CHRISTOPHER VED.

HIS STRANGE COURTSHIP.

BY KATE TANNETT WOODS.

Mr. Christopher Ved, a man of reputed wealth and excellent family from over the sea, chose to select his home not far from Boston. He lived quite alone. The people in the villas near by knew Mr. Ved by sight only. His books and a maltese cat seemed to be his only companions. One night, as he was taking a quiet stroll under the stars, he was addressed by Mr. Irving, whose villa and then the loving would go on better and was nearly a mile away. Mrs. Irving had better for the hard part.". been taken suddenly ill, and the man was in town for the night; the maid servants had utterly lost their self-control, and Mr. Irving begged Mr. Ved, who was known as an expert horseman, to oblige him by going for the family physician in Boston.

Mr. Ved mounted the horse and rode as he was instructed to do "like mad." On his return, although he had never entered or desired to enter a house near him, he reported his success, "the doctor would soon

Mr. Irving thanked him profoundly and entreated him to be seated in his library within call should further assistance be

Everything was in confusion. Just how long this young philosopher and student had been seated there he did not know, when the door opened and a lovely child of some 12 or 13 years entered. She was much agitated and shaking with nervous dread. "O, Mr. Ved," she said, "may I stay with

little Madeline."
"Is?" said the child, with wide-open "Yes, Madeline. What would you do you had been unkind to your mother? What

would you say?"
"Oh, Mr. Ved, I should beg her to forgive me; and I should never rest until she did;

"Then I will indeed be brave, little girl." That night Mr. Ved wrote a letter and it

My Beloved Lady Mother-In the years of silence which have passed I have thought of you hourly, sometimes bitterly. Recently a new influence has come into my lonely life the sweet, saving influence of a little child, the daughter of a neighbor. She harrowed up my very soul by asking me if I had a mother or if God had taken her from me, and I told no falsehood when I said "you had been taken from me." I cannot now feel kindly toward the man who induced you to become his wife, although my father



WITH BOTH DIMPLED HANDS UPON THE VISITOR'S CHEEKS, KISSED HIM TWICE.

I do for you?"

"Nothing; only I am so frightened. Mamma was sick once before and they said she would die, and now papa tells me I life I ask God to keep dear mamma well. Do you know her, Mr. Ved?"

"Only as I have seen her passing and repassing from the station." Mr. Ved observed that the little figure was clad only in a white night robe and he

immediately wrapped an afghan about her, which he took from the library couch. "Will you not rest here, dear?" he said.

"No, no," she said, "I cannot rest anywhere while mamma is in danger," and she said: "Have you a mother, Mr. Ved?" The man started visibly.

"I had once, but she was taken from me." "Oh, how sorry I am, but if my mamma gets well you can have her to love you; she helps every one. Did your mamma always smooth things out for you?" "Yes, yes," said the man. "She did every-

thing that was kind and good." There was silence in the library for a time. Mr. Ved was doing some serious thinking. A little child was leading him. There was much running up and down stairs after the doctor's arrival and it was a relief to Mr. Ved when the door opened and Mr. Irving appeared.

"Thanks to your promptness, the doctor says, Mrs. Irving is now all right. You must have ridden at breakneck pace, Mr. Ved." "Yes; I was accustomed to that at home; but I must go now; and I trust that you will call upon me if I can be of the slightest

"O, papa," interrupted Madeline, from her couch, "do ask Mr. Ved to dinner some day; his mother has been taken away, and-and-

O, I should die if it were my mamma!" 'Why, little daughter, I did not know happy. you were here. Don't cry, pet. Mamma is quite safe now, and Mr. Ved will be more than welcome at any time."

"But, papa," cried Madeline, clinging to her father, "I want to thank Mr. Ved for being so good to us, just as I thank you." Without waiting for either reproof or en-, ant, my boy, and live as becomes your couragement, the child threw the wrapping father's son. from her, and, with both dimpled hands upon the visitor's cheeks, kissed him twice. "Once," she said, "was for helping my

dear mamma, and once for the mamma who was taken away from you."

11. The next day Madeline called with her governess to bring him a message and some lowers from her mother, and a few choice grapes from town. She called frequently after that, sometimes to borrow a book for her father or mother, sometimes to take a was but a few weeks later, however, when

The invitations were declined, as Mr. Ved ica. had injured his ankle, and was more than ever given to reflection and study.

found his quiet neighbor a most remarkable young man. He was always reserved at the pier in East Boston to meet her. and somewhat cold to all but Madel'ne; with her he was cheerful and almost happy.

The child came one day with Miss Andre, the governess, to borrow a book of "Greek for color which had been his pride had and Roman Antiquities," for mamma had been telling her about the "Capsa," where the books or scrip was cared for in the olden time, and, after the usual chatter and olden time, and, after the usual chatter and olden time, and after the usual chatter and olden time. stories, something in the man's manner im-pressed itself upon the girl. "Mr. Ved," the carriage rolled slong, the stranger comhave loved you. I wonder why God takes "You have kept the house exactly as you

"Do you think it is easy to say 'I been wrong, Madeline?"
"No, it is hard, yery hard; but Mr. Ved. mamma says it is cowardly not to own yourself wrong, and I never want to think you are cowardly, for papa says you are

read as follows:

urged you to marry again. I will say noth-

ing of him, but I doubted him. My little

"Certainly, child, if you wish. What can | mentor tells me that her mother, who is a charming lady, is called the "dragon killer." and I recall how you were wont to cast out my demon temper.

Ever since I left you I have lived the life must not cry or make a noise and I cannot of a hermit. I avoid every one and only go to mamma's room. Every night of my visit the haunts of men for books, which I devour still; but, O, how I miss your pres-

Little Madeline has taught me that it was cowardly to leave you and I confess that it

Is Lord Westbrooke kind to you? Are you

You will smile when I tell you that I am thought to be quite old over here. I feel old. I am, however, enriching myself with knowledge and this beautiful land has

powerful fascination for me. then, with a sudden quickness of tone, as if I read and study alone in my modest she were struggling to keep back the tears, thome, without even a servant, and at night, when thoughts burn too deep for sleep, I go

out and study the stars. Madeline's parents are very kind, but she it was who killed the dragon. Her little lips were the first ever pressed to mine since you entreated me not to leave England. I

call the little thing "my sweetheart" in my thoughts and I watch her unfolding as I watch the roses in my modest garden. Some day you must come to this charming America and win me from this life of soli tude; until then forgive and love your im petuous boy. They know me here as "Christopher Ved," but to you, dearest, I am still your loving but willful son.

AUBREY VEDDER. The broken ankle was still troublesom when the London letter came and was carried to Mr. Ved by Madeline, whose father now spent many pleasant hours with his neighbor at the hermitage. It was a brief letter, but it told volumes to the eyes of

Aubrey, My Precious Son-Your mother has needed you every hour; but she dare not ask you to come to her; you would be un-

Lord Westbrooke is very ill, and when I have faithfully fulfilled all my vows even unto the end, then I will come to you. It will rest me to be in new surroundings, and a log cabin would seem a palace if I could share it with you. Do get a good serv-

I am a close captive in my house, and seldom see anyone.

I pray for you daily, and I bless that dear girl for bringing my boy back to his own Write me frequently until we are permit-

ted to meet again. YOUR DEVOTED MOTHER.

III. It was two long years before the irascible and exacting old lord was laid to rest. It new magazine, and often with invitations Lady Westbrooke placed her affairs in the hands of her solicitors and sailed for Amer-

One bleak November day, when all old New England families were planning for the Mr. Irving called frequently also and festival of Thanksgiving, Lady Westerbrooke came to this new land. Her son was Aubrey was amazed to see what the years of confinement and care had accomplished. mented on the beauties of the drive.

"Yes, mother, even my desk is in its

"We will not change matters for the preslife you have led here, and to realize what the years have brought you; it will be my pride to live as you have lived, for a time,

senson, until you are quite rested, no one shall interfere with the simplicity of the Hermitage; I shall count it an honor

debted to the child more than I can tell." "You shall see her very soon, mother. For your sake, the Irvings have declined all invitations, and have insisted on our taking genuine old-time Thanksgiving dinner with them. It will be a novelty to you, and will give them much pleasure.

"As you please, dear; when I am rested." It was some days before Lady Westbrooke saw Madeline, but she found traces of her handy work in the decorations of her room, and comfort in the delicate note of welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Irving. Madeline had been a pupil in a famous

chool for girls in Boston for some time now and had grown into quite a tall young woman, ready to celebrate her 15th birthday before many moons. Lady Westbrooke greeted her with a

motherly embrace and thanked her again and again for her kindness to her son. Mrs. Irving and her husband soon became attached to the stately woman whose graclous manner and gentle voice captivated their infant son. When the long winter wore away the Hermitage garden became a favorite spot for mother and son, and soon changes were made; a few old, devoted family servants came over from England; rare and beautiful articles were sent from the old home and the light came back which

the color deepened in the cheeks of the voman who had seen so much sorrow. Madeline was her joy and delight. They walked together in the vacations, rode and lrove, and four years later, when Aubrey Vedder won the charming girl for his wife, and she came to live in the enlarged and now beautiful Hermitage, Lady Westbrooke was often amused by the readiness with which her new daughter met the jokes of her son. He openly declared "that no man living ever had such a remarkable courtship, for his wife had kissed him at midnight when she was but 12 years old, and he had taught her all the Greek she knew."

ever comes when the heart is at peace, and



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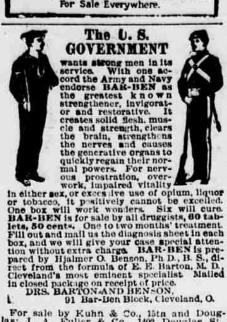
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