

## THE JESSOPS:

## AN EMIGRATION STORY.

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## CHAPTER XI.

## A FRESH ARRIVAL.



MRS. PLAYFAIR bore the burden of her heavy trial meekly and patiently as a Christian should. Indeed, since the so-called "worst" was known, she seemed, like David, more calm and even cheerful than she had been during the days of wearying anxiety. "I dare not repine, for I know my dear husband is perfectly happy; only, if God so allows it, I should like to hear something as to how it happened. I am willing to let him go, but I'd like to know what time he had to think of his dear ones at home, on what day he died, at the bottom of what sea his poor body lies, whether he suffered, and things like that. I feel somehow that it would be a comfort, that it would give something to rest one's thoughts on. But God knows best; His will be done."

So the good woman spoke, and her friend Mrs. Jessop listened, wondering and puzzled. She could not doubt the depth of Mrs. Playfair's affection for her husband, and she became more and more curious to know by personal experience what was the secret power that inspired this calm serenity. Thus does the Divine light shine, not alone round the heads of conspicuous saints, but round the feet of the humblest Christian who treads with patient feet "the path that leads through darkness up to God."

Mrs. Jessop was really a kind-hearted woman, although her moral and spiritual nature had been stunted and imperfectly developed. She was genuinely sorry for the Playfairs in their day of affliction; and she could the more easily afford to be so because her own circumstances had brightened. At least she imagined they had. The villa was now let, actually at a slightly increased rent, so that the pinch of poverty was relaxed. A cheerful letter from Sybil, following the epistle from Reggie, of which the reader already knows, had inspired the widow with new courage. Indeed she was building to herself a most extravagant edifice upon the very slightest foundations. She was sure that her dear children must succeed. Nobody could be long blind to their merits, nor was it possible for such talents as theirs to remain unfruitful. The only source of fear was either that Sybil might not make a sufficiently brilliant match, or that Reggie's health might interfere with the rapid development of his fortune. But doubts of this character were easily dismissed; and Mrs. Jessop found herself free to bestow a large share of time and sympathy on her less fortunate friends the Playfairs.

Matters had remained in this condition for a considerable time, when one morning a stranger appeared at Heatherbank inquiring for Mrs. Playfair's.