

NEW DOMINION MONTHLY.

MAY, 1875.

A STORY TOLD AT SEA.

BY FESTINA LENTE.

We had been watching the sun set. The children had been chasing one another round and round the deck; when the sun had set, their mothers and aunts had taken them down below; the gentlemen had gone away to smoke, so that my old friend and I were left alone together. For us, the beauty of the sunset was yet to come; the gradual rising and crimsoning of the amber-colored clouds, and the sight, so replete with beauty, of their golden reflection on the waves. The sea was very calm; hardly disturbed by a ripple, only now and then with a gurgle and splash, a wave broke against the vessel. Forward, the steerage passengers were singing hymns; the sound of their voices came to us all the sweeter, that so great a distance separated us. "Glory, glory, glory." We listened again—the hymn was finished, only the laughter of the gentlemen on the quarter-deck broke the silence; then, again, the voices, in glad refrain, "In Heaven we part no more." Then my friend turned his eyes from the glorious horizon and I saw that those words, so rudely sung, had penetrated to his innermost consciousness, and that he loved them as prophetic of a blessed reality. To his lips some story seemed to rush; had I not been there, he would have spoken all to his own solitary heart. I looked my assent that he should begin, and he spoke—spoke on continuously, till the moon arose and the stars feebly twinkled in the sky; spoke until in

the dimness of evening I was personally lost to him; and, my identity lost, remained only a shadow, hovering near in silent sympathy.

"I had a friend once," he said—"nay, rather, I *have* a friend—lost to me now in the immensity of space. It is a temporary loss," he said in a wistful tone, and with his eyes again upon the golden halo. "Only a film separates us—lost to my sight—but he himself—his reality—his soul and spirit—my friend indeed—there is no space so great but he would bridge it to come to me.

My friend lived with us from his infancy. He and I were about the same age, but there all likeness between us ended; he was strong and healthy in body, bright and clever in thought and action, while I was feeble in body, and dull and slow in every other particular. Yet very naturally, a deep and earnest love and friendship for each other, grew with our growth, ripened as our years neared manhood, and never once was shaken during absence, trouble or sickness. Conrad, as he desired, was educated for the medical profession. I, with an innate love of art, tried to lose my sense of desolation at his absence, in bending all my dull faculties to small artistic productions. Sometimes I caught a gleam of light on the heather-browed mountain, and on my paper made unwearied attempts