

great beads on his forehead. He rubbed it, bathed it in cold water and tried it again. But all in vain. The blow delivered was either too heavy or too light. Finally the hammer fell at his feet and the arm hung limply at his side. He looked at it for a moment and a grey pallor overspread his face. The terrible truth was forcing itself upon him. He sank on his knees beside the anvil, while a big tear traced its way down his dust-stained cheek.

His cup of bitterness was now full to overflowing. The loss of his property he bore with complacency; the sacrifice of his love was met with patient suffering; the gradual displacement of his handicraft tested his courage; but the consciousness that in the prime of his manhood the power to earn his bread was slipping away from him caused him to cry out in the bitterness of his heart, 'Oh, God! oh, God! has it come to this?'

Suddenly it occurred to him that he might train his left arm. Why had he never thought of it before? Many a good workman was left-handed. There was no need to despair. Suiting the action to the thought he set to work at once and appeared to be satisfying himself with the first lesson when the sound of sleigh-bells outside caused him to drop the hammer guiltily.

A moment later the door opened and there, enveloped in white furs, stood Naera Delavan, looking almost as he had seen her in his dreams. The white cap pulled over her ears held a few stray locks over her forehead, her eyes flashed through the frozen snow which clung to her eyelashes, her cheeks bloomed like roses and her mouth bore an expression of determination.

He gazed at her in speechless astonishment while she came forward and held out her hand. 'Good day, Mr Worth. I suppose you are too busy to entertain strangers?'