

crossed the fields and joined the main road, where the snow was harder. He was thinking—with half-numbed brain—over and over again, that he wished a rich man's sympathy could be turned into coin of the realm.

'I—I think we'll rest—rest a moment or two. It is more sheltered here.' Sir George was breathless again, for Stephen had unintentionally increased the pace when they reached level ground.

Strange thoughts had been passing across the mind of the baronet, and before they again started he spoke.

'Come close to me, man. I want to speak to you. About this little lad of yours, how old is he?'

'Nigh eleven, sir.'

'I have a son that age.'

There was a pause.

'You think that the good things all fall to the share of the wealthy. It is not true. I have heard it again and again, seen it in the eyes of poor wretches in the dock, felt that they were envying me. How little they knew.'

Stephen looked at the old man uneasily. He was not sure that the strain and exposure were not proving too much for his charge.

'I'll tell you,' he burst out again. 'For as I believe God loves me, I will make it equal between your son and mine. If my little Hal lives and gets better, your boy shall have all the doctors can do for him. Pray for him, then, as you'd pray for your own son.'

So these two tramped forward, leaving deep tracks behind them, Stephen scarcely knowing whether his companion were sane, the baronet arguing with God as though he were the advocate and his boy the prisoner of death.

At the station the outlook was desolate enough. A special train had been telegraphed for, but it was not likely to be at Caston before midnight. The baronet made himself as comfortable as he could in the waiting-room.

'Look here, my man,' he had said to Stephen, before they parted, 'I meant what I promised just now. If the boy gets better—I fear there is little hope of it—your lit-



'FIVE MINUTES LATER THE TWO HAD STARTED.'

tle lad shall have all the care my boy has had.' He made a note of Stephen's name and address, and then, under a sudden impulse, held out his hand.

'We'll shake hands on it,' he said. 'Never think you have all the troubles in your line of life, Stephen Grant.'

Stephen started on his homeward tramp, wondering whether it could be true that he was richer by half a sovereign and a promise.

### CHAPTER III.—JUDGE AND PRISONER.

Here a word must be said of another strange link between the lives of Stephen Grant and Sir George Rollit.

It was Mary Grant who recognized the name of the judge.

'Twas he tried Robert. I knew it as soon as you told me his name,' she said, the morning following the accident. 'He hasn't much pity, I fancy. No wonder Robert said he was dead against him from the first.'

Robert Nash was Mrs. Grant's eldest brother—a man who had taken a wrong turn early in life, and had at length been convicted of falsifying his employer's books in the bank in which he held a position of trust.

The sentence was a harsh one, perhaps needlessly so, but in any case the prisoner brooded over revenge during two years of hard labor. It is possible the thought of paying back the judge turned his brain, for on being released he dogged the steps of Sir George Rollit with fixed intention to be 'even with him, by fair means or foul.'

A letter received by his sister, Mrs. Grant, suggests that he was scarcely responsible for his actions when he came near to committing a horrible crime a fortnight after his discharge. The letter ran thus:—

'Dear Sis,—I've done it. Something told me it was the only chance I'd ever have. I thought revenge would be sweet, but it's bitter as gall. I put the iron bar across nearly opposite your little place; I knew who'd be in the train. Then I ran for it, and by this time I'm out of the country. If I've killed him, or any one, I'll do for myself.'

'Your hopeless brother,

'BOB.'

The letter was a fearful shock to Stephen and his wife. The very man whom they had received into their home that snowy night was the judge Robert Nash had meant to murder. He it was who had thrown a ray of hope across their lives. How could they receive any help from him now?

'Poor Bob! What must he be thinking? What can we do?' sobbed Mrs. Grant. 'I know he'll kill himself before he hears the train escaped. Can't we telegraph or do anything to let him know?'

Of course it was impossible; and the two could only wait in an agony of suspense.

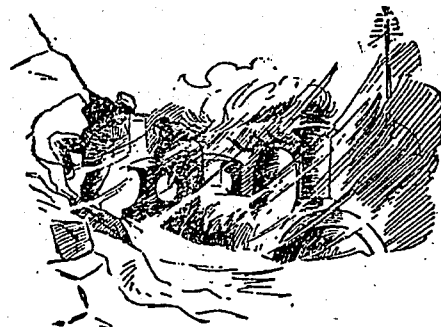
At last, three days later, they received another letter; years seemed to have passed since the first had come. Judging from the contents, Robert Nash had stayed his foot on the brink of the precipice. He was utterly broken down. The awful horror of his position had flashed upon him. Now he had been saved—saved by a miracle, it seemed to him; and his only hope was that if such mercy was for a wretch like himself God had yet further mercy for him.

I set out to give the bare facts connected with the Thorntonwold accident—the facts that is to say, which did not appear in the public press. I have done this at far greater length than I intended. The reader, however, may be sufficiently interested in Stephen Grant to know the outcome of the providence which brought Sir George Rollit to his home.

The last time I saw Stephen he was the happiest man in all England. The little lad had passed through an operation in a great hospital in London and was doing well. The news seemed too good to be true. Mrs. Grant was with her boy, or, rather, to be quite accurate, she was in lodgings close to the hospital. Every penny of expense was being borne by Sir George Rollit, who had fulfilled his promise to the letter.

Some time had elapsed before Stephen

and his wife could bring themselves to accept Sir George's generous offer. 'I wish to do my utmost for your boy,' he wrote, 'as a thank-offering to God for the recovery of my child. I hope I should have done the same even had my Hal been taken from me. I have other reasons for deep gratitude. On the very day I was snow-bound near your cottage, I had received a threatening letter from a man who said



'SNOW-BOUND FOR TWELVE HOURS.'

he intended to pay me out for some imagined injury I had done him. I tell you this that you may never again think that troubles only touch the poor. We all have our burdens. God give us grace to bear them, and help bear the load of every heavy-laden fellow creature who needs our aid.'

Such is the story of the night express, which was snow-bound for twelve hours near Caston. The accident happened years ago, but the details, as I have related them in the foregoing pages, have never been printed.

### How the Mate Saved my Life.

When my sister and I were children, we, being the daughters of a sailor, knew no greater pleasure than that of sitting at our father's feet and listening to the stories of his actual adventures and scrapes.

I cannot say that these bore much resemblance to the wildly sensational stories of the present day, which have such a misleading effect on young readers, and which create such false impressions, especially with regard to life at sea.

My father always said that a sailor's life was a hard one, and that, so far from having a chance of engaging in adventure in foreign lands, his days on shore were few and far between.

Still he could charm us with many tales of peril, exposure and shipwreck; but he described real scenes in which he had been an actor. He commenced his career at sea in sufficiently stirring times, when the victories of Nelson were the theme on every tongue. I will give one of his stories—a very simple one—as he told it.

'I had no right to go to sea,' he said. 'I was the oldest of a family of boys, and should have stayed at home to enter into business, as my father's health was failing. But I had a perfect craze for a sailor's life, and was resolved to gratify it at all hazards. I went on my trial voyage, and was about as ill and miserable as a lad could be.'

'You were not obliged to go again, I suppose?' said I.

'No, but if I stayed on shore I knew how my boy companions would have joked me, and said that Jack had 'swallowed the hands-pike' first voyage. Plenty of lads would turn back after a trial trip if it were not for fear of being thought cowards. So I made up my mind to it, and became as proud of my profession as any sailor living.'

'I was only fourteen when my articles