most hopeful vision of the night. Angry with the public feeling that accused him of a crime of which he was not guilty, and guilty of a crime of which definitely the public knew little or nothing, there was no man in Sevenoaks so unhappy as he. He loved power and popularity. He had been happy in the thought that he controlled the town, and for the moment, at least, he knew the town had slipped disloyally out of his hands.

An impromptu meeting of citizens was held that evening, at which Mr. Belcher did not assist. The clergymen were all present, and there seemed to be a general understanding that they had been ruled long enough in the interest and by the will of a single man. A subscription was raised for a large amount, and the sum offered to any one who would discover the fugitives.

The next morning Mr. Belcher found the village quiet and very reticent, and having learned that a subscription had been raised without calling upon him, he laughingly expressed his determination to win the reward for himself.

Then he turned his grays up the hill, had a long consultation with Mr. Buffum, who informed him of the fate of old Tilden, and started at a rapid pace toward Number Nine.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH JIM AND MIKE CONLIN PASS THROUGH A GREAT TRIAL AND COME OUT VICTORIOUS.

"THERE, Turk, there they be!" said Jim to his dog, pointing to his passengers, as he stood caressing him, with one foot on the land and the other holding the boat to the shore. "There's the little chap that I've brung to play with ye, an' there's the sick man that we've got to take care on. Now don't ye make no row."

Turk looked up into his master's face, then surveyed the new-comers with a wag of his tail that had all the force of a welcome, and, when Harry leaped on shore, he smelt him over, licked his hand, and accepted him as a satisfactory companion.

Jim towed his boat around a point into a little cove where there was a beach, and then drew it by a long, strong pull entirely out of the water. Lifting Benedict and carrying him to his own cabin, he left him in charge of Harry and the dog, while he went to make his bed in "Number Ten." His arrangements completed, he transferred his patient to the quarters prepared for him, where, upheld and pillowed by the sweetest couch that weary body ever rested upon, he sank into slumber.

Harry and the dog became inseparable companions at once; and as it was necessary for Jim to watch with Benedict during the night, he had no difficulty in inducing the new friends to occupy his cabin together. The dog understood his responsibility and the lad accepted his protector; and when both had been bountifully fed they went to sleep side by side.

It was, however, a troubled night at Number Ten. The patient's imagination had been excited, his frame had undergone a great fatigue, and the fresh air, no less than the rain that had found its way to his person through all his wrappings, on the previous night, had produced a powerful impression upon his nervous system. It was not strange that the morning found Jim unrefreshed, and his patient in a high, delirious fever.

"Now's the time," said Jim to himself, "when a feller wants some sort o' religion or a woman; an' I hain't got nothin' but a big dog an' a little boy, an' no doctor nearer'n forty mile."

Poor Jim! He did not know that the shock to which he had subjected the enfeebled lunatic was precisely what was needed to rouse every effort of nature to effect

a cure. He could not measure the influence of the subtle earth-currents that breathed over him. He did not know that there was better medicine in the pure air, in the balsamic bed, in the broad stillness, in the nourishing food and the careful nursing, than in all the drugs of the world. He did not know that, in order to reach the convalescence for which he so ardently longed, his patient must go down to the very basis of his life, and begin and build up anew; that in changing from an old and worn-out existence to a fresh and healthy one, there must come a point between the two conditions where there would seem to be no life, and where death would appear to be the only natural determination. He was burdened with his responsibility; and only the consciousness that his motives were pure and his patient no more hopeless in his hands than in those from which he had rescued him, strengthened his equanimity and sustained his courage.

As the sun rose, Benedict fell into an uneasy slumber, and, while Jim watched his heavy breathing, the door was noiselessly opened, and Harry and the dog looked in. The hungry look of the lad summoned Jim to new duties, and leaving Harry to watch his father, he went off to prepare a breakfast for his family.

All that day and all the following night Jim's time was so occupied in feeding the well and administering to the sick, that his own sleeplessness began to tell upon him. He who had been accustomed to the sleep of a healthy and active man began to look haggard, and to long for the assistance of a trusty hand. It was with a great, irrepressible shout of gratification that, at the close of the second day, he detected the form of Mike Conlin walking up the path by the side of the river, with a snug pack of provisions upon his back.

Jim pushed his boat from the shore, and ferried Mike over to his cabin. The Irishman had reached the land

ing ten miles below to learn that the birch canoe in which he had expected to ascend the river had either been stolen or washed away. He was, therefore, obliged to take the old "tote-road" worn in former years by the lumbermen, at the side of the river, and to reach Jim's camp on foot. He was very tired, but the warmth of his welcome brought a merry twinkle to his eyes and the ready blarney to his tongue.

"Och! divil a bit wud ye be glad to see Mike Conlin if ye knowed he'd come to arrist ye. Jim, ye're me prisoner. Ye've been stalin' a pauper—a pair iv' em, faith—an' ye must answer fur it wid yer life to owld Belcher. Come along wid me. None o' yer nonsinse, or I'll put a windy in ye."

Jim eyed him with a smile, but he knew that no ordinary errand had brought Mike to him so quickly.

"Old Belcher sent ye, did he?" said Jim.

"Be gorry he did, an' I've come to git a reward. Now, if ye'll be dacint, ye shall have part of it."

Although Jim saw that Mike was apparently in sport, he knew that the offer of a cash reward for his own betrayal was indeed a sore temptation to him.

"Did ye tell 'im anything, Mike?" inquired Jim, solemnly.

"Divil a bit."

"An' ye knowed I'd lick ye if ye did. Ye knowed that, didn't ye?"

"I knowed ye'd thry it faithful, an' if ye didn't do it there'd be niver a man to blame but Mike Conlin."

Jim said no more, but went to work and got a bountiful supper for Mike. When he had finished, he took him over to Number Ten, where Harry and Turk were watching. Quietly opening the door of the cabin, he entered. Benedict lay on his bed, his rapt eyes looking up to the roof. His clean-cut, deathly face, his long, tangled locks, and the comfortable appointments about

him, were all scanned by Mike, and, without saying a word, both turned and retired.

"Mike," said Jim, as they retraced their way, "that man an' me was like brothers. I found 'im in the devil's own hole, an' any man as comes atween me an' him must look out fur 'imself forever arter. Jim Fenton's a good-natered man when he ain't riled, but he'd sooner fight nor eat when he is. Will ye help me, or won't ye?"

Mike made no reply, but opened his pack and brought out a tumbler of jelly. "There, ye bloody blaggard, wouldn't ye be afther lickin' that now?" said he; and then, as he proceeded to unload the pack, his tongue ran on in comment. (A paper of crackers.) "Mash 'em all to smithereens now. Give it to 'em, Jim." (A roasted chicken.) "Pitch intil the rooster, Jim. Crack every bone in 'is body." (A bottle of brandy.) "Knock the head aff his shoolders and suck 'is blood." (A package of tea.) "Down with the tay! It's insulted ye, Jim." (A piece of maple sugar.) "Och! the owld, brown rascal! ye'll be afther doin' Jim Fenton a bad turn, will ye? Ye'll be brakin' 'is teeth fur 'im." Then followed a plate, cup and saucer, and these were supplemented by an old shirt and various knick-knacks that only a woman would remember in trying to provide for an invalid far away from the conveniences and comforts of home.

Jim watched Mike with tearful eyes, which grew more and more loaded and luminous as the disgorgement of the contents of the pack progressed.

"Mike, will ye forgive me?" said Jim, stretching out his hand. "I was afeared the money'd be too many for ye; but barrin' yer big foot an' the ugly nose that's on ye, ye're an angel."

"Niver ye mind me fut," responded Mike. "Me inimies don't like it, an' they can give a good raison fur it; an' as fur me nose, it'll look worser nor it does now when Jim Fenton gets a crack at it."

"Mike," said Jim, "ye hurt me. Here's my hand, an' honors are easy."

Mike took the hand without more ado, and then sat back and told Jim all about it.

"Ye see, afther ye wint away that night I jist lay down an' got a bit iv a shnooze, an' in the mornin' I shtarted for me owld horse. It was a big thramp to where ye lift him, and comin' back purty slow, I picked up a few shticks and put intil the wagin for me owld woman—pine knots an' the like o' that. I didn't git home much afore darruk, and me owld horse wasn't more nor in the shtable an' I 'atin' me supper, quiet like, afore Belcher druv up to me house wid his purty man on the seat wid 'im. An' says he: 'Mike Conlin! Mike Conlin! Come to the dour wid ye!' So I wint to the dour, an' he says, says he: 'Hev ye seen a crazy old feller wid a b'y?' An' says I: 'There's no crazy owld feller wid a b'y been by me house in the daytime. If they wint by at all at all, it was when me family was aslape.' Then he got out of his wagin and come in, and he looked 'round in all the corners careless like, and thin he said he wanted to go to the barrun. So he wint to the barrun, and he looked all about purty careful, and he says, says he: 'What ye been doin' wid the owld horse on a Sunday, Mike?' And says I to him, says I: 'Jist a pickin' up a few shticks for the owld woman.' An' when he come out he see the shticks in the wagin, and he says, says he: 'Mike, if ye'll find these fellers in the woods I'll give ye five hundred dollars.' And says I: 'Squire Belcher,' says I (for I knowed he had a wake shpot in 'im), 'ye are richer nor a king, and Mike Conlin's no betther nor a pauper himself. Give me a hundred dollars,' says I, 'an' I'll thry it.' And be gorry I've got it right there' (slapping his pocket).

'Take along somethin' for 'em to ate,' says he, 'and faith I've done that same and found me min; an' now I'll stay wid ye fur a week an' 'arn me hundred dollars."

The week that Mike promised Jim was like a lifetime. To have some one with him to share his vigils and his responsibility lifted a great burden from his shoulders. But the sick man grew weaker and weaker every day. He was assiduously nursed and literally fed with dainties; but the two men went about their duties with solemn faces, and talked almost in a whisper. Occasionally one of them went out for delicate game, and by alternate watches they managed to get sufficient sleep to recruit their exhausted energies.

One morning, after Mike had been there four or five days, both stood by Benedict's bed, and felt that a crisis was upon him. A great uneasiness had possessed him for some hours, and then he had sunk away into a stupor or a sleep, they could not determine which.

The two men watched him for a while, and then went out and sat down on a log in front of the cabin, and held a consultation.

"Mike," said Jim, "somethin' must be did. We've did our best an' nothin' comes on't; an' Benedict is nearer Abram's bosom nor I ever meant he should come in my time. I ain't no doctor; you ain't no doctor. We've nussed 'im the best we knowed, but I guess he's a goner. It's too thunderin' bad, for I'd set my heart on puttin' 'im through."

"Well," said Mike, "I've got me hundred dollars, and you'll git yer pay in the nixt wurruld."

"I don't want no pay," responded Jim. "An' what do ye know about the next world, any way?"

"The praste says there is one," said Mike.

"The priest be hanged! What does he know about it?"

"That's his business," said Mike. "It's not for the like o' me to answer for the praste."

"Well, I wish he was here, in Number Nine, an' we'd see what we could git out of 'im. I've got to the eend o' my rope."

The truth was that Jim was becoming religious. When his own strong right hand failed in any enterprise, he always came to a point where the possibilities of a superior wisdom and power dawned upon him. He had never offered a prayer in his life, but the wish for some medium or instrument of intercession was strong within him. At last an idea struck him, and he turned to Mike and told him to go down to his old cabin, and stay there while he sent the boy back to him.

When Harry came up, with an anxious face, Jim took him between his knees.

"Little feller," said he, "I need comfortin'. It's a comfort to have ye here in my arms, an' I don't never want to have you go 'way from me. Your pa is awful sick, and perhaps he ain't never goin' to be no better. The rain and the ride, I'm afeared, was too many fur him; but I've did the best I could, and I meant well to both on ye, an' now I can't do no more, and there ain't no doctor here, an' there ain't no minister. Ye've allers been a pretty good boy, hain't ye? And don't ye s'pose ye can go out here a little ways behind a tree and pray? I'll hold on to the dog; an' it seems to me, if I was the Lord, I sh'd pay 'tention to what a little feller like you was sayin'. There ain't nobody here but you to do it now, ye know. I can nuss your pa and fix his vittles, an' set up with 'im nights, but I can't pray. I wasn't brung up to it. Now, if ye'll do this, I won't ax ye to do nothin' else."

The boy was serious. He looked off with his great black eyes into the woods. He had said his prayers many times when he did not know that he wanted any

thing. Here was a great emergency, the most terrible that he had ever encountered. He, a child, was the only one who could pray for the life of his father; and the thought of the responsibility, though it was only dimly entertained, or imperfectly grasped, overwhelmed him. His eyes, that had been strained so long, filled with tears, and, bursting into a fit of uncontrollable weeping, he threw his arms around Jim's neck, where he sobbed away his sudden and almost hysterical passion. Then he gently disengaged himself and went away.

Jim took off his cap, and holding fast his uneasy and inquiring dog, bowed his head as if he were in a church. Soon, among the songs of birds that were turning the morning into music, and the flash of waves that ran shoreward before the breeze, and the whisper of the wind among the evergreens, there came to his ear the voice of a child, pleading for his father's life. The tears dropped from his eyes and rolled down upon his beard. There was an element of romantic superstition in the man, of which his request was the offspring, and to which the sound of the child's voice appealed with irresistible power.

When the lad reappeared and approached him, Jim said to himself: "Now, if that won't do it, ther' won't nothin'." Reaching out his arms to Harry, as he came up, he embraced him, and said:

"My boy, ye've did the right thing. It's better nor all the nussin', an' ye must do that every mornin'—every mornin'; an' don't ye take no for an answer. Now, jest go in with me an' see your pa."

Jim would not have been greatly surprised to see the rude little room thronged with angels, but he was astonished, almost to fainting, to see Benedict open his eyes, look about him, then turn his questioning gaze upon him, and recognize him by a faint smile, so like the look of other days, so full of intelligence and peace, that the

woodsman dropped upon his knees and hid his face in the blankets. He did not say a word, but leaving the boy passionately kissing his father, he ran to his own cabin.

Seizing Mike by the shoulders, he shook him as if he intended to kill him.

"Mike," said he, "by the great horned spoons, the little fellow has fetched 'im! Git yer pa'tridge-broth and yer brandy quicker'n lightnin'. Don't talk to me no more 'bout yer priest; I've got a trick worth two o' that."

Both men made haste back to Number Ten, where they found their patient quite able to take the nourishment and stimulant they brought, but still unable to speak. He soon sank into a refreshing slumber, and gave signs of mending throughout the day. The men who had watched him with such careful anxiety were full of hope, and gave vent to their lightened spirits in the chaffing which, in their careless hours, had become habitual with them. The boy and the dog rejoiced too in sympathy; and if there had been ten days of storm and gloom, ended by a brilliant outshining sun, the aspect of the camp could not have been more suddenly or happily changed.

Two days and nights passed away, and then Mike declared that he must go home. The patient had spoken, and knew where he was. He only remembered the past as a dream. First, it was dark and long, and full of horror, but at length all had become bright; and Jim was made supremely happy to learn that he had had a vision of the glory toward which he had pretended to conduct him. Of the fatherly breast he had slept upon, of the golden streets through which he had walked, of the river of the water of life, of the shining ones with whom he had strolled in companionship, of the marvellous city which hath foundations, and the ineffable

beauty of its Maker and Builder, he could not speak in full, until years had passed away; but out of this lovely dream he had emerged into natural life.

"He's jest been down to the bottom, and started new." That was the sum and substance of Jim's philosophy, and it would be hard for science to supplant it.

"Well," said Jim to Mike, "ye've be'n a godsend. Ye've did more good in a week nor ye'll do agin if ye live a thousand year. Ye've 'arned yer hundred dollars, and ye haven't found no pauper, and ye can tell 'em so. Paul Benedict ain't no pauper, an' he ain't no crazy man either."

"Be gorry ye're right!" said Mike, who was greatly relieved at finding his report shaped for him in such a way that he would not be obliged to tell a falsehood.

"An' thank yer old woman for me," said Jim, "an' tell her she's the queen of the huckleberry bushes, an' a jewel to the side o' the road she lives on."

"Divil a bit will I do it," responded Mike. "She'll be so grand I can't live wid her."

"An' tell her when ye've had yer quarrel," said Jim, "that there'll allers be a place for her in Number Ten."

They chaffed one another until Mike passed out of sight among the trees; and Jim, notwithstanding his new society, felt lonelier, as he turned back to his cabin, than he had ever felt when there was no human being within twenty miles of him.

The sun of early May had begun to shine brightly, the willows were growing green by the side of the river, the resinous buds were swelling daily, and making ready to burst into foliage, the birds returned one after another from their winter journeyings, and the thrushes filled the mornings and the evenings alike with their carollings. Spring had come to the woods again, with words of promise and wings of fulfilment, and Jim's heart was full of tender gladness. He had gratified his

benevolent impulses, and he found upon his hands that which would tax their abounding energies. Life had never seemed to him so full of significance as it did then. He could see what he had been saving money for, and he felt that out of the service he was rendering to the poor and the distressed was growing a love for them that gave a new and almost divine flavor to his existence.

Benedict mended slowly, but he mended daily, and gave promise of the permanent recovery of a healthy body and a sound mind. It was a happy day for Jim when, with Harry and the dog bounding before him, and Benedict leaning on his arm, he walked over to his old cabin, and all ate together at his own rude table. Jim never encouraged his friend's questions. He endeavored, by every practical way, to restrain his mind from wandering into the past, and encouraged him to associate his future with his present society and surroundings. The stronger the patient grew, the more willing he became to shut out the past, which, as memory sometimes—nay, too often—recalled it, was an unbroken history of trial, disappointment, grief, despair, and dreams of great darkness.

There was one man whom he could never think of without a shudder, and with that man his possible outside life was inseparably associated. Mr. Belcher had always been able, by his command of money and his coarse and despotic will, to compel him into any course or transaction that he desired. His nature was offensive to Benedict to an extreme degree, and when in his presence, particularly when he entered it driven by necessity, he felt shorn of his own manhood. He felt him to be without conscience, without principle, without humanity, and was sure that it needed only to be known that the insane pauper had become a sound and healthy man to make him the subject of a series of persecutions or per-

suasions that would wrest from him the rights and values on which the great proprietor was foully battening. These rights and values he never intended to surrender, and until he was strong and independent enough to secure them to himself, he did not care to expose his gentler will to the machinations of the great scoundrel who had thrived upon his unrewarded genius.

So, by degrees, he came to look upon the woods as his home. He was there at peace. His wife had faded out of the world, his life had been a fatal struggle with the grossest selfishness, he had come out of the shadows into a new life, and in that life's simple conditions, cared for by Jim's strong arms, and upheld by his manly and cheerful companionship, he intended to build safely the structure of his health, and to erect on the foundation of a useful experience a better life.

In June, Jim did his planting, confined almost entirely to vegetables, as there was no mill near enough to grind his wheat and corn should he succeed in growing them. By the time the young plants were ready for dressing, Benedict could assist Jim for an hour every day; and when the autumn came, the invalid of Number Ten had become a heavier man than he ever was before. Through the disguise of rags, the sun-browned features, the heavy beard, and the generous and almost stalwart figure, his old and most intimate friends would have failed to recognize the delicate and attenuated man they had once known. Jim regarded him with great pride, and almost with awe. He delighted to hear him talk, for he was full of information and overflowing with suggestion.

"Mr. Benedict," said Jim one day, after they had indulged in one of their long talks, "do ye s'pose ye can make a house?"

"Anything."

"A raal house, all ship-shape for a woman to live in?"

"Anything."

"With a little stoop, an' a bureau, an' some chairs, an' a frame, like, fur posies to run up on?"

"Yes, Jim, and a thousand things you never thought of."

Jim did not pursue the conversation further, but went down very deep into a brown study.

During September, he was in the habit of receiving the visits of sportsmen, one of whom, a New York lawyer, who bore the name of Balfour, had come into the woods every year for several successive years. He became aware that his supplies were running low, and that not only was it necessary to lay in a winter's stock of flour and pork, but that his helpless *protégés* should be supplied with clothing for the coming cold weather. Benedict had become quite able to take care of himself and his boy; so one day Jim, having furnished himself with a supply of money from his long accumulated hoard, went off down the river for a week's absence.

He had a long consultation with Mike Conlin, who agreed to draw his lumber to the river whenever he should see fit to begin his enterprise. He had taken along a list of tools, furnished him by Benedict; and Mike carried him to Sevenoaks with the purpose of taking back whatever, in the way of stores, they should purchase. Jim was full of reminiscences of his night's drive, and pointed out to Mike all the localities of his great enterprise. Things had undergone a transformation about the poor-house, and Jim stopped and inquired tenderly for Tom Buffum, and learned that soon after the escape of Benedict the man had gone off in an apoplectic fit.

"He was a pertickler friend o' mine," said Jim, smiling in the face of the new occupant, "an' I'm glad he went off so quick he didn't know where he was goin'. Left some rocks, didn't he?"

The man having replied to Jim's tender solicitude, that he believed the family were sufficiently well provided for, the precious pair of sympathizers went off down the hill.

Jim and Mike had a busy day in Sevenoaks, and at about eight o'clock in the evening, Miss Keziah Butterworth was surprised in her room by the announcement that there was a strange man down-stairs who desired to see her. As she entered the parlor of the little house, she saw a tall man standing upright in the middle of the room, with his fur cap in his hand, and a huge roll of cloth under his arm.

"Miss Butterworth, how fare ye?" said Jim.

"I remember you," said Miss Butterworth, peering up into his face to read his features in the dim light. "You are Jim Fenton, whom I met last spring at the town-meeting."

"I knowed you'd remember me. Women allers does. Be'n purty chirk this summer?"

"Very well, I thank you, sir," and Miss Butterworth dropped a courtesy, and then, sitting down, she pointed him to a chair.

Jim laid his cap on the floor, placed his roll of cloth upright between his knees, and, pulling out his bandanna handkerchief, wiped his perspiring face.

"I've brung a little job fur ye," said Jim.

"Oh, I can't do it," said Miss Butterworth at once. "I'm crowded to death with work. It's a hurrying time of year."

"Yes, I knowed that, but this is a pertickler job."

"Oh, they are all particular jobs," responded Miss Butterworth, shaking her head.

"But this is a job fur pertickler folks."

"Folks are all alike to me," said Miss Butterworth, sharply.

"These clo'es," said Jim, "are fur a good man an' a little boy. They has nothin' but rags on 'em, an' won't have till ye make these clo'es. The man is a pertickler friend o' mine, an' the boy is a cute little chap, an' he can pray better nor any minister in Sevenoaks. If you knowed what I know, Miss Butterworth, I don't know but you'd do somethin' that you'd be ashamed of, an' I don't know but you'd do something that I sh'd be ashamed of. Strange things has happened, an' if ye want to know what they be, you must make these clo'es."

Jim had aimed straight at one of the most powerful motives in human nature, and the woman began to relent, and to talk more as if it were possible for her to undertake the job.

"It may be," said the tailoress, thinking, and scratching the top of her head with a hair-pin, "that I *can* work it in; but I haven't the measure."

"Well, now, let's see," said Jim, pondering. "Whar is they about such a man? Don't ye remember a man that used to be here by the name of—of—Benedict, wasn't it?—a feller about up to my ear—only fleshier nor he was? An' the little feller—well, he's bigger nor Benedict's boy—bigger, leastways, nor he was then."

Miss Butterworth rose to her feet, went up to Jim, and looked him sharply in the eyes.

"Can you tell me anything about Benedict and his boy?"

"All that any feller knows I know," said Jim, "an' I've never telled nobody in Sevenoaks."

"Jim Fenton, you needn't be afraid of me."

"Oh, I ain't. I like ye better nor any woman I seen."

"But you needn't be afraid to tell me," said Miss Butterworth, blushing.

"An' will ye make the clo'es?"

"Yes, I'll make the clothes, if I make them for nothing, and sit up nights to do it."

"Give us your hand," said Jim, and he had a woman's hand in his own almost before he knew it, and his face grew crimson to the roots of his bushy hair.

Miss Butterworth drew her chair up to his, and in a low tone he told her the whole long story as only he knew it, and only he could tell it.

"I think you are the noblest man I ever saw," said Miss Butterworth, trembling with excitement.

"Well, turn about's fa'r play, they say, an' I think you're the most genuine creetur' I ever seen," responded Jim. "All we want up in the woods now is a woman, an' I'd sooner have ye thar nor any other."

"Poh! what a spoon you are!" said Miss Butterworth, tossing her head.

"Then there's timber enough in me fur the puttiest kind of a buckle."

"But you're a blockhead—a great, good blockhead. That's just what you are," said Miss Butterworth, laughing in spite of herself.

"Well, ye can whittle any sort of a head out of a block," said Jim imperturbably.

"Let's have done with joking," said the tailoress solemnly.

"I hain't been jokin'," said Jim. "I'm in 'arnest. I been thinkin' o' ye ever sence the town-meetin'. I been kinder livin' on yer looks. I've dreamt about ye nights; an' when I've be'n helpin' Benedict, I took some o' my pay, thinkin' I was pleasin' ye. I couldn't help hopin'; an' now, when I come to ye so, an' tell ye jest how the land lays, ye git rampageous, or tell me I'm jokin'. 'Twon't be no joke if Jim Fenton goes away from this house feelin' that the only woman he ever seen as he thought was wuth a row o' pins feels herself better nor he is."

Miss Butterworth cast down her eyes, and trotted her knees nervously. She felt that Jim was really in earnest

—that he thoroughly respected her, and that behind his rough exterior there was as true a man as she had ever seen; but the life to which he would introduce her, the gossip to which she would be subjected by any intimate connection with him, and the uprooting of the active social life into which the routine of her daily labor led her, would be a great hardship. Then there was another consideration which weighed heavily with her. In her room were the memorials of an early affection and the disappointment of a life.

"Mr. Fenton," she said, looking up.

"Jest call me Jim."

"Well, Jim," and Miss Butterworth smiled through tearful eyes, "I must tell you that I was once engaged to be married."

"Sho! You don't say!"

"Yes, and I had everything ready."

"Now, you don't tell me!"

"Yes, and the only man I ever loved died—died a week before the day we had set."

"It must have purty near finished ye off."

"Yes, I should have been glad to die myself."

"Well, now, Miss Butterworth, if ye s'pose that Jim Fenton wouldn't bring that man to life if he could, and go to your weddin' singin' hallelujer, you must think he's meaner nor a rat. But ye know he's dead, an' ye never can see him no more. He's a goner, an' ye're all alone, an' here's a man as'll take care on ye fur him; an' it does seem to me that if he was a reasomble man he'd feel obleeged for what I'm doin'."

Miss Butterworth could not help smiling at Jim's earnestness and ingenuity, but his proposition was so sudden and strange, and she had so long ago given up any thought of marrying, that it was impossible for her to give him an answer then, unless she should give him the answer which he deprecated.

"Jim," she said at last, "I believe you are a good man. I believe you are honorable, and that you mean well toward me; but we have been brought up very differently, and the life into which you wish to bring me would be very strange to me. I doubt whether I could be happy in it."

Jim saw that it would not help him to press his suit further at that time, and recognized the reasonableness of her hesitation. He knew he was rough and unused to every sort of refinement, but he also knew that he was truthful, and honorable, and faithful; and, with trust in his own motives, and trust in Miss Butterworth's good sense and discretion, he withheld any further exhibition of his wish to settle the affair on the spot.

"Well, Miss Butterworth," he said, rising, "ye know yer own business, but there'll be a house, an' a stoop, an' a bureau, an' a little ladder for flowers, an' Mike Conlin will draw the lumber, an' Benedict 'll put it together, an' Jim Fenton 'll be the busiest and happiest man in a hundred mile."

As Jim rose, Miss Butterworth also stood up, and looked up into his face. Jim regarded her with tender admiration.

"Do ye know I take to little things wonderful, if they're only alive?" said he. "There's Benedict's little boy! I feel 'im fur hours arter I've had 'im in my arms, jest because he's alive an' little. An' I don't know—I—I vow, I guess I better go away. Can you git the clo'es made in two days, so I can take 'em home with me? Can't ye put 'em out round? I'll pay ye, ye know."

Miss Butterworth thought she could, and on that promise, Jim remained in Sevenoaks.

How he got out of the house he did not remember, but he went away very much exalted. What he did during those two days it did not matter to him, so long as he could walk over to Miss Butterworth's each night, and watch her light from his cover in the trees.

Before the tailoress closed her eyes in sleep that night, her brisk and ready shears had cut the cloth for the two suits at a venture, and in the morning the work was parcelled among her benevolent friends, as a work of charity whose objects were not to be mentioned.

When Jim called for the clothes, they were done, and there was no money to be paid for the labor. The statement of the fact embarrassed Jim more than anything that had occurred in his interviews with the tailoress.

"I sh'll pay ye some time, even if so be that nothin' happens," said he; "an' if so be that somethin' does happen, it'll be squar' any way. I don't want no man that I do fur to be beholden to workin' women for their clo'es."

Jim took the big bundle under his left arm, and, extending his right hand, he took Miss Butterworth's, and said: "Good-by, little woman; I sh'll see ye agin' an' here's hopin'. Don't hurt yerself, and think as well of me as ye can. I hate to go away an' leave every thing loose like, but I s'pose I must. Yes, I don't like to go away so"—and Jim shook his head tenderly—"an' arter I go ye mustn't kick a stone on the road or scare a bird in the trees, for fear it'll be the heart that Jim Fenton leaves behind him."

Jim departed, and Miss Butterworth went up to her room, her eyes moist with the effect of the unconscious poetry of his closing utterance.

It was still early in the evening when Jim reached the hotel, and he had hardly mounted the steps when the stage drove up, and Mr. Balfour, encumbered with a gun, all sorts of fishing-tackle and a lad of twelve years, leaped out. He was on his annual vacation; and with all the hilarity and heartiness of a boy let loose from