

The light from within fell upon the somewhat haggard and startled face of a man who stood upon the door-step and peered out into the darkness.

"It's only I, father;" and in a moment the girl was at his side.

The man responded but slightly to her caress, and, entering the one large living-room of the cottage, sat down, without a word, in its most shadowy corner, seemingly finding something congenial in its gloom.

"What has kept you so late, Vera?" asked a woman who was taking from a rude cupboard the slender materials of the evening meal.

"I was watching a queer little sail-boat, mother."

"Sail-boat, sail-boat; has it landed near us?" asked the man, starting up.

"No, father. I watched till it disappeared down the river," said the girl, soothingly.

"That's a good child. Still it does not signify; no one could have any business with me."

But the slight tremor of excitement in the girl's tone caused the mother to give her a quick, searching glance, and she saw that something unusual had occurred.

Vera looked smilingly and significantly into the pale, anxious face turned to her, and her glance said, "I will tell you all by-and-by."

The woman continued her tasks, though in a manner so feeble as to indicate that the burden of life was growing too heavy to be borne much longer, while Vera assisted her with the quickness of youth and the deftness of experience.