

"When will all this wild, puzzling mystery end?" Then, addressing Miller, he said, "I would like to have some conversation with you, Miller; I am strangely confused and upset to-day."

"Certainly; be glad to have a chat with you. I say, suppose you come home and dine with me? I am on my way to dinner now. Will you go?"

"Gladly," replied Ephraim.

As they walked on, Miller, with intent to break the silence, said,—

"I think we shall have rain to-day, Mr. Batterby."

"Perhaps; it looks like it. What does the signal service say?"

"What does the *what* say?"

"The signal service. What are the indications?"

"I haven't the least idea what you mean, Mr. Batterby."

"Why," said Ephraim, timidly, "were you not aware that a bureau in the War Department collects information which enables it to indicate approaching conditions of the weather, and that it gives this information to the newspapers?"

"Never heard of such a thing, Mr. Batterby, and I don't believe it. Somebody has been joking with you. The only weather indications we have are in the almanacs, and they are not at all reliable."

The two walked along in silence for a time, and then Ephraim said,—

"Miller!"

"Well?"

"I am going to ask you a good many queer questions to-day, for a private purpose of my own; will you agree to answer them candidly?"

"If I can."

"And not think me insane, or absurd, or stupid?"

"Of course I should not think so."

"Very well," said Ephraim; "and when we are done, I may explain why I asked them, and perhaps you can solve a mystery for me."

They reached the house and entered it. The first thing Miller did was to proceed to the side-board, fill two glasses with wine from a decanter, and ask Ephraim to drink.