

gazing in wonder and amaze on Mrs. Tom, and on each other, as if asking what in the world they were destined to hear next.

Christie, too weak now to betray any emotion, lay still, with her wondering blue eyes fixed on the old woman's face.

"Yes, you needn't stare, all of you ; it's jest so," said Mrs. Tom, very much excited ; "and the way of it was this : One morning airy, jest as I riz, Mark Campbell came into my cottage with something I took to be a bundle, under his cloak. He opened it, and you may guess the astonishment I was in, when, instead o' a bundle, he laid the sweetest, dearest, puttiest little baby on the table ever I seed. Lor' sakes ! I was so completely consternified I hadn't a word to say, but jest stood starin' with my mouth wide open, fust at him and then at the baby that was sleepin' like a sweet little angel. Before I could ask him a single blessed question 'bout it, he sez to me :

" 'Mrs. Tom, there's a child I want tooken care of. Ef you'll do it, I'll pay you ; if you won't——'

"I don't know what he was going to say, for I broke out with the greatest string o' questions just then that ever was, asking him all about the baby ; but he only looked fierce, and wouldn't tell me a word.

" 'If you will take it, Mrs. Tom,' sez he, 'you shall be well rewarded for taking care of it ; but you must never, while I live, breathe to a living soul that I left it with you. If you do,' sez he, 'it will be all the worse for you.'

" 'And it's mother,' sez I ; 'where's she ?'

"My conscience ! if you had seen him then ! His face got like a thunder-cloud, and he said, in a voice that