

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please check with an FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **If the book is under copyright in your country, do not download or redistribute this file.**

Title: The Lone Hand

Date of first publication: 1928

Author: Harold Edward Bindloss (1866-1945)

Date first posted: August 14 2012

Date last updated: August 14 2012

Faded Page eBook #20120824

This eBook was produced by: David T. Jones, Mary Meehan, Al Haines & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

The LONE HAND

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
MCMXXVIII

Copyright, 1928, by
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SEA FOG	1
II. THE SPRING TIDE	11
III. THE MILLHOUSE	23
IV. ISAAC HESITATES	33
V. USEFUL FRIENDS	43
VI. MARK FOLLOWS HIS BENT	53
VII. THE FLOOD	62
VIII. AN AMATEUR FIREMAN	72
IX. MARK FINISHES HIS JOB	83
X. THE DOMINANT PARTNER	92
XI. MARK SEES HIS LINE	102
XII. TRANQUILLITY	112
XIII. THE SAWMILL	120
XIV. MISS WELLWIN INVESTIGATES	128
XV. THE BURST TUBE	139
XVI. PICTURES OF THE WOODS	148
XVII. MARK GOES NORTH	157
XVIII. THE WOODS	167
XIX. MARK FINDS HIS MAN	177
XX. TURNBULL'S STORY	186
XXI. MARK FOLLOWS THE CLUE	195
XXII. ISAAC'S SOFT SPOT	202
XXIII. ISAAC'S LUCK TURNS	213
XXIV. A DALESWOMAN	222
XXV. REACTION	232
XXVI. FLORA MEDDLES	240
XXVII. THE BREAKING STRAIN	249
XXVIII. A MODERN STOIC	258
XXIX. THE LAST INTERVIEW	266
XXX. THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE	275
XXXI. MARK'S INHERITANCE	286

THE LONE HAND

CHAPTER I

SEA FOG

Dusk had begun to fall, but for February the evening was mild. A gentle southwest wind blew across the Solway flats, and Mark Crozier's long rubber boots, thick clothes, and fishing mackintosh embarrassed him. The road was soft and he carried a heavy gun, cartridges, some sandwiches, a vacuum flask, and pajamas in his waterproof game-bag. Moreover, if the lag geese were on the marshes, he might carry his load all night. If not, he hoped to reach an inn he knew before the landlord went to bed. In the morning, he must look over the Howbarrow sheep.

The flock was his uncle's, Isaac Crozier's; Mark himself was an engineer, and at present out of a job. All the same, he sprang from yeoman stock and Howbarrow, twenty miles off, was for long his father's. The old house occupied a hollow in the bleak Border hills, where even the hardy black-faced sheep got thin in winter, and Mark had engaged to see how the flock had thriven on the salt-marsh grass.

Two or three miles off, dark woods cut the long flats rolling back to the Scottish hills; in front, the plain was level as the sea and melted into the blurred horizon. Water glimmered in the flooded ditch along the road, the sky was gray, and a gray trail of smoke floated across the boggy field from a stack of burning thorns. The landscape was colorless and dreary, but Mark was young, and after the throbbing workshop, he liked the spaciousness and calm. Then, he carried a good gun, and loneliness and gloom do not bother a dalesman.

The Croziers owned the soil they cultivated in the uplands where Northumbria and Scotland join, but they were not gentlemen farmers. The eldest son took Howbarrow; the younger sons got a small sum, and as a rule, prospered in the market towns. It was typical that they engaged in trade and carried scriptural names. They were shopkeepers, auctioneers, cattle-salesmen, and so forth, and although they went to good schools, none was remarkably cultivated.

For the most part, the Croziers were strongly built, stubborn, laborious, and frugal. None was keen to dispute, but they did not forgive an injury, and they held tenaciously all that was theirs. In the towns they used colloquial English; in the hills their talk was marked by words Danish and Frisian pirates had carried across the North Sea. After a thousand years, the Border dalesmen are frankly Vikings.

By contrast with his relations' sober frugality, Mark's father, Thomas Crozier, was characterized by a humorous extravagance that his elder son inherited. Both were dead, and Thomas's half-brother, Isaac, now ruled at Howbarrow. Mark had got three or four hundred pounds, which had melted during his apprenticeship at a Newcastle foundry. Now the foundry was shut and he looked about for a post.

In the meantime, he hoped to shoot a goose, and when he passed a cluster of white houses he pulled out his watch. Six o'clock, and the night was going to be dark! Well, if he did not find the geese in two or three hours, he must come back to the inn, where a fire burned cheerfully behind the curtains.

The village melted in the gloom, the light wind touched the naked branches in a wood, and Mark, pushing on, threw back the gate at the end of a muddy lane. In front, as far as he could see, level grass, pierced by a wide river-channel, rolled back into the growing dark. In the distance, he heard plover and black-backed gulls call.

For a time he plowed through belts of rushes, and then splashed across the short salt-grass. Sheep, with draggled wool, scattered before his advance, and flitting redshanks screamed. The grass was boggy, and one could not go straight, because a salt marsh is drained by miry creeks, and their tributary *runners* loop and twist. Some were spanned by rude, sod-covered bridges, but since two converging rivers bordered the green flat, Mark's plan was, as far as possible, to keep the watershed.

At length, by a pool, he saw feathers and the marks of broad webbed feet. The geese had fed there recently and might come back, and the bank of a neighboring creek was a good spot to hide. Mark took a square of oilcloth from his bag, and pulling a turf from the bank, sat down; the gun on his knee, and his rubber boots in the mud. If his luck were good, he might get a shot, but he might wait for daybreak and not see a goose. Indeed, since the moon was new, he must rather use his ears than his eyes. The gray lag is a noisy bird and the creak of its broad wings carries far.

For a time, all was quiet. Thin vapor, moving from the southwest, floated across the sky, and Mark saw the flats got

blurred. Fog might be awkward, but when the tide flowed across the sands a breeze ought to spring up and the night would clear. He lighted his pipe and began to muse.

On a February night ten years since, his father and a herd went out to move some sheep. A snowstorm raged across the moors, but Crozier had long fronted the hardest weather England knows. Although he was forced to cross a flooded burn and was entangled in the drifts, he saved most of his flock, and crawling home half-frozen in the bitter morning, died two days afterwards. When his widow died, Mark went to the Newcastle foundry, and Jim took the farm. Jim was by five years the older son, but he was young for the load he carried. Although they had thought their father prosperous, he had speculated rashly in cattle and owed his half-brother, Isaac, much.

Jim, however, was hopeful, and since Isaac promised he would not embarrass him, engaged to put all straight. For the most part, Mark was at Newcastle, but Isaac and his wife were much at Howbarrow. He declared that he was not a hard creditor, but his nephew was young, and he wanted, if possible, to get his money back. So far as Mark knew, where Isaac meddled the line he indicated was economically sound, but it began to look as if the job Jim had undertaken was harder than he thought.

Four years since, Jim one February evening started across the moor to shoot ducks at Blackshaw tarn. At nine o'clock he called at the Packhorse Inn, and admitted he had not got a shot and was cramped and cold. He got some hot drink; the landlord declared he could not state how much, and Turnbull, the Howbarrow cowman, did not remember, although he reckoned Mr. Crozier had had enough. At the bottom of Mark's trunk was a market town newspaper, in which the report of the inquest occupied a column.

Jim refused to wait for Turnbull, who had driven some cattle up the dale. He set off in the fog across the moor, and in the morning a herd found him, broken by the fall, in a limestone quarry half a mile from Howbarrow.

It looked as if that was all anybody knew, and the coroner was satisfied, but somehow Mark was not. For one thing, of the three or four men at the Packhorse only Turnbull thought his master had perhaps used too much liquor. Well, Jim was not altogether abstemious, but Mark had not known him drunk. Then, Isaac and his wife were at the farm, and when the coroner inquired why he waited for morning, he replied, as if unwillingly, that his nephew sometimes was away at night.

Mark doubted. When Jim was not at Howbarrow everybody knew he was at the cattle sales in the market town and he stopped at the George. Yet the replies accounted for the accident and for his lying where he fell until daybreak. When the trustees investigated, Mark got a fresh knock. The debt Jim inherited had got larger, and they agreed for Isaac to take the farm. Their lawyer imagined one could not dispute his claim and advised Mark to take the small sum he offered. Mark did not like his uncle's tight-lipped, parsimonious wife; but when he got a holiday Howbarrow was home. Anyhow, it was done with four years since, and he must concentrate on getting a job.

Curlew called. The flock was flying low and fast; one heard the fanning wings, but when Mark jumped up they circled and were gone. Now he was on his feet, he saw the mist got thicker. All was very quiet, but in the distance something throbbed like a train on a bridge. Mark pulled out his watch and rubbed a match. He imagined the southwest wind blew fresh in the Irish Sea and pushed the surf across the Solway shoals, seven or eight miles off. For him to hear the tide's advance was ominous, and in about two hours it would reach the marsh. Solway tides flow savagely, the moon was new, and when the current ran *up* the creeks he must not be on the marsh. Sometimes, before a gale reached the firth, the water rose several feet above its calculated level.

For a few minutes he pondered. He was on the watershed, and nearer an inn on the north shore than the village he had passed. His plan was to find the river on the north side of the marsh, and since he fronted west, he must follow the first large creek running down on his right hand.

After five or ten minutes, he plunged from a rotten bank and found a creek before he thought. The sticky mud held his boots, and, snapping the cartridges from his gun, he used the butt to help him up the slope. He began to doubt if he would get a shot, but if he did so, a clot of mud at the muzzle might tear the barrel. Crawling out, rather shaken and breathing hard, he followed the creek, although every hundred yards he was forced to circle round a crooked tributary.

At length, he reached the marsh-top and looked down on a belt of sand. He had thought to see water shine, but he did not. The mist flowed past him and since the wind was in his face, he fronted southwest. He, however, ought to have fronted north. Baffled by the fog, instead of crossing the marsh, he had come back to the side from which he started. He might follow the bank to the end of the peninsula, and then keep the other side, but he thought the end two or three miles off, the

creeks were numerous, and where they crossed the sands the bottom was treacherous. Besides, the wind was freshening.

Mark swore. The moon was new, and the wind helped the tide. By and by the current would flow across the lower belts of marsh. Well, when the salt-grass melted in the flood he must not be there; and, trying to keep the wind on his left shoulder, he steered north. For a time, the ground was firm and level; and then he stopped by a gully three or four feet deep. It looked as if he had reached the head of another creek and the creek went north. The trouble was, if he tried to follow it to the sands, he must cross the network of runners that fed the main channel. All the same, he must not stop and ponder. The throb too of the advancing tide had got ominously loud, and February was not a lucky month for the Croziers.

He jumped two or three runners; and then a rotten bank broke and, sliding down a steep incline, he plunged into a foot of water and holding mud. When he scrambled up the other side he was frankly anxious. He was now entangled among the creek's numerous forks, but since it went to the north sands, he must push across its basin. Jumping, and wading where he was forced, he savagely plowed ahead. His thick clothes embarrassed him and his skin was wet by sweat, but speed was important, and when he reached firm ground he began to run.

After a few minutes, his advanced foot got no support, and he plunged down into the dark. When he stopped with an awkward jolt, water splashed, and since he could not reach the top, he knew he was in the main creek's channel. The mud, however, was not remarkably soft, and he had stuck to his gun. He doubted if he could get up the bank, and he kept the channel. By and by the marsh rolled back and wet sand shone in front.

Mark had crossed the peninsula, but that was all he knew, and he must yet cross the creek. Although he doubted if the water was a foot deep, the sand the current flowed across was treacherous, and sometimes cattle were mired. For a hundred yards, he followed the water; and then set his mouth and pushed across. His long boots sank in the yielding bottom, his legs got cold, and he knew the water had run over the top of one boot. Then his other leg got cold, and although he floundered savagely, the quicksand held his feet. If he stopped a few moments longer, he might stop for good, and, leaning forward, he pushed down the gun. The flat heel-plate gave him some support; he pulled his boots from the clinging stuff, found firmer bottom, and splashed ahead. When he stopped, on hard, ribbed sand, his heart thumped and to get his breath hurt.

The wind was strong and the fog rolled across the flats in waves, but Mark saw a belt of sky. He heard geese; a gaggle was flying up the firth. Then oyster-catchers screamed, redshanks whistled, and wings beat in the dark. Something had disturbed the feeding birds, and two or three hundred yards off a gun exploded. Mark heard two quick shots and then another. If the sportsman had tried to stop a cripple, he would not get a third shot. Somebody on the sands was lost, and signaled for help.

Mark shouted, and after a time an indistinct object loomed in the fog. The queer thing was, now he knew the fog baffled another, his anxiety began to go.

"Hallo!" said the stranger. "To hear a shout was some relief. I want to make the waterfoot. Am I heading right?"

"On the whole, I think not," Mark replied. "I imagine you are steering down the firth for Scotland."

"Then, you know where you are?"

"To some extent, although I would not bet on it," said Mark. "Anyhow, the waterfoot inn's my object, and if you are a stranger——"

"I certainly am; I'm stopping at the inn, and when a shepherd fellow reckoned the geese were about, the landlord loaned me a gun. Back home, I've hunted brant geese on the sloos. Well, I started across the sands and the fog swallowed me."

Mark knew the other was young and thought him American.

"Oh, well," he said, "I know where the marsh-top is and hope before very long to reach firm ground."

For the most part, they kept the marsh-top, although they were forced to flounder through some creeks. The wind was getting stronger, the fog got thin, and at length a misty flickering beam pierced the gloom.

"A motor-bus," said Mark and felt the rushes under his feet. "We ought soon to see a fence."

The fence was on the other side of a wide ditch where tall reeds grew, but Mark knew where he was and found a plank bridge. They crossed some fields in the melting fog, and when they reached a wet lane a motor's lights flashed behind the trees not far ahead.

CHAPTER II

THE SPRING TIDE

A waitress carried off the plates and Mark went to an easy-chair. A cheerful fire snapped in the old-fashioned grate, and across the hearth-rug the stranger he had met on the sands rolled a cigarette. Red curtains covered the windows, and the furniture was old, for the inn was built when mail-coaches and post-chaises took the road for Scotland along the Solway shore. Now swift road-borne traffic again rolled by its gate. Mark heard wheels and a motor-bus's horn.

Since he had satisfied his appetite, he studied his companion. The other was an athletic young fellow, tall but not heavily built, and his glance was alert and frank. Mark thought his boots and clothes American. Mark had not a change of clothes, but he had borrowed the landlord's slippers, and he stretched his legs to the fire. After a strenuous evening, he was entitled to go slack.

"Will you take a ready-made cigarette?" he asked. "No, thanks," said the other. "When I was in the woods I rolled all I used, and the habit sticks." He balanced the neatly rolled cigarette. "Pretty good! Can you beat it?"

"I could not," Mark admitted. "You're American?"

The young fellow gave him a twinkling glance.

"The next thing. I'm Canadian; although you might not spot it, there's a difference. Anyhow, reserve is not our habit, and if I had not met up with you, I might have roamed about the sands until the tide got me. I guess I have a card—"

He found a card, and Mark read:

Robert Wellwin
Duquesne Lumber Company
Export Products

"Thank you," he said. "I'm Mark Crozier, until recently of Newcastle, but now at Howbarrow, about twenty miles off. Are you in this country for business?"

Wellwin studied him. Crozier was large, but he was not, like some large men, slow; Wellwin had crossed the treacherous sands with him. His look was calm, and when he fronted one he tilted his head a little and squarely met one's glance. But for his twinkle, Wellwin might have thought him dull. He talked in a quiet voice. Not a Canadian type; but somehow Wellwin knew him a good sort.

"When I pulled out from Glasgow my business was put across, and the old man cabled I might take a holiday. He's the Duquesne Company's president. When I graduated at Toronto I went to the woods, and studied slashing and hauling logs at the winter camps. Then I was at the mill, where we rip the stuff for lumber, and now I'm working through the salesman gang. Well, my mother's folk were Borderers, and I thought I'd see the Solway and the Roman wall. The country's interesting, although it's surely wet. Anyhow, I mustn't bore you. Are you a farmer?"

"Not long since I was an engineer's draughtsman, but the foundry shut down and the heavy machinery trade is bad. I'd thought about starting a car repair-shop; but I don't yet know. One needs some capital and money is hard to get."

"Sure thing!" Wellwin agreed. "But have you thought about the Dominion? If you have not, you might. So long as you are willing to sweat, it's a pretty good country."

"I'll wait," said Mark. "On the English Border, we are not an impulsive lot, and I doubt if the Scots are very rash."

For a few minutes they smoked. The river brawled and they heard the wind in the trees. A motor-lorry clanged across a bridge, and when the roll of wheels got faint a fresh noise throbbled about the inn. Wellwin went to the window and pushed the casement back. A dull rumble, something like a roll of drums, pulsated in the dark.

"An aeroplane? Or a big express freight laboring up-grade?"

"The Solway tide, pushed up the firth by a western gale! Sometimes it advances in a breaking wave two or three feet

high."

Wellwin fastened the window and stretched his legs to the fire.

"I'm content to be where I am. When you heard my gun I was lucky. But there is no gale."

"The gale will arrive by morning and lift the tide three or four feet. In fact, after breakfast I must see that the herds move my uncle's sheep. I don't know if you would be interested, but our dogs are clever."

"So long as the job is on dry ground, I'd like to watch; I'm not going on the sands," said Wellwin, firmly.

For a time they smoked and talked. Although their types were different, each was conscious of a queer attraction. For the most part, youth is trustful and friendship springs fast.

"When I know the sheep are safe, I must get back to Howbarrow," Mark said by and by. "Hadrian's wall is not far off, and if you'd like the excursion, we might visit a spot where the Picts broke through, and a famous camp. Then I could show you an older rampart that puzzles the antiquaries. The bogs, however, are numerous, and the inns are not remarkably good."

Wellwin laughed and got up.

"When you have lived at a loggers' camp and mused along the river trails in the melting snow, you're not fastidious. We'll fix things in the morning. I guess it's time for bed."

Breakfast was served at daybreak, and soon afterwards Mark and Wellwin left the inn and plowed across the wet fields. The morning was gray, the light was dim, and a savage wind drove low-flying scud across the sky. When Mark pulled out his watch behind a battered hedge, it was nine o'clock, but two or three miles off all was indistinct.

The marsh, a tapering, sage-green peninsula, pierced the vague sands. The sands were colorless, but in some places their wet surface glimmered with faint reflected light. Whistling curlew sped inland before the gale. A flock of clamorous gulls got up from a pool, circled on wings that for a moment were white and distinct, and then melted in the gloom. About a mile in front, patches of dingy color dotted the marsh. The patches moved, and in the background Mark saw two or three speeding objects.

"The herds have got to work," he said. "Since the sheep are down on the low end, the men have rather an awkward job. Our lot's about two hundred, but I imagine there's a thousand on the marsh. However, the tide will not reach the sands for two hours, and I dare say we can help."

"How much is a sheep worth?" Wellwin inquired.

"Round about two pounds, for the small hill sorts."

Wellwin calculated. "Two thousand dollars. A useful wad, and straight reckoning! Pounds, shillings, and pence; hundredweights, quarters, and pounds, and then some, leave a Canadian to guess. At Glasgow I was forced to buy me a schooboy's arithmetic book—But I expect you want to get busy."

They crossed the low marsh, and stopped where two men sheltered from the wind behind a broken bank. The herds were big, lean fellows and their clothes had faded to the color of dry soil. One, like Mark, was frankly Saxon; the other, although his eyes were gray, was the old, thin-faced Cumbrian type. His pointed chin and long head were perhaps inherited from the Picts. The herds looked at Mark inquiringly, and he told them who he was.

In front, three or four hundred small sheep slowly followed the bank of a circling creek. The wind blew back their stained fleeces, and where the clean wool showed it looked as if they were flayed. The flock was compact, for a dog turned back stragglers. Other sheep were scattered about the marsh, and at one spot a number plunged into a hollow by a creek and vanished. A dog jumped on some broken turf and fronted the herds, as if it waited for an order.

"Get away back, Nell!" one shouted, and the dog went off at top speed.

"You are gathering them up," said Mark.

"T' black-faces ho'd togedder; yan can han'le them. T' d—Herdwicks are as wild as hawks."

"How many were there in the bunch that took the creek?"

"A score and tyan, I doot they'll scatter," the herd replied. He whistled and shouted: "Fetch on, Nell!"

"I'd have guessed a dozen. They were over the bank like a flash," Wellwin remarked.

A dog barked and the sheep leaped from a gully. The other herd waved his arms, and two dogs sped across the grass and vanished in broken ground. By and by they reappeared, circling round a straggling gray-faced flock. The herd began to count, and Wellwin looked up with surprise.

"You are pretty obviously British, but for all I can distinguish, the fellow might calculate in Chinese," he said to Mark.

"We reckon by scores. I believe the numerals are Scandinavian."

"But who in thunder taught you to count like that?"

"Hakon, King of Norway, or perhaps Hardicanute," Mark replied with a laugh. "At all events, the first Herdwicks were Viking sheep."

"You are a queer crowd," Wellwin remarked. "You stay put for a thousand years!"

"Oh, well," said Mark, "your *gotten* and I'll *get me* were Elizabethan English. Then in some American towns I believe the mayor is a *reeve*."

The gray-faced Herdwicks jointed the larger flock, but did not mix, and Mark and Wellwin took posts to hold them in the bow of the creek. The herds went the other way, and for a time barking dogs and speeding groups of sheep scoured the marsh. Wellwin remarked that the groups got larger, until at length a compact mass, pushed on by the herds and flanked by circling dogs, rolled into the loop. Mark pulled out his watch.

"Ten o'clock! We must be across the hollow spot in an hour."

"Just that," the herd agreed, and whistled. "Gan forrad, Bob! Fetch on, Beauty!"

Six hundred sheep rolled along the watershed, where the ground was firmest and the creeks were small; the black-faces together, the Herdwicks straggling on their flank. Splashing in pools and jumping channels, the men directed their advance, and the dogs stopped the groups that tried to break away. So far, all went smoothly, but sometimes Mark turned his head and looked about.

All he saw behind the marsh-top was the dreary sands, through which a river-channel curved. The water broke in angry waves and foam like soapsuds blew along the bank. The current yet went down the firth, but the tide was not far off, and Mark imagined the savage gale drowned the noise of its advance. Moreover, in front the ground sloped to a hollow where the river at one time had pierced the marsh. A large creek, opening to the sands at both ends, drained the hollow, and although the creek was bridged, tributary channels curved about the slopes. When the party reached the top, gray scum in the grass indicated that the tide had recently swept the basin. The channels bothered the sheep. Buffeted by the gale, they stopped, and rolling together in a bleating mass, fronted the dogs. Then a herd in advance of the groups signaled by tossing arms, and began to run.

"Tide's broken low bridge," said the other. "We must shift them to north end and there's nut much time."

The sheep were frightened and stubborn, and the Herdwicks broke.

"Can ye hold black-faces?" the herd inquired.

"I don't know," said Mark. "So long as they're afraid to cross the creek, we'll try."

Wellwin touched him and he looked round. The river-channel in the sands was smooth, as if the current now ran with the wind; but not far off a white-topped wave stretched from bank to bank. The wave rolled up the channel, and where it passed, the sands melted in a surging flood. Before long the flood would sweep the hollow, and Isaac's sheep were yet scattered about the marsh.

Mark sent Wellwin where he thought he ought to go. The creek the animals dared not cross was behind the compact

black-faced flock; for the most part, the sheep were quiet, but now and then a number surged irresolutely about. In the meantime, the herds were occupied, and when for a few moments Wellwin could watch the dogs, he thought the swift animals reasoned like men. A whistle and sometimes a signal from a lifted arm was all the command they got, but the clusters of sheep got larger. The scores soon were fifties and the fifties hundreds, and at length a solid mass of woolly bodies rolled back tumultuously to the other flock.

The sands, however, had vanished and the tide went up the creek. The low marsh would soon be an island, and the island would melt. The north bridge was a mile off, and Mark doubted if they could get there before the flood. Yet, with the deep creek on one side, the sheep, in order to break away, must pass the row of men; and pushed by the dogs, the flock began to surge along the bank.

One dared not stop for the tributaries; where one could not jump, men and dragged animals plowed through the mud. Wellwin's face was red and his breath was labored. Mark's skin was wet by sweat, and when he dared he glanced at the creek. The current leaped up the bank, and where but a few minutes since the flock had passed water shone in the grass. Dogs barked, one heard the surf beat the marsh-top and mud-crusts fleeces shake. After a time, a herd signed Mark.

"Ye'll get in front and turn them t'other side o' brig. Maybe we'll win over."

Mark called Wellwin, and, circling widely round the flock, they came back to the creek. The north bridge stood; but the flood was nearly level with the small birch trunks, there was not a rail, and the turfs that covered the poles were trampled to sticky slime. Mark and Wellwin took their posts a dozen yards behind the bridge, and for a few moments the flock stopped. Then the Herdwicks saw their line across, and by scores and fifties started down the slope.

"Let them gan!" shouted a herd.

The leaders leaped across the bridge, and Mark got his breath. The black-faces were starting, and where one went all would go. But there was the trouble. The bridge was about five feet wide, and six or seven hundred sheep rolled down the incline on a twenty-yard front. The flock charged for the bridge and all could not get across. Moreover, a sheep swims but poorly.

Shouting for Wellwin, Mark jumped into the creek. The current reached his waist, and he thought it would pull his legs from under him. Wellwin, two or three yards off, took the plunge and gave Mark a smile.

"Nothing very fresh, partner; I have handled logs in the rivers of the North. But watch out. We are for it."

The sheep spilled from the crowded bridge and went up the creek with the flood. None must pass, for the bank farther on was steep; but in front a muddy incline dipped to the water. The swimming animals steered for the spot. Some were carried by, and more fell from the bridge. Struggling stupidly, they collided with Mark, who seized their wool and pushed them across. Fresh sheep, urged by the press behind, took the water, and the herds plunged in. The creek was blocked by struggling animals, held back, as yet, from destruction by four tired men. Three, however, were six-foot Cumbrians, and Wellwin had steered crashing logs down Canadian rapids.

All were savage and breathless. The bottom was treacherous and the flood rose fast. Braced against the current, they somehow kept their feet, shoved back the drifting sheep, and dragged the brutes across. Sometimes the thin-faced herd pulled one from the water, and with a swing of his big shoulders tossed it on the others' backs.

When Mark imagined they were beaten, two cowmen from a farm across the flats arrived. Six men were now in the water, and where live-stock must be controlled four were experts. By degrees the pressure slackened and the flock got thin. The bridge would carry the sheep, and since the most part were on the other side, Mark floundered across. Wellwin pulled him onto the mud and when they climbed the bank the flock streamed up the sage-green slope.

Half an hour afterward, the group stopped where prickly whinns dotted rising ground.

"We'll mannish noo," a herd remarked, and studied the gloomy sky. "The tide is by the top, and if wind drops, she'll be doon three-fit to-neet. Weel but for the Greenrigg lads, I thowt we were beat at brig."

Wellwin looked back. The hollow was a lake, and all he saw of the low marsh was a small island, washed by angry surf.

"I reckon I have had enough, and I want a bath," he said. "My hands are gummed up by sticky grease and my slicker coat smells like—perhaps a tannery is the nearest thing. Anyhow, your relation is two thousand dollars' worth of mutton to the good."

Mark smiled. "One likes to be modest, but I imagine our help tipped the beam and my uncle owes me something. However, I have not much grounds to hope he will meet the bill, and in the meantime we'll steer for the inn."

CHAPTER III

THE MILLHOUSE

Where a limestone block broke the keen wind Wellwin threw his mackintosh in the heath, and, sitting down, lighted a cigarette. Since they lunched by a lonely tarn he and Mark had plowed across the high watershed from which the rivers run to the Solway and the North Sea. Now the sun was low, Wellwin was satisfied to rest and looked about.

As far as one could see, the moors rolled east, and the sunset touched their tops with pale gold and silver-gray. In the keen spring evening, the landscape struck the note of austerity one senses in the North. In front, a narrow valley pierced the hills, and where the heath and bent-grass rolled down the long slope the brown and gray melted into elusive purple. In the dale the light was blue, and the silver birch-trunks and a long limewashed house by the glimmering river were not altogether white. By contrast with the yellow reflections on the moor-tops, the dim blue hollow was strangely beautiful.

For three days, Wellwin, steered by Mark across moors and bogs, had studied the Emperor Hadrian's wall, and a rampart the Picts had supposititiously built. Looking down from a huge earth fort, he had watched the rain slant across a valley through which for two hundred years the Scots invasions had flowed and ebbed. He had seen the legions' mile-castles, broken hypocausts, and gate-tower pavements scored by chariot wheels.

Bob was interested. He liked the Old Country, and began to revise his views about the inhabitants. It looked as if they were not the back numbers he had at one time thought. Their methods were not the methods one used in North America, but after a few transactions with the Glasgow Scots, he admitted they got results. Then he liked the big, quiet English Borderers. Where a Canadian boosted his town and his possessions, they apologized. It looked as if they would sooner listen than talk, but sometimes their slow smile was illuminating. To move them might be hard, but when they got going Bob imagined they went all the way. Mark Crozier was perhaps a good example.

Although Mark was franker than some, Bob sensed a sort of solidity of character; perhaps he meant steadfastness. One felt that his word went and as a rule was not rashly given. Yet sometimes he was humorous and the twinkle in his gray eyes was like the sudden sparkle of a calm pool. In fact, Mark was a regular fellow and Bob would be sorry to let him go. Well, he was entitled to take a holiday and for a few days he might stop at the Packhorse Inn.

By and by Mark pulled out his watch and got up.

"Your inn is three or four miles off, but we'll stop at the Millhouse. If the doctor is not about, the girls will give us tea."

"Perhaps I ought not to bother your friends," said Bob.

"They will not be bothered," Mark rejoined. "In winter, at all events, strangers are not numerous, and to meet a Canadian will be something fresh."

They went down across dry bents and bright-green mossy belts, but at the top of a long scree Mark braced his legs and pushed off. The sharp stones flowed in noisy waves about his feet, and where the pitch was steepest he dragged his stick for a brake. Wellwin, following awkwardly, sat down in the stones, rolled across a mossy slab, and when another brought him up crawled to firmer ground. Forty yards below, Mark looked up with a twinkle.

"I expected you to keep the heather," he remarked.

"Oh, well, you went down," said Bob. "I expect you see the implication?"

Mark laughed. "The first time, I went down on my stomach, and I have plowed a channel with my head. On the whole, I think your luck was good."

"I wonder—" said Bob. "The stones are sharp, my clothes were not made in England, and I cannot see my back. Since we are visiting with your friends, you might inspect——"

"You are not notably the worse for wear," Mark reported. "Anyhow, we are not dining at the Frontenac, and if it's some comfort, we are rather a frugal than a fashionable lot. A dalesman reckons his clothes should last for three or four years."

"In Canada, we'd think him dippy," Wellwin rejoined, and studied the steep slope. "Looks impossible; but you shot the

grade all standing, and although I did not, I did come down. Since the important thing's to arrive in one piece, how d'you judge the pitch?"

"Where stones will lie an active man may go; but before you start you ought to find out if they are held up by the top of a precipice. However, we'll shove on for the Millhouse."

Brushing through dead fern, they reached a fence, and crossed a mossy pasture to the road. Behind a dry-stone wall and naked alders, a river brawled; and then silver birches clustered round the white Millhouse. The flagged roof was stained ochre, gray, and green by moss and house-leeks, and for a background the thin, purple birch-twigs cut the sky. The big wheel was gone, but water splashed across the top of the broken weir. Wellwin smelt burning wood and heard sheep bleat. Where he had gone in Canada, all that man had made was new; in the Border dale he felt that time was put back two hundred years.

Mark, pushing open the thick, low door, steered him along a flagged passage to a spacious room. The furniture was dark and old and the wall was paneled, but Wellwin knew the modern decorator had nothing to do with it. Crooked beams crossed the ceiling; the floor was dark polished oak. In the big hollow fireplace ash blocks snapped among smoldering peat. Bob noted the peat's aromatic smell, and, for a casement window was open, the harsh freshness that marks spring in the North.

A girl got up from a low chair and gave Mark her hand. She was tall and nobly built. Her eyes were calm and gray; but in the meantime that was all Bob knew. He was presented to Miss Forsyth, and she said:

"If you were Mark's walking companion, I expect you will need some food. Tea and scones are waiting. We saw you on the scree."

"I had hoped you did not," Bob rejoined. "You are probably not interested, but I'd like to state the experiment was my first."

Another girl advanced and he was presented to Miss Flora Scot.

"When one goes with Mark one must reckon on queer adventures," she said. "Was your plunge down the scree the only chance you took?"

Bob gave her a twinkle. "You are keen, Miss Scot. Am I very obviously North American? If so, did you spot my clothes, or me?"

"I might enlighten you again. In the meantime I inquired about your adventures."

"Then, I recently helped push and throw two hundred sheep across a flooded creek, but I don't know if it was properly an adventure. Mark and the herds rather implied it was the sort of exploit an Englishman undertakes for exercise."

Miss Forsyth looked up.

"Isaac's black-faces, Mark? The flock was cut off by a spring tide?"

"Something like that; his two hundred were on the low marsh. However, since Wellwin is modest, I must state that he's a useful man."

Bob thought Miss Forsyth's look got thoughtful, but she crossed the floor.

"I will go for tea. Flora, you might see Mr. Wellwin is not bored."

They went off, and Miss Scot remarked: "At the Millhouse one does not order tea; one goes, oneself, for it. In Canada, I suppose you take supper at a large and very efficiently run hotel?"

"Something depends on where you are and your occupation. We have not yet done with domestic life, and I have got my supper at a bunkhouse in the woods; pork and beans and a slab of pie, every evening for six months. However, I don't imagine it's important, and perhaps the queer thing is you seem to know much about us."

"Oh, well, one sees the moving pictures, and since our barren hills will not support us all, for the most part we have relations across the Atlantic. Unconsciously perhaps, they carry on propaganda, and we begin to enjoy some American

advantages; for example saxophones and mosquitoes. I don't know how the mosquitoes get across, but the jazz musicians arrive by first-class liners and rendezvous at famous London hotels."

"And that's all? I am, of course, Canadian; but I imagine our neighbors export some finer stuff."

"Ah," said Flora, "imitative people do not discriminate; they are satisfied to follow the latest fashion. The drawback is obvious, because there are American rules we might with some advantage use but rather leave alone. When you have a foreign model you perhaps copy its exaggerations. I expect it's easier. However, Madge declared you must not be bored."

Wellwin was not at all bored and he politely stated something like that. Miss Scot was keen, and although she had not Miss Forsyth's calm and touch of dignity, she was attractive. She was lightly built and somehow alert; her skin was browned by the weather, her lines were like a graceful boy's, and her quick glance was humorous. Bob was willing for her to banter him; but she had indicated that she had had enough, and he must play up.

"I know nothing about old English houses, but yours is beautiful," he said.

"In the northern dales old houses are numerous, but perhaps the Mill is a good example. At one time, it was the manor; and then, a hundred years since, somebody used it for a water-mill. Now it's a country doctor's home, and although its disadvantages are evident, they were reckoned on when the purchase was fixed."

For all the signs of cultivation, Bob had imagined the doctor was not rich. The rugs on the polished boards were threadbare, and articles a Canadian would have thrown away were carefully mended. He did not know much about women's clothes, but he imagined the material the girls had used was not expensive. Yet Bob knew his hosts thoroughbred.

"Is Mark's home like yours?" he asked.

"Not at all," said Flora. "Howbarrow is a queer, grim old house; the Croziers are hard folk. I suppose one mustn't be romantic, but the dalesmen call them the unlucky Croziers and it looks as if they were haunted by misfortune. Mark's father was lost in the snowdrifts and died a day or two afterwards; his brother plunged down a limestone quarry, and his cousin was fatally hurt at a football match——"

"Oh, well, I am going to the inn."

"Howbarrow is not Mark's," said Flora, as if she apologized. "I myself would much sooner be at the Packhorse, and as a rule, when my uncle is not engaged in the evenings, Mark is at the Mill."

"Then, you are Miss Forsyth's cousin?"

"That is so. I have other relations, but for the most part the Millhouse is my home."

"It's a charming spot," said Bob. "I believe you stated something about one's reckoning on adventures if one went with Mark. As a rule, I expect your adventures depend on your temperament, but I do not think him rash."

"Something depends on your luck, and, so far, Mark's has not been good. It perhaps accounts for his queer soberness. Some people get things easily, but some must fight for the little that is theirs. I think Mark must fight and half-consciously he knows."

"Does one know one's luck?" Bob inquired.

"I wonder—Perhaps, to some extent, it's possible," Flora replied, and got up, for the others came in.

Tea was a cheerful function, and when it was over and the light began to go the reflections of the log fire flickered on shining brass and old polished oak. Bob heard the river's tranquil throb, and fronting the window, saw the thin birch-branches melt and the sunset fade from the moors. He sensed the old room's charm and hoped Miss Forsyth would not get a light.

"Jerry was with us for two days and I believe his letter's at Howbarrow," she said to Mark. "He can get the yard and workshop he wanted at Chester, and thought it the proper spot for a garage."

Miss Scot and Wellwin were on the other side of the fireplace, and she explained:

"Jerry is my brother, and they talk about a partnership."

"Then, I must get to work," said Mark. "To borrow five hundred pounds is an awkward job, but there are perhaps one or two people on whom I have a claim——"

He brooded, and Bob remarked Miss Forsyth's sympathetic glance. Bob knew Mark was her lover, and, for all her gentle calm, he imagined her disturbed.

"Your uncle Isaac?" she said in a quiet voice.

Mark smiled, a rather dreary smile.

"Isaac ought perhaps to indulge me, particularly since Wellwin and I helped to save sheep of his worth four hundred pounds. If he'd guarantee the loan at his bank, I'd be satisfied; but I doubt——"

"Madge doubts," Flora remarked to Wellwin. "If you are a dalesman's friend, you may use his horses and implements; you may borrow his plowmen, but he will not give you money."

"You are entitled to ask," Madge said to Mark.

Mark looked up, rather quickly. Miss Forsyth's glance was calm, but Bob imagined something she implied bothered Mark and she understood. Bob had begun to allow for British reserve, although he thought, if he were forced to weigh things, to consult with a girl like Miss Forsyth would be some relief. In the meantime, it had nothing to do with him, and he looked the other way.

"I rather think that is so, but I'm not hopeful," Mark said quietly.

Bob gave Miss Scot a meaning glance, and she got up.

"Mr. Wellwin and I are going to the river," she remarked and steered Bob through the house and across the garden.

They stopped by a mossy wall. On the other side, water splashed across the weir and pale stars were reflected in a quiet pool.

"Is it important for Mark to get the money?" Bob inquired.

"Very important. Just now for an engineer to get a post is almost impossible, and Mark and my brother planned to start a motor workshop. He declares there is no use in doing so unless they can buy the proper tools. I don't know if Jerry is too hopeful, but he imagines he can get half the sum they need. Mark's business is to get the other. If he cannot, he must emigrate."

"Thank you," said Bob. "I'm a stranger and since I don't know your rules, you perhaps will see me out. Well, I have known Mark for six or seven days, but I'd bet my arm on his making good. Do you think I might help him put up the wad?"

"You might offer. For him to know you were willing might be some comfort; but he will refuse. We do not exploit our friends."

"Oh, well, I think my object was good. I was not entitled to consult you, and I hope you're not annoyed."

Flora looked up, and although the light was almost gone, Bob saw her smile.

"I am rather moved. Trust like yours is bracing," she replied.

They started for the house, and soon afterwards Mark and Bob took the road up the dale.

CHAPTER IV

ISAAC HESITATES

Pale sunshine touched the gray wall at Howbarrow, but the morning was keen and the withered grass on the hillside rippled in a nipping wind. Two battered sycamores tossed their branches above the courtyard arch, and for a few minutes Mark leaned against the gate and looked about.

The spacious yard was clean; the mewsteads, byres, and stables round its sides were large and strongly built of whinnstone blocks. The house fronted the cart-bay, and near the door water splashed in a stone trough. Shining milk-tankards occupied a mossy slab, and the water went through the dairy where a separator droned. The mullioned windows were narrow, and at the top of the first row a broken molding went along the wall. Howbarrow was planned to resist winter storms, but the gloomy rooms were cold. Peat is not a hot fuel, and Isaac hated to send his horses eight miles for expensive coal.

Yet Mark admitted all he saw implied calculated efficiency, and when his father and brother ruled, it was perhaps not like that. Turning his head, he glanced down the green hollow of the ghyll, where the cart-road went and mountain-ashes grew beside the noisy beck. At the bottom, black and white belted cattle, released from steaming byres, frolicked uncouthly about a pasture. Behind the dry-stoned dyke, a plow team labored across a field. The soil was purple-red and shining gulls searched the furrow. The team was good, and chain and clevis and buckle sparkled in the sun. Across the dale, long rows of sheep climbed the hill, and Mark heard lambs bleat.

All stood for sound planning and competent control. Isaac Crozier used business methods and declared that the best farmer he knew was a draper who had sold his shop. Isaac himself was for long an auctioneer, but he sprang from yeoman stock and had perhaps inherited some talent for husbandry. At all events, since he seized control Howbarrow had prospered.

Mark frowned. His uncle knew where to spend, but he expected a profit, and he knew where to use stern economy. Mark doubted if he could persuade him to run some risk, and when he went to the house he unconsciously braced up.

Isaac was in his office. His keeping books and calculating costs was typical, for he maintained that a farmer did not get rich by cleaning the byre. The room was bleak, and in the keen spring morning the grate was empty. A seedsman's almanac, a plan of a separator, and some Ministry of Agriculture notices occupied the walls. When Mark came in, Isaac Crozier looked up from a large office desk.

He was a big man and began to get fat. His shoulders were rather bent, his face was red, and his eyes were watery. His mouth was large and loose. At a market-day dinner, one might mistake him for a jolly fellow, and sometimes he was broadly humorous; his debtors knew him another man. When he consulted with his lawyer and banker, his English was good, but, as a rule at Howbarrow he used Cumbrian.

"I have loafed for some time and feel I ought to get a job," said Mark. "All the same, shipbuilding is dull, ironworks and foundries are stopping, and nobody seems to have much use for an engineer."

"Bob Wallace o' Langwath got a good post at a South-African mine, and they tell me Tom Hewett's lad is a foreman at Melbourne. Well, I would not see my nivew beat for a steamship-ticket."

Mark cogitated. He imagined he knew his uncle, and he certainly knew his parsimonious aunt. They wanted to be rid of him, and he was willing to indulge them, but he was not going to Australia, unless he were forced.

"I had thought about Chester. Scot wants me to join him and start a small garage and repair-shop. He can get the workshop and is negotiating for one or two agencies. In fact, I believe the plan is good. The awkward part is to get the money."

"To get money is awkward," Isaac agreed. "Hooiver, what is the sum ye want?"

"Five hundred pounds ought to see me out," said Mark. "We'd pay current interest and give a mortgage on tools and stock."

Isaac shook his head. "Money at bank is idle money, and mine is walking about farm. Until I sell lambs and bullocks, I'll not can get it back; but sooner than refuse you, I might rob a sheep-fold and risk a hundred pound."

Mark smiled. His uncle's argument, although plausible for a poor man, was ridiculous for Isaac Crozier. Yet Mark had expected him to refuse outright.

"There is no use in your *risking* a hundred pounds," he replied. "I want a fair chance to get on my feet and pay my debt. I believe I could engage to do so, and I feel you ought to indulge me."

Isaac gave him a queer, swift glance, and then his watery eyes shifted.

"You might state your grounds," he said in the sort of English he used at the bank.

"I'll try," said Mark. "You wanted to be a farmer, and you have obviously some talent for the job. Well, you have got the best farm in the dale, and the Howbarrow black-faces are the best sheep on the hills. The farm and sheep were my father's, and but for your transactions with Jim would not have been yours——"

He stopped with a touch of surprise. For all his frankness, Isaac was not annoyed. If he moved at all, Mark thought his emotion relief.

"Was the flock famous when I got Howbarrow? Did the farm carry the first-class herd I feed?"

"I think not," Mark admitted, for he wanted to be just.

"Very well. Sometimes your father was embarrassed, and sometimes I helped Jim. I risked my money, and they knew I did not help for nothing. If they'd thought I wasn't just, they might tried t' bank. I think Jim did try, but manager wanted a mortgage. Then I reckon your lawyer was satisfied."

"That was so," Mark agreed.

"Then, where's your ground for thinking I ought to humor you?"

Mark was baffled. Isaac was sternly logical, but Mark was not satisfied, and because somehow he doubted, he would not urge their relationship.

"Oh, well," he said dully, "I suppose we must let it go."

For a few moments Isaac said nothing and knitted his heavy brows. He wanted to help the lad, and although he was shrewdly practical, he felt that for him to agree might pay. Yet the sum was large, and he had sweated for all he had got. He hesitated, but greed tipped the beam.

"Would two hundred pounds see ye oot?"

"I think not," said Mark. "Since you don't know much about our speculation, you are kind—Still, I expect we'd lose a small sum, which would not buy the tools we need; and there's no use in my bothering you."

He went to the door. Isaac hesitated, but let him go. He rather hoped the lad might stop, but Mark did not. Isaac heard his steps in the passage, and when all was quiet his wife came in.

Mrs. Crozier was tall and thin; a competent, firm-mouthed, parsimonious woman. Her relations were farmers, but they did not visit at Howbarrow, and her friends were not numerous. Ellen Crozier's habit was to be usefully occupied. She did not squander time and effort in hospitality.

"What did Mark want?" she asked.

Isaac told her and she nodded, as if she had expected something like that.

"You refused and sent him off?"

"I let him go," Isaac rejoined. "I might have chanced two hundred pounds. It wasn't enough for Mark."

Mrs. Crozier gave him a scornful glance.

"You're soft; sometimes you're a fool. His father and Jim were squanderers. You'd niver have got a penny back."

As a rule, Isaac's wife dominated him, but his loose mouth got firm.

"Mark's another sort, and five hundred pounds would not have broken us. If I'm soft, I reckon neabody has noticed it but you. Anyhow, I'll tell you something—if the boy had stopped and bothered me, he might have got t' lot. The queer thing is, I felt t' proper plan was t' give it him. And I gey nearly did."

Mrs. Crozier's surprise was obvious, but she smiled, a hard, contemptuous smile.

"Your nerve's not very good. You dinnot ken where you must fix and keep your line. You refused Mark t' money he wanted; and then you offered a sum that was nea use to him—How much did Rob Turnbull get?"

"A hundred pounds," Isaac replied, in an apologetic voice. "I was forced to pay. He knew I met Jim on moor t' neet the lad went over quarry."

"He heard you fratch?" said Mrs. Crozier, and her voice was hard.

"Niver a blow was struck; you're not to think it! Jim had taken liquor, and he was annoyed because I'd sold t' bullocks. He began to shout, and Trum'll was in path by quarry fence. But you ken aw about it. I've told you before——"

Mrs. Crozier's mouth was tight and her glance was fixed on Isaac's face. She saw he sweated and his hand shook. Well, she knew he indulged and imagined he had begun to smuggle liquor into the house. Although he admitted he and Jim disputed, she believed he yet kept something back. Her sign implied that it was done with.

"Trum'll wanted more?"

"He got nea mair," Isaac rejoined. "He wrote from Canadian sawmill and I said I'd send letter to my lawyers."

"Durst you have sent the letter?" Mrs. Crozier inquired.

"Looks as if Rob thowt I might, for I didn't get another," said Isaac dryly, and, looking up, fronted his wife. "Sure as deith, Ellen, I've nea reason to be afraid!"

He did not know if she were satisfied, for all she said was, "You gave Rob a hundred pounds!"

For a moment or two she pondered, her glance yet searching the other's face; and then she resumed:

"You cannot front two ways, Isaac, and you must choose—Mark begins to weigh things, and he is not a fool, like Jim. Do you want him at Chester, and at Howbarrow for his holidays?"

"I do not," said Isaac, in an embarrassed voice.

"Very well. So long as you are firm, Scot and he cannot start the motor-shop. The doctor will nut help them, he has not five pounds to lend. Mark will emigrate. I saw some books he got from steamship agents in his room, and when we have done with him I'll be happier. Howbarrow's ours, my man, and aw that's ours we keep."

Isaac's slack gesture implied that he agreed, but when Mrs. Crozier went out he knitted his brows.

He had plotted and pinched for the farm, and by all the rules he knew, it was his. When he looked back, he admitted that he was jealous of his half-brother. Tom's mother, the first wife, had money; Isaac's mother had not. Then he knew he was the better farmer, and he loved the soil, but he took his small inheritance and started for the market town. Although he prospered, he was not satisfied; he wanted Howbarrow, and by and by he saw a plan. Tom had not his talent for using money and was trustful. He consulted with Isaac about his speculations in young stock and sheep, and when he was embarrassed asked him to negotiate a loan.

Tom was not fortunate, and when Jim inherited, the young fellow was Isaac's debtor for a large sum. His plans had worked, but to some extent the plans were Ellen's. At all events, he admitted she had supplied the driving-force that carried him along. Now Jim was dead and Turnbull had grounds to think Isaac had something to do with it. Isaac clenched his fist. He had not pushed his nephew over the quarry bank, but he dared not dwell upon the dispute in the fog, and he pondered something else.

Had Ellen not been firm, he might have helped Mark. He did not want the boy at Howbarrow, but if he went to Chester, his occupation might absorb him and when he married the doctor's girl he'd be willing to leave the past alone. Ellen, however, did not agree, and where she was resolved there was nothing to be said. Isaac was sorry. After all, he might have risked five hundred pounds—But he must order seed oats and so forth, and he got to work.

In the meantime, Mark took a green road across the hills. He had not reckoned on his uncle's support, but all the same he had got a knock and he wanted to be alone. Coming back across the moor in the afternoon, he sat down where a limestone ridge broke the wind. Behind the stones, the sun was warm and Mark lighted his pipe.

The brown slope rolled down to the hollow Howbarrow occupied. Mark saw the tops of the sycamores and thin blue smoke. Six or seven hundred yards from the house, the quarry, like a white scar, cut the heath. Four years since, his brother, crossing the moor in the dark, went through the rotten fence, although it implied his leaving the path and plowing through tangled heather. Jim knew the moor, and in the dark a dalesman trusts his feet to keep a path. Then, if Jim had left the Packhorse when Turnbull and the landlord stated, he ought to have reached Howbarrow twenty minutes before he plunged down the quarry. His watch had stopped and fixed the time, although at the inquest nobody seemed to have remarked his slowness.

Since Turnbull started soon after Jim, he might, had he left the road where a path went obliquely to the ghyll, have passed the spot when Jim was there. All the same, Mark had no grounds to doubt Turnbull. He was moody and obstinate, but a first-class cowman, and Jim trusted him. Anyhow, he emigrated soon after the accident and nobody knew where he was.

The strange thing was, Isaac, who was at Howbarrow, was not disturbed when Jim did not come back. About the time his nephew reached the quarry, he had gone out in the fog because two horses had strayed from the pasture and the quarry fence was bad. Isaac saw nobody. Yet Jim's habit was not to be away at night.

Mark, as he had done before, let it go. In the evening he must tell Madge about Isaac's refusal, and his resolve to emigrate. Although he knew her pluck, he did not like his job. Yet, since he could not get a post in England, he thought she would agree. Madge would not want him to loaf. All the same, to go was hard, and he started moodily for the farm.

CHAPTER V

USEFUL FRIENDS

Snow glimmered on the moor-tops, and where a dark cloud broke, the bleak slopes melted in a gray smear of sleet. The sun, however, was on the Millhouse, and by the pool a few pale primroses pushed through the dead leaves. A robin sang on a bare oak-branch, and water throbbed across the weir.

Flora Scot, steadying herself by a willow-branch, leaned out over the pool. The bank was precipitous and the water deep, and when the branch began to bend Wellwin seized Flora's arm and strongly pulled her back. When he let her go his heart beat and faint color stained her skin. Bob remarked that her brows were knit in a sort of puzzled frown, as if his touch had somehow disturbed her, but when she was conscious of his study the frown melted. She was not going to admit she was annoyed, and he imagined her carelessness, so to speak, was defensive.

"You perhaps do not know I'm a mountaineer," she said. "A mountaineer trusts his feet and his balance, and the stones on which I stood were firm."

"Looks as if you trusted a willow-branch. When the sap runs in spring, a willow-branch is soft and treacherous."

"Then, you have willows in Canada?"

"Sure we have," said Bob. "Willows and oaks and birches, besides the pines and firs. All the trees you have in the Old Country, and then some."

"In aw t' fells there's nea *heaf* like oor heaf, bleats Herdwick sheep. Perhaps you see the implication?"

"We are both bi-lingual?" Bob suggested with a grin. "Well, although boosting is not allowed, we have trout in Canada, and the fish you spotted behind the stone was a big fellow."

Their habit was to indulge in humorous banter and Flora remarked; "Since you were farther off, your eyes are pretty keen."

"The explanation is, I know where a trout ought to be."

"Then, you are a fisherman?"

Bob nodded. "One tries to be modest, but I imagine you haven't yet found out all my talents. For example, although I did not carry a rope and a long, pointed stick, I have crawled about on snowy rocks."

"A mountaineer does not carry a pointed stick," Flora rejoined. "What was your load?"

"Sometimes a surveyor's chain and two blankets, but I have carried a seventy-pound bag of flour."

Flora thought it possible. Wellwin was athletic and his balance was good. His statement interested her; she rather imagined he meant it to do so and she might be frank.

"But you are a lumber company's salesman. In England when one moves heavy stuff one engages a porter."

"At present, I am a salesman, but I have stacked boards at a sawmill and hauled logs in the snow. Then, you see, I expect to get a more important post, and a good lumber man knows all about his job. I mustn't bore you, but sometimes I have an object for talking at large."

"I wondered——" said Flora. "You will perhaps satisfy my curiosity?"

"Mark's my pal, and I'm a meddlesome fellow, as you perhaps remarked when I pulled you from the bank. If you were annoyed, I'm sorry, although I don't know if *annoyed* is quite the proper word. Classical English is not my medium."

Flora looked up, rather sharply. He was keener than she had thought.

"It is not at all important. Suppose you go ahead?"

"Very well. I'd like to give Mark a boost, and I feel I ought to account for my haunting the Millhouse. When I think about it, I have rather haunted you."

"I hope you do not imagine we were bored," said Flora politely. "For one thing, you are a fresh type."

"If you were bored, I would not know," Bob rejoined with a twinkle. "At home, I wouldn't be left to guess, because when you make a Canadian tired he firmly fires you out. After all, the plan has some advantages. But, since you don't yet see where I'm steering you, Mark is your pal."

"That is so. Then, he is Madge's lover, and she is the best friend I've got."

Bob thrilled. Flora's smile was careless, but he rather thought she wanted him to know Mark was not her lover.

"Now we can go ahead," he resumed. "Mark cannot finance his garage plan, but I'm not allowed to help. He doubts if he can get a post in the Old Country and he hates to loaf. Well, since we are his pals, we are entitled to think for him. In a way, the drawback is, we must think for Miss Forsyth, because although I could get Mark a post in Canada, she might not approve."

"You are a very good sort," said Flora, in a quiet voice.

"To some extent, I'm selfish. So long as we are both resolved to give Mark a fighting chance, I am entitled to consult with my confederate. I admit the Millhouse is a charming spot."

Flora looked up. Bob's eyes twinkled, but he gave her a level glance, and she knew he did not altogether joke.

"But you cannot stop. The lumber company, no doubt, needs its salesman."

"There's the trouble," Bob agreed. "I hate to think about it. However, when the old man wants me he must get busy at the cable. In the meantime, I've got a week or two, and I hope you'll help me forget——"

Big drops splashed the flagged path, and Flora shivered. The sun was gone, the birch-branches tossed, and sleet blew down the dale. Then she saw Madge signaled at the door and she touched Bob.

"Tea waits," said Madge. "I expected you sooner. The wind is cold."

"We were talking about Mark," said Flora. "Mr. Wellwin thinks you might weigh his proposition."

Madge gave Bob a keen glance, and he smiled.

"I am studying Old Country English, and Miss Scot knows some Canadian. We, so to speak, pool our talents——But I have a proposition."

"You are kind. After tea we will talk about it," Madge replied.

Bob waited and when the plates were carried off they went to the big fireplace, Bob opposite Madge across the rug, and Flora between them. Hail beat the windows, one heard the wind in the birches, and the room got dark, but the big fire snapped cheerfully and the leaping reflections flickered on shining oak.

"Miss Scot is umpire, although I hope we are not antagonists," said Bob. "Well, Mark reckoned if he did not start the garage, he might emigrate."

"I am afraid he must," said Madge.

Bob liked her frankness. One could talk to Madge Forsyth as one talked to a man. Yet she was fastidious and cultivated, and the house she ruled was beautiful, although Bob doubted if the doctor earned as much as a Canadian locomotive engineer. The big, quiet dalesfolk were a queer lot, but they had the sort of qualities that in Canada commanded some reward.

"Very well. Mark talked about Australia, but if you fix on a spot half-way round the world, you must stop where you locate——"

Madge Forsyth's look got thoughtful, but that was all. She had weighed the long separation from her lover, and, for his

sake, was willing to let him go. When he sent for her, Bob imagined she would cheerfully join him, although to leave all she knew might hurt.

"Quebec is not quite three thousand miles off and you can get there in six days," he resumed. "My proposition is, Mark locates in Canada, because, if you approve, I believe I might help him go ahead. The drawback is, in the Dominion, one does not get rich quick. One must sweat and hustle for all one wants."

"That is so in Cumberland," Madge remarked with a smile. "As a rule, when one has hustled one's reward is small."

"When Flora and I talked about it by the pool I tried to put her wise," said Bob, and turned to Flora. "When I told you I'd stacked boards and so forth I did not talk at large——"

He wondered whether Miss Forsyth's smile implied that she had noted he called her cousin Flora. The queer thing was, he dared not have done so by the pool; but by the fireplace in the homelike room she was somehow domestic and altogether friendly. Bob admitted his explanations did not advance fast. In the Old Country speed was not important, and he was satisfied to discourse by the Millhouse fire for as long as he was allowed.

"You stated you had an object," Flora remarked. "Perhaps you are modest, but the object is not yet very obvious."

"I'm getting there," Bob rejoined, and turned to Madge. "My father is the Duquesne Company's president, but when I joined him I started at the mill and went to the camps in the woods. There's my plan for Mark. Our engineers' pay is pretty good, but as long as they stop with us they are engine-tenders and that's all. Although the company has a job for a useful man, the man we want must know his job from the beginning. Well, the start is hard, and before Mark made much progress some time might go. For example, I stacked boards in summer and was two winters in the woods. I camped and ate with roughneck choppers, and my pay was a workman's pay. Now I reckon most any lumber house in Canada would give me a post."

Madge thought it possible. Wellwin had graduated at a Canadian University. One sensed his keen intelligence and driving-force. Then, although he was rather lightly built, labor with the axe had hardened his muscles and given him the woodsman's balance. His body, brain, and nerve were firmly disciplined and sound. Yet Madge thought all he did, Mark, when he was trained, could do.

"I understand you have not yet told Mark about your plan," she said.

"I have not," said Bob, and gave her an apologetic glance. "I reckon Mark's my sort and I might perhaps work on him and carry him away; but, unless you are willing, I mustn't experiment. You see, while I begin to know Mark's qualities, something depends on his luck, and I, so to speak, can't fix a date for his making good."

"In fact, you feel you ought to think for me? It might be long before Mark could give me the home you imagine I ought to have! And, of course, in the meantime, I must let him go."

"Yes; I did argue like that. Sometimes perhaps I am not remarkably bright."

"You are very kind," said Madge. "I believe you considered another plan——"

The blood came to Wellwin's skin, but Madge gave him a smile and went on:

"The plan would not work; Flora's advice was good, but you and she are useful friends. However, I am not as fastidious as you think and at the Millhouse we use economy. If Mark believes he can mend his fortunes in Canada, I am willing for him to try."

"I like your pluck," said Bob. "I believe he has a fighting chance he might not get in the Old Country."

"Then he must seize the chance," said Madge. "Where you can help I know you will help, and if Mark's advance is slower than he thinks, we will not make you accountable."

She began to talk about something else, but Bob was satisfied. Miss Forsyth was his friend; moreover she was Flora's cousin and confidante. He imagined the dalesfolk did not forget.

After some time Forsyth arrived. The doctor was tall, his hair was touched by white, and his type was the thin-faced

Cumbrian type. Bob got up.

"You will be ready for supper, sir, and I must shove off."

"I am home sooner than my household expected and must wait for my food," Forsyth replied. "Since the girls will be occupied, you might stop with me."

He gave Bob a cigarette, filled his pipe, and stretched his legs to the fire.

"The wind is keen and I have finished a sixteen-mile ride on a borrowed horse across moors and bogs where a car cannot go. The patients I visit are a queer, primitive lot. Sometime when I can use my little car, to go round with me might interest you. Will you be at the inn for long?"

"I mean to stop as long as I'm allowed," said Bob. "By and by the old man will cable for me, but I'm coming across another time."

Forsyth imagined the young fellow felt he ought to be frank, and he admitted he liked his honesty.

"I suppose the lumber house transacts some business at Glasgow? Well, if you take another holiday on the Border, you must look us up. In our quiet dales young folks are not numerous. The ambitious start for the towns, and we who are left soon get old-fashioned. To make contact with the modern world is bracing, and one imagines North American youth is very much up-to-date."

"Perhaps I'm not a very good example, sir. Anyhow, I was happy in the frozen woods, and the old-time calm at the Millhouse is altogether delightful."

"When you wish to enjoy it, it is yours," said Forsyth with a smile. "I myself like calm, but you see my hair is white, and I know the golden days are gone. Yours are yet in front, and youth is keen to push ahead. You do not advance by the roads we know, but one admits you get somewhere fast."

"One does not know where," said Bob. "I expect it's important, but one must be satisfied to shove along hopefully. Anyhow, in all that's fundamental, I reckon the old rules stand."

"Then, you do not believe a young man's main business is to express himself?"

Bob smiled. "In Canada, his main occupation is to supply himself with food and clothes. We have, of course, psychoanalysts and complex-hunters; but if you live by industry you can't be independent. When you go with the crowd, you must think for the crowd, and where you take the other fellow's dollars you must give him the goods for which he pays. There is no use in stating he ought to want another sort, and in Canada the inferiority-complex is pretty scarce. He gets annoyed and inquires why you reckon he knows less than you."

Plates rattled in the passage and Bob got on his feet.

"I am not much of a philosopher and you want your food. Any time you invite me to join your excursions I'll be glad to do so, sir."

He went off, and when Flora carried in supper Forsyth laughed.

"I like Mark's friend. Physically, he's a fine example of the transplanted English type, and on the whole, I think his views about life and conduct as sound as his well-trained body."

CHAPTER VI

MARK FOLLOWS HIS BENT

Wellwin stated his plan to Mark, who promised to consider it, but asked Bob to wait. For one thing, a small, private syndicate had resolved to reopen an old wolfram mine and engaged him to start the rusty pumping-engine. Although he doubted if the engagement would stand for long, he took the post, and one evening went down a ladder to the drainage-ump.

A bucket and rake dangled at the end of a rope, and a small flat lamp was hooked to Mark's greasy hat. The dim illumination touched dripping rock and the water at his feet. A big armored hose palpitated, and at each pulsation the water sank in a gurgling hollow; then the hollow filled, the surface got level, and bubbles broke. The pump, however, did not pull as she ought. Something was under a valve-clack, or perhaps rubbish choked the suction-grid. Mark struck the bucket with his rake.

A chain tackle rattled and the big hose curved. When its end got nearer the surface the water foamed, and rotten sticks and rubbish tossed about. Mark, pushing down his rake, felt for the suction-box, and dragged away the stuff that blocked the grid.

"Have ye cleared her?" somebody shouted. "Whistle's blowing."

Mark threw the waterlogged rubbish in the bucket and raked off a fresh lot. He did not want to crawl down the sump another time, and his habit was to finish a job. For a few minutes his helper must wait. When he was satisfied, he signaled the other to lower the hose and went up the ladder.

"Whistle's gone three or four minutes," grumbled the man at the top.

They followed an inclined tunnel, where water trickled from the rock and tram-lines rusted in the mud. Rotting props and beams supported the roof, but in some places fresh fir-trunks were stacked against the wall. For some time the mine had not been worked, and before the timbering was renewed and the water pumped out Mark imagined three or four weeks would go.

The tunnel opened to the hillside. A biting wind swept the heather, and the long moor-tops were streaked by snow. The light had begun to melt, and in the cold spring evening the landscape was desolate and bleak. A group, putting on their coats by the iron boiler-house, gave Mark good-night and started down the stony path. Their homes were three or four miles off, but they were going home, and when they vanished in the heath Mark unconsciously frowned.

For the most part, his youth was lonely. His Tyneside lodgings were dreary and cheap, and since his aunt had ruled at Howbarrow he was not there much. In fact, for long the Millhouse was all the home he had known. Anyhow, he had left Howbarrow, and he was not going back.

Hailstones beat his hat and the white bents on the hillside tossed in the keen wind. The light was nearly gone, and Mark shivered and went to the boiler-house. A young fellow, sitting in a coal-barrow, studied a newspaper. Mark glanced at the pressure gauge and water-glass and gave him a nod.

"Trying to spot a winner, Frank? Well, you have got all the steam the old tubes and flues can carry. If you want me, knock on my window, but I may come in for a smoke."

He took a kettle from the furnace door and went to an iron hut, where he kicked off his wet boots and got his frugal supper. Then he pulled an old book from his kit-bag, and carried a chair to the rusty stove. A camp bed occupied a corner of the hut, the walls were corrugated iron, and the roof cracked in the wind. The pump clanged; Mark heard water splash and a beck brawl down the hill.

His pay was not good and his engagement might not last, but he was glad to get a post, and although Wellwin wanted him to go to Canada, he thought he would refuse. Anyhow, he would not start with Bob. At Howbarrow he used a room that was once his brother's, and when he packed his bag and moved some clothes from an old trunk he found an office diary. The book was planned for a farmer's use, and Mark knew Jim's hand. In fact, it looked as if Jim were more businesslike than he had thought, and he brought the book away.

Sitting by the stove, he studied the entries. One near the beginning recorded Jim's purchasing a block of one-pound shares in a cattle-auction company, and noted that Isaac had supplied most of the sum. Mark thought it queer. At one time, Isaac had something to do with the company, which prospered until the trade by which it thrived was diverted to another market. Then the company was wound up, and Mark doubted if Jim had got five shillings for his shares. He wondered whether the shares were Isaac's; they might be transferred through a third party. Anyhow, although Isaac knew the company was embarrassed, he had allowed his nephew to speculate.

There was another speculation. Although the Howbarrow flock was good, Jim, with money supplied by Isaac, had bought lambs of a heavier but less hardy sort. After renting pasture and turnips, he was forced to sell the flock in a falling market, and he had noted the sum he lost.

Mark wanted to be just. Sometimes Jim was obstinate, but Isaac was a live-stock auctioneer and ought to have known prices would go down. Yet he certainly had not stopped his nephew. It was obvious he did not know the diary recording the transaction was under some old books in Jim's trunk.

Lighting his pipe, Mark turned the pages. When Jim sold sheep and cattle he noted the sum he got, and as a rule stated in a fresh line: *I. C. cheque*. It looked as if Isaac were an exacting creditor. Sometimes Mark pulled out his pencil and calculated. He knew more or less how much one ought to spend at Howbarrow and he pictured Jim's sinking deeper in a morass of debt.

Other payments were recorded; sums marked *Cash*, at irregular intervals. They were not large, but in twelve months they mounted up, and Mark did not see what they were for. Near the end of the book, Jim noted cheques received from *I. C.* and the interest he agreed to pay. Mark knew the interest was above the current rate, but he imagined Jim, by that time, could not borrow from a bank.

Putting up the diary, he looked straight in front. Jim's notes were illuminating. He had inherited large debts; Mark saw him struggling savagely, and perhaps recklessly, to put all straight. Isaac, whose business was to advise and control his nephew, had rather encouraged him and worked on his extravagance. In fact, he had planned to seize Howbarrow! An auctioneer was not important, but in the northern dales a statesman (yeoman farmer) so to speak is an aristocrat. Anyhow, Isaac's plans had worked, for Jim, at length, had given him a mortgage on the farm.

Mark clenched his fist. Isaac, for all his greed and cunning, had some scruples, and Mark pictured his tight-mouthed, parsimonious aunt pushing on her husband. Perhaps at the beginning she was ambitious for her son; Mark had liked his cousin, who was a Newcastle architect's pupil, but Frank was hurt at a football-match and died soon afterward. When one thought about it, tragedy seemed to haunt the Croziers, and the dalesfolk declared their house unlucky.

Well, Frank, like Jim, was gone and Isaac ruled at Howbarrow. Mark dared not imagine him accountable for his nephew's plunge from the quarry bank, but he felt Isaac knew something about it that others did not. Moreover, Mark was persuaded his aunt knew. She had not wanted him at the farm, and he had sensed a queer, suspicious antagonism.

Anyhow, it was done with some years since, and until the foundry stopped, Mark had concentrated on his occupation. Now Wellwin wanted him to go to Canada, and Madge was willing; but since he had found Jim's diary he was not keen. He ought perhaps to go. Bob was a useful friend and engaged to see him out. At the mine his pay was small and, for Madge's sake, he must push ahead. Yet Jim was his brother, and although he might find out nothing, Mark was not satisfied. He frankly did not want to meddle, but until he knew why his brother went down the quarry, he must not think for himself.

He looked up. His pipe was out and the stove burned low. The room was cold, and when he pulled out his watch it was ten o'clock. Mark resolved he would talk to Forsyth. One could trust the doctor and he knew all Mark knew about the accident. He put the diary in his bag, stretched his arms, and went to bed.

About eight o'clock next evening, he occupied an easy-chair in the doctor's surgery. Forsyth, on the other side of the fireplace, studied the diary and some notes Mark had made. At length he put up the book.

"The tale's a moving tale. Jim was rash and trustful, but he made a good fight."

"That was so," said Mark. "I expect you see Isaac exploited his trustfulness? To some extent, I imagine he exploited my father's."

"It's possible," Forsyth agreed in a thoughtful voice. "Your father was my friend, and I suspected he was embarrassed. Then, we know Isaac's greediness, and your aunt's ambition for her son. All the same, the money Isaac supplied was his, and, at the beginning, anyhow, he could not force your brother to borrow from him. I think he did plan his entanglement, but that was all, Mark."

Mark nodded. "It's much; but Isaac knows something he has not yet told. To begin with, Jim ought to have been at Howbarrow twenty minutes before he reached the quarry bank; his watch's stopping fixed the time. Turnbull implied that the liquor he got at the Packhorse might account for his losing his way, but nobody supported him. The other explanation is unthinkable. Jim was not the sort to throw himself down the bank."

"It is unthinkable," Forsyth agreed. "I believe we shall never know all about the accident, and there is not much use in your inquiring. In fact, I feel, rather strongly, that you ought to leave the thing alone."

"I would sooner leave it alone. There's the trouble, sir, because I'm somehow persuaded I must try to find out. My brother was not a drunkard, and for all his embarrassments, he was not a suicide."

Forsyth was moved to sympathy. Mark was young and ought to look hopefully in front. His shrinking from the load he perhaps felt unkind Fate had given him was natural, and in a sense healthy. Yet the Croziers were marked by a stubborn vein and could take hard knocks. The doctor knew them all, and he pictured Isaac's slow, laborious plotting, and Jim's steadfastly fighting a sort of forlorn hope. Mark might shrink, but where he thought duty called he would go.

"For some time I had hoped you were willing, or perhaps resigned, for the accident to be forgotten. Your resolve to investigate is something fresh."

Mark's face got red. "In a way, that is so, sir. Isaac's refusal to lend me the sum I wanted had something to do with it; but I'm not revengeful, and I want you to understand—Isaac is parsimonious, but had I engaged to start for Australia, I think I might have persuaded him; in fact, if I went to Chester, he was willing to risk two hundred pounds. The implication is, although it would cost him something, he wanted to be rid of me. Then Wellwin talked about his getting me a post, and I found the diary. If I went to Canada, I could find out nothing, and I was forced to choose——"

"In the meantime, you have got a post."

"The job is a workman's job, and a journeyman engineer gets less pay than the fellows who clean the streets in town. All the same, it helps me hold on, and so long as I am in Cumberland, I might find a clue."

Forsyth saw the young fellow was resolved, and said nothing. Mark resumed:

"You knew Turnbull. All I remember is, he was a queer, sullen fellow; but he started from the Packhorse soon after Jim."

"I attended him when he was hurt by a bull. He was obstinate and moody, but a good cattleman, although I believe he was properly a forester, and came to Howbarrow from a Scottish estate. The story is, he threw a meddlesome bailiff out of the sawmill."

"He vanished soon after the inquest. Do you know where he went?"

"I did know," said Forsyth, and knitted his brows. "Oh, yes, when Robertson of Greensyke went to Canada with the pedigree stock he ran into the fellow at Montreal."

Mark looked up, and Forsyth imagined his reply was rash.

"Turnbull was a forester! He'd no doubt get a job in the lumber industry."

"That does not help you. Canadian lumber is cut in the forests of Quebec and on the Pacific slope, three thousand miles off. Then, I believe there are sawmills in the pine belt north of the great plains. To search for the fellow would be ridiculous, and he'd probably tell you nothing you did not know. Leave it alone, Mark. You are young and ought not to brood about a tragedy that's better forgotten. If you did solve the puzzle, you might not be happier."

For a few moments Mark was quiet. He frowned and his mouth was firm. Then he said:

"Your object's good; but if the job is mine, I ought not to hesitate because I might get hurt. There's another thing: I am

engaged to marry Madge, and she is staunch. If she knew I brooded over a job I turned down, she would not be happy. I think she'd sooner I carried my proper load, and, for her sake, when I marry I must have earned my freedom. All, so to speak, is vague, sir, and I don't yet see my line. I must try to weigh things—But, you have been on your rounds since breakfast, and I must start for my shanty."

Forsyth let him go. Madge was at a neighbor's house, and the mine was five miles off across the moors. The doctor approved his daughter's lover, but he was sorry for the young fellow.

CHAPTER VII

THE FLOOD

Wellwin pulled off his coat and stretched his legs to Mark's stove. For all the sunshine, the morning was cold, and snow sparkled on the moors the shanty windows commanded. Bob had plowed through tangled heather and his boots were wet. Mark's boiler-suit was greasy, and before he pulled out some cigarettes he rubbed his hands.

"A woodsman is not fastidious, and a little machine oil in my tobacco is nothing very new," said Bob. "However, what have you fixed about going across with me?"

"I might go, but not yet. I suppose an English forester could reckon on an engagement at a Canadian lumber camp?"

Bob cogitated. He had talked to Madge and Doctor Forsyth, and to some extent knew Mark's grounds for hesitating. All the same, he did not see where his question led.

"A good chopper would certainly be hired, but to locate him might be awkward. Our forests run from Labrador to the Pacific."

"Oh, well," said Mark, carelessly, "when do you start for Montreal?"

"In his last letter, the old man wanted to know, but until he uses the cable I reckon to wait. Your dales and dalesfolk interest me, and the Millhouse is a charming spot."

"That is so," Mark agreed, rather dryly. "Perhaps I'm not entitled to meddle and the ground is awkward, but the Millhouse people have been my friends for as long as I remember."

"Sure," said Bob. "Flora's your friend, and you ought to be flattered because you have got a pal like that. She reasons like a man; in fact, she's more logical than some I know. You can bet on her taking the proper line, and when we talked about my plans for you——"

Mark looked up. "You consulted with Flora? Well, I suppose your object was good; but we were talking about something else. Your holiday will soon be over and your occupation and interests are across the Atlantic. In the circumstances, I doubt if you ought to be at the Millhouse every evening."

"Three evenings last week; one must be accurate," said Bob. "However, from my point of view, the important thing is, I'm coming back."

"You don't know. The company might not send you to Scotland another time."

"Then they'd certainly lose some trade," Bob rejoined. "But what about it? Suppose I was fired because I refused to stop? I believe I command the sort of post I want, and I can buy a steamship-ticket. Fast liners run from Montreal to Liverpool. Now do you get me?"

The dalesfolk are not theatrical, but Mark gave him his hand.

"I'm sorry, Bob; I hope you will persuade Flora."

Wellwin smiled. "You're old-fashioned, Mark. An up-to-date girl is not persuaded; she knows her own mind. My drawbacks are pretty numerous, but Flora's pluck is good and perhaps she'll not be daunted——"

He stopped, for a workman came in.

"Lend us your sledge-hammer. Jack's brocken his maul."

"The hammer's in the boiler-shed," said Mark. "Have you got up the props at the wet spot?"

"Two-a-three is fixed; but Jack's boddered. Roof's gey loose and water's running through. We ought to have dug a channel to carry beck down t'other side o' crag."

"The company is not extravagant. Frank will give you the hammer."

The miner went off, and Mark pondered.

"Economy's the rule at Dalehead, but I'd have dug the ditch. Some time since a stream broke into a coal-pit across the hills and very few men in the bottom level reached the shaft. Now and then, where the strata is horizontal, one taps an underground reservoir; but at Dalehead the rocks are tilted——"

He scored two or three oblique lines on the boards, and resumed: "The mine is wet, and it's possible water from the beck goes down a crack, and following the inclined top of a layer, might break through where the stone is pierced. My particular business is to drive the pump, but I want to see the weak spot. Would you like to go?"

Bob nodded, and when Mark gave him an old mackintosh and a small flat lamp they stumbled along the slanted tunnel. Where they stopped, candles bedded in clay were stuck to the wall. The flames wavered and the uncertain light touched the dripping stone and the half-naked bodies of three or four men. A large crack had opened in the roof and water splashed the floor. So far as Bob could distinguish, the rock was soft and loose.

A fresh, thick beam, supported by fir-trunks, crossed the roof by the ominous crack, and two gasping men labored to straighten the slightly oblique prop at its end. The prop was a little longer than the space between roof and floor, so that, when driven upright, it would firmly wedge the beam.

"She'll gan noo! Stiddy her!" said one.

His muscular body swung, and while his straining mate pushed against the top, a massive wooden maul crashed on the post. Its foot went forward an inch or two, and then the thick timber trembled under a fresh blow. Water streamed from the crack, and small stones fell.

"They are hefty fellows, but I doubt if he'll drive her home," Wellwin remarked. "Anyhow, she has got to be plumb upright. Sound lumber will stand for some compression, but if you get a bending strain, she'll shear."

A little farther along the tunnel, another group was at work, and Wellwin, watching their efforts, was moved to admiration. Until he transacted business at Glasgow, he had imagined the Old Country folk a rather decadent lot; but he frankly admitted Canada did not breed men like these. In fact, but for some Australians, the largest and strongest British are the men of Viking stock who inhabit the bleak hills where England and Scotland join.

For all that, the post went forward slowly, and one miner's face was dark with blood. The veins on his forehead swelled and his wide chest heaved. The roof cracked ominously and water spirted from the fissures. Bob knew nothing about mining, but unless the timbers soon were fixed, he imagined roof and walls would crash and block the tunnel. He could use an axe, and, as a rule, in the Canadian woods two men chopped a tree. Pulling off his mackintosh, he seized Mark's sledge-hammer.

"Stroke for stroke," he said. "We'll put her where you want."

The big maul jarred the quivering prop, and when the miner swung back, Bob's hammer struck the spot; when one chops one must drop the axe exactly in the notch. The miner was perhaps surprised, but when a dalesman is occupied he does not talk. In the narrow tunnel, he and Bob were cramped for room, but maul and hammer went where they aimed, and the post went home. The miner jumped for a fresh beam. Mark shouted and threw Wellwin back.

A beam groaned and buckled, and a great stone crushed the splintering wood. The block and an avalanche of smaller stuff came down, and a muddy flood poured from the hole.

"I want Jack and Tyson!" Mark shouted, and ran like a deer along the tunnel. Bob had not imagined an Englishman could move so fast, and when he reached the boiler-shed Mark was already occupied with a tallow swab. The furnace door was open and the fireman savagely shoveled coal.

"Watch your water-glass, Frank," said Mark. "The flues are old, but we must risk something, and you'll raise all the steam the pump can use. For an hour or two I may not be about——"

Two wet and breathless men came in, and he said to one:

"I suppose you cannot stop the water, Jack?"

"Neabody could stop it," gasped the miner. "I'll pull oot gang and start them cutting trench across top o' crag; but I reckon mine will be drowned before we've turned t' beck."

"It's possible. If the mine is drowned, I expect the company will wind up, and we will lose our jobs. I'm not captain; my business is to pump, and since the machines I've got won't stop the flood, I'm going for the pulsometer at Tanhead quarry."

"T' old boiler will not give you steam."

"That's so. We'll move the small crane boiler at the quarry. When you have started your men at the trench, you might follow us. I expect we'll be bothered to put the boiler on the stone lorry and haul our load up the bank. In the meantime, I want Tyson."

"Verra weel," said the other and went off.

Wellwin was interested. When they were forced, the Old Country folk could hustle. Moreover, they did not get rattled. So far as Bob remembered, when the roof crashed nobody was much disturbed, and now Mark in three or four sentences, clearly outlined his plan. The miner agreed and got to work. That was all!

"Start for Nethersceugh and get Watson's plow team," Mark said to the other. "We want him and his herds; the company will pay. Then Headley has two good Shire horses. Send him and his cowman to the quarry. I'll meet you there."

The fellow nodded, and when his boots rattled on the stones Wellwin said:

"Have you got a job for me? I'm not a miner, but I have helped manhandle awkward logs."

"To begin with, there's your load," Mark replied, and threw some tools in a greasy bag. "Wheel out Frank's bicycle while I get a pipe-wrench."

The motorcycle was a small English model, and Bob contrasted it with the big red machine he had driven in Canada. Then he glanced at the road by the beck and pondered. Some pitches were nearly precipitous, the surface was torn by wheels, and strewn with treacherous gravel floods had carried down. For all that, Mark started the motorcycle, and Bob, carrying the bag, jumped on the carrier.

They plunged down the hill. Water and gravel leaped about the wheels, and at a corner Mark took the boggy heath. Bob thought they went down a rock slab to the road, but he was mainly occupied by holding on, and when they got to the bottom he was frankly happier.

The stony moorland road was not fenced and sheep sped across. At one spot, the track went down, like a roof, to a water-splash, but Mark drove all out. The little machine rocked, skidded on stones in the stream, and nobly took the hill on the other side. At the top they plowed through sand and bog, and when the track stopped by a wall Bob pulled out his watch.

Since the beck broke into the tunnel half an hour had hardly gone, but Mark had all planned to fight the flood. He opened a gate, and they followed an incline to the bottom of the quarry. In front, pale sandstone, broken by darker-colored streaks, dropped like a smooth wall to a deep, green pool. The stuff was the soft building-stone Cumbrians call chalk.

A crane with an upright boiler occupied the bank, and a big hose, attached to a rounded iron casting went into the pool. The casting was a pulsometer: a chambered pump, modeled something like a human heart, which works by vacuum. The boiler was made for removal from the bed-plate, but the bolts were rusted, and for some time the pipe couplings refused to turn.

Mark hammered and sweated, and when at length the fastenings were loose Bob rather ruefully studied his shooting-clothes. He had had the suit made at Glasgow, of fine Scottish cloth, for use at his country club, but he doubted if the grease and rust could be removed. His hands were bruised and his face was smeared by soot. All the same, he was happy.

"I reckon you won't beat the flood for three or four days," he said. "If you can loan me some overalls, I'd like to stop with

you."

"Very well," said Mark. "I can give you a boiler-suit. But why do you want to stop?"

Bob laughed and gave him a cigarette.

"For one thing, I'm not yet fat and stiff, and maybe the old man miscalculated when he sent me to the woods. When he was a boy he helped around the lumber camps, and his father pre-empted a small bush ranch. Now, perhaps, you get me?"

"Sometimes I'm dull," Mark rejoined.

"Oh, well, I'm a lumber salesman, and on the whole, I like my job; but now and then I want to swing the axe and ride a log downstream. When the sun is on the woods and the pines begin to smell, who'd hustle round city offices if he could get busy by the river?"

"I don't know, but I would not," said Mark. "However, I understand young Canada is pulling out from the back blocks for the United States."

"That is so. Still, I have not much use for soft-handed slobs. Man was built to use his muscles; his body is his servant and ought to be as hard and disciplined as a hunting animal's. You don't get that sort of hardness by jazz and golf; but when it's yours, you rather like to try your nerve and let yourself go all out."

Mark's eyes twinkled. He did not philosophize about his impulses, but although Bob was humorously apologetic, he knew him sincere.

"I imagine Canadian cities supply some opportunities for letting oneself go."

"Opportunities of a sort," said Bob, smiling. "Liquor and betting, and up-to-date young women whose code is self-expression and d—— the bill. Since raw youth is keen to investigate, I have experimented, and on the whole was bored. Maybe I'm queer, but to lose fifty dollars does not thrill me much and a whisky throat in the morning is a thing I can go without. Then, if you're fastidious, a girl who changes her lovers as she might change her boots, leaves you cold. You're willing for her to charm the other fellow. At Glasgow, a timber merchant carried me off to a high-speed night club. The place smelt of doped cigarettes, whisky and scent; the girls were not attractive, and the music was bad. In an hour we had had enough, and the fellow admitted he was not properly a *dog*, but he thought I'd like it. Anyhow, I'd sooner help you move your boiler."

Mark nodded. Bob's philosophy was his. Their talents were utilitarian, and although Romance called, they vaguely knew cabarets and night clubs were not her proper home. She rather haunted the tranquil Millhouse where the thin birches grew beside the pool and the first primroses sprang. In the meantime, for all the keen wind, they sat in the stoves and smoked and waited for the teams.

CHAPTER VIII

AN AMATEUR FIREMAN

A bitter shower blew across the heath, and dark ravines and brown slopes melted in the rain. On the scree behind the mine the wet stones glistened, and when they reached the path up the crag Mark and Bob used some caution. For three or four hours, during which men and horses were strenuously occupied, they had hauled the quarry boiler to the mine. The fire was lighted, but steam was not yet up, and Mark thought himself entitled to look about.

At the top of the crag, a green tongue went up between two ghylls. Down one the beck leaped to its plunge across the rocks; the other was nearly dry and joined a ravine behind the hill, although it was rather obviously at one time the channel for the stream.

The light had begun to go and the evening was cold, but a row of men dug steadily in the rain. They were hardy moorland folk and did not bother to put on their coats. The peat was soft, and where the trench crossed the middle of the tongue its spongy, dripping sides were timbered like a mine. Three or four men at the bottom scooped up the mud, and swinging their long shovels threw out the stuff between the beams. Mark stopped a miner at the end of the row.

"The peat's wet. Where you cut the neck you must go down some distance. Will the water bother you?"

"Big stanes is worse," said the other, indicating a block that weighed a hundred pounds. "Jack reckons he'll mannish, and we'll be back at daybreak. In half an hour we'll not can see."

"If they sweat, they might get through by sundown tomorrow, but I doubt," Bob remarked. "Anyhow, for twenty-four hours you are up against it. D'you think the mine will drown?"

"I don't know," Mark replied, in a thoughtful voice. "My job is to pump, and if the beck is all, we might keep down the water. Since the rock layers are inclined, I imagine we are not draining an underground pool. Frankly, all I do know is, I'd hate to be beaten. Let's see where the flood is in the sump."

They crawled along the tunnel. The break in the roof was stopped by cement bags and planks, supported by strong beams, but the spot was like a waterfall, and two or three men, fixing fresh timbers, splashed about in a noisy stream. Mark waded to the top of the drainage pit, and although the water rose he knew the old pump pulled nobly.

"If the boiler carries her load, we may win, but I am running some risk," he said. "When the pulsometer starts I might be able to calculate, and in the meantime, we'll get some food."

He cooked canned meat and bacon in a frying-pan and brewed strong coffee. They had gone without their lunch, and Bob's appetite was keen.

"Ten minutes for a smoke," said Mark. "I don't know when the next stop is."

"Whose is the mine?" Bob inquired.

"The owner is a sporting gentleman. Some time since a company paid him royalties, and then threw up their lease. The ore is wolfram, from which you can smelt a stuff that's used for hardening steel. Manganese tungstate is now in some demand, and the owner recently persuaded a few friends to speculate. I believe his object is to float a public company, but none of the group knows much about mining."

They lighted their pipes, and for a few minutes were quiet. Mark's responsibility weighed. After moving the boiler, Bob's muscles ached and his back hurt. He imagined they had done all flesh and blood could do, but the age was a mechanical age, and when steam was up the machines would fight for them. By and by Mark touched him, and he jumped up with a start.

Dark had fallen, and when they went out red sparks glimmered in the smoke that streamed from the quarry boiler's short funnel. A small lamp burned between the steam and water-gauges, and bright reflections leaped from the furnace door. Then the door clanged and Mark turned to the fireman.

"Let her go, Frank. Mr. Wellwin will help you stoke."

"Sure," said Bob. "Give me a shovel and watch me move some coal; but when I take a fireman's post I'm Bob for short."

Frank turned a valve-wheel and the steam-pipe shook and knocked. Then something frothed and spluttered like a giant soda-water siphon, and water began to splash.

"She's pulling," said Mark, and plunged into the tunnel.

Pale candle flames pierced the dark, indistinct bent figures dragged about props and beams, and where one swung a heavy maul Mark flattened himself against the rock. The man said nothing, and until the water stopped him he pushed on. The flood advanced up the tunnel and one could not see where the sump was, but at one spot the surface pulsed, as if something labored in the depths. On the whole, Mark was satisfied. The pumps were drawing, and the water was not as high as he had thought. If he could hold on until the men cut the new channel for the beck, they ought to win, and he must hold on. Although he was but the company's servant, in the meantime the mine was his.

When he got back to the boiler-shed Bob tipped a barrow-load of coal on the floor and, swinging a big hammer, began to smash the blocks.

"We want steam," he gasped. "You can use the small stuff another time; I like the fire-bars clean."

"He kens," the grinning stoker remarked. "For a gentleman amateur, he shapes verra weel."

"An amateur?" shouted Bob. "If you had kept steam with wood at a Canadian sawmill when the bosses speed her up, you might talk about firing! In the Dominion we don't aim for safety first; we reckon to make our cut. But quit talking and let me get to work!"

"He don't like to talk," Frank remarked, and, balancing his shovel, shot the coal thinly and evenly across the furnace bars.

Mark seized an oilcan and a tallow swab and crossed the floor. The engine was old; he believed she was bought from a Sheffield scrap-heap, but the makers had used good stuff and he imagined she would carry her load. He did not know about the boiler. The big cylinder throbbed; Mark sensed its straining on the bolts, and felt the thick bed-plate tremble. One knows when a steam-engine labors to the limit of its strength. When the stroke was reversed and the pump clanged, the iron roof rattled in harmony.

He touched a gland, and feeling the crosshead, rubbed his swab along the shining slides. Nothing was dangerously hot, but the oil got thin and the cups drained fast. He used his can and felt the valve-gear.

Bob, stopping for breath, watched his friend. Mark was cool and deliberate; he knew where the load was and where the grease might burn. He pushed his fingers confidently under and between the flashing steel, but when the metal clanged his hand was gone. Well, so long as one, so to speak, felt the engine's pulse and moved in harmony with the beat, the risk was not great. All the same, Bob admitted he himself might hesitate—However, since he had looked at the quarry boiler-gauge some time had gone, and he plunged into the windy dark.

On the high moor, the night was cold, and Bob's overalls were thin. He shivered and glancing at the water-glass started the feed-pump. The quarry boiler was small and the pulsometer used much steam. Then he threw back the furnace door and awkwardly balanced his loaded shovel. At a Canadian sawmill one burns wood, and Bob's target was a shining hole, about a foot across. Moreover, the coal ought to spread evenly on the bars.

Bob swung and let go, but most of the coal crashed against the furnace front. He swore, but the next shovelful went into the hole; and then, although he knew himself ridiculous, he began to pick up the lumps that had fallen in the mud. The heat scorched his face, but he must have light, and since he had undertaken to stoke the boiler, there was no use in throwing the fuel in the peat. Moreover, he pictured the professional stoker's grin.

When he got back to the boiler-shed the pile of coal on the floor was small, and pushing an iron barrow, he went for a fresh supply. The ground was boggy and did not carry the wheel. Bob reflected that in Canada one would put down a plank, and at a modern plant dump the coal in a hopper. It looked as if Englishmen imagined parsimonious methods paid, and rather liked an awkward road. They'd crawl over an obstacle every time; a Canadian would buy some dynamite and remove the thing. Bob slipped in the mud, and when the iron barrow jarred his leg he swore like a lumberman. For all that, he pushed his load into the shed, and Mark looked up with a twinkle.

"Something annoyed you?"

"I was annoyed. I called the night to witness that Britishers are slow. When King Solomon mined gold in Ophir——"

"I believe he did not," Mark said.

"What's it matter? He hired the Tyre-Sidonian gang. My point is, King Hiram, or the other fellow, used better plant than yours. He graded roads to his ore-dumps; but a track that would scare a mule is good enough for you. My hat! If I'd fifty thousand dollars, I'd show the Britisher how to run a plant."

"I believe one or two North Americans, with similar ambitions, risked larger sums and demonstrated mainly that dollars melt. We hate to be hustled, Bob, and we're hard to convince. However, you'll find some coffee by the fire-box."

"You don't get het-up; I like your calm," said Bob. "But give me the hammer and watch me smash that coal."

"I think I'll go to the sump," Mark rejoined.

Crawling along the tunnel, he took a candle from its clay socket. The water, at all events, was not rising much, but the rock was wet and he could not mark its exact advance. The surface heaved and sometimes for a few moments a whirlpool revolved where the drowned sump was. The pumps were doing good work, and when the trench was cut Mark imagined they would beat the flood.

He pulled out his watch. Day broke about seven o'clock, and before the men began to dig nine hours must go. In the dark, one could not fix the timbers to hold back the boggy peat. Had the mine been properly equipped, he would have carried an electric cable up the crag; anyhow, had he but one or two blast-lamps, he could illuminate the trench.

The reopening of the old tunnel, however, was a cheap experiment. Up-to-date plant was expensive, and utilitarian economy implied the command of capital. A poor man must use the tools he had, although much of his labor went for nothing.

Mark pictured his impoverished brother's struggle. From the beginning Jim's fight was a forlorn hope; for all his stubborn efforts, his debts conquered him. Yet he certainly did not throw himself over the quarry bank. Mark set his mouth. He was engaged to marry Madge, and she was stanch and would not let him go. His business was to mend his fortunes, but until he could account of Jim's taking the fatal plunge, he could not concentrate. He imagined Isaac knew something about it, and Turnbull knew. The fellow was in Canada, where Bob urged Mark to try his luck; but Isaac was at the farm he had plotted to seize.

Well, Mark had pondered it all before, and in the meantime he must see the mine did not drown. While he cogitated the oil-cups were draining and journals might get hot. He banished his moody thoughts and crawled back along the tunnel.

When he reached the boiler-shed, the fireman was asleep in the coal-barrow, and Bob smoked a cigarette, but the throb of a blow-off valve implied that pressure was high. Mark went to the engine. A crosshead pin was rather hot, and steam blew from a gland. When he fastened his spanner on the nuts the leak did not stop. All the same, he dared not be fastidious. So long as the engine drove the pump she must run. By and by Bob pushed the fireman from the barrow and went for coal.

The wind got fresh and the relief valve on the quarry boiler blew. The fires burned strongly, but Bob needed light, and when he went out he fastened back the door. Bitter draughts swept the shed and Mark's skin was wet by sweat. Sometimes he crawled down the tunnel, and when he got back to the engine his clothes steamed. On the whole, he thought the water did not advance. The pump clanged, the engine throbbed, and now and then a shower beat the iron roof.

At length, boots rattled on the stones, and Mark went to the door. He was tired and greasy, and he shivered in the biting wind. Day was breaking, and a row of men climbed the muddy track.

"Are ye ho'ding her?" one inquired.

Mark nodded. He did not want to talk.

"Then, flood's beat," said the other. "We'll cut through to ghyll by dark."

The men floundered by and Bob leaned against the door and smiled. Their stolidity tickled him; but they certainly could dig, and since the boss had engaged to cut the trench by dark he reckoned they would make good. Dark, however, was about twelve hours off, and in the meantime Mark and Frank and he must keep down the flood.

"What about breakfast?" he inquired.

Mark cooked ham and Bob brewed coffee, and soon after breakfast was over two gentlemen climbed the hill.

"When your message arrived I was at Hexham, and I did not get back until late in the evening," one said to Mark. "However, the telegraph-office will soon be open, and my car waits in the road. If you can suggest something——"

"The suggestion must not imply much expense," the other observed. "The experiment has cost us a larger sum than we reckoned, and our object is to get something back——"

"Perhaps you would like to see the drainage trench the men are cutting, and go down the tunnel?" said Mark. "The fireman will look for the captain."

The group went off and Bob gave Mark a smile.

"He waited for morning! Well, he was at Hexham, and I expect an Old Country gentleman does not hustle after dinner. You are a queer lot."

"You have stated something like that before," Mark retorted. "If I were a country landlord with a large rent-roll, I might cultivate tranquillity."

"I think not," said Bob. "Some folk are born to labor, and when you study them you know the stamp. Poverty is not the driving-force, and some don't bother to get rich. Their temperament's industrial, and they've got to work. There is another sort. In Canada, they sit on the porches at cheap hotels, and tell you how the country ought to be run.... But the blasted steam is going down. I'd better fetch some coal."

In half an hour the gentlemen returned, and Bob was rather amused to note their clothes and boots were wet.

"We are satisfied that you and Tomlinson have taken the proper line," said one. "We are not keen to engage expensive expert help; but if you think it needful, we might telegraph for a consulting engineer."

"I do not think there is much use in your telegraphing," Mark replied. "If the pumps cannot stop the water, the mine will drown; but Tomlinson believes his trench will carry most of it off. By dark we will know. However, you might get me an engine-man from Red Band Colliery; I understand the Number Two pit is shut."

They promised to inquire, and Mark got to work with his oilcan and swab. The engine-man might not arrive, and in the meantime the pump must not stop.

CHAPTER IX

MARK FINISHES HIS JOB

At six o'clock in the evening Mark took the path up the crag. The rocks were wet and melting hailstones sparkled in the stones. A dark cloud, trailing feathery streamers, floated across the sky, but behind its ragged edge the angry sunset shone and touched the moor-tops with gold. On the high waste, the wind was keen and Mark's greasy clothes were wet.

For all that, he went slowly. Since the flood broke into the tunnel he had been occupied and dared not sleep. His eyes were heavy and his head ached, but he labored up the crag and through tangled heather. A bank of chocolate-colored soil crossed the tongue, and at the end by the ghyll, men he could not see flung fresh peat from the trench. When Mark reached the spot, he found they had but three or four yards to go, and looking back across the crag, he thought two small indistinct objects climbed the hill.

Sitting down behind the bank, he waited, and by and by a big muddy fellow jumped from the trench, and signaled.

"Jack will break out stops at t'other end," he said. "By the time water's here, Tom will cut last shad."

"Aw's clear," said another, a few minutes afterwards. "An awkward job at some bits, but it's deun!"

Mark nodded. A dalesman does not exaggerate, and he noted the great limestone blocks the fellows had torn from the holding peat. They had no tackle but a crowbar and their spades, and he doubted if any other men in England could have lifted the stones to the top. Then muddy water began to trickle along the trench and swelled to a brown flood. The gang had kept the fall even, and the mound on the bank was straight. Mark knew the trench would turn the beck, and he started downhill. The men put on their coats, scraped their muddy boots, and followed him quietly.

At the boiler-shed Mark found an engine-tender and a fireman from the coal-pit had arrived, and Frank was gone. Bob, sitting in the coals, smoked his pipe and watched the fireman push his loaded barrow. His face and overalls were smeared by grease and soot, but his look was cheerful. For some time Mark and the other man moved about the pump and engine. Then he touched Bob.

"The men have turned the beck. I'm going down the mine."

"They're a bully gang," said Bob. "There's something to our politicians' talk about peopling Canada from Nordic stock, and if the boys were choppers, I'd ship the lot across. However, I want to see if the water's going down."

At the door he stopped. The muddy diggers straggled quietly down the path.

"Looks as if nobody but me was interested," he resumed. "The boys are not shouting; all they want is to get home."

"They cut the trench."

"Sure," said Bob. "I admit it's the important thing. Well, I mustn't repeat myself, but I'd like to state that you certainly are not a theatrical bunch."

Crawling along the tunnel, where a few men were yet at work, they stopped by the water. Mark gave Bob his candle, and examined a spot where he had scratched the rock. The water was below the scratch.

"She's down a quarter of an inch," he said.

Bob laughed. "You feel you must be accurate? The gang turned the beck half an hour since, and if you allow for the water yet draining through the rock, it looks as if you had won. I guess it's not going to move you, but I have had enough, and I'll take supper at my inn."

Mark was moved, but he said in a quiet voice: "You helped."

"I believe that is so," Bob agreed. "If at some time I am up against it in the woods, I hope you'll be there to pull me through. I reckon we'd make a strong combine."

He went off, and Mark tried to calculate. If the water dropped a quarter of an inch in thirty minutes—The sum ought not

to baffle him, but his brain was dull, and going back to the boiler-shed he sat down in the barrow. The pump's measured clang and the even splash from the discharge-pipe implied that the engine labored steadily. Mark imagined he could trust the coal-pit men.

"You can let down steam by about ten pounds," he said. "If you want me, knock on the shanty door."

He went to the office, pulled off his wet clothes in the dark, and in five minutes was asleep.

A day or two afterwards, Madge and he stopped one afternoon on a footbridge near the Millhouse. Snow shone on the high moors, but in the dale the sun was warm. The river sparkled and a joyous thrush sang. Under the silver birches primroses pushed through the dead leaves; a larch gently shook slender sprays tasseled by vivid green. One smelt fresh grass and rising sap.

"For all the cold, spring in the dales is beautiful," said Mark. "Sometimes at Newcastle I pictured the lambs leaping about the high fields, and I wanted to be back. Now, I'm an engineer, and on the whole I like my occupation, but our folks were farmers, and although Howbarrow's a grim old house, I'd have been happy there."

The ground was awkward, for Madge was persuaded Mark ought to have got the farm. When he gave her his confidence she indulged him, but to know he brooded hurt.

"In the wet North, farming has some drawbacks, and the important thing is, you are a good engineer. The men declare you saved the mine. I suppose the water no longer bothers you?"

"In a few days we'll drain the tunnel. So long as both pumps are at work the colliery man will stop. It accounts for my taking two or three hours off."

"Mr. Allardyce and his partners ought to be grateful. Have you seen him since you stopped the flood?"

"He looked me up and was rather complimentary. After some polite remarks, he hoped I would accept a little token of appreciation—the phrase is his—and gave me an envelope. When he'd gone I found it covered five treasury notes."

The blood leaped to Madge's skin. Mark nodded.

"Yes; I felt like that. In fact, my impulse was to put the envelope in the stove. A Cumbrian, however, does not burn money, and I thought I'd soothe myself by posting it to Allardyce and composing a short note. Then I reflected that the fellow ought to pay, and the doctor might use the notes for his cothouse patients."

Madge's pride was jarred, but her habit was not to be carried away, and she must think for her lover.

"After all, we are poor, Mark, and I think nobody on Father's round is really in want. Then suppose Allardyce had put a cheque, for a larger sum, in the envelope?"

"Oh, well," said Mark, smiling, "you are logical and perhaps I am not. An engineer may take a cheque; a gamekeeper, for example, a treasury note. When one thinks about it, the thing's ridiculous! All the same, I'm not going to keep Allardyce's present."

He pulled out the envelope and stretched his arm across the footbridge rail.

"Is the doctor to use the money? Or must I drop it overboard?"

"Dare you, Mark?" Madge inquired.

"Try me! To be royally extravagant would be something fresh. The notes are going—going——"

Madge seized the envelope.

"You mustn't! After all, I expect Father's patients sometimes go without comforts sick people ought to have. You are generous, my dear. But did Mr. Allardyce say nothing about his plans for the mine?"

"I imagine I'm something of an independent fool. All the same, I am your lover, and you are the stanchest, kindest, and most attractive young woman in Cumberland. Yet when spring is in the dale and a jolly thrush is singing, you expect me

to talk like a blighted economist."

"Sometimes economy's hateful, but it must be studied," Madge replied. "The people who can indulge their extravagant emotions are not very numerous, and I don't know if one ought to envy them. At all events, ordinary folk are forced to work and pinch. But did Allardyce talk about the mine?"

Mark was moved. Madge was cultivated and instinctively fastidious. One knew her thoroughbred, but she was the doctor's frugal housekeeper. She ought to marry a rich man, and Mark's mouth went tight.

"If you are ordinary, the dalesfolk have some grounds to boast; but I know your firmness—Well, the syndicate is negotiating in London, and when we reach the vein we are boring for, they hope to sell the mine. The new company would use modern plant, and Allardyce reckoned I'd have a better post. On the whole, I doubt. I might get a little higher pay, but all they really want is a competent engine-man. An engineer is another thing."

He turned his head. Across the river, Wellwin came down the path. Bob stopped on the bridge, and although he gave Madge a smile his look was preoccupied.

"I suppose Flora's at the house?" he said. "I've got my cable; the old man's riled, and I must start by the first boat. Are you going out with me, Mark?"

"In the meantime, I'm stopping at the mine. I might join you by and by."

"One can't hustle a Borderer. How much does the syndicate pay you? Maybe I'm blunt, Miss Forsyth, but I want to know."

Mark told him, and Bob turned to Madge.

"Eighteen dollars—a week? There's my argument! In Canada, talents like Mark's command good pay. Send him along, and when he knows something about lumber I'll engage he gets his chance. The company is concentrating on British Columbia, the grandest country in the world, and I see him building a wooden house for you by a Pacific slope inlet where the warm Chinook blows."

"You are very kind," said Madge in a quiet voice. "You, however, must persuade Mark, and he is obstinate."

Bob smiled. "Don't I know? I'm not yet baffled; but just now I have a harder job, and I can't pretend I'm not thinking for myself."

He crossed the bridge and steered for the Millhouse. Mark's eyes twinkled.

"I almost believe Bob's daunted. He wants to marry Flora."

For a moment or two Madge was quiet. Although her look was gentle, Mark knew she pondered. Then she said:

"He is generous and one trusts him. I do not think he boasts, and he urges you to go."

"Ah," said Mark, "but for one thing, I'd agree. For your sake, I ought to get rich, and in Canada it might be possible. Yet I don't know, and until the mine is sold, I'd sooner stick to my post."

"You are thinking about your brother? It's done with, Mark. For some time I hoped you had forgotten."

"I hate to think about it, but when I found Jim's diary I was forced. Isaac exploited and entangled him; I believe he cheated my father. Jim was a good brother, and he indulged me. Now I frankly cannot see my line. Isaac is at Howbarrow, and Turnbull's in Canada. I doubt if I could find him, but I'm satisfied he knows something I ought to know. I'm sorry, Madge; you ought to have had a happier lover."

"I am satisfied, Mark. Happiness is not all," said Madge in a quiet voice. "Then if you felt you had not done all you ought to do, we would not be happy."

Mark noted her calm. He knew Madge loved him, but he knew her unselfishness. Where he thought duty called she would let him go.

"There's the trouble," he agreed. "You talked about ordinary people, and I, at all events, am an ordinary man. I don't think I'm romantic, and I hate to be theatrical. All I want is to marry you and concentrate on my career. In fact, when it looked as if I must first undertake another job, I rebelled. I argued, like your father, that the thing was done with, and if I meddled, I might get a fresh knock. Then I was not justified to entangle you. I must banish the morbid illusion that something was wrong. Round and round in a circle to the spot from which I pushed off: Jim was my brother and I mustn't let him down."

Madge knew she fronted a crisis and she knitted her brows. Mark was not at all morbid, and she had begun to doubt if he were, indeed, moved by an illusion. Then, although she was young, she believed a man could not for long run away from a task he thought was his. She pictured some famous examples whom forsaken duty relentlessly pursued. At all events, she knew her lover. If Mark now took the easy road, he might forever be ashamed. When she turned to him her brows were straight and the sense of strain was gone.

"My dear, it's possible you cheat yourself. I do not know, and in a way, it does not matter. You must try to find out; I do not see another plan. To know your suspicion was justified might hurt less than to feel you were afraid to know the truth."

Mark kissed her. "You are fine stuff, Madge. Well, until the mine is sold, I must keep my post and hope for a clue. If I'm baffled, I'll start for Canada and search for Turnbull at the logging camps. It's possible I may not hit his track, but I'll know I tried. That's fixed. The sun is on the wood and the grass smells. Let's gather primroses."

CHAPTER X

THE DOMINANT PARTNER

Wellwin pushed back the door of the long room at the Millhouse, and Flora put up her sewing. Bob's look was purposeful and her heart beat.

"My luck's good," he remarked. "I was afraid the spring might have called you out. In the Old Country you don't get much sunshine."

"We do not get Arctic blizzards," Flora rejoined. "Then, in Cumberland, one must mend one's old clothes. I believe you throw yours away."

"One on me!" said Bob. "I have mended stuff in camp; but if I had hands like yours, I wouldn't stab them with a needle. There's a mark where you did so. Give me your handkerchief."

Flora firmly removed her hand. She had pricked her finger, and since Bob's arrival accounted for her awkwardness she was rather annoyed.

"At the Millhouse one must use one's hands, but I do not think mine are much the worse."

"They are beautiful hands. If I'm allowed to say so, I like your clothes."

"You are allowed. Since I made the clothes, your approval's flattering. I don't know if it's informed."

"Oh, well," said Bob with a twinkle, "your talents are manifest, but, unless it amuses you, perhaps you oughtn't to squander them on dress-making. You ought to get the things you need from London, Paris, *or Montreal*."

Flora looked up, rather sharply, and Bob pulled out a telegraph envelope.

"But I am not going to Montreal!"

"You have the option," Bob rejoined, and gave her the telegram.

"Ah," said Flora, "I am sorry——"

"That is something. In five days a C.P. liner starts from Liverpool and I'm ordered to be on board. When the old man squanders several dollars on a cablegram, what he states goes. However, five days is perhaps rather soon, and when he saw my grounds for stopping I reckon he'd approve. In the circumstances, I'll risk it, but I must telegraph when we will start."

Flora laughed, but the blood came to her skin.

"Now you are ridiculous! Am I to understand that you soberly propose to marry me?"

"Sure," said Bob. "I'm remarkably sober, and although I admit my nerve is good, from my point of view, the proposition is the soundest I have yet tried to put across. I hope you will, at least think about it, my dear."

"Although I like your rashness, you are rash," Flora remarked in a quiet voice. "For example, how long have you known me, Bob?"

"Three weeks and two days. If you like, I'll state the minutes. We got to the Millhouse at five o'clock. At six o'clock I resolved I'd stay at the Packhorse until the company wired for me. Now, unless you will fix the date when we start together, I have got to quit."

Flora was moved, but since it looked as if she must think for both, she refused to be carried away. Bob was a handsome, athletic young fellow, and she knew him generous and sincere. The trouble was, she did not know his relations.

"I see some drawbacks. For one thing, my fortune is fifty pounds a year, but I am not shabbily ambitious, and you, I believe, are rich."

"Although I try to be modest, I might perhaps claim some other advantages."

"Your advantages are rather evident, Bob. You are kind and you're honest; I like your impulsiveness and your joyous confidence. One, however, cannot know people in three weeks, and since you have not met other English girls, I am a fresh type. That perhaps accounts for something. It looks as if I'm horribly calculating, but one must ponder. You see, if I married you, I'd be yours for life."

"There's the plan's main attraction."

Flora smiled and tried for calm.

"Sometimes I'm rather imperious, and I think you are firm. The rules you use in Canada are not our rules; we look at things from different points of view. You are patriotically Canadian. I'm an English daleswoman."

"In a way we are different," Bob agreed. "What's it matter? In all but my occupation, your word would go."

"Ah," said Flora, "you'd indulge me! But suppose I felt it cost you something? On the whole we are tolerant, and when strangers imply that we are dull and old-fashioned we are amused. Yet if my husband did so, it might hurt. Then you must think for your relations; I expect you owe them much. I don't boast I'm English, Bob, but I'm proud, and I would not pretend. Suppose your relations thought you had married a prejudiced Britisher, who did not know her luck? You would, of course, support me, but it would bother you."

Bob frowned. Flora thought him honest and he dared not cheat. His folk were patriotic and firmly believed the Canadian model the best that one could use. In fact, when he thought about it, he himself did so.

"For a time, I suppose something of the sort must be fronted; but your charm would conquer, and you certainly could reckon on my support. Your pluck is good, and if you love me, as I love you, we might take the chances."

"If I was sure I loved you—but I don't yet know. There's the real drawback, Bob."

Bob turned impulsively and crossed the floor. Coming back, he took Flora's hand and pulled her to her feet.

"You don't hate me, and I'm obstinate. What are we going to do about it?"

"Ah," said Flora, "to allow you to carry me away would not be hard; but I must be firm. I am not sure, and you do not know me. But, if in twelve months you were still resolved——"

"Very well," said Bob. "In twelve months I am coming back, and if I cannot persuade you then, I'll be back another time. In fact, until you are persuaded, I expect to keep it up. That's all, my dear."

Steps echoed in the passage. He kissed her hand and let her go as Madge and Mark came in.

Three or four days afterwards, Isaac Crozier got down one evening rather unsteadily from his high, old-fashioned gig. The market town was some distance off, but a car was expensive, and he could use the horse on the farm. At Howbarrow the front door was opened only for weddings and funerals, and Isaac went in by the spacious kitchen. The flags were freshly scoured, and covered by corn-sacks where the plowman and shepherds sat round the big fireplace. Old-fashioned china, brass, and pewter shone, for Mrs. Crozier was a competent housekeeper. Since she hated to waste fuel, the fire in the grate was small, although the evening was cold. The servants had gone to bed and she was alone.

A plaid shawl covered her thin shoulders, and when Isaac came in she gave him a keen glance. So long as he was an auctioneer his occasional lapses from sobriety had not disturbed her much. Sometimes liquor helped business, but habitual indulgence was another thing. Since they got Howbarrow she imagined he kept a secret stock, and when he arrived in the dark from the market his horse brought him home.

Now his eyes were watery and when he pulled off his boots the laces bothered him. He, however, knew his wife was interested and he gave her an apologetic look.

"I was at King's Arms with Lomas and Tyson, and we bowt old tileworks at Cleughmire."

"Who bought the tileworks?" Mrs. Crozier inquired.

"Tyson and me," Isaac replied with a chuckle. "Allardyce's bailiff met us, and when he heard t'price they asked Tom Lomas cried off. He'd had a glass or two, and he wadn't be ruined for Mr. Allardyce; the man who'd give sum they wanted was a d—— feule! It went with bailiff. He's a young fellow, but he kened Tom was not pretending, and we jaloosed Allardyce was keen to sell; he's spent some money over the wolfram mine. Anyhow, when Lomas went, we got t' lad to cut price a hundred and fifty pound."

Mrs. Crozier nodded. She saw Isaac and his confederate work upon the bailiff. He was the public-school type and had but recently got his post. The young fellow was perhaps rather scornfully polite, but he did not know his antagonists, who had used Lomas's genuine timidity in order to baffle him. Ellen approved their cleverness. All the same, the sum agreed upon was large, and, for the most part, the tileworks manufactured field-drain pipes.

"You'll need to keep the works going," she remarked. "A standing works is like an idle horse. They cost something to keep."

"We reckon we can. Clay's good and we are buying some new machines. Then I'm going to drain bottom pastures and plowland, and I'll get pipes at cost. When I start, I'll make a job, and Howbarrow will take some stuff."

"When you drain, you bury money you'll not get back for long. We are not young, Isaac, and the boy is gone."

"Money's there, in t' land, my lass, and it's paying interest by larger crops. If it was at bank, I reckon we'd not could carry much away."

Mrs. Crozier nodded. On the whole she was satisfied, for, like her husband, she was greedy for land. Moreover, she was willing to pinch and labor, and properly use the soil. In the circumstances, Isaac's farming paid.

"If you put up new machines, you'll need a good engine-man."

"I ken the man. Mark was at first-class foundry and he's cliver."

Mrs. Crozier looked up and her glance was disturbed.

"You're drunk, Isaac."

"Maybe I'm not varra sober; we'd got to put Lomas in right fettle to talk. Aw t' same, I ken what I'm about, and I beat bailiff by a hundred and fifty pound. Mark's the man for us, and if we paid him a pound a week more than he has from Allardyce, we'd get him cheap. We do not want an engine-man; we want somebody to help us remodel old works."

Mrs. Crozier's nerve was good, but she was daunted. If Isaac did not see his folly, he was drunker than she had thought.

"It will not do," she said. "If Mark is long at tileworks, he might find out——"

"He'll not be at Howbarrow and works is eight miles off. Then I do not see what he might find out."

"Do you not?" said Mrs. Crozier, in a queer, hard voice. "Maybe you have forgotten Turnbull and Willie Stoddart witnessed Jim's hand to an agreement two days after the lad was dead?"

Isaac had forgotten, and he braced up. When he was forced, he could to some extent banish the effects of liquor, and as he got sober his English improved.

"Jim had got the money and Turnbull's in Canada. He'd witnessed my hand before and old Willie did not know what he signed. Anyhow, the trustee was satisfied, and if document's not burned, it's tied up with old papers in the box at lawyer's office, where I reckon it will stop for good."

"You niver know," said Mrs. Crozier meaningly. "You might cheat Mr. Grey and his lawyer, but Mark kens his brother's hand."

For a few moments Isaac pondered. After all, he had not cheated the trustee much. To some extent, the supposititious

agreement was for value received, although without it he might have had trouble to prove his claim. Anyhow, he thought he might reckon on Mark's never seeing the document. He had no remorse for entangling Jim; in any circumstances, the stubborn, careless fellow would have gone broke, but the queer thing was, he was sorry for cheating Mark. In fact, the boy should have the tileworks job.

"It's long since, and I'm not going to bother," he said.

"If lawyers knew Jim's hand was copied, you might go to jail; but that's not the worst risk you run," Mrs. Crozier rejoined. "Turnbull knows you and Jim fratched by quarry bank, and if one thing was weighed with t'other——"

Isaac looked at her as if he were afraid; and then passion sparkled in his watery eyes.

"After aw I've said, d'you think I put my nephew over the bank? Jim was as strong as a bullock and I'm twenty years past my best."

Mrs. Crozier's hard glance searched her husband's face.

"My thinking's not important. If others had something to go on, it might be awkward."

For a few moments both were quiet. Greed had carried them farther than they had perhaps at one time thought to go, but Isaac felt he was not altogether accountable. Ellen was harder stuff, and she had pushed him on. Yet the thing was done with, and to give Mark a post was perhaps a useful plan. Besides, he was his nephew and he had robbed the lad. For him to bother was ridiculous, but he did bother. Getting up unsteadily, he crossed the floor and came back.

"I've told you I had nowt to do with Jim's going over bank."

Mrs. Crozier's glance was fixed. Isaac felt she argued as a lawyer would argue, and he pictured his fronting a crowded court. The picture daunted him.

"Oh, yes," she said, "you've told me, but I'm your wife. If all was known, and you tried to convince strangers, your tale might not carry much weight."

Isaac's loose mouth got firm. He was not going to be bullied, and Ellen had pushed him on.

"Turnbull's in Canada; neabody has heard from him and he's maybe dead. Then I fixed with Tyson for Mark to go to tileworks, and he mustn't think the lad and I have fratched. He is going to tileworks, and when I was at King's Arms I wrote him a note. Now I wonder——"

Mrs. Crozier shrugged. She knew her husband grasping and unscrupulous, but he had not her logical firmness and sometimes he was soft. All the same, if her domination was obvious, he might rebel.

"If you make Mark your engineer, I hope you'll not be sorry, my man!"

"Aweel, there's no use in fratching," Isaac remarked. "I'se see if Bill has rubbed down horse, and then I'll gan to bed."

He went to the stable, and climbed to the haymow where his liquor supply was hidden. Ellen's remarks had disturbed him and he needed another drink. By and by Mrs. Crozier heard his steps in the passage, and when all was quiet she searched his driving-coat. In the pocket was an envelope, which she put in the fire. Isaac would probably imagine he had posted the letter, but if he inquired about it, she reckoned to persuade him he must leave Mark alone.

CHAPTER XI

MARK SEES HIS LINE

Mark, in his hut behind the engine-house, lighted his pipe and pulled his chair to the stove. Although spring advanced, the morning was cold; he had finished his frugal lunch, and for half an hour was entitled to go slack.

Wellwin was at Montreal and Mark had got a letter urging him to come out, but he hesitated. So long as he was justified, he wanted to stop where Madge was. Then, if Allardyce floated a company and the mine were properly worked, he might get a better post. In the meantime, helped by Jim's diary, he began to reconstruct his brother's fight at Howbarrow. Inquiring where he thought his questions would not excite suspicion, he got particulars that sometimes vaguely enlightened and sometimes disturbed him. The picture, however, was indistinct. All he really knew was, Isaac had exploited Jim's trustfulness.

In the circumstances, if the new company did not need him, he would join Wellwin in Canada. Since Turnbull was at one time a forester, he had, no doubt, got an engagement at a lumber camp, which ought to help Mark's search. Anyhow, he must try his luck, and, if he did find the fellow, by some means force him to tell all he knew. In fact, when the company was floated he would see his line, and he understood Allardyce soon expected news. He looked up, for the fireman came in.

"A car's stopped at ghyllfoot and a gentleman got down. Looks like Mr. Allardyce, and I thowt you'd like to know."

A few minutes afterwards, Allardyce arrived, and, pulling off his big gloves, sat down by the stove.

"I was in town for four or five days, and got back early this morning," he said. "We have at length concluded our negotiations and the company will soon be floated—"

He supplied some particulars, and Mark waited in suspense. Then with a touch of embarrassment Allardyce resumed:

"There is another thing. Since I take a block of shares, I had hoped I might induce the company to engage you. The new directors, however, had already agreed with a consulting engineer to superintend the developments we plan. I interviewed him, but he declared he had a competent staff. I'm sorry, Crozier, but I don't see a post for you."

"I must thank you for your efforts, sir."

"Oh, well," said Allardyce, "they led to nothing. We will, of course, give you a first-class recommendation, and if you apply for another post, you must use me. Where my help is possible, it's yours, you know."

He began to talk about the new company's plans for extending the mine, and when he went off Mark got up with something like relief. For some time he had pondered and hesitated, trying to convince himself he did not see his line. Now, however, his line was fixed for him. He must join Wellwin and search the Canadian woods for the man who, he imagined, knew how his brother went through the quarry fence.

In the evening he took the road to the Millhouse. The doctor and Flora were visiting at a farm, and Mark joined Madge in the long room. The light was going, but when he came in he fronted the window, and Madge saw his look was resolute. He must, however, not know she was disturbed, and when she gave him her hand her manner was calm.

Mark kissed her. Where argument could not help, Madge was not the sort to argue. Her pluck was good, and since she knew he must go, she would not reproach him for leaving her. Yet now he soon must start he wanted ardently to stop.

"At length you have got some news," she said.

"Allardyce was across in the morning. The mine is sold and the directors have no use for me."

Madge signed him to a chair by the fireplace, and for a moment or two she mused. Then she said:

"You will go to Wellwin?"

Mark nodded. As a rule, the dalesfolk do not indulge their emotions, and he had reckoned on Madge's calm.

"I do not see another plan. Foundries, machine-shops, and shipyards are running slack or shut, and engineers walk the streets. In Canada, Bob engages to get me a post."

"Is that all, Mark?" Madge inquired.

"I expect you know my other object. I must try for a post where the pay is good; but I must find Turnbull."

"Canada is three thousand miles across. You may search for long, and the man might be dead."

"It's possible," Mark agreed, and, hesitating as if he were embarrassed, resumed: "Still, so long as I know I have searched—One hates to talk about one's clumsy efforts to do things one ought. To analyze oneself, so to speak, is not decent. Besides, nobody is interested."

Madge smiled a gentle, sympathetic smile.

"You are rather old-fashioned, Mark; but I am interested."

"Very well. So far, my luck has not been good. The Croziers are an unlucky lot, but I'm not daunted. You are stanch, and somehow I feel I can mend my fortunes. The trouble's not there. You are young and beautiful, and you ought to be happy. So long as I brooded and looked back, I dared not marry you. Your husband ought to look in front and joyously shove ahead. I'm getting romantic, but you ordered me to talk."

"I want you to talk," said Madge in a quiet voice. "To some extent, I understand, but perhaps I'm justified to know all you feel."

"To explain is awkward. Now I think about it, a long time went before I honestly fronted the trouble. At the beginning, I was a boy, and when I got over the knock, all I felt was that somehow people were not just. Jim was a kind brother, but a sort of shadow rested on his memory. I knew liquor had nothing to do with his going over the quarry bank and he did not go because he meant. Yet the police and the coroner were satisfied, and I had no grounds to meddle.

"At the foundry I almost forgot, and when I went to the drawing-office you engaged to marry me. For a time, I did forget; and then I felt the shadow—I don't know a better word—was creeping back and touched me. Somehow I knew all was not right and I ought to vindicate my brother. In a way, I fought for my freedom; the thing was done with and I mustn't be haunted by a morbid illusion. I wanted to believe it an illusion, but I could not.

"Then Bob urged me to join him and I found Jim's diary. Isaac had exploited him; he had planned to seize Howbarrow, and at length it was his."

"Did your losing the farm hurt?" Madge inquired.

"The old house is gloomy, but I loved it," Mark replied in a thoughtful voice. "Then a house perhaps reflects its occupants' moods. Isaac is queer and one feels he broods; his parsimonious wife is sour. Had Jim kept control I'd have been satisfied, but I feel Ellen Crozier ought not to be where my mother ruled."

"Yes," said Madge, "Ellen is hard and calculating. But when you found the diary you got a jar?"

"I saw Isaac had robbed Jim, and I began to wonder whether that was all; but I shrank from trying to find out. He was my father's half-brother, and my business was to concentrate on getting a post that would justify my marrying you. Perhaps I was afraid; anyhow, I hated to meddle. But I'm back where I started. You have heard it all before."

For a few moments Madge was quiet. The light was not quite gone, and Mark fronted the window. His face was thin, and now his mouth was set, Madge thought it pinched. He admitted he had fought for his freedom, and she knew the fight he could not win was hard, for she herself had rebelled. When one was young and had a lover, one was entitled to happiness, although it looked as if the Howbarrow Croziers were a tragic lot.

Madge braced up. She was not a romantic heroine. She and Mark were ordinary sober people; but since tragedy haunted all flesh and blood there was no use in rebelling. Mark must carry his load; moreover, she did not really want him to refuse.

"All that touches you touches me," she said. "In the North, we hide our emotions, but we are not as Spartan as we think,

and sometimes our reserve breaks. Perhaps, if you had not found the diary—But I do not know. We cannot cheat life, and you are not the sort to run away."

"In a sense, I tried. All the same, I knew that if I cheated, I must some time pay. When I marry you I mustn't be ashamed. But I've let myself go and I'd sooner be practical. I may not find Turnbull, and Bob engages to help me get ahead. By and by I hope to come back for you. Yet you love the dale, and I don't suppose there is in Canada a house with the Millhouse's charm."

Madge smiled. "There is no use in pretending, Mark; but poor people must not be fastidious, and if I am where you are, I will not grumble. Then ours is the strongest stock in England; the dalesfolk don't stop for obstacles, and I feel we are going to conquer."

"That's the stuff," said Mark. "By George, I'll try!"

"When you try, you win," Madge resumed. "If one holds on, one's luck must turn, and you have taken some hard knocks."

She thought she did not exaggerate. Although Mark was strongly built, he was thin, and his look was somehow ascetic. Madge felt the shadow he talked about yet brooded over him. Then he had known poverty, and the dreary, humiliating search for an occupation by which he could live. But he was not beaten; Mark was good stuff. He had useful talents, and in Canada the gloom would melt. To know he had tried to vindicate his brother would give him back peace of mind, and something of the youthful joyousness that was properly his. In fact, Mark must buy his freedom and she must let him go.

The separation weighed, but for a time she talked cheerfully and Mark played up. The effort, however, was hard, and on the whole the arrival of the doctor and Flora was something of a relief. Soon afterward Mark took the road for the mine, and Flora, waiting in the passage for Madge's return from the gate, put her arm round her.

"I don't know if it's much comfort, but I altogether approve Mark's resolve. He'll come back in triumph, and, I believe, cured."

"Cured is perhaps not the word," said Madge. "Still, I suppose I do hope for something like that, although to indulge him hurts. I want my lover, but all I can do is to wait."

"Brace up, my dear. I, at all events, am not Victorian, and when I want something I get to work. For a beginning, I am going to write to Bob. Since he undertook to humor me, he shall have a chance."

"But ought you to use him?"

"I have not your scruples, and where it would help my friends I'd use anybody. Besides, I expect Bob is willing."

"Are you going to marry Mr. Wellwin?"

"It's possible," said Flora. "Something depends on Bob. If his resolve doesn't weaken in twelve months, I might agree. When one is poor and one's lover is rich, one must not be rash. You know Mark; in almost any circumstances, the line he'd take is obvious. Perhaps it's an advantage, but I doubt. Anyhow, I don't yet know Bob, and he must make good. If he does not, I might be sorry. In the meantime, I must think about my letter."

She kissed Madge, and, since the evening was cold, went to the kitchen where blocks of oak and peat burned in the big fireplace. Lighting two candles in old-fashioned pewter sticks, she got to work. By and by some ink from the fountain-pen splashed the paper, and she smiled.

"Bob would swear. When he's annoyed I rather like him," she remarked. "A man swears and forgets it; a woman is nasty to the next person she meets. However, I must try to strike just the proper note——"

She knitted her brows and began a fresh line:

"In ten days Mark pulls out for Canada, and my pleasure is that you boost him where a judicious boost is possible. You declared you were my servant, but for all my imperiousness, I'd sooner think you my confederate in a benevolent plot. For me, the part is something fresh and carries a sort of thrill, although it does not imply much effort, since I command and you get busy. You, in fact, are the working partner.

"Madge and Mark frankly need our help. For all their youth, their rules are out-of-date. The old rules were stern. One's main business was not to express (and indulge) oneself; where duty called one went steadfastly, and one paid one's debts. A Spartan code; but can you beat it?"

"Ours is the pursuit of happiness—I believe the phrase is classical American. So long as we don't cheat and are not remarkably shabby, we're entitled to a binge. It certainly carries one where Madge's code does not; but sometimes I wonder.—However, but for me, Mark might not have weighed your proposition, and I feel I'm responsible for his joining you. When one begins to meddle one gets involved, and to know one cannot stop is disturbing.

"Anyhow, I'm frankly bothered, Bob; but the plan was yours and I know you will not let me down. Mark's excellent object is to find the means to support a wife, but he has another, about which I expect he will not talk. He means to find the man who knows how and why Jim Crozier plunged down the quarry. On the whole, I think you must humor him. To some extent, Mark is primitive, his brother was his hero, and until he's satisfied, he will not stop. Yet you might use some caution where he would not. I have given you my confidence and perhaps I have bored you, but you are Mark's friend and mine, and you engaged to help. I imagine your engagements stand——"

Flora stopped and pondered. The letter was not all she wanted, but its composition was harder than she had thought. Then she smiled and resolved to let it go. Eight days afterwards Madge gave her a telegram.

"Getting busy. Bob."

CHAPTER XII

TRANQUILLITY

The *Frontenac's* whistle echoed in the rocks and her big side-wheels revolved with a slacker beat. Mark had got on board at Quebec, and since he expected to land in a few minutes, he looked about with some curiosity. Although the ice had but recently broken, the noble river sparkled in the hot sun, and sweet resinous smells floated on the gentle breeze. Behind the dim southern shore, blue mountains rolled back; on the north bank a rocky tableland dropped to the flats along the waterside.

In the meantime, the steamer forged ahead, a point where pines climbed the stony slopes slipped by, and a bay opened up. A shining church-spire occupied the foreground; in lower Canada, some wooden churches are yet covered by tin-plate. Small wooden houses straggled along the water-front. Some beyond the church were farms, for very long and narrow fields, divided by queer rail fences, stretched back from the road. At the other end of the little town were yellow sawdust-dumps and lumber-piles. An old sailing ship rode behind the point and a wooden steamer was moored to the wharf. Her winches rattled, and Mark saw men carrying fresh white boards.

The *Frontenac's* engines stopped, ropes were thrown, and Mark had arrived at St. Jerome. For a minute or two it looked as if nobody was interested; and then a young fellow crossed the wharf and scrutinized the landing passengers. He signaled Mark, and when he went down the gangway gave him his hand.

"Mr. Crozier, I expect? Pleased to meet you."

"I am pleased to be met," said Mark. "I don't know if your spotting me was remarkable."

"Oh, well, the passengers are *habitants*, French-Canadians," the other replied with a twinkle. "I'm Travis, from the mill, and Bob Wellwin asked me to see you fixed. We were together at Toronto."

Mark imagined he meant the university; he thought he liked Travis.

"You are kind. Perhaps I ought to get my trunk."

"It's coming," said the other. "Watch out!"

The trunk plunged down an inclined plank, and for four or five yards shot across the wharf. When it stopped, Mark ruefully examined the split top.

"The old trunk was my father's and survived twenty years' use in England. In Canada, I suppose three or four journeys is the limit? Your steamboat and railroad men do not handle baggage tenderly."

"That is so. When they cannot smash a trunk with their hands and boots, they use a hammer. The boys hate to be beat. Then we reckon an article twenty years old ought to be in a museum. But a fellow I have sent will bring your stuff. Come on uptown."

They took the quiet street, where small frame houses with green lattice shutters fronted the shining river. Mark saw one or two battered cars and a narrow, high-wheeled wagon. But for a few leisurely foot passengers, that was all, and he admitted his rather vague notions about Canadian activity must be revised. St. Jerome was marked by something of the tranquil charm that broods over the quiet towns by the Scottish border.

The names on the shops were French and the goods were stated to be *sur-choix* and *au bon marché*. For the most part, wooden shingles covered the roofs, but on some, flat, painted sheet-iron—the old Canada plate—was fastened. The little town was clean, and shade-trees, breaking into leaf, spread their branches across the board sidewalk.

"After Montreal, I expect St. Jerome is not typically Canadian," said Mark.

"The town is French-Canadian; there's a difference," Travis agreed. "The *habitants* are useful citizens. Their proper home is the Province of Quebec, and although at Montreal we live harmoniously side by side, we do not mix. Our rules are North American; theirs are the rules Frontenac and Montcalm carried across from Catholic France before the revolution. For all that, they are laborious, keen, and frugal, and now they are pushing west for the wheat-belt, some

people think they may push us out. The Northwest is a stern country; the *habitants* are small, independent cultivators, and to some extent primitive. I reckon they'd thrive and multiply where city-bred men would starve."

"The peasant stock is a strong stock," Mark agreed. "All the same, we in the Old Country imagine you produce some hardy pioneers."

"We don't stay with it. The pioneers' sons pull out for the towns. They have had enough. To watch a machine is a softer job than to use the axe, and at the office the janitor loads up the basement stove. On the plains, if you don't cut cordwood you must freeze. Co-operative industry has advantages, but in the woods, the man who makes good is the man who can go without."

Mark nodded. Since he himself had gone without, Travis's philosophy was his. Moreover, he was independent and willing to go alone. He hated to feel another fixed his path and ordered him to push along.

"Where are we steering for?" he asked.

"I have got a room for you at Marcelle Leroux's. Her son is at the mill, and a clerk we had stopped with them. The usual plan is to board at the hotel, but the house is crowded and the service is not first-class. However, if you don't like your lodgings, you can quit."

Mark said he expected to be satisfied, and when they stopped at Madame Leroux's he imagined his statement was not rash. After the noisy hotel at Montreal, the small frame house was homelike, and Mark's room on one side of the porch fronted the river across the street. The furniture was plain North American hardwood, and the rather bad religious pictures added a touch of austerity he on the whole approved. Then he thought he liked his fat and very polite French-Canadian landlady. She said Mark's supper would soon be served and he and Travis went to the sunny porch.

"For a time, you are fixed," said Travis. "So long as you are at the mill you are a mill-hand. I expect you get me!"

"I am one of the gang? My being Bob Wellwin's pal is altogether another thing. In fact, I'd sooner nobody but you knew."

Travis nodded. "You will want some overalls, and if we start you stacking boards, maybe some leather palms. They fasten round your wrist, and you might get them at the Colbert *magazin*."

"My hands are engineer's hands, and I have two or three boiler-suits," said Mark. "Is that all I need? Bob perhaps asked you to put me wise."

"You are pretty keen," Travis remarked with a twinkle. "To begin with, we are patriotic. A good Canadian is convinced that Canada leads the world, and if you want us to like you, you must agree. Your coming from the Old Country will not help you much; and, for the land's sake, don't study us as if you were amused! Some Englishmen ask for trouble, and as a rule, it comes to them."

"I think I see," said Mark. "My line's to admit I'm a raw stranger, but willing to learn?"

"You'll make good, friend. Where it doesn't hurt, play up to the boys. On the whole, they're a first-class bunch."

"But what about the mill? I frankly want to learn."

"The plant is not up-to-date. The company runs modern mills where the big trees grow, but we are working over second-cut, small stuff. For a time we and the Americans squandered our timber, and recklessly sold off all we could haul to a river. Twenty years since, sailing ships, waiting for a load, swarmed on the St. Lawrence and giant lumber rafts floated downstream. Now they're gone, and in Quebec we are cleaning up corners and pockets we did not exploit before. When the price goes up, you can shove farther back from the waterways. Well, at St. Jerome our plant is not first-class, but the best lumberman is the fellow who used his brain and muscle before he used machines. The finest tool a workman has got is his hand. So long as you are young, the play's a man's play; and now I've done with it, sometimes I'm sorry. When the ice breaks and the logs drive down the freshets, I'm homesick for the woods."

Mark reflected that Bob had stated something like that.

"Then you went to the logging camps? I rather imagined you were at the University."

"That is so. Our graduates don't claim first option on the soft jobs, and a number earn their college fees. They have got something the roughnecks have not, but they are willing to use it in business and our mechanical industries. For example, I had to hustle for the means to live, but I could not stand for clerking at a store. I wanted to use my body and try my nerve at harder play than a football game. The gang boss saw I did so, and sometimes when the logs jambed on a spring flood, I allow I was scared——"

A girl came up the steps. Her clothes were fashionable and she carried herself gracefully. She was young and Mark thought her attractive. Seeing she carried a parcel, he was first on his feet and pushed back the door. She looked up, as if she were rather surprised by his politeness, and giving him a smile went along the passage.

"Who is she?" Mark inquired.

"Angelique Leroux, your landlady's daughter. A saleswoman at the *Magazin des Modes*, and rather obviously French-Canadian. You see troops of her sort in Montreal; all attractive and wearing charming clothes, which I imagine they themselves make. Anyhow, they're clever milliners and good housewives. Yet they don't marry us, and as a rule get nowhere. I expect the *veuve* Leroux was prettier than Angelique, but she married a river-jack and is satisfied at St. Jerome. Well, I must shove off. When the whistle blows in the morning you'll be along."

Travis went down the steps, and by and by Madame Leroux came for Mark. He approved his Canadian supper—steak, fried potatoes, and a slab of fruit pie,—although it looked as if the bill of fare was not varied much for breakfast and dinner. When his appetite was satisfied, he returned to the porch and began to muse.

A hundred yards off, languid ripples splashed the beach; behind the town a rapid throbbed, and he heard cowbells chime. The sun got low and the hills across the shining river were dark blue, but the evening was not cold. Mark pictured Madge at the quiet Millhouse, and the mist creeping down the black moor-tops. To go had cost him much, and for a few moments he set his mouth; but now he was in Canada he had begun to feel a queer tranquillity.

He had not wanted to follow Turnbull; all he had wanted was to be left alone, but some strange power or influence had pushed him on. He did not know if the impulse was from outside, or within himself, but he felt Jim called him from the dark quarry. Well, at length, he was in Canada, where Turnbull was, unless the fellow were dead. In a way, Mark admitted his search was ridiculous. The timber-belt rolled across the country for three thousand miles; since he could not use the axe, nobody would engage him at a lumber camp, and his money was nearly gone.

Speed, however, was not important. The main thing was, he had started; hesitation and doubt were done with, and he must trust his luck. In the meantime, he had gone as far as it was possible for him to go, and the power that had forced him from England must supply the fresh clue. Mark admitted he was not logical; he was perhaps superstitious, but he felt that somehow the clue would be supplied. He was a salesman and had inherited a queer primitive vein.

Anyhow, he was satisfied. If he stopped with the Duquesne Company, he would presently be a useful lumberman and might command a post at a logging camp. His pay was good, and he was not at all daunted by the labor he knew he must undertake. At the beginning he might be exhausted, but his muscles were hard, and all another could do he could do. Moreover, although he was not keen to dispute, if a roughneck Canadian tried to bully him, he thought the fellow would get a jar. Cumberland folk are famous wrestlers, and at Newcastle he had joined a boxing club.

The sun set, a cold wind blew down the river, and Mark went tranquilly to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SAWMILL

In the fresh morning Mark took the road along the water-front. He had pulled a boiler-suit over his oldest clothes and carried a dinner-pail, since his landlady imagined at the beginning he would sooner not walk home at noon. Mark, remembering his first week at the foundry, thought it possible.

Other workmen hurried along the street, and the plank sidewalk echoed the tramp of heavy boots. One or two gave him a careless glance, but that was all, and Mark was bothered by something of the loneliness he had known when he first went to a big English school. He felt he, so to speak, had lost his individuality and was but one of the gang. Then, in order to keep his post, he must prove himself equal to men whose business was to labor. Mark had no illusions; for a time it was going to be hard.

Smoke rolled from the rusty stacks; steam floated about the open-fronted sheds and splashed in shining drops. Mark picked his way across the tram rails and at the office was ordered to wait in the mill. When he reached the shed the whistle blew and panting engines began to turn. Their labored stroke got fast, belts ran over rumbling wheels, and a savage uproar suddenly broke out.

A circular saw screamed on a high, shrill note. One could not see the bright steel revolve, but where a log advanced against it yellow dust leaped. Gang-saws clanged; their parallel blades ripping vertically through gummy wood. Chains rattled, and noisy wire-ropes hauled fresh logs up an incline to the saws. White planks shot from the benches; the dust got thick, and sometimes the swift-moving picture was blurred.

Mark smelt resin and burning wood. His glance was alert and his muscles braced. Speed and action thrilled him; he felt as if he waited before a race, and for the starter to let him go would be some relief. By and by the foreman's hand closed on his shoulder, and since there was not much use in talking, he allowed the fellow to steer him through the turmoil to a stack of boards on the dump across the shed. The foreman indicated how their ends were locked.

"You'll pile them like that. I'll show you where you get them. Come on."

They went back into the mill, and the foreman pushed Mark to a bench, shouted something, and vanished. At the end of the bench a rotary planing-machine spun. Mark saw it was a *miller* and knew how it worked. A man pushed the end of a rough board against the machine, which pulled it in and threw it out on the other side with its surface smoothly cleaned. Fine chips and dust tossed about the cutters, and when the man, following the board, advanced, the gritty shower beat his lowered head. His face and clothes were gray, but stopping for a moment to rub the stuff from his eyes, he gave Mark a friendly grin, and indicated the growing pile of dressed lumber.

"En aura tousjou plus. I lak not the d—— stuff bury me."

Mark seized a board, but the other shook his head, and it looked as if he must carry two. Two fourteen-foot boards are an awkward load to steer across a crowded mill; particularly when one's end goes up and the other's goes down. Moreover, Mark must cross an incline where fresh logs ran, and plow through slab ends and small rubbish. He stacked the boards, but when he got back the French-Canadian gesticulated, and Mark, seeing the pile had got larger, knew he was not fast enough. In the crowded mill, the gangway must not be blocked; his business was to move the lumber as fast as it was planed.

For the most part, he did so, but the effort cost him much. His side and his back hurt, his breath got short, and the board's sharp edges galled his hands. Moreover, the sun was on the roof, and after an hour or two the heat and dust and noise began to get intolerable. Mark gasped and sweated, and sometimes when the pile by the planer grew fast, he seized his load and ran. All the same, he imagined the job was the sort of job a sawmill laborer cheerfully undertook. In fact, when one thought about it, rude, common jobs that nevertheless implied the use of moral force were not scarce. Mechanical dexterity helped, but when a point was passed, one rather held on by pluck than muscle. One's body was one's servant, but sometimes, unless control were firm, a servant rebelled.

Mark's boot slipped in the sawdust, and his tilting load struck a man who swore good-humoredly. He had begun to note the gang's patience. The job was cooperative; one moved the stuff another cut, and unless the slabs and ragged ends were

carried off, the sawyers were embarrassed. Moreover, the company knew each machine's high-speed capacity, and the machinist knew if he could not make good, he must quit. Yet where a comrade was slow and the stuff piled up they did not grumble much. B'tise and Lucien, like them, were forced to sweat, and would come along as soon as possible.

Mark imagined the mill's output was fixed near the highest point flesh and blood could reach; but the gang did not rebel. The queer thing was, in conservative Britain, it looked as if organized workmen used a power democratic Canadians had not. All the same, by contrast with English standards, the pay was generous. One certainly sweated for all one got, but the company got production.

Although Mark vaguely philosophized, he carried the boards. Mechanical labor rather stimulated his brain, and when he watched his lathe at Newcastle his habit was to ponder subjects that had nothing to do with engineering. For all that, a slab on the dump by and by entangled his feet and he and the boards crashed in the sawdust. When he got up he knew he was shaken, and his mouth was parched. The grit from the planer had got into his throat and nose. His impulse was to hurl the boards into the log pond, but he braced up and laughed. To let oneself go was expensive, and if he were a fool, Madge and Bob must pay.

At noon he carried his dinner-pail to a corner outside the shed. To walk half a mile to his lodging was unthinkable, and resting his back against the boards, he lay in the sawdust. After a few minutes, the Ontario foreman came from the mill. He was big and gaunt and hard, and used the company's men, as he used the machines, to the limit of their power; but he studied the tired young fellow with a humorous twinkle.

"You feel as if you'd had some?"

"That is so," Mark agreed. "When we stop in the evening, I'll no doubt feel I've had enough. For a beginner to keep your pace is awkward, but in a day or two I hope to find my stride."

The foreman nodded. The boy was a mixer, and did not talk as if talking hurt. Moreover, although he was obviously nearly beaten, he did not mean to quit.

"Well, for the afternoon you might cut slabs for the boiler. I don't claim the job is soft, but it's different."

Mark wondered whether Travis had hinted that the fellow might handle him tenderly. The workmen, however, were the foreman's tools, and he must be allowed to use them where their use was most economical. Favoritism did not pay. Besides, Mark hated to acknowledge himself a feebler type than the roughneck Canadians.

"I must go where I'm sent," he said. "All the same, if you think me the proper man to stack the boards, I believe I can carry on."

"In the morning you'll be sorry you did," said the other and went to the office.

Mark lay in the sawdust and languidly looked about. A river curved down the valley, and in a wide pool by the mill battered logs floated behind a chained boom. Mark understood the logs were driven downstream from the thinned forests that yet rolled north across the Laurentian tableland. For the most part, the trunks were not large; the trees had grown since the woods first were cut.

The sparkling water gently splashed the bottom of the sawdust-dump, and across the pool, pastures with crooked fences climbed the slopes. In one or two, springing fern encircled the tall, rotten stumps. Since the soil was good, Mark wondered why somebody had not pulled up the stumps; but he had begun to think French Canada touched by an old-fashioned tranquil charm.

The whistle called, and Mark got up and stretched his arms. He was horribly tired, and the boards' sharp edges had begun to cut his blistered hands. Yet until the engines stopped he must speed across the sheds with his awkward load. The lumber must not pile up about the bench; in a sense, the swift, noisy planer was his antagonist. If the ruthless machine beat him, he felt the knockout might be for good. His engaging for a sawmill-hand was rash, and his pride in his strength and stubbornness was his main support. If his pride were broken, he was done for. Somehow he must stick it.

A breeze sprang up and fanned the boiler fires. Smoke and steam blew about the sheds, and dust leaped from the throbbing floor. Sometimes the bent, toiling figures melted and Mark was bothered to see where he went. The engines' stroke got fast, the saws' scream was sharper, and the planer's jarring hum swelled to a high, angry note.

Mark knew the wind helped the stokers; the mill was speeding up, and the foreman meant to let her go. He would proudly record in his stock book the extra lumber she had cut, and the gang must bear the strain. Well, they were hardened to their work, but Mark was not, and he felt the wind and the pitiless machines conspired to break him.

The boards leaped from the planer, and the fellow who shoved the stuff along the bench was rather an automatic part of the noisy plant than a man. But for the wet circles round his eyes, his face was a gray mask; and the woolly dust stuck to Mark's skin and sifted through his clothes. Sometimes when the wind swept the sheds he could not see the workmen, but he knew he must not risk a collision with the logs shooting up the incline. The boards he carried flapped, and when he staggered through the big door tossed him about. Sometimes one went up and the other's lowered end jambed against the ground.

Half-superstitious obstinacy saw him out. The first day was the real test, and if he were beaten, he would know he had not the proper qualities for the business he undertook. He rather feared his nervous reaction from defeat than bodily exhaustion. Then, since the dalesfolk to some extent are primitive, where he did not see his way he, so to speak, waited for a sign. For example, he had found Jim's diary, and then Allardyce had indicated that the new company had not a post for him. Now, if he could not do all a Canadian laborer could do, there was no use in his searching the logging camps for Turnbull.

His hands were wet by blood; where his clothes rubbed, the planer grit galled his skin, his heart beat and his side hurt; but when the whistle blew all the boards were stacked.

To get to his lodging was awkward, and street-cars did not run at St. Jerome. When the widow Leroux, carrying his supper, pushed back the door, he rashly got up and took the loaded tray. He had not thought the effort would embarrass him, but his mouth got tight, and when he reached the table the tray jarred on the boards. Mark gave his landlady an apologetic smile, and gently lowered himself into his chair.

"I expect the beginning is the worst. *N'il y a que le premier pas*—Something like that, isn't it?"

"*Le pauvre gars!*" said Madame Leroux. "The first day is the bad day, but I have a liniment of a marvellous excellence. I go bring the bottle, and if you lak', I rub the spot."

"You're very kind, but the spots are rather numerous," Mark replied.

Madame gave him the bottle and he began his supper. His appetite was not gone, and that was something.

CHAPTER XIV

MISS WELLWIN INVESTIGATES

Mark, lying in the sawdust, languidly smoked his pipe. The sun was hot and he smelt resinous wood and engine oil; he fronted the St. Lawrence, and the noble river shimmered like glass with reflected light. Summer advanced swiftly, and after Mark's efforts in the noisy mill, to stretch his legs in the warm dust and hear the tranquil water splash was some relief. A shining plume floating across the mill roof indicated that steam had not gone down, and for half an hour he could relax.

Yet Mark was not much tired. After three or four strenuous weeks, he had found his proper speed, and he had recently got a fresh job. He did not know if the job was softer, for a fireman who feeds a sawmill furnace with cut slabs and refuse must move actively. The small stuff melts in the flame, and the laboring engines are greedy for steam. Mark's overalls and skin were stained by grease and ash, but he admitted he had perhaps not much grounds to grumble.

In fact, since he got to work at St. Jerome he had indulged a queer tranquillity. The doubts that had bothered him in England were gone; he had, at all events, begun his search for Turnbull. Then he began to think Bob had not exaggerated; in Canada there was perhaps a chance for him he might not have got in the Old Country. At Montreal he was for about ten minutes interviewed by the Duquesne Company's president, Wellwin's questions were embarrassing, and Mark did not see where some led, but he felt he must be frank. The old fellow's glance was searching and he carried the stamp of command. Mark felt the other weighed him accurately, and somehow imagined he was satisfied.

Wellwin sent him to the St. Jerome mill. He was certainly not indulged; he had perhaps got the hardest work one could give a beginner, but Mark was persuaded Travis had some orders about him and, so to speak, tried him out. In the meantime, it was all he wanted. He did not know where his search for Turnbull would carry him and where he must begin. In a sense, it was not important. When the time for him to start arrived, he felt he would know. The force that had conquered his hesitation and driven him across the sea would supply the clue. Although the supposition was perhaps rather romantic than logical, he was willing to wait.

The foreman came from the mill and stopped when he saw Mark.

"In twenty minutes you'll have Travis's canoe at the landing-steps and wait for your passenger. I reckon he's going fishing and you'll stop as long as he wants you."

"Very well," said Mark. "Who is the passenger?"

"Search me," said the foreman. "Old man Wellwin's at the office, and maybe brought a city sport along. Anyhow, you're all right for the afternoon."

Mark agreed. The sunshine called, and he would frankly sooner paddle a canoe across the sparkling water than feed a furnace in the clanging mill. All the same, time did not allow his getting fresh clothes. His overalls were greasy, but since he did not wear much else, he could not pull them off. Then all Wellwin's friend wanted was a man to paddle him upriver.

He carried down and sponged the canoe. She was the Canadian model, lightly built at an Ontario factory and sewn by copper wire. Mark brought her to the steps and waited.

A girl carrying a fishing-rod came down the bank. Her summer clothes were fashionable, but Mark noted her careless, graceful balance on the high, uneven steps. He thought her attractive, although her glance was perhaps rather imperious. The queer thing was, he saw nobody else; but he doubted if the canoe would carry two passengers. She refused the hand he held out to steady her, and jumped on board. A Canadian canoe is not remarkably stable, and had she been awkward, Mark imagined they might have capsized; but he had not expected her to be awkward. He pushed off and waited for an order.

"Upriver," she said carelessly.

Mark, balancing in the stern, dipped the single paddle. He was not an expert boatman, but sometimes in the evening he went on the river, and his reach was long. Then his muscles were hard, and he had the athlete's feeling for rhythmic

movement. The powerful stroke was measured and the canoe went upstream fast.

The girl was occupied by her fishing-rod, but sometimes she studied Mark, and he began to be embarrassed by his greasy overalls. She saw a rather large young man whose look was frank and yet not altogether youthful. She sensed force, quiet force, and control; the young fellow's habit was not to let himself go. When, once or twice, he met her glance, his was level and steady. Well, she had reckoned on his being like that.

"Do you think I could catch a trout?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Mark. "If you like, I'll fix your rod."

The girl laughed. "You are not rash. I believe I am a pretty good fisherman."

"I did not doubt your cleverness," Mark replied politely. "Large fish are pretty scarce, and the sun is bright."

"After your dark hills, that perhaps is something fresh?"

"On the whole, the North is dark," Mark agreed. "It looks as if you knew my home is in the Old Country."

"That is so, Mr. Crozier. When I wanted a boatman I asked Travis for you. You see, I am Constance Wellwin, Bob's sister."

Mark had thought it possible, but since Miss Wellwin was an important lady, he had not seen his line. When she stated she was Bob's sister she had perhaps meant to give him his cue.

"Some business called my father to the mill, and I thought I'd like the journey downriver on board the *Frontenac*," she resumed with a twinkle. "He is occupied at the office, and Travis said the fishing sometimes is good. Now perhaps I have properly accounted for the excursion. I hope you do not mind my engaging you for boatman?"

"On a summer afternoon, the river has attractions the mill has not, and I'd sooner paddle a canoe than stoke a boiler," Mark replied. "But don't you want to catch a trout?"

Constance gave him a thoughtful glance. She wondered whether his remark was humorous; but perhaps he did not know if he might play up.

"I'm not very keen to fish, and you think the sun too bright. If you are not tired, you might paddle upstream."

Mark's stroke got faster and the sparkling current splashed against the bows. Stump-dotted fields and scattered pines rolled by. Resinous scents floated on the warm wind, and in the distance cowbells chimed. Mark liked their queer metallic note; perhaps it was strange, but he had liked the locomotive bells at Montreal. In the meantime, he waited. If Miss Wellwin had an object for her excursion, to indicate it was her part.

The river widened and the current ran slackly along the curving bank. The sawmill-stacks had vanished; in front were small, dark pines and quiet, sloping fields. By and by Constance turned to Mark.

"You might paddle slowly. I do not want you to labor like a machine, and this is a charming spot. Well, I stated I am Bob's sister, and when he talked about you I rather think he drew an accurate portrait."

"To know his remarks might help. Since he's a very good sort, I'd try not to let him down."

Constance smiled. "For one thing, he declared you were modest, and at first your reserve was rather baffling. I believe he did not exaggerate. Then, like other Britishers, you hated to hustle, but when you were forced you could get a move on, and he had known you move surprisingly fast. In fact, as a rule, he reckoned you got where you wanted to go. The phraseology, which you perhaps recognize, is Bob's."

"Our folks are slow," Mark agreed. "We weigh things, and sometimes when we're satisfied, the time to start is gone. However, I don't expect you're interested, and you ought to allow for some reserve. In a sense, I'm a foreigner, and don't yet know my ground."

"In the Old Country a mill-hand is—a mill-hand? You imagined it a drawback?"

"I suppose I did imagine something like that."

"Then, I don't know if you are nice! The important thing is, you are Bob's pal. I have no other brother, and I like to know his friends. Where it's possible, they are my friends. Perhaps you see the implication?"

"Bob is trustful," Mark observed. "Sometimes I think his enthusiasm carries him away. Since I believe your judgment's cooler, you ought to sympathize with my embarrassment."

Constance smiled. She approved Mark's quiet humor, and in some respects she really thought her judgment better than Bob's, but her smile was kind.

"Well, I frankly wanted to study you, but that was not all. You perhaps know Bob is resolved to marry your relation?"

Mark saw light, and admitted Miss Wellwin's interest was justified.

"So far, I rather think Flora has not agreed; but she is not my relation."

"Then, she is, perhaps, Miss Forsyth's relation?"

"Flora is Madge's cousin. When I was a boy at Howbarrow, she was at the Millhouse, and she has been my friend ever since. I imagine she is all Bob pictured her."

"One must make allowance for a lover's enthusiasm, and the picture was splendidly vague. Since I acknowledge my curiosity, you might supply a few particulars. To begin with, is Miss Scot like you?"

"Not at all," said Mark with a twinkle. "Flora is small and light. I stand for the old type; she is up-to-date. By contrast with my cautious soberness, she is keen, and confident, and, so to speak, joyously alert. In fact, she's rather your Canadian type. Yet she has inherited qualities from Border yeomen. She's stanch—leal is our word—and very proud. You could not force her to be shabby, and I believe she never was afraid."

"Your portrait is attractive. Why does she hesitate to marry Bob?"

"I don't know. However, Bob is rich."

"Does one refuse a lover because he is rich?"

"Flora might," Mark replied. "We are a queer, independent lot. Flora's as poor as I am. It's possible she feels Bob must ponder."

"To argue like that is not altogether up-to-date. It implies some balance and control. You talked about inherited qualities! Were Miss Scot's ancestors like yours?"

Mark nodded. "We were farmers, shepherds, and quarrymen. We slept at our bleak, dark homesteads, but lived in the rain and wind. However, I don't see why I should bore you——"

"I am not bored," Constance rejoined. "After all, one inherits much and Miss Scot might yet marry my brother. Well, you claim to stand for the old type, but one imagines the old Borderers romantic swash-bucklers. Bob made an excursion to a moorland churchyard, marked by a headless cross, where the crumbling tombstones carry only women's names."

Mark laughed. "The men were killed in the mosses, and hanged at Carlisle! The tradition's not at all accurate, as some inscriptions prove. Still, they probably were a grim lot. The country's the sternest in England and weak folk would starve."

"Bob saw your name."

"Yes," said Mark, and his smile vanished. "The stone is old. My father and brother were the last—and their luck was not good. But one mustn't be gloomy. Shall I rig the fishing-rod?"

"The trout are not feeding," said Constance. "I would sooner talk."

For a minute or two she was quiet and Mark leisurely swung the paddle. The water shone in the sun, and where the current rippled round a point its throb was musical. Mark was not romantic, but on a summer afternoon to float across

the quiet pool with an attractive girl had some charm. Then Miss Wellwin was Bob's sister, and he knew her friendly.

Constance mused. She had wanted to find out as much as possible about Miss Scot, but Mark interested her. He was rather a handsome, athletic fellow, and she sensed his sincerity. Then she knew his story, and somebody Bob had met had talked about the unlucky Croziers. When one studied Mark, one saw he had not the happy carelessness that went with youth. He had stated his folk were a grim lot, and Constance did not see him take the easy road. His stained overalls and broken nails were perhaps significant.

He moved her to pity. She must not admit he attracted her, and she knew about Miss Forsyth. Constance rather liked to meddle and she felt he ought not to allow his brother's tragedy to haunt him. His business was to concentrate on his career. The ground perhaps was awkward, but her object was good.

"I hope you are happy at the mill," she said.

"Why, yes," said Mark. "On the whole, I like the gang and Travis is kind. I might, of course, get an easier post, but I understand I'm not there for good."

"You are being put through it, and weighed. I don't claim to be discreet, but, if it's some comfort, I believe the company's president is satisfied."

Mark looked up with a twinkle, for he recaptured his queer interview with the rather daunting old fellow.

"Mr. Wellwin saw me for about ten minutes."

"I have not known him cheated," Constance rejoined. "One mustn't boast; but where he trusts he's generous. Then the company is powerful, and a man who satisfies Duquesne's can get the post he likes. Well, by and by you are going to the woods, and if you can stand for it, I think the chance to get ahead is yours."

"You are kind," said Mark, with a touch of embarrassment. "I suppose I reckoned on the chance. Bob is a useful pal."

"He is keen to help. However, in order to make good, you must concentrate. You must stay with your job and think for your job. In fact, you cannot think about another."

Mark looked up and unconsciously frowned.

"Ah," he said, "now I begin to see where you lead!"

"I am not entitled to meddle, but Bob's friends are my friends, and if you let him down he would be hurt," Constance rejoined. "I believe you cannot find the man you want, and if you did find him, it might not banish your doubts. Then Bob states you are engaged to marry a charming girl. Don't you think you ought to let all that's done with go?"

"Perhaps it's strange, but I do not, and Madge agrees," said Mark in a quiet voice. "However, if I find my brooding interferes with my occupation, I'll give up my post."

"I was not thinking for the company," said Constance with a touch of haughtiness. "Bob declares you are not a fool, and I hoped you would ponder—To turn down a career in which you might make your mark, in order to follow an illusion, is ridiculous."

"If I start, I follow a man, and since he's flesh and blood, where he goes I can go. All the same, it's possible I may never hit his track, and if I do not, I expect to be resigned."

Constance's look was puzzled. Mark smiled.

"You see, I do not like my part, and if I'm allowed, I'd be happy to leave the thing alone. But I expect you have had enough. Let's talk about something else."

Constance indulged him, and for a time they pushed upstream. The shadows behind the pines got longer, and by and by Mark turned the canoe. When they stopped at the landing-steps Constance gave him her hand.

"You are obstinate, but after all I like your pluck," she said.

CHAPTER XV

THE BURST TUBE

The morning was hot and Mark sat in his wheelbarrow in front of the mill boiler. Behind him was a stack of sawed-up slabs, ragged board-ends, and knotty resinous stuff; but the pressure was near the danger-line and for a minute or two he was justified to rest. A few yards off, the engineer was occupied with a tallow swab and Mark thought him bothered. The engine carried a heavy load and a crosshead-shoe was hot. The company's president, however, was about and the saws must not stop.

Mark had nothing to do with the engine. His business was to supply the steam, but he thought the bosses rather recklessly speeded up the mill. An important customer pressed for the material he had ordered, and although the plant was old, machines and men must labor to the limit of their powers. The men did not grumble. Mark admitted the Canadians cheerfully ran risks one did not front in England.

By and by he got up. The foreman crossed the floor, glanced at the pressure-gauge and nodded.

"Keep her there! When Wellwin's through at the office he'll take a look round. He likes to hear things hum, and since he knows Maysons have got after Travis about their stuff, I'm letting the old plant rip."

The man was friendly, and Mark said, "If the mill were mine, I'd lighten steam by twenty pounds. Anyhow, I doubt if you can cut the stuff in the time fixed."

"We got to try," the other rejoined with a grin. "The Duquesne Company's engagements stand. Yes, sir, when you trade with us, you get the goods you order and you get them right on time. Office gang's talk; but when Wellwin says so, we got to make good. You watch your gauges; unless I book a record cut, somebody will be fired."

Mark threw back the furnace door. Flame curled about the hole, and turning his head from the heat, he flung in fresh wood. The fire roared, and when the door clanged, by contrast with the dazzling reflections, the mill was dark. In the gloom, a circular saw, spinning so fast that one did not know it moved, glimmered dully, and when a log was forced against its teeth, its shrill scream pierced the crash of parted fiber. The gang-saws plunged up and down, and their thin, high-strung blades struck a queer harmonic note. Rollers rattled, wire-ropes on the feed-ways clanged.

The mill was like an orchestra. The turmoil was measured, and the engines' labored stroke marked the rhythm. The machines' parts harmonized, and sometimes one, so to speak, rested for a bar, but if the proper beat were missed, an engineer would know. Bent figures moved among the sliding logs and vanished where showers of dust leaped up. All strained and sweated, and since speed was important, sometimes risked hand and leg.

Mark admitted a sort of thrill. He was young and high speed moved him. In Canada one certainly got action, and he liked to use all his power. Then the mill was not his, and if a machine crashed, he was not accountable. In England, where engineers used caution, he had known a driving-wheel go through the roof.

In the meantime, his business was to stoke, and the boiler was the locomotive pattern, in which numerous tubes carry the flame from the furnace to the back end. A locomotive boiler steams fast, but has some disadvantages, particularly where the water used corrodes the thin tubes.

By and by Mark saw Travis and Wellwin in the mill. Wellwin was tall and his clothes were city clothes, but somehow he was not conspicuous. Mark felt rather vaguely that the old fellow harmonized with the turmoil. He knew where to stop, and where to move fast; in fact, the president went about the mill like a workman. Sometimes he touched Travis, who nodded. Wellwin did not meddle, but his glance searched the noisy sheds, and where it rested one felt the strain get harder.

Then Mark thought Wellwin studied him, and he jumped for the pile of wood. If the president was interested, he must get busy, but when he had moved a few slab-ends he stopped. For two or three minutes he need not feed the hungry furnace, and he was not going to pretend. He imagined the old fellow had noted his jump, and was dryly amused, but his glance passed Mark and he followed Travis across the floor.

For some time Mark was occupied, and then he saw the trembling pressure-index swing back. Steam had suddenly

dropped, and he threw open the furnace door. Flame blew out and licked the boiler front, and although Mark jumped, his clothes and face were scorched. He heard a queer roaring noise in the fire-box, and knew a tube had burst. A scalding deluge might blow across the shed and he must get the door back. The door clanged, and steam curled about the boiler's back end, where the smokebox is.

For a few moments Mark had labored mechanically, but now his brain began to work. The turmoil in the mill died away, puzzled workmen turned their heads, and the engineer scrambled across the rubbish-stack. The fellow had stopped the engines, although, if left alone, they would carry off some steam from the damaged boiler. If he knew where the trouble was, he did not know his job. When the water blew down, the uncovered tubes would burn and collapse. Mark stopped the man.

"Get back and open the throttle. A tube is gone. I think you have got some patent stoppers in the store?"

"We don't have to use them," said the other dully. "Can you fix the things?"

"It oughtn't to bother me," Mark rejoined. "Start your engine; and then wait by the back end."

He jumped a saw-bench and sped across the shed. Wellwin and Travis saw him go, but he did not stop for Travis's shout, and they started for the boiler. A few moments after they arrived, Mark pushed through the groups that gathered round the spot. He carried some sacks and two log rods with circular plugs fixed to their ends.

Steam blew from the joints of the smokebox door and floated to the roof in a thick white cloud. Hot drops splashed the men, and a muffled, roaring noise throbbled inside the boiler.

"I guess you can't draw the fire," Wellwin remarked.

"She might drown out; I don't know—" said the engineer. "Maybe we can stop the tube; but I haven't used this fixing. Anyhow, we'll try."

Mark threw a sack on his head, and pulling another round his chest, asked a man for his belt. When he fastened the sack he turned to Wellwin.

"Before the fire drowns some fresh tubes may go, sir, and you might be held up for a week. I expect to fix the plugs."

"Get to it," said Wellwin, and signed the others back.

Mark pulled the fastening lever, and jumped when the door swung. Steam and scalding water blew from the opening. The broken tube throbbled like a machine-gun and a hot cloud tossed about the boiler end. Mark, on his knees in the wet dust, beckoned the engineer. His head was bent, and a foot or two above it the scalding blast pierced the vapor. To see and breathe was hard, but somehow he steered the end of the bar into the spouting tube.

Then he thought he was beaten. Crouched under the sacks, he could not properly use his arms, but he dared not get up. Although the stopper was not yet expanded, it looked as if the steam would blow back the obstacle. Mark labored mechanically. He had forgotten Wellwin was about, and he certainly did not think for his employer. All he really knew was, the tube must be stopped. Fire and steam were man's servants and must not conquer him.

For the most part, he and the engineer were hidden by the tossing cloud. Mark had thought the fellow did not know his job, but his pluck, at all events, was good, and he helped nobly. Mark's heart beat; the steam and fumes began to choke him, but the resistance was less, and if he could hold on, they might win. Then he knew the plug had passed the leak; the pressure now carried it forward, and the rod went easily.

"Another foot!" he gasped. "Steady the back disc in! We are through!"

The expanding plugs blocked the tube's ends, and the cloud got thin and melted; Mark got up, rather shakily, and threw off the steaming sacks. Perhaps it was strange, but although his wet hands smarted, he thought he was not scalded much. Hoping his maneuver would not be noted, he pushed the engineer, who joined Wellwin.

"She's fixed, sir. I reckon she'll stand for an easy load, and we might finish the Mayson stuff."

"Then start her up and get a fresh fireman," said Wellwin, and when the engines began to turn, beckoned Mark. "Come on

to the office."

They went to Travis's office, and Wellwin indicated a chair.

"Now we can talk. Are you hurt?"

Mark's hands were blistered, but he said he thought the burns would not bother him. Wellwin nodded. He was tall; his clothes were slack, and not at all fashionable, and his heavy shoulders were rather bent. His face was lined and his hands were large and powerful. "Do you think those plugs will hold?" he asked.

"They ought to hold for a time, sir, but I'd reduce steam."

"Why did the tube blow in? Travis tells me they didn't see much scale when they opened the boiler."

"That might account for something. The feed-water's clean, but some water has a puzzling corrosive action on steel."

"Looks as if you knew something about steel."

"I was at a first-class foundry, sir."

Wellwin nodded. His brain worked fast, and he liked a short reply.

"Why did you push the engineer?"

"Oh, well," said Mark with a touch of embarrassment, "in a way, perhaps, I'd meddled. Then, he's rather a good sort, and a good engine-man."

He noted Wellwin's twinkle, but the old fellow said, "Although he was rattled, you were not. I suppose an Old Country boiler sometimes explodes and you have got up against trouble of the sort before?"

"No, sir. At the foundry we built boilers. I never had anything to do with a really awkward explosion."

"Bob talks," Wellwin remarked. "He helped you pump a mine tunnel when a flood broke in. I hope you got some reward."

Mark imagined he must not state he got five pounds, and he smiled.

"The mine was sold and I was fired. It explains my starting for Montreal."

Wellwin pondered. His rather inscrutable glance was fixed on Mark, who knew he was weighed. Nothing he had said was of much consequence, but he imagined all the old fellow had wanted was to see him. He hoped Wellwin was satisfied, for he certainly did not know.

"I might give you a post as engine-man; I don't know if we want a first-class engineer. Then Bob reckoned you were willing to study up the lumber business. Well, the company goes ahead, and I see some chances for a useful man. If you like it at the mill, you might stay with us."

"Thank you, sir," said Mark. "I expect you are occupied, and I ought to be back."

Wellwin smiled. "You'll go along to a drugstore and get your hands dressed. Then for a day or two you can superintend. Your business is to keep the boiler under steam until Travis has cut the Mayson stuff. Another fellow will throw in the wood. That's all, I guess."

Mark went to the drugstore, and when the *Frontenac* in the evening steamed upriver Wellwin and Constance walked about the promenade deck.

"You had Bob's friend for a boatman," Wellwin remarked. "Sometimes your brother takes a shine to folks."

Constance laughed. "Yes; I argued like that. On the whole, however, I think Bob did not exaggerate; but, of course, my judgment is not as informed as yours."

"Sometimes it's sound," Wellwin rejoined with a twinkle. "The young fellow's straight. Although he helped us keep the

machines going, he refused to let down the engineer. Then when the tube blew in, he sort of seized control naturally and without much effort. Well, I'd thought him slow, but when he's up against an awkward job I reckon he uses qualities he doesn't yet know he's got."

"You are rather keen," Constance agreed. "When Crozier is moved I think he's another man. However, he is Bob's pal, and it has nothing to do with me."

CHAPTER XVI

PICTURES OF THE WOODS

A wedge-shaped ripple trailed behind the canoe, and where it passed, the pines' reflections broke. In the sun the lake shone like glass, but by the island the shadows got long, and their soft gray and green melted in the paddle's eddying splash. The air was cooling, for Indian summer had begun, but Bob Wellwin's stroke was slow. He had since breakfast carried a gun about the woods, and now he languidly enjoyed the evening calm. Mark, in the bottom of the canoe, smoked a cigarette.

"I feel as if it was supper-time. What about getting a move on, Bob?" he said.

"Oh, well, if the hash burns, Constance might be mad. The convention is, young women have not our gross appetite. It's possible, but they certainly don't like to wait. However, my habit is to take supper at hotels where you hear the elevators slam and trolley-cars clang by. All the loafers in town walk about the rotunda, and, as a rule, an electric organ runs full-blast at a cheap restaurant across the street. I don't claim much culture, but I'd sooner be on the lake, and I'm not going to hustle for Constance and you."

Mark laughed and pulled a cushion under his head. The mill had stopped for a week, and he had joined Bob at the Wellwin cottage on the Ontario lake. Throughout the hot summer he had labored in the noisy sheds, but on the whole he admitted he had not much grounds to grumble. His muscles were hard, and the work was not monotonous, for the foreman had moved him about.

Now cool, bracing Indian summer had begun, he was at a saw-bench, and Travis weighed his plans for improving the roller-gear and guides. Mark felt he made some progress, although he now and then imagined he was being pushed along.

Perhaps he ought to be modest, but the mill was run for a profit, and if his advance were not economically justified, he reckoned it would stop. The Duquesne Company's servants must earn their pay, and since Mark rather obviously did so, it did not look as if his comrades were jealous. In Canada, promotion rather goes by competence than by rule. Then, he was a good mixer, and although the men's humor was not fastidious, when the joke was at his cost he grinned. Yet one or two knew the Englishman, if forced, could use his fists.

In fact, Mark was satisfied. His pay was good, and for all his bodily fatigue he enjoyed a queer tranquillity he had not known in England. For four or five days he and Bob had roamed the woods and paddled about the lake, and he admitted he had had a glorious holiday.

Stretching his legs, he looked over the canoe's side. Nine or ten yards off, a small shining ripple outlined the dusky beach; in front, the calm water reflected smooth gray rocks and dim red trunks. One smelt the resin in the pines, and where the sunset glimmered behind the island a loon called. The noise was like a drunken laugh.

"The loon is not a friendly bird; you feel he jeers at you," said Bob. "In the Old Country, the nearest humorist you have got to him is a peacock. Now, I don't know if I'm a romantic, but I like to think about the Millhouse in your Border dale. In the evenings you hear the lambs, and the thrushes sing. Yellow primroses grow by the pool. Aren't you homesick?"

"There's not much use in being homesick," Mark rejoined. "Besides, the primroses and the spring are gone, and the lambs have grown. All is different, and I expect rain blows down the dale."

"It's possible," said Bob in a thoughtful voice. "Only your folks don't alter. You are a steadfast lot. Well, I myself am obstinate, and when winter is over I am going back."

His paddle splashed faster; smooth rocks and misty trunks slipped back into the gloom, and by and by a cove opened up. At the plank landing Constance Wellwin and a man with one arm waited. The man was Wellwin's pensioner, and his wife was cook at the summer house. A circular saw had removed his arm and a log had crushed his leg. When the young men landed he limped across the planks, but Bob signed him back.

"You don't need to help us, Malcolm; but you might rub out the guns. When I can't pack a canoe across the beach, I'll quit paddling."

He balanced the canoe, upside down, on his bent shoulders and extended arms, and went off. Mark gave the man their guns and picked up a duck and two willow grouse.

"In some respects," said Constance, "Bob is boyish. He doesn't like to hide his talents, and he'd sooner be thought a good woodsman than the best salesman the company employs. But are the birds all you have shot?"

Bob, returning rather breathless, gave her an ironical grin.

"For a social leader, you don't use much tact. Mark is tired and hungry, and you want to know if a noble duck and two fine grouse is all he's got! When you have a husband, you'll find out that the proper time for such inquiries is after supper. Any healthy young fellow would sooner be thought a sport than a successful business man."

They went to the small wooden house, and in the veranda Bob gave Malcolm the duck and grouse.

"That is the lot; Mrs. Malcolm mustn't be extravagant," he said, and, leaning against a post, resumed: "Sometimes I feel the golden days are gone. Twenty years since, when you went hunting you shot up all the stuff you could carry. Game swarmed in the woods, and the rivers swarmed with fish. Now the woods are melting, and where we dump our sawdust the trout must quit or die."

"Twenty years since," said Constance, "you could not carry a gun. Then I expect the Duquesne Company is accountable for some poisoned fish. However, you stated that Mark was hungry."

Mrs. Malcolm served a first-class supper, and although the house was but for summer holidays, the glass and china and silver were good. Since the evenings got cold, pine logs snapped in the open grate, and when the plates were carried off the group gathered round the fire.

"A good Canadian boosts his country, but Bob declares the golden days are gone," Constance remarked.

"Just now," said Bob, "I'm a commercial drummer, but I love the quiet woods, and I have not much use for the raw new settlements and their garbage-dumps. Then I know two or three ambitious towns I would like to burn. The transition-stage is an ugly stage, but ugliness is not essential, and Canada goes ahead. By and by we'll replant the forests we destroy; we will not pollute our rivers, as they are polluted now, and we'll build noble, clean cities along the big railroad-tracks. The Laurentian rocks and Alberta foothills will be quiet national parks. A better time is coming, and may come in our time."

"I wonder whether we will be satisfied when it arrives. Are you going to Ottawa to help the change along?"

"Not on my life!" said Bob. "Maybe they need some honest men, but my talents are not for politics and graft. For the old man's sake, I'm in business, and I hope to make good, but when I reckon I have done so I'll buy me a farm."

"Bob's program is fixed, and that's something," Constance remarked. "He is perhaps not very ambitious, but when Father sent him to the woods, I think he did not know all he did."

Mark said nothing. Constance's habit was to banter Bob, and although he declared he indulged his father, he was a competent salesman. Well, Mark himself was by instinct and birth a farmer, and he loved the green dale in the bleak English moors. It was, however, not important. Where a man could not choose his job, he must like the job he had.

"Talking about the woods, you haven't yet seen my pictures," Bob resumed. "At one time, I used a camera, and I dare say Constance knows where the collection is. I don't claim it's good, but you'll get some notion where you are soon going."

Constance went to a bookcase and gave him a small portfolio. Bob pulled out a photograph and moved the lamp.

"The bunkhouse, Number Three camp, in winter! Our layout is not altogether up to date. In some circumstances, the hand-lumbering plan is economical."

The picture was good; Mark thought all Bob did was done efficiently. He saw a long wooden shed against which snow was piled, and pines whose branches bent under their white load. In front of the house, steam floated about two horses and a sledge loaded with logs. Steely light seemed to sparkle behind the trees, but the branches were motionless. Mark sensed daunting quiet and Arctic frost.

"The cold is pretty fierce," Bob remarked. "Sometimes all's so still at nights that you jump when a frozen tree cracks. In the next picture, you get action!"

A plank, six feet above the ground, was notched into a rather large tree, and a man balancing at its end, swung his axe. His arms, extended backwards, were in a line with the long shaft; one saw his muscular body rather followed than directed the circling axe's sweep. The nobly poised figure carried the stamp of dynamic force.

"Lucien could chop," said Bob. "When the logs piled up at St. Joseph, he was crushed in the jamb. The other picture is Johanson. Something like a rodeo stunt, but he rides a log."

The trunk, tilted at one end from the water, plunged down a rapid, and a man on its treacherous, rounded top carried a long pole. Breaking waves and angry whirlpools indicated speed. In the background were rocks and trees. Johanson's pole was pointed like a spear at another trunk; his knee was bent and his foot lifted, as if he danced. When one disturbs its equilibrium, a floating log rolls. Mark knew, because he had experimented behind the boom at St. Jerome, and, as a rule, went overboard.

"The river-jacks are physically a splendid lot," Constance remarked. "In fact, modern Canada produces a roughneck type as fine as the classical sculptors' models. However, I suppose it will vanish and our men will get fat. Where we now use muscle, we'll soon use machines."

"Machines do not altogether banish strain," said Mark. "Sometimes flesh and blood must keep the engines' pace. In England, we make stipulations and fix the output. So far as I know, in Canada, the workmen must speed up."

"They learn," said Bob, rather dryly. "You don't need to put them wise. To a limit, they are willing. Where you cut your output they know you must cut the pay. Anyhow, here's my best shot: *The Wrestler*. I believe he was English, but in a sort of rough-house rodeo he knocked out our best men."

Mark took the picture carelessly. Stiff, dark pines rolled back from a belt of trampled snow, and small groups occupied a row of logs; their figures uncouth and bulky in blankets and ragged skin coats. In the foreground, a man, nearly naked for all the cold, stretched his arms and waited for another to get up from the snow. His body was large and powerful, his pose somehow truculent. Mark's carelessness vanished, and he carried the photograph to the lamp.

"Was the wrestler your man?" he asked.

"No," said Bob. "The Phelps-Martineau boundary touches the river a few miles below our camp, and he came over with their gang. Our lot had fixed up some sports for Christmas day, and the others brought their champion. You see, when two companies run logs down a river disputes begin, and the boys played for their side. The show was a rough-house and, I admit, we were beaten."

Constance touched her brother. Mark's glance was fixed on the photograph and his brows were firmly knit. Constance wanted to seize the picture; she would have liked to destroy it, but she did not see a plan. Besides, she was too late. Bob had given Mark the clue both had hoped he would not get.

"Do you know the fellow's name?" he asked.

"Lewis, Levison? Law, I think! It's nearly two years since," said Bob, and stopped, for he began to see a light. "You know him?" he resumed.

"Yes," said Mark. "In the Old Country, he was Turnbull, but he is the man I want. If you don't mind, I'll keep his portrait."

"Perhaps you ought not," said Constance. "Two years will soon have gone since he was at the camp, and lumbermen move about. He might be in the woods beyond Edmonton, two thousand miles off, and he might have crossed the Rockies. Then, if you did find him and he knew something about the accident at the quarry, you could not force him to enlighten you."

"I hope to try," said Mark, in a quiet voice.

Constance knew she was baffled. Mark's mouth set tight. Although the search might cost him much, he could not be moved.

"Oh, well, I'm sorry. But if you are resolved to follow the man, I suppose you must. Bob perhaps can help."

"I don't want to help," Bob rejoined. "If I'd imagined I was going to put Mark on the track, I'd have burned the photograph. All the same, I know his stubbornness, and I have got to see him out."

"We will talk about it again," said Mark. "Bob's holidays, like mine, are pretty scarce, and after a splendid day in the woods, we are not going to bother about disturbing things."

Bob put up the pictures, and Constance went to the piano. She was sorry for Mark and doubted if music would banish his moody thoughts, but so long as she played and sang he would not feel he was forced to talk.

CHAPTER XVII

MARK GOES NORTH

Two days after his shooting excursion, Mark occupied a corner of a second-class smoking compartment on board the Montreal express. The train rolled smoothly along the bank of a broad river. Rail-joints clicked and the wheels throbbed with a soothing rhythm; pale sunshine touched the water; speeding pines and wooden homesteads cut the tranquil evening sky. For all the quiet landscape's charm, Mark's brows were knit.

His holiday was over and he would soon be back at his saw-bench in the mill. In a way, it did not bother him. He was willing to labor, and now the calm he had known was broken, he admitted he was happy at St. Jerome. Moreover, he made progress; Wellwin, perhaps for Bob's sake, had agreed to try him out, but he had some grounds to think the keen old fellow satisfied. In fact, had he doubted, Bob's frank approval, and one or two discreet remarks of Constance's would have reassured him. Mark pictured the hopeful letters he had written Madge.

He had begun to think Turnbull had vanished for good and perhaps was dead; his using a fresh name had baffled the inquiries Mark had persuaded Travis to make. The fellow, however, was alive and active two years since, and Mark admitted he got a knock when he saw his picture. After all, he was ambitious, and for Madge's sake, he wanted to seize the chance Bob had given him to mend his fortunes. There was the trouble, because he must follow the clue he had begun to imagine, and perhaps to hope, he might not get. Yet he knew Madge's pluck and she had agreed that he must not run away from his duty. Well, there was no use in brooding; he was back at the point he had reached before.

In the early dusk the train rolled into Montreal. Mark walked down St. James, put his bag in a hotel, and started for Dominion Park. He might not get another holiday for long, and the noise and lights and fireworks might banish moody thought. They did not altogether do so, and when he got back to the hotel his sleep was disturbed. Before day broke, he heard music in the cathedral float across the quiet streets. To get up was some relief, and taking the carriage-road up the mountain, he saw the sun rise. When the first train for Quebec started he was on board.

In the morning, he got to work at the mill. Travis declared Law was not, and had not been at any time, on the company's pay-sheet. Angelique Leroux did not know the man, but she took the portrait. Her numerous relations were river-jacks and she promised to inquire. Mark knew she would do so. Angelique was a good sort, and he imagined she sometimes mended his clothes. The *habitants* inherit a vein of the French peasant's industrious frugality.

When Mark thought about it, Angelique Leroux, like Constance Wellwin, was an attractive girl. He imagined they knew he was not attracted; Angelique at all events knew Madge's portrait was in his room, and Madame had remarked that the belle Anglaise had a serious air.

Yet both were friendly, and Mark was persuaded that where Bob schemed for his advantage Constance was his confederate.

All the same, Angelique's inquiries did not help. Nobody she knew knew Law, and it looked as if the frail clue broke. Mark, however, was not cheated; somehow he was convinced he would find another clue, he had not for nothing been steered to the Wellwin summer cottage and given the photograph.

Indian summer melted, and in the keen mornings gold and crimson maple-leaves strewed the plank sidewalks. The logs had vanished from the pond behind the boom and the river froze. For a time, Travis's reserves fed the saws, and the men he did not need went to the woods. Then snow fell, the frost got keen, and the engines stopped.

Travis gave Mark his orders. He was to go to a camp on the height-of-land, where the rivers that run south to the St. Lawrence spring. Until the ice broke, he must help the choppers and teamsters. Travis hoped Mark would like it, but rather implied that he doubted. Mark packed his waterproof kit-bag and in the bitter morning, when the moon was yet bright, the clumsy bob-sledges plunged down the river-bank.

Thin smoke began to float about the roofs of St. Jerome, lights sprang up behind double windows, but the mill on the sawdust bluff was dark. The smoke plumes had vanished and the tall stacks nakedly cut the sky. At length, the saws were quiet, and the rapid that brawled in summer was frozen.

For a few moments Mark indulged a queer hesitation. At the mill, he had begun to be ambitious, and looking forward hopefully, to calculate his progress. Now all in front was dark; he was going to the woods Turnbull had haunted, but the road on which he had started might carry him far. In fact, he admitted, with a vague, half-superstitious shrinking, that he might not come back. However, to brood about it would not help, and when one fronted the biting frost at dawn one's nerve was not firm. Mark beat his numbed hands and went down the bank.

Other parties had gone upriver and the trail was wide. The sledges ran smoothly on the beaten snow, and the steam from the horses, floating back like a silver cloud, froze on the loads. Nobody wanted to loiter, and the pace was fast. They nooned and brewed tea by a fire at the bottom of a bluff where the sun was on the pines. Mark was warm, but he saw the snow a yard or two from the fire did not melt.

When dark fell and hands and feet began to tingle, they got a Homeric supper at a *habitant* farm, but for all his efforts in the frost, Mark did not soon sleep. His kit-bag was an awkward bed, and when he stretched his stiff legs the coarse blue blanket slipped from his body. The windows were double, but a searching draught crept under the door. The big stove burned wood, and Mark smelt hot iron and heard the wind rumble in the pipe. Sometimes big drops of tar splashed from the joint in the roof. The red iron glimmered, and the reflections from the partly opened register flickered across uncouth, huddled forms. The men slept noisily, and sometimes one, disturbed by the cold, turned on his other side and swore.

But for two or three, the gang was French-Canadian. Warned by tales about lumber camps Mark had reckoned on something like a brutal vein in his companions, but so far the brutality was not at all conspicuous, and when the men left St. Jerome most of them were sober. Although the *habitants* lumbermen perhaps were primitive, they were marked by some primitive virtues.

In Canada the two races, speaking different languages, lived more or less harmoniously side by side, but did not mix. One vaguely sensed a dividing-line neither dared cross. Quebec was as French as Normandy; Ontario was Scottish. For the most part, the British sprang from Presbyterian stock; the *habitants* were staunchly Catholic. All the same, they and their priests were loyal citizens. In Canada, religious orders enjoyed a security that was not theirs in Catholic France. But it had nothing to do with Mark. The red stove and huddled figures melted, and he was asleep.

At daybreak he got up and braced himself to front the cold. As long as he was in the woods, he hated the morning start. On the trail, one slept in the clothes one wore all day, and one did not wash. In fact, at the camps, to wash was sometimes a rash adventure.

Breakfast vanished in about ten minutes. Teamsters, buckling harness with numbed hands, swore; the sledges lurched ahead, and the gang took the road. The snow got looser, and the sledge-shoes dragged in the soft stuff. At some places, water had flooded the ice and the frozen crust was treacherous. Then men's rubber boots were long, and Mark had stuffed his with hay, but when he plowed through the pasty slush he imagined he risked frozen feet. Sometimes an open rapid forced them to climb the bank, and the party's advance was not fast.

Where the snow was dry, the trail curved like a pale-blue ribbon across the dazzling surface, and for all the cold, the bright reflections burned Mark's skin. His face smarted, and his eyes ached; although his fur mittens were thick, his hands got numb. In the northern woods, one does not wear gloves with separate fingers.

At dusk they pulled off the ice into a grove of small pines where the horses might shelter, and, building a large fire, camped in the snow. Mark was warned to pull off his rubber boots, but although sometimes he burned his feet, his body was cold. He wondered whether the others slept, for he himself did not, and to start in the morning cost him much.

In the afternoon the party stopped at a spot where for some distance wide dark-colored patches checkered the snow. The river pierced high ground, and it looked as if the swift current had broken and flooded the ice. Tangled pines grew in the rocks and the banks were steep. When one crossed the dark belts one's boots broke the crust, and the ice under the freezing slush cracked ominously.

The teamsters refused to risk it, and for some time disputed in uncouth French. One must wait for the ice to harden; but one might wait for a week. To cut a road up the bank was the proper plan, but for three or four miles one could not get back to the river, and the tableland on top was broken by rocks and trees. In effect, there was not another such pig of a river in Quebec. Name of a pipe! Only fools roam the woods in winter.

Two men, sitting on the sledge, quietly smoked their pipes, but at length Olsen, the Dane, got up.

"I do not like to freeze," he said. "The road mus' be cut."

Long Murdoch nodded. He was an Ontario Scot and used some authority.

"Noo ye're through talking, ye might begin to chop," he said and turned to Mark. "Victor and ye will start for the camp. If the foreman has a team he disnot want, he might send it along. Ye'll tak' the hand-sled and the two bags for the cook."

Mark pulled the light sledge from the load, but he imagined each bag weighed sixty or seventy pounds. He got into the traces, the young French-Canadian pushed, and they floundered awkwardly through wet snow and across cracking ice. The slush that stuck to Mark's boots froze on the rubber, and he was anxious about his feet, but Victor stated that as long as he knew they were cold he need not bother. When one felt as if one's toes were wooden, the trouble began.

On the firm snow, the sledge, for all its load, ran smoothly, and while the light was good their advance was fast. When dusk fell Mark began to feel he had had enough, but before they stopped, Victor was resolved to find a proper spot to camp, and in the dark they pulled the sledge up a bank where small pines and thick junipers grew. For some time after the fire was built they were occupied. Branches must be cut for beds and the snow scraped back. Wood must be stacked for the night, tea brewed, and frozen pork warmed and sliced. Since they had carried fresh bread from St. Jerome, they were not forced to cook flapjacks in the frying-pan.

Mark, tired by his march, hated the labor, but he dared not risk being slack. In the North, the camper who does not use proper caution freezes. Yet a man needs much, and studying the blankets, axe, food supply, and cooking tins, he speculated about the Pioneers, who, sometimes for three or four hundred miles, carried their loads across snowy rocks and through forests where a sledge could not be used.

He had not thought to sleep, but when Victor touched him day was breaking. Although Mark was numbed, he shrank from getting up; he felt he would sooner freeze than make the effort to cook breakfast. All the same, Victor had got to work, and he must not acknowledge himself softer stuff than the French-Canadian.

When they were three or four miles from camp the sun pierced the frosty haze. The river curved between rocks and woods; but for the blurred trail, its surface was smooth and level, like a broad white road. In the shadow, snow and pines were blue; where the sun struck, their ragged white tops sparkled and the red trunks shone against the background of dusky green. The lines were sharp and the color was strong, and for all its austerity Mark thought the landscape beautiful. The quiet, however, was daunting, and he concentrated on pushing ahead. He was resolved he would not camp for another night in the woods.

At noon they stopped for half an hour and brewed some tea. The sledge traces galled Mark's chest and his long boots galled his feet. The snow got loose, and sometimes for a mile or two he labored past open rapids, across rocky slopes. Mark set his mouth, and when they plunged down to the ice, went faster. The landscape did not interest him and he fixed his eyes on the trail. So long as he could follow the river, he was not going to sleep in the frost.

At dusk Victor reckoned the lumber camp was two or three hours' march off. They might make it, but he did not know.

"We have got to make it," Mark rejoined. "Keep going. *Ma boule en roulant, roulant*—Anyhow, come on."

Victor laughed. The Anglaise was harder than he had thought, but he himself sprang from the old *coureurs*. A stranger must not beat him, and when he took the traces the sledge forged ahead. There was no moon, but the river was smooth and level and the camp was not very far in front. Yet, since they might not reach it, they dared not leave the sledge, and although the shift in the traces got shorter they labored on.

At length, a light pierced the snowy trees, and Victor steered for the bank. To climb the slope cost Mark something, but at the top he saw a long wooden shed. Luminous smoke curled from a stove-funnel, and throwing down the traces he pushed back the door.

A table went down the middle of the room, and at the other end men with frost-burned faces clustered round the stove. Mark smelt cooking, hot iron, blankets, and rank tobacco, and after the biting freshness of the night, his head swam. He felt the bunkhouse was suffocating, but the important thing was he had got there, and he steered for a bench along the wall.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WOODS

Mark dully imagined he heard cowbells chime. The noise got louder, as if an advancing locomotive carried the bell, and he knew somebody beat a suspended iron bar. Half-dressed men crawled from their beds on a shelf along the wall and pulled on clothes and boots. A big lamp hung from the roof, the stove was red, and by contrast with Mark's snowy camps, the bunkhouse was warm.

He smelt cooking, stale tobacco-smoke and greasy blankets. At a lumber camp one is not fastidious; the important thing is keep out the Arctic frost. He did not want to get up. His joints, particularly his hip-joint, ached, his muscles were stiff, and his brain was dull; but he must not admit he was exhausted, and he jumped from his bunk. There was no use in looking for water, and he pulled on his coat and long boots, and waited for breakfast.

The plates were tin, and the thick, nicked knives were dull. The food was good; bacon and greasy beans, fresh bread, and slabs of fruit pie, but Mark imagined the bill-of-fare might get monotonous. The lumbermen ate like wolves. In a few minutes the piles of food had melted, and the Ontario foreman called Mark.

"Ye will be a chopper?" he said, and Mark replied, apologetically, that he was not.

"Maybe ye can load up a log sledge?"

Mark said he doubted, particularly if the load were high. There was no use in boasting, since the other had but to experiment. Logs that are not properly stacked fall down.

"Ye're a modest lad! D'ye ken aucht about lumbering?"

"I don't know much," Mark admitted. "I'm keen to learn."

"Well, that's something," remarked the foreman, and signed a teamster. "Ye need help. Put him through it."

The teamster was a large and rather silent Scandinavian, but when Mark helped him harness his horses he nodded as if he approved. The bunkhouse was near the river-bank, and they followed a trail that curved about between tall stumps to the standing woods. Where the hollow track stopped, the trunks lay in rows, and Mark noted that none had fallen across the next. The rows were roughly even, and it looked as if the chopper had dropped the trees exactly where he meant them to go.

While Mark strained on his handspike, the teamster hooked a chain round the nearest log and, starting his horses, hauled the sliding trunk to the sledge-road. In the meantime Mark dragged the cut branches out of the way and piled the stuff where it might be burned. Sometimes he must move the end of a log for a few yards. He used a peevie, a wooden bar with a hinged iron claw, and imagined he would not freeze. The teamster must not wait for him to clear the road, and the foreman, no doubt, knew how many logs they ought to move.

After Mark's march upriver, the labor was exhausting, but when they stopped at dusk his companion did not grumble, and Mark slept until the clanging bar called him to resume his efforts in the bitter dawn. For a week or two he helped the teamster; and then he was sent where an extra man was needed about camp. He piled logs by the bank; straining with his handspike while the trunks rolled up the skids in the looped rope the horses hauled on the other side. He pulled a big saw through gummy wood, and where the trunks were not yet stripped he cut branches. For the most part, he was not sent to chop. The axe is not a beginner's tool, and when he experimented he slashed his boots and cut his foot. To lie in his bunk for a week was some relief.

An engineer, however, is a handy man, and Mark could file a saw, grind an axe and harden a soft blade. His strength and intelligence were useful, and the foreman admitted he earned his pay. For four or five months he lived, rather like an animal, with men who were satisfied to labor and eat and sleep. Sometimes the calm frost was Arctic, and sometimes a savage blizzard drove the gang from the woods to the dark bunkhouse. Snow piled against the small windows and blocked the door; the long shed smelt like a kennel, and by contrast the rank smoke of Quebec tobacco was bracing and clean.

When the sun shone, the reflected light was almost intolerable. Mark's skin was burned; his fur cap galled his forehead and his red eyes hurt. Sometimes, when the thermometer was below zero, he welcomed a chance to occupy himself in the shade. In fact, he imagined he and his companions bore all flesh and blood could bear; and he now and then wondered whether there was, so to speak, in the scheme of things, an object for his stern endurance. It looked as if wanton chance had sent him to the snowy woods, where all he could get was the bodily hardness that stamps the lumberman. Mark did not know. He was in the woods, and somehow he must stick it.

At length the sun got faintly warm and rain honey-combed the snow. The sledge-roads softened, and men and teams floundered in melting slush that froze again at night. The ice cracked with a noise like rifle-shots, and broke. The thick floes crashed and shocked in a flood from the height-of-land. Large blocks were flung upon the stones; confused echoes rolled across the woods, and when a floe struck a boulder the shrill note the splintering ice struck pierced the hoarse turmoil.

When the ice was gone, the gang broke the piles on the bank. The stacks dissolved with a rumble like thunder, and the logs, plunging down the skids, vanished for a few moments in yeasty foam. They came up, jarring and grinding, and sometimes lifting their heavy tops, charged triumphantly downstream.

At a point where the current was slack along a salient curve, men carrying long pike-poles took the water. The logs must not strand, and when two or three collided a river-jack jumped on the treacherous bark and steered the mass into the stream. Sometimes one balanced across an island rock, and a man or two labored savagely. If the butt took the bank downstream, the top would hold the other logs and a jamb might form and block the channel. The water, for the most part, was recently melted snow, the men risked being crushed by the grinding timber, and sometimes must swim.

The mill waited supplies, and the foreman unloaded while the water was high. Since the logs must be *driven* to the pond, picked men were sent ahead to watch the rapids and awkward points, but for some time Mark was kept at the camp. Then, one morning, the foreman sent for him.

"Ye are wanted at the big bend below St. Martin's forks," he said. "The cook will put ye up some grub."

"Who wants me? And how do I get there?" Mark inquired.

"I dinna ken," said the foreman. "Mr. Travis sent word for ye to start. If ye follow the river, ye'll hit the boys' camps, and ye canna miss the forks. When a canoe goes down, we'll send your turkey to the mill. We'll not see ye back, I'm thinking, and maybe I have not hazed ye much."

Mark gave him his hand. The fellow had not bullied him and must justify his wages bill.

"If I'm sent to the woods another time, I hope the camp will be yours. A beginner is rather an embarrassment."

"I've handled worse," said the foreman and let him go.

Mark was not sorry to be off. He wondered who wanted him, but it was not important. He had perhaps made good at the camp, and spring was in the woods. The pines smelt fresh and the sun was warm. He slept at camps by awkward curves and rapids, and one afternoon passed the pool where the St. Martin's river joins the larger stream. In the evening he saw smoke curl about the rocks, and soon afterward a factory-built canoe on the white gravel. At length, he thought he knew who had sent for him.

When he reached the camp, Bob Wellwin and a man from the mill were cooking supper. Bob joyously gave Mark his hand.

"You stuck it out all right? That's fine," he said. "I don't know if you're bigger, but you look tough as rock elm and you walk like a lumberman. I myself am getting soft, but in two or three months I'm for the British Columbian woods and you will come along. However, the pork is cooked. Let's get busy."

Supper was soon over, and Bob, giving Mark his tobacco-pouch, lighted his pipe.

"The stuff is different from the Quebec cigar-dust I expect you got in camp. Now we can talk. To begin with, can you chop?"

"I cannot," said Mark. "When speed is not important, I can fell a tree. That, however, is another thing."

Bob nodded. "Still, I expect you know the trees it pays to cut? You can lay out a job; fix the line for logging-roads, reckon the number of men and horses you ought to use, and so forth?"

"I know something about it; but that's all."

"Anyhow, you're a draughtsman. If you were given a measured base-line and compass-bearings, you could reckon up areas and draw a plan to scale?"

"Since we used the protractor, it oughtn't to be very difficult, although I have not studied surveying."

"That's fine," said Bob, and gave Mark a friendly grin. "Your English habit is to imply things; in Canada we're frank. Well, I reckoned on the old man's taking a shine to you, and he certainly did. When you fixed those tubes at the mill, you got him all right. Then Travis reported you a useful man, and although the camp boss hates beginners, he did not grumble."

"His statement was, he'd handled worse," Mark observed.

"In short," Bob resumed, "your *dossier* is good, and so long as you are willing to stop with us, we have work for you. Now we'll go ahead. I'm for British Columbia, to study up fresh *limits* for which we hold the lease, and survey another block. The timber's giant timber, and when you handle big stuff you use modern mechanical plant. You see why I want you? I guess we can fix your pay so you'll be satisfied, and we'll camp for the summer on the Pacific Slope. The country's the sort of country an artist might dream about—snow mountains, deep woods, blue lakes, and rivers. Bears in the rocks, fish-eagles watching the shallows, and soft Chinook winds blowing up the valleys. Now, I allow we are boosters, but the Canadian Pacific Slope can't be beat on this earth. Anyhow, when I'm back from Scotland we are going there."

Allowing for Bob's enthusiasm, the picture attracted Mark, and he was glad to know his pay would go up.

"Then, you are not keeping your salesman's post?" he said.

Bob smiled. "I took the post because the old man reckoned I must know the company's business from end to end; I stayed with it. All the same, to bother folks to buy goods they sometimes do not want, is not my proper line, and at length I'm through. My last trip as drummer is to Glasgow."

Mark thought Bob's undertaking to study an occupation he frankly disliked typical. Moreover, since he was young, it perhaps implied some rather unusual qualities.

"Do you start soon?" he asked.

"In two or three weeks. You see, I know the Scots. The drummer's talk that goes in North America leaves them cold. They listen and say nothing. You don't know if they're interested, and your inspiration melts. You begin to talk like a schoolboy and sometimes you get mad. Well, I stood for it and studied them until I found out the inducements they would weigh. Anyhow, I sold them stuff and they want some more. There's the argument that persuaded the old man; but when I am in Scotland I'm going to the Millhouse."

"I hope your luck is good," said Mark, in a sympathetic voice.

"I don't know, Mark. Sometimes I wonder; but if Flora refuses, I'll go back another time. Maybe when she sees I'm firm _____"

Mark said nothing. The ground was awkward and he himself did not know; but Bob was a very good sort and Flora was not a fool. For a minute or two Bob smoked his pipe, and then he looked up.

"We will let it go. There's another thing, and it explains my sending for you. We are not getting all the logs the foreman unloads. One allows for some loss by stranding and so forth, but our tally's short, and so far as I have gone upstream, the stranded logs are not on the bank. Well, sound milling lumber is worth something."

"But there is no other mill at St. Jerome."

"Transport by water is cheap; a small tug can move a large log raft. In fact, the Phelps-Martineau logs are towed upriver."

Their lease is on the St. Martin, and we have had disputes with them."

"Do you imagine they steal your lumber?"

"Phelps is not scrupulous," Bob replied in a thoughtful voice. "I doubt if he'd risk a big sweep, but if a little first-class stuff was now and then slipped into his lot, he'd stand for fifty dollars and refuse to investigate. Some folks are like that. They'd steal a postage-stamp, and to spot them is awkward."

"Where do you think they seize the logs?"

"At the big pool below the forks. The river is not ours, and when two combines are running logs disputes begin, but if the other folks are straight, you can fix things. Phelps-Martineau are not remarkably straight, but if the unloading gang do not crowd us, we now and then hold up some logs at the pool and let them get their drive away."

"The pool is boomed," said Mark.

Bob nodded. "If I go up, I'll be spotted for a stranger and somebody will find out who I am. Nobody will bother about you; you are one of the gang. In the dark you'll lurk about the pool."

"Then I ought to start soon."

"You'll start tomorrow. The Phelps boys are driving a big lot and they might run down some of ours. In the morning we'll move the tent and canoe back into the brush and loaf about. When dusk falls you'll take the trail up the bank."



CHAPTER XIX

MARK FINDS HIS MAN

Sometimes the moon vanished behind a cloud and Mark, pushing upstream along the uneven bank, went cautiously. Smooth rocks dropped to deep water, and where shelving gravel bordered the swift current, battered branches and white driftwood strewed the beach. The night was calm and in some places thin mist floated about the pines. Sweet resinous scents floated across the valley, and a rapid beat like a drum.

A fresh breeze swelled the St. Martin, and when the moon was bright Mark saw revolving eddies trailed dark muddy stains along the other bank. On his side, the current for some distance was smooth and clear, as if the rivers kept their separate channels. The Phelps-Martineau gang obviously meant to use the flood. Logs circled in the whirlpools, collided with dull shocks, and were swept downstream. So far, Mark saw nobody, but since the logs were running, people were about. He imagined they watched the shallows where the trunks might strand, and rocks on which a jamb might form.

Anyhow, the night was the sort of night when an unscrupulous foreman might risk driving logs that were not his, and the Duquesne Company had stopped some lumber at the pool. A boom of chained logs crossed the slack, but to push out some of the trunks it enclosed would not bother a river-jack, and the stream would swiftly carry the stuff away with the other lot. Mark reckoned the thieves had a confederate in the Duquesne gang, and he meant to watch the pool. If he were seen, his being there would not excite suspicion. In the meantime, Bob and the mill-hand, keeping the gloom along the bank, would paddle upstream and wait his signal.

After an awkward scramble, Mark reached the pool, and sat down behind a rock. Although he thought nobody could see him, the spot commanded the river, and he resigned himself to keep his dreary watch. The drawback was, he could not hear. The rapid throbbed, logs crashed, and the St. Martin rolled noisily round the rocks on the other side.

Clouds floated across the moon, but when they passed the water sparkled and wet stones shone. After a time, one or two indistinct objects moved along the other bank. They vanished, and Mark's glance searched the bank he occupied. Although he imagined the Duquesne lumber was guarded, he saw nobody.

Where the boom touched a rocky point, the water was deep and went rather fast. Behind the boom, the stream was slack, and the imprisoned logs floated quietly. Since Mark arrived none had come downstream. The foreman was not unloading; although their competitors were not scrupulous, the Duquesne Company's agreement stood. They had driven a large quantity of stuff, and now the others were entitled to use the fresh.

An hour went drearily, and Mark got cramped and cold. If his watching were to be useful, he must not walk about; but he doubted if it would be useful and he wanted to get back to his camp bed. Yet, if Bob's supposition were accurate, all the circumstances favored the thieves. The Phelps-Martineau logs were running, Duquesne lumber worth something floated behind the boom, and Bob imagined the guard was bribed. The stuff could not be tallied until it reached the pond at the mill, and nobody knew the quantity at any particular spot.

A dark object swung out from a whirlpool at the St. Martin's mouth, and when a light cloud melted wet paddles sparkled in the moon. The canoe, stemming the current obliquely, steered for the boom, and Mark reflected that the thieves were bold. To pole a log across ought not to be impossible, and since the river-jacks are hardy, he had rather thought one or two might swim. Then he saw their using a canoe implied that the company's watchman was their accomplice.

Two men were on board, but a cloud rolled across the moon, and they vanished in the gloom by the high bank. Mark thought they had landed behind the boom, and he began to crawl through the brush. He must, if possible, get near enough to see who the fellows were, in order that he might know them another time, and if he went for help they might be gone before Bob arrived. The turmoil of the flood ought to cover his cautious advance.

Silver light pierced the clouds and he saw three men behind the boom; the thieves had joined their confederate. All were expert river-jacks, for they walked about the treacherous, rolling lumber, and pushed the logs with their pike-poles, as if they selected their booty.

Then the light went, and Mark swore. A large cloud rolled across the sky and he thought the moon would be covered for some time. All the same, the dark would hide him and he must get nearer. Pushing laboriously through wet brush and

crawling across driftwood, he reached the rocks at the end of the boom. He must wait for illumination, and he crawled into a pothole where the floods had worn the stone.

By and by a bright beam touched the river and he saw a row of logs float by. The fellows had worked cleverly and fast. Then, as the swift light spread, he saw two men on the boom. The third had vanished, but the others advanced toward the rocks, stepping, and sometimes jumping, from log to log. Although their boots, no doubt, were studded by creeper-spikes, only a first-class lumberman could take their road. For all that, their advance was fast, and Mark knew the first man.

The fellow was a Duquesne man, and had been bribed to rob the company. That was something; but Mark wanted to study the other, in order to pick him out at the Phelps-Martineau camp. The pothole, however, was not deep and the moon was bright. Mark's advantage was, the fellows did not know he was about.

The Duquesne man landed. He was but three or four yards from Mark, who dared not lift his head. By and by the other's spike boots rattled on the stones.

"Do you see Steve?" he asked. "We must shove off."

Mark's heart beat. If the fellow were forced to wait, he might see the pothole was occupied. Moreover, Mark imagined he ought to know his voice. He had not reckoned on the fellows' stopping.

"I think I hear Steve's paddle," said the Duquesne man. "Will you be back for another lot?"

The stranger laughed.

"Something depends on the quantity your boss unloads. The Duquesne boys are not very bright, but if I'm greedy, they might begin to wonder where the logs have gone. Anyhow, I'll be at my tent, a mile back up the St. Martin, and if you get some good news, you might shove across. But where is Steve?"

His boots jarred on the stones, as if he climbed the rock for a wider view. Then he stopped at the edge of the pothole.

"Who in——?"

Mark jumped up. The Duquesne man knew him, and plunging from the rock, vanished like an otter under the logs in the pool. Mark knew the other and he thrilled triumphantly, for a yard or two off Turnbull fronted him. The moon was bright, and it looked as if the fellow had got a knock. His mouth was hard, but his glance was not steady. He carried a short, thick cant-pole, and Mark thought his hand shook. The canoe was yet some distance off and nobody was about.

"Mark Crozier!" said Turnbull, bracing up. "You knew I was on the river? Now you have spotted me, do you think you can get away with it?"

He stepped back. A cant-pole is three or four feet long and fitted at the thick end with an iron claw. Mark knew he needed room to swing the tool, and he jumped for him. All he wanted was to seize the fellow. He was hard and athletic, but the other was cool and quick. The pole swung, Mark took a smashing knock, reeled back, and went down the bank. He rolled into icy water, and for some time that was all he knew.

When he pushed a thick blanket from his chest, he was in a tent and it looked as if day had broken, for dim light pierced the canvas. His head hurt; he felt a wet bandage on his forehead, and although his clothes were gone the blankets in which he lay were hot.

"Hallo!" he said, in a feeble voice. "Is somebody about?"

Bob lifted the door-flap and sat down on a box.

"Beginning to look round, partner? That's fine!"

"I'm not fine; my head hurts horribly," Mark rejoined. "Where did you pick me up?"

"On the stones by the gravel point. Your legs were in the water."

Mark puzzled about it. The gravel bank was some distance from the pool, but the current went fast. Perhaps he had

unconsciously used some mechanical effort, and, anyhow, in a fast stream a man who allowed the current to carry him along ought not to drown. It was when one lifted one's head and arms one went underneath—

"Anyhow, it's not important," Bob resumed soothingly. "You had stopped for some time, and Pete and I landed to investigate. What we found you, you were unconscious. Cold and shock, I reckon; your head was battered. We got you on board, made a fire by the tent, rubbed you over, and put hot stones at your feet."

Mark felt about under the blanket and drew back his leg.

"The stones are there, all right. I knew I was horribly hot. Pull out the things. I don't want to be boiled."

Bob laughed and cautiously removed a large stone.

"You'll soon be fit, old son. One cannot knock out a dalesman; you are a hardy gang. All the same, it looks as if somebody had tried. Do you know the man?"

"You have got his picture. The wrestling fellow, Law. In the Old Country he was Turnbull."

Bob looked up sharply, and Mark thought he frowned.

"We'll talk about it again. In the meantime, you mustn't bother."

"I'm perfectly able to talk," Mark declared. "The brute was stealing your lumber at the pool."

"You are going to sleep," said Bob firmly. "I am going to see about breakfast, but I'll fix your blanket. If you push it off another time, we'll peg it down."

He went off. Although Mark had not thought to sleep, his brain was dull, and when he looked up the sun was hot. Bob brought him tea and flapjacks, and after breakfast he asked for his clothes, but to dress was harder than he had imagined and for a time he was content to lie on his branch bed.

"You are satisfied Law knew you?" said Bob, when Mark had narrated his adventures.

"He used my name. In fact, I believe his knowing me accounts for his resolve to knock me out. Although he might hesitate to kill a man who had caught him stealing, to finish with Mark Crozier was worth some risk. I expect you see the implication?"

Bob nodded. Mark was hurt, and but for his splendid youth might not have recovered from the knock and his icy plunge. He had, indeed, not altogether done so.

"Why, yes; your argument is logical," he agreed. "All the same, I'm sorry, Mark. I'd hoped, perhaps I'd half believed, you might find you followed an illusion."

Mark smiled, a queer grim smile.

"Turnbull was about a yard off, and the moon was bright. For a moment, I think both were quiet. All we felt was perhaps surprise. Then I knew the brute was afraid, and since he was afraid, he was dangerous. Anyhow, he swung the peevie, and I jumped for him."

"Well, let's be practical! Where were the others?"

"When they saw me, your man dived under some logs. Turnbull's partner was paddling around the other end of the boom. In fact, when I went down the rock nobody was near the spot. Turnbull probably thinks me drowned, but I don't see him starting for the woods."

"I expect he'll stay put. His confederates do not know you fought, and if somebody found you, he'd be justified to think your cut head would not excite much suspicion. A man who went down a rapid might carry a mark like that. If, however, he pulled out, the police might investigate. I believe we can reckon on his stopping. What are you going to do about it?"

"He knows much I want to know," Mark replied in a quiet voice. "I have followed him to Canada, and he is going to satisfy my curiosity. When he has done so, you can seize him for stealing your lumber. Since he thinks me drowned, we

might wait for dark and crawl up to his tent on the St. Martin. When I pull back the canvas, I expect he'll get a jar. It's possible he'll think I have come back to haunt him. Anyhow, your man, Pete, is a hefty fellow and after a quiet day, I ought to be pretty fresh."

CHAPTER XX

TURNBULL'S STORY

Bob's tent was hidden by the rocks and trees, and when the canoe was pulled into the brush he imagined nobody going downriver would remark his camp. Moreover, since the Duquesne logs were not running, the company's men would not pass the boom, and the Martineau gang, following their lumber down the St. Martin, would keep the other bank. He and Mark, however, must wait for dark. If they steered for Law's tent in daylight, the fellow would see their canoe on the river and might take alarm. If he stole away into the woods, to follow him would be difficult; but he might send for help, and Bob knew the river-jacks, as a rule, frankly enjoy a fight.

Mark agreed. He was resolved to capture Turnbull. The fellow knew much about Jim's plunge down the quarry, and although Mark was not consciously superstitious, it looked as if he had been steered to the spot. At all events, if accident were accountable, his luck was remarkably good. He had, so to speak, blindly followed Turnbull to Canada, and although his chance of finding the man was ridiculously small, he had found him. Anyhow, now his obstinacy might be rewarded, he must not hesitate.

There was another thing. Turnbull was a queer, moody fellow, and, in a sense, primitive; Mark did not know a better word. When he got up from the pothole, the other, for a moment or two, was afraid. Now he thought Mark at the bottom of the river, if one could steal into his tent after night fell, to work upon his surprise and alarm might be possible. A man who has got a nervous jolt, sometimes forgets his caution. If the circumstances were favorable, Mark thought he would experiment.

In the afternoon, Pete, the mill-hand, sent out to pick up news, came back with his report. He had met one or two of the Martineau gang, and nooned by their fire. Pete reckoned they knew nothing about the Duquesne logs, and only Law and his helper had gone to the boom. They talked about the man, and declared he was a good river boss, although he used liquor and sometimes was savage. Once when the logs jambed, and the man responsible risked some back-talk, he grabbed the fellow and threw him over his head. A cracker jack of a wrestler! Law, however, although he had driven logs on the St. Martin before, had not been with them long. The boys understood the bosses had sent him from an Ontario camp, in consequence of some trouble in which a mutinous chopper was hurt.

"I expect the tale is accurate," Bob remarked, when Pete went off. "Phelps-Martineau have a lease in Ontario, and supply lumber to the new mining towns in the North. It explains your not getting on Law's track."

"It throws some light on the fellow's temperament," said Mark. "He hurt a man at the Phelps camp, and he tried to kill me. In England he and my brother jarred. The argument is obvious."

Bob cogitated. When Mark was resolved, one could not move him, but Bob thought he might get a worse knock than he had recently taken.

"I feel you ought to leave the thing alone. The English police and the coroner were satisfied, and their business is to investigate. But if you did find out something they did not know, you might not be happier."

"Forsyth talked like that. I wanted to agree, but I could not," said Mark. "Until I know all, I cannot fix my mind on my proper job, and I ought not to marry Madge—Besides, the company has been robbed, and since I have spotted the thief, you mustn't let him go."

"I don't propose to let him go," said Bob. "We must wait for dark and steal up to his tent. If he saw us, I expect he'd beat it for the woods."

The evening was cool, and when the sun set, thin mist drifted across the water. About ten o'clock, Bob launched the canoe, and since three passengers were an awkward load, they poled cautiously up the slack along the bank. Law's tent was about a mile from the mouth of the St. Martin. It looked as if he might for a day or two superintend at the confluence, and Bob doubted if they would find him alone. Mark did not. He had begun to think where one trusted one's luck, one's luck, in the end, was good.

Pushing across the river, they poled as noiselessly as possible up the St. Martin. No logs were running, and for a time the

woods along the bank were dark. At length, a light shone indistinctly in the trees and Mark threw down his pole. He knew the lamp burned behind damp canvas, and he pulled the bandage from his head.

"I am going overboard," he said. "When you land bring the bundle of clothes. If the Phelps boys are about, I'll signal."

He dropped noiselessly into the water, the canoe rocked, and he vanished in the gloom of the trees. Bob was frankly anxious, but on the whole he thought Mark's swimming for the beach was prudent. They must not risk a fight with the Phelps-Martineau men, and Mark, going alone, would find out who was at the tent.

"Steer for the slack behind the rock," Bob said to his companion. "If we don't get a signal in ten minutes, we'll land."

The water was chilled by melted snow, and Mark was yet shaken by his recent adventure and embarrassed by his clothes. All the same, he was a strong swimmer, and he had not far to go. To pull a canoe up a stony bank without making some noise is difficult, and when the others landed the tent door must be blocked.

Crawling up a slab, he followed the lumbermen's trail along the bank, and when he was three or four yards from the tent, crouched in the brush. But for the rapid's turmoil, all was quiet, and only the glimmering light indicated that somebody was about. The canvas, wet by dew, strained on the guy-ropes, and an uncouth dark shadow moved across its tight surface. Then Mark heard a match rubbed and his heart beat. Turnbull had got up for a light for his pipe, and he was alone. In a few moments the fellow was going to tell him all he knew.

Mark thought his step was noiseless, for the shadow did not move. He reached the tent door, and, pulling the flap open, stepped inside. Turnbull jumped back, struck the canvas wall, and seized the ridge-pole, as if for support. Mark saw the blood had left his skin and his legs shook. A whisky-bottle was capsized on the ground and the tent smelt of the spirit. An axe and a small sharpening-stone were by the branch bed.

There was no use in running a fresh risk, and Mark advanced until he was between Turnbull and the tool. A red cut crossed his forehead, his face was wet and pinched by cold, and water drained from his clothes. The whisky perhaps implied that Turnbull's nerve was shaken, and when Mark fronted him he shrank. He had some grounds to doubt if the other were flesh and blood.

"You need not bodder me about Jim. I'd nowt t'do wi' his going down quarry," he said.

Perhaps it was strange, but Mark believed the statement accurate. The brute was not altogether sober, and his talking like a salesman was significant. He had got a nasty jolt and, carried away, as he was, by superstitious terror, he dared not cheat. For a few moments one might work on his fear.

"When you knocked me out with the cant-pole, you thought you had got rid of me. Well, I've come back, and if you bluff, I'll drag you down the rapid where I went. You were at the quarry. Who did you see there?"

"Your uncle Isaac; nobody but him and Jim. For aw that, I had nowt——" said Turnbull, and stopped.

Mark wondered whether the shock the other had got was going, and he put his boot on the axe. It began to look as if Turnbull braced up. Anyhow, he was hard stuff and would soon find out his illusion. Moreover, Mark knew the most important thing: Isaac was at the quarry.

"You cannot break through the canvas and I will see you do not get the axe," he said. "Sit on the box by the bed and tell me all you saw and heard the night in the fog."

He thought Turnbull's predominant emotion was something like relief. Anyhow, the brute was beaten; recent indulgence had left him slack, and his brain was dull. In fact, Mark doubted if he was yet altogether satisfied he faced a living man.

"I was at Packhorse Inn; I'd driven blue-gray bullocks to Miresceugh, and Jim was annoyed. I think he knew nowt about their being sold until they were gone——"

A stick cracked, and Mark heard steps in the path. He commanded the tent door and he said:

"Come in, Bob! Pete must wait."

Bob advanced, moved the axe, and sat down on the bed.

"Turnbull is going to give us his confidence and I want you to note his tale," Mark resumed. "He was at the inn when my brother arrived, and admits that Jim was angry. Isaac, without consulting him, had sold some cattle which Turnbull drove to the buyer's farm——" He glanced at Turnbull. "You quarreled about it?"

"We did not. I said one wouldn't know who was boss, and I'd got Isaac's orders."

"It looks as if you meant to be nasty. But go on."

"T'others knew Jim was annoyed. He got some liquor. Hot rum, I think; I mind Braithwaite cut a lemon. I'm not saying he was drunk, but when he went off he was not overstiddy, and he put on his game-bag wrong side in front. He went by Blackshaw moor; I did not want t' fratch with him, and I waited five-a-ten minutes, and then took dale road——"

For a few moments Turnbull brooded. Mark imagined he weighed the tale he meant to tell. Somehow he did not doubt the fellow. At Howbarrow Turnbull was rather sullen than plausible. In fact, Mark thought the hesitating narrative rather eased his mind.

"The night was cold and I went fast," Turnbull resumed and began to use colloquial English. "By and by I took the path that cuts the corner at the ghyll, and when I was near the quarry I heard voices in the fog. I reckoned the others didn't know I was there, and I stopped, maybe thirty yards off. Jim was talking loud: Howbarra' was his, and when stock was sold, he'd sell the beasts. Isaac was too d—— meddlesome. Isaac laughed. The farm belonged to the man who held the mortgage and paid the bills——"

Mark thought the talk did go something like that. As a rule, a North country dalesman's memory is tenacious, and Jim's blood was red. He had perhaps begun to find out Isaac cheated him; at all events, he rebelled against the other's control.

"Was that all you heard?" he asked.

Turnbull gave him a queer, malignant glance.

"Isaac said he meant to meddle. He was going to see the slut at Hexham did not get money that was needed for the farm."

"If you are lying, you'll be sorry," said Mark in a stern voice.

Turnbull smiled, but his smile implied that he knew the other was hurt.

"I'm telling you what Isaac said. If you doubt, you can ask him why he gave me a hundred pounds. There never was a Crozier gave you much for nowt."

"I expect to ask him," Mark rejoined. "Get on with your tale."

"Jim shouted he'd use his money as he liked; Isaac got his interest, and if he was wise, he wouldn't try to bully him. I moved and a stone rolled down the bank. Maybe they heard, for the talking stopped, and I stole off in the fog. When I got to the field dyke, I thought something smashed; but until morning I didn't know it was the rotten fence at quarry top. By and by Isaac, going fast, came up the path, and when he stopped he was breathing hard. He said a horse had broken dyke and strayed on the moor. The horse had broken the dyke, and gone up the lonning. Isaac and me went to the kitchen and I went to bed. In the morning the herd found Jim Crozier on the stones by the quarry pit."

"What about the bribe you state you got?"

"When the doctor had gone, Isaac stopped me in the field. He knew no more than I knew about Jim's going through the fence, but only him and me was on the moor and I must be careful what I said. There was going to be an inquest and he reckoned the coroner would send for me. If I was wise, I'd go abroad. I told him if I got a hundred pounds, I'd start for Montreal, *after the inquest*, and he gave me the money in treasury notes."

"You were modest; you might have got two-hundred pounds," said Mark. "Why did you stop for the inquest?"

"I knew Isaac Crozier," Turnbull replied in a meaning voice. "Only he and I knew where t'other was, and his word might go where the coroner would doubt a cowman. But if you ask me if he and Jim fought, I cannot tell."

Mark said nothing. The fellow's statement must be pondered, and in the meantime his clothes were wet and the night was cold. Bob got up, and when he had shouted for his man he said to Turnbull:

"Pack your turkey for a run downriver. At St. Jerome I'll hand you to the police for stealing the company's logs. You will probably go to the pen, and Mr. Crozier will have some time to investigate your tale."

In a few minutes Turnbull's pack was made, and Bob gave Mark the dry clothes he had brought.

"The canoe will not carry four, and when we have ferried the fellow across one of us will pick you up at the river mouth," he said.

He pushed Turnbull from the tent, and Mark began to pull off his wet clothes.

CHAPTER XXI

MARK FOLLOWS THE CLUE

At daybreak Mark and Bob and Turnbull started for St. Jerome. The mill-hand went upriver and, getting another canoe and a man from the lumber gang, rejoined them at a camp downstream. Since the Phelps-Martineau men might try to rescue the prisoner, Bob was resolved to run no risk. Nobody, however, meddled, and it looked as if Turnbull were moodily resigned.

As a rule, he said nothing, and it was not until the evening before they reached St. Jerome he broke his sullen reserve. Bob had gone to catch a trout and when Turnbull, sitting in front of the tent, beckoned Mark he sent off the man on guard.

"You'll make the settlement by noon tomorrow," Turnbull remarked. "Are you going to put the trouble at Howbarrow on me?"

"I think not," said Mark. "Since I expect you will go to jail for stealing logs, if we want you, we'll know where you are. In the meantime, I am going to England, to try out your tale."

Turnbull nodded, as if he were not much disturbed.

"All I said was right, and if Isaac Crozier tells you different, you can ask him about the hundred pounds. When I landed I'd a hundred and twenty pounds in my belt, and I showed the Immigration officers the notes. Maybe they file their records. Where would a cowman get the money?"

Mark thought the argument sound and he noted that Turnbull was willing for him to inquire. All third-class passengers were rigorously examined and must satisfy the Immigration Bureau that they could support themselves until they found employment.

"The queer thing is, when you took the sum you did not see people might think your stealing off significant."

Turnbull smiled, but his smile was rather grim than humorous.

"I'm not a fool, and so long as I was in England I was not safe. The police might find out something, and I didn't trust your uncle. He's as clever as he's crooked, and the mistress would stop for nowt. Since I'd got to go, I reckoned he ought to pay and he would not be keen for the police to know I'd got the sum from him."

"But why did you risk trying to knock me out at the boom?"

"I was rattled. I thought you had come for me. Since I took Isaac's notes I'd felt I cheated Jim. Not that I liked your brother: he was a hot-headed fool. I'd had enough of the Croziers, and I thought I'd be done with one. Then, you see, I'd used some liquor."

Mark nodded. He thought he knew his man. Turnbull was a sullen, resentful brute, and perhaps felt Isaac had entangled him. Although Mark had not much to go upon, he was on the whole satisfied of the other's innocence.

"Very well, if you are convicted for stealing, we will not bother about your trying to murder me. Since I'll soon be at Howbarrow, to bluff will not help. Do you believe Isaac threw my brother down the bank?"

"I don't know. Sometimes it has bothered me," Turnbull replied. "Jim was a hefty young fellow, and Isaac's fat and soft, but at one time he could move a two-hundred-pound sack of oats. He was nasty and Jim was savage—But, all I know is, I thought I heard the old fence smash."

Mark saw he was sincere. The fellow doubted, but he did not know. Then Bob and Pete pulled up the canoe, and they cooked supper.

Turnbull was tried for stealing logs. He used his fictitious name and declared himself not guilty. Since Mark was the only useful witness against him, it looked as if he might escape, but he was tried in a lumber country by lumbermen, and sometimes Canadian justice is rather practically than fastidiously just. In the circumstances, Law went to jail, and soon after the trial Bob and Mark, one evening, occupied a bench on Dufferin Terrace which commands the St. Lawrence and

the city of Quebec.

The evening was calm; the ice had not long since broken, and the noble river rolled majestically by the rocks Wolfe climbed. On the other side, the houses on the bluff at Levis shone in the setting sun, and a white ferry steamer obliquely stemmed the current. A rusty ocean tramp, her funnel gray with salt, labored up midstream. Locomotive-bells chimed by the wharf, where the river boats began to congregate. The sky was green: the transparent, luminous green that comes at sunset in northern Canada.

For some time Mark was quiet. He was by long inheritance an English dalesman, but he was young and had begun to love the woods where men yet lived by more or less heroic labor. Then somehow in Canada one looked forward and hopefully pushed ahead; in England one soon found out there were obstacles that only genius could pass. Moreover, since Mark was shrewdly practical, he knew he turned down an occupation in which he might go far. He was starting for Howbarrow and he might not come back.

By and by Bob knocked out his pipe.

"We have got Law where you can find him if he's wanted, although I doubt if he'd help you much. He certainly hates your uncle, but since he took his bribe, he refused to implicate him. In fact, I feel his tale is accurate."

"I rather think he hated us all," said Mark.

"Oh, well," said Bob, "my notion is you haunted him before you stole into his tent. I don't suppose he's scrupulous, but his sort are superstitious. Anyhow, there's no use in speculating. You'll soon be on board your steamer, and I'm sorry you are forced to go."

Mark looked about. The sun was near the horizon and shadow touched the old city at the bottom of the rock. In the evening calm, one heard the river, and Mark felt it called him west. The company held timber leases beyond the Rockies, and he had thought to mend his fortunes in the majestic forests of the Pacific Slope. Now he waited for the steamer to carry him the other way.

"I am sorry," he rejoined, in a quiet voice.

"Then, if you don't want to let me down, you'll get back as soon as possible. You see, I rather worked on the old man, and at the beginning I expect he thought to humor me would not cost him much. Then he saw you and was interested. Anyhow, Travis got orders to put you through it and study up your reactions, and I rather think he sounded Constance. She knows something about young fellows. Well, I allow the old man's habit is not to be rash."

Mark smiled. "The president of an important lumber company must use some caution."

"You got the old man," Bob resumed. "When he was at the mill you stopped the boiler-tube; and then you helped us jail the fellow who ran off our logs. Maybe your luck was good, but you were willing to risk scalding and face Law's cant-pole. Travis and Constance fell for you; in fact, you conquered right along. Now, I know your modesty, but sometimes I have a reason for my random talk, and it's possible you begin to see where I lead."

"After all, I am not remarkably dull."

Bob gave him a friendly grin.

"I'm a drummer. My business is to talk, and if you want to move an Englishman, you must hit him with a club. Very well! The company's business develops fast, we hold valuable leases, and options on more. I believe the Duquesne gang is going right ahead, and if you stop with us, we'll carry you along. We know you will pull your weight, and we want you to stop. There's another thing. You are engaged to marry a charming girl and you ought to be ambitious. Since you're resolved to start for Howbarrow, I suppose you must, and you'll perhaps be happier to know you went. But I think that's all, Mark. Some entanglements cannot be put straight. Your line's to look in front and hit the trail for the horizon. I hope it will carry you where you'd like to be."

"You are a stanch pal," said Mark. "When I met you in the fog I was lucky. However, I feel I *must* follow the clue I've got."

Bob pulled out his watch.

"Let's go see if the transfer people have moved your baggage. The big boats leave Montreal at daybreak, the river's running fast, and the *Athabaskan* will arrive on time. She won't stop, and when she whistles for her tug you must be on the wharf. Well, I reckon I'm soon going east, and when I'm at Glasgow I'll wire the Millhouse folk."

They got up, and following the noble terrace, went down by steep streets to their hotel. Dark crept across the St. Lawrence; the bright spring day was over, and Mark wondered whether he would spend another on Canadian soil.

An hour afterward, when they walked about the wharf, a sonorous whistle echoed in the rocks and the *Athabaskan* swung round the point. From waterline to boat-deck, tiers of lights pierced her vague hull; she shone like a fairy palace on the dark river; but one heard the bow wave break and the deep screws beat. A blue flame leaped up by the first dim funnel and changed to fiery red, a bell rang, and the tug's whistle called. Mark gave Bob his hand and went on board.

For a few minutes the tug and liner dropped side by side downstream; and then ropes splashed and the big engines throbbed. Mark, leaning on the rails by the gangway, heard faint shouts and water surge along the quivering hull. The propeller's beat got faster and he felt the liner leap ahead. Then the lights astern got indistinct and went out. All he saw was sliding water, streaked by dim foam.

In a week, he would be where Madge was in the Border dale. He pictured her welcome, and yet he was sorry. When he went back he had thought to claim Madge and triumphantly carry her off. In Canada he had sweated and frozen; his food in camp was coarse, and he had borne crushing fatigue. All the same, in Canada he had a chance to make good he had not known in the Old Country. A fighting chance was all he wanted, but it looked as if he must go without. He was bound for England and the hills he loved. Yet the hills were bleak, and for a poor man might be dreary. Mark leaned against the rails and frowned.

CHAPTER XXII

ISAAC'S SOFT SPOT

Shy spring had reached the northern dales, and Madge Forsyth, taking the road to Howbarrow, rejoiced in the sunshine. The larches' tassels shone luminously green, and by the waterside the willows shook their silver plumes in the dry, cold wind. Lambs bleated in the low pastures where the fresh grass began to spring, and a curlew, circling across the valley, called on a high, joyous note.

Although Madge did not like her errand, her mood was touched by a cheerfulness that harmonized with the spring, for two or three days since she had got a hopeful letter from Mark. Winter at length was breaking, and now the strain was nearly over, he admitted he would be glad to leave the lumber camp. Yet he had learned much that might be useful, and believed he made some progress.

In about two months, Bob and he were going for the summer to the forests on the glorious Pacific Slope. Anyhow, Bob declared British Columbia was glorious, and their surveying, exploring excursion would be a splendid holiday. Then Mark had earned a useful sum, and his pay was going up. Bob hinted that his advance might be fast; the time when he could build a wooden house for Madge might be nearer than they had thought. And so forth—

Madge smiled. Mark was rather a constant than a romantic lover, but she liked his soberness. Then he stated, briefly, that he had found out nothing fresh about Turnbull, who had two years since vanished in the woods. Madge hoped the fellow had vanished for good; but she knew Mark. If chance helped him mend the broken clue, he would follow it stubbornly. Yet, on a spring morning, she must not indulge disturbing thoughts.

She was going to Howbarrow, in the hope that she might persuade Isaac to be merciful. The tileworks he bought had prospered. Isaac's speculations did prosper, and Madge admitted that bold planning and shrewd management as a rule were, and perhaps ought to be, rewarded, although it looked as if frugal industry was not. Isaac, however, had dismissed his engine-man for taking bribes, and Forsyth understood he meant to prosecute the fellow.

The engine-man's child was Forsyth's patient, and his wife had begged the doctor to intercede for them. Mrs. Bell was not a competent housekeeper and two other children were delicate. Forsyth was pitiful, but he refused. He knew he could not move Isaac, and he admitted his temper sometimes was hot. On the whole his sympathy was with the fellow who had robbed the greedy brute, but for him to let himself go would not help Bell. Yet if the engine-man went to jail, his wife and bairns must pay, and if Madge were willing, she might intercede.

Madge was not altogether willing, but she went. Bell did not deny his offense, and the doctor thought a recent Act of Parliament provided for his punishment. The child might be a cripple and the others were rickety.

The day was market-day, and Madge had thought to reach Howbarrow before Isaac started for the town; but by and by she heard a horse's feet on the stony road. Isaac's high gig swung round a bend and she signaled him to stop.

Since cars were expensive, Isaac stuck to his old gig, but he had no use for light hackneys and the horse was a powerful animal that could pull a loaded float. When he went to market his clothes were good, and his high, light-colored hat was the sort some betting men wear. Madge had no grounds to like Isaac, but his wife was at his side and she frankly hated Ellen Crozier.

He stood for successful cunning and greed; he was fat and had begun to carry the stamp of indulgence. When he was humorous his humor was not at all cultivated. Madge felt the man was gross, but for all her jarred fastidiousness, she vaguely sensed in him a softer vein. She felt he, so to speak, might be human; at all events, where humanity did not cost him much.

His wife was another type. In a sense, she was, unconsciously, a Puritan. All the shabbier utilitarian virtues were hers, but she was greedier than Isaac and altogether pitiless. Madge was young and generous, and she shrank from the thin, tight-mouthed woman. All the same, she stepped into the road and Isaac pulled up his big horse and remarked that it was a fine day. Mrs. Crozier said nothing. She studied the girl with a sort of antagonistic curiosity.

"You are going to see the head constable about prosecuting Bell?" said Madge.

Isaac nodded. "He helped the rogues who supplied us at tileworks to rob me. I've paid top price for third-class stuff and got short measure."

"Bell did not supply the goods. I believe it is not very unusual for a servant to take a commission from tradesmen."

"Do you claim it's right?" Isaac inquired.

"Not at all," said Madge. "You were entitled to discharge Bell; he acknowledges he did take a bribe, and the sum was not very small——"

She hesitated. Isaac's glance was interested, and the doctor had stated that Bell was not altogether repentant.

"Weel?" said Isaac.

"Since you have discharged him, you ought perhaps to be merciful. If he goes to jail, you really punish his wife and the children, who have not hurt you."

"If the mistress is an extravagant slut, it has nowt t'do with me. Her sort are always wanting, but they will not work."

"Where the man's a wastrel the woman's responsible for a lot," Mrs. Crozier remarked. "A proper wife would see he mended his ways."

"After all, when people are sick money melts," said Madge. "Medicine, special food, and so forth, are expensive. The boy is a cripple; my father doubts if the girl will ever be healthy."

"Tinned stuff is not for bairns, but it saves the bother of cooking," said Mrs. Crozier, and Isaac studied Madge with a dry twinkle.

"D'you reckon Bell will iver pay doctor for his medicine?"

Madge frankly did not, and she knew her father would refuse to claim the debt. Although the debtor's wife might be extravagant, she herself must be frugal. In fact, from a sternly practical point of view, the Bells were not the sort one could help; but Madge hated the logical economy for which the Croziers stood.

"Anyhow, but for Mark's independence, I'd have got an engineer who would not rob me," Isaac resumed.

"Mark is independent, but he could not take a post that was not offered him."

"He got my offer and said nowt. The evening we bought tileworks, I wrote him at King's Arms."

Madge looked up in surprise.

"Then your letter did not arrive. I suppose you put it in the post?"

"I mind I fastened the envelope and asked waitress for a stamp," said Isaac, as if he pondered. "Noo I think about it, I do not mind if I went to post."

Madge glanced at Mrs. Crozier. The older woman's look was inscrutable, but Madge knew why the letter had not arrived, and imagined Isaac knew. Ellen Crozier hated Mark. Madge admitted she was not much of a champion. She had not helped the Bells, and the big horse began to stamp the road. She expected Isaac to drive on, but he soothed the horse.

"Folks tell doctor their troubles," he remarked. "D'you know how much Bell did get from mill-supply folks."

"If you knew, you would use it against him," Madge rejoined. "Your inquiring, of course, implies that you do not."

"You're a cliver lass," said Isaac with a smile. "If I give my word to let Bell go, will you tell me?" He turned to Mrs. Crozier. "You will not meddle, Ellen."

Madge told him. She thought she might trust him, and she did not see another plan.

"Bell has nowt t' fear from me," said Isaac.

He used the whip, the big horse's feet beat the stones, and Madge went thoughtfully back to the Millhouse. Mrs. Crozier

had stopped Mark's letter, but it was not very important. Mark made progress in Quebec, and he began to hope he might soon come back for her.

When the horse climbed a hill, Isaac gave his wife a meaning glance.

"Mark's not getting my note is queer!"

"You were drunk, my man."

"It's possible. For aw that I beat Allardyce's bailiff by a hundred and fifty pound."

"Bell ought to be prosecuted. He robbed you, and I expect he'll rob another," Mrs. Crozier resumed. "You have a soft spot, Isaac. You'd have kept Mark in England, and you let Miss Forsyth talk you round. She's Mark's lass and she hates us. Some day your softness will ruin you."

"You niver know! In the meantime, I'll chance it," Isaac remarked with a chuckle and cracked his whip. "Git up, Bob! What's ta stopping for?"

At the market town he went to the cattle sales and Mrs. Crozier lunched frugally at a tea-shop. Then, carefully comparing different grocers' qualities and prices, she ordered supplies for Howbarrow, and spent an hour or two at an auction-room, where she bought two pans and a damaged meat safe. Ellen Crozier's holidays were not expensive, and she was willing to labor seven days in the week.

Isaac was less frugal, but when he spent three or four shillings for liquor he expected to get back a pound, which at the town where he transacted business, is something of an exploit. In the evening, he, his tileworks partner, Tyson, another who had recently joined them, and a young clerk from a neighboring coal-pit, occupied a room at the King's Arms.

The inn was famous when pack-horses and mail-coaches crossed the Border hills, but the small, old-fashioned room was now used for an office by commercial travelers. Red curtains covered the small-paned, bow window and the oak floor was pierced by worms; but gassy coal flamed in a modern fireplace and the light was electric. A copper kettle occupied the hob, three or four glasses and a steaming bowl the battered mahogany table.

The coal-pit clerk gave Isaac one or two documents. He was a good accountant, and in return for a small sum went to the tileworks on Saturday afternoons and wrote up the books. The group had heard him read the balance-sheet, and he thought they ought to be satisfied.

"For the first year's work," said Isaac, "the results are pretty good. We have written down old machines and allowed for wear of new. The buildings are valued below the price we gave, but if we were a public company, the money at bank would pay a good dividend. Well, I've got drainpipes for my profit, but t'others can draw against the sum in hand in proportions we agreed. Grey wants his, and if you'll put your hand to the balance-sheet, I'll countersign his check."

They did so, and noted that he left the check-book on the table.

"If the chairman had paid market price, results would ha' been better," Grey remarked. "Then you have written off nowt for bad debts. Tom Branth'et owes us fifty pound. D'you think you'll get it?"

"If I dinnot, Tom will be sorry; you can reckon the debt is good," Isaac rejoined. "I bowt works in order to get pipes cheap, but the price covers cost of manufacture and all charges overhead. We keep works running, and where I get my stuff cheap the customers pay."

The clerk turned his head and smiled; Grey knitted his brows.

"Looks all right, but when you come to think—Ye see, *I'm* not using drainpipes."

"Then dinnot think, but tak' your check," said Tyson, grinning. "If you'd left money at bank, you'd ha' got two-a-three per cent. If you'd speculated in black-face lambs, you'd likely have got nowt. Anyhow, the last ewes you bought went down with fluke."

"I lost near half t'flock," said the other. "For aw that, it looks as if I was paying for Isaac's pipes—But the mistress waits at ironmonger's and I must be going."

He drained his glass and went off. Isaac let the clerk go, and Tyson laughed.

"Some folks are never satisfied, and Joe will worry for a week. But what are you going to do about engine-man?"

Isaac put a document on the table and pulled out his watch.

"We'll not bother the police. I've sent for Brown, the mill-supply company's agent. He'll be here in five minutes."

Brown arrived. He was a clever salesman, and as a rule his manner was urbanely confident. By contrast with the men he fronted, he had a touch of cultivation, but when he met Isaac's glance his confidence melted. Isaac gave him the document on the table.

"You heard we sacked the engine-man for taking your bribe. Since he went I've studied your bill and asked the fresh man what he thought about the goods you sent. He told me. Since you looked him up, you ought t'have done so at *first*."

The agent's embarrassment was obvious.

"Commissions are given, you know," he replied in apologetic voice. "The amount is small and comes off sellers' profit."

"Some goes onto buyer's bill, and some comes off t' goods. You get it back both ways," Tyson remarked. "Hooiver, I believe there is a Corrupt Practices Act."

Isaac stopped him and turned to Brown.

"If the bribe came out of profit, your profit is larger than we are willing t' pay; but I doubt. The amount was not small."

"Then, you know how much Bell got?" Brown said with surprise.

Isaac stated the sum. "I was going t' see lawyers about it, but I thowt I'd send for you. If we prosecuted Bell, the case would not help your business with the collieries. Then the police might reckon you ought to be tried with your confederate—I haven't been t' lawyer's yet."

Brown saw, and was daunted. Crozier could break him. He might go to jail; anyhow, after the sort of advertisement he had given them, his employers would not have much use for him.

For a few moments Isaac waited, and then resumed:

"Well, your bill is here, and you have supplied a lot of shoddy stuff: engine-oil burns on journals, files are soft and badly cut, rubber and asbestos packing is not proper quality and weight. I don't know about the big pumps and main driving-belt."

"The belt carries the manufacturers' stamp and they fix the price," said Brown. "The pumps are from a first-class foundry."

"They are in the bill and our man got his commission. When you bribe an engineer, what's your rule?"

Brown began to see where the other led, and he pondered.

"Generally we divide, on a fifty-fifty basis."

Tyson grinned. "I reckon not! In Cumberland the rule is, yan for you and two for me. Well, we ken the sum Bell got!"

"There's my offer," said Isaac. "We don't want to break you. Write a fresh bill, taking off three times your bribe, and we'll let Bell go. My check-book's on table, and you'll have got a stamp for the receipt."

The sum was large, but Brown dared not refuse. The farmer had beaten him and he pulled out his fountain-pen. For five minutes he was occupied, and then Isaac wrote a check. When the agent went off, he laughed.

"We got the stuff cheap and some is not varra bad. Not long since, mistress reckoned I was soft."

CHAPTER XXIII

ISAAC'S LUCK TURNS

Isaac got his hat and coat. Tyson had gone and he must meet Ellen, but for a few minutes he sat by the fireplace and cogitated. The evening was cold and after a rather strenuous day, he felt he was entitled to savor his triumph. When he thought about it, he had triumphed. He was the son of a second wife; his half-brother's mother had had some money, but Isaac's had none, and when he started his business his father had grumbled about giving him three hundred pounds. Isaac, looking back, saw he had from the beginning been jealous of Tom. The dull fellow had got the farm, which Isaac knew he could work to greater advantage.

Well, Tom was gone, and Jim, his son, was gone. Mark was in Canada and Howbarrow was Isaac's. Moreover, the tileworks was his, and until an hour or two since he had not altogether known how good his speculation was. He had, of course, known the venture prospered, but for all his talent for business he was not an accountant. Where he wanted expert help, he engaged a bookkeeper, and when the fellow began to think himself important got a fresh man.

Anyhow, the balance-sheet was something of an illumination. The derelict works he had bought was now a valuable property, and Isaac saw it developing. Then, although the sum was not very large, he had beaten the agent who had thought to rob him. He had taken the fellow's goods for less than their just price; in fact, he had got something for nothing. All went smoothly, as he had reckoned it would go. But he had engaged to meet Ellen, and starting for the inn yard, he ordered the stable man to harness his horse.

The light was nearly gone and a raw wind blew along the street, but Isaac was warmed by liquor and he pushed importantly through the groups on the pavement. Mrs. Crozier waited at the tea-shop. She was not consciously a hypocrite, and she perhaps rather hated liquor and gambling on economical than moral grounds, but she would not use an inn, and Isaac's lapses from sobriety troubled her.

When he reached the tea-shop, she was alone at the end of the long room. As a rule, Ellen Crozier was alone. She was tall and very thin; her clothes were old-fashioned, and her face was lined. Yet she had a sort of dignity, and when she looked up, without a smile, Isaac was moved by a queer tenderness for the hard, tired woman. He had rather wanted to order a feast for her at the Automobile Hotel, but he knew Ellen would not agree.

"You were long," she said. "When all was properly reckoned up, were you pleased?"

"The reckoning was better than I thowt, and if my plans for next year work, our profit's going up. Farmers' Association president took some pipes last back end. I met him in street and he said ours were the best he'd iver had. If price is right, they'll buy all they want from us. Then I sent for Brown."

"He came?" said Mrs. Crozier, with interest. "What did you fix about Bell?"

Isaac told her, and she nodded.

"Well, the money's useful, and Brown deserved to pay."

At one time, her calm might have jarred, but Isaac did not expect Ellen to applaud his cleverness. She was not like that.

"We are sending Newcastle builders two trucks of our new roof-cap and have made a good start at architect's moulding blocks. Pipes are our stand-by, but t' profit's in fancy goods, and our clay bears firing and holds its color."

"Are you sure the red clay will not run out? Tyson talked about a belt of roach."

Roach is sandy gravel, sometimes partly solidified into stuff that turns the pick; but Isaac smiled.

"When Allardyce sold us works he knew the roach was there. He did not know the vein was thin and the good clay went underneath. I sent for a Newcastle contractor, and when we want he'll engage to shift the stuff with his machines and stack a month's supply of clay beside our pugging-mill."

"We have not had a better spring for lambs and the dairy herd's in good fettle," Mrs. Crozier remarked. "All goes right, and we have won out, but we're getting old. If the boy had but lived——"

Isaac refused to dwell upon it. They had pinched and sweated, and now the reward, for a time, was theirs. But the time was limited. Ellen's hair, like his, was white, and soon a stranger might waste their goods.

"The trouble we've borne is by with. When I met you lang since I was lucky. We took a hard road and did not stop for risks, but it's carried us to the top of the hill."

A young waitress crossed the floor. She saw a gaunt woman whose face was pinched, but whose look was hard, and a large, uncouth, fat man. She hoped she and her lover would not at length, look like that, and she left them alone. The waitress knew their sort; when they went she would not find a tip.

For a minute or two Ellen Crozier brooded. She was greedy, but somehow Isaac's triumph left her cold, and she wondered whether, after all, he was lucky. For all his talents, she had steered him; where he hesitated she did not. The trouble was, she perhaps had pushed him farther than she at one time had thought. Yet she dared not talk about it. Gazing straight in front, her brows knitted in a frown, she was not like the wife of a man who, by her help, had won all he had hoped to get. Her strong, lined face was touched by melancholy; one sensed the shadow the dalesfolk thought haunted the unlucky Croziers.

Isaac pulled out his watch.

"You have a parcel at Jordan's, and I don't want horse to stand."

They went to the street, and at the ironmongers where she got her parcel he examined a gig-lamp.

"How much do you want for the pair?" he asked.

"Thirty shillings," said the salesman. "They were two pounds, but carriage-lamps are not in much demand. The body's brass, the reflector is heavily plated, and the spring is specially made to push the candle firmly up the tube. As the wax burns away, the common spring loses power, and sometimes the short candle end jolts back from the cap. This pattern ensures you a steady light."

Isaac nodded. His lamps were old, the plating was rubbed off the reflectors, and the spring in one was weak.

"Twenty five shillings for the pair!" he said, and, unscrewing the tube, turned to his wife apologetically. "You see it burns candle down to end. Ours with the cracked glass does not push up the last bit."

Mrs. Crozier hesitated. She saw Isaac wanted the handsome lamp, but one must not be extravagant.

"You can get a new spring for sixpence. However, if he will take twenty five shillings——"

The salesman refused, and Mrs. Crozier, touching her husband, left the shop. When they got to the inn the horse and gig were in the yard. The lamps were burning, and the ostler said, "I was ready for you ten minutes since."

"Then, you might have waited for us before you lighted up. The candles are not very long," Isaac rejoined.

He helped Mrs. Crozier on board and got up. The big horse's feet rattled on the stones, the high gig lurched round a corner, and they were in the street.

For a few minutes, lights touched the groups on the pavements and windows shone. Then trees loomed behind iron rails, vague walls melted in the gloom, and the last lamp-posts vanished. The wide, black road dimly reflected the candles' trembling light, and when a cloud rolled away from the half-moon the black moor-tops cut the sky in front.

The night was cold and Isaac let the horse go. He saw bare woods and pastures rise to high, broken ground. A motor-bus dazzled him and plunged by, and sometimes a river shone. He crossed a bridge and heard the current brawl around the piers; and then the lonely road he took began to climb. The woods got thinner and dark moors closed on the dale. Sometimes mist drifted across the slopes and for a few minutes thin rain fell. Steam floated about the horse, but the animal pluckily fronted the long climb. Its feet beat a soothing rhythm, Mrs. Crozier was quiet, and Isaac began to muse.

All went well for him, and when he was at the bank the manager's politeness was flattering. Millburn implied that he knew a good customer and, in Isaac's case, he would not stick to the rules the bank used for others. In fact, when he saw a good speculation in cattle, or if he thought about enlarging the tileworks, they would not bother him much for security

—

Well, he was richer than he had, at one time, hoped. His neighbors said, for a Crozier, he, at all events, was lucky; but Isaac knew them fools. Luck had nothing to do with it. He was willing to sweat, and judgment and his wife's help had put him where he was. She had pinched and managed, and he had labored. A man's temperament made, and sometimes broke, him. That was all. The talk about the Croziers' luck was *blethers*. Anyhow, he owed Ellen much; but she might perhaps have let him give thirty shillings for the lamps. With a carefulness he had not used for long, he pulled the rug around her.

"The wind has an edge. Are you cold, Ellen?"

"I'm not very cold, but when we are at the bank-top you might drive fast. Servants are careless, and I must put all straight in kitchen and dairy before I go to bed."

At the top of the hill Isaac used his whip and the horse plunged down a long incline. A shower blew across the dale and the dry wall by the roadside melted in the rain. The flickering reflections on the wet stones got indistinct, and for a few minutes Isaac concentrated on his driving. Then the rain stopped and he saw the lamp on the off side had jolted out.

"Candle's done," he said. "I thowt it would have seen us home, but t'old spring won't push up last bit. Well, off side is where we want a light, and I'll shift t'other lamp across."

The lamp was hot and Isaac's hands were wet. In order to reach the cooler bottom below the socket-band, he must lean forward awkwardly, and when he did so the horse plunged into a pothole and the jolt threw him back.

"Unless we stop and I get down, I doubt I'll not can move the thing," he said. "Hooiver, we haven't far to go, and neabody will be on road tonight."

As a rule, after dark fell, nobody was on the moorland road; but in the afternoon a motor tourist, starting from Jedburgh, got entangled in the Border hills. A burst tire further delayed him, and when he at length found out where he was, he knew he must drive fast in order to reach Carlisle before the hotel servants went to bed.

Isaac's horse was keen to get home, and at the bottom of the hill swung round a curve where a larch wood grew between the river and the road. The noisy current perhaps drowned the rattle of wheels, and Isaac certainly did not hear a horn. For a moment the larch-trunks were touched by silver light; and then a dazzling beam beat into his eyes.

"Hold tight, Ellen!" he shouted, and pulled to the left.

Glass crashed and the gig rocked. Isaac was thrown against the seat rail, but Bob was yet on his feet. It looked as if he did not feel the bit, for, mad with fear, and perhaps hurt, he leaped ahead. Isaac, bracing his legs against the front board, tried for a purchase. Somehow he must hold the brute; he thought they went across the road, and the dry wall was loose.

He felt a shock, as if a shaft broke, and stones fell noisily. The horse was across the wall and the gig tilted. Isaac seized his wife, and tried to seize the rail, but the seat went upright, and they were in the road.

He got up, shaken and bleeding, and dully looked about. Ellen was in the wet grass near the bottom of the wall. The moon shone and Isaac saw her face was very white, but her eyes were not shut. Kneeling in the stones, he put his arm round her.

"I cannot get up. Doctor's house is but two miles," she said.

Isaac knew her coolness. She had got a nasty knock, but she saw the proper line. All the same, the Millhouse was two miles off, and he imagined Bob was dead. Then, about fifty yards off, he saw a car across the road, and he ran for the spot. The shield was smashed, the hood was crumpled, and it looked as if a wheel had collapsed. A dazed tourist, cut by glass, sat on the running-board, and Isaac pulled him roughly to his feet.

"Can you start your d—— machine?"

"I cannot," said the other dully. "Don't know how I hit you. When I saw your light I was coming round the curve. Since it was near the other wall, I ought to get past. Then I saw the horse, on top of the engine—But is somebody hurt?"

"I doubt somebody's dying," said Isaac, and pointed up the dale. "The doctor's house is two miles off; the first on the right. If he's not at home, tell Miss Forsyth."

The tourist went off and Isaac put his folded coat under his wife's head and got the rug from the gig. When he tried to pull it under her she signed him to stop, and then shut her eyes. Isaac sat in the stones and waited. Ellen was very quiet and her skin was cold. At length he heard a motor-engine, and getting up awkwardly he shouted.

Five minutes afterward Forsyth's small car started up the dale and Isaac occupied the running-board. Ellen was not dead, but that was all the doctor knew.



CHAPTER XXIV

A DALESWOMAN

Ellen Crozier was carried to the Millhouse, and in the morning Forsyth telegraphed for an Edinburgh doctor. When his patient knew he had done so she grumbled.

"He'll not tak' less than a hundred guineas, and it's not as if he could cure me," she said. "I'm past mending, as well you know."

"I do not know," said Forsyth. "One might almost boast that nothing is impossible to a first-class modern surgeon. Then, your husband insisted on my sending for the famous man."

It was all he dared say; there was no use in his trying to cheat Ellen Crozier. For a moment or two she studied him, and although her body was broken her glance was calm.

"Isaac will soon be his lone and to ken he did all one could do might be some comfort," she said. "Then yan can carry nowt away."

Forsyth saw the effort tired her. He himself was tired, and when her eyes shut he stole off to an easy-chair by the long-room fireplace. Nobody at the Millhouse had got much sleep, and Madge was occupied, for a nurse from Carlisle would soon arrive. When Forsyth was getting drowsy, Madge brought him some tea.

"Flora is with Mrs. Crozier, and you ought to go to bed for two or three hours. I might give Isaac a message for you."

"I must see him," said Forsyth. "If he's not here soon, I'll go across in the car."

"Then you're not at all hopeful?"

Forsyth shook his head.

"Moncrieff may be able to do something, but I doubt, and I believe our patient knows. Ellen Crozier is hard stuff. I cannot state if she's resigned, but she's certainly not afraid."

"She's a daleswoman," Madge rejoined. "We are perhaps a hard lot, but our nerve is firm."

"I'm not altogether satisfied about Isaac," Forsyth remarked. "He is a heavy man, and the gig was high. It's possible he was worse shaken than he thinks, but when I dressed his cuts he would not allow me to examine him. However, if he can get on a horse, I expect him presently."

"Although the motorist was cut, he was the luckiest of the group," said Madge. "How does he explain the collision?"

"I think he does not know much about it. He admits he drove fast, and since he was swinging round a left-hand curve, his speed probably threw him across to the side a vehicle meeting him would keep. Then the trees cut his view, and to some extent he saw Isaac's light across the curve. He rather thinks he saw but one light, and imagined he could pass; and then the horse was in front of the engine and the shield smashed about his head. Isaac's narrative is vague, but I did not bother him."

Isaac arrived on horseback, and returned in the evening when the Edinburgh doctor was in Mrs. Crozier's room. The double journey had shaken him, and when he got into an easy-chair in the surgery his breath was labored. He knew he had got a nasty jolt, but in the meantime he was not going to bother.

A board cracked and steps echoed in the passage. For some time that was all, and Isaac felt the old house was furtively quiet. He heard the river and the wind in the trees. The surgery smelt of drugs, and somehow the smell was ominous. Isaac had not had much to do with doctors and hated their stuff. Now their supposititious cleverness was his forlorn hope.

To wait in suspense was dreary, and he began to muse. Since he married Ellen thirty years had gone. He admitted she was not a bonny lass, but he had sensed a balance and competence that attracted him. Isaac did not, so to speak, fall in

love. There were lasses he knew would have met him half-way. Ellen coolly refused to advance. Isaac knew she weighed him and if she were satisfied they would be a strong combine.

They were not romantic, and in a sense their marriage was a commercial partnership. Isaac had wanted a housekeeper; he afterwards knew Ellen wanted a man she could use to carry out her ambitions. Well, he had got the cleverest housekeeper in Cumberland, and Ellen had put him where he could not have gone alone.

She had never moved him to passion; Ellen was instinctively cold, and not at any time affectionate. Isaac did not know if affectionate was the word he wanted, but it was something like that. Yet long association and the labors and risks they had borne had knit them together. Ellen was stanch, and hard as steel. She had pinched for him, and when he hesitated had firmly urged him on. He acknowledged her dauntless steadfastness and her loyalty. Although she had not loved him, he knew from the beginning she would never let him down. Now he knew if she went he would be altogether desolate.

He pulled out his watch. Nine o'clock, and no news yet! The doctor was very long, but he must use control, and he pondered the accident. The motoring swine drove recklessly round the curve, but Isaac's lamp had jolted out because the candle-spring was bad. The lamp that burned was on the near side; the gig's off side was dark. Well, one reckoned on six feet, and the margin might have carried the fellow past. Had he but given thirty shillings for lamps that did not jolt out! It looked as if Ellen and he must pay for their frugality.

In a room at the end of the passage, Mrs. Crozier looked up at the Edinburgh doctor.

"I'll niver be on my feet again?" she said.

Her voice was faint but level, and the doctor met her searching glance. Forsyth had told him much about her, her firmness and courage were evident, and he answered frankly.

"Oh, well," she said, "my job is finished, but I would not be a helpless burden on other folks. How long have I got?"

"I do not know," the doctor replied in a quiet voice.

Ellen turned her head, and he signed Forsyth and went out. Ten minutes afterward, Isaac, treading with a cautious step, crossed the floor. He carried his large bulk stiffly, but when he stopped by the bed his knees were slack.

"My poor lass!" he said. "If I'd but bowt the lamps——"

Ellen touched his hand and he felt her skin was cold.

"Maybe the lights had nothing to do with it. I'm long past my best and there's no use in bothering. But you went over gig when I went, and you're heavier——"

"The cut's all, I think," said Isaac.

He had some grounds to doubt, but Ellen thought for him and must not be disturbed. Although they had taken some hard knocks, one never knew if she was hurt.

"You'll come back when I can talk," she said. "Noo I'm tired, and my brain will nut work."

The nurse signaled; Isaac went and Mrs. Crozier shut her eyes.

In the morning she was fresher and she asked for Madge.

"If it would not be much bother, I'd like you to let me stop," she said. "Isaac would send Watson's lass to wait on nurse, and Bell Pape might come in to red up kitchen and help you cook. My man would put all right with doctor."

Madge smiled. She was willing to humor the sick woman, but for all her hurt, Ellen Crozier followed her bent. If she conquered her weakness, she would soon rule the Millhouse.

"You will not bother us. But would you not sooner be at Howbarrow?"

Mrs. Crozier shook her head.

"Your house is a kind house. Ours is cold."

In the Scots and Border idiom, kind stands for something like friendly and lovable, and Madge agreed. At all events, Howbarrow was not a friendly house. Then, as if she apologized for a sentimental weakness, Mrs. Crozier resumed:

"I doubt if ambulance could get up bank by ghyll. When road is soft the baker leaves his van at beck foot. I might go on a stretcher, but they'd need to carry me half a mile."

"You shall stop with us," said Madge, in a soothing voice.

She joined Forsyth in his surgery. The doctor was forced to mix the medicines he prescribed, and when Madge narrated the interview he weighed some drugs.

"I suppose you could not refuse," he said. "The queer thing is, she wanted to stop. The Croziers are independent."

"To talk about Ellen Crozier's being afraid is rather ridiculous, but somehow I felt she shrank from Howbarrow."

Forsyth cogitated; his glance fixed on his daughter. On the whole, he thought his patient's shrinking did not puzzle Madge.

"After all, I dare say she ought not to be moved, and for her to stay would enable me to keep a closer watch. The extra strain is yours, and Mark's aunt was not his friend; but I suppose it is not important. Then, of course——"

"Yes," said Madge. "I don't think the argument carried much weight, and I hope it did not. Still I knew Moncrieff agreed with you."

"He would not risk a firm prediction. All the same, he imagined the time might be very short," the doctor replied.

Madge went off quietly. She had not thought she could, in any circumstances, be sorry for Mrs. Crozier, but she was sorry, and in a few days she knew the sick woman liked her to be about. Mrs. Crozier did not like the nurse. The young woman was firm, and she herself had for long ruled her husband and the farm. Moreover, Madge was interested. Her patient bore bodily pain with Spartan endurance, but Madge began to see her mind disturbed.

When dusk fell one evening she beckoned Madge. The evening was bleak; the river brawled noisily, and sometimes rain beat the windows.

"Isaac reckoned he'd be back. They are cross-plowing long field and the sheep must be tallied; but they must stop for dark, and I want to see him."

Madge said the doctor had arrived and she could use the car. She went to the surgery and Forsyth went to Mrs. Crozier's room. When he rejoined Madge he nodded.

"I think you ought to go for Isaac. I must mix some stuff for Ivison's wife; his herd will soon be here."

Half an hour afterward, Isaac,—moving, for a large man, lightly,—came into the room, and Mrs. Crozier turned to the nurse.

"You'll leave us alone. When you are wanted, we will send for you."

The nurse knew her patient and she went. Isaac sat down by the bed. When Madge's car stopped by the sheep-pens he had hurried up the hill to Howbarrow for a clean coat and boots, and he imagined his haste was rash, for his side hurt, and his heart beat. He thought Ellen's face had got thinner since morning and her skin was as white as the sheets on the bed, but she gave him a steady glance.

"My time is short, and soon perhaps I'll not can talk," she said.

She stopped for breath. Isaac knew something bothered her.

"You are a good farmer and you know how money should be used," she went on. "For aw that, you have some soft spots, and you're cautious. You'd not have got Howbarra' but for me."

Isaac admitted it was so. His judgment was sound, but Ellen had supplied the driving-force. When she was gone he would miss her and his house would be desolate. Yet for his sort and hers to express the gentler emotions is almost impossible, and all he did was to touch her hand awkwardly. His face was red, but his mouth was firm. Now that he

wanted to, he could not let himself go.

"You and Jim were on the moor that night in the fog. When all was quiet at Howbarrow I'd sit and wonder—and now I've the long day for brooding my mind will not rest. Turnbull heard you and Jim fratch—*Was that all, my man?*"

Isaac's mouth went slack and his skin was wet by sweat. For long years his wife had thought he killed his nephew! Yet she had stuck to him and helped him carry out his plans. Ellen was just; she knew, if he were guilty, his guilt, to some extent, was hers. All the same, the horrible suspicion hurt.

"But I told you——" he said.

"Yes, you told me! When you talked about it, you'll mind I did not say much. I'm not easily daunted, Isaac; but I durstn't ask—Noo, when I'll soon talk no more, I feel I must know."

His wife's fixed glance embarrassed Isaac. To move was some relief, and getting up he leaned against the bedpost. Somehow he must persuade her, but if she doubted, his fresh statement might not carry conviction. At the auction market his broadly humorous talk was famous; now he was stopped for words.

"I'll tell you all, from the beginning," he said, and tried to brace up. "If it's not the truth, and nowt but truth, may I never speak again!"

The tale was not altogether the tale he had told before. At some points, it was perhaps not consistent, but Ellen Crozier knew her husband and she knew his nephew. She saw Isaac, at length, was honest; had he but had pluck like this long since, she might have carried an easier load. His cheating her was ironically humorous; because his tale was plausible she had not believed.

By and by she beckoned him to stop, and for a few moments both were quiet. Rain beat the windows, trees tossed noisily, and the river brawled.

"That's aw," said Isaac hoarsely. "If you're not persuaded, I can say nea mair."

For Ellen Crozier to smile was something fresh, but she did smile.

"You'll not need; at last my mind's at rest—" She beckoned him nearer and feebly touched his arm. "Some day Mark will ask you, and you'll tell him, like a man, aw you've just told me. Because I was afraid, I hated the lad, but he's not a fool like Jim. He'll not waste the gear and money we have gathered——"

She stopped for breath, but Isaac saw where she led, and he signed that he agreed. Then, while strange emotions moved him, the doctor came in.

CHAPTER XXV

REACTION

Since the doctors agreed that she would never leave her bed, Ellen Crozier had not much will to live. For long she had ruled at Howbarrow and to see another use control and waste where she had saved would jar intolerably. Moreover, if to live was to lie and brood, an object for her nurses' careless pity, she was resigned to go. Yet, although her body was broken, she sprang from hardy stock and life ebbed slowly.

On the morning after her talk with Isaac she sent for Madge. Her face was pinched and her skin was colorless, but Madge thought her look different, as if some haunting care at length had vanished.

"For Mark's sake, you hated me, but you're a kind lass," she said in a slow, labored voice. "When you went for my man in the rain, you did not know all you did; but if I'd waited, I might have waited over-lang, and I try to pay my debts."

"If I did hate you, I am sorry, but Mark is my lover."

"He's a canny lad," said Mrs. Crozier, and in Cumberland *canny* implies finer qualities than cunning. "Noo you think I cannot hurt him, you'll be pitiful! My dear, I dinnot want to hurt the lad! Aw that's by with: but there's another thing——"

"You ought not to talk," said Madge.

Mrs. Crozier smiled, a dreary smile.

"I'll be a long time quiet. Isaac will give you a locket on a thin gold chain. It's old-fashioned and was ours for over a hundred years, but a Newcastle jeweler reckoned the stones were good. If Mark is willing, you'll wear it noo and then?"

Madge promised to do so, but she was puzzled. When Mrs. Crozier declared she tried to pay her debts, she did not think about the locket. In the meantime, however, she must let it go, and seeing the other was exhausted, she stole away. When she thought about the interview afterward, she imagined Ellen Crozier's last conscious effort was to talk with her.

Flora was sewing in the long room, and when Madge came in she gave her an interested glance.

"Well?" she said. "You have not much grounds to be sympathetic, but your look is moved."

"I am moved," said Madge. "One feels Ellen Crozier is horribly lonely, and her life was bleak. She cannot have loved her husband: Isaac is not the sort one loves. Then at the end she is nursed by strangers. In all that matters, we are strangers; she declared I had hated her, and perhaps I did—Yet Isaac will give me a locket she wants me to wear. One feels all her effort was for nothing. When she is gone, she is altogether gone. But perhaps for Isaac, nobody will be sorry, and in a few weeks nobody will think about her. To vanish and be forgotten is rather horrible!"

Flora knitted her brows. Madge was a gentle sentimentalist; Flora was not.

"I wonder—Love is not for all, and Ellen's effort was not for nothing. Howbarrow is her apology. She made her husband rich and they made the farm a model farm. In our dark hills, where the rain begins when the frost stops, it's something of an exploit. She was hard; I don't see her scrupulous, and Mark declares she was not; but she was competent. All she undertook to do she did. If you contrast her with the women who are satisfied to be mannequins on whom infatuated men may hang expensive clothes, she stands for conquering force."

"Oh, well," said Madge, "I suppose my philosophy is out of date; but at the end, qualities like Ellen's do not help one much. I'd sooner my apology was, my husband and children were sorry to let me go."

She went to the kitchen. The doctor's household was larger and she must superintend.

For a day or two Madge, when she had leisure, was in the sick woman's room. Mrs. Crozier did not know her husband, but sometimes her dull glance followed Madge, and the nurse declared she liked her to be about. When she died, farmers, shepherds, and cothouse folk went to her funeral, and for a mile, battered cars, old gigs and Digby's, and foot passengers straggled across the moors. None had loved Ellen Crozier, but she was a notable woman, and in a sense her triumph at Howbarrow was a triumph for the dale.

"A tribute to success!" Flora remarked to Forsyth when they watched the long procession start.

"To some extent," said the doctor. "None in the crowd is a mourner, and few are Isaac's friends; but their coming is not shabby. We are practical folk, and something competently done commands our respect."

The procession rolled ahead, and he started his car, but after the funeral he stopped Isaac.

"Will you look me up at the surgery in the morning?" he asked.

"I will not," Isaac rejoined. "I have got a useful job, and when I needed doctors most they could do nowt for me."

"Very well. You are entitled to refuse; but I'll give you some advice for nothing, and I think it sound. You are a heavy man, and when you were thrown from the gig you got an awkward jolt; then you got another with which a doctor perhaps cannot deal. For a time you must use caution, and go soberly."

Forsyth started for the Millhouse. He did not claim to be much of a psychologist; a general practitioner must concentrate on curing his patients' bodies; but he thought his warning justified. Isaac started for Howbarrow and at the beck foot sent off his hired car. Since the collision he had stubbornly braced up, but now a reaction began. He was physically slack and his brain was dull.

The churchyard was a long distance off across the moors, and when he climbed the cart-road the sun had sunk behind the hills. Marsh marigolds shone like polished brass by the boggy waterside, and primroses pushed through the dead fern; but all Isaac saw was a long dark smear on the pale-green sky. In the morning his shepherds had fired the heather, and after two or three dry days, the moor-burn went well. When warm rain came, tender shoots and fresh grass would spring from the blackened soil.

He heard his lambs; the ewes were moving back to their high *heaf*, and in the low pastures green plover called. A circling curlew's vibrant note throbbled across the long slopes like a shake on a violin. Two or three plover followed Isaac up the hill; their wings fanned noisily behind his head and their screams were petulant. In the spring, the birds were bold, but since he had robbed a plover's nest forty years had gone.

By and by he stopped. It was but twelve months last Candlemas, when a shaft broke and the cart cowed, he and Mark carried a load of linseed-cake up the track by the ghyll. Now, although he went slowly, his side hurt and his legs shook. Well, Forsyth talked about his using caution, the doctor was not a fool. Isaac sat down on a broken wall. The scattered stones annoyed him. Doll, the big, clumsy Clydesdale, was at her tricks again; but Jack Welsh could not mend a dyke, though he claimed to be a waller and got five shillings for the job.

Isaac looked about. In the big field by the river, belts of chocolate-brown streaked the springing green. The plowmen were at the funeral, but tomorrow the last rigs must be turned: the peaty clods ought to dry out before the harrows got to work. Then he'd like to start on the hill field, where the turnips would go. For stiff land to weather down in the rain and sun helped the cross-plowing; but the teams were wanted, and the work must wait. Half the great manure-stack was not yet moved, and Doll was lame. She'd soon have something better to do than breaking walls at five shillings a time. In spring, the jobs piled up, and one's men refused to work as their fathers did. Isaac himself was strangely slack; for once, he shrank from the effort he must use until the fields were sown.

A redshank perched on the wall in front and, flicking its tail angrily, screamed in harsh defiance; a noisy lapwing circled round his head. Isaac struck at the bird and swore. Since a peaswheep bothered him, his nerve must be going. Howbarrow was his, for as long as he could hold it; but in the North the weather was a stern antagonist, and the fight was hard. Isaac felt he got old, and his main support was gone.

Well, he was not extravagant, and he had got enough. In fact, but for liquor, all he wanted did not cost much, and for some time Ellen and he were not forced to pinch. It looked as if frugality and effort became a mechanical habit. To reckon one's profits was perhaps all the reward one got; but Isaac felt his wife, so to speak, had stood behind him, calculating, scheming, and urging him to fresh effort.

She had thought he killed his nephew! Yet she had said nothing, but had coolly seized the advantage Jim's death gave them. In a way, her nerve was daunting, and when she admitted her suspicion Isaac had frankly got a shock. To know she, at length, had found out she misjudged him was some relief. Isaac saw why she had schemed to banish Mark; she was afraid the boy might find a clue—Well, Mark yet might do so, but it did not matter much. All that really mattered was,

Ellen was gone. The dominant partner had vanished, and now he was old he knew himself horribly alone.

The rest, however, had steadied him, and he climbed the hill. At the gate under the sycamores he stopped. The light had begun to go, and somehow the gray house was cold and desolate. Water splashed drearily in the stone trough, but the milk tankards were not on the slab, and Isaac went to the dairy. As he had thought, the separator was not yet cleaned and the cream had not been put to cool. The lazy hussies knew the mistress was no longer about and had begun to waste his goods.

Isaac quietly pushed back the kitchen door. The flagstones were dusty and stained by soil from the plowmen's boots. By the big fireplace where wood and peat was piled, his servants engaged in careless talk. He drove them out to byre and dairy, and went to the bleak parlor. The grate was cold and blocked by ash, and the quiet bothered him.

He must find an occupation, and going to his office, he opened a cupboard. A drink might brace him up, and when he had, two or three times, drained his glass, he carried an account-book to his desk. He had already studied the newspaper market reports; politics did not interest him, and he knew nothing about sport. The farm had for long absorbed him. But for the tileworks, it was, in an important sense, all he had got, and now his profits would be squandered by his servants' extravagance.

Somehow he could not concentrate. Rows of figures went crooked and his calculations were obviously wrong. Then a little pulse throbbed in his ears and all got indistinct. His hands slipped forward across the book and his head sank.

He thought somebody called and he awkwardly straightened his back. His cramped shoulders ached and the room was cold. The lamp had burned low and all was quiet, but for a few moments Isaac waited. Then a shrill scream echoed in the courtyard walls, and he got up. An owl hunted mice in the cart bay where the chickens fed—There was another thing. Ellen had cared for the poultry, and he did not know how many hens he had, but when one grew the corn they used, poultry paid. Yet one could not trust a servant to search the mewsteads for the eggs and see the rats did not carry off the chickens.

Isaac frowned. In the small things, as in the large, Ellen had seen him out; but he was cold and shaky and must get another drink before he went to bed. This time he drained the bottle, and breaking the candle when he tried to get a light, he staggered noisily upstairs.

CHAPTER XXVI

FLORA MEDDLES

Not long after breakfast Flora one morning climbed the cart-road up the ghyll. The sun shone on spring grass, red fern, and yellow moss. A lark sang, plover called, and Flora went across the sharp stones like a mountaineer. In the keen spring morning her color was fresh, and her out-of-door clothes were in a comparatively recent fashion. Since she had crossed some boggy fields, her rather thin legs were gaitered and her boots were thick.

Flora hoped to interview Isaac and wondered whether she was wise. When she started from the Millhouse she had not altogether meant to go, but she stopped the postman, who gave her a letter from Bob, and after studying his remarks she steered for Howbarrow. As a rule, when Flora thought she saw a plan she got to work.

Half-way up the hill, where a boulder broke the wind, she sat down and pulled out the envelope. She noted the firm, rapid hand and smiled. Bob wrote and talked fast, and Flora admitted she liked his joyous swiftness.

"Since you have no use for romantic sentiment, we'll cut out the stuff," he said. "I'm just starting for the woods, to look up Mark, and you might like to know he goes soberly ahead. He has captured the company's president, the mill boss, and most of the gang. Mark, in fact, is a winner, and I expect Madge will soon get a note from him reporting fresh progress. Since the clue my picture gave him led him nowhere, all he has got to do is to stay with us and I imagine he'll presently be given a first-class post.

"There's another thing I hope may interest you. When I'm back from the woods, I pull out for Scotland. Before getting busy at Glasgow I shall be at the Millhouse and my motive is pretty obvious. If you yet hesitate, after the company's business is transacted I'll look you up again. Two shots in one excursion, and the excursion's annual! Something for you to ponder, since my resolve is fixed——"

Flora put up the letter, and her look got gentle. Bob's constancy moved her, but in the meantime she was not going to think about him; she must try to think for Madge. When Bob urged Mark to join him, Flora approved. Since he could not get a post in England, she thought he ought to emigrate, and his progress in Quebec justified her.

The drawback was, if he stopped for two or three years, he must stop for good and Madge was essentially an English daleswoman. Flora doubted if she would be happy in Canada. Then, for some time, Madge must wait, and to wait was dreary. Flora, of course, had seen the drawback before, but when Mark went to Quebec his aunt ruled Howbarrow. Now she was dead and Mark was Isaac's heir.

Flora believed Isaac had cheated his brother and nephew, but she had not imagined he killed Jim. When he could get all he wanted by waiting, he would not use force, and Flora did not see him carried away by savage passion. Anyhow, she was going to interview Isaac, and if her meddling did not help much, her purpose, at all events, was good.

When she reached Howbarrow, Isaac was in his office. He turned and Flora studied him with fastidious dislike. The cold room smelt of liquor, and Isaac's red face was mottled by a sort of bluish tinge, as if small veins shone through his skin. His eyes watered and his mouth was loose. Flora's mouth was firm. The large, gross fellow had entangled and broken two better men; moreover, in consequence of his unscrupulousness, Mark was poor. Flora admitted her trying to reconcile uncle and nephew was, on the surface, rash. Yet Mark's real antagonist had been Mrs. Crozier, and, after all, Isaac had some human qualities. Then, if Mark did join his uncle, the partnership might not stand for long. Flora knew the doctor thought Isaac shaken, and he carried the stamp of alcohol. Soon the control he used must pass to younger hands. The trouble was, Flora must indicate something like that. In the meantime, she thought him dryly amused.

"You wanted me?" he said.

"I think I wanted to sympathize. After all, you are our neighbor, and to manage a house is awkward for a man who must superintend a large farm."

Isaac agreed. The besom did not like him and had not yet stated her object, but since she had arrived, she might be useful. He gave her his shopkeepers' books.

"You're not extravagant at doctor's, and you know my household. When my wife was mistress, I did not meddle.

Neobody could cheat Ellen, but noo I get the bills, it looks as if tradesmen thowt to rob me."

"I wonder—you are not famous for trustfulness," said Flora, and when she had studied the books, resumed: "However, it certainly looks as if somebody at Howbarrow was fastidious. The goods you are charged for are the best supplied."

"Where'd you begin to cut the bills?"

Flora told him. She was not keen to help the parsimonious fellow ration his servants, but she wanted a sort of text for her discourse. Isaac made some notes, and gave her an ironically approving glance.

"When Robertson's man calls for orders, he'll get a jolt. You dress like the hussies at a race-course, but you're a manager."

"Sometimes clothes are an ambitious young woman's working capital, but mine are not expensive. Their largest cost was the planning and labor they forced me to use. However, I'd sooner talk about your embarrassments. The farm is large and one person cannot superintend everything. Then, in the dales, a superintendent to some extent is a movable extra man, and where a sheep-walk runs, like yours, across the hills, must move rather fast. Do you expect to carry on?"

"I've got to try," said Isaac grimly. "I've lost my best help, and I'll not risk marrying another time. You can shift your housekeeper, but you have got to keep your wife."

"The rule is no longer absolute. Still, if you do discharge a wife, I believe she can force you to support her, which, of course, is unthinkable!"

Isaac laughed. He liked the baggage's humor, and her jibe about his frugality did not annoy him. Fronting him in the straight wooden chair, her look was carelessly scornful. Sometimes youth is hard, and when one tried to persuade Isaac, Flora imagined politeness would not help one much.

"Howbarrow is a dreary house and you get old," she resumed. "The dreariness might not bother you, but to see your control going and know the farm and flock went down would be hateful. Servants soon get extravagant and sometimes dishonest; for example, these shopkeepers' bills. Your watchfulness and your wife's economy made you rich, but you cannot for long follow your sheep across the moors in a winter's snowstorm, and you cannot be about at night in the rain and frost in spring. However, I expect you see my argument?"

Isaac saw; in fact, he saw difficulties she did not. For one thing, he lost speed, and sometimes could not be where he wanted at the proper time; then he began to forget small but important jobs, about which Ellen had reminded him. Yet to engage a bailiff would be to admit his incompetence, and the fellow's pay would cut the profits.

"When I'm forced, I could sell the farm," he said.

"You would hate to do so, and you are not the sort to loaf," Flora rejoined and gave him a level glance. "Where I'm trying to lead you is plain. Why don't you send for Mark?"

"The lad is independent; I doubt he might refuse. But you know him——"

"I do not know if he would consent, but it's possible, and he is the proper man. You see, I never imagined you put Jim Crozier over the quarry bank."

Isaac's chair jarred on the boards, and his slack pose got braced, but he was moved to something like admiration. The baggage's nerve was good.

"I did not," he said. "But I don't know if Mark is sure about it. There's yan difficulty, and I see some more——"

He frowned and cogitated. On the whole, he thought the girl had not tried to entangle him. Her cousin certainly had not sent her; the doctor's folk were proud. Yet her statement implied that although she did not think him guilty, others might.

"If you want Mark, your business is to inquire," she said. "Then, of course, Howbarrow is not yours for good. All you have got is a life interest, which must presently run out. Are you going to give the farm to Mrs. Crozier's relations?"

"None o't' lot will get a penny."

Flora got up. Her argument was stated and she did not wish to stop on a sober note.

"Oh, well, I imagine you do not cultivate your relations; but charitable institutions are numerous, and, no doubt, deserving. You might, for example, like to support a foreign mission, or a temperance society. Anyhow, you might consider the other plan."

Isaac let her go and for a time looked straight in front. The baggage had argued shrewdly, and her plan had advantages. Ellen had declared Mark was not a squanderer, but Isaac clenched his fist. The boy was not a fool; he might perhaps satisfy him he was not accountable for the accident in the fog; but to satisfy him he had dealt justly with his brother was another thing. Isaac began to think Mark's suspicion was excited and when he started for Quebec he hoped to get on Turnbull's track. In fact, he felt he dared not risk it.

He pulled out his watch. The shepherd reported some sheep were on their knees, and since he did not want foot-rot in his flock, he must walk two miles across the hills in order to examine the cripples. Then the Border-Leicesters in the low pasture ought to be moved. They had been there three weeks, and sheep must not occupy a field for long, but fresh grass was scarce. He must see if there was food for them at the dalehead, and if he went fast, he might be back for dinner. Then he ought to look at the Stanerigg fields, and at two o'clock he must meet the boulder's man at Threaplands, across the moor. Four or five miles to walk, and afterwards he'd be busy until dark.

Isaac frowned. All the days were like that, and he knew he could not keep it up for long. He had recently got very slack. Then Forsyth warned him he must go slow and soberly. Isaac got his stick and hat. Liquor had never hurt him, and so long as he held on to Howbarrow he must move fast.

When Flora arrived at the Millhouse she knew Madge had got some news. Her look was preoccupied, and when she unloaded a box of groceries she put two or three articles where they ought not to go. As a rule, Madge was fastidiously methodical.

"Why are you disturbed?" Flora asked.

"Soon after you went I got a telegram. Mark is coming back!"

"I don't yet see a light. If Mark was my lover, I certainly would not be annoyed because he was coming home."

"Mark has not got a holiday; his message rather implies he was forced to start," said Madge and gave Flora the telegram. "I expect he has found Turnbull and it frankly bothers me."

Flora nodded and knitted her brows.

"Yes, it's awkward, my dear; but we don't know what the fellow told him, and to speculate about it will not carry us far. Then, somehow I believe Isaac Crozier had nothing much to do with the accident at the quarry. His aunt was really Mark's worst antagonist——"

"Oh, well," said Madge, "we must wait until he arrives. Eight or nine days, I suppose, and when you are anxious time goes slowly. But where were you?"

In the circumstances, Flora did not think she ought to talk about her interview with Isaac.

"I went up the dale," she said. "You really mustn't bother, Madge. In a way, Turnbull is interested; he was on the moor that foggy night, one might doubt his statement. In fact, if somebody was accountable for Jim Crozier's plunge, I'd rather suspect Turnbull than Isaac. He stole away after the inquest. The other stopped. All the same, I believe the tragedy was an accident."

Madge let her go and pondered. After all, Flora's opinion might be logical. She recaptured the evening she went to Howbarrow for Isaac; Mrs. Crozier had urgently wanted him and after he had gone was happier. Madge imagined something he told his wife had put her mind at rest. However, there was no use in brooding about it. She must wait, as stoically as possible, for Mark's arrival.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BREAKING STRAIN

Sunshine touched the courtyard wall at Howbarrow and hoar frost melted from the thick roof flags. The house was in the shadow, and by contrast with the yellow light, its gray front was cold. By the gate, the sycamores opened their tight buds, but the tender leaves were bitten by the frost and limp.

Isaac stopped by the slab on which the milk tankards stood. In the dairy a separator droned, and its throbbing note pierced the splash of water in the stone trough. Somehow the noise was dreary. Behind the arch opposite him the moors rolled back, and in the distance their dark-blue tops cut a gleam of silver light. Isaac knew the day would not be fine. Frost in spring was good for nowt. By noon, the watery brightness would melt in mist and rain.

His boots were wet and his breath was short. Since six o'clock he had searched the moor for some sheep, and when he came down the rough path the jolts had shaken him. Before he went to the house for breakfast, he must pull himself together. Sometimes in the morning he was not very steady on his legs, but the servants must not know. He pictured their spiteful gossip; the master was not the man he used to be! The trouble was, the statement would be true.

Since Ellen went he had got slack. He did not want to bother, and muscular effort jarred. Then small obstacles made him savage and to use control was hard. The house was dreary, and although the bills went up, the food he got was not good. Anyhow, he had got up at six o'clock, and by dinner he ought to carry out all he had planned to do. In the afternoon, when the rain began, he could get to work at the office and he'd be glad to sit down.

He went to the parlor where a sullen peat fire burned, and frowned when the kitchen girl carried in the plates. His breakfast was not the sort of breakfast Ellen served. A little rum, however, would help the thick coffee, and since he must soon start for the fields, he began to eat.

After a few minutes, he thought an engine panted and heavy wheels rolled in the stones by the ghyll. Then smoke floated up behind the sycamores, and Isaac swore. The oats in the granary would carry him on until the grass was good, but since corn was going up, the stack or two in the rickyard must be thrashed and sold. To keep the stuff was to lock up money and risk damage by storm and rats. All the same, Isaac had not yet expected the thrashers; the owner had engaged to let him know when the mill would arrive. The man he had sent to the railway for coal would not be back for four or five hours. Another had fallen from a cart and hurt his arm.

Isaac left his breakfast and went out. The engine and big separating mill were at the gate, and two greasy men bantered the dairy maid.

"Leave t' las alone," said Isaac. "Her job's to scald t' churn. I reckoned your master would send me word——"

"We were at Mireside yisterday, and thowt we'd thrash your lot when we were in neighborhood," the engine-man replied. "If that's not right, you'll need to wait. For two-a-three weeks we're hauling stones for road surveyor, and we must be off by dark."

Isaac cogitated. Although he wanted to send the fellows away, the corn must be thrashed. Not long since their independence would not have bothered him, but his temper was getting hot.

"If you start, you must finish," he said. "Come along to the rickyard."

The engine-man went and looked at the stacks.

"I reckon we can do 't; but I doubt we'll not get engine through t' gate. You'll need to break your stacks, and feed t' mill from cart."

Isaac refused, firmly and not politely. The road was soft by the gate, but to carry the corn to the mill implied much extra labor and he was two men short. In consequence, when the thrashers went some corn might be left, to stand perhaps for weeks, with a rick cover for a thatch.

"The road will carry you in," he added. "If the wheels do sink a bit, we'll load some stones at beck and mend soft spots

before you haul away the mill."

The other knew Isaac, and he smiled.

"You will nut, Mr. Crozier. If you want us in yard, you'll make road good before we start."

Isaac was forced to agree and he sent for his men. He might get help from a neighbor, but he must pay, in money, or labor when Strachan was pushed, and Strachan's habit was to claim more than he gave. Then Bell, the kitchen girl, could handle sheaves like a man, and he himself would show folks if he was done with.

Stones were laid in the soft gateway and engine and mill rolled ahead. The iron wheels sank ominously, but the machines reached the stacks, and Isaac reflected that when the thrashing was over to haul his load away was the engine-man's business.

They got to work, and Isaac pulled off his coat. Two on the stack pitched the sheaves across to the noisy separator; others carried off the beaten straw *bottles*, and moved the loaded corn-sacks to the granary. Teams plowed, backward and forward, through the mire; smoke and chaff and dust blew about. The engine clanked, and the separator throbbed on a sharp, trembling note.

At the beginning Isaac imagined he could not bear the strain. He was a large, heavy man, and to balance on the broken stack was awkward; moreover, the sheaves lifted on a fork, must be thrown fast and accurately to the mill. The dust fogged his eyes, and when he was slow, his fork and the other's clashed. The work went with a swinging rhythm and the engine marked the time. Although one's muscles ached and one's breath was labored, one's movements must synchronize.

By and by Isaac got down from the stack. At the end of the separator the thrashed corn ran into sacks, which must be fastened and moved to the granary. The yellow stream trickled fast, and if a fresh bag were not ready, would splash to waste in the trampled mud. Sound oats are heavy, and the large bags must be lifted across a stick by two men and tilted into a cart.

Isaac's muscles were strong, but he was fat and intemperance had made him soft. His side hurt, sometimes his head swam, and he was bothered by a queer shakiness. It looked as if he were a fool to start, but to stop was to acknowledge his servants better men than him, and for as long as possible he would sooner they imagined that all he ordered them to do he himself could do. Then, by refusing to ask his neighbor's help, he saved two men's pay. The sum was not large, but only by stern economy was farming profitable. The shillings one did not squander soon were pounds.

After a time the disturbing slackness went and Isaac's confidence returned. He had not recently handled corn-sacks; that was all. Forsyth exaggerated; he perhaps wanted a fresh patient. Isaac chuckled. He'd cheat the doctor, and he was not really much the worse for his fall from the gig. Anyhow, the stack was melting, and they'd be done before dark.

The man who helped him move the sacks remarked that his face was not, as usual, red. His skin was mottled by gray patches in which the netted veins were distinct and blue. When the gang stopped for lunch, the fellow told another the o'd man looked queer.

About twelve o'clock, the moor-tops vanished in mist, and fine rain rolled across the heath. Big drops began to fall from the bare ash-trees behind the stacks and the smoke did not go up. Heavy rain would stop the thrashing, but, so far, the mill pulled in the sheaves before the straw was wet. Isaac noted that where the loaded carts went through the gateway his big Clydesdales' feet broke the softening road and the stones began to vanish in the mire. To haul the mill away would be awkward, but it had nothing to do with him.

He had not much appetite for dinner. His mouth was parched and the dust had got into his throat. Well, he knew a cure for that, and when he returned to the stack-yard he was braced by liquor. In fact, he felt he conquered. The rain was stopping, and in three or four hours the corn would be thrashed.

The wind dropped and the sky was dark. A sooty cloud floated about the stack, and chaff and dust stuck to the men's wet skins. The pitchers' hands slipped on the forks, and the grit got into Isaac's blood-shot eyes. He imagined it accounted for his not seeing where the needle went when he sewed up the bags, but somehow his fingers did not properly control the curved steel. All the same, to lift the bags did not bother him very much. Effort had become mechanical; he was really fresher than when he started. So long as he must, he could keep going, but he began to wonder what would happen when he stopped.

In the meantime, the last stack was melting, and when the clouds again broke in a drenching shower the engine-man drove the separator hard. The hum of the spinning flywheel rose to a higher pitch, belts slapped, the mill clanked, men gasped, and straining horses trampled in the mud. When Isaac followed the cart to the granary, his boots sank, and he saw the wheel-tracks were deep, but not many loads of corn and straw were left, and the road would carry his carts.

When they unloaded, a lad allowed a bag to slip from the row and the sackcloth burst. Some corn was spilled, and Isaac gave the boy an ironical glance.

"Gan for needle and we'll sew 't up," he said. "If you'll not can carry needle, we'll try you for kitchen maid."

The lad grinned and shambled off. He was willing but awkward, and had not long since stuck his fork in a pitcher's leg. In fact, Isaac would sooner teach a strong girl than a lad who had not yet found his proper speed and balance. Boys did not think, and when they were keen, sprawled like puppies and got in people's way. He mended the bag and went to the mewstead. The thrashed straw was near the roof, and he called to the man on the cart.

"Pitch 't up and get back. Two more loads will see you oot."

When he reached the yard it looked as if the rain would fall all night, but the stack had dwindled to a few tiers of sheaves. To stop now was unthinkable; the grain-bags were thick, and the straw could be moved to the stead before much got wet. Isaac shouted to the engine-man, and the tired gang worked faster.

At length, the flywheel's hum sank and the separator's clanking slowed and stopped. The loaded carts rolled away, and the pitchers put on their coats, but the engine-man studied the torn road.

"You'll need to put down mair stanes. We have got to shift, and I'll not risk engine on ghyll road in t' dark."

"If you want stones, you must wait for the carts to unload," Isaac rejoined. "I might give you some railway sleepers to put in the soft spots."

Old sleepers, which may be bought for about a shilling, are useful at a farm. Isaac broke the pile, and when the men laid the timber in the holes leaned against the gate. He was hot and dizzy, but he had not yet put on his coat, and to feel the rain on his skin was soothing.

By and by he signaled the engine-man. The flywheel revolved and steam blew about. A drawbar groaned, the separator lurched, and the engine rolled ponderously ahead. At the gate, gravel and sleepers vanished under the iron wheels, but for a few moments the timber carried its load. Then the big driving-wheels went down, and while the engine rocked and labored, churned in the mire. Somebody thrust a fresh beam into the hole, a wheel mounted on its end, and the other got hold. Mud and rotten wood were thrown back, but the engine forged ahead, and the boy who had dropped the bag at the granary jumped to throw a sleeper in front of the advancing mill.

He was rather willing than useful, for a wheel plunged into the slough where the beam was not. The engine, however, was on firm ground, and the driver did not stop. The mill tilted ominously, and rolled on, and Isaac thought it must fall against the stone gate-post. At the bottom of the post, the boy tried to force a fresh timber under the sinking wheel.

Then it looked as if he saw he might be crushed, for he jumped up and braced his arms against the inclined mill. The effort was perhaps mechanical, for sometimes his sort do not reason. Since the mill was going over, he must steady the machine.

"Let go, you d—— feule!" shouted Isaac, and jumped for the spot.

The boy was strongly built, and for a moment he held on stupidly to the mill. Then Isaac threw him back for two or three yards, and, staggering, fell against the gate. The separator struck the stone post, but did not stop. The sinking wheel had mounted a sleeper and the iron drawbar held. Lurching upright, the machine rolled through the gate.

The boy got on his feet. Isaac, slipping down the gate, sat in the torn gravel. He did not think the separator touched him, but the effort he had used was violent and somehow he dared not move.

"Ground's wet," said his cowman. "Can you not get up?"

"If you help, I might try," said Isaac, and when the other pulled him to his feet, leaned against the man for support.

"I'm not hurt; the mill went by a yard off," he declared in a dull voice. "For aw that, I'm tired, and I think I'll gan t' bed."

The cowman and a shepherd steadied him to the house and up the awkward stairs. One pulled off Isaac's wet boots, and the housekeeper sent the other for Forsyth.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A MODERN STOIC

Two days after the corn was thrashed, Isaac, in his big four-poster bed, studied the doctor's face. When he was carried to the house the muscles on one side of his body to some extent were powerless. Now he could move his arm and he imagined he would soon be able to move his leg. All the same, Forsyth's look was sober, and Isaac knew he was not hopeful.

"I'll niver again be much use on farm?" he said.

"You might perhaps get out of bed, but I doubt if you will get downstairs."

"Aweel," said Isaac, "I thowt I was done for, but since I started at Howbarra' I have not spared myself, and wet and cold and labor niver hurt me. Noo I might as weel know why I am knocked out."

Forsyth told him frankly. Isaac was entitled to know, and his nerve was firm.

"The trouble is, you did not spare yourself; the consequences of strain, so to speak, are cumulative," he went on. "Then when you were thrown from the gig you got a nasty fall, and had your body not been hurt, there was the other shock. The cure was quiet and stern soberness, but you refused to use it and when you thrashed the corn you had reached the danger-point. I imagine your effort to pull the lad from the gate broke you."

Isaac nodded, with a touch of grim humor.

"I dinnot claim I'm generous. It's first and last time I've meddled where meddling did not pay. But I reckon I'd better begin to put aw straight?"

"It might be wise," Forsyth agreed.

"Verra weel," said Isaac calmly, "to write would bother me. You might send my lawyer—Hardcastle, at Hexham—word I'd like him to come across. Then my liquor's running low and sometimes you're in Carlisle. For once, I might be extravagant, but I'm not used with champagne, and port is heavy stuff. I think I'll stick to whisky and you might order a dozen. The case will see me out."

Forsyth liked his stoic pluck, but he shook his head.

"Although you will probably get the liquor, I will not carry it home for you. If you'd agree to be rationed—but I expect you would not stop at two or three glasses, and more would be dangerous."

"Soberness will not cure me, as weel you know. Ellen is gone, and the farm will soon be another's. Liquor's all I've got, and I'll not be robbed of that."

The doctor admitted Isaac was drearily logical. He had achieved much, and perhaps achievement was some satisfaction, for he had not in any other way enjoyed the reward for his labors, and he knew nobody would grieve when he was gone. Now he was helpless, hired strangers must care for him, and whisky was his only comforter. Yet it looked as if he were resigned. Isaac was stern stuff, and where grumbling would not help he did not grumble.

"You perhaps know Mark is coming back? We expect him in five or six days," the doctor said with pretended carelessness.

Isaac looked up, but not as if he were disturbed.

"Yours is first news I've got. I'll not can run away," he said with dry humor.

Forsyth was rather embarrassed. Isaac saw he knew all Mark's return implied; Forsyth had perhaps indicated that he did so. The old fellow, no doubt, knew his helplessness was his best defense.

"You will be my executor?" he resumed.

"I think not," said the doctor. "A trustee ought to be independent and without prejudice, but since your nephew will marry my daughter, I am interested. Besides, Mark is my friend, and since I'm altogether human, I might not approve your will."

"Neabody but lawyer will ken my will before he reads it to you," said Isaac coolly. "However, you'll send word to him?"

Forsyth engaged to do so and went off. In the kitchen he gave the nurse some orders; and then hesitated. He ought perhaps to stop Isaac's whisky, but if he tried, the fellow would baffle him. Then soberness would not help much; there was not a cure, and the end was not far off. After all, a few more days were not important, and liquor might be some consolation. Forsyth shrugged and started down the hill. He was perhaps a sentimentalist, but he hoped his end would not be as lonely as Crozier's.

When he was engaged in his surgery Madge came in.

"You were at Howbarrow?" she said.

Forsyth agreed. Madge's look was anxious, and he understood her anxiety.

"Isaac regains some muscular control, and may get out of bed. He cannot recover—A week or two I think."

"Then you expect Mark will see him?"

"Yes. I rather experimented, but Isaac, at all events, was not afraid. When I stated that Mark would soon arrive his reply was, he could not run away."

"Ah," said Madge, "I'm bothered! Flora believes Jim's falling into the quarry was an accident. I myself don't know, and Mark did not, but he's resolved to find out. If it's by any means possible, he must find out. You see, it looks as if he has let his career in Quebec go, and if he is baffled, he might brood about the tragedy all his life. When he went to Quebec he had begun to think he had let his brother down, and had waited until the proper time was gone. Since he is coming back, he has found Turnbull and got some sort of clue. All the same, for him to force a dying man to confess would be frankly horrible. Yet Isaac is stubborn and Mark must use force."

Forsyth knew his daughter and he sympathized. He doubted if she could persuade her lover to be pitiful, but if she thought she ought, she would try. For her to see the proper line was hard. Although she admitted Mark must solve the puzzle, she would hate to think he used harsh cruelty.

"After all, I imagine Isaac will not refuse to enlighten Mark," he said. "For one thing, honesty cannot cost him much. Then, perhaps it's queer, but, for all his cunning, in a way, he is just."

"Just?" said Madge. "The statement's ridiculous!"

"I cannot logically claim he was scrupulous, and I believe he exploited Mark's father's trust and Jim's rawness. He probably meant to take the farm, but they got the money another might not have lent. When one transacted business with Isaac the profit was his. All the same, his bills were met and his engagements stood. A queer, greedy, scheming fellow, but he had some qualities—He was not revengeful and he was never cruel."

"He hurt Mark," said Madge. "Your charity is wider than mine."

She went off and Forsyth smiled. He did not claim to be very charitable, but he had studied men and women for thirty more years than Madge and in consequence was perhaps more easily satisfied. Anyhow, the old fellow at Howbarrow had qualities, and fronted his end with stoic pluck. Hard, undaunted, and frankly pagan! Well, the dalesmen's ancestors were North Sea pirates, moss-troopers and cattle-thieves. A grim lot, but English; the Viking strain was not yet run out.

At Howbarrow Isaac beckoned his nurse. She was a competent young woman and her will was firm, but she knew her patient's firmer.

"It's time I took my medicine; I don't mean Forsyth's stuff," he said.

"But the doctor warned you intemperance might be rash."

"I'm not going to be intemperate, lass. Until I've seen my nivew I'll gan canny; and then I'll tak' a proper dose."

"In that case, it is fortunate there is not much whisky."

"Then, we'll send for another lot," Isaac rejoined with a twinkle. "When you bring my dinner you'll tell Frank to yoke t' pony; I've got a job for him. I'll order half a dozen. I'd thowt I'd get a case, but ten glasses go to the bottle, and since you have talked to doctor, you can calculate——"

The nurse reflected. The calculation was not the sort of calculation sick people for the most part were willing to make. Doctor Forsyth had not ordered her to ration her patient and she frankly doubted if she could control him. Then she saw he studied her with a smile.

"You're bonnier when your brow and mouth are straight, my lass. Get t' bottle and some hot water. The lemon you cut yesterday will do again."

The punch was brewed and Isaac slowly drained his glass. He must wait until dinner for the next lot, and be satisfied with another in the evening. Five or six days, Forsyth thought, before Mark arrived. Well, he must use some caution, but when he had seen the lad he'd let himself go. There was no use in his taking the doctor's stuff, and whisky was nicer.

In the meantime the power to move returned and his leg no longer felt as if it were made of wood; the shock was going, and that was something. In the morning perhaps he'd persuade nurse to help him up. When Mark arrived he must be out of bed. It was queer, but he admitted the interview with his nephew began to preoccupy him. Until Mark came he must hold on.

Isaac did not get up in the morning. His leg was yet weak and the nurse firmly refused her help. Isaac knew when he was beaten, and in the afternoon his lawyer arrived. The day was cold and Hardcastle had driven across the moors. Isaac felt his visit justified some hospitality and he ordered the nurse to brew a double supply of punch.

"The stuff is better than you get at Kings' Arms, and Miss Drayson kens she has got to humor me," he said. "If you should need a nurse, she's a canny lass; but she might leave us alone until I call."

Miss Drayson went. Hardcastle thought her competent, but he hoped he would not need her help. Studying his client, he imagined Isaac's sending for him was prudent, and his talking like a dalesman was perhaps ominous. At the Hexham office, Isaac's English, as a rule, was good.

"Since I reckoned on my wife's inheriting, you'll write a fresh will; but to begin with, we'll put aw right for my executors," he said.

He talked for five or ten minutes. Shares and cattle must be sold, sums owing to him be collected, and the money be used as he directed. Hardcastle noted his orders. A market-town lawyer, as a rule, is something of a financier, but he doubted if he could have better handled his client's property.

"Noo," said Isaac, "you will write the will. You and Forsyth are executors. It's first job you've done for me for which you'll not send in your bill. If doctor refuses, he'll maybe help you find another man. Weel, I got money my wife had saved, and although her relations did not like her marrying me, they'll expect some. They'll get nowt, and but for Tom Braith't's widow, mine have got enough. Two hundred pounds apiece to her boys, James and Frederick Braithwaite, to help them learn a useful trade. Twenty pounds to my horseman, shepherds, and cowman, and ten pounds to Bell t' kitchen lass. An untidy slut in house, but she worked on corn-stack like a man. You'll draw't up with proper names, and sea forth; leading on to the important legacies——"

"The tileworks?" said Hardcastle.

"My share to Tyson. He undertakes aw liabilities and receives t'profits. Noo we come to Howbarra'——"

Hardcastle looked up. Isaac's eyes twinkled, as if he thought the climax he had planned something of a joke.

"After t' aforesaid legacies are paid, I give aw that's mine—Weel two-a-three I ken may get a knock, and I reckon t'proper man's emotions will at first be mixed. Can you spot him?"

Hardcastle said it was not his business, but when Isaac supplied the name he remarked:

"In all circumstances, I think the will is a very just and proper will."

Isaac gave him a searching glance and nodded.

"Aweel, your business is to make it tight and fast."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LAST INTERVIEW

The evening was gloomy, and Madge, sitting by a window in the long room, tried to concentrate on her sewing. In the morning a telegram had arrived from Mark at Liverpool. His train was gone and he imagined he would be forced to stop at Carlisle for the night. Madge had studied the doctor's time-table, but since his household seldom used the train, the guide was three or four months out of date. By and by Flora, at the other end of the room, turned her head.

"I thought I heard a car."

"It's possible," said Madge. "As a rule, we are not bothered by much traffic, but in about forty minutes I have jumped up for the butcher, the fish-man, and a seed-merchant who thought he was at Redsyke. However, the grocery-van is due and you might take the parcel."

Flora gave her a sympathetic nod. To expect one's lover and confront the butcher was annoying. In the meantime, the car had stopped and she went along the passage. Madge resumed her sewing, but she did not see where the needle went, and when she heard the car turn she waited. Robertson's man soon was gone.

"A parcel for you!" Flora called.

Madge's heart beat. She jumped up and started for the door. Somebody advanced along the passage, and Mark took her in his arms.

After a time Flora joined them. Mark was thin, but she thought him bigger. His skin was darkened by the reflections from the snow, his look was calm, and he had somehow a balance and gravity she had not remarked before. Flora studied him with open curiosity.

"You have lost nothing in Canada but a touch of boyishness," she said. "In fact, you have got rather attractive, and I suppose I'll presently be your relation."

Mark smiled and kissed her.

"You are a stanch friend. I, however, felt I ought not to rob my pal."

"Ah," said Flora, "Bob's claim is not yet admitted, but he's very obstinate. We got a cablegram yesterday and he'll be here in ten days. When you started I expect he did not know—I suppose you and Madge have not begun to talk about your plans?"

"My plans are not fixed. As soon as the doctor gets home, I am going to Howbarrow."

Flora sat down and gave him a thoughtful look.

"Well, I suppose you must go. I certainly did not imagine I should be Isaac Crozier's champion; but I begin to doubt if he is altogether the greedy, cunning brute I sometimes thought. Then, I believe he had really not much to do with Jim's accident. And he's very ill."

"Yes," said Mark, "my luck is out. In a way, I have let down Bob, and my excursion may cost me my post. I risked it because at length I thought I might find out the truth—However, I suppose one cannot bully a sick and helpless man."

"You, at all events, cannot, Mark," Madge said quietly. "You hate to be cruel and I never knew you shabbily revengeful. Yet you are entitled to know the truth."

"Isaac may be franker than you think," Flora remarked. "When he could get something by trickery I expect he was not fastidious. Now, however, all he has got will not long be his, and although I don't think he is daunted, he might try to be just."

"There's your line, Mark," said Madge. "You are stubborn folk and you must not force your uncle to be obstinate."

They let it go, and talked about Bob's and Mark's adventures in Quebec. By and by Forsyth joined them, and when

Madge stated Mark was going to Howbarrow and she wanted the car the doctor agreed.

"Very well. I think Isaac will be willing to see Mark, and to wait might be risky."

Madge left the car at the beck foot, and they climbed the hill in the dark. When they reached the house, Mark went to Isaac's room, and Madge waited in the kitchen. She noted that the fire was large, and where corn-sacks had covered the flags there was a carpet. A good lamp, perhaps from the parlor, gave a cheerful light, and she thought something of the austerity that had long marked the house was gone.

When Mark went into Isaac's room, the sick man, in a big chair, languidly turned his head. The room was warm, but a rug covered his legs, and his large body was slack in the curve of the chair. His mouth was loose, and small blue veins mottled his shrunken skin. His glance rested on his nephew as if he were rather dryly amused.

"I expected you'd soon be across. Will you take a drink?" he said.

Mark refused. There was no use in pretending and Isaac had implied that he knew the object for his visit. He pulled the cover from a book he had carried from the Millhouse.

"My brother's farming diary!" he said. "I found it in an old trunk and the notes he made are interesting. I'd like to read you four or five."

"You'll not need," Isaac rejoined. "If you move the lamp and put book on little table, I'se mannish."

For a few minutes he studied the diary; and then he said:

"The lad was cliverer than I thowt. If I'd kened book was in his trunk, you'd not have found it."

"I imagined something like that," said Mark. "However, I expect you see where Jim's notes lead?"

"I'm not duller than t' next man; but if I'm defendant, you must state your case."

"Very well. Since my father might have borrowed from a bank, I don't know why he trusted you; but your motive for financing him is rather plain. Jim was perhaps entrapped easily; he was young and had inherited an awkward debt. Although you might have cautioned him, you encouraged his rash efforts to break his embarrassments. Where he speculated, he lost; you reckoned on his losing and hoped to seize Howbarrow for your son. But you dared not have told him how you got the farm. Frank was a good sort."

"He's dead," said Isaac. "His mother and me got a sad blow. But you're clever. Your father had not much of a head for business and Jim was a rash feule. I was second wife's son, but I would not see farm I could weel use wasted. I did want Howbarra' for Frank; but the debts I claimed were money your brother got."

"Now and then Jim paid a sum he marked *Cash in notes*. Do you know where the notes went?"

"None went to me. I ken where 't did go, and you'll not be happier when you find out; but if you must be humored—Hooiver, for two-a-three minutes we'll let it bide. I allow I schemed to seize the farm. Is that aw t' charge?"

Mark studied his uncle. Isaac was not embarrassed; nothing indicated any particular emotion. His pose was very slack and his body had sunk farther down in the big chair, but his glance was steady and his voice, although slow, was calm. Mark, however, had not expected him to be bothered by remorse.

"It is not all," he said. "In Canada I met Turnbull; when I started I meant to find him. He declares you bribed him to emigrate. Why did you do so?"

Isaac smiled. "He got a hundred pounds. I was afraid of Trum'll, and he was afraid of me. Since yan could implicate t'other, I'd sooner he went abroad."

"Then you admit you met Jim on the hill in the fog?"

"You're a keen lad. When I heard you'd started back, I knew you had found Trum'll and reckoning was come, but I was willing. You were entitled to know aw I could tell, and I wad soon be gone."

Mark thought the conclusion logical. Since man's justice could not follow Isaac, he might at length be candid. Bracing up awkwardly, he beckoned Mark nearer.

"When Jim started for Blackshaw tarn, he'd but come back from Garner's sale, and in afternoon I'd sent Trum'll to dalehead with some young stock Jardine had bid for. Jim was for refusing his bid; the beasts shaped weel, but my notion was he thowt them better than they were. Anyhow, Jardine offered a fair price, some bills must be met, and I'd supplied Jim with aw t' money I was willing to risk. Until your brother met Trum'll at Packhorse, he did not know I had agreed to sell.

"In the evening the horses broke the infield dyke, and I went out on moor. Fog was thick, and I was glad to find sheep path that goes by quarry. Somebody was in t' path, and when Jim shouted I stopped, not far from fence. You mind the brow is steep."

Mark nodded. The quarry was cut in the sloping moor, and the fence crossed the sharp pitch a few yards from the edge. On the other side, the turf was undermined by rabbit-holes.

"Jim was savage," Isaac continued. "He'd taken some drink at Packhorse and he wanted to know if Howbarra' was his or mine. I said t' man was master who held the mortgage and met t' bills; but the slut at Hexham wad get nea mair o' t' money that was wanted for farm——"

Mark stopped him. Turnbull's statement and Isaac's tale agreed; but he said he must be convinced his uncle's retort was well grounded.

"Then you can ask the lass," said Isaac, and told him where she lived. "After the funeral she was here and wanted t' see me. She saw Ellen, and she did not come again. Noo you ken where t' cash Jim entered in his diary went."

Mark's doubts melted; he imagined the experiment Isaac suggested would banish them for good. Moreover, his uncle had assigned a reason for the bitterness of the dispute.

"Jim went wild," he resumed. "Howbarra' wasn't mine yet, and he'd had enough! From t' beginning, I'd schemed to rob him; but he'd baffle me and stick to what was his!"

A gust of passion came near to carry Mark away. He saw his brother, broken and desperate, front his triumphant creditor. Then Isaac's horrible coolness jarred. It looked as if he were not moved, and although his voice got faint, the faintness was due to his infirmity. Yet Mark felt his tale was accurate.

"You disputed about the girl. Go on," he said.

"Yan thing led to t' other, and Jim stormed about quarry fence. He'd ordered larch posts and some reels o' barbed wire; I'd sent word we didn't want the stuff. I said o'd fence would stand for some time yet, but if we cut an ash-tree, he could split posts and rails for nowt. Jim declared t' lot was rotten; he'd had enough o' my pinching, and he'd make a proper job. D—— fence wouldn't stop a bullock; a man could shov't down. I was a stubborn o'd skinflint, but he'd show me——"

For a moment Isaac hesitated, and for the first time, Mark sensed a sort of shrinking when he resumed:

"Jim threw himself against t' fence, and rails smashed. I reckon he hit weakest spot, for t' rest was not varra bad. He went through, and maybe broken rail entangled his leg—I dinnot ken, but he plunged forrad and did not stop. The fog was thick, and quarry bank is steep. When I heard rotten turf break and stones go, I turned and ran up path. Trum'll was waiting at gate."

"You left Jim in the quarry?" said Mark in a stern voice.

"When I was rid o' Trum'll, I went back. Jim was dead; from quarry brow to pit at bottom is seventy feet. Nowt could be done before morning, and neabody but Trum'll knew I was about. I stole back to house and went to bed."

Mark tried for calm. After all, horrible as the thing was, he had feared it might be worse, and he was persuaded he at length knew the truth. When one allowed for his uncle's temperament, the line he took was logical. Had the coroner had grounds to doubt him and inquired into his transactions with his nephew, he might have run an awkward risk, but only Turnbull knew he was at the quarry. Well, it was done with, and, on the whole, Mark was conscious of relief.

"You exploited Jim, and in a sense you cheated Madge and me," he said. "The dreadful, haunting doubt robbed us of the happiness we ought to have had."

"Then you thowt I put your brother over the bank?"

"Now I know you did not, I cannot admit you're altogether innocent," Mark rejoined. "When Jim hit the rotten rails, it looked like Croziers' luck; but he had some grounds to be savage, and his dispute with you urged him to the rash experiment——"

He got up, and fronted the other with knitted brows.

"Anyhow, there's no use in talking. You are my father's half-brother, and if I were revengeful, I could not punish you. All the same, I cannot pretend——"

Isaac nodded, and for a moment his fixed look softened, as if he smiled.

"We're stubborn folk. Maybe you're the best o' t' bunch, Mark. Good-by, my lad."

Mark went out. Madge waited in the kitchen, and when they crossed the yard she put her hand gently on his arm.

"I have seen Isaac for the last time," he said. "I ought to have given him my hand, but I could not, and if I had done so, he'd have thought me theatrical. He declared we are a stubborn lot. He broke my brother, although it was, in a sense, by accident that Jim met his death."



CHAPTER XXX

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE

Forsyth stirred the sinking fire and gave Mark a cigarette. The doctor's small surgery rather smelt of tobacco than drugs, and after the lumber camps, Mark thought it homelike. Since he landed at Liverpool he had been occupied and highly strung, and now he felt himself entitled to slack.

"Are you going to rejoin the lumber company?" Forsyth asked.

"I don't know; I warned Bob I might not," Mark replied. "In a way, I turned down my job, and I feel I ought not to use my pal—However, I haven't yet really thought about it."

Forsyth nodded. He had some grounds to imagine Mark might stop in England.

"Oh, well, until Bob arrives, you mustn't bother, and Flora expects him soon. I suppose you are satisfied with your uncle's statement?"

"I am satisfied," said Mark, in a thoughtful voice. "Since I could not punish him, there was no object for his trying to baffle me, and his tale, so to speak, holds together. I believe Jim had begun to find out Isaac's treachery, and when he was annoyed his habit was to let himself go. Then the climax of the dispute was typical. Isaac parsimoniously refused to use a reel of wire; Jim smashed the fence because the other declared the rails would stand."

"One follows one's bent and bears the consequences," Forsyth agreed. "I imagine Isaac's using a broken gig-lamp explains his collision with the car and cost his wife her life. In fact, his collapse at the stack-yard was the consequence of the shock he got."

"I got something of a jolt," said Mark. "I'd thought Jim sober and absorbed by the farm. Did you know about the Hexham girl?"

"Some stories reached me. To investigate was not my business. I doubt if it is yours."

"I must find out, although I frankly hate to inquire. Isaac's tale was convincing; but I can, at all events, put this particular statement to the test, and if it is accurate, I'll know the others stand. Then the girl was perhaps entitled to Jim's help, and we do not disown our debts. Unless she had good grounds, she would not have gone to Howbarrow."

"I imagine you are not rich, Mark," said the doctor dryly.

"If I go back to Quebec, I'll be bothered to buy my steamship-ticket. All the same, I am going to Hexham."

"In the circumstances I rather like your pluck," Forsyth rejoined. "However, since you are resolved, if you can wait for Thursday, I might go with you."

Mark waited, and on Thursday the doctor's car climbed the stony road at the dalehead, and sped, by scattered birch-clumps, and flooded peat-hags, across the lonely moors. After a time, they joined a black trunk-road and followed a river through pasture and plowland until a gray abbey rose behind the trees. Then a battlemented tower dominated the clustering roofs, the car rolled across an ancient market-place, and Mark got down.

Half an hour afterward he entered the hotel smoking-room where Forsyth waited. His look was rather grim and unconsciously he frowned. Forsyth indicated an easy-chair and signed a waitress. Amusement tempered his sympathy. Mark, as his habit was, had tried to carry out an awkward job, because he thought the job was his.

"I expect you need a drink," he said.

Mark agreed, and when the waitress carried off the tray he smiled, an apologetic smile.

"Now I think about it, my nerve was rather good, but when I found the house I wanted to run away. However, I got up the steps, and although I hoped nobody was at home, I was shown in. In some emergencies, sir, youth is a handicap, but, so far as I could distinguish, she was from the beginning less embarrassed than I——"

Forsyth thought it possible. He noted that Mark seemed so unwilling to use the girl's name.

"Well?" he said.

"She is not cultivated, but, after all, we are not. The strange thing was, I did not think her attractive—I had not, of course, expected her to be friendly, but until we had talked for a few minutes, her attitude, so to speak, was openly antagonistic."

The doctor nodded. Two or three Croziers he had known were frankly primitive. He rather sympathized with the young woman, but he pictured Mark's sincerity breaking her reserve.

"Oh, well, her seeing Mrs. Crozier when she looked up Isaac might account for something."

"The awkward thing was to account for the visit. She knew I thought it important and speculated about her not coming another time—You see where we were led?"

"The illusion she perhaps entertained is not altogether uncommon," the doctor remarked. "You admit you were the worse embarrassed, and in some circumstances a woman uses less reserve than a man. Well, I expect she indicated that your supposition was not accurate? It's possible she added that she wanted nothing from the Croziers."

Mark gave him a surprised glance.

"It did go something like that. She hoped she would never see one of us again! She had a good post and might, if she liked, be married, but she doubted if she would risk it. Men were shabby and selfish. It almost looked as if I myself meant well, but if she met me in the street, she would not know me; and so forth. I said I was sorry and I went."

Forsyth nodded. Although Mark hated his errand, the qualities that urged him to search Canada for Turnbull had carried him to Hexham.

"I hope, at length you're content."

"I have some grounds to be content," Mark rejoined. "I know Isaac's tale is accurate and the tragedy at the quarry was an accident. Today's excursion has removed another load. All that's past is done with, and I can look in front. Before we push off let's ring for another drink."

When the car rolled up the dale dusk was falling and Madge waited at the Millhouse gate.

"Perhaps you ought not to stop," she said to Forsyth. "About an hour since the nurse sent a message. You are wanted at Howbarrow."

"Will you get down?" the doctor asked Mark.

"I'm going," Mark said firmly, and the car sped up the dale.

He waited for some time in the kitchen, and then the doctor came in and pulled on his coat.

"Isaac's unconscious and I do not think he will again be sensible," he said. "Nothing in my surgery can help him much, but one must seize the smallest chance and I must go for some stuff. There is no use in your stopping."

They started for the Millhouse and Forsyth went back. In the morning he sent for Mark.

"You are now the head of the house, and since somebody for a few days must take control, you ought to look up your uncle's lawyer. I shall not want the car, and Madge, who knows where Hardcastle's office is, will go with you."

Madge was soon ready, and when they arrived Mark was for some time occupied with the lawyer. He thought the old fellow polite and helpful. The funeral must be a public funeral, but Hardcastle would superintend all arrangements, and since Mark's name must be used, he hoped he would approve the list of the people one ought to ask. Hardcastle believed he knew his lamented client's wishes, but Mark's must be consulted, and so forth.

When Mark rejoined Madge at a tea-shop his look was puzzled.

"For three or four days, I am much more important than I ever thought to be," he said. "I'm calling everybody of note in the countryside to Howbarrow, and nothing is to be done unless I approve."

"But you really are important," Madge replied. "In the dales, you know, a funeral is something of an event and, as a rule, is celebrated by a feast. Then the Croziers are *old-stannart* yeomen, and since Mrs. Crozier's relations are barred by a sort of Salic law, you stand for the ruling line."

"Oh, well," said Mark, smiling, "if they want a temporary figurehead, I suppose I must play up, but when the function's over I'll be glad to abdicate. My taking the post, however, is something of a joke, and it's lucky Hardcastle will meet the bills. If I were forced to do so, I'd go broke."

Madge gave him a sympathetic glance, but her look was thoughtful.

"Howbarrow ought to have been yours, Mark. I wonder who inherits. In the North, our superstition is, a will must not be known before the funeral."

"If I remember correctly, Hardcastle stated Isaac wished him to follow the custom. Anyhow, it has nothing to do with us. I expect to labor for all I get, and I hope Bob will persuade the company to take me back. For all that, he'd be entitled to think my turning him down was shabby."

Madge smiled, a kind, indulgent smile. Sometimes Mark was dull. He did not seem to see his willingness to let his occupation go was rather fine; and he did not see another thing—In the meantime, she ought perhaps not to enlighten him, and she got up.

"I must call at a shop for a parcel; and then we must start."

Two days afterwards, Flora got a telegram from Liverpool and borrowed Forsyth's car. Mark heard the engine throb and ran for the gate, but when he got there the car vanished behind the trees. He turned and saw Madge at the door.

"You plunged along the passage, and in trying to stop you, I knocked down some plates," she said. "Two that broke were, of course, the best we have got. You see, I thought we ought to make a feast for Bob."

"Sorry," said Mark. "Until I heard the engine, I didn't think Flora was ready to start, and I'd meant to go."

Madge smiled. "I imagine Flora knew. Perhaps it's strange, but I expect she was not keen for your society. Yet, of course, she'd sooner not refuse."

"I begin to see a light. Anyhow, if she had indicated she was happier with Bob, I'd have walked home."

"Oh, Mark, you are dull!" Madge rejoined. "However, if it's some comfort, as a rule, your object's good."

Flora left her car at the top of the station hill, and on the footbridge across the line compared her watch with the clock. She had timed the run accurately and the train was punctual. Well, she admitted she did not want to wait. Bob was keener than Mark and he would see all that her meeting him implied. When she went down the steps her heart beat and warm color touched her skin.

The line pierced the moors where the Pennines roll down to the high tableland. Torn clouds tossed about the sky and sun and speeding shadow checkered the heath. In the Border wilds spring is boisterous, and when the train steamed round the curve Bob saw a light, braced figure in the island platform. Flora's glance searched the windows and her clothes blew on the wind. Before the jarring wheels had stopped Bob leaped from the step, and triumphantly put his arm round her waist.

"You reckoned you'd meet me; that's fine!" he said. "Since they landed us, I wondered—but sometimes I'm modest, and I knew I had to wait."

He hurried her to the footbridge, and fat commercial travelers and hard moorland farmers smiled. The girl and her laughing, athletic lover were an attractive picture. Flora, however, did not like to be conspicuous and she stopped Bob.

"The train goes on," she said. "What about your luggage?"

Bob whirled round. "I plumb forgot the stuff! In Canada, you give the transfer-man your checks. Guess I better get it. They're starting the cars."

His small trunk was on the platform, and he seized his bag.

"Bit of a load, sir," remarked a porter. "If you stop a minute, I'll get a truck."

"I don't want to stop," said Bob. "Maybe you can pack the trunk across. To move the lot would not bother me."

The porter seized the trunk and when he put it on board the doctor's car was surprised by his reward. A passenger who was willing to carry his luggage but gave tips like that was something fresh; at all events, in the North. Bob jumped on board, and Flora laughed.

"Your mood is rather theatrical. I was afraid you were going to undertake a strong-man exploit."

"I wasn't going to wait," said Bob. "Your engine's started and I'll fix the door. Step on it and let her rip!"

The car sped down the hill, across a wide market-place, and along an old-fashioned street. Then the white houses and gardens rolled back and the road began to climb the moors. At a corner where larches, touched by shining green, cut the wind Bob touched Flora's arm.

"We'll stop for two or three minutes. Run her on the grass."

Flora did so and for a moment looked about. Behind the mossy wall, heath and gray bent-grass sloped to a valley where a sparkling river ran. Across the dale, two or three white farmsteads shone; and then the long moors, melting from brown to blue, rolled back into the sky. In the serene evening light, the landscape was austere beautiful.

"A hard, bracing country!" Bob remarked. "Somehow it holds one. You feel it's yours, my dear?"

"I'm English; Border English, Bob. I'm proud and hard, and sometimes I'm prejudiced. The country is mine. Yet I could leave it——"

"When I saw you on the platform, I knew. Well, I mustn't hustle you—But when will you go?"

"Ah," said Flora, "let's be practical! For a month, you will be in Scotland, and when you get back to Montreal you must start for British Columbia. You will be in the mountains until the snow falls?"

"That is so," Bob agreed soberly. "If I were married, I might claim another post and stay at Montreal, but I'm the company's servant and the old man begins to reckon on my help. In fact, I feel I mustn't refuse."

"You must not," said Flora. "I expect your people are kind, Bob, but, after all, you are marrying a *foreigner*, and for a time they will weigh all I do. Since you are stanch, I might fight them, and by and by they'd be glad to leave me alone—But, it is not my plan. I must capture your father and sister; I want them to love me."

Bob firmly kissed her.

"They are going to love you. The old man imagined a girl who could hold me for twelve months and draw me back three thousand miles was the sort of wife I ought to get. I told him I had got neater compliments; but he talks like that."

"You don't yet see my argument," Flora resumed. "When I marry, I want my husband, but in Canada I must make good. To begin by forcing you to think for me when you ought to concentrate on the company's plans would not help. Well, I think you see—The company's servant must stay with his proper job!"

For a moment or two Bob cogitated, and Flora saw his brows were knit. Then he put his arm round her waist.

"You're as firm as you're wise and beautiful; I see you conquering—I certainly hate to wait, but it looks as if I must. Anyhow, we'll be through in British Columbia in the fall, and when I come back for you the excursion will be my last. That's something, because until you surrendered I was going to keep it up."

Flora started the car and he inquired about Mark. She told him all she knew and he pondered.

"Mark's good stuff, and now he can think for himself and shove ahead, he'll make some progress."

"I believe he rather doubts if he ought to rejoin you."

"Then, he's plumb ridiculous! The old man wants him, and I calculated on his seeing me out on the Pacific Slope."

"All the same, he may not go," said Flora, in a thoughtful voice. "In fact, until the funeral is over, you ought not to bother him."

"We'll talk about it again," said Bob. "In the meantime, the important thing is, you have engaged——"

Flora firmly pushed back his arm.

"The road curves and we are going fast. The important thing is, not to hit the wall."



CHAPTER XXXI

MARK'S INHERITANCE

Isaac's funeral was over, and the Digbys, high, old-fashioned gigs, and modern cars were scattered across the hills. All, however, had not steered for home, and at the bottom of the Howbarrow cart-road a limousine and two or three battered Fords were parked. Strange horses fed in the stable, and a mixed company occupied the spacious kitchen.

The whinstone flags were marked by muddy boots and rain beat the narrow windows, but the reflections from the big fireplace leaped about the gloomy room. At one end, a long table carried sliced cold meat, and liquor. The supply was generous, and one smelt raw spirit and damp woolen clothes. Women were almost as numerous as men, and some groups were rather obviously from the market town. One knew the moor-folk by their steadier glance and their brown, wrinkled skin.

Their emotions were mixed. None grieved much for Isaac Crozier. A few perhaps hoped to inherit something; most of them did not, and were rather moved by suspicious jealousy. Some were merely curious; Isaac was rich and they wanted to know where his fortune went. Yet since all were Borderers, they waited with inscrutable calm.

Mark's look was as blank as the others'. His part was host and chief mourner, and he played up, but he felt his getting the part was rather an ironical joke. His uncle had seized the farm he was perhaps entitled to think was his, and he was a laborer at a Canadian lumber camp. Well, in half an hour the folks would go, and when he left Howbarrow, he went for good. Mark frowned. He had thought something like that before, but he was back at the old house. All the same, he was not going to be superstitious.

His head ached, and he was strangely dull. Where the farm and Isaac's money went had nothing to do with him. All he wanted was to steal away and talk to Bob. The queer thing was, Bob had said nothing about their excursion to British Columbia. For all Mark's moodiness, he carried himself with a touch of dignity. His body was athletic and the strain he had borne had given him balance and control. The dalesfolk thought him a canny lad, and some, picturing his father, knew he carried the Crozier stamp.

Hardcastle sat down at a small table, and pulled out a document. He was tall and thin and old, but his voice carried.

"My business is now to read your lamented relation's and my respected client's will. I imagine nobody yet knows its provisions; he wished me to follow old-fashioned custom, and as a rule I believe Isaac Crozier's wishes were carried out. However, I must not tire you by my preamble——"

Hardcastle coughed, fixed his spectacles, and began to read, and after a few moments Mark was interested.

"I appoint for my executors William Hardcastle, and Thomas Forsyth."

Forsyth looked up, rather sharply, but Hardcastle gave him a meaning glance.

"In the event of the last-named's refusing, I request and authorise him, in consultation with the aforesaid Hardcastle, to appoint another whom both approve——"

"Are you going to refuse?" Mark inquired in a low voice.

"When I know the will, I'll decide," said the doctor rather dryly.

"I give to my horseman, Arnison, my cowman, Coulthard, and my shepherd, Stoddart, each the sum of twenty pounds; and to Bell Underwood, kitchen-maid, ten pounds," Hardcastle continued.

"Yon's but just. I reckon they earned it," a brown-skinned man remarked.

The lawyer, in a level, monotonous voice, enumerated other small legacies. Nobody was much interested, and Mark, dully looking about, knew the audience waited. Some perhaps were anxious and he imagined two or three bore keen suspense, but their faces were inscrutable. Rain beat the windows and the lawyer's voice rose and fell monotonously. Mark hoped it would soon be over and he could steal away.

Then he sensed a sort of tension. The groups were very quiet and Hardcastle's voice got slower. Perhaps the reading tired him, but Mark rather thought his slowness indicated that he approached the dramatic climax. At all events, it looked as if the others felt a climax advanced.

"To the sons of the late Thomas Braithwaite, James and Frederick Braithwaite, each two hundred pounds, to be used at their mother's discretion for their apprenticeship——"

A woman in widow's clothes turned her head and Mark thought tears shone in her eyes. A faint murmur, as if the audience approved, went round the room.

"My share and interest in the Cleughmire tileworks, to my partner, William Tyson."

Tyson was not far from Mark and his face got rather red. Mark imagined surprise was for the moment his predominant emotion.

"When the legacies enumerated are paid, I give the residue of my personal estate, and my house and farm at Howbarrow, together with my furniture, live stock, and farming implements, to my nephew, Mark Crozier——"

The blood leaped to Mark's skin. He heard a noise, and although he was not conscious that he moved, it looked as if his chair jarred on the flags. Then he felt Forsyth's steadying touch on his arm.

"The bequest is not conditional, but my hope is my nephew will occupy the house and carry on the farm," Hardcastle resumed.

After a moment or two he stopped, and, glancing at Forsyth, pushed the document into a large envelope. People got up; some began to talk in low voices, and an old man crossed the floor.

"In yan respec' the will's a varra proper will," he said and gave Mark his hand. "Although I ken a few who're disappointed, Howbarra's yours by right. I wish you luck, my lad."

Mark braced up. The people were going and the house was his; but the politeness he used cost him something, and when the gigs began to roll down the hill he looked for the lawyer.

"I am not forced to take my legacy," he said. "At all events, if I did so, I could divide the property between my disappointed relations?"

Hardcastle studied him with a touch of humor. The young fellow's look was ingenuously disturbed.

"The gift was not conditional," he remarked. "To some extent, however, your uncle's wish is a stipulation, and for long the farm has gone to the nearest of kin. But I suggest your talking about it to the other trustee."

"Then the doctor is willing to act?"

"He stated he was glad to do so," Hardcastle replied. "But, you will perhaps look me up as soon as possible. Sometimes calm reflection helps."

He joined another, and when the last group vanished Isaac's horseman crossed the yard. He was a big, brown-skinned fellow and moved awkwardly in his Sunday boots and dark clothes.

"Rain's takin' off," he said. "I thowt we might harrow lang field in morning. Soil's in pretty good fettle and we could plew turnip stiches seune."

"I don't know——" said Mark. "The south rigg's not yet ready for the potatoes. However, to get the turnips started while the soil is damp helps them cheat the fly. Come on. We'll look at the long field."

Forsyth had stopped two or three yards off, and he smiled. Mark's ancestors were yeomen, and until he went to the foundry the farm was his home. His talent was constructive and, perhaps unconsciously, he began to seize control.

When Mark reached the field, he broke two or three moist clods with his boot; and then studied the plow on the sledge by the dry wall.

"The soil will break down and you can get to work," he said. "I don't know if I like the old stich plow; in land as stiff as ours, the draught is heavy. The Canadians have a better model. Their moldboard gives a smoother delivery. I must look round the implement-stores when I'm at Carlisle."

He went off across the fields and when the plowman joined the group in the farm kitchen he grinned.

"You'll need to see aw's right in byre and dairy. T' young 'un kens his job."

Mark, taking the road down the ghyll, saw the doctor's car had gone, but to be alone was some relief. He must try to weigh things, for he had not at any time imagined he might be Isaac's heir, and now his inheritance humiliated him. He was willing to labor for all he got and he wanted to refuse his uncle's gift. The drawback was, he must think for Madge. A woman needed much a man did not.

At supper, nobody at the Millhouse talked about the will, but when the plates were carried off and the group sat by the fireplace, Mark turned to Forsyth.

"I understand you agreed to act as trustee, sir?"

"That is so, Mark."

"Then, I expect you know I wanted to refuse my inheritance?"

"To some extent, I sympathized, but I thought you rash. However, perhaps you'd like to state your grounds——"

"Madge is interested, and since I expect Flora is, I hope they'll stop," said Mark. "Well, to begin with, I for some time imagined Isaac had killed my brother. At our last interview, he admitted he exploited my father and Jim; exploited is perhaps the word, because, although he worked on their trustfulness, the money he claimed was, no doubt, his. For all that, he broke Jim, and I refused to acknowledge him my relation."

"Isaac was not at all a sentimentalist," Forsyth observed. "I don't suppose he was much hurt."

"Nothing indicated that he was disturbed, sir. He said we were stubborn folk, and let me go. I think he did not exaggerate, and now I'm sorry; but I could not pretend. Well, one does not take a present from a man one has hated."

"Howbarrow was not a present," said Madge. "When your uncle gave you the farm, he but paid a debt. It's important, Mark. Had he lived and you thought you might win, you would have fought him for the farm."

"I could not win. Howbarrow was his; he'd schemed for it, but all was done cleverly, and I could not use force. He gave me the farm. There's the drawback."

Flora looked up and smiled. "The real drawback is your pride, and perhaps a sort of compunction because when your uncle was willing you refused to be friends. Well, I admit you had some grounds; but Madge's is the proper argument—Howbarrow was your father's and ought to be yours. Then there's another thing. Although Isaac perhaps wanted to make amends, and I rather think he did want, he loved Howbarrow. The statement looks romantic, but some men do love the object of their ambition, as they could not love a man or a woman."

Forsyth nodded. "Yes. I believe Isaac was like that. Go on, Flora."

"He hated to think where he had saved another might squander; to picture the flock's going down or the land's going sour would hurt. We are a tenacious lot, and I expect he wanted to feel that after he was dead he'd yet guard all he had won. Well, he knew Mark's talents and he knew his industry. Mark was the proper man, and before he was hurt at the stack-yard, he thought he'd send for him."

Mark turned with keen surprise, and Flora smiled.

"I was your champion at Howbarrow, and your uncle was rather frank. Ellen Crozier was your real antagonist."

She got up, and inquiring about something in the kitchen, went off. Forsyth thought he had forgotten a job in his surgery, and Mark crossed the floor and stopped by Madge. She gave him a calm, searching glance.

"Howbarrow is yours by right, Mark. I think I know all you feel, and perhaps you were justified not to be friendly; but if

to remember you refused bothers you, to carry out your uncle's wishes is the best amends."

"I'm beaten," said Mark, and kissed her. "After all, I suppose my hesitation did spring from rather boyish pride. And I think from the beginning, I wanted the farm for us."

Madge smiled, a quiet, happy smile.

"You are honest, Mark. Well, I had thought to be happy in Canada; but we are dalesfolk and I'll be happier at Howbarrow. Although the house is dark, an architect might help to banish the material gloom. We ourselves must banish the other."

Three or four days afterward Mark and Madge went with a young architect to the door at Howbarrow. The afternoon was a typical spring afternoon in the North. The gray walls were wet, and lead-colored clouds rolled about the sky, but the rain had stopped and behind the courtyard arch the long moors shone in dazzling light. When the architect went, Bob and Flora joined the others.

"The alterations will not be very expensive, and he'll begin at once," said Mark. "For about three hundred pounds we can make the old house homelike."

"That's Madge's job and yours," said Bob. "If, as some people think, houses carry their occupants' stamp, Howbarrow is going to be brighter than it has been for long. So long as you give folks a square deal, nobody hates you; but I guess his uncle got one on Mark. To *give* him the farm he could not claim was the sort of joke he'd like. Now we reckon on his making good, as he made good in Canada, and I reckon Madge will change the Crozier luck. Well, I've spoken my piece. Come on, Flora."

They crossed the yard and when they went down the ghyll he said:

"Madge and Mark will be happy. They're fixed for good in the moors they love; but you take a big plunge, and sometimes I'm disturbed for you."

"You're a good sort, Bob. Since you are kind and steadfast, I am not afraid," Flora rejoined.

THE END

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE DARK ROAD
THE GHOST OF HEMLOCK CANYON
THE BROKEN TRAIL
PINE CREEK RANCH
PRAIRIE GOLD
CROSS TRAILS
CARSON OF RED RIVER
GREEN TIMBER
THE WILDERNESS PATROL
THE BUSH-RANCHER
NORTHWEST!
THE MAN FROM THE WILDS
KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK
LISTER'S GREAT ADVENTURE
THE WILDERNESS MINE
WYNDHAM'S PAL
THE BUCCANEER FARMER
THE LURE OF THE NORTH

HARDING OF ALLENWOOD
THE INTRIGUERS
A PRAIRIE COURTSHIP
THURSTON OF ORCHARD VALLEY
THE GREATER POWER
THRICE ARMED
DELLAH OF THE SNOWS
THE DUST OF CONFLICT
THE CATTLE BARON'S DAUGHTER
ALTON OF SOMASCO

[The end of *The Lone Hand* by Harold E. Bindloss]