

struck out first to get away from the burning boats and out of harm's way. I swam to the right, and quartered down stream, and after a long and exhaustive struggle we landed safely about one mile and a half below the burning vessels, on the Indiana shore. I crawled up through the bushes, carrying my dear little manly boy in my arms, and when I sat down, almost wholly exhausted, he crouched down by my side and asked:

"Papa, do you think God has taken care of Mamma and Nettie?"

"I hope so, my son," I answered, consolingly, to his sore little heart, for I felt that it would kill him to lose both of these dear idols of his life in a single hour.

After resting a little while I started again to make my way up the banks of the river, leading and sometimes carrying my little Robbie in my arms, when I came to a cabin, the family of which seemed all gone. I passed on, and in a short space I met them returning.

They insisted that I should return with them and they would do the best they could for us. Of course I could not do better, and we all started back for their cabin, where they kindled up a nice, big fire for us to dry ourselves by. They were poor, and had no dry clothes to give us a change, and we had to do the best we could in drying ourselves by the fire.

When daylight came, which was not long, the man got a canoe and rowed us over the river to the Kentucky shore, where the wrecks of our sad misfortune lay burnt and sunk to the water's edge.

Hundreds of people were gathered along the shore, and I made every possible inquiry to obtain some light in regard to the sad fate of my loved ones, but not a ray of hope was given me. Nothing was left me but the cold and dismal conviction that their poor bodies were burned to ashes, or else, having found a watery grave, their lifeless remains would be food for the fish of the river."

"So you left the sad scene, Mr. Fitzgibbon, and came on here?" asked the patient and interested listener.

"Yes, after stopping several weeks in Cincinnati, and making every effort I possibly could to learn something more of the sad fate of my poor wife and child, I came here, partly on business, but chiefly, if possible, to find some relief from the dismal death-sorrow which so oppressively preys upon me."

"I deeply sympathize with you, Mr. Fitzgibbon," said Mr. Benton, his merchant friend, "and now if you will accept of my hospitality, I think you and your little son will find some relief, if not pleasure, in going home with me this evening, out to my sea-shore home, and spend a few days with us. It is only twenty-four miles out from the city by rail, and we will try and make you as pleasant a stay as may be in our power."

This generous offer of his mystic friend, Benton, Mr. Fitzgibbon¹ thankfully accepted, and that evening a short hour's ride brought them to the princely home and family of the Boston merchant. Here Mr. Fitzgibbon was treated with all the kind attentions and tenderness which could have been bestowed upon a brother. The scenes at every point of this rural palace home were grand and beautiful, and had it been under any other circumstances he would have felt that this grand locality, with its magnificent surroundings and social hospitalities, would have been an Eden-home of the highest and purest earthly happiness. But as it was, his very heart was dead to all enjoyment, and nothing but death and the grave seemed to have any allurements for him, or even to feed the thoughts of his mind for a moment. Still he tarried there because it shut him out from the world, and to some extent appeared to bury the deep, deadly grief to his soul.

"Papa, did God take care of Mamma and Nettie?" asked little Robbie again the fifth evening of their sojourn at this lovely sea-shore home, as he and his papa were taking a walk over the extensive lawn, just as the whistle of the locomotive announced the return of Mr. Benton from his day's business in the city. "I hope so, my dear child," was the only response the deeply afflicted father could make.

But the train had scarcely stopped, when he saw Mr. Benton on the run and jump towards him, as if he were wild. He stopped to meet him. Mr. Benton leaped, threw up his arms, and when he came up to where Mr. Fitzgibbon and his little boy were standing he cried out:

"They live! they live! your wife and daughter both live! Thank God! thank God, forever, my dear brother."

Mr. Fitzgibbon thought the man was wild, stark mad. He could give no other explanation to his conduct.

Mr. Benton seeing that his glad tidings of great joy were not credited, broke out again:

"Why, my dear man, you don't believe me, but I am telling you the happiest news of your life. Your dear wife and daughter both live. It is true, it is true."