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Author: H. A. Cody

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IF ANY MAN SIN

BY H. A. CODY

AUTHOR OF THE CHIEF OF THE RANGES, THE LONG PATROL, UNDER SEALED ORDERS, THE FRONTIERSMAN, ETC.

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TO MY WIFE
THIS BOOK IS
LOVINGLY DEDICATED

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IF ANY MAN SIN

CHAPTER I

CHORDS OF MEMORY

It was Sunday night and the great city was hushed in silence. A thick mist hung over streets and houses through which numerous lights endeavoured to force their rays. Few people were astir and all traffic had ceased. Presently the chimes from a hidden church tower pealed forth their sweet message to the world. A man standing alone within the shadow of the church started and turned his face upwards. The musical sounds seemed to fascinate him, and he listened as one entranced. He gave no heed to the men and women hurrying by phantom-like on their way to the evening service. Not until the last note had died upon the air did the man abandon his listening attitude. Then his head drooped, his tense body relaxed, and he stepped back a few paces as if fearful of being observed. Twice he started forward, moved by some inner impulse, but each time he shrank back deeper within the shadow. His strong form trembled convulsively, telling plainly of a mighty fire of emotion raging within.

The man at length left his place of concealment and paced rapidly up and down outside the church, with his head bent forward. This he did for some time. He at last paused, stood for a while in an undecided manner, and then with a stealthy step approached the door. His hand was raised to the large iron latch when strains of music fell upon his ears. Then he heard the sound of numerous voices lifted up in the closing hymn. His courage almost deserted him, and he half turned as if to leave the place. But some irresistible power seemed to stay his steps and force him to open the door and enter.

The church was warm, brightly lighted, and well filled with men and women. No one heeded the stranger as he slipped quietly into a back seat and looked around. The trained voices of the white-robed choir thrilled his soul. Every word of the hymn was familiar to him, for he had often sung it in days gone by. The congregation, too, was singing, and ere long he distinguished one voice from the rest. He had not heard it at first, but now it fell upon his ears with a startling intensity. It was a woman's voice, sweet, clear, and full of mingled tenderness and pathos. The man's firm white hands clutched hard the back of the seat in front of him, and his face underwent a marvellous transformation. His eyes shone with eagerness, and his bosom lifted and fell from the vehemence of his emotion. He leaned forward until he could see the singer and watched her intently. Then when the hymn was finished, and ere the congregation dispersed, the stranger, having cast one more longing look upon the woman with the sweet voice, slipped noiselessly out of the building.

Upon reaching the street he stepped aside and waited for the people to come forth. It was not long ere the big door was thrown wide open, and as the men and women passed by he scrutinised them as closely as possible. He was watching for one person alone, and presently he saw her walking by herself. When she had gone a short distance he followed after, and never once let her out of his sight until she came to a large house, the door of which she opened and entered.

For some time the man stood outside, keeping his eyes fixed upon the building. A policeman passing by noted the man, and, mistaking him for a vagrant, ordered him away. The stranger's pale face flushed, and his hands clenched as he obeyed the command. Slowly he walked along the street with his eyes fixed upon the pavement. At length he paused, retraced his steps, and stood once more before the house into which the woman had entered. Here he remained until the clock of a nearby church struck the hour of eleven. Then, drawing himself together, the man hurried away with rapid steps. Reaching a house on a side street, he opened a door with a latch-key, and passed within. Up three flights of stairs he moved till he came to a little room on the top floor. Groping around in the dark, he lighted an oil lamp fastened to the wall.

It was a humble and scantily furnished garret he had entered. In one corner was a narrow cot. At

its foot stood a wash-stand, over which hung a small cracked mirror. A rough worn table occupied the centre of the room, upon which rested a well-kept violin lying by its open case. Opposite the door was an open fire-place, and as the night was chilly the man lighted a fire from several dry sticks, and threw on some soft coal. Soon a cheerful blaze was curling up the chimney, before which the man sat on the one rickety chair the room contained and warmed his numbed hands.

For over half an hour he remained thus, gazing down intently into the fire. But hotter than the coals before him seemed the eyes which burned in his head. At last he aroused from his reverie and, crossing the room, opened a small grip and brought forth a carefully-folded newspaper clipping. This he unwrapped, spread it out upon the table, and drawing up his chair sat down. He fixed his eyes upon an article with the big headline, "Deposed by His Bishop." A deep flush mantled his cheeks and brow as he read for more than the thousandth time that story of disgrace and degradation. He had really no need to read it over again, for every word was seared upon his soul as with a red-hot iron. But the printed words seemed to fascinate him. The tale was all there in black and white, and the newspaper had made the most of it.

But there were things which were not recorded in cold type, and ere long his eyes drifted from the printed page far off into space. He beheld again the white-haired bishop sitting in his library, and heard his voice tremble as he uttered the words which deposed him forever from the Ministry. Then he recalled his own hot invectives hurled against the Church, and the vow that he would banish it and its teaching entirely from his heart and mind, and free himself from its influence. He remembered his scornful laugh when the bishop told him that such a thing was impossible. "Martin Rutland," he had said in an impressive voice, "you know not what you are saying. Do you imagine that you can cut yourself off from the influence of the Church of your childhood? I tell you that you are mistaken, for such a thing is utterly impossible. The Church and her teaching will follow you to the grave, no matter to what part of the world you go." He had laughed at the bishop's words then, thinking them to be only an old man's empty threat.

He lived over again his last visit to his aged parents. It was the day before Christmas, and they believed that he had to hurry away to attend the services in his parish the next morning. Never for a moment did they suspect him of a single wrong. How proudly they had looked upon him as he stood before them ere he left the house. He never saw them again, and now in the loneliness of his barren room, a wretched outcast, buffeted by the world, he bowed his head upon the table and gave vent to his feelings in a flood of passionate tears. The whole vision rose before him with stinging vividness: his little home and the happy days of youth; his bright prospects, and what he would make of life; his parents toiling and denying themselves to provide for his education. It all came back to him this night like a mighty rushing torrent. In the excitement of the years of aimless wandering, he had partly stifled the thoughts. But to-night it was impossible. The pent-up stream, which could no longer be curbed, had given way in one onward sweep, all the greater, and over-mastering because of the restraint of years.

He rose abruptly to his feet and paced rapidly up and down the room. He knew what had brought upon him this mood. Why had he been so weak as to enter that church? he asked himself. And what was she doing there? He could not separate the two. The Church and Beryl were always connected. He recalled the last time he had seen her in his old parish. It was the evening of the day he had said good-bye to his parents. He wished to see her, but upon approaching her home his courage had failed him. How could he look into her face with the great stain upon him? Her large lustrous eyes would have pierced his very soul. She believed him to be true, noble, and upright. But how little was she aware as she sat at the piano that night, practising the Christmas music, that Rutland, to whom she had given her heart and hand, was watching her longingly through the window. He had stood there until she ceased her playing. Then she had come to the window and looked out upon the world of snow and ice. He remembered how he had shrunk back fearful lest she should see him. For some time did she stand there, and Rutland knew that of him she was thinking. He had waited until the house was in darkness, and then crept back to his own lodging place.

How every incident of that night was burnt upon his brain! He had left the parish like a coward, and when several days later the startling news of his fall and deposition reached Glendale he was swallowed up in the great world of seething humanity. He knew nothing of the grief and agony of his parents, nor the overwhelming blow which for a time almost prostrated Beryl Heathcote. But he read the accounts of his degradation in the papers, and heard men by his side discuss the affair in a light careless manner. How he had recoiled as he listened to their rough remarks, and their apparent delight that another clergyman had gone astray. In a few weeks the story of wrong was forgotten, save by those whose hearts had been most sorely stricken.

Rutland had wandered far and wide, staying only long enough in any one place to earn enough money to supply his scanty needs. He would prove the bishop's words to be false. He would get away from the influence of the Church and all religious teaching. He attended no place of worship during the years of his wanderings, and though living in a country of churches and Church activities he believed that he had so steeled his heart and mind that never again could they exert any influence over him. He lived entirely for himself, and to the few people he occasionally met he was a mystery.

But Rutland had found that he could as easily walk through a flower-garden and not touch the flowers nor inhale their fragrance as he could pass through the world and not be affected by the influence of the Christian religion. He upbraided himself for his weakness in entering that

church. That it should never happen again he was determined. He must get away far off into the wilderness. He would go where the influence of the Church was unknown, and where it was not even a name. He would penetrate regions never before trodden by the feet of white man, and there at last he would find the rest and peace he desired. To stay longer in this city so near to Beryl he could not. The thought of her, however, brought a degree of calmness to his troubled mind. He had ever associated her with peace. In days gone by her mere presence was refreshing. Now she was near, but he must not go to her, neither must she ever know how close he had been to her this night. When she thought of him, he mused, it must be with the deepest loathing. What a terrible change the years had brought about! There was a time when he could hasten to her side, and rejoice in her love. How she would listen to him as he played upon the violin, and often she would accompany him upon the piano. All that was changed now. They were sundered more widely than by the broadest ocean.

At length he paused before the table and picked up the violin, one of the few cherished things he had carried with him. It alone had been his comforting companion in his wretched wandering life. And so to-night as he seated himself upon the cranky chair, and drew the bow across the strings, the old mystic spell swept over his soul. He was a child once more, care-free and happy, playing around his home with the flowers, birds, bees, and butterflies as his companions. He passed into his first and only parish. He saw the faces of those to whom he ministered turned up to him, their chosen leader. But brightest and most-outstanding of all was the face of Beryl as she watched him from her seat by the little church organ.

When Rutland ceased the fire was out in the grate, and a clock in a nearby steeple was striking the hour of two. A shiver passed through his body as he rose and laid his violin tenderly upon the table. Hastily blowing out the light, he threw himself upon the narrow cot, and drew over him the two thin blankets. At length the outcast slept, and for a time the fierce agony of heart and mind troubled him no more.

CHAPTER II

THE VERGE OF TREMBLING

When the news of Martin Rutland's ignominy reached Beryl Heathcote all the light and joy passed out of her life. At first she could not believe it possible, and hoped against hope that there had been some terrible mistake. In a few days, however, she had to realise that it was only too true, and that the man in whom she had trusted so implicitly was an outcast not only from society but from the Church as well. She tried to bear up and face the storm which raged so furiously in the parish. On every side she was forced to listen to the most scathing denunciations of the deposed clergyman. People seemed to take a fiendish delight in calling upon her to discuss the affair and to express their undesired sympathy. No word of blame or complaint passed her lips. At first she cherished the feeble hope that Martin would either return or write to her, that he would prove himself innocent. But as the days slowly edged into weeks, and no word came, a heavy despair settled upon her. The strain proved too much to bear, and she succumbed to a long serious illness, from which it was believed at one time that she could not recover.

When at last she was able to sit up she was but the shadow of her former happy buoyant self. "Oh, if I had only died!" she moaned. "What a relief it would have been. How can I face life again with this terrible weight upon my heart!"

When she was stronger she became determined to leave Glendale, the Gethsemane of her young life, and to go where she would no longer hear the story of shame, and where curious eyes would not follow her whenever she moved abroad.

Her only sister lived in a western city and thither she made her way. What a relief it was to her burdened heart to have the comfort of her sister's love. Here she could rest and endeavour to gather up as far as possible the tangled and broken threads of her life.

This, however, she found to be most difficult, and months passed before she was able to compose her mind and think of the future. She felt that she should be doing something, and thus not depend upon others. To return to her old home to the love and attention which would be hers there she could not. She must remain away from the scene of her great sorrow.

In work, Beryl believed, she could in a measure forget herself. But what work could she do? Music was the only thing in which she had been thoroughly trained. But the idea of turning to it now, and taking in pupils, was most repugnant. Not since that night when she had played in her old home, when Martin Rutland was watching longingly through the window, had she touched the keys of any instrument. Neither had she sung a single note. Music had passed out of her life, and the clear sweet voice which had thrilled the hearts of so many was stilled.

At length, after discussing the matter with her sister, Beryl decided to become a nurse. Not that she cared at all for the profession, but it was the only thing that seemed to offer, and she must keep her mind and hands employed if she were to forget the past. That she must forget she was determined, and she believed that in time the deep wound her heart had received would be at least partly healed.

During the months of her inactivity she had brooded much over what had taken place in her life. Many were the battles she had fought, silent and alone. At times a bitterness, so foreign to her loving nature, possessed her. Then it was that her faith in God and man weakened. Was there a Father in heaven who cared? she would ask herself over and over again. If so, why had He allowed her bright young life to be so clouded and blighted? Then she would think of Martin and how much he had meant to her. Though she had always defended him, or remained silent when others had condemned, nevertheless in her own heart the thought of what he had done rankled sore. But her love was too strong for such feelings to last for any length of time, and so she was always able to come forth unscathed from the fierce struggles.

Beryl threw herself with much energy into the work of her new profession. She made rapid progress, and all who came into contact with her were charmed by her gentleness of manner, and the sweetness of her disposition. To the patients, especially, she was an angel of light. No voice was as comforting, and no hand as soothing as hers, and they would always watch eagerly for the nurse who had the sunny smile of cheer. Though her own heart might be heavy, she revealed nothing of her sorrow to the world, but radiated sunshine wherever she went.

But Beryl found it a severe strain to be always presenting to the world a bright face, and by the time her course of training was almost over she felt that it was impossible for her to do so much longer. Every day it was necessary for her to force herself to her duties, and to assume that lightness of heart which she did not feel. She had little to give her that zest for her work which would make each task a joy. Must she go through life, lacking the needful inspiration? she often asked herself. She knew the difference between work done in the spirit of duty and love. One was mechanical, a mere tread-mill round; the other was of the heart.

She was thinking of these things one Sunday night during service in the church where she generally attended, and which was the nearest to her sister's home. As a rule she was a most devoted and attentive worshipper. But to-night her thoughts wandered. They would go back to Glendale, and to that little church, where for years she had been organist. Again she saw Martin conducting the service just as he used to do before his fall.

Somehow it seemed to Beryl that he was near her this night. Once she glanced partly around as if expecting to see him in the church. She could not account for the idea, as she never had such a feeling before. With an effort she checked her wandering thoughts, and fixed them upon what the clergyman in the pulpit was saying. At once her interest became aroused, and she followed him with the deepest attention. He was speaking about Service, and referred to the noble work nurses were doing both at home and in the mission field. He told also about the Red Cross Society, and paid a tribute to Florence Nightingale. He then quoted one verse of Longfellow's "Santa Filomena":

> "A lady with a lamp shall stand
> In the great history of the land,
> A noble type of good,
> Heroic womanhood."

As he uttered these words a strange new thrill swept through Beryl. Her heart beat fast, and her face flushed with living interest—the first time in years. Almost in an instant she became transformed. Hitherto she had been trembling on the verge of uncertainty, with nothing definite in life. Now she had a purpose, which, like a star of hope, burst suddenly into view.

The last hymn was given out, and the congregation rose, and joined in the singing. Beryl knew the words and had no need of a book, though she held one in her hand. An impulse now stirred her heart, her lips moved, and at last, like a wild bird escaped from its cage, she lifted up her voice, and sang for the first time in years. And it was that voice which Martin heard, where he crouched in a back seat, and which thrilled his entire being.

When the service was over, Beryl left the church and hurried to her sister's house. She knew nothing of the lonely outcast, who yearningly followed her, and then paced the street for hours after the door had closed behind her.

When alone with her sister that night, Beryl related her experience in the church and the new purpose which had come into her life. They were seated before an open fire, and the light illumined their fair faces with a soft glow.

"Yes," Beryl told her, "I have at last made up my mind. I am going to offer for the mission field. I care not to what place I am sent so long as it is somewhere."

"You will need training, perhaps, in that special work," her sister replied.

"I know it, Lois. But you see, when I have graduated I shall take a course in preparatory mission work. I understand there is such a school in this city connected with our Church. I shall then know where I shall be sent."

"It will be a grand work, Beryl," and Lois Hardinge laid her hand lovingly upon that of her sister's. "It will take you out of yourself, and make you forget the past."

"It can never make me forget," and Beryl gazed thoughtfully into the fire as she spoke. "I can never forget him, and I don't want to now. No matter what people say, I cannot believe that he is a bad man, even though he has fallen and is an outcast from the Church. Oh, Lois, do you know I

had the feeling to-night that he was near me during service. It was only a fancy, of course, but it seemed so real. Since then I have the idea that somewhere, sometime, I shall meet him, that we shall understand each other, and that all will be well."

"God grant it so, dear," her sister fervently replied. "If it will comfort you in your work hold fast to that hope."

CHAPTER III

A WILDERNESS WAIF

The great Mackenzie River flowed with a strong and steady sweep on its way to the Arctic Sea. Two boats floated upon its surface, bearing northward, manned for the most part by half-breeds and Indians. Employees were they in the service of the notable Fur Trading Company, which for long years had ruled this wilderness land. For weeks these men had been pushing their way along this stream, contending with rocks, rapids, and portages. Their work was hard, but they did it with a rollicking good humour, and took every difficulty as all in the day's labour.

Martin Rutland worked as hard as the rest though he talked but little. A spirit of elation grew within him as they advanced into the great silent region. He rejoiced at the work, no matter how hard it might be. He had little time for thought during the day, but at night in camp he would sit somewhat apart and consider the new life which was now opening up to him. He seldom joined in talk with his companions, and they did not interfere with him in any way. This strange, silent, hard-working man was a mystery to both half-breeds and Indians alike. It was only when he brought forth his violin and began to play that they would gather eagerly around him. Music has charms when produced by a master, and such was Rutland. But never does it seem so entrancing as out in the open on a calm evening beneath the branches of the tall, over-shadowing trees. There is a mystic plaintiveness about the sound of a violin on such an occasion. Rutland's music was generally in a minor key. It expressed his inmost feelings, and often as he played the naturally superstitious half-breed would glance apprehensively among the shadowy trees. It awed them by its strange weirdness like wailing spirits, lost, wandering, and seeking vainly for refuge and peace. At other times Rutland would play bright airs and snatches of old songs, which delighted the hearts of his companions and banished their feeling of fear.

Each day of progress brought to Rutland a greater feeling of exultation. At last he was free from all influence of the Church which had cast him out. Here in this barren region he could live like the natives, free from care. He would seek some far-off band, and become one of them. He had read much about the Indians, and their picturesque life had always appealed to him most strongly. He would watch his opportunity, steal away, and live and die in their midst, more of an outcast than they.

At times he thought about the Church to which he had once belonged, and a contemptuous sneer always curled his lips when he thought of it. Lying among the trees, he often wondered how he had ever endured the thraldom of bygone days. He remembered how particular he had been about the observance of the slightest rule. In the performance of his duties he had followed the rubrics of the Prayer Book with the most punctilious care. The slightest deviation from the rules laid down filled him with much concern. Special days had been kept with great regularity, and the command of his bishop was as his conscience. But now all was changed. The solemn vows he had taken did not trouble him in the least, and the Church was to him merely a name. Neither did the sin which had driven him forth disturb him. The spirit of rebellion had reigned in his heart during all the years of his wandering life. He believed that he had been unjustly treated. He did not blame himself, but others. He thought of his comrades in the Ministry, and a feeling of pity and superiority came into his heart. He pictured them moving in their narrow, petty circle as of old, and he asked himself what did it all amount to anyway. The spell of the wilderness was now upon him, and he longed for the voyage to end. He would abandon the boat when it had reached its most northerly destination. Then, when his companions had started back, he would plunge into regions beyond and become lost forever to the world of civilization.

One evening after a hard day's work they came to a small Indian encampment just below a dangerous rapid. They had much difficulty in overcoming this turbulent piece of water, and very glad were they to rest after their arduous exertions. They found the Indians in a state of great excitement, the cause of which was soon apparent. That very day a young fur-trader and his wife had been drowned in an attempt to shoot the rapid in a canoe. Their little child, a girl of four years, had been rescued by the natives, and taken to their encampment. The woman's body was recovered, but of the man no trace could be found.

Rutland, with several of his companions, entered the lodge where the body of the unfortunate woman was lying. As he drew back the deer-skin robe which had been placed over her still form, he was surprised at the young and beautiful face which was presented to view. He stood there for some time after the rest of the men had taken a hurried look and departed. He could not get the face of the dead woman out of his mind, and he awoke in the deep of the night thinking that she was standing by his side. In his dream he beheld her, and she was pointing with her finger to something lying at his feet, which he saw to be a little child.

The Indian women had taken good care of the rescued child, and she awoke from a sound sleep none the worse for her cold plunge into the river the day before. Opening her eyes, she expected to see the loved faces of her parents looking down fondly upon her. Her bright, happy expression changed to one of terror when she saw instead the dusky native women bending over her. Wildly she called for her mother, but alas! for the first time in her young life her mother did not respond with loving words, nor hurry to her side.

Rutland, hearing the cry of terror, hastened to the lodge and entered. Why he did so he could not tell. He did not stop to analyse his feelings, but acted merely upon the impulse of the moment. It was sufficient for him to know that the little one was in distress and needed assistance. A large Indian woman was holding the child in her arms when Rutland appeared. Several squaws were gathered around trying to soothe her. But the more they talked in the native tongue the more terrified the child became. Rutland stood for an instant just within the entrance of the lodge. He saw the little girl, her face distorted with fear, struggling madly to free herself, and pleading vainly for her mother. Not for years had Rutland's heart been so stirred. He stepped quickly forward and reached out his hands to the child. The latter saw him and, intuitively realising that here was one who could be trusted, endeavoured to go to him, while a sob of relief escaped her lips. Rutland caught her in his arms, folded her to his breast, and began to calm her with words of comfort.

"Hush, hush, little one," he soothed, as he stroked her silken hair. "You are safe with me, so don't cry any more."

"Mamma, mamma. I want my mamma," wailed the child.

Rutland knew not how to reply. He was little accustomed to the ways of children, so all he could do was to hold her close to his breast and tell her that she was safe. Ere long his words had the desired effect, and soon she remained quietly in his arms looking up into his face with big, wondering eyes. Passing forth from the lodge, Rutland sat down upon the trunk of a fallen tree just outside the door. He placed the child upon his knee, and began to talk to her. He pointed out to her a squirrel sitting upon the branch of a jack-pine not far off. The child's eyes grew bright, her face beamed with pleasure, and she clapped her hands with delight. In a few moments they were the firmest of friends, and soon they started off in search of the chattering squirrel. It was a balmy morning, with not a ripple upon the surface of the river. A new feeling of peace stole into Rutland's heart as he walked by the side of the child with her soft hand in his. She was a beautiful little maid, with wavy brown hair, rosy cheeks, and clear, dark eyes. Her plaid dress was neatly made, and her shoes were of a light-tan colour. At her throat was a small silver clasp-pin, with the one word "Nance" engraven upon it, which Rutland believed must be her name.

After they had strolled about for a while they returned to the lodge, where the Indian women were preparing breakfast.

"You stay here, little one," Rutland said. "These women will give you something to eat. I must go away now, but I shall come back soon."

"No, no," the child cried, clinging close to him. "I don't want to stay. I want my mamma. Take me to my mamma. Where is my mamma?"

"She can't come to you now," Rutland replied. "But I promise you that I shall come back soon."

After much persuasion the child was induced to remain, but she watched her protector anxiously, with tears in her eyes, as he left her.

Rutland hurried at once toward the forest along an Indian trail, which led to a hill not far from the river. Here was a native burying ground where a new grave had been dug that morning. His companions were already assembled, and by the time Rutland arrived they had the body of the young woman lowered into the ground. This task was performed in deep silence, for the presence of death stilled the tongues of these usually garrulous men. No coffin had they in which to place the body. Instead, a grey blanket was used as a shroud, and this had been carefully wrapped around the stiffened form.

As Rutland stood by the grave and looked down upon all that remained of Nance's mother he thought of the dream which had come to him in the night, and he saw again the woman pointing silently to the child at his feet. Between him and the men standing by his side there was a great gulf fixed. They were rude and unlettered, while he was an educated man, capable of seeing things not always revealed to others. They saw only the shrouded form lying in the grave. He saw much more. He beheld a little home, which had been rudely shattered by the sudden death of husband and wife. He pictured loved ones far away waiting anxiously for news from the great northland, and then the sorrow when at last the tidings reached them, if ever they did, of the precious toll the wilderness had taken. He thought, too, of the little child so terribly bereaved, upon whom so much love and care had been bestowed. What would become of her? he asked himself.

He was roused from his reverie by the sound of shovels striking hard upon gravel. He looked quickly up and saw that the men were making ready to fill in the grave. For an instant only he hesitated and then straightening himself up he raised his right hand.

"Wait a moment," he commanded. "It is not right that we should lay this woman here without one word of prayer. Who will say it?"

At once every hat was doffed, and the men looked at one another.

"You go ahead, pard," said one at length. "You know best what to say."

Yes, Rutland knew very well what to say—the exact words—but why should he utter them? He had put everything connected with his Church away from him forever. He paused in an effort to think of something else. Twice he started, but each time floundered and stopped. He could not back down, for the men were watching him. He must say something over the body of Nance's mother. At length, pulling himself together, he repeated the words he had used so often in other days.

"Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take to himself the soul of our dear sister here departed, we therefore commit her body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Here he paused, stooped, and seizing a handful of gravel sprinkled it three times upon the body. This done, he continued the prayer to the end. Then he stepped back and remained perfectly silent, watching the men as they rapidly filled in and rounded up the grave. In fact, he stood there until his companions had gone back to the river. Then he looked cautiously around to be sure that he was alone. Seeing no one in sight, he picked up two sticks lying upon the ground and fastened them together into the form of a cross, with a piece of a raw moose-hide thong he had in his pocket. This he placed at the head of the newly-made grave, thrusting it well down into the loose earth.

Rutland could not account for what he had done. If any one had told him when he awoke that morning that he would repeat that prayer and erect this rude cross, he would have scoffed at the idea. "I did it all for the child's sake," he said to himself, as an excuse for his temporary weakness. At once there flashed into his mind the words of the aged bishop. "Do you think that you can free yourself from the influence of the Church? I tell you that you are mistaken; it is impossible." Rutland's hands clenched hard as the memory of the past swept upon him. He reached down and laid his hand upon the cross he had just erected. He would tear it out and break it into a dozen pieces. But as he touched that symbol of redemption his outstretched arm dropped by his side, and his head drooped low. Though an outcast, and determined to have nothing more to do with his Church, he knew now that its influence was upon him still. It was harder than he had imagined to uproot the teaching which had been implanted in his heart and mind in early days, and carefully nourished throughout the years. But he would succeed. Never again would he allow such weakness to possess him. He would prove the bishop's words to be false.

When Rutland returned to the encampment he found that his companions were almost ready to depart. Nance saw him approaching, and with a cry of delight ran to meet him. He caught her in his arms, and his heart thrilled with joy at her confidence. Here was the one person in the whole world to greet him and look up to him for protection. He carried her to where several Indian women were squatting upon the ground.

"You stay here, little one," and he gently untwined her arms from around his neck as he spoke. "Be a good girl, and I shall come back to you some day."

For a few brief heart beats the child lifted her head, looked searchingly into his eyes, and then with a piteous wail of despair clung to him closer than ever.

"Don't leave me. Don't leave me," she sobbed. "Take me with you. Take me to my papa and mamma. I won't stay here. I won't."

Rutland did not know what to do. He seated himself upon a stump and placed Nance on his knee. He tried to reason with her, telling her how happy she would be with the Indian women, and how they would care for her. But his words were of no avail. The more he talked, the closer she clung to him, and begged him not to leave her.

A shout from the river warned Rutland that his companions were ready to depart. Quickly rising to his feet, he unloosened the child's arms, handed her to an old squaw, and moved rapidly away. At once wild shrieks of despair and terror filled the air. He endeavoured not to listen, and tried to steel his heart. But it was no use. He stopped and looked back. He saw the child where he had left her, her little hands stretched out appealingly toward him. The sight was more than he could endure. Hesitating no longer, he rushed back, seized her in his arms, bore her swiftly to the river, and placed her gently in one of the boats. In a few minutes they were speeding northward, and with them went Nance, the little waif of the wilderness.

CHAPTER IV

BY THE MIRRORING LAKE

Of all the sheets of water lying hidden in the great range of mountains sloping to the cold North Pacific Ocean, none was fairer than Lake Klutana. It was one of nature's most beautiful cameos. Tall, dark trees of spruce, fir, and jack-pine shouldered back from the margin and cast irregular silhouettes around the border. Lofty mountain peaks towered beyond and reflected their coronals of snow in the lake which they embosomed. To the north-east stretched a long wooded valley with

crouching foot-hills on either side. Down through this opening flowed a small river, called by the Indians the "Quaska." Where this stream joined the lake the land was level, which from time immemorial had afforded an excellent camping ground for the natives of the locality.

In days long past the Tasko tribe had been a large one. Hundreds of them had come regularly to this lake to catch the fine salmon, white, and other fish its water contained. At times mighty warriors had gone forth to make raids upon neighboring tribes, and once a furious battle had taken place among the trees at the mouth of the Quaska. But wars and diseases had thinned the tribe until it numbered barely one hundred souls, men, women, and children in all. The days of warfare were now over, and these natives led a quiet life, subsisting chiefly upon the game which the land produced in abundance. The arrival of the white men beyond the great mountains of the rising sun gave them a market for their furs, which they bartered for clothing, food utensils, and trinkets of the world of civilisation.

To all outward appearance theirs was the ideal life as they gathered around their lodges one evening when summer was slowly merging into fall. Several small fires were sending up wreaths of smoke into the pine-scented air. The women were preparing the evening meal; the men were lying prone upon the ground, while the children played near the shore. It all seemed such a free and easy existence. There was none of the mad rush for wealth, no hard grinding at the wheels of industrial life in office, factory, or store. The dwelling places were of the humblest. All the land for miles around was theirs, with no taxes to pay, and no rents continually coming due. Game was plentiful in forest and stream, with only a moderate effort needed to procure it. Changing fashions were unknown, and with the exception of the clothes obtained from the trading post, they used the dressed-skins of wild animals as did their ancestors for many generations.

The sun of the long northern summer day was swinging low in the west as three men suddenly emerged from the forest, and moved slowly along the shore of the lake toward the Indian encampment several hundred yards away. They bore heavy packs strapped upon their shoulders, while one carried a large bundle in his arms. At length they came to a lodge where a middle-aged woman and a girl of seventeen were seated upon the ground just before the entrance. As the men approached the women rose quickly to their feet, and looked intently upon the man with the burden in his arms. His companions uttered a few words in the guttural native tongue, and at once the girl stepped forward and relieved the man of the bundle. Then a cry of surprise and pleasure came from her lips as she beheld the little white face of a sleeping child peeping out from beneath the blanket with which it was enfolded.

Martin Rutland had greatly changed in appearance since the morning he had caught Nance in his arms and carried her swiftly to the river. His hair and beard were long, his face was worn and haggard, while his clothes were almost in tatters. When he saw that Nance was in good hands he gave a sigh of relief, unstrapped the pack from his back, and sank, much exhausted, upon the ground. A conversation at once ensued between his two companions and the Indian women. Then, while the girl laid Nance upon a bed of furs within the lodge, the other squaw began to broil a fish over the hot coals of the fire-place. Rutland was very hungry, and never did any food taste as good as the piece of salmon which was soon handed to him by the kind-hearted squaw. This fish formed the entire meal, but it satisfied his appetite. When he was through he lighted his pipe, and stretched himself full length upon the ground.

Though he did not understand the language of these people, the two Indian men knew a few words of English. He accordingly learned that these women were their wives. The name of the elder was Naheesh, and that of the younger Quabee. Rutland was too tired to talk much. It was so comfortable lying there, leaning against the butt of a log, watching the smoke curling up from his well-blackened pipe. Other Indians had now gathered around, and a continual buzz of voices fell upon his ears. He surmised that the conversation centered upon himself and the child asleep within the lodge. But this did not trouble him in the least. One thing alone disturbed his mind. He wondered if he would be forced to leave this place as he had to abandon camp after camp during the past weeks. He recalled, as he lay there, how hard it had been to find a band of Indians uninfluenced by the Church. At first he had imagined that such a thing would be very easy. In this, however, he had been mistaken. At the trading post, where he and Nance had left the boats, there was a mission church. That evening, at the ringing of the little bell, the Indians had left whatever they were doing and flocked to service. Rutland, knowing that this was no place for him, had left at once, carrying Nance in his arms. In company with several natives he reached an encampment miles away. Here he believed he could remain. But no, even out in the great open he saw the Indians gather together in a little group ere they laid themselves down to sleep. He watched them with much curiosity, thinking they were about to perform some ancient heathen rite. One native, who seemed to be a leader, spoke a few words, and then all began to sing. Though he did not understand a word of the language, he recognised the tune of an old familiar hymn. He remembered how impressively they had sung it, and what fine voices they had. When they finished they all knelt down, and the leader prayed. A feeling of admiration swept over Rutland as he watched them. Then his own heart began to rebuke him for the first time since he left the Ministry. Here were these natives, children of the wild, putting him, who had taken such solemn vows upon himself, to utter shame. Had they only known the life-story of the white man in their midst, what would they have thought of the Christian religion? He had looked into their sincere faces, and for the first time in years felt humbled. It was impossible for him to remain here. How could he, whose life was a failure and a disgrace, endure the presence of such trusting people? Their simple faith stabbed him to the heart and brought back memories he was striving so hard to forget.

He accordingly fled to other encampments, but everywhere it was the same. Out on the hills, in forest depth, or by inland lakes, he found that the Church had been ahead of him and had influenced the natives in a most remarkable manner. He learned, too, that these Indians were not the ordinary miserable creatures sometimes seen hanging around stores and railway stations. They were the nobility of the land, and having once embraced the teaching of the Church, they endeavoured to put their belief into practice. More than once the words of his bishop uttered ten years ago came to his mind, and he began to realise that they were truer than he had imagined.

Thus he fled from camp to camp, and almost despaired of ever reaching a band of Indians untouched by the Christian religion. Hearing at length of the far-off Tasko tribe, he set his face toward Lake Klutana with two friendly natives, who were bound thither. The journey was a hard one, for Nance had to be carried every step of the way. Since leaving the boats at the great river he had at times chided himself for his foolishness in bringing the child with him. Why had he not left her at the mission station where she would have been well cared for? He thought of this by day as he struggled over the cruel trail with the little one in his arms, and he upbraided himself at night when she awoke and cried piteously for her father and mother. But as a rule he was glad that he had her with him. She fared better than he did, for at every camp the Indian women vied with one another in caring for the girl, who now no longer feared their dusky faces. Rutland's love for Nance increased as the days passed. The severe task of bearing her over long miles of trail became at last a joy. He was more than repaid by her prattling talk, and her gentle, affectionate ways. She imagined that he was taking her to her parents, and her guardian had not the courage to tell her otherwise.

By the time Rutland reached the Tasko encampment his strength was almost gone. If these natives were Christians he would abide here for a few days and then carry Nance off somewhere into the wilderness, where they would live alone, undisturbed by either Indians or whites. He dreaded the idea, however, of doing this, for he knew that it would mean many hardships for a time at least. So now as he sat quietly smoking, he was anxious to ascertain whether these people would hold a service such as he had witnessed at other places. As the evening wore on he was greatly relieved when the Indians began to move away to their various lodges. He now believed that he was safe, and that these natives were free from all influence of missionary enterprise.

At length he picked up his violin case which was lying by his side and opened it. Through all the hardships of the past weeks he had never relinquished this companion. It had cheered him when most depressed, and by means of it he had been able to entertain and please the Indians who had been so hospitable to him. As he now tuned up the instrument and drew the bow across the strings a movement took place in the camp. Indians came from all sides and gazed with wonder upon the white man, who was producing such marvellous sounds. As Rutland continued to play the natives squatted around him upon the ground. Their only musical instrument was the mournful Indian drum. But this was altogether different. On one occasion several of the men had listened to the sound of a violin at the fur-trading post, and they had never wearied of telling what they had heard to the rest of their tribe. They were naturally musical, these waifs of the wilderness. The sighing of the breeze, the murmur of the stream, and the roar of the tempest in winter, all had their meaning. They were sounds which soothed or roused their wild nature. So as they listened this night their hearts became strangely affected. Something more than ordinary began to stir within them. It was the same old story being repeated here in the northland. It was the beginning of a new life, new longings, and new aspirations. It was, in short, the dawn of Art which once moved the hearts of the uncouth ancestors of the most cultured races and inspired them to higher things. These Tasko Indians knew nothing of the history of civilisation. They felt only a keen pleasure as the white man played, and they gave vent to an occasional "Ah, ah," when something appealed to them more than usual.

It was late ere Rutland ceased and laid his violin aside. The Indians at once dispersed to their lodges, and silence brooded over the encampment. The moon rose big and bright above the mountains and cast its reflection down into the depths of the quiet lake. Rutland sat for a while watching the superb scene. Then he rose to his feet, and went to the lodge where Nance was lying. He saw that she was sleeping comfortably and, bending over her, he kissed her little white cheek. The child moved, and the word "mamma" came sleepily from her lips. Perhaps the mother, all unseen, was watching over her little one—who knows? Rutland crept softly away and, with his single blanket wrapped about his body, was soon fast asleep upon the hard ground.

CHAPTER V

A CABIN FOR TWO

In a few days Martin's strength was much renewed. The Indians treated him with great kindness, and the women were never weary of caring for the little white child. With hooks supplied him by the natives, Martin succeeded in catching a number of fine salmon in the lake, and these formed excellent food. He looked forward also to the hunting of moose and mountain-sheep, for he had brought with him a good rifle and a number of cartridges. His spirits naturally rose as the days passed. To him the life was ideal. There was a freedom from care, and with Nance by his side he often wandered for hours along the shore of the lake. The child thoroughly enjoyed these rambles, and many were the questions she asked as well as making quaint remarks about the

numerous things she saw.

Martin soon realised that it would not do to remain idle for any length of time. The cool nights warned him that summer was passing, and unless he had a shelter for the winter their position would be a sorry one. Such lodges as the Indians used would be unbearable to them when frost sealed the streams and storms swept howling over the land. He accordingly searched around for a suitable place to build a cabin, and at length settled upon a beautiful spot near the mouth of the Quaska River, where trees stood in abundance suitable for his purpose.

With an axe, borrowed from an Indian, he one day set earnestly to work. Martin had been brought up on a farm, and was well accustomed to the use of the axe. During the years of his wandering life he had been forced at times to toil as a labourer to earn his daily bread. He now put his heart into his task and worked with a will such as he had not known for years. He had to ask no one for the use of the land, and the trees were standing ready for him to cut. As he cleared the ground upon a gentle elevation several rods back from the river, he would stand at times and look out over the lake. The thrill of ownership possessed his soul, and he felt that he would not exchange his lot for the most favoured being on earth. Every day Nance accompanied him and played among the trees and branches. He built her a little playhouse, and sometimes he would sit by her side to rest, play with her, or tell some story to delight the child's heart.

The cabin Martin planned to build was not a large one. It was only for two, he told himself, but it must be as cosy as his hands could make it. There were to be two rooms; one where they would live and the other where provisions would be stored.

After the foundation had been laid Martin began to carry stones from the river and the shore of the lake. With these he constructed a fire-place at one end of the building. This was a work of considerable importance, and occupied him for several weeks. The stones had to be broken, shaped, and then laid carefully together with clay, which he found by digging along the shore of the lake. This, when hardened, was almost like cement, and served his purpose better than the ordinary mortar.

When the fire-place was completed, and tapered off into a capacious chimney, he set to work upon the walls of the cabin. Logs, hewn on three sides, were laid one upon another, and fitted closely together. Then came the roof, composed of long poles, covered with mud and turf. Moss was used for the chinking of the walls, and to obtain this Martin and Nance went every day to a swamp a short distance back from the river, until a sufficient supply was gathered.

By the time this work was completed the days were much shorter. Martin was anxious to occupy his cabin as soon as possible, for he was afraid that the cold nights in the Indian lodge might not be good for Nance. With much difficulty he fashioned a door. It was a marvellous contrivance when finished, and Martin was quite proud of his handiwork. He had no glass for windows, and so was forced to use the skins of mountain-sheep, with the hair removed and scraped very thin. These, stretched across the openings, let in considerable light during the day, and kept out the wind and cold as well. The floor was made of logs, hewn as smooth as the axe could make them. The living room was only eighteen feet long by twelve wide, which could easily be heated, and quite large enough for two.

For the first time in his life Martin possessed a house entirely his own, and which he had built with his own hands. In days long past he had pictured to himself a little home which he and Beryl would occupy. He often thought of those day-dreams as he toiled at his cabin. In fact she had been much in his mind since the night he had seen her in the church and listened to her singing. Try as he might, he could not forget her, although the remembrance always brought a bitter pang to his heart of what he had forever lost. Often he would lie awake at night thinking of the days when they were so much together. At times he had an almost irresistible longing to see her again. This, however, he was forced to banish, as he well knew that such a thing was impossible. While busy at work upon the cabin he had no time to brood over his past life. He was always so tired at night that he slept soundly until the break of day. He dreaded the thought of having nothing to do. Action was his one salvation, and he knew that he must be busy at something. He would find occupation, so he told himself, which would keep his mind from dwelling upon the things he wished to forget.

It was a cold night when Martin lighted the fire and brought Nance to the cabin. A fierce wind was howling over the land, swaying the trees and ruffling the surface of the lake. Nance stood watching the flames as they licked up the chimney.

"Pretty, pretty!" she cried, clapping her hands with glee and then stretching them out toward the fire.

"Is Nance happy now?" Martin questioned, watching with interest the bright sparkle of her eyes, and the fire-light playing upon her face and hair.

"Yes, happy," the child replied. Then she climbed upon his knee, and laid her head against his shoulder. "When will we go to my papa and mamma?" she at length asked.

"Not yet, Nance," and Martin's voice was low. "You must stay with me for a while. But tell me about them, little one, for I never knew them."

"You didn't know my daddy and mamma!" and Nance lifted her head and looked straight into her guardian's eyes. "Isn't that funny," and she gave a queer little chuckle. "My daddy was big and so

strong that he could carry me everywhere. He played with me, too, and we had such fun. Mamma used to tell me stories, such nice ones, and she always kissed me when I went to bed. I wonder where she can be."

"Do you like stories, Nance?" Martin asked.

"Oh, yes. I like nice ones about fairies. Mamma often told me about Alice in Wonderland. Do you know that? It is so pretty. I'll get mamma to tell it to you some day."

A lump came into Martin's throat as he listened to the prattle of this child. How could he ever tell her that she would never see her dear parents on earth again? Would it not be as well for her to know the whole truth now? But no, it would be better to wait for some time until she was older. A sudden idea came into his mind.

"Look, Nance, suppose we play that I am your daddy, and that your mamma is sitting right here by our side."

"Oh, yes," Nance was ready for the game, "and I'll call you 'daddy,' and we'll talk to mamma, and make believe that she's right here."

How often in the past in his old parish had Martin pictured to himself a scene similar to this. It had all been so real: an open fire, a child on his knee, and Beryl by his side. He closed his eyes, while a sigh escaped his lips.

"Daddy." He started at the name. "Are you sleepy? Why do you do that?"

"Do what?"

"Oh, this," and she drew in her breath, and let it out again.

Martin laughed. "I was just thinking, Nance, that was all."

"Well, don't shut your eyes, and don't think, or mamma will be cross, won't you, mamma?" and she turned to an imaginary person nearby.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Tell a story, and mamma and I will listen."

"Tell a story, Nance! What kind of a one do you want?"

"Oh, a fairy story, about flowers, and birds, and people—a story like mamma used to tell."

Martin sat for a while without replying, watching the fire dancing merrily before him. It was a fairy-story the child wanted, and he could not remember any.

"Go on, daddy," Nance demanded.

"Yes, little one, I will. I'm only thinking."

"Well, don't think," was the imperious command. "Talk."

"Once upon a time," Martin began, "there was a little boy who had a beautiful home."

"That's nice." Nance sighed, as she nestled her head back comfortably against the strong arm which was supporting her.

"And the boy," Martin continued, "had a father and a mother who loved him very much. All day long he played in the sunshine, amongst the flowers, birds, and butterflies. He had a big dog, too, and they were always so happy together. Then the boy grew to be a man, and he had a garden all his own. He had many trees and beautiful flowers to look after, and he loved them very much, especially the little baby flowers. These came to him, and he would talk to them, and tell them what to do to make them grow strong and beautiful."

"What! could the flowers talk?" Nance asked in amazement. "Wasn't it funny?"

"Yes, those flowers could talk, and understood everything the gardener told them."

"What is a gardener?"

"Oh, the man who was once a little boy."

"I see." Sleepily.

"Well, after a while the gardener hurt one of his flowers."

"He did!" Nance was wide awake now. "Wasn't he bad! How did he hurt it?"

"He just broke it down, so it could never stand up again."

"Oh!"

"Yes, Nance, that's what he did, and he had to leave his garden and go away."

"Go on," Nance demanded as Martin paused.

"Yes, he went away, for such a long time, and tried to forget all about his garden. Then in a

strange place he saw one of his most beautiful flowers and heard her sing."

"What! can flowers sing?"

"This one could, so beautifully. But the gardener did not dare to speak to her. She knew what he had done, and he was afraid. So he ran away again, far off into a land of wilderness. His heart was very sad and lonely. No one loved him, and everybody thought that he was so bad."

"And wasn't he, daddy? He must have been bad or he wouldn't have hurt the beautiful flower."

"He was very, very sorry, Nance, and his heart was heavy all the time, but no one knew that. Then one day he found another little flower. She had fallen into the water, but some kind people saw her and saved her. The gardener took this lovely flower with him wherever he went. He built a little house among the trees, where they lived all by themselves, and were so happy."

"What was her name, daddy?"

"The gardener called her 'Heart's Ease.'"

"Funny—funny—name," came low and sleepily from the child.

Martin paused, while his thoughts roamed back over the past. He sat thus for some time holding Nance, who had fallen asleep in his arms. At length he arose, laid the child gently in the little rough cot he had prepared for her with such care, and wrapped her well up in the blanket he had obtained from an Indian. He stood for a while watching her by the flickering light of the fire. He then picked up his violin and, seating himself, began to play soft and low. The wind roared and howled outside, but Martin heeded it not. A mystic door had noiselessly opened, and he had passed through into an enchanted world, where the sorrows, regrets, and cares of earth were for a time forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

'TIS HARD TO FORGET

The following weeks were busy ones for Martin. Winter was fast closing in and he had many things to attend to. First of all it was necessary to lay in a sufficient supply of food to last them until spring. Of fish he had plenty, and these were accordingly cached high up between three large trees, safe from prowling dogs or other animals.

He next turned his attention to the hills and forest. It was an exciting and memorable day when he brought down his first moose. He was a big fellow, with great branching antlers. Martin, in company with an Indian, had come upon him as he was quietly browsing in a wild meadow, several miles back from the lake. To Martin it seemed a most contemptible thing to creep up and shoot the unsuspecting creature. But such a feeling had to be overcome if he and Nance were to live through the winter.

At the first shot the moose gave a tremendous leap into the air, and dropped upon his knees. In his excitement Martin rushed from cover, and exposed himself to view. The wounded animal saw him, and in its dying rage charged suddenly upon his assailant. His antlers were but a few yards away and in another instant they would have hurled Martin to the earth. But again the rifle spoke, and the monarch of the forest went down with a thundering crash, never to rise again.

Skinning the moose, cutting it up, and packing it down to the lake was a task of considerable magnitude, and several days passed before all was completed.

Martin was now thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the chase, and he spent much of his time in the woods. Instructed and assisted by his Indian friends, he built a long circular line of traps, consisting chiefly of snares and dead-falls. He soon came to know the ways of the shy denizens of the forest, and took much pride in matching his skill against their cunning. At first meagre success rewarded his labours. The lynx, fox, martin, wolverine, and other animals for a time gave a wide berth to his carefully laid traps. But after a while a change took place, and each day he was able to bear home several furry prizes. These were promptly skinned, and placed upon stretchers, which the Indians had taught him how to make.

During Martin's absence from his cabin Quabee, the young Indian woman, stayed with Nance, and they thus became firm friends. But the child would always watch most anxiously for the return of her daddy, as she now called him, and never once did she forget to ask him if he had found her mamma and her "real daddy."

Through the evenings, which were now very long, Martin worked upon the interior of his house. With considerable difficulty he fashioned a table, and a wonderful easy-chair. He also constructed a couch to the left of the fire-place. Upon this he placed a liberal supply of fir boughs, over which he spread a large well-dressed moose skin which he had obtained from the natives. The cabin was thus made fairly comfortable, and when lighted by the blazing fire it presented a most cosy appearance.

Martin was not satisfied, however. He longed for more cooking utensils, as well as some pictures

to adorn the bare walls. He needed, too, different food for Nance. Her principal diet consisted of meat and fish, and much of this was not good for a white child. Dried berries, and bulbous roots, supplied by the Indians, afforded a pleasing change. These had been procured during the summer, and through native skill had been dried and compressed into cakes. Such delicacies had to be doled out very sparingly, although the women gave what they could to the little pale-face maid of whom they were becoming very fond.

Every night Nance played upon the floor by Martin's side with a funny doll he had made for her. She was delighted with it, and could never have it out of her sight for any length of time. The wilderness life agreed with her, and living so much in the open her face was well browned, and her cheeks like twin roses. Martin was very particular about her appearance, and as he could not always attend to Nance himself he had instructed Quabee in the art of caring for a white child. At first the Indian woman was much puzzled, but through patience she at length learned what was desired of her. Cleanliness Martin insisted upon, and this was something that Quabee could not at first understand.

With much labour Martin had hewn a fair-sized bathtub out of the butt of a large pine tree. It had taken him days to perform this, but when it was finished he was quite proud of his accomplishment. This was accordingly installed in the cabin, and Quabee soon learned what it was for. In this she gave Nance her bath every morning near the fire.

Other Indians came at times to the cabin, but Quabee and her husband were there every day. The Indian woman was quick, intelligent, and most anxious to learn the ways of the white people. Having no children of her own, she placed her affection upon Nance, and the idea of receiving pay for her services never once entered her mind. She was a superior woman in many ways, tall, straight, and comely in appearance. She was never so happy as when with Nance. She would play with her, and the child soon began to learn a number of Indian words, while Quabee added daily to her knowledge of the English language. The Indian woman also made neat little dresses of the finest of dressed deer-skin for the white child, trimming the borders with beads, and coloured fringes. Little moccasins she made as well, and when Nance was fully attired in this native costume Martin thought he had never seen a more beautiful sight.

This constant association with Nance and the instruction she received from Martin ere long exerted an influence upon the Indian woman. She became somewhat neater in appearance, and she daily endeavoured to act more like the white people. She and her husband were greatly pleased with the log cabin, and they decided to have one just like it.

One cold night, three weeks before Christmas, Martin was sitting before the fire lost in deep thought. Nance was playing quietly by his side with her much-worn doll. On the floor at his left was a pile of furs, consisting principally of fox, lynx, wolverine, and beaver. He had counted them over several times, and had them all marked down upon a piece of bark of the birch tree. His only pencil was a small sharpened stick, which he blackened from a dead coal lying upon the table.

Martin had never lost track of the days and months, for one of the few things he had brought with him into the wilderness was a tiny calendar. He had carefully observed Sunday, and abstained from all unnecessary work on this day. He told himself that it was not only for his bodily welfare that he should do so, but it was the divine command. It had nothing to do with the Church, so he reasoned, and although he had been separated from the latter, he still believed that the Great God was his Father, and that His Son had died for mankind. He was by no means an unbeliever, except in his attitude toward the Church. In fact he had always been most careful about Nance repeating her little prayer every night at his knee, although he himself had abandoned the practice since he had become an outcast.

With much care he traced with his rude pencil the things he needed to make the cabin more comfortable, as well as the food and clothing necessary for Nance. Indian hunters were to start in the morning for the trading post across the mountains, and they would take his skins, and bring back the articles he required. They were not many to be sure, but the Indians could easily bring them with their dog teams, and they were quite willing to do it for their white brother.

A delighted chuckle from Nance aroused him, causing him to glance quickly in her direction.

"What is it, little one?" he questioned, as the child sprang to her feet and came to his side.

"Look, see!" she cried. "We are playing Santa Claus. Mamma is fixing up a tree for me and dolly, oh, such a pretty tree."

"It is a beauty," and Martin opened his eyes wide, and stared hard at the imaginary tree. "What nice things you have upon it."

"Oh, no, there's nothing on it yet," and the child gave a chuckle of delight. "We're just fixing it up for Santa Claus. He's coming, you know, and will put such lovely things on it."

"Do you think that old Santa will find you here?" Martin inquired.

"He found me last Christmas, all right, and brought me such lovely things—a little woolly dolly, and candy. When will it be Christmas again?" and Nance climbed upon Martin's knee. The imaginary tree was well enough in play, but it could not take the place of the real one.

"Christmas will soon be here, Nance. It won't be long. What would you like Santa Claus to bring you this year?"

"Oh, so many things," and the child clasped her little hands together as she gazed thoughtfully into the fire. "I want a new dolly, that will shut her eyes and go to sleep. I want candy—and something for Quabee, and the little Indian children. And I want——"

"And what?" Martin asked as she hesitated.

"I want my daddy and my mamma. Oh, why don't they come! Do you think they will come this Christmas?"

"Not this Christmas, Nance. You must wait, and some day you will understand why they cannot come to you now. But we'll fix up a tree, a little one, won't we?" he suggested in order to divert her attention. "We'll find a nice one and put it right by your bed, and we'll play that your daddy and mamma are here."

"Oh, yes," and Nance clapped her hands with delight. "And we'll let the Indian children see it, won't we? Oh, that will be lovely!"

After Nance had been tucked into bed, and was fast asleep, Martin picked up another strip of birch bark, and scrawled a note to the trader at Fort O' Rest. "They may have something suitable for a child," he mused, as he gazed thoughtfully upon what he had written. "Nance will be terribly disappointed if she doesn't get something. They will have sugar, at least, and that will be better than nothing."

As Christmas approached Martin became uneasy. The tree had been found, and was standing at the foot of Nance's cot. Every day he expected the arrival of the Indians from the fort, bringing with them the long-looked-for supplies and presents. They were much later than usual, so Quabee informed him, as it generally took them twelve sleeps to go and return.

The day before Christmas Martin's anxiety increased. Nance talked almost incessantly about what Santa Claus would bring her, and asked all kinds of questions. Martin went often to the door, and looked far off towards the woods whither the trail led, hoping to hear the jingle of bells, the shouts of the Indians, and the joyful yelps of the dogs. But no sound could he hear. The great forest, silent and grim, revealed nothing to the anxious watcher. When night, cold and dreary, shut down Martin's last hope vanished. He now no longer expected the return of the Indians. It was with a heavy heart that he played with Nance, told her several stories about Santa Claus, and the Christmas trees he had when he was a little boy.

"And just think!" the child exclaimed with delight, "when I wake in the morning there will be such nice things upon my tree."

Martin did not reply; how could he? He merely held her close, and stared straight before him into the fire. He pictured her bitter disappointment when she opened her eyes and found the tree as bare as it was the night before. What could he say to her, and how would he be able to soothe her sorrow? When at last she was snugly tucked into her little cot she put her arms around Martin's neck, and gave him a good-night kiss.

"Be sure and call me early in the morning, daddy," she said. "And you'll help me take my presents off the tree, won't you? Oh, I'm so happy!"

Holding fast to her queer battered doll, she was soon in slumber deep. Martin stood watching her sweet chubby face lying on the rough pillow, and in spite of himself tears came into his eyes. He threw himself upon the chair before the fire. If anyone had told him one year ago that a mere child could so capture his heart and weave such a wonderful spell about him he would have scorned the idea. But now that little being lying there was far dearer to him than life, and to think that such a sorrow should come to her in the morning!

Time and time again he replenished the fire from a liberal supply of wood in the corner. He felt that it would be useless to go to bed, for he knew that he could not sleep. How long he sat thus he could not tell, but he was at length aroused by the faint jingle of bells, and a noise outside. He sprang to his feet and listened eagerly. Yes, it must be the Indians! Hurrying to the door, he threw it open, and peered forth. There before him were the forms of men and dogs. The former were busily unfastening something from their sleds. His greetings to the natives were answered by several grunts. They were too anxious to get to their own lodges to waste any time in talk just now. Presently several parcels were handed to him, and Martin was much surprised at their number. He placed them upon the floor, and when the Indians had departed he closed the door, and carried the bundles over to the fire.

With much satisfaction Martin now examined each parcel. Yes, there was everything he had ordered—rice, sugar, beans, tea, tobacco, pencils, paper, and several other things. Then his face grew grave, for he could not find the presents he had ordered for Nance. With a sinking heart he placed the goods against the wall, and was standing looking down upon them when a noise was heard at the door. It opened, and an Indian stepped into the room. He was carrying a parcel in his hands.

"Injun no savvey," he quietly remarked. "Injun all sam' lose 'um." Saying which he held forth the bundle, and, turning, left the building.

Martin seized the parcel, and hastily tore off the paper wrapping. Then he gave vent to an exclamation of joy, for lying before him were the presents for Nance. He did not touch them at first, but crossing the room stood for a while gazing upon the sleeping child. A new feeling now

possessed his heart, and he was anxious for morning to come that he might watch the joy in her sparkling eyes.

Going back to the presents, he examined them, and was greatly surprised at the number. He had no idea before that they kept so many things at the trading-post. There were several picture-books as well, and such a pretty little dress, and candy in coloured bags, all neatly made.

As he turned the various things over a piece of paper caught his eye. Picking it up, he read the words written thereon. As he did so his face grew dark, and the light of joy died out of his eyes. It was from the trader at Fort O' Rest. He did not keep toys, so he wrote, but a mission post had been established there the previous summer, and he had shown the missionary and his wife the birch-bark letter. They accordingly became much interested in the little girl away in the wilderness, and had made up the parcel of presents for her.

This was the substance of the letter, and every word burnt itself into Martin's soul. He sank into his chair, holding the paper in his hand, which trembled from the vehemence of his emotion. So these presents were the gift of the Church. He knew very well that they had been sent in a bale to the mission by some society of the Church to which he had once belonged. The words of his old bishop flashed into his mind: "Do you imagine that you can cut yourself off from the influence of the Church of your childhood? I tell you that you are mistaken, for such a thing is utterly impossible. The Church and her influence will follow you to the grave no matter to what part of the world you go." Martin groaned as he realised how true were these words. He had laughed at them when first spoken, fool that he was. How little he knew and understood the power of the Church.

He rose abruptly to his feet. He seized several of the presents in his hands and carried them to the fire. He would not take them from the Church, no, not for the sake of the child he loved. He could endure her sorrow rather than the bitter remorse which was sure to follow him.

As he stood there, hesitating for an instant, Nance stirred in her sleep. "Daddy, Santa Claus," she murmured. That was all, but it was enough to cause Martin to draw back. The perspiration stood in beads upon his forehead, not caused by the fire alone. He paced rapidly up and down the room, pausing at times to look upon the child. It was a stern battle he was fighting. How could he accept those presents from the Church? And yet how could he disappoint Nance? He wavered to and fro. It was his own battle, and there was no one to help him. He went to the door, and looked out. He knew that it was past midnight by the position of the stars. All was still and cold. The sharp air cooled his hot face, and somewhat calmed his excited mind. He closed the door and sat down. It was Christmas morning, the day which had always brought such a peace into his soul until his fall. He thought of it now and of the days of youth when he had gone with his parents to the little parish church. He saw the choir singing the familiar words of "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," and "O Come, All Ye Faithful." He knew that in a few hours they would be singing them again in the same parish from which he had been driven out. Try as he might he could not banish the vision of the past which came to him this night. A spirit of peace seemed suddenly to surround him, while the old feeling of bitterness and animosity was for a time forgotten. He could not explain it, neither did he try to do so.

How long he remained there he could not tell. Whether he fell asleep and dreamed all the things he saw he did not know. But when he at length aroused himself the fire was burning low, and the dawn of a new Christmas day was stealing over the land. He threw several sticks upon the fire, and then, picking up the presents, he hung them all upon the tree. The strife for the present was over. Nance would be happy when she awoke, and that was all-sufficient.

CHAPTER VII

THE CEASELESS THROB

After the Christmas excitement life settled down to a quiet monotony in the little cabin at the mouth of the Quaska River. Nance played day after day with her doll and other toys, and never seemed to grow weary of them. Martin visited his traps each day, and during the long evenings remained at home. There was no work he could do upon the interior of the building, so he had very little to occupy his time. Nance always went to bed early, after she had several stories told to her. Silence then brooded over the place, broken only by the crackling of the fire and the sound of the violin, upon which Martin would play when the mood was upon him. There was nothing else for him to do but sit and smoke, alone with his own thoughts.

For a while he was contented with this quietness and solitude. But Martin was a man, not a beast of the pen, and he possessed something besides a mere body. There was a power within him which refused to be still. It was ever active, like the ceaseless throb of the engine concealed within the ship. He had known other things. He knew what it was to study, to think, and to aspire. His training had made him so, and he could not endure a life of inactivity.

For the first time since entering the wilderness an insatiable longing came upon him for books, or reading matter of some kind. He thought of his well-filled shelves in his old parish. What a pride he had taken in his library, and what joy had always been his when he could be alone for a while

with his favourite authors. But now he had nothing, not even a scrap of a newspaper. He looked around the barren room, and a tremor shook his body as he realised what little chance there was of ever having those rude walls adorned with books. And what an opportunity for reading, he mused, by the bright light of the open fire.

He was thinking thus one evening when the door softly opened and Taku and Quabee glided into the room, and squatted upon the floor to his left. Martin was pleased that they had come, as he was beginning to be quite fond of these two well-behaved natives. The only difficulty he had was in talking with them. He did not understand their language, while their knowledge of the English tongue was most meagre. Otherwise they would have proven most congenial company.

By their manner he knew that they had come for some special purpose, for they were unusually silent, and sat for a time without saying a word. Martin offered Taku a plug of tobacco, which the latter took, filled his pipe, and then handed it over to his wife. Soon large volumes of smoke were filling the room, while expressions of satisfaction rested upon the faces of the visitors.

"Good!" Taku ejaculated, looking at Martin. "Fine squaw, eh?" and he motioned towards Quabee.

Martin nodded.

"You teach 'um all sam' white man, eh?" Taku continued.

"What's that?" Martin inquired. "Me no savvey."

"You mak' 'um spik all sam' white man?"

"Oh, I see. You want to speak white man's tongue? you want to talk as I do?"

"Ah, ah, all sam'."

"Maybe so," was the slow reply. "I'll think it over. You come in the morning."

"You mak' Injun sling, eh?"

"Do what?"

"Sling, all sam' dis," and Taku began to hum the air of a tune he had learned.

"Where did you hear that?" Martin asked somewhat sharply.

"At post. White squaw mak' beeg box sling all sam' dis," and the Indian tapped upon the floor with his fingers, imitating some one playing an organ.

"And did she sing, too?" Martin questioned.

"Ah, ah."

"And you savvey it, eh?"

"Ah, ah. Me sling all sam' white squaw. Me no savvey talk," and he shook his head in a disconsolate manner.

"You want to savvey the words, do you?"

"Ah, ah."

"Well, then, I shall think about it. You come to me in the morning. Savvey?"

"Ah, ah. Me savvey."

When the Indians had departed Martin sat for a long time in deep meditation. An uneasy feeling possessed him. He knew very well now that the hunters who had gone to the post for supplies had come in contact with the missionaries there, and had attended service. They would go back again, and each time they would hear and learn more about the teaching of the Church. Soon they would hold service among themselves, and sing the hymns as well.

Presently an idea flashed into his mind, which somewhat startled him. It was not unlikely that the missionary, knowing of these Indians, would visit them from time to time and hold service among them. Again the bishop's warning came to him. He was surely learning now how true were those words. He paced rapidly up and down the room. What should he do? Must he leave this place, and the cabin upon which he had expended so much labour, and depart? If he did so where could he go from the influence of the Church?

A sudden thought stabbed his mind, which caused him to pause in the middle of the room. Why had not the idea come to him before? he asked himself. He crossed at once to the chair he had recently left, and sat down. He wished to think it all out very carefully. The Church had cast him off, and he had fled from its influence. He had been always on the defensive. Why not change his position and assume the aggressive? The Church was nothing to him now except the great disturber of his peace of mind. Although he was only one, yet why should he not show that he could retaliate? Why run away like a cur? Would it not be better for him to use his influence and oppose the onward march of the Church into the valley of the Quaska? He would teach the Indians the English language, and when they could understand him intelligently he would speak to them about the Church, and it would not be to its advantage, either.

The conclusion Martin arrived at this night did not trouble him in the least. He believed that he

was justified in the course he was about to pursue. He wondered why he had not done this before. More than once the idea came to his mind that he would like to go back to the ways of civilisation and expose the Church. He knew many things about it which were not generally known, for he had been within the inner circle. He had seen much sham, hypocrisy, and even downright sin in the fold. He could tell of the strife, and division which often existed; of the incessant struggle for high positions; of the jealousy and envy which were so common. Oh, yes, he would unfold a tale which would startle the world. He thought of all these things as he lay that night in his bunk. Not once did there come to him a realisation of his own misdeeds, but only those of others.

Early in the morning Taku and Quabee came to the cabin, bringing with them so many other Indians that the room could hardly hold them all. Martin looked upon them with something akin to despair, although he determined to do the best he could to instruct them. He chose the simplest words at first, using the common articles with which they were familiar as illustrations. The natives were most anxious to learn, and repeated the words over and over again with remarkable patience. Time was nothing to them, and in fact they would have remained all day if Martin had been willing to instruct them. But a lesson of two hours was all that he could endure, especially as the atmosphere in the room had become almost unbearable. When he stopped, and signified that there would be no more teaching that day his scholars made no movement to depart. They remained squatted upon the floor with an expression of expectation upon their faces, which Martin could not understand.

At length Taku rose slowly to his feet, and stood before the white man.

"Injun wait," he began. "Injun lak' sling all sam' white squaw," and he jerked his thumb toward the east.

These words were received with much approval by the assembled natives. Martin well understood what they meant, and his heart beat rapidly. What should he do? Should he teach these Indians to sing the hymns of the Church which had cast him out, or should he poison their minds by telling them that such things were all nonsense? The Indians were observing him closely, and it seemed as if they were watching the struggle which was going on in his mind. Their eyes appeared to reproach him, and for relief he lifted the violin from its case, and began to tune up the instrument.

While he thus stood in the valley of decision Martin glanced towards Nance, sitting quietly by Quabee's side. Her sweet innocent face was turned towards him, and her bright eyes were following his every movement. He glanced towards the expectant natives. They were Nance's companions, and would be for years to come. Suppose he denied them their request now, and turned their minds against religious teaching, what would be the outcome? What had he to offer them instead? By influencing them for good it would be a benefit to Nance as well.

His hands trembled as he continued to thrum upon the strings. How could he turn against the Church? He thought of his parents, and remembered what noble lives they had led, and the peace and comfort they had received through that very Church which he was now on the verge of opposing. Then his mind flashed to Beryl. Beryl! What a vision rose before him. How could he deny the Church of which she was such a devoted member? What did all the sham and pretence amount to in comparison with her! A Church which could produce such characters as his parents and Beryl, how could he fight against it?

By this time the Indians were becoming restless. They were talking among themselves, and although Martin could not understand what they were saying, it was not hard for him to detect a distinct note of anger. This brought him to himself, and put an end to his indecision. He thought of the Bishop's words, and a scornful laugh broke from his lips, as he rose from the stool on which he had been sitting, and laid the violin upon the table. What a fool he had been, he told himself, for having wavered even for an instant. Why should he teach these natives the hymns of the Church? If he began now there would be no end. They would come every day, demanding more. No, it should not be. It was far better not to begin, no matter how angry the Indians might be.

When the natives understood that the white man would not play for them, and that the instructions for the day were ended, they departed surly and dejected. But Martin did not care what they said or thought. He had made up his mind to oppose the Church, and he was not to be turned aside any more. Twice, at least, during the past year he had been weak, and had given way, but it must never happen again.

That night after the simple supper was over, the few dishes washed and put away, Nance climbed upon Martin's knee.

"Tell me about the beautiful flower, please," she pleaded, laying her head contentedly against his shoulder.

"What flower, dear? Heart's Ease?"

"No, not that one now. The other one, you know, which could sing so lovely."

"Oh!" Martin caught his breath. He was surprised that Nance should make such a request when he had been thinking so much about Beryl all through the day.

"Why do you wish to hear about her, little one?" he asked after a pause.

"'Cause I like her. I think about her so much, and how pretty she must be."

"Yes, she is pretty, Nance, and so very, very good."

"What's her name, daddy?"

"Beryl."

"Oh, isn't that a funny name for a flower!"

"It is. But you see this flower is a woman."

"A woman!" Nance sat up straight, and looked full into Martin's face. "I'm so glad. It's much nicer than being just a flower. You called her that in play, didn't you?"

"Yes, Nance, just in play."

"And is she a really real woman?"

"A real woman, Nance; the most beautiful I ever saw."

"More beautiful than my own mamma?"

Martin started at this unexpected question. A picture rose before him of the white face of a dead woman, lying in the Indian lodge on the bank of the great river beyond the mountains. How could he answer the child?

"I never knew your dear mamma, little one," he at length replied. "I never talked to her. But I know Beryl, and have heard her sing."

"Does she love little girls?"

"Yes. She loves everything that is good and beautiful."

"Does she love you, daddy?"

"I—I am not sure," Martin stammered, while a flush came into his face. "I am not beautiful, neither am I good."

"Yes, you are," and Nance twined her little arms around his neck. "You are so beautiful and good that anybody would love you. I do, anyway."

Martin could say no more. A lump rose in his throat, and a strange feeling took possession of him. The simplicity and innocent prattle of this child were unnerving him. He told her that it was getting late, and that she must go to bed. As he bent over her and gave her the usual good-night kiss she looked up earnestly into his face.

"When I am a big woman," she said, "I want to be just like Beryl. Do you think I will, daddy?"

"I trust so," was the quiet reply. "But go to sleep now, and we'll talk about it to-morrow."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DISCOVERY

The more Martin considered the idea that the missionary might cross the mountains and visit the Tasko Indians the more uneasy he became. He called himself a coward and asked why he should run away. But he well knew that he could not bear to meet the missionary. It would be better for him to be on the watch and slip away with Nance somewhere out of sight if necessary. He could come back again, for the missionary would not be likely to make more than one visit a year if he came at all. Then, if the Indians became Christians, he could remove to some place farther away, erect another cabin, and cut himself off entirely from all contact with the natives.

In order, however, to move around easily and at will, it was important that he should have a canoe of his own. By means of this he could traverse the river leading from the lake, and explore the region lying westward. He had spoken to Taku about the country beyond, but the Indian knew very little. It was a land of mystery, so he was informed. The River Heena, which drained the lake, flowed on and on until it came to a mighty river called by the Indians the "Ayan."

After careful consideration, Martin determined to fashion a canoe out of one of the trees standing near the shore of the lake. He would need the craft, so he told himself, for fishing purposes, and it would be pleasant to take Nance out upon the water on many an enjoyable trip.

As the days were now lengthening, and the spirit of spring was breathing over the land, it was possible to work out of doors in comfort. Martin had met with much success in trapping during the winter, and had sent numerous fine skins with the Indians when they had again crossed the mountains to the trading post. In addition to more provisions he had been able to obtain a good new axe, which was a great improvement upon the poor one belonging to the natives. He could now do much better work in less time with the axe the trader had sent to him from the post.

Instructed by Taku, Martin chose a large tree which would suit his purpose. It was a tedious task, and weeks glided speedily by as he hewed the tree into the desired shape, and dug out the interior. As the work progressed Taku was always on hand, and sometimes he would bring his own axe and hew away for hours. He was very particular about the thickness of the shell, and would often pause and feel the sides to be sure that they were not too thick or too thin.

At length the day arrived when the axes were laid aside. The canoe was then filled with water, and a fire built all around it, far enough away so as to heat but not to scorch the wood. Stones were made red hot and placed into the craft, and these soon brought the water to the boiling point. This was kept up for a whole day, thus making the wood of the canoe pliable and capable of expansion. By means of narrow strips of wood hewn smooth and flat the canoe was expanded in the middle to the desired width. When the water had been taken out, and the shell allowed to cool, the sides of the canoe were thus rigid and curved in a uniform and graceful fashion. Martin was much delighted with the craft, and thanked Taku most heartily. He was anxious now for the ice to break up so he could launch the canoe, and take Nance for a spin upon the lake.

During the whole of this time Nance stayed close by Martin. She played among the chips, building little houses for her doll. Often she would sit and watch the canoe which was a wonderful thing in her eyes. When she was told that it would carry her over the lake she became much excited, and could hardly wait for the ice to disappear. But one morning when they woke the lake was clear, the ice having all run out during the night. Then Martin and Taku launched the canoe, which floated gracefully upon the glassy surface of the water. Nance and Quabee sat in the bottom, while Martin and Taku used the paddles. Over the lake they sped, exploring every cove, and returned after a couple of hours well satisfied with the craft.

That night Nance could talk of nothing but the canoe, where they would go, and what they would do.

"What shall we call it, Nance?" Martin asked. "We haven't given our canoe a name yet, you know."

"Let's call it Beryl," was the reply. "Won't that be a nice name?"

"Very well, little one," Martin assented. "It shall be as you say."

Almost every day after this Martin took Nance out upon the water. The fishing was good, and many were the fine salmon they brought to land. But when not fishing Martin would paddle slowly over the lake far away from the cabin. Often the water was perfectly calm like a huge mirror, reflecting the trees and rocks along the shore, as well as the great fleecy clouds which floated lazily overhead. At such times a complete silence brooded over the lake. No discords from the far-off throbbing world of commerce disturbed the quiet scene. It was as serene and beautiful as when it came fresh from the hand of its Creator. Here there was no mad rush for wealth, position, or fame. Here no huge industries vomited forth their volumes of poisonous smoke, nor crushed out the very life-blood of countless men, women, and children. Here there was abundance for all in forest and in stream. Martin thought of all this as he paddled slowly over the lake. They were happy hours for him. Nance was near and often he would look upon her with love and pride. Her chief enjoyment consisted in trailing one little hand through the water by the side of the canoe. Often her joyous laugh would ring out over the silent reaches, and then she would listen entranced to its echo far away in the distance.

One bright afternoon Martin turned the prow of his canoe up the Quaska River. Hitherto he had not paddled up this stream but had been content to spend his time upon the lake. For some distance as he advanced the shores were lined with fir and jack-pines right to the water's edge. At length he came to a large wild meadow where the stream sulked along, and paddling was much easier. Beyond this the trees were small and straggling, showing evidence of fires which had devastated the land. The water here was shallow, and at times the canoe grated upon the gravel. Ere long he reached the mouth of a small stream flowing into the Quaska. Here he ran the craft ashore, and making it fast to a tree he took Nance by the hand, and walked slowly up the creek. It was a quiet sun-lit place, where cottonwood trees and jack-pines lined the sloping hills. An Indian trail led along the bank, and this they followed for some distance. Coming at last to a fair-sized tree, a patriarch among its fellows, they paused.

"We'll have something to eat now," Martin remarked, as he seated himself upon the ground beneath the shade of the outspreading branches.

"Oh, this is nice!" Nance sighed, as she took her place at his feet, and watched him unfold the parcel which contained their food. "Wouldn't it be nice to stay here all the time?"

"Not at night, Nance," and Martin laughed. "It would be cold then, and there might be bears around."

"Would there?" and the child drew closer to her guardian. "Will they come here now, do you think?"

"Don't be afraid," was the reassuring reply. "They'll not trouble us in the day-time."

Their repast was soon over, and then Martin filled and lighted his pipe and leaned back against the old tree. Nance played close to the water, and made little mounds out of the black sand along the shore. Not a breath of wind stirred the trees, and the hot sun slanting down through the forest caused the water to gleam like burnished silver. Birds flitted here and there, while

squirrels chased one another along the ground, and ran chattering up among the boughs overhead.

Martin's eyes were fixed upon Nance, but his thoughts were far away. Such a scene of peace and quietness always brought Beryl to his mind. He recalled one such afternoon when they had wandered among the trees, fields, and flowers. Her bright, happy face rose before him. He remembered her words as they sat under a large tree to rest. "I often wonder," she had said, "why such happiness is mine. It seems almost too good to be true, and I fear lest something may happen to spoil it all." How little did she then know that in less than a year her fairy castle would be shattered, and all her fond hopes destroyed. Martin's hands clenched hard as all this came to him now. He rose abruptly from his reclining position, and moved to the bank of the stream.

"What are you doing, Nance?" he asked, not knowing what else to say.

"Oh, just digging in the sand, and making houses," was the reply. "Come and help me, daddy."

In an instant Martin was by her side, helping her to shape queer little mounds with the sand which was so fine and black. Presently he noticed little golden specks, which gleamed whenever a ray of sunshine touched them. He examined them closely, and found that where the sand had not been disturbed a thin layer of such specks was lying upon the surface. Instinctively he knew that it was gold, which had been washed down with the water and deposited along the shore. Much interested, he examined the sand for several rods up and down the stream, and everywhere he found signs of gold.

He next turned his attention to the gravel lying beneath the water. Scooping up a quantity of this with his hands he found golden specks all through it as well as a number of small nuggets each about the size of rice. This discovery caused his heart to beat rapidly, and he sat down upon the bank in order to think. Gold! Had he made a rich discovery? The earth must be full of it, and perhaps beneath his feet the treasure was lying hidden. The glorious day, and the glamour of his surroundings appealed to him no longer. The idea of the great riches so near possessed his mind. The whole valley stretching between the high walls was his. It was full of gold beyond measure.

Ere long another feeling came upon him. Suppose he did get gold what should he do with it? Gold was useful only out in the world of civilisation. But here it was of no more value than the common stones lying in the river's bed. The Indians knew nothing about it. To them the skins of the animals roaming in the forest were more precious than heaps of the gleaming ore. He well knew that if his discovery became known beyond the mountains a flood of miners would pour into the region, and instead of peace and quietness there would be the wild commotion of a mining town. No, such a thing should not occur. It should be kept a secret. He would say nothing of his find to the Indians. In fact if they did learn of it they would not give themselves the trouble of visiting the place, he was sure of that.

When at length he unfastened the canoe, and started with Nance down to the lake, his mind was so full of the discovery he had made that he paid little or no heed to the prattle of the child.

CHAPTER IX

THE GOLDEN LURE

Martin slept but little that night, as his mind was much disturbed. There were many things to think about since his discovery of the previous day. He did not feel quite sure of himself now. He had imagined that he had severed all connection with the outside world and that never again could he endure the trammels of conventional social life. He was so satisfied with the quiet ways of the wilderness that the awakening came as a severe shock. It was the gold which had made the change. He could not enjoy it here, but out there what magic it would work. What doors hitherto closed would instantly be opened, and great would be his influence. What a surprise it would be to the Church which had cast him off, he mused, when he arose from seclusion and oblivion, and startled the world with his vast wealth. A grim smile of contempt curled his lips as he pictured how the church dignitaries, and others, would condone his past sin, and fawn upon him because of his money. How gratifying it would be to hear the very men who had condemned him most severely lift up their voices in praise of his contributions to the building of churches or charitable institutions. And would not the newspapers, which had devoted big headlines to his fall, be as eager to laud him for his munificence? Then he thought of Nance. How much the gold would do for her. She would be able to mingle with the most select people. He would take her to all parts of the world, and wherever they went they would gladly be received because of their riches.

It was little wonder, therefore, that sleep would not come to Martin with such visions whirling through his brain. He rose early, long before Nance was awake, and prepared breakfast. A new spirit possessed his soul. He drank in great draughts of the fresh morning air, and he felt like shouting with exultation. He had to give vent to his feelings, and the only way he could do so was upon his violin. How he did play! There was a triumphant jubilant note in his music. The Indians were surprised and startled to hear the strains of the violin at such an early hour, while the dogs set up loud barks and howls. The natives tumbled out of their lodges and hastened to the white man's cabin. They gathered in front of the building, and stood watching Martin as he sat upon a

block before the door, playing fast and furiously upon his violin. His long beard swept his breast, for he had not touched a razor to his face since entering the wilderness. His chest was expanded, and his body was drawn up rigid and erect. His eyes, which looked straight ahead, glowed with a defiant, victorious light. His moccasined right foot beat time upon the ground to the music.

For a while the Indians stood watching this unusual sight, and then glided back to their lodges. With almost bated breath they discussed what they had seen and heard. They believed that the white man was possessed with some strange spirit, or why should he look and act in such a peculiar manner?

For some time Martin played after the natives had left, and only ceased when Nance came out of the house. She looked at him with astonishment in her eyes, and then ran to him for her customary morning kiss. Martin smiled as he laid aside the instrument, and turned his attention to the child. He felt much relieved, and viewed the whole situation in a calmer and more reasonable light. His dreams of wealth had been too fanciful, so he told himself. Perhaps he would not find the gold as easily as he had imagined. There might not be any in the valley, and what he had seen might have been washed from some source which he could not discover.

Martin was now anxious to hurry back up the river as soon as possible to make a careful examination of the ground. In an Indian lodge he had once seen a shovel and a small pick. They had been found years before, so he was informed, on a creek many miles away. Nearby were lying the skeletons of two men, prospectors no doubt, who had miserably perished in their search for gold. The natives regarded the pick and shovel with considerable interest, and had always taken good care of them. Provided with these, his axe, and his frying-pan, which would serve him in the stead of the prospector's regular gold-pan, Martin at length reached the spot where he had made the discovery the day before.

He knew something about mining operations on a small scale, as he had not only read much about it in days past, but in his journey northward he had watched prospectors at work on the bars of the river and along the water's edge. This knowledge was of considerable service to him now.

Leaving Nance to continue her play of the day before, Martin scooped up a quantity of gravel with his frying-pan. Washing this carefully, he was delighted to find some gold lying in the bottom of the pan. His excitement now became intense. Stripping off several pieces of the bark of the cottonwood tree, he spread them upon the ground. Upon these he deposited his treasure so that the sun would dry it, and turned once more to the panning of the gravel.

All the morning and afternoon he worked with feverish haste, stopping only long enough to eat his meal with Nance. The lure of the gold was upon him, and it was with great reluctance that he abandoned his task in the evening to go back to his cabin.

He now believed that all the ground up and down the creek was rich with gold. The magnitude of his discovery almost overwhelmed him. He dropped upon the bank and tried to think it all out. He longed to express himself to some one, in order to relieve his feelings. Gold! Gold! He was wealthy beyond his wildest dreams, and there was no one to interfere with him. Gathering up the gleaming ore, he placed it all in his cap.

"Look, Nance!" he cried, as he ran his fingers lovingly through his treasure, "this is gold! You will be the richest woman on earth when you grow up!"

"Pretty, pretty," the child replied, picking up several of the largest nuggets. "Let me play with them."

"Yes, Nance, when you get home. We will both play with them then, eh?"

That night outside the cabin door the gold was all carefully examined, and the little stones picked out. This they did each night, for every day the work of washing out the gold was continued. It was then placed in a strong moose-skin bag and hidden away in the cabin.

After he had been working for some time in the stream Martin turned his attention to the bank above. He believed that gold in large paying quantity could be found by digging down through the earth and if possible reaching bed-rock. This he accordingly began to do, and with pick and shovel he made good progress until he struck frozen earth. This needed to be thawed, so, gathering dry wood, he kept a fire burning all through the day. While this thawing process was going on he prepared other shafts over which fires were also built. Every day he dug out the softened earth and ere long had several excavations from six to ten feet in depth. The farther he descended the richer became the ground. At times he would wash out a pan full of earth to find a most gratifying amount of gold.

One afternoon he came to gravel which led him to believe that he was now not far from bed-rock. In this he was not mistaken, for, digging with feverish haste, he struck at last upon solid rock. He could see that the gravel was full of gold, and every shovelful he threw out sparkled with the golden ore.

The bed-rock, which was soon exposed, sloped downward, and as Martin continued his shovelling, he came to a crevice, and here he found gold which caused him to drop his shovel and to stare in amazement. Then he rubbed his eyes to be sure that he was not mistaken. He stooped for a better inspection. He sank upon his knees and tore at the treasure with his hands. Some of it was loose, but for the most part it was packed and wedged into the split of the bed-rock. How

far this ran underground he could not tell. But right in sight was a fortune in itself. Compared with this new discovery his past efforts seemed ridiculous. He recalled how he had hoarded the smallest grains with the greatest care. But here it was as plentiful as dirt, nuggets large and small all jammed between the rocks.

Although this gold was of no more use to Martin than the gravel lying around, yet it filled him with intense excitement. There was the joy of discovery, and the happy feeling that so much wealth was his with none to dispute his claim. He understood now for the first time something of the fascination of the quest which lures men into the wilderness to endure untold hardships for the golden treasure. The mere finding the gold, looking upon it, and fondling it, form the great reward.

Nance was not with Martin the day of his great discovery. She had stayed at home with Quabee as she generally did now, for the trips up the river had lost their fascination for her. She had been left much to herself and had found no interest in the big holes which Martin had dug in the ground. Her sand houses were of more importance to her, and she had cried at times when Martin would not play with her. To her the gold was nothing more than so many pretty little stones. She did not know that to obtain such things men and women in the far-off world would be willing to sacrifice almost everything; that for those common things men were sweltering, fighting, and dying; or that if the richness of the Quaska valley became known a vast army of gold seekers would pour into the place and change peace into chaos.

Neither did the natives realise the great wealth lying so near their encampment. They knew nothing as yet of the magic power of gold, as all their trading hitherto with the white people had been with the skins of wild animals. The action of their white brother digging so earnestly up the river simply amused them. Ever since that morning when they had watched him playing at such an early hour before his cabin door they had serious doubts as to his sanity. They had often discussed the strange expression in his eyes, and the wildness of the sounds he had made upon the "stick with strings," the name they gave to the violin.

Martin was greatly pleased that the natives did not understand what he was doing. It would have given him no end of trouble if they realised the value of the discovery he had made. Therefore, when he returned to his cabin with the gold he had taken off of bed-rock there was no one to ask any questions, and no curious excited persons crowding around to examine the ore. There was only Nance, who was not even surprised, who merely ran to meet him to tell what she and Quabee had been doing during the day.

CHAPTER X

THE AWAKENING

All through the rest of the summer Martin carried on his mining operations, and steadily the pile of gold within the cabin increased. At length the cold nights and the short days warned him that winter was fast approaching. He accordingly began to wonder what he should do with his treasure. He did not care to have it lying about in the house, as it was hard to tell what might happen to it. At any time a white man might drift that way, and he well knew that dark deeds had been committed with a far lesser motive than the seizure of so much gold. It would prove a temptation to almost any man. He would often awake with a start in the dead of night thinking that some one was creeping stealthily across the floor. Formerly he would sit late before the fire with never a shadow of a fear upon his mind. But now he would turn apprehensively towards the window, thinking that faces were peering in upon him. He hardly liked to be away from home for any length of time lest something should happen to the gold during his absence.

His mind became so obsessed with this idea that he became nervous, and his peace of mind vanished. At last he determined to deposit the gold in a secure place. After careful consideration he dug a hole in the ground at the back of the cabin. At the bottom he placed a large flat stone, walled up the sides, and plastered them over with clay, such as he had used upon the fire-place and chimney.

When this had been finished to his satisfaction he erected over it a small, strong log building, the back of the cabin forming one of the sides, through which he cut a door. There was no other opening in the lean-to, not even a window, so the place would always be in darkness except when lighted by a candle. In the floor, and immediately over the excavation, he fastened a trap-door, fitting the flat-hewn pieces of timber in such an irregular manner that no one would ever suspect that there was any opening in the floor at all. Then when the roof was placed in position, and all finished, Martin brought the gold from the cabin and deposited it in his ground vault. When the trap-door was dropped back into place Martin viewed everything with great approval. He called this building his "Bank," and he often smiled to himself as he considered what a unique bank it really was. He alone was the president, shareholder, and depositor. There were no books to keep, and no regular hours in which to do business. There was no competition, and no anxious watching of the fluctuations in the money market. He had full control of everything, and to no one did he have to render any account.

Martin's mind thus became so filled with the lure of the gold that for weeks everything else was

either neglected or forgotten. From morning till night, and often during the night, he thought of the wealth he was acquiring. The fear lest the missionary should visit the encampment troubled him very little. Nance, too, received but a small share of his attention. He found it difficult to play with her, or to tell her the stories for which she asked. She was left more and more to Quabee's tender care, and always ran to the Indian woman with her little troubles. Martin did not notice that the child was eating less of late, neither did he awaken to the fact that her happy joyous laugh was seldom heard. She would often sit quietly by herself, holding her doll in her arms, while her big open eyes gazed far off into space.

One morning when Nance did not get up at her usual time Martin went to her cot.

"What's the matter, little one?" he asked. "You are sleepy this morning."

A faint smile trembled about the corners of the child's mouth, but she made no reply.

As this was something unusual, Martin became anxious. He placed his hand to her forehead, and found that it was very hot.

"Nance, Nance! are you sick?" he cried, as he bent and looked searchingly into her eyes.

"Yes, daddy," was the low response. "I'm so tired and hot. I want Quabee."

As Martin listened to these words he was seized with a nameless dread. For the first time he noticed how very wan was her flushed face. What should he do? He was helpless in the presence of sickness. The Indian women might know what was the trouble.

"So you want Quabee, do you?" he questioned.

"Yes, I want Quabee," was the faint reply.

"Very well, then. I shall go for her at once. I won't be long."

As Martin hurried over to the Indian encampment he upbraided himself for his neglect of the child. "I've been a fool, a downright fool!" he muttered to himself. "I might have seen days ago that she was failing if I had not been so taken up with that cursed gold."

It did not take him long to tell Quabee and her mother, Naheesh, about the child's illness, and soon the three were hurrying towards the cabin.

Nance's face brightened as the young Indian woman bent over her. Martin saw the smile of greeting and it smote him sore. Knowing that the women could do all that was possible for the child, he left the building and sat upon the trunk of the old tree just outside the door. What if Nance should die? The thought was terrible. How could he live without her? He had neglected her so much that the first one she wanted was Quabee. A jealous feeling stole into his heart. And yet he knew that it was his own fault. Oh, why had he left her so much to herself? It was for her sake, he reasoned. He desired the gold for her, not for himself. But if Nance should be taken away what good would all the gold in the country amount to then?

Later when he crept softly back into the room Nance was asleep, and Quabee motioned to him to be silent. Naheesh had gone to prepare some medicine from native herbs and bark, and would return shortly. All that he could do, therefore, was to sit close by the cot and watch. Ere long Nance opened her eyes and asked for water. All through the day she tossed upon her little bed. Martin left her side hardly for a moment. She did not know him nor any one else in the room. She called often for her mother, and piteously asked why she did not come to her. The day passed and night came on, but Martin remained at his post with Quabee ever near. His eyes seldom left the child's face, and sometimes he would hold one of her little hot hands in his. How he longed for her to look up into his face, speak to him, and throw her arms about his neck. He recalled the last time she had run to him. It was when he was busy sorting the gold he had gathered that day. He had put her away somewhat abruptly, telling her that he was very busy, and that she must not bother him. She had looked surprised, her lips had quivered as she turned away towards Quabee. How forcibly the whole incident came to him now. What would he not give to have her put her arms around his neck and ask him to play with her as of old.

The second night of Nance's illness Martin was sitting alone by her side, as Quabee had gone back to her own lodge for a much-needed rest. The faithfulness and self-denial of the young Indian woman made a deep impression upon his mind. No mother could have been more attentive to her sick child than was Quabee to this motherless girl. Martin sat very still with his head bent low, but with ears keenly alert to Nance's heavy breathing. He tried to be brave and hope for the best. But as the hours dragged by he found it difficult to keep up his drooping spirits. The terrible fear was ever with him that he was to lose Nance. What should he do without her? he asked himself over and over again. With her gone, what was there for him to live for? There was no one else in the whole world who cared for him except this little child. Why should he lose her when she meant so much to him?

A vision of his past life rose suddenly before him. It came upon him with a startling intensity, and in a manner altogether different from anything he had hitherto experienced. The sin which had caused him to be an outcast upon the face of the earth loomed out of the darkness black and appalling. There was not one extenuating circumstance connected with the whole affair. He saw the woman, whose life he had ruined, left to bear her disgrace alone. Never before did he comprehend what a monster he really was. What chastisement could be severe enough to punish

him for what he had done? Had he a right to expect anything else? He believed that he had suffered during the past years, but it was as nothing compared to what he was enduring this night. His very soul was being laid bare by some mysterious power which he could not fathom. Why should such thoughts arise within his bosom now? he asked himself. Was Nance to be taken away as a part of the punishment which truly belonged to him? He had often thought and preached about the miseries of the damned, but only now did he realise that a man who has sinned carries the tortures of hell within his own bosom.

Haggard and trembling, Martin staggered to his feet, and paced up and down the room. The veins stood out upon his forehead; his blood-shot eyes had the look of a hunted animal; the muscles of his body were firmly rigid, while his clenched hands had the grip of a drowning man clinging desperately for life to a few floating straws. How could he endure such agony of soul? Would it last through days, months, and years to come? He knew that such could not be the case, for if it continued much longer he would surely go raving mad.

A slight moan from Nance aroused him. Going at once to the cot, he looked down upon the face of the sleeping child. She was talking in her sleep, and listening attentively Martin could catch the words, "Mamma, Daddy." After a pause she began to repeat the words of a prayer she said every night.

> "'Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
> If I——'"

Then she wandered off and talked about Quabee, her dolly, and the Christmas tree.

Martin took her little hand in his, and as he watched her a love, such as he had never before known, came into his heart. Then his eyes grew dim, and down his cheeks flowed the tears. He sank upon a stool by the cot, and buried his face in his hands. Not for years had he wept, but it was that little prayer which had unbound the flood-gates and allowed the tears to well forth. He thought of the nights she had said the same words at his knees, and how she had always prayed for her father and her mother. At length he lifted his head and in his eyes was a new light. He slipped from the stool, and sank upon his knees upon the hard floor. It was no set formal prayer which the outcast uttered this night. It was a passionate, yearning cry to the great Father above to spare the little child, and to leave her with him for a while longer.

For some time he remained in this kneeling position, but somehow he did not receive the reassuring comfort he had expected. He recalled the time when peace and comfort had always come to him on such an occasion. Now, however, it was so different. He believed that the same Father was ready to hear as of old, but why was there not the feeling of peace as formerly?

He thought of this as he knelt by the side of the sick child, with his face deep in his hands. Then in an instant it all came to him. It was his great sin which stood between him and his God! He understood for the first time the full meaning of the story of the Garden of Eden. As it was impossible for the first parents to go back to the sweet peace of their former life after they had sinned, so neither could he return to the blessed state of years ago because of the sin which he had committed. There stood before him at the gate the explicit "Nay" of the eternal God which guarded the entrance to the throne of purity and peace as truly as did the flaming revolving sword in the far-off Edenic days. He knew that he was an outcast in a more terrible manner than he had ever imagined. He was an outcast not only from his Church, but from his God. The former he had scorned, believing that he could get along without it. But an outcast from his God! He lifted his haggard face as the terrible reality dawned upon him. He rose slowly to his feet. He groped his way to the big chair, and sank heavily into it, the very epitome of wretched despair.

CHAPTER XI

UNFOLDING

When morning dawned the horrors of the night lessened, and although weary from want of sleep Martin was not so much depressed. This was due principally to the fact that Nance was somewhat improved. The change had come very quietly, and toward morning she had opened her eyes and had spoken to the bowed man crouching in the chair before the fire. Martin had bounded to her side, and when he saw the new expression in her eyes he knew that the turn for the better had come, and that with care she would recover.

There was complete silence in the cabin all through the day, for Nance, who had sunk into a natural sleep, must not be disturbed. Quabee, and often Taku, kept a patient and faithful watch by the child, while Martin slept on the couch to the left of the fire-place.

Thus through the days and weeks which followed this season of anxiety Nance rapidly improved. Martin was ever with her, played with her, told her stories, and did all in his power to atone for his past neglect. The story he was called upon to tell more than any other was about Beryl. Nance was never weary of hearing about her, and it was the one which Martin was never tired of relating. A mere general and vague idea of what her heroine was like would not satisfy the child.

She had to know the colour of her eyes, hair, what kind of dresses she wore, and how she looked when she sang, in fact so many things that Martin's memory was severely put to the test.

To Nance Beryl was more than human. The child's vivid imagination wrought a marvellous transformation, and invested her heroine with qualities little short of divine. As the months passed and Nance's mind steadily developed this silent adoration instead of diminishing increased. Beryl was her standard of perfection in everything. She must have her hair arranged just like Beryl's, and she endeavoured to teach Quabee to make her dresses like those of her heroine. The Indian woman would often gaze in amazement as Nance talked about Beryl. She could not see with the eyes of the child, nor enter into her bright and wonderful world of fancy.

The greatest thing of all to Nance was that Beryl could sing. She, accordingly, must do the same. She had a sweet voice herself, and a true ear, and picked up tunes almost intuitively. Able to sing himself, Martin taught her all the songs and hymns he could remember. Then when she became old enough he gave her lessons upon the violin. It was a great day for the child when she was allowed to take the instrument into her own hands. She had often looked upon it with deep longing, and would sit for any length of time watching Martin drawing the bow so skilfully across the strings, and producing such marvellous music.

Since Nance's illness Martin's mind had been much concerned as to the child's future. He had brought her into the wilderness, and was it right that she should grow up in ignorance? He began to realise his responsibility more and more. Some day, no doubt, she would go out into the world of civilisation, and should she go as a young savage? No, such should not be the case. He would teach her here in the little cabin. It would be the schoolhouse, he the teacher, and Nance the pupil. He would instruct her year after year, develop her mind, and lead her into many fields of knowledge. Although far away from the great centres of education she should have learning which should not make her ashamed if ever she should leave her forest home.

With his mind thus made up Martin at once outlined a course of studies for Nance. The instruction was very simple at first. Martin was a good teacher, the child an apt scholar, and so rapid progress was made. By the time Nance was able to read there came the great necessity for books. Martin had printed everything for her upon scraps of paper. But this was a laborious and a never-ending task. He, therefore, sent an order to the trading post, and after waiting for over a year the books at last arrived. Martin had written for children's books suitable for a little girl. This order the trader had forwarded to his company in England, and the selection was accordingly made there.

It was a great event for Nance when the books arrived. It was a cold night in midwinter when the Indians returned from their trip to the post. There were other things as well in the various packages, but the girl had no eyes for anything but the books. Martin, too, was much interested. The sight of a book was to him like a sparkling spring of water to a thirsty traveller. Although they were only books for children, yet he unwrapped the parcel with feverish haste and examined each volume. He and Nance were on the floor before the fire, and as the thick paper wrapping gave way, and the books were exposed to view, the maiden clapped her hands with delight.

"Oh, daddy, look at this!" and she picked up one of the treasures with a bright picture on the cover.

"You will like that, Nance," Martin replied. "It's 'Alice in Wonderland,' the story your mother used to tell you, and suppose we begin upon it first."

Thus sitting upon Martin's knee, with her head resting against his shoulder, Nance heard again that sweet, thrilling story of Alice's marvellous adventures. Never before had she listened to a tale from a real book, and often she would interrupt the reading that she might look upon the funny, and, to her, wonderful pictures.

That night after Nance was asleep Martin sat for a long time before the fire. The book he was reading was not new to him, but it had been years since he had first read "Little Women." It fascinated him now more than ever. He could enter into the ways of children, and in every incident Nance always rose up before him. How pure and innocent were the little folk mentioned in the book, and what a confiding trust they had in their elders.

After a while he laid the volume aside and began to muse upon what he had just been reading. Suppose that the children should have found out that the older ones, surrounding them with such love and care, were very wicked, and had committed evil deeds in the past. What a fearful and heart-breaking revelation it would have been to them. Then he thought of Nance. What if she in some way should learn that he himself was a bad man! What would she think? He knew that she looked upon him as her hero, and if she should find out the truth about his past life what a terrible grief it would bring to her.

Martin sat straight up in his chair as these thoughts swept upon him. Nance must never know. She must always think of him as a man true and pure. Neither must he give her any cause to believe otherwise.

Martin was not at all satisfied with himself. He longed to be worthy of Nance's trust. What would he not give to be able to look into her clear, confiding eyes, and to feel that he was just what she considered him to be. This was what gave him so much concern now. He wanted the child to believe in him, and at the same time he wished to be worthy of that belief.

A new life was now opened up to Nance. She was growing fast, not only in body, but in mind as well. The books had admitted her into a world of wonder of which she had never before dreamed. They were only a few to be sure, but she knew them almost by heart. Her music, too, gave her much delight, and Martin was astonished at the rapid progress she made. The next year more books arrived, with some sheet-music as well, and thus Nance's mind was fed upon new delights. Then, one Christmas morning, when she opened her eyes, she found at the foot of the Christmas tree a fine new violin—her very own. She did not know how much the instrument had cost, nor the effort which had been made to obtain it. Her cup of joy was now overflowing. Martin, too, was happy as he watched Nance. Her eyes sparkled with animation, and her face beamed with happiness as she drew the bow deftly across the strings.

That she was developing into a beautiful maiden he was well aware. She was growing fast, with a figure lithe and graceful. Her dark eyes reflected as in a clear spring the various moods of her nature. They twinkled with fun, and danced with delight. Often they grew sad and thoughtful, and at times they were soft with the light of love. Hers was an affectionate nature, which was revealed more and more as the years passed. To her Martin was all in all, and as her mind expanded she saw the difference between him and the Indians. The latter were very dear to her, especially Quabee. But the native women could not understand the deep longings hidden within her bosom. She knew that Martin could, and to him she talked.

Nance often wondered what the great world was like beyond the mountains, about which she had read so much in the books. Why were she and Martin living away in the wilderness among the Indians? she asked herself many a time. Martin often noticed the far-away expression in her eyes, and partly surmised the cause. It gave him considerable uneasiness. He was afraid lest Nance should become dissatisfied and wish to go to the places of which he had so often told her. He had expected this, and had even looked forward to the day when they would leave their forest home. But now when the time seemed to be drawing near he shrank more and more from the idea.

Although Nance had just entered her teens when these thoughts came to Martin, yet he realised that every year would make the life more unbearable to her. She was longing for some white girl to play with. The Indian children, notwithstanding the teaching they had received from Martin, did not suit her as companions. She seldom cared to play with them, preferring to be by herself or with Martin.

During the summer Nance lived mostly in the open. When not roaming along the river gathering wild flowers, which grew in such abundance, she was out upon the lake with Martin. What life could be more congenial than that spent in God's Great Open. Yet in the maiden's heart there was a longing for other things. She wished to know more of the world beyond the mountains, and to mingle with the people of whom she had heard so much from Martin and read about in the books. She often pictured to herself what it would be like, how she should act, and what people would think of her. At such times she always thought of Beryl, and tried to imagine what she would do and say. Such an influence was by no means without its effect, and Martin often marvelled how Nance acquired such a quiet and graceful manner, never having seen a white woman, except her mother, whom she did not even remember. He did not know that the silent daily worship of an ideal woman was working the transformation. Everything he had told her about Beryl had been thought over so continually that the very character of the woman of beauty, refinement and nobleness had become indelibly impressed upon the maiden's plastic nature.

Thus, while Nance was living in her enchanted world of fancy, Martin was brooding deeply over more serious things. Of his burden, which grew all the heavier as the years passed, he could in no way lighten it by speaking of it to Nance. He had to bear it alone, no matter how crushing it might become.

CHAPTER XII

THE EDGE OF EVENTS

It was a night of wind and storm in the Quaska valley. It had been snowing all day, and a fierce wind was driving down the river. As long as daylight lasted Nance had stood by the window, looking out towards the lake. The mountains were all hidden from view, and nothing could she see but the snow which swirled and raved around the house. It was the last of January, and all through the winter Nance had been thinking seriously of that life beyond the mountains which was drawing her with irresistible, invisible cords. She was not a child now, but a young woman of seventeen, tall and graceful.

Leaving at length the window, she began to prepare the evening meal. The cabin had undergone considerable changes during the past five years. It was no longer a bare dingy place. The rough walls had been carefully covered with cotton, and this coloured with a light-blue paint, which had been procured at the trading post. Magazine-pictures were tacked on all sides, while several large rare pelts were stretched out upon the walls. The bareness of the floor was relieved by a number of well-dressed bear skins. On the side of the fire-place, where Nance's cot had formerly stood, a room had been curtained off especially for her own use. Instead of scraped skins letting in the light through the windows, glass had been obtained at much expense. In the middle of the room stood the table as of old, but this now was covered with a cloth of a deep rich shade. It had

been one of Martin's ambitions to make this little home as cosy and comfortable as possible, and each year he had added some of the refinements of civilisation. In this way he had hoped not only to educate Nance but to make her more satisfied with her lot.

As Nance now prepared supper she laid a white cloth upon the table, and brought from a little cupboard to the left plates, cups, saucers, knives, and forks. She was a good housekeeper, for Martin had instructed her in such matters, as well as in music and other accomplishments. She was thus busy at work when the door opened and Martin entered. He stood for a few seconds looking upon the scene before him. The bright light of the fire illumined the room, forming a pleasing contrast to the roughness of the night outside. Nance turned towards him with a smile of welcome.

"Oh, daddy," she began, "I'm so glad you are back, as I have been very lonesome. What has kept you so long?"

Martin walked over to the fire and laid aside his heavy coat.

"Supper is ready, I see," and he glanced at the nicely-browned piece of moose meat sizzling by the fire. "I'm hungry as a bear, so can't tell you now what I've been up to. But you shall know before long."

When both were seated at the table, and the meal was well under way, Martin looked over at Nance.

"I've heard important news to-day," he remarked.

"At Taku's?"

"Yes. It's somewhat startling, too. The Indians have brought in word that there has been a rush of white men into the country. There's been a gold strike somewhere down the Heena, and they came in by way of the Ayan River."

"Will it affect us here, do you think?" and Nance looked earnestly at Martin.

"Not for a while," was the reply. "But we can't expect to be left alone for any length of time. There will be prospectors prowling all over the country now, and they are bound to strike the rich diggings up the Quaska. When that happens there'll be hordes and hordes up this way."

"Will they trouble us any, daddy, do you think?"

"Will they! You may be sure they will. This will be no place for us if they discover the gold up yonder. They will swarm in here like flies, and our days of peace will be over."

Nance did not reply to these words, and save for the crackling of the fire there was silence in the room. Martin's mind dwelt upon the changes which would take place around the quiet lake should the miners come. He thought also of the gold, so carefully concealed in the ground at the rear of his house. He and Nance were the only ones supposed to know anything about the treasure buried there.

"Daddy, let us go away from this place," Nance at length remarked.

Martin started, and almost dropped the cup he was raising to his lips. He looked keenly into the flushed face before him, and then partly understood what an effort it had been for Nance to make such a request.

"Are you tired of living here, little one?" he asked, and his voice had a pathetic note, which did not escape Nance's attention. "Are you dissatisfied with your lot?"

"Not altogether, daddy. But we used to talk, you remember, how some day we would go away to the great world outside, although we have not spoken about it for several years. In a way I am happy here, and you do so much for me that I should be satisfied. But I do want to see some of the things of which you have told me."

"Sure, sure; it's only natural," Martin assented.

"It seems as if we should go soon," Nance continued, "if we are to go at all. Should the miners come here our quiet home-life would be broken up, and you would not wish to remain any longer if they came, would you?"

Martin did not at once reply to these words. He pushed back the stool upon which he was sitting, and drew forth his pipe. His mind was in a perturbed state. He had been dreading the coming of the time when Nance should wish to leave the Quaska valley. He had taught her for years, and she had responded to his teaching. He was proud of her, and he well knew that she could soon take her place in the great world beyond. There were many things, of course, which she would have to learn there in addition to what he had taught her. He had kept from her all knowledge of the Church, and of clergymen. Of them she knew absolutely nothing. She would naturally be astonished when they went outside, and would ask why he had not spoken to her about such things. What answer would he be able to give? At times during her reading Nance had come across various things about the Church, but as Martin had told her that it was merely a society of men and women she had thought nothing more about it then.

Martin dreaded, moreover, the idea of mingling again with many people. He tried to believe that

all had forgotten him, and what he had done. But now he did not feel so sure, as he felt that some would remember. For himself he did not care so much. But suppose that Nance should hear of it! There were bound to be meddlesome people, who would consider it their duty to tell everything they knew. He had met such persons, who seemed to consider it a part of their religion to make it as uncomfortable as possible for any one who had stepped aside from the path of rectitude. He recalled the case of a young man who had slipped in life, and had spent several years in prison. Upon his release he determined to redeem the past. He obtained a position with a large firm, and was giving excellent satisfaction when several human vultures recognised him, and with hypocritical solicitude informed the manager about the young man's past life. The result was that he was discharged. The same thing occurred wherever he went, until, broken in spirit, he gave up the fight, and drifted into evil ways. He knew the people who had wrecked that young man's after life, and they firmly believed that they were doing the Lord's work.

This he well knew would be true in his own case. There would be some who would recognise him as the outcast clergyman, and who would consider it their unctuous duty to tell all they knew. Of course he and Nance could go to some place far off, away from the scene of his disgrace. But even there he would not feel secure. The world was small in these days of easy travel, and he might find it hard to escape unknown. The gold would supply all their needs. His only worry was as to how he could take so much outside. It would be very difficult to carry it without arousing suspicion.

While Martin was thus musing, Nance had cleared off the table, washed the dishes, and put them carefully away. When all had been completed, she drew the big chair up close to the fire. Then, going to where Martin was sitting, she laid her hand affectionately upon his shoulder.

"Come, daddy," she said, "your chair is all ready. It's more comfortable there."

Martin obeyed her without a word. Nance at once took up her position on a little stool at his feet, and rested her left arm upon his knee. For some time she gazed steadily into the fire without speaking. Martin, too, was silent as he sat there smoking away at his pipe.

"Daddy," Nance after a time began, "you are not my real father, are you?"

"No, little one, I am not," was the quiet reply. "You knew that, didn't you? But I've been a father to you, have I not?"

"Yes, and a mother, too. But I do long to know about my real father and mother. When I was little you told me that you would take me to them some day. I believed that then, but as I grew older I felt there was some reason why you did not do so. I have often longed for you to tell me the whole truth, but I was afraid to ask you."

"What were you afraid of, Nance? That I wouldn't tell you, eh?"

"No, not that. You see, I looked forward so long to meeting them that I used to dream about it by night, and think about it by day. Then it came slowly to me that they were dead. At first I put away the thought, but it grew stronger and stronger the older I became. And then I was afraid to know the truth, because the old hope of meeting them some day had taken such a hold upon me. Now I want to know all."

"I did it for the best, Nance," Martin replied. "When you were little I knew that it would give you much sorrow if I told you all. Then as you grew older I found it difficult to tell you, and as you did not speak to me about them I thought that perhaps you had forgotten. I did it for the best. Now I know that I should have told you."

"I know you did; I am sure of it," and Nance turned her eyes up to Martin's. "You always do everything for the best. You are so good."

At these words a slight mistiness rose before Martin's eyes. If she only knew, he said to himself, how differently she would think. But to Nance he only said:

"Yes, I shall tell you all now, for you are a woman, and can understand such things."

Then Martin unfolded to Nance the sad scene which had taken place on the great Mackenzie River years before. He told her about the accident which had deprived her of father and mother, and left her to the mercy of the Indians. He related simply the part that he himself had performed in caring for her, and carrying her off into the wilderness.

To all this Nance listened with fast-beating heart Her cheeks were flushed, caused not by the heat of the fire, but from the vehemence of her emotion. When Martin spoke about her mother lying so white and still in the Indian lodge her eyes grew moist. But when he mentioned the grave upon the hill-top tears streamed down her cheeks, and her form trembled violently.

"There, there, little one," Martin soothed, laying his hand affectionately upon her head, "I didn't mean to make you feel so badly."

"I know you didn't, daddy," Nance sobbed. "But I cannot help it. My poor father and mother! And only think what would have become of me if you had not been there! I might have lived the rest of my life among the Indians just like one of them. It makes me shudder when I think about it. How much I owe to you."

"You have done more for me, Nance, than I have ever done for you."

"For you!" Nance exclaimed in astonishment. "Why, what have I done for you?"

"You gave me new life, that is what you have done. Before I found you no one loved me, and I had no one to care for. I was a lonely man, without any definite purpose in life. But since you came I have had you to live for. You are all I have now, Nance."

"I have often wondered," Nance replied, "why you ever brought me here. I never liked to ask you, but I have thought about it very much. You know so many things about the world outside, and all that it means, that it must have been hard to bury yourself away in such a wilderness place as this."

As Martin made no immediate reply Nance at first thought that she had offended him. Seeing the expression of pain which passed over his face, she rose quickly to her feet, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Forgive me, daddy," she pleaded. "I'm so sorry that I asked that question. I had no right to do so. You did it for the best, I am sure."

"Sit down, Nance," and Martin motioned her to the stool. "You certainly have the right to ask why I brought you here and kept you shut up in such a place as this for so many years. But how can I answer you? Something caused me to come here, but just what it was I cannot explain. I made a failure in life years ago, and so fled into the wilderness to be far off from people who knew what I had done. To them I am a bad man. But, oh, Nance, I would give anything to be what I once was! How happy I should be to be able to go out into the world and not shrink back from the looks of men and women. But there, I did not mean to tell you this. You will wonder what it all means."

"Don't, don't talk that way, daddy," and Nance placed her hand in his as she spoke. "You are not a bad man. I don't care what people say or think. They do not know you as I do. If they knew what you have done for me all of these years they would think differently. Anyway, no matter what people say, it won't make any difference in my love to you. Though you are not my real father, I love you just the same."

"I know it, Nance; I know it," Martin huskily replied, while his hand closed tight upon hers.

"And, daddy," Nance returned, "if you don't want to go away from here, I shall not mind. So don't let us worry any more about it."

"No, Nance; that must not be. It will be for the best if we go away. I have been thinking it all over very carefully of late. We shall go out to the trading post next summer, in time to go south on the first steamer as it returns from its northern trip. I can get a number of Indians to pack the gold over the mountain. As to the future, we can talk about that again. Come now, let us have some music together, and banish all sad thoughts."

Thus in the cosy cabin before the bright fire Martin and Nance played upon their beloved instruments. The storm continued to rage outside, but they heeded it not. Forgotten for a while were their worries, and what the future might have in store did not trouble them. The music cheered them, and united their hearts with the strong bands of enduring affection.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAP OF TO-MORROW

The storms of winter were over, and the days were rapidly lengthening. The sun rode higher in the heavens, and the breath of spring was pervading the great northland. Nance was much excited at the thought of leaving the Quaska valley and passing beyond the mountains to the marvellous world outside. She dwelt upon it by day and dreamed of it by night. Her few scanty belongings she had carefully gathered together. These she would take with her. But when out in the big cities she would buy many wonderful things for which her heart longed.

Martin noted her animation, and listened quietly as she talked about the journey they were to make, and what nice times they would have seeing the strange sights. Although he was pleased to see Nance so happy, his heart, nevertheless, was heavy. To him the idea of mingling once again with the throbbing world of humanity brought no joy. The little cabin in the wilderness was very dear to him. Here he had spent the past twelve years, hidden from people of his own race and immune from the bitter tongues of men and women. The lake, river, forest, and mountains were friends true and tried. He loved them, and their varying moods drew him very close to them. He had watched and studied them so often, both in calm and storm, that he wondered how he could get along without them. The Indians, too, though rough and uncouth, had been kind neighbors. He disliked their manner of living and their improvident ways. Yet they had always been good to him and to Nance, and he should greatly miss them. Thus he would sit at night, long after Nance had gone to bed, smoking and thinking about the changes which were soon to take place in his life.

He was seated one evening before the fire with Nance by his side, when the door of the cabin was gently pushed open, and Taku glided into the room. He was given a hearty welcome, and Martin passed over his tobacco as soon as the native had squatted himself upon the floor. When

Taku had filled his pipe, and clouds of smoke were circling above his head, an expression of satisfaction overspread his honest, dusky face.

"Snow all go soon," he at length remarked. "Geese, duck all come back. Plenty grub den."

"How long before the ice goes out this year?" Martin asked.

"Beeg moon, leetle moon, moon all go. Ice go also," was the reply.

"In about one month, eh?"

"Ah, ah."

"Good fishing this year?" Martin inquired.

"Good feesh? Ah, ah, mebbe so. Taku no feesh," and the Indian shook his head.

"What, not going to do any fishing?"

"No. Taku go down ribber. Taku see white man. Taku get moche."

"Oh, I see. But are you sure that the white men are there? Maybe they all went away last fall."

Again Taku shook his head, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"White man no go," he at last explained. "Taku see two wan sleep ago."

"What? You saw two white men?" Martin exclaimed, now much aroused.

"Ah, ah."

"Where?"

"Down ribber."

"What, the Heena?"

The Indian nodded.

"And what were the white men doing on the river?"

"Trabblin', dat's all, pack on back. Taku see 'um. Dey in hurry. Dey tell Taku come down to beeg ribber."

"Didn't they tell you where they had come from or what they were doing in here?" Martin questioned.

"No, dey tell nottin'. Dey in beeg hurry; dat's all."

"Did they tell you what they wanted you for, Taku?"

"No."

"And you will go?"

"Ah, ah."

"When?"

"Wan sleep. Tak' dog also. Go queeck."

Martin sat up later than usual this night, as his mind was much disturbed. Nance saw that something was troubling him, so she did not ask for the customary evening music. She kissed him as she had done for years, and went to her own little room.

Early next morning Martin announced that he was going up stream, and might be gone all day. He left Nance standing in the doorway, looking enquiringly after him.

"I will tell you all about it, Nance, when I come back," he called to her as she waved him good-bye.

It was supper time ere Martin returned, and over the meal he explained the object of his visit up the river.

"It's just what I thought, Nance," he began. "When Taku told us about those two white men I had my suspicion, and I was right. They were prospectors, and have discovered the gold up the Quaska."

"Oh!" It was all that Nance said as she looked inquiringly across the table.

"Yes," Martin continued, "I suspected something, and made up my mind to visit my old diggings. There were faded foot-prints all around, and I found where the men had shovelled away the snow and examined the hole I had made. Of course, as you know, the earth I left is full of gold, so they must have found enough in the frozen ground to more than satisfy them. I saw the little brush lean-to where they had evidently camped, showing that they must have been there several days. I tracked them down-stream, and learned that they had been close to our house. Why they did not call, I cannot tell. Perhaps they were unaware that white people lived here. They turned off

sharply to the left, and either crossed the lake or went around the other side, and came out upon the river farther down."

"Do you think that they will come back?" Nance inquired.

"Come back! Indeed they will, and bring a regular crazy mob with them. It isn't every day that men make such a strike as that. As soon as those men record what they have found there will be the greatest stampede the world has ever seen."

"Will they wait until the river is open, do you think?" Nance asked. "We may be away soon afterwards, and so they will not trouble us."

"No, they won't wait, Nance. They will come at once, and many of them, no doubt, will die upon the way. There is no trail, and the ice in the river is getting weak. I've heard about such stampedes. Men seem to go about crazy. They start off with little food, some get hurt, others sick, and numbers just play out. It is wonderful to me what men will endure for the sake of gold."

Almost three weeks later what Martin had foretold came to pass. The vanguard of the prospectors and miners arrived. It was early morning when men were observed making their way slowly along the shore of the lake. They bore packs upon their backs, and leaned much forward. Each carried a stick, which he used as a cane. They all passed close to the cabin, so Martin and Nance could see them quite plainly. They did not turn aside to rest, but moved steadily onward. They seemed to be very weary, and their clothes were ripped and torn. They passed, and, later, others came. Several were limping painfully, which told of swollen and blistered feet. They, too, passed without stopping. Then far down the shore of the lake a struggling line appeared, and as they drew near and staggered by, the watchers from the cabin were moved to deep pity.

"Look at that old man with the white beard!" Nance exclaimed. "Why, he can hardly walk, and that young man by his side is supporting him and helping him along. They must be father and son."

She had barely finished speaking when the old man fell heavily forward. With a cry that could be heard within the cabin, the young man knelt by his side, and endeavoured to lift him to his feet. No one stopped to help him, but all brushed by and hurried on. The gold was ahead, and they must not delay. They had witnessed numerous cases such as this since leaving the great river, one hundred and forty miles away, and their hearts had become hardened to such sights.

With the watchers in the cabin, however, it was different. No sooner had the man fallen than Martin bounded across the room, flung open the door, and hurried out into the open. The young man was astonished to see aid in the form of a white man emerge from a building, which he had supposed contained only natives. "Come," Martin ordered, "give me a hand, and we'll carry him up to the house."

Lifting the helpless man in their arms, they bore him swiftly and gently up the slope. Nance was standing holding open the door as they drew near, and when the sufferer had been laid upon Martin's cot she came close and stood by his side. She noted how worn and haggard was the man's face, while his eyes shone with an unnatural light. His hair was white and long, and his beard fell in profusion upon his breast. He was a powerfully-built man, and the cot upon which he was lying was too short for him. He kept tossing his arms wildly about, and made several attempts to rise, but always fell back panting heavily after each exertion.

"I must get there!" he cried. "Don't stop me! The rest will be ahead of me. Fer God's sake, let me go!"

At these words the young man bent over him, and placed his right hand upon his arm.

"Hush, hush, Tom," he commanded. "Everything will be all right. Be quiet and rest a while."

The vacant expression in the old man's eyes suddenly cleared, and he looked eagerly up.

"Is it much farther, pard?" he asked. "Are we almost there?"

The young man turned inquiringly to Martin standing near.

"Can you answer him?" he asked.

"It's not far," Martin replied. "But it's too far for this man in his present condition."

"Is there anything there?" the young man asked. "Is the ground rich?"

"Rich! There's gold everywhere. The ground is full of it."

The old man heard these words, and attempted to rise.

"Help me up," he cried. "I must go! D'ye hear what he says? The ground is full of gold. Give me yer hand, pard, an' help me out of this."

"No, no, Tom; you can't; you're not able," the young man insisted, pushing him gently back.

"I can't! Why can't I? Why should I stay here an' let the others get all the gold? I've been rustlin' fer gold all me life, an' d'ye think I'll be baulked when it's so near? Let me up, I say."

"But you know, Tom, it's impossible," the young man urged. "You're all in. You should never have

come on this trip at all."

"I shouldn't! Why shouldn't I? I'm not a baby."

"But think how sick you were at Rapid City. Why, man, you got out of bed to come, and would listen to no advice. It's a wonder to me that you're not dead. What kept you up for days on that trail is more than I can understand."

"It was the gold that did it, ha, ha," and the old man's eyes glowed with the intense light of the enthusiast. "Yes, the gold'll cure all sickness in my body. It always has. Didn't dozens of chaps play right out, while I came through? Yes, an' by God, I'll go on, too, an' won't be stuck here. I'll stake my claim with the rest. I've never been beaten, an' won't now!"

"Now, look here, Tom. Don't you worry about that claim you hope to stake. I'll stake it for you, so it will be all right."

"But you can't stake two, pard."

"No, and I don't intend to try. I didn't come here to stake a claim. But as you are not able to do it, there's nothing else for me to do but take your place, see?"

"But——"

"There, that will do, Tom," and the young man's voice was firm; "I won't listen to anything more. You can't go, that's certain, and I won't help you. I'm going in your place. You stay here, keep quiet, and don't worry. I will come back as soon as I can, and report."

The young man turned away from the cot, and as he did so he caught sight of Nance near the fire-place. He had not noticed her before so much taken up had he been with his stricken companion. But now he stood looking with wonder at the woman before him. The table was set ready for breakfast. The cloth was spotless, and the dishes were all neatly arranged. Nance had just stooped to lift the tea-pot, where it was warming before the coals, as the young man turned and saw her. The light of the fire brought into clear relief her graceful figure, adding at the same time a charm to her face and well-poised head such as he had never seen before. He stood spellbound for a few seconds, wondering where she could have dropped from. He had never expected to find such a beautiful being in this wilderness region. He even passed his hand across his eyes to make sure that it was not a vision which would immediately vanish. Then he glanced around the room, and was still further surprised at the books so neatly arranged against the wall. He longed to cross over and examine them, as he was hungry for reading matter of any kind.

As he stood thus Martin approached.

"Come, young man," he remarked; "you must have something to eat before you start up river. Breakfast is all ready, so if you care to put up with our humble fare, you are more than welcome."

The man addressed turned a pair of grateful brown eyes upon Martin's face.

"Humble, do you say!" he replied with a laugh. "Do you call that humble, sir? Why, I have not seen anything half so good as that steak for months. And as for bread, I don't know when I have tasted a scrap. Hard-tack, and mighty little of that, has been the nearest I have had to bread since last year. And as to sitting down to a table with a white cloth upon it, and such dishes as you have here, is most unusual in this country. Why, this is a palace. It is certainly good of you to invite me to such a feast as this, for I am very hungry. But with your permission I shall feed Tom first, for he is about starved."

Martin liked the appearance and the voice of the stranger. He had such an honest face, almost boyish in appearance. His eyes were expressive of sympathy and fun. His tall, erect figure was clad in a rough buckskin suit, a belt encircled his waist, while his feet were encased in the rough miner's boots laced halfway to the knees. Over his right shoulder extended a strap, supporting at his side a black leather case.

"Pardon me," Martin remarked, suddenly realising his position as host; "this is my—my daughter, Nance, Nance Rutland. I fear I have been neglecting my duty."

The young man at once stepped forward, and held out his hand.

"This is certainly more than I expected, Miss Rutland," he replied. "I had no idea that there was such a house as this out here. It is a great treat to meet a white woman, especially," he continued with a smile, "when one is starving. I have been doing my own cooking for months, and am thoroughly tired of it."

"You had better wait until you know what my cooking is like," Nance replied, as she took her place at the head of the table.

She tried to be calm, but her heart kept beating very fast, and she knew that her cheeks were flushed more than they should be. She instinctively felt that this stranger was a gentleman, and she wished to do what was proper in his presence, and not seem confused. But her hand trembled as she poured the tea, and she could not trust herself to speak lest she should make some foolish blunder. She tried to imagine how Beryl would act on such an occasion, and what she would say.

There was little need for words, however, on her part. Martin and the stranger talked, so she was

content to listen. The young man told about his own experience and that of the others on their wild stampede into the Quaska valley. He drew a pathetic picture of the hardships and sufferings which were endured, and how many became discouraged and turned back. He told of the humorous side as well, and related several stories of an amusing nature.

"If I were only an artist," he concluded, "or if I had a camera along, I should have been able to obtain some excellent pictures."

"I thought that black case contained a camera," Martin replied. "I am quite relieved, for I was afraid lest you should snap our cabin and force Nance and me to undergo the same ordeal."

"Nothing would please me better," the visitor laughed, glancing toward Nance. "But it's not as serious as that. It's only a simple medical case I always carry with me. I've had to use it quite often since leaving Rapid City."

"You're a medical man, then—a doctor," Martin returned.

"I suppose I am, and back at old McGill I'm recorded as an M.D., and the men will persist in calling me 'Doc.' But I like to be called just 'Dick,' without any handle. Dick Russell is my name, by the way. 'Mr.' and 'Doctor' make one feel so old, but just Dick sounds fine to my ears. But, say," he added in a lower voice, "you won't mind looking after Tom, will you? He's all gold, but knocked out just now. He's a character all by himself, true as steel, and full of fun. He's been the life of the camp down river all winter. I must be off now, but would you let me sleep here on the floor to-night if I should come back?"

"Sure," Martin replied. "You're welcome to the best we have, and you'll need it, too, I'm thinking."

Telling Tom to keep up courage, and with a good-by and a wave of the hand to Martin and Nance standing at the door, the young man swung away from the cabin toward the trail, leading along the Quaska River.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPPLANTER

Nance stood for a while in the doorway, and watched the retreating form of Dick Russell as it disappeared among the trees. She then turned back into the room, while Martin went off to cut some wood for the fire. The house seemed very lonely now to Nance and strangely silent. It had never appeared so before, and Nance could not understand the reason. She went about her work of washing the dishes and looking after the room, but her thoughts were elsewhere. Her mind dwelt continually upon the stranger who had come so suddenly into her life. She wondered who he was, and what he was doing in the country. He did not come to stake a claim for himself, so she had heard him say. What, then, was his purpose in making the journey over such a terrible trail at this season of the year? She longed to talk the matter over with Martin when he came in with the wood, but for the first time in her young life she found it most difficult to confide in the man who had done so much for her. Several times during the morning she was on the point of speaking, but on each occasion her lips refused to fashion the words, and she became so confused that she was certain Martin would notice her flushed cheeks.

And Martin did notice, although he said nothing. He observed Nance's quiet and preoccupied manner, which was so different from her bright and buoyant disposition. He partly surmised the cause, and it pressed heavily like a great weight upon his heart. He understood how natural it was that Nance, who had never met white men before, should consider this stranger in the light of a hero. He knew how impulsive was her nature, and how ready was her heart to respond to the call of love. Had she been brought up to the ways of the busy world, and had met people of her own age and race, she would, like other maidens of her years, not have been so stirred by the presence of this stranger. But no one had ever told her about the subtle ways of the heart. She was a child of the wilderness, brought up to live and commune with nature. Martin had taught her book knowledge and much about the things of the civilised world. But of the deep passions of the heart he had been silent, and Nance, though now a woman in years, was in many ways but a mere child.

Martin thought of these things now as he had never done before. Nance was all that he had in the world, and he had fondly cherished the idea that she would always be with him to care for him and to love him. But now he realised that he was to be supplanted, and by a stranger at that, a mere stripling, whom Nance had seen for only one hour. It was but natural that a spirit of resentment should rise in his heart as he thought of these things.

All through the morning, and for most of the afternoon, Tom, the white-haired and long-bearded old man, slept upon the cot. It was a sound, natural sleep, and at times Nance went over and stood by his side. His face strongly appealed to her. Lines of care furrowed his brow, and his cheeks were very wan. Occasionally as she watched him a smile would play about the corners of his mouth as if his dreams were pleasant. Nance wondered if he had any one who thought of him in love, and whom he loved in return.

Toward evening the old man opened his eyes, and saw Nance standing by his side. He started up in surprise.

"Nell, Nell, is that you?" he demanded.

Then seeing the look of astonishment upon Nance's face, he sank back upon the pillow, while a deep sigh escaped his lips.

"Fergive me, Miss," he said. "I had sich a beautiful dream, an' when I opened my eyes an' saw you a-standin' there I was sure it was my Nell."

"Would you like to see her?" Nance asked. "Would you like for her to be standing by your side now? How you must miss her."

"I do, I do," was the emphatic reply. "God alone knows how I long fer her!"

"Can't you go to her, then? Or why doesn't she come to you?"

"That can't be, Miss. It's been twenty years since she left me, an' I've been wanderin' ever since. I laid her in the little churchyard way back East, an' I haven't seen the spot since. But I see her in a way, an' that's all I can expect on this earth now. She's ever with me day an' night. Out in the hills she's by my side, an' I often talk to her jist like I used to do years ago, an' it's very comfortin'."

"W-was she your daughter?" Nance queried.

"No, Miss. She was my wife."

"Oh!"

"Yes," the old man continued after a pause, "she was my wife, an' we'd been married scarce one year when she left me."

"Poor man!" Nance soothed. "How hard it must have been for you. You have no home, then, and no one to love you?"

"Well, I can't altogether say that, Miss. My home is wherever night overtakes me, but it's seldom in sich a comfortable place as this. I've friends a plenty, but no one to care fer me jist like Nell used to do. I can't expect it. People have about as much as they can do to look after themselves without botherin' about an old man who has one foot in the grave."

"But you must get very sad and lonely at times," Nance remarked.

"I do, Miss; I certainly do."

"How do you keep so cheerful, then?"

"How d'ye know that I keep cheerful?" and Tom looked his surprise.

"Oh, that man who came with you told us that you were the life of the camp at Rapid City last winter."

"Did Dick really say that, Miss? An' did he tell ye anything about himself?"

"No."

"Well, that's jist like 'im. But I'll tell ye some day. It's gittin' on toward night now, isn't it, Miss? I think I'll git up and sit by yon bright fire fer a while, an' have a smoke. Dick should be back soon."

"Do you feel better?" Nance asked.

"Feel fine. That deep was jist what I needed."

"I am so glad," and Nance's eyes beamed with happiness. "I shall get you something to eat at once, for you must be very hungry. Daddy will be home soon, and he will want his supper, too."

"I am hungry, Miss, fer I haven't had a good square meal since I left the river."

Ensconced in Martin's big chair to the right of the fire, the old man leaned back and puffed away at his blackened pipe, at the same time keeping his eyes upon Nance as she moved quietly about the room.

"Ye do remind me of my Nell," he at length remarked, taking the pipe from his mouth and blowing a great volume of smoke into the air. "She was about your size, an' fixed up her hair in the same way. I remember how I used to sit by the fire, jist as I am now, when the day's work was done, an' watch her gittin' supper. This certainly does remind me of old times."

"How happy you must have been," Nance replied. "Have you been in this northern country ever since?"

"Ah, no. I've travelled over many parts, but I like this the best."

"I suppose it's the gold which keeps you here. I should think that it would be nicer outside where you would meet more people, and life would not be so hard."

"So it would be, Miss. I would like to be near the place where my Nell is lyin'. But one needs the

gold to live there, an' as soon as I git it I'm a-goin' to hike back. But there, I don't know as if the gold'll make me any happier. It's the searchin' fer it, an' the findin' it, that gives the pleasure."

"It must be nice outside," Nance remarked. "I have heard so much about the many things there that I should like to see them."

"Have ye never been outside, Miss?" Tom asked in surprise.

"No, I've lived all my life in the wilderness."

"What! Ye don't say so! Well, I declare! If that don't beat all!"

Just then the door opened, and Martin entered.

"I'm glad to see you sitting up," he began, coming close to Tom. "How are you feeling now?"

"Great. Never felt better in me life. An' why shouldn't I with sich comforts as a good fire, my pipe, an' yer sweet daughter to talk to me an' wait upon me? We've been havin' a fine time together."

"That's good," Martin returned. "But I think that supper will make you feel better still. We can have a pipe together afterwards. It's been a long time since I've had any one to smoke with except the Indians."

They were partly through with the meal when Dick returned. He looked very tired, although his voice was cheery as he greeted his companion of the trail.

"It's good to see you sitting there, Tom," he said, as he took the seat Nance had placed for him.

"It's the lassie who has done the trick, pard," and Tom jerked his head toward Nance. "She's the cause of my sudden return to health."

Nance's face flushed, not so much because of Tom's words as from the eyes of the young man, which were turned upon her with gratitude.

"Oh, I haven't done anything," she replied, as she poured out a cup of steaming tea for Dick. "It was the sleep that did it."

"Only partly, Miss; only partly," Tom rejoined. "Sleep an' food don't do everything toward makin' one feel that life is worth livin'. Ah, no. An old man like me knows a thing or two. But say," and he turned suddenly toward the young man across the table, "how did ye make out up stream, pard?"

An anxious expression came into Dick Russell's eyes. This passed almost instantly, however, although it did not escape Tom's searching look.

"I got along fairly well, and staked a claim at the very edge of some old diggings I found there. How the rest happened to overlook the place I cannot understand. But they are about crazy and hardly know what they are doing."

"Are they camping up there to-night?" Martin asked.

"I can't say that they are camping. They are there for the night, that's sure. But they've been rushing about like mad ever since they reached the place. They will spend the night on the ground just as they have been doing since leaving Rapid City. But their grub is about all gone. If they don't get some from the Indians they'll be in a bad fix."

"Dear me!" Tom murmured.

"The Indians can't help them much," Martin explained. "They are living from hand to mouth themselves now. They generally are at this time of the year."

"We could give them something to eat, couldn't we, daddy?" and Nance looked over at her father.

"Yes, I suppose we could give them something," was the reluctant reply. "But we haven't enough for a crowd of hungry men."

"Oh, they'll make out all right," Dick hastened to explain. "They don't know to-night what they are eating. Hard-tack and roast turkey would be about the same thing to them. When I left they were sitting about a great blazing fire, munching the scraps of food they had left. They are clean daft over the discovery of that gold. I have been chuckling to myself ever since I left them over what they were saying. They are already planning what they are to do with the gold when they get it. One intends to buy a ranch, and keep, I don't know how many, horses and cattle. Another will tour the world. Some have decided to go back to the big cities to live in fine houses they expect to build. But Dobson, generally known as 'Whiskey Jack,' is going on a big spree just as soon as he gets outside."

"Yes, yes, they'll all follow Jack's example, I'm afraid," Tom sadly replied. "I know their kind only too well. They always plan big things, but as a rule they lose it all in whiskey, gambling, and—— But there," he suddenly broke off, "it has always been so, an' what's the use of us worryin' about it?"

"But some one must worry, Tom," was Dick's emphatic reply. "Too many say the same thing. But I know better. I never saw a finer lot of men in my life. They are rough at times, I know. There are a few who gave us trouble last winter, but most of them were good fellows at Rapid City, and you know it."

"Sure thing, pard, sure thing. I'm not denyin' that. But I guess it was you who kept them straight, an' made them show up their best side."

"What about yourself, Tom? You had a big hand in the whole affair, if I am not much mistaken."

Supper ended, Nance began to clear away the dishes. Martin and Tom brought forth their pipes and sat down before the fire for a comfortable chat.

"You men smoke away to your hearts' content," Dick laughed. "I'm going to help with the dishes, that is, if I may," and he turned to Nance.

"No, no, please," the latter hurriedly replied. "I can do them quickly, so don't you bother about them."

"It's no bother, I assure you. But, say, what shall I call you?"

"Nance, just Nance," was the reply.

"But I must not call you that. It wouldn't be right for a stranger to call you that. Wouldn't 'Miss Rutland' sound better?"

"No. Please call me Nance. I like it better, and I have never been called anything else."

"Very well, then, Nance," Dick laughed, as he began to clear away the dishes. "I am not going to see you doing all the work while three men sit lazily before the fire. It wouldn't be fair."

"But I would rather——"

"Let him alone, Miss," Tom interrupted. "He's a good hand at sich things, an' he'll enjoy the job. He can't be still fer two minutes at a time."

Thus while Martin and Tom smoked and talked the two young people looked after the dishes. Dick did most of the talking. He told Nance about his experiences at Rapid City during the past winter. At some of his stories Nance laughed heartily, especially when he told of the dogs stealing his supper one night.

"It wasn't very funny then, I assure you," Dick explained. "But perhaps the poor dogs needed the food more than I did."

By the time the dishes were washed, wiped, and put away, Dick and Nance were firm friends, and somewhat reluctantly they joined the others before the fire.

"May I have a look at your books, sir?" Dick asked, turning to Martin. "I've had my eyes upon them all the evening."

"Not upon the books alone, eh, pard?" Tom chuckled.

"Look at them to your heart's content," Martin replied. "My library is very small, and I am afraid you will find but little there to interest you."

Dick soon returned, bringing with him three small books.

"I've made a strike to-night," he exclaimed, "which is of more interest to me than the gold of the Quaska. Just think, here I have Hazlitt's 'Table Talk,' Emerson's 'Essays,' and Carlyle's 'Heroes and Hero Worship.' I didn't know that there were such books as these anywhere in this country," and he looked curiously toward Martin.

"You know them, then?" the latter queried, his interest now becoming much aroused in the young man.

"Know them! I should say I do. But it has been years since I read them, and of course I have forgotten much. It will all come back again, however, for one never really forgets. May I take Hazlitt with me to-morrow? It will be a great comfort, and I shall take good care of it."

"Ask Nance," Martin replied. "We are co-partners. You have my consent to take the book, but you must get hers as well."

"Have you read these?" Dick asked in surprise, turning toward the young woman sitting near by.

"Oh, yes," was the blushing reply. "I have read them all several times, and found them so nice."

"Now jist listen to that, pard," Tom spoke up. "There's something like a woman fer ye. I don't think ye'd find many young women outside readin' sich books. They'd want novels, an' sich like."

"I think I should like novels, too," Nance replied. "I have heard about them, and they must be nice."

"You are better off without many of the novels of to-day," Dick returned. "Such books as these have done me much good. I read as many as I could while at college, but of late years I have had little opportunity for reading."

"Did you read such books as these when you were at college?" Martin asked. "I was of the opinion that you studied only medical works."

"Oh, I read as widely as possible, especially at Kings, away back East, before I went to McGill."

As Dick uttered these words Martin gave a distinct start, and looked searchingly into the young man's face. The mention of the former college brought to his mind many thoughts. He himself had graduated from the same Institution years before, and he knew that it was principally a divinity college, where young men were trained for the Ministry.

"And what course did you take there?" he asked as calmly as possible, although his heart beat faster than usual.

"I took Arts and studied Divinity," Dick responded.

"Then you are a——?" Martin could not form the word. A strange feeling swept upon him. He suddenly recalled the warning of his old bishop, especially his closing words, "The Church and her teaching will follow you to the grave, no matter to what part of the world you go."

"He's a parson as well as a doctor, that's what he is," Tom explained, noticing his host's hesitation.

Martin rose suddenly to his feet, picked up his hat, and silently left the building. Once outside he stood as if uncertain what course to pursue. Then he paced rapidly up and down before the house. His brain throbbed and beat with wild emotions. "And has it come to this?" he asked himself. "I have taken in a minion of the Church; I have allowed him to enter my cabin and break bread with me. Had I known who he was he should never have crossed the threshold. And he has won Nance's heart and supplanted me in her affections. And to think that I have kept her hidden away here all of these years, and this is the end! But no, by God, it shall not be! I will not lose her! I have fled from the Church, and it has followed me into the wilderness, and is about to wrench from my grasp the one who is dearer to me than life. It shall not be. No longer shall that man remain beneath my roof. He came here under the guise of a doctor. Why didn't he say plainly and frankly what he was? He seems to be ashamed of his profession."

Seldom had Martin ever allowed himself to be so angry with any one. He had always prided himself upon his calmness. But it was the thought of this stranger, and a clergyman at that, coming to the place and winning Nance's heart which stirred his inmost depths. He stood for a few moments looking out across the lake. The perspiration appeared in great beads upon his forehead. Presently he heard Dick's hearty laugh, and this annoyed him all the more. He would soon stop that. He took a step toward the door, but stopped as the sound of violin music fell upon his ears. It was Nance playing. Then some one began to sing. It was a clear, strong tenor voice, which he recognised as that of the young stranger.

Martin listened for a few moments and then, pushing open the door, he entered. No one noticed him as he moved quietly towards the fire. He paused in the middle of the room, strangely affected. It was not the music which caused him to hesitate and place his hand to his forehead in a perplexed manner. It was the expression of supreme happiness depicted upon Nance's face which held him spellbound. Her eyes were bright, and her cheeks were flushed with pleasure as she drew the bow skilfully across the strings.

Martin's anger cooled as he looked upon this peaceful scene. It was a striking and a rebuking contrast to the hell in his own heart, and he knew it. He moved quietly forward, took his seat to the left of the fire, and remained silently there for the rest of the evening. But long after the others were wrapped in slumber Martin sat before the dying embers, fighting the hardest of all battles—the battle of the heart.

CHAPTER XV

SUSPICION

Dick Russell rose early the next morning, much refreshed by his sleep. But Martin was up ahead of him, and had slipped out of the building before any one else was astir. Tom lighted the fire, and proved very handy in helping Nance with preparing the breakfast. In an hour's time the meal was over. It was a very frugal repast, but what was lacking in food was made up in pleasant conversation. Dick thought that Nance looked prettier than ever as she sat at the head of the table and poured the tea. The men naturally wondered what had become of Martin, but Nance informed them that he must have gone to the hills for mountain sheep. Their supply of fresh meat was getting low, and it was nothing unusual for her father to go off in the early morning hours.

"I must be off, too," Dick remarked, as he rose from the table. "This hot sun is breaking up the trail, and it is necessary to get to Rapid City as soon as possible to record that claim. You will stay?" and he turned to Tom.

"Yes, pard," was the reply. "My old legs are not fit fer sich a trip at present. I shall git a cabin fixed up as quick as I can. I haven't much to live upon, to be sure, though I've been placed in a far worse position many a time before. I'll go down to the cache we left along the river an' git my rifle an' some grub. You'll need the rest."

Nance, too, had risen to her feet, and stood looking at the two men. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were bright.

"You will come back, will you not?" she faltered, as Dick took her hand to bid her good-bye.

"Just as soon as I can," Dick returned.

"Before the summer?" she queried. "I hope you will, as we are going away."

"What!" Dick dropped her hand, and looked intently into her eyes. "Going away! Surely you don't mean it!"

"Yes, it is true. We have been planning for some time to go outside, and so have everything arranged for this coming summer."

"But you must not go until I return. Promise me that," the young man urged.

"It all depends upon my father. I did want to go so much a while ago, but now I am not so anxious."

It was with great reluctance that Dick left the house, with Nance standing in the doorway, and swung off down the trail, which ran along the shore of the lake. Several times he turned and waved his hand to the young woman, until a bend in the trail hid her from view.

"She's certainly a fine one," Tom remarked, as he trudged along by Dick's side. "It's a great mystery to me; it really is."

"What's a mystery, Tom?" and Dick glanced inquiringly at his companion.

"Why, you know, pard, as well as I do. I can't savvey why that man should be livin' here all of these years with that beautiful daughter of his. It isn't natural that any one should bury himself like that in sich a wilderness as this."

"You're right, Tom," Dick reflected. "He's an educated man, too, which makes it all the more mysterious. His books plainly show that. He speaks well, and he has taught Nance to play the violin splendidly."

"I felt like askin' him about his life when we were sittin' before the fire last night. But he acted so queer at times that I thought it best not to do so. Did ye notice how he left us so suddenly, an' when he came back he sat glum an' silent in the corner?"

"I did, Tom."

"Now, what would ye make out of that, eh?"

"Nothing. Perhaps it was only his manner. Living so long in the wild is enough to make any one odd, don't you think so?"

"It may be as ye say, pard, though it doesn't altogether fill the bill. Now, why should a man with a fine edication want to live in sich a place as this fer so many years? If it was gold he was after I could somewhat savvey it. But he doesn't seem to care anything about the strike. He hasn't even staked a claim. There's a mystery somewhere in the background, that's certain."

"Do you suppose he knows about the gold up the Quaska?" Dick asked.

"What d'ye mean, pard?"

"Didn't I tell you about the big holes which had been dug up there? I staked your claim right next to them. Now, suppose that Martin did the digging, and has taken out more than he needs, eh?"

"Not on yer life, pard. If he had the gold he'd 'a' hiked out of the country long afore this."

"But who dug those holes, then?" Dick insisted.

"I can't say fer certain. The Rooshians may have done it. They were pokin' around this country years ago. I have found holes in many places that they have dug."

"But surely Martin must have known about those holes, Tom. He has hunted all over this region. But, then, perhaps he wasn't after the gold. He has a very neat cabin at any rate, which is so comfortable."

"Who wouldn't be comfortable with sich a house an' sich a daughter to look after it, tell me that. She's about the finest specimen of womankind I have ever set my eyes on, an' that's sayin' a good deal. What a pity that she's been hid away so long in a lonely spot like this."

Dick made no reply to these words, but all the way along the trail, after Tom had left him, he thought of Nance. To him the Quaska valley had a new fascination now. He had come into the country with the special object of carrying on his Great Master's work, lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of the Church. As a medical man, as well as a missionary, he had done much good among the men in the various camps. This stampede into the Quaska valley had opened to him another door of usefulness. He had gone with the men, not for the sake of gold, but for the assistance he might be able to give. This new region had always seemed to him a very desolate place. But now all had been changed since he had found Nance. Almost unconsciously he began to repeat to himself one of his favourite and inspiring verses of Scripture. Only now he applied the words in a different sense. "The wilderness and the solitary places," he murmured, "shall be glad for *her*, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Her image was thus ever before him as he toiled over the weary trail. He thought of her by day, and dreamed of her at night, as he lay alone upon his bed of fir boughs with the stars twinkling overhead. He was several hours in advance of the rest of the men, and he was glad that such was the case. He wished to be alone with the new happiness which had come so suddenly into his life. Never before had any one impressed him as did Nance. He had met many beautiful and clever women, but not one had ever appealed to him as had this woman by the shore of the Klutana Lake.

He was anxious to hurry down to Rapid City, record the claim, and make ready to return up river as soon as the ice ran out of the stream. That this would not be long he was well aware, for the hot sun was making havoc with the ice, and the water was rising fast. The trail was abominable, but he did not seem to mind it now. A new spirit filled his soul and animated his whole being. His one great desire was to get back to the little cabin in the wilderness before Nance and her father should leave.

After several days of hard travelling, Dick reached Rapid City. He was very tired and hungry when he reached the place, but the first thing that he did was to record the claim he had staked in Tom Hendrick's name. That night all the men in the mining town came to his cabin, anxious to learn all they could about the prospects of the new "diggings."

"What about the old man who lives out there?" Sam Pelchie after a while asked.

"Where did you get your knowledge, Sam?" and Dick looked at him in surprise. "I haven't told you a word about him."

But the other only laughed, and tipped a wink to Dave Purvis, who grinned in return. Dick was about to tell what he knew about Martin when the action of these men caused him to hesitate.

Of all the miners at Rapid City these two had been the most troublesome during the past winter. They were noted for their laziness, and but for the good-heartedness of others they would have starved. They seldom did any hunting for their support. They were disliked by the men of Rapid City, but, as is so often the rule in a frontier camp, they received a share of all that was going. The sense of shame in living as parasites did not bother them in the least. Dick always managed to get along fairly well with "The Twins," as they were commonly called, although he believed them to be veritable scoundrels, who would turn against their best friends upon the least pretext.

Nothing more was said on this occasion about Martin, and so the conversation drifted off to the gold of the Quaska. But Dick determined to keep his eyes upon Pelchie and Purvis. He intended to keep his ears open as well in an effort to learn how they happened to know that Martin lived up river. He knew that they did not hear of him from the two prospectors who had made the discovery, as they had reported that only Indians lived up there. These men had already returned to the Quaska valley. Taku had gone with them, his dogs drawing a supply of provisions.

Dick went to bed that night wondering what The Twins meant by the winks they had passed to each other, and their mysterious manner. A sudden thought came into his mind, which caused him to toss to and fro, tired though he was. Was it possible that Pelchie and Purvis had heard about Nance and her remarkable beauty? He knew from what the men had said on former occasions that they had very little respect for women. In a land such as this where might was right, what chance would a beautiful young woman, innocent as a child, have against wily minions of Satan? What else, he asked himself, would make The Twins take such an interest in Martin? At length he fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that Nance was beset by cruel and terrible dragons, and that he was unable to go to her assistance.

Early the next morning a band of weary stampeders reached Rapid City, and recorded their claims. After breakfast Dick went over to the store, where he found a crowd of men gathered. Upon a small table in the middle of the room was a rough map, sketched with the point of a burnt stick, showing the new diggings. Around this most of the men were clustered, discussing it in a most animated manner. Small numbers marked the places where the stampeders had staked their claims. The old holes formed the boundary line of the valley, and the claims were marked "above" or "below," according to their situation.

"Where is the old man's cabin?" Pelchie asked, leaning over for a better view.

"At the mouth of the river," Ben Haines replied, "right there," and he made a small cross upon the paper.

"Did he stake?" Pelchie further queried.

"No. Takes no interest in the discovery. He's a strange one; lives alone with his daughter, and just hunts for his living. But he was mighty good to us, and handed out about the whole of his grub. His daughter is certainly a beauty. You should have seen her eyes fill with tears when we carried poor old 'Dad' into the cabin, sick as a dog, and moaning like a baby. He was clean cracked when we left him, but that girl was nursing him like a mother. You missed something, Sam, by not being along with us. Why in hell didn't you and Dave go on the stampede?"

"Had other business, Ben, hey, Dave?" and he winked to his partner.

"Sure thing," was the reply. "We've never seen the Quaska, but I'll gamble that we'll take out more gold from that place than any of you."

A laugh went up from the men in the room. They knew The Twins and what bluffing they always did. This last remark was most characteristic.

"You'll have to get a hustle on if you intend to stake," Barry Dane spoke up. "The *Northern Packet* will be here as soon as the river clears, and I wouldn't be surprised if a big crowd comes on her. We're going to get her to go right up to the lake. There's bound to be a lively bunch there this summer, so you'd better make a move at once if you're going to do anything. We're not going to keep you again as we did last winter, I can tell you that."

"Don't you worry," Dave surlily replied. "We'll make your eyes stick out before the summer's over, never fear. I don't care for any d—— crowd which comes on the *Packet*."

Dick Russell said nothing to any of the men about the thoughts which were troubling him. As the days passed he endeavoured to learn something of the plans of Pelchie and Purvis, but in vain. He saw them at times together, talking in a most confidential way, and knew that they were often in each other's cabins. He believed that Martin, and perhaps Nance, formed the chief topic of their conversation, and his heart grew heavy as he thought of what the future might reveal. He awaited anxiously for the river to clear, and the steamer to arrive, that he might hurry up stream, not for gold, but to see Nance and, if necessary, to protect her.

CHAPTER XVI

TOM MAKES A DISCOVERY

It was not long after Dick and Tom had left Martin's cabin that the stampeders arrived. They were in good spirits, but very hungry, having eaten the last of their meal the previous evening. Nance was washing the breakfast dishes and thinking of Dick, when she was startled by the appearance of several men at the door. They doffed their caps when they saw the young woman, and asked if they might have something to eat.

"We are sorry to disturb you, Miss," Barry Dane explained, acting as spokesman, "but we're down to hard-pan. We've not had a bite to eat since last night, and there's a long trail ahead of us."

"Come right in," Nance replied. "We haven't much ourselves, but I know that my father will be pleased to share with you."

While the men seated themselves about the room, Nance went to the larder, and brought forth a large piece of moose meat. From this she cut off numerous slices, and then began to fry several of them over the fire.

"Let me help you, Miss," Barry volunteered. "I am fairly handy at such work, and it isn't right that you should cook for us lazy louts."

"Well, then, you can attend to this while I look after the table," and Nance handed him the frying-pan.

Each man had with him his meagre supply of dishes, and ere long all were enjoying the meat, as well as the tea, which Nance had prepared. These men treated their young hostess with the greatest courtesy. Not a rough word was spoken, and it was somewhat pathetic to observe the manner in which several of them endeavoured to assume an air of gentility. They were true knights, this body of men, rough outwardly, but possessed of big, loyal hearts.

They were almost through with their meal when Martin arrived, bringing with him an old man, who tottered as he walked. He had wide-staring eyes, and was continually muttering to himself. The stampeders rose to their feet in surprise as they recognised 'Dad' Seddon, whom they had left up the Quaska that morning. He had refused to come with them, saying that he would follow later and overtake them.

"What's happened to Dad?" was Barry Dane's first question. "He seems to be all in."

"He certainly is," Martin replied. "I found him up stream down on his knees, clawing at the ground, and jabbering away at a great rate. He's gold mad, that's what's the trouble with him. Come, Nance," and he turned toward her; "a piece of that meat and a cup of tea will do him much good."

Nance had been staring hard at the pathetic figure of the old man. He looked so frail and helpless that her eyes filled with tears as she watched him.

"Say, Dad, what's wrong with you?" Barry asked, stepping over to Seddon, and laying a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

But the poor creature simply stared, and continued his muttering as before. He ate ravenously the food Nance brought him, and gulped down a cup of tea.

"What are we to do with him?" Jim Lane asked. "We can't take him with us, that's sure."

"Leave him here," Martin replied. "We will look after him as well as we can. I think he'll be all right after he has had a good sleep."

"It's kind of you, sir," Barry remarked, "and we won't forget it. We have a long trail ahead of us and could hardly manage Dad. And, besides, we've no grub until we strike our cache down stream. Could you let us have some meat?"

"I think we can," and Martin crossed over to the larder as he spoke. "We have a little meat and a small supply of smoked fish. We can spare some, eh, Nance?"

"Yes," Nance replied. "We can get along very well, as we shall soon have fresh fish from the lake."

"Thank ye kindly," several of the men responded. "We certainly won't forget what ye've done for us to-day."

In about half an hour they had left the cabin, and were swinging off down the trail. They met Tom a short distance from the house, and to him they imparted the news about Dad.

"I'll look after the poor chap," Tom said. "He'll be all right in a short time, never fear."

When he reached the house he found Dad tucked in bed. The half-crazed man had objected at first, but at last had yielded to Nance. Her words and the touch of her hand upon his greatly soothed his excited state of mind, so in a short time he was sleeping soundly.

"It's jist what he needs," Tom explained, as he looked upon him. "He's slept hardly a wink since startin' upon this stampede. That an' the want of food, together with the thought of the gold, has somewhat upset the machinery of his head. Oh, I've seen sich cases afore. He's a fine one, is old Dad, true as steel to his friends, rather cranky at times, an' a regular devil to any one who tries any crooked business upon him. I always got along well with the old chap. In fact we were quite chums last winter. He's great at chess, an' we used to play it most every night. He's got a set of chessmen he made durin' the long winter evenin's out of ivory from the tusk of an old mastodon we found on a little creek some time ago. He's mighty proud of them, I can tell you that, an' if we can git his mind off of the gold fer a while an' turn it on to chess, it might do him a world of good."

"Why, chess is one of our games," Nance replied. "Daddy taught it to me a long time ago, and he, too, made all the pieces himself, out of wood."

"Well, I declare!" and Tom looked his surprise. "To think of you playin' sich a deep, solemn game as that! I don't believe that ye'd find many young women outside spendin' their time in sich a way, ah, no. They're too lightheaded an' giddy fer that. It certainly'll be a great comfort to old Dad when he sees yer chessmen. He'll keep ye at it all the time. He'd 'a' played night an' day last winter if any one would have played with 'im. You will surely be all right in his eyes when he wakes an' I tell 'im the news."

"You had better be careful," Martin laughed. "Nance might not be able to do anything else if Dad gets hold of her. I might lose my housekeeper."

"Ye're bound to lose her sooner or later, anyway," and Tom winked at Nance, as he drew forth his pipe and tobacco from his pocket.

At these words Martin's face darkened, and he straightened himself up with a sudden jerk. His lips moved as if he were about to speak, but not a sound did he utter. He looked Tom full in the face for a few seconds, and then turning walked towards the door. He paused upon the threshold, and glanced around upon the prospector.

"You look after him until I return," and he motioned towards Dad. "I brought down a sheep this morning, but left its carcass up the valley in order to bring in the old man."

"Let me go," Tom hastened to reply. "It isn't fair that you should do all the work."

"No, thank you, I shall go myself. You wouldn't know where to find it." With that he was off, leaving Tom much puzzled over his peculiar manner.

The prospector seated himself upon a stool, and deliberately filled his pipe. When it was lighted and drawing to his satisfaction, he turned toward Nance, who was putting away the dishes she had just wiped.

"Yer father seems worried over something," he began. "I wonder what is the matter."

Nance paused in her work and looked intently upon the old prospector's honest, rugged face. She, too, had noticed Martin's strange behaviour of late, and she longed to unburden her mind to some one. She felt that in Tom she would have a sympathetic listener, and that he would keep her confidence as a sacred trust. She, accordingly, left her work and sat down upon a bench at the side of the table.

"My father," she began, "has only acted in this strange manner since you arrived. He was never like that before. Did you notice how he left so suddenly last night, and when he came back he didn't talk at all?"

"I did; I certainly did, Miss," Tom assented. "Some words which my pardner let drop seemed to upset 'im completely. I wonder—I wonder," he mused, half to himself, "if he is afraid of Dick. It may be that. He's mighty taken with you, Miss, is Dick, an' it might be that yer father fears that he'll lose ye."

A flush suffused Nance's cheeks, and her eyes dropped. Was this, then, the reason of her father's strange actions? she asked herself.

"When d'ye expect to leave, Miss?" Tom suddenly queried.

"Leave!" Nance gave a little startled laugh. "I cannot tell now when we shall leave."

"An' d'ye expect to come back some day?"

"It is hardly likely. This place will be too busy for my father. He would never return, I feel quite sure of that."

"Have ye really lived up here all yer life, Miss?"

"Yes, all my life. My father and mother were drowned on the Mackenzie River when I was a little child, and so——"

"What's that ye tell me?" Tom interrupted in astonishment. "Isn't Martin yer father, then?"

"Oh, no. He happened along with several other men, and took me from the Indians, who would have kept me, and brought me to this place."

"Good Lord!" broke from the prospector's lips. "But go on, Miss."

"There's nothing more to tell except that we've lived here ever since."

"But what in the world kept yer father—I mean Martin—in sich a place as this? Didn't he ever tell ye?"

"No. I haven't the least idea. I have often thought about it, but father never told me."

"Well, I declare!" and Tom scratched his head in perplexity. "But what is his other name besides Martin?"

"It's Rutland," Nance replied, "and he lived, so he told me, somewhere back in Eastern Canada before he came here. That is all I know."

Tom sat for some time lost in deep thought, while Nance went back to her work. "Martin Rutland," he mused; "where have I heard that name before?" Presently he came straight to his feet, while an exclamation escaped his lips.

"Pardon me, Miss," he explained to Nance, who had looked around in surprise. "It is nothing. I take strange kinks sometimes, which make me yelp. I'll jist stroll outside a bit an' work it off."

Once in the open he paced up and down before the door. There came to him now through the mist of twenty years the vision of an open grave, where his Nell was lying, and a young clergyman was reading the Burial Service. The man had come from a neighbouring parish, as his own rector was ill. Tom had heard his name then, and remembered it because of later events. Yes, the man's name was Martin Rutland. He had read how he had been deposed by his bishop for a serious offence. The newspapers had made much of the trouble at the time. Could it be possible that this was the same man?

Tom paused in his rapid walk, and looked out over the lake, although he saw neither the shimmering water nor the dark trees in the background. He beheld again the look upon Martin's face the previous evening when he learned that Dick Russell was a clergyman as well as a medical man. He recalled how he had abruptly left the building, returning later, silent and gloomy. Then, why had Martin left so early this morning, and after the reference to Nance leaving him, why had he taken himself off again as if anxious to be alone? Tom thought, too, of the books in the cabin, not of an ordinary reader, but of a scholar and a thinker. Yes, so he concluded, this must be that same outcast person who had hidden himself away in the wilderness all of these years.

There then came into his mind the thought of the beautiful young woman in the house. It was quite evident that she knew nothing about the past life of the man she had been in the habit of calling "father." What a terrible blow it would be to her if she ever heard the truth. Anyway, she should not hear it from him, Tom made up his mind to that. There was the slight chance, of course, that there might be some mistake, and that it was only a coincidence of names. He determined, nevertheless, to keep his eyes and ears open and try to find out what he could.

"If it's true," he mused, "I must stand by the lassie. There'll be many only too glad of an opportunity of casting the story at her and causing her trouble. No, not a soul shall ever hear of it from my lips."

CHAPTER XVII

HEART THRUSTS

That evening a little group gathered before the open fire, for the nights were still cool. Martin was in better spirits, and talked freely with the old prospector, to whom he had taken a great

liking. Dad Seddon was sitting close to Nance, gazing upon the bright flames as they licked around the large chunks of wood and then curled up the chimney. The sleep had much refreshed the old man, although he was still quite weak from his hard experience since leaving Rapid City.

Tom was in fine fettle. The little circle pleased him greatly, and at times he cast admiring glances toward Nance, who was busy with her needle. He had been thinking deeply over what he had heard that day about Martin, and he was anxious to know for certain if he were the same man who had buried his Nell years ago. He had tried in vain to find some resemblance between this long-bearded, rugged frontiersman and the trim young man who had stood before him on that saddest day of his whole life. "It cannot surely be the same," he thought, as he turned his eyes occasionally toward Martin, who was puffing away at his pipe. "And yet," he mused, "years make a great difference in a man's appearance."

"How are ye feelin' now, Dad?" he suddenly asked, turning to the old trapper.

"Better, Tom," was the brief quiet reply.

"That's good. A game of chess would put ye right on yer pins, eh?"

"Sure thing!" and Dad's eyes brightened at the mention of his favourite game.

"Ah, I thought that would bring ye out of yer dumps," and Tom's hearty laugh rang out. "But ye needn't think that I'm goin' to keep my nose down over any chess-board to-night, not a bit of it."

"No?" and the old man looked his disappointment.

"How d'ye expect to git a board an' men out here?" Tom queried.

"Sure. I never thought of that," Dad sadly replied.

"Don't tease Mr. Seddon," Nance laughed. "Would you like to have a game with me?" and she turned to the man at her side as she spoke.

"What! Can you play, Miss?" There was a pathetic eagerness in Dad's eyes as he riveted them upon the young woman's face.

In reply Nance rose, and going to a shelf brought down a chess-board and a small box containing the various pieces. Dad was delighted as he took the latter in his hands and examined them with a critical eye.

"Did you make these?" he asked, turning to Martin.

"Yes," was the reply, "and many a fine game we've had with them during the long winter evenings, though we haven't played much of late."

Nance had now drawn up a small table, and soon she and Dad were deeply engaged in the royal game. Tom watched them with much satisfaction, and gave vent to several chuckles of delight when he found that Nance was a match for the trapper.

"Ha, that was a fine move!" he exclaimed, while Nance laughed with glee as Dad scratched his head and endeavoured to extricate himself from the clever trap into which his fair opponent had led him. "I'm glad that Dad has met his equal at last," Tom continued, "fer he always beat me without mercy. The first time I ever saw chess played," and he now addressed his remarks to Martin, "was away back in Eastern Canada. Old Parson Dowden, who was rector fer forty years of Glendale, the parish in which I was born, didn't have an equal at the game as fer as I know. Why, he'd go without his meals any time to play chess."

At these words, and especially at the mention of "Dowden" and "Glendale," Martin gave a distinct start, took the pipe from his mouth and looked keenly at Tom. But the latter seemed as though he did not notice Martin's surprise. He bent over, lighted a splinter of wood at the fire, and applied it to his pipe.

"Yes," he continued between puffs, "old Parson Dowden was a great man at chess. I remember hearin' how he licked the parson from the next parish in a wonderful game. But he was a young man, an' hadn't the experience of Parson Dowden."

The fingers of Martin's right hand clutched the pipe with a firm grip. His eyes, staring and big, were fixed upon the prospector's face. Surprise, mingled with consternation, was depicted upon his countenance. But Tom did not seem to notice anything unusual, and Nance was too intent upon the game to heed anything else.

"I only saw that young parson from the adjoinin' parish but once," Tom went on after a pause, in which he seemed to be meditating. "It was when he buried my Nell. But, poor chap, I heard that he got into trouble, was put out of the Church, an' so left the parish to parts unknown. 'Twas a great blow to his friends an' relatives, so I understand."

Tom ceased his narration, casually blew a cloud of smoke into the air, and shot one lightning glance toward Martin. Any doubt as to the identity of the man before him was now removed. The strained, haggard expression upon Martin's face plainly told of the agony within. He sat very still, although he often looked anxiously and keenly into Tom's face as if wondering how much he knew, and if he had any idea that the man sitting before him was the same who had buried his Nell. But the prospector's manner as he watched the game led him to believe that he had not the

slightest suspicion. Although this was somewhat of a relief to Martin, yet he began to feel uneasy in Tom's presence. He longed to hear more about his old parish, and he knew that Tom could supply him with the information. Several times his lips moved ere he could sufficiently control himself to speak.

"You've been away from Eastern Canada for some time, I suppose," he at length remarked in an attempted off-handed manner.

"Yes, nigh on to twenty years," was the reply.

"Many changes must have taken place in your home parish during that time."

"Yes, many," and Tom gazed thoughtfully into the fire. "I kept in touch with it fer years, but I haven't heard any news fer a long time now. I guess people have fergotten all about me an' my Nell. It's wonderful how soon people will fergit except one thing."

"And what is that?" Martin queried.

"Oh, anything bad about a person. Now take the case of that young parson from Glendale fer instance. I don't believe they've fergotten about it yit, at least they hadn't the last time I heard from home."

"Oh, you don't think so?" came involuntarily from Martin's lips, which Tom was not slow to notice.

"No, not a bit of it. I understand that what he did almost ruined the Church there, and the man who followed him had a tough time of it."

"Oh!"

"Yes, numbers of people lost all faith in parsons, while others, though they did not exactly leave the Church, looked with suspicion upon the new man, as if wonderin' what capers he'd cut up."

"You don't say so!"

"But there were some who took the trouble harder than all the rest," Tom continued. "The young parson's fall broke his parents' hearts, an' they both died the next year."

"My God!"

This unusual exclamation caused Nance to look up, startled, from the game. But Martin did not notice her. He was standing erect now, with clenched hands, looking straight before him. Quickly recovering himself, he sat down again.

"It's nothing," he said. "I was overcome at the story of that wretch who killed his parents. Go on, please."

And once more Tom stabbed to the quick.

"I heard that there was a young woman, I jist fergit her name, who took on very hard. It nearly broke her heart at what the parson did. She was a fine singer, too, so I understand. She was sick fer a long time. When she got well she left Glendale, an' I heard later that she became a trained nurse. She was very beautiful. I know that, fer I saw her once myself. She was very much in love with the young parson, so I heard, an' she had her weddin' dress all made. They were to have been married the next summer. It was all very sad."

Tom knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and sat watching the dying embers before him. Martin remained in his chair with his head bent forward, the very embodiment of despair. Occasionally Tom glanced toward him, and his heart smote him with compunction for having caused the man such agony of soul.

Nance wondered more than usual at the expression upon her father's face as she stooped to give him the customary good-night kiss. She noticed that he took both of her hands in his and held them longer than was his wont. She knew that something was troubling his mind, and her heart was very heavy as she went to her room.

During the following days Martin's mind was much disturbed. The news he had heard about his parents caused him intense remorse. He thought of them by day, and would often start up in the dead of night thinking that they were standing by his side. He pictured over and over again their sorrow as they sat alone at night in the old farmhouse, mourning over their wayward son. He recalled the last time he had seen them and how proudly they had looked into his face. Never before did he fully realise what his sin had meant to them. But now it all swept upon him with a maddening intensity. Often a lump would rise in his throat, and tears roll down his cheeks as that night when he had last seen his parents rose before him. Once out on the hills he had buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a child. Only the trees, flowers, and birds witnessed his grief, and they would not divulge the secret.

Although Martin was fond of the old prospector, yet he felt somewhat uneasy in his presence. Several times he found Tom watching him with a wondering expression in his eyes. He was, accordingly, glad when Tom left with Dad for the diggings up the Quaska. But he knew that he would return in a few days, and his peace of mind would once more be disturbed.

One beautiful evening Martin and Nance were seated at the supper table. The ice had run out of the lake and the river over a week ago. The air was balmy, and the days long and fine. Nance had

been unusually quiet of late. She was wondering when Dick would return, and if he would be really the same as when he went away. She had thought over and over again every word he had uttered. The chair on which he had sat the last night he was in the cabin she had carefully kept in the same place. "It will be there for him when he comes back," she had whispered to herself.

Hers was the supreme joy of pure first love, and her heart was light and happy. Dick Russell's strong, manly form rose before her. She saw the twinkle in his light-blue eyes, the frank open face, and the erect poise of his head. To her he was a hero, a knight such as she had read about in a book upon the shelf. She was thinking of him as she now sat at the head of the table on this fine evening.

"It will soon be time for us to be packing up, Nance."

The words startled her, and she lifted her eyes quickly to Martin's face.

"Yes," the latter continued, "we must be over to the Mackenzie in time to catch the steamer on its return from the North."

"Oh!" It was all that Nance could utter, but it caused Martin to study her face very carefully.

"Don't you want to go, little one?" he asked, not unkindly.

"Do you really want to go, daddy?" she returned.

"We can't stay here, Nance, that's certain. I could not live with such a crowd swarming around us. There would no longer be any charm for me here."

"But there would be no quietness outside, daddy."

"That's different, quite different."

Nance lowered her eyes and toyed for some time with her cup. Martin watched her anxiously. He knew as well as if she had told him why she did not wish to leave the country now. But he must get her away forever from the influence of the young usurper, who would undoubtedly return.

Although Nance was very quiet, a great struggle, nevertheless, was taking place within her breast. She wished to stay, to see Dick again. But her duty must be to Martin first. He it was who had done so much for her, and her love for him was deep and sincere. How could she see him stay if his heart was set upon leaving the place? Rising from the table, she threw her arms about Martin's neck.

"Daddy," and her face came close to his as she spoke, "I will go with you whenever the time comes. You are all I have in the world who really loves me, so why should I care to remain here?"

Martin caught her hand in his, drew down her face, and kissed her. Tears came into his eyes, and when he tried to speak he found it difficult to form the words. He rose abruptly to his feet, and dashed his hand across his eyes.

"There, there, little one," and a smile such as Nance had never seen illumined his face. "I know you love me, and it makes me happy. It will be hard for you to leave, but——"

At that instant a hoarse, raucous sound fell upon their ears with a startling intensity. They looked at each other, and then hurried to the door, opened it, and stepped outside.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROYAL BOUNTY

The *Northern Packet*, the little flat-bottom, stern-wheel steamer, had made a notable trip up the Heena River. She was the first that had ever ploughed the waters of this crooked stream. Every foot of the way she had to contend with the swift current, and there was constant danger from sandbars, which, like long fingers, were thrust out below the surface. No pilot had hitherto navigated that river, and great care had to be exercised.

Thus for several days the steamer nosed her way into the wilderness. Her incessant wheezing and puffing startled the wary denizens of the region. Rabbits scurried away in affright; foxes hurried off under cover; moose, grazing in wild meadows, lifted their great heads, stared for an instant at the strange monster on the river, snorted, and with long, swinging strides sought refuge among the tall trees.

But the *Northern Packet* was well accustomed to startling the creatures of the wilderness. She had been doing it on her long, tedious run of over two thousand miles up the mighty Yukon River. It was not the first time that she had done so, either. Hers were the first blasts which had awakened the silence of the land for several years past. She had made it a point to be the first steamer to contend with running ice, and other dangers of that northern stream, to carry supplies to lone miners and prospectors encamped along the banks. No sound was so welcome to the weary watchers as her hoarse whistle, and no sight so dear to straining eyes as her scarred prow breasting the racing stream.

But never before had the *Northern Packet* started upon such an uncertain venture as the run up the Heena to the Klutana Lake. Neither had she ever carried such a throng of excited and anxious men as those which now crowded her almost to overflowing. Word of the new strike had drifted down the Yukon, and by the time the steamer reached Rapid City it looked as if she could carry no more. But in some mysterious manner room was made. There was no limit set by stern authority as to the number of passengers she should carry. It was simply climb on board and room would be made somehow. All the freight which had been consigned for points farther down river was still on board, and this took up considerable space on the lower deck. But wherever there was a nook some one was stowed, and at night those who could not curl themselves up on the floor were forced to stand and wait their turn. But notwithstanding the inconveniences a remarkable spirit of harmony prevailed. Those who had already staked their claims were looking eagerly forward to large cleanups, while those who had never been up the river before were greatly encouraged by the reports they heard of the richness of the land.

Dick Russell was as anxious as any of the men on the steamer to reach Lake Klutana. It was not the gold he craved to see, but the young woman whose face was enshrined in his heart. He was somewhat worried for her sake. He feared the crowd of men thronging the boat. Some of them, he knew, were Nature's gentlemen, but there were others who could not be trusted. He believed that it would be necessary to keep a strict watch upon "The Twins." That they had some mischief in their minds he was quite certain, and it was only natural that he should think of Nance. As for the newcomers, who came from the lower river, he knew very little about them. He had overheard some of them talking, however, and the stories they had told filled him with apprehension. He was determined, at any rate, to put Nance on her guard against such men, and to protect her from any injury.

He was standing on deck, well forward, when the *Northern Packet* steamed out of the Heena into Lake Klutana. Eagerly he strained his eyes for the first glimpse of the little cabin nestling on the bank among the trees. When the loud, coarse blasts of the whistle rent the air he saw the Indians running to the shore in amazement. Then as the steamer swept forward Martin's house appeared to view, and in a few minutes he was able to see two figures standing in the doorway.

There was much excitement on board as the steamer slowed down, drifted slowly into shore, and her bow ran gently upon the sand and gravel right in front of Martin's house. Then ensued a wild scramble for the shore, but Dick was the first to land, and without waiting an instant he ran swiftly up the slope straight toward Nance. The expression upon the latter's face was one of supreme joy as she held out her hands to the young man.

"My! it's good to be back," Dick panted, as he took her hand in his. "How are you, sir?" and he turned to Martin.

"Well, very well," was the somewhat reluctant reply. Martin then relapsed into silence, and stood watching the miners scrambling off the steamer.

But various conflicting emotions were disturbing Martin's heart. He longed to turn upon the visitor and drive him away from the place. The look of happiness in Nance's eyes, however, deterred him from action. How could he bring sorrow to her who was dearer to him than life itself?

He was standing thus uncertain what to do, when a cry of pain down by the shore caused the three to turn quickly in the direction from whence the sound came. There was excitement there, and the men were gathered around some object, and were talking in a most excited manner.

Fearing that something was seriously the matter, Dick left Nance, and hurried at once to the spot.

"What's wrong?" he asked of those standing on the outskirts of the crowd.

"Pete Larsen's hurt," was the reply. "In jumping from the boat his foot caught, and he came down hard on the ground."

Dick at once pushed his way through the crowd, and those gathered about the unfortunate man fell back a little as he approached.

"It's his leg," Dick explained, after he had made a brief examination. "I'm afraid it's broken. We must get him away from here as soon as possible."

"Put him back on the steamer," was the suggestion of several. "He can go down to the mission station. They'll look after him there better than we can."

"No, no!" moaned the injured man. "For God's sake, let me stay! I must stake my claim."

"Guess he'll have to stay," spoke up the captain of the *Packet*. "We couldn't do anything with him on board. He needs attention at once, and more than we can give him."

"You are right," Dick replied. "He must remain here. We'll look after you, Pete, so don't worry."

By this time Martin had joined the crowd, and was listening to the conversation.

"Bring him up to my house," he quietly remarked. "We'll take care of him as well as we can."

At these words the miners turned and looked upon the speaker. They were surprised at his sudden appearance in their midst, and several questioned one another as to where he had come

from.

Dick at once motioned to the men standing near, who lifted Pete in their arms and carried him as gently as they could up the slope to Martin's house, and laid him upon the cot within the building.

"It is a pity that we are giving you so much trouble," Dick apologised, as Nance met him at the door. "We are certainly making a hospital out of your house."

"We do not mind," was the reply. "It is so nice to be able to help people in trouble."

"I am afraid there may be more who will need assistance," and the young man turned his face sadly toward the lake. "Among all that crowd there's something sure to be happening every day."

Martin stood near at hand and watched Dick as he reset the broken leg and put it in splints. He could not help admiring the skilful way in which everything was done. As he looked upon the stricken man lying before him he was thankful for the first time that Dick Russell was present. If he were simply a medical man and not a missionary, Martin would have been delighted. He thought of the days years ago when, in his old parish in Eastern Canada, he had longed to be a doctor as well as a clergyman. There had been several outlying places where the people were very poor. What a comfort it would have been to them, and what an assistance to him in his work, could he have attended to their bodily wants. And now this young man was doing what he had desired to do, and was unable through lack of training.

A sudden revulsion of feeling came over Martin as he watched Dick doing so much for the stricken miner. Here was this man, young in years, doing an unselfish work, while he himself was useless. The missionary had given up home and the comforts of civilisation, and was living in the wilderness, not for the sake of gold, but to help others. And what was he himself doing? He had disgraced his calling; his Church had cast him out, and he in turn had repudiated her. He had thought that it would be an easy thing to free himself from her influence. But here, right in the region where he believed that he would be safe from all interference, and in his own cabin at that, stood a clergyman of the Church which had cast him out forever.

Then for the first time since he had been deposed came the feeling of his own selfishness. What had he really accomplished during his long sojourn in the wilderness? A longing suddenly rose in his heart to take up the work he had abandoned so many years before. He recalled the high ideals which had animated his soul when he took charge of his first and only parish. They were just as lofty and noble, he believed, as those of the young man now standing before him.

After the injured man was resting as comfortably as could be expected, Martin, Nance, and Dick sat for a while outside the door. The evening was balmy and the air delightful. The *Northern Packet* had moved away, and was lying close to the shore just across the mouth of the Quaska. Dick related his experiences on the steamer, and told in a humorous way the inconveniences the passengers endured. Martin had very little to say for some time. He leaned back against the house, smoking and listening intently. Nance was very happy. Often she turned her eyes full upon Dick's face, and at times her joyous laugh rippled forth at some droll story.

The sun had just swung low behind a tall mountain peak and heavy shadows were lying athwart the calm surface of the lake. The only sounds which disturbed the peaceful scene came from the men unloading the steamer. Martin gazed over the water and far beyond the black forest. His pipe was clutched in his right hand, and he had the appearance of a man oblivious as to his surroundings. Presently he shifted a little on the bench and glanced at Dick. The latter was sitting near Nance, silent, and watching with her the operations going on across the river. Martin beheld the thoughtful young faces aglow with a light which was more than the reflection of the departing sun.

"What led you to come into this country?" Martin quietly asked, turning toward Dick.

The latter gave a slight start, as if aroused from a dream, and looked searchingly into his inquirer's face.

"It was the Royal Bounty which did it," was the slow reply.

"The Royal Bounty! I don't understand."

"No, it is not likely that you should. It is all very simple and beautiful to me, however."

"Go on," Martin commanded, as Dick paused, and looked once more out over the water.

"Would you really like to hear my little story which I have never told to any one before?"

"Certainly. That is, if you don't mind."

"No, not at all. But I should not like to tell it to every one. Few there are in the world, it seems to me, who would understand. It was all through a sermon about the Royal Bounty which I heard years ago from the lips of a dear old clergyman. He spoke about King Solomon giving to the Queen of Sheba all the things she asked for, and then he added of his own free will of his Royal Bounty. I cannot remember now all that he said, but the sermon made a very strong impression upon my heart and mind. Several thoughts, however, I can never forget. He showed how God is always giving us of His Royal Bounty, that is, blessings over and above what we actually need. The earth, for instance, might have been made all stony, but He added flowers to give us joy. Birds are not absolutely necessary. He could have made the seasons, the sun, fields, and forests.

But He gave of His Royal Bounty, and added the birds to change the silence into song. He also showed that Christ could have gone through life working at His tasks like other men. But He was not content to do that alone. He was ever going about doing good. He threw in, so to speak, the Royal Bounty, that is, blessings which were not expected.

"I was somewhat unsettled in my mind at the time I heard that sermon, and it started me thinking along new lines. I had open before me a business career, with every opportunity for great success. But that sermon changed my mind completely. I desired to become more than a mere successful business machine. Life took on a new aspect. I wished to do something that would bring the greatest joy to others. With this object in view I entered college to study for the Ministry, and in due time took my degree. I was not satisfied with this, however, and longed to be better fitted for my life's work. With my father's permission I entered McGill University, and studied medicine. When I was through there I was ordained. This was a great day for me, and yet I was not altogether satisfied. A comfortable parish I could have entered at once, and carried on the work for which I had been prepared. But I wished to do more, something which was not expected of me, such as caring for the bodies as well as for the souls of those among whom I laboured. I have always believed that the two should go together, and am now more convinced of it than ever."

"Quite true, quite true," Martin interposed. "But how did you happen to come into such a region as this, when you might have done such a good work outside?"

"I am coming to that," Dick replied. "It, as well, was all due to the Royal Bounty idea. You see, this caused me to enter the Ministry and to study medicine that I might make the most of life and do as much good as possible. I, accordingly, looked around for a field in which to begin my work. Everywhere I found earnest clergymen and doctors devoting themselves to the souls and bodies of people in their various parishes, so my service of a dual nature was not required. One night I heard an address by a missionary who had been working for years in the northland. He appealed for men, and impressed me so strongly that I at once responded. That was five years ago, and I have been up here ever since."

"And you have never regretted the step?" Martin queried.

"No, not for a single moment. Whether I have done any good or dispensed the Royal Bounty is not for me to judge. But in living among men on the ragged edge of civilisation and trying to help them body and soul has given me great happiness. I would not exchange my lot for the most favoured being on earth."

There was a long silence when Dick ended his story. He sat quietly by Nance's side, and compared the past with the present. He had fondly believed that his life was full to overflowing. But now what a difference. There was added a new happiness, a love such as he had never experienced before.

Martin, too, was silent. Thoughts, too deep for words, were passing through his mind. In his heart as well as in Dick's a new life had arisen, although of a far different nature.

CHAPTER XIX

BEGINNINGS

Morning dawned clear and fresh. The sun was abroad early, and the filmy mist hovering over the lake soon vanished before the hot rays. The gold-seekers on the shore were astir at break of day. Some, in fact, had been busy all night selecting suitable sites and pitching their tents. The steamer was nearly unloaded, and the captain was anxious to hurry down the river as speedily as possible to return with another cargo before the summer was over.

The miners had chosen this spot for their encampment because it was on the side of the Quaska River where the gold had been discovered. They would thus not have to cross the stream, but simply follow the trail to the diggings. They wished to settle near the lake so that the steamers could land their goods right at their doors, otherwise it would be difficult to take the whole of their supplies up river. They could easily pack what they would need for several days, and could always come back to the lake for more.

Dick stood in the door of Martin's house watching the animated scene across the river. Not a ripple stirred the surface of the lake, and the dark trees and the towering mountains were reflected in the clear, deep water. It appealed to his poetic nature. He had beheld many grand sights since coming north, but this was the most beautiful and majestic upon which he had ever gazed. "What grandeur," he mused, "and to think that she has been living here in the midst of it all for years, far away from the tumult of the world."

A step at his side caused him to turn, and his eyes rested upon the object of his thoughts.

"Isn't it beautiful," Nance remarked in response to Dick's greeting. "I love the lake, mountains, and trees. I have looked upon them ever since I was a child, and they are very near to my heart."

"How fortunate they are," the young man murmured, gazing with admiration upon her bright

face.

"Oh, they know nothing about it," Nance laughed. "It is an all one-sided love, you see."

"I wish that I could change places with them for a while. I wonder if your feelings would be the same then."

A deep flush suffused Nance's cheeks at these words, and her eyes dropped for an instant. Dick noticed her embarrassment, and he was afraid lest he had offended her.

"Pardon me," he hastened to explain. "I fear that I have said too much. I allowed my heart to overcome my head, or, in other words, I made a fool of myself."

"You didn't offend me," Nance shyly replied. "I was thinking how funny it would be if you took the place of the mountains, trees, and lake."

"And why?" Dick questioned.

"Because you would have such a hard time of it. You have only seen them in peace and sunshine. If you could look upon them as I have, when a fierce storm is raging over the land, you would not envy them then. But I love them just the same. I like to hear the wind roaring down the valley, to see the trees shake and bend, and the water of the lake lashed into foam. Oh, it is grand!"

Dick looked with amazement into the face of the young woman at his side. He saw it transformed. Her cheeks were aglow, and her eyes were very bright as she gazed far off into space and beheld the scene she so vividly described. He knew that it was no ordinary woman that uttered such words. Though naturally quiet and reserved, there were within her soul great depths of thought. She was in harmony with her surroundings, and her rich blood pulsated to the tunes of the moods of the wilderness. All this appealed strongly to Dick. To him she was the most beautiful and yet mysterious woman he had ever met. Everything she said and did was so natural. There was nothing artificial or unreal about her. To her the veneer of polite social life was unknown.

As these thoughts passed through Dick's mind Martin suddenly appeared, hurrying along the trail from the forest. His rifle was over his shoulder, and he carried in his hand several grouse he had recently shot. With a cry of joy Nance sprang to meet him, and Martin's face brightened as she drew near. Taking the grouse from his hand, she walked by his side.

"Where have you been, daddy?" she asked. "We have been waiting breakfast for you."

"I am sorry, Nance, that I have kept you waiting," was the reply. "But I have been out on the hills for several hours. And how is Pete?" was his greeting to Dick as he reached the door.

"Doing as well as can be expected. He has had a fairly good night."

During breakfast Martin had very little to say, and Dick observed him as carefully as he could without arousing any suspicion. He noted that his host seemed ill at ease, that his face was drawn and haggard, and that his eyes were big and staring. He seemed like a man who had been awake all night, and whose thoughts were troubling him. He wondered if Nance saw anything amiss with her father. He longed to speak to her, but had no opportunity just then. When the meal was over Dick tended to the wants of the injured man lying on the cot, and then made ready to leave the house.

"May I have the use of your canoe, sir?" he asked, turning to Martin.

"Certainly, certainly," was the jerky reply, and Dick wondered more than ever.

He thought much concerning the man's strange appearance as he paddled swiftly across to the encampment on the opposite shore. Here he found confusion and excitement. Men were busy unloading the steamer, and the miners were searching for their goods among the piles of stuff thrown out upon the bank. With difficulty Dick rescued his own meagre outfit, and carried it to a secure place. Opening one of the bundles, he lifted out a small leather writing-case, from which he took a sheet of paper and an envelope. Seating himself upon his rolled-up tent, he began to write. This letter was the outcome of many thoughts which had been surging through his mind for days past. Several times while on the river he had been upon the point of doing this, but had always put it off until a more favourable opportunity. The accident which had happened to Pete, and the fact that the steamer was soon to depart, made any further delay unavoidable. He knew that help would be needed if he were to accomplish any definite work among the miners. There was only one place to which he could turn, and if he neglected to send a message now it might be too late when the next steamer arrived.

When he had finished the letter he went on board the *Northern Packet* and gave it to the captain, with strict instructions to deliver it at the mission station of The Good Samaritan down river.

Hurrying ashore, he started to work at once upon his tent. The place he chose for his abode was a snug spot near several large jack-pines. It took him most of the morning to complete the task of erecting his tent, and when at last all was finished he stood and looked upon his handiwork with much satisfaction. The tent shone white beneath the sun, and not a wrinkle marred the smoothness of the well-stretched canvas.

While Dick had been thus busy at work dozens of men around him were also erecting their humble, flimsy abodes. A row of tents had been stretched along the water front, several yards back from the shore of the lake. Higher up on the shelving bank others were placed, while a

street ran between. On all sides pounding and shouting continued throughout the day. Men were constantly moving about, all hustling as fast as they could in order to get through with their work as speedily as possible. It was the rude beginning of a frontier mining camp, which would develop later into a town of wooden houses of considerable importance.

One tent much larger than any of the rest was being erected right in the centre of the encampment. Dick watched this with more than ordinary interest. The men who were doing the work had come up from the lower river and were strangers to him, although he had seen them on the steamer. He had not liked their appearance when first he saw them, and they impressed him now more unfavourably than ever. There were three of them, rough and foul-mouthed. At first he had partly suspected the object of their visit into the country. Now he was certain that they were not miners, but liquor dealers, and the tent they were erecting was to be the saloon. Several cases piled together contained whiskey, he was quite sure, and when these were opened he well knew what the result would be. There was no one in authority to keep law and order, and he shuddered as he thought of the wild scenes which would ensue when the whiskey began to be circulated among the miners.

He naturally thought of Nance, and his face grew grave as he realised the danger to which she would be constantly exposed. What regard would drink-inflamed men have for the purity and the honour of the beautiful woman across the river? he asked himself over and over again. Already, no doubt, they knew of her presence in the little cabin. When sober they might not interfere with her, but when mad with the demon of whiskey there was no telling what they might do. There were several men in the camp he could trust, especially Tom and Dad. But what could a few do against so many?

The presence of Sam Pelchie and Dave Purvis disturbed him. They had put up their miserable little tents, and were now loitering around, always together. Several times Dick saw them engaged in earnest conversation and casting furtive glances at the cabin across the Quaska. He suspected these men, and firmly believed that they had some sinister motive in their minds. "Could it be of Nance they were talking?" he mused. "Had they heard of her down at Rapid City, and were their veiled remarks in reference to her when they had spoken about Martin?" The more he thought of these things, the more uneasy he became. Just what to do he did not know, but he was determined to be on his guard, and keep as sharp a watch as possible over the movements of the two men.

During the rest of the day Dick made himself useful in helping his neighbours. The men who had lived all winter at Rapid City were not in the least surprised at the assistance he gave, for they knew him of old. But the newcomers were much astonished, and all agreed that the young "parson chap was a real sort of a man after all."

That evening Dick crossed the river to see Nance and his patient. He found the former seated by Martin in front of the house, for the evening was very mild. She greeted the visitor with a smile as he sat down upon the bench at her side. Martin had very little to say, and while he puffed at his pipe the young people talked about the miners over the river.

Dick was full of plans which had been revolving in his mind all day. He said nothing about the saloon nor his suspicions as to what the miners might do when inflamed with whiskey. He did not wish to alarm Nance, and if necessary he would speak to Martin privately. His face became animated as he told about the church he hoped to build and the hospital tent he expected would be sent up from the mission station down river. "I believe they can spare it," he added, "for the missionary in charge told me that he had one he could let me have if ever I wanted it."

"So you think there will be need of a hospital, then?" Martin remarked.

"Certainly. We can't tell how soon several of those chaps may get knocked out and will need attention. It has been the way in other large mining camps, and this one is not likely to be an exception."

"Will you be able to care for them yourself?" Martin inquired. "It will be quite an undertaking, will it not?"

"I have considered that matter very carefully and believe there will be no trouble. I have written to the mission station down river, asking for a trained nurse. I think they can spare one. As soon as the tent comes I shall be able to hold services in it until we get a church built."

"What do you mean by a church?" Nance simply asked.

Dick gave a start, and looked at her in surprise.

"What!" he demanded, "didn't you ever hear of a church?"

"Only in books, but I could never understand what the word meant. I suppose it is one of those wonderful things that people have in the great outside world."

Dick now looked at Martin as if expecting him to speak. But the latter was gazing far off over the lake, to all appearance seeing and hearing nothing around him. His pipe was clutched firmly in his right hand. He was sitting very straight, with body tense and rigid. At length he arose abruptly to his feet.

"Nance doesn't know," and he turned to the young man as he spoke. "Tell her if you like. I shall

be back presently."

When he returned about an hour later he found the young couple sitting where he had left them. He was quick to note the expression of happiness upon their faces. They had eyes only for each other, and they could not read the writing upon the countenance of the man who slowly approached, and sank down wearily upon the seat he had vacated. They little realised that while they were engaged in such a pleasant conversation Martin had been wrestling hard with his own heart as he paced to and fro along the margin of the lake. It was not for them to know of the forces which had risen in his soul, and which at times had almost gained the mastery. It was not easy to break the cords which had bound him for years. He had taken such a grim joy in his spirit of rebellion, and the proud resolve that he would have nothing more to do with the Church which had cast him out. And yet in the presence of the missionary old longings returned which he had imagined were dead and buried forever. He comprehended now more than ever how true were the bishop's words. He had believed that the influence of the Church was merely external. But now he knew that it was within him, and that wherever he went he carried with him the teachings he had received. He understood that the truths which had been engrained into his very being were much like seeds. They might lie dormant for years, and to all outward appearance dead. But the life was within them still, and through proper environment of soil, air, and sunshine they would spring forth into vigorous growth.

"Oh, daddy," was Nance's greeting. "I have heard such wonderful things. You never told me about the Church. But," and here her voice lowered, "Dick has been telling me so much."

"Has he?" Martin replied, and again lapsed into silence.

The missionary remained for some time after Martin returned, relating to Nance many things of which she knew nothing. To all this she listened with rapt attention. What she heard was all so wonderful to her, and Dick was so enthusiastic that it was almost impossible not to be affected by his spirit. It was late when at length he arose, and looked in at Pete. Finding him asleep he went back out of doors. Nance was standing there, but Martin had gone into the house. He stood by her side, and gazed out over the water.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" he remarked.

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "But it never seemed so lovely as to-night."

"What's the reason, do you think?" Dick queried.

"Oh, I don't know, except that when I am very happy things always seem more beautiful than at other times."

As Dick watched her standing there an intense longing came over him to seize in his those well-shaped hands which were clasped before her. He forebore, however, and stood silently by her side, looking with her out over the lake. Speech was unnecessary, for love was speaking to their hearts in a language which could not be expressed in mere words.

CHAPTER XX

UNDER COVER OF NIGHT

When Dick left Nance at the cabin door and walked slowly down to the river, his heart was in a tumult of happiness such as he had never before experienced. He could hear the sounds of laughing, talking, and shouting among the miners, late though it was. He suspected that some of the men had been drinking, and were accordingly in a mood of riotous mirth. He did not wish to join them just now. What connection had he with their revelry? He contrasted the quietness of Martin's cabin with the confusion over the river. On the one side there was Nance, beautiful and pure; on the other, men destined for noble purposes and yet willing to degrade themselves at the least opportunity. What could he do to make those men see and realise something of the joy of a life in which the evil passions were subdued, and the higher virtues were predominate? Was it not his duty as a missionary in the Great Master's Cause to stem the tide of evil which was about to set in, and, if possible, to check the moral depravity which, like in other mining camps, always abounded? But what could one man do against so many? He could speak strong words of denunciation, rebuke, and exhort. But he knew such efforts would be of little avail. The men might listen but they would not heed. Some issue of a practical nature, he was well aware, was needed to cause such men to side with right against wrong. But what was this issue to be which would appeal to natures such as theirs? Not a campaign against liquor and its attending evils, he was sure of that.

Dick seated himself upon a log at the foot of a large tree, and gave himself up to serious meditation. Martin's canoe was nearby, so he could cross the river and in a few minutes reach his own tent. But he had no desire to sleep, as his mind was too active for that. He thought of Nance, her words, and the charm of her face. But a cloud arose to darken the light. The miners came into his mind, and he could not get clear of the idea that something was to happen, and that the one he loved was in real danger. He felt that his duty was of a twofold nature now: he must protect Nance, and also help the men who would not help themselves. But how was he to do this?

He was aroused from his reverie by the sound of a canoe grating upon the shore. Looking quickly up he was able to discern by the light of the moon two dark forms stepping from a little craft some distance below Martin's cabin. That they were there for no good purpose he felt quite sure, and his attention became instantly riveted upon their movements. He saw them leave the edge of the water and glide toward the house.

Rising to his feet, he stood irresolute for a few heart-beats, wondering what course he should pursue. It would not do for him to follow them in the open, as his form could easily be seen. Glancing to the right he saw the forest, sweeping in a black curve around the back of the house and not far away. With him to think was to act, so moving at once a short distance up stream, he reached the border of the clearing until he gained the shelter of the sombre trees. Then travelling as rapidly as caution would permit, he skirted the edge of the forest, keeping well within the black shadows.

Reaching at length a position just back of the cabin, he peered cautiously forth. The bright light of the moon made every object visible in the clearing beyond, so that any one approaching the house could easily be seen, although his countenance could not be discerned. Observing no one in sight, he moved forward a few paces and again stopped. This time his efforts were rewarded, for out in the open he saw the two men moving hurriedly to and fro. Several times they encircled the cabin. They seemed to have no design upon the building itself, but contented themselves by keeping a certain distance away. Dick racked his brain in an effort to solve the purpose of their strange actions. Ere long he heard the faint sounds of blows, and observed one of the men driving something into the ground. He then moved some distance away, when more blows followed. This was repeated several times, and the concealed watcher closely observed each spot where this process was performed.

Suddenly the meaning of it all flashed into Dick's mind. They were staking claims upon the very ground where the cabin was situated. The thought of this cowardly act sent the blood coursing rapidly through his veins, and a desire came upon him to rush forth, confront them, and frustrate their evil designs. This, however, he realised would be of little use. He well knew that Martin had not staked the spot upon which he was living. In a way it was his by right of possession, but how that would hold in mining law he had not the least idea. He cared little, anyway, for the legal right, as it was the sense of justice which over-shadowed everything else. Did the men desire the cabin? he wondered, and had they taken this under-handed method of procuring it? or did they have some other motive in view of which he was ignorant?

Dick watched the men until they had finished their task, and made their way back to the river. He was tempted to go over, pull up the stakes they had driven down, and throw them away among the trees. But this he knew would not do. It might lead to complications. He determined, nevertheless, to have a hand in this affair, and that at once.

Quickly making his way back over the route he had recently travelled, he came close to the river. Here he remained until he was sure that the two men had reached the opposite shore. He then walked cautiously toward Martin's canoe, pushed it off, and paddled as silently as possible across the stream. It did not take him long to reach his own tent, and when once inside he sat down upon his bunk, and gave himself over to anxious thought. He longed for some trusty person with whom he could discuss the whole affair, and his mind turned naturally to Tom, who was up at the new diggings. At first he was inclined to wait until morning to see what would happen. This idea he soon banished, however, and he determined to set off at once for assistance.

Silence brooded over the encampment as he started forth upon his journey. The numerous tents gleamed white in the light of the moon, and Dick paused for a moment to gaze upon the scene. Nature was making everything beautiful, and a holy hush reigned over mountains, river, and lake. But what a change would take place on this spot in a few days, nay even when the new day dawned fresh and bright. In a few weeks Quaska would be a typical mining camp, where licentiousness would run riot, unless in some way it could be checked. He looked across the river to the house nestling on the slope of the opposite bank, and thought of Nance sleeping so peacefully, with no idea of the lone man who on this night was so alert and watchful. With a wordless prayer that she might be kept safe from harm, he moved rapidly along the trail leading up stream. He knew that by keeping close to the river, even though he could not always follow the trail, he would in time come upon the miners.

It was still very early when Dick came in sight of the first tents close to the bank of the creek. Soon others appeared to view, but no living being could be seen. Not wishing to disturb any one, and not knowing which was Tom's cabin, he strolled along the shore to observe how much work the men had been doing. Coming to a large tree he sat down upon the ground, and leaned back against the bole. Little did he know that years before, under that same fir, Martin and Nance had stopped to rest, and that the maiden had played in the sand nearby. Had he known of this, how precious would the spot have been to him. He thought of Nance, nevertheless, as he reclined there. In truth she was seldom out of his mind. Presently he saw her standing before him. The same sweet smile was upon her face, and her hands were stretched out toward him. He noted how small and brown they were, and he reached out to take them in his own. At that instant the vision faded, and he opened his eyes with a start, to see Tom standing before him, holding a tin pail in his hand.

"Sorry I've disturbed ye," and the prospector chuckled. "Ye sure looked like a sleepin' beauty."

"Asleep, all right, but not a beauty," Dick laughed, as he sprang to his feet. "It was stupid of me to

go to sleep."

"Why didn't ye come to my shack, pard?" Tom asked, as he placed his pail upon the ground.

"I didn't know which was yours, Tom, and I did not care to disturb the camp hunting around."

"H'm! What on earth brought ye out here at sich an unearthly hour? Tell me that."

"Business, Tom."

"Must be mighty special business."

"That's for you to judge."

"Nothin' wrong down yon among the men, I hope?"

"Nothing special. They were asleep when I left, or most of them, at any rate."

"It isn't the lassie, is it?" and Tom looked keenly into the young man's face.

"Yes; it concerns her and her father."

Tom at once picked up his pail, and soon returned with it full to the brim.

"Come with me, pard," he quietly remarked. "We'd better talk it out under cover."

When once within the tent Tom placed the pail of water upon the ground, and turned to his companion.

"Sit down, pard, an' let's have yer story. Speak low, as it's better not to let every ninny hear what ye've got to say."

Quickly and briefly Dick related his experiences during the past night, to all of which Tom listened with much interest. When the story was ended the prospector sat for a while thinking deeply. He scratched his head in a characteristic manner. At length he rose, and reached for his frying-pan.

"We'll have some breakfast, pard, eh?" he began. "Ye surely must need some grub by this time. I brought down a fine sheep out on the hills yesterday, an' a nice juicy piece 'ill do ye much good, I'm thinkin', fer ye look about tuckered out."

"I've hardly thought about eating," Dick replied with a laugh, "so worked up have I been over this affair."

"An' good reason, pard. I'm jist at a loss to express my feelin's at present, so must do somethin' with my hands. It'll all come back soon, an' then I'll tell ye jist what I think about them skunks."

"But I'm much puzzled," Dick mused.

"Over what, pard?"

"I've been wondering if we can do anything. Martin hasn't staked the claim on which his house is situated, and The Twins have. Now, legally, to whom does that land belong?"

Tom tossed several pieces of meat savagely into the frying-pan, and watched them for a while as they crackled and sizzled.

"Legally! Legally!" he roared. "What is the meanin' of the word? tell me that. I don't care a damn what has been recorded in any law-book, or what decision wise old owls of judges have come to. Sich things don't cut any ice here. That man owns the land on which his cabin is built accordin' to the law of this country. In a frontier sich as this we make our own laws, an' I guess the one we make concernin' this affair won't be fer wrong. There'll be no red-tape about it, either, mark my word. Legally! Legally! h'm!" and Tom gave a grunt of deep disgust as he thrust the knife under the meat to turn it over.

"Good for you, Tom!" Dick exclaimed. "I knew where to come for help, didn't I? You voice my feelings exactly. But we must not lose any time. I don't want Martin, and especially Nance, to get word of this matter. It would worry them, I believe, very much."

"Oh, they shan't be bothered a mite, pard. As soon as I've had a snack to eat, I'll slip out an' have a talk with old Dad, an' a few others I kin trust. It's always well to have several at yer back in an affair like this. Talkin' does mighty little good with some chaps unless ye have plenty of power back of yer words. I've found that out time an' time agin. So as soon as we're through with breakfast you turn in to yon bunk, while I stroll around a bit. A few winks won't do ye any harm."

When Tom had left the cabin Dick stretched himself out upon the one bunk the place contained. He did not believe that he could sleep, but felt that a little rest would do him good, and refresh him for the tramp back to the lake. He wished to return as soon as possible, and he hoped that Tom would go with him. He was anxious about Nance and Martin, for he did not know what tricks The Twins might be already planning.

Thinking thus he slept, and when he opened his eyes an hour later Tom was standing by his side.

"Feelin' rested, pard?" was the prospector's cheery greeting.

"Yes," and Dick sprang out of the bunk as he spoke. "I am surprised at myself, for I didn't believe that I could sleep."

"Ye were pretty well tuckered out, lad, so the nap 'ill do ye a world of good. But I think we'd better be away now. Several of the boys are more'n willin' to go with us. They're certainly roused up over what ye say The Twins did last night."

Outside Dick found Dad Seddon, and three other men, all strong, powerfully built fellows. Tom had made a wise choice in asking these men to accompany him down stream. They were not given to many words, which was partly natural, and partly acquired through long years in the silent wilderness. But they were men in whose eyes lurked not the slightest semblance of fear. They were friends worth having, but enemies to be dreaded.

Dick never forgot that rapid march down to the lake. Very little was said as they strode forward, and it was still early morning when Klutana's surface at length appeared to view. The miners were astir, and the confusion and bustle of a new day had already begun. But the five men headed by Tom did not pause until they had reached a tent of moderate size, situated on somewhat higher ground. Here the various claims were all recorded, and the Recorder was eating his breakfast, which was spread out upon an overturned empty soap box. He looked up with interest as the men appeared before him at the entrance of his tent.

"Mornin', Tom," was his salutation. "Struck somethin' good, eh?"

"Should say not," and Tom spoke in a low voice. "Have ye recorded any claims this mornin', Bill?"

"Sure thing. But why do ye ask?"

"Was it The Twins?"

The Recorder's eyes opened wide in amazement, and he looked curiously at the rest of the men standing silently and grimly outside.

"Have The Twins been here this mornin'?" Tom again asked.

"Yes. They routed me up at a most unearthly hour."

"Did they record claims over on yon bank?" and the prospector waved his hand toward the right.

"Yes; over the Quaska. Said they had rich ground there."

"D'ye know the locality?"

"Not exactly. This whole region is so new to me that I hardly know one spot from another."

"Bill," and Tom's voice sank to a deep hoarse whisper, "I believe that The Twins have staked Martin's place over the river."

The Recorder gave vent to an exclamation of surprise. He reached over to a small rude shelf, and brought forth the book in which the various claims were recorded. This he studied for a few seconds, and then read off what he had written there that morning.

"That's it, an' no mistake!" Tom cried. "The skunks! D'ye know where they are now, Bill?"

"They left here some time ago, and seemed to be in high fettle. I didn't savvey their game, and so paid no attention to their movements."

"Come, boys," and Tom turned suddenly to his companions, "I really believe that those devils are over the river now. Let's follow them, an' see what tricks they're up to. Thank ye, Bill, fer the information. We'll report to ye later."

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAY OF A WOMAN

"Daddy, what do girls do in the great outside world when they grow up?"

Nance and Martin had just finished their breakfast. It was early, and the morning sun, streaming in through the window, fell athwart the table. Pete, the invalid, was still asleep, for the movements in the room had not disturbed him in the least. Martin looked curiously at Nance as she asked the question. He pushed back the bench upon which he was sitting, and began to fill his pipe. Nance sat with her elbows upon the table, her hands supporting her chin, watching him thoughtfully.

"Young women generally get married," Martin at length replied. "That is about all they think of."

"But suppose they don't get married, daddy?"

"Then they stay at home and help their mothers."

"But suppose they have no mothers, what then?"

"Oh, they get out and shift for themselves."

"And what do they do to make a living?"

"Some become servants, others are clerks in stores, dressmakers, school teachers, and so on."

"And some become nurses, do they not?"

"Certainly; I forgot all about them."

"Well, that is what I want to be, daddy."

Martin looked up quickly into the flushed face of the young woman before him.

"Who put such a notion as that into your head?" he quietly remarked. "Was it that young man?"

"No, not altogether. I have been thinking about it for some time. Ever since I read the story of Florence Nightingale in one of my books I have longed to be a nurse. I am practising every day upon Pete, and I know I should like the work so much. I want to be of some use in the world, daddy."

"But you are of some use, little one, of great use to me, at least. What would I do without you? You would go away, and I should be left alone."

"But I am not of much use to you now," and there was a note of sadness in Nance's voice. "You are away all day long out on the hills, so we only see each other morning and evening. Once we were together all the time."

Martin lowered the pipe from his mouth, and his eyes dropped. He knew how true were the words he had just heard, and his heart reproached him. Yes, he had spent most of his time on the hills since the arrival of the miners, and he had left Nance alone. He had almost forgotten her, in fact, so engrossed had he been with his own thoughts, and the perplexing questions which were always disturbing his peace of mind. But of these he could not speak to Nance. He had to bear his burden alone, and not even to the one who was so dear to him could he confide. He looked at her now longingly, and a great fear came over him lest in any way she should learn something about his past life. That she had perfect confidence in him he was well aware. How terrible it would be if she should hear what kind of a man he really was.

"Are you not happy here, Nance?" and his voice was somewhat hoarse as he asked the question. "Would you like to go away? If so, we shall start at once. There will yet be time to cross the mountains, and catch the steamer on her return from the north. Then, when once outside, if you so desire, you can train to be a nurse."

"No, no, daddy, I don't want to go away," Nance hastened to reply. "And, besides, there is no need of it, as I can be just as happy here. Some one will be needed to care for the miners, and why cannot I help?"

"You are talking somewhat wildly, are you not?" Martin replied a little sharply. "Though you have cared for Pete, and have done it well, yet you know hardly anything about nursing. A very thorough training is necessary to make one proficient."

"But I may learn here, daddy. Dick," and at the mention of the name the flush upon her face became more apparent—"told me that he expects a trained nurse in soon on one of the steamers."

"Did he! Well that's news to me. Where is she to stay, pray?"

"At the hospital, which is to be built."

"H'm. Is that so?"

"Yes. And Dick told me something about the woman he expects will be sent in to take charge of the hospital. She is known only as Nurse Marion. She has been working along the Yukon River for years, and she has done so much for the miners. They love her just like the soldiers loved Florence Nightingale. Dick thinks that she will come, for it is always she who goes into new places, and starts the hospital work. I do hope that Nurse Marion will come, for I long to see her. I never saw a white woman, except my mother, and I was too young when she died to know anything about her."

"She was very beautiful, Nance," Martin replied, "and you look just like her."

"Do I, daddy? I didn't know that I am beautiful. But if I look like my mother used to then I must be. You have often told me about Beryl, how beautiful she is, and I have often wished to look just like her. Dick says that Nurse Marion is beautiful, that she has a sweet face, wonderful eyes, and can sing better than any one he ever heard. He said that it is fine to hear her sing by the side of sick people. Her voice is so comforting, and she always seems to know exactly how the patient feels and so sings accordingly. Dick said that she had some great trouble in her life which turned her mind to nursing that she might help others who suffer. Oh, I think her life must be so grand. I know that I shall like her, and I hope that she will let me help her in the hospital. So you see, daddy, I will be of some use in the world, and be right near you at the same time."

Martin made no reply to these words, for his mind was strangely disturbed. The description Nance had given of Nurse Marion made him think of Beryl. Yes, she, too, was beautiful, had a

sweet face, wonderful eyes, a rich voice, and her life had been a troubled one. Tom had said that she had become a trained nurse after she had recovered from her illness. There was such a strong resemblance between Nurse Marion and Beryl that Martin felt that they must be one and the same person. Only the name puzzled him somewhat. But perhaps she had changed it when she entered the nursing profession as she had changed the whole manner of her life. And was it possible that she was coming, the only woman in the whole world whom he longed to see, and yet the only woman he dreaded to meet face to face? Yes, he knew something about those wonderful eyes of which Nance had spoken. With what a loathing scorn would they be turned upon him if he should ever see her again. But, then, that must never be. If the nurse proved to be Beryl she must not know that he lived at Quaska. A sudden impulse seized him to leave the place, such as had come over him when Dick Russell and the miners had arrived. Then it was for Nance's sake he had remained. Now this sudden longing to flee was restrained by a strong desire to behold once more the face of the woman who, during all the years of his voluntary exile, had been so much in his mind. He wondered if she had changed much since he last saw her at the church in the city years before. Would she recognise him if she met him now? he mused. It was hardly likely, for she would not associate a rough bearded man with the trim Martin Rutland she had known so long ago. But one thing was certain: she must never be allowed to cross the threshold of his house. If she did come to Quaska, and Nance should become acquainted with her it was only natural that Nance should wish to bring her home. No, such a thing must not happen.

"Nance," and Martin lifted his eyes to the place where she had been sitting. He was surprised to find that she was not there.

"What is it, daddy?" was her cheery response, as she came to his side. "I am looking after Pete, getting his breakfast."

"Why, I didn't know that you had moved. I did not hear a sound."

"And didn't you hear Pete and me talking?"

"No, not a word," at which remark both Pete and Nance laughed heartily. Martin also smiled at what he called his own foolishness.

"Nance, come close, I want to speak to you," he commanded. "Promise me," and here his voice dropped to a whisper, "that if any white woman comes to Quaska you will never invite her to this house without speaking to me first."

Seeing the surprised look upon Nance's face, he caught both of her hands in his, and held them firm.

"Promise me," he ordered.

"I promise, daddy," was the somewhat faltering reply.

"There, that will do," and Martin released her hands. "You have never told me a falsehood, nor disobeyed me, so I know that I can trust you."

Nance was deeply puzzled over Martin's words and manner. Never before had he spoken to her so sternly and mysteriously. She was disappointed as well, for she had been revolving in her mind of late what a great pleasure it would be to have Nurse Marion come over to their house very often. They would be such friends, so she had planned. And now she must always ask her father's permission, and even then he might not grant her request.

A form bulking large in the doorway caused her to cease her meditation, and look keenly at a thickset man standing there. Without knocking he entered, followed by another man. The night prowlers had arrived to take formal possession of the claims they had staked.

Martin rose to meet them, and looked inquiringly into their faces. They were strangers to him, and he thought that perhaps they had come to see the invalid.

"Are you looking for Pete?" he asked. "He's over there," and he pointed toward the bunk.

"Naw. We've come to see you," Dave replied. "We wish to inform you that you're settled upon our claims, an' we're here to give you notice to quit."

Martin looked first at the one and then at the other, uncertain whether they were in earnest or only joking. But the expression upon their faces, and the look in their eyes told him that they meant business.

"I don't understand you," he at length replied. "What do you mean by 'claims,' and 'notice to quit'?"

"Ye don't? Well, ye damn soon will," was the gruff response. "We've staked our claims upon the ground where your shanty is pitched. The land is ours, so you get out at once. See?"

At these words Martin straightened himself up with a sudden jerk.

"Don't you know that I own this place?" he asked. "I cleared this land, and built this house years and years ago. I hold it by possession. Why should you wish to take it from me? There is all the land on this side of the river unstaked. Can you not let me live here in peace? Why do you need my small piece of ground?"

"That's nothin' to do with it," Sam retorted. "We've staked this spot, an' we want it, so that's all there is about it."

"But suppose I am not willing to give it up, what then?"

"Oh, we'll soon settle that," and the men laughed as they clapped their hands to their hip-pockets. "We've something here which speaks pretty loud, an' to the point."

"But is this legal?" Martin insisted. "I have the land surely by possession, so it is mine by right of ownership."

"Might is right in this country," and Dave spat contemptuously upon the floor. "That is the only law we know here, or pay any attention to."

"Is that so?"

These three brief words caused The Twins to look quickly to the right, and at once their faces underwent a marvellous change. Nance was standing there, with her lithe figure as straight as a reed. She was looking quietly along the barrel of Martin's rifle, and the slight forefinger of her right hand was gently pressing the trigger. The visitors had paid no attention to her before, so engrossed had they been with Martin. But now they suddenly realised that here was a new force to be reckoned with upon which they had not counted. Nance stood before them transformed. Her face was very pale, but her eyes glowed with the light of determination, which the two baffled men were not slow to notice.

"I will shoot the first one of you that moves a hand," Nance warningly remarked.

"Fer God's sake ye wouldn't, Miss," Dave faltered. "Ye don't mean it, surely?"

"Indeed she does," Martin replied. "Don't fool with her if you value your lives. She's a dead shot, as many a grizzly has found out to his cost."

In the silence which followed these words it was almost possible to hear the heart-beats of the two confounded men.

"Are you going to leave this place?" Nance asked slowly and deliberately. "Will you promise never to come here to bother us again?"

No response coming to this request, Nance continued:

"I am going to count ten, and while I am doing it you can think over what I have said. That is all the time I shall give you. One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine——"

"Hold, hold, Miss," Sam interrupted. "I'll leave. I'm not going to have my brains blown out."

"So will I," Dave assented.

"And you will never trouble us again?"

"No, no," came simultaneously from both men.

"Wait a minute," Nance commanded. "I am not through with you yet. Might is right, so you say. Just put your hands above your heads. There, that's better. Now, daddy, please take those weapons out of their pockets; they are not safe things for such men to carry."

Never before had The Twins been in such a fix. It was bad enough to be held up, but to be held up by a woman was gall and wormwood to their reckless natures. Yet they had great respect for the blank frowning muzzle of that rifle, and the determined figure holding it so confidently in her hands. They did not dare to lower their arms, and they were forced to submit to the ignominy of having their revolvers removed from their hip-pockets.

"Nice weapons these," Martin calmly remarked, as he held the two revolvers in his hands. "Suppose we keep them, Nance, as souvenirs. They might come in handy some other time. And perhaps they'll be useful now," he continued, after a pause. "You say that you staked claims here last night, eh?"

"Yes," was Dave's surly response.

"Well, then, you can just go out and pull them up. Nance, keep the rifle upon them until they finish the job, and I'll bring these weapons along, too, in case they are needed."

"Yes, daddy," Nance replied. "I am not going to lower this rifle until the stakes are all up, and these men have cleared out."

The feelings of the two scoundrels were by no means enviable as they were ordered out of the house, and then commanded to undo their work of the past night. Not only were their hearts bursting with rage, but they felt very deeply the humiliation of their position. To be driven by a woman from stake to stake like slaves before a taskmaster upon whom they could not wreak their revenge was something they had never before experienced. Then, while in the midst of their work, the arrival of Dick, Tom, and the rest of the band, filled their cup of shame to overflowing.

The miners took the whole situation in at a glance, and derisive shouts of laughter burst from their lips.

"Hard at it, boys?" Tom shouted. "It's rather early, isn't it, to be workin' so hard?"

"When did ye make up yer minds to obey a woman?" Dad asked. "Ye've changed yer tune since last winter about being bossed by any female, ha, ha!"

"Got yer claims all worked?" sneered another. "Yer pullin' up yer stakes mighty soon. Where's yer clean-up?"

To all of these jibes the two wretched men made no response. They hurried from stake to stake, and when the last had been torn out and thrown savagely upon the ground, they turned and faced their fair young captor.

"Now, will ye let us go?" Sam snarled. He longed to express his feelings in more vehement words, but his courage was not equal to the occasion.

"Yes, you may go now," Nance replied, as she dropped the butt of the rifle upon the ground. "My! that tired my arms."

The Twins were about to scuttle away, when Tom stopped them.

"Hold on a minute," he commanded. "I want a word with ye. Ye may consider yerselves mighty lucky to git clear of this job with whole skins. The lassie an' her dad have been mighty good to ye. Mebbe it wouldn't have been the same if we'd happened along a little sooner. Ye might as well know first as last, Dave Pelchie, and Sam Purvis, that if ye interfere with this property agin ye won't git off as easy as ye have this time. So git out of this as quick as ye kin, fer the sight of yer measly faces makes me sick."

The miners watched for a while two defeated and crestfallen men as they skulked down to the river. Then, with Tom leading, they all shook hands with the heroine of the day.

"We're proud of ye, Miss, that's what we are," Tom exclaimed.

"Hear, hear!" agreed his companions.

But Dick, as he took her hand, held it a little longer than the rest. Their eyes met, and though no word fell from their lips, a language which the others could not understand passed between them —the language of the heart.

CHAPTER XXII

HEART SEARCHINGS

Dad Seddon was delighted with the part Nance had taken in the drama which had just been enacted. His eyes beamed with admiration, and the somewhat surly expression vanished entirely from his face.

"By the horns of a moose!" he exclaimed, turning toward the young woman, "I did feel mighty sore that first night ye beat me at chess. It was a great come-down, so I thought, to be licked by a woman. But I fergive ye now, fer ye've done a deed this mornin' which makes us all proud of ye."

"How would you like another game?" Nance laughingly replied. "We haven't had one for some time."

"What! this mornin'?"

"Certainly. Right away."

"It's a go. I'm there every time. Bring on the weapons of war, an' we'll have a royal battle."

Tom and the rest smiled good naturedly at the old prospector's enthusiasm. They stayed for a while watching the two facing each other across the little deal table. Then, after a few words with Pete, they swung away from the cabin toward the river.

"We've important business over yon," Tom had explained. "We may be needed there jist at present."

All through the day Martin's mind was much concerned about the incident of the morning. He tried to reason out why The Twins should wish to take possession of his property when there was so much unclaimed land lying all around on that side of the river. He thought of the gold buried behind the house, and wondered if in any way the secret had become known. But who was there to tell the white men? he asked himself. Nance had not done so, he was quite sure of that. Then the Indians suddenly flashed into his mind. Perhaps they had been questioned as to the old diggings up the Quaska. The natives, no doubt, well remembered how he had dug there years ago. He at once thought of Taku. This Indian had been down the river among the miners at the time of the great stampede, and he might have told them something.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment, he seized his hat and hurried over to the Indian encampment, straight toward Taku's house. He found the native and his wife at work upon the fish they had recently taken from the lake.

"Doing a good business, Taku, eh?" Martin asked, sitting down upon a stone nearby.

"Ah, ah," was the reply.

"White men take all you catch, eh?"

"Ah, ah."

"Did the white men pay you well for your trip down the Heena this spring?" Martin further questioned.

"Ah, ah. Good. Tobac, tea, gun, coat."

"You were there when they got back from the Quaska?"

"Ah, ah. Beeg tam."

"What did they say about the gold, Taku?"

The native paused at his work, and mused for a while.

"Talk moche," he at length slowly replied. "No savvey beeg hole."

"What hole?"

"Up Quaska."

"They asked you, did they? You told them?"

"Ah, ah."

"That I made the holes?"

"Ah, ah."

"And did you tell them where I put the gold?"

"Ah, ah. Me tell two," and the Indian held up the fore and middle fingers of his left hand.

"Oh, I see!" Martin responded, more to himself than to the native.

He now comprehended everything, and how The Twins had learned about the hidden treasure. But how could he blame Taku? The Indian had not been told to keep the matter a secret. In fact, it had been of little importance to him then, as at that time he had no idea of the value of the gold the white man had unearthed.

Leaving the encampment, Martin walked slowly back to his own house. He now understood the purpose of the two men who had staked their claims upon his land. It was the gold they wanted and nothing else. He was surprised, too, for he had often heard of the code of honour among miners and prospectors. Gold was seldom meddled with, and cabins were always left unlocked. A sneak-thief was looked upon with contempt, and considered the very essence of abomination.

Martin stayed close around the house all day. He discussed with Nance what he had learned from Taku.

"I do not feel safe, little one," he said. "Our house will be watched day and night."

"Never fear, daddy," Nance replied. "Those two men will hardly venture back again. Most likely when the other miners hear of it they will drive them out of the place."

It was only when Dick came over in the evening that they first learned what had happened in the mining town. The young man was much animated this evening, and told in an amusing way the whole story.

"Tom is really a brick," he declared. "I knew that he was all gold, as the miners say, but it takes something out of the ordinary to stir him up. Then when he is once aroused it will be well for his opponents to be on their guard."

"What has he been doing now?" Nance queried, unable to restrain her eagerness to hear about what had taken place over the river.

"Well, as soon as we had left here this morning Tom got busy, and gathered most of the men together, and told them in his own quaint way about what had happened to The Twins."

"Were they present?" Martin asked.

"Indeed they were not. They kept pretty close to themselves all through the day, and didn't show their mean faces in public once. Tom was the orator, and the impression that he left upon his hearers was wonderful. He told in a most graphic manner how The Twins had pulled up the stakes at the point of a rifle, and how back of the rifle was a woman. You should have heard the miners laugh and jeer. Some were for stringing The Twins up to the nearest tree; while others wished to drive them out of the place at once. But Tom thought it best for all to agree to ask The Twins whenever they met them about the claims they had staked, and when they intended to begin work upon them. He suggested that they might mention as well about the beautiful moonlight nights, what shy creatures women are, and so on. He certainly did set it off in glowing colours, and the men were wildly excited over the idea. They agreed that it would be greater fun

for themselves, and a severer punishment for the two rascals than driving them away from Quaska."

"But will it be safe, do you think?" Nance asked. "The Twins might be so angry that they might do some harm."

"Where are their revolvers?" and Dick's eyes twinkled.

"Oh, they are safe," Martin laughed.

"No; they won't shoot," Dick continued; "they are too cowardly for that. They are not only cowards but idiots as well to do what they did last night. Now, if some men had been in their place I doubt whether you would have got off as easily as you did. They would have done some mischief. But The Twins were too much afraid of their skins after you got the rifle levelled upon them."

"Where did they stay while the meeting was going on?" Nance asked.

"In their own tents. They must have known that something was astir, and that it was better for them to keep close."

"And they didn't venture out for the rest of the day?"

"No; stuck close at home. When the meeting was over several of the miners strolled by their tent and made some pretty pointed remarks, which The Twins must have heard and understood. It is evident that they can't stay hidden all the time, and they will certainly receive a bombardment when they do come out."

"Has Tom gone back up river?" Martin asked.

"Yes; on special business."

"Special business? Of what nature?"

"It concerns the building of a hospital. It will mean quite a cost in money and labour, and Tom and I have had several long serious talks over it of late. Before the miners dispersed this morning Tom sprang a surprise upon them as well as upon me. He told in a few plain words how very necessary it is that there should be a hospital built at Quaska for the sick and injured men. He referred to what you have been doing over here, and at that the miners gave a rousing cheer. I wish you could have heard them, it would have done you good. All agreed that Tom's suggestion was an excellent one, and they at once volunteered to help with the hospital as much as they could."

Dick did not tell Martin and Nance of the little speech he had made, in which he had promised to give his services free, and how a nurse was expected on one of the incoming steamers. All this appealed strongly to the miners, and they had expressed their approval in no uncertain manner.

Martin listened to all that Dick had to say about the hospital which was to be built, and his plans for the future. He noted the animated look upon the young man's face, and the old longing came back into his own heart to be up and doing at a similar undertaking. The missionary had much to live for, and the love which he had for his work was great. But what was there for him to do? he asked himself. Always a voice whispered in his ear, "Thou shalt not!" There was a barrier which separated him from that field of sacred work to which he had pledged himself years before.

As the days passed this longing instead of subsiding increased. The fire of anger and rebellion, which for years had burned so fiercely in Martin's heart, died down. No longer did he look upon the Church as his great enemy, and all clergymen as bound menials. He saw things in a different light, and realised as never before that the beam was in his own eyes which had distorted his vision. In the past he had the spirit of pride and anger to sustain him. These were the crutches upon which he had depended. Though wounded, he had held up his head and stood upon his feet. The Church then was the overbearing monster, and there was a certain grim satisfaction in the thought that he had cast it off forever, and that it could affect him no longer. But now that these props had been removed, upon what could he depend? If at times during the past years of his exile he had suffered, it was as nothing to what he now endured. He fled to the hills under the pretence of hunting the mountain-sheep, and there he wrestled with the spectres of his shame and despair, which were his constant companions. At night he would return to his home, creeping along the trail with head bent, and face drawn and haggard. But as he neared his house his form would always straighten, his step quicken, and his eyes brighten as Nance came forth to greet him. In her presence he always tried to be cheerful. But at times he would forget himself, and while at supper he would slip back into the old mood which had held him in thrall throughout the day. Then as he crouched there with the wan dejected look upon his face Nance would watch him with apprehension, and sometimes would speak to him, asking if he felt ill. This would always startle Martin from his reverie, and with an effort he would make some excuse for his strange behaviour. Although Nance pretended not to see anything amiss with her father, she was, nevertheless, much concerned. Why did he leave her so often? she asked herself, and why those strange spells of absent-mindedness, and the haggard expression upon his face?

After supper Martin would sit quietly by himself listening to the story of the hospital, for Dick came every evening, and he always had much to tell about his work during the day. Nance's eyes beamed with interest as he told of the cutting of the logs, floating them down the Quaska, and

the struggle they had in dragging them up the bank to the right spot near the river where they were to erect the building.

Dick worked as hard, if not harder, in fact, than any one else. He not only chopped, hewed, tugged and lifted all day, but he did all the planning as well, besides encouraging his co-workers. The miners took turns at the work, and every day there were several new volunteers. How full of thankfulness was the missionary's heart when at length the exterior of the building was almost completed. Of course there was much work still ahead of him. There were the walls to be chinked with moss and mudded; there were doors and windows to be made; the floor to be built; partitions to be put up; cots, tables, shelves, and other things to be constructed, which would take weeks of steady work. All this he expected to do himself, except for the occasional assistance he was sure to receive from Tom, Dad, and a few others.

But what pleased the missionary more than anything else was the good will of the miners, and the hearty spirit in which they assisted him. He had been brought into close contact with a number of them, and they had all voted him a real good fellow.

As Dick talked each night of the work done throughout the day, and what he hoped to do on the morrow, Nance would listen with the deepest interest. Martin would sit and smoke without saying a word. It was impossible for him not to like the young man, who was so thoroughly in love with his work. But the more Martin heard of the progress of the hospital, the deeper the iron entered into his soul. He did not actually envy the missionary, but how he longed to be full of such enthusiasm, and to be doing a work of a like nature. But this he knew could never be. Not for him could there be a return through that door which had closed to him forever. And as he watched the two happy ones before him he felt like a monster of deception. He presented to them the life of trust and honour, but they could not remove the veil and behold that other old life, which was ever grinning horribly upon him, giving him no rest day or night. How long could he keep this up? he asked himself. Would some one unmask him, or would he be forced to do it himself, that he might find the peace of mind which he so ardently desired?

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MEETING

Every evening the missionary brought the news over the river as to the progress he was making upon the hospital. One room he had reserved for the nurse who should come, so he said, and he was fitting it up as comfortably as he could. This would be her home, and Nance when alone often wondered what it was like, and how it would look when the stranger arrived.

"How are The Twins getting along?" Martin asked, as they sat one evening outside the door.

"Oh, they left several days ago," Dick replied. "The place got too hot for them."

"In what way? Did the miners threaten them with bodily injury?"

"No, not a bit of it. They simply carried out the suggestion which Tom made at the meeting. On all sides, and at every opportunity The Twins were assailed with questions about the claims they had staked, when they intended to work them, and if they expected to get good results. To these they would either reply with oaths, or remain silent and slink away. If they happened to be present at the saloon, or where several men were gathered, the conversation was always sure to drift off to revolvers, and whether a woman could handle a rifle. Then some one was certain to ask The Twins for their opinion. I cannot tell you exactly how the whole thing was managed, but there was really nothing The Twins could do, though they were always boiling over with rage. The miners would talk of nothing else while they were present. Then one night the two scoundrels vanished, where to no one knows. The place is well rid of them. It will teach others to leave you alone after this."

"I am so glad," Nance replied, "but I cannot help feeling sorry for those men. They did look so funny, though, pulling up the stakes, while Tom and the rest were making all kinds of remarks."

"You have been a heroine among the miners ever since," Dick returned. "There is nothing that they would not do for you now. You are under their special protection, and they have vowed to lynch the first man who ever interferes with you or this place again."

A blush suffused Nance's cheeks at these words, while Martin gave a sigh of relief. He had been worried and annoyed over the affray, but now he felt thankful that they were to be left undisturbed in the future.

One morning, just a week after this conversation, Martin and Nance were aroused by several raucous blasts of a steamer. Rushing outside, they saw the *Northern Light* ploughing across the lake, straight toward the new mining town. Her decks were black with people, and as the two watchers hurried to the shore they could see a number of women among the passengers. There was considerable excitement on board, and much cheering as well both on the steamer and on land, where the miners had gathered on the bank. There was no wharf, but the boat curved gracefully around, and as the water was deep, she was able to swing close to the shore. When

tied up, and the gang-planks run out a great scramble took place, while the hum of voices fell strangely upon the ears of the two silent ones over the river. Nance was all excitement now. Never before had she beheld the forms of white women in the Quaska region, and she was most anxious for a closer inspection.

"Oh, daddy!" she exclaimed, "those women must be nurses. Dick didn't expect so many, I am sure. Isn't it too bad that he is up at the diggings with Tom? Suppose we go over and tell them where he is?"

But Martin laid a heavy hand upon her shoulder, which caused her to look up into his face in surprise. He surmised only too well who the women were, and the object of their visit into the country. But how should he tell Nance? How could he explain?

"They are not nurses, little one," he at length answered, and then remained silent, uncertain how to proceed.

"Not nurses! Then who are they?" and Nance looked her astonishment.

"They are bad women who flock into every camp such as this. They drink, gamble, and—lead men astray."

"Oh! I thought that all women were good, daddy."

"Unfortunately not all. And look, Nance, you are not to have anything to do with those women, see?"

"Yes, daddy," but a note of disappointment was apparent in Nance's voice. "But there may be nurses among them," and her face brightened at the thought.

"Not likely. They would hardly have time to get the message from the *Northern Packet*, and return on this boat."

Nance made no reply to these words, but stood silently watching the anxious crowd near the steamer. She was sorely grieved that she could not go over to the place, for she longed to look upon the white women, hear them talk, and to see how they were dressed.

"When the nurse comes may I see her, and talk with her, daddy?" she presently asked.

"Ye-s," was the somewhat reluctant assent. "I have no objection to your meeting with good respectable women, but not with such as have come on that steamer to-day."

Nothing more was said about the matter then, and ere long they both went back to the house. But Nance was more restless than usual. The outside world of which she had so often dreamed was being brought to their very door, and her blood was being stirred as never before. She wanted to see, hear, and learn how people, and especially women, acted who had lived in the great world of civilisation. She wished to know of things of which she had been ignorant so long.

About the middle of the afternoon Nance picked up her violin, and strolled over to the Indian encampment. She could express her feelings better upon the violin than in any other way, and Quabee was always so pleased to listen to her. She found the Indian woman near the shore, and received a hearty welcome. Quabee was squatting with several other native women upon the ground, watching with much interest the steamer lying against the opposite bank.

"Come in canoe on water?" she asked, as Nance drew near.

"What, over there?" and the latter pointed to the farther side of the lake.

"Ah, ah. Go by beeg canoe, eh?"

Nance was quite ready for the trip, as she would thus be able to go quite close to the steamer, and obtain a better view of the women.

In a few moments the canoe was skimming over the surface of the lake, straight toward the steamer. Nance as well as Quabee wielded a paddle, and a pretty sight she presented, seated well astern, and guiding the craft as wilfully as she pleased. She saw several women standing near the bow of the *Northern Light*, and heard one exclaim: "Oh, look at the Indians in the canoe! How pretty!"

During the brief space of time in which they were passing Nance was able to get a fairly good view of the women, and nothing escaped her eyes. They were young, good-looking, and their shapely figures were clad in neatly-fitting dresses, such as she had never seen before. She glanced at her own rough clothes, and for the first time realised how mean and humble they were. What must Dick think of her? she mused. Surely he had often compared her poor dresses with the handsome ones he had seen outside. She was now glad that her father had not consented to go over to the steamer that morning. What would the women have thought of her? She would have caused them no end of amusement.

Nance was as eager to get away from the steamer as a few minutes before she had been anxious to be near it. Heading the canoe diagonally across the lake, she drove her paddle into the water with a sudden swish. In a short time she ran the craft around a sharp point into a little cove where the trees came close to the water's edge. Laying her paddle by her side she let Quabee run the canoe gently ashore, and then looked back over the route they had just traversed. The

steamer was hidden from view, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

A new mood was now upon her such as she had never experienced before. She longed to get away and hide from everybody, except her father and the Indians. She did not even wish to see Dick, for she could not bear for him to look upon her dressed in such humble clothes. Her heart beat fast as she thought of the many times they had been together, and she did not know that she was dressed differently from other white women.

Nance, in fact, was wrong in thinking that her clothes made her look ridiculous. The material was rough, but the dress she wore was neat, and fitted to perfection her lithe figure. Had she only known that her simply-made garments seemed to Dick's eyes most becoming, she would not have felt so badly. There was nothing artificial or bizarre about them such as he had often seen upon women of her age. In fact, anything that she wore would have appeared appropriate to him, for she herself added the charm which was all essential.

Knowing nothing of this, and considering herself a disgraceful and ungainly creature, Nance sat for some time in the canoe lost in thought. Quabee wondered at her unusual silence, and at length, turning, she pointed to the violin.

"Mak' music, eh?" she nodded.

Almost mechanically Nance picked up the instrument, tuned it, and began to play. After a few moments the old-time spirit came upon her. The music acted like a tonic. The heavy mood of depression disappeared, and her natural buoyant self reasserted itself. Tune after tune she played, and the sweet strains sounded out over the water.

Presently Quabee touched Nance upon the arm, and motioned her to look to the right. Coming toward them was a canoe, containing a woman, and a white woman at that. Nance laid her violin carefully in the bottom of the canoe, and then fixed her gaze upon the approaching stranger. Her eyes grew large with wonder as the woman drew near. Never before had she beheld such a person. This must be one of the women who had come on the *Northern Light*, she thought. And yet she did not look bad. Surely her father must have been somewhat mistaken. That face with the large, expressive, pathetic eyes and sweet mouth could have no connection with evil. She noted the noble poise of her head, the erectness of her body, and the skilful manner in which she handled the craft. A sunny smile illumined the stranger's face, as she drew in the paddle and laid it across the canoe.

"Pardon me," she began, noting the looks of astonishment upon the faces of the two women before her. "I heard the music floating across the water, and thought that there must be fairies hidden in this cove, and now I have found that I was right."

Then an expression of sadness came into her eyes as she looked keenly upon Nance. She believed that this was one of the women who had come in on the *Northern Light*.

"I didn't hear you playing on the steamer," she continued after a brief pause. "Where did you keep yourself and your violin hidden all the way up the river?"

Then Nance knew that this stranger had mistaken her for one of the bad women of whom her father had spoken. At once her face flushed with resentment. No doubt this is one of them, she considered, and so she must not speak to her. She turned away her eyes and spoke to Quabee in the Indian tongue. The latter roused herself, seized her paddle and dipped it into the water. The stranger saw that in some way she had offended the young white woman, and she hastened to rectify her mistake.

"Forgive me!" she cried. "I am afraid that I have made a foolish blunder. Let us introduce ourselves, and then perhaps we shall be able to understand each other better. I am Nurse Marion, and have come to this place to take charge of the new hospital. But the lake is so calm this afternoon that I could not resist the temptation of a ride over its glassy surface in this canoe which I borrowed from an Indian."

Nance's face cleared instantly, and a sigh of relief escaped her lips. "Then you are not one of those women over there?" and she motioned toward the steamer.

"No, no!" was the emphatic reply.

"And neither am I. This is my home, and my name is Nance. This is Quabee, my Indian friend from childhood."

"And have you really lived in this country all your life!" the stranger exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, ever since I was a little child. I live over there with my father," and she pointed to the right. "You cannot see the house as that point hides it from view."

Nurse Marion was not slow in noting the correctness of Nance's speech, the beauty of her face, as well as her quiet dignity and natural refinement of manner. She was much impressed, and longed to know more about her.

"Is your mother living here, too?" she asked. "I should like to meet her. I am so pleased that I shall have such nice neighbours."

"My father and mother are both dead," Nance replied. "They were drowned when I was very little."

"Oh! But you said that you lived with your father."

"He is not my real father, though he has been one to me all my life, and I have known no other. He took me from the Indians after my parents were drowned, and we have lived here ever since."

"And how did you learn to play the violin so well?"

"My father taught me. He plays much better than I do. If you once heard him you would not wish to listen to me."

"I should certainly like to hear him," the nurse returned, "and I hope to do so shortly, that is, if I may visit your home sometime. But how lonely you must have been in this country before the miners arrived."

"Why no, I didn't mind it one bit. The Indians have always been very good friends to us, and Quabee here is almost like a mother to me. Then, there are so many beautiful things everywhere, the trees, birds, flowers, mountains, and this lake. I love them all."

"But didn't you get lonely during the long winters, especially in the evenings?"

"Not at all. We had our violins, and it was so nice to sit and play before the bright open fire. We had our books, too, and often a game of chess."

"Books!" the nurse exclaimed in surprise. "Do you mean that you read them yourself?"

"Certainly," and Nance laughed at the other's astonishment.

"But how did you learn to read?"

"My father taught me, as he taught me everything else."

"He must be a remarkable man, and I should like to meet him."

"Indeed he is, and he has always been so good to me."

"You haven't told me his name yet, have you?"

"It is Martin."

"Martin what?"

"Rutland—Martin Rutland."

At these words Nurse Marion gave a slight start, but recovered herself immediately. Her cheeks, flushed by the exercise of paddling, became very white, while her eyes looked straight before her among the trees on the shore. That name brought back memories which she believed had long since been buried. Her brain throbbed as she endeavoured to piece together the things she had just heard. But for the name it would all have passed as a matter of general interest only. Now, however, it was different. She pictured to herself Martin Rutland as she had known him years ago. The last time they had been together he had played for her upon his violin. Then came the terrible blow, and she had not heard one word from him since. Could it be possible, she asked herself, that this was he? Had he fled away into the wilderness, and lived ever since among the Indians, caring for this orphan girl? She longed to ask more questions, but could not trust herself to do so just now. But she was determined to find out the whole truth, and Nance was the one who could help her. And suppose it really was Martin! Her heart beat wildly as she thought of it, and a sudden weakness came upon her. Had the people at the mission station down river been able at this moment to look upon Nurse Marion, who always was so calm and self-possessed, they would have been greatly surprised. But Nance and Quabee saw nothing unusual, so delighted were they in having this wonderful white woman near them.

"Would you like to come with me to the hospital?" the nurse at length asked.

"Oh, may I?" Nance replied. "It would be so nice."

"We will go at once, then. Perhaps you would like to help me to fix up my room."

The look in Nance's eyes told their own story of joy, as she dropped her paddle into the water, swung the canoe about, and headed it for the opposite shore.

CHAPTER XXIV

WITHIN THE LITTLE ROOM

Nance's eyes were big with wonder as she walked by Nurse Marion's side from the shore of the lake up to the hospital. They did not go by way of the river, but landed near the steamer, and thus passed through the busiest part of the town. Quabee kept close behind Nance, and seemed to pay no attention to the curious glances which were cast upon her.

Never before had Nance been brought into contact with so many people. When the stampede had taken place, and the prospectors and miners passed into the Quaska region, she had been

astonished at the number of men she saw. But this crowd around her now was most bewildering. The natural timidity which she possessed with the creatures of the wild came upon her. She moved closer to the nurse, and the latter, noting that she was trembling with apprehension, placed her right arm caressingly around her.

"There is nothing to fear, Nance," she soothed, speaking the maiden's name for the first time. "The men know who I am, and, see, some of them are lifting their hats. Though they are rough at times outwardly, they always respect a nurse from our mission."

And not only did some of the men know Nurse Marion, but those who had come on the first steamer recognised Nance. They knew that it was the first time she had been over to the town, and they now showed their appreciation of her courage in defeating The Twins by lifting their hats to her as well as to the nurse. They were not slow to see the difference between the women who had entered the country merely for evil gain, and the one who had come to care for the miners. For the former they had uncouth remarks and jests, but for the latter only the highest regard.

Nance was greatly relieved when at last the hospital was reached. The large room, which was to be used for patients, was all finished except the fitting up of the cots. The place was fresh and new, just as the workmen had left it. Everything was rough, from the walls and the roof to the floor of whip-sawn planks, and the rude standees where the patients would be placed. Several large well-filled canvas sacks were lying upon the floor, which Nance eyed curiously.

"They are all filled with bedding, and things to brighten up the room," the nurse explained. "We had to work almost night and day to get things ready to catch the *Northern Light*. We had such a short time in which to do it after we received Mr. Russell's letter calling for a nurse."

"It is too bad that Dick isn't here now," Nance replied. "He didn't know that you were coming to-day, or I am sure he would not have gone up river."

"Who is Dick?" the nurse asked. "I never heard of him before."

"Why, the missionary, of course. The men all call him Dick here, and he told me to do the same."

"Oh, I see," Nurse Marion mused. She nevertheless looked keenly into the face of the young woman before her, but she saw only the perfect innocence of a child in her clear blue eyes.

After a while they passed into the room where the nurse was to live. This was a bright cosy place, and Nance was delighted as she looked eagerly around.

"And this will be your home!" she exclaimed. "How nice it will be!"

"Yes, when it is fitted up," was the reply. "You will help me, will you not? I have unpacked some of my things, but there is much to do yet."

Nance was greatly pleased to be of any assistance, so, directed by the nurse, she at once set to work, while Quabee, squatted upon the floor, watched with great interest all that was going on around her.

Nurse Marion was pleased and also surprised as she observed the deft way in which Nance busied herself about the room. She did everything so quietly, and yet speedily. At times the nurse found herself neglecting her own work and watching the movements of the girl in whom she was becoming so much interested. Where did she learn all these things? she asked herself. Her foster-father must surely be a most remarkable man. She thought, too, of his name, and wondered how she was going to find out more about him, and whether he was the same man she had known years before.

An idea came suddenly into her mind as she knelt by the side of a small bag she was unpacking. She hesitated at first, but at length she drew forth a package, carefully tied with a faded blue ribbon. She held it in her hand for a while before opening it. How well she remembered the sad day after her illness when, with trembling hands, she had tied up that little package. She had never opened it since, although she had carried it with her wherever she went. Slowly now her fingers loosened the knotted ribbon, and smoothed out the paper wrapping. Nance saw what she was doing, and with the impetuosity of a child knelt by her side.

"What are they?" she asked, observing several pieces of cardboard.

Nurse Marion lifted up the one on top, and turned it over.

"Why, it's the picture of a man!" Nance cried. "He is young, too, and so good looking. Doesn't he wear a funny collar? Is he your brother?"

"No, no, not my brother, Nance. He is some one I knew long ago, but I haven't seen him for years."

She then picked up another photograph, showing the same young man clad in his robes of office. It was a good likeness, and the nurse caught her breath as she looked upon it. How often in the happy days of old she had held that picture before her and studied the fine face, the clear eyes, and the dark hair brushed back carelessly from the brow. How full was her young life then, he was her hero, and the future was very bright.

"What a funny dress!" Nance exclaimed. "I never knew that men wore such things."

"He was a clergyman when I knew him," the nurse replied, "and during service he always wore his robes, which you see here."

"Do all wear them?"

"No, not all."

"Does Dick?"

"Yes, I suppose so when he holds service. All the clergymen of the Church to which I belong do."

Nurse Marion's little ruse had failed. She thought that perhaps Nance might recognise the photographs of her foster-father. But not a sign of recognition did she give, so the nurse slowly and thoughtfully folded up the pictures, tied once more the ribbon around them, and placed them back in the bag.

In her own mind Nurse Marion held one clear vision of the Martin Rutland she had known. To her he had not changed in the least, and she could not dream of him as a long-bearded man, hair streaked with grey, and hands rough and toil-worn. When, therefore, Nance did not recognise him in the photographs the nurse began to think that he could not be the same man to whom she had once given her heart and hand. And yet she was not satisfied. The idea which had taken possession of her haunted her still, and while her hands were busy her mind kept constantly dwelling upon the name. The sight of the photographs had brought back memories which she could not stifle, try as she might. She talked with Nance, and seemed to be in the gayest of moods as they fitted up the room, using every effort to overcome its bareness with the few meagre things she had brought with her. When they were at last through they both sat down upon the little cot, which was to be the nurse's bed.

"This certainly does look more homelike now," the nurse declared, looking approvingly around the room. "You have been such a help to me, as well as company. I do not like to work alone."

"It is so nice here," Nance replied. "May I come often? You do not know what it means to have a white woman to talk to."

"But it seems to me that you have learned many things here in the wilderness, Nance. Unless you had told me I could not believe that you had never been with a white woman before. I suppose it was your father who taught you so much."

"Yes, daddy has been so good, and he knows most everything. Besides, I learned so much from the books I read, and how white women lived and talked. But there is one person who has been of such great help to me."

"What, some one living here?" the nurse asked.

"Oh, no. I have never seen her, but I have heard much about her."

"From whom?"

"From daddy. When I was quite young he told me many things about her, and I have always kept her in my mind, and tried to be just like her."

"Indeed! Tell me more, please," and the nurse settled herself in a more comfortable position.

"Well, when I was very small daddy used to tell me fairy tales, which were so interesting. The one I liked best of all was about the man who had a beautiful garden. There were all kinds of flowers, and he had to care for them. Then one day he hurt one of the flowers, and he was not allowed to look after the garden any longer. He went away and wandered about from place to place for years. At last he went into the wilderness, and there he found a little flower, which he took with him, and they lived together for a long time. The name of that little flower was Heart's Ease. Don't you think it is a pretty story?"

"And was Heart's Ease the name of the woman you had in your mind all of these years?" and the nurse looked questioningly into the face of the young story teller.

"Oh, no. There was another. Daddy told me about one of the flowers in the garden which felt so badly at what the gardener did. He said it was the most beautiful flower of all. Then when I got older he told me that this flower was a woman, very lovely, with wonderful eyes, and that she could sing so beautifully."

"Oh!" This involuntary exclamation came from Nurse Marion's lips as she sat erect upon the cot. Her form trembled, and her face was white. She now began to read this story in its true light, and what was merely a fairy tale to Nance, to her was terribly real.

"Yes," Nance continued, "the flower was a woman, and daddy told me so much about her that I wanted to be like her. I would sit hour after hour thinking about her, and wondering how she looked and talked. She seemed very real to me. Isn't it funny," and Nance turned toward the nurse, "that when I look at you and listen to you I imagine that you are my Beryl?"

"Beryl!" The word came from the nurse's lips like a startled cry. She grasped Nance's arm, and looked into her eyes. "Did you say the woman's name was Beryl?"

"Yes, that was her name. But are you sick?" she asked, noting the other's white face and excited manner.

"No, no, I am all right now," and the nurse gave a little hollow laugh. "I was so much interested in your story that I forgot myself for the moment."

All doubt was now removed from Nurse Marion's mind as to the identity of Nance's foster-father. It could be no one else, she felt sure of that. She rose to her feet and looked out of the little window at the east side of the house, but saw nothing beyond. Her brain was throbbing, and her hands were firmly clenched. What was she to do? she asked herself. Would it be possible for her to remain in this place, so near to the man, the history of whose life she so well knew, and who had almost broken her heart? Would it not be better for her to go back on the *Northern Light*, and send some one else in her place? But how could she explain such a move on her part to the people at the mission station down river? Would it not appear cowardly as well? No, she must stay and face whatever might come.

This decision once reached a sense of peace stole into her heart. Strive as she might she could not banish the desire to see Martin Rutland once more. But she did not wish to see him face to face and thus have him recognise her. No, that would never do, the gulf was too deep and wide between them ever to be bridged again. If she could see him and not be known herself that would be a degree of satisfaction. She longed to know if he had changed much, and how the years of his remorse had dealt with him.

An exclamation of surprise startled her and caused her to turn quickly around. There in the doorway stood the missionary with an expression of intense wonder stamped upon his face. His eyes swept the room in one swift comprehensive glance, resting upon Quabee, Nance, and, last of all, the woman standing before the window.

"Why, Nurse Marion," he began, as soon as he had somewhat recovered from his astonishment, "I had no idea that you were here. It is too bad that I happened to be away when the steamer arrived. I am so sorry that I was not on hand to welcome you. But if it is not too late, allow me to do so now," and stepping across the room he held out his hand.

"Oh, don't worry, Mr. Russell," the nurse laughingly replied. "I have been well looked after, and have been having such an interesting time."

"I am glad of that," and Dick turned and looked fondly upon Nance, whose face was now beaming with joy. "I might have known that everything would be all right."

Nurse Marion saw the look of complete understanding which passed between the two, and she needed no words to explain its significance.

"You have made a very cosy room for me here, Mr. Russell," she remarked, "and I wish to thank you for what you have done. I am sure that I shall be comfortable."

"It is not so bad, considering what has been done," and Dick glanced approvingly around. "My, I am glad that you are here. A poor chap got badly hurt out at the diggings, and several miners are bringing him in over the trail. I hurried on ahead to see if I couldn't fit up a place in here to keep him."

Nurse Marion was all alert now. "We can fix up a cot at once," she replied. "If you will open the bales, Nance will help me to get ready, won't you?" and she turned to the interested girl at her side.

"Oh, may I?" Nance responded, eager to be of any service to this woman, who seemed such a wonderful person in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RIVER FLOWS BETWEEN

"Where have you been, Nance? I was getting uneasy about you."

Martin was standing in the door as Nance approached. He noted the expression of happiness upon her face and the buoyancy of her step.

"Oh, daddy, I have had such a great time!" was the reply. "I have been over to the hospital."

"To the hospital! What in the world took you there?"

"It was Nurse Marion. I have met her, and she is wonderful."

At these words Martin started, and glanced across the river to the log building perched upon the opposite bank. He then turned to Nance.

"Come, little one; supper is ready. I have been waiting for you for some time."

Nance was too greatly excited to eat much. Seldom had Martin seen her so animated, as she described in detail her afternoon's experience.

"I wish you could see her, daddy," and Nance's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm as she turned

them upon Martin's face. "You really must. Won't you take me over this evening? I know she would like to see you. She asked me many things about you."

"She did?" Martin questioned with averted face.

"Yes, several times, and I told her how you taught me to play the violin, to read, and, in fact, all I know is due to you. She was greatly interested, and said that you must be a wonderful man."

"Did she ask you what my name was?"

"Oh, yes. I told her, too, that you were not my real father, but that you had brought me here when I was a very little child."

"What did she say?"

"She seemed surprised, and asked if I didn't find the life here very lonely."

"Go on," was Martin's only comment as Nance paused.

"It was so nice in her room, and she let me help her fix it up. Daddy, I wonder if all white women —I mean good ones—are like Nurse Marion."

"Why do you ask, Nance?"

"I hardly know how to explain," the girl replied, looking thoughtfully before her. "Nurse Marion is very beautiful, but there is something about her I cannot understand. Her eyes are wonderful. They seem to be always seeing things far away. Even when she was smiling there was a sad expression in her eyes. Do you know, daddy, I believe that she has had some great trouble in her life."

"What makes you think so, Nance?"

"It was the way she stood at times, and looked just at nothing. She wondered how I knew so many things, having lived all my life in the wilderness. I told her that you taught me, and that I got help from the books I read. I told her, too, about Beryl, and——"

"You did!" Martin exclaimed. "What did she say?"

"She listened until I was through, and then she went and looked out of the window for some time."

"Oh!"

"Yes, it seemed to make her sad. But that wasn't all. When we were unpacking her things she came to a small package, wrapped in paper, and tied with a piece of faded blue ribbon. She opened it and showed me two pictures of a clergyman, so she said."

"What! But go on, Nance. Don't stop."

"In one picture the man was dressed in a funny way, 'in his robes of office,' so Nurse Marion said. I thought he must be her brother, but she told me that he was a man she knew years ago. He was young, fine-looking, and——"

"You wash up the dishes, Nance," Martin interrupted. "I am going outside for a while."

With that he strode to the door, leaving Nance sitting at the table, thinking over what she had seen and heard, and dreaming, of the time when she would be a nurse like the woman over the river. She noticed nothing strange about her father's sudden departure. If she had thought of it at all she would have attributed it to a lack of interest in what she had been talking about.

She had barely got the dishes washed and put away, when Martin returned, bringing with him Tom and Dad Seddon. Hearty were the greetings which fell from the lips of the two prospectors when their eyes rested upon Nance.

"We couldn't stay away any longer," Tom remarked, as he gave the young woman's hand a hearty shake. "We've been jist dyin' to see ye. Dad's got several chess problems up his sleeve all ready to hand out."

"That's good," Nance laughingly replied. "I haven't had a game for some time. Would you like to have one now?"

"Sure thing; that's if you have time."

Soon the board was spread out, the chessmen arranged, and the two players faced each other, while Martin and Tom sat near at hand smoking and watching the game.

"How did you happen to come in to-day?" Nance asked, turning to Tom, as she waited for Dad to make a move.

"We brought in Tim Cyr, who got knocked out at the diggin's, an' a mighty surprise was waitin' fer us when we got to town, I can tell ye that."

"Oh, I know," Nance eagerly replied. "You found Nurse Marion there, didn't you? Isn't she lovely?"

"Indeed she is, Miss. She's all gold, if I don't mistake. Ye should have seen the way she looked after Tim an' helped the doctor. Why, I never saw anything like it."

"And didn't she have things fixed up in great shape," Dad remarked, taking his eyes for the first time from off the game.

"Oh, I guess somebody helped her with that," Tom chuckled. "She told me all about it."

"Did she?" and the look on Nance's face showed her delight. "It was so nice to be there. She is the first white woman I ever met, and I hope to see her often."

"Ye won't find all like her, remember, Miss," and Tom's voice had a note of pathos in it. "She is one in a thousand. Not many would be willin' to come in here to help us poor critters. Now, them other women, they're here fer no good, an' they're bound to cause a lot of trouble. Something has got to be done, an' I believe that the parson'll take a hand in the matter to save the boys. Before the women came there was the whiskey. Now, with both women an' whiskey things are bound to be pretty lively. The saloon is goin' full blast, an' the parson has been worryin' a good deal. It was in kernection with this matter that he visited us at the diggin's to-day. He outlined his plan, an', by jiminey! we're goin' to help him."

"Sure thing," Dad assented, as he swung up his queen, in an effort to corner Nance's king. "We'll stand by the parson. Check!"

"Mate!" Nance triumphantly cried, bringing up a knight, and completely cornering Dad's king.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" the prospector exclaimed, as he studied the clever trap into which his opponent had led him. "I didn't see what you were up to till the last. My! that was well done, an' you certainly do deserve the game," and he lifted his eyes, filled with admiration, to the flushed face of his fair young woman, who had outwitted him so cleverly.

"I hope the parson'll do as well at his game over yon," Tom quietly remarked. "I'm afraid there'll be many checks before it's mate in his case. But he's got good grit, an' that's a great thing in his favour. He's made a fair start so fer in gittin' the hospital built, an' havin' a nurse brought in. As soon as the boys see that he goes in fer practical religion, an' if they've eyes at all they must surely see it by now, then they'll be with him. I think that next Sunday 'ill tell the tale."

"What's going to happen next Sunday?" Martin quietly asked.

"Didn't I tell ye? No? Well, that's queer," and Tom ran the fingers of his right hand through his long hair. "To think that we fergot to mention sich an important piece of news, an' it was what took the parson all the way out to the diggin's fer, too."

"Quit yer croaking, Tom, and come to the point," Dad growled. "If you don't I'll have to."

"Feelin' sore over yer lickin', are ye?" Tom bantered. "Well, the parson has been doin' some serious thinkin' of late, an' so he wanted our advice. He knew that the miners at Quaska an' on the creeks need some attraction to keep them away from the saloon, an' to give 'em 'an' uplift,' as he calls it. He, therefore, suggested that we hold a bang-up service next Sunday night in the hospital. We agreed that it was a fine idea, an' promised that we'd do all we could to round up the boys. I don't think there will be any trouble in gittin' 'em, especially if there's plenty of music an' singin'. With two fiddles a-playin' the boys 'ill do the rest."

This mention of the violins was a little ruse on Tom's part in order to see how Martin would take it. But the latter made no comment. He sat very still, looking straight before him, and Tom alone noted the expression upon his face, from which he surmised that the quiet man was fighting a fierce, stubborn battle.

"Ye'll play, lassie, won't ye?" Tom asked, turning to Nance. "I know that the boys would like it great, an' the parson—well, he'll about stand on his head."

"I should dearly love to play," Nance laughingly replied, "that is, if daddy will let me. But perhaps I might break down in the presence of so many men. I am sure to get nervous, and will hardly know what I am doing."

"Don't let that trouble ye, Miss," Tom hastened to reply. "Ye have the nurse with ye. Maybe she sings, an' if she does so much the better. Then, if everything goes off well at the first service, the boys 'ill be sure to flock back ag'in, an' the saloon will be a heavy loser."

Martin sat for a long time outside the door of his house after the two prospectors had gone home. Nance, tired out, was asleep. Sounds from the mining camp fell upon his ears. He could hear the loud talking and laughing, mingled occasionally with the voices of women. Lights twinkled here and there throughout the town, while the saloon down by the lake was ablaze with numerous candles. A hilarious time was being held there, he well knew. He compared the scene now with what it was before the miners came. Then peace and quiet dwelt over the entire place instead of the discords which were making the night hideous.

One small light, trailing out into the darkness, held Martin's attention. It came from the hospital, and he thought of the woman there who was keeping watch over the patient. This was her first night at Quaska, and he realised how lonely she must be. He had no doubt now that it was Beryl. The description which Nance had given, and what she had told him, made him certain that it could be no one else. He marvelled how strangely it had come to pass that she of all women

should come to Quaska. He thought, too, how differently their lives would have been but for his own terrible fall. No doubt they would be living in their own happy home, respected by all. But oh, how opposite the reality. There was Beryl, lonely in that building over yonder, and he himself a dejected outcast, with the future holding not a ray of hope, and the past only gall and wormwood. What would Beryl think and do, he wondered, if she knew that he was so near, with only the river flowing between? But she must never know, so he told himself. Then a great longing came upon him to see her, to look upon her face once more. It would be so easy, he mused, to slip over the river, and peer in through the window from which the light was streaming. He banished this idea, however, as unmanly, and so contented himself with thinking about Beryl as he knew her in the sweet old days before they were separated.

And so on this night while Martin sat and dreamed, a lonely, tear-stained-faced woman stood at the little window of her room and gazed out into the night, thinking of him, who was so near, and yet so far away. And between these two flowed the silent river, dark and swift on its way to the deep lake below.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FACE AT THE DOOR

Next morning Nance was up earlier than usual. Her step was light as she moved about the room preparing breakfast. She was happier than she had been for many a day, for the meeting with Nurse Marion had a wonderful effect upon her young life. She was thinking now of everything the nurse had said. She wanted to be like her, and then she was sure that Dick would not be ashamed of her. She thought, too, of the hospital, and how delightful it would be to assist with the patients. She was very anxious to be over there, for she felt certain that the nurse would need her.

The idea of a service on Sunday night interested her very much. She had some doubt about her ability to play. She felt sure that she would be nervous, and perhaps break down. But then she knew that Dick and the nurse would help her out, so everything would be all right. She wondered if her father would go over to the service. If so, and he consented to play, it would make it so much easier for her.

While these thoughts were running through Nance's mind Martin drew near. He had taken his early morning walk as usual, after having made on the fire and called Nance. He heard her humming a tune before he reached the door, and he was not slow in detecting the note of happiness which could only come from a heart overflowing with peace and joy. He paused upon the threshold to look upon her. Though always fair and graceful to his eyes she seemed to excel in loveliness as she stood before him this morning.

Nance greeted him with a bright smile as he entered the room.

"Breakfast is all ready, daddy. You must be hungry."

"Indeed I am," was the reply. "My walk has sharpened my appetite."

Together over the meal the two discussed the affairs at the mining town. The scraps of news they had heard were of much interest. But Nance's mind was upon Nurse Marion, and about her she talked. She told her father over again what had happened at the hospital on the previous day. Martin did not attempt to restrain her. In fact, he did not wish to do so now. He listened attentively to every word she uttered, and at times found himself leaning eagerly forward that he might not miss anything.

"And only think, daddy!" she cried, "Nurse Marion wants me to help her whenever I can. She said she was so pleased to have me, and I told her that I would go if you would let me. And you will, daddy, won't you?"

"Yes, little one, if it will make you happy. I can trust you with—with Nurse Marion."

"But I will look after our house, daddy, just the same. I will cook, wash, and do all the house work. I shall get up very, very early, and attend to it. Then I can spend the afternoons at the hospital, and learn so many things from Nurse Marion. I long more and more to be a nurse, and I know that she will teach me. Won't it be strange, daddy, to see the hospital full of miners next Sunday?"

"It certainly will, Nance. But perhaps not many of them will be there."

"You will go, daddy, will you not?" Nance asked. "I don't see how I can play alone. If you are there I shall not mind it one bit."

"Nance?" and Martin looked straight into the maiden's eyes as he uttered her name.

"Yes, daddy."

"I want you to promise me two things."

"Yes, daddy."

"You are never again to ask me to go to any service across the river, neither are you to inquire as to the reason why I wish you to promise me this."

"Yes, daddy, I promise," was the faltering response.

"That's good. Now don't forget, little one."

Martin's mind was now doubly agitated. He became exceedingly restless, and spent most of his time out on the hills. Here, and alone, he could brood over the strange events which had come so recently into his life. Besides the deep stirring of his heart, owing to Beryl's arrival, he was face to face with the question of the service to be held at the hospital Sunday night. His thoughts went back to the days when he would have looked forward with joy for the time to arrive when he could take part in the beautiful service of the Church to which he had once belonged. But now an outcast, not only by his bishop, but also by his own conscience, the punishment was almost more than he could endure. How truly did he understand the words of the aged bishop. He had laughed scornfully at them then, little realising how terribly true they were, and how the day would come when their fulfilment would give him such intense mental agony.

Often he would sit under the shade of some tree, and look down over the lake, especially upon the hospital, which appeared like a speck in the distance. He would picture Beryl—not Nurse Marion to him—moving about the building, and attending to the wants of the patient. He knew that Nance was there most of the day, talking with Beryl, and looking into her face. The latter was constantly before him, not as a nurse, with hair streaked with grey, but as he had seen her seated at the piano on that Christmas eve as he watched her through the window of her old home. All the love which he then had for this beautiful woman came back upon him with greater intensity now because of the smouldering fire of long years, and the thought that she could never be his, nor could he speak to her, nor listen to her voice.

Every night Martin would come back home with face drawn and haggard, and an absent, far-away look in his eyes. Nance became much worried about him, and confided her trouble to Dick.

"Perhaps it is the arrival of the miners that is affecting him," the latter suggested.

"It may be that," Nance mused. "Still I cannot understand him. He is away from home most of the day, and when he comes back he looks so strange. I asked him to go to service Sunday night and play with me."

"Will he?" Dick eagerly inquired. "That would be such a help."

"No, he will not go, and he made me promise that I would never ask him again."

"Why? I wonder."

"He made me promise further that I would never ask him to tell the reason why he would not go."

"Oh!"

Dick was as much puzzled as Nance over Martin's strange behaviour, and the next day he mentioned the matter to Tom. It was Sunday afternoon, and the prospector had come into town to be early for the service, and to assist in any way he could with the preparations.

"So he refused to come an' play, did he?" Tom questioned.

"Refused point-blank, so Nance said, and he made her promise that she would never again ask him to go to service, nor the reason why he would not do so. Now, what can you make out of that?"

"He's a reason, no doubt," was the reply.

"Don't you remember, Tom," Dick continued, "how strangely he acted when we first came to his house last spring?"

"I haven't fergotten, pard. He certainly did act queer. It was a problem to me."

Tom didn't say that it was a problem no longer. He understood now very well why Martin was unwilling to attend the service, and accordingly had demanded those promises from Nance. But nothing would induce him to divulge any of the knowledge of Martin's past life which he himself had acquired. "What people don't know about sich things," he had said to himself, "won't do any harm, an' it might make matters very uncomfortable fer Martin an' the lassie."

Martin was unusually quiet all day Sunday. He did not go out to the hills, but sat under the shade of a large tree near the house, reading, or pretending to do so. Nance was with him most of the day reading a book Nurse Marion had let her have. It was entitled "In the Service of the King," and dealt with the work of trained nurses in all lands. Several chapters told of the heroic services of devoted women in the mission fields. Nance was thrilled and delighted with the book. At times she would call her father's attention to some striking passage, and read it to him.

As the afternoon waned Nance left home, for Nurse Marion had invited her to tea in her little room.

"You do not mind my leaving you, daddy?" she asked, putting her arms around his neck, and giving him an affectionate kiss.

"I am always pleased to see you happy, little one," Martin replied with a smile.

But as he watched her as she moved lightly down to the canoe, carrying her violin with her, a great loneliness swept over him. He knew that in reality Nance's heart was not with him, but over the river with Dick and the nurse. The thought that she could go to the service with such a free-from-care spirit pressed heavily upon his soul. He saw now that the time was not far off when she would be no longer with him to kiss him good-bye. A new life of freedom and service was opening up to her, while for him the future held only misery in store. The associations of the wilderness would attract Nance but a little longer, he could see that, and then he would be left alone.

Martin prepared his supper, but ate little, as he missed the familiar form at the head of the table. He soon pushed back his stool, rose and went to the door. The room appeared unbearably close to-night, and he needed the freshness of the open air. He sat outside, lighted his pipe, and smoked. His eyes were fixed constantly upon the hospital across the river. He knew that it would be late before the service began, for the miners would not gather until darkness had spread over the land. Thus hour after hour he remained there, and had Nance looked forth she might have seen his form appearing like a speck against the log building. But she was too much engaged with other things just then to think of the lone watcher on the opposite bank.

The sun swung down behind the tall mountain peaks, and twilight settled over the land. Then Martin rose, closed the door of his house, and walked rapidly toward the Indian village. Here he obtained Taku's canoe, and paddled slowly out upon the lake. Several times he passed by the mining town, and noted the stir about the door of the saloon. Near the hospital, some distance away, scarcely a person was to be seen. Was the service to be a failure after all? he asked himself. At length he saw a number of men sauntering toward the river, followed after a while by others. Thus he knew that the movement for the service had begun. He continued his paddling around, keeping at the same time a close watch upon the land until he felt sure that all who were going had entered the hospital. He then headed the canoe up the river, stopping at length at the very place where Nance had landed that afternoon.

Trees lining the bank draped the shore in deep shadows, and here Martin crouched, listening with straining ears for whatever sounds might come from the building above. He had not long to wait before he heard the sweet strains of Nance's violin sounding forth upon the still night air. It was the familiar tune of a well-known hymn, and soon he heard numerous voices lifted up with one accord.

When the singing ceased a deep silence ensued. Then some one began to speak, and Martin knew that the missionary had begun the service. Occasionally a few familiar words reached him, and he was thus enabled to follow what was being said without much difficulty.

As he remained crouching there amid the deepening darkness, he pictured to himself what was taking place within the hospital. He could see the miners seated around the room on rough benches, and the missionary standing before them reading the service. Nance, no doubt, was near, holding her violin in her hands, waiting for the next hymn. But where was Beryl? he wondered. Was she sitting near Nance? The memory of the many times he had seen her seated at the organ in the church in his first and only parish came upon him now with a sudden stabbing intensity. He recalled, especially, one bright, beautiful July day. The windows of the church were open. Bees hummed among the flowers outside, birds chirped and sang, while the perfume of fragrant fields was wafted into the building. There were sweet flowers, he remembered, upon the Communion Table, and on the organ. Beryl, all in white, was sitting in her accustomed place, and during the service he stole an occasional glance in her direction. He noted the happiness upon her face, and the expression of love in her eyes as she played. How full of peace and joy was his heart that day. He had been lifted up to the seventh heaven of ecstasy. And yet from that state of bliss he had fallen, and had plunged into the deep abyss of hell and despair. He thought of the angels who had been driven headlong out of heaven, and of the first parents thrust out from the Garden of Eden. To have known the joy and peace of walking with the Master made the sting of banishment all the more terribly poignant.

The sound of the violin again striking up roused Martin from his reverie. The tune as before was familiar, and he hummed it to himself. But this time there was no chorus of discordant voices. One alone was singing, and the crouching man started, and then sprang to his feet as the sound reached his ears. It was a woman's voice, and he at once recognised it as Beryl's.

> "There were ninety and nine that safely lay
> In the shelter of the fold;
> But one was out on the hills away,
> Far off from the gates of gold,
> Away on the mountains wild and bare,
> Away from the tender Shepherd's care."

Martin stood there beneath the trees, every nerve alert, and his ears strained so as not to miss one note of that voice which had been silent to him for years. Suddenly an over-mastering impulse seized him to behold once again the face of the singer. He accordingly moved up the hill like a man impelled forward by some unseen power. Reaching the corner of the building, he paused just for an instant, and then stepped to the door, which was wide open, and looked in. His eyes roamed for an instant around the room. He saw as in a dream the miners seated there, almost breathless, with their faces turned in one direction. Then his eyes rested upon Beryl! As

he saw her he clutched the side of the door for support, while his face went deathly white. Yes, it was she, there was no mistake, the same form, the same face, though more worn than when last he beheld it, and the same sweet voice, but filled with a vibrant note of sadness.

"And all through the mountains thunder riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a cry to the gates of Heaven,
'Rejoice, I have found my sheep!'
And the angels, echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.'"

When the last note had rippled forth, a silence which could be felt pervaded the room. Then a sound, half sob and half wail of despair, caused the miners to look hurriedly around. Those nearest the door caught a fleeting glimpse of a face white and haggard, which disappeared instantly into the night.

Later, when Nance walked slowly homeward, with Dick by her side, Martin was sitting before the door of his house awaiting her return.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE INNER IMPULSE

The success of the service showed the necessity of a church building. There might come a time when the hospital could not be used, owing to the number of patients. Dick had often revolved this idea in his mind, and he believed that the time had now arrived for definite action. But it was not his intention to have a building which would be closed six days in the week and open only on Sunday for service. No, it was to be used every day, and during the evenings as well. It was to be a place where the evil influence of the saloon and the dance-hall could be counteracted. He sadly noted how soon the latter had been erected after the arrival of the women, and how well it was patronised. The church building must be cosy, and serve as a place where the miners could meet in genial intercourse, play games, smoke, and relate their experiences in the northland. It was to be a reading-room as well, for he knew that by the time the building was ready he would be able to have on hand a liberal supply of magazines from the mission station down river. They would be somewhat old, to be sure, but that would make little difference, as the miners were hungry for reading matter of any kind.

When Dick unfolded his plan to Tom and Dad they became at once very enthusiastic, and promised to do all in their power to assist. They in turn mentioned the idea to a number of miners, but with little success. A few agreed to help, but most of them were indifferent. This did not discourage the missionary, however, and his little staff of workers. They very well knew that a church building would not appeal to the miners half as much as a hospital. But if it could be built it would prove as great if not a greater benefit in the end. It was Nurse Marion's interest and encouragement which did so much to advance the scheme. Often in the evening the faithful band would gather at the hospital to talk over the whole matter and discuss plans for the building. Nance could not always be present, so the nurse would talk it all over with her when they were alone during the afternoons. Nance was thus enabled to carry the news to Martin, who listened with great interest to the new project which was now on foot.

And thus once again Dick plunged into the forest, axe in hand, to prepare the logs for the little church. Tom assisted him for a whole week, while Dad looked after the mines. Summer was passing all too rapidly, and the days were perceptibly shortening. It was a great sacrifice on Tom's part to leave the diggings just at this season. But he could not see the missionary stuck. "It may be," he quietly remarked to Dad, "that helpin' to build the church 'ill do me more good in the end than diggin' gold. What we dig out yon, Dad, 'ill perish, but in hewin' these sticks I'm feelin' that I'm layin' treasures up yon in the world to come."

Besides giving of their time and labour Tom and Dad contributed as much as they were able of their gold. In this way several idle men were hired to work upon the building. Others gave sparingly, and thus the undertaking steadily though slowly advanced. But wages were high, and at last the day came when Dick found himself alone, and with no gold to employ any one to assist him. It was impossible for his two faithful friends to be with him now. A long hard winter lay ahead, and as they had recently got their mine in good working order, it was necessary for them to keep at it almost day and night, if they were to take out enough gold to last them until spring.

The thought of winter had given Dick considerable worry ever since the arrival of the steamer. Many people had flocked into the region, and others would follow later, who had little money, and who had staked claims on creeks tributary to the Quaska, where there was very little gold. What they would do when the cold weather set in was a problem which he had discussed not only with Tom and Dad, but with Martin and Nance as well. Game was becoming scarce in the vicinity of Quaska, as the moose and caribou were retreating farther into the hills from the presence of the white men.

Dick was also troubled about the church, as he feared that he would not have it finished before

winter. He was doing all he possibly could, and he worked hard every day. It was always a comfort for him to slip over in the evening to see Nance. Her presence cheered him when most depressed. She looked upon the bright side, and he always went back to his task the next morning with renewed courage.

Martin was often a silent listener as Dick talked about the church, and the fear which was tugging at his heart lest it would not be completed in time to be used that season.

"There are men on the creeks," the missionary explained one evening, "who would be glad of a job if I only had some money to give them." He was sitting gazing absently into the fire as he spoke, with Nance and Martin seated near. "They have had bad luck, and are about stranded. The stores will not trust them, so I understand, and what will become of them is hard to tell. It is a pity that they didn't go out on the last steamer. They were urged to do so, but they were determined to stay to make good."

"Won't the rest of the miners help them?" Nance asked. "The ones who have done well will surely not allow them to starve."

"Oh, no. I believe that they will share with them, or at least some will. But many of the men who are hard up will not ask for help. They will live in their lonely shacks far up on the creeks. They will roam the forest for game, and subsist on half a meal a day. They will brood and worry all through the winter, and when the long nights come their position will be about unbearable. I have heard of such cases before. Some will starve to death, while others will go out of their minds. I fear that we shall have many sad cases on our hands before spring."

"Are the stores well supplied with provisions?" Martin asked. "I have never been over to find out."

"Yes, I believe there is plenty to last all through the winter if it could be equally distributed among the miners. But those who are able to buy will get most of it, while others will get very little."

"Will the prices go up later, do you think?" Martin queried.

"I am sure they will. The storekeepers will wait until navigation closes, and then they will jump the prices. They always do that, so I understand. I call it a mean business."

Four days after this conversation Martin returned from a trip up the creeks. Nance, who was preparing supper as he entered the house, noted the buoyancy of his step, and the new expression which shone in his eyes. He appeared to her like a man who had been groping for something for a long time and at last had found it. A smile even spread over his face as Nance greeted him with cheerful words of welcome.

"My, that supper smells good!" he exclaimed, as he laid his rifle aside. "I am almost starved."

"Have you travelled far to-day, daddy?"

"Yes. I have been over several of the creeks. I wanted to find out how much Dick knows about the condition of the miners out there."

"And did you?"

"Partly. I've not been over all the creeks yet, but so far I have learned that he is right. There will certainly be much suffering this winter."

Martin said nothing more about his visit to the creeks, but that evening, much to Nance's surprise, he brought forth his violin, and asked her to accompany him. It was the first time that he had done such a thing since the arrival of the miners.

"What shall we play, daddy?" Nance queried as she tuned up her violin.

"Something sweet to-night, little one. Anything that strikes the fancy."

He then began to play the air of "Ninety and Nine." "Sing it, Nance," he commanded. "Do you know the words?"

"I have them here in this book which Nurse Marion let me have," was the reply. "But, oh, I wish you could have heard her sing it last Sunday at service. It was wonderful, and the men were so still when she got through, except one person near the door."

"And what did he do?" Martin inquired.

"He made a strange noise, something between a sob and a cry."

"Did any one know who it was?"

"No. We were talking about it afterwards, and Tom said that the words of the hymn must have struck some poor chap pretty hard to make him cry out like that."

Martin made no reply, but played the tune over softly, while Nance, with the book open before her, sang the words in a clear, sweet voice.

The former sat for a while when the hymn was ended, with the violin resting upon his knees.

"I can't play any more to-night, Nance," he at length remarked. "Put this away, please," and he

handed the instrument to her.

That night after Nance had gone to bed Martin sat for a long time before the dying coals of the fire. He held in his hand a sheet of note paper, on which he had traced with a lead pencil the Quaska River and the various creeks running into it. On these latter he had made certain marks, which indicated where the cabins of the miners were situated. Several were close together, but most of them were far apart. On a number of the creeks he had made no marks at all. "I must visit them as soon as I can," he mused. "I learned to-day that one man is a long way off, living in a cabin all by himself, without even a dog for a companion."

It was after midnight when Martin at length folded, up the paper, put it into his pocket, and rose to his feet. He listened attentively, until satisfied from her regular breathing that Nance was asleep. Then taking the candle in his hand, he went at once to the strong-room at the back of the house. Unbarring the door, he opened it, entered, and closed it carefully behind him. Crossing to the middle of the room, he lifted the trap-door and, holding the light in his left hand, peered down upon the treasure which he had not looked upon for years. It was all there just as he had left it, with not a gleaming grain molested. Near by was a tin can which he had used in bringing the gold from up river. Seizing this, he placed it near the hole and, scooping up the gold with his hand, he soon had the can filled to the brim. This accomplished, he replaced the trap-door and, passing out of the room, shut to and barred the door as it was before.

Picking up a piece of paper lying on a shelf, he scrawled a few words with his lead pencil. Folding up the paper, he pressed it down on the inside of the can so that only a small portion was left in sight. Picking up the can, and blowing out the candle, he passed out of the house, shut the door, and hurried down to the shore, where his canoe was lying. It did not take him long to cross to the opposite bank, where he landed, as he did the previous Sunday night, just below the hospital.

Carrying the tin of gold in his hands, he moved cautiously up among the trees. The night was quite dark, but he was able to see the building rising up black before him. He did not stop now at the front of the hospital, but moved around to the side, where he knew there was a separate door leading into Beryl's room. His steps were more wary than ever now, for he was afraid lest the least noise should betray him.

Reaching at length the door, he placed the can upon the sill so that it could without any doubt be seen when Beryl opened the door in the morning. His errand completed, Martin breathed a sigh of relief as he stepped back among the trees. He did not leave at once, but stood there for some time, with eyes fixed upon the room in which he knew Beryl was sleeping. He looked toward the door. It was there where she passed in and out, and her feet had often touched that sill. He started suddenly forward several paces, and, stooping, he impulsively pressed his lips to the hard board sill. Then he sprang hurriedly back, surprised at his own action, and, delaying no longer, plunged among the trees, and hastened to the river.

After breakfast the next morning Martin again went into the strong-room and, opening the trap-door, picked up a number of fine nuggets, and placed them in his pocket. He then went back to the living-room and informed Nance that he was going over the river and might not be back for several hours. Nance was somewhat surprised at this, for Martin had always persistently refused to go with her to the town. She watched him as he paddled his canoe down the river, and then along the edge of the shore until he came to the steamboat landing, where he ran ashore. Beyond this she could not follow his movements. Her curiosity was now much aroused, which was by no means lessened when she saw him returning about two hours later with the canoe loaded with supplies from the store. She ran down to the shore to meet him, and was greatly excited when she saw the quantity of provisions he had on board.

"Why, daddy!" she exclaimed, "have you cleared the store all out?"

"Not at all," was the laughing reply. "I had no idea that the stores were so well stocked with provisions. They will hardly miss what I have brought away. They thought that I was a miner."

"But what are you going to do with it all, daddy? We couldn't use so much flour, rice, bacon, beans, tea, and sugar in two years."

"Couldn't we, dearie? Are you sure of that?" and Martin's eyes twinkled as he looked into Nance's puzzled face. "We'll store it away in the strong-room, and this winter you will see how we can use it. There will be five times as much before I am through, or else I am greatly mistaken. You need not mention to any one at the hospital what I am doing. It is just as well for people not to know too much, see?"

Nance helped her father to carry up the supplies and store them carefully away. She longed to know what he intended to do with such a quantity of provisions, but somehow she did not dare to question him any further.

Martin sat for a long time before the fire that night after Nance had gone to bed. He held a book in his hand, though he read but little. His thoughts were elsewhere, and an occasional sigh escaped his lips. At length he arose and crossed the room to his cot, and drew forth from beneath it a small box. This he opened and took out a little package, carefully wrapped in an old piece of faded brown paper. Carrying this back to the fire, he sat down. His hand trembled slightly as he undid the covering and looked upon the newspaper clipping which was exposed to view. Long years had passed since he had last read the story of his shame and disgrace. He had never desired to do so since Nance had come into his life. But now he wished to read that account once

again. With the new impulse that had come to him he believed that he could do so without any of the old feeling rising in his heart to torture him as formerly.

Carefully he read every word, and then laid the clipping upon the book lying on the table by his side, and gave himself up to thought. His whole past life rose before him with wonderful clearness. Nothing was omitted. He wished to view everything before shutting it out from his mind, as he believed, forever. A new man was rising within him, which was to cast off the old.

It was late when he rose from the chair, closed the book, placed it upon the shelf, and then threw himself upon his cot.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE KEEPSAKE

Every day Nurse Marion was kept busy at the hospital. She had three injured men to look after now instead of one, and from early morn until late at night she cared for her patients. She found Nance of great assistance, and looked forward to her arrival every afternoon. In fact, she was more drawn to this maiden of the wilderness than to any other woman she had met for years. She was charmed with her simplicity and naturalness of manner. There was nothing artificial about her. She had none of the languid veneer of many of the young women in towns and cities. She was so anxious to learn, and quick in acquiring knowledge, that the nurse was delighted. During the few weeks that they were together it was remarkable the progress Nance made in the ways of house-keeping, sewing, and cooking, as well as looking after the patients.

Beryl needed a companion upon whom she could depend. For years her life had been a lonely one, notwithstanding her constant activity. People loved her, and the miners down river almost worshipped her. For them there had always been a ready smile and a sympathetic word of cheer or comfort. But none knew of the great sorrow which had come into her life years before, nor the heaviness of her heart at times as she went about her daily duties. Try as she might she could not banish from her mind the one who had been the cause of her sorrow. Hers was not a nature which could lightly put away precious memories and reach out and enjoy things which were new. Her love had been too deep and sacred to be cast off at the least pretext or provocation. She had often heard young people talking about love as something that could be worn to-day like a beautiful robe and cast aside to-morrow and forgotten. Of such a love she knew nothing. Love to her was an inseparable attribute, constantly with her, and forming a part of her very being as the fragrance is to the rose.

Of her past life, and the longing which still dwelt in her heart for the one whom she had never expected to see again, she could not speak to others. The mere idea of bringing forth all of those memories for people to gaze upon and discuss was most horrible to her sensitive nature. There was nothing in common, not the slightest link, between the ones she daily met and her own past life. They could lavish their affection upon her, praise her, and admire her, but still she felt alone. She could touch the world of activity and seem to take her place naturally among men and women, but they could not enter into her life. There she had remained alone until Nance crossed her path. Then a marvellous change had taken place. Nance was not only different from others she had met, but she was the one link between the past and the present.

To no one had Beryl breathed Martin's name after his disgrace. But with Nance it was otherwise. She could talk to her freely about him with no reserve whatsoever. During their quiet afternoon hours each day she skilfully drew from Nance the story of her young life as far back as she could remember. Often Beryl's eyes would fill with tears as she listened to the brave, earnest struggle Martin had made to care for the waif of the wild, and to develop her mind. Nance told her story well, and the listener hung on every word with the most intense interest. Often the nurse would watch Nance as she moved about the room. She was really Martin's child. He had stamped upon her his own personality. She even spoke as he did, and Beryl noted that she pronounced certain words with the same accent that she knew was peculiar to Martin. The more she was with Nance, and learned from her lips of what her foster-father had done for her, the more deeply wrung was Beryl's heart. She recalled the fierce denunciations which had been heaped upon him after his fall, while she alone had been silent. A great longing now came into her heart to publish to the world the story of what he had done for an orphan child in the northern wilderness. If those who had denounced him the most bitterly only knew, she often said to herself, would they not think of him in a different light, and judge him less harshly?

"You must be very happy here, nurse," Nance naïvely remarked one afternoon, as the two were sitting by the window.

"Why, what makes you think so?" was the surprised reply.

"Because you are so beautiful, and do so much good to others."

Nurse Marion's cheeks flushed, and her head bent lower over her work.

"Do you know," and she lifted her eyes to her companion's face, "that I have often thought the same thing about you?"

"About me! Oh, nurse, what could make you think such a thing?"

"You are pretty, happy, and you have done much."

"I never knew that I was pretty until Dick told me, and I am glad that I am—for his sake. But what have I done in life? I have had no chance like you."

"If I am not mistaken, Nance, you have done very much for a lonely man. Did you ever think how strange it is that your father—I can't help calling him that—should have left the ways of civilisation to bury himself here in the wilderness?"

"I have thought about it at times, and I once spoke of it to daddy."

"And what did he say?"

"He did not answer me, but such a sorrowful expression came into his eyes that I never had the heart to ask him again."

"I have thought very much about it, Nance," the nurse continued. "There surely must have been some great trouble in his past life which sent him away from his friends and relatives. Did you ever think about that?"

"Why, no!"

"It must have been something terrible, whatever it was, and his heart must have been full of the deepest despair. Now, suppose you had not come into his life, what do you think would have happened?"

"I do not know. Do you?"

"Not altogether, but I can partly imagine. He might have united himself to the Indians, and lived like one of them, or, what is more likely, he would have brooded over his trouble, until, on the verge of despair, he might have ended his life."

"Oh! do you think so?" and Nance clasped her hands before her, while her eyes looked big with wonder. "Would daddy have done that?"

"He might have done so if he had not found you. You have been his guardian angel during his long life in this country. Upon you he has lavished his affections. For you he lived and toiled. You brought out the best that was in him. You do not know, you cannot fully understand now what great things you have done for him. He might have been dead, or worse than dead, but for you."

Stirred by her deep emotions, Nurse Marion had risen to her feet, and was standing over Nance. Her face was flushed, and her eyes glowed with the light of excitement. She checked herself almost instantly, however, upon observing her companion's wondering look. With a slight forced laugh she straightened herself up, and resumed her former calm manner.

All through the evening Nance thought over what the nurse had said about her father. She quietly studied him as he sat smoking before the fire. She had always known that she owed much to him, but that she had done anything in return was an altogether new idea. If there had been great trouble in his past life, why had he not mentioned it to her? she wondered. Perhaps the nurse was mistaken in what she had surmised. The thought that she knew for a certainty whereof she spoke never once entered Nance's mind. But there came to her the remembrance of her father's peculiar action at times, especially since the arrival of the miners. This had often puzzled her. She had spoken of it to Dick, why not mention it to Nurse Marion as well? It would relieve her mind, at any rate, to talk it over with a woman. She would do so the next day, so she decided.

When Nance crossed over to the hospital the following afternoon she found Dick there. He and the nurse were both greatly excited, caused by the can of gold, which was before them on the table.

"It was on the sill just outside when I opened the door this morning," Nurse Marion explained as Nance approached. "I could not understand what was the meaning of it until I discovered this note," and she pointed to the slip of paper.

"For the new church, from one who wishes to remain unknown."

That was all, and as Nance scanned the words she felt sure that she recognised her father's handwriting. Then she glanced toward the can, and it, too, looked familiar. Though she had not seen it for years she remembered now the first time she had looked upon it, when the Indians had brought it over the mountains from the trading post, filled with tea. The picture of a beautiful flower on the outside had interested her greatly, and she had often looked upon it as a child as it sat upon the shelf against the wall. Then it had disappeared, and she had forgotten about it until now.

"I haven't the least idea who has given all this gold for the church building."

Nance heard Dick utter these words, but his voice appeared far away, and she herself seemed to be dreaming. Her father had given the gold she was quite certain. He must have taken it from the strong-room, and brought it over at night. But why did he wish his name to be unknown? Why had he given all of this for the church when he himself would not attend service?

She took a seat by the side of the little table and watched Dick as he emptied out the gold. What

beautiful nuggets there were, both large and small.

"My! they look good," the missionary exclaimed. "How fascinating they are. There will be enough to finish the church, I do believe."

"Some one has a big heart," Nurse Marion replied, looking down thoughtfully upon the gleaming pile before her. "How strange that he should have left it at my door."

Nance listened to the conversation, but said nothing. She was unusually quiet. She longed to tell all she knew about the gold. But this she must not do. Her father did not wish any one to know what he had done, so she must be true to him, and tell the secret to no one, not even to Dick. The latter noted her silence, and wondered what was the matter.

"What are you going to do with the can?" she at length asked.

"Keep the gold in it, of course. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I hardly know, except—that—if you were not going to use it, I should like to have it."

"For a keepsake?"

"Yes. But if you need it, never mind."

"Why, you are welcome to it. I can put the gold in something else."

Nance said no more then, but that evening as she was leaving the hospital she picked up the can, and wrapped it up carefully in the apron she had been wearing that afternoon. Dick was waiting to accompany her home, and an amused smile played about the corners of his mouth as he observed what she was doing.

Nurse Marion watched them as they left the building, and walked slowly down to the river. They were so happy in each other's company that her own sense of loneliness sank deeper than ever into her soul.

CHAPTER XXIX

ATONEMENT

Summer passed all too soon for the miners in the valley of the Quaska. The days were shortening and the nights lengthening in an alarming manner. Great wedge-like battalions of wild geese honked their way southward each day until all had fled. A greyness settled over the land, and at night the Northern Lights flared brighter in the heavens. It was quite evident to all that winter was not far off. To the ones not prepared for its coming the outlook was not pleasant. They had but started panning out gold, and there was little prospect that they could do much more before spring.

At the approach of winter Martin once again resumed his rounds of the creeks. Many of the miners who had cleaned up a considerable amount of gold during the summer had moved down to the mouth of the river, and settled in little shacks at Quaska. These men could buy their supplies at the stores, even though the prices were exorbitant. But the ones who had met with no success could not afford such luxuries. They preferred to remain on the creeks, to hide their poverty from prying eyes, and, if possible, eke out a precarious living from any wild game they might be able to procure with their rifles.

Carrying with him sufficient food to last him for several days, Martin halted at each cabin. He was always given a hearty welcome, and won all hearts by his brightness and his optimistic spirit. To the miners he was one of themselves, and they believed that he was in the same straitened circumstances as they were. Upon leaving he was always invited to come again, and as often as possible.

Martin returned home at the end of each week. During his absence Nance stayed with Nurse Marion, for her assistance was needed now at the hospital more than ever, owing to the number of patients who had been admitted. Martin was always eager to hear all the news from across the river, and he would sit and listen while Nance recounted everything. She told him about the church; that it was all finished, and how it was opened each night for the men to gather to play games, and to read the few books which the missionary had brought with him.

"We might let some of our books go, eh?" and Martin nodded toward the volumes upon the shelves.

"Oh, that would be so nice, daddy," Nance replied. "The men will be delighted. May I take several over to-morrow?"

"No, not now. It will be better to wait until winter settles in. If they read them all now they will have nothing when the evenings are long and cold. Wait until then."

Nance was greatly pleased at the change which had come over Martin. He talked more, and the worried, haunted expression had left his eyes. She often spoke about him to Nurse Marion, and

the latter was never tired of listening to her, and she would occasionally question Nance about her father.

The next time that Martin left his house for the creeks he carried with him his violin. At every cabin he was doubly welcomed now, and often he would play for hours to a handful of men who had drifted into the shack which he happened to be visiting. He sang, too, and at times the miners would join in when the tune and the words were familiar. He was surprised at first to find how frequently the men asked for some well-known hymn, and as they all sang it he noted the expression upon their faces. He knew that they were face to face with a hard proposition, and needed something to keep up their spirits.

Thus from cabin to cabin he moved, bringing cheer and comfort wherever he went. The men were loth for him to leave and always pressed him to stay longer. As the days shortened, and the long evenings became almost unbearable, the lonely men counted the days and the hours which would bring Martin and his violin once again to their doors. They could not understand him now, and often discussed among themselves why he should make such regular rounds of the creeks. Although they knew where he lived, and how long he had been in the country, he would never talk about himself. This added to the mystery concerning him. What can he be doing it for? they asked over and over again. Some believed that it was for the enjoyment he got out of it, and the companionship of the miners. But when he spent a whole week with Andy Henderson, caring for him when he was sick, the miners did not know what to think.

"If he was a parson," one remarked, "the whole thing would be clear."

"Sure thing," another replied. "But he never says a word about religion."

"Doesn't he, eh? That's where you are mistaken. His is a religion of deeds and not words. If he had come here and handed out a whole lot of talk about being patient under discouragements how much good would it have done us? Mighty little, I can tell you that. But he drops in on us with a word of cheer, and brings along his fiddle. That's the religion which gets me every time."

Winter shut down unusually early, and gripped the northland in its icy embrace. Every time Martin made his rounds of the creeks he noticed the grim spectre of famine and despair creeping upon the miners in their desolate cabins. They scoured the land for miles around in search of game, with but meagre success, for the moose and caribou had withdrawn farther afield upon the arrival of the white men. To follow them far the miners had not the strength. They had been living upon short allowance for some time, and every day their small supplies were becoming much diminished. Several, feeling the pinch of want, went to the stores in town, and asked to be supplied with food on credit until spring. Their request was refused, and with hearts rankling with bitterness they marched back up the creek to bear the news to their companions. The proud spirit of this little band of men was aroused, and they swore that they would die rather than ask again for any food from Quaska. They, accordingly, shared their scanty remaining supply with one another with the feeling that when this was gone there was nothing before them but death.

Winter was now upon them in all its fierceness. The weather was extremely cold, and snow lay thick over the land. At this critical time Martin one day appeared at the cabin nearest to Quaska. He was not alone this time, for he had a sled loaded with provisions, and drawn by two husky dogs he had borrowed from Taku, the Indian.

"Had more grub on hand than I needed," was his brief explanation to the miners as they stared longingly upon the loaded sled.

Then throughout the creeks he moved, dispensing supplies wherever he went, and when all was gone he hurried back for more. His feverish eagerness to be doing something for others was what puzzled the miners. He was now more of a mystery than ever. Whereas at first they considered him as one of themselves they came at last to look upon him as some unearthly being, an angel in the form of a man, who had dropped from heaven to aid them in their distress. Who else could it be? they reasoned, who would go to so much trouble for a few lonely men, hard up in a desolate region? It was no ordinary spirit, they well knew, which would drive a man out into such cruel weather for the sake of others.

In a few weeks the news of what Martin was doing reached Quaska, and passed from man to man, causing much curious comment on every hand. In some way the refusal of the storekeepers to provide starving men with provisions leaked out, and caused considerable stir among the leading men of the place, especially Tom. They went at once to the stores, and ordered supplies for their comrades up the creeks, while several volunteered to carry forward the provisions.

"Who will pay for these things?" the storekeepers whined.

"Pay!" Tom fairly shouted the words. "D'ye think we'd come here an' order this stuff without holdin' ourselves responsible? Ye deserve to be cleaned out an' driven from town fer yer meanness. Ye've not only raised the price of yer goods beyond all reason, but ye refused to supply a few poor chaps who were starvin' to death, an' they never mentioned it to a livin' soul. That's what ye've done."

So high did the feeling run in Quaska over the meanness of the storekeepers that a miners' meeting was held that very night, when Tom was appointed chairman. Fiery speeches of indignation were made, and it was decided that the storekeepers had to come down in their prices. They would be allowed to have fair profits on all they sold, but extortion had to be stopped

at once. If they would not agree to this, so it was decided, their goods would be seized, paid for at cost price, and they themselves driven out of the town. In fear and trembling the storekeepers agreed to the demands of the irate miners, and so the storm blew over.

The news of Martin's noble work out on the creeks was not long in reaching the hospital. It was Tom who told the story in his own graphic manner. Nance was delighted when she heard what her father was doing, and told how he had stored up the provisions before the winter had set in.

"I didn't know what he was going to do with it," she said in conclusion, "for he would not tell me."

As Nurse Marion listened to the story her mind was busy seeking for the cause of Martin's benevolent work. At last it came to her, and she knew that there was only one reason which could prompt him to do such things. He was trying to atone for the past, and at once there came to her mind the fierce struggle which had been going on in his heart for long years. What a battle he must have fought, and how great the victory. The old self had been crushed down, and in its stead a new life of service, contrite and humble, had risen, which had driven him forth to live for others. She understood now for a certainty that though Martin had fallen and could never be forgiven by the critical world which had condemned him, yet in reality he was superior to his critics. He had sadly missed the mark, and had fallen. But he had fought a brave fight, had risen from the pit, and with a courage which nothing could daunt was now plunging into a noble work for others. As she thought of all this a sweet peace stole into her heart. Martin was worthy of her affection, after all, and her love had not been misplaced during the years she had been loyal to him while others had condemned.

Knowing nothing of the stir he was causing at Quaska, Martin continued his work of relief up and down the creeks. For weeks he moved from cabin to cabin, carrying food where it was most needed. But his own supply was getting low, and only one sled load now remained. He knew that to obtain more he would have to go direct to the stores, which he was now very loth to do.

He was travelling late one cold afternoon far up a lonely creek, many miles from Quaska. He had only a small part of his load of provisions and he wished to carry this to a man living all alone, who was in great need. Of all the miners he had met Tim Ralston seemed the most obdurate and ungrateful. He was a man of few words, sullen and morose. His hard luck during the past summer had embittered him more than ever, and living alone he had brooded so much over his troubles that his mind became somewhat affected. He would rave long and vehemently about his hard luck, the country, and the hopelessness of the future. Martin had visited him once before, and had received such a cold reception that he had been by no means anxious to return. But as the severity of the winter increased he found it difficult to get Tim out of his mind. He knew that he must be hard up for food, and he could not allow the man to starve to death without making an effort to relieve his wants.

It was late in the afternoon as Martin at last halted before Tim's cabin. It was bitterly cold, and a volume of smoke was curling up into the frosty air from the miserable stove-pipe sticking out through the roof. He knocked, but received no reply. Thinking this strange, he pushed open the door, and cautiously entered. All was dark within, but very warm. Feeling in his pocket, he found a piece of a candle, which he at once lighted. By means of this he saw the form of a man huddled on the floor, with some blankets wrapped around him. It was Tim with beard almost to his waist, and long, matted hair streaming over his shoulders. He hardly resembled a human being as he crouched there, working his jaws, and swaying his body to and fro.

"Tim, Tim, what's the matter?" Martin cried as he strode forward and stood by the side of the poor creature.

The latter lifted his shaggy head at the sound of these words, and turned his blood-shot eyes upon Martin's face.

"Leg broke," he feebly wailed. "Starving! Dying!"

Martin lost no more time in asking questions. He hurried outside, freed the dogs, and drew the sled with its load into the wretched cabin. He set to work at once to prepare some food for the afflicted man, and then fed him like a baby. All through the night he tended him, doing everything in his power to relieve his sufferings, which were very great. He knew, however, that he needed more aid than he could give. To remain there meant death for Tim. The only hope was to get him into the hospital at Quaska, where he could receive proper care, and attention.

Martin had no intention of going straight to the hospital with the suffering man, for there he would meet Beryl. He would take him to his own house, and let the missionary do the rest.

At the first faint streak of dawn Martin began to make preparations for the run to Quaska. The injured man groaned and cursed as he was wrapped up as comfortably as possible in his blankets, and placed upon the sled. This latter was made in the form of a toboggan, and it would accordingly travel where an ordinary sled with runners could not be taken. Martin was most thankful that such was the case, for he could make a short cut to Quaska over a mountain-pass, and down a long valley instead of going by the much longer circuitous route he had taken on his outward trip. He believed that he could save a whole day by crossing the mountain, which would mean very much to the sufferer.

The air was clear and cold when at last the two huskies, with short, sharp yelps, pulled away from the cabin on their stern run to save the life of Tim Ralston. Martin strode on ahead,

breaking down a trail with his long, narrow snow-shoes. All day they pressed forward, and when night shut down Martin was satisfied with the progress they had made during the day. Selecting a sheltered spot among a thick clump of fir trees, he dug away the snow, built a fire, and prepared camp.

Little sleep came to his eyes this night. Tim was more restless than ever, and he had to be watched constantly lest he should toss aside his blankets, and thus perish. Notwithstanding the fire which Martin kept going, he found it very cold, for, while his face was burning, his back was freezing. Only twice did he doze off, overcome by fatigue and want of sleep. But he always aroused with a start, fearful lest he had slept too long.

All through the next day he plodded on ahead of the dogs, at times helping them by means of a rope around his shoulders, for the snow over the mountain was deep, and the sled dragged hard with its heavy burden. That night they camped upon the brow of the range facing Quaska. Far down below stretched a long valley, with towering hills on both sides. Again Martin was well pleased with the progress they had made, and he expected that with one day more of such travelling they would not be far from Quaska, if not there.

In the morning when they once more drew away from camp the sky was cloudless, and as they descended the mountain side the air became warmer. The short winter sun lifted its shining face into view, and rode along for a while close to the horizon. But toward noon a perceptible change became apparent in the atmospheric conditions. The sky grew cloudy, and the sun disappeared behind a thick haze. Ere long a stiff breeze was swinging down the valley, telling Martin only too plainly that a storm was rapidly brewing.

The region through which they were now travelling was desolate in the extreme. Fires had swept over the land years before, and nothing remained but gaunt fir trees and jack-pines, dead and devoid of every vestige of life. Through their naked branches swept the ever-increasing wind, piercing the bodies of both men and dogs. No shelter was anywhere to be seen, and Martin's only hope was to push on as rapidly as possible and reach the unburnt forest miles down the valley. He knew only too well what it would mean to be caught in a storm on that bleak mountain slope where everything would be blotted out from view, and where the tempest might rage all day and far on into the night.

Calling encouragingly to the dogs, and with the lead rope about his shoulders, Martin started forward as speedily as the deep snow would permit. The huskies strained at their traces, yelped, lowered their heads, and surged onward close at their master's heels. An hour thus passed, and the wind, increasing in strength every moment, was roaring down the valley, while particles of driving snow began to fleck the bodies of the hurrying wayfarers. In another half-hour the air was filled with blinding snow, which drove down lashingly upon them, completely blotting out everything from view except the swaying, spectre-like forms of the nearest trees.

As the wind was full astern, Martin believed that by running straight before it he could keep his course, and at length gain the shelter beyond. He nerved himself to the task, and strained hard upon the rope. But ere long the dogs began to lag, whine, and surge back in their harness. Coaxing and whipping did no good, for with the tempest upon them they refused to advance, and cowered upon the snow. Hastily unhitching the discouraged animals, Martin made his rope fast to the sled, and thus alone endeavoured to drag it forward. It was a hard pull, and slow progress did he make. The helpless man cursed and groaned as he felt the fierceness of the storm beating upon him, and the snow drifting in through every opening of his blankets. Martin could not waste time and breath in trying to soothe him. There was too much at stake, for unless he reached the forest beyond they must both surely perish.

For another hour Martin tugged at the rope, with bent head, and feet shuffling the snow-shoes through the newly-fallen snow. At last Tim cried aloud, saying that he was freezing. Then Martin paused, stripped off his own jacket, and wrapped it around the sufferer's body. He then carefully replaced the blankets which he had removed, and once again took up his weary task.

The wind now pierced him cruelly, and chilled him to the bone. His hands became numb, although he pounded them together in an effort to keep the blood in circulation. At times his brain reeled, and he felt that he could go no farther. But each time he thought of Nance. How could she get along without him? he asked himself. Beryl, too, came to his mind. She seemed to come to him through the storm, and he saw her, not at the hospital, but as he used to see her in the happy days of old. The sight of her had always inspired him then, as it did now in his fight with death. He must not give up, he said to himself. Anyway, if he was to die, it should be with his face to the front, and shoulders to his task. Then if Beryl should ever learn of the struggle he had made, it might do something to atone for the past. She might not think of him so bitterly, as no doubt she had done ever since his fall.

And still the storm continued to wrap around him its cold winding-sheet, entangling his feet, and endeavouring to win him for a victim. Martin was a stern antagonist, however, and fought off his relentless foe with the courage of desperation. He would fight; he would win; he would not give up. But slower and slower now he moved; fiercer and fiercer roared the tempest about him. Peculiar noises sounded in his ears, and weird voices of demons mocked at his futile efforts to stand upright, and to press forward. He saw them leering before him, reaching out their horrible hands to clutch him. Then his brain reeled, a fearful blackness shrouded his eyes, and with a despairing cry he fell forward full length upon the snow.

CHAPTER XXX

REVELATION

The new mission room proved a great boon to the miners at Quaska. When it was first opened very few visited the place, and the missionary felt somewhat discouraged. But Tom told him not to worry, as they would be sure to come later.

"Jist wait, pard," he said, "until the nights git long an' cold, then ye'll see 'em come, an' mighty glad they'll be to have a spot to drop into instid of sittin' in their lonely shacks."

"But perhaps they'll go to the saloons instead," Dick replied. "Won't they feel more at home there?"

"Not a bit of it. Some will go, to be sure. But all can't go, an' all won't want to go. Jist ye wait, an' see."

In due time Tom's words came true, and every night saw the mission room filled with men. Some came at first rather doubtfully, thinking, perhaps, that they were to get a sermon before they left. But when they found the room warm, bright, and filled with such genial company they were delighted. All they were asked to do was to obey certain rules which Dick had posted up in several places. Tom was the presiding genius, even though the missionary was present, and always made every man thoroughly at home by his hearty greeting.

"Ye're as welcome as the night is long," he would exclaim to each newcomer. "This is Liberty Hall, with only a few exceptions," and he would nod toward the rules. "Ye're not to use any cuss words, ye mustn't fight nor gamble, nor come here with a reekin' whiskey breath."

Only once did a bumptious young miner attempt to ignore such instructions. His stay was brief, for as many men as could lay hands upon him hustled him out of the building, with the warning not to return until he could behave in a proper manner.

Dick was not only pleased at the success of the mission room, but he was very thankful to see how the men attended service every Sunday evening. But there was one thing lacking. More reading matter was needed, and though he had placed his few books at the disposal of the men, they still craved for more. The papers and magazines he had expected from the Mission down river, for some reason, did not arrive. He spoke about it to Nance the morning after the storm.

"The room would be complete if we only had something more for the men to read. They are about wild for books and magazines. They have already devoured everything in my small library, and some of the men are reading the books all over again."

Nance glanced at Dick's worried face, and her eyes dropped as they met his. An idea came into her mind, and she was on the point of speaking when she checked herself. No, she would surprise Dick, and that would make it all the more interesting.

They were standing close to each other, and as Dick looked upon Nance he thought that she never seemed so beautiful. There was such a simplicity about her manner, combined with a deep interest in any of his undertakings. Her hands were clasped before her as she stood there looking around the room. How he longed to take those hands in his, and tell her of all that was in his heart. It was not the first time that he had desired to do so, but he had always desisted. He believed that she cared for him, but he wanted her to do more than that. He wished to be sure that she loved him. He was so happy in her presence that he feared if he told her all that his heart prompted him to tell it might break the spell, and cause her to avoid him.

Dick Russell was not much acquainted with the ways of women. Hitherto little time or opportunity had been his to devote to the tender affections. And in truth he had but slight inclination to do so until he met Nance. He could not, therefore, read the look of love in her eyes, nor comprehend the flush which suffused her face whenever he approached. Could he have done so he would not have hesitated about telling her of his over-mastering love.

All that afternoon Nance remained with Nurse Marion at the hospital. She thought much about her father, and wondered if he was safely sheltered in some miner's cabin. He was in her mind more than usual, and during the night as she listened to the storm she felt uneasy as to his welfare. Even after she had fallen asleep she awoke with a start, thinking that he was holding out his hands to her, and calling to her for aid.

Such an impression did the vision make upon her that she could not free herself from the idea that something had happened to her father. During the morning she was more quiet than the nurse had ever seen her.

The storm had cleared in the night, and after dinner Nance put on her snow-shoes, and left the hospital. It was Saturday, the day her father always came home, and it was her custom to have a cheerful fire awaiting him, and supper ready. She found the house more cold and desolate than it had ever appeared to her before. But when she had a bright fire blazing up, the room looked more comfortable and homelike.

Nance sat near the fire warming herself, for she was cold. She thought of the many times she had

sat there with Martin by her side. Then for the first time the sense of loneliness came upon her. She felt home-sick, and longed for Martin. She wanted to have him near her, and listen to his voice. She wished to be a child once again, and to sit upon his knee while he told her stories. She had fondly imagined that she would be supremely happy to be away from the log house, and out into the great world beyond. But now she realised that no matter where she might go, no place could ever be so dear to her as this rude home where she had spent so many happy years.

She looked about the room upon all that Martin had done, and the various things that he had made for her comfort. She had always appreciated his efforts on her behalf, but now a different feeling stole into her heart, and tears came into her eyes. How she longed to see him again, that she might tell him what he was to her, and to thank him for so much kindness.

At length, brushing away her tears, she rose to her feet, and crossed the room to the book-shelves. Standing there, she looked for a while upon the volumes which Martin had read with such enjoyment through the long winter evenings. He had said that she might take them over to the reading-room when the miners needed them most. Surely now was the time, and when her father came home she would speak to him about them. How surprised and delighted Dick would be when she carried an armful over the next day.

Reaching up her hand, she brought down a volume which was lying on top of several others. As she looked at the title, she believed that the miners would like it. It had been years since she had read it, but she remembered how delighted she had been with it at the time. The hero in the book had appealed to her very strongly. She had not met Dick Russell then, and she mused for a while about the difference between her present idea of a hero to that of years ago. Then Martin was the only white man she knew, and she had never looked upon him as a hero. Her heroes were like those mentioned in books, men of war and action, who had accomplished great things.

Going back to the fire, Nance ensconced herself in Martin's big chair, and opened the book. As she did so a newspaper clipping lying between the leaves attracted her attention. Wondering what it could be, she laid the book upon her lap, unfolded the paper, and began to read. She had not proceeded far when her face went white as death, and her hand trembled violently. She rubbed her eyes to make sure that she was not dreaming. The printed columns fascinated her, and she read on and on until she came to the end of the sad tale of shame and disgrace.

The whole truth now flashed into Nance's mind with a startling intensity. Her brain reeled, her heart seemed numbed at the shock, and the light of life, with all its joy, went out. She stared long and hard at the heading of the article. "Deposed by his Bishop." How terrible seemed those words. And there was the name of the man who had fallen, "The Rev. Martin Rutland." Again she read through the entire story, every word of criticism, scorn, and condemnation searing her heart like red-hot iron. Could it be possible that this was some one else? she asked herself. She knew very well that it could not be, for why then should her father have the clipping in his possession? A groan escaped her parched lips as she endeavoured to view calmly the whole situation.

Many things which had hitherto puzzled her were instantly cleared up, and she understood for the first time the reason of Martin's peculiar actions since the arrival of the miners. She knew why he had fled away from the ways of civilisation to live alone in the wilderness. He did not wish to meet people who knew of his disgrace. This, too, was why he would not go to service on Sunday. And to think that for years he had been deceiving her. While she believed him to be so true and noble, he was in reality a man utterly disgraced, an outcast from the Church and society.

A feeling of bitter resentment rushed into her heart. Why had he treated her thus? Why had he pretended to be so good when all the time he was evil, and his whole life a sham? How could she ever face him again, knowing everything, and what he really was? He might return at any moment, and find her sitting there with the clipping in her hand. She did not want to meet him, for she felt that she could not bear to do so. She must get away, and hurry back to the hospital.

Carefully replacing the paper in the book, Nance went back to the shelf from which she had taken it. She paused and looked around the room, thinking that perhaps this would be the last time that she should ever see it again. Everywhere she beheld the work of Martin's hands: the tables, chairs, and decorations on the walls. She turned and walked to her own little room, which she entered. There, too, she saw how he had fitted up everything for her comfort. Then in an instant there came to her a great reversal of feeling. Martin, the outcast, disappeared, and in his stead she beheld a man strong, patient, and gentle, who had been to her both a father and a mother during her whole life. She thought of what he had done for her, how he had striven for her welfare, and cared for her when she would have been left to the uncertain mercy of the Indians. A love deep and strong filled her heart for this man. She pictured to herself how he must have suffered during his exile in the wilderness, knowing that nothing could ever undo the past, and that he would never be forgiven by the Church which had cast him out. If she turned against him would it not break his heart entirely? No, she would be faithful, and he should never know that she had seen the paper, or had the least idea of his past life. It would remain a secret with her, and she would never breathe a word to any one, not even to Dick.

Nance was standing erect in her room as this resolve firmly fixed itself upon her mind. Her face became radiant with a new light, and her eyes shone with the intensity of her great purpose. For a while she stood there, thinking deep, earnest thoughts. A new sense of responsibility came to her. She now saw that life was not all joy and happiness. There was a tragic depth beneath into which for the first time she had been permitted a brief glimpse.

And while standing there she heard some one calling her by name. Hurrying forth from her room, she saw Dick coming to meet her. There was no smile upon his face, but instead an expression of deep concern was depicted there, such as Nance had never seen before. Something had happened, she felt certain, for what else could make Dick look at her in that way?

"What is it?" she gasped. "There's something the matter, I'm sure."

"You are wanted at the hospital, Nance," was the reply.

"Is Nurse Marion ill?"

"No. It's your father."

CHAPTER XXXI

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOWS

Outwardly Nance was very calm as she closed the door and swiftly put on her snow-shoes. But her heart was heating rapidly, and she was filled with grave apprehensions.

"What is it?" she asked as she moved along over the snow by Dick's side. "Don't hide anything from me. I want to know all."

"There is but little to tell, Nance," the young man replied. "It seems that the Indian Taku was awakened last night by the whining of one of his dogs outside the cabin door. When he had let the animal in he found that it was one of the two your father had taken with him. The poor creature was almost exhausted. It was carrying its harness and dragging its traces. Taku surmised that something was wrong and he at once started forth in the direction from which the dog had come. The storm had ceased, and the moon was full when he set out, so it was easy for him to follow the dog's tracks. They led away from Quaska, up the river, and then off to the left through that long wooded valley. He had passed only a short distance out of the woods on the upper side into a desolate region, when he found a miner, Tim Ralston, with a broken leg, lying on a sled. By his side was your father, unconscious, and to all appearance dead. With much difficulty Taku brought both men into the woods, made a small fire, and started off in post-haste for help. As luck would have it, he overtook Tom, who had been storm-stayed up the creek, and together they brought the two helpless men to the hospital. That, in brief, is the story."

As Dick ended, Nance stopped, laid her hand lightly upon his arm, and looked searchingly into his face.

"Will he live?" she gasped.

"I can't say. He has been terribly exposed. I am afraid it will go hard with him."

"And he did it for Tim!" Nance murmured. "He gave his life to save another."

Her thoughts flashed to the newspaper clipping, and her heart rebuked her for her harsh judgment but a short time before. Now she understood the motive of her father's unceasing efforts on behalf of the miners, especially this last and greatest sacrifice of all. She did not, however, reveal her knowledge to Dick, but hastened on, anxious to reach Martin's side as soon as possible. Arriving at length at the hospital door, she and Dick laid aside their snow-shoes, and quietly entered. All was still within as they passed through the main ward into Nurse Marion's room.

Here Martin was lying upon the one cot the room contained, and by his side sat the nurse. She did not hear the steps at the door, for her thoughts were upon the unconscious man before her. In her eyes was an expression which had not been seen there since the days when he so often visited her in her old home years before. She was thinking of that time now, and she was picturing Martin as she then knew him. At first it was hard for her to believe that this bronzed and bearded man was the same as she had known then and cherished in her memory ever since. She studied his face and saw there something of the terrible struggle through which he had passed. She imagined his agony of mind after his fall, and what it must have meant for him to live away in the wilderness, cut off from all the benefits of civilised life. No sense of anger or reproach came to her mind now as she sat there, but only a pity and a love, such as she had never known, possessed her heart.

Nance paused but for an instant at the door, and then with a cry hurried forward, and knelt by the side of the bed. She seized Martin's right hand in hers, and pressed it to her lips.

"Daddy! daddy!" she cried. "I am here. Speak to me. It is Nance."

But no sign of recognition came from the unconscious form upon the cot. As Nance continued to press the outstretched hand, Nurse Marion rose and walked over to the window, and looked out upon the world of snow beyond. Tumultuous thoughts surged suddenly through her mind as she saw Nance kneeling by the bed and listened to her wailing cry. What right had this girl to supplant her? Had she been all sufficient to Martin, and had he forgotten Beryl, to whom he had given his heart and hand? For the first time in years a revulsion of feeling swept upon her. She

had been a fool to believe that Martin had remembered her. He cared only for Nance, and his first love had grown cold. Years of separation had done it, and what vain fancy had led her to imagine that he still cared for her? She saw it now as never before. She must get away from the place. But where should she go, with the rivers frozen and the land snow-locked on every side?

Those few moments had wrought a marvellous transformation in Nurse Marion's face. It was calm—terribly calm—when at last she went back to Martin's side. She was the professional nurse now, ready to do her duty to the utmost, but no more. She had other patients in the hospital to care for, and she busied herself with them during most of the day. She had little to say to the watchers by Martin's side, and they, occupied with their deep anxiety, did not notice her unusual silence. Then, when all her other tasks were done, she sat with Nance and Dick through the long hours of the night. She had to be doing something, so she brought her needle-work, and though her fingers were busy, and at times her head drooped, she hardly realised what she was doing.

Since he had been brought into the hospital Martin had not shown the least sign of consciousness. He had lain as one in a deep sleep. But as the night wore away, and the dawn of a new day was breaking he began to move, and then to toss restlessly upon the cot. At last he opened his eyes and stared vacantly around the room.

"Tim! Tim!" he called. "Are you cold? Here's my jacket. It'll keep you warm."

His eyes next roved to the watchers near by until they rested upon the nurse's face. He did not seem at all surprised to see her there.

"Beryl."

At that word the needle-work dropped from the nurse's hand, her face went white as death, though she uttered not a sound.

"Are the hymns all ready, Beryl?" Martin continued. "It's almost church time, and I can't wait any longer."

"He thinks you are Beryl," Nance whispered. But the nurse made no reply. She sat erect, rigid, with staring eyes fixed full upon the man before her.

A troubled expression now came into Martin's eyes, and his fingers moved over the blanket as if in search of something. "I can't find them," he murmured. "The bread—the wine—some one has hidden them. Ah, ah, here they are," and his fingers closed eagerly upon some imaginary objects. Then a semblance of a smile flickered about the corners of his mouth, and his voice was low and reverent as his lips moved—"Take—and eat—this—in remembrance—that Christ—died—for thee—and feed—on Him——"

His voice trailed off into silence, and for a while he lay very still. "Ah, ah!" he cried, starting suddenly up, while a fierce light glowed in his eyes, "I defy you! The Church is nothing to me, and I will live without it! Get out of my house, you impostor," he roared, looking now at Dick. "You come here to steal Nance from me! But you won't get her! No, by heavens! she shall never be yours! The Church! The Church! I don't care for the Church! It has cast me out. I will live without it! Get out, I say. Don't torture me! For God's sake, go!"

To say that the missionary was surprised at the remarks of this raving man is putting it too mildly. He was astounded. What could be the meaning of it all? he asked himself. Why did he refer to the hymns, repeat those words of the Communion Service, and speak so fiercely about the Church? Was it possible that this man had once been a clergyman? The idea came to him now with a startling intensity. In an instant there flashed into his mind Martin's peculiar actions ever since he had known him, his strange behaviour and fitful moods. Was this the reason, then, why this educated man had lived for long years in the wilderness? Had he been deposed by the Church in which he had once been a clergyman? Dick knew now that such must have been the case, and a feeling such as he had never before experienced came upon him. He sank into the chair he had recently vacated, and buried his face in his hands. He had at times heard of men who had left the Ministry through some misdemeanour, but never until now did he understand what it really meant. As he listened to Martin's ravings he comprehended something of the agony of mind which had been his through his long wilderness life.

And thus the three sat, watched, and waited, as the unconscious man tossed upon the cot. There was little that they could do except think. The missionary understood a little now of the past history of the man before him, while Nance knew more. But neither realised that Nurse Marion, sitting near with hands tightly clasped upon her lap, knew all, and yet remained silent.

CHAPTER XXXII

REFINED GOLD

For days the raging fever held Martin in its terrible grip. Never once was he conscious of his surroundings, and most trying was it for the patient watchers to listen to his wild ravings. Every night Tom came to the hospital to take his turn by the side of the sick man. In fact, he would have remained part of each day as well if he had been permitted to do so, and he always grumbled

when he was ordered by Dick to go and get some sleep. Nurse Marion sat at times with Tom. She found it difficult to rest, as she did not know at what moment Martin might need more help than the miner could give.

One day she was sitting alone by the bed, with her needle-work, as usual, in her hands. The sufferer was still and to all appearance asleep. Sounds of the violin came from the outer room, where Nance was playing softly for the benefit of the few patients who were there. The strains brought a restful feeling into the nurse's heart, for it had been weeks since she had heard the sound of music. Presently her work dropped into her lap, and her hands remained idle. Her eyes gazed off through the window before her, though she saw nothing.

She was startled from her reverie by a light touch upon her hand. Glancing down, great was her surprise to see Martin looking intently into her face. In his eyes was the light of reason, mingled with surprise. The nurse was on her feet in an instant, bending over the cot.

"Hush," she soothed, as if Martin were a child awaking from sleep. "Don't speak now."

"I must," Martin feebly breathed. "Are you Beryl? I woke, and thought I was dreaming, and so I touched your hand to be sure."

"Yes, I am Beryl," was the reply. "But you must not talk any more. You are very weak."

With a deep sigh, whether of regret or contentment the nurse could not tell, Martin closed his eyes, and in a few moments passed into a restful and a natural sleep. Nurse Marion stood very still for a while watching him. Just what her thoughts were she alone knew, but her eyes were moist as she presently turned and walked softly into the large ward outside.

As the days passed Martin rapidly improved, and at length he was able to sit up. The miners came often to see him, for they all held him in high regard for what he had done for Tim. But Martin was never so happy as when Beryl was in the room. Neither had once mentioned the days years ago, and to outward eyes they were friends and nothing more. But little did people realise what was taking place in the hearts of both patient and nurse alike. Beryl was ever on her guard lest she should let slip the slightest word which might betray her inmost feelings. The bitterness of that day when Nance had first knelt by the cot had passed away. But she did not know what Martin thought of her, though at times she found his eyes fixed upon her in a puzzled way.

Martin, in fact, did not know what to make of Beryl's quiet constrained manner. If she had expressed surprise, or even upbraided him, he could have understood it. But she never alluded to the past. She waited upon him, and talked about ordinary things, but that was all. This estrangement was hard for him to endure. He began to feel that she no longer cared for him. She knew what he had done, and so was determined to treat him as any other patient. Such was the situation between the two. Each believed that the other did not care, and so both made every effort not to reveal the real feelings enshrined within their hearts.

One bright afternoon Nance and Dick crossed over the river to the lonely house to bring back some books for the Reading Room. Beryl watched them as they sped down to the river on their show-shoes—for there was no path in the deep snow. A sigh escaped her lips as she saw how happy they were. Laughingly they waved their hands to her as they reached the river, and saw her still at the window. What perfect understanding there is between them, she mused. Could any two people be more suited to each other than they?

She remained gazing after them for a while, and then went into the room where Martin was sitting. She found him near the window facing the river. His eyes were filled with an inexpressible sadness as they followed Nance and Dick until they reached the log building beyond. Beryl stood watching him for a few heart beats, and then moved softly to his side. But Martin did not look up. Instead, his whole body drooped, his head bent forward, and he buried his face in his hands as if trying to shut out something from his view.

"What is it?" Beryl asked, in a voice tremulous with emotion. "Are you not feeling well? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Beryl," and Martin lifted his face, which was now drawn and haggard.

"Yes—Martin," was the faint reply.

"Sit down, Beryl. There, that's better."'

A deep silence now reigned in the room. Martin's gaze wandered out through the window, but the nurse saw nothing. Neither did she hear anything, except the wild beating of her own heart. She longed to do something to comfort the visibly distressed man nearby. But she felt powerless, and no words could she utter.

"Why must I suffer like this, Beryl?" burst at last from Martin's lips. "There, there!" he cried, lifting a thin warning hand. "Don't speak until I am through. I know why I suffer. It's just, and what else could I expect. But, my God! is there to be no end? Is this suffering of mind—this hell, never to cease? Why did they not let me die out there in the snow?"

"Hush, hush! Martin," and Beryl rose to her feet, and laid her hand lightly upon his shoulder. "Don't talk that way! I can't stand it!"

"I must talk. Don't try to stop me. Did you see them going over the river?" he asked. "How happy

they are. I am nothing to Nance now. Dick is everything, and I am only in the way. What have I to live for?"

These words caused Beryl to straighten up suddenly. The trembling emotion which had possessed her departed, leaving her very white and calm. Then it was Nance he alone cared for, she told herself. Of her only he thought. Yes, she knew now, and why had she expected anything else?

"Beryl," Martin continued, after a pause, "do you see how happy they are? They are everything to each other. We, too, might have been as happy—but—but for my——How can you look at me, or speak to me, Beryl? You know what I did, and what an outcast I am to-day from God and the Church. Is there any one in the whole world so vile as I?"

"But you have atoned for the past," Beryl soothed. "Think of what you have done."

"Done! Done! Good Lord! what have I done that can ever merit forgiveness from an avenging God? Is there any pardon for one who disgraced his sacred office, broke his parents' hearts, and denounced his Church? Men may talk lightly of sin. But they know not what they are saying, nor its terrible consequences. Nothing can wipe out such a stain as mine, which is so great. There is murder on my hands!"

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," Beryl gently quoted, with tears now streaming down her cheeks. "Don't you, oh, don't you believe it?"

"I believe it, but I don't feel it. It doesn't give me peace. What can wash away *my* sins, which are so great?"

"'If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins,'" Beryl once more quoted.

"Ah, ah," and Martin slightly raised his head. "There is comfort in those words. 'If any man sin,' and 'Jesus' blood cleanseth us from all sin,' Beryl," and he now looked up full into her face. "You know how great are my sins, do you really think that they can ever be forgiven?"

Beryl at once leaned forward and caught his right hand in hers. "Martin," she cried, "I forgave you long ago, and will not He, whose love and mercy are so great, be more ready to forgive?"

Into Martin's eyes came an expression of surprise, mingled with hope.

"Do you mean it, Beryl?" he asked, in a voice scarcely above a whisper. "That you forgive me? I can't believe it!"

"Yes, yes; it's true. I forgave you long ago. Even when every one denounced you I still believed in you."

"Is it possible? Is it possible?" and Martin gazed absently out of the window. "What reason had you to forgive me?"

"Perhaps there was none," Beryl gently replied. "When a woman loves she doesn't seek for a reason; she never thinks of it. True love is of the heart, and not of the head."

"And I believed that you had forgotten!" Martin murmured.

"So you thought of me—sometimes, then?" Beryl questioned.

"Thought of you!" Martin passionately cried, seizing both of her hands in his. "Day and night during those long terrible years you were never out of my mind. But for the thought of you I would not be here to-day."

He paused suddenly, and the woman standing by his side could feel his form tremble as if shaken by some violent emotion.

"Beryl," came at last low and tense from his lips, "is it too late? You know what I mean. Do you care enough for me to—to——"

"To take up life where we laid it down years ago? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes, that's it, Beryl. Oh, can we?"

"What is there to hinder?" was the quiet response. "Why should we be separated any longer when we mean so much to each other?"

The only reply Martin made was to reach out and enfold Beryl in his arms as she sank into the chair by his side. Her face was close to his, and their lips met. At last the struggle, doubt, and uncertainty were ended. A peace such as they had not known for years came into their hearts. Their lives, like two turbulent streams long parted, were at last reunited, to flow on as one, strong and deep.

For over an hour they sat and talked about the future. Time was as nothing to them now, and they were surprised when the door opened and Nance and Dick entered. Beryl rose instantly to her feet, while a flush mantled her cheeks and brow. But Nance did not notice her agitation, so engrossed was she with her own affairs. Hurrying across the room, she threw her arms about the nurse's neck, and gave her an affectionate kiss. She then knelt by Martin's side, and looked up into his face.

"Daddy, oh, daddy!" she cried, "I am so happy!" Then words failed her, and she hid her blushing face in her hands.

Dick, who had been standing in the middle of the room, now came forward, and stood before Martin. "May I have her?" he simply asked. "Nance has promised to be my wife if you will give your consent."

For a few heart beats there was a tense silence, while Martin sat gazing off into space. He was thinking of the past, and of a little child he had rescued from the Indians on the bank of the Mackenzie River years before. Presently his eyes sought those of the young man before him.

"Do you know that Nance is not my child?" he asked in a hesitating voice. "I do not even know her parents' names."

"Yes, I know," Dick replied. "But that doesn't make any difference."

"If you had asked me for Nance a month, nay, even an hour ago," Martin continued, "I should have refused you. She was all I had in the world. But now it is different. You may have her, for I have one to take her place. I have found my Beryl. She has come back to me."

At these words Nance sprang to her feet, and looked eagerly and curiously around the room. Seeing only the nurse standing there with a happy smile upon her face, she was much puzzled, and turned to Martin for an explanation.

"Oh, daddy!" she exclaimed, "how you startled me! What did you mean by saying that Beryl had come back?"

"And so she has, dear. This is my long lost Beryl you see before you."

For an instant only Nance stood there, her eyes filled with wonder. Then they brightened, with complete understanding, and with a glad cry she sprang toward the nurse, who caught her in her arms, and showered kisses upon the fair, fresh face turned up to hers.

During the remainder of the afternoon all was excitement within that little room. There was so much to talk about that it was supper time before they were half through. While Beryl and Nance were preparing the simple repast the two men discussed plans for the future.

"You must stay right here," Dick told Martin. "We can work so much better together."

"But only as a helper," was the low reply. "Remember I am an outcast, and——"

"Hush," Dick interrupted, "don't speak of that again. Let the past be buried forever."

Scarcely had the four sat down to supper ere a knock sounded upon the door. When it was opened Tom and Old Dad entered. They were given a hearty welcome, and room was made for them at the table. Soon the whole story was told, and nothing would do the visitors but they must rise and grasp the hands of the happy couples, and wish them much joy. Tom was so excited that he could eat but little, and for once his tongue seemed tied. When the meal was ended he pushed back from the table, and ran his fingers thoughtfully through his hair.

"If I only had a smoke," he remarked, "it 'ud certainly relieve my feelin's."

"Smoke to your heart's content," Beryl laughingly replied.

"What! Here?"

"Yes. Make yourself perfectly at home."

"I guess a game of chess would relieve *my* feelin's," and Dad looked eagerly into Nance's face as he spoke. "D'ye feel equal fer the battle after all this excitement?"

"Why, yes," was the cheerful response. "Just as soon as these dishes are washed we shall have a game."

What an evening that was on the bank of the Quaska River in that room in the hospital. Happiness reigned supreme, for the black clouds had all disappeared. When the game was ended they talked about the visit which would be made next summer to the great world outside of which Nance had heard so much, but had never seen. Then the two newly-wedded couples would return to carry on the work in the place which was so dear to their hearts.

"An' we'll be here to give yez a house-warmin', hey, Dad?" Tom exclaimed, with joy depicted upon his honest, rugged face.

"Sure thing," was the reply. "An' mebbe ye'll git a few new wrinkles at chess," he slyly added, turning to Nance, at which they all laughed.

Then just before they parted for the night, Martin asked for his violin. Nance brought hers, too, and together they played, the first time in months. There were no sad wailing notes now, but only such music as wells freely from hearts full of love, gratitude, and happiness.

THE END

ZANE GREY'S NOVELS

THE LIGHT OF WESTERN STARS

A New York society girl buys a ranch which becomes the center of frontier warfare. Her loyal superintendent rescues her when she is captured by bandits. A surprising climax brings the story to a delightful close.

THE RAINBOW TRAIL

The story of a young clergyman who becomes a wanderer in the great western uplands—until at last love and faith awake.

DESERT GOLD

The story describes the recent uprising along the border, and ends with the finding of the gold which two prospectors had willed to the girl who is the story's heroine.

RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE

A picturesque romance of Utah of some forty years ago when Mormon authority ruled. The prosecution of Jane Withersteen is the theme of the story.

THE LAST OF THE PLAINSMEN

This is the record of a trip which the author took with Buffalo Jones, known as the preserver of the American bison, across the Arizona desert and of a hunt in "that wonderful country of deep canons and giant pines."

THE HERITAGE OF THE DESERT

A lovely girl, who has been reared among Mormons, learns to love a young New Englander. The Mormon religion, however, demands that the girl shall become the second wife of one of the Mormons—Well, that's the problem of this great story.

THE SHORT STOP

The young hero, tiring of his factory grind, starts out to win fame and fortune as a professional ball player. His hard knocks at the start are followed by such success as clean sportsmanship, courage and honesty ought to win.

BETTY ZANE

This story tells of the bravery and heroism of Betty, the beautiful young sister of old Colonel Zane, one of the bravest pioneers.

THE LONE STAR RANGER

After killing a man in self defense Buck Duane becomes an outlaw along the Texas border. In a camp on the Mexican side of the river, he finds a young girl held prisoner, and in attempting to rescue her, brings down upon himself the wrath of her captors and henceforth is hunted on one side by honest men, on the other by outlaws.

THE BORDER LEGION

Joan Randle, in a spirit of anger, sent Jim Cleve out to a lawless Western mining camp, to prove his mettle. Then realizing that she loved him—she followed him out. On her way, she is captured by a bandit band, and trouble begins when she shoots Kells, the leader—and nurses him to health again. Here enters another romance when Joan, disguised as an outlaw, observes Jim, in the throes of dissipation. A gold strike, a thrilling robbery—gambling and gun play carry you along breathlessly.

THE LAST OF THE GREAT SCOUTS.

By Helen Cody Wetmore and Zane Grey

The life story of Colonel William F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill," as told by his sister and Zane Grey. It begins with his boyhood in Iowa and his first encounter with an Indian. We see "Bill" as a pony express rider, then near Fort Sumter as Chief of the Scouts, and later engaged in the most

dangerous Indian campaigns. There is also a very interesting account of the travels of "The Wild West" Show. No character in public life makes a stronger appeal to the imagination of America than "Buffalo Bill," whose daring and bravery made him famous.

BOOTH TARKINGTON'S NOVELS

SEVENTEEN. Illustrated by Arthur William Brown.

No one but the creator of Penrod could have portrayed the immortal young people of this story. Its humor is irresistible and reminiscent of the time when the reader was Seventeen.

PENROD. Illustrated by Gordon Grant.

This is a picture of a boy's heart, full of the lovable, humorous, tragic things which are locked secrets to most older folks. It is a finished, exquisite work.

PENROD AND SAM. Illustrated by Worth Brehm.

Like "Penrod" and "Seventeen," this book contains some remarkable phases of real boyhood and some of the best stories of juvenile prankishness that have ever been written.

THE TURMOIL. Illustrated by G. E. Chambers.

Bibbs Sheridan is a dreamy, imaginative youth, who revolts against his father's plans for him to be a servitor of big business. The love of a fine girl turns Bibb's life from failure to success.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM INDIANA. Frontispiece.

A story of love and politics,—more especially a picture of a country editor's life in Indiana, but the charm of the book lies in the love interest.

THE FLIRT. Illustrated by Clarence F. Underwood.

The "Flirt," the younger of two sisters, breaks one girl's engagement, drives one man to suicide, causes the murder of another, leads another to lose his fortune, and in the end marries a stupid and unpromising suitor, leaving the really worthy one to marry her sister.

THE NOVELS OF GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

GRAUSTARK. Illustrated with Scenes from the Play.

With the appearance of this novel, the author introduced a new type of story and won for himself a perpetual reading public. It is the story of love behind a throne in a new and strange country.

BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK. Illustrations by Harrison Fisher.

This is a sequel to "Graustark." A bewitching American girl visits the little principality and there has a romantic love affair.

PRINCE OF GRAUSTARK. Illustrations by A. I. Keller.

The Prince of Graustark is none other than the son of the heroine of "Graustark." Beverly's daughter, and an American multimillionaire with a brilliant and lovely daughter also figure in the story.

BREWSTER'S MILLIONS. Illustrated with Scenes from the Photo-Play.

A young man, required to spend one million dollars in one year, in order to inherit *seven*, accomplishes the task in this lively story.

COWARDICE COURT. Illus. by Harrison Fisher and decorations by Theodore Hapgood.

A romance of love and adventure, the plot forming around a social feud in the Adirondacks in which an English girl is tempted into being a traitor by a romantic young American.

THE HOLLOW OF HER HAND. Illustrated by A. I. Keller.

A story of modern New York, built around an ancient enmity, born of the scorn of the aristocrat for one of inferior birth.

WHAT'S-HIS-NAME. Illustrations by Harrison Fisher.

"What's-His-Name" is the husband of a beautiful and popular actress who is billboarded on Broadway under an assumed name. The very opposite manner in which these two live their lives brings a dramatic climax to the story.

THE NOVELS OF MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

"K." Illustrated.

K. LeMoyne, famous surgeon, drops out of the world that has known him, and goes to live in a little town where beautiful Sidney Page lives. She is in training to become a nurse. The joys and troubles of their young love are told with that keen and sympathetic appreciation which has made the author famous.

THE MAN IN LOWER TEN. Illustrated by Howard Chandler Christy.

An absorbing detective story woven around the mysterious death of the "Man in Lower Ten." The strongest elements of Mrs. Rinehart's success are found in this book.

WHEN A MAN MARRIES. Illustrated by Harrison Fisher and Mayo Bunker.

A young artist, whose wife had recently divorced him; finds that his aunt is soon to visit him. The aunt, who contributes to the family income and who has never seen the wife, knows nothing of the domestic upheaval. How the young man met the situation is humorously and most entertainingly told.

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE. Illus. by Lester Ralph.

The summer occupants of "Sunnyside" find the dead body of Arnold Armstrong, the son of the owner, on the circular staircase. Following the murder a bank failure is announced. Around these two events is woven a plot of absorbing interest.

THE STREET OF SEVEN STARS. Illustrated (Photo Play Edition.)

Harmony Wells, studying in Vienna to be a great violinist, suddenly realizes that her money is almost gone. She meets a young ambitious doctor who offers her chivalry and sympathy, and together with world-worn Dr. Anna and Jimmie, the waif, they share their love and slender means.

STORIES OF RARE CHARM BY GENE STRATTON-PORTER

MICHAEL O'HALLORAN. Illustrated by Frances Rogers.

Michael is a quick-witted little Irish newsboy, living in Northern Indiana. He adopts a deserted little girl, a cripple. He also assumes the responsibility of leading the entire rural community upward and onward.

LADDIE. Illustrated by Herman Pfeifer.

This is a bright, cheery tale with the scenes laid in Indiana. The story is told by Little Sister, the youngest member of a large family, but it is concerned not so much with childish doings as with the love affairs of older members of the family. Chief among them is that of Laddie and the Princess, an English girl who has come to live in the neighborhood and about whose family there hangs a mystery.

THE HARVESTER. Illustrated by W. L. Jacobs.

"The Harvester," is a man of the woods and fields, and if the book had nothing in it but the splendid figure of this man it would be notable. But when the Girl comes to his "Medicine Woods," there begins a romance of the rarest idyllic quality.

FRECKLES. Illustrated.

Freckles is a nameless waif when the tale opens, but the way in which he takes hold of life; the nature friendships he forms in the great Limberlost Swamp; the manner in which everyone who meets him succumbs to the charm of his engaging personality; and his love-story with "The Angel" are full of real sentiment.

A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST. Illustrated.

The story of a girl of the Michigan woods; a buoyant, loveable type of the self-reliant American. Her philosophy is one of love and kindness towards all things; her hope is never dimmed. And by the sheer beauty of her soul, and the purity of her vision, she wins from barren and unpromising surroundings those rewards of high courage.

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW. Illustrations in colors.

The scene of this charming love story is laid in Central Indiana. The story is one of devoted friendship, and tender self-sacrificing love. The novel is brimful of the most beautiful word painting of nature, and its pathos and tender sentiment will endear it to all.

THE SONG OF THE CARDINAL. Profusely Illustrated.

A love ideal of the Cardinal bird and big mate, told with delicacy and humor.

KATHLEEN NORRIS' STORIES

MOTHER. Illustrated by F. G. Yohn.

This book has a fairy-story touch, counterbalanced by the sturdy reality of struggle, sacrifice, and resulting peace and power of a mother's experiences.

SATURDAY'S CHILD. Frontispiece by F. Graham Cootes.

Out on the Pacific coast a normal girl, obscure and lovely, makes a quest for happiness. She passes through three stages—poverty, wealth and service—and works out a creditable salvation.

THE RICH MRS. BURGOYNE. Illustrated by Lucius H. Hitchcock.

The story of a sensible woman who keeps within her means, refuses to be swamped by social engagements, lives a normal human life of varied interests, and has her own romance.

THE STORY OF JULIA PAGE. Frontispiece by Allan Gilbert.

How Julia Page, reared in rather unpromising surroundings, lifted herself through sheer determination to a higher plane of life.

THE HEART OF RACHAEL. Frontispiece by Charles E. Chambers.

Rachael is called upon to solve many problems, and in working out these, there is shown the beauty and strength of soul of one of fiction's most appealing characters.

JACK LONDON'S NOVELS

JOHN BARLEYCORN. Illustrated by H. T. Dunn.

This remarkable book is a record of the author's own amasing experiences. This big, brawny world rover, who has been acquainted with alcohol from boyhood, comes out boldly against John Barleycorn. It is a string of exciting adventures, yet it forcefully conveys an unforgetable idea and makes a typical Jack London book.

THE VALLEY OF THE MOON. Frontispiece by George Harper.

The story opens in the city slums where Billy Roberts, teamster and ex-prize fighter, and Saxon Brown, laundry worker, meet and love and marry. They tramp from one end of California to the other, and in the Valley of the Moon find the farm paradise that is to be their salvation.

BURNING DAYLIGHT. Four illustrations.

The story of an adventurer who went to Alaska and laid the foundations of his fortune before the gold hunters arrived. Bringing his fortunes to the States he is cheated out of it by a crowd of money kings, and recovers it only at the muzzle of his gun. He then starts out as a merciless exploiter on his own account. Finally he takes to drinking and becomes a picture of degeneration. About this time he falls in love with his stenographer and wins her heart but not her hand and then—but read the story!

A SON OF THE SUN. Illustrated by A. O. Fischer and C.W. Ashley.

David Grief was once a light-haired, blue-eyed youth who came from England to the South Seas in search of adventure. Tanned like a native and as lithe as a tiger, he became a real son of the sun. The life appealed to him and he remained and became very wealthy.

THE CALL OF THE WILD. Illustrations by Philip R. Goodwin and Charles Livingston Bull. Decorations by Charles E. Hooper.

A book of dog adventures as exciting as any man's exploits could be. Here is excitement to stir the blood and here is picturesque color to transport the reader to primitive scenes.

THE SEA WOLF. Illustrated by W. J. Aylward.

Told by a man whom Fate suddenly swings from his fastidious life into the power of the brutal captain of a sealing schooner. A novel of adventure warmed by a beautiful love episode that every reader will hail with delight.

WHITE FANG. Illustrated by Charles Livingston Bun.

"White Fang" is part dog, part wolf and all brute, living in the frozen north; he gradually comes under the Spell of man's companionship, and surrenders all at the last in a fight with a bull dog. Thereafter he is man's loving slave.

SEWELL FORD'S STORIES

SHORTY McCABE. Illustrated by Francis Vaux Wilson.

A very humorous story. The hero, an independent and vigorous thinker, sees life, and tells about it in a very unconventional way.

SIDE-STEPPING WITH SHORTY. Illustrated by Francis Vaux Wilson.

Twenty skits, presenting people with their foibles. Sympathy with human nature and an abounding sense of humor are the requisites "side-stepping with Shorty."

SHORTY McCABE ON THE JOB. Illustrated by Francis Vaux Wilson.

Shorty McCabe reappears with his figures of speech revamped right up to the minute. He aids in the right distribution of a "conscience fund," and gives joy to all concerned.

SHORTY McCABE'S ODD NUMBERS. Illustrated by Francis Vaux Wilson.

These further chronicles of Shorty McCabe tell of his studio for physical culture, and of his experiences both on the East side and at swell yachting parties.

TORCHY. Illus. by Geo. Biehm and Jas. Montgomery Flagg.

A red-headed office boy, overflowing with wit and wisdom peculiar to the youths reared on the sidewalks of New York, tells the story of his experiences.

TRYING OUT TORCHY. Illustrated by F. Foster Lincoln.

Torchy is just as deliriously funny in these stories as he was in the previous book.

ON WITH TORCHY. Illustrated by F. Foster Lincoln.

Torchy falls desperately in love with "the only girl that ever was," but that young society woman's aunt tries to keep the young people apart, which brings about many hilariously funny situations.

TORCHY, PRIVATE SEC. Illustrated by F. Foster Lincoln.

Torchy rises from the position of office boy to that of secretary for the Corrugated Iron Company. The story is full of humor and infectious American slang.

WILT THOU TORCHY. Illus. by F. Snapp and A. W. Brown.

Torchy goes on a treasure search expedition to the Florida West Coast, in company with a group of friends of the Corrugated Trust and with his friend's aunt, on which trip Torchy wins the aunt's permission to place an engagement ring on Vee's finger.

JOHN FOX, JR'S. STORIES OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE. Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

The "lonesome pine" from which the story takes its name was a tall tree that stood in solitary splendor on a mountain top. The fame of the pine lured a young engineer through Kentucky to catch the trail, and when he finally climbed to its shelter he found not only the pine but the *foot-prints of a girl*. And the girl proved to be lovely, piquant, and the trail of these girlish foot-prints led the young engineer a madder chase than "the trail of the lonesome pine."

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

This is a story of Kentucky, in a settlement known as "Kingdom Come." It is a life rude, semi-barbarous; but natural and honest, from which often springs the flower of civilization.

"Chad." the "little shepherd" did not know who he was nor whence he came—he had just wandered from door to door since early childhood, seeking shelter with kindly mountaineers who gladly fathered and mothered this waif about whom there was such a mystery—a charming waif, by the way, who could play the banjo better that anyone else in the mountains.

A KNIGHT OF THE CUMBERLAND. Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

The scenes are laid along the waters of the Cumberland, the lair of moonshiner and feudsman. The knight is a moonshiner's son, and the heroine a beautiful girl perversely christened "The Blight." Two impetuous young Southerners' fall under the spell of "The Blight's" charms and she learns what a large part jealousy and pistols have in the love making of the mountaineers.

Included in this volume is "Hell fer-Sartain" and other stories, some of Mr. Fox's most entertaining Cumberland valley narratives.

B. M. Bower's Novels

Thrilling Western Romances

CHIP, OF THE FLYING U

A breezy wholesome tale, wherein the love affairs of Chip and Delia Whitman are charmingly and humorously told. Chip's jealousy of Dr. Cecil Grantham, who turns out to be a big, blue eyed young woman is very amusing. A clever, realistic story of the American Cow-puncher.

THE HAPPY FAMILY

A lively and amusing story, dealing with the adventures of eighteen jovial, big hearted Montana cowboys. Foremost amongst them, we find Ananias Green, known as Andy, whose imaginative powers cause many lively and exciting adventures.

HER PRAIRIE KNIGHT

A realistic story of the plains, describing a gay party of Easterners who exchange a cottage at Newport for the rough homeliness of a Montana ranch-house. The merry-hearted cowboys, the fascinating Beatrice, and the effusive Sir Redmond, become living, breathing personalities.

THE RANGE DWELLERS

Here are everyday, genuine cowboys, just as they really exist. Spirited action, a range feud

between two families, and a Romeo and Juliet courtship make this a bright, jolly, entertaining story, without a dull page.

THE LURE OF DIM TRAILS

A vivid portrayal of the experience of an Eastern author, among the cowboys of the West, in search of "local color" for a new novel. "Bud" Thurston learns many a lesson while following "the lure of the dim trails" but the hardest, and probably the most welcome, is that of love.

THE LONESOME TRAIL

"Weary" Davidson leaves the ranch for Portland, where conventional city life palls on him. A little branch of sage brush, pungent with the atmosphere of the prairie, and the recollection of a pair of large brown eyes soon compel his return. A wholesome love story.

THE LONG SHADOW

A vigorous Western story, sparkling with the free, outdoor, life of a mountain ranch. Its scenes shift rapidly and its actors play the game of life fearlessly and like men. It is a fine love story from start to finish.

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