

CHAPTER XII. THE END OF IT.

JOHN JAGO was brought before the magistrate, and John Jago was identified the next day.

The lives of Ambrose and Silas were, of course, no longer in peril, so far as human justice was concerned. But there were legal delays to be encountered, and legal formalities to be observed, before the brothers could be released from prison in the characters of innocent men.

During the interval which thus elapsed, certain events happened which may be briefly mentioned here before I close my narrative.

Mr. Meadowcroft the elder, broken by the suffering which he had gone through, died suddenly of a rheumatic affection of the heart. A codicil attached to his will abundantly justified what Naomi had told me of Miss Meadowcroft's influence over her father, and of the end she had in view in exercising it. A life income only was left to Mr. Meadowcroft's sons. The freehold of the farm was bequeathed to his daughter, with the testator's recommendation added, that she should marry his "best and dearest friend, Mr. John Jago."

Armed with the power of the will, the heiress of Morwick sent an insolent message to Naomi, requesting her no longer to consider herself one of the inmates at the farm. Miss Meadowcroft, it should be here added, positively refused to believe that John Jago had ever asked Naomi to be his wife, or had ever threatened her, as I had heard him threaten her, if she refused. She accused me, as she accused Naomi, of trying meanly to injure John Jago in her estimation, out of hatred toward "that much-injured man;" and she sent to me, as she had sent to Naomi, a formal notice to leave the house.

We two banished ones met the same day in the hall, with our traveling-bags in our hands.

"We are turned out together, friend Lefrank," said Naomi, with her quaintly-comical smile. "You will go back to England, I guess; and I must make my own living in my own country. Women can get employment in the States if they have a friend to speak for them. Where shall I find somebody who can give me a place?"

I saw my way to saying the right word at the right moment.

"I have got a place to offer you," I replied.

She suspected nothing, so far.

"That's lucky, sir," was all she said. "Is it in a telegraph-office or in a dry-goods store?"

I astonished my little American friend by taking her then and there in my arms, and giving her my first kiss.

"The office is by my fireside," I said; "the salary is anything in reason you like to ask me for; and the place, Naomi, if you have no objection to it, is the place of my wife."

I have no more to say, except that years have passed since I spoke those words and that I am as fond of Naomi as ever.

Some months after our marriage, Mrs. Lefrank wrote to a friend at Narrabee for news of what was going on at the farm. The answer informed us that Ambrose and Silas had emigrated to New Zealand, and that Miss Meadowcroft was alone at Morwick Farm. John Jago had refused to marry her. John Jago had disappeared again, nobody knew where.

NOTE IN CONCLUSION.--The first idea of this little story was suggested to the author by a printed account of a trial which actually took place, early in the present century, in the United States. The published narrative of this strange case is entitled "The Trial, Confessions, and Conviction of Jesse and Stephen Boorn for the Murder of Russell Colvin, and the Return of the Man supposed to have been murdered. By Hon. Leonard Sargeant, Ex-Lieutenant Governor of Vermont. (Manchester, Vermont, Journal Book and Job Office, 1873.)" It may not be amiss to add, for the benefit of incredulous readers, that all the "improbable events" in the story are matters of fact, taken from the printed narrative. Anything which "looks like truth" is, in nine cases out of ten, the invention of the author.--W. C.