

weeks, and Christmas was approaching before I set out for Chatham. I had written to Mary after my arrival, but gave her no hint that I intended to give up the sea. So, when I arrived in Chatham on Christmas morning no one expected me and no one knew me. How should they, indeed? I had left the place a slim, smooth-faced youth; I returned to it a strong full-bearded man with the marks of a hundred conflicts with the storm stamped on my face. I put up at the hotel, and, although I wrote my name on the register, it was in such a tremulous hand that no one could read it; and if they had, how much wiser would they have been? Who was likely to remember Joe Farwell when even the great fire was beginning to be rather an old story?

I took my breakfast at the hotel and turned my steps towards my sister's dwelling. I approached it with a trembling heart; as I passed the window I caught a glimpse of a matronly-looking lady, whom I thought was my sister, but she did not see me; I reached the door and knocked. In a moment or two it was opened and when I saw in real flesh and blood the face and form that had haunted me for so many years—those features which had appeared to me so often in the night watches, and which had risen from the midst of the flame to warn me to come home, I started back and almost fainted.

"Good Heavens, who is this? Grace! Mary!" I cried, "is it you?"

I hardly spoken when Mary, for it was indeed she, with a loud cry fell into my arms, and the whole household came running to see what was the matter. My sister rushed to embrace me, and when my worthy brother-in-law made his appearance on the scene he thought for a moment that the females of his family