

“HOMEWARD BOUND”

the old master had ever married her when he brought her home?”

“No, I have not heard that,” he put in.

“Well, you see, the sailors always had queer tales, some of them saying as he won her at cards, the others, as he carried her off against her will.

“However it was, she hated him, and yet never tried any of her tricks with him. He had a grim way of chuckling at her, too, if ever she showed a spice of temper, as though he knew that he had the whip-hand of her. One way or another he generally did have the whip-hand. As he got feebler he seemed to feel the need to be cautious with her, doing things that more than once made me think he was afraid of poison. He mostly always managed that it was Isaac or me that took him his food. She thought the world and all of her son then, before she got tired of his meanness and dulness, and of his poor stupid wife; then she lost interest in all save Meg, who, I think, she did care for to the last — my poor little Meg whose soul she brought to the same ruin as she did her own.” The old woman sighed deeply, and Isabel laid a kindly hand upon her wrinkled one in silent sympathy.

“God bless your good face,” Ellen said, then, with an effort at briskness, “Well, I’m leaving the Grange in the morning, but if you’ll write me a line, telling me what you want me to do when I get home, it will find me at 45 Culver Street, Islington, where I’m boarding for a week to buy some bits of duds, as are nowhere cheaper than in London. And if it’s not a liberty, sir,” rising as she spoke, “I’d like to shake hands and wish you good luck for the sake of Susan Bauer in old times.”