

"Don't cry,—now p-l-e-a-s-e don't you cry now, Miss Mary," he nervously began. "There ain't nothing at all to cry for whatsome-ever, now, Miss Mary, for I've promised the girls as how I would take care of you and Blessing. You air never to be lonesome any more,—not whilst I lives and has my being—I've given my word to it!"

"Stop!" cried the other, springing to her feet. "I do not want your word. Now keep right still and listen to what I tell you, for I think you are going to get a very big surprise." During the next few moments, while the impassioned, unfamiliar voice rang out, the cowering and utterly dumb-founded Chris was to experience what seemed to him the crumbling of his walls of Jericho.

"I have told you already how I have tossed awake all night, thinking and praying, with a heart on fire. It would have been easier to meekly accept the arrangements you and the others made for me. But somehow—last night—the meekness all went from me, and to my great astonishment I find that there is a woman left beneath. It is this woman now that says to you, I *scorn* your pity and protection, nor will I condescend to be merely cared for by you or any man alive."

Here was Chris's freedom—sudden, absolute. "But listen, Miss Mary, let me speak," he now protested in a shaking voice.

"Yes, you shall speak, dear friend," said Mary,