

worked themselves upward so diligently and successfully, that not only have they earned a comfortable maintenance, but shortly before the date of our visit, they came to Meredith, purchased a small yet comfortable house, and found lucrative employment. They have yet, it is said, a respectable nest-egg in bank. Success attend them."

Mr. Bennet gazed intently upon the article for several minutes, and then arose and paced the floor with his arms folded across his chest. This conduct drew the attention of his nephew, who looked inquiringly at him. Mr. Bennet soon poked,—

"Dudley," he said, "you know something about my two run-a-way children, I presume?"

"I have been somewhat informed," was the brief answer, for Dudley believed that the tyranny of his uncle had been the sole cause of his desertion by them.

There was silence for several minutes, broken at last by Mr. Bennet's reseating himself and saying:

"Then I will tell you of my two children, for I have thought much about them to-night. I sometimes think that unjust treatment on my part did really drive them away. Richard and Isabel, the only two of my children who survived childhood, both left me, the one when nineteen, the other seventeen, because they said that I would have them do this and that when their inclinations were in opposite directions.

"I don't know but that I was too arbitrary. I wanted Richard to study medicine. He declared that he could not, that he had no taste for it, and wanted to go to sea. I thought that that was a boyish fancy which he would overcome in time, but he did not. It grew upon him. My father, you know, lost his life at sea, and my brother Joshua, who was a sea captain, died of cholera in the West Indies. I thought it folly on his part to want to go to sea, and I would not consent. I feared that he would come to an untimely end.

"But he persisted, grew more and more

defiant of my wishes, and at last ran away. He kept his whereabouts secret until after he became of age when he turned up in Salem and had married a girl not worth a cent, when he might have had Florence Brown and a snug fortune with her, as well as not. He was as poor as Job's turkey, too proud to ask help of me, and I, as proud as he, would have nothing to do with him. It has been eight years since I have heard anything of him. He was then in Newburyport. He was commander of an important vessel engaged in the European trade.

"As for Isabel, she took a notion for a worthless fellow named Kelley. Possibly he was well enough, but he had no property, no parents or near relations, and was improvident. I couldn't stand all that, holding the position that I do, and I resorted to extreme measures to break up the ill-assorted match. But she was as defiant as Richard, and the result was, they also ran away, two years after Richard did. Kelley lived at his wits' ends until he died of Panama fever on his way to California. I am now childless, and live almost like a hermit. Now tell me, Dudley, was I right in the course I pursued?"

Dudley hesitated. The question was unexpected, and he feared that should he speak out his honest belief in the premises he too might win the displeasure of the old man. But seeing his uncle in an unwonted mood, he mentally resolved, let come what would, to endeavor to make him see the unwise course he had pursued, and make some reparation for his wrongs. He therefore approached the subject,—

"Uncle," he said, "I think you were wrong. Now Richard made an excellent sailor. To-day, in looking over a newspaper some six years old, I saw an account of the loss of the ship of which he was the commander. It also spoke highly of him. The road which he had traveled had been hard, but to more than compensate for this he had achieved a reputation.