

spent, by the roadside some miles outside Boston. A kindly market-gardener gave me a lift back to town, and through that day and the succeeding six I dragged myself like a man in a dream. The seventh day brought a letter from Mrs. Richards, and you may imagine the eagerness with which I tore it open. It contained the crushing information that the Richards home and furniture had been disposed of and that the family had left for some unknown destination. The writer's protestation of love and grief for me was unmistakably genuine; but I was adjured by the love I bore her daughter and my desire for that daughter's happiness to make no effort to trace them or communicate with them in any way.

"What could I do but submit? But only God knows what it cost me. Around and around in a circle of fruitless speculation my brain would go; I often wondered that it did not give way, and as often hoped that it would. But gradually there emerged two clearly defined things: my belief in Mary's love for me, and my determination to be ready and fit to obey her call if she should ever need me and send for me.

"Two years passed. No tidings had come from the Richards', and the public had ceased to speculate over the mystery of their sudden disappearance. And then one day the summons came that I had for so long instinctively expected; I received from Mr. Richards a short note dated from Saint John, N.B., asking me to come to them immediately. One of our fastest schooners was sailing for Saint John, in ballast, that very evening, and I had but little difficulty in obtaining leave of absence and arranging for my passage. Two evenings later I sat in this very room, listening to the whole story from the lips of Mr. Richards himself; and surely no man ever listened to a stranger tale. First he told me what I began by telling you—of the true relations existing between 'Mrs. Richards' and himself, and the parentage of Mary. But

the sequel! You must hear that.

"It appeared that, since Mary had been a mere child, Mr. Richards had never been absent from home for more than a day at a time until that fatal three months' visit to New York. It needed but a week of his absence to disclose to him the fact that what he had considered a paternal affection for the young girl who had been brought up to love him as her father had been displaced by an absorbing passion that nothing but marriage could satisfy. Throughout the remaining weeks of his absence his resolve grew daily stronger. It seems strange that the man who for so many years had set self aside and devoted himself so wholeheartedly to the welfare and happiness of others should now allow selfishness to dominate all other feelings. It is true, of course, that he had no knowledge that Mary had formed any attachment, for Mrs. Richards had made no mention of the matter in her letters. He had for so long sought the happiness of herself and her daughter that she never doubted that he would rejoice in this crowning joy that had come into Mary's life, and she withheld the news to be a happy surprise to him on his return.

"I cannot, without a feeling of horror, contemplate what happened on his return. He told Mrs. Richards of the discovery he had made regarding his feelings towards her daughter; he demanded that Mary be told the story of her parentage; and he pleaded his long years of single-hearted devotion to the interests of mother and daughter and claimed the daughter's hand in marriage as his reward.

"What could the poor mother do? She and her child owed everything to their protector and this was the only call he had ever made upon their gratitude. The interview between mother and daughter is too sacred to dwell upon; suffice it to say that after a night of grief and prayer the poor girl agreed to sacrifice her love on the altar of her mother's and her own gratitude. It was decided that Mr.