

it look as if there were a curse upon me?—first the storm, then the fever, and then—this morning——' He stopped short, as if some new thought had just come to him.

'What was it this morning?' asked Bill, rather glad to come back to plain matters of fact.

'I'll tell you,' he said, dropping his voice a little. 'I was lying still here, thinking over it all, wondering how it was I'd come safe out of both storm and fever, and whether God had done with me yet, or if there was something more coming. And I half turned myself round and looked, and there was the snake just creeping out of the folds of my coat, creeping up towards my hand. I could have flung it out of the hammock with one jerk,—I was just going to do it,—but something held me still. Something seemed to say to me, "He has found me out at last." And I thought to myself that I had fled from before His face and fought against His will, so far, but that I would do so no more. And I thought, "I will not lift a finger either way. If it lets me alone I shall hope that there is one more chance for me; and, if not, let it strike and let me die." So I lay and looked at it, and it looked at me, and came creeping up and up towards my face. I wanted to shut my eyes, that at least I might not see my death coming near in such a shape; but I would not let myself do it. Then, at last, it turned slowly away, and glided off at the side of the hammock there, and was gone!'

'Then it came out all right!' cried Bill, who had been listening with open eyes. 'You said if it went away you'd believe there was a chance for you still, and it did!'

'Ah! but I'm not so sure of it since,' sighed his friend. 'Telling you about it has brought it all back—all I've done, and it seems not possible that I should ever come to good. Doesn't that very book that you are hugging there say that some of us are created vessels of wrath, ordained beforehand for destruction, and in the same place it says, "*Who hath resisted His will?*"'

'Whereabouts is it that it says that?' asked Bill, looking grave and turning over the leaves of his beloved book.

'The ninth chapter of Romans, I believe,' answered Thomson, and lay looking at the boards above his head with a sad and dreamy look.

Bill turned over the leaves for a minute or two, then found the place, and pored over it for some time.

Before he had made it out to his mind a trampling was heard on deck, and a voice calling 'Bill,' at which he started up in a hurry.

'I can't make it out,' he said; 'it's very hard to understand. But there's things in that same chapter that seem to me to go clean against what you were saying just now. I wish you'd read it yourself.'

He thrust the book into the man's hand, and ran. It was some time before he could get down again, and when he did so he found Thomson quietly asleep, with the Testament still held fast in his hand.

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A few weeks later this strange pair of friends were taking leave of one another on the deck of the *Mary Alice*.

'Good bye!' said the man to the boy. 'You will see me again some day, perhaps, but with a different dress and a different name, and, please God, with a different character.'

'And what are you going to do now?'

'Look out for the man I robbed, and give him back his own, and give myself to him, body and soul, till I have set him up in the world again.'

'But supposing you can't find him?'

'Then I shall help every other man I see in trouble, till God takes pity on me, and gives me a chance to undo the wrong I did. Lad! here's a smart new Bible for you, if you'll give me your little old one in exchange. And you'll find a bit of that snake's skin put in at one place, to remind you, whenever you see it, of me.'

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After his friend had gone, Bill looked out for the snake's skin. And this was the text that was marked on that page: '*In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.*' HELEN SHIPTON.