

if only this were *his* ship! Another gun, and she once more pushed aside the curtain and looked out. A rocket flashed upon the darkness, revealing the angry sea, and then there came into her mind the full meaning of her terrible wish. "Oh, God!" and she sank upon her knees, "Save me! Save me!"

There was a footfall outside the room, and she arose in time to see Reginald enter. A moment he stood, as though to admire the utter peace and beauty of the picture—she, in a narrow circle of light, her jewels flashing out in contrast to the darkness around. He came forward, and an impulse seized her to tell him all, when once again the door opened. "Please, sir, the men want you to help man the boat, if you will." Reginald was a daring boatman, and had left word that if he were needed he would come. So he kissed his wife and bade her be calm, for that, if God willed, he should be safe and return to her again. "If God willed"—she had never known him speak so before, and again a fearful weakness took possession of her. She could not stay there, so she wrapped herself in a cloak and hood, and calling two women of the house to go with her, they all three, bearing lanterns in their hands, made their way down to the shore. It was bitterly cold; but what of that? Brave men were putting their lives in peril for others, and should they shrink from a mere blast of wind? They might take care of those rescued, and so perform their share in the great work; and thinking thus, Constance strove to stifle the thought which would come, that the clergyman was dead and the nurse old and obscure, so that she might in all safety adhere to the wording of the second will—it was her secret, resting with her alone. Once or twice a lurid ray from rockets thrown by those on the vessel in distress, showed to those on shore the men, women, and children clinging to the masts and rocks against which they had been thrown, showed also the lifeboat slowly plunging its way back heavily laden, and at times in extreme peril, as all could see. It came to land, and Constance felt a throb of gladness for other women besides herself, and while they, the boat's crew, prepared to return again upon their perilous errand, she pressed forward with the rest to minister to the poor half-drowned creatures lying upon the sands. One lay apart, and she bent over him alone, turning her lantern full upon him; ah, now she knew the cause of her inmost dread upon this day and night, for in the pale, insensible face before her she recognised William Berry. She did not faint or turn away—no, she only felt that for her judgment was begun. The wind was fast becoming more boisterous, while the feeble light of the moon, which was now struggling through the clouds, revealed the lifeboat, and at the sight those on shore gave a wild shriek—it would never come to land, and they, the rescued and the rescuers, would together share a watery grave. Then Constance threw herself upon the wet sands, and besought God to give her Reginald's life, and to spare this man, William Berry, to inherit his own. "A life for a life," she pleaded, and at the close of her prayer there arose a murmuring that the boat was righting itself, and was gradually nearing the shore.

"Take this man to my house," she cried in an ecstasy of joy; for it already seemed to her that her petition was granted, and immediately some fisher-lads close by obeyed her behest. There was an almost unearthly light in her dark eyes as she followed behind, as she tended him, too, in the best guest-chamber her home afforded. The servants looked on in wonder, for Constance, in her anxiety to serve and bring this man back to life, was but to her mind tending and saving Reginald.

The moments throbbed on in that silent chamber, where death seemed brooding even as on the boisterous sea. It throbbed calmly and unsitatingly, as if earth's anguish were as naught! But at the last a wild shout from the shore came echoing there, exultingly, joyously, as with the tale of a victory gained. The boat had landed, preservers and preserved were safe and rejoicing together—the passionate prayer, "a life for a life!" was answered. The eyes of the unconscious man opened at that joyous cry as of many voices, and Constance sank to the floor in a deadly swoon.

But it was a happy returning to life for her. Reginald's arms were about her, his voice whispered that he loved her, not for wealth, nor ease, nor luxury, but for her own dear self. And William Berry's love had been, and still was, strong and true, noble and generous; he would hear of no giving up nor restitution; he had enough of this world's goods and to spare in a foreign land; he only spent a few months in the old home by the sea—a beautiful dream of

confidence, forgiveness, and noble self-surrender—and then went away to his distant home.

And Constance mourned for him as for a lost brother, while her life became purer, holier, and more chastened in her great woman's love—and her husband gloried in her.

## THE VINEYARD.

By THE REV. J. HILLS HUGHES.

The vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted. Psalm lxxxv. 13.

WHEN vines are planted and a vineyard is formed, it is not with a view to cover the ground with foliage, to ornament the slopes of some neighbouring hill, or to afford occupation to a number of hungry workers. No, the object of the owner of the vineyard is to obtain fruit. The husbandman reasonably anticipates that his vines when well tended will quickly remunerate him for all his labours, and form a source of annual income. If, however, after a fair trial the plant should prove fruitless it is removed to make way for one more promising. So the purpose of the Eternal in sending His truth, and subsequently His Son into the world was, as it is, to obtain from man the fruits of righteousness. His revelation and religion were not intended to be the means simply of civilising man—the means only of improving their worldly prospects. His Church was formed not for the purpose of opening up a professional calling for a class of mankind, and covering the world with "reverend" vine-dressers. No. His object is to see in us and obtain from us that which glorifies Him. Jesus thus stated the case: "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." Civilisation, social improvement, mental progress, and ministerial service will be certain to follow where the fruits of righteousness are found. The Church will be a blessing to the world, and a sphere for most diligent toil, so long as in it the Lordly Proprietor can discern the signs of life and fruition. Each of us must exhibit our vitality by our fruit. It is of no service that we are associated with the trees of God's planting otherwise. We are cumberers of the ground. Faith without works is dead. Foliage without fruit is hypocrisy. Nothing can compensate for the absence of clustering excellencies. There is no greater anomaly beneath the blue skies than a barren believer. The soul that truly loves Jesus will spontaneously put forth its efforts to please Him. Constrained by the noblest and purest and sweetest of all principles, the heart will lay its best productions at the feet of Christ. Realising the duty and destiny of every regenerated man, the Church says, as Solomon represents, "Let my beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." Dear sirs, it is a question worthy of being forced home upon our hearts—are we fruitful? Are we giving evidence of our spiritual life by submission to our Master's will? Are we striving every day to overcome the evils of our hearts and lives? Are we exhibiting the temper of Jesus? Are we aiming after conformity to His image? Do we daily yield ourselves to His wish? Do we cast our whole experience upon His promise? Does His love constrain us to watch, and pray, and work, and wait? Do we try to expel the proud, discontented, selfish, angry, revengeful feelings which sometimes possess us? Let us ask ourselves these questions.

We must never lose sight of the *keeper* of the vineyard. It was customary to erect a tower in ancient vineyards, where a watch was kept in order to repel all assaults of enemies. Youder, from His watch-tower, the unseen but all-seeing God guards His Church. By the mouth of His servant Isaiah, the Infinite One says: "In that day sing unto her, a vineyard of red wine; I, the Lord, do keep it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Mark the words "every moment," "night and day." What season can that be in which the vineyard of the Lord is without a keeper? In the darkest hour of persecution, as well as in the sunniest period of liberty and growth—in the winter of our discontent, as well as the summer of success and satisfaction the Lord watches over His people. Throughout all the troubled past He has preserved His Church—and He will preserve it, whatever may await its future history. There shall ever be a vineyard—that vineyard shall extend in its dimensions, and increase in its fruitfulness until one day He who planted, and purchased, and preserved it shall come to His own possessions, and see there the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

One word in relation to the *labourers* in the vineyard.