

Days after, Barney hushed Jessie's uncontrollable grief at the loss of her father, by a bitter antidote.

"Better thus, my Jessie, than the end that surely otherwise would have overtaken him as a daring and persistent smuggler. Rather let us thank that benevolent Providence that sent me the dream which yesterday brought me to the coast. One unwarned, and so unwatchful, might never have seen that light spar till it had been tossed upon the outer reef, which would have ended all our hopes for the coming happy years."

With a low sob she sank again upon his breast.

BEN HALLIDAY'S WELCOME.

On the steps of the largest ticket office for steamers in San Francisco, a sturdy, sun-burned, farmer-like man some forty years of age, stood lost in thought.

Painful thought, moreover, if one might judge from the nervous contraction of the broad white forehead, and the anxious, wandering glance of his full blue eyes.

The trouble in his face was so evident, that more than one stranger passing up and down the steps, turned and looked curiously back at him. At last a bright-eyed ticket agent came dashing up from the street, nearly running over the abstracted man. Both turned to apologize; both, after one broad stare of utter astonishment at each other, held out a hand in friendly greeting.

"Ben Halliday!" cried the agent, his voice as hearty as his look of welcome. "Well, I am glad, old fellow. I took you for your own ghost at first thought."

"I suppose you saw the report of my death from that explosion in the mines, last year, Burnham?" replied Halliday, speaking rather absently.

"To be sure I did, and sorry enough I was to see it. What did the reporters mean?"

"They were not to blame. A Ben Halliday was killed at the time. He was a poor English laboring man, without home or friends. I was away at another mine, and knew nothing of the matter for nearly six months. When I heard it I was afraid that the home papers had copied the account. I know now that they did. Every one in our village, Charley, believes me to be dead."

"But your wife and boy, Ben," began the agent, with a puzzled stare. "Your letters must have told them the truth."

"I have not heard from Lucy for nearly a year," said the other, gloomily. "I've kept that trouble to myself till now, but we were boys together, Charley, and I can trust you. I sent my money home, regularly. For a year past she has never acknowledged its receipt."

"Through whom did you send it, Ben?"

"Our mine agent, Thompson."

"Well, my opinion is, that we shall hear news of him, some day," said Charles Burnham, cautiously. "Don't put any more cash in his hands, my boy. And I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write to old Hewson, the postmaster at Vernon. He will remember both of us, and I can find out all you wish to know, by the very next mail."

"Take no trouble, Charley; you'll see it all there. She was very, very handsome, you know. The belle of Vernon,

they called her, when she married me, and now—I suppose she thought, truly, that I was dead. But to be forgotten like that, so soon! and the boy, too! It's hard! my God, it is hard!"

The fine, brave face broke suddenly into quivering lines, the blue eyes filled and overflowed. Ashamed of his own grief, Halliday drew a New York paper from his breast pocket, pointed to the first page, and turned his head away.

There, with an inward groan over woman's fickleness, Charles Burnham read the marriage of Lucy Halliday to George Henderson of New York.

"Who would have believed that Lucy could be like that when she seemed so fond of you, Ben?" he exclaimed, angrily. "What are you going to do, old boy?"

"The only thing that can be done now," said Halliday, recovering his composure by a brave effort. "I must go home, that is, I must go back at once. I must see her people—a divorce can be obtained, I suppose—and then they can be really married. I should like to make it all right for her about the money, too. For her—and the boy."

"You won't leave him with her, Ben?"

"He's only a baby; he loves her best of course, and she is wrapped up in him, poor girl. I couldn't take him from her. I know now heartbroken she will be over this; the child will be her only comfort, for a time——"

"Ben, you have the kindest heart on earth," said the agent, and the tears stood in his eyes, "and you'll want a friend to see you through this dreadful business. I'll get a furlough and go back to Vernon with you, my dear boy."

A month afterwards, Charles Burnham's prediction was fulfilled. Thompson, the mine agent, levanted suddenly, leaving a set of beautifully kept (and falsified) books behind him, but carrying away the investments of the miners for the past six months. It was plain enough to the two friends where Ben Halliday's unacknowledged remittances had gone to.

"Poor Lucy," said the bereaved husband, as they were starting on their journey home, "we mustn't be too hard on her, Charley. She may have been driven to—such a step by actual want. All my fault. I never ought to have trusted any stranger as I trusted that villainous agent. God forgive him, I cannot! He has ruined all my life, and hers too, for she will never know another happy hour after she hears the truth. And yet it must be told. Ah, this isn't the kind of a home-coming that I looked forward to, when I went to the mines."

The close of a dull, rainy day in autumn saw the two friends safe once more in the little New Jersey village, where they had both been born.

As they alighted from the stage coach at the porch of the old-fashioned tavern, a strange landlord came out to welcome them, in the place of the rotund, jolly old "Uncle Gorham" whom they had known in their boyhood. But the tavern was "Gorham's" still, as in the olden time.

"Shall I order supper here?" asked Burnham, when the host had left them in the private room they had ordered.

"No, no! Come with me at once, Charley. I cannot rest or breathe until I have found out where she is," replied his friend, nervously. "We can inquire

at—at the house where I used to live. The new people there will tell me."

The next moment they were hurrying down the one street of the village, where lights were already burning in the cottage windows, and family groups were seated comfortably at the evening meal.

Ben Halliday gave a gasp of pain as he pointed to a neat gray house with green blinds, and a side verandah that stood in the midst of a pretty fruit orchard, at some distance from the street.

"There it is! It would kill me, I think, to go up to that door and not find her there. There's the orchard I planted for her; how the trees have grown; and how nice the garden looks. There never was a happier man in this world, Charley, than I when we lived there. Go, Charley, go and ask if she—if her people still live at the old farm. I can bear to talk it over with them, perhaps, they were always fond of me."

He rested his folded arms on the stone coping of the orchard wall, and bent his head down with such a groan of bitter, hopeless misery, that Charley Burnham hurried away, with eyes almost too dim to see the cottage path.

In reality he was scarcely gone ten minutes, although it seemed an age to the wretched man who waited to hear from his lips his doom.

Then the cottage door flew wide open, showing a snug interior of warmth, light and comfort. Down the path, over which a sudden gust now whirled heavy drops of rain, a fair, rosy woman came running with extended arms, and after her came Charles Burnham, with a baby boy carefully wrapped in his heavy overcoat, and shielded in his arms from the rapidly increasing storm.

"Ben! Ben! Oh, thank God that you are alive, and safe at home again with the child and me!" cried the weeping, laughing woman, as she sprang into the arms that were mechanically held out to receive her. "I thought you were dead, the papers all had it so. But how could you think that I had married anyone else, dear? How could you?"

"It was your cousin Lucy—same name—you remember her, Ben; little dark girl with lots of curls," said Charley, half choking under the stout pulls that the boy was giving to his beard and comforter. "Here, take him before he kills me quite."

And so, only half comprehending, as yet, his own exceeding happiness and good fortune, the weary, storm-tossed man went joyfully with wife, child and friend, in at the open, waiting cottage door.

Jackson—"Talking about literary style, there goes a man noted for his finished sentences." Binkson—"Indeed? Is he a novelist?" Jackson—"No; he is an ex-convict."

A goodly parson complained to an elderly lady of his congregation that her daughter appeared to be wholly taken up with trifles or worldly finery, instead of fixing her mind on things above.

"You are mistaken, sir," answered she. "I know that the girl appears to an observer to be taken up with worldly things; but you cannot judge correctly of the direction her mind takes, as she is a little cross-eyed."