

efface the image of her lost lover, and some more eligible suitor finally supplant me in her affections? She was not one likely to forget, or to give her heart and take it back again at the bidding of caprice; and I could have placed full reliance on her constancy had my own prospects been less hopeful than they were. Had Alice been poor, and less tenderly nurtured, there would, in that land of abundance, have been hope that ours might be a life of at least moderate comfort and prosperity. But the dear girl had been hitherto known what it was to have a wish ungratified that money could realize, and it would have been selfish on my part to expose her to the hardships of poverty; while, even if she had been capable of direct disobedience to her father's commands, I felt assured that Mr. Harman would never relent, or extend a helping hand to one who had defied his authority. As matters stood, a continued sojourn in America had become distasteful to me; and although fully sensible that there is much truth in the old proverb which condemns a rolling stone, I had determined on tempting fortune in that part of the world where riches are amassed and health jeopardised with, perhaps, greater rapidity than anywhere else. I had distant connections in China, on whose aid I could in some degree rely, and had obtained, for the outward voyage, the temporary post of supercargo on board a fine ship, the *Star of the South*, bound from New Orleans to California and Shanghai. My kit was ready. In one short week the clipper was to sail, and my business up the river, such as it was had been all transacted. Some few hundred dollars I had contrived to save, and these had been out at interest in a Vicksburg bank, the manager of which had invited me to spend a couple of days at his villa near Grand Gulf, and had driven me over, with the money safe in my pocket, to the landing-wharf of the latter town, at the termination of my visit. I had but to return to New Orleans, bid farewell to the few kind friends who dwelt in that city, and then leave America, perhaps for ever.

I had almost forgotten the presence of my not over-reputable acquaintance, Captain Gregg, when I found myself opposite to him as I walked slowly to and fro, and observed that his eyes were fixed on me with rather a singular expression. It was early as yet, in the day, but he had evidently been drinking a good deal; and, curiously enough, the repeated doses of alcohol which he had swallowed seemed to have at length produced the effect of steadying his nerves. His hand no longer shook, and the unwholesome flush on his bronzed cheek had passed away.

'Going up river, are you not?' he asked abruptly. 'I see the steamer rounding the point yonder—the *Empire City*, by her colours—fine boat, and sure to have a band on board of her.'

'No,' I answered; 'my way lies down stream; I take the first steamer for New Orleans, and, if I am not mistaken, they are signalling her now.'

An exclamation of mingled pain and anger, half curse, half moan, broke from Gregg's lips as I spoke, and then he jumped up from the log on which he had been seated, and took one or two hasty strides backwards and forwards on the quay. 'No, no!' hang it, no!' I heard him mutter to himself as he passed me. 'If it had been any other living soul, I'd have cared no more than for the empty shuck of a cotton-pod, but this too much to stand.' He grew calmer after a moment or two, and then came up and laid his muscular brown hand on my sleeve. 'Mainwaring, he said, 'I'll take it kind of you if you