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THE CUP OF TREMBLING  
AND OTHER STORIES

BY  
MARY HALLOCK FOOTE



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
The Riverside Press, Cambridge  
1895

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## THE CUP OF TREMBLING

### I

A miner of the Cœur d'Alêne was returning alone on foot, one winter evening, from the town in the gulch to his solitary claim far up on the timbered mountain-side.

His nearest way was by an unfrequented road that led to the Dreadnaught, a lofty and now abandoned mine that had struck the vein three thousand feet above the valley, but the ore, being low-grade, could never be made to pay the cost of transportation.

He had cached his snow-shoes, going down, at the Bruce boys' cabin, the only habitation on the Dreadnaught road, which from there was still open to town.

The snows that camp all summer on the highest peaks of the Cœur d'Alêne were steadily working downward, driving the game before them; but traffic had not ceased in the mountains. Supplies were still delivered by pack-train at outlying claims and distant cabins in the standing timber. The miner was therefore traveling light, encumbered with no heavier load than his personal requisition of tobacco and whisky and the latest newspapers, which he circulated in exchange for the wayside hospitalities of that thinly peopled but neighborly region.

His homeward halt at the cabin was well timed. The Bruce boys were just sitting down to supper; and the moon, that would light his lonelier way across the white slopes of the forest, would not be visible for an hour or more. The boys threw wood upon their low cooking-fire of coals, which flamed up gloriously, spreading its immemorial welcome over that poor, chance suggestion of a home. The supper was served upon a board, or literally two boards, nailed shelf-wise across the lighted end of the cabin, beneath a small window where, crossed by the squares of a dusty sash, the austere winter twilight looked in: a sky of stained-glass colors above the clear heights of snow; an atmosphere as cold and pure as the air of a fireless church; a hushed multitude of trees disguised in vestments of snow, a mute recession after the benediction has been said.

Each man dragged his seat to the table, and placed himself sidewise, that his legs might find room beneath the narrow board. Each dark face was illumined on one side by the fitful fire-glow, on the other by the constant though fading ray from the window; and, as they talked, the boisterous fire applauded, and the twilight, like a pale listener, laid its cold finger on the pane.

They talked of the price of silver, of the mines shutting down, of the bad times East and West, and the signs of a corrupt generation; and this brought them to the latest ill rumor from town—a sensation that had transpired only a few hours before the miner's departure, and which friends of the persons discussed were trying to keep as quiet as possible.

The name of a young woman was mentioned, hitherto a rather disdainful favorite with society in the Cœur d'Alêne—the wife of one of the richest mine-owners in the State.

The "Old Man," as the miners called him, had been absent for three months in London, detained from week to week on the tedious but paramount business of selling his mine. The mine, with its fatalistic millions (which, it was surmised, had spoken for their owner in marriage more eloquently than the man could have spoken for himself), had been closed down pending negotiations for its sale, and left in charge of the engineer, who was also the superintendent. This young man, whose personal qualities were in somewhat formidable contrast to those of his employer, nevertheless, in business ways, enjoyed a high measure of his confidence, and had indeed deserved it. The present outlook was somewhat different. Persons who were fond of Waring were saying in town that "Jack must be off his head," as the most charitable way of accounting for his late eccentricity. The husband was reported to be on shipboard, expected in New York in a week or less; but the wife, without explanation, had suddenly left her home. Her disappearance was generally accounted a flight. On the same night of the young woman's evanishment, Superintendent Waring had relieved himself of his duties and responsibilities, and

taken himself off, with the same irrevocable frankness, leaving upon his friends the burden of his excuses, his motives, his whereabouts, and his reputation.

Since news of the double desertion had got abroad, tongues had been busy, and a vigorous search was afoot for evidence of the generally assumed fact of an elopement, but with trifling results.

The fugitives, it was easily learned, had not gone out by the railroad; but Clarkson's best team, without bells, and a bob-sleigh with two seats in it had been driven into the stable yard before daylight on the morning of the discovery, the horses rough and jaded, and white with frozen steam; and Clarkson himself had been the driver on this hard night trip. As he was not in the habit of serving his patrons in this capacity, and as he would give none but frivolous, evasive answers to the many questions that were asked him, he was supposed to be accessory to Waring in his crime against the morals of the camp.

While the visitor enlarged upon the evidence furnished by Clarkson's night ride, the condition of his horses, and his own frank lying, the Bruce boys glanced at each other significantly, and each man spat into the fire in silence.

The traveler's halt was over. He slipped his feet into the straps of his snow-shoes, and took his pole in hand; for now the moon had risen to light his path; faint boreal shadows began to appear on the glistening slopes. He shuffled away, and his shape was soon lost in the white depths of the forest.

The brothers sat and smoked by their sinking fire, before covering its embers for the night; and again the small window, whitening in the growing moonlight, was like the blanched face of a troubled listener.

"That must have been them last night, you recollect. I looked out about two o'clock, and it *was* a bob-sleigh, crawlin' up the grade, and the horses hadn't any bells on. The driver was a thick-set man like Clarkson, in a buffaler coat. There was two on the back seat, a man and woman plain enough, all muffled up, with their heads down. It was so still in the woods I could have heard if they'd been talkin' no louder than I be now; but not a word was spoke all the way up the hill. I says to myself, 'Them folks must be pretty well acquainted, 'less they 're all asleep, goin' along through the woods the prettiest kind of a night, walkin' their horses, and not a word in the whole dumb outfit.'"

"I'm glad you didn't open your head about it," said the elder brother. "We don't know for certain it was them, and it's none of our funeral, anyhow. Where, think, could they have been going to, supposin' you was right? Would Jack be likely to harbor up there at the mine?"

"Where else could they get to, with a team, by this road? Where else could they be safer? Jack's inside of his own lines up there, and come another big snow the road'll be closed till spring; and who'd bother about them, anyway, exceptin' it might be the Old Man? And a man that leaves his wife around loose the way he done ain't likely to be huntin' her on snow-shoes up to another man's mine."

"I don't believe Jack's got the coin to be meanderin' very far just about now," said the practical elder brother. "He's staked out with a pretty short rope, unless he's realized on some of his claims. I heard he was tryin' to dig up a trade with a man who's got a mine over in the Slocan country. That would be convenient, over the line among the Kanucks. I wouldn't wonder if he's hidin' out for a spell till he gathers his senses, and gets a little more room to turn in. He can't fly far with a woman like her, unless his pockets are pretty well lined. Them easy-comers easy-goers ain't the kind that likes to rough it. I'll bet she don't bile his shirts or cook his dinners, not much."

"It's a wild old nest up there," said the younger and more imaginative as well as more sympathetic of the brothers—"a wild road to nowhere, only the dropping-off place."

"What gets me is that talk of Jack's last fall, when you was in the Kootenai, about his intentions to bach it up there this winter, if he could coax his brother out from Manitoba to bach with him. I wouldn't like to think it of Jack, that he'd lie that way, just to turn folks off the scent. But he did, sure, pack a lot of his books and stuff up to the mine; grub, too, a lot of it; and done some work on the cabin. Think he was fixin' up for a hide-out, in case he should need one? Or wa'n't it anything but a bluff?"

"Naw," the other drawled impatiently. "Jack's no such a deep schemer as all that comes to. More'n likely he seen he was workin' the wrong lead, and concluded 't was about time for him to be driftin' in another direction. 'T ain't likely he give in to such foolishness without one fight with himself. And about when he had made up his mind to fire himself out, and quit the whole business, the Old Man puts out for London, stuck on sellin' his mine, and can't leave unless Jack stays with it. And Jack says to himself, 'Well, damn it all, I done what I could! What is to be will be.' That's about the way I put it up."

"I wouldn't be surprised," the other assented; "but what's become of the brother, if there ever was a brother in it at all?"

"Why, Lord! a man can change his mind. But I guess he didn't tell his brother about this young madam he was lookin' after along with the rest of the Old Man's goods. I hain't got nothin' against Jack Waring; he's always been square with me, and he's an awful good minin' man. I'd trust him with my pile, if it was millions, but I wouldn't trust him, nor any other man, with my

wife."

"Sho! she was poor stuff; she was light, I tell ye. Think of some of the women we've known! Did they need watchin'? No, sir; it ain't the man, it's the woman, when it's between a young man and a married woman. It's her foolishness that gits away with them both. Girls is different. I'd skin a man alive that set the town talkin' about my sister like *she's* bein' talked about, now."

The brothers stepped outside and stood awhile in silence, regarding the night and breathing the pure, frosty air of the forest. A commiserating thankfulness swelled in their breasts with each deep, clean inspiration. They were poor men, but they were free men—free, compared with Jack. There was no need to bar their door, or watch suspiciously, or skulk away and hide their direction, choosing the defense of winter and the deathlike silence of the snows to the observation of their kind.

They stared with awe up the white, blank road that led to the deserted mine, and they marveled in homely thinking: "Will it pay?" It was "the wrong lead this time, sure."

The brothers watched the road from day to day, and took note that not a fresh track had been seen upon it; not a team, or a traveler on snow-shoes, had gone up or down since the night when the bob-sleigh with its silent passengers had creaked up it in the moonlight. Since that night of the full moon of January not another footprint had broken the smoothness of that hidden track. The snow-tides of midwinter flowed over it. They filled the gulch and softly mounting, snow on snow, rose to the eaves of the little cabin by the buried road. The Bruce boys dug out their window; the hooded roof protected their door. They walked about on top of the frozen tide, and entered their house, as if it were a cellar, by steps cut in a seven-foot wall of snow.

One gray day in February a black dog, with a long nose and bloodshot eyes, leaped down into the trench and pawed upon the cabin door. Opening to the sound, the Bruce boys gave him a boisterous welcome, calling their visitor by name. The dog was Tip, Jack Waring's clever shepherd spaniel, a character as well known in the mountains as his master. Indeed, he was too well known, and too social in his habits, for a safe member of a household cultivating strict seclusion; therefore, when Tip's master went away with his neighbor's wife, Tip had been left behind. His reappearance on this road was regarded by the Bruce boys as highly suggestive.

Tip was a dog that never forgave an injury or forgot a kindness. Many a good bone he had set down to the Bruce boys' credit in the days when his master's mine was supposed to be booming, and his own busy feet were better acquainted with the Dreadnaught road. He would not come in, but stood at the door, wagging his tail inquiringly. The boys were about to haul him into the cabin by the hair of his neck, or shut him out in the cold, when a shout was heard from the direction of the road above. Looking out, they saw a strange young man on snow-shoes, who hailed them a second time, and stood still, awaiting their response. Tip appeared to be satisfied now; he briskly led the way, the boys following, up the frozen steps cut in their moat-wall of snow, and stood close by, assisting, with all the eloquence his honest, ugly phiz was capable of, at the conference that ensued. He showed himself particularly anxious that his old friends should take his word for the stranger whom he had introduced and appeared to have adopted.

Pointing up the mountain, the young man asked, "Is that the way to the Dreadnaught mine?"

"There ain't anybody workin' up there now," Jim Bruce replied indirectly, after a pause in which he had been studying the stranger's appearance. His countenance was exceedingly fresh and pleasing, his age about twenty years. He was buttoned to the chin in a reefing-jacket of iron-gray Irish frieze. His smooth, girlish face was all over one pure, deep blush from exertion in the cold. He wore Canadian snow-shoes strapped upon his feet, instead of the long Norwegian skier on which the men of the Cœur d'Alène make their winter journeys in the mountains; and this difference alone would have marked him for a stranger from over the line. After he had spoken, he wiped away the icy moisture of his breath that frosted his upper lip, stuck a short pipe between his teeth, drew off one mitten and fumbled in his clothing for a match. The Bruce boys supplied him with a light, and as the fresh, pungent smoke ascended, he raised his head and smiled his thanks.

"Is this the road to the Waring mine—the Dreadnaught?" he asked again, deliberately, after a pull or two at his pipe.

And again came the evasive answer: "Mine's shut down. Ain't nobody workin' up there now."

The youngster laughed aloud. "Most uncommunicative population I ever struck," he remarked, in a sort of humorous despair. "That's the way they answered me in town. I say, is this a hoodoo? If my brother isn't up there, where in the devil is he? All I ask is a straight answer to a straight question."

The Bruce boys grinned their embarrassment. "You'll have to ask us somethin' easier," they said.

"This is the road to the mine, ain't it?"

"Oh, that's the road all right enough," the boys admitted; "but you can see yourself how much it's been traveled lately."

The stranger declined to be put off with such casual evidence as this. "The wind would wipe out any snow-shoe track; and a snow-shoer would as soon take across the woods as keep the road, if he knew the way."

"Wal," said Jim Bruce, conclusively, "most of the boys, when they are humpin' themselves to town, stops in here for a spell to limber up their shins by our fire; but Jack Waring hain't fetched his bones this way for two months and better. Looks mighty queer that we hain't seen track nor trace of him if he's been livin' up there since winter set in. Are you the brother he was talkin' of sending for to come out and bach it with him?"

The boys were conscious of their own uneasy looks as the frank eyes of the stranger met theirs at the question.

"I'm the only brother he's got. He wrote me last August that he'd taken a fit of the sulks, and wanted me to come and help him work it off up here at his mine. I was coming, only a good job took me in tow; and after a month or so the work went back on me, and I wrote to Jack two weeks ago to look out for me; and here I am. And the people in town, where he's been doing business these six years, act as if they distantly remembered him. 'Oh, yes,' they say, 'Jack Waring; but he's gone away, don't you know? Snowed under somewhere; don't know where.' I asked them if he'd left no address. Apparently not. Asked if he'd seemed to be clothed in his proper senses when last seen. They thought so. I went to the post-office, expecting to find his mail piled up there. Every scrap had been cleaned up since Friday last; but not the letter I wrote him, so he can't be looking for me. The P. M. squirmed, like everybody else, when I mentioned my brother; but he owned that a man's mail can't leave the box without hands, and that the hands belonged usually to some of the boys at the Mule Deer mine. Now, the Mule Deer is next neighbor to the Dreadnaught, across the divide. It's a friendly power, I know; and that confirms me that my brother has done just what he said he was going to do. The tone of his letter showed that he was feeling a bit seedy. He seemed to have soured on the town for some reason, which might mean that the town has soured on him. I don't ask what it is, and I don't care to know, but something has queered him with the whole crowd. I asked Clarkson to let me have a man to show me the way to the Dreadnaught. He calmly lied to me a blue streak, and he knew that I knew he was lying. And then Tip, here, looked me in the eye, with his head on one side, and I saw that he was on to the whole business."

"Smartest dog that ever lived!" Jim Bruce ejaculated. "I wouldn't wonder if he knew you was Jack's brother."

"I won't swear that he could name the connection; but he knows I'm looking for his master, and he's looking for him too; but he's afraid to trail after him without a good excuse. See? I don't know what Tip's been up to, that he should be left with a man like Clarkson; but whatever he's done, he's a good dog now. Ain't you, Tip?"

"*He done!*" Jim Bruce interrupted sternly. "Tip never done nothing to be punished for. Got more sense of what's right than most humans, and lives up to it straight along. I'd quar'l with any man that looked cross at that dog. You old brute, you rascal! What you doin' up here? Ain't you 'shamed, totin' folks 'way up here on a wild-goose chase? What you doin' it fer, eh? Pertendin' you're so smart! You know Jack ain't up here; Jack ain't up here, I say. Go along with ye, tryin' to fool a stranger!"

Tip was not only unconvinced by these unblushing assertions on the part of a friend whose word he had never doubted: he was terribly abashed and troubled by their manifest disingenuousness. From a dog's point of view it was a poor thing for the Bruce boys to do, trying to pass upon him like this. He blinked apologetically, and licked his chaps, and wagged the end of his tail, which had sunk a trifle from distress and embarrassment at his position.

The three men stood and watched the workings of his mind, expressed in his humble, doggish countenance; and a final admission of the truth that he had been trying to conceal escaped Jim Bruce in a burst of admiration for his favorite's unswerving sagacity.

"Smartest dog that ever lived!" he repeated, triumphant in defeat; and the brothers wasted no more lies upon the stranger.

There was something uncanny, thought the young man, in this mystery about his brother, that grew upon him and waxed formidable, and pursued him even into the depths of the snow-buried wilderness. The breath of gossip should have died on so clean an air, unless there had been more than gossip in it.

The Bruce boys ceased to argue with him on the question of his brother's occupancy of the mine. They urged other considerations by way of delaying him. They spoke of the weather; of the look of snow in the sky, the feeling of snow in the air, the yellow stillness of the forest, the creeping cold. They tried to keep him over night, on the offer of their company up the mountain in the morning, if the weather should prove fit. But he was confident, though graver in manner than at first, that he was going to a supper and a bed at his brother's camp, to say nothing of a brother's welcome.

"I'm positive he's up there. I froze on to it from the first," he persisted. "And why should I sleep at the foot of the hill when my brother sleeps at the top?"

The Bruce boys were forced to let him go on, with the promise, merely allowing for the chance of disappointment, that if he found nobody above he would not attempt to return after nightfall by the Dreadnaught road, which hugs the peak at a height above the valley where there is always a stiff gale blowing, and the combing drifts in midwinter are forty feet high.

"Trust Tip," they said; "he'll show you the trail across the mountain to the Mule Deer"—a longer but far safer way to shelter for the night.

"Tip is fly; he'll see me through," said Jack's brother. "I'd trust him with my life. I'll be back this way possibly in the morning; but if you don't see me, come up and pay us a visit. We'll teach the Dreadnaught to be more neighborly. Here's hoping," he cried, and the three drank in turn out of the young fellow's flask, the Bruce boys almost solemnly as they thought of the meeting between the brothers, the sequel to that innocent hope. Unhappy brother, unhappy Jack!

He turned his face to the snows again, and toiled on up the mountain, with Tip's little figure trotting on ahead.

"Think of Jack's leavin' a dog like that, and takin' up with a woman!" said Jim Bruce, as he squared his shoulders to the fire, yawning and shuddering with the chill he had brought with him from outside. "And such a woman!" he added. "I'd want the straight thing, or else I'd manage to git along without. Anything decent would have taken the dog too."

"'Twas mortal cute, though, of the youngster to freeze on to Tip, and pay no attention to the talk. He knows a dog, that's sure. And Tip knowed him. But I wish we could 'a' blocked that little rascal's game. 'Twas too bad to let him go on."

"I never see anybody so stuck on goin' to a place," said the elder Bruce. "We'll see him back in the morning: but I'll bet he don't jaw much about brother Jack."

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The manager's house at the Dreadnaught had been built in the time of the mine's supposititious prosperity, and was the ideal log cabin of the Cœur d'Alêne. A thick-waisted chimney of country rock buttressed the long side-wall of peeled logs chinked with mud. The front room was twenty feet across, and had a stone hearth and a floor of dressed pine. Back of it were a small bedroom and a kitchen into which water was piped from a spring higher up on the mountain. The roof of cedar shakes projected over the gable, shading the low-browed entrance from the sun in summer, and protecting it in winter from the high-piled snows.

Like a swallow's nest it clung in the hollow of the peak, which slopes in vast, grand contours to the valley, as if it were the inside of a bowl, the rim half broken away. The valley is the bottom of the bowl, and the broken rim is the lower range of hills that completes its boundary. Great trees, growing beside its hidden streams far below, to the eye of a dweller in the cabin are dwarfed to the size of junipers, and the call of those unseen waters comes dreamily in a distant, inconstant murmur, except when the wind beats up the peak, which it seldom does, as may be seen by the warp of the pines and tamaracks, and the drifting of the snows in winter.

To secure level space for the passage of teams in front of the house, an embankment had been thrown up, faced with a heavy retaining-wall of stone. This bench, or terrace, was now all one with the mountain-side, heaped up and smoothed over with snow.

Jack, in his winter nest-building, had cleared a little space for air and light in front of each of the side windows, and with unceasing labor he shoveled out the snow which the wind as constantly sifted into these pits, and into the trench beneath the hooded roof that sheltered the gable entrance.

The snow walls of this sunken gallery rose to the height of the door-frame, cutting out all view from without or within. A perpetual white twilight, warmed by the glow of their hearth-fire, was all that the fugitives ever saw of the day. Sun, or stars were alike to them. One link they had with humanity, however, without which they might have suffered hardship, or even have been forced to succumb to their savage isolation.

The friendly Mule Deer across the mountain was in a state of winter siege, like the Dreadnaught, but had not severed its connections with the world. It was a working mine, with a force of fifty or more men on its pay-roll, and regular communication on snow-shoes was had with the town. The mine was well stocked as well as garrisoned, and Jack was indebted to the friendship of the manager for many accustomed luxuries which Esmée would have missed in the new life that she had rashly welcomed for his sake. No woman could have been less fitted than she, by previous circumstances and training, to take her share of its hardships, or to contribute to its slender possibilities in the way of comfort. A servant was not to be thought of. No servant but a Chinaman would have been impersonal enough for the situation, and all heathen labor has been ostracized by Christian white labor from the Cœur d'Alêne.

So Jack waited upon his love, and was inside man and outside man, and as he expressed it, "general dog around the place." He was a clever cook, which goes without saying in one who has known good living, and has lived eight years a bachelor on the frontier: but he cleaned his own kitchen and washed his own skillets, which does not go without saying, sooner than see Esmée's delicate hands defiled with such grimy tasks. He even swept, as a man sweeps; but what man was ever known to dust? The house, for all his ardent, unremitting toil, did not look particularly tidy.

Its great, dark front room was a man's room, big, undraped and uncurtained, strongly framed,—the framework much exposed in places,—heavy in color, hard in texture, yet a stronghold, and a place of absolute reserve: a very safe place in which to lodge such a secret as Esmée. And there she was, in her exotic beauty, shivering close to a roaring fire, scorching her cheeks that her silk-

clad shoulders might be warm. She had never before lived in a house where the fires went out at night, and water froze beside her bed, and the floors were carpetless and cold as the world's indifference to her fate. She was absolutely without clothing suited to such a change, nor would she listen to sensible, if somewhat unattractive, suggestions from Jack. Now, least of all times, could she afford to disguise her picturesque beauty for the sake of mere comfort and common sense, or even to spare Jack his worries about her health.

It was noon, and the breakfast-table still stood in front of the fire. Jack, who since eight o'clock had been chopping wood and "packing" it out of the tunneled snow-drift which was the woodshed into the kitchen, and cooking breakfast, and shoveling snow out of the trenches, sat glowing on his side of the table, farthest from the fire, while Esmée, her chair drawn close to the hearth, was sipping her coffee and holding a fan spread between her face and the flames.

"Jack, I wish you had a fire-screen—one that would stand of itself, and not have to be held."

"Bless you! I'd be your fire-screen, only I think I'm rather hotter than the fire itself. I insist that you take some exercise, Esmée. Come, walk the trench with me ten rounds before I start."

"Why do you start so early?"

"Do you call this early? Besides, it looks like snow."

"Then, why go at all?"

"You know why I go, dearest. The boys went to town yesterday. I've had no mail for a week."

"And can't you exist without your mail?"

"Existence is just the hitch with us at present. It's for your sake I cannot afford to be overlooked. If I fall out of step in my work, it may take years to get into line again. I can't say like those ballad fellows:

'Arise! my love, and fearless be,  
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

"I wish I had. We'll put some money in our purse, and then we'll make ourselves a home where we please. Money is the first thing with us now. You must see that yourself."

"I see it, of course; but it doesn't seem the nearest way to a fortune, going twice a week on snowshoes to play solo at the Mule Deer mine. Confess, Jack dear, you do not come straight away as soon as you get your mail."

"I do not, of course. I must be civil, after a fashion, to Wilfrid Knight, considering all that he is doing for me."

"What is he doing for you?"

"He's working as hard as he can for me in certain directions. It's best not to say too much about these things till they've materialized; but he has as strong a backing as any man in the Cœur d'Alène. To tell you the truth, I can't afford *not* to be civil to him, if it meant solo every day in the week."

Esmée smiled a little, but remained silent. Jack went around to the chimney-piece and filled his pipe, and began to stalk about the room, talking in brief sentences as he smoked.

"And by the way, dearest, would you mind if he should drop in on us some day?" Jack laughed at his own phrase, so literally close to the only mode of gaining access to their cellarage in the snow.

Esmée looked up quickly. "What in the world does he want to come here for? Doesn't he see enough of you as it is?"

"He wants to see something of you; and it's howling lonesome at the Mule Deer. Won't you let him come, Esmée?"

"Why, do you want him, Jack?"

"I want him! What should I want him for? But we have to be decent to a man who's doing everything in the world for us. We couldn't have made it here, at all, without the aid and comfort of the Mule Deer."

"I'd rather have done without his aid and comfort, if it must be paid for at his own price."

"Everything has got to be paid for. Even that inordinate fire, which you won't be parted from, has to be paid for with a burning cheek."

"Not if you had a fire-screen, Jack," Esmée reminded him sweetly.

"We will have one—an incandescent fire-screen on two legs. Will two be enough? A Mule Deer miner shall pack it in on his back from town. But we shall have to thank Wilfrid Knight for sending him. Well, if you won't have him here, he can't come, of course; but it's a mistake, I think. We can't afford, in my opinion, not to see the first hand that is held out to us in a social way—a hand that can help us if it will, but one that is quite as strong to injure us."

"Have him, then, if he's so dangerous. But is he nice, do you think?"

"He's nice enough, as men go. We're not any of us any too nice."

"Some of you are at least considerate, and I think it very inconsiderate of Mr. Wilfrid Knight to wish to intrude himself on me now."

"Dearest, he has been kindness itself, and delicacy, in a way. Twice he has sent a special man to town to hunt up little dainties and comforts for you when my prison fare"—

"Jack, what do you mean? Has Wilfrid Knight been putting his hand in his pocket for things for me to eat and drink?"

"His pocket's not much hurt. Don't let that disturb you; but it is something to send a man fifteen miles down the mountain to pack the stuff. You might very properly recognize that, if you chose."

"I recognize nothing of it. Why did you not tell me how it was? I thought that you were sending for those things."

"How can I send Knight's men on my errands, if you please? I don't show up very largely at the mine in person. You don't seem to realize the situation. Did you suppose that the Mule Deer men, when they fetch these things from town, know whom they are for? They may, but they are not supposed to."

"Arrange it as you like, but I will not take presents from the manager of the Mule Deer."

"He has dined at your table, Esmée."

"Not at *my* table," said Esmée, haughtily averting her face.

"But you have been nice to him; he remembers you with distinct pleasure."

"Very likely. It is my rôle to be nice to people. I should be nice to him if he came here now; but I should hate him for coming. If *he* were nice, he would not dream of your asking him or allowing him to come."

"Darling, darling, we can't keep it up like this. We are not lords of fate to that extent. Fellows will pay you attention; they always have and they always will: but you must not, dearest, imply that I am not sensitive on the point of what you may or may not receive in that way. I should make myself a laughing-stock before all men if I should begin by resenting things. I could not insult you so. I will resent nothing that a husband does not resent."

"Jack, don't you understand? I could have taken it lightly once; I always used to. I can't take it lightly now. I cannot have him come here—the first to see us in this *solitude à deux*, the most intimate, the most awful—"

"Of course, of course," murmured Jack. "It is awful, I admit it, for you. But it always will be. Ours is a double solitude for life, with the world always eying us askance, scoring us, or secretly envying us, or merely wondering coarsely about us. It takes tremendous courage in a woman; but you will have the courage of your honesty, your surpassing generosity to me."

"Generosity!" Esmée repeated. "We shall see. I give myself just five years of this 'generosity.' After that, the beginning of the end. I shall have to eliminate myself from the problem, to be finally generous. But five years is a good while," she whispered, "to dare to love my love in, if my love loves me."

There could be no doubt of this as yet. Esmée could afford to toy sentimentally with the thought of future despair and final self-elimination.

"Come, come," said Waring; "this will never do; we must get some fresh air on this." He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, pocketed it, and marched into an inner room whence he fetched a warm, loose cloak and a pair of carriage boots.

"Fresh air and exercise!"

Esmée, seeing there was to be no escape from Jack's favorite specific for every earthly ill, put out her foot, in its foolish little slipper, and Jack drew on the fur-lined boots, and laced them around the silken ankles.

He followed her out into the snow-walled fosse, and fell into step beside her.

"May I smoke?"

"What affectation! As if you didn't always smoke."

"Well, hardly, when I have a lady with me, in such a public place."

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"Oh me, oh me!" Esmée suddenly broke forth, "why did I not meet you when you were in New York the winter before! Well, it would have settled one or two things. And we might be walking like this now, before all the world, and every one would say we were exactly suited to each other. And so we are—fearfully and wonderfully. Why did that fact wait to force itself upon us when to



admit it was a crime? And we were so helpless *not* to admit it. What resources had I against it?"

"God knows. Perhaps I ought to have made a better fight, for your sake. But the fight was over for me the moment I saw that you were unhappy. If you had seemed reasonably content with your life, or even resigned, I hope I should have been man enough to have taken myself off and had it out alone."

"I had no life that was not all a pretense and a lie. I began by thinking I could pretend to you. But you know how all that broke down. Oh, Jack, *you* know the man!"

"I wouldn't go on with that, Esmée."

"But I must. I must explain to you just once, if I can."

"You need not explain, I should hope, to me."

"But this is something that rankles fearfully. I must tell you that I never, never would have given in if I hadn't thought there was something in him, really. Even his peculiarities at first seemed rather picturesque; at least they were different from other men's. And we thought him a great original, a force, a man of such power and capacity. His very success was supposed to mean that. It was not his gross money that appealed to me. You could not think that I would have let myself be literally sold. But the money seemed to show what he had done. I thought that at least my husband would be a man among men, and especially in the West. But"—

"Darling, need we go into all this? Say it to yourself, if it must be said. You need not say it to me."

"I am saying it, not you. It is not you who have a monstrous, incredible marriage to explain. I must explain it as far as I can. Do you think I can afford to be without your respect and comprehension simply because you love me?"

"But love includes the rest."

"Not after a while. Now let me speak. It was when he brought me out here that I saw him as he is. I measured him by the standards of the life that had made him. I saw that he was just a rough Western man, like hundreds of others; not half so picturesque as a good many who passed the window every day. And all his great success, which I had taken as a proof of ability, meant nothing but a stroke of brutal luck that might happen to the commonest miner any day. I saw how you pretended to respect his judgment while privately you managed in spite of it. I could not help seeing that he was laughed at for his pretensions in the community that knew him best. It was tearing away the last rag of self-respect in which I had been trying to dress up my shameful bargain. I knew what you all thought of him, and I knew what you must think of me. I could not force myself to act my wretched part before you; it seemed a deeper degradation when you were there to see. How could I let you think that *that* was my idea of happiness! But from the first I never could be anything with you but just myself—for better or for worse. It was such a rest, such a perilous rest, to be with you, just because I knew it was no use to pretend. You always seemed to understand everything without a word."

"I understood *you* because I gave my whole mind to the business. You were in my thoughts night and day, from the moment I first saw you."

"Yes," said Esmée, passing over this confession as a thing of course in a young man's relations with his employer's wife. "It was as if we had been dear friends once, before memory began, before anything began; and all the rest came of the miserable accident of our being born—mis-born, since we could not meet until it was too late. Oh, it was cruel! I can never forgive life, fate, society—whatever it was that played us this trick. I had the strangest forebodings when they talked about you, before I saw you—a premonition of a crisis, a danger ahead. There was a fascination in the commonest reports about you. And then your perfectly reckless naturalness, of a man who has nothing to hide and nothing to fear. Who on earth could resist it?"

"I was the one who ought to have resisted it, perhaps. I don't deny that I was 'natural.' We're neither of us exactly humbugs—not now. If the law that we've broken is hunting for us, there will be plenty of good people to point us out. All that we shall have to face by and by. I wish I could take your share and mine too; but you will always have it the harder. That, too, is part of the law, I suppose."

"I must not be too proud," said Esmée. "I must remember what I am in the eyes of the world. But, Jack dear, if Wilfrid Knight does come, do not let him come without telling me first. Don't let him 'drop in on us,' as you said."

"He shall not come at all if it bothers you to think of it. I am not such a politic fellow. It's for your sake, dearest one, that I am cringing to luck in this way. I never pestered myself much about making friends and connections; but *I* must not be too proud, either. It's a handicap, there's no doubt about that; it's wiser to accept the fact, and go softly. Great heavens! haven't I got you?"

"I suppose Wilfrid Knight is a man of the world? He'll know how to spare the situation?"

"Quite so," said Jack, with a faint smile. "You needn't be uneasy about him." Then, more gravely, he added:—

"He knows this is no light thing with either of us. He must respect your courage—the courage so rare in a woman—to face a cruel mistake that all the world says she must cover up, and right it at

any cost."

"That is nonsense," said Esmée, with the violence of acute sensitiveness. "You need not try to doctor up the truth to me. You know that men do not admire that kind of courage in women—not in their own women. Let us be plain with each other. I don't pretend that I came here with you for the sake of courage, or even of honesty."

Esmée stopped, and turned herself about, with her shoulders against the wall of snow, crushing the back of her head deep into its soft, cold resistance. In this way she gained a glimpse of the sky.

"Jack, it does look like a storm. It's all over gray, is it not? and the air is so raw and chilly. I wish you would not go to-day."

"I'll get off at once, and be back before dark. There shall be no solo this afternoon. But leave those dishes for me. I despise to have you wash dishes."

"I hate it myself. If I do do it, it will be to preserve my self-respect, and partly because you are so slow, Jack dear, and there's no comfort in life till you get through. What a ridiculous, blissful, squalid time it is! Shall we ever do anything natural and restful again, I wonder?"

"Yes; when we get some money."

"I can't bear to hear you talk so much about money. Have I not had enough of money in my life?"

"Life is more of a problem with us than it is with most people."

"Let us go where nature solves the problem. There was an old song one of my nurses used to sing to me—

'Oh, islands there are, in the midst of the deep,  
Where the leaves never fade, and the skies never weep.'

"Can't we go, Jack dear? Let us be South Sea Islanders. Let's be anything where there will be no dishes to wash, or somebody to wash them for us."

"We will go when we get some money," Jack persisted hauntingly.

"Oh, hush about the money! It's so uncomplimentary of you. I shall begin to think"—

"You must not think. Thinking, after a thing is done, is no use. You must 'sleep, dear, sleep.' I shall be back before dark; but if I am not, don't think it strange. One never knows what may happen."

When he was gone Esmée was seized with a profound fit of dawdling. She sat for an hour in Jack's deep leather chair by the fire, her cloak thrown back, her feet, in the fur boots, extended to the blaze. For the first time that day she felt completely warm. She sat an hour dreaming, in perfect physical content.

Where did those words that Jack had quoted come from, she mused, and repeated them to herself, trying their sound by ear.

"Then sleep, dear, sleep!"

They gathered meaning from some fragmentary connection in her memory.

"If thou wilt ease thine heart  
Of love, and all its smart—  
Then sleep, dear, sleep!"

"And not a sorrow"—

She could recall no more. The lines had an echo of Keats. She looked across the room toward the low shelves where Jack's books were crammed in dusty banishment. It was not likely that Keats would be in that company; yet Jack, by fits and starts, had been a passionate reader of everybody, even of the poets.

She was too utterly comfortable to be willing to move merely to lay the ghost of a vanished song. And now another verse awoke to haunt her:—

"But wilt thou cure thine heart  
Of love, and all its smart—  
Then die, dear, die!"

"T is deeper, sweeter"—

Than what? She could not remember. She had read the verses long ago, as a girl of twenty measures time, when the sentiment had had for her the palest meaning. Now she thought it not extravagant, but simply true.

"Then die, dear, die!"

She repeated, pillowing her head in the satin lining of her cloak. A tear of self-forgiving pity stole down her cheek. Love,—of her own fair, sensitive self; love of the one who could best express her to herself, and magnify her day by day, on the highest key of modern poetic sympathy and primal passion and mediæval romance,—this was the whole of life to her. She desired no other revelation concerning the mission of woman. In no other sense would she have held it worth while to be a woman. Yet she, of Beauty's daughters, had been chosen for that stupidest of all the dull old world's experiments in what it calls success—a loveless marriage!

When at length the fire went down, and the air of the draughty room grew cool, Esmée languidly bestirred herself. The confusion that Jack had left behind him in his belated departure began to afflict her—the unwashed dishes on the table, the crumbs on the floor, the half-emptied pipe and ashes on the mantel, the dust everywhere. She pitied herself that she had no one at her command to set things right. At length she rose, reluctantly dispensing with her cloak, but keeping the fur boots on her feet, and began to pile up the breakfast dishes, and carry them by separate journeys to the kitchen.

The fire had long been out in the cook-stove; the bare little place was distressingly cold; neither was it particularly clean, and the nature of its disorder was even more objectionable than that of the sitting-room. Poor Jack! Esmée had profoundly admired and pitied his struggles with the kitchen. What man of Jack's type and breeding had ever stood such a test of devotion? Even young Sir Gareth, who had done the same sort of thing, had done it for knighthood's sake, and had taken pride in the ordeal. With Jack such service counted for nothing except as a preposterous proof of his love for her.

Suppose she should surprise him in house-wifely fashion, and treat him to a clean kitchen, a bright fire, and a hot supper on his return? The fancy was a pleasing one; but when she came to reckon up the unavoidable steps to its accomplishment, the details were too hopelessly repellent. She did not know, in fact, where or how to begin. She mused forlornly on their present situation, which, of course, could not last; but what would come next? Surely, without money, plucked of the world's respect and charity, they were a helpless pair. Jack was right; money they must have; and she must learn to keep her scruples out of his way; he was sufficiently handicapped already. She hovered about the scene of his labors for a while, mourning over him, and over herself for being so helpless to help him. By this time the sitting-room fire had gone quite down; she put on a pair of gloves before raking out the coals and laying the wood to rebuild it. The room had still a comfortless air, now that she was alone to observe it. She could have wept as she went about, moving chairs, lifting heavy bearskins, and finding dirt, ever more dirt, that had accumulated under Jack's superficial housekeeping.

Her timid attempt at sweeping raised a hideous dust. When she tried to open the windows every one was frozen fast, and when she opened the door the cold air cut her like a knife.

She gave up trying to overhaul Jack's back accounts, and contented herself with smoothing things over on the surface. She possessed in perfection the decorative touch that lends an outward grace to the aspect of a room which may be inwardly unclean, and therefore unwholesome, for those who live in it.

It had never been required of her that she should be anything but beautiful and amiable, or do anything but contribute her beauty and amiability to the indulgent world around her. The hard work was for those who had nothing else to bestow. She laid Jack's slippers by the fire, and, with fond coquetry, placed a pair of her own little mouse-colored suedes, sparkling with silver embroidery, close beside them. Her velvet wrap with its collar of ostrich plumes she disposed effectively over the back of the hardwood settle, where the shimmering satin lining caught a red gleam from the fire. Then she locked the outer door, and prepared to take Jack's advice, and "sleep, dear, sleep."

At the door of her bedroom she turned for a last survey of the empty room—the room that would live in her memory as the scene of this most fateful chapter of her life. That day, she suddenly remembered, was her younger sister's wedding-day. She would not permit the thoughts to come. All weddings, since her own, were hateful to her. "Hush!" she inwardly breathed, to quell her heart. "The thing was done. All that was left was dishonor, either way. This is my plea, O God! There was no escape from shame! And Jack loved me so!"

About five o'clock of that dark winter day Esmée was awakened from her warm sleep by a loud knocking on the outside door. It could not be Jack, for he had carried with him the key of the kitchen door, by which way he always entered on his return. It was understood between them that in his absences no stranger could be admitted to the house. Guests they did not look for; as to friends, they knew not who their friends were, or if, indeed, they had any friends remaining since their flight.

The knocking continued, with pauses during which Esmée could fancy the knocker outside listening for sounds within the house. Her heart beat hard and fast. She had half risen in her bed; at intervals she drew a deep breath, and shifted her weight on its supporting arm.

Footsteps could be heard passing and repassing the length of the trench in front of the house. They ceased, and presently a man jumped down into the pit outside her bedroom window; the window was curtained, but she was aware that he was there, trying to look in. He laid his hand on the window-frame, and leaped upon the sill, and shook the sash, endeavoring to raise it; but the blessed frost held it fast. The man had a dog with him, that trotted after him, back and forth,

and seconded his efforts to gain entrance by leaping against the door, and whining, and scratching at the lock.

The girl was unspeakably alarmed, there was something so imperative in the stranger's demand. It had for her startled ear an awful assurance, as who should say, "I have a right to enter here." Who was it, what was it, knocking at the door of that guilty house?

It seemed to Esmée that this unappeasable presence had haunted the place for an hour or more, trying windows, and going from door to door. At length came silence so prolonged and complete that she thought herself alone at last.

But Jack's brother had not gone. He was standing close to the window of the outer room, studying its interior in the strong light and shadow of a pitch-pine fire. The room was confiding its history to one who was no stranger to its earlier chapters, and was keen for knowledge of the rest.

This was Jack's house, beyond a doubt, and Jack was its tenant at this present time, its daily intimate inhabitant. In this sense the man and his house were one.

The Dreadnaught had been Jack's first important mining venture. In it he had sunk his share of his father's estate, considerable time and reputation, and the best work he was capable of; and he still maintained, in accordance with his temperament, that the mine was a good mine, only present conditions would not admit of the fact being demonstrated. The impregnable nature of its isolation made it a convenient cache for personal properties that he had no room for in his quarters in town, the beloved impedimenta that every man of fads and enthusiasms accumulates even in a rolling-stone existence. He was all there: it was Jack so frankly depicted in his belongings that his young brother, who adored him, sighed restlessly, and a blush of mingled emotions rose in his snow-chilled cheek.

What reminder is so characteristic of a man as the shoes he has lately put off his feet? And, by token, there were Jack's old pumps waiting for him by the fire.

But now suspicion laid its finger on that very unnamed dread which had been lurking in the young man's thoughts. Jack, the silent room confessed, was not living here alone. This could hardly be called "baching it," with a pair of frail little feminine slippers moored close beside his own. Where had Jack's feet been straying lately,—on what forbidden ground,—that his own brother must be kept in ignorance of such a step as this? If he had been mad enough to fetch a bride to such an inhuman solitude as this,—if this were Jack's lawful honeymoon, why should his bliss be hedged about with an awkward conspiracy of silence on the part of all his friends?

The silent room summoned its witnesses; one by one each mute, inanimate object told its story. The firelight questioned them in scornful flashes; the defensive shadows tried to confuse the evidence, and cover it up.

But there were the conscious slippers reddening by the hearth. The costly Paris wrap displayed itself over the back of Jack's honest hardwood settle. On the rough table, covered with a blanket wrought by the hands of an Indian squaw, glimpsed a gilded fan, half-open, showing court ladies, dressed as shepherdesses, blowing kisses to their ephemeral swains. Faded hot-house roses were hanging their heads—shriveled packets of sweetness—against the brown sides of a pot-bellied tobacco-jar, the lid of which, turned upside down, was doing duty as an ash-receiver. A box of rich confectionery imported from the East had been emptied into a Dresden bowl of a delicate, frigid pattern, reminding one of such pure-bred gentlewomen as Jack's little mother, from whom he had coaxed this bit of the family china on his last home visit.

We do not dress up our brother's obliquity in euphemistic phrases; Jack might call it what he pleased; but not the commonest man that knew him had been willing to state in plain words the manner of his life at present, snowed in at the top of the Dreadnaught road. Behold how that life spoke for itself: how his books were covered with dust; how the fine, manly rigor of the room had been debased by contact with the habits of a luxurious dependent woman!

Here Jack was wasting life in idleness, in self-banishment, in inordinate affections and deceits of the flesh. The brother who loved him too well to be lenient to his weakness turned away with a groan of such indignant heartbreak as only the young can know. Only the young and the pure in heart can have such faith in anything human as Jack's brother had had in Jack.

Esmée, reassured by the long-continued silence, had ventured out, and now stepped cautiously forward into the broad, low light in the middle of the room. The fireshine touched her upraised chin, her parted lips, and a spark floated in each of her large, dark, startled eyes. Tip had been watching as breathless and as motionless as his companion, but now at sight of Esmée he bounded against the sash, and squealed his impatience to be let in. Esmée shrank back with a cry; her hands went up to her breast and clasped themselves. She had seen the face at the window. Her attitude was the instinctive expression of her convicted presence in that house. And the excluded pair who watched her were her natural judges: Fidelity that she had outraged, and Family Affection that she had wronged.

Tip made further demonstrations at the window, but Esmée had dragged herself away out of sight into her own room.

The steps of the knocker were heard, a few minutes later, wandering irresolutely up and down the trench. For the last time they paused at the door.

"Shall we knock once more, Tip? Shall we give her one more chance? She has seen that I am no ruffian; she knows that you are a friend. Now if she is an honest woman let her show herself! For the last time, then!"

A terrific peal of knocking shocked the silence. Esmée could have screamed, there was an accent so scornfully accusative in this last ironical summons. No answer was possible. The footsteps turned away from the door, and did not come back.

## II

The snow that had begun to fall softly and quietly about the middle of the afternoon had steadily increased until now in the thickening dusk it spread a white blindness everywhere. From her bedroom window Esmée looked out, and though she could not see the sky, there were signs enough to tell her what the coming night would be. Fresh snow lay piled in the trench, and snow was whirling in. The blast outside wailed in the chimney, and shook the house, and sifted snow in beneath the outer door.

Esmée was not surprised that Jack, when he came home, should be as dismal and quiet as she was herself; but it did surprise her that he should not at once perceive that something had happened in his absence.

At first there was supper to cook, and she could not talk to him then. Later, when they were seated together at the table, she tried to speak of that ghostly knocking; but Jack seemed preoccupied and not inclined to talk, and she was glad of an excuse to postpone a subject that had for her a peculiar terror in its suggestions.

It was nine o'clock before all the little house tasks were done, and they drew up to the fire, seeking in each other's eyes the assurance that both were in need of, that nothing of their dear-bought treasure of companionship had altered since they had sat that way before. But it was not quite the same Esmée, nor the same Jack. They were not thinking exclusively of each other.

"Why don't you read your letters, dear?"

"I can't read them," said Esmée. "They were not written to me—the woman I am now."

These were the home letters, telling of her sister's coming wedding festivities, that Esmée could not read, especially that one from Lilla—her last letter as a girl to the sister who had been a bride herself, and would know what a girl's feelings at such a time must be.

"I have tried to write to mama," said Esmée; "but it's impossible. Anything I could say by way of defense sounds as if I were trying to lay the blame on some one else; and if I say nothing, but just state the facts, it is harsh, as if I were brazening it out. And she has never seen you, Jack. You are my only real defense. By what you are, by what you will be to me, I am willing to be judged."

"Dearest, you make me ashamed, but I can say the same of you. Still, to a mother, I'm afraid it will make little difference whether it's 'Launcelot or another.'"

"It certainly made little difference to her when she made her choice of a husband for me," said Esmée, bitterly. One by one she dropped the sheets of her letters in the fire, and watched them burn to ashes.

"When they know—if they ever write to me after that, I will read those letters. These have no meaning." They had too much meaning, was what Esmée should have said.

After a silence Jack spoke somewhat hoarsely: "It's a beastly long time since I have written to any of my people. It's a pity I didn't write and tell them something; it might have saved trouble. But how can a fellow write? I got a letter to-day from my brother Sid. Says he's thinking of coming out here."

"Heaven save us!" cried Esmée. "Do write at once—anything—say anything you like."

Jack smiled drearily. "I'm afraid it's too late. In fact, the letter was written the day before he was to start, and it's dated January 25. There's a rumor that some one is in town, now, looking for me. I shouldn't be surprised if it were Sid."

"What if it were?" asked Esmée. "What could you do?"

"I don't know, indeed," said Jack. "I'm awfully cut up about it. The worst of it is, I asked him to come."

"You asked him!"

"Some time ago, dearest, when everything was different. I thought I must make the fight for both our sakes, and I sent for Sid, thinking it might help to have him here with me."

"Did you indeed," said Esmée, coldly. "What a pity he did not come before it was too late; he might have saved us both. How long ago was it, please?"

"Esmée, don't speak to me like that."

"But do you realize what you are saying?"

"You should not mind what I say. Think—what shall we do if it should be Sid? It rests with you, Esmée. Could you bear to meet him?"

"What is he like?" said Esmée, trembling.

"Oh, he's a lovely fellow. There's nobody like Sid."

"What does he look like?"

"He's good-looking, of course, being my brother," said Jack, with a wretched attempt at pleasantry, which met with no response. Esmée was staring at him, a strange terror in her eyes. "But there is more to his looks, somehow, than to most pretty boys. People who are up in such things say he's like the Saint George, or Saint Somebody, by Donatello. He's blond, you know; he's as fresh as a girl, but he has an uncommonly set look at times, when he's serious or a bit disgusted about something. He has a set in his temper, too. I should not care to have Sid hear our story—not till after he had seen you, Esmée. Perhaps even then he could not understand. He has never loved a woman, except his mother. He doesn't know what a man's full-grown passion means. At least, I don't think he knows. He was rather fiercely moral on some points when I talked to him last; a little bit inhuman—what is it, Esmée?"

"There is that dog again!"

Jack looked at her in surprise at her shocked expression. Every trace of color had left her face. Her eyes were fixed upon the door.

"What dog? Why, it's Tip."

A creature as white as the storm sprang into the room as he opened the door, threw himself upon Jack, and whimpered and groaned and shivered, and seemed to weep with joy. Jack hugged him, laughing, and then threw him off, and dusted the snow from his clothing.

Tip shook himself, and came back excitedly for more recognition from his master. He took no notice at all of Esmée.

"Speak to him, won't you, dear? It's only manners, even if you don't care for him," Jack prompted gently. But Tip refused to accept Esmée's sad, perfunctory greeting; his countenance changed, he held aloof, glancing at her with an unpleasant gleam in his bloodshot eyes.

He had satisfied the cravings of affection, and now made it plain that his visit was on business that demanded his master's attention outside of the house. Jack knew the creature's intelligent ways so well that speech was hardly needed between them. "What's the racket, Tip? What's wrong out there? No, sir; I don't go back to town with you to-night, sir. Not much. Lie down! Be quiet, idiot!"

But Tip stood at the door, and began to whine, fixing his eyes on his master's face. As nothing came of this, he went back and stood in front of him, wagging his tail heavily and slowly; troubled wrinkles stood out over his beseeching eyes.

"What under heaven's the matter with you, dog? You're a regular funeral procession." Jack shoved the creature from him, and again he took up his station at the door. Jack rose, and opened it, and playfully tried to push him out. Tip stood his ground, always with his eyes on his master's face, and whimpered under his breath with almost tearful meaning.

"He's on duty to-night," said Jack. "He's got something on his mind, and he wants me to help him out with it. I say, old chap, we don't keep a life-saving station up here. Get out with your nonsense."

"There was some one with him when he was here this afternoon," Esmée forced herself to say.

"Has Tip been here before?"

"Yes, Jack. But a man was with him—a young, strange man. It was about four o'clock, perhaps five; it was getting dusk. I had been asleep, and I was so frightened. He knocked and knocked. I thought he would never stop knocking. He came to my window, and tried to get in, but the sash was frozen fast." Esmée paused, and caught her breath. "And I heard a dog scratching and whining."

"Did you not see the man?"

"I did. I saw him," gasped Esmée. "It was all quiet after a while. I thought he had gone. I came out into the room, and there he stood close by that window, staring in; and the dog was with him. It was Tip."

"And you did not open the door to Tip?"

"Jack dear, have you not told me that I was never to open the door when you were away?"

"But didn't you speak to the man? Didn't you ask him who he was or what he wanted?"

"How could I? He did not speak to me. He stared at me as if I were a ghost, and then he went away."

"I would have questioned any man that came here with Tip. Tip doesn't take up with toughs and

hobos. What was he like?"

Esmée had retreated under this cross-questioning, and stood at some distance from Jack, pale, and trembling with an ague of the nerves.

"What was he like?" Jack repeated.

"He was most awfully beautiful. He had a face like—like a death-angel."

Jack rejected this phrase with an impatient gesture. "Was he fair, with blue eyes, and a little blond mustache?"

"I don't know. The light was not good. He stood close to the window, or I could not have seen him. What have I done? Was it wrong not to open the door?"

"Never mind about that, Esmée. I want you to describe the man."

"I can't describe him. I don't need to. I know—I know it was your brother."

"It must have been; and we have been sitting here—how many hours?"

"I did not know there could be anybody—who—had a right to come in."

"Such a night as this? Get away, Tip!"

Jack had risen, and thrown off his coat. Esmée saw him get down his snow-shoe rig. He pulled on a thick woolen jersey, and buttoned his reefer over that. His foot-gear was drying by the fire; he put on a pair of German stockings, and fastened them below the knee, and over these the India-rubber buskins which a snow-shoer wears.

"Tip had better have something to eat before we start," he suggested. He did not look at Esmée, but his manner to her was very gentle and forbearing; it cut her more than harsh words and unreasonable reproaches would have done.

"He seems to think that I have done it," she said to herself, with the instinct of self-defense which will always come first with timid natures.

Tip would not touch the food she brought him. She followed him about the room meekly, with the plate in her hand; but he shrunk away, lifting his lip, and showing the whites of his blood-rimmed eyes.

Except for this defect, the sequel of distemper or some other of the ills of puppyhood, Tip had been a good-looking dog. But this accident of his appearance had prejudiced Esmée against him at the first sight. Later he had made her dislike and fear him by a habit he had of dogging his master to her door, and waiting there, outside, like Jack's discarded conscience. If chidden, or invited to come in, the unaccountable creature would skulk away, only to return and take up his post of dumb witness as before; so that no one who watched the movements of Jack's dog could fail to know how Jack bestowed his time. In this manner Esmée had come almost to hate the dog, and Tip returned her feeling in his heart, though he was restrained from showing it. But to-night there was a new accusation in his gruesome eye.

"He will not eat for me," said Esmée, humbly.

"He must eat," said Jack. "Here, down with it!" The dog clapped his jaws on the meat his master threw to him, and stood ready, without a change of countenance, at the door.

"Can't you say that you forgive me?" Esmée pleaded.

"Forgive you? Who am I, to be forgiving people?" Jack answered hoarsely.

"But say it—say it! It was your brother. If it had been mine, I could forgive you."

"Esmée, you don't see it as it is."

"I do see it; but, Jack, you said that I was not to open the door."

"Well, you didn't open it, did you? So it's all right. But there's a man out in the snow, somewhere, that I have got to find, if Tip can show me where he is. Come, Tip!"

"Oh, Jack! You will not go without"—Jack turned his back to the door, and held out his arms. Esmée cast herself into them, and he kissed her in bitter silence, and went out.

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These two were seated together again by the fire in the same room. It was four o'clock in the morning, but as dark as midnight. The floor in spots was wet with melted snow. They spoke seldom, in low, tired voices; it was generally Esmée who spoke. They had not been weeping, but their faces were changed and grown old. Jack shivered, and kept feeding the fire. On the bed in the adjoining room, cold as the snow in a deserted nest, lay their first guest, whom no house fire would ever warm.

"I cannot believe it. I cannot take it in. Are you sure there is nothing more we could do that a doctor would do if we had one?"

"We have done everything. It was too late when I found him."

"How is it possible? I have heard of persons lost for days—and this was only such a few hours."

"A few hours! Good God, Esmée! Come out with me, and stand five minutes in this storm, if you can. And he had been on snow-shoes all day; he had come all the way up-hill from town. He had had no rest, and nothing to eat. And then to turn about, and take it worse than ever!"

"It is an impossible thing," she reiterated. "I am crazy when I think of it."

Tip lifted his head uneasily, rose, and tapped about the room, his long-nailed toes rattling on the uncarpeted floor. He paused, and licked up one of the pools of melted snow. "Stop that!" Jack commanded. There was dead silence. Then Tip began again his restless march about the room, pausing at the bedroom door to whine his questioning distress.

"Can't you make him stay in the kitchen?" Esmée suggested timidly.

"It is cold in the kitchen. Tip has earned his place by my fire as long as I shall have one," said Jack, emphatically.

Down fell some crashing object, and was shivered on the floor. The dog sprang up, and howled; Esmée trembled like a leaf.

"It's only your little looking-glass," she whispered. There was no mystery in its having fallen in such a wind from the projecting log where Esmée, with more confidence than judgment, had propped it.

In silence both recalled the light words that had passed when Jack had taken it down from its high nail, saying that the mirrors in his establishment had not been hung with reference to persons of her size; and Esmée could see the picture they had made, putting their heads together before it, Jack stooping, with his hands on her shoulders, to bring his face in line with hers. Those laughing faces! All smiles, all tremulous mirth in that house had vanished as the reflections in a shattered mirror.

Jack got up, and fetched a broom, and swept the clinking fragments into the fire. The frame he broke in two and tossed after them.

"Call me as soon as it is light enough to start," he said to Esmée.

"But not unless it has stopped snowing?"

"Call me as soon as it is light, please," Jack repeated. He stumbled as he walked, like an old man. Esmée followed him into the drear little kitchen, where a single candle on the table was guttering in the draft. The windows were blank with frost, the boards cracked with the cold. Esmée helped prepare him a bed on a rude bunk against the wall, and Jack threw himself down on his pallet, and closed his eyes, without speaking. Esmée stood watching him in silence a moment; then she fell on her knees beside him on the floor.

"Say that you can forgive me! How shall I bear it all alone!"

At first Jack made no answer; he could not speak; his breath came deep and hard. Then he rose on one elbow, and looked at her with great stern eyes.

"Have I accused you? You did not do it. I did not do it. It happened—to show us what we are. We have broken with all the ties of family. We can have no brother or sister—our brothers and sisters are the rebels like ourselves; every man and woman whom society has branded and cast out. Sooner or later we shall embrace them all. Nothing healthy can come near us and not take harm from us. We are contamination to women and destruction to men. Poor Sid had better have come to a den of thieves and murderers than to his own brother's house last night; yet we might have done him worse harm if we had let him in. Now he is only dead—clean and true, as he lived. He is dead through my sin. Do you see, now, what this means to me?"

"I see," said Esmée, rising from her knees. She went out of the room, closing the door gently between them.

Jack lay stretching his aching muscles in one position after another, and every way he turned his thoughts pursued him. The brutality of his speech to Esmée wrought its anguish equally upon him, now that it was too late to get back a single word. Still, she must understand,—she would understand, when she came to think—how broken up he was in mind and body, how crazed for want of rest after that horrible night's work. This feeling of irresponsibility to himself satisfied him that she could not hold him responsible for his words at such a time. The strain he was supporting, mentally and physically, must absolve him if she had any consideration for him left.

So at length he slept. Esmée was careful not to disturb him. She had no need of bodily rest, and the beating of her heart and the ceaseless thinking went on and on.

"I am to be left here alone with *it*"—she glanced toward the room where the body lay—"while he goes for help to take it to town. He has not asked me if I can go through with this. If I should say to him, 'Spare me this awful trial,' he would answer,—and of course he would be right,—'There are only us two; one to go and one to stay. Is it so much to ask of you after what has happened?'"

"He does not ask it; he expects it. He is not my tender, remorseful lover now, dreading for me,



every day, what his happiness must cost me. He is counting what I have cost him in other possessions which he might have had if he had not paid too great a price for one."

So these two had come to judge each other in the common misery that drove them apart. Toward daylight the snow ceased and the wind went down. Jack had forgotten to provide wood for Esmée's fire; the room was growing cold, and the wood supply was in the kitchen, where he slept. She sat still and suffered mutely, rather than waken him before the time. This was not altogether consideration for him. It was partly wounded pride, inflicting its own suffering on the flesh after a moral scourging, either through one's own or another's conscience.

When the late morning slowly dawned, she went to waken him, obedient to orders. She made every effort to arouse him, but in vain. His sleep was like a trance. She had heard of cases of extreme mental and physical strain where a sleep like this, bordering on unconsciousness, had been nature's cure. She let him sleep.

Seeing that her movements did not disturb him, she went cautiously about the room, trying, now in forlorn sincerity, to adapt herself to the necessities of the situation. She did her best to make ready something in the nature of a breakfast for Jack when he should at length awaken. It promised to be a poor substitute, but the effort did her good.

It was after noon before Jack came to himself. He had been awake some little time, watching her, before she was aware of it. He could see for himself what she had been trying to accomplish, and he was greatly touched.

"Poor child!" he said, and held out his arms.

She remained at a distance, slightly smiling, her eyes on the floor.

He did not press the moment of reconciliation. He got upon his feet, and, in the soldierly fashion of men who live in camps and narrow quarters, began to fold his blankets, and straighten things in his corner of the room.

"If you will go into the sitting-room, I will bring in the breakfast, such as it is," said Esmée. Jack obeyed her meekly. The sitting-room fire had been relighted, and was burning brightly. It was strange to him to sit and see her wait upon him. Stranger still was her silence. Here was a new distress. He tried to pretend unconsciousness of the change in her.

"It is two o'clock," he said, looking at his watch. "I'm afraid I shall be late getting back; but you must not worry. The storm is over, and I know every foot of the way."

"Did I do wrong," Esmée questioned nervously, "not to call you? I tried very hard, but you could not wake. You must have needed to sleep, I think."

"Do you expect me to scold you every time I speak, Esmée? I have said enough, I think. Come here, dear girl. *I* need to be forgiven now. It cuts me to the heart to see you so humble. May God humble me for those words I said!"

"You spoke the truth. Only we had not been telling each other the truth before."

"No. And we must stop it. We shall learn the truth fast enough. We need not make whips of it to lash each other with. Come here."

"I can't," said Esmée in a choking whisper.

"Yes, you can. You shall forgive me."

She shook her head. "That is not the question. You did not do it. I did not do it. God has done it—as you said."

"Did I say that? Did I presume to preach to you?"

"If I have done what you say—if I have cut you off from all human relations, and made your house worse than a den of thieves and murderers, how can anything be too bad for me to hear? What does it matter from whom I hear it?"

"I was beside myself. I was drunk with sorrow and fatigue."

"That is when people speak the truth, they say. I don't blame you, Jack. How should I? But you know it can never be the same, after this, with you or with me."

"Esmée," said Jack, after a long and bitter silence, holding out his shaking hand, "will you come with me in there, and look at him? He knows the truth—the whole truth. If you can see in his face anything like scorn or reproach, anything but peace,—peace beyond all conception,—then I will agree that we part this day, forever. Will you come?"

"Oh, Jack, you *are* beside yourself, now. Do you think that I would go in there, in the presence of *that* peace, and call on it for my justification, and begin this thing again? I should expect that peace would come to me—the peace of instant death—for such awful presumption."

"I didn't mean that—not to excuse ourselves; only to bring back the trust that was between us. Does this bitterness cure the past? Have we not hurt each other enough already?"

"I think so. It is sufficient for me. But men, they say, get over such things, and their lives go on,

and they take their places as before. I want you to"—

"There is nothing for me—will you believe it?—more than there is for you. Will you not do me that much justice, not to treat this one passion of my life as—what shall I say? It is not possible that you can think such things. We must make up to each other for what we have each cost the other. Come. Let us go and stand beside him—you and I, before the others get here. It will do us good. Then we will follow him out, on his way home, as far as we can; and if there is any one in town who has an account with me, he can settle it there and then. Perhaps my mother will have both her sons shipped home to her on the same train."

Jack had not miscounted on the effect of these words. They broke down Esmée's purer resolution with their human appeal. Yet he was not altogether selfish.

He held out his hand to her. She took it, and they went together, shrinkingly, into the presence of the dead. When they came out, the eyes of both were wet.

Late as it was, it was inevitable that Jack must start. Esmée watched him prepare once more for the journey. When he was ready to set out, she said to him, with an extreme effort:

"If any one should come while you are gone, I am to let him in?"

"Do as you think best, dear; but I am afraid that no one will disturb you. It will be a lonely watch. I wish I could help you through with it."

"It is my watch," said Esmée. "I must keep it."

She would have been thankful for the company even of Tip, to answer for something living, if not human, in the house; but the dog insisted so savagely on following his master that she was forced to set him free. She closed the door after him, and locked it mechanically, hardly aware of what she did.

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There is a growth of the spirit which is gradual, progressive, healthful, and therefore permanent. There are other psychical births that are forced, convulsive, agonizing in their suddenness. They may be premature, brought on by the shock of a great sorrow, or a sin perhaps committed without full knowledge of its nature, or realization of its consequences. Such births are perilous and unsure. Of these was the spiritual crisis through which Esmée was now passing.

She had made her choice: human love was satisfied according to the natural law. Now, in the hours of her solitary watch, that irrevocable choice confronted her. It was as a cup of trembling held to her lips by the mystery of the Invisible, which says: Whoever will drink of this cup of his desire, be it soon, be it late, shall drain it to the dregs, and "wring them out." Esmée had come very soon to the dregs of her cup of trembling.

In such anguish and abasement her new life of the spirit began. Will she have strength to sustain it, or must it pass like a shaken light into the keeping of a steadier hand?

She was but dimly aware of outward changes as the ordeal wore on. It had been pale daylight in the cabin, and now it was dusk. It had been as still as death outside after the night of storm, the cold relenting, the frost trickling like tears down the pane; but now there was a rising stir. The soft, wild gale, the chinook of the Northwest, came roaring up the peak—the breath of May, but the voice of March. The forest began to murmur and moan, and strip its white boughs of their burden, and all its fairy frost-work melted like a dream. At intervals in the deep timber a strange sound was heard, the rush and thump of some soft, heavy mass into the snow. Esmée had never heard the sound before; it filled her with a creeping dread. Every separate distinct pounce—they came at intervals, near or far, but with no regularity—was a shock to her overwrought nerves. These sounds had taken sole possession of her ear. It was hence a double shock, at about the same hour of early twilight when her visitor had come the night before, to hear again a man's feet in the trench outside, and again a loud knock upon the door.

Her heart with its panting answered in her breast. There was a pause while outside the knocker seemed to listen, as he had done before. Then the new-born will of the woman fearfully took command of her cowering senses. Something that was beyond herself forced her to the door. Pale, and weak in every limb, she dragged herself to meet whatever it was that summoned her. This time she opened the door.

There stood a mild-faced man, in the dress of a miner, smiling apologetically. Esmée simply stared at him, and held the door wide. The man stepped hesitatingly inside, taking off his hat to the pale girl who looked at him so strangely.

David Bruce modestly attempted to give an incidental character to his visit by inventing an errand in that neighborhood.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said. "I was going along over to the Mule Deer, but I thought I'd just ask if Mr. Waring's brother got through all right yesterday evenin'. It was so ugly outside."

The girl parted her lips to speak, but no sound came. The light shone in her ashy face. Her eyes were losing their expression. Bruce saw that she was fainting, and caught her as she fell.

The interview begun in this unpromising manner proved of the utmost comfort to Esmée. There was nothing in Bruce's manner to herself, nothing in his references to Jack, that implied any curiosity on his part as to the relation between them, or the least surprise at their being together at the Dreadnaught. He had "spared the situation" with an instinct that does not come from knowledge of the world.

He listened to her story of the night's tragedy, which she told with helpless severity, almost with indifference, as if it had happened to another.

He appeared to be greatly moved by it personally; its moral significance he did not seem to see. He sat helplessly repeating himself, in his efforts to give words to his sorrow for the "kid." His vocabulary being limited, and chiefly composed of words which he could not use before a lady, he was put to great inconvenience to do justice to his feelings.

He blamed himself and his brother for letting the young man go by their cabin on such a threatening day.

"Why, Jim and me we couldn't get to sleep for thinkin' about him, 't was blowin' such a blizzard. Seemed like we could hear him a-yellin' to us, 'Is this the way to the Dreadnaught mine?' Wisht the Lord we'd 'a' said it wa'n't. Well, sir, we don't want no more such foolishness. And that's partly why I come. We never thought but what he *had* got through, for all we was pestered about it, or else me and Jim would 'a' turned out last night. But what we was a-sayin' this morning was this: Them folks up there ain't acquainted with this country like we be—not in the winter-time. This here is what we call snow-slide weather. Hain't you been hearing how things is lettin' go? The snow slumpin' off the trees—you must have heard that. It's lettin' go up above us, too. There's a million ton of snow up there a-settlin' and a-crawlin' in this chinook, just a-gettin' ready to start to slide. We fellers in the mountains know how 'tis. This cabin has stood all right so far, but the woods above was cut last summer. Now, I want you to come along with me right now. I've got a hand-sleigh here. You can tuck yourself up on it, and we'll pull out for the Mule Deer, and likely meet with Mr. Waring on the way. And if there's a snow-slide here before morning, it'll bury the dead, and not the living and the dead."

At these words the blood rushed to Esmée's cheek, and then dropped back to her heart, leaving her as white as snow.

"I don't remember that I have ever seen you before," she said; "but I thank you more than I ever thanked anybody in all my life."

David Bruce thought of course that she was going with him. But that was not what she meant. Her face shone. God, in his great mercy, had given her this one opportunity.

"This is my watch, you know. I cannot leave this house. But I don't think there will be a snow-slide. Things do not happen so simply as that. You don't know what I mean? But think a moment. You know, do you not, who I am? Should you think really that death is a thing that any friend of mine would wish to save me from? Life is what I am afraid of—long life to the end. I don't think there will be a snow-slide, not in time for me. But I thank you so much. You have made me feel so human—so like other people. You don't understand that, either? Well, no matter. I am just as grateful. I shall remember your visit all my life; and even if I live long, I doubt if I shall ever have a kinder visitor. I am much better for your coming, though you may think you have come for nothing. Now you must go before it gets too dark. You will go to the Mule Deer, will you not, and carry this same message to—there?"

"I'm goin' to stop right here till Jack Waring gets back."

"Oh, no, you're not. You are going this instant." She rose, and held out her hand. She had that power over him that one so much in earnest as she will always have over one who is amazed and in doubt.

"Won't you shake hands with me?" Her thrilling voice made a sort of music of the common words.

He took her hand, and wagged it clumsily in a dazed way, and she almost pushed him out of the house.

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"Well, I'll be hanged if that ain't the meanest trick since I was born—to leave a little lone woman watchin' with a dead man in a cabin, with snow-slides startin' all over the mountains! What's the matter with me, anyhow? Seem to be knocked silly with her blamed queer talk. Heap of sense in it, too. Wouldn't think one of her kind would see it that way, though. Durned if I know which kind she is. B'lieve I'll go back now. Why, Lord! I must go back! What'll I say to Jim?"

David Bruce had gained the top of the road leading away from the mine before he came to himself in a burst of unconscious profanity. He could hear the howling of the wind around the horn of the peak. He looked up and down, and considered a second.

In another second it was too late—too late to add his life to hers, that instant buried beneath the avalanche.

A stroke out of a clear sky; a roar that filled the air; a burst of light snow mounting over the tree-tops like steam condensed above a rushing train; a concussion of wind that felled trees in the

valley a hundred yards from the spot where the plunging mass shot down—then the chinook eddied back, across the track of the snow-slide, and went storming up the peak.

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## MAVERICK

Traveling Buttes is a lone stage-station on the road, largely speaking, from Blackfoot to Boise. I do not know whether the stages take that road now, but ten years ago they did, and the man who kept the stage-house was a person of primitive habits and corresponding appearance named Gilroy.

The stage-house is perhaps half a mile from the foot of the largest butte, one of three that loom on the horizon, and appear to "travel" from you, as you approach them from the plains. A day's ride with the Buttes as a landmark is like a stern chase, in that you seem never to gain upon them.

From the stage-house the plain slopes up to the foot of the Big Butte, which rises suddenly in the form of an enormous tepee, as if Gitche Manito, the mighty, had here descended and pitched his tent for a council of the nations.

The country is destitute of water. To say that it is "thirsty" is to mock with vain imagery that dead and mummied land on the borders of the Black Lava. The people at the stage-house had located a precious spring, four miles up, in a cleft near the top of the Big Butte; they piped the water down to the house and they sold it to travelers on that Jericho road at so much per horse. The man was thrown in, but the man usually drank whisky.

Our guide commented unfavorably on this species of husbandry, which is common enough in the arid West, and as legitimate as selling oats or hay; but he chose to resent it in the case of Gilroy, and to look upon it as an instance of individual and exceptional meanness.

"Any man that will jump God's water in a place like this, and sell it the same as drinks—he'd sell water to his own father in hell!"

This was our guide's opinion of Gilroy. He was equally frank, and much more explicit, in regard to Gilroy's sons. "But," he concluded, with a philosopher's acceptance of existing facts, "it ain't likely that any of that outfit will ever git into trouble, so long as Maverick is sheriff of Lemhi County."

We were about to ask why, when we drove up to the stage-house, and Maverick himself stepped out and took our horses.

"What the—infernal has happened to the man?" my companion, Ferris, exclaimed; and our guide answered indifferently, as if he were speaking of the weather,—

"Some Injuns caught him alone in an out-o'-the-way ranch, when he was a kid, and took a notion to play with him. This is what was left when they got through. I never see but one worse-looking man," he added, speaking low, as Maverick passed us with the team: "him a bear wiped over the head with its paw. 'Twas quicker over with, I expect, but he lived, and *he* looked worse than Maverick."

"Then I hope to the Lord I may never see him!" Ferris ejaculated; and I noticed that he left his dinner untasted, though he had boasted of a hunter's appetite.

We were two college friends on a hunting trip, but we had not got into the country of game. In two days more we expected to make Jackson's Hole, and I may mention that "hole," in this region, signifies any small, deep valley, well hidden amidst high mountains, where moisture is perennial, and grass abounds. In these pockets of plenty, herds of elk gather and feed as tame as park pets; and other hunted creatures, as wild but less innocent, often find sanctuary here, and cache their stolen stock and other spoil of the road and the range.

We did not forget to put our question concerning Maverick, that unhappy man, in his character of legalized protector of the Gilroy gang. What did our free-spoken guide mean by that insinuation?

We were told that Gilroy, in his rough-handed way, had been as a father to the lad, after the savages wreaked their pleasure on him: and his people being dead or scattered, Maverick had made himself useful in various humble capacities at the stage-house, and had finally become a sort of factotum there and a member of the family. And though perfectly square himself, and much respected on account of his personal courage and singular misfortunes, he could never see the old man's crookedness, nor the more than crookedness of his sons. He was like a son of the house, himself; but most persons agreed that it was not as a brother he felt toward Rose Gilroy. And a tough lookout it was for the girl; for Maverick was one whom no man would lightly cross, and in her case he was acting as "general dog around the place," as our guide called it. The young fellows were shy of the house, notwithstanding the attraction it held. It was likely to be Maverick or nobody for Rose.

We did not see Rose Gilroy, but we heard her step in the stage-house kitchen, and her voice, as clear as a lark's, giving orders to the tall, stooping, fair young Swede, who waited on us at table, and did other work of a menial character in that singular establishment.

"How is it the watch-dog allows such a pretty sprig as that around the place?" Ferris questioned, eying our knight of the trencher, who blushed to feel himself remarked.

"He won't stay," our guide pronounced; "they don't none of 'em stay when they're good-lookin'. The old man he's failin' considerable these days,—gettin' kind o' silly,—and the boys are away the heft of the time. Maverick pretty much runs the place. I don't justly blame the critter. He's watched that little Rose grow up from a baby. How's he goin' to quit being fond of her now she's a woman? I dare say he'd a heap sooner she'd stayed a little girl. And these yere boys around here they're a triflin' set, not half so able to take care of her as Maverick. He's got the sense and he's got the sand; but there's that awful head on him! I don't blame him much, lookin' the way he does, and feelin' the same as any other man."

We left Traveling Buttes and its cruel little love-story, but we had not gone a mile when a horseman overtook us with a message for Ferris from his new foreman at the ranch, a summons which called him back for a day at the least. Ferris was exceedingly annoyed: a day at the ranch meant four days on the road; but the business was imperative. We held a brief council, and decided that, with Ferris returning, our guide should push on with the animals and camp outfit into a country of grass, and look up a good camping-spot (which might not be the first place he struck) this side of Jackson's Hole. It remained for me to choose between going with the stuff, or staying for a longer look at the phenomenal Black Lava fields at Arco; Arco being another name for desolation on the very edge of that weird stone sea. This was my ostensible reason for choosing to remain at Arco; but I will not say the reflection did not cross me that Arco is only sixteen miles from Traveling Buttes—not an insurmountable distance between geology and a pretty girl, when one is five and twenty, and has not seen a pretty face for a month of Sundays.

Arco, at that time, consisted of the stage-house, a store, and one or two cabins—a poor little seed of civilization dropped by the wayside, between the Black Lava and the hills where Lost River comes down and "sinks" on the edge of the lava. The station is somewhat back from the road, with its face—a very grimy, unwashed countenance—to the lava. Quaking aspens and mountain birches follow the water, pausing a little way up the gulch behind the house, but the eager grass tracks it all the way till it vanishes; and the dry bed of the stream goes on and spreads in a mass of coarse sand and gravel, beaten flat, flailed by the feet of countless driven sheep that have gathered here. For this road is on the great overland sheep-trail from Oregon eastward—the march of the million mouths, and what the mouths do not devour the feet tramp down.

The staple topic of conversation at Arco was one very common in the far west, when a tenderfoot is of the company. The poorest place can boast of some distinction, and Arco, though hardly on the highroad of fashion and commerce, had frequently been named in print in connection with crime of a highly sensational and picturesque character. Scarcely another fifty miles of stage-road could boast of so many and such successful road-jobs; and although these affairs were of almost monthly occurrence, and might be looked for to come off always within that noted danger-limit, yet it was a fact that the law had never yet laid finger on a man of the gang, nor gained the smallest clew to their hide-out. It was a difficult country around Arco, one that lent itself to secrecy. The road-agents came, and took, and vanished as if the hills were their co-partners as well as the receivers of their goods. As for the lava, which was its front dooryard, so to speak, for a hundred miles, the man did not live who could say he had crossed it. What it held or was capable of hiding, in life or in death, no man knew.

The day after Ferris left me I rode out upon that arrested tide—those silent breakers which for ages have threatened, but never reached, the shore. I tried to fancy it as it must once have been, a sluggish, vitreous flood, filling the great valley, and stiffening as it slowly pushed toward the bases of the hills. It climbed and spread, as dough rises and crawls over the edge of the pan. The Black Lava is always called a sea—that image is inevitable; yet its movement had never in the least the character of water. "This is where hell pops," an old plains-man feelingly described it, and the suggestion is perfect. The colors of the rock are those produced by fire: its texture is that of slag from a furnace. One sees how the lava hardened into a crust, which cracked and sank in places, mingling its tumbled edges with the creeping flood not cooled beneath. After all movement had ceased and the mass was still, time began upon its tortured configurations, crumbled and wore and broke, and sifted a little earth here and there, and sealed the burnt rock with fairy print of lichens, serpent-green and orange and rust-red. The spring rains left shallow pools which the summer dried. Across it, a few dim trails wander a little way and give out, like the water.

For a hundred miles to the Snake River this Plutonian gulf obliterates the land—holds it against occupation or travel. The shoes of a marching army would be cut from their feet before they had gone a dozen miles across it; horses would have no feet left; and water would have to be packed as on an ocean, or a desert, cruise.

I rode over places where the rock rang beneath my horse's hoofs like the iron cover of a manhole. I followed the hollow ridges that mounted often forty feet above my head, but always with that gruesome effect of thickening movement—that sluggish, atomic crawl; and I thought how one man pursuing another into this frozen hell might lose himself, but never find the object of his quest. If he took the wrong furrow, he could not cross from one blind gut into another, nor hope to meet the fugitive at any future turning.

I don't know why the fancy of a flight and pursuit should so have haunted me, in connection with the Black Lava; probably the desperate and lawless character of our conversation at the stage-house gave rise to it.

I had fallen completely under the spell of that skeleton flood. I watched the sun sink, as it sinks at sea, beyond its utmost ragged ridges; I sat on the borders of it, and stared across it in the gray moonlight; I rode out upon it when the Buttes, in their delusive nearness, were as blue as the gates of amethyst, and the morning was as fair as one great pearl; but no peace or radiance of heaven or earth could change its aspect more than that of a mound of skulls. When I began to dream about it, I thought I must be getting morbid. This is worse than Gilroy's, I said; and I promised myself I would ride up there next day and see if by chance one might get a peep at the Rose that all were praising, but none dared put forth a hand to pluck. Was it indeed so hard a case for the Rose? There are women who can love a man for the perils he has passed. Alas, Maverick! could any one get used to a face like that?

Here, surely, was the story of Beauty and her poor Beast humbly awaiting, in the mask of a brutish deformity, the recognition of Love pure enough to divine the soul beneath, and unselfish enough to deliver it. Was there such love as that at Gilroy's? However, I did not make that ride.

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It was the fourth night of clear, desert moonlight since Ferris had left me: I was sleepless, and so I heard the first faint throb of a horse's feet approaching from the east, coming on at a great pace, and making the turn to the stage-house. I looked out, and on the trodden space in front I saw Maverick dismounting from a badly blown horse.

"Halloo! what's up?" I called from the open window of my bedroom on the ground-floor.

"Did two men pass here on horseback since dark?"

"Yes," I said; "about twelve o'clock: a tall man and a little short fellow."

"Did they stop to water?"

"No, they did not; and they seemed in such a tearing hurry that I watched them down the road"—

"I am after those men, and I want a fresh horse," he cut in. "Call up somebody quick!"

"Shall you take one of the boys along?" I inquired, with half an eye to myself, after I had obeyed his command.

He shook his head. "Only one horse here that's good for anything: I want that myself."

"There is my horse," I suggested; "but I'd rather be the one who rides her. She belongs to a friend."

"Take her, and come on, then, but understand—this ain't a Sunday-school picnic."

"I'm with you, if you'll have me."

"I'd sooner have your horse," he remarked, shifting the quid of tobacco in his cheek.

"You can't have her without me, unless you steal her," I said.

"Git your gun, then, and shove some grub into your pockets: I can't wait for nobody." He swung himself into the saddle.

"What road do you take?"

"There ain't but one," he shouted, and pointed straight ahead.

I overtook him easily within the hour; he was saving his horse, for this was his last chance to change until Champagne Station, fifty miles away.

He gave me rather a cynical smile of recognition as I ranged alongside, as if to say, "You'll probably get enough of this before we are through." The horses settled down to their work, and they "humped theirselves," as Maverick put it, in the cool hours before sunrise.

At daybreak his awful face struck me all afresh, as inscrutable in its strange distortion as some stone god in the desert, from whose graven hideousness a thousand years of mornings have silently drawn the veil.

"What do you want those fellows for?" I asked, as we rode. I had taken for granted that we were hunting suspects of the road-agent persuasion.

"I want 'em on general principles," he answered shortly.

"Do you think you know them?"

"I think they'll know me. All depends on how they act when we get within range. If they don't pay no attention to us, we'll send a shot across their bows. But more likely they'll speak first."

He was very gloomy, and would keep silence for an hour at a time. Once he turned on me as with a sudden misgiving.

"See here, don't you git excited; and whatever happens, don't you meddle with the little one. If the big fellow cuts up rough, he'll take his chances, but you leave the little one to me. I want him

—I want him for State's evidence," he finished hoarsely.

"The little one must be the Benjamin of the family," I thought—"one of the bad young Gilroys, whose time has come at last; and sheriff Maverick finds his duty hard."

I could not say whether I really wished the men to be overtaken, but the spirit of the chase had undoubtedly entered into my blood. I felt as most men do, who are not saints or cowards, when such work as this is to be done. But I knew I had no business to be along. It was one thing for Maverick, but the part of an amateur in a man-hunt is not one to boast of.

The sun was now high, and the fresh tracks ahead of us were plain in the dust. Once they left the road and strayed off into the lava, incomprehensibly to me; but Maverick understood, and pressed forward. "We'll strike them again further on. D— fool!" he muttered, and I observed that he alluded but to one, "huntin' water-holes in the lava in the tail end of August!"

They could not have found water, for at Belgian Flat they had stopped and dug for it in the gravel, where a little stream in freshet time comes down the gulch from the snow-fields higher up, and sinks, as at Arco, on the lip of the lava. They had dug, and found it, and saved us the trouble, as Maverick remarked.

Considerable water had gathered since the flight had paused here and lost precious time. We drank our fill, refreshed our horses, and shifted the saddle-girths; and I managed to stow away my lunch during the next mile or so, after offering to share it with Maverick, who refused it as if the notion of food made him sick. He had considerable whisky aboard, but he was, I judged, one of those men on whom drink has little effect; else some counter-flame of excitement was fighting it in his blood.

I looked for the development of the personal complication whenever we should come up with the chase, for the man's eye burned, and had his branded countenance been capable of any expression that was not cruelly travestied, he would have looked the impersonation of wild justice.

It was now high noon, and our horses were beginning to feel the steady work; yet we had not ridden as they brought the good news from Ghent: that is the pace of a great lyric; but it's not the pace at which justice, or even vengeance, travels in the far West. Even the furies take it coolly when they pursue a man over these roads, and on these poor brutes of horses, in fifty-mile stages, with drought thrown in.

Maverick had had no mercy on the pony that brought him sixteen miles; but this piece of horse-flesh he now bestrode must last him through at least to Champagne Station, should we not overhaul our men before. He knew well when to press and when to spare the pace, a species of purely practical consideration which seemed habitual with him; he rode like an automaton, his baleful face borne straight before him—the Gorgon's head.

Beyond Belgian Flat—how far beyond I do not remember, for I was beginning to feel the work, too, and the country looked all alike to me as we made it, mile by mile—the road follows close along by the lava, but the hills recede, and a little trail cuts across, meeting the road again at Deadman's Flat. Here we could not trust to the track, which from the nature of the ground was indistinct. So we divided our forces, Maverick taking the trail,—which I was quite willing he should do, for it had a look of most sinister invitation,—while I continued by the longer road. Our little discussion, or some atmospheric change,—some breath of coolness from the hills,—had brought me up out of my stupor of weariness. I began to feel both alert and nervous; my heart was beating fast. The still sunshine lay all around us, but where Maverick's white horse was climbing, the shadows were turning eastward, and the deep gulches, with their patches of aspen, were purple instead of brown. The aspens were left shaking where he broke through them and passed out of sight.

I kept on at a good pace, and about three o'clock I, being then as much as half a mile away, saw the spot which I knew must be Deadman's Flat; and there were our men, the tall one and his boyish mate, standing quietly by their horses in broad sunlight, as if there were no one within a hundred miles. Their horses had drunk, and were cropping the thin grass, which had set its tooth in the gravel where, as at the other places, a living stream had perished. I spurred forward, with my heart thumping, but before they saw me I saw Maverick coming down the little gulch; and from the way he came I knew that he had seen them.

The scene was awful in its treacherous peacefulness. Their shadows slept on the broad bed of sunlight, and the gulch was as cool and still as a lady's chamber. The great dead desert received the silence like a secret.

Tenderfoot as I was, I knew quite well what must happen now; yet I was not prepared—could not realize it—even when the tall one put his hand quickly behind him and stepped ahead of his horse. There was the flash of his pistol, and the loud crack echoing in the hill; a second shot, and then Maverick replied deliberately, and the tall one was down, with his face in the grass.

I heard a scream that sounded strangely like a woman's; but there were only the three, the little one, acting wildly, and Maverick bending over him who lay with his face in the grass. I saw him turn the body over, and the little fellow seemed to protest, and to try to push him away. I thought it strange he made no more of a fight, but I was not near enough to hear what those two said to each other.

Still, the tragedy did not come home to me. It was all like a scene, and I was without feeling in it except for that nervous trembling which I could not control.

Maverick stood up at length, and came slowly toward me, wiping his face. He kept his hat in his hand, and, looking down at it, said huskily:—

"I gave that man his life when I found him last spring runnin' loose like a wild thing in the mountains, and now I've took it; and God above knows I had no grudge ag'in' him, if he had stayed in his place. But he would have it so."

"Maverick, I saw it all, and I can swear it was self-defense."

His face drew into the tortured grimace which was his smile. "This here will never come before a jury," he said. "It's a family affair. Did ye see how he acted? Steppin' up to me like he was a first-class shot, or else a fool. He ain't nary one; he's a poor silly tool, the whip-hand of a girl that's boltin' from her friends like they was her mortal enemies. Go and take a look at him; then maybe you'll understand."

He paused, and uttered the name of Jesus Christ, but not as such men often use it, with an inconsequence dreadful to hear: he was not idly swearing, but calling that name to witness solemnly in a case that would never come before a jury.

I began to understand.

"Is it—is the girl"—

"Yes; it's our poor little Rose—that's the little one, in the gray hat. She'll give herself away if I don't. She don't care for nothin' nor nobody. She was runnin' away with that fellow—that dish-washin' Swede what I found in the mountings eatin' roots like a ground-hog, with the ends of his feet froze off. Now you know all I know—and more than she knows, for she thinks she was fond of him. She wa'n't, never—for I watched 'em, and I know. She was crazy to git away, and she took him for the chance."

His excitement passed, and we sat apart and watched the pair at a distance. She—the little one—sat as passively by her dead as Maverick pondering his cruel deed; but with both it was a hopeless quiet.

"Come," he said at length, "I've got to bury him. You look after her, and keep her with you till I git through. I'm givin' you the hardest part," he added wistfully, as if he fully realized how he had cut himself off from all such duties, henceforth, to the girl he was consigning to a stranger's care.

I told him I thought that the funeral had more need of me than the mourner, and I shrank from intruding myself.

"I dassent leave her by herself—see? I don't know what notion she may take next, and she won't let me come within a rope's len'th of her."

I will not go over again that miserable hour in the willows, where I made her stay with me, out of sight of what Maverick was doing. Ours were the tender mercies of the wicked, I fear; but she must have felt that sympathy at least was near her, if not help. I will not say that her youth and distressful loveliness did not sharpen my perception of a sweet life wasted, gone utterly astray, which might have brought God's blessing into some man's home—perhaps Maverick's, had he not been so hardly dealt with. She was not of that great disposition of heart which can love best that which has sorest need of love; but she was all woman, and helpless and distraught with her tangle of grief and despair, the nature of which I could only half comprehend.

We sat there by the sunken stream, on the hot gravel where the sun had lain, the willows sifting their inconstant shadows over us; and I thought how other things as precious as "God's water" go astray on the Jericho road, or are captured and sold for a price, while dry hearts ache with the thirst that asks a "draught divine."

The man's felt hat she wore, pulled down over her face, was pinned to her coil of braids which had slipped from the crown of her head. The hat was no longer even a protection; she cast it off, and the blond braids, that had not been smoothed for a day and night, fell like ropes down her back. The sun had burned her cheeks and neck to a clear crimson; her blue eyes were as wild with weeping as a child's. She was a rose, but a rose that had been trampled in the dust; and her prayer was to be left there, rather than that we should take her home.

I suppose I must have had some influence over her, for she allowed me to help her to arrange her forlorn disguise, and put her on her horse, which was more than could have been expected from the way she had received me. And so, about four o'clock, we started back.

There was a scene when we headed the horses to the west; she protesting with wild sobs that she would not, could not, go home, that she would rather die, that we should never get her back alive, and so on. Maverick stood aside bitterly, and left her to me, and I was aware of a grotesque touch of jealousy—which, after all, was perhaps natural—in his dour face whenever he looked back at us. He kept some distance ahead, and waited for us when we fell too far in the rear.

This would happen when from time to time her situation seemed to overpower her, and she would stop in the road, and wring her hands, and try to throw herself out of the saddle, and pray me to let her go.



"Go where?" I would ask. "Where do you wish to go? Have you any plan, or suggestion, that I could help you to carry out?" But I said it only to show her how hopeless her resistance was. This she would own piteously, and say: "Nobody can help me. There ain't nowhere for me to go. But I can't go back. You won't let him make me, will you?"

"Why cannot you go back to your father and your brothers?"

This would usually silence her, and, setting her teeth upon her trouble, she would ride on, while I reproached myself, I knew not why.

After one of these struggles—when she had given in to the force of circumstances, but still unconsenting and rebellious—Maverick fell back, and ranged his horse by her other side.

"I know partly what's troubling you, and I'd rid you of that part quick enough," he said, with a kind of dogged patience in his hard voice; "but you can't get on there without me. You know that, don't you? You don't blame me for staying?"

"I don't blame you for anything but what you've done to-day. You've broke my heart, and ruined me, and took away my last chance, and I don't care what becomes of me, so I don't have to go back."

"You don't have to any more than you have to live. Dyin' is a good deal easier, but we can't always die when we want to. Suppose I found a little lost child on the road, and it cried to go home, and I didn't know where 'home' was, would I leave it there just because it cried and hung back? I'd take you to a better home if I knew of one; but I don't. And there's the old man. I suppose we could get some doctor to certify that he's out of his mind, and get him sent up to Blackfoot; but I guess we'd have to buy the doctor first."

"Oh, hush, do, and leave me alone," she said.

Maverick dug his spurs into his horse, and plunged ahead.

"There," she cried, "now you know part of it; but it's the least part—the least, the least! Poor father, he's awful queer. He don't more than half the time know who I am," she whispered. "But it ain't him I'm running away from. It's myself—my own life."

"What is it—can't you tell me?"

She shook her head, but she kept on telling, as if she were talking to herself.

"Father he's like I told you, and the boys—oh, that's worse! I can't get a decent woman to come there and live, and the women at Arco won't speak to me because I'm livin' there alone. They say—they think I ought to get married—to Maverick or somebody. I'll die first. I *will* die, if there's any way to, before I'll marry him!"

This may not sound like tragedy as I tell it, but I think it was tragedy to her. I tried to persuade her that it must be her imagination about the women at Arco; or, if some of them did talk,—as indeed I myself had heard, to my shame and disgust,—I told her I had never known that place where there was not one woman, at least, who could understand and help another in her trouble.

"I don't know of any," she said simply.

There was no more to do but ride on, feeling like her executioner; but

"Ride hooly, ride hooly, now, gentlemen,  
Ride hooly now wi' me,"

came into my mind; and no man ever kept beside a "wearier burd," on a sadder journey.

At dusk we came to Belgian Flat, and here Maverick, dismounting, mixed a little whisky in his flask with water which he dipped from the pool. She must have recalled who dug the well, and with whom she had drunk in the morning. He held it to her lips. She rejected it with a strong shudder of disgust.

"Drink it!" he commanded. "You'll kill yourself, carryin' on like this." He pressed it on her, but she turned away her face like a sick and rebellious child.

"Maybe she'll drink it for you," said Maverick, with bitter patience, handing me the cup.

"Will you?" I asked her gently. She shook her head, but at the same time she let me take her hand, and put it down from her face, and I held the cup to her lips. She drank it, every drop. It made her deathly sick, and I took her off her horse, and made a pillow of my coat, so that she could lie down. In ten minutes she was asleep. Maverick covered her with his coat after she was no longer conscious.

We built a fire on the edge of the lava, for we were both chilled and both miserable, each for his own part in that day's work.

The flat is a little cup-shaped valley formed by high hills, like dark walls, shutting it in. The lava creeps up to it in front.

We hovered over the fire, and Maverick fed it, savagely, in silence. He did not recognize my presence by a word—not so much as if I had been a strange dog. I relieved him of it after a while,

and went out a little way on the lava. At first all was blackness after the strong glare of the fire; but gradually the desolation took shape, and I stumbled about in it, with my shadow mocking me in derisive beckonings, or crouching close at my heels, as the red flames towered or fell. I stayed out there till I was chilled to the bone, and then went back defiantly. Maverick sat as if he had not moved, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands. I wondered if he were thinking of that other sleeper under the birches of Deadman's Gulch, victim of an unhappy girl's revolt. Had she loved him? Had she deceived him as well as herself? It seemed to me they were all like children who had lost their way home.

By midnight the moon had risen high enough to look at us coldly over the tops of the great hills. Their shadows crept forth upon the lava. The fire had died down. Maverick rose, and scattered the winking brands with his boot-heel.

"We must pull out," he said. "I'll saddle up, if you will"—The hoarseness in his voice choked him, and he nodded toward the sleeper.

I dreaded to waken the poor Rose. She was very meek and quiet after the brief respite sleep had given her. She sat quite still, and watched me while I shook the sand from my coat, put it on, and buttoned it to the chin, and drew my hat down more firmly. There was a kind of magnetism in her gaze; I felt it creep over me like the touch of a soft hand.

When her horse was ready, Maverick brought it, and left it standing near, and went back to his own, without looking toward us.

"Come, you poor, tired little girl," I said, holding out my hand. She could not find her way at first in the uncertain light, and she seemed half asleep still, so I kept her hand in mine, and guided her to her horse. "Now, once more up," I encouraged her; and suddenly she was clinging to me, and whispering passionately:

"Can't you take me somewhere? Where are those women that you know?" she cried, shaking from head to foot.

"Dear little soul, all the women I know are two thousand miles away," I answered.

"But can't you take me *somewhere*? There must be some place. I know you would be good to me; and you could go away afterward, and I wouldn't trouble you any more."

"My child, there is not a place under the heavens where I could take you. You must go on like a brave girl, and trust to your friends. Keep up your heart, and the way will open. God will not forget you," I said, and may He forgive me for talking cant to that poor soul in her bitter extremity.

She stood perfectly still one moment while I held her by the hands. I think she could have heard my heart beat; but there was nothing I could do. Even now I wake in the night, and wonder if there was any other way—but one; the way that for one wild moment I was half tempted to take.

"Yes; the way will open," she said very low. She cast off my hands, and in a second she was in the saddle, and off up the road, riding for her life. And we two men knew no better than to follow her.

I knew better, or I think, now, that I did. I told Maverick we had pushed her far enough. I begged him to hold up and at least not to let her see us on her track. He never answered a word, but kept straight on, as if possessed. I don't think he knew what he was doing. At least there was only one thing *he* was capable of doing—following that girl till he dropped.

Two miles beyond the Flat there is another turn, where the shoulder of a hill comes down and crowds the road, which passes out of sight. She saw us hard upon her, as she reached this bend. Maverick was ahead. Her horse was doing all he could, but it was plain he could not do much more. She looked back, and flung out her hand in the man's sleeve that half covered it. She gave a little whimpering cry, the most dreadful sound I ever heard from any hunted thing.

We made the turn after her; and there lay the road white in the moonlight, and as bare as my hand. She had escaped us.

We pulled up the horses, and listened. Not a sound came from the hills or the dark gulches, where the wind was stirring the quaking aspens; the lonesome hush-sh made the silence deeper. But we heard a horse's step go clink, clinking—a loose, uncertain step wandering away in the lava.

"Look! look there! My God!" groaned Maverick.

There was her horse limping along one of the hollow ridges, but the saddle was empty.

"She has taken to the lava!"

I had no need to be told what that meant; but if I had needed, I learned what it meant before the night was through. I think that if I were a poet, I could add another "dolorous circle" to the wailing-place for lost souls.

But she had found a way. Somewhere in that stony-hearted wilderness she is at rest. We shall see her again when the sea—the stupid, cruel sea that crawls upon the land—gives up its dead.

# ON A SIDE-TRACK

## I

It was the second week in February, but winter had taken a fresh hold: the stockmen were grumbling; freight was dull, and travel light on the white Northwestern lines. In the Portland car from Omaha there were but four passengers: father and daughter,—a gentle, unsophisticated pair,—and two strong-faced men, fellow-travelers also, keeping each other's company in a silent but close and conspicuous proximity. They shared the same section, the younger man sleeping above, going to bed before, and rising later than, his companion; and whenever he changed his seat or made an unexpected movement, the eyes of the elder man followed him, and they were never far from him at any time.

The elder was a plain farmer type of man, with a clean-shaven, straight upper lip, a grizzled beard covering the lower half of his face, and humorous wrinkles spreading from the corners of his keen gray eyes.

The younger showed in his striking person that union of good blood with hard conditions so often seen in the old-young graduates of the life schools of the West. His hands and face were dark with exposure to the sun, not of parks and club-grounds and seaside piazzas, but the dry untempered light of the desert and the plains. His dark eye was distinctively masculine,—if there be such a thing as gender in features,—bold, ardent, and possessive; but now it was clouded with sadness that did not pass like a mood, though he looked capable of moods.

He was dressed in the demi-toilet which answers for dinners in the West, on occasions where a dress-coat is not required. In itself the costume was correct, even fastidious, in its details, but on board an overland train there was a foppish unsuitability in it that "gave the wearer away," as another man would have said—put him at a disadvantage, notwithstanding his splendid physique, and the sad, rather fine preoccupation of his manner. He looked like a very real person dressed for a trifling part, which he lays aside between the scenes while he thinks about his sick child, or his debts, or his friend with whom he has quarreled.

But these incongruities, especially the one of dress, might easily have escaped a pair of eyes so confiding and unworldly as those of the young girl in the opposite section; they had escaped her, but not the incongruity of youth with so much sadness. The girl and her father had boarded the car at Omaha, escorted by the porter of one of the forward sleepers on the same train. They had come from farther East. The old gentleman appeared to be an invalid; but they gave little trouble. The porter had much leisure on his hands, which he bestowed in arrears of sleep on the end seat forward. The conductor made up his accounts in the empty drawing-room, or looked at himself in the mirrors, or stretched his legs on the velvet sofas. He was a young fellow, with a tendency to jokes and snatches of song and talk of a light character when not on duty. He talked sometimes with the porter in low tones, and then both looked at the pair of travelers in No. 8, and the younger man seemed moodily aware of their observation.

On the first morning out from Omaha the old gentleman kept his berth until nine or ten o'clock. At eight his daughter brought him a cup of chocolate and a sandwich, and sat between his curtains, chatting with him cozily. In speaking together they used the language of the Society of Friends.

The young man opposite listened attentively to the girl's voice; it was as sweet as the piping of birds at daybreak. Phebe her father called her.

Afterward Phebe sat in the empty section next her father's. The table before her was spread with a fresh napkin, and a few pieces of old household silver and china which she had taken from her lunch-basket.

She and her father were economical travelers, but in all their belongings there was the refinement of modest suitability and an exquisite cleanliness. Her own order for breakfast was confined to a cup of coffee, which the porter was preparing in the buffet-kitchen.

"Would you mind changing places with me?"

The young man in No. 8 spoke to his companion, who sat opposite reading a newspaper. They changed seats, and by this arrangement the younger could look at Phebe, who innocently gave him every advantage to study her sober and delicate profile against the white snow-light, as she sat watching the dreary cattle-ranges of Wyoming swim past the car window.

Her hair had been brushed, and her face washed in the bitter alkaline waters of the plains, with the uncompromising severity of one whose standards of personal adornment are limited to the sternest ideals of neatness and purity. Yet her fair face bloomed, like a winter sunrise, with tints of rose and pearl and sapphire blue, and the pale gold of winter sunshine was in her satin-smooth hair.

The young man did not fail to include in his study of Phebe the modest breakfast equipment set out before her. He perfectly recalled the pattern of the white-and-gold china, the touch, the very taste, of the thin, bright old silver spoons; they were like his grandmother's tea-things in the family homestead in the country, where he had spent his summers as a boy. The look of them touched him nearly, but not happily, it would seem, from his expression.

The porter came with the cup of coffee, and offered a number of patronizing suggestions in the line of his service, which the young girl declined. She set forth a meek choice of food, blushing faintly in deprecation of the young man's eyes, of which she began to be aware. Evidently she was not yet hardened to the practice of eating in public.

He took the hint, and retired to his corner, opening a newspaper between himself and Phebe.

Presently he heard her call the porter in a small, ineffectual voice. The porter did not come. She waited a little, and called again, with no better result. He put down his newspaper.

"If you will press the button at your left," he suggested.

"The button!" she repeated, looking at him helplessly.

He sprang to assist her. As he did so his companion flung down his paper, and jumped in front of him. The eyes of the two met. A hot flush rose to the young man's eyebrows.

"I am calling the porter for her."

"Oh!" said the other, and he sat down again; but he kept an eye upon the angry youth, who leaned across Phebe's seat, and touched the electric button.

"Little girl hadn't got on to it, eh?" the grizzled man remarked pleasantly, when his companion had resumed his seat.

There was no answer.

"Nice folks; from the country, somewheres back East, I should guess," the imperturbable one continued. "Old man seems sort of sickly. Making a move on account of his health, likely. Great mistake—old folks turning out in winter huntin' a climate."

The young man remained silent, and the elder returned to his paper.

At Cheyenne, where the train halts for dinner, the young girl helped her father into his outer garments, buttoned herself hastily into her homespun jacket bordered with gray fur, pinned her little hat firmly to her crown of golden braids, hid her hands in her muff,—she did not wait to put on gloves,—and led the way to the dining-room.

The travelers in No. 8 disposed of their meal rapidly, in their usual close but silent conjunction, and returned at once to the car.

The old gentleman and his daughter walked the windy platform, and cast rather forlorn glances at the crowd bustling about in the bleak winter sunlight. When they took their seats again, the father's pale blue eyes were still paler, his face looked white and drawn with the cold; but Phebe was like a rose: with her wonderful, pure color the girl was beautiful. The young man of No. 8 looked at her with a startled reluctance, as if her sweetness wounded him.

Then he seemed to have resolved to look at her no more. He leaned his head back in his corner, and closed his eyes; the train shook him slightly as he sat in moody preoccupation with his thoughts, and the miles of track flew by.

At Green River, at midnight, the Portland car was dropped by its convoy of the Union Pacific, and was coupled with a train making up for the Oregon Short Line. There was hooting and backing of engines, slamming of car doors, flashing of conductors' lanterns, voices calling across the tracks. One of these voices could be heard, in the wakeful silence within the car, as an engine from the west steamed past in the glare of its snow-wreathed headlight.

"No. 10 stuck this side of Squaw Creek. Bet you don't make it before Sunday!"

The outbound conductor's retort was lost in the clank of couplings as the train lurched forward on the slippery rails.

"Phebe, is thee awake?" the old gentleman softly called to his daughter, about the small hours.

"Yes, father. Want anything?"

"Are those ventilators shut? I feel a cold draft in the back of my berth."

The ventilators were all shut, but the train was now climbing the Wind River divide, the cold bitterly increasing, and the wind dead ahead. Cinders tinkled on the roaring stovepipes, the blast swept the car roofs, pelting the window panes with fine, dry snow, and searching every joint and crevice defended by the company's upholstery.

Phebe slipped down behind the berth-curtain, and tucked a shawl in at her father's back. Her low voice could be heard, and the old man's self-pitying tones in answer to her tender questionings. He coughed at intervals till daybreak, when there was silence in section No. 7.

In No. 8, across the aisle, the young man lay awake in the strength of his thoughts, and made up passionate sentences which he fancied himself speaking to persons he might never be brought face to face with again. They were people mixed in with his life in various relations, past and present, whose opinions had weighed with him. When he heard Phebe talking to her father, he muttered, with a sort of anguish:—

"Oh, you precious lamb!"

He and his companion made their toilet early, and breakfasted and smoked together, and their taciturn relation continued as before. Snow filled the air, and blotted out the distance, but there were few stationary dark objects outside by which to gauge its fall. They were across the border now, between Wyoming and Idaho, in a featureless white region, a country of small Mormon ranches, far from any considerable town.

The old man slept behind his curtains. Phebe went through the morning routine by which women travelers make themselves at home and pass the time, but obviously her day did not begin until her father had reported himself. She had found a hole in one of her gloves, which she was mending, choosing critically the needle and the silk for the purpose from a very complete housewife in brown linen bound with a brown silk galloon. Again the young man was reminded of his boyhood, and of certain kind old ladies of precise habits who had contributed to his happiness, and occasionally had eked out the fond measure of paternal discipline.

The snow continued; about noon the train halted at a small water station, waited awhile as if in consideration of difficulties ahead, and then quietly backed down upon a side-track. A shock of silence followed. Every least personal movement in the thinly peopled car, before lost in the drumming of the wheels, asserted itself against this new medium. The passengers looked up and at one another; the Pullman conductor stepped out to make inquiries.

The silence continued, and became embarrassing. Phebe dropped her scissors. This time the young man sat still, but the flush rose to his forehead as before. The old gentleman's breathing could be heard behind his curtains; the porter rattling plates in the cooking-closet; the soft rustling of the snow outside. Phebe stepped to her father's berth, and peeped between his curtains; he was still sleeping. Her voice was hushed to the note of a sick-room as she asked,—

"Where are we now, do you know?"

The young man was looking at her, and to him she addressed the question.

With a glance at his companion, he crossed to her side of the car, and took the seat in front of her.

"We are in the Bear Lake valley, just over the border of Idaho, about fifteen miles from the Squaw Creek divide," he answered, sinking his voice.

"Did you hear what that person said in the night, when a train passed us, about our not getting through?"

"I wondered if you heard that." He smiled. "You did not rest well, I'm afraid."

"I was anxious about father. This weather is a great surprise to us. We were told the winters were short in southern Idaho—almost like Virginia; but look at this!"

"We have nearly eight thousand feet of altitude here, you must remember. In the valleys it is warmer. There the winter does break usually about this time. Are you going on much farther?"

"To a place called Volney."

"Volney is pretty high; but there is Boise, farther down. Strangers moving into a new country very seldom strike it right the first time."

"Oh, we shall stay at Volney, even if we do not like it; that is, if we *can* stay. I have a married sister living there. She thought the climate would be better for father."

After a pause she asked, "Do you know why we are stopping here so long?"

"Probably because we have had orders not to go any farther."

"Do you mean that we are blocked?"

"The train ahead of us is. We shall stay here until that gets through."

"You seem very cheerful about it," she said, observing his expression.

"Ah, I should think so!"

His short lip curled in the first smile she had seen upon his strong, brooding face. She could not help smiling in response, but she felt bound to protest against his irresponsible view of the situation.

"Have you so much time to spend upon the road? I thought the men of this country were always in a hurry."

"It makes a difference where a man is going, and on what errand, and what fortune he meets with on the way. *I* am not going to Volney."

She did not understand his emphasis, nor the bearing of his words. His eyes dropped to her hands lying in her lap, still holding the glove she had been mending.

"How nicely you do it! How can you take such little stitches without pricking yourself, when the train is going?"

"It is my business to take little stitches. I don't know how to do anything else."

"Do you mean it literally? It is your business to sew?"

The notion seemed to surprise him.

"No; I mean in a general sense. Some of us can do only small things, a stitch at a time,—take little steps, and not know always where they are going."

"Is this a little step—to Volney?"

"Oh, no; it is a very long one, and rather a wild one, I'm afraid. I suppose everybody does a wild thing once in a lifetime?"

"How should *you* know that?"

"I only said so. I don't say that it is true."

"People who take little steps are sometimes picked up and carried off their feet by those who take long, wild ones."

"Why, what are we talking about?" she asked herself, in surprise.

"About going to Volney, was it not?" he suggested.

"What is there about Volney, please tell me, that you harp upon the name? I am a stranger, you know; I don't know the country allusions. Is there anything peculiar about Volney?"

"She is a deep little innocent," he said within himself; "but oh, so innocent!" And again he appeared to gather himself in pained resistance to some thought that jarred with the thought of Phebe. He rose and bowed, and so took leave of her, and settled himself back into his corner, shading his eyes with his hand.

He ate no luncheon, Phebe noticed, and he sat so long in a dogged silence that she began to cast wistful glances across the aisle, wondering if he were ill, or if she had unwittingly been rude to him. Any one could have shaken her confidence in her own behavior; moreover, she reminded herself, she did not know the etiquette of an overland train. She had heard that the Western people were very friendly; no doubt they expected a frank response in others. She resolved to be more careful the next time, if the moody young man should speak to her again.

Her father was awake now, dressed and sitting up. He was very chipper, but Phebe knew that his color was not natural, nor his breathing right. He was much inclined to talk, in a rambling, childish, excited manner that increased her anxiety.

The young man in No. 8 had evidently taken his fancy; his formal, old-fashioned advances were modestly but promptly met.

"I suppose it is not usual, in these parts, for travelers to inquire each other's names?" the old gentleman remarked to his new acquaintance; "but we seem to have plenty of time on our hands; we might as well improve it socially. My name is David Underhill, and this is my daughter Phebe. Now what might thy name be, friend?"

"My name is Ludovic," said the youth, looking a half-apology at Phebe, who saw no reason for it.

"First or family name?"

"Ludovic is my family name."

"And a very good name it is," said the old gentleman. "Not a common name in these parts, I should say, but one very well and highly known to me," he added, with pleased emphasis. "Phebe, thee remembers a visit we had from Martin Ludovic when we were living at New Rochelle?"

"Thee knows I was not born when you lived at New Rochelle, father dear."

"True, true! It was thy mother I was thinking of. She had a great esteem for Martin Ludovic. He was one of the world's people, as we say—in the world, but not of the world. Yet he made a great success in life. He was her father's junior partner—rose from a clerk's stool in his counting-room; and a great success he made of it. But that was after Friend Lawrence's time. My wife was Phebe Lawrence."

Young Ludovic smiled brightly in reply to this information, and seemed about to speak, but the old gentleman forestalled him.

"Friend Lawrence had made what was considered a competence in those days—a very small one it would be called now; but he was satisfied. Thee may not be aware that it is a recommendation among the Friends, and it used to be a common practice, that when a merchant had made a sufficiency for himself and those depending on him, he should show his sense of the favor of Providence by stepping out and leaving his chance to the younger men. Friend Lawrence did so—not to his own benefit ultimately, though that was no one's fault that ever I heard; and Martin Ludovic was his successor, and a great and honorable business was the outcome of his efforts. Now does thee happen to recall if Martin is a name in thy branch?"

"My grandfather was Martin Ludovic of the old New York house of Lawrence and Ludovic," said the cadet of that name; but as he gave these credentials a profound melancholy subdued his just and natural pride.

"Is it possible!" Friend Underhill exulted, more pleased than if he had recovered a lost bank-note for many hundreds. There are no people who hold by the ties of blood and family more strongly than the Friends; and Friend Underhill, on this long journey, had felt himself sadly insolvent in those sureties that cannot be packed in a trunk or invested in irrigable lands. It was as if on the wild, cold seas he had crossed the path of a bark from home. He yearned to have speech with this graciously favored young man, whose grandfather had been his Phebe's grandfather's partner and dearest friend. The memory of that connection had been cherished with ungrudging pride through the succeeding generations in which the Ludovics had gone up in the world and the Lawrences had come down. Friend Underhill did not recall—nor would he have thought it of the least importance—that a Lawrence had been the benefactor in the first place, and had set Martin Ludovic's feet upon the ladder of success. He took the young man's hand affectionately in his own, and studied the favor of his countenance.

"Thee has the family look," he said in a satisfied tone; "and they had no cause, as a rule, to be discontented with their looks."

Young Ludovic's eyes fell, and he blushed like a girl; the dark-red blood dyed his face with the color almost of shame. Phebe moved uneasily in her seat.

"Make room beside thee, Phebe," said her father; "or, no, friend Ludovic; sit thee here beside me. If the train should start, I could hear thee better. And thy name—let me see—thee must be a Charles Ludovic. In thy family there was always a Martin, and then an Aloys, and then a Charles; and it was said—though a foolish superstition, no doubt—that the king's name brought ill luck. The Ludovic whose turn it was to bear the name of the unhappy Stuart took with it the misfortunes of three generations."

"A very unjust superstition I should call it," pronounced Phebe.

"Surely, and a very idle one," her father acquiesced, smiling at her warmth. "I trust, friend Charles, it has been given thee happily to disprove it in thy own person."

"On the contrary," said Charles Ludovic, "if I am not the unluckiest of my name, I hope there may never be another."

He spoke with such conviction, such energy of sadness, only silence could follow the words. Then the old gentleman said, most gently and ruefully:—

"If it be indeed as thee says, I trust it will not seem an intrusion, in one who knew thy family's great worth, to ask the nature of thy trouble—if by chance it might be my privilege to assist thee. I feel of rather less than my usual small importance—cast loose, as it were, between the old and the new; but if my small remedies should happen to suit with thy complaint, it would not matter that they were trifling—like Phebe's drops and pellets she puts such faith in," he added, with a glance at his daughter's downcast face.

"Dear sir, you *have* helped me, by the gift of the outstretched hand. Between strangers, as we are, that implies a faith as generous as it is rare."

"Nay, we are not strangers; no one of thy name shall call himself stranger to one of ours. Shall he, Phebe? Still, I would not importune thee"—

"I thank you far more than you can know; but we need not talk of my troubles. It was a graceless speech of mine to obtrude them."

"As thee will. But I deny the lack of grace. The gracelessness was mine to bring up a foolish saying, more honored in the forgetting."

Here Phebe interposed with a spoonful of the medicine her father had referred to so disparagingly. "I would not talk any more now, if I were thee, father. Thee sees how it makes thee cough."

At this, Ludovic rose to leave them; but Phebe detained him, shyly doing the honors of their quarters in the common caravan. He stayed, but a constrained silence had come upon him. The old gentleman closed his eyes, and sometimes smiled to himself as he sat so, beside the younger man, and Phebe had strange thoughts as she looked at them both. Her imagination was greatly stirred. She talked easily and with perfect unconsciousness to Ludovic, and told him little things she could remember having heard about the one generation of his family that had formerly been connected with her own. She knew more about it, it appeared, than he did. And more and more he seemed to lose himself in her eyes, rather than to be listening to her voice. He sat with his back to his companion across the aisle; at length the latter rose, and touched him on the shoulder. He turned instantly, and Phebe, looking up, caught the hard, roused expression that altered him into the likeness of another man.

"I am going outside." No more was said, but Ludovic rose, bowed to Phebe, and followed his curt fellow-passenger.

"What can be the connection between them?" thought the girl. "They seem inseparable, yet not friends precisely. How could they be friends?" And in her prompt mental comparison the elder man inevitably suffered. She began to think of all the tragedies with which young lives are fatalistically bound up; but it was significant that none of her speculations included the possibility of anything in the nature of error in respect to this Charles Ludovic who called himself unhappy.

"Stop a moment. I want to speak to you," said Ludovic. The two men were passing through the gentlemen's toilet-room; Ludovic turned his back to the marble washstand, and waited, with his head up, and the tips of his long hands resting in his trousers' pockets. "I have a favor to ask of you, Mr. Burke."

"Well, sir, what's the size of it?"

"You must have heard some of our talk in there; you see how it is? They will never, of themselves, suspect the reason of your fondness for my company. Is it worth while, for the time we shall be together, to put them on to it? It's not very easy, you see; make it as easy as you can."

"Have I tried to make it hard, Mr. Ludovic?"

"Not at all. I don't mean that."

"Am I giving you away most of the time?"

"Of course not. You have been most awfully good. But you're—you're damnably in my way. I see you out of the corner of my eye always, when you aren't square in front of me. I can't make a move but you jump. Do you think I am such a fool as to make a break now? No, sir; I am going through with this; I'm in it most of the time. Now see here, I give you my word—and there are no liars of my name—that you will find me with you at Pocatello. Till then let me alone, will you? Keep your eyes off me. Keep out of range of my talk. I would like to say a word now and then without knowing there's a running comment in the mind of a man across the car, who thinks he knows me better than the people I am talking to—understand?"

"Maybe I do, maybe I don't," said Mr. Burke, deliberately. "I don't know as it's any of my business what you say to your friends, or what they think of you. All I'm responsible for is your person."

"Precisely. At Pocatello you will have my person."

"And have I got your word for the road between?"

"My word, and my thanks—if the thanks of a man in my situation are worth anything."

"I'm dum sorry for you, Mr. Ludovic, and I don't mind doing what little I can to make things easy"—Mr. Burke paused, seeing his companion smile. "Well, yes, I know it's hard—it's dooced almighty hard; and it looks like there was a big mistake somewheres, but it's no business of mine to say so. Have a cigar?"

Young Mr. Ludovic had accepted a number of Mr. Burke's palliative offers of cigars during their journey together; he accepted the courtesy, but he did not smoke the cigars. He usually gave them to the porter. He had an expensive taste in cigars, as in many other things. He paid for his high-priced preferences, or he went without. He was never willing to accept any substitute for the thing he really wanted; and it was very hard for him, when he had set his heart upon a thing, not to approach it in the attitude that an all-wise Providence had intended it for him.

About dusk the snow-plow engines from above came down for coal and water. They brought no positive word, only that the plows and shovelers were at work at both ends of the big cut, and they hoped the track would be free by daybreak. But the snow was still falling as night set in.

Ludovic and Phebe sat in the shadowed corner behind the curtains of No. 7. Phebe's father had gone to bed early; his cough was worse, and Phebe was treating him for that and for the fever which had developed as an attendant symptom. She was a devotee in her chosen school of medicine; she knew her remedies, within the limits of her household experience, and used them with the courage and constancy that are of no school, but which better the wisdom of them all.

Ludovic observed that she never lost count of the time through all her talk, which was growing more and more absorbing; he was jealous of the interruption when she said, "Excuse me," and looked at her watch, or rose and carried her tumblers of medicine alternately to the patient, and woke him gently; for it was now a case for strenuous treatment, and she purposed to watch out the night, and give the medicines regularly every hour.

Mr. Burke was as good as his word; he kept several seats distant from the young people. He had a private understanding, though, with the car officials: not that he put no faith in the word of a Ludovic, but business is business.

When he went to his berth about eleven o'clock he noticed that his prisoner was still keeping the little Quaker girl company, and neither of them seemed to be sleepy. The table where they had taken supper together was still between them, with Phebe's watch and the medicine tumblers upon it. The panel of looking-glass reflected the young man's profile, touched with gleams of lamplight, as he leaned forward with his arms upon the table.

Phebe sat far back in her corner, pale and grave; but when her eyes were lifted to his face they were as bright as winter stars.

It was Ludovic's intention, before he parted with Phebe, to tell her his story—his own story; the newspaper account of him she would read, with all the world, after she had reached Volney. Meantime he wished to lose himself in a dream of how it might have been could he have met this



little Phebe, not on a side-track, his chance already spoiled, but on the main line, with a long ticket, and the road clear before them to the Golden Gate.

Under other circumstances she might not have had the same overmastering fascination for him; he did not argue that question with himself. He talked to her all night long as a man talks to the woman he has chosen and is free to win, with but a single day in which to win her; and underneath his impassioned tones, shading and deepening them with tragic meaning, was the truth he was withholding. There was no one to stand between Phebe and this peril, and how should she know whither they were drifting?

He told her stories of his life of danger and excitement and contrasts, East and West; he told her of his work, his ambitions, his disappointments; he carried her from city to city, from camp to camp. He spoke to sparkling eyes, to fresh, thrilling sympathies, to a warm heart, a large comprehension, and a narrow experience. Every word went home; for with this girl he was strangely sure of himself, as indeed he might have been.

And still the low music of his voice went on; for he did not lack that charm, among many others—a voice for sustained and moving speech. Perhaps he did not know his own power; at all events, he was unsparing of an influence the most deliberate and enthralling to which the girl had ever been subjected.

He was a Ludovic of that family her own had ever held in highest consideration. He was that Charles Ludovic who had called himself unhappiest of his name. Phebe never forgot this fact, and in his pauses, and often in his words, she felt the tug of that strong undertow of unspoken feeling pulling him back into depths where even in thought she could not follow him.

And so they sat face to face, with the watch between them ticking away the fateful moments. For Ludovic, life ended at Pocatello, but not for Phebe.

What had he done with that faith they had given him—the gentle, generous pair! He had resisted, he thought that he was resisting, his mad attraction to this girl—of all girls the most impossible to him now, yet the one, his soul averred, most obviously designed for him. His wild, sick fancy had clung to her from the moment her face had startled him, as he took his last backward look upon the world he had forfeited.

His prayer was that he might win from Phebe, before he left her at Pocatello, some sure token of her remembrance that he might dwell upon and dream over in the years of his buried life.

It would not have been wonderful, as the hours of that strange night flew by, if Phebe had lost a moment, now and then, had sometimes wandered from the purpose of her vigil. Her thoughts strayed, but they came back duly, and she was constant to her charge. Through all that unwholesome enchantment her hold upon herself was firm, through her faithfulness to the simple duties in which she had been bred.

Meanwhile the train lay still in the darkness, and Ludovic thanked God, shamelessly, for the snow. How the dream outwore the night and strengthened as morning broke gray and cold, and quiet with the stillness of the desert, we need not follow. More and more it possessed him, and began to seem the only truth that mattered.

He took to himself all the privileges of her protector; the rights, indeed—as if he could have rights such as belong to other men, now, in regard to any woman.

If the powers that are named of good or evil, according to the will of the wisher, had conspired to help him on, the dream could not have drawn closer to the dearest facts of life; but no spells were needed beyond those which the reckless conjurer himself possessed—his youth, his implied misfortunes, his unlikeness to any person she had known, his passion, "meek, but wild," which he neither spoke nor attempted to conceal.

And Phebe sat like a charmed thing while he wove the dream about her. She could not think; she had nothing to do while her father slept; she had nowhere to go, away from this new friend of her father's choosing. She was exhausted with watching, and nervously unstrung. Her hands were ice; her color went and came; her heart was in a wild alarm. She blushed almost as she breathed, with his eyes always upon her; and blushing, could have wept, but for the pride that still was left her in this strange, unwholesome excitement.

It was an ordeal that should have had no witnesses but the angels; yet it was seen of the porter and the conductor and Mr. Burke. The last was not a person finely cognizant of situations like this one; but he felt it and resented it in every fibre of his honest manhood.

"What's Ludovic doing?" he asked himself in heated soliloquy. "He's out of the running, and the old man's sick abed, and no better than an old woman when he's well. What's the fellow thinking of?"

Mr. Burke took occasion to ask him, when they were alone together—Ludovic putting the finishing touches to a shave; the time was not the happiest, but the words were honest and to the point.

"I didn't understand," said Mr. Burke, "that the little girl was in it. Now, do you call it quite on the square, Mr. Ludovic, between you and her? I don't like it, myself; I don't want to be a party to it. I've got girls of my own."

Ludovic held his chin up high; his hands shook as he worked at his collar-button.

"Have you got any boys?" he flung out in the tone of a retort.

"Yes; one about your age, I should guess."

"How would you like to see him in the fix I'm in?"

"I couldn't suppose it, Mr. Ludovic. My boy and you ain't one bit alike."

"Are your girls like her?"

"No, sir; they are not. I ain't worrying about them any, nor wouldn't if they was in her place. But there's points about this thing"—

"We'll leave the points. Suppose, I say, your boy was in my fix: would you grudge him any little kindness he might be able to cheat heaven, we'll say, out of between here and Pocatello?"

"Heaven can take care of itself; that little girl is not in heaven yet. And there's kindnesses and kindnesses, Mr. Ludovic. There are some that cost like the mischief. I expect you're willing to bid high on kindness from a nice girl, about now; but how about her? Has kindness gone up in her market? I guess not. That little creetur's goods can wait; she'd be on top in any market. I guess it ain't quite a square deal between her and you."

Ludovic sat down, and buried his hands in his pockets. His face was a dark red; his lips twitched.

"Are you going to stick to your bargain, or are you not?" he asked, fixing his eyes on a spot just above Mr. Burke's head.

"You've got the cheek to call it a bargain! But say it was a bargain. I didn't know, I say, that the little girl was in it. Your bank's broke, Mr. Ludovic. You ought to quit business. You've got no right to keep your doors open, taking in money like hers, clean gold fresh from the mint."

"O Lord!" murmured Ludovic; and he may have added a prayer for patience with this common man who was so pitilessly in the right. A week ago, and the right had been easy to him. But now he was off the track; every turn of the wheels tore something to pieces.

"There are just two subjects I cannot discuss with you," he said, sinking his voice. "One is that young lady. Her father knows my people. She shall know me before I leave her. They say we shall go through to-night. You must think I am the devil if you think that, without the right even to dispense with your company, I can have much to answer for between here and Pocatello."

"You are as selfish as the devil, that's what I think; and the worst of it is, you look as white as other folks."

"Then leave me alone, or else put the irons on me. Do one thing or the other. I won't be dogged and watched and hammered with your infernal jaw! You can put a ball through me, you can handcuff me before her face; but my eyes are my own, and my tongue is my own, and I will use them as I please."

Mr. Burke said no more. He had said a good deal; he had covered the ground, he thought. And possibly he had some sympathy, even when he thought of his girls, with the young fellow who had looked too late in the face of joy and gone clean wild over his mischance.

It was his opinion that Ludovic would "get" not less than twenty-five years. There were likely to be Populists on that jury; the prisoner's friends belonged to a clique of big monopolists; it would go harder with him than if he had been an honest miner, or a playful cow-boy on one of his monthly "tears."

When Ludovic returned to his section, Phebe had gone to sleep in the corner opposite, her muff tucked under one flushed cheek; the other cheek was pale. Shadows as delicate as the tinted reflections in the hollow of a snow-drift slept beneath her chin, and in the curves around her pathetic eyelids, and in the small incision that defined her pure red under lip. Again the angels, whom we used to believe in, were far from this their child.

Ludovic drew down all the blinds to keep out the glare, and sat in his own place, and watched her, and fed his aching dream. He did not care what he did, nor who saw him, nor what anybody thought.

In the afternoon he took her out for a walk. The snow had stopped; her father was up and dressed, and very much better, and Phebe was radiant. Her sky was clearing all at once. She charged the porter to call her in "just twenty minutes," for then she must give the medicine again. On their way out of the car Ludovic slipped a dollar into the porter's hand. Somehow that clever but corrupted functionary let the time slip by, to Phebe's innocent amazement. Could he have gone to sleep? Surely it must be more than twenty minutes since they had left the car.

"He's probably given the dose himself," said Ludovic. "A good porter is always three parts nurse."

"But he doesn't know which medicine to give."

"Oh, let them be," he said impatiently. "He's talking to your father, and making him laugh. He'll brace him up better than any medicine. They will call you fast enough if you are needed."

They walked the platform up and down in front of the section-house. They were watched, but Ludovic did not care for that now.

"Will you take my arm?"

She hesitated, in amused consideration of her own inexperience.

"Why, I never *did* take any one's arm that I remember. I don't think I could keep step with thee."

The intimate pronoun slipped out unawares.

"I will keep step with *thee*."

"I don't know that I quite like to hear you use that word."

"But you used it, just now, to me."

"It was an accident, then."

"Your father says 'thee' to me."

"He is of an older generation; my mother wore the Friends' dress. But those customs had a religious meaning for them to which I cannot pretend. With me it is a sort of instinct; I can't explain it, nor yet quite ignore it."

"Have I offended that particular instinct of yours which attaches to the word 'thee'?"

He seemed deeply chagrined. He was one who did not like to make mistakes, and he had no time to waste in apologizing and recovering lost ground.

"People do say it to us sometimes in fun, not knowing what the word means to us," said Phebe.

In the fresh winter air she was regaining her tone—escaping from him, Ludovic felt, into her own sweet, calm self-possession.

"Then you distinctly refuse me whatever—the least—that word implies? I am one of those who 'rush in'?"

"Oh, no; but you are much too serious. It is partly a habit of speech; we cannot lose the habit of speaking to each other as strangers in three days."

"You were never a stranger to me. I knew you from the first moment I saw you; yet each moment since you have been a fresh surprise."

"I cannot keep up with you," she said, slipping her hand out of his arm. In the grasp of his passionate dream he was striding along regardless, not of her, but of her steps.

"Oh, little steps," he groaned within himself—"oh, little doubting steps, why did we not meet before?"

Oh, blessed hampering steps, how much safer would his have gone beside them!

"What a charming pair!" cried a lady passenger from the forward sleeper. She too was walking, with her husband, and her eye had been instantly taken by the gentle girl with the delicate wild-rose color, halting on the arm of a splendid youth with dare-devil eyes, who did not look as happy as he ought with that sweet creature on his arm.

"Isn't it good to know that the old stories are going on all the same?" said the sentimental traveler. "What do you say—will that story end in happiness?"

"I say that he isn't good enough for her," the husband replied.

"Then he'll be sure to win her," laughed the lady. "He has won her, I believe," she added more seriously, watching the pair where they stood together at the far end of the platform; "but something is wrong."

"Something usually is at that stage, if I remember. Come, let us get aboard."

The sun was setting clear in the pale saffron west. The train from the buried cut had been released, and now came sliding down the track, welcomed by boisterous salutations. Behind were the mighty snow-plow engines, backing down, enwreathed and garlanded with snow.

"A-a-all aboard!" the conductor drawled in a colloquial tone to the small waiting group upon the platform.

Slowly they crept back upon the main track, and heavily the motion increased, till the old chant of the rails began again, and they were thundering westward down the line.

### III

Phebe was much occupied with her father, perhaps purposely so, until his bed-time. She made him her innocent refuge. Ludovic kept subtly away, lest the friendly old gentleman should be led into conversation, which might delay the hour of his retiring. He went cheerfully to rest about the time the lamps were lighted, and Phebe sought once more her corner in the empty section, shaded by her father's curtains.

Ludovic, dropping his voice below the roar of the train, asked if he might take the seat beside her.

He took it, and turned his back upon the car. He looked at his watch. He had just three hours before Pocatello. The train was making great speed; they would get in, the conductor said, by eleven o'clock. But he need not tell her yet. Half an hour passed, and his thoughts in the silence were no longer to be borne.

She was aware of his intense excitement, his restlessness, the nervous action of his hands. She shrank from the burning misery in his questioning eyes. Once she heard him whisper under his breath; but the words she heard were, "*My love! my love!*" and she thought she could not have heard aright. Her trouble increased with her sense of some involuntary strangeness in her companion, some recklessness impending which she might not know how to meet. She rose in her place, and said tremulously that she must go.

"Go!" He sprang up. "Go where, in Heaven's name? Stay," he implored, "and be kind to me! We get off at Pocatello."

"We?" she asked with her eyes in his.

"That man and I. I am his prisoner."

She sank down again, and stared at him mutely.

"He is the sheriff of Bingham County, and I am his prisoner," he repeated. "Do the words mean nothing to you?" He paused for some sign that she understood him. She dropped her eyes; her face had become as white as a snowdrop.

"He is taking me to Pocatello for the preliminary examination—oh, must I tell you this? If I thought you would never read it in the ghastly type"—

"Go on," she whispered.

"Examination," he choked, "for—for homicide. I don't know what the judge will call it; but the other man is dead, and I am left to answer for the passion of a moment with my life. And you will not speak to me?"

But now she did speak. Leaning forward so that she could look him in the eyes, she said:—

"I thought when I saw that man always with you, watching you, that he might be taking you, with your consent, to one of those places where they treat persons for—for unsoundness of the mind. I knew you had some trouble that was beyond help. I could think of nothing worse than that. It haunted me till we began to speak together; then I knew it could not be; now I wish it had been."

"I do not," said Ludovic. "I thank God I am not mad. There is passion in my blood, and folly, perhaps, but not insanity. No; I am responsible."

She remained silent, and he continued defensively:—

"But I am not the only one responsible. Can you listen? Can you hear the particulars? One always feels that one's own case is peculiar; one is never the common sinner, you know."

"I have a friend at Pocatello; he is my partner in business. Two years ago he married a New York girl, and brought her out there to live. If you knew Pocatello, you would know what a privilege it was to have their house to go to. They made me free of it, as people do in the West. There is nothing they could not have asked of me in return for such hospitality; it was an obligation not less sacred on my part than that of family."

"When my friend went away on long journeys, on our common business, it was my place in his absence to care for all that was his. There are many little things a woman needs a man to do for her in a place like Pocatello; it was my pride and privilege to be at all times at the service of this lady. She was needlessly grateful, but she liked me besides: she was one who showed her likes and dislikes frankly. She had grown up in a small, exclusive set of persons who knew one another's grandfathers, and were accustomed to say what they pleased inside; what outsiders thought did not matter. She had not learned to be careful; she despised the need of it. She thought Pocatello and the people there were a joke. But there is a serious side even to Pocatello: you cannot joke with rattlesnakes and vitriol and slow mines. She made enemies by her gay little sallies, and she would never condescend to explain. When people said things that showed they had interpreted her words or actions in a stupid or a vulgar way, she gave the thing up. It was not her business to adapt herself to such people; it was theirs to understand her. If they could not, then it did not matter what they thought. That was her theory of life in Pocatello."

"One night I was in a place—not for my pleasure—a place where a lady's name is never spoken by a gentleman. I heard her name spoken by a fool; he coupled it with mine, and laughed. I walked out of the place, and forgot what I was there for till I found myself down the street with my heart jumping. That time I did right, you would say."

"But I met him again. It was at the depot at Pocatello. I was seeing a man off—a stranger in the place, but a friend of my friends; we had dined at their house together. This other—I think he had been drinking—I suppose he must have included me in his stupid spite against the lady. He made his fool speech again. The man who was with me heard him, and looked astounded. I stepped up to him. I said—I don't know what. I ordered him to leave that name alone. He repeated it, and I

struck him. He pulled a pistol on me. I grabbed him, and twisted it out of his hand. How it happened I cannot tell, but there in the smoke he lay at my feet. The train was moving out. My friend pulled me aboard. The papers said I ran away. I did not. I waited at Omaha for Mr. Burke.

"And there I met you, three days ago; and all I care for now is just to know that you will not think of me always by that word."

"What word?"

"Never mind; spare me the word. Look at me! Do I seem to you at all the same man?"

Phebe slowly lifted her eyes.

"Is there nothing left of me? Answer me the truth. I have a right to be answered."

"You are the same; but all the rest of it is strange. I do not see how such a thing could be."

"Can you not conceive of one wild act in a man not inevitably always a sinner?"

"Oh, yes; but not that act. I cannot understand the impulse to take a life."

"I did not think of his miserable life; I only meant to stop his talking. He tried to take mine. I wish he had. But no, no; I should have missed this glimpse of you. Just when it is too late I learn what life is worth."

"Do men truly do those things for the sake of women? Were you thinking of your friend's wife when you struck him?"

"I was thinking of the man—what a foul-mouthed fool he was—not fit to"—He stopped, seeing the look on Phebe's face.

"Oh, I'm impossible, I know, to one like you! It's rather hard I should have to be compared, in your mind, to a race of men like your father. Have you never known any other men?"

"I have read of all the men other people read of. I have some imagination."

"I suppose you read your Bible."

"Yes: the men in the Bible were not all of the Spirit; but they worshiped the Spirit—they were humble when they did wrong."

"Did women ever love them?"

Phebe was silent.

"Do not talk to me of the Spirit," Ludovic pleaded. "I am a long way from that. At least I am not a hypocrite—not yet. Wait till I am a 'trusty,' scheming for a pardon. Can you not give me one word of simple human comfort? There are just forty minutes more."

"What can I say?"

"Tell me this—and oh, be careful! Could you, if it were permitted a criminal like me to expiate his sin in the world among living men, in human relations with them—could we ever meet? Could you say 'thee' to me, not as to an afflicted person or a child? Am I to be only a text, another instance"—

"Many would not blame you. Neither do I blame you, not knowing that life or those people," said Phebe. "But there was One who turned away from the evil-speakers, and wrote upon the sand."

"But those evil-speakers spoke the truth."

"Can a lie be stopped by a pistol-shot? But we need not argue."

"No; I see how it is. I shall be to you only another of the wretched sons of Cain."

"I am thy sister," she said, and gave him her hand.

He held it in his strong, cold, trembling clasp.

"Darling, do you know where I am going? I shall never see you, never again—unless you are like the sainted women of your faith who walked the prisons, and preached to them in bonds."

"Thy bonds are mine: but I am no preacher."

The drowsy lights swayed and twinkled, the wheels rang on the frozen rails as the wild, white wastes flew by.

"Father shall never know it," Phebe murmured. "He shall never know, if I can help it, why you called yourself unhappy."

"Is it such an unspeakable horror to you?" He winced.

"He has not many years to live; it would only be one disappointment more." She was leaning back in her seat; her eyes were closed; she looked dead weary, but patient, as if this too were life, and not more than her share.

"Has your father any money, dear?"

She smiled: "Do we look like people with money?"

"If they would only let me have my hands!" he groaned. "To think of shutting up a great strong fellow like me"—

It was useless to go on. He sat, bitterly forecasting the fortunes of those two lambs who had strayed so far from the green pastures and still waters, when he heard Phebe say softly, as if to herself,—

"We are almost there."

Mr. Burke began to fold his newspapers and get his bags in order. His hands rested upon the implements of his office—he carried them always in his pockets—while he stood balancing himself in the rocking car, and the porter dusted his hat and coat.

The train dashed past the first scattered lights of the town.

"Po-catello!" the brakeman roared in a voice of triumph, for they were "in" at last.

The porter came, and touched Ludovic on the shoulder.

"Gen'leman says he's ready, sir."

He rose and bent over Phebe. If she had been like any other girl he must have kissed her, but he dared not. He had prayed for a sign, and he had won it—that look of dumb and lasting anguish in her childlike eyes.

Yet, strange passion of the man's nature, he was not sorry for what he had done.

Mr. Burke took his arm in silence, and steered him out of the car; both doors were guarded, for he had feared there might be trouble. He was surprised at Ludovic's behavior.

"What's the matter with him?" the car-conductor asked, looking after the pair as they walked up the platform together. "Is he sick?"

"Mashed," said the porter, gloomily; for Ludovic had forgotten the parting fee. "Regular girl mash, the worst I ever saw."

"He's late about it, if he expects to have any fun," said the conductor; and he began to dance, with his hands in his great-coat pockets, for the night air was raw. He was at the end of his run, and was going home to his own girl, whom he had married the week before.

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Friends and family influence mustered strong for Ludovic at the trial six weeks later. His lawyer's speech was the finest effort, it was said, ever listened to by an Idaho jury. The ladies went to hear it, and to look at the handsome prisoner, who seemed to grow visibly old as the days of the trial went by.

But those who are acquainted with the average Western jury need not be told that it was not influence that did it, nor the lawyer's eloquence, nor the court's fine-spun legal definitions, nor even the women's tears. They looked at the boy, and thought of their own boys, or they looked inside, and thought of themselves; and they concluded that society might take its chances with that young man at large. They stayed out an hour, out of respect to their oath, and then brought in a verdict of "Not guilty;" and the audience had to be suppressed.

But after the jury's verdict there is society, and all the tongues that will talk, long after the tears are dry. And then comes God in the silence—and Phebe.

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The men all say she is too good for him, whose name has been in everybody's mouth. They say it, even though they do not know the cruel way in which he won her love. But the women say that Phebe, though undeniably a saint (and "the sweetest thing that ever lived"), is yet a woman, incapable of inflicting judgment upon the man she loves.

The case is in her hands now. She may punish, she may avenge, if she will; for Ludovic is the slave of his own remorseless conquest. But Phebe has never discovered that she was wronged. There is something in faith, after all; and there is a good deal in blood, Friend Underhill thinks. "Doubtless the grandson of Martin Ludovic must have had great provocation."

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## THE TRUMPETER

### I

When the trumpets at Bisuka barracks sound retreat, the girls in the Meadows cottage, on the edge of the Reservation, begin to hurry with the supper things, and Mrs. Meadows, who has been

young herself, says to her eldest daughter, "You go now, Callie; the girls and I can finish." Which means that Callie's colors go up as the colors on the hill come down; for soon the tidy infantrymen and the troopers with their yellow stripes will be seen, in the first blush of the afterglow, tramping along the paths that thread the sagebrush common between the barracks and the town; and Callie's young man will be among them, and he will turn off at the bridge that crosses the acéquia, and make for the cottage gate by a path which he ought to know pretty well by this time.

Callie's young man is Henniker, one of the trumpeters of K troop, —th cavalry; *the* trumpeter, Callie would say, for though there are two of the infantry and two of the cavalry who stand forth at sunset, in front of the adjutant's office, and blow as one man the brazen call that throbs against the hill, it is only Henniker whom Callie hears. That trumpet blare, most masculine of all musical utterances, goes straight from his big blue-clad chest to the heart of his girl, across the clear-lit evening; but not to hers alone. There is only one Henniker, but there is more than one girl in the cottage on the common.

At this hour, nightly, a small dark head, not so high above the sage as Callie's auburn one, pursues its dreaming way, in the wake of two cows and a half-grown heifer, towards the hills where the town herd pastures. Punctually at the first call it starts out behind the cows from the home corral; by the second it has passed, very slowly, the foot-bridge, and is nearly to the corner post of the Reservation; but when "sound off" is heard, the slow-moving head stops still. The cheek turns. A listening eye is raised; it is black, heavily lashed; the tip of a silken eyebrow shows against the narrow temple. The cheek is round and young, of a smooth clear brown, richly undertinted with rose,—a native wild flower of the Northwest. As the trumpets cease, and the gun fires, and the brief echo dies in the hill, the liquid eyes grow sad.

"Sweet, sweet! too sweet to be so short and so strong!" The dumb childish heart swells in the constriction of a new and keener sense of joy, an unspeakable new longing.

What that note of the deep-colored summer twilight means to her she hardly understands. It awakens no thought of expectation for herself, no definite desire. She knows that the trumpeter's sunset call is his good-by to duty on the eve of joy; it is the pæan of his love for Callie. Wonderful to be like Callie; who after all is just like any other girl,—like herself, just as she was a year ago, before she had ever spoken to Henniker.

Henniker was not only a trumpeter, one of four who made music for the small two-company garrison; he was an artist with a personality. The others blew according to tactics, and sometimes made mistakes; Henniker never made mistakes, except that he sometimes blew too well. Nobody with an ear, listening nightly for taps, could mistake when it was Henniker's turn, as orderly trumpeter, to sound the calls. He had the temperament of the joyous art: and with it the vanity, the passion, the forgetfulness, the unconscious cruelty, the love of beauty, and the love of being loved that made him the flirt constitutional as well as the flirt military,—which not all soldiers are, but which all soldiers are accused of being. He flirted not only with his fine gait and figure, and bold roving glances from under his cap-peak with the gold sabres crossed above it; he flirted in a particular and personal as well as promiscuous manner, and was ever new to the dangers he incurred, not to mention those to which his willing victims exposed themselves. For up to this time in all his life Henniker had never yet pursued a girl. There had been no need, and as yet no inducement, for him to take the offensive. The girls all felt his irresponsible gift of pleasing, and forgot to be afraid. Not one of the class of girls he met but envied Callie Meadows, and showed it by pretending to wonder what he could see in her.

It was himself Henniker saw, so no wonder he was satisfied, until he should see himself in a more flattering mirror still. The very first night he met her, Callie had informed him, with the courage of her bright eyes, that she thought him magnificent fun; and he had laughed in his heart, and said, "Go ahead, my dear!" And ahead they went headlong, and were engaged within a week.

Mother Meadows did not like it much, but it was the youthful way, in pastoral frontier circles like their own; and Callie would do as she pleased,—that was Callie's way. Father Meadows said it was the women's business; if Callie and her mother were satisfied, so was he.

But he made inquiries at the post, and learned that Henniker's record was good in a military sense. He stood well with his officers, had no loose, unsoldierly habits, and never was drunk on duty. He did not save his pay; but how much "pay" had Meadows ever saved when he was a single man? And within two years, if he wanted it, the trumpeter was entitled to his discharge. So he prospered in this as in former love affairs that had stopped short of the conclusive step of marriage.

Meta, the little cow-girl, the youngest and fairest, though many shades the darkest, of the Meadows household, was not of the Meadows blood. On her father's side, her ancestry, doubtless, was uncertain; some said carelessly, "Canada French." Her mother was pure squaw of the Bannock breed. But Mother Meadows, whose warm Scotch-Irish heart nourished a vein of romance together with a feudal love of family, upheld that Meta was no chance slip of the murky half-bloods, neither clean wild nor clean tame. Her father, she claimed to know, had been a man of education and of honor, on the white side of his life, a well-born Scottish gentleman, exiled to the wilderness of the Northwest in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. And Meta's mother had broken no law of her rudimentary conscience. She had not swerved in her own wild allegiance, nor suffered desertion by her white chief. He had been killed in some obscure frontier fight, and his goods, including the woman and child, were the stake for which he had perished.

But Father Josette, who knew all things and all people of those parts, and had baptized the infant by the sainted name of Margaret, had traced his lost plant of grace and conveyed it out of the forest shades into the sunshine of a Christian white woman's home. Father Josette—so Mrs. Meadows maintained—had known that the babe would prove worthy of transplantation.

She made room for the little black-headed stranger, with soft eyes like a mouse (by the blessing of God she had never lost a child, and the nest was full,) in the midst of her own fat, fair-haired brood, and cherished her in her place, and gave her a daughter's privilege.

In a wild, woodlandish way Meta was a bit of an heiress in her own right. She had inherited through her mother a share in the yearly increase of a band of Bannock ponies down on the Salmon meadows; and every season, after grand round-up, the settlement was made,—always with distinct fairness, though it took some time, and a good deal of eating, drinking, and diplomacy, before the business could be accomplished.

"What is a matter of a field worth forty shekels betwixt thee and me?" was the etiquette of the transaction, but the outcome was practically the same as in the days of patriarchal transfers of real estate.

Father Meadows would say that it cost him twice over what the maiden's claim was worth to have her cousins the Bannocks, with their wives and children and horses, camped on his borders every summer; for Meta's dark-skinned brethren never sent her the worth of her share in money, but came themselves with her ponies in the flesh, and spare ponies of their own, for sale in the town; and on Father Meadows was the burden of keeping them all good-natured, of satisfying their primitive ideas of hospitality, and of pasturing Meta's ponies until they could finally be sold for her benefit. No account was kept, in this simple, generous household, of what was done for Meta, but strict account was kept of what was Meta's own.

The Bannock brethren were very proud of their fair kinswoman who dwelt in the tents of Jacob. They called her, amongst themselves, by the name they give to the mariposa lily, the closed bud of which is pure white as the whitest garden lily; but as each Psyche-wing petal opens it is mooned at the base with a dark, purplish stain which marks the flower with startling beauty, yet to some eyes seems to mar it as well. With every new bud the immaculate promise is renewed; but the leopard cannot change his spots nor the wild hill lily her natal stain.

This year the sale of pony flesh amounted to nearly a hundred dollars, which Father Meadows put away for Meta's future benefit,—all but one gold piece, which the mother showed her, telling her that it represented a new dress.

"You need a new white one for your best, and I shall have it made long. You're filling out so, I don't believe you'll grow much taller."

Meta smiled sedately. In spite of the yearly object lesson her dark kinsfolk presented, she never classed herself among the hybrids. She accepted homage and tribute from the tribe, but in her consciousness, at this time, she was all white. This was due partly to Mother Meadows's large-hearted and romantic theories of training, and partly to an accident of heredity. The woman who looks the squaw is the squaw, when it comes to the flowering time of her life. To Meta had succeeded the temperament of her mother expressed in the features of her father; whether Canadian trapper or Scotch grandee, he had owned an admirable profile.

A great social and musical event took place that summer in the town, and Meta's first long dress was finished in time to play its part, as such trifles will, in the simple fates of girlhood. It was by far the prettiest dress she had ever put over her head: the work of a professional, to begin with. Then its length persuaded one that she was taller than nature had made her. Its short waist suited her youthful bust and flat back and narrow shoulders. The sleeves were puffed and stood out like wings, and were gathered on a ribbon which tied in a bow just above the bend of her elbow. Her arms were round and soft as satin, and pinkish-pale inside, like the palms of her small hands. All her skin, though dark, was as clear as wine in a colored glass. The neck was cut down in a circle below her throat, which she shyly clasped with her hands, not being accustomed to feel it bare. And as naturally as a bird would open its beak for a worm, she exclaimed to Mother Meadows, "Oh, how I wish I had some beads!" And before night she had strung herself a necklace of the gold-colored pom-pons with silver-gray stems that spangle the dry hills in June,—"butterballs" the Western children call them,—and, in spite of the laughter and gibes of the other girls, she wore her sylvan ornament on the gala night, and its amazing becomingness was its best defense.

So Meta's first long dress went, in company with three other unenvious white dresses and Father Meadows's best coat, to hear the "Coonville Minstrels," a company of amateur performers representing the best musical talent in the town, who would appear "for one night only," for the benefit of the free circulating library fund.

Henniker was not in attendance on his girl as usual.

"What a pity," the sisters said, "that he should have to be on guard to-night!" But Meta remembered, though she did not say so, that Henniker had been on guard only two nights before, so it could not be his turn again, and that could not explain his absence.

But Callie was as gay as ever, and did not seem put out, even at her father's bantering insinuations about some other possible girl who might be scoring in her place.



The sisters were enraptured over every number on the programme. The performers had endeavored to conceal their identity under burnt cork and names that were fictitious and humorous, but everybody was comparing guesses as to which was which, and who was who. The house was packed, and "society" was there. The feminine half of it did not wear its best frock to the show and its head uncovered, but what of that! A girl knows when she is looking her prettiest, and the young Meadowses were in no way concerned for the propriety of their own appearance. Father Meadows, looking along the row of smiling faces belonging to him, was as well satisfied as any man in the house. His eyes rested longer than usual on little Meta to-night. He saw for the first time that the child was a beauty; not going to be,—she was one then and there. Her hair, which she was accustomed to wear in two tightly braided pigtailed down her back, had been released and brushed out all its stately maiden length, "crisped like a war steed's encolure." It fell below her waist, and made her face and throat look pale against its blackness. A spot of white electric light touched her chest where it rose and fell beneath the chain of golden blossom balls,—orange gold, the cavalry color. She looked like no other girl in the house, though nearly every girl in town was there.

Part I. of the programme was finished; a brief wait,—the curtain rose, and behold the colored gentlemen from Coonville had vanished. Only the interlocutor remained, scratching his white wool wig over a letter which he begged to read in apology for his predicament. His minstrelsy had decamped, and spoilt his show. They wrote to inform him of the obvious fact, and advised him facetiously to throw himself upon the indulgence of the house, but "by no means to refund the money."

Poor little Meta believed that she was listening to the deplorable truth, and wondered how Father Meadows and the girls could laugh.

"Oh, won't there be any second part, after all?" she despaired; at which Father Meadows laughed still more, and pinched her cheek, and some persons in the row of chairs in front half turned and smiled.

"Goosey," whispered Callie, "don't you see he's only gassing? This is part of the fun."

"Oh, is it?" sighed Meta, and she waited for the secret of the fun to develop.

"Look at your programme," Callie instructed her. "See, this is the Impresario's Predicament. The Wandering Minstrel comes next. He will be splendid, I can tell you."

"Mr. Piper Hide-and-Seek," murmured Meta, studying her programme. "What a funny name!"

"Oh, you child!" Callie laughed aloud, but as suddenly hushed, for the sensation of the evening, to the Meadows party, had begun.

A very handsome man, in the gala dress of a stage peasant, of the Bavarian Highlands possibly, came forward with a short, military step, and bowed impressively. There was a burst of applause from the bluecoats in the gallery, and much whistling and stamping from the boys.

"Who is it?" the lady in front whispered to her neighbor.

"One of the soldiers from the post," was the answer.

"Really!"

But the lady's accent of surprise conveyed nothing, beside the speechless admiration of the Meadows family. Callie, who had been in the exciting secret all along, whispered violently with the other girls, but Meta had become quite cold and shivery. She could not have uttered a word.

Henniker made a little speech in an assumed accent which astonished his friends almost more than his theatrical dress and bearing. He said he was a stranger, piping his way through a foreign land, but he could "spik ze Engleesh a leetle." Would the ladies and gentlemen permit him, in the embarrassing absence of better performers, to present them with a specimen of his poor skill upon a very simple instrument? Behold!

He flung back his short cloak, and filled his chest, standing lightly on his feet, with his elbows raised.

No rattling trumpet blast from the artist's lips to-night, but, still and small, sustained and clear, the pure reed note trilled forth. Willow whistles piping in spring-time in the stillness of deep meadow lands before the grass is long, or in flickering wood paths before the full leaves darken the boughs—such was the pastoral simplicity of the instrument with which Henniker beguiled his audience. Such was the quality of sound, but the ingenuity, caprice, delicacy, and precision of its management were quite his own. They procured him a wild encore.

Henniker had been nervous at the first time of playing; it would have embarrassed him less to come before a strange house; for there were the captain and the captain's lady, and the lieutenants with their best girls; and forty men he knew were nudging and winking at one another; and there were the bonny Meadowses, with their eyes upon him and their faces all aglow. But who was she, the little big-eyed dark one in their midst? He took her in more coolly as he came before the house the second time; and this time he knew her, but not as he ever had known her before.

Is it one of nature's revenges that in the beauty of their women lurks the venom of the dark races

which the white man has put beneath his feet? The bruised serpent has its sting; and we know how, from Moab and Midian down, the daughters of the heathen have been the unhappy instruments of proud Israel's fall; but the shaft of his punishment reaches him through the body of the woman who cleaves to his breast.

That one look of Henniker's at Meta, in her strange yet familiar beauty, sitting captive to his spell, went through his flattered senses like the intoxication of strong drink. He did not take his eyes off her again. His face was pale with the complex excitement of a full house that was all one girl and all hushed through joy of him. She sat so close to Callie, his reckless glances might have been meant for either of them; Callie thought at first they were for her, but she did not think so long.

Something followed on the programme at which everybody laughed, but it meant nothing at all to Meta. She thought the supreme moment had come and gone, when a big Zouave in his barbaric reds and blues marched out and took his stand, back from the footlights, between the wings, and began that amazing performance with a rifle which is known as the "Zouave drill."

The dress was less of a disguise than the minstrel's had been, and it was a sterner, manlier transformation. It brought out the fighting look in Henniker. The footlights were lowered, a smoke arose behind the wings, strange lurid colors were cast upon the figure of the soldier magician.

"The stage is burning!" gasped Meta, clutching Collie's arm.

"It's nothing but red fire. You mustn't give yourself away so, Meta; folks will take us for a lot of sagebrushers."

Meta settled back in her place with a fluttering sigh, and poured her soul into this new wonder.

But Henniker was not doing himself justice to-night, his comrades thought. No one present was so critical of him or so proud of him as they. A hundred times he had put himself through this drill before a barrack audience, and it had seemed as if he could not make a break. But to-night his nerve was not good. Once he actually dropped his piece, and a groan escaped the row of uniforms in the gallery. This made him angry; he pulled himself up and did some good work for a moment, and then—"Great Scott! he's lost it again! No, he hasn't. Brace up, man!" The rifle swerves, but Henniker's knee flies up to catch it; the sound of the blow on the bone makes the women shiver; but he has his piece, and sends it savagely whirling, and that miss was his last. His head was like the centre of a spinning top or the hub of a flying wheel. He felt ugly from the pain of his knee, but he made a dogged finish, and only those who had seen him at his best would have said that his drill was a failure.

Henniker knew, if no one else did, what had lost him his grip in the rifle act. His eyes, which should have been glued to his work, had been straying for another and yet one more look at Meta. Where she sat so still was the storm centre of emotion in the house, and when his eyes approached her they caught the nerve shock that shook his whole system and spoiled his fine work. He cared nothing for the success of his piping when he thought of the failure of his drill. The failure had come last, and, with other things, it left its sting.

On the way home to barracks, the boys were all talking, in their free way, about Meta Meadows,—the little broncho, they called her, in allusion to her great mane of hair,—which made Henniker very hot.

He would not own that his knee pained him; he would not have it referred to, and was ready, next day, to join the riders in squad drill, a new feature of which was the hurdles and ditch-jumping and the mounted exercises, in which as usual, Henniker had distinguished himself.

The Reservation is bounded on the south-east side, next the town, by an irrigation ditch, which is crossed by as many little bridges as there are streets that open out upon the common. (All this part of the town is laid out in "additions," and is sparsely built up.) Close to this division line, at right angles with it, are the dry ditches and hurdle embankments over which the stern young corporals put their squads, under the eye of the captain.

Out in the centre of the plain other squads are engaged in the athletics of horsemanship,—a series of problems in action which embraces every sort of emergency a mounted man may encounter in the rush and throng of battle, and the means of instantly meeting it, and of saving his own life or that of a comrade. So much more is made in these days of the individual powers of the man and horse that it is wonderful to see what an exact yet intelligently obedient combination they have become; no less effective in a charge, as so many pounds of live momentum to be hurled on the bayonet points, but much more self-reliant on scout service, or when scattered singly, in defeat, over a wide, strange field of danger.

On the regular afternoons for squad and troop drill, the ditch bank on the town side would be lined with spectators: ladies in light cotton dresses and beflowered hats, small bare-legged boys and muddy dogs, the small boys' sisters dragging bonnetless babies by the hand, and sometimes a tired mother who has come in a hurry to see where her little truants have strayed to, or a cowboy lounging sideways on his peaked saddle, condescending to look on at the riding of Uncle Sam's boys. The crowd assort itself as the people do who line the barriers at a bull-fight: those who have parasols, to the shadow; those who have barely a hat, to the sun.

Here, on the field of the gray-green plain, under the glaring tent roof of the desert sky, the

national free circus goes on,—to the screaming delight of the small boys, the fear and exultation of the ladies, and the alternate pride and disgust of the officers who have it in charge.

A squad of the boldest riders are jumping, six in line. One can see by the way they come that every man will go over: first the small ditch, hardly a check in the pace; then a rush at the hurdle embankment, the horses' heads very grand and Greek as they rear in a broken line to take it. Their faces are as strong and wild as the faces of the men. Their flanks are slippery with sweat. They clear the hurdles, and stretch out for the wide ditch.

"Keep in line! Don't crowd!" the corporal shouts. They are doing well, he thinks. Over they all go; and the ladies breathe again, and say to each other how much finer this sport is because it is work, and has a purpose in it.

Now the guidon comes, riding alone, and the whole troop is proud of him. The signal flag flashes erect from the trooper's stirrup; the horse is new to it, and fears it as if it were something pursuing him; but in the face of horse and man is the same fixed expression, the sober recklessness that goes straight to the finish. If these do not go over, it will not be for want of the spur in the blood.

Next comes a pale young cavalryman just out of the hospital. He has had a fall at the hurdle week before and strained his back. His captain sees that he is nervous and not yet fit for the work, yet cannot spare him openly. He invents an order, and sends him off to another part of the field where the other squads are manœuvring.

If it is not in the man to go over, it will not be in his horse, though a poor horse may put a good rider to shame; but the measure of every man and every horse is taken by those who have watched them day by day.

The ladies are much concerned for the man who fails,—"so sorry" they are for him, as his horse blunders over the hurdle, and slackens when he ought to go free; and of course he jibs at the wide ditch, and the rider sags on his mouth.

"Give him his head! Where are your spurs, man?" the corporal shouts, and adds something under his breath which cannot be said in the presence of his captain. In they go, floundering, on their knees and noses, horse and man, and the ladies cannot see, for the dust, which of them is on top; but they come to the surface panting, and the man, whose uniform is of the color of the ditch, climbs on again, and the corporal's disgust is heard in his voice as he calls, "Ne-aaxt!"

It need not be said that no corporal ever asked Henniker where were *his* spurs. To-day the fret in his temper fretted his horse, a young, nervous animal who did not need to know where his rider's heels were quite so often as Henniker's informed him.

"Is that a non-commissioned officer who is off, and his horse scouring away over the plain? What a dire mortification," the ladies say, "and what a consolation to the bunglers!"

No, it is the trumpeter. He was taking the hurdle in a rush of the whole squad; his check-strap broke, and his horse went wild, and slammed himself into another man's horse, and ground his rider's knee against his comrade's carbine. It is Henniker who is down in the dust, cursing the carbine, and cursing his knee, and cursing the mischief generally.

The ladies strolled home through the heat, and said how glorious it was and how awfully real, and how one man got badly hurt; and they described in detail the sight of Henniker limping bareheaded in the sun, holding on to a comrade's shoulder; how his face was a "ghastly brown white," and his eyes were bloodshot, and his black head dun with dust.

"It was the trumpeter who blew so beautifully the other night,—who hurt his knee in the rifle drill," they said. "It was his knee that was hurt to-day. I wonder if it was the same knee?"

It was the same knee, and this time Henniker went to hospital and stayed there; and being no malingerer, his confinement was bitterly irksome and a hurt to his physical pride.

The post surgeon's house is the last one on the line. Then comes the hospital, but lower down the hill. The officer's walk reaches it by a pair of steps that end in a slope of grass. There are moisture and shade where the hospital stands, and a clump of box-elder trees is a boon to the convalescents there. The road between barracks and canteen passes the angle of the whitewashed fence; a wild syringa bush grows on the hospital side, and thrusts its blossoms over the wall. There is a broken board in the fence which the syringa partly hides.

After three o'clock in the afternoon this is the coolest corner of the hospital grounds; and here, on the grass, Henniker was lying, one day of the second week of his confinement.

He had been half asleep when a soft, light thump on the grass aroused him. A stray kitten had crawled through the hole in the fence, and, feeling her way down with her forepaws, had leaped to the ground beside him.

"Hey, pussy!" Henniker welcomed her pleasantly, and then was silent. A hand had followed the kitten through the hole in the fence,—a smooth brown hand no bigger than a child's, but perfect in shape as a woman's. The small fingers moved and curled enticingly.

"Pussy, pussy? Come, pussy!" a soft voice cooed. "Puss, puss, puss? Come, pussy!" The fingers groped about in empty air. "Where are you, pussy?"

Henniker had quietly possessed himself of the kitten, which, moved by these siren tones, began to squirm a little and meekly to "miew." He reached forth his hand and took the small questing one prisoner; then he let the kitten go. There was a brief speechless struggle, quite a useless one.

"Let me go! Who is it? Oh *dear!*"

Another pull. Plainly, from the tone, this last was feminine profanity.

Silence again, the hand struggling persistently, but in vain. The soft bare arm, working against the fence, became an angry red.

"Softly now. It's only me. Didn't you know I was in hospital, Meta?"

"Is it you, Henniker?"

"Indeed it is. You wouldn't begrudge me a small shake of your hand, after all these days?"

"But you are not in hospital now?"

"That's what I am. I'm not in bed, but I'm going on three legs when I'm going at all. I'm a house-bound man." A heavy sigh from Henniker.

"Haven't you shaken hands enough now, Henniker?" beseechingly from the other side. "I only wanted kitty; please put her through the fence."

"What's your hurry?"

"Have you got her there? Callie left her with me. I mustn't lose her. Please?"

"Has Callie gone away?"

"Why, yes, didn't you know? She has gone to stay with Tim's wife." (Tim Meadows was the eldest, the married son of the family.) "She has a little baby, and they can't get any help, and father wouldn't let mother go down because it's bad for her to be over a cook stove, you know."

"Yes, I know the old lady feels the heat."

"We are quite busy at the house. I came of an errand to the quartermaster-sergeant's, and kitty followed me, and the children chased her. I must go home now," urged Meta. "Really, I did not think you would be so foolish, Henniker. I can't see what fun there is in this!"

"Yes, but Meta, I've made a discovery,—here in your hand."

"In my hand? What is it? Let me see." A violent determined pull, and a sound like a smothered explosion of laughter from Henniker.

"Softly, softly now. You'll hurt yourself, my dear."

"Is my hand dirty? It was the kitten, then; her paws were all over sand."

"Oh, no. Great sign! It's worse than that. It'll not come off."

"I *will* see what it is!"

"But you can't see unless I was to tell you. I'm a hand reader, did you know it? I can tell your fortune by the lines on your palm. I'm reading them off here just like a book."

"Good gracious! what do you see?"

"Why, it's a most extraordinary thing! Your head line is that mixed up with your heart line, 'pon me word I can't tell which is which. Which is it, Meta? Do you choose your friends with your head entirely, or is it the other way with you, dear?"

"Oh, is that all? I thought you could tell fortunes really. I don't care what I *am*; I want to know what I'm going to *do*. Don't you see anything that's going to happen to me?"

"Lots of things. I see something that's going to happen to you right now. I wonder did it ever happen to you before?"

"What is it? When is it coming?"

"It has come. I will put it right here in your hand. But I shall want it back again, remember; and don't be giving it away, now, to anybody else."

A mysterious pause. Meta felt a breath upon her wrist, and a kiss from a mustached lip was pressed into the hollow of her hand.

"Keep that till I ask you for it," said Henniker quite sternly, and closed her hand tight with his own. The hand became an expressive little fist.

"I think you are just as mean and silly as you can be! I'll never believe a word you say again."

"Pussy," remarked Henniker, in a mournful aside, "go ask your mistress will she please forgive me. Tell her I'm not exactly sorry, but I couldn't help it. Faith, I couldn't."

"I'm not her mistress," said Meta.

It was a keen reminder, but Henniker did not seem to feel it much.

"Go tell Meta," he corrected. "Ask her please to forgive me, and I'll take it back,—the kiss, I mean."

"I'm going now," said Meta. "Keep the kitten, if you want her. She isn't mine, anyway."

But now the kitten was softly crowded through the fence by Henniker, and Meta, relenting, gathered her into her arms and carried her home.

It was certainly not his absence from Callie's side that put Henniker in such a bad humor with his confinement. He grew morbid, and fell into treacherous dreaming, and wondered jealously about the other boys, and what they were doing with themselves these summer evenings, while he was loafing on crutches under the hospital trees. He was frankly pining for his freedom before Callie should return. He wanted a few evenings which he need not account for to anybody but himself; and he got his freedom, unhappily, in time to do the mischief of his dream,—to put vain, selfish longings into the simple heart of Meta, and to spoil his own conscience toward his promised wife.

Henniker knew the ways of the Meadows cottage as well as if he had been one of the family. He knew that Meta, having less skill about the house than the older girls, took the part of chore-boy, and fetched and drove away the cows.

It were simple enough to cross her evening track through the pale sagebrush, which betrayed every bit of contrasting color, the colors of Meta's hair-ribbon and her evening frock; it were simple enough, had she been willing to meet him. But Meta had lost confidence in the hero of the household. She had seen Henniker in a new light; and whatever her heart line said, her head line told her that she had best keep a good breadth of sagebrush between herself and that particular pair of broad blue shoulders that moved so fast above it. So as Henniker advanced the girl retreated, obscurely, with shy doublings and turnings, carefully managed not to reveal that she was running away; for that might vex Henniker, and she was still too loyal to the family bond to wish to show her sister's lover an open discourtesy. She did not dream of the possibility of his becoming her own lover, but she thought him capable of going great lengths in his very peculiar method of teasing.

As soon as he understood her tactics Henniker changed his own. Without another glance in her direction he made off for the hills, but not too far from the trail the cows were taking; and choosing a secluded spot, behind a thick-set clump of sage, he took out his rustic pipe and waited, and when he saw her he began to play.

Meta's heart jumped at the first note. She stole along, drinking in the sounds, no one molesting or making her afraid. Ahead of her, as she climbed, the first range of hills cast a glowing reflection in her face; but the hills beyond were darker, cooler, and the blue-black pines stood out against the sky-like trees of a far cloud-country cut off by some aerial gulf from the most venturesome of living feet.

Henniker saw the girl coming, her face alight in the primrose glow, and he threw away all moments but the present. His breath stopped; then he took a deep inspiration, laid his lips to the pipe, and played, softly, subtly, as one who thinks himself alone.

She had discovered him, but she could not drag herself very far away from those sounds. At last she sat down upon the ground, and gave herself up to listening. A springy sagebush supported her as she let herself sink back; one arm was behind her head, to protect it from the prickly shoots.

"Meta," said Henniker, "are you listening? I'm talking to you now."

It was all the same: his voice was like another phrase of music. He went on playing, and Meta did not stir.

Another pause. "Are you there still, Meta? I was lonesome to-night, but you ran away from me. Was that friendly? You like my music; then why don't you like me? Well, here's for you again, ungrateful!" He went on playing.

The cows were wandering wide of the trail, towards the upper valley. Meta began to feel herself constrained, and not in the direction of her duty. She rose, cast her long braids over her shoulder, and moved resolutely away.

Henniker was absorbed in what he was saying to her with his pipe. When he had made a most seductive finish he paused, and spoke. He rose and looked about him. Meta was a long way off, down the valley, walking fast. He bounded after her, and caught her rudely around the waist.

"See here, little girl, I won't be made game of like this! I was playing to you, and you ran off and left me tooting like a fool. Was that right?"

"I had to go; it is getting late. The music was too sweet. It made me feel like I could cry." She lifted her long-lashed eyes swimming in liquid brightness. Henniker caught her hand in his.

"I was playing to you, Meta, as I play to no one else. Does a person steal away and leave another person discoursin' to the empty air? I didn't think you would want to make a fool of me."

Meta drew away her hand and pressed it in silence on her heart. No woman of Anglo-Saxon blood, without a vast amount of training, could have said so much and said it so naturally with a

gesture so hackneyed.

Henniker looked at her from under his eyebrows, biting his mustache. He took a few steps away from her, and then came back.

"Meta," he said, in a different voice, "what was that thing you wore around your neck, the other night, at the minstrels,—that filigree gold thing, eh?"

The girl looked up, astonished; then her eyes fell, and she colored angrily. No Indian or dog could hate to be laughed at more than Meta; and she had been so teased about her innocent make-believe necklace! Had the girls been spreading the joke? She had suddenly outgrown the childish good faith that had made it possible for her to deck herself in it, and she wished never to hear the thing mentioned again. She hung her head and would not speak.

Henniker's suspicions were characteristic. Of course a girl like that must have a lover. Her face confessed that he had touched upon a tender spot.

"It was a pretty thing," he said coldly. "I wonder if I could get one like it for Callie?"

"I don't think Callie would wear one even if you gave it to her," Meta answered with spirit.

"I say, won't you tell me which of the boys it is, Meta?—Won't I wear the life out of him, just!" he added to himself.

"Is what?"

"Your best fellah; the one who gave you that."

"There isn't any. It was nothing. I won't tell you what it was! I made it myself, there! It was only 'butter-balls.'"

"Oh, good Lord!" laughed Henniker.

Meta thought he was laughing at her. It was too much! The sweetness of his music was all jangled in her nerves. Tears would come, and then more tears because of the first.

Had Meta been the child of her father, she might have been sitting that night in one of the vine-shaded porches of the houses on the line, with a brace of young lieutenants at her feet, and in her wildest follies with them she would have been protected by all the traditions and safeguards of her class. As she was the child of her mother, instead, she was out on the hills with Henniker. And how should the squaw's daughter know the difference between protection and pursuit?

When Henniker put his arm around her and kissed the tears from her eyes, she would not have changed places with the proudest lady of the line,—captain's wife, lieutenant's sweetheart, or colonel's daughter of them all. Her chief, who blew the trumpet, was as great a man in Meta's eyes as the officer who buckled on his sabre in obedience to the call.

As for Henniker, no girl's head against his breast had ever looked so womanly dear as Meta's; no shut eyelids that he had ever kissed had covered such wild, sweet eyes. He did not think of her at all in words, any more than of the twilight afterglow in which they parted, with its peculiar intensity, its pang of color. He simply felt her; and it was nearest to the poetic passion of any emotion that he had ever known.

That night Meta deceived her foster-mother, and lying awake beside Callie's empty cot, in the room which the two girls shared together, she treacherously prayed that it might be long before her sister's return. The wild white lily had opened, and behold the stain!

It had been a hard summer for Tim Meadows's family,—the second summer on a sagebrush ranch, their small capital all in the ground, the first hay crop ungathered, and the men to board as well as to pay. The boarding was Mrs. Tim's part; yet many a young wife would have thought that she had enough to do with her own family to cook and wash for, and her first baby to take care of.

"You'll get along all right," the older mothers encouraged her. "A summer baby is no trouble at all."

No trouble when the trouble is twenty years behind us, among the joys of the past. But Tim's wife was wondering if she could hold out till cool weather came, when the rush of the farm work would be over, and her "summer baby" would be in short clothes and able to sit alone. The heat in their four-roomed cabin, in the midst of the treeless land, was an ordeal alone. To sleep in the house was impossible; the rooms and the windows were too small to admit enough air. They moved their beds outside, and slept like tramps under the stars; and the broad light awoke them at earliest dawn, and the baby would never sleep till after ten at night, when the dry Plains wind began to fan the face of the weary land. Even Callie, whose part in the work was subsidiary, lost flesh, and the roses in her cheeks turned sallow, in the month she stayed on the ranch; but she would have been ashamed to complain, though she was heartsick for a word from Henniker. He had written to her only once.

It was Mrs. Meadows who thought it high time that Callie should come home. She had found a good woman to take her daughter's place, and arranged the matter of pay herself. Tim had said they could get no help, but his mother knew what that meant; such help as they could afford to pay for was worse than none.

It seemed a poor return to Callie, for her sisterly service in the valley, to come home and find her lover a changed man. Mrs. Meadows said he was like all the soldiers she had ever known,—light come, light go. But this did not comfort Callie much, nor more to be reminded what a good thing it was she had found him out in time.

Henniker was not scoundrel enough to make love to two girls at once, two semi-sisters, who slept in the same room and watched each other's movements in the same looking-glass. It was no use pretending that he and Callie could "heat their broth over again;" so the coolness came speedily to a breach, and Henniker no longer openly, in fair daylight, took the path to the cottage gate. But there were other paths.

He had found a way to talk to Meta with his trumpet. He sent her messages at guard-mounting, as the guard was forming, when, as senior trumpeter, he was allowed a choice in the airs he played; and when he was orderly trumpeter, and could not come himself to say it, he sent her his good-night in the plaintive notes of taps.

This was the climax of Henniker's flirtations: all that went before had been as nothing, all that came after was not much worse than nothing. It was the one sincere as it was the one poetic passion of his life; and had it not cost him his self-respect through his baseness to Callie, and the treachery and dissimulation he was teaching to an innocent child, it might have made him a faithful man. As it was, his soldier's honor slept; it was the undisciplined part of him that spoke to the elemental nature of the girl; and it was fit that a trumpet's reckless summons, or its brief inarticulate call, like the note of a wild bird to its mate, should be the language of his love.

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Retreat had sounded, one evening in October, but it made no stir any more in the cottage where the girls had been so gay. Callie, putting the tea on the table, remembered, as she heard the gun fire, how in the the spring Henniker had said that when "sound off" was at six he would drop in to supper some night, and show her how to make *chili con carne*, a dish that every soldier knows who has served on the Mexican border. Her face grew hard, for these foolish, unsleeping reminders were as constant as the bugle calls.

The women waited for the head of the house; but as he did not come, they sat down and ate quickly, saving the best dish hot for him.

They had finished, and the room was growing dusk, when he came in breezily, and called at once, as a man will, for a light. Meta rose to fetch it. The door stood open between the fore-room and the kitchen, where she was groping for a lamp. Mr. Meadows spoke in a voice too big for the room. He had just been conversing across the common with the quartermaster-sergeant, as the two men's footsteps diverged by separate paths to their homes.

"I hear there's going to be a change at the post;" he shouted. "The —th is going to leave this department, and C troop of the Second is coming from Custer. Sergeant says they are looking for orders any day now."

Mrs. Meadows, before she thought, glanced at Callie. The girl winced, for she hated to be looked at like that. She held up her head and began to sing audaciously, drumming with her fingers on the table:—

"When my mother comes to know  
That I love the soldiers so,  
She will lock me up all day,  
Till the soldiers march away."

"What sort of a song is that?" asked her father sharply.

Callie looked him in the eyes. "Don't you know that tune?" said she. "Henniker plays that at guard-mount; and sometimes he plays this:—

'Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,  
Though father and mither and a' should go mad.'"

"Let him play what he likes," said the father angrily. "His saucy jig tunes are nothing to us. I'm thankful no girl of mine is following after the army. It's a hard life for a woman, I can tell you, in the ranks."

Callie pushed her chair back, and looked out of the window as if she had not heard.

"Where's Meta with that lamp? Go and see what's keeping her."

"Sit still," said Mrs. Meadows. She went herself into the kitchen, but no one heard her speak a word; yet the kitchen was not empty.

There was a calico-covered lounge that stood across the end of the room; Meta sat there, quite still, her back against the wall. Mrs. Meadows took one look at her; then she lighted the lamp and carried it into the dining-room, and went back and shut herself in with Meta.

"When my mother comes to know,"

hummed Callie. Her face was pale. She hardly knew that she was singing.

"Stop that song!" her father shouted. "Go and see what's the matter with your sister."

"Sister?" repeated Callie. "Meta is no sister of mine."

"She's your tent-mate, then. Ye grew nest-ripe under the same mother's wing."

"Meta can use her own wings now, you will find. She grew nest-ripe very young."

Father Meadows knew that there was trouble inside of that closed door, as there was trouble inside the white lips and shut heart of his frank and joyous Callie, but it was "the women's business." He went out to attend to his own.

Irrigation on the scale of a small cottage garden is tedious work. It has intervals of silence and leaning on a hoe while one little channel fills or trickles into the next one; and the water must be stopped out here, and floated longer there, like the bath over the surface of an etcher's plate. Water was scarce and the rates were high that summer, and there was a good deal of "dry-point" work with a hoe in Father Meadows's garden.

He had come to one of the discouraging places where the ground was higher than the water could be made to reach without a deal of propping and damming with shovelfuls of earth. This spot was close to the window of the kitchen chamber, which was "mother's room." She was in there talking to Meta. Her voice was deep with the maternal note of remonstrance; Meta's was sharp and high with excitement and resistance. Her faintness had passed, but Mother Meadows had been inquiring into causes.

"I am married to him, mother! He is my husband as much as he can be."

"It was never Father Magrath married you, or I should be knowing to it before now."

"No; we went before a judge, or a justice, in the town."

"In town! Well, that is something; but be sure there is a wrong or a folly somewhere when a man takes a young girl out of her home and out of her church to be married. If Henniker had taken you 'soberly, in the fear of God'—"

"He *was* sober!" cried Meta. "I never saw him any other way."

"Mercy on us! I was not thinking of the man's habits. He's too good to have done the way he has. That's what I have against him. I don't know what I shall say to Father Josette. The disgrace of this is on me, too, for not looking after my house better. 'Never let her be humbled through her not being all white,' the father said when he brought you to me, and God knows I never forgot that your little heart was white. I trusted you as I would one of my own, and was easier on you for fear of a mother's natural bias toward her own flesh and blood; and now to think that you would lie to me, and take a man in secret that had deceived your sister before you,—as if nothing mattered so that you got what you wanted! And down in the town, without the priest's blessing or a kiss from any of us belonging to you! It's one way to get married, but it's not the right way."

"Did no white girl ever do as I have?" asked Meta, with a touch of sullenness.

"Plenty of them, but they didn't make their mothers happy."

Meta stirred restively on the bed. "Will Father Magrath have to talk to me, and Father Josette, and *all* the fathers?" she inquired. "He said he never would have married Callie anyway,—not even if he couldn't have had me."

"And the more shame to him to say such a thing to one sister of another! Callie is much the best off of you two." Mrs. Meadows rose and moved heavily away from the bed. "Well," she said, "most marriages are just one couple more. It's very little of a sacrament there is about the common run of such things, but I hoped for something better when it came to my girls' turn. However, sorrow is the sacrament God sends us, to give us a chance to learn a little something before we die. I expect you'll learn your lesson."

She came back to the bed, and Meta moaned as she sat down again, to signify that she had been talked to enough. But the mother had something practical to say, though she could not say it without emotional emphasis, for her outraged feelings were like a flood that has come down, but has not yet subsided.

"If there's any way for you to go with Henniker when the troop goes, it's with him you ought to be; but if he has married without his captain's consent, he'll get no help at barracks. Do you know how that is, Meta?"

Meta shook her head; but presently she forced herself to speak the truth. She did know that Henniker had told no one at the post of his marriage. She had never asked him why, nor had thought that it mattered.

"Oh my! I was afraid of that," said Mrs. Meadows. "The colonel knows it was Callie he was engaged to. Father went up to see him about Henniker, and the colonel as good as gave his word for him that he was a man we could have in the family. A commanding officer doesn't like such goings-on with respectable neighbors."

Mrs. Meadows possibly overestimated the post commandant's interest in these matters, but she



had gratefully remembered his civility to her husband when he went to make fatherly inquiries. The colonel was a father himself, and had seemed to appreciate their anxiety about Callie's choice. It was just as well that Meta should know that none of the constituted authorities were on the side of her lover's defection.

Meta said nothing to all this. It did not touch her, only as it bore on the one question, Was Henniker going to leave her behind him?

"How long is it since you have seen him, that he hasn't told you this news himself?" asked the mother.

"Last night; but perhaps he did not know."

Henniker had known, as Mrs. Meadows supposed, but having to shift for himself in the matter of transportation for the wife he had never acknowledged, and seeing no way of providing for her without considerable inconvenience to himself, he had put off the pain of breaking to her the parting that must come. In their later consultations Meta had mentioned her "pony money," as she called it, and Henniker had privately welcomed the existence of such a fund. It lightened the pressure of his own responsibility in the future, in case—but he did not formulate his doubts. There are more uncertainties than anything else, except hard work, in the life of an enlisted man.

Father Meadows purposely would not speak of Meta's resources. He felt that Henniker had not earned his confidence in this or any other respect where his girls were concerned. Till Meta should come of age,—she was barely sixteen,—or until it could be known what sort of a husband she had got in Henniker, her bit of money was safest in her guardian's hands.

So the orders came, and the transfer of troops was made; and now it was the trumpeter of C troop that sounded the calls, and Henniker's bold messages at guard-mounting and his tender good-night at taps called no more across the plain. The summer lilies were all dead on the hills, and the common was white with snow. But something in Meta's heart said,—

"Weep no more! Oh, weep no more!  
Young buds sleep in the root's white core."

And she dried her eyes. The mother was very gentle with her; and Callie, hard-eyed, saying nothing, watched her, and did her little cruel kindnesses that cut to the quick of her soreness and her pride.

When the Bannock brethren came, late in September, the next year, she walked the sagebrush paths to their encampment with her young son in her arms. They looked at the boy and said that it was good; but when they asked after the father, and Meta told them that he had gone with his troop to Fort Custer, and that she waited for word to join him, they said it was not good, and they turned away their eyes in silence from her shame. The men did, but the women looked at her in a silence that said different things. Her heart went out to them, and their dumb soft glances brought healing to her wounds. What sorrow, what humiliation, was hers that they from all time had not known? The men took little notice of her after that: she had lost caste both as maid and wife; she was nothing now but a means of existence to her son. But between her and her dark sisters the natural bond grew strong. Old lessons that had lain dormant in her blood revived with the force of her keener intelligence, and supplanted later teachings that were of no use now except to make her suffer more.

It was impossible that Mother Meadows should not resent the wrong and insult to her own child; she felt it increasingly as she came to realize the girl's unhappiness. It grew upon her, and she could not feel the same towards Meta, who kept herself more and more proudly and silently aloof. She was one alone in the house, where no one spoke of the past to reproach her, where nothing but kindness was ever shown. The kindness was like the hand of pardon held out to her. Why did they think she wanted their forgiveness? She was not sorry for what she had done. She wanted nothing, only Henniker. So she crept away with her child and sat among the Bannock women, and was at peace with them whom she had never injured; who beheld her unhappiness, but did not call it her shame.

When she walked the paths across the common, her eyes were always on the skyward range of hills that appeared to her farther away than ever,—beyond a wider gulf, now that their tops were white, and the clouds came low enough to hide them. Often yellow gleams shot out beneath the clouds and turned the valleys green. It seemed to her that Henniker was there; he was in the cold, bright north, and the trumpets called her, but she could not go, for the way was very long. Such words as these she would sometimes whisper to her dark sisters by the camp-fire, and once they said to her, "Get strong and go; we will show you the way."

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Henniker was taking life as it comes to an enlisted man in barracks. He thought of Meta many times, and of his boy, very tenderly and shamefully; and if he could have whistled them to him, or if a wind of luck could have blown them thither, he would have embraced them with joy, and shared with them all that he had. There was the difficulty. He had so little besides the very well fitting clothes on his back. His pay seemed to melt away, month by month, and where it went to the mischief only knew. Canteen got a good deal of it. Henniker was one of the popular men in barracks, with his physical expertness, his piping and singing and story-telling, and his high good

humor at all times with himself and everybody else. He did not drink much, except in the way of comradeship, but he did a good deal of that. He was a model trumpeter, and a very ornamental fellow when he rode behind his captain on full-dress inspection, more bedight than the captain himself with gold cords and tags and bullion; but he was not a domestic man, and the only person in the world who might perhaps have made him one was a very helpless, ignorant little person, and—she was not there.

It was a bad season for selling ponies. The Indians had arrived late with a larger band than usual, which partly represented an unwise investment they had made on the strength of their good fortune the year before. Certain big ditch enterprises had been starting then, creating a brisk demand for horses at prices unusual, especially in the latter end of summer. This year the big ditch had closed down, and was selling its own horses, or turning them out upon the range, and unbroken Indian ponies could hardly be given away.

The disappointment of the Bannocks was very great, and their comprehension of causes very slow. It took some time for them to satisfy themselves that Father Meadows was telling them a straight tale. It took still more time for consultations as to what should now be done with their unsalable stock. The middle of October was near, and the grumbling chiefs finally decided to accept their loss and go hunting. The squaws and children were ordered home to the Reservation by rail, as wards of the nation travel, to get permission of the agent for the hunt, and the men, with ponies, were to ride overland and meet the women at Eagle Rock.

Thus Meta learned how an Indian woman may pass unchallenged from one part of the country to another, clothed in the freedom of her poverty. In this way the nation acknowledges a part of its ancient indebtedness to her people. No word had come from Henniker, though he had said that he should get his discharge in October. Meta's resolve was taken. The Bannock women encouraged her, and she saw how simple it would be to copy their dress and slip away with them as far as their roads lay together; and thence, having gained practice in her part and become accustomed to its disguises, to go on alone to Custer, where her chief, her beautiful trumpeter, was sounding his last calls. She was wise in this resolution—to see her husband, at whatever cost, before the time of his freedom should come; but she was late in carrying it out.

Long before, she had turned over fruitlessly in her mind every means of getting money for this journey besides the obvious way of asking Father Meadows for her own. She had guessed that her friends were suspicious of Henniker's good faith, and believed that if they should come to know of her intention of running away to follow him they would prevent her for her own good,—which was quite the case.

That was the point Father Meadows made with his wife, when she argued that Meta, being a married woman now, ought to learn the purchasing power of money and its limitations by experimenting with a little of her own.

"We shall do wrong if we keep her a child now," she said.

"But if she has money, she'll lay it by till she gets enough to slip off to her soldier with. There's that much Injun about her; she'll follow to heel like a dog."

Father Meadows could not have spoken in this way of Meta a year ago. She had lost caste with him, also.

"Don't, father," the mother said, with a hurt look. "She'll not follow far with ten dollars in her pocket; but that much I want to try her with. She's like a child about shopping. She'll take anything at all, if it looks right and the man persuades her. And those Jew clerks will charge whatever they think they can get."

Mrs. Meadows had her way, and the trial sum was given to Meta one day, and the next day she and the child were missing.

At dusk, that evening, a group of Bannock squaws, more or less encumbered with packs, and children, climbed upon one of the flat cars of a freight train bound for Pocatello. The engine steamed out of the station, and down the valley, and away upon the autumn plains. The next morning the Bannocks broke camp, and vanished before the hoar frost had melted from the sage. Their leave-taking had been sullen, and their answers to questions about Meta, with which Father Meadows had routed them out in the night, had been so unsatisfactory that he took the first train to the Fort Hall Agency. There he waited for the party of squaws from Bisuka; but when they came, Meta was not with them. They knew nothing of her, they said; even the agent was deceived by their counterfeit ignorance. They could tell nothing, and were allowed to join their men at Eagle Rock, to go hunting into the wild country around Jackson's Hole.

Father Meadows went back and relieved his wife's worst fear,—that the girl had fulfilled the wrong half of her destiny, and gone back to hide her grief in the bosom of her tribe.

"Then you'll find her at Custer," said she. "You must write to the quartermaster-sergeant. And be sure you tell him she's married to him. He may be carrying on with some one else by this time."

Traveling as a ward of the nation travels; suffering as a white girl would suffer, from exposure and squalor, weariness and dirt, but bearing her misery like a squaw, Meta came at last to Custer station. In five days, always on the outside of comforts that other travelers pay for, she had passed from the lingering mildness of autumn in southern Idaho into the early winter of the hard Montana north.

She was fit only for a sick-bed when she came into the empty station at Custer, and learned that she was still thirty miles away from the fort. In her make-believe broken English, she asked a humble question about transportation. The station-keeper was called away that moment by a summons from the wire. It was while she stood listening to the tapping of the message, and waiting to repeat her question, that she felt a frightening pain, sharp, like a knife sticking in her breast. She could take only short breaths, yet longed for deep ones to brace her lungs and strengthen her sick heart. She stepped outside and spoke to a man who was wheeling freight down the platform. She dared not throw off her fated disguise and say, "I am the wife of Trumpeter Henniker. How shall I get to the fort?" for she had stolen a ride of a thousand miles, and she knew not what the penalty of discovery might be. She had borrowed a squaw's wretched immunity, and she must pay the price for that which she had rashly coveted. She pulled her blanket about her face and muttered, "Which way—Fort Custer?"

The freight man answered by pointing to the road. Dark wind clouds rolled along the snow-white tops of the mountains. The plain was a howling sea of dust.

"No stage?" she gasped.

The man laughed and shook his head. "There's the road. Injuns walk." He went on with his baggage-truck, and did not look at her again. He had not spoken unkindly: the fact and his blunt way of putting it were equally a matter of course, Squaws who "beat" their way in on freight trains do not go out by stage.

Meta crept away in the lee of a pile of freight, and sat down to nurse her child. The infant, like herself, had taken harm from exposure to the cold; his head passages were stopped, and when he tried to nurse he had to fight with suffocation and hunger both, and threw himself back in the visible act of screaming, but his hoarse little pipe was muted to a squeak. This, which sounds grotesque in the telling, was acute anguish for the mother to see. She covered her face with her blanket and sobbed and coughed, and the pain tore her like a knife. But she rose, and began her journey. She had little conception of what she was under-taking, but it would have made no difference; she must get there on her feet, since there was no other way.

She no longer carried her baby squaw fashion. She was out of sight of the station, and she hugged it where the burden lay heaviest, on her heart. Her hands were not free, but she had cast away her bundle of food; she could eat no more; and the warmth of the child's nestling body gave her all the strength she had,—that and her certainty of Henniker's welcome. That he would be faithful to her presence she never doubted. He would see her coming, perhaps, and he would run to catch her and the child together in his arms. She could feel the thrill of his eyes upon her, and the half groan of joy with which he would strain her to his breast. Then she would take one deep, deep breath of happiness,—ah, that pain!—and let the anguish of it kill her if it must.

The snows on the mountains had come down and encompassed the whole plain; the winter's siege had begun. The winds were iced to the teeth, and they smote like armed men. They encountered Meta carrying some hidden, precious thing to the garrison at Custer; they seized her and searched her rudely, and left her, trembling and disheveled, sobbing along with her silly treasure in her arms. The dust rose in columns, and traveled with mocking becks and bows before her, or burst like a bomb in her face, or circled about her like a band of wild horses lashed by the hooting winds.

Meantime, Henniker, in span-new civilian dress, was rattling across the plain on the box seat of the ambulance, beside the soldier driver. The ambulance was late to catch the east-bound train, and the pay-master was inside; so the four stout mules laid back their ears and traveled, and the heavy wheels bounded from stone to stone of the dust-buried road. Henniker smoked hard in silence, and drew great breaths of cold air into his splendid lungs. He was warm and clean and sound and fit, from top to toe. He had been drinking bounteous farewells to a dozen good comrades, and though sufficiently himself for all ordinary purposes, he was not that self he would have wished to be had he known that one of the best moments of his life was before him. It was a mood with him of headlong, treacherous quiet, and the devil of all foolish desires was showing him the pleasures of the world. He was in dangerously good health; he had got his discharge, and was off duty and off guard, all at once. He was a free man, though married. He was going to his wife, of course. Poor little Meta! God bless the girl, how she loved him! Ah, those black-eyed girls, with narrow temples and sallow, deep-fringed eyelids, they knew how to love a man! He was going to her by way of Laramie, or perhaps the coast. He might run upon a good thing over there, and start a bit of a home before he sent for her or went to fetch her; it was all one. She rested lightly on his mind, and he thought of her with a tender, reminiscent sadness,—rather a curious feeling considering that he was to see her now so soon. Why was she always "poor little Meta" in his thoughts?

Poor little Meta was toiling on, for "Injuns walk." The dreadful pain of coughing was incessant. The dust blinded and choked her, and there was a roaring in her ears which she confused with the night and day burden of the trains. She was in a burning fever that was fever and chill in one, and her mind was not clear, except on the point of keeping on; for once down, she felt that she could never get up again. At times she fancied she was clinging to the rocking, roaring platforms she had ridden on so long. The dust swirled around her—when had she breathed anything but dust! The ground swam like water under her feet. She swayed, and seemed to be falling,—perhaps she did fall. But she was up and on her feet, the blanket cast from her head, when the ambulance drove straight towards her, and she saw him—

She had seen it coming, the ambulance, down the long, dizzy rise. The hills above were white as death; a crooked gash of color rent the sky; the toothed pines stood black against that gleam, and through the ringing in her ears, loud and sweet, she heard the trumpets call. The cloud of delirium lifted, and she saw the uniform she loved; and beside the soldier driver sat her white chief, looking down at her who came so late with joy, bringing her babe,—her sheaves, the harvest of that year's wild sowing. But he did not seem to see her. She had not the power to speak or cry. She took one step forward and held up the child.

Then she fell down on her face in the road, for the beloved one had seen her, and had not known her, and had passed her by. And God would not let her make one sound.

How in Heaven's name could it have happened! Could any man believe it of himself? Henniker put it to his reason, not to speak of conscience or affection, and never could explain, even to himself, that most unhappy moment of his life. If he had not a heart for any helpless thing in trouble, who had? He was the joke of the garrison for his softness about dogs and women and children. Yet he had met his wife and baby on the open road, and passed them by, and owned them not, and still he called himself a man.

What he had seen at first had been the abject figure of a little squaw facing the wind, her bowed head shrouded in her blanket, carrying something which her short arms could barely meet around,—a shapeless bundle. He did not think it a child, for a squaw will pack her baby always on her back. He had looked at her indifferently, but with condescending pity; for the day was rough, and the road was long, even for a squaw. Then, in all the disfigurement of her dirt and wretchedness and wild attire, it broke upon him that this creature was his wife, the rightful sharer of his life and freedom; and that animal-like thing she held up, that wrung its face and squeaked like a blind kitten, was his son.

Good God! He clutched the driver's arm, and the man swore and jerked his mules out of the road, for the woman had stopped right in the track where the wheels were going. The driver looked back, but could not see her; he knew that he had not touched her, only with the wind of his pace, so he pulled the mules into the road again, and the ambulance rolled on.

"Stop; let me get off. That woman is my wife." Henniker heard himself saying the words, but they were never spoken to the ear. "Stop; let me get down," the inner voice prompted; but he did not make a sound, and the curtains flapped and the wheels went bounding along. They were a long way past the spot, and the station was in sight, when Henniker was heard to say hoarsely, "Pick her up, as you go back, can't you?"

"Pick up which?" asked the driver.

"The—that woman we passed just now."

"I'll see how she's making it," the man answered coolly. "I ain't much stuck on squaws. Acted like she was drunk or crazy."

Henniker's face flushed, but he shuddered as if he were cold.

"Pick her up, for the child's sake, by God!" No man was ever more ashamed of himself than he as he took out a gold piece and handed it to the soldier. "Give her this, Billy,—from yourself, you know. I ain't in it."

Billy looked at Henniker, and then at the gold piece. It was a double eagle; all that the husband had dared to offer as alms to his wife, but more than enough to arouse the suspicions that he feared.

"Ain't in it, eh?" thought the soldier. "You knew the woman, and she knew you. This is conscience money." But aloud he said, "A fool and his money are soon parted. How do you know but I'll blow it in at canteen?"

"I'll trust you," said Henniker.

The men did not speak to each other again.

"She's one of them Bannocks that camped by old Pop Meadows's place, down at Bisuka, I bet," said the soldier to himself.

Henniker went on fighting his fight as if it had not been lost forever in that instant's hesitation. A man cannot bethink himself: "By the way, it strikes me that was my wife and child we passed on the road!" What he had done could never be explained without grotesque lying which would deceive nobody.

It could not be undone; it must be lived down. Henniker was much better at living things down than he was at explaining or trying to mend them.

After all, it was the girl's own fault, putting up that wretched squaw act on him. To follow him publicly, and shame him before all the garrison, in that beastly Bannock rig! Had she turned Bannock altogether and gone back to the tribe? In that case let the tribe look after her; he could have no more to do with her, of course.

He stepped into the smoking-car, and lost himself as quickly as possible in the interest of new faces around him, and the agreeable impressions of himself which he read in eyes that glanced and returned for another look at so much magnificent health and color and virility. His spot of

turpitude did not show through. He was still good to look at; and to look the man that one would be goes a long way toward feeling that one is that man.

## II

It was at Laramie, between the mountains, and Henniker was celebrating the present and drowning the past in a large, untrammelled style, when he received a letter from the quartermaster-sergeant at Custer,—a plain statement until the end, where Henniker read:—

"If you should happen at any time to wish for news of your son, Meadows and his wife have taken the child. They came on here to get him, and Meadows insisted on standing the expense of the funeral, which was the best we could give her for the credit of the troop. He put a handsome stone over her, with 'Meta, wife of Trumpeter Henniker, K Troop, —th U. S. Cavalry,' on it; and there it stands to her memory, poor girl, and to your shame, a false, cruel, and cowardly man in the way you treated her. And so every one of us calls you, officers and men the same,—of your old troop that walked behind her to her grave. And where were you, Henniker, and what were you doing this day two weeks, when we were burying your poor wife? The twenty dollars you sent her by Billy, Meadows has, and says he will keep it till he sees you again. Which some of us think it will be a good while he will be packing that Judas piece around with him.—And so good-by, Henniker. I might have said less, or I might have said nothing at all, but that the boy is a fine child, my wife says, and must have a grand constitution to stand what he has stood; and I have a fondness for you myself when all is said and done.

"P. S. I would take a thought for that boy once in a while, if I was you. A man doesn't care for the brats when he is young, but age cures us of all wants but the want of a child."

But Henniker was not ready to go back to the Meadows cottage and be clothed in the robe of forgiveness, and receive his babe like a pledge of penitence on his hand.

The shock of the letter sobered him at first, and then the sting of it drove him to drinking harder than ever. He did not run upon that "good thing" at Laramie, nor in any of the cities westward, that one after another beheld the progress of his deterioration. It does not take long in the telling, but it was several years before he finally struck upon the "Barbary Coast" in San Francisco, where so many mothers' sons who never were heard of have gone down. He went ashore, but he did not quite go to pieces. His constitution had matured under healthy conditions, and could stand a good deal of ill-usage; but we are "no stronger than our weakest part," and at the end of all he found himself in a hospital bed under treatment for his knee,—the same that had been mulcted for him twice before.

He listened grimly to the doctor's explanations,—how the past sins of his whole impenitent system were being vicariously reckoned for through this one afflicted member. It was rough on his old knee, Henniker remarked; but he had hopes of getting out all right again, and he made the usual sick-bed promises to himself. He did get out, eventually, without a penny in the world, and with a stiff knee to drag about for the rest of his life. And he was just thirty-four years old.

His splendid vitality, that had been wont to express itself in so many attractive ways, now found its chief vent in talk—inexpensive, inordinate, meddlesome discourse—wherever two or three were gathered together in the name of idleness and discontent. The members of these congregations were pessimists to a man. They disbelieved in everybody and everything except themselves, and secretly, at times, they were even a little shaken on that head; but all the louder they exclaimed upon the world that had refused them the chance to be the great and successful characters nature had intended them to be.

It need hardly be said that when Henniker raved about the inequalities of class, the helplessness of poverty, the tyranny of wealth, and the curse of labor; and devoted in eloquent phrases the remainder of a blighted existence to the cause of the Poor Man, he was thinking of but one poor man, namely, himself. He classed himself with Labor only that he might feel his superiority to the laboring masses. There were few situations in which he could taste his superiority, in these days. The "ego" in his Cosmos was very hungry; his memories were bitter, his hopes unsatisfied; his vanity and artistic sense were crucified through poverty, lameness, and bad clothes. Now all that was left him was the conquests of the mind. For the smiles of women, give him the hoarse plaudits of men. The dandy of the garrison began to shine in saloon coteries and primaries of the most primary order. He was the star of sidewalk convocations and vacant-lot meetings of the Unemployed. But he despised the mob that echoed his perorations and paid for his drinks, and was at heart the aristocrat that his old uniform had made him.

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In the summer of 1894, a little black-eyed boy with chestnut curls used to swing on the gate of the Meadows cottage that opens upon the common, and chant some verses of domestic doggerel about Coxe's army, which was then begging and bullying its way eastward, and demanding transportation at the expense of the railroads and of the people at large.

He sang his song to the well-marked tune of Pharaoh's Army, and thus the verses ran:—

"The Coxeyites they gathered,  
The Coxeyites they gathered,

And stole a train of freight-cars in the morn,  
And stole a train of freight-cars in the morning,  
And stole a train of freight-cars in the morn.

"The engine left them standing,  
The engine left them standing,  
On the railroad-track at Caldwell in the morn.  
Very sad it was for Caldwell in the morning  
To feed that hungry army in the morn.

"Where are all the U. S. marshals,  
The deputy U. S. marshals,  
To jail that Coxey army in the morn,  
That 'industrious, law-abiding' Coxey's army  
That stole a train of freight-cars in the morn?"

Where indeed were all the U. S. marshals? The question was being asked with anxiety in the town, for a posse of them had gone down to arrest the defiant train-stealers, and it was rumored that the civil arm had been disarmed, and the deputies carried on as prisoners to Pocatello, where the Industrials, two hundred strong, were intrenched in the sympathies of the town, and knocking the federal authorities about at their law-abiding pleasure. Pocatello is a division town on the Union Pacific Railroad; it is full of the company's shops and men, the latter all in the American Railway Union or the Knights of Labor, and solid on class issues, right or wrong; and it was said that the master workman was expected at Pocatello to speak on the situation, and, if need arose, to call out the trades all over the land in support of the principle that tramp delegations shall not walk. Disquieting rumors were abroad, and there was relief in the news that the regulars had been called on to sustain the action of the federal court.

The troops at Bisuka barracks were under marching orders. While the town was alert to hear them go they tramped away one evening, just as a shower was clearing that had emptied the streets of citizens; and before the ladies could say "There they go," and call each other to the window, they were gone.

Then for a few days the remote little capital, with Coxeyites gathering and threatening its mails and railroad service, waited in apprehensive curiosity as to what was going to happen next. The party press on both sides seized the occasion to point a moral on their own account, and some said, "Behold the logic of McKinleyism," and others retorted, "Behold the shadow of the Wilson Bill stalking abroad over the land. Let us fall on our faces and pray!" But most people laughed instead, and patted the Coxeyites on the back, preferring their backs to their faces.

It seemed as if it might be time to stop laughing and gibing and inviting the procession to move on, when a thousand or more men, calling themselves American citizens, were parading their idleness through the land as authority for lawlessness and crime, and when our sober regulars had to be called out to quell a Falstaff's army. The regulars, be sure, did not enjoy it. If there is a sort of service our soldiers would like to be spared, doubtless it is disarming crazy Indians: but they prefer even that to standing up to be stoned and insulted and chunked with railroad iron by a mob which they are ordered not to fire upon, or to entering a peaceful country which has been sown with dynamite by patriotic labor unions, or prepared with cut-bridges by sympathetic strikers.

We are here to be hurt, so the strong ones tell us, and perhaps the best apology the strong can make to the weak for the vast superiority that training gives is to show how long they can hold their fire amidst a mob of brute ignorances, and how much better they can bear their hurts when the senseless missiles fly. We love the forbearance of our "unpitted strong;" it is what we expect of them: but we trust also in their firmness when the time for forbearance is past.

Little Ross Henniker—named for that mythical great Scotchman, his supposed grandfather—was deeply disappointed because he did not see the soldiers go. To have lived next door to them all his life, seven whole years, and watched them practicing and preparing to be fit and ready to go, and then not to see them when they did march away for actual service in the field, was hard indeed.

Ross was not only one of those brightest boys of his age known to parents and grand-parents by the million, but he was really a very bright and handsome child. If Mother Meadows, now "granny," had ever had any doubts at all about the Scottish chief of the Hudson's Bay Company, the style and presence of that incomparable boy were proof enough. It was a marked case of "throwing-back." There was none of the Bannock here. Could he not be trusted like a man to do whatever things he liked to do; as riding to fetch the cows and driving them hillward again, on the weird little spotted pony, hardly bigger than a dog, with a huge head and a furry cheek and a hanging under-lip, which the tributary Bannocks had brought him? It was while he was on cow-duty far away, but not out of sight of the post, that he saw the column move. "Great Scott!" how he did ride! He broke his stick over the pony's back, and kicked him with his bare heels, and slapped him with his hat, till the pony bucked him off into a sagebush whence he picked himself up and flew as fast as his own legs would spin; but he was too late. Then, for the first time in six months at least, he howled. Aunt Callie comforted him with fresh strawberry jam for supper, but the lump of grief remained, until, as she was washing the dishes, she glanced at him, laughing out of the corner of her eye, and began to make up the song about Coxey's army. For some time

Ross refused to smile, but when it came to the chorus about the soldiers who were going

"To turn back Coxeys army, hallelujah!  
To turn back Coxeys army, hallelloo!"

he began to sing "hallelujah" too. Then gun-fire broke in with a lonesome sound, as if the cavalry up on the hill missed its comrades of the white stripes who were gone to "turn back" that ridiculous army.

Mother Meadows wished "that man Coxeys had never been born," so weary did she get of the Coxeys song. Coxeysism had taken complete possession of the young lord of the house, now that his friends the soldiers had gone to take a hand in the business.

In a few days the soldiers came back escorting the Coxeys prisoners. The "presence of the troops" had sufficed. The two hundred Coxeysites were to be tried at Bisuka for crimes committed within the State. They were penned meanwhile in a field by the river, below the railroad track, and at night they were shut into a rough barrack which had been hastily put up for the purpose. A skirt of the town little known, except to the Chinese vegetable gardeners and makers of hay on the river meadows and small boys fishing along the shore, now became the centre of popular regard; and "Have you been down to the Coxeys camp?" was as common a question as "Are you going to the Natatorium Saturday night?" or "Will there be a mail from the west to-day?"

One evening, Mother Meadows, with little Ross Henniker by the hand, stood close to the deadline of the Coxeys field, watching the groups on the prisoners' side. The woman looked at them with perplexed pity, but the child swung himself away and cried, "Pooh! only a lot of dirty hobos!" and turned to look at the soldiers.

The tents of the guard of regulars stood in a row in front of a rank of tall poplar-trees, their tops swinging slow in the last sunlight. Behind the trees stretched the green river flats in the shadow. Frogs were croaking; voices of girls could be heard in a tennis-court with a high wall that ran back to the street of the railroad.

Roll-call was proceeding in front of the tents, the men firing their quick, harsh answers like scattering shots along the line. Under the trees at a little distance the beautiful sleek cavalry horses were grouped, unsaddled and calling for their supper. Ross Henniker gazed at them with a look of joy; then he turned a contemptuous eye upon the prisoners.

"Which of them two kinds of animals looks most like what a man ought to be?" he asked, pointing to the horses and then to the Coxeysites, who in the cool of the evening were indulging in unbeautiful horse-play, not without a suspicion of showing off before the eyes of visitors. The horses in their free impatience were as unconscious as lords.

"What are you saying, Ross?" asked Mrs. Meadows, rousing herself.

"I say, suppose I'd just come down from the moon, or some place where they don't know a man from a horse, and you said to me: 'Look at these things, and then look at them things over there, and say which is boss of t'other.' Why, I'd say *them* things, every time." Ross pointed without any prejudice to the horses.

"My goodness!" cried Mrs. Meadows, "if these Coxeys had been taken care of and coddled all their lives like them troop horses, they might not be so handsome, but they'd look a good deal better than what they do. And they'd have more sense," she added in a lower voice. "Very few poor men's sons get the training those horses have had. They've learned to mind, for one thing, and to be faithful to the hand that feeds them."

"Not all of them don't," said Ross, shaking his head wisely. "There's kickers and biters and shirks amongst them; but if they won't learn and can't learn, they get 'condemned.'"

"And what becomes of them then?"

"Why, *you* know," answered the boy, who began to suspect that there was a moral looming in the distance of this bold generalization.

"Yes," said Mother Meadows, "I know what becomes of some of them, because I've seen; and I don't think a condemned horse looks much better in the latter end of him than a condemned man."

"But you can't leave them in the troop, for they'd spoil all the rest," objected the boy.

"It's too much for me, dear," replied the old woman humbly. "These Coxeys are a kind of folks I don't understand."

"I should think you might understand, when the troops have to go out and run 'em in! I'm on the side of the soldiers, every time."

"Well, that's simple enough," said Mrs. Meadows. She was a very mild protagonist, for she could never confine herself to one side of a question. "I'm on the side of the soldiers, too. A soldier has to do what he's told, and pays with his life for it, right or wrong."

"And I think it's a shame to send the beautiful clean soldiers to shove a lot of dirty hobos back where they belong."

"My goodness! Hush! you'd better talk less till you get more sense to talk with," said Mrs. Meadows sternly. A man standing near, with his back to them, had turned around quickly, and she saw by his angry eye that he had overheard. She looked at him again, and knew the man. It was the boy's father. Ross had bounded away to talk to his friend Corporal Niles.

"Henniker!" exclaimed Mrs. Meadows in a low voice of shocked amazement. "It don't seem as if this could be you!"

"Let that be!" said Henniker roughly. "I didn't enlist by that name in this army. Who's that young son of a gun that's got so much lip on him?"

"God help you! don't you know your own son?"

"What? No! Has he got to be that size already?" The man's weather-beaten face turned a darker red under the week-old beard that disfigured it. He sat down on the ground, for suddenly he felt weak, and also to hide his lameness from the woman who should have hated him, but who simply pitied him instead. Her face showed a sort of motherly shame for the change that she saw in him. It was very hard to bear. He had not fully realized the change in himself till its effect upon her confronted him. He tried to bluff it off carelessly.

"Bring the boy here. I have a word to say to him."

"You should have said it long ago, then." Mrs. Meadows was hurt and indignant at his manner. "What has been said is said, for good and all. It's too late to unsay it now."

"What do you mean by that, Mrs. Meadows? Am I the boy's father or am I not?"

"You are not the father he knows. Do you think I have been teaching him to be ashamed of the name he bears?"

"Old lady," cried Henniker the Coxeyite, "have you been stuffing that boy about his dad as you did the mother about hers?"

"I have told him the truth, partly. The rest, if it wasn't the truth, it ought to have been," answered Mrs. Meadows stoutly. "I have put the story right, as an honest man would have lived it. Whatever you've been doing with yourself these years, it's your own affair, not the boy's nor mine. Keep it to yourself now. You were too good for them once,—the mother and the child; they can do without you now."

"That's all right," said Henniker, wincing; "but as a matter of curiosity let me hear how you have put it up."

"How I have what?"

"How you have dressed up the story to the boy. I'd like to see myself with a woman's eyes once more."

Mrs. Meadows looked him over and hesitated; then her face kindled. "I've told him that his father was a beautiful clean man," she said, using unconsciously the boy's own words, "and rode a beautiful horse, and saluted his captain so!" She pointed to the corporal of the guard who was at that moment reporting. "I told him that when the troops went you had to leave your young wife behind you, and she could not be kept from following you with her child; and by a cruel mischance you passed each other on the road, and you never knew till you had got to her old home and heard she was dead and buried; and you were so broke up that you couldn't bear your life in the place where you used to be with her; and you were a sorrowful wandering man that he must pray for, and ask God to bring you home. You never came near us, Henniker, nor thought of coming; but could I tell your own child that? Indeed, I would be afraid to tell him what did happen on that road from Custer station, for fear when he's a man he'd go hunting you with a shotgun. Now where is the falsehood here? Is it in me, or in you, who have made it as much as your own life is worth to tell the truth about you to your son? *Was* it the truth, Henniker? Sure, man, you did love her! What did you want with her else? Was it the truth that they told us at Custer? There are times when I can't believe it myself. If there is a word you could say for yourself,—say it, for the child's sake! You wouldn't mind speaking to an old woman like me? There was a time when I would have been proud to call you my son."

"You are a good woman, Mrs. Meadows, but I cannot lie to you, even for the child's sake. And it's not that I don't know how to lie, for God knows I'm nothing but a lie this blessed minute! What do I care for such cattle as these?" He had risen, and waved his hand contemptuously toward his fellow-martyrs. "Well, I must be going. I see they're passin' around the flesh-pots. We're livin' like fighting-cocks here, on a restaurant contract. There'll be a big deal in it for the marshal, I suspect." Henniker winked, and his face fell into the lowest of its demoralized expressions.

"There's no such a thing!" said Mrs. Meadows indignantly. "Some folks are willing to work for very little these hard times, and give good value for their money. You had better eat and be thankful, and leave other folks alone!"

Little Ross coming up heard but the last words, and saw his granny's agitation and the familiar attitude of the strange Coxeyite. His quick temper flashed out: "Get out with you! Go off where you belong, you dirty man!"

Mrs. Meadows caught the boy, and whirled him around and shook him. "Never, never let me hear



you speak like that to any man again!"

"Why?" he demanded.

"I'll tell you why, some day, if I have to. Pray God I may never need to tell you!"

"Why?" repeated the boy, wondering at her excitement.

"Come away,—come away home!" she said, and Ross saw that her eyes were red with unshed tears. He hung behind her and looked back.

"He's lame," said he, half to himself. "I wouldn't have spoken that way if I'd known he had a game leg."

"Who's lame?" asked Mrs. Meadows.

"The Coxeyite. See. He limps bad."

"Didn't I tell you! We never know, when we call names, what sore spots we may be hitting. You may have sore spots of your own some day."

"I hope I sha'n't be lame," mused the boy. "And I hope I sha'n't be a Coxey."

The Coxeyites had been in camp a fortnight when their trial began. Twice a day the prisoners were marched up the streets of Bisuka to the courthouse, and back again to camp, till the citizens became accustomed to the strange, unrepublican procession. The prisoners were herded along the middle of the street; on either side of them walked the marshals, and outside of the line of civil officers the guard of infantry or cavalry, the officers riding and the men on foot.

This was the last march of the Coxeyites. Many citizens looking on were of the opinion that if these men desired to make themselves an "object-lesson" to the nation, this was their best chance of being useful in that capacity.

For two weeks, day by day, in the prisoner's field, Henniker had been confronted with the contrast of his old service with his present demoralization. He had been a conspicuous figure among the Industrials until they came in contact with the troops; then suddenly he subsided, and was heard and seen as little as possible. Not for all that a populist congress could vote, out of the pockets of the people into the pockets of the tramp petitioners, would he have posed as one of them before the eyes of an officer, or a man, of his old regiment, who might remember him as Trumpeter Henniker of K troop. But the daily march to the courthouse was the death-sickness of his pride. Once he had walked these same streets with his head as high as any man's; and it had been, "How are you, Henniker?" and "Step in, Henniker;" or Callie had been laughing and falling out of step on his arm, or Meta—poor little Meta—waiting for him when the darkness fell!

Now the women ran to the windows and crowded the porches, and stared at him and his ill-conditioned comrades as if they had been animals belonging to a different species.

But Henniker was mistaken here. The eyes of the pretty girls were for the "pretty soldiers." It was all in the day's work for the soldiers, who tramped indifferently along; but the officers looked bored, as if they were neither proud of the duty nor of the display of it which the times demanded.

On the last day's march from the courthouse to the camp, there was a clamor of voices that drowned the shuffling and tramping of the feet. The prisoners were all talking at once, discussing the sentences which the court had just announced: the leaders and those taken in acts of violence to be imprisoned at hard labor for specified terms; the rank and file to be put back on their stolen progress as far westward, whence they came, as the borders of the State would allow; there to be staked out, as it were, on the banks of the Snake River, and guarded for sixty days by the marshals, supported by the inevitable "presence of the troops."

But the sentence that Henniker heard was that private one which his own child had spoken: "Get out with you! Go back where you belong, you dirty man!" He had wished at the time that he could make the proud youngster feel the sting of his own lash: but that thought had passed entirely, and been merged in the simple hurt of a father's longing for his son. "If he were mine," he bitterly confessed, "if that little cock-a-hoop rascal would own me and love me for his dad, I swear to God I could begin my life again! But now, what next?"

There had been a stoppage ahead, the feet pressing on had slackened step, when there, with his back to the high iron gates of the capitol-grounds, was the beautiful child again. A young woman stood beside him, a fine, wholesome girl like a full-blown cottage rose, with auburn hair, an ivory-white throat, and a back as flat as a trooper's. It was Callie, of course, with Meta's child. The cup of Henniker's humiliation was full.

The boy stood with his chin up, his hat on the back of his head, his plump hands spread on the hips of his white knickerbockers. He was dressed in his best, as he had come from a children's fête. Around his neck hung a prize which he had won in the games, a silver dog-whistle on a scarlet ribbon. He caught it to his lips and blew a long piercing trill, his dark eyes smiling, the wind blowing the short curls across his cheek.

"There he is, the lame one! I made him look round," said Ross.

Henniker had turned, for one long look—the last, he thought—at his son. All the singleness and

passion of the mother, the fire and grace and daring of the father, were in the promise of his childish face and form. He flushed, not a self-conscious, but an honest, generous blush, and took his hat away off his head to the lame Coxeyite—"because I was mean to him; and they are down and done for now, the Coxeyes."

"Whose kid is that?" asked the man who walked beside Henniker, seeing the gesture and the look that passed between the man and the boy. "He's as handsome as they make 'em," he added, smiling.

Henniker did not reply in the proud word "Mine." A sudden heat rushed to his eyes, his chest was tight to bursting. He pulled his hat down and tramped along. The shuffling feet of the prisoners passed on down the middle of the street; the double line of guards kept step on either side. The dust arose and blended the moving shapes, prisoners and guards together, and blotted them out in the distance.

Callie had not seen her old lover at all. "Great is the recuperative power of the human heart." She had been looking at Corporal Niles, who could not turn his well-drilled head to look at her. But a side-spark from his blue eye shot out in her direction, and made her blush and cease to smile. Corporal Niles carried his head a little higher and walked a little straighter after that; and Callie went slowly through the gates, and sat a long while on one of the benches in the park, with her elbow resting on the iron scroll and her cheek upon her hand.

She was thinking about the Coxeyites' sentence, and wondering if the cavalry would have to go down to the stockade prison on the Snake; for in that case Corporal Niles would have to go, and the wedding be postponed. Everybody knows it is bad luck to put off a wedding-day; and besides, the yellow roses she had promised her corporal to wear would all be out of bloom, and no other roses but those were the true cavalry yellow.

But the cavalry did not go down till after the wedding, which took place on the evening appointed, at the Meadows cottage, between "Sound off" and "Taps." The ring was duly blessed, and the father's and mother's kiss was not wanting. The primrose radiance of the summer twilight shone as strong as lamplight in the room, and Callie, in her white dress, with her auburn braids gleaming through the wedding-veil and her lover's colors in the roses on her breast, was as sweet and womanly a picture as any mother could wish to behold.

When little Ross came up to kiss the bride, he somehow forgot, and flung his arms first around Corporal Niles's brown neck.

"Corporal, I'm twice related to the cavalry now," said he. "I had a father in it, and now I've got an uncle in it."

"That's right," the corporal agreed; "and if you have any sort of luck you'll be in it yourself some day."

"But not in the ranks," said Ross firmly. "I'm going to West Point, you know."

"Bless his heart!" cried Callie, catching the boy in her arms; "and how does he think he's going to get there?"

"I shall manage it somehow," said Ross, struggling. He was very fond of Aunt Callie, but a boy doesn't like to be hugged so before his military acquaintances, and in Ross's opinion there had been a great deal too much kissing and hugging, not to speak of crying, already. He did not see why there should be all this fuss just because Aunt Callie was going up to the barracks to live, in the jolliest little whitewashed cabin, with a hop-vine hanging, like the veil on an old woman's bonnet, over the front gable. He only wished that the corporal had asked him to go too!

A slight misgiving about his last speech was making Ross uncomfortable. If there was a person whose feelings he would not have wished to hurt for anything in the world, it was Corporal Niles.

"Corporal," he amended affectionately, "if I should be a West Pointer, and should be over you, I shouldn't put on any airs, you know. We should be better friends than ever."

"I expect we should, captain. I'm looking forward to the day."

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A mild species of *corvée* had been put in force down on the Snake River while the stockade prison was building. The prisoners as a body rebelled against it, and were not constrained to work; but a few were willing, and these were promptly stigmatized as "scabs," and ill treated by the lordly idlers. Hence they were given a separate camp and treated as trusties.

When the work was done the trusties were rewarded with their freedom, either to go independently, or to stay and eat government rations till the sixty days of their sentence had expired.

Henniker, in spite of his infirmity, had been one of the hardest volunteer workers. But now the work was done, and the question returned, What next? What comes after Coxeyism when Coxeyism fails?

He sat one evening by the river, and again he was a free man. A dry embankment, warm as an

oven to the touch, sloped up to the railroad track above his head; tufts of young sage and broken stone strewed the face of it; there was not a tree in sight. He heard the river boiling down over the rapids and thundering under the bridge. He heard the trumpets calling the men to quarters. "Lights out" had sounded some time before. He had been lying motionless, prone on his face, his head resting on his crossed arms. The sound of the trumpets made him choke up like a homesick boy. He lay there till, faintly in the distance, "Taps" breathed its slow and sweet good-night.

"Last call," he said. "Time to turn in." He rolled over and began to pull off the rags in which his child had spurned him.

"The next time I'm inspected," he muttered, "I shall be a clean man." So, naked, he slipped into the black water under the bank. The river bore him up and gave him one more chance, but he refused it: with two strokes he was in the midst of the death current, and it seized him and took him down.

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