

Such a question positively made my heart cease to beat for some seconds. If you will think that for five-and-twenty years I had never spent a night, except one at Liverpool, from under our own roof; that I knew absolutely nothing of friendly visiting, or excursions to the sea-side; that for a whole quarter of a century I had slept in the same room, and opened my eyes each morning on the self-same objects, you will see how the question stunned me as though a thunderbolt had fallen at my feet. It opened out such vast changes, such undreamed-of revolutions in all the habits of my life, that I shrank back frightened.

"Could you spare her," cried Philip, all aglow with excitement.

"To be sure," said George, calmly, as if it were no unusual thing; "I should like her to go, if you promise to bring her home safely in two months or so."

"There is nothing I should like so much," exclaimed Philip; "you shall have no trouble at all, Aunt Milly; and we shall be back in two months at the latest, with three or four weeks to spare on the other side. You will know something of the sea then! Say you will come."

I felt fluttered and frightened; yet an irresistible yearning came with my fears to break loose for once from the safe moorings of home, and see something beyond its narrow confines. I wished George had not suggested it; for the idea would never have come of itself into my head. But now it was there it could not be dislodged; and the restlessness I had conquered in my girlhood threatened to assert itself again.

"You might as well take Mrs. Transome," I said; "I am too old now."

"I will take her," answered Philip; "she will come if I ask her, and you cannot say you are too old then. Say no more, Aunt Milly. I shall run down to Liverpool this very night, and see that everything is made comfortable for you. It will be the greatest pleasure I've had since I was a boy."

I made some faint remonstrances; but it was impossible to me to oppose him when George was on his side. There were only a few days for me to prepare in; for all our arrangements had been made, and our emigrants were waiting to go. After all, it was far less trouble and exertion than I had expected. Philip came back from Liverpool to fetch Mrs. Transome and me; and I had simply to leave myself in his hands, and have everything done for me. It was I who obeyed now, not Philip. I bade George farewell, and left home, with a strange sensation of losing almost my own identity.

But there were no good-byes at Liverpool. All we had to do was to cross over to the steamer, which lay in the river ready to start; for we must get over the bar at the next tide, and the last hour was come. As we drew near I was surprised to see how large it was.