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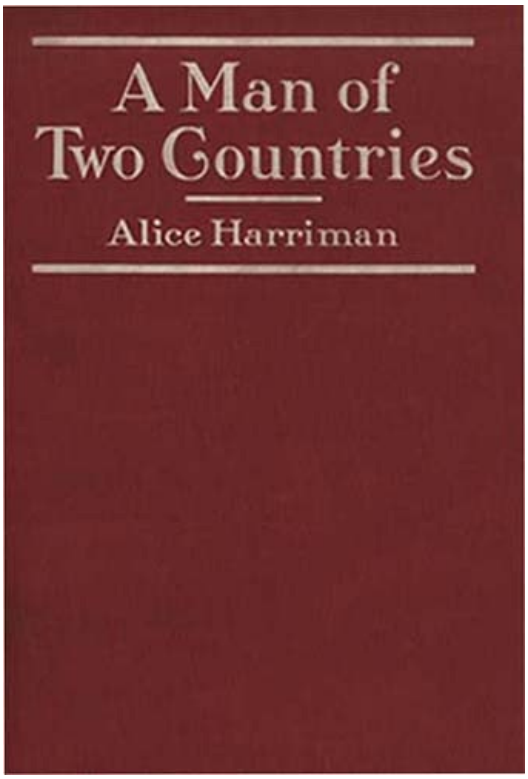

A MAN *of* TWO COUNTRIES

BY

ALICE HARRIMAN

Author of Songs o' the Sound, Chaperoning Adrienne through the Yellowstone, Songs o' the Olympics, etc.

Chapter Headings by

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TO THE READER

[5]

Prior to the days of the cowboy and the range, the settler and irrigation, the State and the Province, an ebb and flow of Indians, traders, trappers, wolfers, buffalo-hunters, whiskey smugglers, missionaries, prospectors, United States soldiery and newly organized North West Mounted Police crossed and recrossed the international boundary between the American Northwest and what was then known as the "Whoop Up Country." This heterogeneous flotsam and jetsam held some of the material from which Montana evolved its later statehood.

To one who came to know and to love the region after the surging tide had exterminated the buffalo and worse than exterminated the Indian,—to one who appreciates the limitless possibilities of the splendid Commonwealth of Montana on the one side and the great Province of Alberta on the other of that invisible line which now draws together instead of separating men of a common tongue, this period seems tremendously interesting. The "local color" has, perhaps, not been squeezed from too many tubes. Types stand out; never individuals.

As types, therefore, the characters of this book weave their story as the shuttle of time, filled with the woof of hidden purpose and open deed, runs through the warp of their friendships and enmities. [6]

And with the less attractive strands the shifting harness of place and circumstance enmeshes a thread of Love's gold.

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THE RIVER

"I beheld the westward marches
Of the ... nations,
Restless, struggling, toiling, striving."

—Longfellow

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Chapter I
Twisting the Lion's Tail

Philip Danvers, heading a small party of horsemen, galloped around the corner of a warehouse and pulled up on the levee at Bismarck as the mate of the *Far West* bellowed, "Let 'er go!"

"Hold on!" he shouted, leaping from his mount.

"Why in blazes!" The mate's impatience flared luridly as he ordered the gang-plank replaced. His heat ignited the smouldering resentment of the passengers, and they, too, exploded.

"We're loaded to the guards now!" yelled one.

"Yeh can't come aboard!" threatened another.

"Haven't yeh got a full passenger list a'ready, Captain?" demanded a blustering, heavy-set man with beetling eyebrows, as he pushed himself angrily through the crowding men to the deck-rail. [16]

"Can't help it if I have, Burroughs," retorted the autocrat of the river-boat. "These troopers are recruits for the North West Mounted Police——"

"The hell yeh say!"

Philip Danvers noted the unfriendly eye, and realized that this burly fellow dominated even the captain.

"Their passage was engaged three months ago," went on the officer.

"It's nothing to me," affirmed Burroughs, reddening in his effort to regain his surface amenity.

The young trooper, superintending the loading of the horses, resented the manifest unfriendliness toward the English recruits. A dreary rain added discomfort, and the passengers growled at the slow progress hitherto made against the spring floods of the turbulent Missouri and this prolonged delay at Bismarck.

As he went up the gang-plank and walked along the deck, bits of conversation came to him.

"He looks like an officer," said one, with a jerk of his thumb in his direction.

"An officer! Where? D'yeh mean the dark-haired one?" The voice was that of Burroughs again, and as Danvers met his insolent eye an instant antagonism flashed between the roughly dressed frontiersman and the lean-flanked, broad-shouldered English youth. [17]

"Hello! 'F there ain't Toe String Joe!" continued Burroughs, recognizing the last to come on board, as the line was cast off and the steamer backed into the stream. "What you doin' here, Joe?"

"I met up with these here Britishers when they came in on the train from the East, an' I'm goin' t' enlist," admitted the shambling Joe, his breath confirming his appearance. "Where you been?"

"Back to the States to get my outfit. I'm goin' ter start in fer myself up to Fort Macleod. So you've decided to be a damned Britisher, eh?" Burroughs reverted to Joe's statement. "Yeh'll have to take the oath of allegiance fer three years of enlistment. Did yeh know that?" He closed one eye, as if speculating how this might further his own interests. "You'll make a fine police, Joe, you will!" he jeered in conclusion.

"You goin' to Fort Macleod?" questioned Joe. "You'll git no trade in Canada!"

"Don't yeh ever think it!" returned Burroughs, with a look that Danvers sub-consciously noted.

Beyond the crowd he saw a child, held by a man with a scarred face. His involuntary look of amazement changed the pensiveness of her delicate face to animation, and she returned his smile. This unexpected exchange of friendship restored his self-respect and his anger evaporated. [18] He recalled the childhood spent in English lanes with his only sister. He beckoned enticingly, and soon she came near, shy and lovely.

"What's your name, little girl?"

"Winifred."

"That's a pretty name," said the young trooper. "Are you going to Fort Benton with your papa?"

"No. Papa's dead—and—mamma. That's my brother," indicating the man who had held her. "He came to get me. His name is Charlie."

"Dear little girl!" thought Philip Danvers, as the child ran to brotherly arms.

"Howdy!" Charlie gave unconventional greeting as he took a bench near by.

"I've been getting acquainted with your sister," explained the Englishman.

"Glad of it. Winnie's afraid of most o' the men, an' there aren't more'n three white women up the river. I've had to bring her back with me, and I don't know much about children. But there's one good old lady at Benton," the frontiersman proceeded, cheerfully. "She'll look after her. You see, I'm away most of the time. I'm a freighter between the head of navigation and the Whoop Up Country—Fort Macleod."

"Oh!"

"I got the contract to haul the supplies for the North West Mounted Police this spring. I'll be in [19]
Fort Macleod 'most as soon as you, I reckon. What is it, Winnie?" he questioned, as the child drew shrinking closer to him.

"I don't like that man," asserted Winifred, as Robert Burroughs passed.

"You mustn't say that, Winnie," reproved Charlie. "Burroughs"—addressing Philip—"Sweet Oil Bob, we call him, is goin' to start a new tradin' post at Macleod. He's clerked at Fort Benton till he knows more about the profits of an Injun tradin' post than any man on the river! Yeh'll likely see quite a little o' him. Most of the Canadian traders 'd rather he stayed this side o' the line."

"Surely there are other American traders in this Whoop Up Country, as you call it."

"Not so many—no. But Sweet Oil Bob is shrewd, an' the Canadians are afraid he'll get the biggest share o' the Injun trade. You know how it is."

Before Danvers could answer, his attention was caught by:

"The ambition of my life is to sit on the supreme bench of some State," spoken by a fair-haired young man as he passed with a taller, older one. "Montana will be a State, some day," the would-be judge went on, eagerly boyish.

"Hello, Doc," called Charlie, as he sighted the elder pedestrian. "Stop a minute."

Before the invitation was accepted the physician gave impetus to the other's desire. [20]

"Hope your hopes, Latimer. Honorable and honest endeavor will reach the most exalted position." Then he put out his hand to the child, who clasped it affectionately.

"Well, Charlie," he smiled genially at the English lad as well as on his former river travelers. "How goes it?"

"All right," returned Charlie, amiably. "So Latimer wants to dabble in territorial politics, eh?"

"I didn't say so," flushed the embryonic lawyer. "I said I'd like to be a judge on the supreme bench, some day. I'm going to settle in Montana, and——"

"What do you think about politics?" suddenly quizzed Charlie, turning to Danvers.

"I'd not risk losing your friendship," smiled Philip, "by stating what an Englishman's opinion of American politics are."

"Better not," laughed the doctor, with a keen glance of appraisal.

"I'll admit they're rotten," Latimer hastened to add. "But I'd love to play the game. No political affiliations should bias my decision."

"Bet you'll be glad to get home, Doc." Charlie changed the subject, so foreign to his out-of-door interests. "You can't keep the doctor away from Fort Benton," he explained to the two strangers. [21]
"He thinks she's got a big future, don't you, Doc?"

"To be sure! To be sure!" corroborated the physician, as his arm went around the little girl. "Fort Benton will be a second St. Louis! Mark my words, Latimer." He turned to his companion, whose charm of manner appealed unconsciously to the reserved Danvers.

"I hope your predictions may prove correct, since I am to set up a law office there," replied Latimer. "And you?" He turned to include Philip Danvers in a smile which the lonely Englishman never forgot.

"He an' I 's for Fort Macleod," explained Scar Faced Charlie, before Philip could speak. These ready frontiersmen had a way of taking the words out of his mouth.

"He's for the Mounted Police, yeh know, an' I'm freightin' in the supplies. An' what d'yeh think,

Doc? Toe String Joe says he's goin' to enlist when we get to Fort Benton. Burroughs won't mind havin' him in the Force."

"Isn't it unusual for Canadian troopers to come through the United States?" inquired Arthur Latimer.

This time it was the doctor who answered the question directed toward the silent Danvers.

"The first companies marched overland from Winnipeg two years ago, when the North West Mounted Police was organized, and a tough time they had. They were six months making it, what with hostile Indians and one thing and another, and at last they got lost in an awful snowstorm (winter set in early that year), and they nearly died of cold and starvation—most of their horses did. An Indian brought word to one of the trading posts. Remember that rescue, Charlie?" He turned for corroboration to the freighter, but continued, without waiting for an answer that was quite unnecessary to prod the reminiscent doctor. [22]

"Fort Macleod is only two hundred miles north of Fort Benton," he concluded, "and I understand the recruits will hereafter be taken into the Whoop Up Country by way of the Missouri."

The blue eyes of the lawyer instinctively sought the dark ones of the young trooper in a bond of subtle feeling at this recital of pioneer life. It was all in the future for them.

"We came from Ottawa by rail to Bismarck," explained Danvers at the unspoken question, "and brought our horses."

"They are a civil force under military discipline," added the doctor to Latimer's questioning eyes.

As they talked, the steamboat came to a series of rapids, and Danvers and Latimer went to the prow to watch the warping of the boat over the obstruction. Burroughs stood near, and took no pains to lower his voice as he remarked to the mate: "Jes' watch my smoke. I'm goin' to twist the lion's tail." [23]

"Meanin' the feller with the black hair?" The mate looked critically at Danvers. "Better leave him alone, Burroughs," he advised. "Yeh've been achin' to git at him ever since yeh set eyes on him. What's eatin' yeh?"

"Yeh talk too much with yer mouth," flung back Burroughs, as he moved toward the Englishman. "Ever been up the river before?" he demanded of Danvers.

"No." Philip barely glanced away from the lusty roustabouts working the donkey engines.

"Are yeh a 'non-com' or a commissioned officer?"

The young recruit turned stiffly, surprised at the persistence.

"Neither," he answered, laconically, returning to the survey of the swearing, sweating crew. Several bystanders laughed, and the mate remarked:

"You'll git nothin' outer that pilgrim that's enlightenin', Bob. He's too clost mouthed."

"Some say 'neether' an' some say 'naythe r,' but 'nythe r' is right," sneered Burroughs, "fer the Prince o' Wales says 'nythe r.'"

Danvers, disdaining to notice the cheap wit, watched the brilliant sunshine struggling through the lessening rain as it danced from eddy to sand-bar, from rapids to half-submerged snags. The boiling river whitened as the steamboat labored to deeper water above the rapids. The islands, flushed with the fresh growth of a Northern spring, and the newly formed shore-line where the capricious Missouri had recently undermined a stretch of bank, gave character to the scene, as did the delicately virent leaves of swirling willow, quaking aspens and cottonwoods loosened from their place on shore to float in midstream. [24]

A party of yelling Crees attracted their attention, and the stranger's indifference gave a combative twist to Burroughs' remark:

"Them's Canadian Injuns."

Something in his tone made the men draw nearer. Was it a sneer? A slur on all things English? A challenge to resent the statement, and resenting, to show one's mettle? Frontiersmen on the upper Missouri fought at a word in the early seventies. No need for cause. Men had been shot for less animus than Burroughs displayed.

"A fight?" asked Scar Faced Charlie, drawn from the cabin.

"No; a prayer-meeting," Toe String Joe gave facetious answer.

"Run back to our stateroom, Winnie," said Charlie, as he glanced at Burroughs' face. "What's the matter?" he inquired as she obeyed. [25]

"Search me." Joe still acted as fourth dimension. "Bob and Danvers seem to hate each other on sight."

Burroughs moved nearer the quiet trooper.

"The Mounted Police think they're goin' to stop whiskey sellin' to the Injuns," he began. "But they

can't. I know——" A meaning wink at his friends implied disloyalty even in the Force.

The baited youth faced the trader, his countenance darkening. But his hand unclasped as he started for the cabin with Latimer. Why notice this loud talk? Why debase himself by fighting this unknown bully? His bearing voiced his thoughts. The expectant crowd looked noncommittally at the tall smokestacks, at the snags. Burroughs laughed noisily.

"'The widdy at Windsor' 's got another pretty!" he taunted. Hate flared suddenly from his deep-set eyes; he could not have analyzed its cause. "Jes' cut loose from home an' mammy," he continued, intemperately. "Perhaps he's the queen's latest favorite, boys. We all know what women are!"

What was it? A crash of thunder? A living bolt of fire? Something threw the intervening men violently to the deck. The stripling who had accepted the traditional shilling brushed the crowd [26] aside and knocked down the slanderer of all women—and of his queen!

"Take that back!" Philip breathed, not shouted, as one less angry might have done. "You will not? You shall!"

Burroughs sprang to his feet instantly and returned the blow valiantly. He did not draw his Colt's as frontiersmen were prone to do, for he thought that a knock-down fight would show that a man must not stand too much on dignity on the upper Missouri. Besides, the lad was English, therefore to be punished.

At once the trifling affair widened into a promiscuous scrimmage of recruits against civilians. In the excitement Winifred, frightened at the uproar, came searching for her brother, just as Danvers again delivered a blow that sent Burroughs reeling against the deck railing. It was not strong enough to withstand the collision and the aggressor in the fight barely kept his balance as the wood broke. But Winifred, pushed forward by the struggling men, clutched at the air and dropped into the whirling yellow river far below.

"My God!" groaned Charlie, springing after her. But his leap was preceded by that of Philip Danvers.

The alarm was given; the engines reversed. As the roustabouts jumped to lower the boats the [27] men pressed forward, but the mate beat them back and got the crew to work.

Nowhere could the soft curls be seen. Charlie, nearly drawn into the revolving paddles, was taken into the boat. Presently the watchers saw Winifred's little red dress caught on an uprooted sapling. Tree and child were in the center of the current. While so much debris stayed near the shore or drifted on the shallow sand-bars, this one tree with its human freight hurried on.

"Save her! Save her!" sobbed Scar Faced Charlie, kept by force from jumping again into the stream. "*Let me go!*" he roared.

"No, Charlie," said the mate firmly. "We're goin' to pick up yer sister an' Danvers. No need fer yeh to risk yer life again. That English lad is goin' to turn the trick."

Philip swam on, strongly, while vociferous ejaculations reached him.

"That feller's got sand!" he heard Joe say, as he dexterously avoided a whirlpool and dodged a snag.

"He's a fool!"

"He'll drown, an' the girl, too!"

"It's caught—he'll overtake her!"

A devilfish-like snag held tree and burden. With a burst of speed Philip swam alongside. Winifred? Thank God! Still alive, although unconscious; face white, eyes closed. As he grasped [28] her, her eyes opened.

After the excitement, the shouts and the cursings, the crashing of wood and the fighting, quiet reigned on the *Far West*.

Robert Burroughs, sitting in the long northern twilight, rubbed his sore muscles while Scar Faced Charlie and the doctor paced the deck.

"Danvers did a big thing. He saved my sister's life. I'll never forget it. If the time ever comes I'll do as much for him," declared Charlie.

"Perhaps you may," mused the doctor. "We can never tell what the future holds. Perhaps you'll not save his life, but life isn't everything. He may ask you to do something that you won't want to do."

The grating of the steamer on a sand-bar interrupted him.

Brought into high relief by the rising moon, the lead-man stationed forward called:

"Four feet scant—four feet—by the lead five n' a half! No bottom!" Then came:

"Three—t-h-r-e-e—f-e-e-t—scant!" Again the boat scraped the sand.

As the pilot shouted down the tube to the engineers to pile on more steam Charlie reverted to the rescue.

"Danvers looked pretty well used up when he was brought aboard. But darned if he yipped. He was all for lookin' after Winnie." [29]

"I like the lad," nodded the doctor approvingly. "He has the gift of silence. Shakespeare says: 'Give thy thoughts no tongue.'"

In their next turn they saw Burroughs.

"It'll never do for you to locate at Macleod, Bob, 'f you're goin' to aggravate every recruit you don't happen to like," suggested Charlie, with the privilege of friendship.

"I was a fool!" Burroughs confessed. "But somehow that youngster——"

"You an' he'll always be like two bull buffalo in a herd," said Charlie, wisely.

"I'll do him yet," snarled Burroughs, as he rose to go to the cabin.

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[30]

Chapter II
The Girl on the Fontenelle

The passengers on the *Far West* rose early. Danvers stood watching the slow sun uplift from the gently undulating prairie. He threw back his head, his lungs expanded as though he could not get enough of the air. He did not know why, but he suddenly felt himself a part of the country—felt that this great, open country was his. The banks of the Missouri were not high and he had an unobstructed view of the vast, grassy sea rolling uncounted miles away to where the sky came down to the edge of the world.

The song of the meadow lark, sweet and incessant as it balanced on a rosin-weed, of the lark bunting and lark finch, poured forth melodiously; twittering blue-birds looked into the air and back to their perch atop the dead cottonwood as they gathered luckless insects; the brown thrush, which sings the night through in the bright starlight, rivaled the robin and grosbeak as Philip gazed over the blue-skyed, green-grassed land. The blue-green of the ocean had not so fascinated as the mysticism of this broad view. He was glad to be alive, and anxious to be in the riot of life on the plains, where trappers, traders and soldiers moved in the strenuous game of making a new world. [31]

His abounding vitality had recouped itself after the strain of yesterday and he forgot its unpleasantness in the glorious morning; yet at the sight of Burroughs coming from his cabin, the sunlight dulled and involuntarily he felt himself grow tense.

"I didn't mean a damn thing," began Burroughs awkwardly.

"That's all right," broke in Philip, as uncomfortable as the other.

Just then the doctor, with Joe and Charlie, came on the upper deck.

"What 'd I tell you, Charlie?" triumphantly asked the physician, as he saw the trader and trooper shaking hands.

"What 'd you tell us?" repeated the man with the scarred face, in doubt, as Burroughs moved away and Danvers turned toward the prow of the boat staring, with eyes that saw not, into the western unknown. [32]

"Didn't I tell you that Bob would do the right thing?" asked the charitable surgeon impatiently, unconscious that he had voiced no such sentiment.

The three looked at the river and at the long lances of light streaming from the East, then at the

English youth, abstracted, aloof.

"Perhaps yeh did," assented Joe, easily. "But I know one thing. It'll stick in Bob's crop that he craw-fished——." A nod indicated his meaning. "Somehow Danvers strikes me as a stuck-up Britisher."

"A man shouldn't be damned for his look or his manner," exploded the doctor, although he recognized the truth of the criticism. "He's young and self-conscious. A year or two in the Whoop Up Country will season him and be the making of him."

"He'll not always stay in the Whoop Up Country," Charlie said, presciently. "I wish I could do something for him," he added. "He'll make his mark—somehow—somewhere."

"Prophesying, eh?" smiled the doctor. "All right; we'll see."

The light-draft, flat-bottomed *Far West* made slow progress. The dead and broken snags, the "sawyers" of river parlance, fast in the sand-bars, seemed waiting to impale the steamboat. The [33] lead-man called unceasingly from his position. One bluff yielded to another, a flat succeeded to a grove where wild roses burst into riotous bloom, and over all lay the enchantment of the gay, palpitant, young summer.

The journey was monotonous until, with a bend of the river, they sighted another steamer, the *Fontenelle*, stuck fast on Spread Eagle Bar—the worst bar of the Missouri. Among the passengers at the rail Philip Danvers saw—could it be? a woman—a white woman, young and beautiful. What could be her mission in that far country which seemed so vast to the young Englishman that each day's journey put years of civilization behind him?

The girl on the *Fontenelle* was evidently enjoying the situation, and Danvers discovered at once that she was holding court on her own boat as well as commanding tribute from the *Far West*. The men about him stared eagerly at the slender, imperious figure, while Burroughs procured a glass from the mate and feasted his eyes.

"I'm goin' to see her at closer range," he declared, and soon had persuaded the captain to let him have a rowboat.

Philip and Latimer, by this time good friends, watched the trader go on board and disappear into the cabin.

"The nerve of that man amazes me!" declared Latimer. "What can he be thinking of?" [34]

"Of the girl, and the first chance at Fort Benton!" answered the doctor, who joined the two in time to catch the remark. "If you'd known Bob Burroughs as long as I have at Fort Benton, you wouldn't be surprised at anything. He's determined to win, wherever you put him, and he'll make money easy enough."

"But his eagerness and offensiveness——" began Danvers.

"It isn't so much ignorance," explained the doctor, always ready to give credit wherever due. "He can talk English well enough when he thinks there is any occasion. He's one of the self-made sort, you know. But he doesn't estimate men correctly—puts them all a little too low—and that's where he's going to lose the game."

When Burroughs came back he was met with a fusillade of questions.

"Who is she, Bob?"

"Major Thornhill's daughter, Eva Thornhill."

"Didn't know he had a daughter," quoth Joe. "He never tol' me——"

This created a laugh, as Joe meant it should.

"The major hasn't been so social since he was stationed at Fort Benton, as to tell us his family affairs," reminded Charlie.

"Bob's thinkin' o' that girl," surmised the mate, openly, as Burroughs looked longingly toward the [35] *Fontenelle*.

The boats, obstructed by the bar, were delayed the better part of two days, and came to feel quite neighborly. The enamoured Burroughs made another call, but he came back with a grievance.

"She wanted to know who the fellow was with the complexion like a girl's. I told her that if she meant Danvers," here he turned toward the object of his comment, "that he was nothin' but a private in the Canadian North West Mounted Police. She wasn't interested then," maliciously.

"Army girls don't look at anything under a lieutenant, you bet!" seconded Toe String Joe. "She probably won't even take any notice of me!"

"She'd heard, through the captain, about the 'hero' who saved Charlie's sister, and she wanted to know all about it," sneered Burroughs.

"Did you tell her how the railin' happened to break?" insinuated Charlie.

Philip Danvers remembered the fling. However, what did it matter what Miss Thornhill thought of

him or his position? He would probably never meet her. Yet as the *Far West* followed the *Fontenelle* up the river, he watched the girl's face turned, seemingly, toward him; and as the first steamer disappeared around a bend, the alluring eyes seemed like will-o'-the-wisps drawing him on. As he turned, other eyes, soft and affectionate, were upraised to his, and a child's hand crept [36] into his with mute sympathy.

And thus by following the endless turn and twist of the erratic Missouri; warping over rapids and sticking on sand-bars; running by banks undermined by the flood; shaving here a shore and hugging there a bar; after the tie-ups to clean the boilers, or to get wood, or to wait for the high winds to abate; after perils by water and danger from roving Indians, the *Far West* swung around the last curve of the river and behold—Fort Benton. The passengers cheered; the crowds on the levees answered, while fluttering flags blossomed from boat and adobe fort and trading posts as wild roses blossom in spring.

"Whew!" whistled the doctor, wiping his forehead as he joined Philip and Latimer on the prow of the steamer. "It's warm. Here we are, at last. I wish," turning to Danvers, "that you were going to stay here. Latimer and I will miss you."

"Indeed we shall!" echoed the young lawyer. "Here we've just gotten to be friends and you must leave us. But you must write, old boy, and if I don't make a success of the law business at Fort Benton, I'll run up to Fort Macleod and make you a visit, while I look over the situation."

The Americanism of the phrase "law business" struck oddly on British ears, as lacking in dignity. Philip thought of "doctor business," "artist business," and wondered if Americans spoke thus of [37] all professions. Latimer changed the subject.

"Is this all there is to Fort Benton?" with a wave of his hand.

"Sure," answered the doctor, offended, "what did you expect—a St. Louis?"

"N-o," hesitated the lawyer, divided between a desire to gird at the doctor, or to soothe his civic pride. "But I'll confess I expected a town somewhat larger, for the port of entry of the territory of Montana."

"Thirty years from now Fort Benton will be a second St. Louis," affirmed the doctor, oracularly. "The river traffic will be enormous by that time."

The physician's faith in the ultimate settlement of the Northwest and Fort Benton's consequent growth was shared, Danvers knew, by many another enthusiast; but as he looked back, mentally, over the lonely, wind-swept miles through which the Missouri flowed, uninhabited save by a few adventurers, trappers and Indians, the prediction seemed preposterous.

"So the town looks small to you, eh?" asked the doctor, returning to Latimer's comment. "But let me tell you, Fort Benton does the business! Our boats bring in the year's supply for the mining camps, for the Indian agencies, for the military posts and for the Canadian Mounted Police. No [38] other town in the West has its future."

The three were silent for a time. The little town was very attractive, nestling in the bend of the Missouri and protected by the bluffs in their springtime tints.

Several stern-wheelers, many mackinaws, and smaller boats lay along the water front.

The *Fontenelle*, first to arrive, was discharging her cargo. Danvers, boy-like, took a certain pride in knowing that even the Canadians, through the establishment of the North West Mounted Police and their immediate needs, were adding to the prosperity of this Northwestern center. Much sectional talk among the passengers had strengthened his opinion that Americans were unfair and unjust to their brothers of a common language, though when it came to business, he noticed that the loudest talkers were the most anxious to secure Canadian trade.

The longer Philip looked at Fort Benton the more he was attracted. Decisions about places are as intuitive as convictions about people. One place is liked, another disliked, and no logical reason can be given for either. Fort Benton, that blue and golden day, touched his heart so deeply that the sentiment never left him. Others might see only a raw, rough frontier trading post; but for the trooper, the glamour of the West was mingled with the faint, curling smoke dissolving into the [39] clear atmosphere. He had been right in his strong impulse to cross the seas! Never had he been more sure.

By this time the steamer had cautiously nosed its way to its moorings and tied up to a snubbing post. An officer from Fort Macleod came on board to look after his recruits, and in the bustle of landing Philip saw Scar Faced Charlie and little Winifred but a moment. Soon the doctor and Latimer disappeared around the end of a long warehouse on their way to the hotel, after a promise to look him up on the morrow.

The captain was ordering his men, and presently Burroughs sauntered near.

"Well, here we are! I wonder 'f I'll see Miss Thornhill again?" As Danvers made no reply. Burroughs smiled heavily. "I'll see yeh agin. Likely I'll pull m' freight soon after you do and we'll meet at Macleod."

"G'bow thar! ye cussed, Texas horned toad! Haw, thar! ye bull-headed son of a gun, pull ahead! Whoa! Haw! Ye long-horned, mackerel-back cross between a shanghai rooster an' a mud-hen, I'll skin ye alive in about a minute!" The pop of a bull-whip followed like a pistol shot.

These vibrating adjurations, rending the balmy Sunday air, would have amazed and shocked the [40]
citizens of a more cultured community, but served in Fort Benton merely to start Scar Faced Charlie's bull-team, loaded almost beyond hauling.

Charlie's shouts, delivered in the vernacular which he avoided when his small kin was near, waked Philip Danvers, and soon he was outside the walls of the 'dobe fort which Major Thornhill had courteously placed at the service of the Canadian officer and his recruits. He called to the driver and fell into step beside the bull-team heading for the western bluffs, while the bull-whacker told him that little Winifred was being cared for by "a real nice old lady."

As he returned to town, after a pleasant good-by, he turned more than once to note the slow, swinging plod of the bulls. Finally he walked more briskly, and, finding the doctor and Latimer, they sought the levees, where the bustle and hustle of the frontier town were most apparent. Early as it was, the river-front was thronged with river-men, American and English soldiers; traders, busy, preoccupied and alert; clerks, examining and checking off goods; bull-whackers and mule-skinners; wolfers and trappers, half-breeds and Indians, gamblers and squaws—all constantly shifting and reforming into kaleidoscopic groups and jovial comradeship.

Everywhere he encountered the covert hostility toward the English, but it was not until late in [41]
the afternoon that it became openly manifest.

"Hi there!" a staggering man hiccoughed as he turned to follow Philip and his American friends.

"Go slow, so's folks c'n take yeh in. I'm goin' to kick yeh off'n the face of the earth," he continued, prodding uncertainly at Danvers. "Stop, I tell yeh! Why do I want yeh to walk slow? 'Cos (hic) I want to wipe the road up with yer English hide. Yeh think yeh're all ri', but yeh ain't. Yeh look's if yeh owned the town, an' yeh're walk's convincin', yeh——"

"That's Wild Cat Bill," said the kindly man of drugs, seeking to remove the sting whose effect Danvers only partially succeeded in concealing, as they outdistanced the drunken man. "He's ostensibly a wolfer, a man who kills wolves by scattering poisoned buffalo meat on the prairies in winter, you know," he interjected, "and then makes his rounds later to gather up the dead wolves which have feasted not wisely, but too well. He's a great friend of Sweet Oil Bob's."

Before Danvers had time to speak they passed Burroughs in close conversation with Toe String Joe.

"Those three! Bob and Joe and Bill!" snorted the doctor contemptuously. "You'll likely see considerable of Bob's friends if he goes to Macleod. He might be 'most anything he liked—he's [42]
clever enough, but unscrupulous. He's crafty enough to get the most of his work done by his confreres. He can speak English as well as I can, but he thinks bad grammar will give him a stand-in with the frontiersmen. And it's easy for a man to live on a lower level. He'll be sorry some day to find himself out of practice, when the right girl comes along."

"Here he comes—he's behind us," warned Latimer.

As Burroughs passed them he threw a glance of triumph that was unexplainable until a corner turned brought to view Major Thornhill, also walking abroad, accompanied by his daughter. Burroughs, smooth, ingratiating, joined them as if by appointment.

After Philip retired that night the monotone of the soldiers' talk merged into confused and indistinct recollections of his first Sunday at Fort Benton. Eva Thornhill's scornful yet inviting face seemed drawing him through deep waters, to be replaced by the face of the child Winifred, terror-stricken as when she was in the river. Then came the memory of the even-song at home, threading its sweetly haunting way through the wild shouts of a frontier town that continued joyously its night of revelry, until, at last, he fell asleep.

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[43]

[44]

BOOK II

[45]

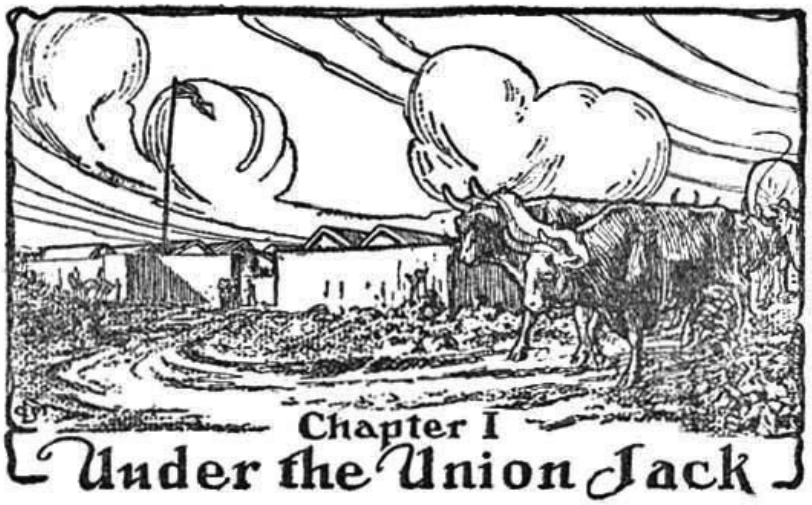
THE PRAIRIE

"On Darden plain
The fresh and yet unbruised Greeks do pitch
Their brave pavilions."

—Troilus and Cressida

[46]

[47]



The arrival of the troopers at Fort Macleod, after the long journey on horseback over the prairie, was a relief to Philip Danvers, and the weeks that followed were full of interest. Nevertheless, he felt a loneliness which was all the greater when he remembered his new-found friends at Fort Benton. The two hundred miles that separated him from the doctor and Arthur Latimer might have been two thousand for all he saw of them, and save for an occasional letter from the hopeful Southerner he had little that could be called companionship. Among all the troopers and traders there were none that appealed to Danvers, and had it not been for the devotion of O'Dwyer he would have been alone indeed.

[48] This gay Irish trooper had come out the year previous, and when the recruits arrived from Fort Benton had been the first to welcome them, "from the owld counthry." There was nothing in common between the silent Englishman and this son of Erin, but from the night when Danvers had discovered him, some miles from the Fort, deserted by his two convivial companions, and had assisted him to the barracks, O'Dwyer had been his loyal subject and devoted slave.

Now, after three months, his zeal had not abated, and while Danvers lay stretched on the bank of

the wide slough, O'Dwyer could be seen, not far distant, sunning himself like a contented dog at his master's feet.

Long the English lad lay looking over the infinite reaches of tranquil prairie, domed with a cloudless September sky.

This island in Old Man's River had become the little world in which he lived. To the right was the Fort—a square stockade of cottonwood logs, enclosing the low, mud-roofed officers' quarters, the barracks, the quartermaster's stores, and the stables. To the left, and separated from the fort by a gully, straggled the village of Fort Macleod. Conspicuous, with its new board front, loomed the trading post of Robert Burroughs. These beginnings of civilization seemed out of place in the splendid, supreme calm of nature. Against the space and stillness it appeared crude and impertinent. [49]

Across the river he saw the Indian lodges, and heard the distant hallo from rollicking comrades, swimming on the opposite side of the island. The troopers, the traders and the 'breeds were as dependent upon one another as if they were a colony upon an island in mid-ocean. He did not care to be with these men, but he desired comradeship. How could he overcome his natural reserve, make friends, yet not sacrifice his individuality and family traditions? He recalled his father's haughty: "Associate with your own kind, or walk the path alone." But he was too young to find joy in aloofness. The facility of speech, the adaptive moulding to another's mood was not in him!

"I'll have to be myself," he concluded. "I never cared before for men's good-will; but Arthur Latimer's camaraderie has made me see things differently."

O'Dwyer slept peacefully in the late afternoon, and Danvers envied him the contentment of his simple nature. He drew a package of letters from his red tunic and fingered them idly as he read the addresses. He selected the last from Arthur Latimer and read again the already familiar lines:

> *I am coming to the Whoop Up Country with Scar Faced Charlie. He leaves again for Fort Macleod in about a week. The doctor says that office work is bad for me and that I ought to get out in the open for a year or two. Really I am curious to see you in your giddy uniform, and shall enjoy a visit, though if I could get work I might stay permanently.* [50]
>
> *How is Burroughs progressing? Is he selling beads and tea to the Indians at a thousand per cent. profit, or selling them whisky on the Q. T. at fifty thousand per cent. profit? How are you and he hitting it off?*
>
> *I saw Miss Thornhill last week, but, between you and me, poor devils of lawyers are not what my lady wants.*

As Danvers folded the letter and replaced it, he felt a thrill of gladness at the thought of the meeting. There would be some one to share his joy in the sunsets and the prairie distances.

Then the future swept toward him; he wondered if this companionship with his friend would be all that he should ever know. The intangible, divine understanding that others knew—the possibility of an appreciation that would be sweet, came vaguely into his awakening heart. He took a newspaper clipping from his notebook and read:

> *There is an interesting old Chinese legend which relates how an angel sits with a long pole which he dips into the Sea of Love and lifts a drop of shining water. With an expert motion he turns one-half of this drop to the right, the other half to the left, where each is immediately transformed into a soul, a male and a female; and these souls go seeking each other forever.* [51]
>
> *The angel is so constantly occupied that he keeps no track of the souls that he separates, and they must depend on their own intuition to recognize each other.*

The golden haze of the setting sun was not more glorious than the dreams that came of a loved one ever near, of a son to perpetuate his name; but the trumpet's brazen call sounding retreat, and its echoing reverberations, made Danvers spring to his feet, romance and sentiment laid aside. The present satisfied. Soldiering was good.

O'Dwyer sat up rubbing his eyes, with an exclamation of surprise at the late hour.

As they ran through the big, open gate with its guard-room and sentry, they saw Burroughs moving toward the lodges near the timber on the eastern side of the island, while Toe String Joe, leaving his crony, came to the fort.

"Sweet Oil Bob's a favorite in the lodges all roight," remarked O'Dwyer. "There'll be trouble if he don't let Scar Faced Charlie's squaw alone." [52]

"Pine Coulee?" questioned Danvers.

"The same!" said O'Dwyer, and with a salute prompted by affection and not military compulsion he left Danvers at the barracks.

The arrival of Arthur Latimer with Scar Faced Charlie, making his second trip since Danvers came to Macleod, unexpectedly settled most of the problems baffling the silent and lonely Danvers. Charlie's freighting outfit pulled into Macleod when the troops were drilling, and Philip,

though attentive to the commands of his superior, looked across the gully and watched the gate-framed picture of the arrival of supplies. The lurching wagons, the bulls, the men and dogs, loomed large as their slow movements brought them into the one street of Fort Macleod. Though there were two outfits, Danvers instantly recognized Scar Faced Charlie, and saw Latimer run across the dry gully. He warmed with delight as the troops swept along in their evolutions, for he knew his friend was watching, and he smiled a welcome as Arthur's cap rose high in happy salute.

After the parade Philip joined Latimer. The clasp of their hands told more than the conventional greetings. They leaned on the rail fence of the reservation and Latimer looked round eagerly. "I like it up here!" he cried.

"Better than Fort Benton?" questioned Danvers hopefully. [53]

"You are here, Phil," came the quick answer from the Southerner, with his old, appealing charm of voice and smile.

Night fell as they surveyed the scene. The freighters had built camp-fires and the flare lighted the scene weirdly as they walked toward Burroughs' trading-post. Latimer greeted all as comrades, even the officers in mufti, and Danvers, seeing the responsive smiles, realized how a sunny nature receives what it sheds.

"Whose outfit came in with Charlie's?" inquired Danvers, as they neared the store.

"The mule teams? Oh, that was McDevitt—an odd character, from all I hear; Charlie gave me his version on the way up."

Danvers waited for the narrator to continue.

"He is what they call a missionary-trader—though evidently there is little difference in the varieties in this country. He's supposed, however, to be an example to the Indians, and to furnish them with material supplies, as well as spiritual food."

As they entered Burroughs' store, the trader met them cordially.

"Glad to see yeh, Latimer," he said, grasping the outstretched hands. "I 'spose yeh've seen that pretty Miss Thornhill every day since we left Fort Benton," he went on. "That's a girl for yeh!" [54]

Danvers felt his face change. He had not yet ventured to broach Miss Thornhill's name. This loud mention of her in the rough crowd was unbearable.

Latimer made a vague reply. He sympathized with Danvers' involuntary stiffening.

"Well, glad to see yeh!" repeated Burroughs, after more questions and answers. "Make yerself to home. Guess yer glad to see yer friend," he said, turning to Danvers. "Yeh ain't seemed to take up with any of us fellers," and he passed on to other arrivals.

It was not long before McDevitt entered, having come, evidently, to provoke a quarrel with Burroughs. While argument waxed hot between the rival traders over the respective shipping points for furs and the tariff on buffalo robes, Danvers and Latimer looked around the long building lined with cotton sheeting not yet stained or grimed. Blankets, beads, bright cloth, guns, bright ribbons, scalping-knives, shot, powder and flints (the Indians had not seen many matches), stood out against the light background. The bizarre effect was heightened by the garb of the men. Suits of buckskin, gay sashes, blankets and buffalo robes decked traders, scouts or Indians, as the case might be, while the trooper costume—red tunics, tiny forage caps, and blue trousers [55] with yellow stripes—accentuated the riot of color. A few bales of furs, of little value, were on the high counters. In the warehouse in the rear, however, hanging from unhewn beams or piled in heaps, were buffalo robes and skins of all the fur-bearing animals, awaiting shipment to Fort Benton.

The babel of tongues grew louder. Burroughs' quick temper suffered from McDevitt's repeated assertion that Americans were ruining the fur trade by paying the Indians more than the Canadian traders.

"I'm losing money right along," McDevitt affirmed.

"Th' hell yeh are!" sneered Burroughs. "Yeh preach an' then rob; rob an' preach. *I* pay a fair price an' don't invite the Injuns to git religion in the same breath that I offer 'em a drink o' smuggled whiskey."

"You! *You*—talking! You sell more whiskey than any other trader in the Whoop Up Country, right here under the noses of the Police!"

"Prove it!" taunted Burroughs provokingly. "'F the Police ever suspect me an' make a search, they'll not fin' me holdin' a prayer-meetin', same's they did you not so very long ago. Le'me see— [56] how much was yer fine, anyway?" with a laugh.

"Is that so? Think yeh're smart, don' yeh?" snarled McDevitt, furious. "Look here, Bob Burroughs, come out an' we'll settle this right here an' now! No? Well, let me tell yeh this! Yeh'll be sorry yeh said that. Bygones is bygones, an' I don't want that fine throwed up in my face again!"

"Did yeh say just the exact amount of the fine?" repeated Burroughs, disdaining to fight either in

or out of his trading-post.

McDevitt's voice shook with vehemence as he strode from the crowded room.

"I'll have something to throw up to you, Bob Burroughs, some o' these days. I'm like a Injun, I furgive 'n furgit, but I'm campin' on yer trail! Yeh won't be so smilin' then—le'me tell yeh!"

"An' the fine?" once more insisted Burroughs, as McDevitt vanished, amid a roar of laughter at the American's persistence.

The moon was rising when Danvers wended his way to the barracks an hour later, Arthur walking to the reservation fence with him.

"I wish we could prove where the Indians and 'breeds get their whiskey," said Danvers.

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Suspicion is not certainty," dryly.

"It's a queer world," thought Latimer aloud.

"But we're 'pioneers of a glorious future,'" quoted Danvers, lightly. "It will all come out right." He [57]
longed to hear of Eva Thornhill, hesitated, then inquired: "Was Miss Thornhill at Fort Benton when you left?"

"Yes. She asked several times about you." Danvers took off his cap. So she remembered him. "But she asked for Bob, too." The cap went on. "We'll all make a try for her heart, old man," laughed Latimer. "By the way," he added, as they paused before separating for the night, "that wasn't a bad looking squaw I saw just as we left Bob's. What is her name?"

"The one to our right, as we struck the trail? That was Pine Coulee. She's Scar Faced Charlie's squaw, but Burroughs is trying to get her away from him. However, one of her own tribe, Me-Casto, or Red Crow, will steal her some of these days. He hates the white men because they take the likely squaws."

"Whew!" whistled the visitor.

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[58]

A day or two after Christmas, O'Dwyer, a lonely sentinel on his midnight beat, strode with measured step, alert, on duty. Outside the town, Robert Burroughs skulked toward the lodge, while Me-Casto followed covertly.

An hour afterward O'Dwyer heard moccasined feet approaching the stockade gate. Challenging quickly, his "Halt, who goes there?" was answered by Me-Casto. As that Indian had done some scouting for the Police, the postern gate was unlocked, after some delay, and Me-Casto admitted to the Colonel's presence.

When Me-Casto left the fort, Danvers, lying deep in sleep, with others of his troop, felt a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Don't speak," whispered the orderly sergeant, who roused them. "Get up and dress for special [59]
duty. Report at stables at once, armed."

The men knew what was before them. They had been so roused before, when it was expedient to have some party leave the fort with secrecy, and it was not long before the chill water of the ford splashed them as they rode away from the sleeping town and garrison.

Almost before the sound of carefully led horses had died away, Toe String Joe was dressing, and soon was making his way through a secret opening in the stockade where he had sawed off a log near the ground and hung it with wooden pins to each adjoining post in such a manner that it

would easily swing.

As he lay on his cot of woven willows, he had watched, with narrowed eyelids, his comrades leave the troop room. Now he must report to his chief. The fort was soon behind him. Arriving at Burroughs' store, he passed to the rear and tapped on the small pane of glass doing duty as a window. He tapped again, again; then turned, cursing, to find Burroughs at his elbow.

"What's up?" Burroughs interrupted Joe's blasphemy.

"A party went out from the fort."

"M-m-m! Who was at the fort before you turned in?"

"Nobody."

"Who was ordered out?" [60]

Joe told him. "Danvers was one," he concluded.

"Always that black-haired Englishman! I hate him!"

"What yeh goin' to do? Ain't them goods comin' this week? Somebody's blabbed. Me-Casto's been watchin' yeh mighty clost, lately. Perhaps it was him."

"Perhaps," concurred the trader, looking at the disloyal trooper thoughtfully. "We kin only hope fer the best. Wild Cat Bill is bringin' it in, an' Scar Faced Charlie is drivin'. 'F they git a chance to *cache* the stuff they will. Maybe," he concluded hopefully, "the detachment won't run across 'em, an' they'll fool the Police, with their little pill boxes stuck on three hairs."

Meantime the mounted detail, with Me-Casto as scout, galloped past the lodge fires of the outlying Indians and pressed their way through a falling sleet with not a sound but the muffled thud of the horses' hoofs and the moan of the wind.

The stars dimmed; the east lightened. In the early morning the troopers came to a small trading-post, where they saw a group of men awaiting their arrival.

"I thought it was you, Danvers, the minute I piped yeh off!" Wild Cat Bill stepped forward as he spoke, and shook hands with the young trooper as cordially as if they were old friends. Bill [61] breathed as though he had been running, but went on immediately:

"We've come up here to see what the chances were fer wolfin' this winter. Here's Charlie, yeh see. What yeh out fer? Horse thieves?"

Philip did not answer, as the officer in charge, singularly lacking in perspicacity, took it upon himself.

"We are looking for smugglers," he frowned. "You haven't seen any loaded outfits headed this way from Fort Benton, have you?"

"Nope!" Bill promptly answered. "We've been here two days, and nobody passed here—has they, Charlie?" The freighter confirmed Bill's assertion and the troopers were then ordered to stable their horses for an hour.

"How is your sister, Charlie?" Danvers asked at his earliest opportunity. He was sorry to see the freighter, feeling something was amiss.

"She's in the East, at boarding-school," answered Charlie. "I couldn't do by her as I should," he went on. "Fort Benton's no place to bring up Winnie."

"Remember me to her when you write," said Danvers, walking his horse away as Charlie passed inside the trading-post.

"What are yeh thinkin'?" whispered one of the detail in the dark of the stables as the horses were [62] being fed.

"Not much of anything," Danvers whispered back.

"Yes, yeh are. Yeh know they's *cached* whiskey somewhere around."

Coming from the stables, Danvers passed the conspicuously empty wagons belonging to the Americans. He noticed that the pile of refuse near by was not covered with snow, although the stables had not been cleaned. Walking nearer, he detected a strong odor of whiskey rising from the wagon boxes. He remembered the sweat on the men's foreheads. Getting a stable fork he struck sharply into the compost. Something clinked. A quick throwing of the litter uncovered a case, such as was commonly used to convey liquor.

As it was his duty, Danvers walked to the captain and saluted.

"I've found a *cache* of whiskey, sir," he answered, respectfully.

The captain investigated. Then he opened the door of the shack and surprised the Americans eating breakfast.

When placed under arrest, they seemed stunned, submitting without demur.

"I bet Danvers found that *cache*!" muttered Bill. "He's too foxy fer me!"

On the return trip to Fort Macleod, Me-Casto began to fear that the men would attempt to prove [63]
that the whiskey was not Burroughs'. He knew what he had heard in the lodges; but what would his word be, as against these defiant men? He pondered for many miles, then thought of another way to bring disgrace on Burroughs. He would yet have Pine Coulee, himself! Riding close to the wagon where the morose Charlie sat, Me-Casto craftily engaged in conversation.

"*Kitzi-nan-nappi-ekki?*" (your whiskey?) he asked. The Blackfeet would make no effort to learn English, although they understood a little; but most white men had a fair knowledge of the Indian dialects.

"No," answered Charlie.

"*Nee-a-poos?*" (Burroughs?)

"No."

"Whose?" was the next question in Blackfoot.

"I don't know."

"You'll get six months in the guard-room if they get you."

"I s'pose so," was the reluctant admission. The prospect was not pleasing.

"Then Burroughs have Pine Coulee all time!"

"What'd you mean?" thundered Charlie, effectually interested.

"Burroughs give Pine Coulee a new dress—new beads—new blanket," was the candid reply. [64]

The teamster was stricken dumb. He made no comment on the gossip, but when it came his turn to be examined before Colonel Macleod, he swore that Burroughs was the owner of the seized liquor and that he had been employed to drive these men North. In every way he could, he offset the perjured testimony of Bill, who posed as the victim of circumstantial evidence.

The commandant-magistrate was puzzled. Me-Casto had testified that he had heard Burroughs in one of the lodges, arranging for the *caching* of expected whiskey, in one of the cut banks of the river. The teamster corroborated the Indian. Wild Cat Bill and Burroughs swore that neither owned the confiscated liquor. Colonel Macleod knew nothing of Charlie or Bill; but he considered the standing of Burroughs, also the unreliability of most Indians' testimony, and finally acquitted Burroughs unconditionally, while declaring Bill and Charlie guilty of smuggling, and he sentenced them accordingly. Burroughs promptly furnished the money for the payment of Bill's fine, and Latimer, believing Charlie's tale, loaned him money to escape the guard-room.

Great was the rejoicing in Burroughs' post that night. Long after midnight Bill waited for a moment with his chief.

"I done the best I could, Bob," he said dejectedly, when they were at last alone. "'F Phil Danvers [65]
hadn't been along I'd 'a' made it."

"I'll get even with him," growled Burroughs.

"The Police mos' caught us red-handed," explained Bill. "We hadn't more'n got the pitchforks back in the stable when they rode up."

"Say no more about it, Bill," suggested Bob. The smuggler looked comforted.

"Danvers is all right," mused Bill, while his friend prepared a drink.

"Is that so?" queried Bob with unpleasant emphasis.

"You're as cocky as a rooster," expostulated the other. "Phil Danvers has swore to do his duty—an' he does it. The most of us is on the make up here, an' the Police've got their traitors, as you know. Danvers is sort of unusual, that's all."

"He ain't my style!" was the retort.

"No," was the dry comment, "I shouldn't presume he was." But the sarcasm was lost on his hearer.

"What was eatin' Scar Faced Charlie, anyway?"

"He's squiffy." Bill had heard the conversation between Me-Casto and Charlie on the trail, but was in no mind to retail it.

"I'm goin' out," said Burroughs, presently, and at this broad hint Bill rose. [66]

"I'm in yer debt," he began awkwardly.

"That's all right." The trader knew and Bill knew that the paid fine was another cord to bind him.

"An' now we'll make a pile o' money 'f we're careful. Joe's inside the fort an' you an' me are outside, an' the Injuns are always dry—see? This deal's goin' to be pretty hard on me, what with the government confiscatin' all them nine hundred gallons of whiskey; but we've got more comin', an' we'll have to mix it a little thinner, that's all."

Burroughs went toward the Indian lodges and soon discovered Charlie also sneaking thither.

No superfluous words were spoken. "What'd yeh do it fer?" The angry trader whirled, the teamster facing him.

"You let Pine Coulee alone!" mumbled Charlie, far gone in liquor.

"That's it, eh?" commented the enlightened Burroughs, turning away contemptuously. "Like hell I will!"

Not long after Arthur Latimer answered a recent letter from the doctor in Fort Benton. He gave a vivid account of recent events and of a dinner that had been given at the military post on Christmas day to which he had been invited.

> *"After the dinner," he continued, "the boys sang for an hour or more. They have good voices, and it was worth a long journey to hear them sing 'The Wearing of the Green.'* [67]
>
> *"Colonel Macleod seemed to enjoy the music immensely, and (I don't see how he happened to think of it) he called Danvers up and asked him if he knew anything from 'Il Trovatore.' Phil saluted and said that he had heard it in London. Thereupon the colonel asked him if he could sing any of the airs. Phil hesitated, but the commanding officer's request is tantamount to a command, and after a moment he began the 'Miserere.' The men were still as death. Probably they had never heard it before. You, of course, remember that superb tenor solo—the haunting misery, the despair! And what do you think? When he got to the duet I took Leonora's part. Phil gave a little start, but kept on singing, and we carried the duet through. My! but the men nearly tore us to shreds. O'Dwyer fairly lifted Phil off his feet, at this triumph of his hero, for he has taken a great liking to our silent Englishman. The colonel thanked us with delightful appreciation and soon after went out—more quiet than ever. I reckon he was homesick. We all were—a bit. Sweethearts and wives seemed very far away that night.* [68]
>
> *"You speak of Scar Faced Charlie's avowed intention of abandoning his freighting. He'll probably never come up here again. He recently sent me some cash I'd loaned him, and he intimated as much. Before he left here he returned his squaw, Pine Coulee, to her father; then Burroughs bought her for a bunch of ponies.*
>
> *"Me-Casto couldn't compete—poor devil. He, like all Indians, had gambled away his small stock of ponies early in the fall—as Burroughs well knew."*

"Come on, Arthur," called Danvers, cheerily, as he stuck his head into the room. "There's a dance on at Bob's trading-post."

"All right." Latimer hurriedly put away his writing and soon they ran along the trail to the rendezvous.

"Look, there is Me-Casto!" exclaimed Philip.

"Where?"

"Skulking in the shadows back of Bob's place."

"Bob better look out," said Arthur, as they pushed open the store door. "Me-Casto is not here for any good."

The candle-lighted room was well filled with traders, troopers, trappers and squaws. No buck [69] ever participated in a white man's dance, but several stood by the door and looked on. Every one was in high spirits, and when the fiddler, a French 'breed, struck up, stamping his moccasined feet to keep time, each man secured a squaw and took his place. A brazen-lunged 'breed shouted, "Alleman' lef'! Swing yer partners!" and the couples swung giddily around.

Danvers joined in with right good-will. Occasionally he danced; more often he sat on the long trade counter and kept time to the emphatic music by beating his spurs heavily against the boards behind his feet. Latimer and O'Dwyer danced joyously; but Burroughs, apparently uneasy, as the evening wore on, kept a watchful eye on the outer door. Philip noticed, too, that Pine Coulee was less phlegmatic than usual, although she danced faithfully at the command of her lord and master.

Presently Me-Casto came in and stood by the door. With blanket muffling the lower part of his face, he looked piercingly at Pine Coulee—at Robert Burroughs. The trader caught Me-Casto's eye, and, ostentatiously clasping Pine Coulee's hand as he swung her in the dance, he smiled full in the Blackfoot's face, purposely flaunting his ownership of the squaw. Me-Casto turned and left the room.

"'On wid the dance, let j'y be unconfined!'" yelled O'Dwyer, as he combined an Irish jig and a Red [70] River reel. He had not noticed Me-Casto, but Latimer and Danvers exchanged glances. Just then

Pine Coulee looked wistfully toward the opening door. Burroughs, ever watchful, caught a glimpse of Me-Casto as his lips gave an almost imperceptible signal to Pine Coulee. The trader's anger was quick; his discretion slight. He struck the girl flat on the cheek.

"Take that!" he said savagely. "I'll teach yeh to hanker after that lousy buck!"

The words and the blow were simultaneous. So was the leap of the indignant Danvers.

"You coward!" he cried, "to strike a woman!" He took the trader by the nape of the neck and shook him soundly.

Before Burroughs could close with the trooper there came three rifle shots. Each time a singing bullet whizzed by a dodging form. Only one of the shots took effect. Pine Coulee sank to the floor, blood flowing from her bosom.

Screams, oaths and shouts mingled as Danvers raised the squaw. Latimer assisted him in placing her on a counter, while Burroughs, certain of the would-be murderer, ran outside for the assailant, the crowd following. A head pushed past the half-opened side door.

"Didn't I kill Burroughs?" The question was in Blackfoot.

"You shot Pine Coulee!" replied Danvers, sternly. In an instant renewed shouting indicated that [71]
the men had tracked the Indian. A moment later the sound of fleeing hoofs told that Me-Casto had made a get-away. The trot of other horses followed, but soon the eternal silence of the prairie reigned alone.

By the time Burroughs returned to the store Pine Coulee had revived.

As the trader was dragging the squaw to his near-by house, he paused on the threshold.

"Phil Danvers," he said, moistening his dry lips as his rage increased, "as true as they's a God above I'll pay yeh back for interferin' to-night. I've hated yeh from the first time I set eyes on yeh! 'F I live I'll make yeh feel what hate'll do! Yeh're too good fer the Whoop Up Country, an' I've got a long score to settle with yeh! 'F ever white women come to this country an' yeh git a sweetheart I'll do my best to separate yeh! 'F yeh've got a sister I'll have her! I'll—I'll—God! But I hate yeh!"

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[72]

Chapter III.
The Hot Blood of Youth

The spring warmed into summer, the summer melted into autumn. Autumn, in turn, chilled into the white world of winter. All thoughts of the little girl on the *Far West* had slipped from the mind of Danvers, and even the memory of Miss Thornhill became faint—obliterated by the strenuous life of the service. Promotion came in his third year of service as a reward for intelligence and efficiency. Danvers was offered and accepted a commission. He felt that life was good. Fears and homesickness had long since disappeared; the longings for other and more congenial, refined and feminine associates came but seldom; still, the desire for the understanding of one alone, for a loved wife and a son to bear his name was not dead—it was simply dormant in that womanless land.

"The doctor will be here next week," announced Arthur Latimer, who had been bookkeeper in one [73]
of the trading-posts ever since he had come to Macleod, soon after Danvers was made a second lieutenant. "Colonel Macleod, I hear, has invited quite a party to visit him from Fort Benton."

"Yes. I heard from the doctor, too." Philip smiled at thought of his friend's surprise at his new rank.

It was not long before the visitors arrived, and, greatly to Danvers' surprise, Miss Thornhill, accompanied by her father, the major, was among them.

The first white woman that he had seen for three years! He had never before realized how dainty a lady is in comparison with her sisters of the lodges. They may be kin in the world relationship, but, oh! the difference one from the other. The squaws, standing stolidly by, were intolerable. As Eva walked consciously past with Colonel Macleod, attended by the staff officers, she gave no sign of recognition other than a heightened color and lowered eye-lashes; but Philip felt that she recognized him. Before the girl reached the barracks Mr. Burroughs entered the stockade. With the assurance of a favored acquaintance, he advanced and pressed the hand of Miss Thornhill.

Danvers turned away. So new a mood assailed him that he went outside the stockade and [74]
prowled along the outer wall, not waiting to do more than greet the doctor. How he longed for a touch of that dainty hand, for a word from Eva—from *any* young woman of his own race! All the manhood, all the heart-hunger of the isolated years, surged within him. He smiled rather piteously. He had not realized that he was starving for the sight of fair skin, sunny hair and slender hands; for a bonny white face—white—white! That was it! A white face, a womanly face! He hardly noticed the muttered "How" of Pine Coulee as she passed, her young babe slung over her back. But he returned her salutation, and after they passed each other he recalled a look on her usually expressionless face that he had never seen there before.

"Here, Phil! Wait for us!" Latimer was calling, and Danvers soon forgot his perturbation in the pleasure of the doctor's presence and congratulations, as he came up with Arthur.

"Got so you can talk, eh?" asked the doctor, noting how the young men vied in their efforts to entertain him. "I told the colonel that I was coming up here to see you, fully as much as him—good friends as we are. You are good to look at, both of you."

"Arthur always could talk," smiled Danvers, "and I can—with my friends." [75]

"How is Burroughs getting along?" asked the doctor, as the trader passed them, too absorbed, apparently, in the recollection of his meeting with Miss Thornhill to note either them or Pine Coulee, who followed him.

"Remarkably well, from a financial standpoint. His living with a squaw makes him popular with the Indians, and the colonel swears by him—thinks he's perfect."

"And the trade in whiskey?"

Latimer shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"That's Bob's squaw," said Arthur, after an awkward pause. "She's as proud as a peacock of that papoose. She rather lords it over her former associates of the lodges."

The doctor whistled. He knew Pine Coulee's story, but had not heard of the child. "Bob will want to marry some day," was his sole comment. "Has Me-Casto ever been caught?"

"No. When he does turn up, Robert Burroughs may look out for trouble."

"Why did Toe String Joe leave the Force?" asked the doctor presently. "He has been in Fort Benton for some little time."

"Drummed out of the service. But he wouldn't tell who supplied him with the whiskey. What is he doing now?"

"Joe is mining. He declares he will be a millionaire." [76]

"He'll be a millionaire when Danvers turns American and runs for office," scoffed Latimer, remembering Joe's shiftless disposition and making the most improbable comparison that he could think of.

"He will never be one, then," said Philip, quietly. "I cannot think of anything that would make me break my allegiance to England. I am going to stay in the service—I like it! And as for American politics!... You know what I think of them." He smiled affectionately to atone for the words.

The glimpses that the troopers and younger officers caught of Eva Thornhill in the following week were few. Nevertheless a gust of love-madness swept through the ranks, from the officer commanding to the newest recruit. Nor were the townsmen behind in their attempts to win a part of the girl's time and thoughts—if not herself. Burroughs easily led in favor, and Lieutenant Danvers effaced himself. So rigidly did he do so that it was not long before Miss Thornhill found the flavor of rue in her Canadian visit. The smart lieutenant had made no advances, had sought no introduction. Eva demanded the homage of all, accustomed as she was to the frontier life where women were too rare to be neglected. No chaperon was thought of in the freedom of the [77]
frontier, and, indeed, none was needed among the innately chivalrous Westerners. This little world of Macleod revolved around her—all but the silent, unobtrusive Danvers, whose acquaintance seemed the more desirable in direct ratio to his aloofness. Eva resolved to win him, and Arthur Latimer was artfully sounded for the cause of his friend's indifference. The Southerner, already playing at love with the fair-haired belle, and at no pains to conceal it, readily undertook to find out.

"Why don't you meet Miss Thornhill?" he asked.

"I am very busy these days," interrupted the lieutenant, giving his excuse hastily. Not even to his friend could he disclose how he was drawn toward the only white representative of her sex at Macleod.

"But she wants to know you. She wants to meet you," insisted the loyal Arthur, who had sung Danvers' praises industriously and unselfishly.

"Why, Arthur!" Philip cried, gaily, to cover the tremor in his voice that would not be subdued when he learned that this haughty maid had thought of him. "If you are as much in love with Miss Thornhill as you pretend to be, you want to speak for yourself. But she evidently prefers Bob [78] Burroughs, and I, for one, think I'll keep out of temptation." He slapped the ardent Southerner affectionately on the back. "No chance for either of us, old man! Don't talk of me to her! She will think us asses—amiable idiots!"

"I know there's no chance for me," replied Latimer, aggrieved. "What have I to offer a wife—I'm poor as the proverbial church mouse."

"Anyway, leave me out of your conversations."

"I'll see that you do not meet her!" returned the Missourian, in mock alarm. Then they laughed light-heartedly. "I know whom she'd choose—if she had the opportunity. Burroughs wouldn't stand a show, nor I either."

"There she is now." Danvers nodded toward the ford, where he had seen, for several moments, the trader and Eva riding easily.

"Bob's got his nerve! How about Pine Coulee and the child?" exploded Latimer.

"S-sh!" warned Philip, seeing a movement of the bullberry bushes near them.

As the young men looked toward the riders, whose mounts were close together and walking slowly, a dark face, with passionate eyes gleaming, pushed cautiously out from the sheltering branches, and Pine Coulee also watched the unconscious maid and the trader.

When Colonel Macleod, wishing to impress his American visitors, ordered the troops under his [79] command to go through their cavalry exercises, Miss Thornhill sat on a glossy mare beside him, while troopers passed at a walk or trot, and wondered why she had found it so difficult to meet Lieutenant Danvers. As the lines of superb and faultlessly groomed men and horses swept past on the last mad gallop she forgot her brooding and clapped her hands enthusiastically.

"Oh, Colonel Macleod! That was splendid! Make them go on, and on!" she cried.

"Why, of course, if you wish," assented the gallant Macleod, forgetting that the rise of ground directly in front of him had the river on its farther slope.

"Phat's the colonel thinkin' of?" growled O'Dwyer, as no halt sounded.

"He's not thinkin' at all!" responded the man next in alignment, sourly. "A man can't think when a slip of a girl's near by."

"He's forgot the river!" groaned the fleshy Irishman, dreading the certain plunge.

Into the stream they dashed, many of the men over their heads, for there was no turning back.

As the horses balked, Lieutenant Danvers' stallion threshed viciously, hitting O'Dwyer, and then ceased to swim.

O'Dwyer groaned, "Me a-r-rm!"

It was over in an instant. Those on shore assisted Danvers and the Irishman to land. O'Dwyer was [80] left in Philip's care, while the rest of the men rode back, as the review must not be interrupted.

Eva saw the break in the ranks.

"Lieutenant Danvers has dropped out," she exclaimed, and straightway bit her lip.

"Philip?" hastily asked the Fort Benton doctor, on a horse near by. "Then there has been an accident!"

The sergeant-major rode up to report, but the impulsive Eva did not wait for details. She touched her mare and was after the doctor.

"I'm so sorry!" cried the girl, as she met Danvers and O'Dwyer returning. "It's all my fault that you are wet—and hurt! Which one is hurt?" She turned provocative eyes to the dripping lieutenant.

"O'Dwyer has a sprained elbow," answered Philip, his heart dancing at her solicitude. "It was through my carelessness."

"Don't ye be belavin' a wor-rd he says, miss!" burst out O'Dwyer. "That is (beggin' yer pardon fer spakin' to the loikes of yez, an' me a private!), don't ye belave 'tis his fault. He kep' me from drownin', that's what he did!"

O'Dwyer had noted his idol's preoccupation since Miss Thornhill's advent, the self-imposed [81] aloofness, and had drawn his own shrewd conclusions. He determined, here and now, to do

Danvers a good turn, despite the frown on the doctor's face and Philip's frantic signaling. "Lieutenant Danvers is the finest feller God ever made!" he blurted, regardless.

"Oh, keep still! *Keep still!*" cried the exasperated Englishman. This misplaced loquacity!

Eva reached out suddenly, frankly.

"I think it's time we knew each other," she said, sweetly, and their hands met.

That touch! Never had the unsophisticated youth felt such a touch! A thrill of exquisite life went from her hand to his; from his hand to his feet and the vibrations went tingling back to the girl. For the first time Philip looked full into the blue eyes of Eva Thornhill.

"You're a fool, O'Dwyer!" Danvers heard the doctor remark, as they proceeded toward the fort. The humbled trooper, hitching his arm in the improvised sling which Philip had made, groaned doleful assent. Too late he remembered the barrack-room decision that Miss Thornhill was after every scalp in the Whoop Up Country.

And Eva Thornhill? Her opportunity had come, and she had taken it as a gift from the gods. Suddenly she knew that Philip was merged in her personality, and she reveled in the bloom of quickly grown, fully developed passion. By the time the lieutenant assisted her from her mare at [82] the colonel's headquarters she was ready to think that there was nothing to keep them apart. So quickly, hotly, does young blood run!

Her answer to the question that was ready to slip from his tongue—what would it be? As Danvers lifted the flushing girl from her mount, her eyes gave promise beneath their long-lashed veiling that the answer would not be "no."

It was not many days before Major Thornhill took his daughter to task for her neglect of Mr. Burroughs.

"Don't you let go of Burroughs," he counseled, with brutal sordidness. "These young lawyers and lieutenants haven't a cent, so far as I can find out. Burroughs has money and will have more. Remember that an army officer never has anything to leave to his mourners."

Eva shrugged her shoulders; but her training showed her the wisdom of her father's advice, and she bestowed more favor on the trader than he had received for several days. However, she decided that one more ride with the lieutenant she must have, and so impetuous was Philip that she allowed him to say more than she intended he should. His wooing was eager, headlong.

As they drew near the town on their return from their long ride, the girl saw a squaw peering from the bushes beside the trail.

"Who is that squaw?" she asked, petulantly. "It seems to me that I never go out but she is near [83] me!"

"Oh—er——" he stammered, losing, for a moment, his self-possession as he recognized Burroughs' property. He knew that the trader had pledged his intimates to secrecy as to his relations with Pine Coulee while Miss Thornhill was a visitor at Macleod, and he, while not pledged, would be the last one to bring her in any way to Eva's notice. "Oh," he began again, "she's a Blackfoot."

"That is evasion, pure and simple!" retorted his companion. "She wants either to speak to me—or to kill me, I've not decided which. Wait here! I am going to speak to her!"

"You are probably the first white woman she ever saw," Philip tried vainly to make a satisfactory explanation; but, to his consternation, Eva was gone.

Pine Coulee stood motionless as the fair-haired girl drew rein beside her. Never had she shown her Indian blood more clearly than in the stolid awaiting of her rival. Danvers drew nearer, fearing results.

"Do you speak English?" Pine Coulee was asked. "I think that you want to speak to me. What is it? What can I do for you?" The look of dejection on the dark face touched even Miss Thornhill. [84]

Silence.

"What a big baby!" was Eva's next effort to gain good-will.

She was sure that the squaw could, at least, understand English; and the gleam of motherhood, kindling at her praise, confirmed her belief.

Silence.

"What is the baby's name?"

Silence prolonged. Eva turned away, impatient that her advances should be met so churlishly. Then, swift, malignant, Pine Coulee spoke:

"Him name Robert Burroughs! *Robert Burroughs!*" The words came with startling distinctness.

Eva's surprise was great. She shuddered uncontrollably.

Pine Coulee understood the incredulity in the girl's eyes, and rushed on, bitterly, in broken

English:

"Yes. Robert Burroughs! Ask him!" pointing to Danvers with her lips, as Indians will. "Burroughs mine! You not have him! You take this man! You have everything—Pine Coulee have nothing but Bob and his baby! You sha'n't have him! No! No!" The squaw, crazed with jealousy, started towards Burroughs' house, but turned back with real dignity. "I hate you! Why you come to steal my man?" [85]

Then she abruptly took her bitter way along the trail till—Burroughs blocked her. He gave her one look and rode forward.

"Your father sent me to look for you, Miss Thornhill," he began, as he drew rein. He resolved to carry the matter off boldly, if Eva referred to the Indian woman. "If you like, we will ride back together," he added, nodding to Danvers.

"No, no, no!" cried Eva, hysterically. "I'm afraid of—of that—squaw!" She pointed to Pine Coulee, who had followed Burroughs like a blighting shadow.

"Git out of here!" Burroughs emphasized his command to the squaw with a vicious kick. Not realizing how much the words would reveal, he added: "I tol' yeh ter stay in the house!"

"I'll care for Miss Thornhill, Burroughs," interrupted Danvers. "Let us pass, please! Take Pine Coulee back and leave decent white women to others."

"To you?" sneered the trader, with suddenly loosened rage at maid and man.

"Yes, to me!" proudly answered Philip, drawing closer to Eva's mount. The girl was scarlet with rage.

"Oh, it's that way, is it?" snarled Bob. "You told Miss Thornhill—that's plain to be seen!" [86]

"He did not tell!" Eva slipped from her lover's protection and reined her horse toward Burroughs. "Lieutenant Danvers tried to shield you. She—she——" Eva looked at Pine Coulee, nursing her bruised forehead (for Burroughs had kicked to hurt) and changed her words. "The lieutenant never—he never intimated—such—a—horrid—thing. Of course you will understand that I no longer care for your acquaintance!" The reaction came and she begged: "Oh, Lieutenant Danvers, take me to father!"

"Oh, you don't, eh?" sneered the trader. "There are many years ahead of us both, and the time may come when you will want my help! And you," turning to Danvers, "I'll get even with you! If I can't win Eva Thornhill, you never shall, mark my words! I'll——"

"You dare to threaten—us? Get out of our way!"

With a touch Danvers quickly started both his horse and Miss Thornhill's. After a brief interval he slowed the pace.

"And now, darling, you must let me care for you always," urged Philip, after he had restored Eva to some semblance of calm. "Let me speak to your father to-night!" He talked on, encouraged by the girl's silent yielding and the long kiss he laid on her willing lips. She was told of his prospects, [87] both in the army and in England, where his father and sister lived. He told her of his lovely American mother, who had died so young. He had enlisted, he said, for sheer love of a military life.

"Father wanted to buy a commission for me, but I knew I could get one—without money!" was the modest close.

The afternoon together ended by Philip's putting his mother's engagement ring on Eva's hand for their plighted troth. She looked at it a moment.

"I cannot wear this now," she said. "If we are engaged, I want it to be kept secret until next spring. Don't you see, dear," she rubbed her face caressingly on Philip's impatient hand, "that it will be better so? Father will be furious when he knows that I've given Mr. Burroughs his congé, and you'll come into your fortune when you are twenty-one next June. Father'll never consent until then. He'll make me miserable all winter!"

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[88]

Chapter IV
The Return to Fort Benton

That autumn visit of Eva Thornhill glowed in Danvers' heart like the riotous colors in the gray landscape that precedes the frost of winter; for winter was coming, her visit was over, and Eva and her father were to leave for Fort Benton on the morrow. Danvers inwardly chafed under the secrecy imposed upon their engagement, and yet it would have been hard for him to have spoken of his love for Eva, even to the sympathetic Latimer.

But he longed to see more of her, to drink his fill of her beauty and fix her image in his memory that he might not famish in his loneliness during the dreary winter months when they should be separated.

Though it was hard to evade her father, Eva Thornhill granted her lover a last interview. His [89] reserve, now softened by his love, fascinated the girl, and the element of secrecy lent a romantic touch that did not lessen her enjoyment of the situation. Yet it was a relief to return to Fort Benton, where she could think it all over and avoid her father's anger at a possible discovery.

"You will write to me?" said Danvers eagerly, as he held her hands, in parting. "There are few mails in the winter, but some one will be coming up." He looked imploringly into her eyes, as she hesitated.

"Of course I'll answer your letters—Philip," she spoke the name deliberately, as though enjoying her right to the familiarity of its use. "And when shall I hear from *you*?"

"*Always*; whenever you will close your eyes and listen! It may be weeks before a freighter makes the trip; but without a written message you will know that I am thinking of you, loving you! Remember it, Eva!"

His arm drew her close, and the girl caught his ardor as she returned his good-bye kiss.

"I will, dear; oh, I will!" She clung to him and for a moment caught the glory of his vision. Real tears dimmed her eyes as her lover tenderly released her, and the man was satisfied.

That night Latimer had a long talk with his friend. [90]

"You see, old man, I may as well go now, when the doctor and the Thornhills are returning to Fort Benton. It may be weeks before I have another chance."

Latimer, too! The thought sent a chill to the heart of the lieutenant, now doubly sensitive to the love of this only friend! He had long known that Latimer would return to his law practice in Fort Benton, but the time had never been set for his going.

"The years of outdoor life," continued Latimer, "have made a new man of me!" patting his chest, not yet so broad as Danvers'. "And if I am ever to go back to the law I must get about it before I forget all I ever knew." He gave his arguments with a half apology as if to soften the sharpness of his decision, which to his loyal heart seemed like a desertion of his friend.

Danvers was silent. He saw, more clearly than his companion, that the doctor's visit, the presence of Major Thornhill and his daughter, and the association with those of his own class, had roused in the Southerner a longing for the old life of civic usefulness, had drawn him back to his office, to his books and civilized associations.

"And if I get away to-morrow," went on Latimer, "I must pack up my few belongings in the [91] morning, and shall not have time for much of a good-bye—you will understand, Phil?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Danvers, realizing that he had been too long silent. "Write to me when you can, Arthur. You know what the winters are up in this country."

They smoked in silence for an hour or more—that strange communion that men find gives greater sympathy than any speech. Then Danvers wrung the hand of his friend, and set out for the barracks.

Many sober faces clustered around Eva when she said good-bye next morning, but Burroughs'

was not among them. He had said nothing of his humiliation, but had avoided meeting Miss Thornhill again. Her father was greatly dissatisfied; he thought that Eva's reception of the attention of other men had offended the trader, and he did not spare his blame for such a condition of things. Eva maintained her equanimity, feeling that she had done well to preserve the secret of her engagement, and to win Philip's pledge to silence.

Two months later Robert Burroughs sold out his trading-post, and he, too, prepared to return to the States. When he told Pine Coulee that she was to return to her father's lodge with the boy, he was, for the first time, afraid of the woman. All her savage blood surged in protest; his offers to [92] support their child were spurned. He was glad when the squaw was sullenly silent in the lodges of her tribe, and he determined never to come again to Macleod—to leave the past behind him. That was his dominant thought as he started out for Fort Benton, accompanied by his familiar, Wild Cat Bill.

Their life at Fort Macleod had been in many ways one of jeopardy. He had run incredible risks of exposure and ruin, but he had won, through sheer audacity and bravado. He smiled covertly as he recalled the fact that he, the greatest whiskey smuggler in the Whoop Up Country, was also the privileged friend of an unsuspecting, honorable, upright officer—Colonel Macleod. Even his hardened conscience pricked as he thought how he had deceived one who, with somewhat more of acumen, and somewhat less of belief in men, would have been most severe on his wrong-doing.

But that was over. To turn to less reprehensible and underhand ways would be easy, he was sure. Or, if he found that the old ways of accomplishing his purpose were more profitable, he would exercise them on bigger projects in Montana. He had made a fortune in the Whoop Up Country. Now he intended to increase it in the development of Montana's resources. He proposed to marry [93] and rear a family, as became a prosperous and respected citizen.

Dreams of statehood were beginning to waken into hope of reality among the sturdy men who dwelt in the territory, and during this journey south Burroughs confided to Bill his ambition to sit in the United States Senate. Fortune had favored him so far. All that was necessary to further his ambitions was to be as shrewd and cautious as he had been hitherto, and all things should be his —with Bill's help. Bill listened—that was his rôle for the time being. But he thought well of the plans, and said so before his chief referred to quite another subject—Pine Coulee and the boy. Here Bill found no words.

Burroughs opined that the episode with Pine Coulee was nothing. She was a fool to expect him to continue their relations simply because there was a child. He would see that they did not suffer. Really Sweet Oil Bob felt a glow of self-approval as he talked. But few men in the Whoop Up Country gave a thought to the comfort of the squaws when they left them. And as for the children —let them go with their mothers! It was the easiest thing imaginable.

To Danvers it seemed that half the population of Fort Macleod was leaving, since Scar Faced Charlie had departed months before, and Toe String Joe had been dishonorably discharged and [94] gone out of the country. Only the loyal O'Dwyer remained, and to him he sometimes spoke of Fort Benton friends. To Eva he wrote with every outgoing mail, and watched eagerly for a sign from her when a chance freighter should bring the Fort Benton mail. Then fever broke out in the barracks and Danvers spent his nights caring for the others and had little time for thought. His splendid constitution seemed able to bear any amount of fatigue, and he boasted that the loss of sleep was nothing—that he preferred to talk to some one—he had not enough to do to keep busy!

But he overestimated his strength, and when a mail was brought with no letter from Eva the disappointment and anxiety told on his already overtaxed constitution. O'Dwyer was the last to convalesce, and even he was no longer in need of constant attention. With the relaxing of the strain came Philip's utter collapse. The fever was on him, and for weeks he talked deliriously of English lanes, of his sister Kate, of his rise in the service, but never of Eva Thornhill. It was as if some psychic power guarded his lips and loyally preserved his secret.

The spring flowers were budding when he again breathed the outer air, and it was a gaunt figure which sat in the lee of the stockade one day in May and took the package of letters brought from [95] Fort Benton.

At last! Eva's first letter lay in his hand. He forgave her the long silence. The winter had been unusually severe and to the irregularity of the mails he ascribed his love's apparent defection. With trembling fingers he opened the thin envelope. The letter had no heading.

> *"I have told father of my promise to you. He refuses absolutely to sanction it and declares I shall never marry an Englishman. I now agree with father that it would be very unwise. I hate the army, and you say you will never leave it. It is best that we understand each other at once, and very fortunate that we agreed not to speak of our engagement. I have not heard from you in three months, and so I presume you are tired of it and as glad to break as I am."*

That was all. The dazed convalescent remembered that his letter was mailed the very day that he went to the hospital, and his promise of silence made it impossible to ask another to notify her of his condition. Fate's cruelty bit deep. The heartlessness of Eva's dismissal pierced his soul. Mechanically he took up a letter from his sister.

> "*Dear brother Philip*," her letter began. *"We have written and written. What has become of you these last months? Haven't you received the solicitor's letters or* [96]

mine, telling you of father's sudden death, and the discovery that we are almost penniless—all the fortune gone?"

Danvers gasped, weakly, at the wealth of disaster. He had always regarded his father as an exceptionally acute man of business. And now.... The letters of which his sister Kate wrote had never reached him. The mail service was wretched, he knew; but it seemed incredible that such important letters should be lost. He turned to the other envelopes just received. Yes, there were three from the family solicitors, and one from Arthur Latimer. These from England had probably lain at Fort Benton all winter. Presently he read on:

"However, you no doubt have received them all by this time. I write this, in haste, to ask you to meet me at Fort Benton by the middle of June, as I shall come to America in time to take the first boat leaving Bismarck. I shall have about a hundred pounds when I start. I am determined to come to you."

With some expression of grief at their bereavement, and anticipation of seeing her brother, the letter closed. [97]

Come up to the Whoop Up Country! His young, unsophisticated sister? She must not! He started up, thinking to send a rider to Fort Benton with a message to cable to London. But she would already have started. And how could he support her in England? How support her in any country on his small income, used as she was to every luxury? It was horrible! What to do! What to do! At last he took up Latimer's letter. At least here would be something to put heart into a fellow, he thought, hopefully. The bold handwriting seemed so like the light-hearted Southerner that a wan smile played over Philip's ghastly face. The smile faded to be replaced by agony as the sense of the words was absorbed—words leaping at him, fiendishly:

"Dear Old Chum—I am the happiest fellow alive. Eva Thornhill and I were married last week, and our only regret was that you could not be my best man. I spoke of it several times. How did this happen, you ask? Why, I was fortunate enough to fall heir to something like twenty-five thousand dollars this winter, and, after settling the question whether there was any understanding between you and Eva (she assured me there never had been) I sailed right in—and she is mine. [98]

"Old boy! Eva's the dearest little piece of guilelessness in the world. She's told me all about Burroughs, and even confessed that she used to admire you; but she thought you very reserved. I have told how companionable you really are and how she should have captured you. But she shakes her pretty head and says that she is jealous of you—that I am fonder of you than of her! She's a rogue! I used to be dumbly jealous of the other fellows, knowing how poor I was. I had to keep myself well in hand, I tell you, especially when I used to see you two together. But if Eva had cared for you (how could she help it?) I'd have been the first one to congratulate you. We could not be rivals, could we, dear old man?

"We are going East for the summer, and the doctor goes with us as far as St. Louis. Wish us well, Phil! Why haven't you written? I know it has been a bad winter and only two mails from Macleod, but I expected to hear at least once.

"I wish that you could find so ideal a wife as mine. Dear, innocent, truthful—what more can man ask?"

Danvers pulled himself up from the bench, wondering why the day had grown so cold, where the sunshine had gone. He replaced Latimer's letter in its envelope, dully, slowly: [99]

"'Truthful—innocent!'" he quoted. "Poor Arthur!" He laughed—a dreadful sound. Then he fell face downward—and so they found him.

A pale-faced youth looked with dilated eyes on the nearing town of Fort Benton. It was Philip Danvers, late second lieutenant of the North West Mounted Police of Canada. He had lived through the shock which the three letters had brought on his fever-weakened frame, and during his convalescence determined to leave the service and seek employment at Fort Benton. To his colonel alone he gave his reasons. His sister Kate was a delicate girl, unused to adversity. His pay was insufficient to support her, even if she could have lived at Fort Macleod. She must be safe-guarded. For three long, hard, lonely years he had dreamed of a commission, and now that he had secured it he must give it up, together with hope of further advancement. There was no alternative.

As the band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me" (invariably rendered when men in the English service change garrison), O'Dwyer stepped forward to say good-bye.

"Sure, Phil," he blubbered, "I'll lave the service 's soon's me time's up, now ye're gone! I'll folley ye to Fort Benton!" [100]

Danvers turned tear-dimmed eyes away from his friend, from the low fort and the weather-beaten stockade, and resolutely denied himself the pain of looking back to catch the last flutter of the Union Jack as the long rise of land dipped toward the south. How often had he strained his eyes to see that symbol of his country as he returned from the various forays and hunting trips! But

duty called! This was the only thought that he dared allow himself—and his sister, his sister! She had no one but him to look to, and in his loneliness she was a comforting thought, and worth all the sacrifice of his life's ambitions.

While he had lain unconscious, in his illness, she had arrived at the head of navigation, and had written him girlish, impatient letters. He knew that Latimer would look out for her if he and Eva had returned from their wedding trip, but he was sure they had not, and felt an equal relief that he need offer no congratulations. The doctor, too, Arthur had told him, was in St. Louis. He wondered how his sister had passed the time. Once she had mentioned meeting Burroughs, and he knew that she was living at the little hotel that he remembered. He was frantic to reach his destination and assume a brother's responsibility for the simple-hearted, yielding, young English girl, brought abruptly into the rough Western life. [101]

As he drew near the growing town of Fort Benton he was astounded at the sight of what seemed quite a metropolis to his eyes, so long accustomed to the log buildings and the scant population of Fort Macleod.

As the road dipped over the bench and led into town he saw, riding to meet him—was it his sister?—and with her, Robert Burroughs!

But Danvers was on his feet, and as he assisted the girl to dismount she slid into his arms and put up her lips for a kiss.

When something like coherence was evolved from the rush of questions and answers, Kate turned shyly toward Burroughs, who still sat upon his horse.

She took her brother by the hand.

"Phil, dear, you have not spoken to Mr. Burroughs. He has told me so much of your life together in the Whoop Up Country, and what friends you are. He has been most kind to me. When I learned that you were ill, I was so alarmed—alone! But he—that is—I——"

"Why, it's this way, Danvers," interrupted Burroughs, speaking with more correctness than Phil had before heard him, and willingly taking the onus of explanation—his hour had come. "Your sister couldn't go to Macleod, of course. She couldn't stay here, alone. You'll stay with the Police, no doubt; and, as Latimer and his wife are away, it fitted right in with my plans"—he paused to enjoy the dismay on Danvers' face—"to ask Kate to do me the honor of marrying me. You remember," he hastened to add, "don't you, that I once told you that you'd not only never marry Eva Thornhill, but that I'd marry your sister?" [102]

The dark, exultant face flashed the same look of hate that greeted Philip on the *Far West*, and later gloomed through the dimly lighted trading-post on the night of the dance! With a groan Danvers realized, as he looked at his suddenly shrinking sister, that the sacrifice of his life's ambition had been in vain.

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[104]

BOOK III

[105]

THE STATE

"*What constitutes a state?*

. . . .

Men who their duty know."

[106]

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[107]

Chapter I
Visitors from Helena

Philip Danvers, cattleman, nearing Fort Benton on his return from a round-up, found his thoughts reverting to the past. The spring day was like another that he remembered when he first caught sight of the frontier town more than a dozen years before. He noted the smoke of a railroad locomotive as it trailed into nothingness, and involuntarily he looked toward the Missouri River; but there was no boat steaming up the river, and the unfurrowed water brought a sadness to his face.

He recalled the doctor's vigorous opposition a few years previous, when the question of a railroad came before the residents of Fort Benton. Perhaps the doctor had been right in thinking that the [108] river traffic would be destroyed, and with it the future of the town. Certainly his derided prophecy had been most literally fulfilled. Instead of becoming a second St. Louis, the village lay in undisturbed tranquillity, but little larger than when the *Far West* had brought the first recruits of the North West Mounted Police to its levees. To those who loved the place, who believed in it, the result caused by the changing conditions of Western life was well-nigh heartbreaking.

Instead of the terminus of a great waterway—the port where gold was brought by the ton to be shipped East from the territorial diggings; the stage where moved explorer, trader, miner and soldier—instead of being the logical metropolis of the entire Northwest, Fort Benton lay a drowsy little village, embowered in cottonwoods and dependent upon the cattlemen who made it their headquarters for shipping.

The lusty bull-whacker's yell, the mule-skinner's cry and the pop of long, biting whips were heard no more in the broad, sweeping curve of the Missouri. The levees were no longer crowded with bales of merchandise, piles of buffalo hides and boxes of gold. No steamers tied up to the rotting snubbing-posts; the bustle of the roustabouts, the oaths of the mates, the trader's activity had vanished forever, as irrevocably as the buffalo on the plains. Nothing in the prospect before him [109] suggested to Danvers the well-remembered past except the old adobe fort on the water's edge. One bastion and a part of a wall recalled to the Anglo-American his first homesick night in the Northwest. Even the trading-posts on the river between Bismarck and Fort Benton were abandoned.

The man had altered as well. It was evident that the shy reserve of the Kentish youth had changed to the dignity of the reticent man. The military bearing remained; the eyes were steady and observant, as of old; but the youthful red and white of his face had been replaced by a clear tan, marked by lines of thought. In a country of bearded and seldom-shaved men, Philip's clean face added not a little to that look of distinction which had impressed the passengers on the *Far West* and gained the first enmity of Robert Burroughs.

Danvers was still unmarried. At rare intervals he read the old clipping of the two souls separated and seeking each other, but the legend had grown dim. The romantic dreams of boyhood were gone. He doubted that his heart would ever be roused again; that the ph[oe]nix flame of love would rise from the ashes of what he knew had been but the stirring of adolescent blood when he fancied that he loved Eva Thornhill. The home life of others had not impressed him as a dream [110] fulfilled. The gradual disillusionment of the many was disheartening, and Latimer's worn, unhappy face was a constant reminder. Arthur Latimer! That blithe Southerner—believer in men—and women! Philip knew what had made him seek forgetfulness in the law and politics. The success of his friend, who had reached his goal, on the supreme bench, had gratified Danvers, and Latimer's enthusiasm and persistent belief in the ultimate good, when the builders and founders of the newly formed State should merge personal desires into one—one that had the best good of all for its incentive, tempered his dislike for American politics.

Not long after the round-up, Philip Danvers received a call from Wild Cat Bill, now known in Montana as the Honorable William Moore. His ability to promote big enterprises, whether floating a mining company or electing a friend to the legislature, was publicly known, and Danvers wondered silently what had brought the politician from Helena to the semi-deserted town of Fort Benton, and induced him to favor him with a call.

"Yes, Danvers," volunteered the affable Moore, "I just thought I'd take a few days off and see what the old place looked like."

Danvers noticed that he had dropped the vernacular, though his speech was characteristic of the West. [111]

"It's always a pleasure to go back to the early days, when we roughed it together," Bill went on.

Philip doubted the pleasure. He recognized this sentiment as a very recent acquisition in the Honorable William Moore, and waited for further enlightenment as to the real purpose of the visit.

"The old bunch turned out pretty well, after all," Moore commented. "Robert Burroughs is a millionaire! Your sister was in luck, all right! And Bob was tickled to death when a baby came. A big girl by this time!"

A dangerous look—a look that made Wild Cat Bill remember the night of the dance at the trading-post—warned the Honorable William to drop personalities. The one fact that made the position of his sister tolerable to Danvers was the knowledge that Burroughs took pride in his wife and child and lavished his wealth upon them.

"And you and the doctor still cling to Fort Benton!" The next remark of the caller was spoken with commiseration. "Is the doctor still preaching its future?"

Danvers winced at what seemed a thrust at an old friend. "My cattle make it necessary for me to ship from Fort Benton and—I like the place," he acknowledged without apology.

"And Joe Hall—you recall Toe String Joe?" [112]

There was ample reason why Philip Danvers should remember the disloyal trooper, dishonorably discharged.

"Queer idea of Joe's to enlist in the first place," continued Moore. "He made a much better miner. You're following his case in court, I suppose?"

A subtle change in expression made the cattleman aware that all his visitor's remarks had been preliminary to this one. It was, then, the famous case of Hall vs. Burroughs that for some reason Bill Moore thought worth a trip from Helena to discuss.

"Burroughs can't afford to lose that case," declared Moore.

"He'll lose it if Joe has fair play!" cried Danvers.

Philip felt no love for the recruit of early days, but his sense of justice asserted itself when he recalled the years that Burroughs had made a tool of Toe String Joe at Fort Macleod, and later robbed him of his mining claim at Helena. Burroughs had grub-staked him and secured a half interest. At a time when Joe was down sick, and hard pressed with debts, Burroughs rushed a sale with Eastern capitalists and forced Joe Hall to relinquish the claim for $25,000. When Joe discovered that it had brought $125,000, and that Burroughs had pocketed the difference, he [113] went to law and won his suit. Burroughs had appealed, and now the case was before the Supreme Court.

"There are politics in the Supreme Court as well as elsewhere," ventured Moore, with a meaning look.

"It is usually thought otherwise, I believe."

"I don't know what's usually thought. I know it's a fact."

"Perhaps corruption can be found——"

"Perhaps!" sneered the caller. "I tell you politics is a matter of a-gittin' plenty while you're gittin'."

"I was not speaking of politics, but of corruption."

"What's the difference?" cynically. "Now, I say that Judge Latimer can be influenced."

"Indeed!"

"I'm thinking that it would be safe to approach him in this case of Bob's."

"Are you going to try it?" Danvers' tone continued impersonal.

The Honorable William Moore hurried on. He breathed as one having put forth more strength than was required—breathed as he had breathed when the detachment of Mounted Police rode up to the small trading-post where he had barely succeeded in concealing his smuggled whiskey. [114] He laughed a little, threw his cigar away and put his thumbs firmly together with fingers clasped

—a familiar mannerism.

"See here, Danvers! This case mustn't go against Burroughs. Bob's a good fellow. He did what any one else would have done. He wasn't looking out for Joe Hall. He did all the head-work, and at the time Joe was satisfied with the price. Of course you know that Bob's going to run for United States Senator next winter. And he's not over popular in Montana; you know how it is, moneyed interest against labor (so the common herd think), and this case has made more talk than everything else put together that Bob ever did."

"Well?" Philip's eyes had a gleam that Moore did not care to meet. Perhaps he had been too confidential. He walked about the room, nervously, his right hand grasping the rear of his coat. At last he forced himself to say bluntly:

"If you'll go to Judge Latimer and tell him how you feel—that Burroughs is your brother-in-law—that sort of talk, and that if the case goes against Bob, Latimer'll never get re-elected to the supreme bench—oh, you know what to say. Anyway, if you'll do this you'll be twenty-five thousand dollars better off—that's all; and I tell you, you'll need the money before next winter is over if this drouth continues. Your cattle must be in bad shape now. Just tell Latimer how you feel." [115]

"How do you know how I feel about this case?" Danvers kept himself well under control, though he felt his blood pounding.

"It isn't so much what you feel as what you say."

Philip looked at the man.

"You haven't got the money, Bill."

"Haven't I?" boasted Moore. "Look at this!" He made a quick dive inside his coat. "Three packages of twenty-five thousand each!" He exulted as he displayed the bills. "They were handed to me just before I took the train, and——"

"Bill Moore," said the cattleman curiously, "did you think for a moment that I could be purchased?"

The Honorable Mr. Moore sparred.

"Or Arthur Latimer?" continued Danvers.

"What else am I here for?" cried Moore in a rage. "Every man's got his price. Latimer's poor as a church mouse. He's got a wife like a vampire. And as for you—I know cattle raising isn't all profit!"

"The trouble with you, Bill," said Danvers, dispassionately, "is that you judge every man by yourself. You can't understand a man like Judge Latimer—the thing would be impossible!"

"It's you who are judging by yourself! We all know you're a fanatic—or used to be. I thought perhaps you'd gotten over some of those notions. I know Judge Latimer as well as you do. If we don't get him one way, we'll take another. We're goin' to win!" [116]

Danvers made no reply. The Honorable William waited for a moment, and then put back the packages he had flung on the table. He looked his surprise; he could not understand how he had been foiled with no anger.

"You say you know my standards," began Danvers, slowly. "Then why did you come to me?"

"We had to make the try; nobody could influence Judge Latimer like you."

"But what good would the money do him?" questioned Danvers, unable to follow the reasoning of the politician. "It would be found out and Latimer would be ruined."

"Oh, no, it wouldn't." Moore was hopeful again.

"Why didn't you approach him yourself?" It was an afterthought.

"It looks more natural for you to be interested in your brother-in-law. Bob said to see you."

"So this is his method of beginning a campaign for a seat in the United States Senate!"

"We knew we could trust you!" replied Moore.

And Danvers knew that the man believed he was paying a sincere tribute.

More than a month after this conversation Judge Latimer also paid a visit to Fort Benton and straightway sought his dearest friend. [117]

"I wanted to get away from business, from—everything that distracts one," he explained, "and I wanted to see you, Phil, and the doctor, and dear old sleepy Fort Benton again."

He looked worn and distracted—thinner than Philip remembered him, and in need of something more than physical relaxation.

"Are you quite well, Arthur?" asked Danvers solicitously. "I'm going to have the doctor over to give you a thorough examination, and I'll see that you carry out all his directions. You don't take a

bit of care of yourself!"

But in the evening, after a day in the open air, he brightened, and under the old spell of comradeship he took on the boyish manner that had been so marked a characteristic.

"And how are all our friends at Helena?" inquired the doctor, after he had secured a favorable report of Eva and the baby. "All well, of course, or I should have heard from them!" he went on, with the geniality that Latimer remembered so well. "And little Arthur—he must be quite a lad now——"

"Six—and so proud of his new sister," replied the father, with a note of pride that Danvers marked with thankfulness. The tenderness in the man's eyes told him that this little son was the [118] sole balm of a harrassed life, and he wondered if even this great compensation was adequate for all the man had given—and lost.

"Why didn't you bring the little chap with you?" questioned the doctor.

"I did think of it," confessed Latimer, "but this is a business trip chiefly, if I must own up to it. I want to talk over the situation with someone I know—someone I can trust."

"Anything special?" asked the doctor.

"Politics!" replied the judge. "The political pot is beginning to get a scum on the top, preparatory to boiling."

"How domestic a simile!" jeered the doctor.

Latimer laughed. "We've been without a maid lately, and I've had a chance to see the inside workings of a kitchen. Not that it's Eva's fault," he added hastily. "Maids are hard to get."

"H-m-m," assented the doctor, judicially, and soon the three were deep in Montana politics.

The probable nominees for state officials were gone over, and Danvers remarked:

"You are sure of re-election, Arthur."

"No, I'm not; not even of nomination," objected the judge. "The Honorable William Moore has been to see me——"

Danvers shot him a keen glance, and the doctor listened curiously.

"He was interested in the Hall and Burroughs case." Latimer hesitated, and a spot of color [119] suddenly burned in his cheeks. "Moore evidently thought it necessary to come to me and ask that Burroughs have *fair play*!"

The doctor laughed. It was an opportunity to tease the boy he loved; not a serious impeachment of the character of the judge of the Supreme Court.

"He offered me a hundred thousand dollars if I'd take a rest! Suggested Europe!" The judge's voice trembled.

"The devil he did!" burst from the physician.

"He raised his price by the time he got to you," commented Danvers.

"What?" Latimer whirled, amazed, toward the speaker.

"When Moore asked me to intercede with you for Burroughs he had only twenty-five thousand for each of us."

"What does Burroughs think I am?" groaned the judge. "He should know me better than to send Moore on his dirty business, but nothing I could say made any impression. He left, telling me to think it over."

"Do you know if he tried the others?"

"No. I've not mentioned the matter to anyone—except Eva. I was so outraged that I had to speak to someone. And she—she doesn't understand. She would enjoy a trip to Europe, and I—I can't [120] give it to her."

His two friends were silent, and presently Latimer went on.

"And all this means that when it comes time to go before the convention this fall I shall have Burroughs and his cohorts against me."

"You seem sure of his opposition," remarked Danvers. "The case isn't decided yet. If it is in favor of Burroughs——"

"The decision was handed down this morning. It was in favor of Hall."

"Good!" chorused Danvers and the doctor.

"The election will turn out all right for you, too," prophesied the doctor, "and especially with Danvers to help. The judge and I have been plotting against you for some time, Phil," he explained. "We want you to go into politics."

Danvers shook his head.

"Wait a minute," urged the doctor. "It's like this, Danvers. You're an American, as much as we are. You have taken out your naturalization papers. You never think of leaving Montana. You have a splendid cattle business, and you love Fort Benton almost as much as I do."

The cattleman smiled as the doctor outlined his position, and owned that he did love the country of his adoption.

"And here's poor Latimer struggling on alone up there at Helena, while you and I devote our time to making a fortune——" [121]

"What are you offered for lots in Fort Benton now, Doctor?" teased Latimer, with a flash of his old humor. "Let me explain, Phil," he said.

"I know it would be a sacrifice for you to leave your business here; you've made a success with your cattle, and I envy you the independent, care-free existence."

"You don't appreciate the difficulties with drouths and blizzards," put in Danvers, "to say nothing of competition and low prices."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Latimer, with a gesture of his hand that swept away such trivialities like mere cobwebs that annoy but do not obstruct the vision. "All this is nothing! It is the complications with men—the relations with people—that weary and sicken and break the heart! I've tried to put up a clean record, a straight fight; I've tried to give honest service, and it seems as if the odds were all against me!"

"What do you want?" asked Danvers, more moved at the sight of his friend's distress than the need of his country.

"We want to put you in the Legislature as the senator from Chouteau County!" cried Latimer, flushed and eager. "If only a better class of men would go into politics! I can't blame them for wanting to keep out, and yet what is our country coming to? What can one man do alone? If you or the doctor or men of that character were in office, it wouldn't be so hard a fight. And with you in Helena, Phil——" [122]

The familiar name, in the soft voice of the Southerner, stirred the heart of Danvers like a caress. He was lonely, too—he had not realized how much so, till the hand of his friend was stretched out to him, not only for aid, but for companionship. His heart throbbed as it had not done since a woman fired his boyish imagination. In the long years on the range he had grown indifferent, and rejoiced in his lack of feeling. Now he was waking, he was ready to take up his work in the world of men, ready to open his heart at the call of one who would be his mate.

"I might be induced to run, since you put it so strongly," said Danvers, with a lightness that did not conceal from either of his friends the depth of his feeling.

"Thank you, Phil."

Danvers took the thin, nervous hand extended to him, and held it with a grasp that sent courage into the heart of Judge Latimer. It was a hand that had guided bucking bronchos and held lassoed steers, and the man weary with life's battles knew that a friend had come to his aid who would blench at no enemy.

"Do you need any more men?" inquired Danvers, with a tone of assurance and natural leadership that amazed them both. [123]

"Do we *need* them? Can you produce any more? That is the question," said Latimer.

"There's always O'Dwyer, of course!" laughed Danvers.

"Is he as devoted as ever?" inquired Latimer.

"The same old worshipper," declared the doctor. "And, by George! now you speak of it, he wouldn't make a bad representative!"

The three men talked over the situation and planned a brief campaign, sending Arthur Latimer home, cheered and strengthened. Nevertheless, after they had said good-bye at the station, the doctor turned to Danvers with a heavy sigh.

"Latimer's heart is in bad condition. He's going to have trouble with it. And the nervous strain he lives under so constantly is more than I can reckon with. If he could rest at home—but I know how it was when they lived at Fort Benton!"

"Arthur has changed," said Danvers, sadly.

"I'll never forget," said the doctor, speaking more freely than ever before, "the time when Latimer first discovered that Eva did not care for him. He took it all to himself, and was broken-hearted because he had failed to keep her affections. Think of it!"

"Did she ever care for him?" Danvers could not resist asking. [124]

"I hardly think so. I always had an idea that her heart—what there is of it—was captured by an army officer." He looked slyly at his companion as they walked through the gloom.

"Nothing so low in rank as a second lieutenant!" evaded Danvers.

"You were fortunate, after all, Philip, though it would have been better for Eva. She needed a master—and she took our gentle, sensitive, chivalrous Arthur! He will break; break like fine tempered steel when the strain becomes too great."

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[125]

Chapter II
Charlie Blair's Sister

The summer sped hot and with but little rain. Some ten days before the state convention, the Doctor and Danvers went to Helena. A strong opposition to Judge Latimer's renomination had developed, which was not traceable to any definite source. Although Danvers avowed a dislike for politics, in reality he had the inherent instinct for political life characteristic of the upper-class Englishman, and he threw himself into the maelstrom with all his forces well in hand. Office-seeking was disgusting to him, but the fight for his friend seemed worth the effort.

[126] In the midst of the political excitement, Mrs. Latimer gave a dinner-party, and Philip Danvers could not refuse his invitation without causing comment, and, what was of more consequence to his independent nature, wounding his friend Arthur. He had met Eva Latimer occasionally when they lived at Fort Benton, but had preferred to lure Arthur to his own quarters, or the doctor's office, for an old-time visit, rather than invade the formalities of the Latimer residence. Since his friend had been on the supreme bench Danvers had not often seen Eva, and now the great house in the suburbs of Helena—so much more elaborate than Latimer could afford, impressed him, as it had on previous calls, unpleasantly. It was not a home for Arthur; it was an establishment for social functions, and a burden of expense; yet Danvers knew it was the goal of Arthur's thoughts, where his little son awaited him at the close of the day.

Danvers rang the bell, not a moment too early; nevertheless he found the Western men standing self-conscious and ill at ease, waiting for the announcement of dinner. Arthur greeted him warmly, and Eva sparkled, smiled and chatted, moving among her guests and tactfully putting each at his best, while they waited for the last arrival—a Miss Blair, who was to be, so Philip learned, his own partner at dinner.

[127] Presently the tardy one arrived, beautiful in her serene, straightforward gaze from under fine brows and a wealth of dark hair that caught threads of light even under the gas-jets, and made hurriedly breathless excuses to her hostess. Danvers was introduced to her immediately, and the dining-room was invaded.

"So awkward of me," she explained in an undertone. "I turned my ankle as I came across the lawn, and had to wait quite a bit before I could move. I was afraid at first I couldn't come to dinner, but I hated to disappoint Eva. Little Arthur must have left his hoop on the lawn, and I tripped on it. We live in the next house, and always come across lots. Doesn't that sound New England-y?" She laughed softly. "My brother says I'll never drop our Yankee phrases. I say pail for bucket, and path for trail, and the other day I said farm for ranch."

"Your voice has more of *Old* England than of New England," said Danvers, appreciatively. He had not spoken before except to acknowledge Mrs. Latimer's hurried introduction.

"Oh, thank you!" Miss Blair smiled, frankly pleased. "Not that I'm a bit of an Anglo-maniac," she hastened to affirm, "but, do you know," she leaned toward Danvers in an amusingly confidential way, "I've always felt mortified over my throaty voice—that is, I used to be."

[128] Philip smiled, a smile that but few had ever seen. He listened with enjoyment. Something in his companion's tacit belief that he would understand her feeling was wonderfully pleasing. He seemed taken into her confidence at once as being worthy, and it did not lessen his pleasure to observe that the Honorable William Moore, who sat at the left of Miss Blair, received only the most formal recognition, despite his effort at conversation, to the neglect of his own dinner partner.

Wit and merriment flashed from one to another, and all but the host seemed overflowing with animation. Although Latimer looked after the needs of his guests, he was often preoccupied.

"Why so silent, judge?" asked the doctor in a lull of conversation.

"I beg your pardon," Arthur apologized. "I fear I was rude. Perhaps I was trying to work out the salvation of my country—from my own point of view."

"Planning for re-nomination?" asked Moore, innocently.

"And your ankle?" asked Danvers of Miss Blair, under cover of the laugh that followed Moore's attempt at wit. "I hope that you are not suffering from it." His observant eye had noted the smooth contour of the girl's face, but as the moments passed the natural lack of high coloring seemed to grow more colorless.

"It hurts—a little," confessed the girl. "But it is of no consequence. Mrs. Latimer's dinner must [129]
not be marred by my blundering in the dark. I should have come by the walk."

"You are thoughtful." Danvers looked again at the girl, and wished for the first time that he could use the small talk of society. Politics was debarred from the table conversation, but when they were again in the parlors Miss Blair turned to Danvers.

"Aren't you the senator from Chouteau?"

"Not yet," smiled Philip.

"Oh, but you will be. My brother says so."

"I'm glad some one is optimistic. I'm afraid I shall not be the deciding party."

"Who will be our United States senator?"

"That is hard to tell. So many straws sticking out of the tangle make it difficult to prophesy which will be pulled out."

"Your party is so split up this year," said the girl. "Which wing are you affiliated with?"

This was not "small talk," as Danvers recognized with an amused feeling that he had not expected a lady to know anything outside his preconceived idea of feminine chat.

"Montana politics have no wings," he quibbled.

Miss Blair laughed. "Really, haven't you decided which of the candidates you'll support for United States senator?" She ran over the names.

"That's rather a leading question, isn't it?" evaded Philip. "If a *man* asked me, I'd give him no [130]
satisfaction. I will say to you, though, that I am going to do my best to send some one to Washington who is pledged to place community interests before his own."

"I did not mean to ask impertinent questions, or to cross-examine," quavered Miss Blair. "One who finds out anything from you must have taken his thirty-third degree in Masonry. I am not trying my hand at lobbying," she added as an afterthought. "You mustn't think that. I'm just interested in the political situation. And brother Charlie won't talk politics with me any more than he'll recount his experiences as a freighter."

"Charlie? Brother Charlie?" A dim memory revived. "I beg your pardon! Is Scar Faced Charlie your brother?"

"Yes. Didn't you know?"

"Then you are the little girl——"

"Winifred. I thought you didn't recognize me, though I knew you at once. But you would scarcely remember me, while I—you know you saved my life."

"And to think that you have so changed—grown up! And that you are here! I remember asking for you when Charlie was in Fort Benton, shortly after I went there to live; but you were away at school. I don't recall ever hearing your brother called Blair, though as a matter of fact I wasn't [131]
thinking of your name. I was thinking of you!"

"What a pretty speech! And Mrs. Latimer is always telling what a woman-hater you are!"

"I was not aware that I was of enough importance to be the subject of Mrs. Latimer's strictures," replied Danvers, his brow contracting. "But I believe I do have that reputation," he added, and smiled into her unbelieving brown eyes.

"Moore is not running for office this year," said Danvers presently, finding it easier to talk of matters politic.

"No. Charlie wants a place in the Senate—perhaps you know." She changed the subject by asking, "Do you think that a man should ever vote for a candidate not in his own party?"

"If he votes for the better man—especially in local politics—yes. Is it a political crime in your eyes?"

"I believe most politicians think so." Miss Blair also resorted to evasion.

They were joined by other guests, and the conversation became general. The Honorable Mr. Moore, resplendent in a new dress suit, was saying pleasant things to his hostess.

"What a lucky dog the judge is, my dear Mrs. Latimer! You would carry off any situation. You [132]
deserve a wider field than this small Western city."

"Really?" cooed the flattered lady.

As she moved away, Moore's glance followed her, and a look of sudden inspiration illumined his shiny face. Wild Cat Bill, with his rotund form, resembled a domesticated house cat far more than the agile creature which had given him his frontier title. The incongruity struck Danvers, and he smiled at Winifred Blair as she drifted to another part of the room—a smile that she returned with a friendly nod of farewell. He did not see her again that evening, and not long afterward he and the doctor bade their hostess good-night.

"Not sorry you went, are you, Phil?" asked the doctor, as they walked to their hotel. "Goodness knows, Arthur and I labored hard enough to get you there."

"I have always disliked dinner parties." The observant doctor noticed the wording of the reply and drew his own conclusions.

"Come in and have a smoke with me," said the doctor, as they reached his room, and he bent over to insert the key. For years it had been Danvers' habit to drop into the physician's office during the late afternoon or evening, to talk or smoke in silence, as the case may be. To-night he [133]
followed the doctor, and sat down for a half-hour's chat.

"That was a fetching gown that Mrs. Latimer wore; I don't envy Arthur the bills!" remarked the astute doctor, as he filled his pipe.

"I didn't notice," was Philip's indifferent reply. "I never know what women have on."

"And how lovely Miss Blair looked in blue!"

"Soft rose!" came the correction from the man who never noticed.

The doctor's mouth twitched, but he smoked on in silence, and when he bade Philip good-night he gave him a God-bless-you pat on the shoulder, which the coming senator from Chouteau interpreted solely as due to his long friendship.

Danvers was wakeful that night, and a name sang through his drowsy brain until he roused, impatient.

"It was only her voice that interested me!" he exclaimed aloud. "She's probably like the rest of them." The nettle of one woman's fickleness had stung so deeply when he first took to the primrose path of love that he had never gone farther along the road leading to the solving of life's enigma, and now the overgrowth of other interests had almost obliterated the trail.

Although the days at Helena were busy ones for Philip Danvers, he found time before the convention to make his dinner call at the Latimer's. On the shaded lawn before the house he [134]
found Miss Blair entertaining little Arthur while she kept watch over the baby asleep in its carriage.

"Mrs. Latimer is away for the afternoon. She will be sorry to have missed you," exclaimed the girl, as Arthur ran to greet the visitor, always a favorite.

"You called on Aunt Winnie and me! Didn't you? Didn't you?" chanted the boy, tugging at the hand of the visitor.

"May I stay?" asked Danvers, smiling at the eager little man. "And how is the sprain?"

"Of course you may," assented Winifred brightly. "And as for the sprained ankle, wicked and deceitful creature that I am, I made it the excuse for not going with Mrs. Latimer. Good people, really good people, would think that I merited punishment for not doing my duty in my small sphere of life. Yet see! Instead of that I'm rewarded—here *you* come to entertain Arthur and me!"

"It is a bad example!" decided Danvers, with a stern eye that did not deceive anyone. He was amused at her naïveté, and had no wish to decry such open good-will.

"But I do limp! Don't I, Arthur?" Miss Blair appealed to the child, gravely.

He nodded and stooped to examine the low, narrow shoe, peeping from her sheer summer gown. [135]
Winifred pulled the foot back with a sudden flush. "I am, perhaps, helping along in this world as much as though I were playing cards, by staying with the children instead of their being with the maid," she said hastily.

Philip leaned over to look at the baby. Arthur pulled the parasol to one side proudly.

"Her name is Winifred," he announced.

"I believe I never saw a really little baby before," said Danvers, looking with awe at the tiny sleeper. "My sister and I were near of an age; we grew up together. How *little* babies are!"

Miss Blair laughed. "Winifred is a very nice baby—big for her few months of life. I'm very proud to be her godmother." Danvers watched as she pulled the fleecy covering around the sleeping child. With the act a maternal look came into her lovely face, unconscious as she was of scrutiny, and a thrill of manhood shook him deeply.

"So you did not care for the party?" inquired the caller, presently. "I thought all ladies adored card parties and enjoyed fighting for the prizes."

"Play cards when the mountains look like that?" Winifred rejoined. "It would be a sacrilege!"

"I do not care for cards myself," agreed Danvers.

"Wouldn't you like to be out there?" Winifred seemed scarcely to have heard him. [136]

Following the direction of her gaze, he thought her wide-flung gesture a deserved tribute to the view. The Prickly Pear Valley lay before them, checkered in vivid green or sage-drab as water had been given or withheld. The Scratch Gravel Hills jutted impertinently into the middle distance; while on the far western side of the plain the Jefferson Range rose, tier on tier, the distances shading the climbing foothills, until the Bear's Tooth, a prominent, jagged peak, cleft the azure sky. A stretch of darker blue showed where the Missouri River, itself unseen, broke through the Gate of the Mountains. The view took one away from the affairs of men. On their side of the valley towered Mount Helena and Mount Ascension with auriferous gulches separating and leading up to the main range of the Rockies. As the foothills sank into the valley the gulches, washed of their golden treasure, were transformed into the streets of Helena—irregular, uneven, unpaved often; in the residence part of the town young trees ambitiously spread their slender branches; the main street and intersecting steeper ones were bordered with business blocks as ambitious, in their way, as the transplanted trees.

"'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,'" quoted Winifred, softly. "What a singer David was. But these mountains seem worthy of the grand old psalms." [137]

"Yes," assented Danvers, simply; and he liked her better on this second meeting than he had at the dinner party—a crucial test where a woman is concerned.

"I never weary of looking," she breathed.

"I think—I never should, either," he declared, and looked—at her!

Unconscious of his gaze, she absently jogged the carriage while the baby slept, and Arthur, holding Danvers' hand, waited his turn.

"Mamma hates Helena," was his contribution.

"Sh-h-h!" warned Winifred.

"Then if I can't talk, make Uncle Phil show us a good time." The lad turned appealing, beautiful eyes toward Danvers, so like his father's that Philip drew him closer. "Tell us about the Crow Indians stealing the Blackfeet ponies." This was a favorite story.

"Not to-day, laddie," refused Philip, gently. "Miss Blair would not——"

"Yes, I should," contradicted Winifred.

"Aunt Winnie will just love to hear that story," affirmed Arthur. "*I* do! She tells me lots of stories. She was telling one when you came—the one I like the best of all. It had a be-u-ti-ful trooper in it who rescued her from a water-y grave!" The child's recital was as melodramatic as his words. [138] "He held her just so!" Arthur illustrated by a tight clasp of the embarrassed girl. "Now, you tell one."

Philip saw that Winifred had a real interest in the old days, and while relieving her embarrassment by gratifying the little story-teller, he spoke of the Whoop Up Country.

Winifred had the rare gift of bringing out the best in people. Danvers needed such incentive; although denying it, he was a good conversationalist. Now his whole being responded to this clear-eyed, pleasant-voiced girl who sat in the low rocker beside him. She would understand. The few times he had essayed to speak to others of his service in the Mounted Police, he had met with such indifference that the words were killed; and with the exception of the Doctor, Danvers had never shared his experiences with any one. To the women he had met in Helena and Fort Benton that lonely life had brought a shudder, and to the men unpleasant reminiscences. So far as his associates of the early days were concerned it was a closed chapter.

To the child Winifred, Danvers had been a hero—handsome, debonair; to the woman Winifred, he found himself talking as easily as to the little girl who listened years before. The life at Fort Macleod was the one subject that would win Danvers from his silence, and in the next hour Miss Blair had good reason to think that she would not exchange this call for all the card parties in the world. [139]

Presently he challenged, "You are bored?"

"I've been delightfully entertained. It is all fascinating to me. Charlie will seldom speak of the freighting days, and I remember very little of Fort Benton."

"The old place isn't big enough for most of us. The Macleod men are scattered, too."

"Have you ever been back?"

"Never! I could not bear to see the country fenced in, the old cottonwood barracks replaced, the railroad screaming in the silence, and Colonel Macleod dead. No, I shall never go back."

The baby awoke and diverted them, and soon the maid came for both children. Half-way to the house little Arthur ran back.

"I'm going to be a Police when I grow up," he announced. "I prayed about it last night. I know God'll fix it. I put it right to Him. It was peachy!"

"Arthur is always saying the drollest things," remarked Miss Blair as the child ran out of hearing distance. "Yesterday he told me that when he went fishing with his papa his fish wouldn't hook on tight."

"I'm afraid he'll find the same difficulty later in life," laughed Philip, and rose to say good- [140]
afternoon.

"I will not wait longer for Mrs. Latimer, but leave my card," he decided. "The doctor will be wondering what has become of me."

But the doctor found him very silent over his pipe that evening. The sight of Arthur Latimer's little son had wakened the old longing, the inborn desire of every Englishman to bestow the ancestral name upon the heir of his house. Philip Danvers! For eight generations a son had borne the name. Would he be the last to inherit it in this far country that had come to be his own?

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[141]

Chapter III
A Man of Two Countries

On the Sunday spent in Helena the doctor proposed to Danvers that they give over politics and call at the Blairs. "They won't stand on formalities, and we both need to get our minds out of this political struggle. I'll be glad when I can go home to Fort Benton!"

"Charlie seems to be doing well in Helena," remarked Philip, as they approached the house next Judge Latimer's.

"He's up, then down. He isn't much of a business man, and hasn't head enough to keep in the swim. He worships that sister of his, and just now he's doing pretty well. I fancy that she knows nothing of his financial standing."

"I imagine Miss Blair knows more about Charlie's difficulties than either you or he give her credit [142]
for. She sees more than she tells."

The callers found brother and sister on the wide porch, and after the greetings and a half-hour of general conversation, Charlie Blair asked the doctor if he would come inside and give a little advice on a private matter.

"Good," cried Winifred. "For once I'm glad that Charlie can think of nothing but business. Now I can talk to Mr. Danvers."

"See that you do!" commanded Philip. "Yesterday I went away feeling like a garrulous dame; it is your turn to-day."

Winifred affected to reflect. "What shall be my theme—art, music, literature or our mutual friends?"

"Tell me of yourself."

"As a subject of conversation, that would be soon exhausted. Women, you know, are too idle to be good; too conventional to be bad."

"Indeed!" returned the cattleman, catching her mood. "I have known many women of that

description. Pardon me, but I had imagined you were a different type."

"You say the nicest things! I feel that we are going to be very good friends."

Danvers bowed. "Thank you. I think we are."

She returned his frank gaze, and settled herself comfortably for an afternoon's enjoyment. [143]

"Now talk!" she in turn commanded, with the sweeping imperialism she sometimes manifested toward a chance companion.

"I refuse. It is your turn."

"How you like to put on the mask of silence! Do you bolt the door to everyone but the doctor and Judge Latimer?"

"Thoughts are hard things to express, unless one forgets himself, and they come spontaneously."

"Go ahead and forget yourself, then!"

"You are inexorable," laughing. "Your demand makes me think of an Indian Council. Of course, you know that when they meet to discuss problems, they sit silent for hours. The avowed purpose of conferring paralyzes their tongues, apparently, as you have paralyzed mine. If I ever had an idea I could not produce it now."

"The Quakers have a prettier custom. They sit in silence till the spirit moves. I will be the spirit that moves you;" and so adroitly did she continue that unconsciously the man spoke of more serious things—his likings, his beliefs.

"Why did you become an American?" she asked at length, the question that had often puzzled her.

"My mother was an American." His voice took a note of tenderness which Winifred remembered [144]
long. "But when I left the service it was with no thought of choosing this as my country. I had no desire to return to England, however, and the chances for business seemed greater on this side of the line."

The girl's deep eyes gazed directly into his with flattering intentness.

"And so the years slipped by until I found that my interests were all here, and I could not leave, even if I had cared to. Isn't that true, judge?" he remarked, as Arthur Latimer came across the lawn. "You wanted to make a voter of me, for your own dark purposes——"

"Philip always hits the bull's-eye," admitted the judge, interrupting with a menacing gesture of affection at the implication. "You would not leave the State. That's just it. The most of us came into the Northwest, as we thought, to make a fortune and go back East or South to enjoy it. But whether we have made money or not, we discovered that we are here to stay. The old ties in other communities are gone. Old friends are dead. Old memories faded. We aren't all such enthusiasts as the doctor, who lives at Fort Benton for sheer love of the place, but——"

"I know just how he feels," cried Winifred, quick to defend her old friend. "I could go back there myself to live. We have a love-feast every time we speak of the dear old town, and that's every [145]
time I see him."

"I think," said Danvers, slowly, making sure of his words, "that I have come to love Montana more than my native land, though that was certainly very far from my feeling when I came back to Fort Benton as a civilian, and asked for work. I told the man that I was an Englishman, but I made a mistake. There was a long list of applicants ahead of me—Americans—to whom preference would be given. I thanked the manager, but from that day I determined to succeed without being forced into citizenship. I did succeed, and of my own choice I became an American!"

"Words, words! What are you talking about?" the doctor asked, breezily, as he appeared with Blair. "Let us into your charmed circle. I, for one, promise to be silent. Any occasion gains dignity by having an audience, and I'll promise not to be critical. I will consider your youth."

After a general laugh, the judge gave the trend of the conversation, and the doctor quite forgot his promise. The discussion of good citizenship became general, and presently Philip was appealed to for testimony on the subject of foreigners becoming naturalized.

"I hardly think I can tell you much that you do not already know," he said, "concerning Englishmen becoming American citizens. We must give the inhabitants of every great European [146]
country the credit for believing their own country to be the greatest. With the possible exception of Russia and Turkey, I am inclined to the opinion that they think their liberty is not infringed upon, any more than it should be; and they are, I suppose, contented with their lot. John Bull has every reason to think himself a favored being. He is proud of the institutions of his country—royalty, aristocracy. The knight, the 'squire, the merchant, manufacturer, skilled workman and laborer—each has his place. The laborer, cap in hand, bows to his master. So, too, aristocracy bends the knee to royalty—being taught to keep allotted rank in society, and to defer to those above. What is more, all have a supreme regard for the law itself, as well as for those who administer it."

Winifred listened. Her bright, upturned face was an incentive for Danvers to continue.

"When we Englishmen come to this country," he said, "knowing but little of the government, we care nothing for it. We generally come to better our condition financially, not politically. When we see the actions of political heelers at elections we are often astounded. We hear of Tweed, of Tammany, and it is not surprising that we have a certain contempt for American politics. If we watch very closely we see men elected to office who are entirely incompetent, and we even have [147] suspicions of their honesty."

The girl laughed lightly.

"You choose to be very sarcastic," she commented. But Danvers had more to say.

"As time goes on we watch events, comparing the government of this country with that of our own. Little by little we are brought to feel that these States are being fairly well governed, after all. In my own case, when Judge Latimer asked me to take an active part in politics, I hesitated. But I had cast my lot in Fort Benton, and it seemed wrong to accept all that America had to give with no return from myself."

The Anglo-American looked around his circle of friends. Never before had he expressed himself so fully. He could not understand how he had been beguiled. But never before had he felt that a woman's brain would grasp every reason adduced, and understand—that was it; he felt that he was understood!

"Montana politics are like an Englishman's game—high. They smell to heaven," said Charlie Blair, after the men had further discussed the political situation.

"I don't believe that Montana is any worse than many other States," defended Winifred, quickly.

"We are building history," said the doctor, dreamily, "and history repeats itself. As the powerful [148] nobles of Greece and Rome dictated harsh terms to the common people and ruined their nations, so it will be with us. Machine politics, money and whiskey, millionaires and monopolies—truly the outlook is depressing."

"You are not usually so pessimistic, doctor," reproached Winifred.

"Well"—Blair's contented philosophy was refreshing—"politicians seldom get more than one-fourth their money's worth, when they use it unlawfully. Three-quarters of it is wasted by giving it to hangers-on."

"Public men should be unhampered by demands for spoils."

"They invite the demands, Phil," replied the doctor, dryly. "If it were not openly known that a man could get a position as a corporation lawyer, or timekeeper in a big mine, or some other inducement, do you think any would-be senator, for instance, would be troubled by distributing 'spoils of office'?"

"He would not be troubled with superfluous votes, either," remarked the judge, caustically.

"Oh," cried Winifred, with a vision of what might be, "if only the candidates and the voters could be brought to see that public office is a public trust; that the honor of election is enough!"

"That is the way it is in England," answered Danvers. "There, for instance, a man is elected to a [149] city council for his personal fitness and ability to hold office. No questioning of his political affiliations. No perquisites—no privileges. Only the honor of his fellow citizens, which is enough. It is the same in other positions, even in Parliament."

"Here comes Mrs. Latimer." Miss Blair rose and advanced to meet her friend. "I see by your eyes, Eva," she said gaily, "that I have to placate you for monopolizing all the men in sight."

Mrs. Latimer laughed, and the circle widened to admit her.

"You are talking of politics," she accused, lazily. "Either that or of Fort Macleod."

"Madam," the doctor affected remorse, "we were talking of politics. But when you burst upon our enchanted vision, as beautiful as when you dazzled us sixteen——"

"Oh, don't!" shuddered Eva. "Why—why will men be so exact as to dates? Why not say 'some years ago'?" She looked around rebelliously. "I will not grow old, even if you, dear doctor, have silvery hair, and Arthur's is growing thin, and Mr. Blair—well, I'll admit the years have dealt kindly with Charlie and Mr. Danvers."

"And with you, dear," added her husband, loyally.

"How do you like my gown?" asked Eva, turning to Miss Blair as the men began to talk of other [150] subjects.

"It's lovely! You are so artistic! It must please your husband to have you so perfectly gowned."

"Oh, Arthur—as for one's husband, I simply can't imagine dressing for one man."

"I can," breathed the girl, her thoughts afield. But the sentiment was lost upon Eva.

"If I lived nine miles from nowhere I would dress and walk among the cow corrals or on the range for the cowboys—if there were no other men to admire me!"

"You say such dreadful things," Winifred answered, gently, "but I know you do not mean them."

"But I do!" wilfully.

"I have grown away from the East," the doctor was saying, when the ladies again listened. "I want more room than the crowded cities can give.

> "'Room, room to turn 'round in,
> To breathe and be free.'

"I fancy the Puritans wanted physical as well as religious freedom, if the truth were known." He mused; then suddenly:

"How can you make one who has never experienced it *feel the West*?"

"You can't," laughed Latimer. "I tried once, but my companion looked bored, and I stopped. 'Oh, go on,' he said, politely; '*you* are interested!'" [151]

When the merriment had subsided, Eva exclaimed:

"I'm sick and tired of the West! I want to live in New York, Washington, abroad—anywhere but Montana!"

"I wish that we might, dear," said the judge, patiently; "perhaps we can some day."

"By the way," remarked Eva, her thoughts flying inconsequently to another subject, "I've promised to read a paper on 'The Judiciary of Montana' before our club to-morrow. Tell me all about it, Arthur, and I'll write the essay this evening." She looked at the group in surprise. What had she said to raise such shouts?

As soon as her husband could speak he wiped his eyes.

"It's a pretty big subject for me to discuss now," he said; "but I'll write something. That will be better than confusing your mind with it. These club-women," he went on indulgently, addressing the others, "are so fervid—so much in earnest."

"Are you a club-woman, too?" the doctor asked Winifred, and Danvers waited her reply.

"I used to be," dolefully. "But I am a renegade, or a degenerate. I was allowed to join the classic circle of a Dante Club, and for two years we (perhaps I'd better say I) agonized over the prescribed study—the course was sent out by the university. But when the third year arrived I wearied of well-doing. I was horrid, I know; but the subject was remote as to time, and dead as to issues. I like live topics, real issues—Montana politics, for instance." [152]

"You might have joined the Current Events Club," reproached Mrs. Latimer. "To be sure, it's sometimes hard to find topics for the next meeting, but we get along. Club work broadens our minds and widens our sphere," she concluded, with a pretty air of triumph.

"And when topics fail—to write about," put in Blair, "you can talk. You ladies always find enough to talk about!"

"Why, Charlie Blair! You're just as horrid as you used to be!" responded Eva, hotly.

"Didn't I hear something about one lady's stabbing to death another lady's imported hat, just on account of too much talk at one of the club meetings?" Blair was persistent.

"That story about the hat has been grossly exaggerated! It is nothing but gossip."

"'Current Events,' too," murmured Charlie, properly deprecatory.

Not long afterwards Danvers made the first move toward breaking up the group.

"Must you be going?" Winifred rose also. "I suppose I shall not see you again before the Assembly meets. You'll be sure to be here then, as senator from Chouteau." [153]

"Thank you for your optimism. May I call?"

"Certainly. I should feel hurt if you didn't. We are friends of many years' standing, you know."

Never before had he asked to call upon a lady. The importunity had always been on the other side.

Late in the evening the doctor came to Danvers' room for the good-night call; but the talk was wholly of Judge Latimer's interests.

"I'm afraid that Arthur will have a hard pull," regretted the old friend, "but we will do all we can for him. I've had a telegram calling me back to Fort Benton, and must leave on the midnight train."

Danvers walked to the little depot, a mile from the city proper, with his friend, and after the train pulled out he again thought of Winifred.

As he passed, on his way back to town, the huge piles of loose rock that the miners had left in their sluicing for gold in bygone days, his thoughts followed the girl back into the long years since he had first met her on the *Far West*—a child eager for sympathy. It was odd that he had

never seen her in all that time—the years when he had unconsciously longed for friendship, and the sight of a woman's face—a white face. The rings from his cigar melted around him, softening his face until it took on the boyish fairness of youth. [154]

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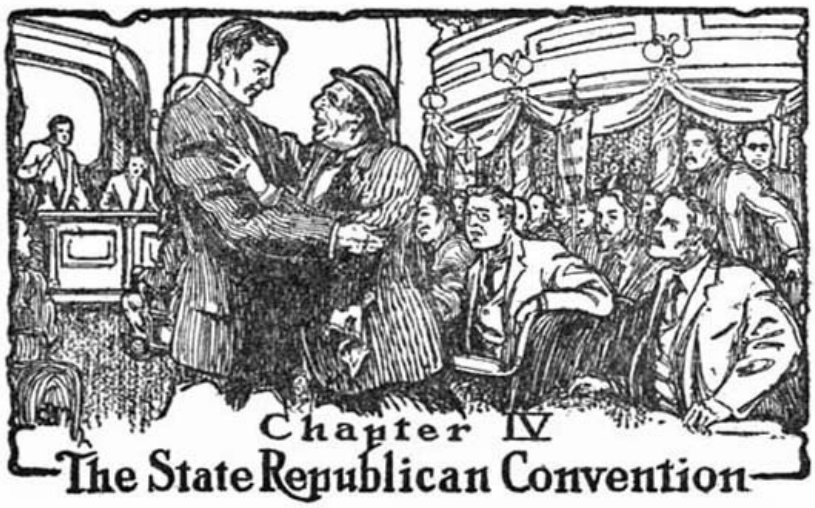
[155]



Chapter IV
The State Republican Convention

The evening before the convention found Judge Latimer at the club in conference with his friends. His nomination seemed doubtful, yet there was a possibility that he might win, and Danvers was working hard and hopefully.

The Honorable William Moore had arrived from Butte that day, and as he greeted various members of the club, watched for a chance to approach Judge Latimer.

"What are the prospects?" he inquired, after a chat on politics in general. "I calculate you'll need the support of Silver Bow County, and we'd like to help you out."

"Of course, I shall be glad of your support," responded Latimer, who knew it would be impossible to win without this important section of Montana. [156]

"Very well. What can you do for us—that is, for Burroughs?"

The judge moved uneasily. "It doesn't seem to me that I can do very much for a man who has practically the whole State at his command."

"You know what we want!" scowlingly.

"I shall have no influence."

"Bah! What's the use talking? He'll make it worth your while. Get Danvers to vote for Burroughs when it comes time to elect United States senator. He never will unless you can persuade him. You know his feeling toward Burroughs, although Bob's been a good husband and father. And there's Charlie Blair, get him pledged and he'll be elected; and——"

"Hold on, Moore!" Latimer's voice trembled with anger. "Why should you oppose me? Haven't my decisions always been just and——"

"I'm not saying anything about your decisions," broke in Moore, "although it would have paid you to be amenable. I knew the time would come when you'd want our political help."

"I *don't* want your help!" cried the judge, passionately. "If I should be elected through your instrumentality I should feel as though every man in the State believed that a decision handed down by the Supreme Court was tainted with your money. As yet the Supreme Court of Montana has been above suspicion, and so far as it is in my power, it shall remain so!" He struck out, his slight form quivering righteously. [157]

Across the room Danvers saw him, and walked quickly toward the men.

"I want to speak to you, Arthur," he said, and drew the judge into the street.

"The elephant and the gazelle are trotting together," said Latimer, presently, trying to be facetious in an effort to regain control of himself. He looked up at his stalwart companion.

"Yes, and the gazelle is always looking for trouble when the elephant is around, so he can be pulled out!" returned Danvers, in the same strain; yet with the undercurrent of affection that always crept into his tone when speaking to Latimer.

Words failed the harassed judge as he attempted to reply. This friend of his! This dear friend!

"It is just as I thought, Phil," he remarked, after they had walked for a time in silence. "Burroughs will block me."

"That's bad; but it might be worse. Let me see. Who are the delegates from Silver Bow?"

"Bill Moore is the chairman. No need to specify the individual men, for every one of them will [158] vote as instructed. Oh, Burroughs has that county well organized!"

"H-m-m!" mused Danvers, nodding affirmation. "Silver Bow is not the only county, and Moore is not the only chairman. I am chairman of the Chouteau County delegation, and we are solid for you. I have more or less influence in other counties," modestly. As they walked they canvassed the situation. Without Silver Bow it did look dubious.

Turning a corner they met O'Dwyer, ruddy and smiling as ever.

"Here's O'Dwyer!" cried Danvers. "He is always good in an emergency. His fertile brain will contrive some method of procedure that will land you safely on the bench for a second term."

A conference ensued. O'Dwyer shook his head doubtfully when he learned of Burroughs' strong following, but said nothing until the three were in Danvers' room.

"I heard Wild Cat Bill talking to yeh," he acknowledged, "and I think I've got something up my sleeve." But he refused to disclose his plans, only warning Danvers not to be surprised if he was late to the convention, and they separated.

The convention was called to order. Campaign issues did not appear to be of great moment; but when the chairman announced that the candidates for chief justice would now be considered, [159] there suddenly arose so much controversy and ill-feeling that the meeting was adjourned until evening. An active canvass was begun by Danvers for Judge Latimer, and by Moore for his candidate. O'Dwyer of Chouteau County, seemingly not so much interested in the business in hand as in looking up old friends whom he had known at Fort Macleod, circulated joyously among the men. It was not long before he was cheek by jowl at the hotel bar with Wild Cat Bill (Moore never objected to the old nickname), and after sundry refreshments and their accompanying chasers, he proposed that they dine together. Mr. Moore was agreeable, and suggested a private room for the meal, being under the impression that O'Dwyer would look favorably on an effort to turn his allegiance from Latimer's candidacy.

As the dinner progressed he told O'Dwyer that he had in mind a lucrative position which Mr. Burroughs would gladly bestow on an old friend, if the Irishman saw fit to accept. Moore carefully explained, as the glasses were filled and emptied, that he had no ulterior motive. Oh, certainly not! O'Dwyer must not think that Burroughs ever offered a bribe, even in so small a matter as this of defeating Judge Latimer in state convention!

"Of course not!" agreed O'Dwyer, and surreptitiously glanced at his watch. He redoubled his [160] efforts to be the good fellow, and apparently coincided with Moore's views on politics.

The clock in the court house struck half after eight. The convention was called to order, and Mrs. Latimer, thrilling with the sense of unknown possibilities, sat in the crowded gallery, and settled expectantly to the excitement of the balloting. Strong and spicy speeches were anticipated. Silver Bow, notoriously the hotbed of political agitation in the State, possessed in Mr. Moore a star speaker. He always had something to say, and was the chief factor in filling the ladies' gallery. His fiery remarks and impassioned appeals were as exhilarating as cocktails. Full well did Mr. Burroughs know the value of his trusted henchman, both in caucus and on the floor, and he had left his cause against Judge Latimer wholly in Moore's hands, with no understudy. He had made the trip over from Butte the day before, and now expectantly awaited the appearance of the Honorable William.

As the delegates and spectators listened to the blaring band they watched the rapidly filling seats and noted the tall staffs and placards indicating the various counties. Danvers looked in vain for Latimer; Burroughs for Moore.

O'Dwyer had not appeared, and the chairman of the Chouteau County delegation smiled as he [161] thought of the Irishman's devotion to his friends, and the possible discomfiture of their common enemy. But Latimer's absence was disquieting. He had said something about little Arthur's having a cold, but surely that would not keep him from so important an occasion.

Nine o'clock. The chairman declared the convention ready to proceed. Burroughs, hovering near the doors of the auditorium, looked anxious as he saw Danvers rise to make his nomination speech for Judge Latimer. Moore—the invaluable Moore—was not in the hall. The moments were slipping by, and Burroughs hastily dispatched a messenger to his hotel and to the club.

As Danvers gave a simple, earnest recital of Judge Latimer's qualifications and the need for such men in the State of Montana, he saw the judge enter. He spoke of his devotion to his family, his business integrity, his high ideals; and ended with the plea that in this day of corruption in high places, his own State preserve her prestige by maintaining in office one who had been found able and incorruptible in discharging his duties as judge of the Supreme Court of the State of Montana.

As Danvers returned to his seat he was met by the recalcitrant Moore, walking carefully, and blandly indifferent to Burroughs' angry oath with which he had been greeted at the door.

Danvers tried to avoid the wavering path, but the Honorable William had a set purpose in his muddled brain. He fell upon the neck of the delegate from Chouteau, and his arms met around Danvers' neck. [162]

"I d'know yer name," he hiccoughed, enthusiastically, "but I know yeh're a gen'lmun." The unexpected followed. Holding himself upright by the embarrassed Danvers, he bellowed: "Mishter Chairman! I seconsh the nomination!"

Pandemonium ensued—laughter in the galleries, drowned by the roar of disapproval from Burroughs' candidate and his following. O'Dwyer hastily gained the recognition of the chairman and again seconded the nomination of Latimer, and the balloting began.

Burroughs, not being a delegate, had no place on the floor, and was powerless. The leaderless flock from Silver Bow made weak efforts to assert themselves, but O'Dwyer saw to it that Moore did not get to them until affairs were well settled. The first ballot was taken, and Latimer had a majority. He had received the nomination!

There were cheers and loud calls for Latimer, and he responded briefly. In the excitement Burroughs succeeded in enticing the torpid Bill into the lobby, and so effective were his words, emphasized by his fists, that Moore returned to the hall a chastened man, and demanded that the [163] nomination be set aside. In the uproar Burroughs ventured onto the floor and yelled to the cheering delegation from Chouteau County, "Howl, ye hirelings!" He violently accused Danvers of collusion with O'Dwyer in detaining Mr. Moore.

O'Dwyer was in no mood to permit this. For years he had idolized the Englishman. In a moment he placed himself in front of the ex-trader, and reaching, grabbed for Burroughs' nose.

"Do I understand yeh're talkin' agin me friend, Philip Danvers?" he shouted, with a twist of the olfactory member. "If I hear anither whimper out of yez, I'll smash yeh one! I got Bill Moore drunk—I! Yeh can settle wid mesilf!"

In the tumult the meeting adjourned, and Danvers was glad to get out of the hall and have a word with his friend.

"Why were you so late, Arthur?" questioned Danvers, as soon as they had a moment together.

"My boy is not well," Arthur explained, as his eye roved anxiously around the circling balcony. "Eva had set her heart on hearing the nomination speeches, and so I stayed with the laddie until the last minute. I couldn't bear to leave him alone with the nurse-girl."

"Let me go for a doctor!" begged Danvers, anxious to be of some help.

"No, he isn't sick enough for that—I did call a physician about dinner time. Perhaps I'm foolish," [164] he smiled wanly, "but if anything should happen——"

"Tut! tut!" Danvers put his hand on the stooping shoulders. "I'm going home on the midnight train, and I'll send the old doctor up to see the lad; or," with a sudden thought, "why not wire him? I will do it as I go to the station."

"Perhaps you'd better," agreed Latimer. "I wish he had remained here for the convention; but I know he will be glad to make the trip for the sake of the boy, and the sight of his face will do me good."

"You've been working too hard. Take it easy now and don't worry," counseled Danvers. "I shall be up again in a few weeks, and in the meantime write to me, Arthur."

He stood a moment as Judge Latimer waited for Eva. He felt, somehow, that his friend needed him. But his train would soon be due, and with a hearty hand-clasp he said good-night and hurried away for the Fort Benton express.

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[165]

Chapter V
Despair

The days that followed the convention were like a dream to Danvers when he remembered them afterwards. He had scarcely picked up the old life at Fort Benton—looked over his cattle and gone over his neglected correspondence, when a telegram from the old doctor recalled him to Helena.

Arthur Latimer's tragedy had come, and Danvers, unfamiliar with death, knew no words of consolation for the father bereft of his firstborn. A numbness mercifully comes during those first hours, which makes it possible to move about and go through strange, meaningless ceremonies with a calm that surprises those who have not known the searing touch of the death angel.

A few days later he and the doctor were back at Fort Benton again, and life moved on as before. [166]
Only there was always the memory of Latimer's drawn face that no laddie's voice would lighten, no little hand caress.

The doctor hoped that the political campaign would occupy his thoughts for the present, but when the election went against Latimer he shook his head.

"Read this letter," he said to Danvers one evening. "It came to-day, and I should have sent for you if I hadn't felt so certain you would drop in. You're the one to go."

It was a letter from Winifred, and Danvers felt a peculiar sensation of satisfaction in seeing her handwriting, as if it gave him an added bond to their friendship.

But he forgot Winifred in his anxiety over the message her letter conveyed.

> *"I wish that you or Mr. Danvers could come to Helena," she wrote. "Judge Latimer is so changed since little Arthur's death that we sometimes fear for his reason. Since the election has gone against him there is no direct interest to take his attention and he has sunk into a deep melancholy. You could rouse him as no one else could. Please come—one or both of you."*

Danvers read no further, but looked up to catch the doctor's eye. He nodded. "All right, doctor. [167]
I'll go to-night."

His heart was drawn still more closely to the stricken man. He longed to bring back to that sad face the smile that he remembered on the *Far West*, when Latimer's buoyancy had been like wine to his lonely heart. He felt confident that the friendship of one man for another could reach the heart of his friend, now closing against all human sympathy.

It was noon before Danvers reached Helena and made his way to Judge Latimer's residence. He was startled by the absence of life, the silence and drawn shades. Turning, he saw Miss Blair entering her own gate.

"I'm so glad you've come!" cried the girl, with unaffected pleasure, as he hastened towards her. "But didn't you know that the Latimers had gone to the hotel for the winter?"

Danvers had not known.

"Come in and have lunch with Charlie and me," she urged; "it will be ready in just a minute. Charlie will be here soon and will want to congratulate you on your majority."

"But Arthur—I feel I must get to him."

"Come in and telephone. He has opened offices down town and you may find him there. I call up [168]
Eva every morning, but Judge Latimer is out a great deal."

While she was speaking Danvers had followed her into the house. It was a homelike room; a canary's trill greeted them, and a glimpse of old-fashioned plants in the bay-window wakened memories of English homes. How different it was from his rooms at Fort Benton!

Winifred smiled brightly as she made him at home, and excused herself for a moment.

"And how is Judge Latimer?" questioned Danvers, as she reappeared from the dining-room with a big apron, which she fastened about her waist in a most businesslike manner.

"He needs cheering—needs loving! With the old routine of office suddenly lacking, and little Arthur gone, the man is lost—aimless. There seems to be nothing worth while—nothing to keep him with us! And there are other troubles—I don't understand them myself, but you will know how to help him. I'm so glad you have come!" she repeated, with a warmth that made his heart beat faster. What would it be like to find such a welcome for his own sake—and every night when he came home!

"Did you 'phone the office?" The words recalled him.

"Yes. He is down in the valley; the clerk didn't know when he would return."

"We won't wait for Charlie. He's often late, and I know you are anxious to find the judge." [169]

After a few minutes' absence Winifred announced that luncheon was ready. As Philip held the curtains for her to precede him to the dining-room he looked longingly at the sweet-scented blossoms in the window.

"I have seen nothing more delightful in years," he explained. "I am old-fashioned enough not to care for palms or rubber plants."

"Another bond of friendship," smiled Winifred, lightly. "Shall I make the salad dressing, or would you prefer to mix it yourself?" she asked, after she had persuaded him to take the head of the table.

"I make a dressing that is the despair of my friends," she continued. "So I make them shut their eyes when I mix it, else my one accomplishment would be mine no longer."

Philip promised, with a smile, to "play fair." He delighted in the housewifely nonsense, and ate the salad, though he hated olive oil. "Salads are a woman's folly," he had once said. But he did not repeat it.

"How do you like it?" Her mood suited the visitor. The light conversation took his mind from the more serious purpose of his visit, and Winifred's accent implied accepted friendship. He needed this relaxation.

"I never cared for salads, before," he replied truthfully. [170]

"Why did you eat it?"

"I ate it, and I liked it because you made it for me. I am not used to being waited upon, and I rather like the experience."

"You poor man!" Winifred sympathized without reflection. "It must be horrid not to have anyone to do things for you. I should think—I mean——" she colored as she met Philip's eyes, "I mean—Charlie says that I have spoiled him completely."

The advent of Blair relieved the girl from her condition of fragmentary speech, and they talked of the Latimers and the political outlook for the coming winter.

Danvers took his leave with a feeling of regret at parting from unexpectedly congenial friends. How little he had known of Blair—the good fellow. How cheery and unaffected Winifred was! The years were bridged which had separated him from his kind, and as he walked down the street he felt a glow of kindness toward all the world.

He called at the hotel, thinking Latimer might have returned, but Mrs. Latimer pettishly denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. He often went for long walks, she said, and seldom returned until late. "Won't you stay until he returns?" she invited, but Danvers pleaded business. [171]

Twice during the afternoon Danvers ran up to the judge's office, but failed to find him until evening. Seeing a light in the inner office, he opened the door and entered.

The judge did not look up. He sat with his back to the door, and gazed intently at a revolver, while his hand played idly with the trigger.

Danvers stepped forward and silently reached for the weapon.

"No, no, Arthur! Not that!"

"Phil! You?" Latimer sprang from his chair. "Why—why——"

Danvers was shocked at the haggard face.

"I ran up from Fort Benton, Arthur, just to see you. I've been looking for you all the afternoon." He gently pushed the trembling man back into his chair.

"Why—why did you stop me? It would have been over—now—if——"

"Life is not so bad as that, old friend."

"Isn't it?" bitterly. "If you——"

"I can understand—I know. But you must promise me that you will not attempt this—again." Danvers spoke firmly, feeling that he could never leave his friend if he were not given a pledge.

The broken man looked into the kind eyes opposite. "You think me a coward, don't you? I promise." [172]

"No," refuted Danvers, warmly. "You are worn out, mentally and physically; that is all. Take a run to the coast with me for a month or two——"

Latimer began to laugh, mirthlessly. "I couldn't take a run to Fort Benton, Phil. I haven't a dollar—not a dollar. I'm a ruined man!"

"Arthur!"

Latimer took a paper-knife and checked off his sentence. His voice was impersonal.

"You made a mistake, Phil, when you interrupted me. No, do not speak," he raised his hand. "I was in possession of what sanity I've had since Arthur——" He did not complete the sentence. "I've deliberately decided that a quick shot was the only solution of my problem. Boy gone; home gone; my dearest ambition frustrated; hopelessly in debt——"

"I can help you in that."

"And disbarment proceedings about to be instituted," finished Latimer.

"What!" ejaculated Danvers. "Who will institute them? On what grounds?"

"Burroughs. He has trumped up some infamous charge. I got a hint of it only this morning—a straight tip." [173]

"He shall not do it! I shall have something to say to him—to the papers. He would not like to have them get hold of Moore's interviews with you and me on the matter of that Supreme Court decision. I——"

"Papers!" Latimer threw out his hands with a helpless gesture. "Burroughs *owns* every paper in the State!"

"Well, then, I have another card to play. You leave this matter to me. You are not going under, and you are not going to—die—not yet! Bob will drop the disbarment proceedings, I promise you; and if he is not amenable to reason—why—he does not own the Associated Press!" grimly.

"N-no. But I'm broke—ruined."

"What do you think a friend is for, Arthur?" said Danvers, reproachfully. "If I had had any idea that financial matters were troubling you, I would have fixed you out in short order!"

"I can't accept favors."

"Favors!" slightingly, to cover his feeling. "I shall be a Shylock—never you fear!" Then a hand, heavy with love, fell on Latimer's shoulder. "What is mine is yours, Arthur."

Within a week, not only were the judge's difficulties relieved, but the proposed disbarment proceedings were dropped. [174]

"I had means," said Danvers, sternly, when pressed for details by the grateful judge, and none but Burroughs ever knew of the threatened exposure.

Before Danvers returned to Fort Benton, he had the pleasure of seeing Judge Latimer off for the East on legal work and knew that his low mental condition was replaced by a more healthy one. Mrs. Latimer he avoided. The gratitude of Winifred Blair came as a surprise, and strengthened their sympathy in this common cause. He called to say good-bye, but found her not at home, and he left Helena with a distinct feeling of disappointment.

The state election in November gave Danvers a handsome majority, and it was as the senator from Chouteau County that, early in the new year, he attended the governor's reception to the legislators. He came in late, and after paying his respects to the governor and his wife, wandered rather helplessly toward the hall, seeing many whom he knew, but finding little pleasure in their casual greetings.

Mr. and Mrs. Burroughs, as well as the Hon. William Moore, had come from Butte to attend the brilliant society function. Other acquaintances who now lived at the capital were among the guests whom Danvers recognized. His sister he seldom saw, and the lack of any common interest between them made it possible to meet her husband in only the most formal way. [175]

Presently he saw Winifred Blair at the salad table, who, chancing to look up from her task, smiled invitingly.

"May I not serve you with salad?" she asked, as he approached.

"If you will make the dressing," recalling their lunch of the late summer.

"It is already dressed," laughed the girl.

"Then you will let me get you some punch; come with me for it."

She was perishing of thirst (by her own statement), and Danvers finding some one to take her place for a time, discovered a quiet corner of the library past which swept the tide of callers. Hither he enticed Miss Blair, and soon brought the refreshing drink. She sank on the window couch.

"How nice to be looked after," she said, gratefully. "I believe that you knew I was tired of the silly things one must say to men whom one never expects—or wants—to meet again."

"Never say silly things to me or I shall think I am in the category."

"Very well, I will not. I've always had to be to other people what they wanted me to be—what they [176]
expected. Somehow, with you—I am myself."

"You could not pay me a higher compliment."

For some minutes they chatted of the coming assembly and then wandered to the discussion of a book which denied love to be the greatest thing in the world. By that instinct which prompts men and women to talk of this one subject they enlarged on the topic, impersonally at first, as if it were a matter of the price of cattle.

"Then you do believe in the great passion?"

"Certainly; don't you?"

"I used to think that I did—years ago. But one sees the counterfeit so often."

"There could be no counterfeit unless the real existed."

"You are right. The real is so rare, then, that one despairs of knowing it." The subject grew more personal. "But we all want the genuine."

"I don't care for paste diamonds myself, no matter how well they imitate."

"You have had opportunity to discriminate?" tentatively.

"I—think so," Winifred replied, reflectively, as if he had asked whether she liked cucumbers, and his face clouded, for no reason. "Vicarious experience," she added, mischievously.

"Oh!"

"I have admired men; liked a few immensely," she admitted, frankly. "But the mysterious glow [177]
which comes—it has never enveloped me," she ended abruptly. "Since we are getting so personal, how about yourself?"

"I——" he hesitated.

"You needn't finish!" Winifred nodded, laughing. "Other men swear by the little god that they have never loved—never—until——" Once more Winifred found her facile tongue had led her into difficulties.

"Other men lie—I do not; yet you evidently do not believe me."

"Yes, I do! That is what I so like about you. People believe you, trust you, know where you are to be found."

"I know no other way," replied the Senator. "It is no merit. I simply find it awkward and inconvenient to prevaricate."

"You are to be congratulated," murmured the girl, ransacking her memory for another man who could say as much.

An eddy of the flowing stream of guests brought Mrs. Burroughs towards them. Mrs. Latimer, too, came into the deep window space, the ladies talking animatedly.

"Am I not right, Winnie?" appealed Mrs. Latimer, after the felicitations of the day had been exchanged. "I say that a woman has never had a love affair worthy of the name who hasn't had a [178]
lover called 'Jack.' Jack—the care-free; Jack—the debonair; Jack—the dare-devil! It's all in the name, Jack."

"Alas!" moaned Winifred, entering into the gay spirit of the moment. "Alack, woe is me! That I must confess my poverty before woman"—she glanced at Danvers—"and man! I've had lovers of many names—Henry and Jim and—and—Bi——" she seemed out of names—"and of many hues—Brown and Green and Black; but never a Jack for me!"

"If you haven't had an adorer by that name," laughed Mrs. Latimer, "it's because no man in the state answers to the name of Jack!" They all joined in the merriment, to Winifred's confusion.

"'Thou, too, Brutus!'" she quoted reproachfully. "What will Senator Danvers think of me, with such a reputation as you give."

"Suppose I have my name changed," suggested Danvers.

"Philip suits you very well," Miss Blair answered, sedately. "You intimated a few minutes ago that you were rather inexperienced," she went on daringly. "If this winter you will try for such a reputation as Mrs. Latimer gave me, I'll agree to meet you on the field of battle." As she concluded the doctor came up and the joke was explained to him. He turned to the Senator. [179]

"*You're* too old to have your name changed, or to affect the tender passion, Phil. Leave that to younger men—to me! I'll have my name changed to Jack, right away; and as for loving, I have always loved thee!" bowing to Winifred.

A chorus of shrieks greeted the doctor's declaration.

"No," insisted Philip, when his voice could be heard, "I am going to enter the lists, inexperienced as I am."

The challenge in his eyes was good to see, but Winifred could not meet them. Delighted at the sight, the doctor changed the subject, and soon the group broke up.

As Danvers greeted others, he noticed Eva Latimer in earnest conversation with Mr. William Moore. He bowed in passing, but their lowered voices paused only long enough for the conventional greeting.

After making the round of the parlors, Danvers found the doctor and soon afterward they returned to their hotel.

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[180]

Chapter VI
Il Trovatore

The next morning Judge Latimer was surprised to find his wife taking a sudden interest in politics.

"Why is there so much opposition to Mr. Burroughs for United States senator?" she inquired.

"Several reasons," he answered, evasively, thinking she would not be interested to pursue the subject.

"But he will be elected."

"That remains to be seen."

"He has thirty pledged out of the whole ninety-four, and several——"

"How do you know? Where did you get your information?" Latimer spoke sharply.

"Mr. Moore—nobody talked of anything else, it seems to me," amended Mrs. Latimer, with what carelessness she could assume. "Since the legislators have been arriving I have heard nothing discussed so much as Mr. Burroughs' chances of winning the election." [181]

"That comes of living in a hotel," said the judge, bitterly. "Burroughs' headquarters are on this floor, too, confound it! I wish we had not given up our home."

"I don't," cried Eva. "Politics are lots of fun! I had no idea how much until this winter. It's so exciting!"

She did not tell her husband that the Honorable William Moore had been at considerable pains to interest her in the coming struggle, even prolonging his frequent calls unduly, in giving her an insight (so far as he thought necessary) into the workings of practical politics as expounded and promulgated by Mr. Burroughs and himself. So delicately had he broached what had been in his mind since the night of Eva's dinner party that before she was aware she had promised that she would do what she could to forward Burroughs' cause with recalcitrant members. The political manager had assured her that his patron, in his gratitude, would make the reward for her

services magnificently great.

Mrs. Latimer had not been cajoled into this without some scruples, for she well knew what her husband would think. She remembered, too, certain interviews of her own with Burroughs, which she would have liked to forget; but it was many years ago that he had made love to her, and she succeeded in allaying the troublesome reproaches of conscience by the justification of the urgent need of retrieving their fortunes. If Arthur could be made minister to some foreign capital (her ambition had vaulted to Berlin) he need never suspect her share in its offer. [182]

Mr. Moore had told her that only a rich man could afford to be at the head of one of the larger legations, and had most thoughtfully placed certain mining shares in her name, whose value had already increased gratifyingly. When Arthur should ask her how he could accept such a position, she would triumphantly produce the fortune made from these shares, and explain that she had judiciously invested the small patrimony from her father's estate. It all seemed easy to the ambitious woman. Only a little effort to interest certain men—could anything be easier?

And the gold which she had found after Moore's last call! When she had sent him word he told her that he had its duplicate; to use the money, since she had found it. The temptation was great. Arthur was always complaining of unpaid accounts. She settled certain debts with a light heart. He would never think to inquire about them. [183]

So now she merely looked misunderstood as she continued: "It is nothing to us, of course, whether Mr. Burroughs is elected; but"—she hesitated, not knowing how best to proceed—"I'm sure a word from you would have great influence with the members."

Latimer was dumfounded. Then he began to laugh.

"You would make a first-class lobbyist!" he said lightly. "Have a care! A word from you would be worth ten of mine." Then, more seriously: "Don't talk too much of this, Eva. It is going to be a bad business before a senator is elected. Ugly rumors are heard already. I know of——" He changed his words. "Mr. Burroughs is not respected among men of integrity. Not even among men of low standards. His wealth is his only asset. Unscrupulous, defying investigation——" He pulled himself up. Never before had he expressed so definite a judgment on the millionaire.

But though he cautioned his wife, Latimer had no suspicion that it might be necessary. She had lived purely on the surface, showing no interest in anything but dress, society, herself. It did not occur to him that ambition might render her something more than a butterfly. In this respect Moore read the woman more accurately. [184]

That week Helena was billed for Italian opera. The announcement of *Il Trovatore* made Danvers' heart leap with desire to hear it once more. He knew it was doubtful whether the company could sing, but it could not be wholly bad.

When he first heard the opera, during a boyish holiday in London, it was at the height of its popularity, and every evening of his vacation found him enthralled in the boxes. The isolation of the frontier had but made the old music more loved, and Philip decided to make up a box party of his friends. Miss Blair had told him that she had never heard it in its entirety. She should be the guest of honor. Judge and Mrs. Latimer, Blair, the doctor from Fort Benton and O'Dwyer should complete the party.

"The opera has been given for the last twenty years," said Senator Danvers to Miss Blair, as she expressed herself delighted to accept his invitation. "You could hardly get a corporal's guard to go across the street to hear it in New York, I fancy; but it was the first opera I ever heard, and I love the old airs."

The theater was filling fast as Danvers held the curtain aside for his guests to enter the box. The distractions of the opposing forces at the capitol were, for the time, dismissed, and he listened with amusement to Miss Blair as he assisted to remove her light opera cloak. [185]

"I've never been in a theater box before," she confessed. "It makes one feel exclusive, doesn't it? And, oh, dear! dreadfully self-conscious. Suppose I fall out—over the railing? I'm sure I shall bring disgrace upon us!" She looked gaily at her host. "Suppose I should fall over?" she repeated, her eyes wide with pretense.

"Somebody would catch you," said matter-of-fact Eva.

"If you think that you are growing dizzy from looking over that fearful, two-foot precipice," said Danvers, adopting Winifred's tone, "I'm going to be the one to save you from a tragic death! I'll go around now, and get ready to be a hero!"

"Don't! A lady in an opera box is worth two in the orchestra seats," paraphrased Winifred, blithely. "I will not fall out."

As Danvers pulled her chair a little further from the low rail, Winifred noticed his face change.

"What is it?" she asked, in quick response.

Philip smiled a little sadly. "'My heart is on the ground,'" he answered, using an expressive Indian phrase. "I cannot be light and witty. I am cursed with seriousness."

"Your friends like you just as you are." But in this frank avowal the senator found no consolation. [186]

Danvers' enjoyment of the familiar opera was augmented by the appreciation shown on Winifred's earnest, mobile face. The company proved to be exceptionally good, the voices above the average, the acting intelligent and *con amore*. The passionate intensity of the Italians soon enthused Miss Blair into forgetfulness of those around her. While her brother and O'Dwyer sat stoically, the doctor contentedly, and Mrs. Latimer indifferent in her secret musing, Arthur and Philip followed, with her, the fortunes of *Leonora*. Not until the curtain fell on act three did she readily join in the chatter of her friends, and then only when Judge Latimer said to his wife: "You should have heard Phil sing '*Di quella pira*' when we were at Fort Macleod. He reached that high note quite as easily as this Italian."

"Don't you believe him, Mrs. Latimer," besought Danvers. "Make allowance for his well-known partiality."

"Certainly," responded Eva, trying to make her tone indifferent. She never was quite sure of her voice when speaking directly to this man who ignored the past.

"Do you sing?" Winifred turned with a quick motion which was characteristic. "Do you, Senator Danvers?"

"I do not." [187]

"But you did?"

"You bet he did!" blurted out O'Dwyer, ever ready to recite the good qualities of Danvers. Thereupon he told of the Christmas supper, Colonel Macleod's request, and the duet. "But they sang in English, so a Christian could understand—not this Dago lingo," he concluded. The Irishman's contempt for the soft Italian syllables was irresistible.

"Oh," sighed Winifred, after the laugh had died away, "I wish that I could have been at Fort Macleod that Christmas night!" she included Judge Latimer in her friendly glance.

"Mr. O'Dwyer did not tell you that he could sing!" chortled Latimer. But O'Dwyer begged to be spared, and after some good-natured raillery the judge acquiesced.

"Has that particular duet already been sung?" Winifred's eyes shone as she leaned toward her host. "If it has I shall insist upon its being repeated."

"You are so used to having people do as you ask that I believe you would," volunteered Eva.

"Of course I would. Everybody does as I wish."

"Perhaps that is because you do not ask impossible things," put in Senator Danvers. "But to relieve your anxiety, and to prevent your rising and asking for something that might be refused, I [188] hasten to assure you that the duet has not been sung. Mr. O'Dwyer forgot to say that it was the *Miserere* that we tried to sing for dear old Colonel Macleod. I'm afraid we did it pretty poorly."

From this the conversation drifted to other matters.

"I don't see Mr. Burroughs, Senator Danvers, although your sister and niece are in one of the opposite boxes," said Eva, sweeping the house with her glasses. "Nor Mr. Moore, nor Senator Hall—although his wife is here," she added.

"Politics are more exciting than Italian opera, I fancy," said Winifred.

"The politicians are pretty busy," confirmed the judge.

"Whom do you think I saw on the street to-day, Danvers?" asked Blair, suddenly. "McDevitt!" he announced, waiting for no speculations.

"No!"

The men were surprised, for McDevitt, the missionary-trader, had long since been forgotten.

"He says that he lives in Montana now, somewhere near the Canadian line."

Just then a messenger boy brought a telegram for Danvers, who excused himself to read and answer it. As he returned the opening bars of *Leonora's* florid song sounded, and under cover of [189] the music the doctor whispered to O'Dwyer: "You did better to-night in your whole-souled praise than when your elbow was sprained at Fort Macleod. *This* is the girl!"

"Betcher life she is! An' what's more, she's on!" The Irishman reverted to trooper slang in his ardor, and got a sharp nudge from the doctor in consequence.

The beautiful melodies followed in swift succession. Miss Blair gave a sigh of appreciation as the *Miserere* "*Ah che la mort*" was sung, and unconsciously put out her hand. The sleeve of her soft evening gown brushed Danvers' arm, and instantly his heart began to sing. Not so had he been stirred by Eva's conscious touch, years before. Eva had not struck the chord divine—this thrill revealed it.

"I want to live," breathed Winifred, "while there is such music and such love in the world. I don't care if it is old—the opera. Music and love never grow old."

As the duet ended, Winifred and Philip, each in the thrall of the divine song, looked deep into each other's eyes. Confused, startled, the spell was broken, and Winifred turned again to the

stage.

When the Latimers were alone in their apartments the judge remarked on Danvers' generosity. "I never knew a man who so delighted in giving pleasure to other people. He sent tickets to a family of four to-night because he heard me speak of their love for music; and they'll never know their benefactor." [190]

"You're always ready to sing the praises of Senator Danvers!" Mrs. Latimer stifled a yawn. "I really get tired of hearing his good qualities enumerated."

While Danvers and his friends were enjoying the opera Joseph Hall sat in a hotel office in Helena, watching the crowd and grumbling at the excitement and bustle of the politicians and hangers-on.

He was something of a power in the political affairs of the State, but to-night the swarming activity of the candidates for the appointive offices displeased him mightily. So did the well-organized methods of one man who wanted to go to Congress—Robert Burroughs. Hall did not belong to the party in power, although he had been elected from his county. As he saw Burroughs' friends hobnobbing with the country legislators he shut his eyes, cursing all men impartially. Like a thorn in the flesh the memory of Burroughs' trick and the resultant lawsuit pricked his anger into poisonous hate. Outwardly he showed no enmity, but revenge would be [191] sweet. To be sure, he had won his suit and recovered his share of the proceeds from the sale of the mine, but the cause rankled, and had become a mania, not the less dangerous because it was nursed secretly.

In the jostling, good-natured throng of senators, representatives, boys who wanted to be pages, and girls who boldly or coyly tried to interest unintroduced men in their clerical abilities, Joe Hall saw no one with whom he cared to speak. Montana was not yet populous enough to make its leading men unknown to each other, especially the old-timers. As he rose to go he heard his name spoken, and turned to face a man whom he could not for the moment place.

"McDevitt!" he finally exclaimed.

"To command," was the fawning response. "May I speak to you for a moment?"

Hall hesitated; he thought that the man would hardly be seeking an office at the capital, and he motioned the Canadian to follow. They passed into a small room reserved for semi-private conversations.

"What shall it be?" he asked as they took seats at a small table.

"Lemonade." McDevitt had never drunk openly. Joe smiled grimly at the call-boy's amazement. Lemonade was not often called for at that hotel. Hall's own order was gin.

"Well?" [192]

McDevitt was disconcerted. He had thought to receive a cordial greeting, forgetting that Joseph Hall had left the North West Mounted Police in disgrace, and might wish to ignore his past. He hesitated; then, seeing that there were to be no questionings, he began autobiographically:

"I've been living in Montana for some time. I run a little store. Say, look here," his voice changed to anxiety as he breathed his desire, "I'm here looking for a job. I'm no lobbyist, but I want a position at the capital."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yes. I thought maybe you could give me a good word. I know you're a leading light in Montana politics. I seen by the papers that you was State senator."

"Oh, you did?" Little encouragement could be gathered from the noncommittal responses. Hall's restless, drumming fingers and lowered gaze threw the suppliant out of countenance. McDevitt, in turn, grew silent and drank the last of his mild refreshment. Hall looked up, with shifty eyes.

"Can you pray?"

"Now?" gasped the startled ex-preacher.

Joe relaxed in spite of himself. "Well, not just now. This is not a church." The jingle of glasses in the adjoining bar corroborated his statement. "When were you in Macleod last?" The question came suddenly, with intent to surprise truth. [193]

"Oh, some little time ago," evaded McDevitt, deftly. Why tell that he had been caught smuggling whiskey, and after serving his sentence had left Canada?

Hall looked at him, thoughtfully, with a curious cunning in his eyes.

"Then you don't happen to know where Bob Burroughs' squaw is?"

"Pine Coulee? Why—she's—that is—perhaps I could find out? What do you want to know for?" The caution of a possible bargain appeared.

Hall did not answer immediately, but went back to McDevitt's request.

"So you want a job? Why don't you go to Burroughs? He isn't in the Legislature, but he seems to be promising 'most everything to 'most everybody these days." Joe spoke bitterly, and light dawned on the not over acute McDevitt.

"H-m-m! *Me* asking Bob Burroughs for anything! I see myself!"

"Or him giving it!" supplemented Hall, remembering the rivalry of the traders. Again he did deliberate thinking. If he should place McDevitt it would be a small but irritating way to annoy [194] Burroughs. He was not above seeking even infinitesimal means of stinging, and this chance encounter might lead to something more to his set purpose. So he went on: "Get you a job, eh? Se-ve-ri-al others want sinecures." He grew facetious as his thought took shape. "I'm out of it this year, Mac. Still, I think I've influence enough to help an old friend if——" His look suggested an exchange of favors.

McDevitt was shrewd enough to wait. Joe mused an appreciable time, beating his tattoo on the table. "Yes," he finally said, "they've got to give the minority something, and I know one of the members who can get what I want. He's owing me a little favor—see? I needn't figure in the deal at all, and Burroughs will be mad as thunder." Again he thrummed, decisively this time. "If I get you on the pay-roll as chaplain at five per (or whatever the legislators pay for prayers which, if answered, would put 'em out of business), I'll expect you to find Pine Coulee and Burroughs' half-breed brat. He must be a chunk of a youngster now, if he's alive. And," impressively, "after that I'll expect you to keep your mouth shut—see?"

"Oh, the 'breed's alive, all right," threw out the ex-preacher in the expansion of his soul at the thought of a comfortable per diem. "The hour I sign the pay-roll I'll tell yeh several surprisin' [195] things. I'd like to get even, too. And as for talking too much with my mouth, I reckon selling whiskey in the Whoop Up Country after the Police came in taught me the necessity of occasionally being a mute."

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Chapter VII
Debauching a Legislature

The rumors of vote-buying before the Legislature convened were forgotten in the facts of the days following. The first ballot for United States senator, as provided for by the Federal statutes, was cast in each branch of the Assembly separately on the second Tuesday after organization; and it was, as usual, scattered by honoring different men of State repute. The next day, and the next, the ballot was taken in joint session. The first test of each candidate's strength showed that Robert Burroughs had but thirty of the entire ninety-four. Thereafter began a systematized demoralization of the men of all parties who constituted the legislative assembly. Sumptuous headquarters were maintained at the leading hotel by Mr. Burroughs, and the Honorable William [197] Moore, past master in chicanery and rascality, extended a well-filled hand to all who entered the spider's parlor. Burroughs was seldom in evidence. In fact, he was not often in the city.

"My friends are working for me," he would explain, nonchalantly. "I have placed myself in their hands completely. It is not necessary for me to trouble about the minor details. They have urged me to allow my name to be used; but, really, it is immaterial to me—I have other interests to look after." Then, plaintively, "I am far from well."

This last statement was a self-evident fact. Years of crafty plotting had seamed Burroughs' face with lines that come from secret connivings—an offer here, a lure there; a sword of Damocles held low; an iron hand and a velvet glove—all these things made for age in heavy retribution. He complained of the heat, of the cold; of his breathing and of his digestion. A sense of suffocating fullness oppressed him as he climbed the steep incline of the streets of the capital. Yet he retained his pride in the English girl whom he had married, as he avowed, to vent malice on her

brother. His family affection was the one redeeming sentiment of his life. When he was away from Butte not a day passed that he did not communicate with his wife, either by post or [198] telegraph. He took pains that no newspapers speaking ill of him should gain admittance to his house—a superfluous task, since politics were of no interest to his home-loving wife.

William Moore sometimes looked meditatively at his old friend as he fumed over trifles. Invariably after such reflection he saw to it that his own private exchequer was bettered from the flow of gold streaming from the millionaire's store. It was well to be on the safe side, thought the ex-wolfer, sagely. Yet on the whole his arduous work as Burroughs' manager was conscientiously done. These men had worked together too long for Moore not to feel a personal pride in his work of debauching a Legislature.

Other candidates there were, too, who used illegal methods to obtain votes. Not that no reputable man was a candidate; not that honest, incorruptible men could not be found in the legislative halls of Montana; but Moore's extravagance in behalf of his chief shattered all precedents, defied integrity and exposure and eclipsed the good that would not be submerged. In fact, his prodigality defeated its purpose; when men found that they could get five thousand dollars for a vote as easily as one thousand, they held their decision in abeyance until the consideration was increased fourfold. This not once, nor twice; not by one man, but by the indefinite many, until it [199] was current talk that certain men had received one, five, ten, even fifteen thousand dollars for their votes. Why should legislators talk of "their duty," or "the principle of the thing," when a lifetime of ordinary business methods and dealings would bring but little more than might be obtained by speaking a man's name in joint assembly? To listen to any group of men discussing the political situation one unacquainted with the law would never mistrust that bribery in legislatures was a state's prison offense.

So wary did members become that Burroughs, possessing small faith in the impeccability of his fellow men, grew peevish at the delay in securing the requisite majority, while those who held Montana's best interests at heart breasted the tidal wave of corruption with sinking hearts.

As in every contest of its kind, the full vote for Burroughs was not cast at any joint assembly until Moore knew he had the number required to elect. In this way no legislator was sure from day to day of the man sitting beside him; some one known to be pledged to another candidate, or professing himself under no obligations to any man, would swaggeringly or shamefacedly, as the case might be, announce as his name was called from the alphabetical list by the brazen-voiced reader in front of the speaker's desk that his choice for a United States senator was Robert [200] Burroughs.

Days went by, with no decisive vote; there was less good-fellowship, more caution; less talking, more secrecy; each member looking askance at his neighbor, wondering if he was or would be bought. Lobbies and halls of capitol, hotels, saloons and offices swarmed with men talking of Burroughs.

O'Dwyer, member from Chouteau County, took to walking in the middle of the streets to ward off Burroughs' emissaries—greatly to the amusement of his friends, in days when amusement was seldom indulged in by the small band of honest men in the Legislature. State Senator Danvers grew more grave as time went on. The onus of his party's opposition had fallen on him, for he was working for the governor's election as United States senator as against Burroughs, also a Republican. He felt more alone than at any time since he had lived in the Northwest, for the doctor was back at Fort Benton, and Judge Latimer away on professional matters.

Hall grew unctuous, and had many a sly wink with Chaplain McDevitt. Senator Blair was moody, restless and irritable, except in the hours which he spent with Mrs. Latimer. Winifred, in her anxiety, became a stranger to sleep, but she made no complaint of her haunting fear. A reserve, [201] unnatural to her, became apparent.

With Eva Latimer it was different. She was intoxicated with the excitement, and missed no noon hour when the senate marched in, two by two, to the representatives' chamber for the daily balloting. With a list of the members of both houses in hand, she sat watching the proceedings and checking off each name on the roll-call. Her absorption in the varying sum totals for Burroughs made her unconscious of the glances in her direction; and Moore, secluded in his retreat, knew nothing of her open interest in the capitol. Often Senator Blair was at her side at the convening of the Legislature, or provided her a seat near his own, and in the intervals of routine work they would chat in low tones. She often cast furtive eyes at Danvers, eyes that revealed so much that those who watched her smiled meaningly. But Danvers, absorbed in his arduous duties, saw nothing personal in her self-revealing glance; he resented only her carelessness in protecting her absent husband's interests.

The contest was not without its amusing features. A nervous representative shied violently at a piece of writing paper one night which had been left on his floor by a careless chambermaid; for the member rooming next him had the night before opened his innocent eyes on a thousand-dollar bill miraculously floating through the transom. If bills of such denomination materialized as [202] cleverly as roses at a medium's seance, what might not develop at any moment? It was disquieting! Beds were feverishly ripped open instead of being slept in; mattresses were overhauled and pillows uncased; chiffoniers were turned upside down in hope that bills were tacked on the bottom; envelopes in unfamiliar handwriting were opened cautiously, with no witnesses; papers were signed making one legislator an Indian agent, another a doctor in a coal camp, another a lawyer in a large corporation—all positions contingent on Burroughs' election.

The list of pledged men grew, yet still Moore's outlay did not buy the United States senatorship for Robert Burroughs.

"Yes, the whole number of ninety-four," confided Moore, patiently, as Burroughs asked for the hundredth time how many members were in the Assembly. They were sitting before a large desk in the inner room of Burroughs' suite, and the Assembly had been in session nearly six weeks.

"I surely have forty-five of 'em now?" anxiously.

"That's the way I've got it figured," soothingly.

"Good men? Men who would vote for me anyway?" Burroughs had lately developed an exasperating desire to believe that some man was his friend with no thought of reward. Mr. Moore, knowing the aspirant's record and reputation, thought that this portended senility. [203]

"Yes—I suppose so. Thirty of 'em, anyway."

"And the others?"

"Oh, so-so," indifferently. What did it matter?

"How many are there who can't be approached?"

"It's pretty hard to tell who can and who can't," parried Moore, cautiously, and lighted a cigar. "I fancy the lantern business would experience a gigantic boom if one went hunting for an honest man in politics."

"In Montana," supplemented Burroughs, smiling at his pleasantry.

"In Montana," acquiesced the arch-briber, suavely.

"How many more must I get?" This was a question that any child could answer, but Burroughs had a nervous desire to talk which irritated his companion almost beyond endurance. The day had been a trying one, and Burroughs asked for repetitions of statements and figures unceasingly.

"Three or four, to make certain," answered Moore, with what urbanity he could command at the moment.

"How much have you paid out already?" The change in subject was not so unexpected as might appear. Like most millionaires, the magnate kept closer account of his expenditures than many a working man. [204]

"I haven't the exact figures. Men often come in and ask for money to grease their gabbers with, and I give it to them without making a note of the item."

"I wouldn't believe you under oath—unless I chose," Burroughs said, equably.

Moore shrugged his shoulders. It was all a matter of a day's exigencies.

"Seems to me we've got a lot of bribe-brokers who are earning easy money," continued the candidate for Congress.

"That's no dream. But the saloons must be worked, and the men who are talking for you all the time seem to think it is worth cash money right along. They've cultivated the politician's faculty of making themselves indispensable."

"Oh, well, that's all right. I'll go to Congress if it costs me—no one knows what it costs to buy a Legislature, but I'm going to find out this winter." Burroughs looked thoughtfully at a slip of paper on the desk, then raised his eyes.

"Haven't got O'Dwyer, I see."

"No."

"What do you think he'll do?"

"I'm no mind reader."

"Can't get Danvers?" [205]

"What are you thinking of? Of course we can't get him. He's the head of the opposition. We won't even try. I've had one experience with him in that Hall case. That's enough for me, and," defiantly, "I rather admire him." Burroughs lifted his eyebrows. "Besides——"

"How about Joe Hall?" Burroughs interrupted.

"Joe will be in this evening. First time I've been able to get him to promise to come here. He's sore yet, Bob."

"That's all right. Better be liberal with him. I always liked Joe well enough. But he's sold out so often in politics that he's a little risky, after all. Weren't you out with him last night?"

Moore laughed admiringly. So Burroughs knew of a drive to a roadhouse and a convivial night. His chief kept an omniscient eye on everybody with whom he was dealing.

"Well, yes. I thought that I'd jolly him up a little without any hint of trying to get his vote. I had half a mind to commit suicide this morning, but my head was so sore that I hated to shoot a hole in it."

Burroughs grinned. "Joe's always telling of what he's done. According to his talk he's developed the State from cattle to copper—from sheep to sapphires. A man who's always telling what he's [206] done isn't doing very much now. I'll bet he'll be the easiest in the bunch if you tackle him right."

"Don't be too sure. A man that's been everything from a Populist to a justice of the peace is likely to be hard to convince. Queer how McDevitt turned up this winter," Moore went on, after a drink. "Chaplain of the House, too!"

"I don't much like that!"

"Oh, we must throw something overboard to the sharks," said Moore, carelessly. "A member asked me to see that McDevitt got the job, and I thought it an easy way to get the member—see? Quite a number of the old Whoop Up crowd here this winter."

"Yes. Got Blair yet?"

"No. He'll be the toughest nut of all. He's hard up, but he's a pretty decent sort of man these days, and his sister has considerable influence over him. Besides, he feels in duty bound to stick to Danvers—the old story of Danvers saving his sister's life, you know."

"I suppose so," admitted Burroughs. "Get a woman after him."

"I have. Mrs. Latimer is interesting him in your behalf. But the idiot has lost his head over her, instead of taking her advice and voting for you."

"He's a fool!" snarled Burroughs, remembering Eva's dismissal of himself. "I thought the time [207] would come when she'd be anxious to get my help—in some way! But get Blair—get him!" he repeated. "He'll do to take along as a political exhibit. I've never forgiven him for squealing in the matter of that whiskey in the Whoop Up Country. Fix it so his change of face will smirch Eva Latimer. That'll hurt her virtuous and law-upholding husband more than anything I can do to get even with that decision *in re* Hall. Offer him—anything in reason. He's probably banking on a big haul. Give it to him, and I'll see that his sister knows that he was bought like a steer in open market. Her scorn will be like hell for him. I can see that Danvers is gone on her. She'll send him flying if her brother gets bit—mark my words. Or, rather, Danvers would hardly want to marry her—the sister of a bribe-taker!"

"I hate to touch Charlie, or to offer him more than any of the others," objected Moore. "I'll try to get you elected without him. I will if I can, and in the meantime I don't give a hang if Mrs. Latimer's reputation is scorched."

"I know why you don't want to touch Blair. That sister of his is what you're after. Look out for Danvers if you undertake to stick your brand on *her*! But my interests must come first—remember. And as for Eva——" Bill let no smile indicate his mental amusement. [208]

Mr. Burroughs had not been gone long before Senator Hall looked into the hospitably open door of the outer room.

"You here, Bill?"

"Yes. Walk right in." Moore stepped forward and stood aside for Hall to precede him to the inner room, closing and locking the door. "We'll not be interrupted here. I've been wanting to see you for six weeks—never made it until last night."

After a little talk of the weather and of the political outlook, Moore thought best to approach his subject boldly.

"How are you feeling towards Burroughs, Joe?"

"Just like a kitten—a soft, purry kitten." Hall was heartily metaphorical, as he opened his pocket knife mechanically. "If you want to feel my claws, just ask me to vote for that damn thief! You'll think that I live in four different atmospheres. You and Bob Burroughs may be able to buy the rest of the Legislature, but you can't buy me—so don't ask my price!" Senator Hall had thought long on what he should say when solicited by the Honorable William, and he had his bluster volubly perfect. "Any man but Burroughs may go to Congress, but he never shall!" He continued [209] to pare his nails.

Moore was not at all deceived. He had heard men talk before, and he detected the false ring of Hall's words. Herein Joe miscalculated. He thought to deceive a man steeped in conspiracy and deceit. Nevertheless, Moore was politic, and made no haste.

"Why not forget bygones, Joe? You would have done the same thing yourself in your deal with Burroughs if you had had the first chance at those Easterners."

"Would I?" snorted Hall.

"Isn't there any inducement that we can offer you to support Burroughs?"

"None whatever. My constituents would hang me in effigy if I voted for him. I was on the stump last fall and went on record."

"Your constituents! The voters! What are they? Cattle driven into a chute! They don't know the true inwardness of State politics. There aren't six men who do."

"Politics must be purified," Hall announced, solemnly.

"That's so," acquiesced Moore. "Every politician I know, nearly, is so desirous of being purified that he steps right up here, as though this was the disinfecting vat! Our legislators seem to think that Burroughs is the Chief Purifier, and that I am the one who cares for the shorn lambs!" [210]

"Well, I can't change now."

"You're mighty conscientious. If you had been as much so at Fort Macleod you probably wouldn't have been run out of the police for——"

"I'm as conscientious as most office-holders," Hall interrupted. Something in the twist given the words inspired Moore with renewed courage to press his point. After he had talked earnestly for several moments, his guest interrupted: "Where is Bob to-night? You said last night that he would be here."

"He's instructing the conscientious legislator."

Hall laughed, and it was not long before he allowed himself to say:

"Of course, if there's any money going, I want to get my share. I'd do as much for Burroughs' money as anybody."

After a guarantee of good faith had passed from a safe to his pocket he left. "What do I care whether Bob Burroughs goes to Congress or goes to hell?" he muttered delightedly, as he felt the roll of bills in his pocket. "I've got a pricker coming that will sting his rhinoceros hide! This money ain't half what's coming to me from that mining deal; take it all in all, I'll even up with him before the session closes. Just you wait, Joe," he apostrophized, as he entered the elevator; "just you wait until the time comes!"

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Chapter VIII
Danvers' Discouragement

"Good evening, Senator!" Danvers was waiting at the elevator door as Hall stepped through it on the ground floor.

"Good evening, Senator," returned Joe, thinking how little Danvers had changed in appearance since he first came to Fort Benton.

The Senator from Chouteau County took the lift to the third floor. He went to the doctor's room, for he knew that his old friend from Fort Benton, who had but just come to the capital, would be waiting for the evening call and friendly smoke on the first day of his arrival. To-night the younger man was unusually silent, and after the first greetings nearly an hour passed before a [212] word was spoken. But the doctor felt the silence—pregnant with the heart-ache of his friend, and at last he spoke.

"How goes it, Phil?"

"Pretty heavy luggage."

"He'll get it?" No need to be more specific.

"I'm afraid so," soberly. "I never dreamed it could be possible to mow down an Assembly as Burroughs is doing."

"He would sell his soul for the senatorship," affirmed the doctor, "and yet he pretends that he doesn't want the office. He would have people think that he is in mortal fear of being politically ravished, and all the while he, and every man that he can control, are actively engaged in promoting a campaign of ravishment."

"And Bill Moore is his chief procurer," added Danvers.

"But the whole Legislature can't be bought."

"Every one!"

"You include yourself there, Phil," smiled the doctor. "But I know what you mean. It's damnable!" The believer in mankind felt the foundations of the State totter.

"I did not mean to be quite so bitter, but I am sick of the lack of principle that I find in the men sent to Helena. Burroughs has a long string of men who are now scattering their votes, on the pretext that our Republican caucuses do not pledge them clearly to any one candidate. This split [213] in the party is bad for Burroughs, of course, and he is not only trying to get my men away from the Governor, but is angling for members of the Democratic party." After a moment he smiled. "Of course we are sure of O'Dwyer!" He then named several others who could be depended upon not to enter Burroughs' camp, either by reason of their own integrity or the pledges they had given to other candidates. "So many in the field scatters the vote," he continued, "and that gives us a chance to work."

"How about Hall?" asked the doctor.

"Senator Hall seems safe. He is one enemy whom Bob cannot buy. I never saw a man hold the idea of revenge as Hall does."

"If Joe Hall doesn't vote for Burroughs it is the first time that he ever resisted easy money," quoth the doctor. "However, hate will make even money seem of small account. But Hall will do some dirty trick, one of these days, to get even on that mining deal. Those two are a good pair to draw to."

"As politics now are it would not be hard to find three of a kind," added Danvers.

The old man took up the evening paper, containing the list of the legislators and their city addresses. He checked off the names as he read, and presently looked up.

"As far as we can tell Burroughs is shy several votes for a majority." [214]

"Looks that way."

"We don't know who Moore's holding back—worse luck! But we do know who are solid against Burroughs. By the way, what's Charlie Blair up to?"

"Politically or personally?"

"I think one means the other these days, according to all I hear."

"Possibly." After a moment Danvers added: "Blair has promised me on his honor not to vote for Burroughs. I do not think that he will deliberately go back on his word. As for—I can't speak of it, doctor! Poor Arthur!"

"Eva's not a bad woman—she's only an ambitious fool," asserted the doctor, touching one of the sore spots in Danvers' aching heart. "I can overlook a woman's folly if it is the result of an overwhelming passion—some women are as intense as men. But to play with fire—while she is as cold as ice—as calculating as a machine——" The speaker made a gesture of disgust. "Be sure that she is promised something she thinks worth her while, by Bob or by Moore, for her sudden interest in politics and—Charlie Blair. She is a good catspaw. I thought she was making eyes at Charlie at the opera, but I couldn't believe my own. She and Moore are working the members of [215] this Legislature by concerted action, or I am very much mistaken."

"You haven't heard any open talk of Mrs. Latimer—Arthur would—I should fear for his reason—for his life—if scandal——"

"Well, I can't say there hasn't been any," compromised the doctor. "But there'll be more if she doesn't turn Blair down pretty quick. He's drinking, too; something he hasn't done since his sister came back from school to live with him. He could always stand liquor in abnormal quantities; but he can't stand"—abruptly he blurted it out—"first Eva knows there will be hell to pay—and I doubt if her credit is good."

"She doesn't care for him, then?"

"Nah!" The negative was drawn out contemptuously. "All she wants of Charlie is his vote for Burroughs. She never loved but one man in her life." A glance went to the senator, but he did not apply the words.

"Poor Winifred!" sighed the young man. The doctor caught the baptismal name.

"Winifred's a plucky woman. I'll wager she knows practically every move being made in all this rotten business—all," the old man added significantly. "Yet you would never mistrust it to see her. It is well to put on the cheerful face and tone, yet when in trouble is it best? It is deceiving to one's best friends, robbing them of the opportunity to extend sympathy. Winifred Blair is [216] worrying over Charlie, yet she keeps her troubles to herself and cheats her friends of a just privilege."

"I wish," began Danvers, then closed his lips. No one should see his heart.

"I wish she would give you the right to protect her," said the doctor, heartily. "What has come between you two? I had thought——"

"I do not know," acknowledged the disconsolate lover. "She was friendly. We've seen each other quite a good deal. I thought she was one to understand. I cannot talk as most men do—I am aware of my failing."

His eyes were more eloquent than words, as he paused. "And now she hardly speaks to me—makes some trivial excuse to leave me with Charlie when I call; or if he is not there she pleads an engagement. You have noticed how Moore has been paying her marked attention? It is for her to choose——"

When Danvers began again it was of another phase of his trouble. "Miss Blair has doubtless heard of my financial loss, caused by that early snowstorm and later rain, which crusted the snow until my cattle were almost wiped out. My foreman wired me the night of the opera, you remember. Those that were not frozen were starved to death. My political life here in Helena is [217] costing me a fortune."

Danvers rose and paced the floor. "It gives me the jigs, even to think of those cattle," he burst out. "Not the financial loss, you understand, but the suffering of dumb animals!"

"You did all you could, Phil."

"Yes. But what with a three years' drouth and no hay in the country, and the railroads blocked so that no feed could be shipped in, even if we could have gotten to the cattle on the range—oh, well ——" The cattleman dropped to his chair with a sigh of helplessness.

The doctor took a new turn.

"I have known you for fifteen years or more, my boy, and I never knew you to be jealous before, much less unjust."

"I—unjust!" Danvers was startled. Never before had he faced such accusations.

"Yes, you. You should know Winifred Blair better than to think such thoughts as you are harboring."

"My experience with women has been unfortunate, probably; I do not pretend to understand them—they are too complex for me."

"Tut, tut!" The gentle friend tried to turn the tide. "Not Winnie. She is a woman to trust."

"But how can she have anything to do with Bill Moore? That is what I can't get over."

"You shouldn't speak so of Moore. It shows a spirit I'm sorry to see you cultivate. Go in and win. [218] You have probably told Winifred something of your standards of public morality and the sacredness of the ballot, and she fears that Charlie will disgrace both himself and her. She perhaps fears your disgust if——"

"She is mistaken if she thinks so poorly of me. Her brother's conduct could never change my feeling for her; rather, pity would come to plead for love. Do you think she does care for me?"

"Do I? You had better ask her—not go tilting at political windmills when more important matters should be——"

"If Charlie's foolishness is the only thing in my way, I'll force him to be a man if I have to gag him in joint assembly!" cried the lover, joyously.

"What transformations love will work!" sighed the matchmaker after he had bidden the light-hearted Danvers good-night. "Standing practically alone against the might of Burroughs' millions—holding his scant forces by sheer force of character, yet downed by the mistaken attitude of a mere slip of a girl!"

Chapter IX
A Frontier Knock

The next afternoon Winifred lay back in a low chair before a leaping wood fire. She wanted to think, to puzzle out all that was taking place around her. She recognized, yet refused to accept the verdict of her common sense. She was no unsophisticated school girl; she was a woman of the world. The social and political atmosphere in which she moved seemed charged with dynamic possibilities. Her closed eyes suddenly brimmed with tears. Winifred let them fall unheeded, feeling miserable consolation in her self-pity, as women will.

Apart from the senatorial contest lay her personal interest in the game being played by the scheming Burroughs, the unscrupulous Moore and the ambitious Eva, on the one side, and her [220] brother on the other. What chance had Charlie against such a combination? Robert Burroughs had judged truly; Blair's degradation would hurt Winifred inexpressibly. He had chuckled as he had watched the growing attachment between his brother-in-law and the girl, and thought of his vow. He realized that here was a way to bring vicarious suffering upon the man whose distinction had first roused his envy and whose rectitude had won his hatred.

As Winifred groped in the tangle of State and private intrigues that enmeshed her, the fire burned low and the snapping of an occasional spark checked and soothed until her mind slipped into more peaceful channels. She looked about the quiet room. The firelight threw her face into relief and accentuated the faint lines of pain that had come during the last few weeks; a pensive touch had been added to a countenance that combined loveliness with strength. The yellow puff-ball in the gilded cage by the window stirred drowsily, with a faint, comforting chirp. The white and gold of blossoming narcissi, rising from their sheaths of green, gleamed purely from a tabouret, and their incense filled the room.

Presently she took up events of recent occurrence with clearer mind. She had probably exaggerated the seeming coherence of disconnected happenings. She longed to think so. Eva [221] took great interest in the senatorial contest. Should that be an indictment? She craved excitement—expected to hold the stage in any episode; her position as the wife of an eminent jurist gave her a certain prestige in the political arena where pretty women were not unwelcome. The power they wielded, whether consciously or not, was almost unlimited—Winifred had seen enough of the average legislator to appreciate that fact.

In thinking it over, Winifred admitted that Mrs. Latimer had known for many years Mr. Burroughs, Mr. Moore, Mr. Danvers and her brother Charlie—four of the men who were playing their part in the drama fast drawing to its climax. What cause for apprehension in this? Ever since the Latimers' marriage their home had been a rendezvous for the politicians of the State—at least, of Arthur's party. Surely Mrs. Latimer could receive the same guests, even if the judge was away—even if some among her satellites were men whose reputations excluded them from all but the very smartest set. If she talked politics she did so in the pursuit of her affirmed desire to learn of politics at first hand. It could not be that she would descend to the plane of a lobbyist! But what would Judge Latimer think of this surprising fervor? He would not care to express himself as opposed to Burroughs. Did not Eva care for her husband's opinions—for his [222] reputation? Winifred did not feel called upon to judge her friend; she was only trying to account for the circumstantial evidence accumulating against Eva.

When the girl turned her thoughts to her brother, she was sucked into a whirling maelstrom. The doctor's opinion of her had been correct. She knew her brother and his fluctuating fortunes as only a sister of infinite love and infinite tact could know. But she never had dreamed that he could be enmeshed by the wiles of the wife of his friend. The crux of the whole matter lay in the possibility of saving him, not only from Eva's hypnotic charm, but from the less intricate and more thinly concealed machinations of Mr. Moore. Winifred felt her first smart of anger revive toward Mrs. Latimer as she recalled how ingenuously Charlie had been led to the juggernaut of Burroughs' ambition.

It was horrible—horrible! Afresh came the intolerable loathing of it all—this overshadowing political machine, that could scatter ruin in its wake even if it did not obtain control.

Winifred knew that Danvers was studying every move and checkmating where he could. She felt that if possible he would prevent this crime of buying a United States senatorship. He would protect Charlie. Through the doctor she learned how strong a bulwark of the State the senator [223] from Chouteau County was proving to be. She gloried in these recitals, and longed to confide in her old friend, but always the woman's reticence withheld her.

Presently a tap came at the door, and Mrs. Latimer appeared on Winifred's invitation to enter.

"How fortunate," she said, "that you came to the hotel for the winter! It's not only more convenient for you and Charlie, but for me. Would you sit by baby for a half hour, Winnie, dear?" she entreated. "The nurse is out, and I must run downtown before six."

"Yes, indeed! I'd love to."

They passed into the Latimers' apartments, and when Eva finally left, Winifred sat down beside the crib where the child slept. Heavy portieres hung behind her, evidently covering the double doors leading into other rooms beyond. In the stillness she heard a voice.

"I tell you I don't want any paltry thousand dollars! I know of three men who've got five thousand. You promised——" The rest was indistinct. A soothing voice followed that Winifred recognized; then: "I don't care a damn if everybody can hear. I want what you promised if I vote for——" The speaker must have walked from the dividing wall, for the girl heard no more. After a time an [224] almost inaudible scratch, scratch came from behind the draperies. Winifred rose in dismay, throwing down the book she was reading. Who was seeking entrance through this private door? It was evidently a preconcerted signal, for it came again, impatiently; then cautious footsteps retreated. Winifred choked the shudder that swept over her. Mr. Burroughs' headquarters took all the rooms on that side of the hall except those occupied by Judge Latimer and his family. She had heard the unmistakable voice of Mr. Moore. Had he used that frontier knock—a scratch on the door as he might scratch on the flap of a tent?

In a frenzy the girl walked through the suite.

"I will not believe—I will not!" she said to herself. "I do not understand; but it is all right—I'm sure it is. I'll stand by Eva—she shall not be talked about—shall not do foolish things. Oh, this contest! And poor Judge Latimer!" Her thoughts raced on. "How much worse if someone else had heard that signal! But it meant nothing—of course, it meant nothing!"

She smiled, with a conscious effort, when Mrs. Latimer returned, with apologies for delay; and resolved again not to abandon Eva to the innuendos that were already circulating.

"Shall we go down to dinner together, Eva?" she asked, gently. "I'm alone to-night; Charlie is [225] dining at the club."

"Thank you, dear. I believe I'll have my dinner sent up. Thank you so much!"

After her lonely meal Winifred remembered her unfinished book, and thought to get it as she stepped from the elevator. She knocked lightly at Mrs. Latimer's door. She heard a faint rustle inside, then all was still. Again she gave a soft, playful battering of open palms on the panels; then she fled to her own apartments, and flung herself face downward on the pillowed couch, weeping as though her heart would break.

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[226]

Chapter X
Wheels within Wheels

On the other side of the closed door stood Eva Latimer, lips parted, hands clasped on her breast in terror.

The Honorable William Moore came from between the portieres over the door which he had used for entrance from Burroughs' apartments into the Latimer suite.

"That's just like a woman!" he grumbled, as he returned to the Morris chair. "Fly to open a door!"

"But I didn't open it!"

"No, but you meant to," severely.

"I was frightened," pleaded Eva.

"No, you were not," contradicted Moore. "You wanted to get that door open. It wasn't necessary that it be opened at once. You should have given me time to get out of here into those rooms that [227] Burroughs reserved for just such emergencies. It would never do for me to be found here. But, no! That door must be opened! I've noticed that trait in other women. They don't reason; they don't think. But they must have a door opened the moment there is a knock."

"It might have been Winnie. After you told me that you gave our signal—that you wanted to go over this list before dinner—I've been sick with fear that she heard your scratch. But evidently she didn't, for she asked no questions when I returned. I don't want her to suspect anything. I never wanted you to come through those connecting doors, anyway. Why not come openly, as everyone else does?"

"I tell you it would never do!" angrily. "Miss Blair had better suspect—than know," grimly. "What people don't see they can't prove."

"It might have been Arthur," still seeking justification.

"Well, it wasn't," replied the political manager, coolly. "Besides, he has a latch-key, and we should have heard its click. Now, let's get to work. I've got a dinner engagement with Charlie Blair to-night at eight-thirty. Here's the list. Let's check up."

The Honorable was very methodical, very systematic. He called off senators and representatives [228] in alphabetical order, and checked or drew a line through their names as Eva told of her efforts in Burroughs' behalf.

"How do you do it?" asked the man with admiration, as she reported that one particularly obdurate senator, too rich to be influenced by money, had promised his vote.

"I told him frankly that it was a personal affair," admitted the fair lobbyist. "He knows women well enough to understand why I have never been satisfied to live in this little hill city——"

"And he thought it his duty to see that your brilliancy lighted wider domains—I see." Moore finished the sentence to suit himself.

"He was very nice about it," returned Eva, haughtily. "He thinks that Arthur should have some recognition from the government for all that he has done for the party; and he added that Arthur was too big a legal light to be eclipsed by the shadow of Mount Helena." She paused, evidently hesitating to speak further. "Can't you get the others on the list yourself? I'm getting tired of——" She was shaken by the unexpected knock; suddenly, but too late, she was afraid of what her husband would think—would say. Her aspirations seemed of small account after that tap that could not be answered.

"Get Charlie Blair's promise, and we'll be satisfied," said Moore, not unkindly. "You have done [229] very well."

"Will Mr. Burroughs keep his promise? He knows that I——" Eva could not speak to Moore of her fear of the man whose money she would accept.

"Burroughs is all right. Words don't count, these days; it's money that turns the trick."

"But I want more than money. I want that place for Arthur."

"My dear lady," urbane William rose and bowed. "If Robert Burroughs is elected to the United States Senate, the judge shall be Minister to Berlin. It is practically arranged already. Bob's a big man in his party. What he asks for he'll get, never you fear. That is—in Washington."

"I'm glad to be assured." Mrs. Latimer intimated by a look that the interview was over, and rose. But Moore did not choose to go.

"When do you think that you can get Senator Blair? Heaven knows you've spent more time on him than on all the rest put together."

"I begin to wish that I had never seen Charlie Blair," petulantly.

"Oh-h! It's that way, eh? He's getting a little—a lit——"

"Don't you dare!" flashed Mrs. Latimer. "You promised to ask no questions."

"Pardon me. I said I didn't care what means you used," corrected Moore, with delicate emphasis. [230] He added, reflectively: "Blair has always been something of a recluse; but I've noticed that when a Puritan once feels a little of the warmth of the devil's presence that he's rather loath to step out into the cold again." The look of anger from Mrs. Latimer made him change both tone and words. "We have depended on you to get Charlie," he said, reproachfully. "I never wanted to tackle him. You know how it is? I've never had but one weakness——"

"Yes. She was here this afternoon when you signaled," interrupted Eva, glad to repay him in ever so little for his insult. "What a pity that you could not have known it. You might have come in."

"Thank God I didn't!"

"Winifred is too good for you. Senator Danvers is the sort she will marry."

Not relishing the information, Moore turned to go. But he had one more sting. "It'll be pretty hard for you to see Danvers married, won't it?" Then, satisfied to see the quick flush on Eva's cheeks, he added casually: "I'll talk with Blair to-night. You needn't bother with him further." He knew how to frighten the woman. It was understood that she must follow instructions or receive no pay.

"Give me one more chance," begged Eva, trembling. [231]

As Mr. Moore walked briskly toward the club where he was to have dinner with Blair he thought of all that underlay this winter's work, and it seemed but a continuance of the days of fur and whiskey smuggling in the Whoop Up Country. It was a series of wheels within wheels—this work of electing a man to Congress; and the man's soul reveled in the intrigue of it. He was quite content to be the one to superintend their revolutions and to watch the havoc which they might cause. Burroughs' vaulting ambition was the greatest need of all, but revolving around it were the triple, lesser desires of the ex-trader; of wreaking vengeance on Judge Latimer through his wife's folly; of causing Charlie Blair's downfall, to repay the old grudge of the Queen's evidence; and of wounding the hated Danvers through his friends, as well as separating him from Winifred.

And now but one vote was needed to give Burroughs his heart's desire. Moore had not told Eva this. But if Charlie could be secured to-night, to-morrow or the next day he would give the signal, and the men, bought but not yet delivered, would vote for Burroughs—and the battle be won! Oh, it was glorious! Bob *was* lucky. How often he had said it of himself. Yet sudden fear came. A [232] certain Corsican had thought that he was the darling of the gods, and confused his luck with destiny. Had Burroughs made the same mistake? Certainly not. Moore's habitual confidence returned manifold. The opposition was divided among too many men to amount to anything more than to keep Burroughs in uncertainty, and no stretching of his imagination could conceive any one man fusing their warring elements. Moore already saw his winter's work crowned with success.

Blair was waiting on the club steps for his host, and the dinner was ready. They were unusually silent until the black coffee and the cigars were brought. Then Moore leaned forward to reach the cognac for his coffee and asked:

"How much does it cost you a year to live, Charlie? Expenses run pretty high?"

The questions were unexpected. Blair knew the motive of his host in giving a dinner, for Moore seldom entertained without an underlying reason. Certainly he never spent his own or Burroughs' money without expecting fair returns. But Charlie had thought the attack would be more direct. Therefore he answered lightly:

"I might reply as a colored man did who was asked how little he could live on. 'I live and work on three cents' worth of peanuts a day, but I'm a little hungry sometimes.'"

Mr. Moore smiled perfunctorily. He had no sense of humor. [233]

"What have you been doing all summer?"

"Prospecting."

"Prospecting is like trying to raise money without security. Neither pans out."

"Precious little you know about either," retorted Blair.

"You're a poor man," said Moore, abruptly. The announcement struck the senator as superfluous. He nodded.

"I am familiar with the fact."

The Honorable William resolved to strike. He had never thought to speak to Charlie, but if Mrs. Latimer could not bring him to the point he would have to do it himself. One more member must be secured, and Blair was the only possible man. The other legislators who had not already succumbed seemed impregnable.

Moore became impatient as he remembered how easy it had seemed at first to secure enough votes to elect his chief.

"Charlie," he began, clearing his throat, "we want you in this fight we are making, and we want you hard. We are going to win. We are going to get the votes; if we don't get them one way, we're going to get them another."

"So I've understood."

The host felt on unstable ground at the noncommittal answer, but he boldly pushed ahead. No [234] time to fear quicksands—the end of the session was too near! He dwelt on the good that Burroughs could do the State if he went to Congress, and finally repeated:

"Bob's going to be elected. He's gaining votes every day. But we need to get the thing over with, and—it will be to your financial interest to work with us." Moore played nervously with his teaspoon.

Senator Blair watched his smoke rings fade, and made no response. Both men were silent for a time. Moore occupied himself by placing, with infinite exactness, three cubes of sugar on his spoon and pouring brandy over them. When the liquor was fired the blue flame lighted his face weirdly. So might *Mephistopheles* have looked when tempting *Faust*. He was thinking that Blair had always been a failure, and always would be—slow, methodical, too dull to see his best interests. He was a plodder, content with moderate means, when infinite opportunities in Montana waited a man's grasp—if he was sharp enough.

But silent Charlie was thinking that his opportunity had come. During the past weeks he had observed, with his usual calm, the trend of events. He had been inclined to promise Mrs. Latimer the boon she asked, for he would be glad to promote Judge Latimer's advancement (remembering [235] the fine that Latimer had paid at Fort Macleod), even if in doing so he should aid the man he hated for stealing his squaw. But Charlie was beginning to forget the judge's kindness in his passion for the judge's wife. He realized that as soon as he cast his vote for Burroughs all the advances and marks of favor which stamp a lobbyist of the sex without a franchise would be a thing of the past—an episode to be forgotten. He had quite lost sight of the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Instead, he was dreaming over the fact of a possible possession.

Knowing too well the paucity of his bank account, he was tempted to play both sides—to make a big strike with Moore, and to press his half-repulsed, half-accepted passion until Eva Latimer should consent to his plans for the future. To sum the matter up: He meant to get more than anyone else from this business of electing a United States senator. Never mind Winifred. The lure of inviting eyes had so completely ensnared him that during these days of intrigue he had almost forgotten the existence of his sister in the alternate intoxication of Eva's companionship and the less dangerous one of liquor.

The host grew impatient as his guest made no effort to reopen the conversation. He drank his coffee with a jerk and drew an envelope from his pocket. It was stuffed with bills, and a torn [236] corner showed the figures "1000." Moore pulled it out and threw it across the table. "There! That's what Burroughs and I do business with," he exclaimed. "'Tisn't so heavy as gold, nor as pretty; but it's a pretty good substitute. It's not intended to influence your vote," he hastened to add, as he noted the senator's expression; "it just shows you that my feelings are agreeable toward you—and that pretty sister of yours."

"Leave my sister out of it, please," commanded Blair, with dignity. "I can't use a thousand-dollar bank note. I'm not in the habit of flashing bills of that denomination."

"You will be if you tie to us," suggested the tempter. "Thousand-dollar bills will be as common in Helena in a few days as nickels in a contribution box. I'm about out of 'em myself, but the old man's bringing in a stack to-night. They come in right handy for contingent expenses."

"I suppose so," assented Blair, pocketing the money with a fine air of preoccupation that made the Honorable William smile the smile of the canary-nourished cat. "If there's any money going I'd like to get my share of it, of course, if it could be done without my sister knowing it. But I'll not vote for Burroughs until the last one. Perhaps then I'll see about changing if you are sure that you have a majority."

Moore rapidly ran over a list of names. "Will that satisfy you?" he demanded. "You see, I trust [237] you. Every man I have named will vote for Burroughs whenever I say so. I may never call on them all—I won't unless I have to. But"—the pause was purposely impressive—"they are to have their money whether they are called upon or not, and so will you, provided that Burroughs is elected."

"You'll never make me believe that Joe Hall can be bought—not until I hear him give his vote for Robert Burroughs. I notice you have him listed. He hates Bob more than I do, and that's saying a good deal."

"He was the easiest one of the whole bunch. He was the cheapest, and he's afraid he won't earn his money."

"Does Burroughs sanction all this?" Senator Blair was amazed, not so much at the men bought as at the sum total that must have been expended. Why was Burroughs so anxious to go to Congress? He did not need the money that was popularly supposed to accrue to senators in Washington from land grants, timber lands and other large steals; he had millions already.

"Well, he's putting up the dough, but I don't trouble him with all the minor details," admitted Moore.

"Bob's not the only one who's offering good money for votes," said Blair. [238]

"Who has approached you?"

"That's like asking who yelled fire at a theater. There are some seven candidates, and a thousand workers—I can't name them all."

"We expect to pay every member who votes for Burroughs—of his own party or not. The man who votes for him without being paid is a fool."

"Might as well have a red flag of auction placed on the speaker's desk." Senator Blair was inclined to moralize.

"Money is a legitimate source of influence in a Legislature." Moore was on the defensive.

"I judge that you think so, if no one else. But, see here! I can't vote for Burroughs, any way I see it!" (Moore thought of his vanished thousand-dollar bill!) "I've promised Danvers to vote for the Governor. My friendship for Phil—you know he saved my sister's life——"

"Friendship be damned! What difference does it make when you can get cash and get it easy? Say!" Moore leaned forward in his earnestness. "If you've been approached before, let me get my work in." He held up ten fingers as indicative of what he would pay.

"Ten thousand dollars doesn't make much of a stir in Montana," spoke Blair, scornfully.

"Fifteen, then!" The senator's eyes narrowed. "Twenty? Come, now! How's that? Burroughs will [239] pay it. No one else has got that, Charlie."

"If Burroughs is good for twenty thousand, he's good for more."

"How much do you want? Spit it out!" The briber was disgusted. This was not the Blair whom he had known in Fort Benton days.

"I'm not soliciting nor making a proposition. But if my vote is worth anything it's worth twenty-five thousand—yes, thirty thousand dollars!" Blair, for the first time, looked Burroughs' manager in the eye. If he got that sum he could leave Montana—and not alone!

"Are you mad?" Moore was aghast. Even his own rapacity had not thought to hold up Burroughs for such a sum. Thirty thousand dollars for speaking a man's name in joint assembly! Thus he interpreted selling a vote.

"No, I'm not mad. But that is my price." Blair also rose, unexpectedly committed to a fixed statement.

"You'll never get it!" roared Moore. "I'll see you damned first! We'll find others who aren't so high-priced! You have over-reached this time, Charlie Blair!" And they parted in unfriendly fashion.

The next day the Honorable Mr. Moore notified Mrs. Latimer that all she had done for Mr. [240] Burroughs would avail nothing if she failed to secure the vote of Senator Blair.

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[241]

Chapter XI
The Chinese Legend

"Well, well, well! What does this mean?" The doctor looked in amazement at Miss Blair as she opened the door to his rap, the same evening that Moore gave his dinner to her brother. Traces of tears were to be seen; indeed, more tears seemed ready to fall, despite her effort to restrain them.

"Come right in, doctor!" Winifred made no pretense of answering his question, but busily engaged herself in pulling the easiest chair to the cheerful grate fire. "I believe that I am more glad to see you than anyone else in the world," she added, affectionately, as she motioned her caller to the comfortable corner. "Now we'll have a nice, long, cozy evening."

"What does this mean?" repeated the doctor, with the privilege of friendship, not to be put off. [242]

"You should know better than to ask a woman why her eyes are red—it isn't polite! Are mine very red?" she asked, ruefully. Before he could answer: "Let us talk of Fort Benton, and of what good times we'll have when we are there again to live happy ever after. Really, I mean it," she said, earnestly, seeing his questioning face. "I want to forget—everything but Fort Benton."

Still her visitor looked at her keenly, until she sat silent under his scrutiny. He was not deceived. Nevertheless he humored her for the moment, knowing that she was no match for his astuteness when the time came to probe her hurt.

"Fort Benton, eh? You know the weak spot of the old doctor, you 'rastical'," whimsically. Then, more seriously: "I, too, wish we were there. Like you, I am sick of Helena. We were all happier, better off, in the little old trading-post—before—the railroads came." He ascribed all evils to the course of empire as exemplified in the steel rails of commerce. "The Latimers, the Burroughs, the Halls, Bill Moore, you and Charlie—every one of you moved away. Phil and I are the only ones left; and since he is in the Legislature I spend almost as much time in Helena as at Fort Benton."

"There's Mr. O'Dwyer."

"I forgot him. Yes, O'Dwyer stays near Danvers—he left the Police to go to him, you know." As he looked around the room he asked, "Where's Charlie to-night?" [243]

"He's dining with Mr. Moore at the club."

"With Moore?" The doctor, surprised, repeated her words.

"Yes. I—didn't know—they weren't friends."

Something in her hesitation gave her visitor an opportunity to ask: "You do not care very much for the Honorable William?"

"No, I do not!" came the quick response.

"Yet he is accounted quite a ladies' man; and," tentatively, "I can see that he is quite infatuated."

"He can get un-infatuated," interrupted Winifred, with no pretense of misunderstanding.

The doctor was pleased at this outburst. He had been an observer of advances and repulses between these two. Now he was thinking of another affair whose recent complications were giving him much concern.

"You wouldn't call him a gentleman?"

"Oh, no. He's a politician."

"That's rather hard on the rest of us who are dabbling in politics."

"You know what I mean!" Winifred made a pretty *moue*, her chin upturned, showing clear against the leaping flame. As her companion noted her sweetness he almost longed for his bygone youth. [244]

"I sometimes think I have missed a good deal by not marrying," mused the doctor, with seeming irrevelance. "But the rôle of husband was too exacting a one for me!"

Miss Blair gave his hand a gentle pressure which conveyed her disbelief.

"We bachelors are rather a forlorn class, when the years begin to count up; and as for the women who do not marry——" He left her to complete the observation.

"They are not all forlorn," defended Winifred. "But I will admit that the unsuspected longings of some of them are pathetic. Here is a case in point. I had a caller this very afternoon—a woman of middle age who used to work for us. She was in distress because she had received an offer of marriage. From a worldly standpoint she is foolish not to accept the man, for he is worthy of her, and could provide a home. When I ventured to say as much she cried, and showed me this clipping from some old paper. Shall I read it?"

The doctor assented, and Winifred rose and took a slip from the mantel.

> "'*There is an interesting old Chinese legend,*'" she read, "'*which relates how an angel sits with a long pole which he dips into the Sea of Love and lifts a drop of shining water. With an expert motion he turns one-half of this drop to the right, where it is immediately transformed into a soul; the other half to the left—a male and a female; and these two souls go seeking each other forever. The angel is so constantly occupied that he keeps no track of the souls that he separates, and they must depend upon their own intuition to recognize each other.*'" [245]

The old man reached for the paper as Winifred ceased. She was silent as he glanced it over.

"That old legend did not seem trite to her; it does not to me," said the girl, as the doctor looked up. "I asked her to leave it for me to copy."

"And the woman?" reminded the doctor.

"She stood before me, gaunt, unlovely, growing old. As I read her clipping she clasped her hands tensely. 'Don't you see why I don't marry him?' she cried, and all the romance and persistent hope of her lifetime came to her faded eyes. 'Because I want to find my other half. Because I want —Love.'"

"She is all right, and I respect her," said the doctor. "Too many women sacrifice their personality in loveless marriages."

"I am in doubt," speculated Winifred, "whether the women who lead colorless, unloved and unloving lives are not happier after all. They have fewer troubles. Men are very interesting, but they can make a woman's life so miserable, too." [246]

More than a hint of pathos in this, thought the listener. "How about a girl making a man

miserable?" he inquired. "A girl who has love—deep, sincere love waiting her recognition?" The surgeon took the knife resolutely.

"I don't know what you—I was speaking in general——"

"Somewhere in the Bible, I think, somebody goes about seeking whom he may devour. Nowadays women go about looking for trouble. I've known that kind before, Winnie, but I never saw anyone fairly gallop after it as you do."

"Why, doctor!"

"My dear," the friend put his hand caressingly on her own, "why do you repulse Danvers' love? Do not be offended," he said gently, as she pulled away.

She hid her face in her upturned hands. Suddenly it was sweet to feel the solicitude of a love so like what she had dreamed a father's might be.

"I can see, dear child. I know Philip as I know my own heart. I think I know you (so far as a man can understand a woman)," he stroked her hair fondly, "and you are making a mistake." [247]

"No, I'm not," came in a whisper. "I—you don't know—about—Charlie——" Tears fell fast, relieving the suppressed anguish of weeks.

"Oh, yes, I do." His words fell like balm.

"Charlie has been so good to me all these years. I can't bear to see him—drift. You know—I can't say it——"

"Don't say it," counseled the doctor. "I understand perfectly."

"And yet," with quivering voice, "you ask me why I turn Mr. Danvers away! Can't you understand—knowing his love for Judge Latimer? Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" she gasped; but soon controlled herself. "And I'm afraid Charlie will vote for Mr. Burroughs because——"

"Exactly!" The doctor used the truth unsparingly. "Eva has secured many votes for Burroughs. But we'll hope that Charlie can be held in line. He has promised Danvers to vote for his candidate—the governor."

"Oh, but I'm afraid!" wailed the girl. "And if—oh, he would despise us both—we are of the same blood! If it were not for this dreadful contest I might be so happy!" Confession shone in her eyes.

"Thank God!" said the old man, reverently. "He has been good to you—both." He kissed the hand that trembled in his. "You have made me happy, too." [248]

They sat in silent communion, the old man watching the play of emotion on the girl's sensitive face, now free from the look of anxiety that had been so apparent.

"Love is one long heartache," said the girl, plaintively. "Wouldn't you think, doctor, that if a man cared——"

"If that isn't just like a woman!" interrupted her companion, thinking he knew what Winifred was trying to say. "Women must have it in words. You want Philip to chatter away like a society man. He will talk fast enough when you quit your foolishness and give him a chance."

"I only wanted to say that he is undemonstrative," explained the girl, flaming red. "I should think that if he—oh, but I am glad he does not speak!" she interrupted herself, vehemently, remembering her brother's peril. "He must not speak!"

"Don't allow any false pride to come between you," urged the doctor. "Nothing kills a man's love so quickly as indifference, real or feigned."

"Do you think so?" She was glad to be impersonal again. "I imagined a little indifference piqued a man to further effort."

"The heat of propinquity feeds the flame of love," oracularly.

"I do not agree with you there, Doctor. I think men grow tired of women's solicitude and company." [249]

"Of their wives?"

Winifred nodded.

"Precious few have the experience! But I agree with you that most married people see too much of each other. Men seem to realize the fact. That is why they go on hunting and fishing trips. Do they hunt? A few of the party, but the rest sit around and enjoy themselves, because they are a party of *men*. Women will never understand this feeling—this insulation, so to speak; it is the cause of much of the unhappiness we see. Most men fall short of the standard a woman demands from her husband. The first rapturous love, with its utterance and reciprocity, is expected to last after years of intimacy. In love, as in a dinner, comes the gradual relaxation, the ease of well-being, which is the greatest compliment (if she but knew it) to a woman's power to evoke and to hold love. She has not lost it; to reiterate what is a self-evident fact seems to the man unnecessary. A happy married life is one of content, comradeship, loyalty. Words are not needed where such conditions exist."

"I'll remember all you have said," sighed the girl, "but I shall never have an opportunity to prove it!"

"Nonsense, girl!" The comforter rose as he heard Charlie's voice in the outer hall. "You are [250] depressed to-night. Life will look brighter to-morrow. These tangled trails are going to be straightened—I'm sure of it! Love will crystallize that Chinese legend into reality—for you and for Phil. Good-night! Good-night!"

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[251]

For years Danvers had shunned women. Yet he had not spent his life in melancholy over Eva's defection; known to many, but understood by few, his real nature withdrew from the light. His intuitive attitude toward strangers of either sex was a negative indifference that gave him time to estimate their character or their motives—a habit desirable enough in business, but unsatisfactory in social life.

The growth of his regard for Winifred had been so gradual that he had not thought it might prove to be love. Her unaffected interest in the only life he had enjoyed—the old days at Fort Macleod—had roused him from apathy, and her comprehension of his motives and activities exhilarated [252] him. He delighted in her intelligent comradeship when discussing the real world.

One subject, only, did she avoid, and that but recently. State politics were never mentioned after her brother became the keystone to the situation. Though she had no proof that Charlie's vote was the one vote necessary to Burroughs' election, she had no doubt that it was a fact.

When this shadow of another's crime crept over the brightness of their friendship, Danvers was bewildered—repulsed by her unusual reserve. The doctor's explanation gave him somewhat of courage, and he had the fine perseverance that conquers.

A few days after he had talked with the doctor Danvers saw Miss Blair crossing the street just ahead of him. He hastened to overtake her—he would put an end to her coldness and her repulses. As he dodged a car, he noted in her walk the pride and courage that had recently been added to her bearing. He thought he understood her attitude toward him—toward the whole world; and a flood of loving pity swept over him. Reaching the other side of the street, he found that she had disappeared. He looked up and down in the dusk, but caught no further sight of the elusive Miss Blair; and after lingering on the street for a half hour, he returned to the hotel.

As he ascended the stairs to the first floor he caught a glimpse of Charlie Blair, just entering the [253] Latimers' apartments. His vexation at Winifred's avoidance was a small matter to the anger that now flamed within. Small wonder that Miss Blair wished to meet no one while this folly was unchecked! Yet he felt that he must share her trouble, and resolved to make one more attempt to see her that evening.

She opened the door in response to his firm knock after dinner, hesitating perceptibly when she saw him. But Philip would not be denied, and entered with a determined resolution.

The girl's heart rose high—fluttered, and almost ceased to beat. He was going to speak; she must not allow it.

"Where did you go to-night?" he asked, as he put his hat and stick on the table. "I saw you on Warren street and tried to overtake you, but you disappeared. I prowled around hoping to find you again; and I had my new shoes on, too, and they hurt me."

The whimsical gaiety of the complaint took away Winifred's reserve, and without attempting to explain her disappearance, she smiled a welcome, though she soon fell silent under the burden of her heart.

Philip had called with a set purpose, yet he found no words as he sat before the smouldering fire. [254] He had time, waiting for the moment of speech, to note the pathetic droop of her shoulders and

the weariness of her beautiful eyes. Evidently the courage and strength of the day had been exhausted.

She played idly with a book, but laid it aside while she roused the half-burned wood into a shower of sparks.

Philip reached and took up the book abstractedly, and carelessly turned the leaves, wondering how he should say what was in his heart. A loose paper fluttered to the floor. He picked it up. It was the newspaper cutting that Winifred had saved, but had forgotten to copy, in the stress of her anxieties.

Danvers was about to replace it when something familiar made him scan it eagerly. Radiant with joy, he glanced at his companion, but Winifred stood at the mantel with averted face. He took out his note-book, found a little, old, yellow scrap, and held both slips in his hand as he rose. He drew the girl to him, startled, resisting.

"Haven't we found each other?" he asked, simply, showing her the twin copies of the legend, old, yet ever new. "This little clipping has been close to my heart for years—waiting for you, dear. Won't you take its place?"

Winifred was silent. She had guarded against all ordinary appeals, but this—how could she answer him? To refuse this tender sympathy, this yearning love, when she most needed it—the thought was bitterness! [255]

Still silent she drew away from him, and lifted a face so drawn with suffering that Danvers was startled at the change.

"You do not love me?" he questioned, more to himself than to the shrinking woman. "You do not understand?"

He stood before her struggling with his disappointment—that she should fail to understand—she who had always felt his thought so subtly; it was this, almost as much as her lack of response to his love, that hurt him.

They stood before each other, separated by a thing which the woman would not put into words, and the man dared not question.

"Mr. Danvers—Philip," said the girl, gently, "I am sorry——" She hesitated at the trite words, her voice faltering as she looked up into his sad face; it had grown thin and tired these last days. She longed to go to him, to tell him that he should find rest at last. "No," she went on, finally, "I am not sorry that you found the clipping," she altered her words; "why should I not be honest with myself—and you?"

She spoke so simply, so easily, that Danvers almost believed that she did not care.

"You saved my life once, dear friend," she said, "and that makes me dare to ask you to be generous now. Do not judge me! Wait a little. Forget this evening, and let us go back to the old days. Will you?" [256]

She smiled into his face, so sad a little smile in its evident effort at bravery, that he responded to her mood, eager to help her keep the mastery over her heart, that she might fight her battle in her own proud way. Almost, he was reconciled to her woman's judgment; and he sat down and talked of Fort Benton days.

For that hour Winifred was grateful to Danvers all her life; and when he rose to say good-night she was quite herself again.

"You will understand if I tell you that I must go now?" inquired Danvers. "Judge Latimer was to come in on Number Four, and I must see him to-night."

Winifred met his look with comprehension, and gave him her hand.

A faint sound reached them from the Latimer's apartment across the way as Danvers opened the door. He listened, then ran across the hall.

"What's that?" cried Winifred, startled.

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[257]

Fate, woman-like, cares not what means she employs to hurt. She takes what comes first to hand. Sometimes the more unlikely the weapon, the more effective is its use.

The same afternoon that Danvers tried to overtake Miss Blair, two talkative drummers boarded the west-bound train at a small Montana station, doubling back to Helena. As they entered the smoking compartment of a sleeper they found it empty save for a slight, weary-looking man who was gazing abstractedly at the wintry plains.

"Here, don't sit that side," said one; "the sun glares on the snow too much."

As the drummer spoke to his friend he gave a passing glance at the preoccupied stranger, and [258] chanced to take the seat directly in front of him. The other followed his advice, facing him.

"What's doing in Helena? I've been gone a week, but I see by the paper you haven't elected a senator yet."

"Naw," returned his companion; "hadn't yesterday, when I took the train."

"Pretty stiff contest."

"Pretty slick man bound to win out."

"Wish I was a member, with all the swag there is floating 'round."

"Wish I was a member with a right pretty woman coaxing for my vote!"

"What's that? I hadn't heard of that yet." The speaker leaned forward, scenting scandal.

"Aw! It's no secret in Helena. It's the talk of the town."

"I never heard a word. I thought politics was free from petticoats out here."

"They never are—anywhere. You know Charlie Blair?"

The drummer interrogated shook his head.

"Well, he's a Helena man, and one of the State senators. There's a woman lobbyin' for Burroughs, so they say, and she's got Blair batty! Last man in the world you'd expect to be caught by a woman. They say he's a great friend of her husband's, too—Judge Latimer."

A stifled moan came from the seat behind the drummers. [259]

"You don't say! Any talk about her before?"

"Search me!"

"Probably there's nothing in it," concluded the other, with unexpected charity. "You know how people surmise the worst. She doesn't care for him, I take it."

"Naw! At least, not if I size her up correct. She's a good-looker, all right; she was pointed out to me one night in the hotel dining-room. It was easy to see where *she* was stuck! She couldn't keep her eyes off a tall, good-looking fellow, that I was told was the senator from Chouteau County."

The other nodded. "I've heard of him. He's the head of the opposition to Burroughs in the Republican party. Danvers, his name is—Englishman—in the cattle business."

"I saw the situation right away. Bill Moore, Burroughs' political boss, you know, says that years ago they had an affair over in the Whoop Up Country—wherever that is, and——"

"Bozeman!" said the porter, interrupting the conversation.

"I got to see a man here," said one of the drummers. "Come along. It won't take but a minute. He'll be waiting on the platform; I wired him."

"That man looked bad," commented the other, jerking his thumb backward as they stepped from the car. "Did you notice how ghastly his face was? I thought for a moment he was going to speak to you." [260]

They passed on, and the conductor, who followed a moment later, stopped abruptly at sight of the limp figure, and hurried into the next coach.

"Is there a doctor on board?" he asked. "A man has fainted—or had a stroke. It's Judge Latimer, of Helena."

And the instruments of fate never knew what a deadly blow they had delivered.

That evening Mrs. Latimer, exquisitely gowned and radiating magnetism, was again trying to persuade Senator Blair to vote for Mr. Burroughs.

"Burroughs is capable of more skulduggery than any man in the State," declared her caller, after they had talked somewhat of the senatorial candidate. "I can't see why you keep on harping on his fitness for the place."

"Do you know, I admire him," responded Mrs. Latimer, with apparent frankness. "He may be unscrupulous; but he has been successful. The end justifies the means, I think."

"I've promised Senator Danvers that I would not vote for Burroughs," affirmed Blair, stubbornly. Eva had treated him coolly for a few days, and he had practically decided that he wanted neither [261] Judge Latimer's wife nor Burroughs' money. But as he gazed at the lady's ripe beauty he became more infatuated than before. He changed the subject abruptly. "I must go down to the valley to-morrow, after the session adjourns. Will you come with me for a ride?"

"Are you crazy?" Mrs. Latimer spoke with scorn.

"No one will see us," he pleaded. "I can pick you up where you used to live. You can wear a veil if you like. What do we care if we do meet somebody we know? You belong to the smart set—you can do anything you like." Charlie laughed loud.

"My dear friend," Eva began, cynically, believing that her position had so far made her exempt from comment, "the world is too suspicious. No man and woman can foregather without some pure soul interpreting that companionship to its own satisfaction. Besides, I expect Arthur any day now. He neither writes nor wires me just when he can come."

"You'll never do a thing to please me!" cried Blair, hotly. "I am the one who must grant favors. I ——"

"Aren't you a man, and therefore to be compliant?" returned Eva, her smile tempering her insolence. Then, pleading, although her eyes grew no softer: "Only one thing do I ask, Senator. [262] Please, please grant me that! Don't you care for me more than for Senator Danvers? Break your promise to him—for me." She was very enticing as she bent towards him, and he was conscious of the faint perfume about her.

"Mr. Burroughs needs your vote," she went on, persuasively; "and if you give it to him—as I've told you a hundred times—he has promised that he will provide for Arthur; and you like Arthur."

"And what do *I* get out of it?"

"You'll please *me*," was the caressing answer. "And—I never thought of it before," she hastened to add, as the scar grew more conspicuous—a sure register of his emotions—"why not ask Mr. Burroughs to get you to Berlin, too—as first secretary or something, if we go there?" She must throw him some encouragement. "I hate Helena. You do yourself. If we were in Berlin, we'd be where life is—a whirl of——"

"Madness," Senator Blair finished her sentence for her, thickly. "I do not have to go away from Helena for that sensation!" He lost control of himself. "You drive me mad, Eva! You are more tempting than ever! Give me one kiss—one—and I'll vote for Burroughs till hell freezes over!" The language of the frontier returned, in his abandon.

"Not now!" The temptress was thoroughly alarmed. She had thought to control any situation, but [263] —Charlie's eyes—so near her own! "Perhaps—when you have voted for——" She must secure this man's vote for Burroughs, even if she bartered her self-respect.

"Now, by God! Now!"

"No! No!" In terror Eva gave a suppressed cry and turned to escape the arms of the man she had maddened. With his hot lips brushing her own she turned away her face in impotent writhing, and saw her husband standing in the doorway.

"Pardon me," apologized Latimer, courteously, as though in a trance. He stepped forward, closed the door and took off his coat and hat. He sat down absently, as if he had returned after only a few hours' absence. He took no notice of the presence of Senator Blair nor of his hasty exit. The scene he had interrupted seemed to have no meaning for him. He could not have told how he reached home, and his one thought was of Danvers—his supposed Judas—and of the wife who

had lived a lie even while bearing his children.

But Eva could not know this, and strove hurriedly to form some excuse for her predicament.

Latimer made no response to her explanations. Instead he said, quite gently: "I'll go and see if little Arthur is asleep. I want to kiss him good-night," and disappeared through the portieres. [264]

Eva stood motionless, voiceless, in chill terror at her husband's solicitude for the dead child! Had he forgotten—or was he going mad? What had happened? What was to happen?

When Latimer returned, his eyes had lost their dazed expression. "My name is a reproach—it is handed around by coarse gossips!" he said, hoarsely. His look went beyond accusation.

Eva suddenly sank to her knees in mortal fear. The tones were not loud, but she never could have believed that those mild, blue eyes would flash at her such a menace of death.

"Arthur!" she wailed; "what have you heard? Why have you come home like this? I have not been untrue? Who said so? I have not! I have lied to you sometimes about little things—but not now!"

The silence was terrible! She began again, miserably: "I've been helping Mr. Burroughs; but surely that's not—it was for your advancement—Arthur!—speak to me!" She broke into gasping sobs.

The pale, emaciated face above her never softened; the eyes never wavered. Yet a reasoning anguish crept into the insane glare. After all, nothing mattered except this one great pain in his heart. What was it he wanted to know? Yes—he remembered! The truth!—the truth! [265]

"And Philip Danvers?"

The change in tone gave so great relief that Eva became hysterical, not understanding the obscure connection.

"Oh, Senator Danvers? He has had nothing to do with the lobbying. You know he is against Mr. Burroughs." She rose, again self-possessed, feeling herself able to explain all untoward circumstances.

"Come, you are worn from your journey. Lie here on the couch and I'll get you some wine."

But her husband resisted, dumbly, looking at her as a starving dog might look at the hand that had enticed him by pretending to offer food. Words came, at last, while he beat his hands together in agony.

"I cannot bear it—I cannot! They said you and Phil had an affair in the Whoop Up Country——"

"What are you saying?" came from Eva, sharply. She went from fear to fury. "You've been listening to some malicious gossip," she screamed; "and now you come home to frighten me into spasms!" The rage covered her fright. "There's not a word of truth in it!"

"Tell me the truth!" The God on high could not have been more mandatory.

The woman dared not lie again. Her anger, rather than her self-respect, brought the truth like a charge of dynamite from the muddy waters of her soul. [266]

"Well, then, it *is* the truth! I was engaged to Philip Danvers at Fort Macleod. I threw him over afterwards, because he had no money and you had. Now are you satisfied?" The cruel desire to hurt gave this added thrust. "No? Then let me tell you that I have never loved you, never! I've always loved Philip Danvers—always—always—always!" Her voice rose in crescendo.

At last it was spoken. Eva stood at bay, her jewels glittering on bare shoulders and arms as balefully as her eyes flashed hate.

"God!" Latimer reeled, and put his hand on his heart, but recovered himself. "And Philip"—the words came in a chill whisper—"did he love—you?"

"You'd better ask him!" Eva was wholly beside herself, in the reaction of a weak woman's fear.

"Phil—my friend!" he choked, started and winced, putting his hand again over his heart; then fell heavily.

The woman screamed in fright and knelt beside him.

"Arthur, he never cared—after I dismissed him. He despised me. He despises me now—more than you ever can. Oh, God in heaven! What have I done?" Remorse followed swiftly on her anger. [267]

Latimer was conscious as his wife raised his head. He had understood her confession, and although he could not speak he motioned for her to seek assistance; but the effort was too much, and he again sank back, moaning.

Eva laid him gently down, and flew to the door. As she opened it she fell against Danvers, coming from Winifred's side.

"You've killed him, at last!" Philip flayed her with word and look as she sped for other help; but he forgot her as he knelt and raised Latimer's head to his knee. He would have carried him to a couch, but Arthur motioned that he could not endure that pain. The look of trust that greeted Danvers was returned with one of love and fidelity.

With a sigh of utter content Latimer, by a supreme effort, raised his hands to Philip's shoulders.

"Arthur!" Danvers groaned, holding him close as he looked into the glazing eyes.

"Did I doubt you?" whispered the judge. "Forgive me—my dear—friend—Phil!"

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[268]

When Senator Blair learned of Judge Latimer's death he thought himself its prime cause and suffered as only a man can who is not wholly heartless. How poorly he had rewarded the friendship which had relieved him in his need at Fort Macleod! All his passion for Mrs. Latimer had died in that fearful moment when he looked on the curiously passive husband in the doorway; remorse bit like acid into the depths of his heart. The meaning glances and the interrupted conversations that met him everywhere the morning after the judge's death drove him to solitude. He even avoided his sister, Danvers and the doctor; but most of all he shunned the Honorable Mr. Moore. He had had enough of temptation! He would not allow himself again to be approached! [269]

His belief that in the sight of God he was a murderer made Blair collapse during the day. He was confined to his room; and it was then that he told the Fort Benton physician all that was haunting him, hour by hour. Blair did not attempt to palliate his sin, and although the doctor had known much and suspected more, he could hardly find it in his heart to forgive either Winifred's brother or the woman who had led him on. The only ray of mercy he felt was that matters were not so bad as he had feared between these old friends of his; but in his bitterness at Arthur's death, he would not give Blair the consolation of knowing that it was only a question of a short time, at best, when the judge's weak heart must have failed. Let him suffer! Arthur had! For the first time the lenient doctor did not want to relieve pain. Neither he nor Blair knew of what had taken place between Eva and her husband after Charlie had left their rooms.

The doctor's bitterness, however, was as nothing to the inward storm which shook Danvers when Eva, in the height of her hysterical remorse and fear of exposure, told him the sorry tale of her first flutterings around the arc-light of Mr. Burroughs' ambition; of her consent to aid Mr. Moore in his efforts to influence uncertain legislators to vote for Burroughs, and that gentleman's [270] acceptance thereof; of the clandestine meetings in her apartments with the Honorable William, and of the more open but far less harmless friendship with Senator Blair, pursued until she was singed with the flame of her own kindling and nearly consumed by its fires. And lastly, her husband's reproaches; her miserable evasions and the hurt that she had deliberately given him. When she told her silent listener of that last half hour Danvers held himself forcibly in his fear of doing the woman bodily harm. That she should have done this cruel thing! Her indiscretions had been bad enough, but they had been prompted by an ambition second only to Mr. Burroughs'. But to turn the knife wantonly in Arthur's heart of gold!... How nearly his friend had gone from him, believing that he was false!... And now he was dead!... dead!

Philip's agony broke its restraint, and Mrs. Latimer never forgot his scathing denunciation.

"You killed Arthur," he concluded, white to the lips, "as surely as if you used a stiletto! So that was what Arthur meant." For a few moments Danvers could not speak as the recollection of that look of love and trust came surging back. "No one must ever know the truth," he went on, huskily. "Let it be buried with poor Arthur. There will be more or less gossip; but we will stand by [271] you for the judge's sake—and for Miss Blair's as well. She, of all persons, must know nothing of what you have told me."

Mrs. Latimer's sobs only roused his wrath at all the misery she had wrought. He knew her tears were for herself, not for her husband. As he turned to leave the room she caught at his hand.

"I did not mean——" she began in weak defense. "You are too hard," she protested, feeling him recoil.

"Hard!" Philip laughed harshly in his pain. "You did not expect me to condole with you on the outcome of your folly? All that I can say is, may God forgive you!" and he was gone.

So resolutely did Latimer's friends ignore all previous conditions that the ready tongue of rumor was silenced immediately. Surely if Senator Danvers and the doctor from Fort Benton, as well as Miss Blair, were ever at Mrs. Latimer's side, there could have been no breath of wrong in her sudden cultivation of Senator Blair.

Only three persons—Danvers, the doctor and Moore—knew of the hidden octopus of Burroughs' insatiable vindictiveness, whose tentacles, first fastening on Eva, had finally crushed Latimer. Moore knew, if the others did not, that Blair was doomed if he once again came within its radius. Then for the others! But he made no immediate move, and decorously gave regard to the [272] proprieties, both for himself and as a substitute for Mr. Burroughs. His chief was almost as hysterical as Eva herself over the judge's untimely death, for he thought his prospects endangered thereby. His panic made him hasten to leave Helena for a few days.

Moore had tried to secure some other man to change to Burroughs, someone who did not hold himself as high as Blair had done on the night of the club dinner; but he had finally been obliged to report his non-success. He suggested to Burroughs that he approach Senator Blair once more, offering twenty thousand dollars. He felt sure that Charlie would take less—now!

Just before Burroughs ordered a special train to hurry him away from the prevailing gloom, the two conspirators had their final word on the subject of Senator Blair.

"We've got to get this thing over," said Burroughs, savagely. "There's too much talk. We'll be hung as high as Haman or sent to the pen for twenty years if we don't get a move on. And there are but six days more of the session. Give Charlie Blair his price—and be damned to him!"

"That's all right, Bob," retorted Moore, angrily. "I'll give him the money if you say so. But I don't think the whole business of being a United States senator is worth thirty thousand dollars. And if [273] I do get it to him (and the Lord knows how I can)—what then? He is sick in bed, and who can tell when he can get to the capitol?"

"*Get*? We'll *take* him, alive or dying! Thirty thousand! It's my money, isn't it? You are nothing out of pocket. Get it to him while the rest of his folks are at the—the funeral!" The word chilled them both. Were they responsible for this death? "Get it to him! He'll keep it! Montana'll be too hot for him from now on, let me tell you! He'll take the money, vote for me, and skip—all in the same day. There's been too much talk to be agreeable to a man who's never before been mixed up with a woman—except that squaw!" Burroughs walked nervously back and forth, then: "You wire me when you've given the money to him and I'll come back. It'll all be clear sailing then."

This delay! As Burroughs reviewed the results of his schemes he felt that he had been hardly used. Not so had fortune treated him in the past. Most of all he bewailed the inclusion of a woman in the necessary chicanery of diverting votes. Catch him again being over-persuaded by Bill Moore's sophistry!

In truth Senator Blair had begun to think that he should have to take Burroughs' money. How could he ever face his sister, his world again? He made sure that he was not only called a [274] murderer, but that he was one. He might as well be other things. No appellation could be so terrible as that first. He would take the thirty thousand dollars if it should be forthcoming, vote and take the first train west the same day. In the Orient he could lose his identity as a bribe-taker and a murderer. The torture never relaxed during the days preceding the judge's funeral.

Late on the afternoon of the day of the burial of the man whom he had so nearly wronged the senator's attention was drawn to a low rustle near the door opening from his room to the hall outside. Something white and long was being cautiously pushed under the door. Charlie was alone, and he weakly pulled himself to that mysterious package. The soft *feel* of it thrilled him like brandy. Burroughs had come to his terms! He could get away! But he must previously acknowledge before all men that he had been bought at a price. The odium.... A flirt of the devil's tail brought a new thought to his fevered brain—fevered by remorse and the effects of long-continued and unwonted alcoholic stimulants. Suppose that he did not vote? Suppose that he kept this fortune (he counted it over to assure himself of its reality), pleading his sickness until the last day of the session, and go ... go.... The thought swung him to uneasy sleep.

While he slept the doctor and the senator from Chouteau came into the room as they returned [275] from the cemetery. Blair had been too much occupied in his dizzy thought to remember to hide his ill-gotten money, and on the white counterpane lay those proofs of Burroughs' infamy.

"Thirty thousand dollars!" gasped the doctor, in undertones, counting the large bills and sheafing them in one trembling hand. "What shall we do?"

"Nothing," responded Danvers, very quietly. "When Charlie wakes I will talk with him. I do not believe that he will keep that money or vote for Burroughs."

"How fortunate that Winifred did not come in with us!" said the older man. "You stay here, Phil, and I will keep her away for an hour. He will not sleep long. He is too feverish." Danvers nodded acquiescence, and the physician tiptoed away.

Before many minutes the sick man awoke. Danvers sat near the bed, reading the evening paper. Blair looked around with the impersonal eyes of the sick, then saw the pile of bank notes on the

stand beside his bed. He started and gave a furtive look at Philip. Their eyes met squarely.

"You will send that money back, Charlie." The words were not so much query as certainty. Blair, shamed, was long in replying.

"I can't afford to, Danvers," he said finally. "I'm not only a poor man, but a ruined one as well. I [276] may keep it and—get out of the State."

"And vote for Bob Burroughs?" The head of the opposition still kept his calm acceptance of his discovery. Curiously enough it threshed the sick senator, after a few words, into stubborn silence.

"Maybe I will and maybe I won't. I have the money, and Bob or Bill will never dare to ask for it back. If you ever see me in the Assembly again you'll know that I'm going to vote for Burroughs—curse him!"

"Let me have that money, Charlie," Danvers pleaded. "Think of your sister. It will break her heart if you do this thing. And," he continued huskily, for he suddenly found that he could not control his voice, "hearts enough have been broken over this business of electing a United States senator." He reached out his hand, persuasively, expectantly. "I will see that it goes to the men who gave it to you."

But Senator Blair was obdurate; and when Philip left him he felt that his long fight was to end in defeat, and that Robert Burroughs would be elected by the high-priced vote of Winifred's brother. Senator Danvers had kept in too close touch with the situation not to know that Moore would never have paid such a sum to Senator Blair if he were not their last hope for a majority of even [277] one.

The next day of the Legislature Senator Blair was again reported not present on account of sickness, and William Moore thought it best not to show his full strength. The next, and the last day of the session, Blair was still absent. Ballot after ballot was taken. One by one men responded to the crack of Moore's whip and changed their votes to Burroughs, while the spectators indulged in significant laughter. One by one the several candidates withdrew their names as their former adherents shamelessly went over the fast increasing list for Burroughs. Still Senator Danvers held most of his men, and not until long after nightfall did the ballots come within one of electing Burroughs. The last man to change, amid hoots of derision, was Joseph Hall.

Mr. Burroughs and the Honorable William were both in the rear of the House of Representatives, for the first time during the session.

"We must get Charlie Blair here!" hissed Burroughs, hearing Senator Danvers make a motion for a ten minutes' recess. Senator Hall opposed the motion. He did not know that Senator Blair's vote would elect Burroughs, or he would not have tried to block Danvers' desire to speak to some of the turncoats. But the motion prevailed and there was much seeking of the various places where a man might refresh himself after such arduous toil. "He *shall* come," continued the [278] candidate for Congress, "if he dies in the next hour!" Moore, feeling sure of the men he had already lined up, consented to be the one to bring the sick senator from the hotel, only five minutes away.

In the meantime Senator Danvers was vainly trying to stem the tide. The doctor reported that Senator Blair was in bed and apparently sleeping, so Philip was comparatively easy. All that remained for him to do was to see that no other man went over to the enemy; and it had been agreed that the Legislature should adjourn at two o'clock that night.

Senator Blair, meanwhile, had made up his mind to get away that very hour. No matter if he were too sick to stand, he would get up and dress, get a carriage and go.... It was better than staying and going mad. The hotel was practically empty, he knew, for everybody who could be at the capitol was there to witness the closing hours of the Assembly. Word had spread that Robert Burroughs would surely be elected before midnight. The whole city and most of the State's inhabitants of voting age and sex were crowded into the capitol. Charlie knew that Winifred was with Mrs. Latimer across the hall. Hurriedly he dressed, trembling with fear and physical weakness, packed a suit case, felt to see if the thirty thousand dollars was safe, and cautiously [279] opening the outer door, peeped into the hall to see if the way was clear. But it was not. There stood the Honorable William, in the very act of putting his hand on the door-knob!

"No, you don't, my beauty!" snarled Moore, pushing the sick man back and seeing in a glance what was planned. "You'll not leave Helena until you've earned that thirty thousand! Don't you ever think it! You're coming over to the capitol right now, with me, and vote for Bob! We need you in the business! And, if you don't, by God I'll make you sorry for it! It's come to a show down. This business has killed Judge Latimer and it may as well kill you—you miserable, white-livered ——" Moore's language and voice were raised to the highest power.

"Charlie!" At the disturbance, Winifred came from Eva's rooms. "You up—and out in the hall! What is the trouble? You surely are not going to the capitol in your condition?"

Blair was past all words in his rage, and Moore explained with what grace he might that it was imperative for Charlie to cast his vote. Winifred insisted that she accompany them if her brother must go, and Moore did not dare to delay long enough to argue the matter. Every moment counted now.

In the cab Winifred, knowing nothing of the blood-money in her brother's pocket, begged him not [280]

to vote for Mr. Burroughs. She had heard the last of Moore's tirade. But he would not answer, and she felt Moore's foot seeking Blair's to freshen his resolve. Though her tears wet the hand she held, it did not return her caress.

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As the three entered the crowded chamber where the joint assembly had been once more called to order, they passed Mr. Burroughs, his wife and daughter. They had come from Butte to witness his triumph. Surely the wife would congratulate, the daughter be proud of her father.

Moore was left at the rail which separated the legislators from the spectators, but Senator Blair's sister went with him and found a seat at his side. Charlie's face was ghastly, and the doctor, surprised beyond measure at sight of him, kept guard with a watchful eye.

[282] Blair's entrance into the chamber with its atmosphere of suspense drew every nerve taut. Senator Danvers saw him and his heart sank. His efforts had been in vain! He bowed to Winifred, though he had not seen even his own sister, far in the rear of the hall—there were no galleries for spectators.

It was a moment long remembered by that breathless crowd. Men, drowning, see their whole lives as in a flashlight's glare. So did Danvers see his past. He was again a boy, embarking on the *Far West*, and he breathed the wet spring air, blowing over prairie and river. He was with the men on the upper deck, and noted their glances of curiosity. Their youth seemed never to have faded, as he remembered the delicate face of the joyous Latimer, the kind glance of the doctor, the western breeziness of Toe String Joe and the quieter manner of Scar Faced Charlie; while the debonair arrogance of Sweet Oil Bob stirred his fighting blood afresh. Eva Thornhill's beautiful face came, bewitching in its youth, and little Winnie's trusting smile again reached his heart. Even Fort Benton, a busy port of entry, as he first saw it, and Wild Cat Bill's drunken animosity, leaped out as the searchlight of recollection swept the past.

[283] Then Memory's moving picture brought the same faces, shaded or illumined as each temperament exposed its impulse; changed and moulded by hidden thoughts, unexploited forces of character and assimilated environment. Came a sigh for Arthur Latimer, asleep after life's bright beginning and shadowed close. A thought of Eva, broken and undone; of Winifred——

Every thought and act of his life led up to this moment. Could he let this plot be consummated? Not while the blood so pounded in his veins. He must speak—no one else would. Outraged decency demanded. The honor of the state demanded.

He forgot that he was an alien by birth—that he must expose many of his friends; it did not occur to him that he had never made a public speech, that his denunciation would ruin his political future and would be altogether futile. The disgraceful contest had killed his dearest friend—driven the wife into retirement to avoid the glare of scandal, and it was likely to lose him Winifred.

His hand went up, and the President of the Senate recognized him. He rose.

"Mr. President: I rise to a point of personal privilege."

[284] "The Senator from Chouteau," announced the presiding officer of the joint assembly, surprised but courteous. Philip Danvers was not one to be ignored, no matter how inopportune the time. As he stood there for the moment silent, he conveyed the impression of perfect poise, and the honesty and sincerity of his purpose was patent to all.

"Mr. President: In the struggle to elect a United States senator which has lasted this entire session of our legislative assembly, the party with which I have the honor to be affiliated, ever since I foreswore allegiance to my native country, has, unfortunately, never been able to fix on a caucus nominee; and I have been forced, unwillingly, to lead the minority of my party against the man whose name led all others in the last ballot. As a result of the division, the election of a

senator has descended to a contest of one individual, with the known antagonism of not only the best element of his party, but the ill will of the whole State, irrespective of party.

"The shameless condition that this has fostered is now familiar to every man in the United States. When that politician, ravenous for his spoil, could not get enough supporters from his own party, he went into the highways and byways of Democrats, Populists and Laborites; he gathered not only the poor and needy, but some few men hitherto possessing apparent respectability, and good standing at home and abroad.

"Personal reasons have kept me silent on the floor of this house, however much I may have worked in other ways against this crime. But the time has come when I must put aside all thought [285] of self in the greater interest of the reputation of Montana.

"Gentlemen: A most outrageous crime is being committed upon this State! I can keep my seat no longer while the very walls reek with bribery! Yes, bribery! No one has dared to voice that sinister word in this Assembly, but we all know that in every hotel corridor, on every street, in every home in this State that damnable word is handed from mouth to mouth as claim and counterclaim, that certain men have been purchased like cattle in open market, and that they would deliver themselves to a certain candidate when called upon. They have been called upon to-day! That is why this room is filled to overflowing! The curious, the sensation-seeker want to look upon those men, so lost to decency that they will rise here, and with no blush of shame, tacitly admit that they have been bought with a price. Even the open enemies of this candidate have voted for him, as the last ballot shamelessly proclaimed. How one senator, opposed to the candidate in every walk of life, has been debauched, we can imagine as well as though we saw the thousands counted out to him by the money-changer who has had charge of the bartering of votes."

As Danvers looked straight at Senator Hall, the bribe-taker half rose, then sank back in his [286] degradation. One thought sustained him. His revenge on Burroughs was nearing its hour, and he felt that the mortification of this bold accusation could be endured, if that other matter was never traced to him. He knew too well what the enmity of Burroughs could compass to invite it openly, and he had become fearful of the results of his long-delayed scheme of vengeance.

Meantime the voice of the senator from Chouteau County went on, clear and distinct, creating consternation as might the voice from Sinai. In his earnestness he stepped nearer the speaker's desk, and faced the hushed audience, fearlessly. He made no pretence of oratory, but his words were terribly effective.

"In olden times, bribers were branded on the cheek with the letter B. If we had the time, I would suggest that we pass a law, before this session is over, to brand not only the bribers, but the bribed with a white-hot iron, so that the owner might identify his property. This brand should be burned into the political mavericks who, since the convening of this Assembly, have run with every herd, and openly sought the highest bidder for their worthless carcasses. For these cattle of unknown pedigree I have only words of contempt.

"Mr. President: The state in which we find ourselves on this, the last night of the session, should make us pause. We are apt to be dim-sighted to our own failings, and clear-sighted to the faults [287] of others; but I ask you in all candor, do the men who have so nearly elected a United States senator believe that he is the choice of the State for that high office, or that he would be considered by that legislative body if it were not for the influence of his wealth? We would better be unrepresented in Congress than misrepresented, and I ask you, gentlemen," turning again to the legislators, "if you are going to vote again as you did in the last ballot, and allow a sick man to cast his vote for Robert Burroughs and thus elect him? I know," he added with impressive slowness, "whereof I speak! That we are Democrats or Republicans, Labor or Fusion, should not figure in this contest. Instead, each man should consider whether we, a young State, shall enter Washington tarred with the ineradicable pitch of bribery or shall we send a man who will show the elder States that Montana is proud of her newly acquired statehood, and that no star in the Northwest firmament shines more pure?

"To those who have allowed themselves in this fiery ordeal to swerve from their duty to their State, through the temptation of personal gain, let me say that they will be branded and dishonored, despised at home and abroad; that they will be political pariahs forever, unless they reconsider their votes while yet there is time. They have been clay, moulded on the potter's [288] wheel of the political manipulator behind whom the leading candidate has worked his nefarious will. Because a man is rich shall we condone his base acts? A poor man is as likely to commit crime as a rich one; but he would do so for very different reasons. The rich man in politics, sins for his own self-gratification; the poor man, to better himself or his family, often not comprehending the enormity of his crime.

"So long as I possess the faculties of a man, I purpose to fight against the election of Robert Burroughs to a seat in Congress. I do not want it said that I was a State senator in a Legislature which seated a man so notoriously lost to a sense of political decency as he. I would rather go back to the Whoop Up Country to spend my days in toil and obscurity, and be able to hold up my head and look the world in the face."

For a moment he paused. The awed, sullen, furious faces before him seemed individually seared on his soul as he swept the crowded room. Many a man sat in a cold sweat of fear, with haunted eyes and compressed lips that proclaimed his guilt with deadly certainty.

For the first time Philip became aware that his sister was present, and had heard his denunciation of her husband. But it was too late to retract, and he would not if he could. Truth-telling, like the cauterizing of the snake's bite, must sometimes be done, no matter what the [289] immediate suffering. His eyes sought Winifred's, misty with apprehension, admiration, love. And Charlie? His temple pulse beat visibly in his effort to control his nerves. His face was fixed as the face of one dead. Could any appeal snatch him from being the keystone of that elaborate structure builded by Burroughs and Moore—so nearly completed? If he refused to become that apex, even for this one ballot to be called as soon as Danvers finished speaking, there was a faint hope that the apparently inevitable could be averted. Stepping nearer his colleagues in his vehemence, Senator Danvers brought his unpremeditated speech to an end.

"For God's sake, are there not men enough in this body to help me to drive out corruption and fraud and dishonor, and establish integrity and justice? I ask in the name of women and children, wives and sweethearts, pioneers and posterity! Let us not become a disgrace to the nations of the world! We can clean these Augean stables by one concentrated effort, even as England cleaned her corrupt borough elections of a century and a half ago. Let us fix on one man who will stand for civic purity, virtue and honor, no matter what his party. Let us elect a United States senator who is above reproach, above the taint of gaining a victory by the downfall of his fellow men! In [290] the next ballot, let us each vote as his conscience dictates!"

It was said. Senator Danvers stepped back to his seat amid a buzz of blended approval and hisses, which came to his brain as the sound of swarming bees. He felt sick and weak. His appeal seemed hopelessly futile. But he sat erect, with no sign of discouragement, and looked fixedly at Senator Blair in the hope of seeing some inkling of change from his declaration that if he came to the capitol he should vote for Burroughs. But Blair would not look his way.

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Danvers did not hear the clerk of the Senate as he began the roll-call of the senators after the presiding officer had rapped for order. The first three men in the A's were irrevocably opposed to Burroughs and Danvers concentrated his whole thought on Senator Blair's change of heart.

While the men preceding Charlie were voting, Winifred whispered to her brother. He did not seem to hear, and his dazed eyes were still fixed straight ahead. The flaming red of the scar made his face look still more ghastly, and at times his form swayed dizzily.

"Do not vote for Mr. Burroughs," Winifred entreated. "For my sake, Charlie. You've always been [292] willing to please me. Vote for any one else. Philip expects your loyalty. Vote for him, even. Show him that you, if no one else, appreciate his courage in facing these men and denouncing them before the entire Assembly."

"Blair!" came the stentorian voice from the desk. Necks were craned and men rose to whisper and to look as this man's name was called. How would he vote? Burroughs' throat grew dry to suffocation. Moore's gaze was imperturbable, but the muscles in his neck twitched perceptibly, while sweat beaded his upper lip. Danvers still kept his eye on the miserably shaken Blair, and still hoped.

Suddenly Charlie turned and threw him one look. Then he rose, slowly, with painful effort, holding his sister's supporting arm. He showed the effect of stormy weeks of passion as he stood a moment, silent.

"Vote for Philip, Charlie," whispered Winifred, under cover of assisting him. Blair looked around the room.

"Mr. President," he began, in a trembling voice. "Before I cast my vote in this ballot, I wish to say that I have listened to my honored colleague from Chouteau County with mingled feelings of shame at my own unworthiness and admiration for the courage which had dared to say what

every man of us should have said six weeks ago. Senator Danvers beseeches us to send to [293]
Washington a man who will guard the fair name of Montana, who will work for our best interests, and reflect honor on every inhabitant of the State. He asks us to vote for one above reproach, one who would accept no position at the expense of his fellows. I am inclined to give his plea serious consideration. But before I cast my ballot," his voice gained in strength and firmness, and he stepped forward with a gesture of irrevocable decision and placed upon the speaker's desk a long white envelope, "I will place here thirty thousand dollars, to be redeemed by the party who shoved it under my door two days ago.

"And now," turning to the gasping assembly, "as the senator from Chouteau has unconsciously suggested the very man to represent our State in Congress—the man on whom, I am sure, we can all agree—I take great pleasure, Mr. President, in casting my vote, the first vote, for the Honorable Philip Danvers of Fort Benton!"

Quick applause rang out as Blair took his seat, and Winifred kissed his hand as it lay trembling on his desk.

Danvers gasped in dismay. Had Blair's sickness quite turned his head? But, no! Never had his eye been clearer; never had he looked more the man as he returned full and strong Philip's amazed [294]
gaze.

Danvers half rose to protest, but the doctor pulled him down. Winifred began to cry behind her veil as the applause continued. A responsive note had been struck. When quiet was somewhat restored, the automatic clerk called the next name—the name of the senator who had promised Eva his vote. Since Latimer's death he had heartily wished for some excuse to be absolved from that promise. Here was his opportunity.

"Philip Danvers!" he called loudly, defiantly, perhaps. He owed Burroughs nothing. But as a rolling stone gathers momentum, so did this unexpected addition to the new name on the list of candidates give impetus to a stampede which soon made itself understood, as much to the surprise of Blair as Danvers.

"Never mind, Bob," whispered Moore, hoarsely. "It's only a spurt that will die out. They often run like a flock of sheep. You'll get there on the next ballot."

When Senator Hall's name was called, he rose airily. He not only wished to hide his hand, but to get even with Danvers for many an upright act unconsciously done while they two were troopers together at Fort Macleod.

"I wish to explain my vote," began the lanky senator. "My esteemed colleague from Chouteau [295]
County has made a very pretty speech, intended, I take it, for the ladies who are honoring us with their fair presence, and also to enhance his own reputation. His accusations can hardly be proven. And while I voted for Burroughs for reasons which no man has a right to question, I wish to state that even if I had not so voted in the past, I should feel it incumbent on me as a native born American to vote for him at this time. I do not approve of a foreigner, an Englishman, a man who has been one of that force across our northern border which has frequently done grave injustice not only to many of our citizens, but, I dare say, to Burroughs himself, undertaking to teach us anything in a political way."

O'Dwyer rose at this. His red face was redder than ever, and he shook his fist at the speaker; but the doctor pulled him down, and he reluctantly subsided. For Hall to speak thus of the North West Mounted Police when he had been drummed out of the force!

"I may also say," went on Hall, "that I believe this thirty thousand dollars (if there is such a sum of money in the envelope which Senator Blair has just placed on the desk) was put up for the purpose of stampeding the Assembly for this man who professes to be so honest and so upright—Senator Danvers!"

Hisses came from all over the room, but Hall was impervious. [296]

"Mr. President: I hereby make my protest against such spectacular performances by casting my vote, altogether uninfluenced, for the Honorable Robert Burroughs," he gave a quick glance to the rear of the room where a new group had just crowded in, "and I defy anyone to detect 'a blush of shame' on my brow."

The speech and the bravado fell flat. The crowd was not with this bribe-taker. The voting proceeded, and Danvers' name was spoken with gusto by many who thought, on the next ballot, to return to their respective candidates.

"Philip Danvers!" yelled Representative O'Dwyer, hardly waiting for his name as the representatives were called. "Danvers! Danvers! Danvers!" he repeated, in a frenzy of friendly fervor. Pounding feet and canes accentuated the Irishman's cry.

"You've given him the deciding vote, O'Dwyer!" shouted the doctor, forgetting decorum in the delirium of the moment. He had kept close check on the various candidates while the angry Moore and Burroughs, purple and speechless, stood aghast, not believing that this flurry could abolish the results of their expensive campaign.

"Philip Danvers it is!" yelled O'Dwyer, overjoyed, leaping to the top of his desk and jumping [297]
madly. "Danvers forever! Hooray!"

"Danvers! Danvers! Danvers!" The name was taken up as a slogan by the cheering legislators and citizens—men and women alike. Shouts and hisses, congratulations and curses, laughter and consternation mingled over this unexpected denouement of the long-drawn-out contest.

The speaker's gavel came near to breaking, and the desk was cracked before the tumult could be quieted sufficiently to proceed with the balloting.

The remaining numbers, almost to a man, voted for Danvers; and when O'Dwyer moved that the vote be made unanimous, the noise and enthusiasm which had preceded was as silence to what followed when the motion was put, seconded and carried, that Philip Danvers of Fort Benton be declared unanimously elected as the United States senator from Montana to fill the vacancy for the four years beginning March four, eighteen hundred and ninety——.

Even Senator Hall joined the majority—for did he not already have his money safely invested? Besides, he could be censured by Burroughs no more than many others who had taken his money and betrayed him.

"Speech! speech!" yelled the crowd. But Danvers could not speak.

"Let us go," whispered Mrs. Burroughs, as the demonstration continued. She looked half in scorn, [298]
half in pity, on her husband, frustrated in the ambition of years by the man he most hated—her brother. "Let us go, Robert," she repeated.

The young daughter crept nearer and clasped her father's icy hand. She did not understand the accusations made against a father who had shown her nothing but love.

"Better luck next time, Bob," consoled Moore. "Don't let everybody see how hard hit you are. Danvers is elected only for the short term, you know—four years."

Choking, Burroughs attempted to force his way through the cheering, struggling mob, and to clear a path for his wife and daughter. But as the crowd gave way, in deference to the women, a new obstruction presented itself.

Robert Burroughs did not recognize the slouching, dirty buck blocking his way as Me-Casto, the once haughty pride of the Blackfeet federation, or the obese, filthy squaw as Pine Coulee. The work of civilization had obviously been in vain. But this tall, strapping 'breed reaching out his unwashed hand! Burroughs gazed at a replica of himself as he had been at Fort Macleod.

"Him you father?" questioned the half-breed, addressing the frightened daughter. He had been well coached by the grinning McDevitt, so close behind him.

"She you mother?" He pointed to Kate Danvers, high bred and aristocratic in her scorn. [299]

"She *my* mother," the 'breed went on, fiendishly, indicating the toothless, loathsome squaw, whose vindictive eyes never wavered from Burroughs' craven face. "Him both our father!" The common parent was given a fillip of a contemptuous thumb and finger.

Burroughs could not look at his wife, but he threw a furtive glance at the flower-like face of his daughter. Her look of terror and of shame was more than he could bear. Before all men he had been confounded; before the wife whose love he had never won, his own passion proving his torment; before his daughter, the idol of his heart.

As the surge of curious men pressed nearer he saw the malevolent joy of Joseph Hall and of Chaplain McDevitt, and he knew who had planned his disgrace. He saw Danvers, vainly striving to reach his sister.

"Let me out!" came in a thick gurgle from his swelling throat. Something in his face made the throng give way and Moore quickly pushed him outside into the midnight cold.

"Go back for my wife and daughter," Burroughs commanded. "Go back!"

The street was empty, for everybody had stayed within the capitol to feast on the sensation of the [300]
Indians and the fainting women. Moore hesitated.

"They'll be right out, Bob. Let me call a cab."

"Go!" The old, imperious fire came from the deep-set eyes.

Moore had no sooner turned his back to obey than a pistol shot broke the stillness.

The rabble poured from the capitol at the sound of the shot. Moore, the only friend that Burroughs ever had, raised his companion. The plotting and planning was over. Robert Burroughs, having forced his way through life's stockade, stepped out, alone, into the Dark Trail.

In the confusion of that midnight scene Danvers was conscious of but one desire, held in abeyance by the tragic necessities of the moment. At last the surging crowd dispersed, the officers of the law performed their hasty duty, and Moore drove away in a closed carriage with Mrs. Burroughs and her daughter.

Then Danvers turned wearily, eagerly, like a man famished and athirst, to the woman who meant peace and rest and inspiration.

She stood in the dim light, clinging to her brother's arm, while the doctor waited beside the

carriage.

Charlie reached out a trembling hand and looked into Philip's face. Then he bent and kissed his sister, and gently withdrawing his arm, gave her to Danvers. The doctor hurried the sick man into the carriage, and it drove into the night. [301]

The lovers clung together like tired, frightened children, and walked silently.

"It is all over," said Winifred, at last.

"No, dear one; it is just begun!"

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This first novel by a new writer is worth reading. One feels, as they read, as if he, too, were living the untrammeled life of Cattleland.

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Unheeded falls, the sun shines as of old,
But lingers not in all the dreary rooms
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Transcriber's note

The following changes have been made to the text:

Page 89: "She clnug to him" changed to "She clung to him".

Page 289 "like the the cauterizing" changed to "like the cauterizing".

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