

The old man turned his eyes to his wife with a questioning look.

The woman gave a heavy sob. She bent over her husband—oh, so changed in mind and tone from the callousness to which she had long been used—and, kissing his forehead, laid her thin cheek upon that wrinkled brow.

"You see, you say you're feeling better and less pained," she resumed. "That's because Doc. gave you a dose of morphia to ease you a bit. But, dear—there's worse, much worse. He says you're going to die if—if—oh, God, help me to say it; I can't! I can't!" The speaker quite broke down, and her tears rained upon the white head beside her.

There were a few deep breaths from the old man; his brows lowered a little, and his lips tightened. He knew he had to steel himself for an ordeal.

"God *is* helping you, and helping me," he spoke, softly and with deep reverence. "You may tell me all, Mary. I can bear anything now, for He is with me."

Then the woman plunged into the terrible truth. She told how the doctor had said that his life was in great danger, but that there was only one possibility of saving him, and that was by amputation. The nervous shock that he had sustained would jeopardise even that alternative, but the hope of his life hung on one thread, and that, an immediate operation.

Seth listened in silence until his wife ceased speaking. Then he spoke slowly in an awed undertone, as if it were difficult to realise what he heard her say.

"You mean that he will have to remove my old