

Mrs. Tom, very much excited ; “and the way of it was this : One morning, airy, jest as I riz, Mark Campbell came into my cottage with something I took to be a bundle, under his cloak. He opened it, and you may guess the astonishment I was in when, instead o’ a bundle, he laid the sweetest, dearest, puttiest little baby on the table ever I seed. Lor’ sakes ! I was so completely consternified I hadn’t a word to say, but jest stood starin’ with my mouth wide open, fust at him and then at the baby that was sleepin’ like a sweet little angel. Before I could ax him a single blessed question ’bout it, he sez to me : ‘ Mrs. Tom, there’s a child I want taken care of. Ef you’ll do it, I’ll pay you ; if you won’t—’ I don’t know what he was going to say, for I broke out with the greatest string o’ questions just then that ever was, asking him all about the baby ; but he only looked fierce, and wouldn’t tell me a word. ‘ If you will take it, Mrs. Tom,’ sez he, ‘ you shall be well rewarded for taking care of it ; but you must never, while I live, breathe to a living soul that I left it with you. If you do,’ sez he, ‘ it will be all the worse for you.’ ‘ And its mother,’ sez I ; ‘ where is she ? ’ My conscience ! if you had seen him then ! His face got like a thunder-cloud, and he said, in a voice that made me tremble—yes, even me (and there ain’t many I’d tremble before, thank the Lord ! ) ; ‘ Never mention that word again, or I swear I’ll blow your brains out as I would a rabbit’s ! ’ And then he rushed from the house, leaving me more astonished and frightened than ever I had been before in all my born days. But I kept the baby, and called it ‘ Christiana,’ after a sister I had once (Carl Henley’s mother, poor thing, that went and heaved herself away on a vagabones of a Dutchman), and kept it till it grew up. Mark Campbell died a little while after, but we never spoke another word about the child ; but now I know, after hearing about the crazy woman, she was its mother.”

Aunt Tom paused for breath, and Sybil, with a great cry, sprang forward and clasped Christie in her arms.

“ My sister ! my sister ! my dear little sister ! ” she exclaimed, through her fast falling tears. “ Oh, Christie ; oh ! Christie ! to discover you are my sister when it is too late ! ”

With her arms round Sybil’s neck, her golden head