

been the great sorrow of their life, but they never spoke of it to one another, unless it was called forth by some little circumstance, such as that which had occurred this morning.

Since the captain had belonged to the revenue service, his home had been at different seacoast villages, and now he was in the neighbourhood of Estleigh, a narrow line of town running along the shore, and about thirty miles from Burton Cray, where their son was born.

Poor Mrs. Smith! this allusion to her long-lost child quite upset her, and burying her face on her husband's breast, she choked back her sobs, for she knew it distressed him to see her weep. Then, seeking to draw her from her sorrow, he strove to interest her by an account of the smuggling that, in spite of his watchfulness, was carried on at the very spot where he was now stationed. He told her of the fierce encounters which sometimes took place between the revenue men and these lawless beings. "There is a small vessel," he said, "expected to-night, from France. They will try to run her into Gavie's Creek with the tide. The night is moonless, and they think Old Starry, the coast-guard, will soon be overpowered; but I fancy we shall teach them another story. Some of the villains will find themselves elsewhere than drinking over their ill-gotten gains to-night; but we shall have a tussle for it. Well, I must be off, and see if I can get more information as to their whereabouts. Good-bye, Rosa, keep up a good heart;" and with another kiss he left her. And all through that day Mrs. Smith sat with the book open on her knee, fearing and praying for the rough old captain, and letting her thoughts dwell on that past that seemed more than ever present with her.

II.

Very inviting looked the snug room of Dennis Smith's tiny cottage; a bright fire crackled in the old-fashioned grate, and quivered along the floor, and flickered on the ceiling, wrapping in gold the pots of evergreens in the small window, and causing the brass birdcage, whose tenant was chirping to the blaze, to glow and sparkle all over. Nor was this all. That bounding flame was flashing on the glass doors of Jessie's cupboard, till the old china stored there sparkled and looked young again. It rested lovingly for a moment on Jessie's brown-golden hair; it lit up the broad, sunburnt brow of Dennis, as he lay back in the great wooden easy chair, in which nestled the soft cushions she had made for her husband.

Dennis sat looking at the wife of six months with that gloomy, troubled expression of face which had lately made her so unhappy. In vain she chatted nicely of the little nothings which had made up her day: how the black hen was sitting on her eggs at last; how busy she had been in putting their little house to rights; what a famous stew she had prepared for his supper, and how Neighbour Jenkins had admired the handsome shawl he had given her, saying it was red lace, and marvellously good. At this last piece of information his brow clouded more deeply, and he said, snappishly, "Just like all you women. What business had you gossiping with the prying old thing? and what does she know about lace? If it is real, the man must have sold it in a mistake," and then Dennis looked more gloomy and sulky than ever.

Jessie said nothing, for she saw he was out of temper; she prepared the supper, and he came sullenly to the table, and sat there leaning his handsome head on his hand, and looking strangely different from the bright Dennis he sometimes was. All Jessie's brightness was gone too, and the choking sensation in her throat prevented her from eating. "Dennis was so queer sometimes."

When the semblance of a meal was concluded, and Jessie began to put away the supper-things, Dennis rose, and said, "Where's my comforter, Jess? I'm going out."

"But, Dennis," she cried, putting aside the window-curtains, "it begins to snow, don't go out to-night."

"I've business to do," he answered; "and

when a fellow's got anything on hand, he can't sit staring at the fire. I shall be back in an hour or two; don't wait up for me;" and, without another word, he was gone.

And Jessie stood at the door shivering and watching him across the lonely common, which lay between the cottage and the town. Then she came in and cried very bitterly, as she wondered what had come over Dennis, and why he was so much away at night now, and she knelt in the light of that quivering fire, and prayed God to shield him from harm, and lead him in the right way; and the dancing flame brightened over her like a glory, and she rose from her knees calmer and stronger. Jessie had been piously brought up, and now the sound of the leaping blaze seemed to form itself into words, and say; "Be strong, and of good courage; fear not, for I am with thee!"

A corner of the black lace shawl, hanging from the drawer, attracted her attention, and as she went to lay it smoothly, she could not resist looking over the pretty things Dennis had given her lately, "but which he did not like her often to wear," he said. As soon as she had duly admired and replaced all her treasures, she seated herself in the great chair her husband had vacated, and soon was sleeping the sweet sleep of a child.

She slept calmly and soundly. On through the night the village clock ran out the hours unheeded, as she lay wrapped in her soft and girl-like slumber; and when she awoke, the cold, dull December morning was seven hours old.

Jessie started to her feet; something was wrong. Ah, yes! she remembered now. Dennis, her beloved, had not returned. Then came the sickening chill, the sinking of heart that one feels on waking to sorrowful life again. In a little while the cold, grey light began to shadow forth the objects in the room. The fire had long since gone out, the ground was covered with snow, and a fog hung in the air. "I must find him," she said to herself. "I will go and ask mother what to do;" but her thoughts were confused, and she could not form any determinate purpose. She hastily wrapped around her a thick shawl, and, locking the street-door behind her, set forth to cross the common. Very dreary it looked—snow everywhere, and the town shut out by the fog. What wonder that Jessie lost her way? She grew sadly frightened, and then she paused, and hearing voices, endeavoured to make her way towards them. She soon found herself at the extreme edge of the common, the rushing, foaming sea was beneath her, and looking down the steep cliff she dimly discerned men fighting. Poor Jessie! her heart stood still with fear; she seemed riveted to the spot.

At length the strife ceased, and the morning sunshine breaking through the fog, Jessie could see the town and the wrong direction she had taken. As she turned to leave the spot, a groan fell upon her ear; once and again she heard it, and looking intently down the cliff she espied a human figure, almost concealed by the bushes that covered the steep, lying about halfway down the declivity. One instant Jessie paused to take counsel with herself, and prayed for help; then she bravely started for the town to try and get some one to assist her. To some sailors loitering about, and to some workmen going forth to their daily toil, she told her tale, and descending the cliff with much difficulty, they brought up the man, who was bleeding copiously from the side. It was her husband, her own dear Dennis!

Now the secret of those dark looks flashed on Jessie. Her husband had been one in the strife between the men of the *Dauntless* and the smugglers. Now she knew how it was she had those sparkling brooches and glossy silks. Very bitterly had she arrived at the knowledge of the truth: but she kept her discovery to herself, and the men thought he had fallen from the cliff.

One of them took off his great coat, and made of it a sort of hammock, in which they placed the wounded man, and so they went on; his wife kept close to his side—at least, as near as

she could, just outside the man who was carrying the hammock, and in this way they proceeded to the cottage. No fire was sparkling there now; but, dull and cold as it was, Jessie was glad to lay him on his own bed, and to hear him breathe a deep sigh.

"He lives! he lives!" she exclaimed. "Oh, my husband!" The doctor told her she must keep very calm, for that her husband was dangerously wounded. A severe illness came on, during which patient Jessie was his only nurse.

But revenue officers are not easily satisfied; they are impracticable sort of people, and no sooner did Captain Smith, of the *Dauntless*, hear that a sailor was ill at the lower end of the town, than he thought it would be no harm to try and get a sight of him. It was just possible it was some fellow who had been wounded in the fray by Gavie's Creek. These old captains are shrewd and sharp, and the instinct was not wrong which led him to Jessie's door. The poor thing was frightened to death at the idea of the captain of the revenue cutter, *Dauntless*, being within her doors, but she could not help herself. She told me afterwards she was as if struck senseless, and she let him walk up-stairs into her husband's chamber, without one word of remonstrance or prohibition. The captain's manner was so quiet, and his voice so gentle, that he did not wake the sick man, who was sleeping.

What was it that brought that look into the old man's eyes, and made his lips quiver, as he watched the sleeper? There was the short upper lip, and the well-formed Roman nose, most singularly resembling the wayward boy he had lost so long ago; and with that sleep so tranquil, the innocent expression of boyhood had come back on Dennis's face.

As Captain Smith watched him gently breathing, he altogether forgot the purpose for which he came; but when the sick man moved, and turned, and woke, the likeness seemed to melt away, and he remembered the object of his visit.

"I am not going to commit myself, captain," Dennis said, somewhat archly, and there was that in his voice which sent the blood rushing to the old man's heart.

Now, indeed, he made inquiries, without any purpose of discovering the young man's share in the fray. Who was he? How long was it since he had left home? A hundred persons might be called Smith, but what was his Christian name? "Dennis!" then there was no longer a doubt—the lost one was found, and father and son were soon clasped in each other's arms.

Jessie had been standing at the door all this time, and when Captain Smith said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found," she thought he had lost his senses, and fell to sobbing and crying from sheer terror.

The meeting between the mother and that long-lost child is too sacred for many words. It was a joy which found its sweetest expression in tears.

Dennis was very repentant. His father got him an appointment in the Customs, and he prospered more by his industry and patient work than he had ever done by his sin.

As for Jessie, she grew, through this re-union, better and happier than ever, and wiser, too. She could never be persuaded to wear any of her fine things again; and when she was in a handsome house with gilded lamps and flaring gas, she retained her modest simplicity of character, and loved her husband not one whit better than when he sat in the old wooden chair, whose cushions she had wrought for him in the little room, lighted by the quivering flame that sparkled on her gold-brown hair.

A SOLDIER'S COV.—The late field-Marshal Lord Combermere, known in the Peninsular War as Sir Stapylton Cotton, was in command of the troops employed in the reduction of Bhurtpore in 1826. A general officer put the following riddle to his brother officers at mess the night before that famous fortress was stormed:—"Why is the Commander-in-Chief certain to carry Bhurtpore?—Because Cotton can never be worsted."