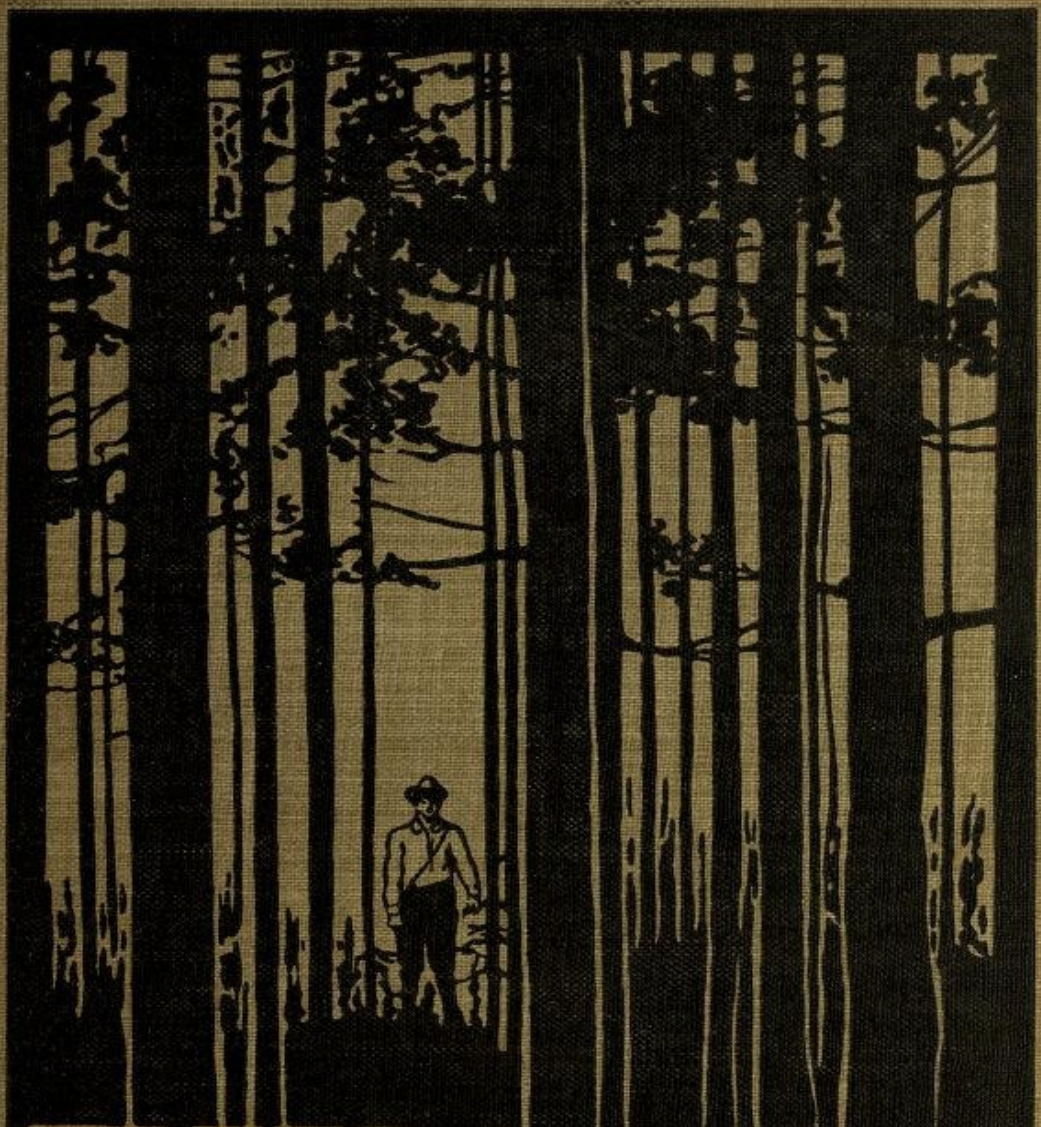

FREEBOOTERS of the WILDERNESS

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THE FREEBOOTERS OF THE WILDERNESS

by

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FOREWORD

I have been asked how much of this tale of modern freebooters is true? In exactly which States have such episodes occurred? Have vast herds of sheep been run over battlements? Have animals been bludgeoned to death; have men been burned alive; have the criminals not only gone unpunished but been protected by the law-makers? Have sheriffs "hidden under the bed" and "handy men" bluffed the press? Have vast domains of timber lands been stolen in blocks of thousands and hundreds of thousands of acres through "dummy" entrymen? Have the federal law officers been shot to death above stolen coal mines? Have Reclamation Engineers, and Land Office field men, and Forest Rangers undergone such hardships in Desert and Mountain, as portrayed here? Have they not only undergone the hardship, but been crucified by the Government which they served for carrying out the laws of that Government? In a word, are latter day freebooters of our Western Wilderness playing the same game in the great transmontane domain as the old-time pirates played on the high seas? Is this a true story of "the Man on the Job" and "the Man on the Firing Line" and "the Man Higher Up" and the Looters?

I answer first that I am not writing of twenty years ago, or yesterday, or the day before yesterday, but *to-day*, the Year of our Lord 1909-1910 in the most highly civilized country the world has ever known; in a country where self-government has reached a perfection of prosperity and power not dreamed by poet or prophet. The menace to self-government from such national influences at work need not be described. The triumph of such factors in national life means the wresting of self-government from the people into the hands of the few, a repetition of the struggle between the Robber Barons of the Middle Ages and the Commoners.

It seems almost incredible that such lawlessness and outrage and chicanery can exist in America—many of the outrages would disgrace Russia or Turkey—yet every episode related here has ten prototypes in Life, in Fact; not of twenty years ago, or yesterday, or the day before yesterday, *but to-day*. For instance, the number of sheep destroyed is given as fifteen thousand. The number destroyed in two counties which I had in mind when I wrote that chapter, by actual tally of the Stock Association for the past six years, is sixty thousand. Last year alone, five thousand in one State suffered every form of hideous mutilation—backs broken, entrails torn out; fifteen hundred in an adjoining State had their throats cut; three men were burned to death; one herder in a still more Northern State was riddled to death with bullets.

Or to take the case of the timber thefts, I refer to two hundred thousand acres

in California. I might have referred to a million and a half in Washington and Oregon.

Or referring to the mineral lands, I mention two thousand acres of coal. I might have told another story of fifty thousand acres, or yet another of three hundred thousand acres of gold and silver lands. When I narrate the shooting of a man at the head of a coal shaft, the stealing of Government timber by the half million dollars a year through "the hatchet" trick, or the theft of two thousand acres by "dummies," I am stating facts known to every Westerner out on the spot.

In which States have these episodes occurred? Take an imaginary point anywhere in Central Utah. Describe a circle round that point to include the timber and grazing sections of all the Rocky Mountain States from Northern Arizona to Montana and Washington. The episodes related here could be true of any State inside that circle except (in part) one. Such forces are at work in all the Mountain States except (in part) one. That one exception is Utah. Utah has had and is having tribulations of her own in the working out of self-government; but, for reasons that need not be given here, she has kept comparatively free of recent range wars and timber steals.

This story was suggested to me by a Land Office man—one of the men on the firing line—who has stood the brunt of the fight against the freebooters for twenty years and wrested many a victory. I may state that he is *still* in the Service and will, I hope, remain in it for many a year; but these episodes are hinged round the Ranger, rather than the Land Office or Reclamation men, because, though the latter are fighting the same splendid fight, their work is of its very nature transitory—dealing with the beginning of things; while the Ranger is the man out on the job who remains on the firing line; unless—as my Land Office friend suggested—unless "he gets fired." As to the hardships suffered by the fighters, to quote one of them, "You bet: only more so."

Just as this volume goes to press, comes word of fires in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, destroying dozens of villages, hundreds of lives and millions of dollars worth of property in the National Forests; and it is added—"the fires are incendiary." Why this incendiarism? The story narrated here endeavors to answer that question.

The international incidents thinly disguised are equally founded on fact and will be recognized by the dear but fast dwindling fraternity of good old-timers. The mother of the boy still lives her steadfast beautiful creed on the Upper Missouri; and the old frontiersman still lives on the Saskatchewan, one of the most picturesque and heroic figures in the West to-day. I may say that both missionaries support their schools as incidentally revealed here, without Government aid through their own efforts. Also, it was the stalwart man from Saskatchewan who was sent searching the heirs to the estate of an embittered Jacobite of 1745; and those heirs refused to accept either the wealth or the position for the very reasons

set forth here. Calamity's story, too, is true—tragically true, though this is not all, not a fraction of her life story; but her name was not Calamity.

PART I
THE MAN ON THE JOB

The Freebooters of the Wilderness

CHAPTER I
TO STRADDLE OR FIGHT

"Well," she asked, "are you going to straddle or fight?"

How like a woman, how like a child, how typical of the outsider's shallow view of any struggle! As if all one had to do—was stand up and fight! Mere fighting—that was easy; but to fight to the last ditch only to find yourself beaten! That gave a fellow pause about bucking the challenge of everyday life.

Wayland punched both fists in the jacket pockets of his sage-green Service suit, and kicked a log back to the camp fire that smouldered in front of his cabin. If she had been his wife he would have explained what a fool-thing it was to argue that all a man had to do was fight. Or if she had belonged to the general class—women—he could have met her with the condescending silence of the general class—man; but for him, she had never belonged to any general class.

She savored of his own Eastern World, he knew that, though he had met her in this Western Back of Beyond half way between sky and earth on the Holy Cross Mountain. Wayland could never quite analyze his own feelings. Her presence had piqued his interest from the first. When we can measure a character, we can forfend against surprises—discount virtues, exaggerate faults, strike a balance to our own ego; but when what you know is only a faint margin of what you don't know, a siren of the unknown beckons and lures and retreats.

She had all of what he used to regard as culture in the old Eastern life, the jargon of the colleges, the smattering of things talked about, the tricks and turns of trained motions and emotions; but there was a difference. There was no pretence. There was none of the fire-proof self-complacency—Self-sufficiency, she had, but not self-righteousness. Then, most striking contra-distinction of all to the old-land culture, there was unconsciousness of self—face to sunlight, radiant of the joy of life, not anaemic and putrid of its own egoism. She didn't talk in phrases thread-bare from use. She had all the naked unashamed directness of the West that thinks in terms of life and speaks without gloze. She never side-stepped the facts of life that she might not wish to know. Yet her intrusion on such facts gave the impression of the touch that heals.

The Forest Ranger had heard the Valley talk of MacDonald, the Canadian sheep rancher, belonging to some famous fur-trade clans that had intermarried

with the Indians generations before; and Wayland used to wonder if it could be that strain of life from the outdoors that never pretends nor lies that had given her Eastern culture the red-blooded directness of the West. To be sure, such a character study was not less interesting because he read it through eyes glossy as an Indian's, under lashes with the curve of the Celt, with black hair that blew changing curls to every wind. Indian and Celt—was that it, he wondered?—reserve and passion, self-control and yet the abandonment of force that bursts its own barriers?

She had not wormed under the surface for some indirect answer that would betray what he intended to do. She had asked exactly what she wanted to know, with a slight accent on the—you.

"Are you going to straddle or fight?"

Wayland flicked pine needles from his mountaineering boots. He answered his own thoughts more than her question.

"All very well to say—fight; fight for all the fellows in the Land and Forest Service when they see a steal being sneaked and jobbed! But suppose you do fight, and get licked, and get yourself chucked out of the job? Suppose the follow who takes your place sells out to the enemy—well, then; where are you? Lost everything; gained nothing!" She laid her panama sunshade on the timbered seat that spanned between two stumps.

"Men must decide that sort of thing every day I suppose."

"You bet they must," agreed the Ranger with a burst of boyishness through his old-man air, "and the Lord pity the chap who has wife and kiddies in the balance —"

"Do you think women tip the scale wrong?"

"Of course not! They'd advise right—right—right; fight—fight—fight, just as you do; but the point is—can a fellow do right by them if he chucks his job in a losing fight?"

The old-mannish air had returned. She followed the Ranger's glance over the edge of the Ridge into the Valley where the smoke-stacks of the distant Smelter City belched inky clouds against an evening sky.

"Smelters need timber," Wayland waved his hand towards the pall of smoke over the River. "Smelters need coal. These men plan to take theirs free. Yet the law arrests a man for stealing a scuttle of coal or a cord of wood. One law for the rich, another for the poor; and who makes the law?"

They could see the Valley below encircled by the Rim-Rocks round as a half-hoop, terra-cotta red in the sunset. Where the river leaped down a white fume, stood the ranch houses—the Missionary's and her Father's on the near side, the Senator's across the stream. Sounds of mouth organs and concertinas and a wheezing gramaphone came from the Valley where the Senator's cow-boys camped with drovers come up from Arizona.

“Dick,” she asked, “exactly what is the Senator’s brand?”

“Circle X.”

“A circle with an X in it?”

The Ranger stubbornly permitted the suspicion of a smile.

“So if the cattle from Arizona have only a circle, all a new owner has to do is put an X inside?”

“And pay for the cattle,” amplified Wayland.

“Or a circle with a line, put another line across?”

“And hand over the cash,” added the Ranger.

“Or a circle dot, just put an X on top of the dot?”

“And fix the sheriff,” explained the irrelevant [Transcriber’s note: irreverent?] Ranger.

“And the Senator has all the appointments to the Service out here?”

“No—disappointments,” corrected Wayland.

They were both watching the grotesque antics of a squirrel negotiating the fresh tips of a young spruce. The squirrel sat up on his hind legs and chittered, whether at the Senator’s brands or their heresy it would be hard to tell; but they both laughed.

“Have you room on the Grazing Range for so many cattle?”

“Not without crowding—”

“You mean crowding the sheepmen, off,” she said.

“What is the use of talking?” demanded Wayland petulantly. “Neither you nor I dare open our mouths about it! Tell the sheriff; your ranch houses will be burnt over your ears some night! Everybody knows what has happened when a sheep herder has been killed in an accident, or hustled back to foreign parts; but speak of it—you had better have cut your tongue out! Fight it: you know what happened to my predecessors! One had a sudden transfer. Another got what is known as the bounce—you English people would call it the sack. The third got a job at three times bigger salary—down in the Smelter.

“It’s all very well to preach right—right—right, Eleanor; and fight—fight—fight; and ‘He who fights and runs away, *May* live to fight another day’; but what are you going to do about it? I sweat till I lay the dust thinking about it; but we never seem to get anywhere. When we had Wild Bills in the old days, we formed Vigilant Committees, and went out after the law breakers with a gun; but now, we are a law-abiding people. We are a law-abiding age, don’t you forget that! When you skin a skunk now days, you do it according to law, slowly, judiciously, no matter what the skunk does to you meantime, even tho’ it get away with the chickens. Fact is, we’re so busy straining at legal gnats just now that we’re swallowing a whole generation of camels. We don’t risk our necks any more to put things right—not we; we get in behind the skirts of law, and yap, yap, yap, about law like a rat terrier, when we should be bull dogs getting our teeth in the

burglar's leg.

"You know whose drovers are rustling cattle up North from Arizona? You know who pays the gang? So do I! You don't know whose cattle those are: so don't I! To-morrow when they are branded fresh, they'll be the Senator's; and what are you sheep people going to do with this crowd coming in from the outside? The law says—equal rights to all; and you say—fight; but who is going to see that the law is carried out, unless the people awaken and become a Vigilant Committee for the Nation? Tell Sheriff Flood to go out and round up those rustlers: he'll hide under the bed for a week, or 'allow he don't like the job.' Senator Moyese got him that berth. He's going to hang on like a leech to blood.

"Now, look down this side! Do you know a quarter section of that big timber is worth from $10,000 to $40,000 to its owners, the people of the United States? Do you know you can build a cottage of six rooms out of one tree, the very size a workman needs? The workmen who vote own those trees! Do you know the Smelter Lumber Company takes all for nothing, half a million of it a year? Do you know that Smelter, itself, is built on two-thousand acres of coal lands—stolen—stolen from the Government as clearly as if the Smelter teams had hauled it from a Government coal pit? Do you know there isn't a man in the Land Office who hasn't urged and urged and urged the Government to sue for restitution of that steal, and headquarters pretend to be doubtful so that the Statute of Limitations will intervene?"

On the inner side, the Ridge dropped to an Alpine meadow that billowed up another slope through mossed forests to the snow line of the Holy Cross Mountains. What the girl saw was a sylvan world of spruce, then the dark green pointed larches where the jubilant rivers rioted down from the snow. What the man saw was—a Challenge.

"See those settlers' cabins at an angle of forty-five? Need a sheet anchor to keep 'em from sliding down the mountain! Fine farm land, isn't it? Makes good timber chutes for the land looters! We've to pass and approve *all* homesteads in the National Forests. You may not know it; but those *are* homesteads. You ask Senator Moyese when he weeps crocodile tears 'bout the poor, poor homesteader run off by the Forest Rangers! If the homesteader got the profits, there'd be some excuse; but he doesn't. He gets a hired man's wages while he sits on the homestead; and when he perjures himself as to date of filing, he may get a five or ten extra, while your $40,000 claim goes to Mr. Fat-Man at a couple of hundreds from Uncle Sam's timber limits; and the *Smelter City Herald* thunders about the citizen's right to homestead free land, about the Federal Government putting up a fence to keep the settler off. That fellow—that fellow in the first shack can't speak a word of English. Smelter brought a train load of 'em in here; and they've all homesteaded the big timbers, a thousand of 'em, foreigners, given homesteads in the name of the free American citizen. Have you seen anything about it in the

newspaper? Well—I guess not. It isn't a *news* feature. We're all full up about the great migration to Canada. We like to be given a gold brick and the glad hand. Of course, they'll farm that land. One man couldn't clear that big timber for a homestead in a hundred years. Of course, they are not homesteading free timber for the big Smelter. Of course not! They didn't loot the redwoods of California that way—two hundred thousand acres of 'em—seventy-five millions of a steal. Hm!' " muttered Wayland. "Calls himself Moyese—Moses! Senator Smelter! Senator Thief! Senator Beef Steer—"

She laughed. "I like your rage! Look! What's that mountain behind the cabin doing?"

"Shine on pale moon, don't mind me," laughed Wayland; but suddenly he stopped storming.

The slant sunlight struck the Holy Cross Mountain turning the snow gullies pure gold against the luminous peak. Just for a moment the white cornice of snow forming the bar of the apparent cross flushed to the Alpine glow, flushed blood-red and quivering like a cross poised in mid-air. An invisible hand of silence touched them both. The sunset became a topaz gate curtained by clouds of fire and lilac mist; while overhead across the indigo blue of the high rare mountain zenith slowly spread and faded a light—ashes of roses on the sun altar of the dead day.

CHAPTER II
AN INTERLUDE THAT CAME UNANNOUNCED

Wayland stopped storming. His cynical laugh came back an echo hard to his own hearing. Was It speaking the same mute language to her It had spoken to him since first he came to the Holy Cross? The violet shadows of twilight slowly filled with a primrose mist, with a rapt hush as of the day's vespers. The great quiet of the mountain world wrapped them round as in an invisible robe of worship.

Always, as the red flush ran the spectrum gamut of the yellows and oranges and greens and blues and purples to the solitary star above the opaline peak, he had wanted to wait and see—what? He did not know. It had always seemed, if he watched, the primrose veil would lift and release some phantom with noiseless tread on a ripple of night wind. In his lonely vigils he used to listen for all the little bells of the nodding purple heather to begin ringing some sort of pixie music, or for the flaming tongues of the painter's flower to take voice in some chorus that would beat time to the rhythm of woodland life fluting the age-old melodies of Pan.

You would look and look at the winged flames of light swimming and shimmering and melting outlines in the opal clouds there, till almost it became a sort of Mount of Transfiguration, of free uncabined roofless night-dreams camped beneath the sheen of a million stars.

You would listen and listen to the mountain silence—rare, hushed, silver silence—till almost you could hear; but until to-night it had always been like the fall of the snow flake. You could never be quite sure you heard, though there was no mistaking a mass of several million years of snow flakes when they thundered down in avalanche or broke a ledge with the boom of artillery.

Now, at last—was it the end of a million years of pre-existence waiting for this thing? Now, at last, Wayland realized that the quiet fellowship, the common interests, the satisfaction of her presence, the aptitude their minds had of always rushing to meet halfway on the same subject, had somehow massed to a something within himself that set his blood coursing with jubilant swiftness.

He looked at the rancher's daughter. What had happened? She was the same, yet not the same. Her eyes were awaiting his. They did not flinch. They were wells of light; a strange new light; depth of light. Had the veil lifted at last? The welter of sullen anger subsided within him. The wrapped mystery of the mountain twilight hushed speech. What folly it all was—that far off clamor of greed in the Outer World, that wolfish war of self-interest down in the Valley, that clack of the wordsters darkening wisdom without knowledge! As if one man, as if one generation of men, could stay the workings of the laws of eternal righteousness by

refusing to heed, any more than one man's will could stop an avalanche by refusing to heed the law of the snowflake!

Calamity, the little withered half-breed woman, slipped in and out of the Forester's cabin tidying up bachelor confusion. The wind suffed through the evergreens in dream voices, pansy-soft to the touch. The slow-swaying evergreens rocked to a rhythm old as Eternity, Druid priests standing guard over the sacrament of love and night. From the purpling Valley came the sibilant hush of the River. Somewhere, from the branches below the Ridge, a water thrush gurgled a last joyous note that rippled liquid gold through the twilight.

Life might have become the tent of a night in an Eternity—a tent of sky hung with stars; the after-glow a topaz gate ajar into some infinite life. Then Love and Silence and Eternity had wrapped them round as in a robe of prayer. He was standing above the dead camp-fire. She was leaning forward from the slab seat, her face between her hands. With a catch of breath, she withdrew her eyes from his and watched the long shadows creep like ghosts across the Valley.

What he said aloud in the nonchalant voice of twentieth century youth keeping hold of himself was—

"Not bad, is it?" nodding at the opal flame-winged peak. "Pretty good show turned on free every night?"

A meadow lark went lifting above the Ridge dropping silver arrows of song; and a little flutter of phantom wind came rustling through the pine needles.

"I don't suppose," she was saying—he had never heard those notes in her voice before: they were gold, gold flute notes to melt rock-hard self-control and touch the timbre of unknown chords within—"I don't suppose anything ever was accomplished without somebody being willing to fight a losing battle. Do you?" Wayland stretched out on the ground at her feet.

"Eleanor, do you know, do you realize—?"

"Yes I know," she whispered.

And somehow, unpremeditated and half way, their hands met.

"Something wonderful has happened to us both to-night."

The sheen of the stars had come to her eyes. She could not trust her glance to meet his. A compulsion was sweeping over her in waves, drawing her to him—her free hand lay on his hair; her averted face flushed to the warmth of his nearness.

"I don't suppose, Dick, that right ever did triumph till somebody was willing to be crucified. Men die of vices every day; women snuff out like candles. What's so heroic about a man more or less going down in a good game fight—?"

He felt the tremor in her voice and her hands, in her deep breathing; and his manhood came to rescue their balance in words that sounded foolish enough:

"So my old mountain talks to you, too? I'll think of that when I'm up here in my hammock alone. Oh, you bet, I'll think of that hard! What does the old

mountain lady say to you, anyway? Look—when the light's on that long precipice, you can sometimes see a snow slide come over the edge in a puff of spray. They are worst at mid-day when the heat sends 'em down; and they're bigger on the back of the mountain where she shelves straight up and down—"

And her thought met his poise half way.

"What does the old mountain say? Don't you know what science says—how the snow flakes fall to the same music of law as the snow slide, and it's the snow flake makes the snow slide that sets the mountain free, the gentle, quiet, beautiful snow flake that sculptures the granite—"

"The gentle, quiet—beautiful thing," slowly repeated the Ranger in a dream. "That sounds pretty good to me."

He said no more; for he knew that the veil had lifted, and the voiceless voices of the night were shouting riotously. The wind came suffing through the swaying arms of the bearded waving hemlocks—Druid priests officiating at some age-old sacrament. Then a night-hawk swerved past with a hum of wings like the twang of a harp string.

"Look," she said, poking at the sod with her foot. "All the little clover leaves have folded their wings to sleep."

Old Calamity passed in and out of the Range cabin. Wayland couldn't remember how from the first they had slipped into the habit of calling each other by Christian names. It was the old half-breed woman, who had first told him that the Canadian, Donald MacDonald, the rich sheep man, had a daughter travelling in Europe. One day when he had been signing grazing permits in the MacDonald ranch house, he had caught a glimpse of a piano, that had been packed up the mountains on mules, standing in an inner sitting room; and the walls were decorated with long-necked swan-necked Gibson girls and Watts' photogravures and Turner color prints and naked Sorolla boys bathing in Spanish seas. That was the beginning. She had come in suddenly, introduced herself and shaken hands.

And now Wayland felt a dazed wonder how in the world they two in the course of half an hour—the first half hour they had ever been alone in their lives—had come to deciding "straddle or fight"; but that was the unusual thing about her. She got under surfaces; but, until to-night on the Holy Cross Mountain, he had been able to laugh at his own new sensations, to laugh even at an occasional sense of his tongue turning to dough in the roof of his mouth.

"Look, what is that behind your shoulder, Dick?"

"Oh, that," said the Forest Ranger, "that is a well known, game old elderly spinster lady commonly called the Moon; and that other on the branch chittering swear words is nothing in the world but a Douglas squirrel hunting—I think he is really hunting—a flea to mix in his spruce tips as salad."

“Do you know what he is saying?”

“Of course! Cheer up! Cheer up! Chirrup! He’s our Master Forester—caches the best seed cones for us to steal.”

But when he turned back, she had freed her hands, and slipped to the other side of the slab seat; and Wayland—inconsistent fellow—went all abash when they had both got hold of themselves and were once more back to life with feet on solid earth.

“And is it straddle or—fight?”

She had put on her panama sunshade and was looking straight and steadily in his eyes. The Ranger met the look, the eager look slowly and deliberately giving place to determined masterdom.

“If that is a challenge, I’ll take it!” Then he added; and his face went hot as her own: “As to the freebooters of the Western Wilderness ripping the bowels out of public property out here, I’ll accept that challenge, too! We’ll put up a bluff of a fight, anyway!”

“I didn’t mean that, Dick.” She was looking over the edge of the Ridge. “I couldn’t give a precious gift conditionally if I wanted to, Dick. It would surely give itself before I could stop it. Isn’t that always the way? I wanted you to feel I would be with you in the fight if I could. They are late. Father and the missionary, Mr. Williams, and his boy were to have been here an hour ago. I heard them talking of your struggle against the big steals, and came up here before them to wait. They are coming to see about changing the sheep from the Holy Cross Range to the Rim Rocks.”

“I can hear ’em coming,” Wayland leaned over the precipice. “They are coming up the switch back now. They have a turn or two to take—we have a few minutes yet—Eleanor, best gifts come unasked: perhaps, also, they go unsent. Listen, I couldn’t Hope to keep the gift unless I jumped in this fight for right; but it’s a man’s job! I mustn’t desert because of the gift! I mustn’t take the prize before I finish the job! I want you to see that—always that I mind my p’s and q’s and don’t swerve from that resolution. If I deserted and went down from the Ridge to the Valley, from hard to easy, I wouldn’t be worthy of—do you understand what I am trying to say to you?”

“Not in the least. You wouldn’t be worthy of what?”

“Of you,” said Wayland.

“Gifts?” It was the falsetto of a boy’s voice from the trail below the Ridge. “Who’s talkin’ of gifts and things?”

They heard the others ascending. Her woman instinct caught at the first straw to hand. “Photogravures, Fordie, three more to-day. They are Watts—”

“He has to round the next turn! Never mind! He didn’t hear,” interjected Wayland irritably.

“All the same,” she said, “I’m going to send one of those pictures up to you for

the cabin. There is Hope sitting on top of the World, eyes bandaged, harp strings broken—”

“Don’t send that one! Jim-jams enough of my own up here! I want my Hope clear-eyed even if she has to go it blind for a bit as to you—”

“Then there’s Faith sheathing her sword—”

“Not putting away the Big-Stick,” interrupted Wayland.

“Then you’ll have to take the Happy Warrior—”

“I forget that one: I’ve been up here four years, you know?”

“It’s the Soldier asleep on the Battle-Field—”

“You mean the picture of the girl kissing the man in his sleep—Yes, that will do all right for me. You can send that one—”

And the Missionary’s boy came over the edge of the Ridge trail in a hand spring.

CHAPTER III
THE CHALLENGE TO A LOSING FIGHT

“Hullo, Dick! Who is talking of pictures and things?” The high falsetto announced the Missionary’s boy of twelve, who promptly turned a hand spring over the slab bench, never pausing in a running fire of exuberant comment. “Get on y’r bib and tucker, Dickie! You’re goin’ t’ have a s’prise party—right away! Senator Moses and Battle Brydges, handy-andy-dandy, comin’ up with Dad and MacDonald! Oh, hullo, Miss Eleanor, how d’ y’ get here ahead? Did y’ climb? We met His Royal High Mightiness and His Nibs goin’ to the cow-camp. Say, Miss Eleanor, I don’t care what they say, I’m goin’ to take sheep all by my lonesome this time, sure; goin’ t’ ride Pinto ’cause he’s got a big tummy t’ keep him from sinking when he swims. You needn’t laugh, it’s so! You ask Dad if a tum-jack don’t keep a horse from sinkin’! Say—” sticking forward his face in a whisper—"Senator oughtn’t to sink—eh?”

“You don’t swim sheep unless you’re a pilgrim,” admonished Wayland; but at that moment, the Senator himself came over the edge of the Ridge, bloused and white-vested and out of breath, a bunch of mountain flowers in one hand, his felt hat in the other; and three men bobbed up behind, Indian file, over the crest of the trail, the Missionary, Williams, stepping lightly, MacDonald swarthy and close-lipped, taking the climb with the ease of a mountaineer, Bat Brydges, the Senator’s newspaper man, hat on the back of his head, coat and vest and collar in hand, blowing with the zest of a puffing locomotive.

“Whew!” The Senator dilated expansively and sank again. “Here we are at last! You here, Miss Eleanor? Evening—Wayland! Night to you, Calamity! How is the world using you since you stopped tramping over the hills?” Calamity shrank back to the cabin. “I thought this trail hard as a climb to Paradise. Now, I know it was,” and the gentleman wheezed a bow to Eleanor that sent his neck creasing to his flowing collar and set his vest chortling.

“What! No flowers—either of you? You leave an old fellow like me to gather flowers and quote ‘What so rare as a day in June’ and all that? What’s that lazy rascal of a Forest fellow doing? I would have spouted *yards* of good poetry when I was his age a night like this. Hasn’t Wayland told you the flowers are the best part of the mountains in June? Pshaw! Like all the rest of them from the East—stuffed full of college chuck—can’t tell a daisy from an aster! Takes an old stager who never had your dude Service suits on his back to know the secrets of these hills, Miss Eleanor. Has he told you about the echo? No, I’ll bet you, not; nor the gorge in behind this old Holy Cross; nor the cave? Pshaw! See here,"—showing his bunch of wild flowers—"if you want to know what a sly old sphinx Dame Nature is and how she’s up to tricks and wiles and ways, snow or shine, you get these

little flower people to whisper their secrets! Whenever I find a new kind on the hills, I mark the place and have roots brought down in the fall. Now this little mountain anemone is still blooming on upper slopes. Little fool of a thing thinks it's April 'stead of June, paints her cheeks, see?—like an old girl trying to look young—"

"But she has a royal white heart," interposed Eleanor.

The Senator looked up to the face of the rancher's daughter and laughed, a big soft noiseless laugh that shook down inside the white vest.

"Typical of a woman, eh? Here, take 'em! Why am I an old bachelor? Now, here's the wind flower; opens to touch o' the wind like woman to love; find 'em like stars on the bleakest slopes—that's like a woman, too, eh? And like a woman, they wither when you pick 'em, eh? And see these little cheats—pale people—catch flies—know why they call 'em that? Stuck all over with false honey to snare the moths—stew the poor devils to death in sweetness—eh, now, isn't that a woman for you?" Spreading his broad palms, the Senator shook noiselessly at his own facetiousness.

"They keep the real honey for the royal butterflies," suggested Eleanor.

"Exactly! What chance on earth for an old bumble bee of a drudge like me without any wings and frills and things, all weighted down with cares of state?" And Moyese mopped the moisture from a good natured red face, that looked anything but weighted down by the cares of state. "You know, don't you," he added, "that the flies actually do prefer white flowers; bees t' th' blue; butterflies, red; and the moths, white?"

So this was the manner of man representing the forces challenging to the great national fight, a lover of flowers paying tribute to all things beautiful; good-natured, smiling, easy-going, soft-speaking; the embodiment of vested rights done up in a white waist-coat. Soldiers of the firing line had fought dragons in the shape of savages and white bandits in the early days; but this dragon had neither horns nor hoofs. It was a courtly glossy-faced pursuer of gainful occupations according to a limited light and very much according to a belief that freedom meant freedom to make and take and break independent of the other fellow's rights. In fact, as Eleanor looked over the dragon with its wide strong jaw and plausible eyes and big gripping hand she very much doubted whether the conception had ever dawned on the big dome head that the *other* fellow had *any* rights. The man was not the baby-eating monster of the muck-rakers. Neither was he a gentleman—he had had a narrow escape from that—the next generation of him would probably be one. He gave the impression of a passion for only one thing—getting. If people or things or laws came in the way of that getting, so much the worse for them.

Strident laughter blew up on the wind from the cow camp of the Arizona drovers in the Valley.

“Rough rascals,” ejaculated Moyese fanning himself with his hat. “I wish you wouldn’t wander round too much alone when these drover fellows are here from Arizona. Birds of passage, you know? Sheriff can’t pursue ’em into another State! When it’s pay day, whiskey flows pretty free—pretty free! Wish you wouldn’t wander alone too much when they’re up this way.”

“Mr. Senator, I move we come to business, and leave poetry and flowers and palaver out of it—”

The Senator turned suavely and faced the impatient sheep-rancher.

“To be sure! Let us get down to business, MacDonald, by all means; but before we go any farther, let me ask you a straight question! Clearing the field before action, Miss Eleanor! Bat come over here and entertain Miss Eleanor. Miss MacDonald, this is my man Friday—Brydges, Miss MacDonald: it’s Brydges, you know, sets us all down fools to posterity by reporting our speeches for the newspapers.”

Brydges winked as he got his limp collar back to his neck. It wasn’t his part to tell how many speeches came in reported before delivered; how many were never delivered at all.

The Senator had stopped fanning himself. He was caressing his shaven chin and taking the measure of the rancher; a tall man, straight and lithe as a whip, lean and clean-limbed and swarthy.

“MacDonald, why don’t you take out your naturalization papers so you can vote at election? In the eyes of the law, you’re still an alien.”

“Alien? What has *that* to do with paying grazing fees for sheep on the Forest Range?” MacDonald’s black eyes closed to a tiny slit of shiny light. “Mr. Senator,” he said tersely, “how much do you want?”

Mr. Senator refused to be perturbed by the edge of that question.

“You ask Wayland how much the grazing fee is. You know it’s my belief there ought to be no grazing fee. We stockmen can take care of ourselves without Washington worrying—”

“Yes,” interrupted Williams, “you took such good care of the sheep herders last spring, some of you put them to eternal sleep.”

“We’re not living in Paradise or Utopia,” assented Moyese. “We can take care of our own. Men who won’t listen to warning must look out for stronger arguments; and it’s a great deal quicker than carrying long-drawn legal cases up to the Supreme Court. You sheepmen are asking us to take care of you. I’m asking MacDonald to vote so he can take care of us. Majority rules. What I’m trying to get at is which side you are on! We’re not taking care of neutrals and aliens—”

“Aliens.” The low tense voice bit into the word like acid. “And I suppose you’re not taking care of pea-nut politicians either. My ancestors have lived in this country since 1759. Mr. Senator, how many generations have your people lived in this country?”

Eleanor became conscious that a question had been asked fraught with explosion; but the Senator smiled the big soft voiceless smile down in his waist-coat as if not one of the group knew that memories of the ghetto had not faded from his own generation.

"We're not strong on ancestry out West," he rubbed his whiskerless chin. "It goes back too often to—" he looked up quietly at MacDonald, "to bow and arrow aristocracy, scalps, in fact; but as for myself," if a little oily, still the smile remained genial, "for myself, from what my name means in French, I should judge we were Hugenots—what do you call 'em?—Psalm singing lot that came over in that big boat, growing bigger every year; boat that brought all the true blues over here; Mayflower—that's what I'm trying to say—all our ancestors came over in the Mayflower—"

The sheep rancher's thin lips slowly curled in a contemptuous smile. "Then I guess my ancestors on one side of the house were chanting war whoops to welcome you—"

Bat Brydges uttered a snort. Eleanor puckered her brows as at news. The Senator was fanning himself again with his hat. Even Wayland was smiling. He had heard political opponents of Moyese say that dynamite wouldn't disturb the Senator. "Only way you could raise him was yeast cake stamped with S: two sticks through it."

Certainly—Eleanor was thinking—there was some good in the worst of dragons. St. George had put his foot on one ancient beast. Wasn't it possible to tame this one, to tame all modern dragons, put a bit in their mouths and harness them to good nation building?

"Girt round with mine enemies, Miss Eleanor," he laughed, "and I slay them with the jaw bone of an ass."

The white waist-coat chortled; and she laughed. This dragon didn't spout flame but gentle ridicule, which was elusive as quicksilver slipping through your fingers.

"The point is," explained the Ranger, coming forward, "the sheep have almost grazed off up here; at least, far as we allow them to graze—"

"Besides, it's too cold for the lambs," effervesced the Missionary's boy, bouncing out of the woods.

"Shut up, Fordie," ordered Williams, holding aloof.

"Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Williams want to transfer from this Divide to the Mesas above the Rim Rocks," continued Wayland.

"Well, Mr. Forest Ranger, *that* is *your* business! The Rim Rocks are National Forest, tho' to save my life, I have never seen *one* tree on those Mesas. What in the world they are in the National Forest for, I don't know! You know very well I think there oughtn't to be any National Forests—each State look after its own job. Have you issued the grazing permits, Wayland? I don't see that it's *any* of *my*

business."

The Senator had leisurely seated himself on the slab. Eleanor knew now why he wielded such power in the Valley. He was human: he was the man in the street: something with red blood giving and taking in a game of win and lose among men. In a word, she had to acknowledge, the Dragon of the Valley was decidedly likable; and behind the genial front were the big hands that would crush; behind the plausible eyes, the craft that would undermine what the hands could not crush. Anaemic teachers and preachers might as well throw paper wads at a wall as attempt to dislodge this man with argument. Right was an empty term to him. Might he understood; not right.

He sat waiting for them to go on. She remembered afterwards how he made them play down from the first; and how, all the time that he was watching them, plans of his own were busy as shuttles in behind the plausible eyes.

"The point," continued Wayland, "is to get fifteen-thousand sheep up there."

"Fifteen-thousand." It was the number, not the getting there that touched him.

"A deep stone gully runs between the Holy Cross and the bench of the Rim Rocks," explained the Missionary. "Look—behind the cabin—you can see where the cut runs through the timber, a notch right in the saddle of the sky line."

"How many of those fifteen-thousand are yours, Mr. Missionary?"

The Senator was gazing down in the Valley. Just for a second, Eleanor thought the genial look hardened and centred.

"About two-thousand, Senator! I've just brought a thousand angoras in to see if we can't teach weaving to the Indians. It would mean a good deal if we could teach them to be self-supporting—"

"It would mean the loss of a lot of possible patronage to this Valley," said the Senator absently. "Are you still determined not to accept Government aid?"

"Absolutely sir: my work is to Christianize these Indians, not just leave them educated savages."

"Hm," from the Senator. "What do you suppose they think we are?"

"I don't see very well how I can train them to be honest men if, out of every dollar assigned to aid the Indian school, sixty cents goes to Government contracts and party heelers?"

"Hm!" Moyese was stroking his bare chin with a crookt forefinger. "I suppose if I were the story-book villain, I'd say 'yes, you must teach 'em to be honest'; but I don't. Fact is, Mr. Missionary, if you go into the ethics of things, you're stumped the first bat: who gave us their land, in the first place? This whole business isn't a golden rule job: it's an iron proposition; and if I were an under-dog beaten in the game by the law that rules all life, I'd take half a bone rather than no meat. I make a point of never quarreling with the conditions that existed when I came into the world. I accept 'em and make the best of 'em; and I advise *you* to do the same."

"You can't take the contracts of a bargain-counter to regulate the things of the

spirit, Mr. Senator."

"Oh, as for things of the spirit," deprecated the Senator, smiling the big soft smile that lost itself down in his vest; and he spread his broad palms in suave protest, "don't please quote spirit to me! I have all I can do managing things right here on earth. To put it briefly, far as this sheep business is concerned, if you can't get the sheep across the saddle between the Holy Cross and the Rim Rocks, you want to bring 'em along the trail through my ranch?"

"That's it," assented Wayland. "I've issued grazing permits for the Upper Range: and it only remains to get your permission to drive them across the land that is not Forest Range."

The Senator crossed his legs and hung his hat on one knee.

"As I make it out, here's our situation! I ask MacDonald here, who is the richest sheepman west of the Mississippi, what's he willing to do for the party. Far as I can see without a telescope or microscope, he doesn't raise a finger—won't even take out papers so he can vote! I ask Parson Williams here what he is willing to do for the party; and he objects to his copper-gentry taking a free-for-all forty cents on the dollar. Then, you both come asking me to pass fifteen-thousand sheep across my ranch to the Rim Rocks, though they ruin the pasture and there isn't room enough for all the cattle, let alone sheep. I hate 'em! I'm free to say I hate 'em! Every cattleman hates the sheep business. We haven't Range enough for our cattle, let alone sheep and this fool business of fencing off free pasturage in Forest Reserves. And your sheep herders never make settlers. You know how it is. We'd run your sheep to Hades if we could! We aren't all in the missionary business like Williams. We are in for what we can get; and this nation is the biggest nation on earth because all men are free to go in for all they can get. The sheep destroy the Range: and I'm cattle! You neither of you raise a hand to help the party; and I'm a plain party man; yes, I guess, Miss Eleanor—I'm a spoilsman, all right; and you come asking favors of me. It isn't reasonable; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll show you that I'm ready to meet you in a fair half-way! MacDonald, you and Williams and the Kid, there, go along and see if that saddle can be crossed, here to the Rim Rocks. If it can't, you can come down through the Valley and pass your sheep up through my ranch. I guess it's light enough yet for you to see. The gully is not five minutes away. Bat, you go off and entertain Miss Eleanor. I want to talk to Wayland here."

Wayland was in no mood for straddling, for palaver, for "carrying water on both shoulders." He was weary to death of talk and compromise and temporize and discretionize and all the other "izes" by which the politicians were hedging right and wrong and somehow euchring the many in the interests of the few and transforming democracy into plutocracy. Besides, memory that merged to conscious realization was playing in lambent flames through his whole being

round the form of the figure against the skyline of the Ridge.

The light of the cow-boy camp blinked through the lilac mist of the Valley. A veil impalpable as dreams hovered over the River. The boom and roll of a snow cornice falling somewhere in the Gorge behind the Holy Cross came in dull rolling muffled thunder through the spruce forests. Had her eyes flashed it in that recognition of love; or had she said it; or had the thought been born of the peace that had come? It kept coming back and back to Wayland as the boom of falling snow faded, *as if one man or generation of men, could stay the workings of the laws of eternal righteousness by refusing to heed, any more than a man could stop an avalanche by refusing to heed the law of the snowflake*!

He heard the wordless chant that the suff of the evening wind sang; that the storm wind of the mountains shouted in spring as from a million trumpets; that the dream winds of the ghost mornings forerunner of fresh life for the sons of men whispered, singing, chanting, trumpeting the message that snowflake and avalanche told: yet beside him on the slab seat sat a man who heard none of those voices, and knew no law but the law of his own desire to get.

The Ranger drew a deep breath of the pervading fragrance, a tang of resin and balsam, a barky smell of clean earth-mould and moss, an odor as of some illusive frankincense proffered from the vesper chalices and censer cups of the flower world.

"Great thing to be alive night like this," opened the Senator. Then he pulled down his waist coat and pulled up his limp spine and wheeled on the slab seat facing the Ranger. Very quietly, in a soft even voice he was reasoning—

"We have been fighting each other for four years now?"

"We certainly have, Mr. Senator."

"You're a good fighter, Wayland! I like the way you fight! You fight square; and you fight hard; and you never let up."

No answer from the Forest Ranger.

"I wouldn't really have enough respect for you to say what I am going to say, if you hadn't fought exactly as you have fought—"

What Wayland was saying to himself was what Moyese would not have understood: it was a foolish, quotation about the Greeks when they come bearing gifts.

"But my dear fellow, we differ on fundamentals. You are for Federal authority. I am for the Federal authority everlastingly minding its own business most *severely*, and the States managing their own business! I am for States Rights. The Federal Government is an expensive luxury, Wayland. It wastes two dollars for every dollar it gives back to the country. There's an army of petty grafters and party heelers to be paid off at every turn! All the States want is to be let alone.

"For three years, Wayland, you have been fighting over those two-thousand

acres of coal land where the Smelter stands. You say it was taken illegally. I know that; but they didn't take it! It was jugged through by an English promoter—"

"Just as foreign immigrants are jugging through timber steals to-day," thought Wayland; but he answered; "I acknowledge all that, Senator; but when goods are stolen, the owner has the right to take them back where found; and that land was stolen from the U. S. Reserves—ninety-million dollars worth of it."

"I know! I know! But what have *you* gained? *That* is what I ask! Federal Government has blocked every move you have made to take action for these lands, hasn't it? Very soon, the Statute of Limitations will block *you* altogether."

The Senator shifted a knee. Wayland waited.

"You have gained nothing—less than nothing: you have laid up a lot of ill will for yourself that will block your promotion. Been four years here, haven't you, at seventy-five dollars a month? I pay my cow men more; and *they* haven't spent five years at Yale. Now take the timber cases. You hold the Smelter shouldn't take free timber from the Forests?"

"No more than the poorest thief who steals a stick of wood from a yard—"

"Pah! Poor man! Dismiss that piffle from your brain! What does the poor man do for the Valley? Why does any man stay poor in this land? Because he is no good! We've brought in thousands of workmen. We've built up a city. We have developed this State."

"All for your own profit—"

"Exactly! What else does the poor man work for? But I'm not going to argue that kindergarten twaddle of the college highbrows, Wayland. I'm out for all I can make; so is the Smelter; so are you; but the point is you've fought this timber thing; you have filed and filed and filed your recommendations for suit to be instituted; so have the Land Office men; have they done any good, Wayland? Has your boasted Federal Government, so superior to the State, taken any action?"

"No," answered Wayland, "somebody has monkeyed with the wheels of justice."

"Then, why do you distress yourself? You have played a losing game for four years, cut your fingers on those same wheels of justice. Quit it, Wayland! What good does it do? Come over to the right side and build up big industries, big development! I've watched you fighting for four years, Wayland! You are the squarest, pluckiest fighter I've ever known. But you can't do a thing! You can't get anywhere! You're wasting the best years of your life mouthing up here in the Mountains at the moon; and who of all the public you are fighting for, my boy, who of all the public gives one damn for right or wrong? If we turn you down, who is going to raise a finger for you? Answer that my boy! They are paying you poorer wages now than we pay any ignorant foreigner down in the Smelter; that's a way the dear people have of caring for their ownest! Chuck it, Wayland! Chuck it! Waken up, man; look out for number one; and, in the words of the illustrious

Vanderbilticus, let the public be d—ee—d! Come down to my ranch where you'll have a chance to carry out your fine ideas of Range and Forest! Hell, what are you gaining here, man? A sort o' moral hysterics—that's all! It's all very well for those Down Easterners, who have lots of money and are keen on the lime light, to go spouting all over the country about running the Government the way you'd run a Sunday School." The Senator had become so tense that he had raised his voice. "Chuck those damfool theories, Wayland! Chuck them, I tell you! Get down to business, man! What are you howling about timber for posterity for? If you don't look alive, you'll go lean frying fat for posterity! Oh, rot, the thing makes me so tired I can't talk about it! Come down to my ranch. I want a thorough man! I want a man who can fight like the devil if he has to and handle that gang in the cow camp with branding irons! I want 'em run out, do you hear? They're blackguards! I want a man that's a man; and, for pay, you can name your own price. I'll want a partner as I grow older. And don't you do any fool rash thing that I'll have to fight and down you for! I like *you*, Wayland—"

Then three things happened instantaneously. Wayland glanced up. Eleanor MacDonald was looking straight into his eyes. And the sheep rancher's choppy voice was saying to the Missionary, "Some men go up in the mountains to fish for trout; but others stay right down in the Valley and grow rich catching suckers."

"We can't cross that gully," shouted the boy. "We, can't cross it nohow! We got to cross the ranch trail to go up to them Rim Rocks."

"Why, all right, Fordie," the Senator rose, kicking the folds from the knees of his trousers, "if you boss the job, Fordie, I'll let you cross the ranch! You'll take a few of the herders up with you? And you'll not let the sheep spread over the fields? Better do it towards evening when it's cool for the climb! All right, we'll call that a bargain! Fordie's on the job to pass the sheep up the trail; and just to show you I'm fair, here is Miss Eleanor for my witness, you can drive the whole bunch over my ranch! Good night, all! Everybody coming now? Come on! We'll lead the way, Miss Eleanor. It's getting dark. I'll pad the fall if anybody behind trips. Good night, Wayland; think that offer of mine over? Not coming, Brydges? All right, give Wayland a piece of your mind, as a newspaper man, about this business! Night! Good night, Calamity!"

CHAPTER IV
STACKING THE CARDS

Bat straddled the slab and lighted his pipe.

"Old man been giving you some good advice?"

"I don't know whether you'd call it good or not. Let's heap the logs on, Brydges, and make the shadows dance."

Brydges did some hard thinking and let the Ranger do the heaping.

"Sort of razzle-dazzler, MacDonald's daughter; she's a winner; but you can't get at her! Sort of feel when she's talking to you as if her other self was 'way down East. Wonder what the old curmudgeon brought her back here for? If she'd let down her high airs a peg, she'd have every fellow in the Valley on a string. She could have Moyese's scalp now if she wanted it—all that's left of it?"

"You can bunk inside! I'll take the hammock." Wayland emerged from the cabin trailing a gray blanket and a lynx skin robe. Bat continued to emit smoke in puffs and curls and wreaths at the top of the trees.

"How many acres do you patrol, Dickie?"

"About a hundred-thousand."

"Is that all? How many horses does the Govment allow?"

"None! Buy our own!"

"Great Guns! And you're loyal to that kind of Service? It's bally loyal I'd be! Why, Moyese allows me the use of any bronch on his ranch; and, when there's a quick turn to be made, it's a motor car. Why don't you let me send you up a couple of Moyese's nags? You could pasture 'em here and get their use for nothing. I could do that right off my own responsibility. Need be no connection with the old man."

"Bat," said the Ranger, "did you stay up here to say that to me?"

"I don't know whether I did or not; but, now that I *am* here, I say it anyway; and I say a whole lot more—don't be a bally fool and buck into a buzz-saw! Why don't you take the Senator's offer? Holy Smoke! What are you gaining stuck up here in a hole of a shack that's snowed ten feet deep all winter? What's the use of fighting the Smelter thieves, and the Timber thieves, and the Dummy homesteaders, and all that? You can't buck the combination, Dick! It isn't only Moyese! He's a mere tool himself in this game. It's the Ring you're up against, and you can chase yourself all your life round that Ring, and never get anywhere. The big dubs at Washington, the politicians, they are only spokes themselves in that wheel. If you buck into that wheel, you get yourself tangled into a pulp; and if any of those dubs down in Washington thinks he won't fit into the Ring, why he'll find himself broken and jerked out so quick he won't know what has happened till he sees the Wheel going round again with a new spoke in his place."

"Bat, did you stay up here to say that to me?"

"No, I did not." With a twig Bat pushed down the tobacco in his pipe. "I stayed up here, if you want to know, because we were on our way to the cow camp when the parson and his kid joined us. I guess every man has his limit. That cow-camp gang is mine. I want to live a little longer; and I don't want to know things that might make it useful for me to die. When Moyese wants to deal with that gang, he can go it alone."

"Brydges," said Wayland, "you have given me some frank advice. *I'm* going to reciprocate. You know what is going on out here. You know why that Arizona gang comes up here. You know why we can't touch them—they are off the Range of the Forest. You know about the stolen coal for the Smelter Ring, thousands of acres of it; and the stolen timber limits for the Lumber Ring, millions of acres of them. If the public knew, Bat, we'd win our fight. It would be a walk over. Every man jack of them would lie down, and stay put. Why don't you tell in your paper? Why don't you tell the truth when you send the dispatches East? If you did, Bat, we could clean out the gang in a month. Why don't you play the game a man should play? Every newspaper man likes a clean sporty fight; and no knifing in the back. Why don't you put up that fight for us, now, Brydges, and stop giving us side jabs?"

Brydges' pipe fell from his teeth.

"Wayland—what in hell—do you think—I'm working for?"

There was a big silence.

The look of masterdom came back to Wayland's face; but he paused, looking straight ahead in space. Perhaps he was looking for the hard grip of the next grapple. He had a curious trick at such times of clinching his teeth very tight behind open lips; and the pupil of his eye became a blank.

"You are at least sincere, Brydges," he said. Bat gathered up his shattered pipe.

"I'm not a past-master, *yet*," he said. "I haven't reached the point where I can believe my own lies; so I don't tell 'em and get caught. I've dug down in the mortuaries of other men too often—long as a man doesn 't believe his own lies, he's on guard and doesn't get caught. It's when he comes ping against a buzz-saw and finds it's a fact that he has to pay or back down or lose out. You can't budge a fact, damn it! Thing always shows the same!"

Bat had found the pieces of his pipe. Fitting the meerschaum to the wood, he had gained confidence and was going ahead full steam.

"Saw 'Macbeth' in Smelter City Theatre last night. 'Member the place where he says 'Thou canst not say I did it?' Well, that's the beginning of the end for that old boy; fooled himself that time. If he'd remembered that, though he didn't do it with his own hand, he did do it all the same, he wouldn't have believed his own lie

and got all tangled up. One of the first things Moyese told me when I went on his paper was never to monkey with the dee-fool who wastes time justifying himself: do it and go ahead! Fact is, Dick, I look on a newspaper man same as I do a lawyer: he has his price; and he finds his market for his wares; and it's none of his business what his private convictions are of the right or wrong. He's paid to defend or attack like a lawyer; and he goes ahead—"

"And doesn't pretend he's fooling the public by giving news, eh, Bat? Brydges, if you argue that fashion, you must excuse me if I grin."

"Who's the old party talking to your road gang down by the white tent?" asked Brydges, pointing where the Range sloped down to the Homestead Settlement and a long canvass bunk house marked the domicile of the road hands for the Forests.

"Oh, no, you don't get away from the argument so easily, Bat! You make the Senator's job and your job and public service all round a bunco game, a bunco game with marked cards; while we Service and Land fellows act the decent sign for a blind pig—"

"Hullo, he's coming up," interrupted Brydges. "Seems your night for deputations, Wayland! Looks like a parson! By George, I didn't know Senator had his drag net out for parsons as dummy entrymen! Nothing like imparting quality! By George, hanged if I know—he looks like a peddler—has a pack horse—"

"Peddler o' th' Gospel, Son! Good eé-vening to you, Gentlemen."

The newcomer sang out greeting in a high thin falsetto that belied the ruddy youth of shaven cheeks and accorded more with his masses of white hair.

"Is this the Ranger place perched on top o' th' warld? Y'r workmen in the white tent told me A'd find a short trail here-by t' th' next Valley. 'Tis y'r Missionary Williams A'm seekin'; A thought if A'd push on, push on, an' cat-er-corner y'r mountain here, A'd strike y'r River by moonlight! So A have! So A have! But it's Satan's own waste o' windfall 'mong these big trees! Such a leg-breakin' trail A have na' beaten since A peddled Texas tickler done up in Gospel hymn books filled wi' whiskey—"

"Well—I'll—be—hanged," slowly ejaculated Mr. Bat Brydges. "Come far?" he asked aloud, fumbling his brain for a clue.

The old man, emerging from the timbers, took off his hat and swabbed the sweat from his brow. Then he righted the saddle on his broncho.

"Eh, woman, do A scare y'?" This to Calamity, just turning down the Ridge trail with a dun gray blanket filled with odds and ends on her shoulders, when the padded thud of the pack horse coming through the heavy timber was followed by the stalwart form of the newcomer. Face and form were frontiersman; vesture, clerical; but Old Calamity trotted back to the Range cabin.

"Come far, did y' ask? More or less, more or less. A've come farther on unholier missions. We'd call it a nice bit snow-shoe run in the old days. Two months since A left Saskatchewan! We've taken our time, Bessie an' me—"

caressing the mare with resounding slaps. “We’re not so young as we were, Bessie an’ me, when we sarved Satan hot-foot back an’ forth these same trails till by the Grace o’ God we broke halter from Hell for holier trail—”

“Better loosen up and berth here for to-night,” suggested the Ranger. “The Ridge trail is steep going, down grade, after dark for a stranger—”

“Stranger?” The old man trumpeted a laugh that would have done credit to a megaphone. “Stranger, my kiddie boy? A’ve known these Rocky Mountain States when, if ye owned these pairts an’ had a homestead in Hell, y’d rent y’r residence here and take up quiet life the other place! A knew these trails before y’ were born, from Mexico to MacKenzie River, wherever men had a thirst. A’ve travelled these trails wi’ cook stoves packed full o’ Scotch dew, an’ the Mounted Police hangin’ t’ m’ tail till A scuttled the Boundary. Good days—rip roaring days for the makin’ of strong men! We were none o’ y’r cold blooded reptile calculatin’ kind! May we fight valiant for God now as we wrestled for the Devil then! Oh, to be young again an’ not spill life in wassail! to give the blows for right instead of wrong! Man, what a view y’ have here—what a view! Minds me of the days A was bridge building in the Rockies—”

“Then you’ve been in these mountains before?” asked Brydges; but the old frontiersman refused to take the bait and rambled on in his reverie.

“What a view! Th’ vera kingdom of earth at y’r feet! The river wimplin’—wimplin’—wimplin’ wi’ a silver laugh over the stones, an’ the light violet as a Scotch lass’s eye! An’ the green fields of alfalfa—Have y’ ever noticed how th’ light above the alfalfa turns purple? An’ y’r Rim Rocks roasted fire red by the heat. ’Tis the same view A’ve gazed on many a time when A was young.” He drew a deep sigh of the longing that only the passing frontiersman knows. “ ’Tis like if the Devil came tempting to-day, ’t would be such a place as this! Many’s the time He came to us in them old days, lawless days! ’Tis different to-day. He’d not bait men savage naked now. The kingdoms of the earth, he’d offer—wealth an’ success—wealth an’ success—the fetish o’ sons o’ men to-day. ’Twould not be simple cards for drink y’d play! Bigger stakes—bigger stakes, boys! He’d bait men’s souls wi’ bigger stakes! If I were young I’d take his bet an’ play for the biggest stakes outside o’ Hell—”

“Hey? What is that?” queried Brydges; and he winked at Wayland. “We’d been talking of a bunco game when you came up.”

“Y’ had, had you?” The old frontiersman measured Brydges through and through. “Well, judging from y’r brass an’ the up-and-coming kind of it, A’m thinking y’r stakes would be pea-nuts under little shells! ’Tis bigger stakes I’d play for if I had m’ life to live over—”

“What?” asked Wayland curiously.

Mr. Bat Brydges was revising his inventory of the old “duffer.” Wayland was laughing openly. The old man had become oblivious of both, with a triangling of

sharply intersected lines between his brows and tense compression of the lips—

"The—fate—o'—this—land," he ripped out in hammer raps, "the fate of this land, boys, with all time lookin' on since ever Time began! Y're the fiery furnace of all the world's hopes and fears, of all earth's people, of all poets' dreams; an' God only knows what a mess o' slag y're turning out! Y'r muck rakers are belching y'r failures to the four corners of earth! Justice perverted! Courts in fee to the highest bidder! More murders—murders in this fresh new clean land than all the stew pots o' filth the old nations have brewed in a thousand years; and murders unpunished! Y'r Government—the great world experiment—is it the wull o' the people, or the wull of a gilded clique o' tricksters?"

The old man stretched out his hands above the Valley. "What are ye doing with y'r freedom, the freedom that the children o' light prayed for and fought for and died for? When there's one law for the rich and another for the poor, when ye have to bribe y'r own self-elected rulers to do y'r wull, where is y'r freedom different from the freedom in France before the Revolution? Is it not written 'my house shall be for all nations; but ye have made it a den of thieves?' Ye have what all the nations of the earth have bled for, what prophets have prayed for, and patriots died for; and all the world is looking on asking, sneering, scoffing, saying ye pervert the Ark o' the Covenant of God, saying lawlessness stalks under y'r banners, saying y' wrest the judgment to the highest bidder, aye to the supreme fountain head o' y'r courts! The fate o' this land, boys! Them's the stakes I'd play for, if I had lusty blows to spare. I'd up—I'd up—I'd strip me naked of every back-thought and expediency and self-interest and hold-back! I'd hurl the lie—in the teeth—of a scoffing world—I'd show all nations o' time that the people, the plain common good people, can keep the law sound as the Ark o' the Covenant of God; and—and—I'd hurl y'r traitor leaders—y'r Judas Iscariots huckstering the land's good for paltry silver—I'd hurl y'r grafters an' y'r heelers an' y'r bosses an' y'r strumpet justices, who sell a verdict like a harlot, I'd hurl them to the bottom of Hell! An' may Hell be both deep and hot—old fashioned extra for the pack of them!"

He shook his trembling fist at the vacuous air. "Fight—right—might! I'd paint the words in letters o' blood till they awakened this land like the fiery cross of old! I'd fight—fight—fight till they had to kill every man o' my kind before I'd down! Before I'd see y'r law outraged, y'r courts perverted, y'r justice bartered and hawked and peddled from huckster to trickster, from heeler to headman, from blackmailer to high judge—but A didna mean to break loose. Y'r fair scene stirred m' blood; and A'm an old man; and A love the land. A was born West. A'm none of y'r immigration boomsters who goes in a Pullman car, then tells the world all about—Now, which way to y'r Missionary Williams?"

Bat flushed; but he did not laugh. Oddly enough, he forgot the feature-story. Wayland rose and came forward and involuntarily held out his hand.

“I wish you’d stay for the night,” he said. “A good many of us feel the way you do; but like you, we’re all up in air. Sawing the air doesn’t saw wood. A good many of us are in the fight right now; but, unless we get somewhere, we’re going to feel as if we were carving wind mills. Suppose you put up here for the night? Besides, it’s pretty late to go down. Trail switches sharply—”

The old frontiersman heard absently.

“An old man’s broodings,” he ruminated.

“I’d call ’em D. T.’s,” muttered Brydges.

“Don’t fear for my bones on the trail.” He came back from his reverie as from a journey. “A’m the old breed that doesn’t break. ’Tis you young brittle fellows all bred to pace and speed and style needs look to y’r goin’s. Which way do A turn at the foot of the Ridge? One—two—three—A see four lights. Which is the Mission?”

“If you insist on leaving, Sir, there is an Indian woman here going down to the MacDonald ranch—”

“MacDonald, did you say?”

“The next place along the River is the Mission. Here, Calamity, show this stranger which way to go, will you?”

But Calamity had already bolted for the Ridge trail.

“Stranger? She doesn’t look to me exactly like a stranger. Looks precious like one of our Saskatchewan half-breeds! Haven’t A seen you before, my good woman? A’m Jack Matthews, who carried the mail for the Company at the Big House; by an’ by contractor, then by the Grace o’ God missionary to the Cree! Haven’t A seen you, girl? Was it ’85 at the Agency House when Wandering Spirit —”

“Non sabe,” snapped Calamity, setting off down the trail at a run paced to keep the reverend traveller behind till she reached the last loop. Drawing her shawl over her face, she paused with her back to the frontiersman. To the left blinked the lights of the sheep ranch house and the Mission, to the right the cow-boy camp and the dead glare of the white buildings belonging to the Senator.

“Viola! dat vay!” The woman deliberately pointed to the cow-boy camp; then vanished in the darkness.

“Mighty quick wench! A have seen you before, my sly minx, and A’ll see you some more,” he said staring after the fading form.

Then he headed his mare for the cow-boy camp below the cliff. Half a dozen men lounged round a smudge fire. The old man paused to sort out the scene; the box of a gramaphone laid out for a card table, a bottle of whiskey in the centre, two empty bottles with candles stuck in the necks for lights, a dull smudge fire, four rough fellows sprawling on the ground, one with corduroy velveteen trousers, an old white pack horse nosing windward of the smoke; one figure with sheepskin

chaps to his waist, thumbs in his belt, standing erect with back to the trail; and face in light, a shaven face with a strong jaw and oily geniality, a corpulent form in a white vest, putting a pocket book in a breast pocket.

The old frontiersman took hold of his mare's bridle.

" 'Tis hardly what you'd look for in a Missionary outfit, Bessie."

"You'll leave for the South at once?"

The question commanded. The old frontiersman listened.

"Hoof express, Sir," promised the sheep-skin leggings.

"And mind you I know nothing about it, Jim. I'm not to be told. I take care of you without you knowing about it. I *expect you* to take care of us—" the white waist coat became at once impressive and anxious.

"That's all right, Colonel. I understand! We'll crowd 'em to beat Hell; and they'll go it blind. If it's coming dark, they'll shut their eyes and go over blind. I defy Sheriff Flood, himself, if he's standing on the spot to make a case—"

"You need have no fear of Sheriff Flood *ever* being on the spot. He'll be busy under his bed that night; but look out for these Federal puppy-boy Forest Ranger fellows! Finish up off the confounded National Range. Finish up before they reach the National Range."

"And the Mexican herders?" asked the sheep skin chaps with a flourish of his band above the fire that showed the flash of a diamond on the little finger.

The white vest spread deprecating hands.

"That's your business, Jim! Make a clean sweep of the herd; but see that no harm comes to the boy."

The old frontiersman headed his broncho silently back on the trail.

"Night birds hatching snake eggs. A'm really between two minds to go back and crack their addled heads."

CHAPTER V
THE CHOICE THAT COMES TO ALL MEN

"Did you notice anything?" demanded Brydges, as the old stranger went down the Ridge trail. "She knows English as well as you do; and she is a French breed. Why did she put on to be Mexican? What did she sneak for? Whole thing cussed queer. What do you make of it? Matthews? Matthews? I recall that name. Fellow by that name wrote our paper to know if any Canadian settlers had come here! Say, Wayland, the old man pricked up his ears at MacDonald's name—spoke of Rebellion Days."

"Oh, shut it off, Bat! What in the world has a travelling half-cracked ranting old evangelist to do with the MacDonald family? He'll land on the Mission for a week or two free like the rest of 'em! He'll likely preach Hell-fire to Indians, who'll not know a word of what he says till Mr. Williams gives him a call to move on—"

"All the same," retorted Bat, disappearing inside the cabin.

Wayland passed a bad night, the worst he had known on the Holy Cross, contending with what comes to all lives, and to many lives many times.

The Ranger had absorbed the average amount of Sunday school pabulum that floats round in the mental atmosphere of all youth, that, if you keep on doing right and doing it hard, things will turn out all right in the end. Well, he told himself bluntly, he *had* been doing right and doing it hard, just as hundreds of the Land Office field men and Land Office attorneys had been doing right in their vain endeavour to stop public loot;—and things had turned out all wrong. What did his four years' fight stand for, anyway? Marking time, that was all. Nothing accomplished except the wasting of four years of his own life; and, while that may be small enough in the sum total of things, where a thousand seeds go to waste for one that bears fruit, it is overwhelmingly big to the individual man. If he had been the one and only failure of the Civil Service workers, he could have accused himself and taken the Senator's advice to "chuck" the fool-theory of men in public service fighting for right; but he was only one of a multitude of men, paid public money to prevent the looting of public property; whose work was blocked, non-suited, pigeon-holed, bluffed, hampered, or, worst of all, carried up to investigating committees whose sole purpose was to conceal and wear the public out with interminable wrangles over technicalities that were irrelevant.

Better men than he had fought doggedly only to be downed. There was the Land Office man in Oregon dismissed for the slip of a wrong entry in his field book because he had quite unintentionally unearthed the frauds of a member of the land-loot ring who happened to be a congressman. There was the Federal attorney

hounded from his home city because he prosecuted bribe-givers and objected to being shot while on duty in the court room. There was that other Federal Law man, shot at the shaft of a coal mine stolen from public lands. There was the Army Engineer demoted from his life work because he fought for a free harbor for a great city and offended the railroad fighting to keep that harbor closed. There were the two Forest Service men dismissed for giving facts to the public. Then, there was the Alaska Case—Wayland laughed; and the laugh was a little bitter. Surely the crowning farce of all: that had gone up easily to investigation with a blare of trumpets and a flare of news headlines. That was the easiest of all.

It made good politics, yet—it was so involved in technicalities, while it offered a bit of by-play to the gallery, that there had never from the first, even for the fraction of an instant, been the faintest hope of anything but confusion emerging from the investigation; but it played into the game without hurting anybody. If they had really wanted to investigate, why didn't they take a case in which there were no technicalities of law, the looted red-lands of California, for instance; or the half-million of timber openly stolen each year for a certain smelting ring; or the two thousand acres of coal where Smelter City itself was built; or the shooting of the Federal Law Officer down at that other coal mine? These cases involved no "twilight zone" of dispute as to law, in which the "system" and the "ring" could hide. Every Government man knew the evidence was plain and complete in these cases: yet they were pigeon-holed, let lapse for the Statute of Limitations to bar action. Why?

Wayland sat down on the slab seat, and the personal reasons came trooping against his resolutions like the scouts of an oncoming host.

To begin with, he could make more money outside the Service. The Government men were paid less than foreign ditch-diggers; but then, which of the men remained in the Service for money? He ran his mind over half a dozen fellows in the Agricultural Department who had increased the nation's wealth by hundreds of millions a year. They were working at salaries less than a Wall Street Junior clerk or office girl. The question of salary didn't come in as an argument. That could be dismissed. But there was the bitter fact, he was accomplishing absolutely nothing by continuing the struggle, nothing more than a woman yoked to a Silenus hoping to reform him when he daily grew worse under her eyes. The Government had blocked him. The party had blocked him. What was the pith of it all, anyway? *Should those who had the power be given the legal right to take what they cared to seize*? It was the same old question that had split every country up into revolution. And closest of all, keenest of all arguments, the new influence that had come into his life, possessing it, obsessing it. He might put her out of his thoughts as a possibility. That would not dull the edge of his own hunger. By staying on he barred all possibility of ultimate happiness, perhaps her happiness: yet, if he abandoned the fight for right, he would be unworthy of her. Sooner or

later she would know, and, though she might remain mute, was she the one to make semblance of what she did not feel? If the light died from her eye, it would die from his life. He was not a Silenus to guzzle hog-like over husks when the life had gone. Besides—Wayland laughed aloud—the idea of her nature permitting a Silenus near enough to breathe the same atmosphere that she breathed was inconceivable. There was one chance—one chance only—Get the issue before the People, squarely, fairly, openly before the People; awaken the People; mass the law of the snow flake to the mighty rush of the avalanche; let the People know, force the People to pronounce the verdict. Wayland thought of Bat inside the cabin—, and laughed bitterly. He rose and began pacing the edge of the Ridge. There he was, back in the old hopeless circle.

Her touch had wrapped him in a vision world; but across the clearness of the vision now somehow obtruded the quiet cynicism, the genial scoff of the Senator's arguments, leaving fierce physical unrest and confused cross-currents of desire. A mist seemed to blurr all life. The hemlocks no longer chanted riotous gladness. There was a dirge to-night of futility, monotonous age-old eons of useless effort, the useless fall of the forest giant to the dry rot of slug and insect. It was as if Wayland's spirit stood back and listened to the conflicting contentions of two other men, the one who wanted to breast the stream and the one who wanted to go with the current; one full of blind, red-blood courage, the other full of cold white-corpuscled argument; one a zealous sportsman playing the game for the game's zest, the other a quitter because he foresaw no gain.

Not a doubt of it; it was a doleful business, this being stuck half-way up between heaven and earth cut off from everything but renunciation. *Why*, was he doing it? What was to be gained? It would have surprised Wayland if he had disentangled out of his own weltering thoughts the fact that he had never weighed *gain* as an argument before Moyese talked. He had never known the coward's fear of loss. What was it they had said to him? 'Blocked at every turn,'—'Has your boasted Federal Government taken any action?'—'This is the Service you are loyal to,'—'Who of the public gives one damn for right or wrong?' Had it really come to that? Was that the seat of the trouble? Did the public care? 'Go lean frying fat for posterity?' All those voices strident, scoffing; then, part of the night's voiceless voices, that other undertone—'Nothing accomplished without somebody fighting a losing battle,'—'What so heroic about a fighter more or less going down beaten?' It was nothing heroic at all unless you happened to be the fighter. And what was the sense of accepting a challenge to a losing battle? 'I want a man who can fight like the Devil.' Well, that was what the whole world wanted—always had needed and wanted; and he and hundreds of other Government fellows were applicants for just such a fighting job. What was it that comical old sermonizing duffer had ranted about? Oh, yes! If the Devil (of course, there wasn't a Devil), if the Devil came tempting to-day 'twould be such a place

as this.' 'Etches, he would proffer as of old,' 'the biggest gamble of all,' 'play for the biggest stake outside of Hell,' 'The Fate . . . of the Land . . . with all Time looking on . . . since ever Time began,' 'all the World looking on . . . asking . . . keep sacred as the Covenant of God . . . The stakes I'd play for . . . if I were young . . . I'd up . . . I'd up . . . I'd up . . . stripped naked of very hold-back . . . I'd hurl the lie in the teeth of a scoffing world. I'd hurl y'r traitor leaders huckstering the land's good for silver. . . . Fight . . . right . . . might . . . I'd paint the words in letters of blood till they awakened the land. . . . I'd fight . . . fight . . . fight till they had to kill every man of my kind before I'd down . . .'

The old man had been like the storm wind of the mountains hurling off the dead leaves of thought. Wayland paused in his pacing. The opal peak emerged from pearl gray cloud wrack; a silver cross, translucent, unreal, luminous, a thing of dreams winged with silver light beneath a solitary star, eternal as God. And the night wind through the pines, that had sounded so doleful but a moment before, became the jubilant clicking of countless castanets, the castanets of the long pine needles, sounding a triumphant chant to the touch of invisible hands.

Wayland stopped pacing. He almost stopped thinking. The consciousness, the realizing sense of her presence, of her touch, of a something more than her touch, of her being enveloping his in some ethereal fire, went over the Ranger in fiercely tender flood tides; this time, not in tumultuous confused desire, but in waves of strength, in visions from which the mists had vanished, daring that laughed with gladness over life. There were no longer two Waylands in conflict, with one sneering and looking on. "A house divided against itself shall fall." There was only one, with the blood of mothers in his veins, whelmed by a consciousness that reached back far as the consciousness of the race. Somehow, his simple manhood, the inheritance in his blood of men and women, who had loved, fused the conflict of his nature to a singleness of purpose and won peace now.

What he said was: "Come on, my friend, the enemy! I'm right here on the job; nailed, you bet, long as she does it! Just to come alive is worth being crucified."

"Hullo," bawled a towsled head through the cabin window. "Aren't you going to turn in? It's exactly twelve o'clock! Darn it all! Don't make a sleep-walking Lady Macbeth tragedy out of it! Chuck the bally thing and come on down to the Valley! Why do you waste your life pretending you are Providence steering the whole earth? Chuck it, Dickie! If you were in town, I'd give you a cocktail! Got anything up here?"

Wayland went to sleep to dream one of those dreams that envelop day with rain-bow mist. He dreamed that the amethyst gates of the sun had swung ajar flooding life with countless charioteers each carrying a golden spear, and as they advanced over the clouds to earth, all the little purple heather bells that had hung their heads during the night to keep out the dew, all the waxy chalices of the

winter-greens pale and faint with passion, all the bells nodding to the wind, began ringing—ringing ten thousand golden bells; and the painter's brush, multicolored dazzling knee-deep in the Alpine meadows, flaunted countless torches of carmine flame to welcome back the day. Then, suddenly, it wasn't a sound of bells at all. It was her voice, her voice with the golden note and the liquid break that came when he had surprised Love in her eyes; and it wasn't the warmth of the Sun's fan-shaped shafts at all; it was the warmth of her lips in the face of the picture she had promised—the face above "the Warrior." When he awakened, a sprig of everlasting that he had stuck in the band of his Alpine hat had blown across his face.

CHAPTER VI
WHEREIN ONE PLAYS AN UNCONSCIOUS PART

Watch a snow flake as it falls! Gentle is too rough a word for the motion. It floats, a crystal cob-web shot with the glint of sun-jewels; tangible but melting to your touch, evanescent and translucent as light; conceived of the wind that bloweth where it listeth and the gossamer clouds of a vague somewhere.

Waveringly, noiselessly, so noiselessly it comes that you do not catch the rustling flutter with your ear, but with a sixth sense of motion. And it transforms, bewitches, beautifies what it touches. I suppose if such an evanescent thing were told that it and it alone had been the age-old, time-immemorial sculptor of the granite rocks; that it and it alone—to paraphrase the words of the scientists—had rolled away the door from the sepulchers of the eternal rocks and turned a planet into a sensate earth pulsing with growth—I suppose if a snow flake were told such heresy, it would die of its own amaze.

This, *apropos* of nothing in particular, unless you happen to understand from the catagory of your own experiences.

It was her first love-letter; and, because she did not know she was writing a love-letter she wrote out of the fulness of an overflowing heart. Also the hour was the precise hour when consciousness of her presence had gone over Wayland in flood tides of fierce tenderness. That may have been a mere coincidence. I set it down because such coincidences daily touch life.

Here is the letter.

Twelve O'clock.

Are you a 'vision fugitive,' O Ranger Man? Do you know that I have seen you less than ten times and really known you less than a month? Is it a dream? What happened? I did not mean to do it. I did not want it. I did not ask it. Why has it come? You said 'best gifts came unasked; perhaps, they also go unsent!' This one can never go, Dick. I've been weaving it in and out for three whole hours, (no, not *thinking*, I *think* of other people,) weaving it in and out of every strand of me. I know now I have been waiting for it a billion years; ages and ages ago when you and I were cave people or desert runners like the 20,000 B. C. skeleton in the British Museum; and in the shuffle of atoms, we got apart. We shall never stray again; for I have locked last night in my heart. Yesterday I could look up at the Mountain, and what I saw was the snow cross, cold and far away. To-night I look up. The Mountain is still there but not the same—what I feel is—*you*; and you are not far away. I am warm with happiness, delirious when I let myself *stop* thinking.

I have tried to sleep but cannot. Your old Mountain has been talking again. I can see the Cross here from my window and the lone star above the peak; and I know that you see too. If I touched the telephone, I might speak to you; but I can write more frankly than I'd ever have courage to speak, and I must say it. It is all tumult. I do not understand, but Hope is strumming her strings—I hear them every time the wind comes down from the Ridge. Here is the Watts' 'Happy Warrior,' and Dick—listen—I didn't mean it as a token when I offered to send it up. I meant it as a rallying cry; but now that you take it as a token, I can't say that it isn't; only I really didn't mean to push you over the edge of things as I did. I didn't mean to go over the edge myself. If I had heard Senator Moyese talk, I couldn't have been so childish and ignorant. It was like urging you to jump a precipice and break your neck. I know now what the fight means. It isn't just the Valley. It's the Nation. I hadn't any right to let my (here a word was crossed and blotted) feeling shove you over. Yet if you jump yourself, I'll not pull a gossamer thread to draw back. I haven't any right.

You know how it has always been with me—whisked away to the convent at Quebec when I was four, sent to that New York finishing school to get what Father called 'world-sense knocked into my religion.' Well, they were knocks all right. Then England and Switzerland and my Father's orders to come back, and how lonely and apart he always seems. I don't understand. What did Moyese mean to-night when he spoke of 'bow-and-arrow aristocracy'? Will you believe me that is the first I have ever heard of it? Who is Calamity? Will you tell me if you know? Why are we so apart from all the people of the Valley? What is a 'squaw man'? When I think, I am afraid for having let you become so interwoven. I did not mean to. It is wholly my fault. The thoughts I hardly knew myself must have been weaving up into this. They often do. Father and Mr. Williams leave at daybreak for the Upper Pass. I did not mean to write so much, but our old Mountain has come from under a cloud. Anyway, I had to explain, no, I mean write. Explanations never do explain; but here's the picture of 'The Warrior.'

"E. MACD."

Going to the French window of her bedroom, Eleanor called down to old Calamity's room below. To her surprise, the half-breed woman on the instant poked her head above the balcony railing of the basement quarters.

"Going to the Ridge to-morrow, Calamity?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle, surement," pattered Calamity softly in that Cree patois which is neither French nor Indian.

"Then, take this up to Mr. Wayland, please!"

As she withdrew to her room, Eleanor became conscious that she could not remember a day since she had come back to the Valley when the Cree half-breed had not been within call or sight. The girl suddenly pressed both hands to her eyes. What had Moyese meant?

Once among the pillows, she fell into the life-bathing sleep of the great mountain ozone-world. Was it a dream; or had Calamity come stealing through the French window to stand at the foot of her bed? Waking to a burst of sunlight across her face, Eleanor could not tell in the least whether the memory of the half-breed woman standing in the shadows were dream or reality. The sun was coming over the Rim Rocks in a fan-shaped shield of spear shafts; and every single shaft wafted down thoughts that refused to lie quiet. Shafts that have a trick of turning your heart into a target can't be shut out by armor proof.

Daylight restored her poise. Her first instinct was to recall the letter; but Calamity had already set off for the Ridge. The thought hardly took form, but the shadow haunted her. If It were true, he would surely never let her work round the ranch houses of the Valley. Breakfast passed as usual, alone in the big raftered dining room after the ranch hands had gone, the lame German cook for the camp wagons hobbling in and out with the dishes. Stage had passed long since and the mail lay at her place, where the German had spread a white square above the oilcloth of the long bench table; but letters and papers remained unopened.

Perhaps, after all, those midnight thoughts had been morbid as midnight thoughts often are. It might be that the Valley was apart from them, not they apart from the Valley. Who were the neighbors from whom her father stood aside? There was the Senator in the white house across the River. Well, the Senator spent the most of his time in Smelter City forty miles away, and in Washington. Then, there were the Williams of the Mission House with their only boy and eighty or a hundred Indian children; gentlefolk keeping up the amenities of refined life, spreading the contagion of beautiful example like an irrigation plot widening slowly over arid sage brush. Surely her father was held in esteem by them; and they stood for all that was best in the Valley. Below the ranch houses came what was known as "the English Colony," a scattering of young bachelors playing at ranching, whose rendezvous was the pretty Swiss chalet known as "the Rookery," where a wonderful little young-old lady with red wig and hectic flush dispensed lavish hospitality and canned music and old port behind the eminent respectability of a stool-pigeon in the person of a card-loving husband. The lady's husband called himself "colonel." The Valley called him one of those "no-good Englishmen"; but the Valley may have been mistaken; for even to the ranch house had come tales of outraged honor in the person of the "no-good husband" bursting in on games of cards with wild charges which only the payment of big money

could suppress—suppress you understand, purely for the sake of the lady: outraged honor could accept no atonement. Then the lady would flit for the winter to those beauty doctors of Paris and New York, who operate on wrinkles and lay up muniments for fresh campaigns; and the "colonel" would betake himself to resorts where balm is accorded wounded honour; while loose-mouthed, simple-eyed young fellows went East for the winter lighter as to purse, wiser as to the ways of paying for pleasure. Altogether, it was not surprising her father kept apart from "the English Colony," Eleanor reflected. She passed out to the piazza spanning all sides of the ranch house.

It was a sun-bathed, sun-kissed, sun-fused world. The River flowed liquid silver jubilant and singing. The morning mists rolled up primrose spangled with jewels, while over all lay such light as hypnotized the senses into a sort of dazzled dream world. Ashes of roses! There were no ashes here. It was the rose, itself; a world veiled in gold mist, wind-blown, flame-fired of joy, little cressets of fire edging every ridge. The sheep browsing in the Valley, the fleece-clouds herding mid the winds of the upper peaks, you hardly knew which shone whiter. The burnished mountain with its silver cross and wings of light, opal about the peaks, melting in fading lines about the base, with the middle distances lost in gashed purple shadows, might have been a thing of airy fancy. So might the dark forested Ridge where the evergreens stood sentinels among wisps of cloud. And everywhere, all pervasive, sifting through the shadows of silvered pine needles and trembling poplars, permeated the cinnamon smell of the barky forest world, resinous of balsam, spicy with the tang of life.

She could see the mountain streams where they laughed down the Ridge in wind-tattered spray. With the glass, too, she could see a little blue wreath of man-made smoke curling up from the evergreens; and waves of happiness, absurd warm glowing happiness, broke over her, the sheer gladness of being alive. Whatever sinister thing kept her father apart, it was here she belonged—she knew it now—to the great spacious life-stimulating West; to the world resinous with imprisoned sunbeams; not to the lands of sky shut out by twenty story roofs and pea-soup fogs and sickly anaemic views of life. Life was good. She drank of it and called it good as in creation's prime.

Once she called Central up on the telephone. Central answered that the Ridge line had been cut. Such duties as men's hands could not do round ranch houses, she finished in a dream, turning with a touch the house into a home; flowers for the middle of the big table, dishes pitchforked down replaced in order, corner cobwebs speared with a duster on a broom, Navajo rugs uncurled and squared, stale cooking expelled from littered shelves, flies pursued to the last ditch, breaks in the mosquito wire round the piazza tacked up, heaps of mended socks and overalls sent out to the bunk house for the ranch hands, milk cans buried—it had

always been one of the absurdities she was going to reform, that people used canned milk in a cow country; but, unfortunately, the obstacle to that reform was that cows could not be milked on horseback.

After mid-day meal, she ensconced herself in a steamer chair on the piazza facing the mountain; but her book lay face downward. It was a book on coniferous trees. She had thought the Valley monotonous when she had first come back. Now she knew it never remained the same for two whole hours. The dazzling white of morning had given place to the yellow glow of afternoon. The River that had flowed quicksilver now swept seaward pure amber rilled with gold. The fleece clouds herded by wandering winds had massed to towering cumulus where the sheet lightnings played; and the Mountain where the silver snow-cross had glistened in the morning seemed to have changed perspective, to have retreated and withdrawn to a weird upper world. You no longer saw the wind-blown cataracts. Purpling shadows, palpable sabling mournful ghost-forms, folded and wrapped the Ridge with here and there shafts of slant light, yellow as bars of gold. You could no longer hear the rampant roar of streams disimprisoned from snow by mid-day sun. With the slant light came the sibilant hush, the quiet tangible.

She reclined very still in the steamer chair. Life and love and mystery wrapped her round, the great reverie of the race, the ecstasy of devotees that sent to death and crusade in the Middle Ages, the lovelight of life brooding warm and radiant. She no longer saw the shining pageant of sunlight on the argent fields of an infinite universe; the sparks and spangles of light in silver cataracts; a world veiled in gold mist, flame-fired of joy, little cressets of rose edging every sky-line. She was possessed, obsessed, bathed, enveloped in a flame of new life. If she thought at all, 'twas in the symbol of the old Apostle, "in Him we live and move and have our being." She recalled that God had been defined in the consciousness of the race as Love. Deep draughts of new existence whelmed her. No longer life coursed somnolent through unconscious veins. Life ran riotous of gladness tingling to a living joy so poignant it became pain. Was it fool-joy born of swifter pulse and time-old inheritance in the flesh? Was it the rhapsody of self-hypnotism, which ancients would have called vision? Of such dreams does creation spring full born and enfleshed. Of such dreams does heroism laugh at death. Of such dreams does life invest the daily round with rain-bow mist, with the spectrum gamut of all the colors that blend to the pure white light of daily life. As a lense splits up light, so love had brought out the hidden colors of existence, of eternity; as she dreamed, eternity itself seemed short.

Then came the restlessness that had shaken Wayland on the Ridge the night before, the fire that tests the vessel; and whether the life go to pieces depend on whether the vessel be both strong and clean. Yet she was not afraid. She remembered their talk the night before of the snow flake falling to the same law as

the avalanche; and was she not also a part of the Great Law?

She knew he could not be free till six. She must not go up to the Ridge. Last night, she had gone heedlessly. She could never go so again. Then, she realized why the Missionary's wife had linked her fate with Williams'—a frail bit of china putting itself to the coarse uses of earthenware—washing, scrubbing, sandpapering three generations of morals and bodies to make an ideal real. It was Wayland who had first described Mrs. Williams in that metaphor: "a piece of Bisque or Dresden," he had said, "and what those lousy Indians need is a wooden wash tub with lots of soft soap." Then, she wanted to see Mrs. Williams, to study her with this new knowledge.

A picket fence in imitation of a home in the East ran round the Mission House. Pitiful attempts at gardening lined the gravel entrance, periwinkle dried up in the blazing Western sun, sickly scented geraniums that shrivelled to the night frost, altheas that did better but refused to bloom. "They don't transplant East to West, any better than they do West to East. Better follow the Senator's advice and domesticate our Western ones." Then, the whimsical thought came perhaps that was what her father had done with her.

The drone of a man's voice from the Mission Parlor surprised her; for Mr. Williams had gone off with her father to the Upper Pass.

"Here is Miss Eleanor, herself! We were just speaking about you, Eleanor! This is an old friend of your father's, Mr. Matthews from Saskatchewan!"

A little woman in gray drew Eleanor inside the Mission Parlor, a little woman with a white transparent skin trenched by lines of care, but somehow, when you looked twice, they were lines of beauty chiseled by time. She was garbed in gray and her hair was almost white, but, from the first time Eleanor had looked at her hands, the girl wanted to kiss and cover them with her own—they were such beautifully kept hands but so gnarled and misshapen with toil. There had been only one child; but there were eighty Indian children in the Mission School. Had the love dream paid toll for such toil—Eleanor had asked herself when first she had seen the Missionary's wife. Now she knew that, whether the love dream paid toll or not, love would do and was doing the same thing time without end and everywhere.

Then, she became aware of the massive form of a man topped by an enormous head of white hair rising in links and hinges from a chair in the corner till his figure towered above the little woman.

"So this—is Eleanor—MacDonald? Well, well, well!"

He was shaking hands at each word. "A knew your grandfather well. Many's the time we have raced the dogtrains down MacKenzie River an' the canoes down the Saskatchewan! 'Twas your grandfather set the bagpipes skirling when Governor Simpson used to come galloping down the Columbia in the forties with his paddlers splitting the wind, a dark fearsome man, child, but a brave one, tho'

his heart was hard as his hand, and his hand was iron—Bras de Fer, Arm of Iron, the Indians called him; for his left hand, he lost in a duel; and his false hand was a true hand of iron metal that made many a lazy voyageur bite the dust. Bless me, but you are a MacDonald to your dainty feet—" holding her off from him at arm's length. "Eyes true to pedigree, and the curly hair, and the short upper lip, the only one of all the MacDonalds that's kept the race type. 'Tis good to see you! A'm right glad to see you! A'm gladder than you know-"

Eleanor did not wait for any second thought. "And did you know my mother's people, too?"

The old man sat back in his corner. "No, A cannot say A did! A had left the Company an' was building railway bridges in the Rockies when your father left Canada."

She felt the hot flush mount.

"Such an absurd thing, Eleanor," Mrs. Williams was explaining. "Mr. Matthews came by the Holy Cross last night. Mr. Wayland told Calamity to show him which way to turn; and she sent him the wrong way, to the cow-boy camp, you know! He had to sleep out all night at our very door. Such a shame! That put him so late that he missed Mr. Williams. You know they have gone to the Upper Pass and can't possibly be back for weeks—excuse me, some of my school people seem to want me," and she flitted from the room. To Eleanor, her life seemed a constant flitting at the beck of bootless duties, nagging duties that only an expert time keeper of Heaven could credit.

"Yes! Sent me a mile along the road in the wrong direction—into a nest of mid-night birds. A nice bunch o' beauties, too, hatching some Devil plot to ruin the poor sheepmen! A man in a white vest was there, who by the same token didn't belong; tho' A'm no so sure he was any better than his company. They didn't see *me*! A didna' just speak to *them*, but A heard them plain enough, —'leave for the South at once;' and 'crowd 'em to beat Hell,' and 'send 'em over without a push' an' 'see that no harm comes to the boy'—Eh, why, what is the matter?"

Eleanor had sprung forward with white lips.

"It's Fordie! He's taking the sheep to the Rim Rocks with the Mexican herders. Don't frighten his mother! It may not be too late! He may not have reached the Rim—"

"Let's telephone that Ranger fellow?"

Then, it all dawned on her, the deadly, suave, incredibly malicious pre-planned thing!

"The wires had been cut since morning," she said.

CHAPTER VII
WHILE LAW MARKS TIME, CRIME SCORES

They did not tell the boy's mother.

The German cook hitched the fastest bronchos to the yellow buckboard with the front wheel brake; and, the old frontiersman flourishing the reins, they had whisked off for the Ridge trail before Mrs. Williams could return to the Mission Parlor.

"The Ranger will be able to tell whether the sheep have passed down the Ridge," she explained.

The old man caught the light on her face as she spoke the name. It was like the flash in the dark that betrays a diamond, or the scintilla of light through the leaves that tells of an Alpine lake; but he made no comment except to the ponies.

"Go it, little ones! Make time! Split the wind! Show y'r heels! Tear the air to tatters! there!" And he whirled the whip with the skill of all the old Adam stirring within him, while the buckboard went forward with a bounce.

"We can't take the wagon up yon Ridge trail—"

"No, but I can climb straight up and not mind the switch back, if you'll wait."

He muttered some commonplace about "true Westerner;" and, springing out, she had gone scrambling up the slope avoiding delay of the zig-zag by climbing almost straight.

Quizzically, the old man gazed after her; the first hundred feet were easy, a mossed slope with padded foot-hold. Then came steep ground slippery with pine needles; but the mountain laurel and ground juniper gave hand grip; and she swung herself up past the third tier of the switch back where the Ridge arose a rock face and trees with two notches and one blaze marked the lower bounds of the National Forests. Here he saw her run along the bridle trail marked by one notch and one blaze: then, she was swinging over moraine slopes to the fifth bench of the trail. There she disappeared round a jut of rock—he remembered a mountain spring trickled out at this place bridged by spruce poles. Then he noticed that the cumulous clouds which had been flashing sheet lightning all afternoon, were massing and darkening and lowering closer over the Valley, with zig-zag jags of live fire down to the ground and sounds more like the crack of a whip or splinter of wood than thunder. The cliff swallows dipped almost to the grass; and the flowers were hanging their heads in miniature umbrellas. All the trembling poplars and cotton-woods seemed to be furled waiting. Then, the lower side of the slate clouds frayed in the edge of a sweepy garment to sheets and fringes of rain. A little tremor ran through the leaves. The horses laid back their ears.

"We'll get it," said the old man tightening the reins.

She had paused for breath round the buttress of a gray crag when she noticed the churn of yeasty blackness blotting out the Valley and felt the hushed heat of the air. A jack rabbit went whipping past at long bounds. The last rasp of a jay's scold jangled out from the trees. Then, she heard from the hushed Valley, the low flute trill of a blue bird's love song. Ever afterwards, either of those bird notes, the scurl of the jay or the golden melody of the blue warbler, brought her joyous, terrible thoughts, too keen to the very quick of being for either words or tears; for a horseman had turned the crag leading his broncho. It was the Ranger in his sage green Service suit wearing a sprig of everlasting in his Alpine hat.

"Why, I've been trying to get you by telephone all day," he said, "but the wires are cut—"

In the light of the sudden strength on his face, she forgot the brooding storm, the impending horror.

"Has Fordie brought the sheep down?"

"Yes, ages ago; he passed at noon with the whole bunch, fifteen thousand of 'em, strung along the trail from the top of the Ridge to the bottom. Don't you see how they skinned every branch? That's why the cattlemen hate 'em! Ford will be on the Rim Mesas now. Why; anything wrong?"

She did not remember till afterwards how it was she had met both his hands with her own as she repeated the old frontiersman's report. She knew, if time stopped and storm split the welkin, it would be all the same. She felt the heat hush come up from the Valley, felt the quivering pause of the waiting air, the noiseless flutter of the foliage, the awed quiet, then the exquisite tingling pain of her own being,—

"Eleanor, look at me! Look in my eyes! Look up at me—"

She felt the rush of her being to meet and blend and fuse in the flame of his love. Then, she looked up. His eyes drank hers in one poised moment of delirious recognition, of tempestuous tenderness. The world swam out of ken. All but the fluted melody of the blue bird; and she knew they must always sound together, the trill and the rasp, the blue bird and the jay, the true and the false, love and its counterfeit.

"We go into this fight together," he said very quietly, "And forever!" He placed the sprig of everlasting in her hand. "You can count me on the firing line."

Then he had thrown the reins over his broncho's neck, headed the horse back up the Ridge and was slithering down the steep slope giving her hand-hold as of steel-springs. So short was the interval, it could not be measured in time. Yet it had rivetted eternity. She saw the rolling clouds of ink writhing up the Valley turning everything to blackness: yet she did not know it. The little flutter of air changed to whiplashes and puffs of wind that curled the black hair forward over her unhatted face in a frame. Wayland looked at her and felt his masterdom going to those same winds; for the pace had painted her ivory cheeks, not rose color, but

the deep flame of the wild flower. Some day, perhaps,—no matter; he set his teeth and screwed the whipcord muscles taut; for the moraine stones had begun to roll, and there was a zig-zag flash of lightning that sent fire balls sizzling over the rock. He braced her to the leap down the steep sliding moraine, and felt the frenzy of joy from her touch.

"There! We took the jump together! You didn't push me over the edge of things," he said, as their feet touched the pine needle slope.

This time, the lightning came with a ripping splintering rocking echo.

"It's like Love and Life racing in the picture," she laughed back and they bounded into the buckboard, Wayland standing braced behind the seat, "to stop her kiting down the hill if we break loose," he said; she, forward with the driver, feet braced to the iron foot-rest, hands holding the seat-guard. Then, the brim of his felt hat flapping, the bronchos' ears laid back, necks craned out, the old man whirling the whip, they were off for the Rim Rocks. The breaking storm, the whipping winds, the wild pace, the rush of the fringed rain, seemed a part of the furious exaltation breaking the bounds of her own consciousness.

"Cross the ford, Sir," shouted the Ranger bending forward, "it's shorter than the bridge;" and her hair tossed in his face as the buckboard splashed into the River and bounced up the far side with hind wheels swaying.

"Are y' all right, there?" called the old driver over his shoulder.

"Stay with it," yelled Wayland, "straight ahead where the road cuts the Rim Rocks."

"We're splitting the air all right," shouted the old man. "Ye mind y' talked of sawing air. Split it, man, an' y'll get somewhere."

Up a hummock, down a ravine, over a fallen log with a hurdle jump that threatened to break the buckboard's back.

"Are ye there yet?" called the old man.

"Split the wind, Sir," shouted Wayland; and the rig went rattling up the red earth road of the Rim Rocks not a wheel's width from the edge.

"We're leaving the storm behind; look back," she said.

Up the Valley swept the rains in a wall of whipped spray jagged by the zig-zag streaks of lightning.

"Hold on till we turn the next switch back," warned the Ranger. The buckboard wheeled a point as he spoke and the bronchos floundered to a fagged trot. They saw it coming: the rain wall, frayed at the edge to a fringe, the wind lashing their faces, the red rocks of the battlements jutting through the cloud wrack spectral and ominous. A toothed edge of rock above, then a belt of cloud cut by the darting wings of the countless swallows.

The trees of the Ridge across the Valley seemed to bend and snap. There was a funnelling roar, sucking up earth and air, trees and brushwood; whips and lashes and splintering crashes of rain and wind and jagged light-lines; the bronchos

cowering against the inner wall of the trail. Then the funnelling wind tore the pinnacled rock tops clear of the billowing mist.

"There goes your hat, Sir," cried Wayland as the black felt went sailing down the precipice.

"What's that!" demanded the old man, springing from the seat and pointing upward with his whip.

Over the edge of the sky line, on the rimmed red battlements, jumping, jumping, jumping; as sheep jump at shearing time from the hot center to the cool outside, or over the backs of one another in winter cold, when the outer line jumps to the huddled center; came the herd in a gray woolly shapeless whirling mass! Shouts, cries, shrill bleatings, storm muffled bang, bang and thud of guns! Just for an instant, emerged from the mist on the skyline of the battlements the figure of a man in sheep-skin chaps, a riderless white horse, shadows of other men, the sheep in a living torrent pouring over into the nothingness of mist; then a boy, a little boy, riding hatless, craning far forward over the neck of his pinto pony, shouting, waving, screaming, trying to head the sheep back from the precipice edge!

"The dastard coward, blackguard Hell-hatched hounds!" roared the old man, shaking his impotent fist. Then he funnelled his hands and shouted the lad's name.

It happened in the twinkling of an eye. The man in the sheep-skin-chaps clubbed his rifle at the galloping pony. The pinto reared, flung back, pitched over the edge of the Rim Rocks. Then the cloud blot, earth and air sponged into the wet blur of a washed slate, shrieking furies of peltering rain, a roar of the hurricane wind, a blinding flash, the air torn to tatters! The cloud burst hurled down in sheets, the red clay road runnelling flood torrents. Wayland had caught her under shelter of the rock wall. The old man hurtled to the heads of the shivering bronchos, gripping both bridles. A splintering crash that rocketted from crag to crag and rumbled below their feet; and the thing was over quick as it had come. The funnelling whirl of clouds eddied over the Pass behind the Holy Cross Mountain; the opal peak radiant and dazzling above the Valley; the air a burst of yellow sunlight quivering in the smoking rain mist; the red battlement rocks above dripping and bare; and somewhere a song sparrow trilling to the tinkle of the subsiding waters. A roil of cloud rolled from below.

The sound came first, smothered and pain-piercing; then the old frontiersman had uttered something between a curse and a groan. She sprang from shelter and looked over the edge. Jumbled at the foot of the pinnacled red rocks heaved a writhing mass, a weltering maimed horror. On the outer edge, arms under head, face to sky, tossed backwards, lay the body of the boy beside the pinto pony, the neck of the horse broken under in the fall, the child pitched beyond the mass by the double turn of his falling horse.

For a moment none of the three uttered a word. She was trembling so that she could not speak. There were tears in the old man's eyes. To Wayland's face had come a look. It was like the blue flash of a pistol shot. The pupils of his eyes had focussed to pin points of fire. He moistened his lips.

"May Hell be both deep and hot!" he said.

It was the cry of the primal man beneath all the culture of the schools that disprove Hell; the cry of human red-blooded manhood against all the white-corpuscled sickly sentimentality that ever sacrifices innocence on the altar of guilt.

While the Law marked time, the swift feet of crime had not paused nor slackened pace. While the Law argued, learnedly, disputatiously, with the handing up and the handing down of inane decisions, Crime scored; and Who or What tallied? The men round the fire the night before in the cow-camp, the men of "the bunco game" had stacked cards and played trump; but unfortunately, they had jumbled the white-vested fighter's orders about the boy. The cattlemen had taken care of themselves after a code not honored by the law of nations.

Also, they had gone into the fight together: the one who saw the right but did not understand the fight; the one who understood the fight but sometimes lost his vision of the right; and the one who saw in the fight for right, not the quarrel of a Valley, or a Faction, or a Ring, but the saving of the Nation, the repudiation of a world lie, the welding of right and might into an eternal harmony.

CHAPTER VIII
A VICTIM OF LAW'S DELAY

For years, Eleanor could not let herself remember the details of that night. We like to persuade ourselves that by some miraculous chance, some trickery of fate, good may come in a vague somehow out of evil; contrary to the proofs from the beginning of time that good fruit never yet grew from evil seed. The girl was too honest for such fetish faith. She could not turn up the whites of her eyes in a pious resignation that it had been the will of God evil should triumph. So she shut out the details of the horror from mind's memory and set her teeth, knowing well that when lewd horrors triumph it is not because the God of the Universe is a fool but because the powers for right have not fought valiant as the powers for evil.

She remembered the Ranger had tossed a revolver to the old frontiersman and Matthews had gone tearing up the slippery clay of the Mesa road ripping out oaths of his unregenerate days that he would have "the scoundrels' scalps if he had to tear them off with his own hands." Somehow, Wayland had headed the draggled horses round on the narrow Rim Rock trail.

"Go down and break the news to his mother. I'll get the body," he had said; and she had driven the buckboard down with her foot on the wheel brake. Not a soul appeared around the Senator's place as she passed the white square of fenced buildings. All the mosquito doors were hooked. Everything looked deserted; branding irons lying in disorder round the k'raal. The River had swollen too turbulent for fording and she had crossed the white bridge—she remembered she had crossed at a gallop contrary to the little notice tacked on the board railing. Then, the horses steaming from rain had stopped in front of the Mission gate and Mrs. Williams had come out "wondering about Fordie in the storm." With her back to the waiting mother, Eleanor had spent an unconscionable time tying the ponies, trying to control her own trembling lips and threshing round for some way to tell the untenable. She remembered the roil of the raging waters, the floating star blossoms on the muddy swirl, the light sifting in beaten rain dust through the silver pine needles, the curve and dip of the joyous swallows. Then, she had followed the little white haired lady into the Mission Parlor.

Almost hysterically, that saying of an old profane writer came to mind, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" and all her inner being was shouting in rebellion "Does He, Does He?" Then she shut the door. She knew very well how she ought to have broken the news with the pious platitudes that everything is for the best, with the whitewashed lies that every damnable tragedy is a blessing in disguise, that every devil-dance of fool circumstance is beneficent design, that disease is really health in a mask and sin a joke, a misnomer, that crime is really a trump card up Deity's sleeve to play down some wonderful trick of good; but—

was it the Indian strain in her blood back many generations? She could not mouthe the hollow mockery of such sophistries in the presence of Death.

"Eleanor—what is it? Why do your eyes look so strange?"

The little woman clasped both the girl's hands and gazed questioningly up in her face. At the same moment, she began to tremble. She tried to ask and faltered; a tremor pulsed in the upper lip. Then the grand-daughter of the man of the iron hand had gathered the little white haired lady in her arms as if to ward the blow.

"The outlaws drove Fordie over the Rim Rocks with the herd," she said.

"Is he dead? Is he dead?"

The little woman had drawn her body up its full height.

Eleanor tried to answer. The words would not come from her lips. She nodded. There again she had to shut the door of memory; for, when we break the news, it isn't the news we break; it's the news breaks us.

After what seemed an interminable quiet, Mrs. Williams was asking through dry tearless sobs:

"What does it all mean? Have we not given our whole lives to God? How could this thing happen—to an innocent child? There isn't any justice or right in this whole world."

"We must *not* be quiescent any more, Mrs. Williams. We must fight. We have such a habit of letting things go, and things let go—go wrong. It isn't God's fault at all: it's us—us humans: it's our fault. Every one of us ought to have been ready to die to prevent crime; and we've been letting things go. We mustn't be quiescent any more. We must fight wrongs and evils. And much more;" the girl in tears, the little woman fevered, red-eyed, gazing with glazed look into dark spaces, kneading her clasped hands together. Once the door opened and the shawled head of the old half-breed woman poked in.

"Ford?" Calamity asked.

"Go 'way, Calamity," whispered Eleanor.

She saw the little woman rise slowly.

"He is murdered," Mrs. Williams said, "he is murdered just as truly as if Moyese had cut his throat with his own hand." It was not for months after, that Eleanor recalled the look on Calamity's face as the Indian woman heard those frenzied words. Then Mrs. Williams broke in uncontrollable sobbing. "Leave me! Go out—all of you. Leave me alone!"

Eleanor shut the door and led the dazed Indian children from the outer hall. In the Library, opposite the Mission Parlor, she found old Calamity sitting on the floor with the shawl over her head. The half-breed woman sat peering through the shawl as Eleanor lighted the hanging lamp. No Indian will mention the name of the dead. She fastened her eyes on Eleanor, snakily, sinister, never shifting her glance.

"What is it, Calamity?"

"Is dat true? Senator man he keel heem—keel leetle boy?" she asked slowly.

Eleanor thought a moment.

"Yes, it is entirely true," she said, never heeding the import of her words to the superstitious mind of the Indian woman.

A little hiss of breath came from the crouching form. She rose, drew the shawl round her head and at the door, turned.

"Dey take mine," she said, "and now dey keel heem, an' white man, he yappy—yappy—yappy; not do—not do any t'ing! He send for Mount' P'lice, mabee no do anyt'ing unless Indian man . . . he keel." The little hiss of breath again and a cunning mad look in the eyes.

"Go 'way Calamity! Go home to our ranch house!"

By and by, came Wayland. She knew why he had come after dark, carrying the slender body against his shoulder. A white handkerchief had been thrown over the face; and she saw that he held the arms tightly to hide the fact that both had been broken in the fall. The rains had matted the curly hair and brought a strange rose glow to the cheeks. There again—Eleanor had to shut the doors of memory; for they had carried him in together. The wind was not tempered to the shorn lamb; and it is the living, not the dead, who beat against the Portals of Death.

They kept watch together, she and Wayland, in the Library across from the closed door of the Mission. Parlor, black-eyed Indian urchins peeping furtively from the head of the stairs till bells rang lights out. Then silence fell, stabbed by the creak of floor, the swing of door, the click and rustle of the cotton wood leaves outside.

There was a slight patter of rain-drip from the eaves somewhere. A gate swung to the wind; and, from across the hall, they could hear the driven footsteps pacing up and down the parlor. Then, the drip,—drip,—was broken by longer blanks, and stopped. The cotton wood leaves ceased to rustle and flutter. Only the twang of the night hawk's wing hummed through the stillness; and the distracted tread no longer paced the Mission Parlor. When Eleanor came back from across the hall, she shut the Library door softly.

"She is praying," she said.

Wayland had been extemporizing a morris chair into a lounge with his Service coat for a pillow. He threw a navajo rug across. Then, he faced her. The look of masterdom had both hardened and softened. She did not know that the hunger-light of her own face hardened that hardness; and she gazed through the darkened window to hide her tears. He stood beside her with his arms folded. A convulsive shudder shook her frame. Wayland tightened his folded arms. Sympathy is so easy. The sense of her nearness, of her trust, of the warm living fire of her love was pushing him not over the precipice but into the battle, out beyond the firing line. What did one man matter in this big fight anyway? They heard the sibilant

hush of the River flood-tide; and the warm June dark enveloped them as in a caress. They could see the sheet lightning glimmer on the bank of cumulous clouds behind the Holy Cross. The humming night-hawk, up in the indigo of mid-heaven, uttered a lonely, far, fading call, as of life in flight; and a rustle of wind, faint as the brushing of moth wings, passed whispering into silence.

"You don't really think death is the end of all, do you?" she asked.

Wayland could not answer. If she had looked, she would have seen his face white and his eyes shining with a strange new light. He drew back a little in the dark of the window casement, with his hand on the sill. It touched hers and closed over it. Then, somewhere from the dark came a night-sound heard only in June, the broken dream-trill of a bird in its sleep. When she spoke, her voice was low, keyed as the dream-voice from the dark.

"Where did the spray of flowers you gave me come from?"

"Sprig I'd stuck in my hat band."

"Was that all? Didn't you mean to tell me more?"

"It's a pearl everlasting blossom," answered Wayland.

She waited. He heard the slow ticking of his own watch.

"I was dreaming of your face," he blundered out, "and when I wakened, the thing had blown down on—the hammock." It was a clumsy subterfuge; and he knew that her thought meeting his half-way divined his dream.

The wind passed whispering into silence. He felt the quiver of the pine needles outside, trembling to the touch of wind and night. The sense of her nearness, of her trust, of the warm living fire of her love swept over him unstemmed; and, when she turned and looked in his eyes, he caught her in his arms and held her there with a fierce tenderness, her face thrown back, the veins of her throat pulsing to the touch of wind and night, her lips parted, her lashes hiding her eyes.

"Tell me that you are mine," he whispered.

She did not answer for a moment. Then she lifted her eyes. He drank their light as a thirsty man might drink waters of life. Neither spoke. The rustling wind passed whispering. The June dark enveloped them in the warm caress of the night. By the dim flare of the library lamp he saw her lips trembling.

"Tell me," he commanded.

"Do I need to tell you?"

"Yes, yes! I must have a seal of memory for the dark future," and his tongue poured forth such utterances as he had not dreamed men could use but in prayer. "I must know from your own lips."

He felt the tremor, felt the two hands rise to frame his face, felt the catch and take of breath, heard the broken notes of gold.

"Then, take it," she said.

He bent over her lips in an exquisite torture that could neither give nor take enough till she struggled to free herself, when he crushed her the closer, and

kissed the closed eyes and the forehead and the hair and the pulsing throat. Then he opened his arms.

She sank on the morris chair and hid her face in her hands. They neither of them spoke nor heard very much but the pounding of their own hearts. Wayland gazed out in the dark at the shiny flood-tides of the river. She had not meant—she had meant always to be free; she had not meant to mingle her life currents in the destiny of others.

The door opened suddenly. It was old Calamity, red-shawled and stooping.

"Missa Vellam say not for vait no longer, Mademoiselle! She aw' right. She say t'ank you now for to go home!"

Eleanor rose with a shuddering sigh

"Come then, Calamity," she said.

Wayland walked with her to the ranch house, the old half-breed woman pattering behind. The gray dawn-light lay on the river mistily. At the gate, she turned.

"Has Mr. Matthews come back yet, Calamity?"

Calamity gave a vigorous shake of her head.

"I am going up to the Rim Rocks at once to see what's become of him. Go on in, Calamity; I want to speak to Miss MacDonald! Forgive me," he pleaded. "I had no right. I have no right to anything till I have cleaned up this damnable hell-work. I must not leave duty till I have fought this thing out; and I must not drag you in; but I wanted—" he paused; "I couldn't help it."

She trembled, but she took refuge in neither the subterfuge nor the pretence of the Eastern woman.

"It was yours," she said.

Wayland's eyes flashed their gratitude. "It's so God-blessed beautiful, Eleanor; it's so wonderfully beautiful I mustn't spoil it with my man hands! I couldn't believe it true without the memory you've given me; but you must keep me in line! Now that I have that memory in my heart I'll drink it, and hike for the firing line! My place isn't here; you must never let me break my resolution again."

"I never will," interrupted Eleanor.

"We've got to fight this thing to the last ditch! If the innocent may be done to death by our law makers; if murder can be planned and carried out unpunished; there's an end to our democracy! Last year it was a little school teacher strangled down in the Desert; nobody punished, because that would have interfered with a voting gang on election day. This year, it's Fordie. *If these crimes had been committed under a monarchy, the people would have tanned the hide of the king into boot leather*! Last year it was the little school teacher. This year it's Fordie. Tomorrow, it may be any man, woman or child in the Valley. If they'd keep their crimes among their own kind, there would be some excuse for this let-alone policy; but when freedom to do what a man likes means freedom to push crime

into your life and mine, freedom to deprive others of freedom, it's time the Nation jumped on somebody! We've got to fight this damnable thing to the last ditch, Eleanor!"

"Good luck and God speed," she said without looking up; and she turned without once looking back, and walked up the slab steps of the rustic entrance to the ranch house.

CHAPTER IX
RIGHT INTO MIGHT

Don't wait for Mr. Matthews and me. We are setting out on the Long Trail. It is the Long Trail this Nation will have to travel before Democracy arrives. It is the Trail of the Man behind the Thing; and we'll not quit till we get him. You remember what our old visitor said about "splitting the air to get somewhere." We are going to quit "sawing the air" and "split it to get somewhere." We are going to set out after the Man; the little codger first, as a foot print on the Long Trail to the lair of the Man Higher Up.

You cannot stab a lot of things to life as you did last night and the night before, and then expect them to lie quiet and be the same. You have sent me forth on the Long Trail, Eleanor; and I shall hunt the better because you have stabbed me alive and will never let me go to sleep again. I thank you; and yet, I can't thank you, mine *Alder Liefest*—look up and see what that means in old Saxon—Yours in Life and Death and Always and Out Beyond.

DICK.

I have ordered a wreath from Smelter City for Fordie. Find it hard to stop writing and go from you; but the darned old Mountain doesn't look the same; it's all draped out in such "dam-phool 'appiness" that I am glad in the shadow of Death.

DICK. (2nd)

Don't forget every day dawn and sunset, I come to renew the Seal. Ever study Algebra in college? Then look up what this means.

DICK. (nth)

And because she had graduated from girl to woman between sunset and daydawn of that Death Watch, she kissed the last signature, right in the midst of the German cook's dishes, set all higgeldy-piggeldy on the oilcloth top instead of the linen cover, owing to the distraction of the night's tragedy. It was his first love letter; and because it was his first, he did not know it was a love letter. He had written it on the pages of a field note book. On the reverse side, were figures of triangulations and scaled timbers, which Eleanor fingered lovingly because the dumb signs seemed to connect her life with his before—before what? Ask those who know!

The note was lying at her breakfast place when she came out from a sleepless

night, a night that seemed to pass swinging between the gates of Life and the gates of Death, with phantoms on the trail between, of Love so terrible its glory blinded her, of Crime so dark its shadow obscured her faith in God. For hours, she had lain quivering to the consciousness of that moment when Life leaped up to meet and blend with Life in Love. For hours, she had lain quivering to the consciousness of Crime stalking satyr-faced amid the shadows of Life, Greed and Murder and Lust, hiding beneath suave words, behind conventionality, draped in all the broad phalacteries of law, ready to leap fanged at the throat of Innocence in a Land of Let-Alone; and she emerged from the conflict of these two forces no longer what would be called a Christian, no longer a Quiescent, no longer a Let Alone. She emerged knowing that Democracy must become a joke, and Christianity the laughing stock of the ages, unless Right could be made over into Might.

Then, she found the Ranger's note at her late breakfast—it was a shockingly late breakfast, it was after the noon hour—the note saying that he had set out on the Long Trail that the Nation must travel, the trail of the Man behind the Thing, the Man Higher Up. It was as it had been from the first with him, the meeting half-way of their thoughts from different beginnings; and she kissed the signature with a gesture that played havoc with the breakfast dishes and sent Calamity snivelling and muttering from the kitchen. The ignorant half-breed's knowledge of life among the miners of the Black Hills and the shingle men of the Bitter Boot saw-mills didn't admit explanations of love that kissed signatures and impelled tears.

And yet while revolution convulsed two souls you could have gone from end to end of the Valley that week or to every cabin on the Homestead Claim of the Ridge and not heard a living soul speak one word of the tragedy on the Rim Rocks. Were they moral cowards? I don't think so. Wasn't it more of that spirit of Let Alone? If you had mentioned the terrible episode to a casual settler, he would have given you a blank look and remarked "that he hadn't heard."

The story set down here, I could not myself have learned if a chance ramble over the foot hills of the Rim Rocks had not led one day to a solitary little grave, surrounded by a picket fence marked by the figure of a kneeling child carved in rough sand stone. As the guest of the Mission School, I made the mistake of asking the mother, herself, whose grave that was. Women, who are neither politicians nor politic, have a plain way of uttering harsh facts. She did not speak about the author of her boy's death in soft words, that little white haired mother. She used a term oftener heard in the purlieus of criminal courts. "To think," she exclaimed bitterly, "to think that Fordie, descended from generations of Williams who have pioneered and fought for and built up this country since ever the first Williams landed in Boston in 1666, was done to death by this murderer, this truckster, this political trickster, this outcast from the European gutters, this huckster of lazaretto morals and bawd houses, who is overturning our Nation with

his oiled villainies and peddler ways! No, we have never taken Government aid and we never shall! I like to know that my Indian girls are safe." What more she added, I do not relate; for an angered mother has a way of uttering terrible truths.

To-day, if you visit that grave on the crest of the saddle back, you will find it flanked by two others, a man's on one side with the figure of a trader carved in sandstone by the Indians; on the other, old Calamity's with a plain granite slab; though I have heard strict people say her body ought not to have been laid there because of the vagrant character of her early life.

Indian boys from the school had shaped the coffin and carved the figure for the stone. A girlish teacher read the Church Services for the dead; and the children's voices rose a thin tremulous treble in the funeral hymn around the grave. Wild flowers covered the casket, pearl everlasting and the wind flower and the white Canada violet and the painter's brush vari-colored as a flame; and a wreath had come up from Smelter City.

Sights and sounds that have been a setting for sorrow, haunt the mind. After that day, Eleanor could never hear the hammer of the woodpecker, the lone cry of circling hawk, the whistling of the solitary mountain marmot, without hearing also the thin treble of the Indian pupils breaking and silencing on that funeral hymn till only the mother's voice sang clarion to the end. She heard the low melting trill of the blue bird and the wrangling rasp of the jay—true and counterfeit, peace and discord—had God put right and wrong in the world for the friction of the conflict between, to develop souls? Had one been set over against the other, like light and shadow, to train the spiritual eye to know?

Then, the Indian boys began to lower the casket. One young pall bearer faltered and slipped his hold; it was the little white haired mother's hand steadied the rope that lowered, and slowly lowered, out of sight for ever. Then one of the girl teachers dropped in a great bunch of mountain laurel. Eleanor succeeded in leading the mother away.

Were the amethyst portals still ajar to the infinite life; or did the shadow of the Cross, of the time-old ever-recurring crucifixion, darken the vista of a glad future? The Indian children filed in through the gate of the Mission school. At the gate, the mother looked up the Saddle back. She had no time for the pampered luxury of self conscious grief. She had directed the making of the coffin and the carving of the sandstone and had led the funeral hymn to the end; but now she looked back. Ashes of roses across the sky, creeping phantom shadows, and in her heart, the sombre presence of the after-desolation which neither faith nor fortitude casts out. She would go to sleep dull with the woe of it and dream depressed of its loneliness, to waken heavy with the memory. Then, by and by, would come the peace that the dead send, which is not forgetfulness. But now she looked back,

looked back with the wrench that was the tearing of flesh and spirit asunder. Above the new-made grave, across those topaz sunset gates, stood the figure of the native woman, shawl thrown from her head reaving the long black hair; and from the hill crest came such a long low cry as might have been a ghost echo of all the age-old world sorrows. Eleanor felt the quick twitch on her arm. Without a word, without a tear, the boy's mother had fainted.

"We ought to have looked out for that," explained one of the girl teachers from the school. "We ought to have left Calamity home. She has always done that since they took her child away."

"Had she a child?" asked Eleanor.

"Yes; and they took it away when she went insane."

Eleanor slept with the leaves of the field-book under her pillow that night; but she slept the heavy dreamless sleep of baffled hope.

CHAPTER X
THE HANDY MAN GETS BUSY

If you think the Senator had had anything to do with the terrible events of the Rim Rocks, you are jumping to conclusions and must surely have failed to follow the activities of Mr. Bat Brydges the morning after the tragedy.

The first newspaper office that the handy man visited was owned by the Senator. That was easy. Bat went into the reporters' long room where the typewriters usually clicked. This morning they were silent. The men were out on their assignments. The news editor was taking a message over the telephone. Bat sat down on the table and waited. The news editor was thin-faced and nervous and alert and immaculately groomed. Bat was round-faced and sleepy-eyed—tortoise-shell eyes—and all that prevented his suit from looking positively slovenly was that his own ample avoirdupois filled every wrinkle.

The news editor adjusted his glasses to his nose and answered, "Yes, Yes," impatiently over the telephone.

"It's a parson," he explained with an irritable snap of his black eyes towards Bat.

Bat smiled sleepily. "Thinks you're hungering and thirsting for news of his flock, does he?"

"No, blank it," snapped the news editor.

"It's another kind of flock that's worrying us this morning."

Bat's smile faded to a sly haze in his sleepy eyes.

"What has the old boy got to say?"

"How do you know he is old?" snapped the news editor.

Bat didn't volunteer on that point.

"Ask him what his name is," suggested Brydges.

"What did you say the name was? Matthews—Matthews—is that it? Wait, please!" The news-editor put his hand over the mouth piece of the telephone.

"Know anything about him, Bat?"

"I should say I do! Choke it off! He's staying with Missionary Williams at the Indian School, and you know about how much love is lost between Williams and Moyese."

"But we can't possibly suppress this, Bat. It will be all over the country."

"Better see whose ox is gored," advised Brydges.

"But we've got to get this, Brydges! The stage driver's told one of my men, already! Every bar-room buffer in the country side will know it by night."

"Then you had better get it straight," advised Bat.

The news-man looked in space through eyes narrowed to an arrow. Bat watched sleepily. "If we choke this old chap's account off, can you give one to

us?”

“Got it in my pocket! I’ve just come in on the stage!”

“I thought you came down in a motor with the Senator? Didn’t he take the morning limited for Washington?”

“Well, the darn thing broke down so often it was bad as the stage. Anyway, I’ve got the story for you—”

“Senator O. K. it?” The news-man hung the telephone receiver up, still keeping his hand over the mouth piece.

“Lord, no!” Bat slid off the table, tore the sheets from his note book and handed the story of the Rim Rocks across to the editor.

“What do you take the Senator for? He knows nothing about it; but it’s in his constituency, and I guess his own paper should see that the account which goes in is straight.”

The news-editor hoisted his foot to the seat of a chair and stood racing his eyes through sheet after sheet of Brydges’s copy. Bat lighted a cigar, put his hands in his pockets and pivoted on his heels. There was the squeak, squeak, squeak of a child’s new boots coming up the first flight of stairs; and a squeak, squeak, squeak up the second flight of stairs; and a little girl, not twelve years old, resplendent in such tawdry finery as might have stepped out of an East End London pawn shop, presented herself framed in the doorway of the reporter’s room. She plainly belonged to the immigrant section of Smelter City. The news-editor never took his eyes from Bat’s copy. They were eyes made for drilling holes into the motives behind facts. Bat emitted a whistle that was a laugh.

“Hullo,” he said. “I knew they were coming on younger every year; but I didn’t know we had gone into the kindergarten business yet. You don’t want a job? Now don’t tell me you want a job?”

The little person lifted a pair of very sober eyes beneath the brim of some faded plush headgear.

“Is thus th’ rha-porther’s room?”

“Sure! you bet!” Bat wheeled on both heels. The little person looked at him very steadily and solemnly.

“A’ wannt,” she said in that mongrel dialect of German-American and Cockney-English, “A wawnt an iteem.”

“Sure,” says Bat, “nothing easier.”

“Wull thur be eny chaarge?”

“Not for ladies,” says Bat, saluting, hand to hat, and grinning more sleepily than ever.

“Then, A wull guve it t’ y’: wull y’ write it, sor?”

“Sure!” Bat squared himself to one of the reporters’ high desks.

“Mestriss Leez-y O’Fannigan,” dictated the little publicity agent.

“Miss O’Funny Girl,” with a look to his fat cheeks as of a bag blown full of

air.

"No Sor, O'Fan-ni-gan-"

"Perhaps," said Bat, "You'd like to know we're in the same boat, except that you're seeking exactly what I'm trying to avoid, Miss O'Finnigan?"

"Wull dance t' night—" continued the little publicity seeker.

"Will she dance in her copper-toe boots?" asks Bat.

"Wull dance at the H—— i-o-f lodge meetin' at—"

"That'll do, get her out of this," ordered the news-man. "It grows worse every day. Every damphool thinks the world is aching for an interview with himself, from the mining fakirs to the Shanty Town brats: it's seeped down to the kids. You go home, kid, and tell your mother to spank you special extra—"

They heard the fat little legs stumping down the stairs. "That kid belongs to Shanty Town. She dances for the bar room buffers now; she'll dance later, like you and me, Bat, for bigger bluffers. Freedom of the press! Damn it, I'm sick of the bunco game, Bat—"

"Draw it easy," drawled Bat. "If you're sick of it, it's dead easy to get out. I guess the kid is doing the same thing as you and me: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' How's the story? Will you give it a flare head?"

"Will there be any charge?" ironically repeated the news-man.

"Not for Moyese," smiled the handy man sleepily, "and say, if I were you, I'd do one of two things, get rid of my conscience or get a tonic for my nerves."

The telephone rang. The news-man ran to the receiver and a moment later slammed it back on the hook.

"Old frump, giving namby pamby talks on woman's influence in politics without votes." The news editor spat aimlessly.

Bat tapped the story of the Rim Rocks with his pencil. "Well," he asked.

"We'll give this flare."

The news man put heavy underscores in blue beneath the words TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD, BY THE VALLEY CATTLE ASSOCIATION FOR PROOF OF THE PERPETRATORS OF LAST NIGHT'S VILE CRIME.

"We'll put this in red! God! The Senator is an artist! I like having to lick the hand that leashes me."

"And feeds you, eh?" added Bat.

Beneath the flare heading followed a statement of facts (more or less) to the effect that in an altercation between the drovers of some outside cattlemen and the herders belonging to the MacDonald ranch, the sheep herd had been hustled—("I like your alliterations, Bat, it gives flavor of quality," commented the news-man with a snap of his black eyes,) too close to the edge of the Rim Rocks with the unintended and tragical result that several hundred sheep had been shoved over the battlements. ("What I like specially is what you don't give," commented the

news-man.)

There was not a word about broken backs and slashed lambs and disemboweled ewes; nor of what had been found on the Upper Mesas. As a sort of addendum it was stated that a boy belonging to the Mission school had lost his life in the melee.

"Anyway, we're in style! Way to tell a thing now adays is to turn all around it, and not tell anything at all. Auto suggestion, eh, Bat?"

Bat's fat cheeks blew up in the explosion of a bursting paper bag. "You bet it's auto all right. If you'd heard the old man talking all the way down on the iniquity of the thing: he kept it going harder than the buzz wagon."

"Better inform a breathlessly eager public that he's gone to Washington?"

"Here, I've got that, too! He dictated that straight, 'for the express purpose of taking up the whole question of eliminating the grazing areas from the National Forests when it will be possible for the State authorities to protect the live stock interests,' " Bat handed across the second item.

"What in thunder have the National Forests to do with the Rim Rock massacre?" The newsman looked up through his glasses.

"And who in thunder is going to ask that?"

Bat tapped the last item sharply with his pencil. "They'll read *that* and they'll read the other, and I'll bet dollars to doughnuts nine men out of ten will begin jawing and spouting and arguing that if there were *no* National Forests, there would be no Range Wars. If they draw a false impression, that's the public's look out. If we weren't dealing with damphools, we couldn't fool 'em."

"But it didn't happen on the National Forests."

"But it's only the tenth man who will stop to think that out. You put in one of those big middle page cartoons—National Forests with the Federal sign board, KEEP OFF, the sheep being massacred inside the sign board and the State sheriff unable to go in and stop it—"

"But you didn't say massacred! You said they accidently went over the edge."

"But it's only the tenth man will stop to think that. You run the cartoon, see?" said Bat, and, though he asked it as a question, if sounded final. The news-man went tearing back to the front editorial rooms. Bat went whistling down stairs, two steps at a bounce. At the half-way landing, he paused.

"Say," he yelled up, "you can use the same old cartoon; 'Keep Off the Grass,' you know."

"Eh?—right," crossly from the front room.

"And say?"

The news-man came out and leaned over the upper railing.

"Don't forget to take that tonic for your nerves."

The news-man told Bat to go any where he pleased; but it was all in the day's work with Mr. Bat Brydges. He didn't go. The handy man went straight across to

the paper in opposition. The news-man went back to the front room and stood thinking. He didn't curse Bat nor emit fumes of the sulphurous place to which he had invited Brydges. He was contemplating what he called his "kids"; and he was figuring the next payment due on the Smelter City lots in which he had been speculating. Evidently, these were the news-man's tonic; for he at once did what he described as "bucking it" and called down the speaking tube for the press man to put on the old cartoon.

The opposition paper required more finesse on the part of the handy man. Bat strolled as if it were a matter of habit into the telegraph editor's room, where he lolled back in one of the two empty chairs. It was still early and the wires were silent. Bat laid one cigar at the editor's place and took a fresh one for himself.

"Hullo, Bat," bubbled the telegraph man, dashing from the composing room in his shirt sleeves, "We've just been having a yell of an argument about the elements of success." He seated himself and whipped out a match to light the cigar. Bat was clicking his cigar case open and shut. This editor was all nerves too. Nerves seemed to go with the job; but these nerves were not jangled. He leaned back in his swing chair with one boot against the desk. "What makes a man successful, anyway? It isn't ability. Your news-man across the way could buy our office out with brains; but gee whitaker, he's worse than a dose of bitters! Now take your Senator, he hasn't either the education or the brains of lots of our cub reporters, here!" He paused nibbling his cigar end. "Yet, he's successful. We aren't, except in a sort of doggon-hack-horse way. You're next to the old man, Bat, what do you say makes him successful?"

Bat clicked the cigar case shut and put it in his pocket.

"Two things: he's a specialist; he delivers the goods no other man can deliver; and he doesn't fool any time away by bucking into a buzz saw, fighting windmills and that sort of thing, way you fellows 'agin the Government' do."

The telegraph man removed his cigar.

"What do you mean by 'delivers the goods no other man can deliver'? Do you mean the pork barrel?"

"No," said Bat, "I don't, though the pork barrel is a d—ee—d essential part of the game. Here's what I mean; when you came to this Valley, there was nothing doing. We had mines; but we hadn't a smelter! Well, Senator got the coking coal for a smelting site and the big developers came in. Other men couldn't, wouldn't or didn't dare to do it! He did it. He delivered the goods and got the big fellows interested."

"He stole 'em, those coal lands. He jugged 'em thro' Land Office records with false entries." The telegraph man had lowered his voice.

"We don't call 'em stolen when it's been the making of the Valley."

"No, because the Smelter is a sacred cow mustn't be touched for the sake of the grease."

“Then, there was nothing doing in lumber; big fellows wouldn’t come in and develop. Well, Moyese got ’em the timber tracts for a song. Other men couldn’t, wouldn’t or didn’t dare. He delivered the goods—”

“The courage of the highwayman,” commented the wire editor with a puff.

“We don’t call it that when it helps the Valley,” corrected the handy man.

“No, it’s another sacred bovine; mustn’t be touched for fear of the axle grease. See? I’ve got a list of ’em—public lands, through freights, water power, smelter, lumber deals,” the telegraph man opened his table drawer and held out a scrawled list. “If you call that delivering the goods, I call it filling the barrel. What’s the other factor for success?”

“Not bucking into a buzz saw. The world is mostly made of barkers and builders. You fellows spend all the time barking. Then you wonder there’s nothing to show in the way of a building.”

The telegraph wires began to click and the girl operator came in with some tissue sheets.

“Fight in Frisco—that goes,” commented the telegraph editor dashing in the “ands” and “buts” and the punctuation. He stuck the slip on the printer’s hook. “Wedding in Newport—”

“That goes,” laughed the handy man, “There’s no sacred cow about that.”

The telegraph man wrote headings for the dispatches and stuck them on the hook for the printer’s boy.

“Speaking of sacred cows, it isn’t exactly cows, but it’s in the stock line all right—what do you know about that business last night up on Rim Rocks? Stage driver has been blazing it all round town—”

“Stage driver’s a liar,” emphatically declared Brydges.

“Been trying to get the news for an hour; the wires are cut. Can’t get ’em by phone. Think I’ll send a man up to-night with a photographer.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t,” drawled Bat sleepily. “It isn’t worth it. I’ve just come down. Whole row’s over. You can’t get a dub in the Valley to open his mouth. Same old gag we’ve used for the last ten years, ‘heavily armed band of masked men,’ ‘scene like a butcher’s shambles,’ and that guy of a sheriff ‘scouring the hills for the miscreants.’ I’ll bet he’s under his bed scared blue.”

“Who did it?”

“Same old gang of outside grazers, drovers who skipped the State line. I succeeded in getting their names after a good deal of trouble.”

“You did, did you? Then give us a stick about it, will you? Date it special at the Rim Rocks! Trouble is, if I do send a man up, business office will kick at the expense account; for there’s nothing in it; and that kind of news hurts the Valley.”

So Mr. Bat Brydges wrote forty lines of two paragraphs in which he warned the public that this sort of thing had to stop; the West would not stand for interference from outside cattlemen who were trying to wrest the range away from

local grazers. There followed the names of six men concerned in the Rim Rock fray. Whose names they were, neither Bat nor anyone else knew. Also Mr. Sheriff Flood was not described as "a guy" nor pictured as reposing under his bed. He might have been a walking arsenal of defence for the Valley. According to Mr. Bat Brydges, Sheriff Flood was busy on the case and had wired the authorities of the adjoining States to be on the look out for the guilty parties. There followed a description of the guilty parties photographed accurately from Mr. Bat Brydges's retina.

The third newspaper office was the least easy for the handy man's tactics. The editor was an independent of the fiery order. Bat avoided the editor and tackled a young reporter at the noon hour.

"What do you say to a spin in the 40 h. p. to-night?" he asked.

"What's on?"

The youth was reading an ink-smudged galley proof.

Bat sat down on the desk where he could read over the other's shoulder. The proof reeked of "gore" and "shambles" and "heavily armed masked men" and rifle shots thick as hail stones with a sheriff careening over the Mesas at break neck speed slathered with zeal for law.

"What reforms are you jollying along now?" asked Bat.

"We'll jolly you fellows when this comes out."

"I've always said if I were his Satanic Majesty and wished to defeat the goody-goodies, I wouldn't bother fighting 'em! I'd take an afternoon nap and let them buck themselves by their lies and bickerings."

The youth ran his eye down the galley proof.

"Who filled you up with this dope?" Brydges lowered his voice to an altogether amused and very confidential key.

"What's the matter with it?"

"Matter? There's nothing right about it."

"Goes all the same. Got snap! It's good stuff."

"Stuffing, you mean," corrected the handy man. "Say, where ever did you get it? Talk of stuff? Somebody has mistaken you for a spring chicken."

"Got it straight. It's all right! Fellow from the English colony—"

"English Colony? Those Rookeries—Mother Carey's chickens. Do you know what that Rookery gang is? A lot of gambling toughs, remittance doughheads—"

"That doesn't spoil a ripping good story! I'm going to wire a column to Chicago."

"No, you're not," contradicted Brydges. "That kind of thing hurts the State more than ten thousand dollars will advertise it. You go over your advertising columns my boy—"

"All right! It's up to you?"

Bat whistled and swung the galley proofs between his knees.

"Doesn't matter what you say out here. Everybody knows your rag sheet will contradict to-morrow what you say to-day in headings red and long as a lead pencil. You'll contradict in a little hidden paragraph tucked away among the ads., and I guess we know which are the ads. out here; but, if you want any more dope on inside stuff, don't you send that East! You have applied for a job on our paper twice. If you want one, don't you send that East! What do they pay you, anyway?"

The youth paused to estimate; and youth's hopes are ever high.

"That's worth a hundred to me!"

"No, you don't! They pay you six and ten and sometimes two, but it's worth a hundred if you keep it out, nice crisp little bills, my boy. Call for you to-night at five; but don't you play that story up."

It was then and there Bat showed himself a past master. He sauntered out of the office humming.

"Say, Brydges," called the youth, "what's wrong with this account, anyway?"

"All wrong," reiterated Brydges stepping back. "Wasn't a man lost his life. Wasn't a man on the Range at the time, only a kid got in the way of a stampede! Here, I'll give it to you straight! I've just come down from the Valley! You tell what happened down in Mesa and Garfield counties ten years ago, and up in Wyoming last spring! Give it to the other States. Don't give your own State a black eye! Come on out and have something with me, and I'll fix you up as we feed."

So when the Independent's fiery columns came out with red scare heads and gory recital full of reference to "something rotten in the State of Denmark" and "damnable rascality," there was only one emasculated innocuous column given to the local event, but seven columns were steeped with the bloody details of sheep massacres and stock raids and Range Wars in other states in "the good old gun-toting days."

Bat's last act that day was to send a telegram care of the East-bound Limited to Senator Moyese. It read, "All local papers out highly gratulatory references your efforts to punish guilty parties."

CHAPTER XI
SETTING OUT ON THE LONG TRAIL

In the half light of mist and dawn, the Ranger ascended the Ridge trail.

Life was at flood-tide. Thought focussed to one point of consciousness set on fire of its own rays. He walked as one unseeing, unhearing, hardened to singleness of purpose, heedless of the steepness of the climb, of his blood leaping like a mountain cataract, of his muscles moving with the ease of piston rods; heedless of all but the warmth of the glow enveloping his outer body from the flame burning within.

He did not follow the zig-zag Ridge trail but clambered straight up the face of the slope, following pretty much the short cut-off they had taken the night before. He came to the crag where the spruce logs spanned the tinkling water course. There was a gossamer scarf of cloud hanging among the mosses of the trees. The peak came out opal fire above belts of clouds. The sage-green moss spanning the spruces turned to a jewel-dropped thing in a sun-bathed rain-washed world of flawless clouds and jubilant waters. He drew a deep breath. The air was tonic of imprisoned sunlight and resinous healing. Was each day's birth the dawn to new being?

It was here he had met her the night before. Waves of consciousness, tender delirious consciousness, flooded and surprised him. He had asked for a seal of memory. He knew now it would never be a memory: it would be consciousness, ever-living, ever present; a compulsion not to be controlled because it was not his own; and never to be quenched because it burned within. If he had been a weakling, the seal would have been a seal to self; but because an elemental war for right was winnowing the self out of him, he knew it was a seal to service.

Day-dawn marked the creation of a new world; and That had opened the doors for him to a life that no telling could have revealed. Would it be the same with the Nation? Would this struggle open the doors to a new life; or would the powers that stood for law and right go on marking time inside the firing line, while the powers that stood for wrong and outrage held their course rampant, unchecked; straining the law not to protect right but to extend wrong; perverting the courts; stealing where they chose to steal; killing where they chose to kill; deluging the land with anarchy by sweeping away law, just as surely as the removal of the sluice gates would set loose flood waters?

He ascended the rest of the dripping Ridge trail in a swing that was almost a run.

Below the Ranger cabin on the Homestead Slope stood the large oblong canvas bunk house of the road gang employed by the Forest Service.

"Hi—fellows," shouted Wayland, shaking the tent flap. "All hands up!" And he ordered the foreman to send the road gang to skin and burn and bury what lay at the foot of the battlements. As the Rim Rocks lay a few feet outside the bounds of the National Forests, it will be seen that Wayland *had stopped marking time behind the law and gone out beyond the firing line*. If it isn't clear to you how the Ranger was exceeding the authority of the law, then read the Senator's speeches about "the Forest and Land Service men going outside their jurisdiction employing Government men to do work which was not Government Service at all."

The Ranger saddled his own broncho for himself and a horse belonging to one of his assistants for the old frontiersman, who must be some where on the upper Mesas. To each saddle he fastened a Service hatchet and a cased rifle. Then, he caught one of the mules of the road gang for the pack saddle. Going inside the cabin, he furbished together such provisions as his biscuit box shelves afforded, a sack containing half a ham, a quarter bag of flour, one tin of canned beans, a tobacco pouch filled with tea, another pouch with sugar on one side of the dividing leather and salt in the other. Then, he cinched a couple of cow-boy slickers over the pack saddle, and, in place of the green Service coat which he had left at the Mission, donned a leather jacket, took a last look to see if a water-proof match case were in the inside pocket, ran back to the cabin for a half-flask of brandy, and an extra hat, and with the other horse and the pack mule in front, he mounted his pony and set out for the Rim Rocks. It will be seen this was not the equipment of a man who intended to remain marking time.

Just for a second, he pondered which path to follow. It would take an hour to go down the Ridge trail, cross the Valley and ascend the terra-cotta road of the Rim Rocks. Couldn't he jump his horses over the gully that cut between the Holy Cross and the Upper Mesa? He headed his horse into the tangle of hemlock and larch, the mule trotting ahead snatching bites of dogwood and willow from the edge of the dripping trail, the Ranger riding as Westerners ride, glued to the leather, guiding by the loose neck rein instead of the bit, with a wave of his hand to keep the little mule in line.

A turn to the left through a thicket of devil's club brought him where the Ridge overlooked the River. Wayland reined up sharply. A pile of logs scaled and marked with the U. S. stamp lay where the slightest topple would send them over a natural chute into the River. He had not scaled those logs: neither had his assistants. There was no record of them on the books. Of course, he had heard the chop and slash at the settlers' cabins, but homesteaders don't farm on the edge of a vertical precipice unless they are a lumber company; and logs tossed over that precipice to the River were destined for only one market, Smelter City. Then he remembered giving a permit to a Swede settler of the Homestead Slope to take out

windfall and dead tops for a little portable gasoline engine; but the permit didn't cover this area.

"Having stopped stealing half a million from the Bitter Boot, they've started their dummies in here." He looked at the gashed timber-slash as a thrifty man looks at wantonness and waste; it was a gaping wound in the forest side, old and young trees alike hacked down, the stumps of the big trees, not eighteen inches low as the regulations provided, but three and four and five feet high of waste to rot and gather fungus, the biggest of the giant spruce cut from a scaffolding nine feet from the ground, leaving wasted lumber enough to build a house.

"This was done when I was away on my last long patrol," reflected Wayland. The slash of brushwood and wasted tops lay higher than his horse's head. "A fine fire-trap for the fall drought," thought Wayland angrily. "One spark in that tinder pile in a high wind; and there would be no forests left on Holy Cross."

What did it mean, this open defiance, not of himself, (he was a mere cog in the big wheel; so was the entire Forest Service,) this open defiance of law; this open theft of Government property? Connected with the outrage of the Range War, and the Senator's advice for him to stop suing for restitution of the two-thousand acres of coal lands, and the handy-man's urgent arguments for him "to chuck the fight and come down to the Valley," the Ranger knew well enough what the pile of stolen logs stamped with a counterfeit Government hatchet meant; stamped, of course, by some poor ignorant dummy foreigner. The Ring were setting their hired tools on to the fight. And far away in the East—yes it was the East's business to see what went on in the West—were myriads of wage-earners forced to pay exorbitantly for coal and wood and lumber and house rent because of this wanton waste; this seizing fraudulently by the few of the property belonging to the many. If they had thrown down the challenge, assuredly he was taking it up! What would the people do about it, he wondered, when they came to know? Would any power on earth waken the people up to do something, and stop talking? *A Roman ruler had fiddled while his imperial city burned. What was the many-headed ruler of the great republic doing, while enemies burned and cut and slashed and wasted in wantonness the property of the public for the enrichment of the Ring*?

The Ranger touched his horse to a gallop and jumped all three animals through the criss-cross of wind-fall and slash, coming out on the edge of the rock chasm that cut the Upper Mesas off from the Holy Cross. The gully crumbled on the near side and shelved on the far, twenty feet deep and fifty wide, altogether not very jumpable, the Ranger thought. He zig-zagged in and out among the larches along the margin of the rock cut-way, noting "dead tops" ripe for the axe, pines where the squirrels had cached cone seed at the root, spruce logs gone to punk with alien seedlings coming up from the dead trunk, yellow ant-eaten wood-rot ripped open by some bear hunting the white eggs; noting, above all, the wonderful flame of the

painter's brush, spikes with the tints of the rainbow, like Indian arrows dipped in blood, knee-deep, multi-colored, fiery, dyed in the very essence of sunglow, humming with bees and alive with butterflies, lives of a summer in the aeon of ages that the snow flakes had taken manufacturing soil out of granite, silt out of snow.

"The little snow flake gets there all right," reflected Wayland. "It takes time; but she carves out her little snow flake job all the same, and the rocks go down before her! Guess if we follow the law, we're hitched up with the stars all right."

He reined up and caught at a pine bough. A sight to hold the eye of any forester held his; the enormous trunk of a fallen giant, a dozen dwarfs growing from its punk, spanned the gully. Wayland slid off his horse. The great trunk lay destitute of lesser branches to the tip on the far side of the chasm like great characters that discard mannerisms.

The Ranger struck his Service axe into the trunk. The bark held firm, though he heard the ring of the dry-rot at the heart that had brought the old giant crashing down to become food for the scrubs and pigmies of the forest. Wayland picked out two spindly birches. Quick strokes brought them down. Walking out on the dead trunk, he threw a birch on each side as a guard rail, affording fence, not protection, to the wavering faith of a shy horse, "all a feeling of security to steady a giddy head," he reflected. He led the little pack mule; and the bronchos followed. A moment later, he was galloping through the larches and low juniper that fringed the Mesas above the Rim Rock trail, the mule huff-huffing to the fore snatching mouthfuls on the run. Then, with a lope, Wayland's broncho leaped out on the bare sage-grown Mesas, the mule with ears pointed, nose high, heading straight for the white canvas-top of a tented wagon.

For a moment, the light blinded Wayland's sight; for the sun had come up in an orange fan; and the sky was not blue: it shone the dazzling silver of mercury. Against the high rarefied air came in view the figure of a man, grotesquely exaggerated, head and shoulders first, then body, riding a heavy horse, saddleless, hatless, coatless, white of hair, heels pressed to his horse's flanks, bent far over the animal's neck as Indians ride, galloping for the Rim Rock trail, or a second jump from the battlements.

Wayland stood up in his stirrups and with hands trumpeted uttered a yell. The rider jerked his horse to a rear flounder, waved frantically, then split the air—

"Glory be to the powers—but—A'm glad to see you! A've headed them off from the South trail. We've got them, Wayland, the low dastard scoundrels! We've got them trapped like rats in a trap! They're in the Pass if you've a man in the Valley with spirit enough to get out with a gun!" He stopped for breath as the two horses floundered together.

“We haven’t,” answered Wayland.

“They jumped the gully! Man alive, y’ ought t’ seen them jump the gully! A slammed them right down into the bottom of it. A would to God ’t had been to the bottomless pit. The same gentry A saw that night under your Ridge, saving his High Mightiness. The evil fellow wi’ the sheep hide leggings, an’ the one armed blackguard in the cow-boy slicker, an’ the corduroy dandy wi’ the red tie, an’ four more of them same card-sharp gentry. A rode ’long the top of y’r gully an’ poured six bullets after ’em! Man alive! A heard the fellow in the yellow slicker yell bloody murder when A fired! A’m hopin’—God forgive me—A’ve nipped him in the other arm an’ brought him winged t’ th’ throne o’ Grace! They followed the gully bed behind y’r Mountain, the white horse same as yon night under y’r Ridge, limpin’, the one armed man rockin’ in the saddle an’ spittin’ out blasphemous filth for th’ others to wait. A’ve kept guard all night, yellin’ an’ howlin’ like a vigilantee, knowin’ they’re not the gentry to run into the arms of them good old-time neck-tie com’tees; an’ not dreamin’ A hadn’t another cartridge to my name!” The old man swabbed the sweat from his brow.

“A left m’ coat and togs back at yon chuck wagon!” Wayland noticed he was riding stocking soled.

“I have an extra hat for you here.” Wayland tossed the soft felt from the pocket of his leather coat.

“Oh, A saw ’em plain enough; same ill-lookin’ six that y’r hell-kite laws hatch on a bad frontier! Make no mistake. Yon white vest is at the bottom o’ this deviltry! Who is he, Wayland?”

Wayland related the visit of a white-vest to his Ridge cabin; and they trotted forward towards a sheep wagon.

“How did y’ come up here?” asked the old frontiersman.

“Where did you get that horse?” retorted the Ranger.

“One of the chuck wagons’ teams—”

“Herders all right?” asked Wayland. He knew what the answer must be; the same answer that had been disgracing the West these twenty years.

The old man jerked his horse to a dead stop, drew himself erect and looked straight at the Ranger.

“Wayland, man, is this Russia—or Hell? Is there another country in the world calls itself civilized would allow four herder men to be burned to death? Does the country know what is doing? Do you know what happened? Do you know that last wagon is left there only because the rains put out the fire? Y’ll find the iron tires of the other wagons with skeletons of men chained to the wheels. A came up just as they were settin’ aboot firin’ the second wagon. They’d ripped all the flour bags open and loosed the horses. This one, A caught full pelther down the trail.”

The old man shook his head.

They trotted their horses across the Mesas in silence towards the glaring white

canvas wagon. Broken harness, half-burned spokes, the charred hub of a wheel, snapped whiffle-trees, the white dust of scattered flour littered the ground. A brown scorch of flame up the back of the tent above the remaining wagon marked where the rains had extinguished the fire. A smouldering ill-smelling ash heap told the fate of the other wagons.

"Hell-devilish work, hell-devilish work! Th' beasts of the field couldna' conceive such baseness, Wayland! 'Tis the work o' devils spawned by harpies! They say there is no devil to-day! Hoh!" The old man puffed the heresy from his pursed lips. "The beasts don't prey on their own 'cepting the rats that starve; but, man, there's no explanation of his self-destruction 'cepting the old fashioned one, Wayland. 'He was possessed by a devil.' "

The Ranger had dismounted and was prodding the ash-heap with his heavy boot sole. Then, he gave the embers a smart flap with his whip. The blackened hub of a wheel went circling out. Suddenly, Wayland turned away his face, white and nauseated, hardened to resolution granite as the rocks. Eyeless sockets of a skeleton face protruded from the ashes; and on the ground were stains which the rains had not washed out. It was then Wayland noticed the bloody thumb marks round the canvas front of the wagon seat where the driver had been dragged down.

For a little time neither man spoke. But, was it not the natural ending of brutality unleashed of law; of crime left alone by the good?

"To mutilate thousands of sheep was damnable enough," said Wayland; "but —this?"

The old frontiersman had picked up coat and boots flung aside the night before. He stood holding by his horse's mane looking down. "And this is a white man's land," he said. "To this have y' prostituted freedom bought by th' blood of saints an' martyrs? Not in th' heat o' passion, but for filthy gain, has a free people come to this? *The heads o' kings fell on the bloody block for less crime in days not so soft spoken as these*. Is y'r freedom, freedom to right or to wrong? Is it to send y'r Nation smash over the precipice? Wayland, *is this Democracy*?"

The Ranger did not answer for a moment.

"No," he said quietly, "it isn't Democracy any more than your Robber Barons were Monarchy! Don't you make that mistake; this is Anarchy, the Anarchy of unrestrained greed! You fought it in your plundering Scotch Robber Barons long ago! We have to fight it to-day in our plundering plutocrats!"

CHAPTER XII
THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW VEILS ITSELF

"Do you mean me to believe," the old frontiersman drew himself up to the full height of British superiority to everything outside the island of its own circumscribed knowledge, "do you mean me to believe that if any of these poor herders had escaped as witnesses, we'd not have been able to send these blackguard murderers to the gallows?"

The Ranger had signalled for some of the road gang to ascend from below the battlements to keep guard till the coroner could come. The little pack mule to the fore, Wayland and Matthews were picking the way slowly down the terra cotta trail of the Rim Rocks.

"It does not make the slightest difference in the world what you or I believe, Sir! The facts are unless you could offer a witness money enough to take him out the United States and to keep him for the rest of his life, he would develop a good-forgetter, or else the same old gag—'been blind folded,' 'didn't see,' and so on, and on, and on; you can't blame them! I'll bet if every one of the herders had escaped instead of festering there in the ash heap, they'd all be legging it out of the country far and fast as they could go."

The little mule came to a stand at a bend in the switch back; and the old evangelist sat ruminating silently on his broncho.

"Y' have a sheriff?"

Wayland laughed.

"He's like the Indian flies; a no-see-him. He'll ride over the hills for weeks and if he tumbles over the top of his prisoner, he can't find his man!"

The old Britisher looked doubtfully at Wayland, as much as to say, "I don't believe you."

"You're no temptin' me to take the law into our own hands?"

Again Wayland laughed.

"My dear sir, you don't understand! I don't want to drag you into this at all! For ten years, *the powers that stand for law in this country have been marking time behind the firing line; while the other fellow got away with the goods*. They have been marking time while Crime scored, and what you call the Devil kept tally."

The old man nodded his head approvingly.

"That's all true!"

"You ask me if I intend to break the law? No, Sir, I do not; but *I do intend to carry the law out beyond the firing line. The thief strains the law to get away with the goods; I am going to strain the law to get them back. The murderer strains the law to protect his damned useless neck; I'm going to strain the law to break his*

neck. Unless," he added, "I break my own neck doing it."

The old man had drawn down his brows. "A don't just like the sound of it; what's your plan?"

"To go out with a gun till I get them; the way your own Mounted Police do up in Canada! *I'm going to quit monkeying with technicalities in the twilight zone . . . and go out . . . after the man*."

The old Britisher sat thinking: "Wayland, if A was managing this thing, first thing A'd do would be blow such a blast on your local press, the authorities would *have* to sit up, then—A'd go after your sheriff if A had to tackle the coward by the scruff of his scurvy neck, A'd make him ashamed . . . *not* . . . to act."

"All right, Sir! Manage this thing . . . manage it just as you would behind your hide-bound British laws! We'll pass the Senator's ranch in ten minutes. You can telephone down to 'The Smelter City Herald.' I'll get something ready to eat while you telephone. Then, we'll go right along to the sheriff."

They kicked their ponies lightly into a trot and came to the Senator's k'raal before the noon hour. Two or three of the ranch hands loitered casually out to the road. All were in blue over-alls and shirt sleeves but one; and he was in knickerbockers.

"That's the foreman, ask him!"

" 'Twould oblige me t' have the use of your telephone?"

The man in the knickerbockers tilted his hat at a rakish angle, stuck a tooth-pick in the corner of his mouth, put his thumbs in his jacket arm holes, shot Wayland a quick look of questioning, grinned at the old man and nodded towards a white pergola standing apart from the veranda of the ranch house.

"Find it there," he indicated, "drop a nickel—then, ring!"

"Did you see that look?" gritted the old Britisher between his teeth, as the fellow sauntered away with elaborate indifference.

"Yes, but looks don't go with a jury."

"Neck-tie was effective with the likes of him in my day!"

For the third time, Wayland uttered the same sardonic laugh. What was happening to the old Britisher to change his point of view?

"I'll go on down to the River and prepare grub."

What Wayland was thinking, he did not say; but *what* was passing in the brain of the law-loving old Britisher that the rakish tilt of the hat, the insolent angle of the tooth-pick, the spread of a man's thumbs and feet—could break through hide-bound respect for law and elicit reference to the court of the old-time neck-tie?

At the River, the Ranger loosened the saddle girths and put a small kettle to boil above a fire of cottonwood chips and grass. Then he took out his note book and wrote the note to Eleanor which he gave to one of the road gang for Calamity. The note said: "We are setting out on the Long Trail . . . the Long Trail this Nation will have to travel before Democracy arrives . . . the trail of the Man behind the

Thing . . . the Man Higher Up." How did the Ranger know what was going on up at the telephone in the pergola, where British respect for law was at one end of the wire and the handy man of the Valley at the other?

There was no bitterness in the quizzical smile with which he awaited the old man's return; for as he lay back on the ground watching the fire burn up, the letter brought again, not memory, but consciousness of that seal to service, he wondered half vaguely could she know, could she realize, did a woman *ever* realize what her love meant to a man. She could surely never have given such full draughts of life, of wondrous new revealing consciousness, unless they were drinking together from the same perennial, ever-new, ever-surprising spring! . . . He did not hear the footsteps till the old man spoke—

"A somehow—didna' seem—to get—them clear! They answered; then—they didna' answer! *Smelter City Herald*—ye said? 'Twas strange—'twas vera strange—A got an answer plain asking my name—then central said 'ring off! ring off! can't get them, wire out of order'!"

This time, Wayland did not laugh. Had not the wires been out of order since first he began to ring the bells of his little insignificant place to a Nation's alarm?

They ate their bannocks—'Rocky Mountain dead shot' Westerners call the slap-jacks—in silence. While the old man still pondered mazed and dumb, the Ranger dabbled the cups and plates in the River and recinched the pack saddle, the little mule blowing out his sides and groaning to ease the girth, the bronchos wisely eating to the process of reharnessing. The Britisher's reverence for law dies hard. Wayland saw the wrestle and kept silent. A deep low boom rolled dully through the earth in smothered rumblings and tremblings like distant thunder.

"What's that, Wayland?"

"Only the snow slides loosened by the noon-thaw slithering down the Pass of Holy Cross;" and somehow, he could not but think of what she had said . . . the law of the snow flake sculpturing the rocks.

The horses cropped audibly over the grasses—waiting. The little mule looked back—also waiting. A whelming impulse, part of the spirit to drink of her inspiration, part of the flesh to drink of her touch—came over him to ride down to the ranch house, the MacDonald ranch house, to see her—just once before setting out on the Long Trail.

"Well," he said; "which way, Mr. Matthews?"

The old Britisher moved thoughtfully towards his broncho.

"We'll try y'r sheriff—at least, we'll try him *first*."

And again the Ranger laughed.

"Don't laugh, man! D' y' know what it means when men are driven outside the line of law?"

The horses waded in midstream and reached down drinking, champing on their

bits.

"Well—what does it mean?"

He saw the blue of the mountain stream swirl and whirl and eddy over the sun-dyed pebbles, singing the law of the far mountain snows.

"God knows," answered the old man slowly. "It means disrupture. We slew our kings in olden times; but ye are a many headed king in this land! It means—perhaps, ye call it Anarchy to-day."

The yellow noon-day light sifted through the cottonwoods jewel-spangled on the crystal blue River. The Ranger always knew the character of the mountains from the River: silty and milky-blue from glaciers; crystal and green-blue from the snow. And they rode away up the Valley from the ranch houses towards the Pass, out beyond the bounds of the National Forests with the trees marked two notches and one blaze; gradually up the narrowing trail fringed by the shiny laurel bushes; with the mountains closing closer and the spiced balsam odor raining on the air a sifted gold dust of sunlight. At intervals, came the dull rumble of the snow slide, the far reverberation, the echo of the law of the snow flake rolling away the stone; the smash of the great law drama, the titans behind the mountains.

It was one of those frequent mountain formations where a Valley seems to terminate in a blank wall. You turn a buttress of rock, and you find the sheer wall opening before you in a trail that climbs to a notch on the sky line between forested flanks. The notch of blue is a Pass.

"Anyway, Mr. Matthews, we are splitting the air, now! We are doing more than sawing air."

They had put their horses to a sharp trot along the trail winding up the River. The water was gurgling over the polished pebbles with little leaps and glints of fire. Presently, the mountains had closed behind them. The River was tumbling with noisy rush in a succession of cascades, and the trail wound back from the rocky bank through circular flats or what were locally known as "bottoms."

"Sheriff live this way?" shouted Matthews; for the roar of the little stream filled the canyon.

"Has a ranch at the foot of the Pass."

"It won't be wasting time, anyway," said the old Britisher.

Again, Wayland smiled. If it would *not* be wasting time; then, they were already in pursuit of the outlaws. What was it in the insolent look of the Senator's ranch hand that had suddenly dashed the doughty Briton's reverence for the instrument of the law?

A barb wire fence tacked to spindly cottonwood trees marked the line of an irregular homestead; and the Ranger swung into a gate extemporized from barb wire on two adjustable posts. Behind the gate, stood a log shack; on the windows,

cheap lace curtains; behind the lace curtains, a vague movement of peeping faces and a querulous termagant voice: “I ain’t a goin’ to have you mixed up in no scrap; so there, Dan Flood!”

Wayland dismounted and knocked on the door with his riding stock. It opened on an anaemic sulphur face with blond hair screwed in curl papers over a full row of gold headlights where an enterprising dentist had engrafted as much of Klondike as possible.

“Sheriff Flood in?” the Ranger raised his hat.

“Oh, how j’ do, Mr. Wayland.” All the curl papers nodded like clover tops in the wind, while the coy brows arched, and an inviting smile played round the simpering headlights. “No, he ain’t! Dan ain’t in!” The curl papers nodded again and the gold teeth simpered again.

“Is he—*home*?” The word home came out with the force of a bullet.

“No, he ain’t home! Mr. Flood ain’t home! The sheriff was called ’way! Is there any message?”

Wayland stood back and watched the fray. The old man gazed full at the frowsy apparition in the doorway. If dagger looks could have stabbed her, the lady would have dropped dead stuck full of as many daggers as a cushion is of pins. The gold headlights suffered eclipse behind a pair of tightly perked lips; and one hand darted hold of the door knob.

“Yes,” he said, looking fixedly at the deep V of ash-colored skin where the lady had turned back the neck of her pink wrapper in imitation of gowns seen in the Sunday supplement of “The Smelter City Herald.” “There was murder done on the Rim Rocks last night! There’s festering bodies lying on top of yon Mesas! ’Tis a job for the sheriff, not for an outsider—”

“Yes, Sir,” said the gold headlights, “I think he’s gone to see about it.”

He had looked her slowly over again from the blondine hair and the ash-colored V of unclean skin and waistless slop of slattern wrapper to clock work stockings and high heeled slippers.

“A ha’ ma doubts he’s sprintin’ fr’ the back door this minute! Are ye the sheriff’s—woman?” and oddly enough the lady didn’t flush; but the faintest gloss came over the saffron skin—of what? It was the same nonchalant, wordless insolence that had played in the eyes of the man who had come out from the Senator’s ranch.

“Yes, Sir, I’ll deliver your message a’ right,” flickered the headlights reassuringly.

The old man stood stolidly and scorched the lady’s eyes.

“How long since y’r sheriff thing set out? Did he break loose by the back door?”

“There ain’t no back door,” snapped the headlights; and the front door slammed in their faces. Wayland burst in a peal of laughter.

" 'Tis no laughing matter! 'Tis bad enough t' depend on that broken reed of a dastard coward sheriff hidin' under the bed! A've a mind to go back an' have him oot; but that—pot ash pate—" what else the old man called her was more truthful than elegant for an expurgated age. They replaced the post of the barbed wire gate in its loop and mounted their horses.

"Well, Sir?" asked Wayland. "I don't wish to offend your British sense of law; but which way now?"

The old man left the reins hanging on the broncho's neck. The horses began cropping the grass. The Ranger was fumbling at his stirrup.

"A'm sore puzzled, Wayland! 'Tis not in the blood of a British born to go *outside* law. Y'r no thinkin' that; are y', Wayland?"

"I am saying nothing! The law protects them in their lawlessness. It doesn't protect us in our lawfulness. The American citizen is the law-maker. There is only one thing for an American citizen to do—get to work and enforce his laws—"

"Then—God's name, Wayland, go ahead and do it! Take the lead! A'll follow! This trail go behind the mountain?"

"Yes, it brings us round behind! They have the start of us by three hours; but they'll camp to-night somewhere along the Lake Behind the Peak. Beyond that, there are some mighty bad slides. These rains have loosened snows. They'll hardly cross the slides beyond the lake but by daylight. If we can reach the lake to-day, we'll have a chance at 'em."

"Wayland, A'm on the last lap of *my* trail! It doesn't matter what happens to me; but have you thought what might happen when we catch up on them? Those fellows are out to kill. We are out to arrest. Have you thought what that might mean at close quarters?"

"It's close quarters I'm seeking," said Wayland, "though it's hardly fair to drag you into the fight. All I want is a man as a witness who's got red blood that won't turn yellow. This Nation has been cowering behind the line of law, while the looters and skinners have disarmed our very firing line. It's time somebody risked his neck to reverse the order—"

"Git epp," said the old man roughly to his broncho.

The little pack mule took to the trail ears back at an easy lope; and the riders set off up the Pass at the rocking-chair trot of the plains-horseman. Gradually, the mountains crowded closer, in weather-stained rock walls, with a far whish as of wind or waters coming up from the canyon bottom; the sky overhead narrowing to a cleft of blue with the frayed pines and hemlocks hanging from the granite blocks, fragile as ferns against the sky. You looked back; the rocks had closed to a solid wall; you looked down; the river filling the canyon with a hollow hush had dwarfed to a glistening silver thread with the forest dwarfed banks of moss. It was a sombre world, all the more shadowy from that cleft of blue over head where an eagle circled with lonely cry.

The Pass was like the passage of birth and death from life to larger life. On the other side of the mountain lay the sun-bathed Valley and the Ridge with its silver cataracts and the opal peak with the glistening snow cross. This side, the Mountain in the Valley of the Shadow became giant beveled masonry, tier on tier, criss-crossed and scarred by the iced cataracts of a billion years—no sound but the raucous scream of the lone eagle, the hollow hush of the far River, the tinkling of the water-drip freezing as it fell. Then, where the cleft of blue smote the rocks with sunlight, the doors of the mountains would open again to larger life in another Valley.

The horses were no longer trotting. They were climbing and blowing and pausing where the trail of the Pass took sharp turns, back and forward, up and up, till the eagle was circling below. Both men had dismounted and were walking Indian file to the rear, Wayland carrying his own cased rifle. The trail was now running along the edge of an escarpment no wider than a saddle, sheer drop below, sheer wall above.

"How would they come out from the gully on this trail, Wayland? I have been watching for the tracks. They're not ahead of us."

"Gully ends in a blind wall above. As I make it, they'd push their nags up and come down on the Pass trail somewhere below the precipice ahead. We can take our time; I have been watching. There are no tracks ahead. The trail above is worse than this. Devil takes care of his own; or they would have broken their necks long ago coming back and forward. We'll let 'em go down to the lake first. They'll go into the trap. It's a lake mostly ice this time of the year. There's an old punt sometimes used by hunters. It'll take them an hour to cross with their horses. We'll let them camp at the lake. We could pot them there, if we had a sheriff worth his salt."

" 'Tis a great trail, Wayland! Minds me of my days building bridges in the Rockies! 'Tisn't just a matter o' courage to follow these precipice trails: it's temperament! 'Tis something in the pit o' the stomach! A mind one of our best engineers; he could meet Chinese navvies with their knives out: couldn't cross one of the precipices to save his life without blinders like a horse: we had to blindfold him so he wouldn't know till he'd crossed. How deep do you call it here?"

"About 7,000 feet drop, I think. This is the top of the Pass. We go down after we leave the precipice! See—? the horses know it! They are taking their top-turn rest."

The two men glanced below. In the shadowed depths, they could see the River tearing down a white fume, a pantherine thing leaping—leaping—; and the hollow roar of water filled the canyon with a quiver that was tangible. Far below, the eagle flew lazily, lifting and falling to the throb of the canyon winds. Suddenly, the air was cut by a piercing whistle. Both men jumped.

“It’s only a marmot.” The Ranger pointed over his shoulder to the little gray beast sitting on the face of the rock. “Curious place, this Pass! There is an echo here—if it were not that we don’t want to announce ourselves, I’d let you hear it. If you yell or sing, you can hear the thing dancing along that opposite wall—Kind of uncanny, the echo voice, in the mist here sometimes.”

But the whistle of the marmot had also startled the horses. The tired pack mule gave a hobbling jump and came to a stand. A stone no larger than a horse-shoe kicked loose, tottered on the edge, and went bounding over. It struck the tier of rock below with clattering echo, displaced another stone twice its size, then bounced—bounced—and a slither of slaty rock the size of a house wrenched out—shot into mid-air with crash and sharp clappering echoes—Then the Pass was filled with the thundering roll. They saw it sink—sink—sink and fade, while the echo still rocketted amid the rock tops—sink—sink—sink—no larger than a spool in the purple shadows, till with a plunge it disappeared.

“Whew, it *would* be going if one went over.” The old man mowed the sweat from his forehead and drew a breath.

On the instant, the hollow chasm of the canyon split to the crash of a rifle shot that rocketted and quaked and repeated in splintering echoes; and a bullet pinged at Wayland’s feet.

“That’s splitting the air for you—Wayland.”

“Drop down, Sir,” urged the Ranger, pulling the old frontiersman to shelter of the upper rocks. “They have come out above. They have heard that cursed stone. That’s only a chance shot to learn where we are. They can’t come behind. They have got to go down ahead—”

“And the fat’s in the fire; for my rifle’s gone with the horse,” deplored the old man woefully; for mule and bronchos had galloped along the trail with the clatter of a cavalcade through the canyon. Wayland handed the old man his own rifle and took the six shooter from his belt beneath the leather coat.

“They won’t understand this pursuit at all,” explained Wayland. “Sheriff Flood is the guarantee of safety for any criminal in the country side. They’ll think it a citizens’ posse. Where this trail comes down at the end of the precipice is a crag. Will you hide behind that, sir? I’ll go above and head them down. I’m not asking you to risk your life. They’ll not see you till they gallop down.”

“But you are risking your own life if you go up?”

“So does the fellow who has slipped on a banana peel,” said Wayland.

CHAPTER XIII
THE MAN ON THE JOB

The two men proceeded along the precipice trail of the Pass. The shouting river below boisterous from the full flood of noon-day thaw began to hush. By the shadows, the Ranger knew that the afternoon was waning. The echoes from the shot still rocked in sharp crepitating knocks as of stone against stone, fainter and fading. Then a quiver of wind met their faces. The chasm opened to the fore like a gate, or a notch in the serrated ridge of the sky-line; and the precipice trail dropped over the edge of the crag to the scooped hollow of a slope where rock slide or avalanche had plowed a groove in the bevelled masonry of the precipice.

"This is the place," indicated Wayland.

From the shoulder of the higher slope came a little narrow indurated trail scarcely a hand's width, marked by the cleft foot-prints of a mountain goat. Where the path came down to the main trail of the Pass, jutted a huge rock left high and dry on its slide to the bottom of the gorge.

"Keep behind the other side of that, sir! They can't possibly see you."

"How do you know that trail comes from the Ridge gully? Looks to me like a goat track."

"Because I built it! You can see the N. F. trail sign—one notch and one blaze on that scrub juniper. Up on the Mesas, we were *off* the Forests. Here, we are back on them. You may not know it, sir; but this canyon is part of the region Moyese wants withdrawn for homesteads. You could homestead a reservoir for Smelter City here—pay a German or a Swede three-hundred to sit on this site—then sell for a couple of million to the Smelter City gang. They would get the suckers in the East to buy the bonds to pay for it. A fellow in the Sierras located a hundred water power sites that way."

The old Britisher was not following the Ranger's reasoning in the least.

"Then, if we are really on the National Forests, that is your territory, and we have the legal right to make an arrest?"

Wayland laughed outright. If you don't see why, then you do not know the stickling of a Briton's sense of law and a Scotchman's conscience. Matthews took up his station behind the rock that abutted on the trail.

He saw the Ranger hasten back along the face of the precipice, stop where the rock offered foothold and begin slowly climbing almost vertically. At first, it was going up the tiers of a broken stone stair. Then, the weathered ledge gave place to slant shale. He saw Wayland dig his heels for grip, grasp a sharp edge overhead, and hoist himself to the overhanging branch of a recumbent pine; then, scramble along the fallen trunk to a ledge barely wide enough for footing. Along this, he

cautiously worked, face in, hand over hand from rock block to rock block, sticking fingers among the mossed crevices, fumbling the pebbles from the slate edges, and so round out of sight behind a flying buttress of masonry and back in view again a tier higher.

Just once, the watcher felt a tremor for the rash climber. Wayland's head was on a level with the crest of another ledge, his face to the rock, his left hand gripping a shoot of mountain laurel, his right groping the upper rocks. The old man saw the shrub jerk loose, moss, roots and all—he held his breath for the coming crash—it was all over. Wayland's left arm flung out to ward off the spatter of small stones; then, the right arm had clutched the spindly bole of a creeping juniper—his body lurched out, hung, swayed, lifted; and the Ranger disappeared among the shrubbery of the upper trail.

The old man took a deep breath.

"And this is the Man on the Job," he said. He drew behind his shelter and waited. "The same breed o' men after all, in different harness."

He had not noticed before, but there, ahead, where the black chasm of the Pass opened portals to the sunny blue of another valley, lay a lake, the Lake Behind the Peak, spangled with light, marbled like onyx or malachite, with the sheen of a jewel. Almost at his feet below, the near end of it lay. He could have tossed a pebble into it, seven-thousand feet below, where the white foaming river came ramping through a great pile of moraine that dammed up this end of the Pass to the width of a bridle trail. The outlaws would have to cross the lake to escape from the Pass; and almost, he thought, he saw the old punt at the far end, which Wayland had said hunters sometimes used.

The white butterflies flitted past his hiding place out to the light of the sun. The eagle was soaring strong-winged, swerving and lifting and falling in an insolence of languid power. The silent Pass quivered to the throb of waters. But what was doing with the Ranger? Not a sound came from the upper trail but the tinkle of hidden springs down the rocks. He knew if he uttered a shout, the echo would take up his call. An hour passed: two hours. Ghost shadows came creeping into the canyon. The butterflies had fluttered out to the blue portal where the rocks opened doors to the sun. The rampant roar of the river was quieting to the hollow hush. The old man rose, walked along the precipice, came back to his shelter, sat, stood up, examined the rifle, looked ahead where the horses had wandered on, fidgeted, and bemoaned the years that prevented pursuit up the rock face. He knew by the light and the hush that it must be almost five o 'clock.

And at five o'clock in the ranch house back in the Valley, Eleanor was lying in her room with her face buried in Wayland's note, praying as only the young pray, with the worst and the best of their nature in the prayer; for where such love comes, all goes into the incense of the fire that goes up from the altar—the best

and the worst of the inmost heart: an apotheosis of “give-me” and an utter abandonment of “let-me-give.” By and by, when we grow older, we leave both the “give me” and the “let-me-give” to God.

The old man knew it must be almost six o’clock; for the light came aslant the gap and the chill of the upper snow crept down from the mountain. A pretty business this, it seemed to him: twenty miles back of beyond; horses sent on at random ahead; a gang of murderers in hiding above—Matthews walked boldly along the precipice trail, saw the eagle below circling, still circling; heard a hawk skirr and scold from a dead branch—Then, he deliberately pointed his voice to the rock wall of the echo across the gorge and let out a yell that split the welkin—A thousand—ten thousand—multitudinous eldritch laughing echoes came jibbering and mumbling and giggling and shrilling back from the rock, filling the Pass with chattering, knocking sounds that skipped from stone to stone.

Instantly, a shot, a shout, a bang, the rocking crash of echoes—mixed with ear-splitting, rocketting shots—a crunch of feet—the old man dashed to the hiding of his crag. A spurt of gravel mid showers of dust and snorting of horses—Not on the trail at all but almost over his back, slithered and slid and bunched horses and men, pell mell, the white horse leading the way braced back on its haunches, the fellow in the yellow slicker rumbling a volcano of lurid curses—The outlaws had not followed the goat track at all but jumped sheer from the higher slope to the Pass trail.

Shouting “Stop!—Stop!—I command you in the name of the State to stop—!” the old man sprang to the middle of the trail flourishing the rifle above his head.

“State be damned,” yelled the fellow in the oil-skin slicker. Never pausing, turning only to shoot at wild random, the outlaws had tumbled—stumbled—slid down the slatey slope for the lake.

There was the pound—pound—the huffing of saddle leather—and a horse came spurring along the Pass trail at reckless gallop. The old man flung himself athwart—a rider in sheep-skin leggings, hat far back, came round the rock at break neck pace looking over his shoulder as if pursued—One jump—the old frontiersman had the horse’s bridle! The shock threw the beast’s hind legs clear over the edge jarring the rider almost to the animal’s neck. Next—the old man was looking down the barrel of the outlaw’s big repeater—With a mighty swing, Matthews clubbed his rifle on the other’s wrist. He might have scruples as to law and conscience; but he knew how and when and where to hit, did the Briton with the Scotch-Canadian blood. Also he knew when to let go—There was a flash—the rock splintering crash of echo, the whinnying scream and leap of the horse shot by the falling weapon—Rider and beast hurtled backwards, the man’s foot caught to one stirrup—There was the crackling of slate and shale—the gash and rasp and wrench of loosening rock masses sliding—down—down—down and yet down,

with knocking echoes; with laughter of terrified scream from the echo rock across the gorge—pound and plunge from ledge to ledge—the horse's body turning twice as it struck and bounced out—a cloud of dust—the shout, the blasphemy, the cry of rage, then the shrill scream of death terror that echoed and echoed—The old man looked down! There was a pounding of the stones—a faint far rebound and the darkness below swallowed over a fading swirl at the bottom of the canyon. He heard, he thought, he heard the engulfing gurgle of the waters, while the shrill scream still jibbered and faded along the echo ledge.

"By violence ye lived—by violence ye die—over the precipice ye go as ye sent the mangled boy to the bloody death!"

Then the Ranger was tumbling down the goat track in a slither of shale.

"Come on—that was well done, sir! Wish we'd sent them all over to the very bottom of Hell—! I'd stalked that fellow apart from the others when you signaled—come on—we'll catch the rest at the lake—there's a fellow wounded—you must have nipped one when you shot this morning—join me at the lake," and leaving Matthews to follow by the foot trail, the delirious Ranger went tearing exultant down the stone slide. Water-muffled shots sounded from the lake. Wayland paused in his head-long descent. The five outlaws were shoving the punt from the shore with the bronchos swimming in tow. The stolen wagon horses, lay shot on the shore. One of the outlaws was being supported by the others. It was the man in the yellow slicker.

A great wave went over Wayland of something he had never before known. It pounded at his temples. It set his heart going in a force pump. It blew his lungs out, and set the whip cord muscles itching to go—to go—he wanted to shout with joy of power—power that pursued and caught and crushed—and trembled with overplus of intoxicated strength—He knew if he could lay his hand on Crime at that moment he could crush the life out of the thing's throat; and there was a parchedness that was not thirst, a tingling to clinch that Criminal Thing menacing the Nation, to clinch and strangle it to a death not honored in the code of white-corpuscled anaemic study-chair reformers.

"Well," he said, as the other came limping down to the shore, "I didn't think there could be enough of the savage in me to enjoy a manhunt."

The old Briton looked queerly at the young fellow.

"A'm beginnin'—," he said slowly, "A'm beginnin' to understand y'r lynch law in this country—an' the *why*."

"What do you make of it?" asked Wayland, too excited to notice the other's abstraction.

"A'm beginnin' to understand if y' monkey with the law much longer in this land, the whole Nation will go locoed like you, Wayland—with a blood thirst for

righteousness—a white passion for the square deal—an' God pity—that day!"

The fugitives had reached the far shore of the lake, landed and were riding off when a second thought seemed to bring one man back to the water's edge. He stooped, heaved up a rock, threw it through the bottom of the old punt.

"You'll have to do better than that to keep me from crossing," said Wayland.

The fellow was aiming his rifle. Wayland and Matthews jumped behind the big hemlocks.

"He's fulling a skin bag wi' water."

"Then, they intend to cross the Desert," inferred Wayland; "but they'll have to go farther to slip me."

One of the riders was scanning back with a field glass.

"Looking for number six—Of all the colossal effrontery—they are actually going to speak."

The fellow nearest shore lowered his rifle and trumpeted both hands.

"Speak louder—can't hear ye." Matthews had gone to the edge of the lake. The answer came faint and muffled.

"Where's—our—pardner—?"

"Hold up y'r hands—all five," roared back Matthews.

The arms of all but the hurt man went above heads, hands facing.

"Y'll find y'r man's carcass in the bloody mess where ye sent the sheep—! d' y'—see yon eagle?—'Tis pickin' his bones—" roared Matthews through funnelled palms; and both jumped back to the shelter of the hemlocks. The outlaws drew together to confer.

"They don't believe us," said Wayland. "They'll camp in the timber over there for the night and wait. All right, my friends! You'll not have to wait long; no longer than it takes you, sir, to find our pack mule and the stray bronchs, while I build a raft. We can't cross the lower end for the moraine; and we can't cross the upper end for the ice; and it's too cold to risk swimming."

Matthews had headed the horses and pack mule back from an open glade and hobbled their fore feet. Then Wayland began chopping down small trees. They saw the figures of the outlaws against the twilight of the gap ride away from the far margin of the lake. Then only did the Ranger build a little fire behind the biggest hemlocks, an Indian's tiny chip fire, not "the big white-man's blaze." On this, they cooked their supper, lake trout hauled out while they waited, and flap jacks, with a tin plate for a frying pan.

"Anyway," said the Ranger wiping the smoke tears from his eyes, "the smoke keeps off the mosquitoes."

"Mosquitoes, pah! That shows y're Yale for all y'r good work this day! A have no seen one yet."

Wayland's answer was to light his pipe. "It's either bear's grease, or smoke

between bites," he laughed.

They had unsaddled horses and were sitting on a log watching the animals crop through the deep grasses.

The frontiersman uttered a sigh. " 'Tis like a taste of the good old days, the days well nigh gone for ever; the smell of the bark fire; an' th' tang of the kinnikinick; an' the cinnamon cedars; and the air like champagne; an' the stars prickin' the crown o' the hoary old peaks like diamonds; an' the little waves lappin' an' lavin' an' whisperin' an' tellin' of the woman y' luve. An' care? Care, man? There wasna' a care heavier than dandelion down. 'Twas sleep like a deep drink, an' up an' away in the mornin', chasin' a young man's hopes to the end o' the Trail! A suppose th' Almighty meant t' anchor men, or He wouldna' permit the buildin' of toons! Once A was in New York! A did na' see but one patch o' sunlight twenty stories overhead! Th' car things screeched an' rulled an' the folks—the wimmen wi' awfu' stern wheeler hats, an' the men—hurryin'—hurryin'!—Wayland, d' they get it? There's only twenty-four hours in a day—they can't catch any more by hurryin'—what are they hurryin' for? Do they get it—what they're hurryin' for? Do they get anywhere? D' they sit down joyous at night? A heard some laugh—It was not joyous! Do they get anything down there in the awfu' heat?"

Wayland laughed. "I don't know," he said. "Care isn't light as dandelion fluff! I'll bet on that."

The roar of waters below the moraine softened and quieted. There was a chorus of little waves lipping and whispering among the reeds. A whole aeon of resinous sunbeams breathed their essence through the dark from the spicy evergreens. One need not attempt to guess of what Wayland was thinking. He had forgotten his companion's presence till the old man spoke.

"A suppose, Wayland, you are only one of an army of kiddie boys on the job out here?"

Wayland absently roused himself.

"Land Service and Reclamation men have tougher jobs and less glory. All we have to do is sit tight and it's a pretty good place to sit tight in—this out-door world. Different with the other fellows! They're hamstrung by the red tape of office, or blackguarded by some peanut politician who is scoring an opponent! There was Walker down at Durango, shot examining a coal fraud. He was a Land Office man; and his murderers have not even been punished. Then, there were the two chaps, who ran the rapids before the Gunnison Tunnel could be built; though that's been exaggerated with a lot of magazine hog-wash to make a fellow sick! Biggest job there was the engineer's work. Do you know he drove that six mile tunnel from both ends and, when the two ends met, they were not two inches off? Hog-wash and dish-water hacks spread themselves in the magazines all over those

chaps running the rapids! You've run ten times worse rapids, yourself, on Saskatchewan and MacKenzie hundreds of times. Yet those chaps—not one of them—noted the wonder of a tunnel driven from both ends coming out exactly even. Why, the poor ignorant foreign workmen cried when they met from both ends, got hold of one fellow's wrist through the mud wall and pulled him through bodily, cried like kids at the victory of it! Your town hack didn't know what it meant to be a sand hog under ground for years and come through to daylight like that. The ignorant foreigner knew. I guess a good dozen of 'em had sacrificed their lives to the work. They knew the quiet engineer fellow had conquered the earth; and that fellow doesn't get the salary of a Wall Street stenographer—a way Uncle Sam has. They'd give such a man a title and a fifty thousand a year pension in England or Germany.

"Then, there was Fessenden, unearthed a lot of fraud in Oregon and got himself crucified—got the bounce; had broken his health in that sort of thing; got fired because he proved up that some smug politicians had caused the death of an old couple by jumping their homestead claim and driving them to penury. Then, there was Carrington. He was on the Desert Reclamation Project; took his bride in on their honeymoon; hundreds of miles from the railroad. She was delicate—lungs; poor fellow thought perhaps camp life would cure her. She died there in the heat. Two or three of the men gave up their jobs to help bring the body out." Wayland land paused, lost in thought. "They got the body out all right; but, the horror of it, Carrington went off his head! Know an engineering chap tramped the Sierras for a hundred miles dogged by a spotter from one of the railroads—but what's the use of talking about it? These things have to be done; and these are the men on the job."

"The Men on the Job," slowly repeated Matthews, "the men we make earls and premiers of in Britain; but who of your big public cares one jot? Time you wakened up as a Nation."

"You are using almost the same words as Moyese. He says the public doesn't care a damn, wouldn't raise a hand to stand for the rights of one of us, pays us less than dagoes earn. I guess Moyese doesn't understand our point of view, can't take in why we keep at it."

The wind came through the trees a phantom harper. The little waves lapped and whispered. The pine needles clicked pixy castanets; and the moon beams sifted through the trees a silver dust.

"Why do you? Why do you keep on the job?" asked the old man.

"Hanged if I know," answered Wayland uncomfortably.

"A saw a man on the job to-day risk his life twice and think no more about it than if he had been out for a walk. If a man in England, if a man in Germany, if a man in Italy, yes by thunder, Wayland, if a man on the job in pagan Turkey had done what you did to-day, he'd be given a V. C. accordin' to the Turk, and a title

and a pension for life."

"I don't despair of a cross myself, when Moyese hears what happened to-day. It'll be a double cross with a G. B.; but, speaking of cross, as we have to cross the lake, don't you think you'd better snatch a little sleep?"

And so the two men, one representing the chivalry of the old West, the other the chivalry of the new, stretched out to sleep with coats for pillows, while the flood-waters went singing through the stones, and the little waves came lipping and whispering, and the low boom of the snow slides rolled through the chambered hollows of canyon and gorge. Absurd, wasn't it, but the Ranger was not dreaming about the bevelling trowel of the titan mountain gods? He went to sleep dreaming of the star visible from the other side of the Holy Cross, dreaming dreams that men and women have dreamed since time began; of drinking, drinking, and drinking yet again, of life and love and blessedness from the fount of human lips; of the seal that should be the seal to service, not to self; of the gates ajar to a new life like the notch of sky where the rocks of the Pass opened portals to the blue valley. Would he have dreamed less joyously if he had known that the portals of the Pass led to the avalanche and the desert and the alkali death? Who shall say that love did not pay the toll? And in him rioted the savagery of the fighter who wanted to seize his foe by the throat.

CHAPTER XIV
ON THE GAME TRAIL

The dull boom of a snow-cornice tumbling over some high cliff on the far side of the lake awakened the Ranger to the chill darkness of mountain night just before dawn. The moon had sunk behind the sky-line of the peaks; and the little lake laving among the reeds lay inky in the shadow of the heavy mist.

Wayland listened. The deep breathing of the horses round the ashes of the mosquito smudge guided him across to saddles. He placed saddles, pack trees and provisions on the raft. Then, he wakened the old man and pulled the grunting horses to their feet. A little riffle, half wind, half light, stirred the lake mist, revealing glare patches of snow reflection in the water.

"Hoh! man, but y'r old peaks have a nip in the air at three in the mornin'!" Matthews came down to the raft chaffing his hands. "That's a job worthy a woodsman," he observed, holding the halter reins while the Ranger got a couple of long poles.

A dozen saplings had been mortised to a couple of cottonwoods.

"They may take water; but they'll not sink; and they'll not tip," declared Wayland.

Reeds and willows had been used in place of nails. Two or three of the logs were spliced to grip the end cottonwoods firmly. The two men stepped on the raft.

"Why didn't you go round the upper end?"

"Ice," answered Wayland.

"Too deep for poling in the middle?" asked Matthews.

"That's why I'm going to creep along shore."

"It'ull keep y' in the shadows."

With a prod of his pole, Wayland shoved off, and the frontiersman lengthened out the leading lines for the horses. The Ranger smiled whimsically to find the reverse side of Holy Cross peak, up-side down in the water, and he set to figuring out what sort of triangular lines thought-waves must follow to connect his thought of that peak etched in the bottom of the lake with her thought on the other side of a peak up in the sky.

"Steady, man! Slow up! There's a fallen tree with its rump stuck ashore! A' don't want to warp ye in by snaggin' round; an' that mule brute is thinkin' o' sittin' down."

The bronchos had plunged to the cold dip with deep grunts, but the mule braced his legs and brayed at the morning. The frontiersman said things between set teeth that might have been objurgations to the soul of Satan or the race of mules. Wayland shoved on the pole. The mule pulled. The logs of the raft began to creak. "Look out, sir, we're splitting! Let that doggon brute go—"

And the raft swerved out, the horses swimming, the freed mule plunging along the wooded shore, Wayland thrusting his long pole deep, almost to his hand-grip, to find bottom.

"There's a nasty under current from the upper river," he said.

"Let her go, there—! let her go t' th' current—tack her an' the current wull swerve ye int' the other side! More men lose their lives by poling too hard than lettin' go! Catch the current and let her go."

The old man had twisted the halter ropes under his feet. He seized a pole and swerved the raft to the current, pointing in to the other side. They could hear the roar of the wild mountain stream pouring a maelstrom down from the glare ice and snow of the upper meadows. The next plunge of the pole missed bottom. There was a yielding creak of logs. The raft poised, and spun round.

"Let her go, man! We'll wriggle her in below!"

"Then loose your halter ropes, they're pulling us round."

They tossed the ropes free. Wayland waved his pole to head the bronchos across. They heard the mule squealing at the head of the lake.

"She can't sink—wriggle her round, Wayland!"

The raft spun twice to the under-pull, took an inch or two of water, and swirled into the quiet shadows of the far shore.

"Minds me of that story of Napoleon! Do you carry bridges in y'r pockets, too, Wayland?" asked the old man, as the Ranger gave a long prod that sent the raft grating ashore.

"What story?" asked Wayland.

"Oh, Boney came to a river too deep for swimming cavalry. General ordered engineer fellow to get 'em across! Man began to draw maps. When he came to Napoleon with his blue print plans, he found a common soldier fellow had pontooned 'em all across!"

"Did the big fellow get a leg up on his job; or did the soldier fellow get the bounce for going outside regulations?"

"That is possible, too." The old man was handing off the saddles and camp kit.

"If you'll wait here, sir, I'll go along for the horses! I don't know the trails along on this side! It's outside the N. F!"

There was no moonlight to guide him; but there was the wall of blue sky where the mountains opened; and he followed up the lake shore with a sense of feel more than sight for one of those little indurated game tracks that would lead back over the stones to the trail that the outlaws had seemed to follow. If you think it an easy thing to walk over a pile of moraine by the obscure light preceding dawn—try it! The great moraines flank the mountains in petrified billows stranded on the shores of time from the ice ages, in stones from the size of a spool to a house. Step on the small stones; and they roll, bringing down the whole bank in a

miniature slide under your feet! Pick your way over the sharp edges of the big rocks; and the glazed moisture is slippery as ice; but he, whose foot hold fumbles, has no business in the mountain world; and the Ranger swung from crest to crest of the pointed rocks, safely shrouded in the lake mist, guided solely by the blank glare of sky between the mountain walls.

He could hear the tinkle of waters down the ledges on his right; and the little flutter of wind riffling through the Pass sucking up the mists forewarned dawn. He had climbed the roll of stone slowly, picking each step, for, perhaps, two-hundred feet, when that trail sense of *feel* made him stoop to examine the ground. The roll of moraine he had climbed met another stone billow; and between the two ran a groove, a little narrow hardened tracing where the tracks of game going to and from watering place had packed and worked in between the rolling pebbles the ice dust of a million years.

This, then, was the trail that the outlaws must have followed away from the lake. He stooped to examine closer. There were horse tracks. Had his own horses stumbled up from the lake along this trail? It would lead back to the camp fire of the night before. Better reconnoitre while there was still the hiding of the mist.

He looked back. The lake was obliterated by the mist curling up; but above he could see the black rocks of the precipice trail as if the Pass behind had closed its doors against retreat; and was it imagination, or did he see, an eagle soaring, strong-winged, majestically out from the rocks in curves of insolent power? Memory of the nauseating horror came over him in a physical wave; and curiously enough, he kept hearing the soft voice of the Senator's scoffing question: "Who of the public gives one damn?" It was easier sitting smug inside the firing line. He knew men in the Service who would call him a fool for going out on this present quest; and he knew others whose jealousy would say it was all done for self-advertising; and he knew also that he might be dismissed for going out beyond the letter in order to fulfil the spirit of the law; but preceding the horror of the precipice trail, was that other memory of the dead boy lying at the foot of the Rim Rocks beside the writhing mass of mutilated sheep.

The Ranger followed along the game trail. Who was it had said that the only difference between charcoal and diamond was that one was soft and the other hard? Was that what ailed the Nation? Had the fine edge of citizenship dulled? Was the Nation losing the fine edge of distinction between right and wrong?

Another little flutter of wind set the restless mists boiling.

"Strange it is hot so early," thought Wayland. Fir trees stood out from the shifting gray haze. Among them, did he see shadows moving? They might be deer coming down to water. Involuntarily, he stepped behind some alder brush off the trail. Another flutter of wind thinning the turbid mist. There was a whiff of camp smoke. Through the mist, he could make out figures not a hundred yards away—five horses ready for travel, four men clumsily lifting a fellow in cow-boy slicker

into his saddle. The man fell forward over the pummel. The group seemed undecided what to do. Then, picked out—distinct—deliberate—coming over the stones from the lake side—leisurely, lazily, careful, soft footsteps with rests between—The Ranger would not have been surprised to see the missing outlaw limp from the mist—Then, the head of his own errant mule bobbed forward, and another roll of mist came up from the lake. Wayland caught the trailing halter, headed the amazed little animal back down the goat track with an urgent kick and sprang after it to a clatter of rolling stones. When the clamor sank, he heard the pound of hoofs as the outlaws galloped in the other direction. Five paces farther, he found both the bronchos nosing consolingly round the mule. Wayland emitted a deep breath of relief. If he had waited five minutes longer at the raft, they would have had his horses. It was all in the difference between being on the wrong and the right side of five minutes.

"Y' don't need t' tell me we're goin' South an' down—We might be goin' to the bottomless pit. The wind's like a furnace."

"Off the Desert," explained the Ranger.

The sun had risen high above the peaks. The mists had receded to belts and wisps of cloud against the forests. Waters tumbling wind-blown from the ledges were swelling to a chorus. Little cross bills and jays that had come round the breakfast camp still followed the pack train.

"As this is off y'r National Forests, A suppose y' couldn't have jumped into the bunch an' arrested every man-jack of 'em?"

"Not without being a target for five shots while they would have been targets for only one."

"We'd have strung 'em up in the good old days, an' sent for the sheriff to clean up the remnants."

They had left the goat track and dipped down a shaggy green hollow between mountains that seemed to slope to lakes of pure light above a blue open plain.

"Any citizen can arrest a law breaker whereever found. Our badge is supposed to increase that privilege; but the crime was committed just a stone's throw *off* the grazing ground in the National Forests. We'd have to turn our prisoners over to Sheriff Flood. How long do you think he'd keep 'em in custody? They'd escape while he was having an attack of 'look-the-other-way—' "

"Your idea to run 'em aground in their own State?"

"Not necessary to go so far. Run them across *this* State line—then catch them off guard in some of these canyons or arroyos. Turn them over to a sheriff who doesn't owe his bread and butter to Moyese. He'll have to hold them till Williams and MacDonald come down to testify. By that time, I fancy we'll hear from people who have been losing stock all the way up from Arizona. Moyese will be keeping mighty quiet."

"Meanwhile, Mr. White-vest, who planned all this deviltry—he goes free!

These are only the poor rowdy tools for—”

“For the Man Higher Up,” finished Wayland.

“Wayland, who is this white-vested anarchist, this vested-righter who subverts your laws?”

“His name is Legion, sir! That’s what’s the matter! These hide-bound vested righters are only vested righters when the rights don’t happen to belong to some other man.” The Ranger related the incidents of the visit to the Ridge.

The old man rode along in silence.

“And from what you say,” finished Wayland, “he evidently didn’t mean any harm to come to the boy; but that is always the way with this cursed system. You’re law breaking law-makers, your divine-right-king-crooks out here—don’t *plan* crime. They only plan to have their own way. It’s like a man breaking down a dam to get a little water. When the floods burst through the break, he thinks it isn’t his fault.”

“That’s what some of our Scotch kings thought; we took their heads off just the same.”

“Well, if we can get our people wakened up, we’ll take a few heads off, too, at election time.” He touched his pony to a brisk trot across the meadow, following the mule as it dodged in and out among the larches, up over a saddle back and down again thwarting a long bare hollow.

Wayland saw the light come sifting in gold dust. Somehow, the warmth of it swept round him in a consciousness of that night on the Ridge. It was like the snow flakes she talked about, sculpturing the rocks, shaping destiny. Would the day ever come when they two could ride forth adventuring happiness together? The hammer of a woodpecker, the resinous tang of the gold-dust air, the shaking of the evergreen needles like gypsy tambourines—filled him with an absurd sense of the joy of life; and he could never drink the joy of these things without thinking of her; for the consciousness of her presence, of the warm glow of her love, enveloped all now, permeated his being, a life inside his life, blended of his own.

“A don’t like the way that mule o’ yours keeps lookin’ ahead with both ears, Wayland! It’s all-fired quiet here, for noon-hour when the streams should be shouting. There is something mighty queer and still in this air. Yon saucy woodpecker has quit drillin’! Hold back a bit! A’m goin’ ahead! A’ve known these mountains longer than you have,” and curving through the brushwood, the old frontiersman came out ahead of the pack leader.

The little mule had undoubtedly followed a kind of trail. Though the grasses were saddle-high, punky logs showed the fresh rip of shod horses. Little mossy streams betrayed roiled water and stones over-turned. Then, the path emerged from the trees so abruptly you could have drawn a line along the edge of the timber, out to a great hollowed slope, wind-blown, bare of rocks, clear of trees as

if levelled by a giant trowel; hushed, preternaturally hushed, the Ranger thought as he came up abreast and glanced to the top of the long slope where the snows glistened over the edge of the rocks heavy and white.

"This is what we heard last night! See, Wayland, the snow up there has been breakin'! It sags! Got its fore feet forward for a race down one of these days!"

Both men became aware of something portentous and heavy in the silence: it was mid-day; but there was no noon-time shout of disimprisoned waters. Not a crossbill, not a jay, neither eagle nor hawk, showed against the azure fields of sky and snow. A little riffle as of waiting fluttered through the grasses and leaves. Wayland was looking with dumb amazement at the great field of laurel in bloom across the slope; three or four miles of it, leaves of green wax in the sun, flowers passion pale, motionless, waiting; what was it he missed? The insect life; there were neither butterflies nor bees rifling the fields of honey bloom; the flowers, acres and acres of them, stood passion pale, motionless waiting—waiting what? Then, there was a singing in his ears, a weird strange undertone to the hush of the forest behind them. His breath came heavy. The old man was speaking in a muffled voice.

"See, boy, there are three men on the other side! They are signalling."

Wayland came alive out of his strange trance.

"It isn't to us they are signalling. Move back quick, out of sight, sir; see! there's a man half way across, the fellow in the yellow slicker! There's some one on foot holding him in his saddle! What ever are they waving so frantically for?"

Involuntarily, both men had wheeled the ponies back in the screen of trees, when the old man cried out: "What in blazes ails your mule?"

The little animal had jumped sideways.

"Get back, quick! for God's sake, Wayland! A know the signs from the Canadian Rockies. It isn't *us* they are signalling. It's the snow; it's coming, Wayland!"

The words were smothered by a tremor grinding through the hollow hush. There was a split, a splintering, a dull boom of titanic weight falling, miles away. They saw the puff of snow dust fly up in a toss of mist over the face of the distant upper crags. Then, a grinding tore the earth; something white glistening viscous crumpled—coiled with untellable furious speed, shaggy and formless, out from the upper peaks—coiled and writhed out like a giant python in titanic torture. For an instant, for less than the fraction of an instant, it poised and coiled and looped as a great white snake in and out among the far upper meadows: then ruptured free with ear splitting wrench. The air was ripped to tatters. The forest, the rock wall, the foundations of the universe gave way; the huge hemlocks were tossing and bending like feathers; the upper forests toppled and spilled like an inverted matchbox. Then the whole world, earth, air, rocks, forest, shot down in a blinding rush, in a viscous torrent of titanic fury. The surface of the mountain crumpled up

and peeled in a sliding mass.

Wayland came to himself hurled back a hundred feet knocked flat by an invisible blow. The old frontiersman lay clinging to a prone trunk spitting blood and gasping for air. The animals were scrambling to their feet saddles twisted, bridles broken.

“ ’Twas the concussion of the air! A’m not hurt, not a feather o’ my head hurt! A’ve seen it before in the Rockies! Look back,” he panted.

When the Ranger turned, the clouds of dust were settling, though the earth still rocked. A hundred feet of snow lay across the trail in a wall. Huge trees had been torn from the roots, sucked in, twisted and torted like straws.

“Look,” reiterated the old frontiersman.

Against the rock trail on the other side of the snow slide, three men stood waving frantically. From the time the falling cornice of snow had tossed up in a puff of smoke ten miles away to the fell stroke of the titanic leveller of the ages—not ten seconds had passed. It would have been an even bet that the men on the other side had been caught in the middle of their sentences, in the middle of their signalling. As for the injured man and his companion—Wayland looked down the mountain slope. The snow slide had shot to the bottom and gone quarter way up the other side.

“ ’Twill be safer now to cross to the other side! We can go up above the snow slide and cross by the bare rocks!”

But Wayland was unheeding. What was it about snow flakes massing to a momentum that bevelled the granite and rolled away the rocks for the resurrection to a new life? Would it be so some day with the Nation? Would the quiet workers, the pure thinkers, the faithful citizens mass some day to sweep away the lawlessness, the outrage, the crime, the treachery, the trickery, the shame, the sham of self-government’s failures; to roll away the stone for the resurrection to a new Democracy? ‘High brows,’ ‘dreamers,’ ‘ghost walkers,’ ‘barkers,’ ‘biters,’ ‘muck-rakers!’ Oh, he knew the choice names that lawless greed cast at such as he; but a greater than he had said something about the meek and the inheritance of the earth; and there lay the work of the snow flake across the trail.

“I suppose,” he remarked absently, “it’s our duty to go down and dig those dead duffers out.”

“Nothing o’ the kind. They’ll keep cold storage till the crack o’ doom, and after that ’tis an ice pack they’ll need. The snow’s too clean a grave for the likes o’ them! The Lord has hewn out a path through the sea! Sound the loud timbrel and on!”

CHAPTER XV
THE DESERT

Four days had passed since they stood on the edge of the snow slide and gazed across at three outlaws on the far side under the crag waving frantically where their belated comrades had been buried under the avalanche. When the outlaw drovers had turned and galloped into the blue slashed gully of the opposite mountain, the Ranger had observed that their only remaining pack horse was white, an old dappled white running with a limp.

It had taken the better part of three days to cross above the wreckage of snows and forest. They had camped for two nights within a stone's throw of the upper glaciers. Wayland could see the reflection of the stars in the ice at night, and count the layers of the century's snow-fall that harked back, each layer a year's fall, to the eras before Christ.

"The little snow flake has been on the job a long time," he said to the old preacher.

Matthews didn't understand. "Can't make out why it's so hot when we're high up!"

"The wind is off the Desert," said Wayland.

"Mountains in a desert?"

"That's the same as asking if you ever have summer in Saskatchewan."

The frontiersman looked more puzzled than ever.

Wild longings to seize the day's joy came to the Ranger. If the snow flake typified law sculpturing the centuries, law was a process not of a life time, not of a century, but aeons of centuries; and flesh, spirit, humanity's brevity cried out for the trancing joys of the present. If law took billions of years to sculpture its purpose, grinding down the transient lives in its way?—When Wayland came to that *impasse*, he used to get off and walk. He did not know, and it was well he did not know, she was pacing her room two hundred miles back on the other side of the Divide, praying that he might succeed in one breath, that he might come back in another, and praying always that they might both be strong.

Every mile was a mile deeper into the eternity of her love . . . he knew that; but he also knew that the fulfilment of duty meant renunciation. Was it the cry of the flesh? Wayland scoffed the thought. Flesh in the frontier West doesn't take the trouble to wear fig-leaf signs. It is blazoning, bold, unashamed, known for what it is; but there is no confusion of values. He who wills takes what he wills and wears the mark. Wayland had been long enough away from the confused values of more civilized lands to know belladonna eyes from starlight; and he knew what his being craved was not carrion. It was what harmonizes both flesh and spirit, and

lifts the temporal to eternity. Eternity . . . he laughed again. Eternity was too short; and that was what renunciation meant, giving up a citadel against all the harking cares and hells of hate in life.

Where they had picked up the fugitives' trail again on the fourth day from the snow slide, the Ranger had taken stock of provisions. We none of us know just how long the Trail is to be when we set out. Flour and tea enough for a month's travel: of bacon and canned beans, only a day's supply remained.

"Yes, on your life, forward, long as there's a mouthful left . . . push on," Matthews had urged.

Wayland expostulated: "Do you know what Desert travel means?"

"No, an' care less! If y' want to get anywhere, ye don't set out to turn back! Dante's inner circle was ice! A've had that! Now, A'll take a nip of his outer circle and try your blue blazing Desert."

"It'll be blue all right, sir! You'll know it when you come to it by the shadows being blue instead of black."

And always, the trail had grown rockier, the forests more scattered, the trees scantier and dwarfed, till the way led from clump to clump of scrub pinon amid red buttes and sand hummocks. And always, the valleys widened and lifted to higher table lands, blasted and shrivelled and tremulous of heat, till the mountains lay on the far sky-line silver strips flecked with purple, like shores to an ocean of pure light. And always, it was the trail of fleeing horsemen they followed, with one track running aside from the others picking the softest places.

"Only one pack horse and that lame," Wayland pointed to the foot prints. "That means they must have provisions cached some where on the way. If we can tire them out before they can reach their cache, we've got 'em."

Once, where the way led between flanking foot hills, the tracks dipped into a mountain stream and didn't come up on the other side. "Hoh!" commented the old man, "that's easy; you'll take the right and A'll take the left; and where the hills lift up ahead, A'm thinking you'll find the tracks plain."

All the same, Wayland noticed Matthews frequently moistening his parched lips; and the lakes of light ahead lay a wavering looming veil. A mile farther on, the ripped punk of a dead pinon betrayed the passing of the fugitives. When Wayland dismounted to examine the marks, he stepped on a small cactus. They picked up a trail that led over rocky mesas and dipped suddenly into the deep dug-way of a dry gravel bed. The sand walls of the dead stream afforded shelter from the sun, and the two riders spurred their bronchos to a canter led by the pack mule. The sand banks spread, widened, opened; and the mule stopped, both ears pointing forward like a hunting dog. They rode forward to find themselves looking down

on an ocean of light, shimmering orange colored light, with the mountains trembling on the far sky line silver strips necked by purple and opal. The old frontiersman mowed the sweat from his brows and gazed from under shade of his level hand.

"Sun's like a shower o' red hot arrows," he said.

The sand lay fine as sifted ashes dotted with clumps of bluish-green sage brush and greasewood. A bleached ox-skull focussed the light with a glaze that stabbed vision. The ashy earth, the dusty sage brush, the orange sand hills, the silver strip on the far sky line flecked by the purple and opal loomed and wavered and writhed in a white flame.

"Do you see the bluish shade to the shadows?" asked Wayland.

The old man was still shading his eyes from the white heat. "Do A see mountains, Wayland?"

"Certainly, you do! Did you think the Desert flat as the sea?"

"That's just it! If A see mountains, then A see water too! It keeps wavering."

"By which you may know *it isn't water*," warned Wayland.

"Wayland, A' don't believe you!"

He had dismounted as he spoke and proceeded down the yellow sands to a pit at the foot of the rolling slope. Wayland saw him halt, again shade his eyes from the sun glare, and stoop. On his knees, he looked again and rose. He came up the slope shaking his head. "Y'd swear it was water at y'r very feet till you bent down."

"Till you changed the angle of reflection . . . eh? and then the water vanished, sir."

Both men had thrown their coats across the rear of the saddles. Matthews now knotted a large handkerchief round his neck. There was not a cloud, nor the shadow of a cloud for shade. It was a wilted, shrivelled, heat-flayed, fire-blasted world of arid desolation; trenched by the dry arroyos; sifted by the hot winds fine as flour; with rings and belts and wavering layers of heat—heat from the orange sun edged red by the Desert dust of the atmosphere—heat from the wind off some white flamed furnace—heat from the ochre shifting sands panting to the loom and writhe of the blue-flamed air, and over all a veil, was it blue or lilac or lavender? tinted as of rainbow mists. For a little while, neither spoke. Each knew what the dusty dead orange earth, the smoking sand hills, the sifted volcanic ash, the burnt oil smell of shrivelled growth, meant to unprepared travellers.

"I wish, sir," said Wayland, "I wish you would turn back here and let me go on alone; I really do!"

"What! turn tail like a whipped dog an' scuttle at first danger? Go to blazes, my boy! Do you think y'r beasts will stand crossing before sunset?"

"It's about as easy going ahead as standing still. If we only had a water canteen, it wouldn't be such a fool-thing to risk."

The wind flayed them with hot peppering sand.

"If we took time to go back for one now, this wind would wipe out the tracks."

"What's yon splash o' dust goin' over the roll o' th' hill?"

Beyond the quiver of the dusky heat, they could see the drift of ash dust eddying to the wind like dirty snow.

"I wish, sir, you would turn back here," urged Wayland; but Matthews was not heeding. He had gathered up the broncho's reins.

"Time to be moving," he said. " 'Tis my observation, Wayland, that the devil gets away from the saint because, he'll always ride one faster. Many's the time when A've been pressed in the old days, when if the man behind had just ridden the one bit harder that he thought he couldn't, just not sagged where he nagged, he'd ha' got me, Wayland! When y' pace two men, one ridin' with the devil behind him, and the other jog trotting with a dumpy comfortable conscience, 'tis a safe bet which will win."

There was the clitter clatter of the horses' hoofs over the lava rocks; the padded beat of the easy plains lope as they left the lava for the ashy silt; then no sound but the swash of saddle leather along trail marks that cut the crusted silt like tracks in soft snow. The wind had been flaring a steady torrid white flame. Now it began to come in puffs and whirls that beat the air to dust of ashes and sent the sand foaming in the wave lines of a yellow sea. The mule no longer ambled ahead with ears pointed. He shuffled through the ash with dragging steps; and the sage brush crackled brittle where the trail led out from the silt across the baked earth. The heat waves writhed and throbbed through the atmosphere, a flame through a sieve, with a scorch of burning from the ground and clouds of dust like smoke.

"I think I'll get off and walk," said Wayland, suiting the action to the word. "I hope those blackguards are counting on camping at a spring to-night."

They plodded on for another half hour before Matthews answered.

"Do you think they did it intentionally? A mean, do y' think they lured us here to get rid of us?"

Wayland paused and thought.

"It's all the same whether they did or not . . . now! What was it you said about a man chased by the devil setting a good live pace? They have to find water. They know where water is. We don't! Only safety is to follow."

"Queer how y' keep imaginin' ye hear wimplin' brooks! When A let myself go, A keep hearin' the tinkle o' y'r rills back in the mountains! A keep seein' the blue false water waverin' up to my feet an' recedin' again! Isn't there a fellow in mythology, Wayland, died o' thirst in water because when he reached to drink it, it kept waverin' away?"

"That fellow had travelled in the Desert," answered Wayland.

He aimed his revolver at a green rattlesnake lying under a sage brush. The sun glinted from the steel barrel. The snake coiled and raised its head. "See," said

Wayland, “the snake takes aim. The light sort of hypnotizes it. The greenest tenderfoot couldn’t miss it.”

“How far d’ y’ call it across?”

“Two to four days straight: eleven to twenty if you take it diagonally. As I make it, they are steering due West for one of the deep cut ways to take ’em South under shade.”

“Shade would taste pretty good to me, Wayland.”

Wayland looked back at his companion. What he thought, he did not say; but he mounted at once and hastened pace.

“Once we find a spring, we’ll travel at night,” he said.

A condor rose from the rocks and circled away with slow lazy sweep of wings.

“You would wonder what they could find to eat here, if it were not for the snakes and the lizards.”

“Perhaps, we’ll *not* wonder so much before we finish.”

Wayland looked at the old frontiersman again. He was riding heavily, sagged forward, with one hand on the high pommel of the Mexican saddle.

“Talk about the heroes o’ cold in the North,” he said. “ ’Tis easy! Y’r cold buoys a man up! This stews the life out before ye have a fightin’ chance! Y’ could light a match on these saddle buckles.”

“I think I see sand hills ahead. If there’s any shade, we’ll rest till twilight.”

The lava rocks rolled to a trough of sand; and the light lay a shimmering lake in the alkali sink.

“Is that what y’ call a false pond?”

“No, I hope you’ll not see any false ponds this trip! False pond is in your head or your eye; and the harder you ride, the faster it runs. Let’s get out of this wind!”

Wayland noticed the horses paw restlessly and nose at the gravel when they crossed the dry bed of a spring stream.

“Think y’ could dig down to water with y’r axe, Wayland?”

The Ranger pointed to the wide cracks in the baked earth, dry as flour dust deep as they could see. The mule led the way at a run up the next sand roll.

“Think he smells water, Wayland?”

Another broad mesa rolled away to the silver strip of mountain on the sky line; but the fore ground broke into slabs and blocks of red stone. Wayland examined the trail. It twisted in and out among the rocks towards more broken country.

“There may be a canyon leading South over there,” he pointed.

“Y’ might try for a spring beneath that big rock. Looks green at the bottom.”

A mist as of primrose or fire tinged the lakes of quivering light lying on the ochre-colored mesas. The sun hung close to the silver strip of mountain exaggerated to a huge dull blood-red shield.

“Wayland, is this desert light red or is it that A’m seein’ red?”

The Ranger looked a third time at his companion. The old man sat more erect;

but his eyes were blood shot. A puff of wind, a lift and fall and drift of sand, the wind met them in a peppering shower of hot shot.

"Is that a rain cloud comin' up?"

Wayland glanced back. The heavy dust rose a red-black curtain above the flame-crested ridges of orange sand.

"You're a churchman, sir! You should know! Ever read in Scripture of the cloud by day and the pillar by night? Ever think what that might mean on the scorching Red Sea job when Moses led a personally conducted tour through the desert?"

"Dust?" queried the preacher.

"By Harry," cried Wayland, "that mule *does* smell water."

The little beast had set off for the red rock at a canter. Wayland's horse followed at a long gallop. The broncho of the old clergyman with the heavier man lurched to a tired lope. They felt the eddies of dust as they tore ahead, saw the rainless clouds gathering low and gray far behind, saw the sun lurid through the whirls of red silt, saw the dust toss up among the lava beds like snow in a blizzard, then the sand storm broke, the dry storm of rainless clouds and choking dust flaying the air in rainless lightning. They gave the ponies blind rein and shot round the sheltered side of the great red rock into one of those hidden river beds that trench below the surface of the desert in cutways and canyons. It was dry.

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land," quoted the old man sliding from his horse exhausted.

Foot prints of men and horses punctured the moist silt of the river bottom. The little mule was kicking and squealing where the red rock came through the clay bank. Down the terra cotta ledge trickled a tiny rill not so large as a pencil. Wayland was chopping a deep mud hole in the river-bottom up which slowly oozed a yellow pool.

"Don't drink that, sir," he ordered.

The old frontiersman was stooping to lave up a handful of the muddy fluid.

"Don't drink that if you want to get out alive! Wait, I have something in the pack!"

He threw the cinch ropes free from the mule, pulled out the sacks of flour and bacon and coffee. "Here we are." He drew out the only can of beans and punctured the end with his knife.

"If you will satisfy your thirst with that juice, I'll catch the trickle down the rock while we rest; but you must never drink this alkali sink stuff."

Leaving the horses nuzzling the muddy pool, the Ranger stuck his jack knife into a crevice of the ledge and hung the small kettle where it would catch the drip. Matthews was examining the tracks.

"Not more than an hour or two old, an' A'm thinking, Wayland, we've fooled them out of water!"

"They'll keep to the shelter of the cutway long as this dust storm lasts."

Wayland was following down the tracks.

The sun had sunk behind the silver strip of mountain reddening the heat lakes and the Desert air. Across the mesas, the silt dust and sand drift still whirled in fitful gusts; but the air no longer carried the scorch of burning oil. The sky that had blazed all day in fiery brass darkened and closed near to earth, a throbbing thing of the Desert night brooding over life: a oneness of space rimmed round by the red sky line.

"Hullo," exclaimed Wayland, pointing to the bank. "We are not so far behind: there is the freshly opened cache."

Where the cutway caved to a hollow lay a hole littered with empty cans and canvas bags.

"Not much value left, eh? Hold on, Wayland, this might be useful." Matthews had picked up a skin water bag. It was full of tepid water.

"They're harder pressed than I thought. They've had water stored here. They'll rest somewhere in the cutway to-night. We'll likely run them down before morning if our horses can stand it."

Back at the rock, the Ranger was cooking their supper over a fire of withered moss and pinon chips, keeping the old man's mind off his fevered thirst by calling attention to the tricks of Desert growth to save water.

"You see the cactus turns its leaves into water vats with spikes to keep intruders off; and the greasewood stops evaporation by a varnish of gum. I'm sun-veneered all right. I don't sweat all my moisture out—"

"Better varnish me, then, before ye take me out again."

Less than a pint of water had seeped into the little kettle; and this they used for their tea, mixing the flour with the stale water from the mud pool. Then, they lighted pipes and lay back to rest.

Wayland had placed the kettle back under the drip of the ledge.

"A can understand Moses smitin' the rocks for a spring; and such a wind as we had to-day blowin' the Red Sea dry," observed the old man dreamily.

"I guess if you get any miracle down to close quarters, you'll sort it out all right without busting common sense," returned Wayland.

He wasn't thinking of the day's hardships.

The silver strip of the far mountains had faded; first, the purple base; then, the melting opal summit. At last, the restless wind had sunk. The red rocks of the mesa darkened to spectral shapes. The heat, the scorch, the torrid pain of the day had calmed to the soft velvet caress of the indigo Desert night. Twice, the Ranger dozed off to wake with a start, with a sense of her hand warning danger. Always before, the thought of her had come in an involuntary consciousness whelmed of happiness; but to-night, was it . . . fear?

He rose and looked about. Two of the horses lay at rest. The mule stood munching near. The old frontiersman slept heavily, his face troubled and upturned to the sky. Wayland noticed the livid tinge of the lips, the shadows round the eye sockets, the protuberance of veins on the backs of the old man's hands. The sky seemed to come down lower as the red twilight darkened; and he could hear not a sound but the crunch of the grazing mule and the slow drop, drop, drop of the water seeping from the terra cotta ledge. The stars were beginning to prick through the indigo darkness. In another hour, it would be bright enough to travel by starlight; and the Ranger lay back to rest, slipping into a dusky realm as of half consciousness and sleep; but for the nervous ticking of his watch, and the slow drop, drop, drop; then sleep with a dream face wavering through the dark; then the watch tick scurrying on again; then a hand touched him! Wayland sprang to his feet half asleep. He could have sworn she was, standing there; but the form faded. The pack mule had flounced up with a cough. A white horse stood between the banks of the arroyo. There was a steel flash in the dark, the rip of a quick shot, and the kettle bounced from the ledge with a jangling spill.

"What's that?" yelled the old frontiersman, jumping for the horses.

Wayland was pumping his repeater into the darkness; but the clatter of hoof beats down the dry gravel bed answered the question.

"It's the signal for us to get up," answered the Ranger. "I don't mind the blackguard's bad aim so much as I do the upset of that kettle. Every drop of water is spilled."

"A'm thinkin' 'twas the kettle they aimed at, and not us, my boy!"

CHAPTER XVI
BITTER WATERS

But for all that the outlaws seemed hard pressed, they succeeded in keeping ahead. The velvet dark of the night in the arroyo had given place to a sickly saffron dawn. Where the cut-way widened and lost itself in an alkali sink, the hoof prints of the fugitives' horses led out again to the open country of gray torrid earth dotted by sage brush and greasewood. The yellow sky met the ochre panting earth in a tremulous heat mist of wavering purple; and against that sky line, a swirl of dust marked the receding figures of the riders.

"There they go, Wayland! It's a case of who lasts out now! If we can only keep pushing them ahead, this heat wull do the rest."

The old man shaded his eyes as he gazed across the desert dawn.

"Queer way y'r mountains here keep shiftin' an' mufflin' an' meltin' their lines! They're here one minute about a mile away, then as you look, they've a trick of movin' back! That dust against the sky line is about ten miles off as A make it in this high rare air; an' they're goin' mighty slow! We've played 'em out."

"Yes; but they have played us out! Let us get off and have breakfast. If that small wren coming out of the cactus could speak, it might tell us where to find water."

They had camped one noon hour at a Desert pool beneath a cottonwood, where the putrid carcass of a dead ox polluted air and water. The Ranger whittled the cottonwood branches for a small chip fire, and he boiled enough water to fill the skin bag for the next day's travel; but a high wind was blowing, restless, nagging, gusty, pelting ash dust in their eyes, and not to lose the trail, they had pressed on through the sweltering heat of mid-day. Wayland's muscles had begun to feel hardened to the dryness of knotted whip cords. His skin had bronzed swarthy as an Indian's. He was beginning to rejoice in the vast spacious relentless Desert with its fierce struggle of life against death; the cactus, the greasewood, the brittle sage brush, all matching themselves against the heat-death. Was there a thing, beast or bush, not armed with the fangs of protection and onslaught? Wayland looked at his leather coat. It had been jagged to tatters by thorn and spine. Silent, too; the struggle was silent and insidious and crafty as death. Who could guess where the water-pools lay beneath the dry gravel beds; or why the cactus fortified its storage of moisture in bristling spear points; the greasewood and pinon with thorns and resin; the sage brush with a dull gray varnish that imprisoned evaporation? The very crust above the earth of ash and silt conspired to hide the trail of wolf and cougar; and wolf and cougar, wren and condor, masked in colors that hid their

presence. Twice Wayland had almost stumbled on a wolf sitting motionless, gray as the ash, watching the horsemen pass; pass where? Was it down the Long Trail where the tracks all point one way? Yet the fierceness, the craft, the relentless cruelty of the silent struggle matched his own mood. He felt the stimulus of the high dry sun-fused tireless air. He began to understand why the Desert prophets of the East, who camped on sand plains rimmed round and round by an unbroken sky line, had been the first of the human race to grasp the idea of the Oneness of God. And was it not the Desert prophets, who had preached a God relentless as he was merciful; and the retribution that was fire? Well, Wayland ruminated, who should say that they were wrong? If the God who created the Desert, was the God of life; but there, his thought had been broken by coming on the withered carcass beside the yellow pool.

"They can't keep going on in this heat! We'll run 'em down if we can only keep going," Wayland had said; as they set out again in the blistering wind; but to his dying day, he will never forget the traverse of the Desert in that mid-day sun. To his dying day he will never see the spectrum colors of white light split by a prism, or the spectrum colors of a child's soap bubble, without living over the tortures of that afternoon, for the air, whipped to dust by the hurricane wind, acted as a prism splitting the white flame of light to lurid reds and oranges and yellows and violets.

Now, on this second morning before the stars had faded to the orange sunrise coming up through the lavender air in a half fan, the heat had thrown riders and horses in a sweltering sweat; and the nagging wind had begun driving ash dust in eyes and skin like pepper on a raw sore. Matthews' ruddy face had turned livid; his blood-shot eyes were dark ringed. The horses travelled with heads hung low. Spite of the sun, it was a cloudy sky, but whether rain clouds or dust clouds, they could not tell. Towards noon, they could see against the purple mountains the red tinged clouds fraying out to a fringe that swept the sky.

"A thought it never rained in the Desert in summer, Wayland?"

"It doesn't."

"What's that ahead?"

"Rain; but if you look again, you'll see it doesn't reach the sky line! It's sucked up and evaporated before it hits the dust. . . ."

Towards the middle of the afternoon, the horses were resting in the shade of a reddish butte. Both men had dismounted. Wayland did not notice what was happening till he glanced where the blue shadow of the rock met the wavering glare of the sand. The old man had stooped to one knee and had twice laved his hand down to the wavering margin of blue light and bluer shadows.

"Fooled you again, did it?' asked the Ranger, throwing the saddle from his own pony, strapping the cased rifle to his shoulder and carrying the hatchet in the

crook of his elbow.

"Better let me give you a drink from the water bag; it's hot and stale; but it will keep you from seeing water at your feet till we find another spring."

The old man drank from the neck of the water bag and wiped his mouth with his hand.

"Queer effect y'r heat has on a North man, Wayland! D' y' know what A'd be doing if A let myself?"

"Drinking those blue shadows again?"

"No, sir, A'd be babbling and babbling about the sea! A fall asleep as we ride; an' when A wake from a doze, 'tisn't the sea of sand, 'tis the sea o' water that's about me! The yellow sea o' York Fort up Hudson Bay way where A took the boats from Saskatchewan."

Wayland helped him to mount.

"Aren't y' goin' to ride y'rself?"

"No," answered Wayland. "I'm going to keep one horse fresh. Best this one to-day: then we'll change off and rest yours to-morrow. Those fellows can't go any faster than we do. This heat will beat them out if we can't. I'll make those blackguards glad to drink horse-blood."

Then, they moved forward again, Wayland leading on foot, the little pack mule to the rear, both horses stumbling clumsily, raising clouds of dust; breathing hard, with heaving flanks.

That night, they halted in broken country . . . more red buttes; hummocks of red; silt crust trenched by the crumbly cutways of spring freshets; sand hills billowing to a brick red sky, where the sun hung a dull blaze. There were tracks of the fleeing drovers having paused for a rest in the same place. It was a pebble bottom hot and dry. Wayland scooped under with his Service axe and an ooze of clay water seeped slowly up forming a brackish pool. He had to hold the little mule back from fighting the horses for that water. When the animals had drunk, he filled the water bag with the settlings. Towards three in the morning, the soft velvet pansy blue Desert dark broke to a sulphur mist. Wayland saddled horses and mule and wakened the old frontiersman.

"Eh, where's this?" He came to himself heavily. "Wayland, is this hell-broth of a sulphur stew doin' me? Has y'r Desert got me, Wayland?"

"No, sir, when the Desert gets you, it gets you raving mad with fever. Chains won't hold you! This soggy sleep is all right. Long as you sleep, you'll keep your head!"

All the same, the Ranger noticed that the old man ate scarcely any breakfast. For those people who think that the Ranger's life consists of an easy all day jog-trot, it would be well to set down exactly of what that breakfast consisted. It consisted of slap jacks made with water sediment. Both men were afraid to draw on the water from the skin bag for tea.

They passed dead pools that day, places where Desert travellers had stuck up posts to mark a spring; but where the Service axe failed to find water below the saline crust. Then, Wayland knew why the sulphur dust drift moved so slowly against the horizon. The outlaws *had not* found water. Horses and men were fagging. A velveteen coat had been thrown aside to lighten weight; from the dust markings one horse seemed to have fallen; and the load had been lightened still more by casting off half sacks of flour and some canvas tenting; but the tracks of the lame horse picking the soft places along the trail showed drops of blood. Had it cut itself on the glassy lava rocks; or was it the hoof? A little farther ahead, the same horse had fallen again to its knees, rolling over headlong; and the other tracks doubled back confusedly where the riders had come to help.

The Ranger smiled, though the yellow heat danced in blood clots before his blistered vision. He had had to put the old frontiersman back on his horse three times. The stirrup was wrong; or the saddle was slipping; or . . . what alarmed Wayland was each time he had stopped, the old man was stooping as if to follow the wavering outline of invisible water. Then, when the Ranger tried to count how many days they had been out, he found he couldn't. He had lost track: the days had slipped into nights and the nights into days; and he suddenly realized that his head pounded like a steel derrick; that the crackling of the dry sage brush leaves snapped something strung and irritable in his own nerves. There was no longer a drowsy hum in his ears. It was a wild rushing.

Once, the horses shuffled to a dead stop. Wayland looked up from the dancing sand at his feet. He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"I keep thinking I see a white horse lagging behind that dust drift. What puzzles me is whether they are trying to *get out* of the Desert or *lose* us in it. While we are seeing them, you can bet they are seeing us! There hasn't been a yard for a mile back, where the hoof tracks weren't bloody. They'll lose a horse if they keep on to-day: then, they'll be without a packer; but if they are plumb up against it, why don't they face round and fight? They are three to our two? They could hide behind any of these sand rolls and pot us crossing the sinks; but if they are not at the end of their tether, why don't they hustle and get out of sight? If they aren't played out, they could outride us in half a day."

The old man was shading his eyes and gazing across the sun glare. Wayland noticed that he was steadying himself in the saddle by the pummel.

"Is my eye playing me tricks, Wayland; or do A see something stuck on yon bush along the way? First glance, it looks like the leaf of a note book. Keep looking, it might be a tent a couple of miles away. That used to happen when we were buildin' bridges in the Rockies. Surveyors crossing upper snows would stick up a message in neck of a ginger ale bottle: then, when we'd come along with the line men after trampin' the snow for hours, we'd mistake the thing for a man with

a white hat till we almost tumbled over the bottle. Is it the Desert playin' me tricks, Wayland; or do A see something? Look, . . . where that bit of brush grows against the lava rock there."

Wayland's glance ran along the trail; and for an instant, the writhing sun glare played the same trick with his own vision. Something a dirty white quivered above the black lava table like the loose canvas top of a tented wagon. The Ranger side-stepped the trail for a different angle of refraction. The object blurred, then reappeared, a leaf from a note book not thirty yards away. Wayland went quickly forward. He was aware as he walked that the shrivelled earth heaved and sank so that he had the sensation of staggering. It was a dirty leaf from a note book fouled by the Desert winds and lodged in the sage brush. Then, he looked twice. It was not lodged. It was stuck down in the branches secure against the wind. The ranger pulled the thing off. The under side showed tobacco stains. On the upper were scrawled in heavy pencil; *By. 20 ml du est if yu don't cath upp hit itt est flagg midnite frate carrie yu mine sitty*.

"Railway twenty miles due East," translated Wayland. "That is probably true. I think there is a branch line runs a hundred miles in to Mine City. If you don't catch up, hit it East, flag the midnight freight, she'll carry you to Mine City. Well? What do you make of it? Did they leave it; or did some body else? If it had been there long, the wind would have torn it to tatters."

"Let me see it." The old man turned it over in his hand. "Evidently left to direct the man back in the Pass; they don't believe he's dead."

The Ranger took it back and read it over. "If they're lagging back for the missing man, why didn't they leave a message sooner? Trail doesn't fork here. Why did they leave word here?"

"There really is a railway somewhere here, Wayland?"

"There must be if one knew where to find it."

Matthews smiled. "Then, A take it this is a gentle hint to go off and lose ourselves trying to find it."

Wayland's eyes rested on the slow-moving dust cloud against the horizon.

"Then it is a case of who lasts out!" He looked at his white haired companion. "But there's no call for you to risk *your* life on the last lap of the race. It's not your job. It means another day; perhaps, two. If you'd take my horse, it's fresher, and the water bag, you could ride out to the railroad to-night. Those fellows are not good for many miles more unless they hit a spring. Let me go on alone, sir."

"Alone?" The old man's face flushed furious, livid. . . . "Git epp!"

Up a sand bluff, heaving to the heat waves; down a slither of ash dust; then, across the petrified black lava roll; down to a saline sink, white and blistering to the sight; over a silt bank crumbly as flour; and on and yet on; across the dusty sage-smelling parched plain . . . they moved; always following the tracks; tracks

confused and doubling back as if the hind horse lagged; with blood drip and shuffling dragging hoofs; always keeping the dust whirl of the fore horizon in view; on and on, but speaking scarcely at all!

The Ranger again had that curious sensation of the earth slipping away from his foot steps. He had thrown away his leather coat early in the morning. Now be found himself tearing off the loose red tie round the flannel collar of the Service suit; and he pulled himself sharply together recognizing the fevered instinct to strip off all hampering clothing. It was as much a heat-death symptom as sleep forbodes frost death. He did not walk in a daze as the old man rode, half numbness, half drowse. He walked with a throb—throb—throb in his temples like the fall of water. He wanted to run; to strip himself as an athlete for a race; and all the time, he kept walking as if the heaving earth went writhing away from each step.

"Don't y' think ye better open that pack, an' get a drink for y'rself, my boy?"

Wayland was pausing in the shadow of a sand butte, and the old man had ridden up.

"Want it for yourself?"

"Not a drop."

"Better keep it for the horses, then; if we can keep them going to the next spring, they'll carry us out. Anything the matter with me that you ask that?"

"Oh no; A thought A saw you wave y'r arms."

The Ranger looked at the elder man. He was riding leaning forward heavily; and the dust had trenched deep fatigue lines in the hollow beneath his eyes and from the nostrils to the mouth. Wayland didn't retort that the frontiersman's speech had sounded guttural and muffled. He was not sure it was *not* the fault of his own ears.

They worked slowly to the crest of the sand roll, zig-zagging to break the steepness. An ash-colored shadow skulked along the tracks of the outlaw trail. The little mule gave a squealing hind kick. The shadow looked back: it was a coyote, scenting the tracks of the drovers' lame horse. It went loping over the sand a blurr of gray.

"Curious thing that, Wayland! Notice the antics of the mule? Always see that in a range bred beast, centuries of ham stringing."

The Ranger did not answer. The sand was no longer heaving in waves. It was running, sliding like the glossy surface of the sea. The throb of his temples, the slide of the sand, the lakes of light, light and crystal pools, that ran away as you came up, all brought visions of water. The dust cloud on the sky line dipped and disappeared behind a ridge of rolling sand.

There was the drowsy swash of saddle leather and the padded chug of dragging feet and the hum, the hypnotic hum, of the heat that drowsed from

delirium to sleep.

"I think," said Wayland, "this seems a pretty good jumping-off place for a rest."

The afternoon was waning. They were under shelter of a sand bank from the wind and sun.

"A think, Wayland, this is nearly my jumping off place altogether."

Matthews spoke feebly. On pretense of steadying the fagged broncho, the Ranger helped him to dismount. Then, Wayland unsaddled and drew the water bag from the pack trees. He handed it over to the old man. Matthews pushed it aside: "Keep it for yourself to-morrow. If y' find no spring, y'll need the water to-morrow; but A'll take y'r flask of brandy if y' don't mind?"

"That's a fool thing to take in the heat, sir."

" 'Tis if y' intend to live, Wayland; but A'm at the end of this Trail. A'd like a bit strength t' tell y' a thing or two before . . . as we rest! Don't waste any water on flap jacks."

The mule lay rolling in the sage brush. The two horses stood with lowered heads chacking on the bit and pawing. Wayland saw the brandy flush mount to the purplish pallor of the old man's face.

"Wayland, this is *my* jumping off place! A'm at the end of the Track. The Trail where the tracks all point one way. 'Tis na' sensible y'r hangin' back for me! If y'll take the fresh horse an' go on alone, y'll get out! If the railroad is only thirty miles due East, y' can make that. We'll rest a bit here, then after sundown we'll ride on; an' in the dark A'll drop back. If it hurts y' t' think of it, A'll head my horse due East for the railroad! Y'll go on, Wayland! Y'll not turn back for me!"

It took the Ranger a moment to realize what the old frontiersman was trying to say. "I think you'd better take another drink of that brandy," he said. "It seems to me a fool thing to let a good man die for the sake of catching three outlaw blackguards."

" 'Tis not for the sake o' three blackguards!" The words came out with a rap. " 'Tis to vindicate justice, 'tis to uphold law, an' till every good citizen is willin' to lay down his life hounding outrage to th' very covert o' Hell, t' die protectin' law an' justice an' innocence an' right, y'r Nation wull be ruled by paltroons an' cowards an' white-vested blackguards! Go; go on; go on to the end till ye fall and rot! If th' Devil takes to the open an' the saints take to cover, whose goin' t' fight the battle for right? The Armageddon o' y'r Nation? 'Tis easy t' be a good citizen when the bands are playin' an' the cannon roarin'. 'Tis harder in times o' peace to fight the battle o' the lone man! These outlaws, these blackguards, these cut throats, they're only the tools of the Man Higher Up! Get them, then go on for the Man Higher Up! Leave me, when A drop back in the dark to-night; if A'm in my senses, A'll shout a bravo and give y' a wave! Y'r the Man on the Job, the

Nation's job! 'Tis not by bludgeons and bayonets, 'tis by ballots and brains y'll fight this battle out; and fight y' must or y'r freedom will go the way o' the old world despotisms down in a welter. A wish y'd go to the top o' the bank and have a look ahead."

An absurd sense of power, of resolution from despair, of will to do—suddenly swept over the Ranger. He forgot his fatigue. Months afterwards, a fellow student who had become a professor in psychology explained to him that it was a case of consciousness dipping suddenly down to the sublimal reservoirs of unconscious strength that lie in humanity; but then, Wayland had left two factors of explanation untold: first, that the dying trumpet call of the old warrior missionary had opened the doors of consciousness to that night on the Ridge of the Holy Cross; second, that the setting sun tinging all the buttes and hummocks and plains with rose flame somehow tinctured his being with consciousness of her, consciousness of the life drafts he had taken from her lips that night of the Death Watch.

He went across to the pack trees. Picking up the cross trees and blankets, he laid them on the ground as a pillow.

"If you will rest here, sir, I'll go above and have a look."

From the top of the sand bank, the Ranger looked down to see the old man lying with his face to the sky, his head pillowed on the saddle blankets, sound asleep. He looked across the Desert. The sun had sunk behind the azure strip of the mountain sky line. The billows of lava, black and glazed, the ashy silt pink-tinged to the sun-glow, the heaving orange sands . . . lay palpitating infinite almost with a oneness that was of God. Wayland was not given to prayers. Perhaps, like all men of action, he tried to make his life a prayer. Somehow, something within him prayed wordlessly now . . . not for exceptional advantage in the game of life, not for remission of the laws of Nature, not for miracle, but for aptitude to play the game according to rules. His wordless prayer did not end in an "amen." It ended in a little hard laugh. As though Right were such a simple business as just personally being good! or an insurance policy against damnation and guarantee for salvation! What was it the old man had said? Your right must be made into might . . . that was the game of life: the saving of the Nation: the good old-fashioned square deal no matter which party cut the cards. Right made Might, Might made Right; that was what the Nation wanted!

Then, it came again, the touch, the consciousness, the will to power, to do, to fight and overcome. He rose and looked across the Desert. A puff of dust, a swirl and eddy of riders, resolved itself through the terra cotta mist to the forms of three men going over the crest of the sand roll against the red sun-wrack of the sky line; three figures far apart, riding slowly, crawling against the face of the distant sky;

one man in advance bent over his pummel; a second rider with a pack horse in tow pulling and dragging on the halter rope, the pack horse white and lame, stopping at every step, the man crunched, huddling fore done, down in his saddle; then dragging far to the rear, just cresting the sky line as the other two disappeared, swaying from side to side, a ragged wreck lying almost forward on his horse's neck; was he being deserted?

Wayland uttered a jubilant low whistle and tumbled down the sand bank to his camp kit.

The wind was at lull and the velvet air palpitating as a human pulse. The afterglow lay on the orange sands cresting all the ridges with cressets of flame. Wayland was riding bare backed.

"When we sight them, I want you to drop back, sir! The Desert's got them. They haven't the resistance of dead fish left. If we cut across this sink, as I make it, we'll save a couple of miles and almost meet them on the other side of the next ridge."

When Wayland had wakened the old frontiersman, he had babbled inconsequently about the sea. Mixing brandy with the last of the sediment water, Wayland got him into the saddle. There were queer splotches of blood under the skin on the backs of his hands; but when the brandy relieved his fatigue, he stopped babbling of the sea and spoke coherently.

"Y' mind the man, whose wife died in the Desert, Wayland?"

His horse stumbled. The Ranger snatched at the bridle and jerked it up.

"Yes," said Wayland.

"Vera noble of the woman; 'tis all right on *her* record, Wayland; but what do y' think o' th' man?"

"But in this case, the man took her in to save her life."

"A wasn't thinking of *his* case," answered the other bluntly. "A was thinking of *yours*."

The horse stumbled again. This time, the Ranger kept hold of the bridle rein.

"A didna' just mean t' tell y', Wayland; but A want y' t' know before A drop back. A saw it in her eyes, Wayland, yon night she went up the Ridge trail, and oh, man, A was loth to speak: she would cheer y' on in y'r work, A thought, perhaps—perhaps, the Lord might be playin' an ace card an' A'd no be trumpin' my partner's tricks; but 'tisn't so; Wayland, 'tisn't so! This Desert hell proves me wrong. She isna for y', man; no man can ask a woman to come into a fight that may mean this! It's a man's job, Wayland; an' the man who would drag a woman into the sufferin' of it isn't worthy of her . . . isn't the man to do the job. Oh yes, A know, a woman's love is ready to jump in the fire an' all that. Hoh! The man's love that'll let her is poor stuff, Wayland, base metal, kind o' love to burn all away to dross an' ashes when the fires come! Her's will come out pure gold thro' it all,

but man alive, Wayland, think o' her when she finds his as dross; an' if he lets her sacrifice hers for his, 'tis dross!"

Wayland grew suddenly hot all over. He could not bring himself to name her, much less indulge in the cheap confessional of tawdry loose held affection. He had heard men discuss their love affairs: men who could discuss them hadn't any; theirs was the sense reflex of the frog that kicks when you tickle its nerve-end. He rode on unspeaking.

"Y'll be tellin' y'rself 'tis too sacred to mouthe—with an old fellow like me. All right! We'll say it is *too* sacred; but that minds me of a Cree rascal on my Reserve, an old medicine man, always talkin' of his sacred medicine bag; well, one day when he was good an' far away, good an' plenty drunk, A took a peep into his medicine bag; there was nothin' inside but a little snake that hissed; an' him beatin' the big drum! Hoh! sacred?

"Y'll be tellin' me y'r passion vows are stronger than life or death? Hoh! Y'd be a poor man if love wasn't stronger than death without any vows and big drum! Y'll be tellin' me y've warned her not t' link her life up wi' y'rs, to help y' resist an' all that; well, while y'r playin' y'r high and mighty self-sacrifice, did y'r manhood melt in the love light o' her eyes?"

Wayland jerked his horse roughly to a dead stop. "Mr. Matthews, for what reason are you saying all this?"

"A'll tell y' that too! A've come for her, Wayland. A've come to take her back to her people. Y' don't understand, her father is a MacDonald of the Lovatt clan—came out with Wolfe's regiment in 1759."

"In 1759?" repeated Wayland. "I heard her father say that very year."

"Yes, and a dark doursome race they are. Lovatt: Fraser MacDonald was his name; fought under Wolfe and joined the up country furhunters. When he came back from his hunting one year, he found his wife had eloped with an officer of the regiment; so he took to the north woods an' married an Indian girl and his son was the man o' the iron arm, the piper for little Sir George in the thirties, who blew the bag pipes up Saskatchewan and over the mountains and down the Columbia and all round them lakes where y'r Holy Cross Forest is. They were a' dark fearsome men in their loves and hates. This man married late in life, he had two sons, Angus of Prince Albert an' your Donald here. He never saw his father alive. The Lovatt estates have been restored by law; but the line is bred out, down to a little old lady whose waitin' me up at my Mission on Saskatchewan. She came huntin' heirs. Angus had married an Indian woman; he'll never go back, nor his sons. They're livin' under a tent to-day. What would they do wi' a castle and liveried servants and tenants an' things? Donald, y'r sheep king man, married a white girl. Some time after '85 she left him for the part he took in the Rebellion. She died after the child's birth; and the father claimed the daughter. He's known they'd have to come for his daughter some day, spite of his part in the Rebellion;

and that was no such shameful thing as y' might think, if y've lived long enough in the West, t' understand! He has educated the daughter for the place. As A guess, she knows nothing of it, doesn't know who her mother was, or why her father had to leave Canada. A guessed that much when y'r Indian woman sent me the wrong road from the Ridge trail, that night! She doesn't even know who that Indian woman is."

"You came—for her?" repeated Wayland slowly. The night on the Ridge came back to him! Calamity's fear when the old frontiersman arrived; Bat's threat to expose something; Eleanor's perturbed letter; the father's half furtive defiant existence. He was too proud to ask more than the other cared to tell, too loyal to pry into any part of her life that she could not willingly share with him. He sat gazing into the mystic afterglow of the Desert, a flame of fire over a lake of light. It was as the old man had said, he had asked her to strengthen his resolution; and he drank in the love light of her eyes as he asked. He had vowed himself to a life apart and then his humanity, his weakness, his need had sealed the vow of renunciation in the fires that forged eternally their beings into one. But this, this was the Hand from Outside on which we never reckon and which always comes; the Destiny Thing which Man's Will denies, wrenching the forging asunder. Was it right for him to risk their lives farther in the Desert now; it affected her life now; and that was exactly what his common sense had foreseen: the fighter must fight alone. Love might send forth; but love must not be suffered to draw back.

"Why do you tell me all this?"

The old man moistened his lips before speaking. "If A don't go out, Wayland, A want y' t' see that her father's told, that she's taken back. When A saw the love light in her face come out like stars and her breath break when A spoke of you as a Ranger fellow, when A saw that, A thought, no matter what A thought. If y' married her, d' y' think y' could go off on the firing line; d' y' think y' would if y' knew y'd left her in danger? They'd strike at you through her, Wayland . . . it would be the end of free fightin'. A ask no promise. 'Tis enough A've told y'. Drive on!"

They moved slowly up the sand ridge, the Ranger a little ahead, oblivious of the livid blue of the old man's lips and the drag on the bridle rope till a quick jerk ripped the line from his loose hold; and he glanced back to see the other's horse stagger, flounder up again, waver and sink with a sucking groan. Wayland sprang just in time to catch the old frontiersman. He tore the saddle from the fallen broncho and cinched it on his own horse. Then he lifted Matthews, protesting, to the fresh mount, "till we reach the next rest place," he said, tying the halter rope of the pack mule to the saddle pommel. "Go on, I'll come."

Wayland waited till the horse and mule passed over the crest of the sand bank;

then, he took out his revolver. A shudder ran through the fallen horse. The Ranger's hand trembled. He stroked its neck. "Poor devil; it's none of your affair either. I wonder how the God of the game will square it with the dumb brutes?"

He ran his left hand down the white face of the broncho. It hobbled as if to stagger up, and sank back dumb, faithful, trying to the end, one fore knee bent to rise, the neck outstretched. Wayland's right hand went swiftly close between eye and ear. He shot, in quick succession, three times, his hand fumbling, his sight turned aside.

Neither spoke as they advanced down the other side of the sand ridge, the Ranger steadying himself with a hand to the mule's neck. The bank dipped to a white alkali pit where the light lay in dead pools, gray in the twilight, quivering with heat, layers of blue air above ashes of death. For the second time that day, the sand colored thing skulked across the trail. Wayland took hold of both bridles and led down, the old man wakening as from a stupor. The alkali pit lay perhaps a mile distant, gray and fading in the red light.

"Wayland, is that water?"

"Where? I can't see it."

"There, at the foot of the hill."

"With trees up side down? No, sir! It may be mirage of water miles away, carried by the rays of this twilight; but if you can see it and the horses can't smell it, you can bet on a false pool!"

But the little mule had jerked free with a low squeal.

"A tell you, Wayland, there is water;" and he began babbling again inconsequently of the sea, running his words together incoherent, half delirious.

"Go on and see, then! I'll follow! If there's water, look out for the drovers."

Wayland let go his hold of the bridle. Horse and mule shot down the sand bank. He saw them shoulder neck and neck along the white alkali bottom, then break to a gallop, the old man hanging to the pommel; then all disappeared round the end of the bank. Wayland slithered down the sand slope and dashed to the top of the next hill breathless. Below lay the glister of water, real water and no mirage, glassy, gray and sinister. The Ranger uttered a yell; then paused in his head-long descent.

The pony had plunged in belly deep; the mule had lowered its head; the old man was kneeling at the brink. Wayland saw him lave the water up with his hand: then throw it violently back. All at once, the grip of life snapped. Matthews was lying motionless on the sand. The horse was chocking its head up and down; the mule was stamping angrily with fore feet roiling the pool bottom. It had been one of the salt sinks that lie in the depressions of the Desert.

CHAPTER XVII
WHERE THE TRACKS ALL POINT ONE WAY

Wayland poured the last very driblets of water sediments from the skin bag. This, he forced past the old man's lips. Then he drew the unconscious form back on the saddle blankets, loosened the neck of the shirt, laved the temples and wrists with the salt water, tore strips of canvas from the tent square, wet that and laid it on the old man's forehead. He ran his hand inside the shirt and felt the heart. It was still beating, beating furiously, with faint flutterings, then accessions of fresh fury. The lips were black and swollen. The eyes were sunken; and the veins stood out in deadly clear purplish reticulation with splotches of transfused blood under the shrivelled skin of the hands. Then, he raised the old white head from the pack trees,—brave old warrior for right going down the Trail where the Tracks All Point One Way—, and somehow got a mouthful of brandy past the clinched teeth. The breath came fast and faint like the heart beats. Once, the eyes opened; but they were glazed and unseeing. Wayland laid the old head on the pillowed pack trees, fitting rest for frontiersman of the wilderness; then he stood up to think! A terrible passion of tenderness, of question, of defiance to God, rushed through his thoughts. The animals take their tragedies dumb and uncomplaining. Man alone has not learned the futility of shouting impotent reproaches at a brazen sky.

The Ranger unsaddled the pony. Then he tethered the mule and broncho by separate ropes to the boulders. He placed the brandy flask by the old man's right hand. He thought a moment. Then he laid the loaded rifle close to the same hand.

The eyes were still staring wide open unseeing. The purple lips began babbling wordless words, words of the sea, words that ran into one another inarticulate. Wayland stooped and took the left hand in his own palm. It was cold and heavy, a thing detached from life; and the purple swollen lips were still babbling in inarticulate whispers. Should he leave him to die there alone; or go forth to seek; seek what?

The Ranger stooped and pressed his lips to the blood-blotched back of the faithful shrivelled old hand. He did not shed a tear. We weep only when we are half hurt.

Wayland seized the Service axe and uncased his own rifle. Then in words that were not worshipful, not bending his knees, but standing with his hat off, he uttered what may have been a prayer, or may have been blasphemy. I leave you to judge: "By God, if there is a God, why doesn't He waken up? If there is a God, does *He* stand for right? Is there such a thing as Right; or is Right the dream of fools? I want to know! If there is a God, I want God to speak out clear and plain,

right now, in plain facts, so I can understand, and not so blamed long ago that a plain fellow can't make out what's the right thing to do."

It was one thing to pray under the rose-colored windows of a college chapel, and another thing to pray under the yellow, brazen Desert sky. There was only the dreadful Desert silence, with the rattle from the laboured breathing of the unconscious man. If there was no God, then the fight for Right was the futility of fools: Right was only the Right of the strong to prey upon the weak, till the weak became in turn strong enough to prey; and that meant anarchy. If Right was right as two and two make four in Heaven or Hell, then *where* was the God from whom Right, laws of Right emanated, guiding the unwise as laws of gravity guide the stars?

He didn't know that he had been staggering from physical weakness as he climbed the ridge of sand. There was the fresh horse. *One of them* might escape in a night by riding it to death. Then, there was the possibility of the railroad being within reach. One of them might go out to the railroad, *but not both*. The old frontiersman had passed the point of being able to ride; and a very few hours would probably witness the end of his life. He could tie the old man to the fresh horse, but the slow pace that would be necessary would sacrifice both their lives. There was another possibility: the fresh man on the fresh horse. That way out did not enter Wayland's mind; but he did ask himself *why* the outlaws had not come down to the false pool. Why had they gone on? They were as near the end of their tether as he was of his.

Then he became suddenly conscious that he had eaten almost nothing for twenty-four hours and that the quivering air darkening to night rolled above the yellow sands in a way not caused by heat. Was it saddle wear or exhaustion that he stumbled as he walked? He looked at the silver strip of mountains above the westering sky. A fore-shortening haze swam into his sight. There was the mountain flecked with silver. Then it had gone into a milky black and pools, pools of water, fringed by the pines of the North, hung in the blue haze of mid-air, fore-shortening, shifting like a blurred sieve into the silver strip of mountain and milky blot, then back again, pools of crystal water, cool mountain lakes, this time with the trees up side down and figures among the trees. He knew by the trees being up side down, though he was dreaming of laughing as he drank and drank, that it must be a mirage! Then he came to himself wondering how in the world he was sitting on the sand bank. And why hadn't he kept the tea leaves to put on his eyes in case of heat inflammation? Then, it tripped almost under his feet, you understand *he* did not trip, he had struck at it with his Service axe—the wolf thing tracking the red stain of the outlaws' trail along the base of the sand bank out across the ash colored silt sands. He watched it pausing, where the wind had eddied the dust in serpentine lines over the tracks, sniffing the air, loping across the break, and on out again at a run, nose down to earth: a blot against the sky; the

burned out sulphur sky above an earth of embers and ashes. Was it a mirage; or was he going delirious; or had he fallen asleep to dream her face framed in the blur of the purpling haze, receding from him, drawing him with the shine of the stars in her eyes, drawing him with the warmth of their first passion kiss on her lips? He would rise from his grave, and follow her from death, if she wove such spells, whether of dreams or delirium or mirage! The Ranger found himself stumbling across the baked silt and lava rocks, stripped of his hat and his boots, stripped like a marathon runner, vaguely conscious that he ought to have kept those tea leaves for that burn in his eyes, that the silver strip of the mountain was there just ahead; now a crystal pool of the cool mountain lake in mid air; now her face had vanished into the blue haze. Suddenly, winged things flappered up with raucous protest. The coyote had skulked over the edge of the lava dip; not the burnt-oil earth-scorched Desert smell, but the shrivelled putridity of flesh smote and nauseated his senses. The white pack horse of the outlaw drovers lay dead across the trail at his feet, a pool of clotted blood darkening the ashy sand. Its throat had been cut. . . .

The Ranger drew off, rubbed his eyes and looked again. The crumbly silt had been trampled all round the dead horse. So they, too, were dying of thirst on the Desert. Which way to follow now? There were the hoof prints across the open level; but forking from the main trail was another track: that of a man dragged or dragging or crawling forward on his hands and knees. Had they deserted the third man; or had the third man dropped back from them to cut his horse's throat? The Ranger laughed aloud, a harsh cracked laugh; he knew he was delirious. The Lord had played an ace and he wouldn't trump His trick by going after the trail of the man who had crawled away to die. There was a Deity of retribution at least, whether God or demon: he had vowed he would make those blackguards drink horse blood!

If he hounded along the trail, perhaps he might overhaul the other two. Then, then if he did perish in the Desert, he would not have perished for naught! It was then, the earth performed the acrobatic feat of heaving up, and he fell! This time, he knew he had fallen. It was no trip. He was down and out and done for; and he knew it. He rose to his knees steadying himself on his Service axe. Then, it came again, the silver strip of mountain on the sky line with the cool lakes and the blue haze, and her face, the face in the Watts' picture of "the Happy Warrior," weaving the spell, receding from him, drawing him with the love light in her eyes and the passion kiss on her lips, beckoning, beckoning; he would rise and follow her from the dead if she beckoned with that light in her eyes. She was receding *not* along the trail of the fleeing Desert runners, but down the dragged track of the body that had crawled to the foot of a sand bank. Wayland never knew whether he staggered or crept down the trail of the dragged body away from the hoof prints of the drovers' horses across the alkali sink; but between him and the silver strip of

mountain on the far skyline, above the yellow sand so hot to his palms, beckoned her face, the love light in her eyes, weaving the spell. Then the coyote had bounded into the air, and the red-combed Desert condors, the scavengers of an outcast world, rose from their quarry; and Wayland, fevered, delirious, laughing, crying, kneeled over the body of a man lying on his face with his bloody hand clutched in death grip round an upright post driven into the alkali bottoms, a post with a drinking cup hung on the notched crotch, the Desert sign of a water spring beneath the drifted sands.

Wayland pushed the body aside. The man's face was red-smeared. He was dead. Wayland had to unlock the clutched fingers from the post. Somewhere, from the submerged consciousness of forgotten college lore came memory that the water table lay ten feet deep beneath the Desert silt. The Ranger slid down the sand drift and was chopping, hacking, digging, into the side of the bank, thanking God; God *was* on the job after all; scooping the sand drift out with his naked hand, burrowing at the earth as the animals of the wilderness-struggle tear in maddened thirst for the hidden life beneath the sand death. He heard the suck and gurgle of the water, not the joyous silver laugh of Northern springs, but the sullen coming of water compelled; and his lips were at the sand; drinking, drinking, drinking. Then, he suddenly remembered her face. He looked up. Gone the silver strip of shining mountain; gone the mirage of the crystal pool; darkness, velvet pansy darkness of the Desert night; and an earth bat winged past his face. Even as he drank he felt the puff and whirl of the wind rising; he laughed. He felt the cool water trickle and settle and pool in the sand hole. Then he laved his temples and wrists, and laughed softly, and called a low long tremulous call; that foolish Saxon word he had told her to look up in the dictionary.

The wind might blow great guns, and wipe out the fugitive trail. He would go no farther. The wind would attend to the other two men. He had found water: he had found life. God had played the trick; and he had not trumped the ace; four of the six outlaws dead, and the last two hastening to the alkali death across the Desert sands. He drank again, this time from the cup, sip by sip, slowly, then in deep draughts of God-given waters.

He didn't thank God in so many words, or in testimony to pass muster at a prayer meeting; but he paused twice on his way back to the saline sink to say: "He's on the job. You bet He's on the job!" He spent the rest of the week nursing the old frontiersman back to life.

PART II
THE MAN HIGHER UP

CHAPTER XVIII
WITHOUT MALICE

The Senator sat in his office with his hat on the back of his head and a U. S. Geological Survey map spread out on the desk in front of him. Bat stood sleepily at attention on the other side of the desk with his hat in his hand. It was a sweltering July afternoon in Smelter City, the air athrob with the derricks and the trucks and the cranes and the pulleys and the steam hoists and the cable car tramway run up and down the face of Coal Hill by natural gravitation. The light was dusky yellow from the smelter smoke; and loafers round the transcontinental railroad station across the street chose the shady side of the building, where they sat swinging their legs from the platform and aiming tobacco juice with regularity and precision in the exact centre of the gray dusty road.

The Senator wore a pair of pince nez glasses. He looked up over the top of them through the yellow sun-light of the open street door.

"Declare, Brydges, the damned rascals are too lazy to brush the flies off," he observed of the brigade of loafers across the street.

Bat threw a glance over his shoulder at the coterie of loafers, and brought his drowsy tortoise-shell glance back to the map lying before the Senator.

"I guess the flies won't bother 'em long as they vote right, Mr. Senator."

Moyese was slowly turning and turning the thick stub of a crayon pencil between his thumb and fore finger. Bat knew that trick of absent-minded motion always presaged senatorial sermonizing, just as the soft laugh down in the crinkles of the white vest forewarned danger. ("When I see the tummy wrinkles coming, I always feel like telling the other fellow to get the button off his fencing sword—You bet *that* means business," Bat often confided to the newseditor.)

"Brydges, this country is rapidly lining up two opposing sides: fighting lines, too, by George! Mobocracy *versus* Plutocracy! I'm only a cog in the wheel, myself, a mere marker for the big counters, my boy; but if I have to put up with the tyranny of one or t'other, I'm damned if I don't prefer the tyranny of the rich to the tyranny of the poor, any day! *Why*, is any man poor in this country, Brydges? Because he's a damned incompetent unfit swinish hog, too lazy to plant and hoe his own row; so he gets the husks of the corn while the competent man gets the cob—the cob with the corn on, you bet, number one, Silver King, Hard, seventy cents a bushel! If I have to put up with one or t'other, I'm damned if I don't prefer the tyranny of knowledge to the tyranny of ignorance! One butters your bread, anyway, and sometimes puts some jam on with the butter. The other snivels and whines and begs a crust from the other fellow's table, and snaps at the hand that gives him the crust, and spends the time in self-pity that he should spend in work! Look at that row of free-born American citizens, kings in disguise,

Brydges! Not a damned man of them ever did a stroke of honest work in his life except on election day, when we line 'em up; and damn it, aren't we right, to line 'em up? What kind of rule are you going to get from that kind of rulership if some one doesn't jump in and group it and direct it; yes, by George, and *compel* it to keep in line and vote right, just as a general licks his recruits in shape on pain of court martial? Think any battle would ever be won, Brydges, if the commanding officer hadn't the power of a despot? He makes mistakes. Of course, he makes mistakes! So do we! But we're keeping those damned rascals in line for the good of the country; and so, I say, the plutocrats who are being cursed from one end of the country to the other to-day, are playing the same part in modern life as the big war chiefs of the Middle Ages. They are marshalling the forces; leading the advance; conquering the countries with commerce that the old war chiefs used to conquer with arms; building up, constructing, amassing, concentrating in trust and combine all the scattered abilities of men, who would be powerless individually; and we use our tools, that parcel of beauties out there, same as the old war chiefs used their blackguard mercenaries! It's cheaper for us to buy 'em than be bossed by 'em, a darn sight cheaper, Brydges; for us to swing 'em into a bunch and control 'em than be blackmailed by 'em, Brydges! If every penny grafter didn't hold up the corporation, every damned little squirt of a county supervisor and road contractor and town councilman, if they didn't hold the corporation up for blackmail way the highwaymen of old used to hold up the lone traveller, if they didn't hold us up for blackmail, Brydges, it wouldn't be necessary for us to man that gang across the way on voting day!

"Freedom, pah!" The Senator had stopped swirling the stub pencil. He reached forward to a jar of roses on his desk. "Equality? Pah! Dream of fools, Brydges! Doesn't exist! Never did exist! Never can exist! Know how we develop Silver King Corn that gives ninety bushels to the acre instead of old thirty bushel yield?"

Bat had sat down, still sleepily watchful through the tortoise-shell eyes, but a bit wilted in the heat. Some of the men swinging corduroy and blue jean legs from the station platform evidently perpetrated a pleasantry; for there was a loud guffaw, and a shower of tobacco wads into the middle of the road.

"Know how we get high grade corn, high grade rose like this American Beauty: in fact, high grade anything? Well, I'll tell you. It's the same process that brings out high grade men. You go into a field of corn. You pick out best specimens. You keep that for seed, special care, special fine ground, special careful cultivation. You let the others go, feed 'em to the hogs, understand, Bat? It's the same with the roses, and the same with men; and now where's your fine theory of all men equal?"

As Bat did not care to remind the Senator that his own career from the ghetto up contradicted all this fine philosophy, he left the question unanswered.

Moyese pushed the glasses up on his nose and returned to the map.

"How many homesteaders did you succeed in nabbing out of that last train-load?"

"About a hundred, Senator! I've got the list of 'em here . . . haven't counted, but think it will tally up about a hundred."

"What are they, Germans?"

"No, Swedes."

Moyese laughed. "Thrifty beggars will job round and earn double while they're operating for us! Got good big families, Bat?"

It was the turn of the handy man to laugh. "I filed one fellow and eight kids for one hundred and sixty acres each."

"You didn't contract to pay each of the little olive branches three-hundred?"

"Lord, no! If the dad sits tight till we prove up entry, he's to get three-hundred! No fear of his blabbing. He can't speak a word of English; and when I told the woman, through the interpreter that we pay their fare out and each of the kids would get a five, why, she kissed my hand and slobbered gratitude all over me."

"Wayland won't be quite so grateful for that bunch."

"Oh, I didn't file that batch in the N. F. You bet, that's a little too obvious! I put 'em in the Pass, lower end of the Pass, not by a damn sight, I didn't put 'em in the N. F.! I thought Smelter people wanted us to secure that Pass for a dam; and I bunched 'em all in just above the Sheriff's place!"

"That's good! The Sheriff proves up this year; and if you get this bunch in behind, that corks the Pass up pretty effectually! Where are the bounds of the Forest there?"

Bat drew his fore-finger along the map. "Along the red line, here: just to the trail through the canyon."

"Good: now what about the timber claim along the Gully? That's in the Forests, Brydges. I want to force a contest on that; the Swede fellow has cut the logs under his permit; but I'd like to make that doubly sure before we go to trial. If we can get a double cinch on that, we'll knock the claim of the Forestry Department to keep homesteaders out into a cocked hat."

Bat's sleepy eyes emitted sparks and his good natured smile widened to an open grin.

"The Swede happened to use a U. S. Forest hatchet when he cut those logs," he said. "I told him to be sure and stamp the butt end of each log U. S., duly inspected," he said.

Moyese dropped the map and the pencil and his heavy hand with a thud on the desk and laughed noiselessly down into the creases of his fat double chin and into the wrinkling rotundity of his white vest.

"And to cinch it," continued Brydges, "as the fellow's permit didn't cover the Gully, I got some blanket railway scrip for an Irishman, O'Finnigan, Shanty

Town, and planked it on the Gully. You see, Senator, by law the settlers *can* go in on the National Forests wherever it has been surveyed and declared agricultural land; but they can't go in and get title till it is surveyed and passed. But you can plaster the railway scrip *where it is unsurveyed*. That's the little joker somebody tucked in when the scrip railway act was passed. I guess by the time they have red-taped and trapesed round and wrangled those two tangles of title out, the logs will be safe down the River; and I guess that will about see the finish of Wayland before the coal cases come up—"

"That's it, Brydges." Moyese had lowered his voice. "What about Wayland? Have you found out anything? Where the devil is he? He isn't on his patrol! He hasn't been at the Ridge for three weeks. He hasn't been at the Ridge since I left for Washington. If we could prove how he's been using Government time," he paused to reflect. "*That* might be shortest way out! Did you find out anything at the MacDonald Ranch?"

Bat threw a precautionary glance over his shoulder towards the door opening on the street. Then he rose, walked across the office, shut the door, came back and drawing his chair close to the desk opposite the Senator, sat down astride with his feet tucked back one round each hind leg.

"Yes, I did; and no again, I didn't! It's just as it may strike you! As a news man, I know *how* this kind of yarn would be taken by the public."

"Oh, come on with it, Brydges!" Moyese had pushed back and was holding the edge of the desk with his hands. Mr. Bat Brydges recognized that while the creases of good-nature crinkled at the chin, the jaws and the hands had locked.

"Your newsman got this despatch from Mine City: you see it's pretty vague: 'bodies of two men found forty miles from branch of P. & O. Line, thought to be drovers overcome by heat and thirst.' I wired for more particulars; but the railway hands had shovelled the bodies under."

"Brydges," interrupted Moyese sharply, "I'm going to tell you something; and you put it in your pipe and smoke it; and don't waste time running off on false clues. You leave that to women and sissies—to the she-male man! Now listen, *a man can't lose himself in the Desert: He can't lose himself in the Wilderness*. If he's a damphool, he can get lost, but he can't lose himself, he can't hide in the wilderness, not ever! He can lose himself in a city in one week. He could drop out of sight right here in Smelter City; but he can't go into the wilds and not come out again and people not know it. Somebody sees him go in, and somebody doesn't see him come out; and there you are! It's the same in the wilds as at the North Pole: you can't cook up a fake. Man who goes into the wilds is a marked man till he comes out. Every man, who meets him, takes a turn round to look at him; and he's going to keep looking till the fellow comes out. Now, you take this case. Wayland had on his Service Badge. If he had been one of those two, the fact would have been flashed right down to Washington. Now tell me facts, not

rumors; exactly what did you find out?"

When his chief began in that dictatorial fashion, Bat let his facts go in a running fire:

"Well, Flood saw him with his own eyes going up the Pass with that old Canadian duffer the morning, the morning," Bat paused, manifestly unable to specify which morning.

"Yes, the morning *after*," added the soft, even voice of Moyese. "And the snow slide filled the Pass up to the neck, forty-eight hours later. Yes, I know; but Wayland was too good a mountain man to be caught by a slide."

"I told Flood to get out and examine that slide, anyway! He said 'twasn't any use, this hot weather would clean it up in a couple of weeks. He was going up the Pass when I left for the Valley yesterday."

"What did you find out at the Ridge?"

"That's where the milk is in this cocoanut," answered Bat. "He hasn't passed one night *at* the Ridge since the night we were all up! You remember *who* was at the Cabin, night we went up? Well, keep that in mind; when I went across to MacDonald's Ranch to express your regret over this accident, found old man wasn't home. He's expected back from the Upper Pass by train this week: seems he has been arranging new grazing ground for another herd up there. You know how MacDonald house is laid out? Big room as you enter; then a sort of back sitting room for," Bat smiled queerly, a smile that said nothing, yet subterraneously conveyed out to daylight one of those under currents of thought that flows only in the dark, "for the lady. Well, sir, chill blasts of North Pole were tropical zephyrs compared to what I got from that MacDonald gurl."

"I thought her name was Miss MacDonald," suggested the Senator, softly. He had lowered his chin and was looking over his eye glasses at Brydges.

"Hold on, Mr. Senator! I am coming to that! Her father has been away a month. I found out from Calamity and the road gang that Wayland hasn't been at the Cabin since that night I was there; and Gee Whittiker," Brydges laughed sleepily, the same smile that said nothing but came up from the subterranean under current, "he *was* a bear with a sore head that night; spent most of the night prancing the Ridge. Well, a fellow can't exactly stand on one leg and then on t'other all through a call. She didn't ask me to sit down. Said her father was coming home by Smelter City and you could have the pleasure of conveying your sympathy personally: kept standing herself all the time; kept looking from me to the door. Well, sir, while she was looking *through* the door behind me, I was looking *through* the door behind her." And as Bat said it, he looked away. "Wayland's Range coat was hanging in that inner room."

Bat smiled slowly and sleepily; then openly grinned as who should say "now the cat *is* out"; but when he turned to Moyese, his chief had whirled in the swing chair and was sitting with hands clasped under his hat, and the back of his head

towards Brydges.

A glossy smile had come over Bat's face that is not good to see on man, woman, child or beast; and it is the same kind of smile on all four, not laughter, nor light, not definite enough to be malicious, nor pointed enough to be self accusatory, nor direct enough to be challenged and repudiated; a smile untellably familiar—a Satyr-faced thought looking through a veil, somehow sinuously suggestive, saying nothing at all, yet conveying the physical sensation of pus from an ulcerous thing; and strangely enough, there are blow-fly natures that prefer pus to nectar.

If Brydges had not been so absorbed in the jocularity of his own sensations, he would have observed that his chief remained singularly silent.

"Oh, I don't suppose he's there all this time." Bat rushed to the defence of the absent, (Heaven bless such defenders). "That old Canadian duffer, who seems to have hitched up with him on the Rim Rocks accident, your ranch foreman saw 'em pass together at noon; tried to telephone 'Herald,' but I choked *that* off; that old fellow once wrote our paper to know about Canadian settlers here. He recognized Calamity and talked about old North West Rebellion days. It's my theory he's here about something that's been hushed up! Like dad, like daughter," Bat pronounced.

"It's my theory when MacDonald comes back from the Upper Pass, Wayland and the old fellow will turn up about the same time. Haven't been able to learn what it is; but I'll bet dollars to doughnuts, they are all absent on the same trail. If we let go a broadside, they'll have to come out with the truth to shut us off; and there is where we are going to get him; see? I've got another theory, too."

"What's that?" asked the Senator, without turning.

"It is, if he sees we're going to involve her, he'll quit."

Moyese didn't answer. He rose from his chair and walked to a rear window, where he stood looking out. Did he credit what he had heard? Was it a recital of facts, or a distortion of facts through a tainted mind? Did Brydges, himself, believe what he had tried to convey? Or was his job to obtain certain results at any cost: and was this part of the cost? Ask yourself that of the tainted news you read every day. Ask why those who recognize the lie do not brand it as such; why those who are uncertain do not verify before they repeat and credit; and you will probably have some clue to the little melodrama of dishonor enacted in the office of a legal luminary at Smelter City that sweltering hot July day. When you come to observe it, Bat's recital contained nothing that might not have been posted in eminent respectability on a church warden's door. Like fresh fruit passed through a mouldy cellar, the facts came from the medium of the narrator with the unclean contagion of cellar mould. The next narrator would not pass on the facts. He would pass on the cellar rot.

"If we served up those two stories together hot," emphasized Bat, "we'd about

cut the throat of any opposition to our interests in the Valley? He'd quit! I'll bet before he'd see her involved, he'd jump his job!"

When the Senator turned his face to the handy man, he was very sober. He stood looking over the tops of his glasses boring into Bat's face.

"It's a pity," he said.

"Yes, it's too bad: one hates to have one's faith in human nature all balled out this way; but you never know what kind of a fact you're going ping up against where a woman is concerned." Something in the Senator's look stopped Bat midway.

"Brydges, I thought I told you never to meddle with the damphool who makes excuses for what he's going to do. Never do anything, unless you have some end worth while in view; then, if it's worth while, do it, damn it, and don't waste time excusing the means! Now, I'll have nothing to do with this; mind that, Brydges. You do it off your own responsibility. If MacDonald were one of our party, I wouldn't make use of it, if it were ten times over and over true. You'll have to be very careful how you use that, at all! It's effective. I don't deny it's very effective; but it's a pity! If you use that at all, you'll have to use it so it's not libelous."

"Libelous?" burst out the handy man wakening up suddenly, scratching his tousled head and trying to make head or tail of orders that said 'do it' and 'don't do it' in one breath. "I can write it without a name so every man in the State will know who it is: give it as a joke; fetch in Calamity as the mother of the whole mess; the call of the blood, you know; reversion to type! They'll have to prove that the intent was malice before they can get a judgment. They'll have to come out with the truth before they can prove libel. It isn't libelous if it's done as a joke without malice."

Moyese had flung himself down in his chair with a blow of his clenched fist on the desk, when the opening of the office door stopped the oath of disgust on his lips; and Eleanor MacDonald stood framed in the yellow light shining in from the hot street. For a moment, the transition from sun to shade blinded her. Then, she saw who was with the Senator. Brydges sprang up waiting to return her recognition. She made no sign. She walked over where he was standing. The Senator had half risen from his desk. Was it the spirit of the ancestral Indian in her eyes; or of the Man with the Iron Hand? Brydges' oily gloss went to tallow under her look. Moyese knew looks that drilled; and Brydges himself could bore behind for motives; but this look was not a drill: it was a Search Light; and the handy man —well, perhaps, it was the heat—the handy man suddenly wilted.

"You can go, Brydges," ordered Moyese.

"All right! See you again about that, Senator!" Brydges grabbed up the loose notes from the desk and bolted, banging the door behind him.

The Senator's face seemed at once to age and trench with lines. He motioned her to the vacated chair and remained bending forward over his desk till she had

seated herself. Then, he sat down, suddenly remembered his hat, and laid it off. If she had sunk forward on the desk weeping; if she had made a sign of appeal; he would have gone round and caressed her and petted her and told her she must *stop* Wayland. His whole manhood went out to comfort her, to stand between her and what? . . . Was it the drive of those wheels of which he was a cog? But when she looked across the desk, the eyes had no appeal, the Search Light had turned on him.

"You must excuse me if you heard what I was saying, when you came in, Miss Eleanor; but it was a G— doggon lie! I had been angered: I had been angered very much; and that's a bad thing on a hot day." He was slipping back to the usual suavity.

CHAPTER XIX
BALLOTS FOR BULLETS

It was Calamity, who had carried the trouble-making coat across from the Mission Library to the MacDonald Ranch House. Eleanor had found it in the big living room that day after she had read the note saying he was setting out “on the Long Trail, the trail this Nation will have to follow before Democracy arrives; the trail of the Man behind the Thing.” Somehow, she lost interest in her reading and her driving, and spent the most of that first week after the funeral in the steamer chair on the Ranch House piazza. Were the topaz gates of the sunset still ajar to a new infinite life; or did satyr faces haunt the shadows of the trail, satyr faces of the Greed that had plotted the bloody villainy of the Rim Rocks? She had thought she knew joy before, joy that rapt her from life in a race reverie. Now, she knew joy, tense as pain; and the consciousness never left her. It was there; beside, inside, above, all round, an enveloping atmosphere to everything she thought and said and did. She could not read; for while her eyes passed *over* the lines, that consciousness danced in flames *between* the lines. She tried to forget herself in her work—in the sorting of the littered shelves, in the mending for the ranch hands absent with her father in the Upper Pass; but It was there just the same, at her elbow; in behind the commonplace weaving rainbow mists, a shadowy deity of thought all pervasive as ether. Before, she had been as one standing in front of the up-lifted veil. Now, she knew she had passed in behind the veil, and could not if she would come out to the former place. Life symbols empty of meaning before, suddenly became allegorical of eternity—the bridal veil, the orange wreaths, the ring typical of the infinite, the vows of service, the angel of the drawn sword on the back trail. Yet she knew she had promised to keep him resolute, standing strong to his work, unflinching because of her.

It was, perhaps, typical of those ancestral traits that fear for him never once entered her thoughts. His work was on the firing line; and had she not *once* said that a life more or less did not matter? That was before his life had become her life. That is, fear for him did not enter her waking thoughts. It was different when she slept. Then the uncurbed thoughts hovered like the face in the picture of “the Sleeping Warrior.” One night as she sat in the steamer chair, a cold wind came down from the Pass. The cook explained it was because of the snow slide that had filled up the canyon.

“Calamity,” she called, “bring me out something to put round my shoulders; don’t bring a shawl: I hate shawls!”

And Calamity, perfectly naturally, brought out Wayland’s coat. Eleanor did not laugh; for she knew it was only since Calamity had stopped roving the Black Hills that she had exchanged male attire for the Indian woman’s insignia of good

conduct, a shawl. She waited till Calamity had pattered down to the basement. Then, she slipped into the coat with a queer little laugh that would have played havoc with Wayland's resolutions, and running her hands up the long dangling sleeve ends, lay back to a reverie that could hardly be called thought. It was consciousness, delirious foolish consciousness, possible only to youth; and the consciousness slipped into a drowse between sleeping and waking. It was—where was it? In the shadow realms of wonderful dream consciousness, his face, the face in "the Happy Warrior"; but not her face: instead was the evil fellow seen that night in the storm on the Rim Rocks clubbing his gun at Fordie's pinto pony through the mists; only he wasn't clubbing it at Fordie; he was aiming at Wayland; and there was the white horse. She wakened herself with her cry. That happened to be the night Wayland had camped in the Desert arroyos.

One afternoon, Sheriff Flood had called to know if her father had come back and what "he intended to do about it." Incidentally, he mentioned that the Forest Ranger had gone through the Pass that led to the Desert: there had been a snow slide; but he "guessed" the Ranger was "too cute a mountain man to be caught." That night, she shivered as she sat in the steamer chair; and she drew Wayland's coat around her; but it was not to delirious thoughts. When she fell asleep, she saw him lying on his face in the Desert; and she called him, and called him, and never could reach him, and awakened herself with her own calling. Wayland's professional friend, who was a psychologist, explained both incidents as auto suggestion from the coat awakened by the uneasiness of the unconscious fears; an explanation that explains by saying x is y.

At all events, she never again used the coat; and having nothing to conceal, didn't conceal it, which is the most damning evidence you can offer to a tortuous mind. She hung the coat in the apartment off the big living room. Then, the despatch came out about the two bodies found in the Desert. The same mail brought a letter from her father asking her to meet him at Smelter City; and there at the Ranch House gate stood Mr. Bat Brydges, handy man of the Valley, quizzing the ranch hands, quizzing the German cook, quizzing Calamity at the very foot of rustic slab steps that ran up from the basement.

"What is he after, Calamity?"

The half breed woman had dashed up the back stairs to Eleanor's room.

"He want t' know if Waylan—Ranga fellah—has ever stay here, dis house—he ever go back Cabin House—tepee on hill—night dey keel leetle boy?"

Even then, Eleanor did not realize the drift of the handy man's activities. She thought perhaps, he, too, might be anxious about Wayland.

"What did you tell him, Calamity?"

"I tell heem," Calamity dropped her soft patois to a guttural, "I tell heem, y' go Hell!"

"Ca-lam-ity?" rebuked Eleanor.

But what was it in the gentleman's jaunty air, in the smile of the sleepy tortoise-shell eyes, in the play of a self-conscious dimple round the fat double chin? Eleanor had not passed from her own apartment to the big living room before a repulsion that she could not define swept over her in a physical shudder; and Mr. Bat Brydges' report to the Senator of that interview had been fairly accurate. She did not know that she had not greeted him with the common courtesy due a caller, that she had stood looking past him to the open door, that she had left him standing first on one leg then on the other till Bat had been forced to terminate the interview; and she had not the faintest conception of what her own feeling of repulsion meant. He had scarcely gone before she wished she had asked him about those two bodies found in the Desert. As a matter of fact, she called up the "Smelter City Independent." The editor could give her no details. He asked her very particularly who was inquiring; and having nothing to conceal, she did not conceal it. He allayed her fears in almost the words that the Senator had used to lay Bat's suspicions, if the bodies had been those of Government men, the Ranger's Badge would have been found and the news flashed all over America.

"Oh, thank you, so much! You know the sheep lost on the Rim Rocks belonged to our ranch; and I wouldn't like to think that he had lost his life defending our interests."

Then something odd occurred with the telephone. She distinctly heard the voice at the other end telling somebody that, "Brydges was up there now." Then, the voice was assuring her, "They would let her know if they heard anything more."

Eleanor rang off with a sense of relief; and yet with a sickening feeling, of what? It was the same feeling she had had when Brydges came in with his jaunty air.

She was standing at the Ranch House gate waiting for the stage to Smelter City. Calamity had carried down the yellow suit case. The words came from Eleanor's lips before she thought; or she could never have asked the question:

"Calamity, who was it took your little baby away?"

The suit case fell from the Indian woman's hand.

"D' pries'," she said, "Father Moran."

Eleanor thought a moment, racking her memory in vain for that name in her convent life of Quebec. She was digging her toe in the dust of the road.

"Was that before or after you went to the Black Hills, Calamity?"

But Calamity had gone without a word; and the stage came whipping across the bridge from the Moyese Ranch; a double-tandem stage driven by a bronzed fellow with one arm, whose management of the reins absorbed Eleanor so that she forgot to notice the fat form hoisting her suit case to the roof. Then, she was inside; and the door had swung shut; and the fat form squeezed in next to the door;

and she was lost in her own thoughts oblivious of her close packed neighbors till the stage stopped again with a jerk, and the sharp edge of a black cart-wheel-hat decorated with plumes enough for an undertaker's wagon cut a swath that threatened to slice off one of Eleanor's ears.

"I beg your pardon," said Eleanor.

"Oh, I guess tha' wuz my fault," and a mouthful of gold teeth above an ash colored V of neck and below the most wonderful straw stack of wheat colored hair simpered up at Eleanor from beneath the black cart-wheel-hat; simpered and ended up in a funny little tittering laugh. Eleanor took a quick glance at her neighbors, all men but the cart-wheel-hat to one side and a little young-old lady opposite with a hectic flush, and very protuberant hard mouth and beady little brown eyes. Eleanor noticed the brown eyes were accompanied by red hair, and she recognized the presiding genius of the English Colony.

"A beautiful morning for a ride down the Valley," remarked Eleanor absently.

"What? I beg your pardon? Did you speak to me?"

It wasn't the words. It was the hard tone of surprise.

"We're in luck to have such a morning to ride down," amplified Eleanor.

"Yes," said the lady with the hectic flush; and Eleanor felt the gold teeth simpering beneath the undertaker's plumes.

What was it? Eleanor took a second look at the two women, and recognized both, the Sheriff's wife and the English lady. They were arrayed gorgeously, her neighbor across in lavender silk, her elbow traveller in black with a profusion of cheap lace round the ash colored V of exposed skin: Eleanor wished the woman had powdered all the way down. She, herself, had come garbed for the dust of stage travel, a broad brimmed English sailor and a kakhi duster motoring coat. Was it because she was not garbed as the others that they rebuffed her friendly overtures, she wondered. At the next stop, she passed out to go up and ride on the driver's seat, manifestly an impossible feat for ladies in lavender and undertaker's plumes. A fat hand reached forward to shove the door open. It was Bat Brydges'. She nodded her thanks, and the handy man bowed with a sweep of his hat naming her aloud for the whole stage to hear. If a look could have blasted Mr. Bat Brydges, he would have been dissolved in gaseous matter from the expression that passed over the face under the sailor hat. She heard the hilarity break bounds inside as she mounted the driver's seat; and felt very much as you have felt when you have come out of the clatter of the orchestra pit where you have chanced to sit next to a musk-scented neighbor.

But she forgot the lavender grandee and the gold teeth and the undertaker's plumes, as she sat on the upper seat with the one-armed driver behind the double tandem grays. The sun was coming up over the Rim Rocks in a half fan of fire; and the light was on the Ridge; and all the silver cataracts tossing down the sheer

wall shone wind-blown spray against the evergreens. The Valley widened as it dropped to the leap and fume and swirl of the foaming river; and the double tandem grays kept step with a proud chacking up of heads and bristling of arched necks and movement of thigh and shoulder muscles under satin skin like shuttles.

"You must be very proud of your beautiful horses," she said to the driver.

The driver 'lowed he was: that 'un dappled on the rump there, that 'un was foaled, let me see? year o' the rush to the Black Hills, with a squirt of chewing tobacco over the front wheel and a damn't, and another squirt and more damn't's; and before Eleanor realized the one-armed driver had asked her if she wouldn't like to learn to drive double tandems; and she had the reins in her hands; and the double tandem grays took the bit in their teeth to show what double tandem grays and ample oats could do.

"How-do," called the driver with a squirt of tobacco over the front wheel at a rancher loping across the trail. "How-do; y' are up early, y' son of a gun! What d' y' know?"

"Senator's goin' t' stand again this fall," called the man.

The driver emitted another damn't in true Western style just as innocently as an Easterner says "Oh, yes, indeed," or an Englishman says "My word." In fact Eleanor lost count of the damn't's.

"How ever do you manage it?" she asked shifting the reins.

"With my one arm, y' mean?" The stage driver laughed and aimed more chewing tobacco at that innocent front wheel; and the question drew out such a story of heroism in spite of the damn't's and the tobacco squids as made her proud of human clay, just as she had been ashamed of human something or other inside the stage with the lavender silk and the gold teeth and Bat's frozen tallow smile.

"Why, it was the year o' the Kootenay rush, ye mind? No, ye don't mind, ye weren't born then, were y'? Damn't," and a punctuation in tobacco. "Wall, 'twas in the early days 'fore we had steam hoists an' things." (Another punctuation mark —a good big one.) "We was usin' an old hand hoist. Guess the shaft was about hundred feet down—straight down, an' we was gettin' in the pay streak, bringin' up barrels o' rock showin' more color every load. Wall, them loads was hauled up to the dumps by a hand hoist y' onderstand, kind of winch, like y' turn a handle in old fashioned down East wells. Wall—" (Another punctuation mark and another dip for ink, so to speak, from the plug in the hand of the one-armed driver.) "boys were all down under. Say—'twas in the days when ol' Calamity was runnin' the hills. Know Calamity? She was a wild 'un in *her* day; an' they say MacDonald, the rich sheep man, has kind o' sorter given her a home these late years. Wall—I ain't the one t' say he shouldn't. Her morals weren't much better in them days than the crazy patch quilts ladies used to make down East when I was a boy; but she's settled down I hear; an' I ain't the one to say MacDonald don't deserve credit for what he's done. She saved many a poor miner's life from the Indians in

them ol' days, saved 'em by a shave, carried 'em in on her shoulder to the Deadwood Hospital, or nussed 'em well on the spot, an' all the while, she wazn't no better than she ought t' be; wazn't there a woman in Scripture like that? Kind o' seems to me the church folks forgets that Rahub gurl! Wall—'twas about those days." (More showers of damn't's and tobacco on that front wheel.) "Boys was all under. Big load of rock was comin' up. I waz man at the hoist, man on the easy job that day. Wall—wad y' believe it, the damn thing bruk—bruk plum whoop an' started spinnin' round back side first with the load o' rock an' the boys under comin' up the ladder. I yelled for a kid we had workin' round to get me a jack wrench, a hand spike, Hell, any ol' thing to stop her kitin' that load o' rock down on the boys! Kid stood gopin' there an' sayin' 'What d'y' say?' Say,—damn't—an' that load o' rock goin' plumb down on the boys, heavy enough to smash 'em to pulp. There weren't nothin' handy near 'cept me, so I jumped this here arm that you find missin' right into the wheel! It stopped her all right, the load didn't fall on the boys; and they got up all right by the ladder; but—say, mebbe the cogs o' that damn wheel didn't do a thing to my arm. Say—the doctor didn't need to amputate it. That winch did him out o' his job."

"You mean," said Eleanor, slowing the grays to a reluctant walk down grade, while the driver clamped the front wheel brake with his foot, "you mean because there was no crowbar, or anything to stop the hoist flying backwards and killing the men under the load of rock, you mean because there was no crowbar, you jumped into the wheel, yourself?"

"Sure," said the man astonished at her question; and because Eleanor was a true Westerner and didn't mind the tobacco squids and the damn't's in the least (where they belonged) she gave that one-armed driver a look that would have made any man proud: only the one-armed driver didn't see it.

"They took up a purse an' wanted to give me a perscription—damn't, but I told 'em t' turn it in t' the Horspital. Any man w'd a' done same for a yellow dog. What d'y' want t' give a fellow a medal for not bein' stinkin' coward?"

Eleanor laughed. It was a happy silver laugh like the light on the Ridge cataracts. Somehow, the one-armed stage driver with his unconscious heroism and equally unconscious profanity gave her a sense of the big wholesome unconscious outdoor world, just as the lavender silks and undertaker's plumes and tallow smile inside smothered her with a drugged sense of heavy unwholesome musk. The one-time miner did not know it; but what Eleanor was saying to herself was—"So much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us." Then she thought of the Senator and his genial smile and his voice soft as a woman's, and his love of flowers. He, too, must have his vein of heroism, if one could only find it. She thought and thought as the tandem grays arched their necks at the sound of the tramway bells in the nearing city; thought and thought, vague wordless thoughts

full of hope; vague womanish thoughts that women have thought since time began of finding that magic vein of heroism in the Man that is to transmute slag into gold, hog into human, and greed into generosity, and lust into love; thought and thought the gentle womanish hoping-against-hope thoughts that women have worn out their lives thinking and enslaved their bodies and pawned their souls. If only one could find *that* vein in the Senator, the battle would be won without the letting of blood and smashing of reputations; as if peace without victory were ever worth while since time began.

Then, the stage was rattling over the pressed brick pavement of Smelter City; and the tandem grays were pretending to shy at the electric cars; and the one-armed driver came near expectorating his entire internal anatomy out of sheer joy and pride in the arched necks and the frail driver with the black curls under the broad brimmed English sailor hat handling the reins. She had pulled off her heavy buckskin gloves; and she never knew how absurdly like matches her fingers looked to the big one-time miner beside her; nor how the exhilaration brought the tints of the painters' flower to her cheeks and the light of the Alpine pools to her eyes. Every man on the street turned and looked back, while the gold teeth inside blinked with self conscious certainty that *they* did it; and the lavender silks wore a peculiarly cynical smile. Loafers sat up and followed the stage with eager eyes far as they could see it and said, "By Gawd—whose gurl is that?" Oh, Mr. Bat Brydges intended every bar room buffer and loafer in the State should know, 'whose girl' that was before night. Everything was fair in love and war; and Bat considered he had run down a case of both. According to his lights, he had; but his lights were smutty and in need of trimming.

The stage dropped the gold teeth at a dentist's office, and the lavender silks at a manicure's 'studio,' I believe she called it; and Bat swung off while the coach was still moving; and Eleanor reluctantly gave up the reins at the transcontinental station.

"Thank you so much. I don't know when I have had as good a time," she said, giving the stage driver the sensation of a king in disguise.

And, of course, the transcontinental was late. When was it not late, when you were in a hurry?

"How late?"

"Four hours, last report," the operator answered.

She sent her suit case across to the hotel, and shopped, and loitered up and down the platform. It was not until afterwards she remembered one of the loafer brigade dangling legs from the station platform looking over his shoulder with an evil smile.

"Say—d' y' see the evening paper?" he had asked. "That's her;" and there was a laugh that somehow sent her back inside the station feeling vaguely uneasy.

"I think I'll telephone them up at the Ranch not to keep dinner waiting," she

said to the operator.

He was reading the paper. He looked at her a moment before answering. If a human face could have been expressed in a punctuation mark, that agent's face should have been drawn in a big question mark, with the eyes put somewhere in the hook, and the neck growing longer and longer as he looked.

"Public telephone right across the road," he said.

In avoidance of the loafers' looks, she had walked unheeding straight into the Senator's office. Her first instinct was to withdraw. Then, she saw Brydges; and that curious sensation of repulsion obsessed her. She literally shot the handy man in full retreat with one glance. Then, the joy of the ride down, the heroism of the driver, came back. Perhaps it was the jar of roses, but the thought came what if *she* could find that vein of heroism in the Senator. When women risk their souls on that "if" and the souls of friends and children; is it vanity, I wonder, or is it the will o' the wisp light that lights erring feet to darkness?

She thought more highly of the Senator that he did not offer to shake hands, just as most of us would think more highly of Judas Iscariot if he had not kissed Christ. Being a Westerner, she had the Westerner's horror of a maverick sporting the brand of a thoroughbred. The Senator took off his glasses and sat tapping them above the U. S. Geological Survey map.

"I trust," he began, "that my man expressed to you my deep regret—my deep distress over—"

"Don't . . . please, don't," interrupted Eleanor, with a passionate break in her voice. "I know you are honest, Senator Moyese, honest to what you believe is right; and I don't want you to feel that you have to lie because I am a woman."

The Senator opened his mouth, took a breath, and shut it again.

She understood him well enough to know that if he had to toy with his glasses for a twelve month, he would wait for her to play down first. Yet she recognized the instinct of his manhood to rescue the confusion of her embarrassment when he put forward his hand casually and said—"See my roses, Miss Eleanor? They are a new variety of American Beauties. See, each petal has a white veining? Know how those roses are produced? Ages and ages of poor trash worthless common roses have been sacrificed to produce this perfect type."

"That's your theory of life, isn't it?" she asked, vaguely conscious that the dragon was disarming her anger.

"Isn't it nature's?" asked Moyese gently. "The fit survive because they are fit; the exceptional; the few; while the worthless go to waste?"

Before Eleanor realized, she had lost all consciousness of self and was pleading passionately leaning forward across the desk.

"Isn't Christ's theory better, Senator, to make all the unfit into fit? Isn't Christ's theory the theory of science? Science aims to make a whole field of perfect corn; not just one perfect cob. I know that; for I read it in your speech at

the opening of the Agricultural College. If we keep on sacrificing the interests of the many to the interests of the few, aren't we working back to savagery, Senator?"

The Senator drew the finest of the roses from the jar. "It's a matter of taste, perhaps, Miss Eleanor; but I prefer this to a whole jarful of scrubs."

"Then you are not working for democracy. It's just as Mrs. Williams says, all you foreign multimillionaires are subverting our Nation by working for old fashioned despotism in disguise; sacrificing the many to the few."

"Oh, does Mrs. Williams say that?" asked Moyese reflectively, pushing back from the desk and clasping his hands round one knee. "That may be; republicanism doesn't necessarily mean letting the blockheads rule! It may mean giving equal opportunity for the fit men to come to the top and rule. Did you come in to talk over these things with me, Miss Eleanor? I must make a convert of you; it would win over Wayland and Williams and your father."

"No, I didn't. I came in here by mistake. The operator told me I'd find a public telephone across the road; and I wasn't noticing where I was going, and I came in here; but all the way down, I had been thinking of you, Senator Moyese. I kept thinking if you could only be made to see the New Day that is dawning, perhaps you would meet it half way. I rode in the driver's seat coming down; and he told me how he lost his arm; Senator, think of the hero in him?"

"And you thought there might be some of the hero in me, too?" Moyese laughed, the noiseless genial laugh creasing his chin and his white vest.

"While you laugh, you are letting your rose wither."

He handed the rose to her. "Yes, I know that fellow. I was in the Kootenay when he lost his arm, torn out all bloody right from the shoulder socket; had to pry the cogs up to get him out. They collected a purse of a thousand for him; but he wouldn't take a cent: handed it over to the hospital. Something in that fellow bigger than self kind of popped out and surprised himself."

She noticed him looking at the wall clock as he talked, but not being a business woman did not know what that meant.

"There's something bigger than self with us all, Senator; and we have to work for it."

"My dear child, do you think you need to tell an old stager that?" He was kicking the creases out of his trousers. This time, she could not mistake the signal, and felt her womanish idealism of mining for the hidden vein of heroism both childish and cheapening. She rose and placed the flower back on the desk.

"There's something bigger than you or me, my dear," he went on, "something for which every man worth his salt must work and fight, and which a woman does not understand."

"And that is?"

"His party," said Moyese.

“But Senator, there is something bigger than party, and if a man works against That, he’ll injure his party.”

“And that is?”

“His Nation,” said the girl.

Moyese gave her a quick sharp look that was not unkindly. In fact, Eleanor could read that it was lonely, irritated, isolated.

“My dear,” he said, coming round where she stood, “we differ on fundamentals. The whole nation to-day is divided on fundamentals. I’m no mealy mouth to curse plutocracy in order to please the mob. Plutocracy fills the workman’s dinner pail and keeps the mills going and opens the mines and builds the railroads. Mobocracy, your grubby corn cob and trashy roses, that, what does it do? Mouthe and mouthe and try to pull down what is above it! It will have to be fought out! No? It will not be another French Revolution! *Our bullets are ballots, nowadays*; and the American people get exactly the form of Government which they want. If they want another form, it remains with them to fight for it. The umpire of all is fact—Miss Eleanor; and the facts of each side will have to be fought out; the better man will win; be sure of that! *The facts that are facts not fictions will win, with ballots for bullets*. For my part, I’ll not dodge the issue; and I hope you’ll not think me any the less of the hero for that?”

He had extended his hand as he talked, and to her surprise, she found herself taking it when with a wave of revulsion, the memory of the Ridge and the Rim Rocks came back.

“And government is a mere game of politics?” she said. “And politics resolves itself into brute force; and a murder more or less doesn’t matter? Fordie, I suppose, would be classed as one of the scrubs sacrificed for this perfection of party?”

His hand dropped hers as if she had struck him.

“You did not know that you were overheard? ‘See that no harm comes to the boy.’ You did not mean Fordie to be murdered; but they were to crowd the sheep over ‘to beat Hell,’ ‘the sheep were to go it blind’—my father’s and Mr. Williams’ property was to be sacrificed to build up the fortune of the cattle barons: they too, I suppose, are scrubs sacrificed among the many for the wealth of the one, who happens to be yourself. You broke the law; but because you did not order Fordie’s murder, you think the blood guiltiness from that broken law does not rest upon you. You say it must all be fought out. You force the fight—”

He raised his hand to stop her. She remembered afterwards how ashy white and aged his face became. He walked to the door and opened it. She passed out. So that was to what her womanish mining for the vein of the ideal heroism had led. She had been politely shown out. It was as Wayland had said: there was no middle course; and it was also as the Senator had said, it must be fought out, and the bullets were to be ballots.

The Senator slammed his door shut and snapped the yale lock. Then he noticed the rose she had left, and tossed it in the spittoon.

"Thank God," he ejaculated fervently as he sank back in the swing chair, "*Thank God women are not in politics. There is always something to be thankful for*."

Then, an idea seemed to strike him. He rang the telephone with fury, and it didn't improve his temper to hear the saucy little central informing her elbow mate that "that ol' fellah wuz burnin' the wire up alive."

"Is that 'The Herald'? Brydges there? That you, Brydges? Listen, the night you were up on the Ridge, have you any perfect proof that Wayland didn't go down when you were asleep? Eh? You turned in at ten; and you found him still stamping about at twelve? Is that it? What? No? Don't be a damphool, *cut that out*. Of course, he didn't go down to the Ranch House. Cut that whole scandal thing out. There's nothing in it; but I think we can locate our missing knight errant. Understand? He's got to be smashed? What? *You had printed the scandal story before you ever came in to me at all*? Dictated it right in to the typo machines? In the 'Independent'? Oh, well, I'm glad it didn't go in the 'City Herald'? But it did go in; one evening paper?" Then the wrath of the strong man broke bounds. If he had been a stage villain the curtain drop would have fallen on a red faced gentleman pounding the desk, tearing at the telephone, hurling his chair about the office and generally, as the saucy little central remarked, "eating the wire up alive."

When Brydges' chief indulged in explosives that necessitated the repair of furniture the next day, the handy man always stood strictly and silently at attention. He knew the meaning of the stage thunder: it was the trick of the Indian medicine man, who fires guns to bring down rain. Bat knew that the fulminations were of a piece with all the other orders to do and not to do, an effort to get results while diverting the thunderbolt from the rain maker's head; for by one of those strange contingencies that Shakespeare defines as an opportunity of evil, when the handy man had gone to the 'Herald,' the news editor chanced to be out. Bat crossed to the 'Independent's' office. It lacked but half an hour of the time to lock up the press, and on condition that the story should be "a scoop," Bat was sent out to the composing room to dictate straight to the printer, standing over the linotype machine.

What was "the story" that he dictated? If you know where to look, you can see its prototype seven times a week. It was written jocularly; oh, it was exceedingly funny with all sorts of veiled references to naughtiness that couldn't be printed, pretty naughtiness, you understand, the kind you wink at, as was to be expected from a little beauty, a brunette, chic, etc. (I forget how many French words Bat tucked in: he had to look 'em up in the French-English appendix to Webster's

Dictionary as the proof came off the galley), the well known daughter of the richest sheep rancher in the Valley. “The story” was headed: “Pretty Scandal in Peaceful Valley.” Bat played “the human interest” feature for all it was worth; also the trick of suspended interest. It began by informing the public that a pretty scandal was disturbing a certain Valley not a hundred miles from the Rim Rocks, the essential details of which could not be given, would probably *never* be printed, for obvious reasons. Then followed a solid paragraph of nonsense verse inserted as prose; about a Ranger-man, Ranger-man, running away, ’Cause pa-pah, dear pa-pah comes home for to-day; But his Lincoln green coatie the Ranger forgot; And pa-pah, dear pa-pah came home raging hot; The Ranger-man, Ranger-man was still on the run, For pa-pah, dear pa-pah was out with a gun, He’d heaved up his war club and jangled his spear, And swore by my halidom what doth that coat here, etc., etc. Any school boy could have trolled off yards of the same drivelling cleverness; and Eleanor’s innocent telephone call was, of course, lugged in.

There followed a garbled account of poor Calamity’s errant days among the miners of the Black Hills. The account had no reference to her heroism in the early mining days, when she roved in man’s attire over the hills to rescue wounded miners from the Sioux. It set forth only her blazoning sins; evidently on the assumption that carrion is preferable to meat. And then tucked ingeniously into this account was veiled mention of a rich sheepman, too well known to need naming, who was evidently making reparation for the errors of his youth by according to the mother as good treatment as the daughter under the same roof. Not a name was mentioned except Calamity’s. I trust it is obvious to you that it was not libelous, because it was without malice. In fact, if you want to know the ear marks of a handy man’s “story,” look out for the smart gentlemen in veiled references without any facts which can be transfixed by either a pin or a handspike. When you find the innuendo without the handhold of fact, lick your lips if you are keen on carrion; for I promise that you have come on a morsel.

Bat did even better than the clever story dictated straight to the typo in the composing room. Always in the West, there flit in and out what we Westerners used to call “floaters,” gentlemen (and ladies) who come in on a pullman car and go out on a pullman car and sometimes venture as far away from safety as a hotel rotunda, then syndicate their impressions of the West, in the East, and gravely correct twenty year Westerners with twenty minute impressions. I don’t believe on the whole, as Westerners, we like them very much; but obviously, one doesn’t kill a mosquito with a hammer.

Bat caught such a floater on the delayed transcontinental express. He was seeing the West through a car window. The East will not see the jocularity of that fact. The West will, though it may smile with a twist. Bat’s floater was working for a Chicago boomster, who had issued a magazine to boom Western real estate, suburban lots seven miles from a flat car, which was all there was of the city. For

exactly fifteen dollars (when the floater's impressions came out, I made exact inquiries as to what Bat had paid him; and it seemed to me that floater sold himself very cheap) the travelling impressionist took over Bat's story of "the Pretty Scandal in Peaceful Valley" and rehashed it with the name MacDonald given as Macdonel, and syndicated the scandal against the Forest Service throughout the East.

The transcontinental express had made up lost time and came roaring in just as the stage rattled up to the platform. MacDonald and Williams stepped off the observation car. Eleanor shook hands.

"You know about the sheep?" she asked.

"Yes, we have your letter," answered MacDonald. "That's why we stayed so long buying grazing ground in the Upper Pass."

"Here, boy." He bought an evening paper; and helped Eleanor inside the stage. Then he mounted to the top with Williams. There were only three other occupants in the stage, the lady of the lavender silks, the gold teeth, and a workman, sodden drunk and drowsy, in the upper corner. The lady of the lavender silks had a complexion that looked as if it had been dipped in a fountain of perennial youth. She was leaning over the evening paper which the undertaker plumes had evidently shown her. The heat had not improved Eleanor's stiff linen collar and the dust had certainly not added to the style of her kakhi motor coat. It was not until afterwards she remembered how both the heads flew apart from the evening paper the moment she entered the stage.

"Have you had a pleasant day shopping, my dear?" It was the lavender silk with the hard mouth actually breaking in a smile. It was the "my dear" that struck Eleanor's ear as odd. The manner said plainly as words could say "You weren't before; but you *are* now."

"Oh, it was rather hot," answered Eleanor quietly.

"Y're on the wrong soide. Y're in the sun. If y'll sit over b'side off me, my dear gurl—"

Eleanor nearly exploded. 'Girl' was the limit: 'lady' would have been worse; 'woman' was good enough for her; but, 'gurl.' It was the manner, the proprietary manner, you are one of us *now*: what had happened? She did not answer. She raised her eye lashes and looked the speaker over from the undertaker's plumes and the gold teeth and the ash colored V of skin to the clock-work stockings and high heeled slippers. Then, the stage was stopping violently and her father appeared on the rear steps at the door. She had never seen him look so. His eyes were blazing. It was not until afterwards she remembered how the lavender silks had crushed the evening paper all up and sat upon it.

"There is a little girl up on the seat with the driver. You'll find it pleasanter there going up the Valley."

She remembered afterwards, while her father gave her a hand up the front wheel, a voice inside the stage exclaimed: “Say, thought they wuz goin’ to be fireworks. If Dan’d read that in th’ paper ’bout me, he’d a gone on awful.”

“Oh, no, he’s a thoroughbred all right, if it is part Indian.”

Then her father and Williams had gone down inside the stage; and she was left with the driver and a diminutive little bit of humanity, that looked as if it had escaped from one of the rag shops of Shanty Town. She wore a tawdry thing on her head with bright carmine ostrich plumes that had lost their curl in the rain. A red plush cape was round her shoulders; and Eleanor could hardly believe her eyes —she had not seen them since she went through the East End of London—they were copper toed boots.

“M’ name is Meestress Leezie O’Finnigan. What’s y’rs?” demanded the little old face.

Eleanor didn’t answer. She was trying to think what had changed the driver’s friendly manner. He had neither greeted her nor proffered the reins. And now, oh, philosopher of the human heart, for each of us is a philosopher inside, answer me: why did the driver, who was a bit of a hero, and the lavender silk, who was an adventuress, and the gold teeth, who was a slattern, neither pure nor simple, why did each and all eagerly believe the evil, so vague it had not been stated, written by an unknown blackmailer, in the face of the reputation of purity sitting beside them?

“M’ father uz down inside,” continued the child. “He’s sleep. We’re goin’ t’ live on th’ Ridge. D’ y’ know what a Ridge iz? We’re goin’ t’ be waal-thy—m’ father says so. He says we won’t have a thing t’ do but sit toight an’ whuttle un’ sput, un’ whuttle un’ sput fur three years, then the com’ny wull huv t’ pay us what he asks. He says they think they’ll pay him off fur three hun’red; but he says he *knows*, he does; un’ he’s goin’ t’ hold ’em up fur half. Unless they give him half he’ll tell—”

“What?” asked Eleanor, suddenly wakening up to the meaning of the chatter. “What is your father?”

“He’s trunk jes’ now,” said the child. Then she reached her face up to Eleanor’s confidentially. The little teeth were very unclean and the breath was very garlicky, indeed. “He’s goin’ t’ be a dummy,” she whispered with a gurgle of childish glee, “un’ he says he’ll easily hold ’em up for twenty thousand without doin’ a thing fur five years but whuttle un’ sput.”

“A dummy? Oh,” said Eleanor.

Even the driver relaxed enough to flick the tandem grays with his whip and permit a twisted smile to play round the tobacco wad in his cheek.

They ate their late supper in the Ranch House by lamp light, her father scarcely uttering a word, the evening paper still sticking out of his coat pocket.

“I know this sheep affair has been a horrible, hideous loss,” she said. “Is that what’s worrying you, father?”

MacDonald shoved back from the table.

“Pah, that’s nothing,” he said.

He stood waiting till the German cook had removed the dishes. Then he drew the paper from his pocket.

“There’s something here I’m sorry you’ll have to know,” he said. “You won’t understand how low the meaning of most of it is; but I’m sorry they hit you to try and hurt me.”

He threw himself down in a big leather chair. She took the paper mechanically and sat on the arm of the chair to read. She read slowly and deliberately to the end. Then she re-read both columns; and the paper fell from her hands. She did not know it, but the same suppressed fury was blazing in her face as she had seen on his at the stage door.

“So that is what was doing when I went to the Senator’s office this afternoon to plead with him that things could not go on in the old plundering way. That is what his man’s visit meant here the other day to express sympathy with you for the loss of the sheep? Now I understand what the loafers at the station meant, and the driver’s unfriendliness, and those unclean women; and to think they framed it all out of that innocent coat. You know, father, Mr. Wayland had carried Fordie down from the Rim Rocks. We carried the body in together.”

“Where is Wayland?” asked MacDonald; and she poured out the full story of all that had happened. I hope, gentle reader, you will please to observe that if the father had viewed the facts of that recital through the same tainted mind as Mr. Bat Brydges, a breach would have occurred that neither time nor regret could have bridged. I confess when I see breaches occur that wrench lives and break hearts through love harboring suspicion, I don’t think the love is very much worth the name. You can’t both have your plant grow, and keep tearing up the roots to see if they are growing. You can’t both throw mud in a spring and drink out of a well of love undefiled. If love grows by what it feeds on, so does suspicion. He did not once look up questioningly to her eyes. Instead, he reached up and took hold of her hand. For the first time in their lives, father and daughter came together.

“But there is one thing you are mistaken about, father. They did not hit me, to hurt you. They hit me, to stop Dick Wayland.”

“Why, what difference can you make to Wayland?”

She hid her face on his shoulder.

“I love him,” she said.

When the German cook came in with the washed dishes, father and daughter still sat in the big arm chair; and you may depend on it, that flunky carried out to the ranch hands, guzzling over the evening paper in the bunk house, a proper

report of a heart broken father and a repentant daughter; for when we look out on the world, do we see the world at all; or do we see the shadows of our own inner souls cast out on the passing things of life?

CHAPTER XX
A FAITH WORKABLE FOR MEN ON THE JOB

"The point is," said Wayland, "though, we have driven out this nest of beauties, we have no guarantee another nest won't take their place; and so we're not much farther ahead than before, with the chances I'll be called down for exceeding my duties."

"And y'll keep on bein' where y' were before till y' get the Man Higher Up," interrupted Matthews.

They had camped among the red firs where the Desert crossed the State Line and merged from cut rocks to broken timber. It was seven weeks since they had set out from the Upper Mesas of the Rim Rocks, four weeks since they had left the saline pool. Man and beast, fagged to the point of utter exhaustion, retraced steps slower than fresh hunters on an untried trail. Also, going down, they had followed hard wherever fugitives led. Coming back, they struck across to the Western Desert road, and travelled from belt to belt of the irrigation farms, with their orange-green cottonwood groves and bluish-green alfalfa fields and little match box houses stuck out of sight among peach orchards. The parched-earth, burnt-oil smell gave place to the minty odor of hay in wind rows, with the cool water tang of the big irrigation ditch flowing liquid gold in the yellow August light. One evening, Matthews looked back to the looming heat waving and writhing above the orange sands beneath a sky of lilac and topaz round a sunset flowing from a dull red ball of fire. Far ahead, the edges of forested mountain cut the heat haze with opal winged light above what might have been peaks or clouds.

" 'Tis beautiful, Wayland, y'r lone Desert world; but man alive, it's sad! Y' call some the Painted Desert, don't ye? 'Tis like a painted woman, Wayland, vera beautiful, vera fair to look on an' allurin', but a' out o' perspective; an' Wayland, the painted woman is always a bit lonely in the bottom o' her soul spite o' harsh laugh. So is the Desert wi' its harsh silence. Those as like to be shrivelled up wi' thirst, may have it! A'm a plain man!"

Then one morning, the opal swimming above the smoke haze of the North shone,—was it the shape of a cross?

"Wayland, man, look!"

The old frontiersman had taken off his hat.

"Man alive, open y'r throat an' let out a yell."

"I'm too busy drinking in the air," answered Wayland.

And they both laughed. The mule and the broncho stood pointing their ears forward. Wayland's mare, which he had bought at one of the irrigation farms, lifted up her neck and whinnied. It was at that irrigation farm operated by a retired newspaper man from Chicago—they had got a reading of the first newspaper seen

since leaving the Valley and learned that the bodies of the two remaining fugitive outlaws had been found by the railway navvies. Wayland thoughtfully removed his Forest Service medallion. Men do not question each other over much in the West. They had passed on unquestioning and unquestioned, Wayland a disguised figure in his new ready-to-wear kakhi, not a sign of the Forest Service about them, but the green felt hat still worn by the old preacher, and the hatchets fastened to the saddles.

"How many Holy Cross Mountains have y' in the West, Wayland?"

"Three that I know of."

"That's ours, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's ours: the old priests and explorers scattered the name round pretty thick in the old days."

"How far do you make it?"

"About a hundred miles, perhaps more!"

"Been a pilot to the priests and explorers for centuries?"

"I guess so, sir."

"Wayland, may it be so t' th' Nation, now! Y've got a wilderness an' a Red Sea an' a Dead Sea an' a devilish dirty lot o' travellin' to do on th' way t' y'r promised land; an' A'm thinkin', man, y've wasted a lot o' time on the trail worshippin' th' calf; an' God knows who is y'r Moses."

They camped that night among the evergreens with red fir branches for beds, the first beds they had known for seven weeks, with the needled end pointing in and the branch end out, "unless y' want t' sleep on stumps," the old preacher had admonished the bed maker. And during the night, the wind sprang up shaking all the pixie tambourines in the pines and the hemlocks, and setting the poplars and cottonwoods clapping their hands. A spurt of moisture hit the old man's face.

"Man alive, but is that rain?" he asked. Wayland laughed. "Only a drop from a broken pine needle; but rain would taste good, wouldn't it?"

"D' y' smell it? Smell hard! It's like cloves."

Wayland laughed. He had had all these sensations of coming back from South to North before.

The next night, they camped beside a chorus of waterfalls, joyous, gurgling, laughing silver water, not the sullen silent blood red streams of the Desert that flow without a sound but the plunk of the soft bank corroding and falling in. They could not talk. They lay in quiet, listening to the tinkle and trill and treble of the silver flow over the stones; to the little waves lipping and lisping and lapping through the grasses; and when the moon came up, every rill showed a silver light. Wayland was thinking,—need I tell what he was thinking? Was he thinking at all; or was he drinking, drinking, drinking life from a fountain of memory immanent as present consciousness? He tossed restlessly. He sat up with his face in his

hands. When he turned, the old man had risen and was stripping.

"A'm goin' t' find a pool an' go in, Wayland. Dry farmin' may be good for crops; but this dry bath business o' y'r Desert,—'tis not for a North man. Better come along! If A can find it to my neck, y'll need a cant hook to get me out 'fore daylight!"

They had come back from their plunge and were spreading the slickers above the fir branches for bed, when Matthews began to talk in a low dreamy voice, more as a man thinking out loud than one uttering a confessional. It was the first word of religion the Ranger had heard him utter. Wayland had really come to wonder when the old preacher prayed. When he came to know him better, he realized that a good man may pray standing on his feet, or striding to duty, readily as on prone knees.

" 'Tis like the water o' life, Wayland! Men laugh at that phrase to-day! Oh, A know vera well, we've no time for an old or a new dispensation nowdays. We're too busy wi' the golden calf, an' the painted woman, an' th' market place, an' th' den o' thieves; an' when th' vision faileth, the people perish! 'Ye shall have a just balance an' a just ephah'; 'an' take away y'r offerings an' y'r burnt offerings an y'r gifts, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Ram *that* down the throat of y'r church-buildin' thieves, an' y'r bribe-givin' pirates, who steal a billion out o' th' Nation's pocket, then take out an insurance policy against a Hell, they're no so sure doesn't exist, by givin' back a million t' th' people they've plundered! Tell me y'r old dispensation's past? A could preach a sermon from th' oldest book in the Bible w'ud burn up Fifth Avenue an' have y'r churches sendin' in a call for the p'lice t' cart me away t' a lunatic asylum! Ah, yes, A know they'll tell y' A'm not learned an' don't know Hebrew! No; but A know th' language o' th' man on the street; an A know life; an' A know God; an' A know how to putt righteousness in the end o' my doubled fist; which is what th' world is wantin'. Y'r learned men, what are they do in' for th' man on the street? 'Darkening counsel without knowledge,' while the people go gropin' in the dark for light.

"Y' wonder how a man, who was a whiskey smuggler an' a gambler an' a contractor, who could skin the Devil, comes to be a preacher, Wayland; a missionary t' th' Cree?"

"Yes, I have wondered, sometimes," confessed Wayland. "I could not just reconcile you with the poverty-stricken, down-in-the-mouth—"

"Don't say 'poverty-stricken', Wayland! A'm . . . rich. A've *never* known want! God has taken care of me since A put it squarely up to Him! A've my wife! A've my children! A've my ranch; an' my ranch pays for the school! A've never known want! Why, man, thirty dollars a year is more than A need for m' clothes! A'm rich! What wud A be doin' goin' among a lot o' kiddie boys t' study Hebrew when A know the language o' the man on the street; an' A know God? 'Twas the

bishop's idea t' have me come t' College at forty years o' age an' potter t' A-B-C an' white collar an' clerics buttoned up the back an' a' the rest." The old frontiersman laughed. "Poh! What for wud A waste m' years doin' that? A'd wasted forty servin' the Devil. A'd no more years t' waste. A must be up, up, up an' doin', Wayland, the way y'r up an' doin', for the Nation. A'd earned m' livin' when A served th' Devil! A would earn m' livin' when A served God; an' as A spoke th' Cree, A tackled them first; an' now we're buildin' our hospital.

"How did it happen, y' ask?" The old frontiersman sat down on a log. "God knows! A don't! A can no more tell y', Wayland, what happened t' me, than y' cud tell a man what comin' off th' Desert an' bathin' in a cool mountain stream was like; no more than y' cud tell what happened t' y', when y' first looked in her eyes an' read, love! God, man, it *was* love! That's what happened t' me! A all of a sudden got t' see what life meant when ye bathed in love. God looked into m' eyes, Wayland, that was it! An' all th' dirt o' me shrivelled up an' th' mud in m' manhood, way yours did when y' looked in her eyes! A needed washin', Wayland, that was it, an' then A saw Him on the Cross as y' see *that*—yon Cross there in the sky. 'Sense o' sin!' Man alive, A'd never heard them words till that night."

"What night?" asked Wayland, quietly.

"Oh, 'twas a hot night, Wayland, my boy; an' hot for more reasons than one. Th' tin horns an' the plugs an' the toots had come up t' our construction camp, an' of a Monday mornin' after Sunday's spree, y' cud count fifty dead navvies, Chinks an' Japs an' dagoes, washed down th' river after gamblers' fights an' chucked up in the sands o' Kickin' Horse! Well, a lot o' big fellows o' th' railway company had come thro' that day on the first train. There was Strathcona, who was plain Donald Smith in them days, an' Van Horn, who was manager, an' Ross, who was contractor! A'd been workin' m' crews on the high span bridge, there,—y' don't know,—well no matter, 'tis the highest in the Rockies an' dangerous from a curve! A didn't want that train load o' directors to risk crossin': wasn't safe! M' crew hadn't one main girder placed; but Ross was a headstrong dour man; an' Smith—Smith wud a' sent a train thro' Hell in them days to prove that railway could be built. Full lickety smash their train came onto that bridge o' mine off the sharp curve: the dagoes went yellow as cheese wi' fear, th' Chinks chattered in their jaws, an' the Japs: well the Japs hung on to the girder an' the cranes. A saw th' bridge heave an' swerve, an' th' girder went smashin' to th' bottom o' yon creek bed so far below y' could scarcely see the water; Ross was ridin' wi' th' engineer. Ross kept his head, ordered them to throw throttle open. All that saved that train load o' directors was th' train got across before th' weight smashed thro'; way a quick skater can cross thin ice. Man alive, but A was mad, riskin' m' crew o' two hundred workmen for a train load o' rash directors! Th' train stopped! A dashed up! Ross opened out, his throttle was full open: so was mine; an' th' steam an' smoke escapin' from yon big mogul,—well, Wayland, them was my

unregenerate days! A may as well confess, Wayland, A gave him back all he'd given with sulphur thrown in extra; till Donald Smith poked his head out o' th' private car callin', 'Go on, Ross! Go on, what are you delayin' for?' Well, then, three of us contractors and th' company doctor was summoned to th' coast next week. We were all so mad at the fool rashness, we had our resignations in our pockets. They had our pay checks ready; but when they saw all four of us had our resignations written, well, everybody took a cool breath; an' A think mebbee th' wise little man o' that private car sent across something to help us wash away bitter memories! Anyway, 'twas a hot night, Wayland! Y' couldn't drink one of the four under th' table; an' we had cashed our checks at the pay car! A was playin' wi' th' doctor for partner! Mebbee, it was that little night cap from the private car, mebbee, well, in an hour or two, three month's wages for four men was in the middle o' that table; an' mebbee th' loafers in that saloon didn't sit up! Mebbee, somebody from that private car didn't saunter in t' look us four fools over! Wayland man, we won it all, th' doctor an' me! Th' other two wanted to play on their watches, they wud a' pawned th' clothes off their backs; but we wouldn't let them! We gave 'em back enough to grub stake 'em back to their job! Then some one says, th' vera words: A can hear them yet, 'Let's go across an' hear those damned evangelists: there's a white faced whiskers, an' a little clean shaved jumpin' jack skippin' all over the backs o' the church seats pretendin' he's Henry Ward Beecher an' sayin' in a fog horn voice, 'I like that.' Let's go an' raise Hell.

"Wayland, man, we went across! 'Twas all true, there was the white faced fat man; an' there was the little clean chopped chap jumpin' all over the backs o' th' seats; an' there was a lot o' snivellin' Saints in Israel, women that cry an' sissie men that get converted an' converted at every meetin'! Man, Wayland, A'd like to dump th' job lot o' such folks out in a cesspool! They do religion more harm than the Devil! They're about as like what fightin' Christians ought to be as a spit wad's like a bullet! Well, we went in with a whoop; but God wasn't out for the sissies that night, Wayland: he was out with a gun for red blood men! He got us, Wayland! That's all! 'Twasn't the poor puny preachers, perhaps 'twas th' music: th' fat one cud sing, but when we came out the doctor was cryin'; poor fellow he killed himself in D. T.'s later; an' A was all plugged up wi' cold in m' head blowin' m' nose! 'Boys,' says I, 'here's where I get off. Here's y'r money back. A've put up a pretty good fight for the Devil so far an' A've earned m' way! Now, A'm goin' t' fight for God an' earn m' way!' They didn't want to take the money back. They didn't believe it. A finished my job on the railroad, then A slummed it in th' cities, this was when the bishop tried to turn me school boy at forty, an' to dig in y'r graveyard o' theology; that was before m' brother was bishop and why, A hiked for Indians, Wayland! A know the Cree tongue, an' A know the need o' decency in th' tepees, an' A know the trick o' puttin' Christianity into th' end o'

m’ fist on white blackguards! An’ that’s all.”

“Is that all?” repeated Wayland; and he gave the old frontiersman the same kind of a look, Matthews had given him that day going up the face of the Pass precipice.

“Yes, that’s all there was to it; an’ A could no more tell y’ what happened, Wayland, than y’ could tell a man what happened when y’ jumped in that pool an’ got washed clean! Better try it, Wayland!”

They sat late listening to the gurgle and trill and tinkle of the water slipping over the stones. Neither man said anything more, nor mouthed, nor kneeled, nor amened, nor did save as men among men do and say: but somehow Wayland had never felt so sure of the God, who was Love and whose Love washed men clean, being, as he told himself, ‘on the job.’ It may not have been religion; and it may not have been theology; but I think it was the workable conviction that many a fighting man incorporates into his life. Perhaps, it was what Christians call Belief, only we have so slimed that good word over with hypocrisy that it’s hard for fighting working men among men, women among women, people on the job, to mine down to the exact business sense of those old religious terms. ‘Slimed with hypocrisy?’ Yes, good friends, ‘slimed with hypocrisy.’ Have you not known men and women, legions of them, who shouted their fire-proof Belief, Belief, Belief, their fire-insurance Belief that was to roof them from rain of fire and act as an umbrella against the results of their own misdeeds; who underscored their Bibles, and prayed long and loud, and proclaimed themselves right, when every day, every act of every day, every leastermost act of very hour, shouted blasphemous denial of what so ever is lovely and pure and unselfish and Christlike; whose influence damned and injured and blighted every life it touched? You must not blame business men and women for wanting a workable faith, a faith that will deliver the goods on the job.

CHAPTER XXI
THE HAPPY AND TRIUMPHANT HOME-COMING

They were up before sunrise following along a rock trail against the face of a mountain through the morning mists, when they turned a sharp crag and came suddenly on one of those flower slopes bevelled out of the forests by snow or ice. The slant sunlight met their faces, and the mists were lifting in a curtain, with a riffle of wind that ran through the grasses like the ripple of waves to the touch of unseen feet. The slope lay literally a field of gold, spikes and umbels of gold—the gold of yellow midsummer light dyed in the asters and sunflowers and great flowered gaillardias and golden rod, with an odor of dried grasses or mint or cloves.

"By George," cried Wayland, "you'd not believe it! Only seven weeks; look!"

Matthews looked but apparently did not see.

"Don't you see? It's the place where the snow slide slumped down!"

"But where in the name o' conscience is all yon snow; and where's th' bodies, Wayland?"

"Washed down to the bottom of the Lake Behind the Peak by this time; or you may find a great rock pile at the foot of the slope."

"A'm thinkin' they'll lie quiet till the crack o' doom, Wayland; but, but do y' no' see a tent back in yon larches across th' slide, man, where the thing knocked us both sprawlin'?"

"By George, yes, I do! Wonder if they're homesteading this next? It's off the N. F."

They put their ponies to an easy lope across the slope and came on a tepee tent with the flap laced tight and no sign of life, but a horse lazily floundering up beside a large fallen log, an empty whiskey bottle on the log, and a man's boot leg protruding from beneath the tent skirt.

"A'm wonderin' if there's a leg in that boot, Wayland."

"It's the sheriff's horse," said Wayland.

"It is, is it? And this is off y'r Forest Range; an' y'r not responsible for what A may be tempted to do?"

The old frontiersman literally avalanched off his broncho and made a dash at the tent flap, frapping it loudly with the flat of his hand.

"Here you—anybody inside?"

No response came from the owner of the leg.

"Here you, waken up." Matthews caught hold of the leg and pulled and pulled. There was a splutter of snorts, and, 'what in Hell's,' and the fat girth of an apple-shaped body ripped the tent pegging free and came out under the tepee skirt followed by another leg, and two oozy hands flabbily clawing at the grass roots to

stop the unusual exit. One hand held a flat flask and the air became flavored with the second-hand fumes of a whiskey cask. The sheriff rolled over after the manner of apple-shaped bodies and sat up on the end of his spine rubbing his eyes. Then, he recollected the dignity of his office and got groggily to his feet, steadying himself by clutches at the tent flap. Then, he emitted a hiccough. " 'Scuse m'," he said thickly. "I'm not well, thas ish not really well! Will one of y' pleash gimme a drink o' water? I been chasin' those damn-cow-boy-outlawsh seven weeks sclean 'cross Shate Sline, I'm dead beat out. Thas you, ain't it Wayland? Kindsh o' you both come after me! Saw y' pash tha' day y' called t' door! Wife tol' me to hide—not risk m' life, women 're all thas way; skeary; skeary. Well, I bin out ever shince y' pashed! I nearly got 'em, too! I caught 'em right in here day after shnow slide had 'em cornered! Gosh, bullets was pretty thick fur about half-an-hour; bu' I cud'nt chross Shtate Line." Something in the old frontiersman's widening eyes and glowering brows stopped the flow of valor; and Sheriff Flood dragged his exhausted virtue across to the log with some difficulty as to knees and elbows, got himself turned round and seated.

"Y' been out huntin' them seven weeks?"

"Yes, seven weeks!" His articulation had cleared a little. "Please gimme m' gun, Wayland!"

"Y' saw them? Y're sure y' saw them?"

"Saw them?" Sheriff Flood laughed in a thin little squeaking laugh. "Gosh A'mighty, I—I fought—them single handed for a whole half day; I think I got one! Least ways, there's a powerful smell som'pin dead comin' up below the Pass Trail. It's too steep to go down to see. I wish I knew."

"Ye wish ye knew? Ye do—do you? 'Tis a wish bone instead of a back bone the likes of you have; and it was too steep to see?" Matthews megaphoned a laugh that echoed loud and long and scornful from the rocks. "I saw a man who was no sheriff climb both up an' down that place too steep for the likes o' you to see; and he climbed to do more than see! 'Twas half an hour y' fought them th' first version? Now 'tis raised to half a day. A'm thinkin' y' be applyin' to th' pension bureau for a hero's triflin' remembrance! Hoh! An' y' saw us pass did y'? An' y'r frowsy dyed-haired slattern wife told us y' were away? An' 't will be a week y' fought 'em when y' tell it again; an' y' been huntin' them seven weeks lyin' sodden drunk in y'r tent wi' a whiskey keg from th' cellar o' y'r white-vested friend? Hoh?"

He caught the flabby body by the collar, spinning the dignity of the law round face down prone upon the log. "A'll not take my fist t' y' as A wud t' a Man! Ye dastard, drunken, poltroon, coward, whiskey sodden lout an' scum o' filth, an'," each word was emphasized by the thud of the empty whiskey bottle wielded as a flail.

"Look out, sir," warned Wayland, rolling from his horse in laughter, "you'll

hurt something, with that bottle."

"Hurt something? N' danger on this wad of fat an' laziness an' lies." (Thud . . . thump . . . and a double tattoo.) He threw the instrument of castigation aside and spinning the hulk of flesh and sprawling legs erect, began applying the sole of his boot. "A'll no take m' fist t' y' as A wud t' a Man! A'll treat y' as A wud a dirty broth of a brat of a boy with the flat o' my hand an' sole leather; y' scum, y' runt, y' hoggish swinish whiskey soak o' bacon an' fat! 'Tis th' likes o' you are the curse o' this country, y' horse-thief sheriff, y' bribe-takin' blackguard guardian o' justice an' right! y' coward not doin' th' crime y' self, but shieldin' them that do."

The sheriff had uttered a splutter of filthy expletives at the first blow, then a yell; now he was bellowing aloud, chattering with terror, screaming to be, "let go, let go! I never done you no harm. I'll have y'r life for this."

"Y' will, will y'? Did y' ask for a drink? Wayland, wait for m' here!"

The Ranger saw the white-haired frontiersman seize one sprawling leg and the shirt front of the struggling limp thing in his hands. He heard him plunging down through the tangle of windfall and brush. There was a bellowing howl and a splash; and Wayland being altogether human flesh and blood doubled up on the ground with laughter.

"That'll cool him," remarked Matthews coming back very red of face and sober, "an' it's not deep enough to drown."

He tore open the tent flap and rolled out a small keg. There was a sound of dregs still rinsing round inside. They could hear the bellows from the brook. The majesty of the law had evidently crawled out on the far side.

"He's the kind o' brave man will slap children, an' call a boy a calf, an' bully timid women, an' knock down little Chinks and dagoes! Oh, A know his kind o' thunder-barrel bravery, that makes the more noise the emptier and bigger it is—they're thick as louse ticks under the slimy side of a dirty board in this world, Wayland; an' they're thick in the girth an' thicker in the skull." Matthews had taken one of the Forest axes from the saddle. He left the whiskey keg in kindling wood.

"He's camped dead beat on the State line, all right, Wayland," said the irate old frontiersman as they mounted their ponies. "He'll have at least some scars to prove his story, but A'm no thinkin' he'll boast round showin' them marks o' glory! 'Tis some satisfaction for my thirst back in the Desert."

"I thought it was about here, on our way out, that a law-loving Briton, I know, gave me a sermon about exceeding law, taking the law in our own hands?"

"Hoh!" said the old man.

And the Sheriff's tent was not the only one seen on the way back to the Ridge. Where the Pass widened to the Valley above the Sheriff's homestead, they came on a huge miner's tent boarded half way up as for winter residence, with eight

tow-headed half-clad urchins thumb in mouth staring out from the open mosquito wire door. There was a smell of onions and frying pork.

"What! a homestead, here, Wayland? D' y'r homesteaders farm on th' perpendicular, or the level; an' what will they grow on these rocks?"

The Ranger had reined in his pony and was running his glance up the precipice face for the posts marking the bounds.

"What do they grow? Water-power, I guess! I'm looking for the lines. The fellow has his posts in for a wire fence; he couldn't get a hundred and sixty acres on the level; and the posts run up the face, by George he's blanketed a cool square mile, mostly on the up and down."

"Your territory, Wayland?"

The Ranger had turned looking back up the Pass.

"The trail marks the lower bounds of the N. F., but this fellow's line runs clear up above the trail. If you bunch this fellow's claim with the Sheriff's, they've got forty miles of the Pass corked up: no way to bring the timber above down but by the River; and they've got the River; and if possession is nine points in the law, they've got our Forest road besides. We'll have to give that fellow warning and if he doesn't move, break his fence down."

"Gutt dae." A big burly Swede came forward from the miner's tent.

"Are you one of the new settlers?" asked Wayland.

"Yaw! A gott pig—varm! Tra—vor—years mak' pig money liffin' y'ere! Mae voman, Ae send her vork citie; Ae build mae house y're!"

"All these children yours?"

"Yaw!" The man smiled bigly, incredulous that any one could doubt.

"Have you filed for a homestead for each of them?"

"Yaw!" The man smiled more pleased than ever, indicating the numerous olive branches by a wave of his hand. "Gott gutt pig varm! Pat, Pat Prydges . . . he sae he pay mae voman, one-huntred; mae, two huntred; mae chil'en . . ." he smiled again, bigly and blandly, "mabbee, five, ten. Yaw—?"

"One hundred and sixty acres each: twelve hundred acres for the kids, not one of age, a quarter section to the man!" Then turning back from Matthews to the foreign settler.

"You've got a thundering big farm?"

"Yaw! Ae mak' a pig yob of itt!"

"By George, I should think you do make a big job of it! This is the way those two-thousand acres of coal lands were swiped! Are you the fellow I gave a permit to cut timber up on the Ridge? What did you change your homestead for?"

The Swede stood smiling showing all his white teeth and wrinkling his nose and absorbing the meaning of the Ranger's questions into his skull.

"Pat did utt," he said.

"Who? Oh, Bat!" He looked at Matthews. "Do you mind riding back over the

Pass trail; so we can go to the Ridge by the Gully, the way the outlaws escaped? I want to see where this fellow's upper lines run."

They rode back in silence almost all the way, coming up to the top shoulder of the precipice where the outlaws had come tumbling down on Matthews' hiding place a few weeks before. Wayland followed the lines of the newly planted posts, where the wire had not yet been strung.

"There is not the slightest doubt," he burst out, "this has been done to force a test case! Well, they'll get it."

"Wayland, is there no way of letting the public know what is going on? A bet the people of this State don't know!"

"It's against the rule to give out information any more," answered Wayland.

"Man alive—is this Russia? Y' mind me of Indians in the conjurors' tent: they tie the medicine man hand and foot and throw him into a tent; and he's t' make the tent shake. Only the devil-Indians can do it. They tie y' hand an' foot, then they expect y' to serve the Nation."

"No," corrected Wayland, "they tie us hand and foot to keep us *from* serving the Nation."

And the Swede's tent was not the only one they saw, as the reader well knows. Coming along the Gully on the Ridge crest, Wayland looked for the pile of illegally-taken saw logs. They were gone. There was nothing left but a timber skid, and the dry slash and a pile of saw dust emitting the odor of imprisoned fragrance in the afternoon heat; but a few yards back from the pile of saw dust stood a tepee tent with the flap hooked up; and in the opening, a wide-eyed diminutive child with a very old face and a very small frame, that looked for all the world to Wayland like a clothes rack in a pawn shop covered with colored rags.

"Waz ye wantin' me faather?"

As the reader is aware this little person never lacked speech.

"H's away! H's gone t' th' citie for th' throuble that's comin' on about th' mine, y' onderstand? He's wan o' th' men t' be on hand if there's throuble."

"Are you one of the new settlers'?"

"Yes, sor! M' name's Meestress Leezie O'Finnigan! We're come upp t' live three years, mebba four, m' faather says we may fool 'em on less than five; an' we're goin' to be wal-thy, an' we won't hev' a thing t' do but sit toight an' whuttle an' sput an'," it was the same story, she had told Eleanor.

"What trouble in the mines?" asked Wayland.

"In the coal mines, sor! There's a gen'leman come from Waashington, an' soon as the Ranger's been found, there's been goin's on, sor, bad goin's ons, soon as th' Ranger's back, their expectin' throuble; un' m' faather's gone down for to

be there, he saz."

"Well?" said Wayland, as they rode on towards the Cabin.

"They've been busy, Wayland! They've been busy, man! You're in the thick of it! More power t' y'r elbow! We've got the first licks in on th' sheriff's carcass."

"And six dead men to the good," added Wayland dryly, "only I guess they don't go into the reports, they are missing!"

As they approached the Cabin, a young man in gray flannels and sailor hat sat up in the hammock, looked twice at Wayland, got up and came forward.

"Are you Wayland?" he asked, with a contemptuous glance at the Ranger's disguised suit.

"That's my name."

The young fellow handed him a letter stamped from the head department at Washington. It stated that the bearer was a Federal attorney sent out to investigate the Smelter City Coal Claims and any other matters bearing on the contests of the Holy Cross. The letter was couched—Wayland thought—with peculiar frigidity, as though he and not the coal claimants were the guilty party to an undecided contest. Then he glanced back at the bearer: an incredibly young and inexperienced youth—not more than twenty-two or three, barely out of a law school.

"Glad to see you, sir," said Wayland, "Been waiting long?"

The young fellow gave him a side wise look.

"About a week."

"I'm sorry to have delayed you; but one of the most important cases we have ever had called me away. I had intended to go down to Washington and explain the whole situation."

The young man smiled very faintly, and was it, contemptuously? "A good deal needs explaining," he remarked.

"I hope you made yourself at home in the Cabin?"

"On the contrary, I'm with Moyese! I have arranged to have the coal cases examined this week. The claimants declare the coal is not worth a farthing, and this case is seriously disturbing the title to the land where the Smelter stands."

"You're a geologist, of course?" asked Wayland innocently.

"No, I'm from the law department. We considered this more a case of legality of title than coal values. The Company has kindly consented to let us examine the mine this week."

"Kindly consented? By George, I like that condescending kindness from pirates and thieves!"

"But there are two sides to this question, Mr. Ranger: what good does coal do locked up in the earth? The country wants coal developed."

"Exactly," answered Wayland, "and not stolen and locked up in a great trust and rings that jack the prices sky-high! The law was passed to keep these pirates from stealing coal with dummies, to let the individual who hadn't money to hire dummies go in and develop. If you'll walk along the Ridge here, you'll see another of the contested cases. The forests are open to homesteading wherever the land is agricultural; but you can hardly call land agricultural that's a sheer drop of 1,000 feet, though the big trees growing on it would each build a house of six rooms. If you'll walk along, you'll see where the 'dummy' business has begun the same game as in the Bitter Boot."

The young bureaucrat turned short on his heel and strolled down the Ridge Trail, with an air that only a bureaucrat, a very young bureaucrat, and a very cheap one could possibly wear.

"Well, A 'm—A 'm d—danged."

Wayland burst out laughing.

"Do you suppose that little kindergarten ass thought he had come and caught me off duty?"

The old man stood dumfounded. It was such a happy and triumphant home-coming for a Man on the Job, who had risked his life for seven successive weeks solely in the cause of Right. Matthews slammed his hat on the ground, and stamped upon it, and clenched his teeth to keep in the words that seemed to want to hiss out.

"Man alive. A'd like t' spank him!"

Wayland laughed.

"I guess he's staying with our white-vested friend," he said, as he pulled the saddles off the animals and gave them a slap heading down to the drinking trough; but when he turned, Calamity stood in the door of the Cabin holding out a letter. He forgot to greet her; for the handwriting was Eleanor's. He tore the envelope open devouring the words in his eagerness; then his face clouded.

"What in thunder does it all mean? Listen.

> 'Dear Dick: I don't know when you will come home, but as soon as you do, you will learn of something abominable that has been published. I'm going to send Calamity up with this every day so she will be sure to catch you first thing.' ("It's dated three weeks ago," interjected Wayland.) 'They have struck at you through me. Don't mind, Dick. They did it to make you stop. You will not stop, will you? It didn't hurt me.' (Oh, brave beautiful liar! Does the Angel Gabriel take note of such lies by women; and which side of the account does he put them on?) 'Father says a fact is a hard nut to crack. You're not to take any notice of this attack on me. You're not to flinch from the fight for my sake or

deflect a hair's breadth on my account. You know what you said. Things have gone so far that crime is invading decent lives. Well, it has invaded yours and mine; and you're not to slack one jot. Dick, I command it. I command it in the name of that seal I gave you.'

'E. MACD.' "

"What in thunder does it all mean?" reiterated Wayland.

"What seal is that she speaks of? A'm thinkin' if you'll read that pile of mail in there on the table, you'll find out."

"Any ansher?" asked Calamity softly, by which, you may guess, dear reader, that an Indian woman has a heart under her ribs as well as you.

"Wait," said Wayland.

He tore a sheet from his field book. This is what he wrote:

I shall obey you implicitly, my Alder Liefest. I don't know what it is yet; but I'll not let it make any difference in the fight no matter what it is. I have thought of that seal every day and night since I left you, and all day and all night; and I couldn't have pulled through this trip if I hadn't had that well of memory to drink from. You saved my life, tho' you don't know it. Matthews will tell you: and you saved his too.

DICK. (nth.)

P. S. There's a funny little kid up here, been left by her father in one of the settlers' tents. She's the most pitiable little object I ever saw. I think her father is a drunken tough from Shanty Town. She oughtn't to be left up here alone near such a baby-eater as I am. I wish you'd come up and see about her. If you don't come alone, get Mrs. Williams, or my friend, Matthews.

Calamity went on down the Ridge and Wayland plunged at his mail. On the very top of the pile lay a newspaper in a folder marked with red "Important." Before the pole cat begins operations, he chooses his target. For myself, I think discretion is better than valor in such a case, and you would do well to retreat and let the little genus Mephitis Mephitica infect the air for his own benefit; but Wayland did not know what was coming and tore the paper open and read. Then he flung it from him and stood looking with blazing eyes at the thing on the floor.

"Read it," he said.

The old frontiersman got his glasses laboriously out of the case and began to read. The sun was behind the Holy Cross, and he stood in the door to get the light on the paper. When he had finished and looked round, he saw Wayland sitting crunched forward with his face in his hands.

"Wayland, man," he slapped him twice on the shoulder, "look up, look up at

that picture on the wall above y'r bed."

Wayland took his hands from his eyes. The Alpine glow struck through the doorway against the picture on the wall, the picture she had had Calamity bring down surreptitiously and had sent back framed, the picture of the face above the Warrior.

"Man alive, why w'd y' care for the devil's dirt and skunk stench and snake venom, when y' have, when y' have That? She's a—a trump! She's a thoroughbred! Man, y'd know she had th' blood o' Scottish kings and queens in her veins. Y'll no go down to-night, Wayland, when y'r all undone! 'Twould hurt her. A intended tellin' her to-night why A came; but A'll not now! A'll not now! She must not run from this scandal. She must face it down before she goes, but A'll go an' see her father an' come back an' tell y'. Cheer up man! 'Tis part o'the fight."

And for the only time in the struggle, Wayland let go; or rather—his manhood got from under leash. You can be stoical all right when *you* get the blow. It's another thing to be stoical when the blow hits what you love. When the curtain-drop fell on Moyese, it fell on a man pounding the desk, kicking furniture, eating up the telephone, turning the air blue. It fell on the Ranger sitting crunched in his chair gazing through misty eyes at a picture painted by an artist, who was an idealist. Was he down and out? Was Right the sport of fools?

CHAPTER XXII
A DOWNY-LIPPED YOUTH IN GRAY FLANNELS

I suppose it was owing to the fact that she was woman and he was man that she spent that first night of the home-coming in dumb hurt wonder that he had not come immediately to her; and that he passed the night in restless fevered fury, knowing well that you cannot both control fire and fan it, fuse metals molten and expect them not to forge, keep a resolution and break it. She had listened eagerly to the old frontiersman's account of the adventures on the trail, up the Pass precipice, crossing the snow slide and in the desert, where the Ranger had refused to save his own life by abandoning his companion; and the narrative lost nothing in Matthews' recital with his Scottish-Canadian R's rolling out sonorous and strong, where he was moved to admiration or anger. The sheep rancher sat silent through the stirring story with only an occasional glint of fire from his black eyes gazing aimlessly at the floor.

" 'Cast your bread upon the waters and after many days it shall return to you again.' 'Minds me of what A saw you do for this woman you call Calamity, in our old Rebellion Days."

Eleanor was sitting on the arm of her father's leather chair. The sheepman glanced up warningly, but Matthews was going ahead full steam.

"We're both older than we were in those days, MacDonald, older an' wiser, an' for m'self, A should add, a good bit steadier! You, y' were always a sober-faced secret lad, MacDonald; an' till yon day in front o' th' Agency house, A don't think, A hardly think, we men knew what a devil was in y'! A can see y' yet as y' kicked th' gun out o' yon blackguard's hand an' let him take the load o' buckshot square between th' shoulders! 'Twas a handsome thing o' you to take th' poor buddy in an' give her a shelter! How does she come to call herself Calamity?"

MacDonald's foot came down on the floor with a clamp, and he rose. "She didn't. 'Twas the miners in the Black Hills. She used to bring in so many hard-luck chaps, shot up by the Sioux, bring 'em in on her shoulders from the hills to the camp, that the boys got to calling her Calamity. She had lost her good looks, and—" MacDonald shot a glance of warning in the direction of his daughter —"and the same old story, I guess; she was off the market! One of my trips to the mining camps up state, I found her in a mess of rags picking crusts out of the garbage barrels along a back lane! I brought her back with me. Gave her a week's soak in the bath house—" he paused as if reflecting, "and that it seems was foundation enough for the hog-wash that appeared in one of the papers here. Suppose we take a walk as we discuss old days; they were pretty wild days for discussion before a girl, who didn't know her dad before she was born."

And Eleanor went out on the Ranch House piazza off her room, while the two frontiersmen strolled down the river. How different her outlook on life was from two months before when reference to Calamity had called up mingled fury and horror. Now that she understood, anything in this Western Country might be possible, and understandable, and explainable. She had his hurried pencil note where she could feel it, under her locket; only the locket was outside above; and the fly leaf of that field book was inside next. "Dick (nth)," he had signed himself; and he had not come down. She could see the dark shadowy Ridge from her piazza chair, and hear the subdued laughter and lipping of the waters, and he was there—not a half hour's walk away—and he had not come. There was a full moon. She could see its silver sheen on the River, on the tremulous poplar leaves, sifting through the pine needles and in opal wings round the far luminous cross of snow on the mountain. The night hawks and the swallows dipped and darted and cut the air with humming wings; and once the wire gate squeaked to some one entering. Eleanor sprang up with her heart beating so that she could not speak; but it was only a white hatted youth in light gray flannels asking Calamity at the basement door "when MacDonald would be back." Did Eleanor imagine it; or did the citified young person in the gray flannels with the red necktie look up towards her hesitatingly, with the suggestion of an ingratiating smile in the pale blue eyes, a suggestion which she could not define but which somehow infuriated her? Poor pale anaemic youth! He was not used to having his waiting smiles met by the blaze of red fury that flashed to her eyes.

"Calamity, if that person wants anything, tell him to go out to the bunkhouse and see the foreman."

Then, she sank back in her chair both glad and sorry in one breath that Wayland had not been there. She shut her eyes to drink again of the memories that had sustained her all these weeks; and felt the lift and fall of the note his hand had written, pulsing to the rhythm of her breathing; but the memories failed her. Memories were for absence; and he was here; and he had *not* come. If only he would come now, how she would greet him, holding him unflinchingly to his resolution, of course, and of course; but as a kind of second thought in the back of her head, the under motive beneath all the clamor of light upper notes, she knew to the inmost core of her being that she was wishing he would come now because her father was out and she was alone and could greet him as flesh and spirit, heart and mind, cried out to greet him; to touch him; to spend themselves upon him in a fierce proud abandon of love and gladness; to give and take, and give and take again, till, till—what? Was this the way to keep him standing strong to his resolutions?

And shall we blame her? Does the beautiful thing we call life spring from postulates and rules and mathematics; or from the spirit's altar fires? And I confess I never see the thing we call vice but I wonder did it not spring from the

burning of the refuse heap, which poor humans have mistaken for altar fires?

She heard her father come in late, slamming the mosquito door behind him, and pass across the dark living room to his own chamber without saying good night. Once, she thought she saw a white sailor hat through the cottonwood hovering along the road. Then, as she looked, the white sailor seemed accompanied by a panama; and she crept into her room with fevered hands and heavy heart, snacking the mosquito door behind her. There was the companion bang of a door being hooked below, old Calamity keeping watch as usual and only turning in, when she heard Eleanor going to bed. Eleanor waited till all was quiet. Then, she drew the burlap portiere across the mosquito door, and lighted her candle, and began writing,—writing what? Was it some dildo of oriental song she had read in Europe; was it the burden of some Indian chant stirring vaguely in her unconscious blood; or was it but the simple love cry of primitive Woman, of that woman who wandered round about the streets of Jerusalem calling her lover? “My flesh cries out to touch you, my beloved,” she wrote; “my hands are hungry to touch you, and my spirit is hungrier than my hands. When you were absent, I drank of memories; but now, you are back, the shadow waters have gone; I must have the living. If I could see you but once, I know this wild longing would lie down and be quiet.” She stopped writing. Would it? Would it lie down and be quiet with just a look? A look would be a deep drink of living waters, she knew that; but would it, would it lie down and be quiet? She didn’t intend ever to stop loving him. As long as she loved him, and stayed where love could grow by what it fed on, would it lie quiet? Was this keeping him strong to his resolution?

She tore the paper to tiny atoms and burned the scraps bit by bit on her metal paper knife above the candle. Then, she blew out the candle and drew his soiled field-book leaf from her breast. She fell asleep with her head on her arm, and her lips pressed to that fool-thing he had signed at the bottom of his note, “Dick (the nth),” whatever that meant.

There was no mistaking it next morning at breakfast. She felt strung and upset; and her father looked at her strangely; and Matthews was so keen on covering the general embarrassment that he aimed too far in the other direction, rattling off such a fusilade of Western stories that they sounded hollow. She forgot her own confusion studying the two men. How stooped her father looked! He looked, what was it? Like a man who has waited a long time for something to come, and when it has come, found himself too sad to seize it. His eyes looked as if he had not slept; and Eleanor now observed that the frontiersman’s sun-burned nose had a suspicious shine at the end. If she had not been undone from her own bad night, she would have helped their efforts to cover embarrassment; but now a horrible thought came; a thought born of the low innuendo in the scandal story; and the thought finished her. She felt her self-control going and rose and fled round the end of the table to her room. The old frontiersman stopped mid-way in his story of

the brats of Blackfoot boys stealing every stitch of his clothing one day he was bathing in Lower Saskatchewan. Her father jumped to his feet and threw out one arm to stop her. That finished Eleanor. He had never done such a thing before. The only time he had ever shown affection was that night when she had read the scandal in the paper and he had reached up his hand and taken hers. Now, he held her in his arms, bowed, broken, unspeaking. The tears came in a rain. She did not hide her face after the manner of tenderly nurtured shrinking women. She faced him with wide open lashes and brimming eyes and burning defiance.

"Father, you don't doubt me, too, do you?"

"Doubt you? My God no, child! It's only I never knew how much I loved you till I realized I might have to part with you."

How strange and non-understanding and non-understandable these men creatures were! Eleanor looked at him; and looked at him. Then she threw her arms round his neck and kissed the dark sad silent face with a frightened tender fervor; and do not laugh, dear reader; for it is only on the stage that the graceful altogether elegant curtain-drop comes; but the old frontiersman had somehow got himself outside the screen door, and immediately on that kiss came through the mosquito wire such a thunder clap of pulpit artillery as is the peculiar prerogative of some large gentlemen when they blow their nose. MacDonald and Eleanor both burst out laughing; and Eleanor noticed it was a large red cotton one, two for ten they sold in Smelter City.

And all the while, Wayland sat crunched in the chair of the Cabin, gazing and gazing at the face in the picture above "the Happy Warrior," till the light faded from the Holy Cross and the moon beams struck aslant the timbered floor, and Calamity's shadow stood in the doorway with a basket on her arm.

"Meesis Villiam send up y' supper," she said.

Wayland ate mechanically. He did not know that he was bursting out with angry words all through the meal.

"To think, they'd stoop, they'd dare to splash their filth and hog-wash on her skirts, to hurt me? Well, they've got me, Calamity? They've got me, old girl! But they've got me in a way they don't expect! You Indians knew the courts were a fraud and lie. They'd have cleared this kind of blackguardism up with a knife. Well—so will I; but it will be another kind of knife. You can't out-Herod a skunk; but you can bury it, Calamity, eh, old girl? We'll bury 'em so deep next election, they'll never see daylight: then we'll pile this pack of exposure on 'em so high they'll never get up again. We're out for scalps, Calamity! No more fighting in the open, eh? We'll spring it on 'em the way you Indians put a knife in a man's back."

"Iss it Moy-eese, heem keel little boy?" asked Calamity softly.

Something in the soft hiss of the words made the Ranger turn. There was a mad look in the glint of the black eyes, and the hands were kneading nervously in

and out of the palms.

"Yes, damn him, it is Moyese, who is at the bottom of all this deviltry; but don't you worry, Calamity! We're going to get his scalp!"

He paced the Ridge half the night planning his campaign. He would go first thing in the morning and get that child's story of the mine and the "dummy" entryman. Then, he would get that Swede's affidavit before the thick-tow-head realized what he was after. Then, he would get a trained geologist for the examination of the mine, not that flannelled kindergartner, stuck full of bureaucratic self importance as he was of ignorance. Then, he would surprise them by doing absolutely nothing till election time, then "plunk" it all on them through the opposition paper, and stand back, and take his dismissal! Oh, his midnight thoughts raced, as yours and mine have raced, when we have been struck by sorrow, or blackmail, or motiveless malice! He could not make sure of it; but once as he paced near the Ridge trail he thought he saw . . . was it a form in flannels accompanied by a figure resembling Bat's sauntering slowly down to the Valley?

When Wayland dwelt a moment on what such a conjunction of observers might mean, his thoughts jumped. Could Brydges have done it? Back in the Cabin, the face in the picture seemed sentient and shining in the gloom. It was an absurd notion, of course; for the picture was a shadowy thing in dark sepia; and there was no light but the silver reflection of the moon from the Holy Cross. The Holy Cross,—what was it she had said? Nothing worth while ever won without someone being crucified? How absurdly small, how remotely contemptibly impossible, the scandal thing seemed anyway, as though a skunk could obstruct the avalanche of the massed snow flakes by sending up his malodorous stench across the path of the Law! And he loved her and he had her love, and he had known the highest blessedness of life, and nothing could take the consciousness of it from him! Wayland went to sleep dreaming fool-things about the face in the picture. Of course, you never dreamed them, sleeping or waking. At break of day, he picked a sprig of mountain flower, and did certain things to that framed picture, and rode away to his day's work.

"Let's go up and see that little runt of an Irish lassie," Matthews had suggested in the afternoon; and they were leisurely climbing the Ridge Trail, the old frontiersman yarning and yarning of the dear good old days; Eleanor thinking her own thoughts. They met a downy-lipped youth in gray flannels and Mr. Bat Brydges wearing a panama hat and an "Oh-I-know-it-all" air. Both dabbed at their hats to the old man; but Matthews saw them not till they had passed when he stopped and turned with a look over his shoulder and a grunt. Eleanor had not learned yet what had happened to the Sheriff; but somehow the old frontiersman's look gave her a satisfaction. Where a crag jutted out from the face of the Ridge

and some spruce saplings spanned a spring trickling down from the rocks, Matthews stopped. This was the place! Old rascal! How did he know? Has age ever been young? Eleanor did not know that he was looking at her, did not know that her face was wrapped in mystery and light. Suddenly he placed both hands on her shoulder.

"Eleanor, y'r a magnificent woman! Y' don't mind me callin' y' a woman?"

It was his highest compliment.

"Y're braver than my wife; an' she's the bravest o' them a'! D' y' know that my wife came half way round the world t' marry me an' go penniless to th' Indian Reserve? D' y' know when she found the Indians sick, d' y' know she went East an' took a full four years' medical course t' be able to attend them? D' y' know she goes all over the Reserve day an' night an' for three hundred miles among th' settlers to attend th' sick? But duty with us is easy. We're rich. Duty brought us together! Duty's goin' t' push y' apart; an' y're not complainin'."

Eleanor could not answer. What was there to say? They went on up the Ridge Trail, Matthews still talking to let her think her own thoughts. There was the story of the last great buffalo hunt at Battleford; of his first buffalo hunt when he had broken away from the other hunters in his early boyhood days and the buffalo bull had got him down in a crack of the earth under its feet. And there was the story of his first Synod Meeting, "when A came all wild an' woolley out o' the West! My five brithers were there; they were a' preachers! One is the bishop! Oh, A guess they were on needles an' pins for fear o' what A'd do! A'd been in the West so long, A didn't know enough not to go shirtsleeves down the streets o' Montreal! Well, been a hot day! 'Twas an evenin' meetin'! All the missionaries to th' Indians were givin' experiences. One got up an' he wanted th' *dear sisters* to raise a little money to build a fence; a fence, y' understand? An' another got up an' wanted th' *dear sisters* t' have a sewin' bee, gossip buzz, A call 'em, to raise a little money for the Lord t' build a school. Losh! A stood it long as A could! Then A jumped up! 'Twas a hot night, an' A'd ripped off m' coat! A'm no sure my collar hadn't slumped t' a jelly, too! Says I, 'If y'r reverences will excuse a plain Western man speakin' plain Western speech, A want t' say A don't like t' hear strong well able-bodied men whinin' an' beggin' th' *dear sisters* t' help them.' Says I, 'If th' brothers will just peel off their coats an' build their own fences, they'll find the Lord 'ull help them without any whinin' an' beggin'! Peel off y' coats, an' y'r dude duds,' says I, 'an' go t' work, an' don't insult God Almighty an' disgust the women folk wi' that milk-sop bottle-baby rubber-ring talk.' "

"What did the meeting say?" asked Eleanor, surprised out of herself.

"Oh, A dunno that they said much at all! They kind o' stomped, tho'."

CHAPTER XXIII

IT AIN'T THE TRUTH I'M TELLIN' YOU: IT'S ONLY WHAT I'VE HEERD

They were opposite the Cabin. Now, by all the tricks of stage-craft and story-craft, the Ranger should have been standing posed in the doorway; but he wasn't. So different is fact from fiction—so much harder, always; so brutally inconsiderate of our desires; so much more surprisingly beautiful than we can desire. The door stood open and empty.

"Wait! A want to leave a note," said Matthews.

"May I look in and see what bachelor confusion is like?" asked Eleanor.

She wanted to see if he had noticed the framed picture. Noticed—bless you? The thing hung skugee on its nail; and there was a sprig of mountain everlasting stuck in the wire; and Eleanor would really have liked to see whether the glass above that picture were blurred. She leaned over the couch examining it while Matthews wrote a note; and she went hurriedly out of the door hot of face and happy.

The old man's note read: *We're going along to the Ridge to see that little Irish runt. If you chance back, will you happen along to see the old man. I'll keep her till six.*

"It ain't the truth I'm tellin' y': it's ownly what I've heerd."

Meestress Lizzie O'Finnigan stood in the opening of the tent flap, a lonely little face, a lonely little figure in her tawdry rags, a lonely little soul in the great lone Forest, like a little mite lost in the big universe, Eleanor thought. She was telling them about the "Throuble expected at th' moine; an' faather bein' on hand t' take a fist; an' th' gen'leman from Waashin'ton waitin' for the Ranger man t' come back; an' th' goin's on raported in the paphers. Ah, h' waz a baad man, wuz the Ranger, faather said."

"Do *you* read the paper, little one?" broke in Matthews.

"*Nut* the print, sor, but I do th' pitchers; an' th' murthers; an' thim's all pitchered out plain so I can read! Faather sez he wun't have his independence proposed upon; if th' don't give him twinty thousan' fur settin' toight here, he'll peach; but about th' mine, th' Ranger man iz expected t' make throuble, an' faather iz all powerful quick with his fist, sor, 'specially when he's in drink; an' he's t' be on hand. It ain't th' truth I'm tellin' y', sor; it's ownly what I've heerd."

"And if you sit tight here for five years, you are going to be wealthy?" asked Eleanor, taking her by the hand and leading her out to the woods.

The unwonted act almost startled the little face. She looked up at Eleanor questioningly. "Y's, mam, waal-thy," she said. "Faather sez when we're waal-thy, he'll be a gen'leman an' Oil be a loidy."

"All you need, to be a lady, or a gentleman is, to be wealthy? Is that it?" asked

the old frontiersman laughing.

"Yes, sor," said the child solemnly, "Faather wull shure be a gen'leman."

"Do you like living here?" asked Eleanor.

"No, mam, I don't think much of it! In Smelter City, there wuz curcuses; an' elephants on *all* the bills of fare; an' loidies dancin' on th'r heads! Faather sez if I keep on dancin' as foine as I do now, mebbie I'll be able t' dance on m' head; but I wouldn't like to dance without any skeerts, wud y'?"

"No, A wouldn't," answered the preacher quickly; and Eleanor laughed.

It was all so ludicrously pathetic. They asked her if she would not like to come down with them to the Indian School; and she looked wistfully and did not answer. Oh, God of Little Children, where are You? Are the Lambs outside the fold not Yours also?

When they pointed out the creatures of the woods to her, they found she did not know a squirrel from a chipmunk; and she pronounced the merry chattering "odjus." When a cat bird came tittering on his tail, squeaking out every imaginary note of gladness and the frontiersman explained that this fellow sang only *after* his family had been raised whereas the other birds sang *before*, she said he "wazn't as interestin' as th' elephants on the bill o' fare."

"Let's see! There's three trails here about!" Matthews was cogitating with his gaze on Eleanor. "There's the one across to the Upper Mesas; an' there's one back behind over th' shoulder of the Holy Cross down to the Lake Behind the Peak; an' there ought to be one between, runnin' up to the snows! Think y'r good for climbin' over this windfall while A carry this little puss on m' shoulder? Steer for the snow ahead! Don't mind my laggin' back! Go on ahead an' wait for us! A'm goin' t' see if A can't mine down to some gold beneath th' slime o' th' slums! It's not in the course o' nature that any child should be blind t' this world, Miss Eleanor, if A can open th' doors for her! Go ahead; an' if y' find a good sittin' down place, just rest quiet an' wait for us an' don't worry if we're long comin'! If A can't make her love God's big play ground, A'm no preacher!"

Eleanor laughed. Her last mining down to veins of gold had not been a particular success. She looked back at the two; the massive thewed frontiersman with the shock of white hair and ruddy cheeks and almost boyish eyes; the little tawdry bundle of rags on his shoulder, with the black hollow eyes full of nameless fear and nameless knowledge, and the little old hard mouth with a dreadful tense sadness about the droop. She heard the big genial voice with the roll of Scotch-Canadian drawling out its r's, and the child's thin "Yes, Sor, m' Faather;" then the child burst into a joyous laugh. Eleanor wondered what he could have said to elicit that laugh. When she glanced back, the old frontiersman had Lizzie standing on his outstretched hand holding to a branch overhead peering in a deserted hawk's nest. Even as Eleanor looked, the little future acrobat went scrabbling up into the tree with another joyous laugh.

Then, with that spirit of the child, which possesses us all when we give ourselves to the genii of the woods, Eleanor was following the long lanes of light between the giant spruces—the long lanes of light that lead on and on and on, ahead of you; out over the edge of the world into the realms of dreams and holiday and joy, where there is no Greed, and there is no Lust, and there is no nagging Care, and there is no Motiveless Malice spoiling things. She looked up. The gray green moss hung festooned from branch to branch; and the light sifted down a tempered rain of gold; and all the shiny evergreens shook gypsy castanets of joy to the riffling wind. She listened. The voices behind had faded away; and the air was vibrant of voiceless voices, of pixy tambourines beating the silence. There was a hush, the sibilant hush of waters rushing down from the far snows of the Holy Cross; and a flutter—the flutter of all the little leaves clapping their hands; and a big voiceless voice of solemn undertone—the diapason of the pines harping the age-old melodies to the touch of the wind's invisible hands, melodies of the soul of the sea in the heart of the tree, of strength and power and eternity. As she listened, she could fancy some vast oratorio voicing the themes of humanity and the universe and God.

Then all the little people of the woods came peeping through the greenery surveying her, weighing her, examining her, testing her spirit of good or ill. A little squirrel went scampering up one huge tree trunk and down another, just a pace ahead, scouting for the other pixies of the woods, till with a scurr-r-r and chitter—chipper—ee, he whisked back in his tracks. "She's all right, people," he said. Then a whisky jack flitted from branch to branch of the under brush—always just a step ahead, not saying as much as was his custom, but peeking a deal with head cocked from side to side. "No," said Eleanor, "I have no camp crumbs: you go back." The little red crested cross bill twittered in front of her from spray to spray of the purple fire weed and fern fronds; then, concluded that she was only a part of this out door world, anyway, and went back about his business on the trail behind. Two or three times, there was a vague rustle in the leaves that she couldn't localize—water ouzel in moss covert, or hawk babies in hiding, or—or what? She couldn't descry. Then, suddenly, with a hiss—ss and swear plain as a bird could swear, a little male grouse came sprinting down the trail to stop her, ruff up, tail spread to a fan, wings down, screaming at her in bad words "to stop! to stop! or he'd pick her eyes out!" Eleanor naturally stopped. There was a rustle and a flump; and a mother grouse whirred up with her brood—a dozen of them Eleanor counted, was it a second family? babies just in feather, clumsy and heavy of wing; and the little man ducked to hiding among the dead leaves. Eleanor peered everywhere. There was not the glint of an eye to betray hiding. She laughed and looked back for Matthews and his little pupil. A turn of the lane shut off all view; and again, she had that curious sensation of a vague movement back among the

evergreens. She glanced forward. The light was shut off by a huge pile of windfall giant tree on tree, moss grown, with cypress and alder shoots from the great, broad dead trunks, a pile the height of a house. Passage round the ends of the up-rooted trunks led back through the brushwood. Eleanor stepped to the lowest trunk and began climbing over the pile by ascending first one trunk, then back up another. Almost on the top, she paused. It was that same vague rustling movement, too noiseless to be a noise, too evanescent for a sound. She parted the screen of shrubbery growing from the prone trunks and peered forward.

The same lanes of gold-sifted light leading over the edge of the world through the aisled evergreens, but at the end a glint as of emerald, the sheen of water with the metal glister of green enamel, water marbled like onyx or malachite, with the reflection of a snow cross and dun gray shadows—shadows of deer standing motionless at the opening of the aisled trees—come out from the forest at sundown to their drinking place. Lane of light? It had been a lane of delight; and that was what all life might be but for the Satyr shadows lurking along the trail. There were two or three little fawns, just turning from ash coat to ochre gray, nuzzling and wasting the water; and one of the year old deer had turned its head and was sniffing the air looking back, a poetry of motionless motion, all senses poised. Eleanor held her breath. If only the other two would come: yet she had put back her hand to warn them if they should come; and stood so, looking and listening. She remembered afterwards by the nodding of the blue bells she had known that the wind was away from the deer to her. There was a quick step on the lowest log. She stretched back her hand to signal quiet. The quick noiseless step came up the logs like a stair—winged feet. She turned to see what effect this fairy scene would have on the little denizen of the slums.

It wasn't the frontiersman at all. It was the Ranger; and she had let the screen of branches spring back with a snap; and the deer had leaped in mid-air, vanishing phantoms; and her hands had met his half way; and his eyes were shining with a light that blinded her presence of mind. Then, he had drawn her to himself; and afterwards, when she had tried to live it over again, she realized that she had lost count.

Shall we let the curtain drop, dear reader? For you must remember you are looking upon two sensible young people, who have resolved to keep each other strong to their resolutions. He had planned exactly how he would conduct himself when this meeting came; guarded, very guarded, so guarded she must know he was keeping a grip for both. And she had known exactly what she would do when he came: she would be frank, perfectly frank and open; for had they not both taken the resolution? And when she came to herself, it was as that night at the Death Watch—her face thrown back and he was kissing the pulsing veins of her throat, saying in a voice between a breath and a whisper—"When one has ached in the Desert for seven weeks, one is pretty thirsty."

“Let me go, dear! This wild happiness is a kind of madness.”

“Give me all you have for me in but one more!” He bent over her face; when he released her, she was faint.

He offered her hand-hold down over the tree trunks to the lake; and when their feet touched solid earth again, took a grip of the situation to relieve her embarrassment and began talking furiously of the Desert ride and the dream face that had twice saved his life. Eleanor stopped stock still.

“Why, *that* was my dream,” she explained; and their hands met half way and before she had finished telling, it had happened all over again.

They were standing on the margin of the lake. The sun was behind the peak, and the wine glow lay on the snow cross, and the topaz gate was ajar again to the new infinite life, and I think they were both a little bit afraid. An old world poet has said something about fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. The mountaineer expresses the same thought in his own more picturesque and I think more poetic vernacular, certainly it is a vernacular *next* to life rather than books. It is an axiom that “only the most blatant tenderfoot, the most tumble-footed greenhorn, will monkey on the edge of a precipice.”

The marbled water shadows deepened to fire in the Alpine after glow; and the little waves of the lake came lipping and lisping and laving at their feet.

“There is no use trying to tell about it or talk it out,” burst out Wayland.

“Don’t,” said Eleanor. “Mr. Matthews told us much last night: and I’ll dig the rest out of him the next time I see him.”

“I’m not talking of the Desert. I’m talking of you. It’s so God-blessed beautiful, Eleanor! I used to think and think in the Desert what this would be like; and it’s so much more beautiful than one could hope or guess. Don’t you think there must be something in God and Heaven and all that? Love is so much more beautiful than a fellow could possibly think?”

“Don’t you think they’ll be wondering about us?” asked Eleanor.

“Pooh, no! Matthews told me to come on here and find you! He’s just back there a little way.”

“Did he plan this?”

“Course! How do you suppose I knew where to find you? You see now why I must not see you, if we are to keep our resolutions?”

“Yes, I see! Let us go back.”

It was on the lake side of the logs that Wayland paused.

“I don’t *think* they could see through those logs?” he said.

Eleanor burst into a peal of laughter and ascended the fallen trunks as if they had been stairs.

They came on the other two sitting squat in the middle of the trail; and if the windfall had been opaque, one of the two wore an expression on his face as if he

had guessed. He was tossing a handful of little pebbles up from his palm and catching them on the backs of his knuckles.

“We didn’t make much o’ the woods an’ birds,” he remarked with a twisted smile, “but man alive, we can play jacks!”

Don’t smile, self superior reader! It takes some little time to manufacture a snow slide out of snow flakes; and it may be the law that it also takes some little time to manufacture a soul out of slime.

Passing the Cabin, they again encountered a downy-lipped youth in gray flannels accompanied by a fat gentleman with tortoise-shell eyes and a tallow smile; but the jaunty dimples of the fat man, the supercilious lift of the gray flannel’s eyebrow—froze mid-way at sight of Meestress Leezie O’Finnigan, who bowed to Bat with the gravity of a mother superior.

“It ain’t the truth I’m tellin’ y’ ": Lizzie was loquaciously going over the story for the twentieth time, “It ain’t the truth I’m tellin’ y’, y’ onderstand; it’s ownly what I’ve heerd.”

The Ranger dropped out of the group at the Cabin.

Bat stood bellicosely scowling at the three figures receding down the Ridge Trail.

“What in Hell is that old parson doing with that Shanty Town kid? He’d better keep his oar out of this.”

“It’s a free country,” said Wayland dryly. “Can I do anything for you?”

“We came up to notify you that the mine will be examined to-morrow,” announced the downy lips.

CHAPTER XXIV
I AM UNCLE SAM

"So they would examine the mine to-morrow? So they had sprung the examination of the coal veins before he could obtain a Government Geologist, and the coal would be pronounced worthless, as the coal involved in the Alaska cases was pronounced worthless by another kindergartner when that contest was impending. Then, they would argue and consider and send up briefs and send down decisions on the value of the coal till the statutory time had expired and the law of limitations would bar suit for restitution. Meanwhile, Smelter City Coking Company were using half-a-million tons a year, and sending away as much again; but on the word of an ignorant bureaucratic cub, the coal was to be worthless and the brazen steal of public property to be sanctioned by law. How much mineral land had been stolen in the very same way in the last ten years, first homesteaded by 'the dummy' foreigner, then for five, ten, one-hundred, two-hundred at most three-hundred dollars a quarter section on false affidavit as to entry, length of residence, age of homesteader, turned over to the Ring, whose sworn valuation of the coal ran from $20,000 to $40,000 an acre?" Personally, Wayland, as he thought it over, knew of fifty-thousand acres of coal so stolen in Colorado and as much again in Wyoming; not to mention three-hundred-thousand acres of gold and silver lands looted in the South-West.

And the looters were the party shouting at the top of their voices about "vested rights" and "attacks on property" and "demagoguery producing national hysteria." Where was the respect due "the vested rights" belonging to Uncle Sam? What about the piracy and plunder of the property belonging to Uncle Sam? Why was it valor to throw a burglar looting your house out by the neck, and "hysteria" to go after a burglar looting Uncle Sam?

Wayland had once asked Bat Brydges these questions. Bat had looked pained at the Ranger's obtuseness.

"Wayland," he had exclaimed, "who is Uncle Sam? I am Uncle Sam! You are Uncle Sam! We are all Uncle Sam! That's the beauty of democracy! This property you are howling about is yours and mine; and when we go in and develop it, we are only taking what is our own."

"What about the fellow who isn't in on a share?"

"Share? Quit talking Socialism," Bat had commanded with a grand gesture, leaving Wayland wondering *who* were the real Socialists in the Nation.

It came to him as he watched the panama hat and the white sailor going down the Ridge Trail that you can't argufy national problems; nor compromise on them; nor enter on any treaty of peace but the peace that is a victory. Brydges was Uncle Sam; and he thought one way. The Ranger was Uncle Sam; and he thought

another way. One was fighting for the vested rights of the few. The other was fighting for the vested rights of the many. It would have to be fought out, the fight would have to come; and this coal case, like the Range War, was one of the preliminary skirmishes to the Great National Contest. Would the people, who were paying fifty cents, a dollar, a dollar-and-a-half extra for every ton of coal bought, because the coal areas were being brought under the domination of one Ring, understand and waken up and rally to the fight? Or was it as Moyese had declared with the most open and genial cynicism that "the public did not give one damn"?

The Ranger crossed over to the telephone and called up the MacDonald Ranch.

"That you, Mr. MacDonald? Matthews back yet? Oh, gone across to the Mission School? No, nothing wrong: better not pay any attention to the little Irish kid's babble of trouble at the mine! They'd hardly dare that! Yes, I know they did on the Rim Rocks; but that was daring only you and Williams: this would be daring the great Government of the greatest Nation in the world! Oh, that doesn't bother me! The point is—they haven't given me time to get a Government expert up here; and this fellow is evidently a toady for Moyese. I want an extra witness on the quality of that coal: want a witness to prove it's being used and shipped and sold. Oh, no, not both of you, one will do, either you or Matthews! All right; will you go down by the early stage? Better not go down with me! I'm going to set out now; ride down the Forest Service trail, camp in the woods and expect to reach Smelter City about ten in the morning. If you leave by the six o'clock morning stage, that will be plenty of time. All right, either one of you! Much obliged! Good-by!"

An hour from the time Eleanor had left him, the Ranger was on his horse. He did not go down the Ridge Trail. He followed the National Forest Trail along the edge of the Ridge away from the Holy Cross Peak, down the forested back of a long foot-hill sloping and flanking the Valley almost to Smelter City. Locally, the sloping hill was known as "a hog's back"; and it was where the hog's back poked its nose into the Valley far below, that the tangle had occurred between the Forest Service and the Smelter Ring. Mining was permitted in the National Forests, of course; but the mining areas must be obtained according to law, and paid for, and operated individually, not homesteaded by the "dummies," then turned into a consolidated ring of coal owners. What made this violation of law more flagrant than usual was the fact that these homesteaded coal lands lay at an angle of almost ninety degrees in a sheer wall; and it was an impossibility for any homesteader ever to have put in residence on them. Homestead entry, term of residence, proof and title, all exhibited fraud on the face of the records; and there wasn't a man in

the Government Service who did not know that. What unseen hand had juggled entries, title and proof through? The homesteaders had sold out long ago for a song, some for as little as ten dollars a hundred and sixty acres. The Ring had possession; and as every man in the Land Service knew, the Government had pigeon-holed all recommendations for legal action to compel restitution. Would the wheels of justice rest inert? Would the presiding deity of justice be so blind, if some poor man, a poor man, who was also Uncle Sam, stole a ton of coal from the Ring operating these mines? Why was it possible to steal ninety-million dollars' worth of coal from the people, and not permissible for one of the people to steal one ton of coal from the Ring? These were the questions Wayland asked himself as he rode down the hog's back for Smelter City.

The trail down the hog's back sloped gradually and cut fifteen miles off the distance to Smelter City by the Valley Road. It was "the show" trail of all the National Forests. When supervisors came to inspect, or visitors from the East who wanted to give accounts of having roughed it without losing an hour of sleep or carrying any scars of stump beds, or when Congressional committees came from Washington for a champagne junket to report on all they hadn't seen—Wayland always conducted them down the hog's back trail that ran along the backbone of the Holy Cross lower slope. He had built the trail, himself; much of it, with his own hands; cut in the side of the forest mould and rock with an outer log as guard rail; wide enough for two horses abreast and zig-zagging enough to break the descent into a gradual drop and afford new vistas at each turn, of the Valley below, of the Mesas above the Rim Rocks across, and of the River looping and sweeping down to Smelter City.

He used to dream, as he rode down the bridle path, of the day coming when all the vast domain of National Forests would be like that trail; not a stick of underbrush or slash as big as your finger; not a stump above eighteen inches high; all the scaled logs piled neat as card board boxes; open park below the resinous cinnamon-smelling lodge-pole line and englemann spruce, hardly a branch lower on the trees than the height of a man; and such a rain of tempered light from the clicking pine needles and whorled spruces as might have come through the rose window of a cathedral. A "show" picture of a properly conducted National Forest has gone through all the magazines and newspapers—It represents the piles of cordwood clean as piles of pencils, the trees standing park-like with vistas and glades and opens beneath the tall pinery. Wayland knew in his own heart that his Forest was better than that "show" picture. No pictures could tell of the pine seedlings stolen from a squirrel *cache* scattered on the snows; the delicate young pinery coming up among a protecting nursery of birch and poplar and cottonwood. No picture could show "the dead tops" cut out; the "cheesy" rotten heartwood burning on an altar of sacrifice to the deity of the forest; the markings on "the

dead tops" and ripe trees and trees with broken top "leaders" for the lumberman to come and harvest. No picture could give the jolly song of the cross-cut saw, the musical ripping of the oiled blade through the huge logs, the odor of the imprisoned sunbeams and flowers from the rain of the yellow saw-dust. No picture could possibly tell you the life story of yon big tree, the warrior of the woods who had beaten down all competitors and enemies and wore his purple cones like the tasseled honor badges of a soldier, with pendulous moving, plumy arms: yet to the eye of the Forester, the life history was there, in the fluted grooved columnar bark, in the knot scars where branches had been discarded to send the main trunk towering above its fellows for light and air, in the wood rings, where a branch had broken and fallen away in the struggle. Why, this noble fellow had been a straggling sapling a thousand years before the birth of Christ! Before Darius led his conquering hosts from realm to realm, or ever Caesar knew life, or Christopher Columbus framed mast and spar to discover America, this sun-crowned monarch had over-topped his fellows, and met the challenge of the blasts of heaven, and drunk of the wines of the dews of an immortal youth, and dieted on the ambrosial ether of gods, and sent his seedling offspring sailing ten thousand airy seas with the wind for master pilot and never a craft but the gypsy parachute of a seed with wings shaken out from the cones purpling to the autumn heat!

Air ships? Had the modern world gone mad over air ships? This fellow had been sending out whole navies of air ships for thousands of years; seeding the mighty mountains; fighting all rivals; travelling on the wings of the wind, and if consumed by fire, then, like the phoenix springing to new life from the ashes, sending forth fresh armadas from the pendant purplish cinnamon-scented cones split open by the heat and so releasing fresh winged seeds!

Wayland used to dream, as he rode down the hog's back trail, of the day coming when all the National Forests would be a great park, the people's playground, yielding bigger annual harvest in ripe lumber than the wheat fields or the corn; yielding income for the State and health for the Nation. Germany did it. Why couldn't America? Why not, indeed; except that she had not exterminated her pirates of the public weal, her freebooters of the wilderness, her slippery fingered pick-pockets, who shouted "*I am Uncle Sam*," while they picked Uncle Sam's pockets?

Riding down the hog's back, you first left the larches and the junipers below the snow line, the junipers beginning to show their berries, the larches yellowing and shedding their golden shower to the approach of autumn. Then, a turn of the trail; and you were among the hemlocks, funereal and sombre in the distance, wonderfully lightened when you were below them by the sage-green moss and the pale silver blue lining on the under side of the leaves. Another turn or two, there came the feathery sugar pine and the Douglas spruce—the monarchs of the North-Western Forests—plume decked warriors carrying a glint of spears with the scars

of a thousand years and a thousand victories in the wrinkled bark, with cones like tassels, and whorls like banners. You could count these whorls, or the scars of the whorls; and you had their years; and the bluish green shade was restful as the repose of age. The smell of them, it was like incense; incense to the deity of the woods; and when the wind blew, every old evergreen harped the age-old melodies of Pan. And, oh, yes, there were warriors scarred from the fight, fellows with corky arms and mottled streaks where the lightning had struck and splintered. Only the cheesy-hearted, the warriors with maggots and grubs manufacturing punk out of heart-wood, for all the world like humans infected by evil thoughts, only the hollow hearted came down to earth with a crash in the fray.

Another turn, you were among the lodge-pole pines and englemann spruce—pure park, Wayland always thought, the delight of a Forester's heart; warm human open park places where you kept looking for deer though you knew there weren't any. In riding down the backbone of the Ridge, Wayland always planned to camp under the lodge pole pines; it was so cool, so rain-proof and sun-proof, with an almost certainty of a mountain stream somewhere near, and if you had eyes to see, a game trail down to the stream. To-night, he went on down to the *Brulé*, a cross section of the mountain swept by fire years before the Forest Service had taken hold in the days when millmen had been permitted to take out windfall and burn free, and all a millman had to do to become a millionaire in free lumber was set the incendiary fire going to create windfall. In his own district, Wayland knew two men who had become rich in that way; but of course, *that* was long ago. The Forest men had cleared out the windfall and burn; and now, the deity of the woods, Nature, was at work! By the moonlight, the Ranger could see the pale chalky peach-bloom boles of the ghost birches, and the satiny poplars and cottonwoods, turning gold to the approaching autumn but going down gay, twinkling, laughing fellows to the year's death, actually clapping their hands, shaking with glee, sending leaves down in a rain of gold, which, it is to be hoped, the pixies picked up, the pixies sailing the air in feather parachutes of flower and cone seed! Wayland could see these airy ships between him and the silver moonlight, dropping seeds—seeds—seeds; seeds of fire flower and golden rod and hoary evergreen; shooting them out in tiny catapults; sending them up in dandelion fluff and sky rockets; catching and skimming the wind in airy canoes; tilting the winged sails to a whiff and sailing, sailing, dropping the seeds of life for a thousand years! And beneath the birches with the hundred eyes looking out from the chalky faced bark, and the poplars laughing and shaking with glee, and the cottonwoods showering down a rain of gold in their death; stood the little pines seeded by the wind, nursed by the shade of the quick growing trees. Who would be living and loving and fighting and hating and winning and losing when these little fellows rose to toss and flaunt their victory in the face of the sky? Was that the meaning of life after all, the strength and thew, the valor and might of the fight

up? Then, it was not such a bad way with the Nation. The Nation would be the better for this fight. Certain, it was, the better side would win. Would it be the few like the sugar pine towering over its fellows; or the many like the lodge pole pine and englemann spruce standing in serried ranks of equal valor and power?

And if you think he could take that ride without wishing to the “nth” degree that she could be with him to share the joy, then, I assure you, you don’t know to what music those gay, twinkling, trembling gold leaves above the *Brulé* were beating time all night to the whisper of the wind and rustle of the pixy parachutes sailing mid-air.

CHAPTER XXV
THE QUESTION IS—WHICH UNCLE SAM?

Before, it had been a race-reverie; a waiting, puzzled and uncertain for the ways of life. Now, it was the joy of life, the fulfilment for which life had been created and waited expectant; and whether the ways were any plainer in the new light, there was no room for wonder in the fulness of joy. Eleanor was glad the little bundle of tawdry loquacity toddling between them kept up a constant stream of idle boastings on the road to the Mission House, about being "waal-thy" and "Faather shure bein' a gen'leman when they were waal-thy" and "herself as foine as eny loidy in th' land," and more and more of the same, all the way down the Ridge Trail; which was not so fatuous as it sounded, when it voiced the convictions of a great many more people than the little unwashed garlicky Shanty Town dancer. Eleanor wondered if the same arguments applied to the culture of horses and pigs and potatoes—size instead of sort, fulness of stomach not quality of head, area of possession not area of service.

The garrulous babble continued to the very doors of the Mission School, and through the formalities of an absurdly formal introduction to Mrs. Williams, and during the suppertime meal with the little Indian children in the big dining room. Eleanor noticed how Lizzie's lips pursed with contempt at the other children and the little stomach poked out with arrogance and fulness as the boasting waxed.

"That kind is the most hopeless of all," remarked Mrs. Williams in a low voice, amused at the amazement on the faces of the Indian children.

Yet Eleanor was glad. The babble gave her opportunity for withdrawal in her own thoughts; and when she came back to the Ranch House with Matthews, leaving Lizzie still boasting at the School, she hardly noticed that her father stopped the frontiersman on the threshold, but she passed out to the steamer chair on her own piazza. What was *It*? Eleanor could not have answered if she had tried. She only knew that she had drunk of the fulness of living, and that time could not rob her of that consciousness. It was there, forever with her, breathing in every breath, pulsing in the rhythm of her blood, "Closer than hands or feet," as the Pantheistic poet has sung, immanent, enveloping, possessory, obsessory, warm, living, a flooding realization of life, giving tone to every touch of existence, like the strings of the violin to the bow of the skilled musician. She wanted to sing; the long, low, jubilant chant of womanhood which no poet has yet sung. By the joy of it, she knew what the sorrow of it must be. By the purity, she realized what the poisoning of the fountain springs of life could mean. By the triumph, she realized what the defeat, the debasement could be. She thought of love as a fountain spring, a spring into which you could not both cast defilement and drink of waters undefiled; as an altar flame fed with incense lighting the darkness; and one could

no more offend love with impurity, than cast the dung heap on the altar flame and not expect blastment. She wanted to clap her hands as the gay, twinkling cottonwoods were clapping theirs to the sunset; to dance and beat gypsy tambourines as the pines were throbbing and harping and clicking to the age-old melodies of Pan. She wanted—what was it? Had the Israelitish women of old timed their joy to the rhythm of the dance; or was it a later strain, the strain from the tribal woman of the plains who heard a voice in the music of the laughing leaves, and the throb of the river, and the shout of the sun-glinted cataract, and the little lispings and whisperings of the waves among the reeds? The stars came pricking out. Each hung a tiny censer flame to the altar of night and holiness and mystery. She knew she could never again see the stars come pricking through the purple dusk without feeling the stab of joy that had wakened death to life when recognition had struck fire in consciousness. She knew, then, there was no eternity long enough for the joy of *It*, nor heaven high enough for the reach of *It*, nor hell deep enough for the wrong of *It*.

There was a click of the mosquito wire door opening out on her piazza. It was her father.

"Matthews and I are going to take the fast team and the light buckboard and drive down to Smelter City to-night. Will you be all right, Eleanor?"

"I? Oh, of course! Nothing wrong is there, Father?"

"Nothing, whatever!" She remembered afterwards the shine and look of lonely longing in the black eyes. "We have to be in Smelter City, tomorrow; think it best to drive down in the cool of evening! Day stage is a tiresome drive. You'll be all right, Eleanor?"

If she could only have known, how she would have spent herself in his arms; but it is, perhaps, a part of the irony of life that the best service is silent; that the loudest service, like the big drum, is the emptiest; only we never know the quality of that big drum till a specially hard knock tests it. She remembered afterwards how he half hesitated. He was not a demonstrative man, nor a handling one; only a dumb doer of things next, regardless of consequences; and we don't realize what that means till we are too old to pay tribute and they to whom tribute is due have passed our reach.

"I, oh, of course I'll be all right! Would you like a lunch or something?"

"No, never mind! Keep Calamity by you! Go to bed early, have a good sleep! 'Night," he said. The mosquito door clicked and he had gone. A moment later, the yellow buck board had rattled down the River road, and her father did what he had never done before, he turned and lightly waved his hat.

If Eleanor could have known it, he was saying at that moment:

"Matthews, you can fight the world, the flesh, and the devil; but you can't fight against the stars."

The old frontiersman didn't answer for a little. When he spoke, it was very soberly:

"No, when it's that, you'll work for the stars spite o' y'rself! Why, A contrived the meetin' myself this vera afternoon; wha' d' y' think o' that for an old fool? A'll be goin' back empty handed, an' all m' own doin'!"

"And I'll have built plans for twenty years on,—on the sands," and MacDonald flicked the bronchos up with his whip.

There was a long silence but for the crunch of the wheels through the road dust.

"MacDonald," said Matthews abruptly, "A'm goin' t' see this thing thro'. A don't mean y'r daughter's love; th' angels o' Heaven have that in *their* own charge! A'm referrin' t' this mine thing! There's evil brewin'! A'm goin' t' see this thing thro'; an' A make no doubt y'r goin' to do th' same! A'm no wantin' t' pry into y'r affairs, MacDonald; but—is y'r will made an' secure?"

The sheep rancher flicked his whip at the bronchos and took firmer hold of the reins.

"Copper rivetted," he said.

We call *It* clairvoyance; and we call *It* intuition; and we call *It* instinct; and we might as well call it x, y, z for all these terms mean. We do not know what they mean. Neither do we know what *It* is. We hear *It* and obey *It*; and *It* brings blessedness. In the din of life's insistent noise, we sometimes do not hear *It*. That is, we do not hear *It* until afterwards when the curse has come. Then, we remember that we did hear *It*, though we did not heed it.

It was so with Eleanor after her father passed from the Ranch House that night. Afterwards, she knew that she had noticed the wistful look on his face; but the memory of it did not come to the surface of thought till she heard the click of Calamity's door in the basement and recollected his words; "Keep Calamity by you." Also, at that very moment, a great gray racing motor car swerved out across the white bridge from the Senator's ranch buildings and went spinning down the Valley road, the twin lanterns before and behind cutting the dark in the double sword of a great search light that etched the sheathed pine needles and twinkling cottonwoods in black against a background of gold. Eleanor was perfectly certain she saw the same two hats in the back seat that had met Wayland at the Cabin that afternoon.

"Calamity," she called down over the piazza railing.

The native woman came up the piazza stairs on a pattering run.

"Why has everybody gone down to Smelter City to-night? Is anything wrong?"

The Cree woman's shawl had fallen back from her head. She stood kneading her fingers in and out of her palms. There was a strange wild look in the dark eyes

and her breathing labored. “It ees Moyese,” said Calamity slowly. “He ’xamin d’ mine t’-morrow.”

“Why, Calamity, that is perfect nonsense! Moyese won’t examine the mine, at all! This young fellow from Washington is the one to examine the mine?”

Calamity continued to knit her fingers in and out. “All ’same,” she said, “Messieu Waylan’, he telephone Messieu MacDonal’ come ’mine help him t’-morrow!”

“Telephone my father? Why, how could he? I have been right here, Calamity?”

“You go see Missy Villam, leetle gurl,” explained Calamity. “Messieu Waylan’ he ride down hog back trail woods all night, ’lone! He ring ting—ling—says he go ’samin mine.”

Then, the child’s babble, the looks of the two at the Cabin, her father’s wistful face, the quick departure of Matthews and himself, followed almost immediately by Moyese’s motor, confirmed Calamity’s incoherent account. Eleanor ran out to the telephone in the living room, and rang for the Ranger’s Cabin. There was no answer on the local circuit, and Central at Smelter City could only say “They don’t answer! Try local!”

Yet why should she feel such alarm? Had he not gone down to the Desert, and come back, and she had not known fear? Was the fear for her father? Was it her father’s wistful look? What could she do? Would he wish her to do anything? This, too, was on the Firing Line, but reason how she would, she could not subdue her fears, nor keep the tremor from her hands as she ran back to the bed room dimly lighted by the candle above the desk at the head of the bed.

“Calamity, you don’t think there is any danger to Father?”

Then Calamity did the strangest thing that ever Eleanor had seen her do. She had thrown off the shawl. She had drawn herself up on moccasined tip-toes, and seemed suddenly to have thrown off age and abuse and disgrace and rags and sin, with her eyes fixed stonily on the far spaces of her wrecked youth, the lids wide open, the whites glistening, a mad look in the dilated pupils shining like fire; and her fingers were knitting in and out of her palms.

“M’ man,” she whispered, “dey keel heem, dey hang heem! M’ babee, dey take it away, d’ pries’ he sing—sing an’ wave candle an’ bury it in snow. Leetle Ford, d’ keel heem! D’ punish Indian man, d’ hang heem, m’ man! Moyese, he keel leetle Ford: he go free, not’ng hurt heem!” She burst out laughing, low voiced cunning laughter. “I go see,” she said. “I ride down hog’s back t’ d’ mine! I go see! Messieu MacDonal’—He help me! I help heem! I go see,” and before Eleanor had grasped the import of the words, the woman had darted out into the dark; and a moment later, Eleanor heard the basement door clang. There was the pound-pound of a horse being pulled hither and thither, leaping to a wild gallop, then the figure of Calamity bare-headed, riding bareback and astride, cut the

moonlight; and the ring of hoof beats echoed back from the rocks of some one going furious, heedless up the face of the Ridge towards the hog's back trail.

Eleanor called up the Mission School telephone: Mr. Williams had heard nothing; he didn't believe there was any cause for alarm; the child was patently and plainly an astounding little liar! About Calamity? Oh, yes, Eleanor was not to be alarmed! She had gone off in those mad fits ever since her baby died up on Saskatchewan. It had been very distressing; was in winter time, and she wouldn't release the dead child from her arms; they had to take it from her by force; she always came back after a week or two of wandering! Would Eleanor like some one to come over and stay in the Ranch House? And Eleanor being a true descendant of the Man with the Iron Hand flaunted personal fear; and went back to a sleepless but not unhappy night in her room. Why did the news that Calamity's child had died bring such a sense of relief?

How simply does life deck out her tragedies! There is no prelude of low-toned plaintive orchestral music tuned to expectancy. There is no thunder barrel; or if there is a thunder barrel, you may know that the tragedy is theatrical and hollow in proportion to the size of its emptiness. And there is no graceful curtain-drop between it and real life, permitting you to rise from your place and go home happy.

MacDonald was stepping into the bucket to descend the last shaft of the mine when something on the edge of the *Brulé* arrested his glance; in fact, two things: one was Calamity coming out from the trail of the hog's back through the young cottonwoods and poplars, riding bareback and looking very mad, indeed; the other, was O'Finnigan from Shanty Town on foot, staggering and mad as whiskey could make him, coming up the narrow rock trail from Smelter City.

"Go on," said MacDonald curtly to the others. "I'll keep the notes safe up here, and give Sheriff Flood a hand at the hoist!"

All had gone well, exceedingly well, in the examination of the mine. It had begun sharp at twelve o'clock when the day shift came out with their dinner pails. It will be remembered the Ridge sloped down to a burnt area, known as the *Brulé*, overgrown with young poplars and birches and yet younger pines. The *Brulé* slanted down to a roll of rock and shingle and gravel above the City known as Coal Hill. It was on the face of this hill that the mines lay. You could see the black veins coming out on the face of the cliff; and into the cliff penetrated two parallel tunnels. Up and down from these tunnels rattled the trucks on serial tramways to and from the Smelter, weaving in and out of the tunnel mouths like shuttles, run by gravitation pressure. If the mines were worthless, or worth only the five, ten, and three-hundred dollars that the Ring had paid the "dummy" homesteaders for each quarter section, these shifts of a hundred men at a time, and trucks and tramways would have offered a puzzle to any one but the downy-lipped youth,

who had come to examine them.

When Wayland arrived at the mine with Matthews and MacDonald, he found the federal investigator on hand with Mr. Bat Brydges, who was out for news features, and the news editor of the "Smelter City Herald," who somehow gave the Ranger a look mingled of smothered anger and friendliness. If Mr. Bat Brydges felt any embarrassment, he did not show it. Indeed, the handy man would have felt proud of the very things of which he had accused the Ranger; and it is to be doubted if the door of decent shame remained open; if, indeed, the harboring of thoughts like the flocking of the carrion bird to putridity does not pre-suppose a kind of inner death. And as the party were donning blue overalls to descend into the mine, who should come on the scene but Mr. Sheriff Flood, "to see that ev'thing waz al' right," he explained, exhibiting a protuberant rotundity due reverse of the compass that had been most prominent when Wayland last saw him; and if the doughty defender of the law felt any embarrassment, like the handy man, he did not show it. Indeed, this mighty man of valor could truthfully be described as fat of brain, fat of chops, fat of neck, and fattest of all in the rotundity of this strutting stomach. In fact, he seemed proud of that hummocky part of his anatomy and swung it round at you and rested his hands clasped across it as he talked.

"Jis' thought I'd happen along! Wife didn't want me to: women are all skeery that way; but I jis' thought I'd happen along an' nut let her know!"

"All sorts o' things might chance in a mine, mightn't they?" cut in Matthews with a twinkle of his eye more merry than good natured.

The Sheriff smiled a sickly smile and ' 'lowed they could'; and everybody walked into the lowest tunnel leaving the fire guard lanterns outside; for this tunnel was lighted by electricity. As they all walked in, the Sheriff was to the rear.

"Here, you, Mr. Sheriff," Matthews blurted out, going to the rear of the procession, "seems to me my place is kind o' back o' behind o' you."

The Sheriff smiled a sickly smile and ' 'lowed it waz.'

Wayland took the record of the mine's output per day. (It averaged a net return of forty per cent. dividend on a capitalization of ninety million.) Then, he took the record of what the Smelter could consume per day. The difference must be used for shipment or storage. Wayland did the counting and measuring. MacDonald jotted down the notes. The downy-lipped youth proceeded along the tunnel with an air of supreme contempt. It was as they were about to enter the second tunnel that his superiority expressed itself. Matthews afterwards said it was because the black water drip or coal sweat was seeping through the overalls.

"I don't see what we're delaying to take all these specific measurements for anyway," he said.

"Don't you?" asked Wayland. "Then I'll tell you! I have the affidavit of the most of the 'dummies' that the homestead entries were fraudulent! You could see

that if you knew that men can't farm at an angle of ninety! In case that fails, I want proof that this coal is so valuable it is being shipped out. I want exact proofs of the exact profits being made on the fraudulently acquired mines."

"What's your idea? Shut 'em up from development for ever?" asked Brydges belligerently.

"Brydges," said Wayland, "when you find you can't throw your pursuer off the trail by the skunk's peculiar trick of defence, I'd advise you to try kicking sand in the public's eyes and drawing a rotten herring across the trail! This time, I think you'll find, the public won't go off the trail after the rotten herring. They'll keep on after the thief."

It was at that stage, Bat fell back abreast of the Sheriff, and Matthews behind heard one of the two say, "Damn him, then, let him go on and examine his bellyfull! It's his funeral; not ours!"

Wayland not only examined the second tunnel above the first, but he insisted on descending a shaft that had been sunk almost vertically from the crest of Coal Hill to get a measurement of the veins, for stoping, or cross cutting, or drifting or some such technical work, I forget what; but the vertical shaft afforded estimates of the depth of the veins. Because it was not a regular avenue of work but only of examination, it had not been equipped with steam hoist and electric light, but was furnished only with such old fashioned hand winch as the stage driver had described to Eleanor. A huge bucket depended by cable from the hand hoist. It was as they were all lighting lanterns and stepping in, that MacDonald took a look at the hoist and noticed that the Sheriff was to give a hand at the winch.

"Not coming Brydges?" asked Matthews, who was already in the bucket.

"Oh, I guess I'm a pretty heavy man to go in that."

"Then, A guess you're afraid of what's goin' t' happen! We're not goin' down, without you, m' boy."

Bat winked at the Sheriff and clambered in. It was then something on the edge of the *Brulé* arrested MacDonald's glance; Calamity coming through the cottonwoods mad and dishevelled, O'Finnigan reeling up from the Smelter City trail mad with whiskey, waving a bottle and shouting—"What's th' use o' anything? Nothing! I'm Uncle Sam! Hoorah!"

"Go on," ordered MacDonald curtly. "I'll keep the notes safe up here, in my pocket, Wayland! I'll stay and give Sheriff Flood a hand at the hoist!"

The Sheriff looked for directions to Brydges.

"Let her go," ordered Brydges with a glance back over his shoulder towards the trail from Smelter City; and the winch creaked and groaned; and the bucket fell with a bump; then a steady drop to the first vein. When Matthews looked up, the slant of the shaft had cut off the sky. Brydges didn't bother clambering out of the bucket. He was silent and kept hold of the dependent cable. Suddenly, there was a rumble as of the hoist flying backward, then the whip lash of a taut rope

snapping, and the cable whirled down in a coil round Brydges' head.

"Gee whiz! This is a pretty mess! The cable's broke; and we can't get up!"

"What's that?" called Mathews. Wayland and the others were examining the black wall of the shaft.

Matthews flashed his hand lantern in Brydges' face. It was ashen doughy, with sagged lips. "Wayland, have y' on y'r mountaineerin' boots, the boots pegged wi' handspikes?" cried the old frontiersman. "The cable's broken; and A like t' see y' shin for th' top soon as possible!"

Something in the voice must have caught the ear of the news editor; for he turned back and flooded his lantern, first on Matthews' face, then on Brydges'.

"You'll climb easier if you pull off y'r overalls and fasten y'r lantern in y'r hat, Wayland," he said in the same cutting voice he used in the hurry and rush of the composing room.

If Mr. Bat Brydges had been after a feature story, he had it then and there; the tenebrous thick coal darkness; the drip-drip-drip of the water-soak through the rock walls; Matthews' eyes blazing like coals of fire in the dark, his lantern shining full on Brydges; the news editor hatchet-faced, white of skin, with pistol point eyes, his lantern full on Brydges; the downy-lipped youth white, terrified, chattering of jaws, unable to speak a word, clutching to the edge of the bucket to hide his trembling, his hat had fallen off, his lantern had fallen out of his hand, and a great blob of black coal drip trickled from his yellow hair down his cheek in front of his ear; and the handy man still standing in the barrel, his face chalky and soggy like dough, with a show of bluff, but unable to look a man in the face, gazing at his feet in the bottom of the barrel:

"Gawd, Wayland! Don't risk it! Don't climb! Wait a little! They'll wind her up and drop another rope down to us and—"

The Ranger had begun climbing. They could see the shine of the lantern in his hat against the black moist rock wall; up and up, slow, sure and light of foot, swinging from side to side for hand grip; hands first finding foot hold; then a leg up; and another foot hold.

"Look out fellows," he warned once. "I might knock some of these small rocks loose!"

Then, the light of the lantern disappeared at a bend in the shaft.

"It's a darned dangerous thing to do," pronounced the handy man thickly.

Not one of the men answered a word, and the silence grew impressive by what it didn't say.

Once Wayland had turned the bend of the shaft, the rest of the way up was easy. Daylight was above, and the climb was a gradual slant over uneven ridged rock; and with the grip of the pegs in his mountaineering boots, he ascended

almost at a run on all fours.

"Hullo up-there," he called, "what's wrong?"

There was no answer. He ascended the rest of the way winged and came out hoisting himself from his elbows to his knees with a deep breath of pure air above the surface. At first, daylight blinded him. He threw the lantern from his hat and blinked the darkness out of his eyes.

"It's all right fellows," he roared down the shaft, funnelling his hands.

Then he looked.

Sheriff Flood was not to be seen. Neither was MacDonald. There seemed to be no one. The day shift were going back in the tunnels below. The windlass handle hung prone as a disused well. It had not flown back broken. The cable had been cut. Then, he heard a groan. It was Calamity lying on her face at the foot of the windlass, weeping and reaving her hair. Stretched on the grass a few paces back from the windlass with two bloody bullet holes full in the soft of the temple, lay MacDonald, the sheep rancher, beyond recall.

Wayland stooped and felt for the heart.

It was motionless. The body was chilling and stiffening. He looked back at the face. There was almost a smile on the lips; and one hand hung as if fallen from the windlass handle. A suspicion flashed through Wayland's mind. He could hardly give it credence. It was preposterous, unbelievable, like a page from the lawlessness of the frontier a hundred years ago! Yet hadn't this thing happened in California, and happened in Alaska? They would never dare to murder a man conducting an investigation ordered by the great Government of the greatest Nation on earth! Yet had they not tried to assassinate representatives of the great Federal Government down in San Francisco, and shot to death in Colorado a federal officer sent straight from Washington? And these murders had not been committed by the rabble, by the demagogues, by the anarchists. They had been pre-planned and carried out by the vested-righter, in defiance of law, in defiance of the strongest Government on earth and up to the present, in defiance of retribution.

Wayland tore open the coat and felt for the notes. They were gone. He looked at Calamity. A darker suspicion came. Then, he caught the Cree woman by the shoulder and threw her to her feet.

"Calamity who did this?"

"Th' trunk man, O'Finnigan! Flood, he lead heem up; an' t' trunk man shoot, shoot quick close—lak dat," she said snapping her fingers round behind Wayland's ear against the soft of his temple.

Wayland's suspicions became a certainty.

"They will blame you," he said, "do you understand me? They will prove *you did* it; and hang you! Ride for your life! Ride for Canada; and hide!"

Was he thinking of Calamity or Eleanor? But where was Flood; and where was the drunken man?

He fastened a stone to the end of the cut cable, and with a shout began dropping it down and down from the windlass.

CHAPTER XXVI
THE AWAKENING

By all the tricks of stage-craft and book-craft, of the copybook headlines and platitudinous lies which we have had rammed down our throats since childhood, virtue should have triumphed in the person of the Ranger, because he fought regardless of consequences for right. MacDonald, the sheep rancher, who went out of his way to enforce the fair deal and the square deal, when he could very much more easily have remained safely at home, a fire-insurance, bread-and-butter, safety-guarantee Christian of the quiescent kind, MacDonald by all the tricks of the-be-good-and-you-will-prosper doctrines, ought not to have been shot down as he stood guard at the head of the mine shaft.

A very great many years ago, a very great Man, in fact, the very greatest moral teacher the world has ever known, declared that the milk-and-water, neither-hot-nor-cold, quiescent, safety-guarantee type of Christianity was a thing to be spewed out of the mouth; but that was a very great many years ago. Time has softened the edge of that passion for right. Perhaps, He didn't mean it! Perhaps, we have permitted sentimentality to sand-paper down the fighting edge of militant righteousness that goes out beyond the Safety Line! To be sure, bread-and-butter goodness is an easier matter than risking hot shot beyond the Safety Line; and perhaps, a sentimental Deity may be persuaded to allow us a little jam on our bread and butter if we sit tight on the safe side with a fire-insurance policy in the shape of a creed! Personally, I wonder when we all take to joining the sit-tight, safety-guarantee brigade, who is to stand on the outside guard? Or is there any modern Fighting Line? Or does the Fighting Line belong to the old Shibboleth legends of Canaanite and Jebusite and Perizzite and God knows what other "ite"? I hear these ancient gentry preached about and the heroes who smote them hip and thigh extolled. Personally, I am a great deal more interested in the modern tussle for a promised land than in those old time frays for a fertile patch in a sterile wilderness; and I see the same call for the hero's fighting edge; and I like the MacDonalds, who jump out from behind the Safety Line to fight for right, though it bring but the bloody bullet holes in the soft of the temple; and I like the Waylands, who take up the game trail to run down crime though it bring the sword of dismissal dangling over their own heads; and I like best of all the Matthews, who throw aside their "skin-dicate contracts" to take up the game of playing as joyfully for right as they have for wrong, "rich" (I wish you could have heard the full way in which he said that word) "rich" on "thirty dollars a year for clothes," spending self without stint, joyfully, unknowing of self-pity, for the making of right into might, for the making of a patch of human weeds into a garden of goodness. Only, I would put on record the fact that each man's reward was not the

hero's crown of laurel leaves, but the crown that their great prototype wore upon the Cross.

Eleanor could not understand why she had been formally notified to attend the coroner's inquest till the drift of the questions began to indicate that this investigation like many another was not an investigation to *find out* but an investigation to *hush up*, not a following of the clues of evidence but a deliberate attempt to throw pursuit off on false clues. In fact, there were many things about that inquest which Eleanor could not fathom. Why, for instance was the local district attorney not present? Why had the Smelter Coking Company a special pleader present? Why was the great Federal Government not represented by an attorney of equal ability, instead of this downy-lipped silent and incredibly ignorant youth? Why was the first session of the inquest adjourned till the burial of her father? Why did the sheriff act as a mentor at the ear of the chief coroner? Why did the justice of the peace acting as coroner listen to all suggestions from the Smelter Company's attorney and the Sheriff, and reject all suggestions from her father's friends? Why was the stenographer instructed to erase some evidence and preserve other? What was the ground of discrimination? If you doubt whether these things are ever done, dear reader; then, peruse with close scrutiny the first criminal trial that comes under your notice; and see if you think that the term of the Old Dispensation 'wresting the judgment' has become obsolete? You don't suppose those long-whiskered old patriarchs openly took the bribe in hand and right before the claimants, tucked the loose shekels into the wide phalacteries of holy skirts—do you?

Yet, there were certain features of that inquest which awakened strange hope in her breast. It was held in the county court room; and the crowd gathering to listen and hear somehow gave her a different impression from the unwashed rabble that usually infests public courts to feast on the carrion of criminal proceedings. Men predominated, of course; but they were decent men, men of standing, not idlers and blacklegs. As she passed up the aisle with Matthews and Mrs. Williams to the front row of chairs where the news editor and Wayland and Brydges and the youth from Washington were already seated, she heard a man's voice say, "They've gone too far this time, by Jingo! It will take more than wind-jamming to win next fall's elections with this against them."

"You bet there's an awakening," returned another voice. "The-dyed-in-the-woollies don't realize yet; but they will waken up after election day!"

The news editor had only finished giving evidence; on the whole immaterial testimony; for suspicions do not pass with juries and coroners.

"How was it you attended the examination of this mine?" was the last question asked him.

Considering the Smelter City lots, for which the news editor had yet to pay and the "kiddies" which he had to support, it would have been an easy matter for him 'to slink' that question. "A newspaper man's pursuit of a good story" would have been answer enough to satisfy any coroner; but the news editor did not give that answer. He took off his glasses and polished the lenses with his handkerchief. Then, he put them back on his nose and looked straight at the gentleman presiding.

"May I answer that question in my own way, taking plenty of time?" he asked. "I take it this inquest is being held to get at the real truth."

The coroner said, "Go ahead!"

The attorney for the Smelter City Coking Company sat up and whispered something to Brydges. The handy man turned lazily round. "Yes," he said, "one of our staff."

The news editor cleared his throat, and a little sharp intersection of lines bridged above his nose.

"For some little time, it has been known in the Valley that a quiet contest has been going on."

The attorney for the Smelter City Coking Company jumped to his feet.

"The witness should keep to a strict recital of fact, not rumors," he interjected; and the downy-lipped representative of the Federal Government said nothing about the privileges of a witness, or the impropriety of a special pleader opening his mouth at an inquest.

"Confine yourself to facts," ordered the coroner heavily.

Wayland and Eleanor suddenly leaned forward. The news editor rubbed his glasses and resumed in a low clear tense voice. How many of the listeners had the faintest idea of what the recital cost him?

"I take it the object of this inquest is to ascertain facts. If I am to relate facts, I must repeat that for some little time it has been known in the Valley that a quiet contest has been going on between the people and certain interests which I do not need to name. It was well known in our office that the miners on Coal Hill had openly boasted no Washington man was going to get away with any facts about mining operations. O'Finnigan of Shanty Town had boasted he had been brought down from the Ridge for 'a surprise party' as he called it. For some little time, as news editor I had been dissatisfied with the reports of this whole struggle: they struck me as exceedingly biased and untruthful; in fact what the reporters call 'doped news'; 'news doped by outsiders for special reasons of their own.' "

Bat's boot came down with a clump on the floor. The attorney was up again, glaring at the coroner. The news editor cleared his throat.

"So I determined to go and see this thing for myself—"

"With the result," roared the attorney, "that you saw every facility afforded for the most thorough examination of the mine."

There was a shuffling of feet among the men at the back of the room. More men seemed to be crowding in.

"That," said the news editor aloud, sitting back beside Wayland, "That effectually cooks my dough! See that you fellows do as well!"

Eleanor was next questioned, most considerately and courteously. Twice she was interrupted. The first time was when she repeated that her father had said he expected no trouble whatsoever.

"I would call your attention to the fact, Mr. Coroner, that the deceased gentleman assured his daughter he expected no trouble whatsoever," called out the attorney.

The Sheriff leaned over and whispered to the coroner.

"Did the half-breed woman known as Calamity leave the Ranch House the night before the examination of the mine?" asked the coroner.

It was when Eleanor was describing the mad look of Calamity that the attorney again interrupted:

"Mr. Coroner, out of respect to the memory of the deceased gentleman and to the member of his family present, I ask that the stenographer strike out the record of the insane woman's babblings! The fact is established on the word of Miss MacDonald that the Indian woman set out with the express intention of seeking her employer. What she intended to do when she found him, we cannot know; for the woman was plainly insane and her word is worthless."

Bat wore a tallow smile. The attorney's expression became inscrutable. Sheriff Flood's face shone as a new moon. The other faces were a puzzled blank.

"You want to check that," whispered the news editor to Wayland. Matthews was being questioned.

"Before A proceed t' answer y'r verra civil inquiries, Mr. Coroner, A wud ask the privilege o' puttin' three questions!"

"Go ahead, Sir!"

"Why is the man O'Finnigan not here?"

"Still drunk," answered the Sheriff.

"Then, if A commit a crime, if A cut y'r throat, Mr. Coroner, all A have t' do t' avoid awkward questions, is t' fill up? Verra well! Why is the woman Calamity, herself, not here?"

"Can't be found," called Wayland.

"So that if A'm accused of a crime A know no more about than th' babe unborn, all A've t' do t' rivet that crime on myself for life is not to be found? Verra well—"

"Sir," interrupted the coroner.

"A wud ask why is that little Irish lassie not here?"

Mrs. Williams explained that Lizzie, having exhausted the Indian children with her boastings in two days, had lost interest in life and run back to the slums.

“A always did say if y’ took a pig out o’ a pen an’ putt it in a parlor, ’twould feel lonesome for its hogwash,” exclaimed the old frontiersman running a puzzled hand through his mop of white hair. Matthews also was twice interrupted in his testimony. He was explaining that he anticipated trouble about the mine from what had already happened on the Rim Rocks when Wayland trod forcibly and sharply on his foot; and all reference to the pursuit across the Desert was omitted. The coroner, it seemed, did not want any details about the Rim Rocks. The second interruption came when he began to quote Mistress Lizzie O’Finnigan’s words those afternoons on the Ridge. The attorney sprang up:

“As the child is an incorrigible liar and her father an incorrigible drunkard, Mr. Coroner, I think it only fair to the Company that their aspersions and reference to us be stricken off the records;” and the coroner instructed the stenographer to erase all reference to Lizzie’s babbling.

The old frontiersman sat back with a dazed feeling that while he had expressed anticipation of trouble at the mine, he had failed to give proof or reason for that anticipation.

Brydges’ evidence was innocuous to the very end. The Sheriff had whispered something to the coroner.

“Is there any reason why anyone in the Valley might harbor a grudge against the sheep rancher?” asked the coroner.

Brydges hesitated as one who could say much if he would. “Yes, there is,” he answered lowering his eyes and flushing dully.

It was the attorney again who was on his feet.

“Mr. Coroner, the dead cannot defend themselves. Out of respect to the deceased gentleman and the member of his family present, I think that line of enquiry ought not to be recorded or pursued.”

“The second time they have said that; what do they mean?” Eleanor asked Mrs. Williams in a whisper.

Matthews was hanging on to his chair to hold himself down and the news editor had leaned across Eleanor to speak to Wayland: “Good God, Wayland! Don’t you see the drift? Can’t you head that off?”

“Leave ’t’ me,” muttered the old frontiersman gripping his chair.

“But you have given your evidence: Wayland is our only chance left. Don’t you see how they’ll clinch it?”

“Hold y’r head shut,” ordered Matthews.

Wayland was giving his evidence, as little as he could possibly give, it seemed to Eleanor, from the time he had telephoned down to her father to come and take corroborative proof of the value of the coal mines.

“You did not anticipate any trouble about the examination?”

“None whatever,” answered Wayland. He had described the examination of the two tunnels and the preparation to go down the shaft when the Sheriff again

whispered to the coroner.

"When MacDonald seemed to change his mind about going down the shaft, was there anyone visible except the Sheriff?"

"Not that I saw," answered Wayland; and he went on to describe the cutting of the cable and the climb up the side of the shaft.

Eleanor became suddenly conscious that tense stillness reigned in the county court room. Some man standing behind the back benches shuffled his feet and cleared his throat with an offensive "hem." The roomful of people looked back angrily. The attorney had pencilled a line on a scrap of paper and shoved it across in front of the coroner. Through the open windows, Eleanor could see that a great concourse of people was gathering outside.

"When you found the body, was anyone else present at the top of the shaft?"

For the fraction of a second, Eleanor wondered if they meant to cast suspicion on the Ranger.

"Yes," answered Wayland, "the woman, Calamity was lying on the ground sobbing to break her heart. No one else was visible."

"You say the wound was such that it could not possibly have been self-inflicted?"

"You determined that for yourselves, when you examined the body," answered Wayland.

"Was the woman's position such that she might have shot him?"

"The shot was in the right temple, close; close enough to scorch the face! You have the record of that! The woman was kneeling on the ground a little to the left facing him."

"Did she carry a weapon?"

"She did not."

"How do you know she had not one concealed?"

"Because I caught her by the shoulders and lifted her up and shook her and said, 'Calamity, who did this?' "

"What did she answer?"

The attorney was on his feet with a bang of his fist on the table that shut off the answer:

"Mr. Coroner, this evidence has proceeded far enough to show that the death of the deceased gentleman had absolutely no connection whatever with the official examination of the mines. The dead cannot defend themselves. Out of respect to the deceased and the member of his family—"

"That," interrupted Matthews, breaking from his chair, "is the third time th' insinuation has been thrown out that MacDonald had things in his life that wud na bear tellin'! A know his life: A know all his life: ask me!"

But the attorney and the coroner were in an endless wrangle as to law, that was Hebrew to the listeners, and gave the roomful of spectators ample time to imbibe

the false impression that was meant to be conveyed, and to pass it to the prurient crowd outside. After a half hour of reading from authorities to prove that the answer was inadmissible as evidence, and another half hour rattling off counter authorities at such a rate the listeners could not possibly judge for themselves, the coroner reserved decision as to whether that answer could be admitted as evidence or not, coming as it did from a person plainly of unsound mind.

"What next happened?"

"I tied a stone to the cut end of the cable and unrolled the rope on the hoist and gave it a hard enough pitch to send the stone past the bend in the shaft."

"And when you turned to work the hoist and bring up the others?"

"And when I turned to work the hoist, the Indian woman was nowhere to be seen. The chances are she knew the guilty parties would try to throw the blame—"

"Mr. Coroner," shouted the attorney, "there can be no chances recorded as evidence where the reputation of a gentleman, who cannot defend himself, is concerned."

"Good God," said the news editor under his breath.

"Humph! A'll put a crimp in that! The Sheriff man is to give evidence yet! Eleanor, y' better not wait! A'm goin' t' do some plain speakin' t' y' father's honor, but 'tis not talk for a woman's ears! Y've heard y'r father defamed."

"Then, I'll wait and hear him cleared," she whispered to Mrs. Williams. "Will you stay?"

The Sheriff had gone round in front of the table, not too near it for obvious reasons; for the time of his revenge had come and his rotundity protruded full blown and swelling. He told how MacDonald had refused to go down the shaft.

"Do you know any reason for that sudden change of mind?"

"I don't know whether it's the reason or not; but somethin' happened jes' as he had his leg up to climb in, *might a' made* him change his mind! Th' squaw come ridin' all bareheaded, an' mad as a hornet out o' th' cottonwoods wavin' her hands roarin' crazy! Minit he seen her, he quit goin' down: said he'd give me a hand at the hoist! I seen what made him change his mind al' right! She waz ravin' mad, come rampin' out, then, she seen me, an' kin' o' hiked back ahint the cottonwood; but I seen her plain! Jes as we commenced unwindin' her—"

"You mean the hoist?"

"Yes, jes' as we began lettin' her down, I sees O'Finnigan come up from Smelter City trail roarin' drunk, ugly drunk, yellin' 'Hell: he waz Uncle Sam,' an' all that."

"If y'll not admit the child's story of her father, why d' y' admit this man's story of him?" demanded Matthews; but the coroner ignored the interruption and the doughty defender of the law continued.

"I put up with his drunken yellin' till I felt the bucket bump the first level.

Then I sez, ‘Now, my gen’leman, hand over that bottle o’ tipperary, an’ scat out o’ this!’ There it is,” the Sheriff laid a black square whiskey bottle on the desk. “He began jawin’ an’ cuttin’ up gineral. T’ make a long story short, I took him by the scruff o’ th’ neck and helped him down Smelter City trail an’-an’-an’ I jugged him: that’s all; an’ there he is yet! When I came back up, this had happened.”

“When you arrested O’Finnigan for drunkenness, where was the woman, Calamity?”

“Hidin’ back among th’ cottonwoods! She’d slid off her horse! Jes’ as I turned down the trail, I looked back! She waz comin’ peepin’ out from tree t’ tree!”

“How was MacDonald standing?”

“He waz standin’ with his back t’ her, with his hand hangin’ kind o’ loose from th’ hoist waitin’ for ’em t’ ring th’ bell t’ let her down t’ next level!”

There was a long silence. Eleanor had turned very white. The eyes of the news editor emitted sparks.

“I expected that,” commented Wayland.

“Y’ d’, did y’?” rumbled Matthews. “Then A ’ll wager y ’ll nut be expectin’ what A ’ll spring!”

The room suddenly filled with a rustling and whispering. Men were demonstrating exactly how it had happened. The handy man’s tallow smile melted on his face; and the tortoise shell eyes looked sidewise at Wayland. The look wasn’t malicious; and it wasn’t triumphant. It was the look of a gambler saying, “Come on my four-flusher, beat that! Show down!” The rabble outside deployed off the pavement across the street back a whole block. Eleanor could hear the hum through the open window.

The attorney was leaning across the table conferring with the coroner.

The coroner rapped the table and cried for “order.”

The room suddenly silenced.

“Gentlemen, as this evidence will have to be handed in to the district attorney for what action he deems best, I wish to ask one more question. Mr. Sheriff, you know this Valley and the people in it well?”

“I do, known it for twenty years.”

“Do you know of any reason why this woman Calamity would have shot or wished to shoot, her employer, MacDonald?”

The Sheriff changed a quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other.

Eleanor leaned forward looking straight in his eyes. Bat was eyeing Eleanor quizzically. (Had he constructed the evidence so skilfully that he had come to believe it himself?) Matthews was almost tearing the arms out of the chair where he sat.

“Well,” said Sheriff Flood clasping his hands in rest across his portly person. “I guess squaw is same as any other woman in *one* respect. I guess she had same reason for shootin’ MacDonal’ as any other woman in her place would o’ had,”

and he looked up well pleased with himself at the roomful. For a moment, there was deadly heavy silence; then the hum of the crowd on the steps pouring the word out to those in the street.

"Ye lyin' scut[1]! Ye filthy cess pool o' dirt an' falsehood!"

The old frontiersman had sprung from his place and smashed his chair in twenty atoms on the table between the sheriff and the coroner.

"Y'll not offend the deceased gentleman's memory? Y'll not offend his daughter here? An' the dead can't defend themselves? An' y're all s' verra delicate y're lettin' a stinkin' slanderous unclean unspoken damnable hell-spawned lie go forth unchallenged t' blacken a dead man's memory? Oh, A know y'r kind well! A've heard harlots lisp an' whisp' an' half tell and damn by a lie o' th' eye! Y' are insinuatin' this woman Calamity shot her master to avenge dishonor in her early life? 'Tis a lie! 'Tis a most damnable black an' filthy lie! She wud a' died for MacDonald ten thousand times over if she could, because he had long ago, before ever he came here, avenged *her* dishonor."

The coroner had sprung back from the table. The mighty man of valor, who defended law, had precipitately put the space of overturned benches between himself and the irate old frontiersman. Matthews suddenly swung to face the spectators.

"Men," he cried, "foul murder has been done; and this slander is t' fasten guilt on a poor innocent outcast woman, t' send her a scapegoat int' th' wilderness bearin' th' sins o' those higher up that A do na' name; of y'r Man Higher Up, who is the curse o' this land! 'Twas in my boyhood days on Saskatchewan! This woman, that y' have seen wander the Black Hills sinnin' unashamed, was but a fair slip o' an Indian girl, then, pure as y'r own girls in school! She married a little Indian boy, Wandering Spirit o' the Crees at Frog Lake! The Indian Officer at Frog Lake was a Sioux half-breed—he took her forcibly from Wandering Spirit t' th' Agency House! 'Twas y'r sheep rancher, MacDonald, who was fur trader then, went forcibly to th' Agency House, thrashed the Agent, and brought her back to the Indian, Wandering Spirit! A was passin' West by dog train to the Mountains when A stopped at the Agency House! MacDonald had gone North. Little Wandering Spirit comes and asks me t' interpret something he has to say t' th' Master—meanin' that danged unclean Sioux beast. Says I, 'Wandering Spirit has something not pleasant t' say t' you: Y' better get another interpreter.' The officer says, 'Spit it out! Y' can't phase me.' Boys, A spit it out. A gave it to him plain! The boy Indian stood in the door o' th' Agency House holdin' a loaded dog-train whip hidden behind his back. He was na' but half as big as the brute behind the Government desk! He says, 'Tell the Master he must leave my wife alone! If ever he comes near m' tepee again, A do to him like that,' rolling a dead leaf t' powder 'tween his hands. The officer lets out a roar o' filthy oaths! I hear the little Indian give a scream like a hurt wild cat. 'He calls me a dog—a son of a dog,' he

screams; an' boys, with one leap he was over that counter with his dog whip; an' what A did t' y'r Sheriff last week in the Pass is nothing to what that bit of an Indian boy did t' yon bullying Agent! He thrashed him, an' he thrashed him, an' he chased him bellowin' round the Agency House till the blackguard's pants were ribbons an' the blood stripes reached down an' soaked his socks. Boys, A went on to th' Mountains! When A came back next year an' when MacDonald came back from MacKenzie River, we found that Agent had had Little Wandering Spirit arrested by the Mounted Police for assault an' battery, an' sentenced to a year in th' penitentiary! 'Twas too late to undo the wrong! Th' girl, th' woman y' know as Calamity, had gone insane from abuse! A helped to pry her dead child from her arms! A helped the priest t' bury it in the snow! Next year, was the Rebellion! Y'r sheepman an' his wife, Miss Eleanor here was na' born then, had come down from the North. The Indians loved him. They'd never touch *him*; but when the Rebellion broke out, 'twas Wandering Spirit went dancing mad for revenge from one end o' the Reserve t' th' other! When the massacre came, the officer had tripped the little Indian fellow to his face an' was pointin' the old muzzle loader at the back o' his head to blow out his brains, when along comes the MacDonald man an' kicks the gun from the bully's hand! Little Wandering Spirit up an' he pours that muzzle loader into the officer's face; an' he borrows another gun an' empties that in his face; and he snatches a knife; an' what he left o' that brute y' could bury in a coffin th' length o' y'r hand! 'Twas th' Indian's way o' vengeance; but blame fell on MacDonald; an' when Wandering Spirit was hanged for the murder, MacDonald fled from Canada; for his sympathies were with the Indians, as every right feelin' man's were;[2] for back a generation, there was Indian blood on the mother's side; but the Act o' Amnesty has been passed this many a year; an' A'd come to take him back to a fortune waitin' him in Scotland, to an inheritance when this happened.

"Y' know how he found her again, eatin' garbage in the Black Hills where the miners had cast her off; how he gave her an asylum an' a home; an' this is the man y'r fulthy sheriff poltroon coward says she'd shoot! Men, men o' th' Nation, murder has been done here: coward assassin murder on an innocent man! The notes on the mine have been robbed from his pocket. Who planned this murder? Who shot MacDonald by mistake? Who planned th' Rim Rocks outrage? Is it to this y' have let y'r Democracy come? Is this y'r self government workin' worse outrage than the despotism o' Russia? We'd have hanged our kings in Scotland for less sin! France would a' tanned her rulers' hide into moccasins for less! What are y' goin' to do about it." His shout rang and rang through the court. "Will ye make of self-government a farce, a screamin' shame, a shriekin' laughter in th' ears o' th' world?"

There were cries of "Sit down! Sit down! Shut up! Go on! Who is the old tow-head?" Then some one cried out "Moyese." Half the spectators cheered. Half

hissed. Then a voice yelled “Wayland! Wayland!” and Eleanor felt the leap to her blood; for the crowd outside took up the cry “Wayland, Wayland? What’s the matter with Wayland?”

The Sheriff and Coroner were on the table shouting for “order—order” when some wag heaved under and upset table, sheriff, coroner and all.

The last Eleanor saw before the news editor and Wayland pushed Mrs. Williams and herself through a door behind the coroner’s seat to a taxicab that whirled them off to the hotel, was a wild sprawling of the Sheriff coming down in mid-air. Bat Brydges and the downy-lipped youth, chalky white as a dead birch tree, were letting themselves hastily out through a back window. Matthews was being carried down the aisle on the shoulders of a howling rabble of men and boys. His head was bare; his coat was almost torn from his shoulders. His face was passionate with jubilant laughter. “Yell, boys! Yell for Wayland,” he was urging. Could Eleanor have known what happened at the door, her heart would have beat still faster. The old frontiersman brought her word two hours later when he joined them at the hotel.

“They hauled me out to th’ steps o’ th’ court house,” he said, “an’ A says ‘Yell boys! Yell, Yell like Hell for Wayland!’ An’ they set me down on th’ steps an’ began yellin’ ‘Speech! Speech!’ A held up m’ two hands like this. ‘Men,’ says I, ‘y’ ask for a word! Well, A’ll give it t’ you. A’ll give it t’ y’ from the door o’ y’r own sacred court o’ justice, which y’ have seen profaned this day by injustice, an’ a lie, an’ a bribe into th’ bedlam o’ a mob! Y’ ask for a word. A will give it y’, *Men o’ the United States o’ the World*; Men o’ Liberty; Men o’ Strength; the world has its eye on ye! What will y’ do? M’ word is this t’ all time: M’ word is th’ simple word o’ the old prophets that ye conned by heart at y’r mother’s knee: Y’ ha’ seen the author o’ crime an’ outrage an’ murder tryin’ to wrest the judgment, t’ pervert the court, to slander the dead, t’ send into th’ wilderness a poor innocent scapegoat o’ sin, to defile the vera presence o’ death. An’ ye ha’ seen a young man single-handed fightin’ for right, to save y’r land from the looters, an’ y’r forests from the timber thieves, an’ y’r mines from the coal pirates! Y’ ha’ seen evil an’ good an’ the fruits o’ them! *Choose ye this day which ye will serve*!’ Man alive, Wayland, ye should a’ heard them! They yelled like Hell for y’! They yelled till they split the welkin! They yelled, Wayland, till A couldna’ keep th’ tears from m’ eyes; an’ then, man alive, they yelled more than ever! Whiles we were yellin’ and riproarin’ outside, y’r brave Sheriff man, he gets the door shut an’ locked, an’ the windows down, an’ the shades all drawn; an’ they brings in a verdict o’ ‘come to his death by the hands o’ parties unknown.’ Oh, A’ll warrant ’twill be ‘by the hands o’ parties unknown.’ They’ll never more try t’ fasten that crime on poor old Calamity; tho’ she’s no so old when y’ come t’ think o’ it, except in her bein’ sore sinned against.”

“I wonder if they’ll try to come down on you for the disorder,” asked

Wayland.

The old frontiersman chuckled. “A wish t’ God they would,” he said. “What A’m wonderin’ is what y’ fat Bat fellow’s doin’?”

“Oh, I can tell you that,” answered the news editor. “Bat is singing small! I’ll bet you a five there won’t be a line nor the fraction of a line of all this in the local papers; nor as much as a blank space about it in any other paper. My God, if I could only lay my hand on a moneyed man who would back a paper thro’ a fight like this and tell the counting rooms to go to the Devil! I know a score of editors would jump for the job and work their heads off! You needn’t think we are specially keen for eating dog on this kind of a job! ’Tisn’t the men inside the office bedevil us: ’tis y’r outside interest—”

Eleanor gave him a quick queer look. She was learning to think fast and decide quickly. But the news editor was quite right. Not a word of the disgraceful attempt to pervert justice appeared in either the local or any other paper. MacDonald’s death was briefly recorded as accidental and the coroner’s verdict given in a four line paragraph. Do not ask me the *why* of this, dear reader; or I shall ask you the why of a hundred other equally mysterious silences. Don’t forget, as Wayland has already informed you, there are other countries besides Russia where everything is not given out to the press. And do not curse the press! It is not the fault of the press in Russia. Is it here?

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[1] I can find no authority for the old frontiersman’s use of the word but in a certain Elizabethan dramatist; and as he uses the word “scut” for the bobtail of a fleeing rabbit or sheep, perhaps the meanings of the word as used are identical.—*Author*.

[2] It need scarcely be explained these are the old frontiersman’s sentiments, not the writer’s; but on investigation I found his statement of facts as to what transformed little Wandering Spirit into a blood-thirsty monster was absolutely true. This, of course, did not justify the Rebellion, but helps to explain it, to explain why a worthless scamp like Riel could rouse the peaceful natives to blood thirst and rapine.—*Author*.

CHAPTER XXVII
THE AWAKENING CONTINUED

It was all over, the inquest, the coroner's finding, the reading of the will, the revelation of the real errand on which the old frontiersman had come from Saskatchewan. The parting of the ways had come to her, as it comes to us all. The death of her father had shut the door on opportunity in the Valley; and the little old lady, waiting for Matthews up in Prince Albert, Canada, to take her back to the inheritance of her father's family in Scotland, opened elsewhere another door of opportunity. As one door had swung shut, another had swung open. Were we creatures of circumstances, as the fatalists declared; or could we master and bend circumstances to human will? Was her feeling of rebellion but the kicking of ructious heels against the closed door of fate? Would time teach the futility of barking one's shins in such fashion? Eleanor sat in the parlor of the suite of rooms reserved by the Williams and herself. The Williams and Matthews had gone out for the evening to some women's club meeting on missions. Eleanor's nerves were too tension-strung for people to-night. They had read her father's will that afternoon. The quiet man doing the duty next and making no professions had left her secure against want; and after the lawyer who read the will had gone, the Williams went out, and Matthews had drawn his chair near to hers and told her the same story of her father's people that he had told Wayland in the Desert.

"They were a' dark fearsome men," he had said, telling her of the first Fraser-MacDonald who fought with Wolfe at Quebec, and the Man of the Iron Hand. "They were a' dark fearsome men; but of stainless honor, child! Not a man of them left a bar sinister on th' scutcheon! Even the man who married th' squaw, had a priest tie th' knot so that children would come stainless t' life; but they were dark fearsome men, undyin' in their hates an' unhappy in their loves. Y'r own mother's people turned against y'r father for th' part he took in th' Rebellion."

"Don't you think," asked Eleanor, "it's time one of the race broke the spell of unhappy love?"

"Aye, child! 'Tis why A'd take y' back t' th' little old lady waitin' in Prince Albert, an' put y' in y'r own place in th' halls o' Scotland? D' y' know there's been none o' y'r race direct t' occupy th' manor since th' first Frazer fled from th' Jacobite Rebellion to French Canada? 'Twas part o' his stubborn spirit that he fought for the Nation that had cast him out."

"Oh, I'm not interested in the Jacobites and Wolfe and things of the past," interrupted Eleanor. "I want to live my life full in the present."

"Aye; an' 'tis because y're a Fraser-MacDonald of the Lovatt clan that ye want t' live a full present! If you were an upstart new-rich, my dear, y'd be sellin' y'r soul t' th' Devil an' y'r body t' some leprous kite with ulcerous weddin' kisses

for the privilege o' claimin' this inheritance that's yours! There's a male decendant o' some collateral line on th' place adjoinin' yours. Man alive, he's had th' pick o' every pork packer's an' brewer's daughter; but he's waitin' th' little lady who's his aunt t' come back from Prince Albert—"

He knew the minute he had spoken that he had struck a false note. Eleanor jumped from her chair.

"Oh, bother the little lady at Prince Albert. Leave me, please! I want to think —"

He withdrew as far as the door. "Would y' like me to see y'r lawyer man 'bout puttin' th' ranch lands o' th' Upper Pass on th' market, an' settlin' up th' estate?"

"No," answered Eleanor. "I'm not going to sell any of my father's estate."

And when Matthews withdrew to join the Williams at the missionary meeting, she burst into tears.

She went across to the window wondering about Wayland. She had not seen him since early morning, before breakfast, when he called at the sitting room door to arrange their return up the Valley next day. The Williams and Matthews would go up in the buckboard. Would she ride back up the hog's back trail with him? He would hire horses and riding togs now if she would say? Yes, he knew it would be steep up grade; but then, they could go it slow; he laughed as he said that. You see the hog's back trail was fifteen miles shorter than the Valley road and they could afford to go it slow; in fact, *very slow*.

"Come on in," urged Eleanor, throwing open the parlor door. "The Williams are not up, yet!"

"That's why I came! No, I'll not come in: not much! I'm keeping resolutions!"

She had not understood the wistfulness beneath his forced gayety until Matthews told her all that afternoon.

"It will be our last ride: you'll come, won't you?" asked Wayland.

She had promised. Then, she had spent a most miserable morning. Why was it to be the *last* ride? She had not cared to go out. Though the papers had suppressed all details of the cowardly assassination, the glare of publicity had been focussed too keenly on her for comfort by that explosion of the old frontiersman in the court room. She had remained in all morning watching the motley crowds of a frontier town surge past the hotel windows down the dusty hot main street, with its medley of fine brick blocks, and poor shacks, and saloons, and false fronts—little unpainted restaurants and cigar stands and gambling places of one-story, with a false timber wall running up a couple of stories.

"United States of the World," the old frontiersman had called this country. Surely that was the true name of the wonderful new country that had defied all traditions and mingled in her making the races from every corner of the world! An immigrant train had come in. Eleanor lifted the parlor window, and looked, and listened. Jap and Chinese and Hindoo—strikingly tall fellows with turbaned head

gear; negro and West Indians and Malay; German and Russian and Poles and Assyrians. In half an hour, she did not hear one word of pure English, or what could be called American. Oh, it was good to be alive in this wonderful new world under these wonderful new conditions working out the age-old problem of right and wrong that had defied solution since time began! She did not mind the crudity. And if I am to be frank, she did not mind the rudity. It was not a boiled shirt-front, kid-glove world. In fact, at that moment she saw her hero stage driver shooting out tobacco squids at the innocent granolithic, which showed no target because so many other contributors had preceded the stage driver. In fact, it was not a world for a lady with a train, though Eleanor saw some trollopy immigrant "ladies" emerging from a big tent on a back lot decked with tawdry lace and sporting trains in inverse proportions to the sufficiency of their "h's." Nor was it a perfumed world. She could smell the reek of the whiskey saloons all down the street—eleven of them, there were in a succession of twelve buildings; and the twelfth building, if Eleanor had known it, was a gambling joint of the Chinese variety that had iron shutters and iron doors and signs up for "Gentlemen Only." Let us hope, dear reader, that "gentlemen only" entered behind the dark of those iron doors! She could not help wondering had the old day passed forever in the West. Was a new day not dawning? What was to become of all these incoming people? Could the cattle barons and the sheep kings and the land rings fence them off the vast, broad, idle acres forever?

Yet this was the world where her father had come penniless, a refugee from miscarried justice, and had won out. It was the world where he had been shot down by some miserable, criminal assassin, who, it was more than likely, had mistaken him for Wayland. It was Wayland's world, a world in the making. Well had Matthews designated it—The United States of the World! More Jews than in Palestine; more Germans than in Berlin; more Italians than in Rome; more Russians than in St. Petersburg; more Canadians than in any four Canadian cities combined; more descendants of the British than in the British Isles—the United States of the World in the Making! Was it any wonder crime was rampant; and Democracy rocked to the shock of collision and miscalculation and inexperience; and Righteousness became a tacking to progress, not a straight line, like the zig-zag of the ship making headway all the time, but tacking back and forward to wind and current? It was good to be alive and take part in the making of the United States of the World!

She had had breakfast and luncheon in her apartments. At mid-day, she saw Wayland coming along the thronged main street. At every step, some man stopped him to shake hands; and groups turned and gazed after him as he passed, and spat their approval or disapproval with great emphasis at the mottled pavement. Below the window, a big Swede grabbed his two shoulders with the grip of a steam crane.

“Say, you Vaylan’, huh?” he asked. “Say, you a’ right! You ever need yob, Vaylan’, you ’ply our union! Huh?” and he laughed, and went on; and the tears welled to Eleanor’s eyes.

Then came the lawyer to read the will; and after the lawyer’s departure, Matthews had told her how she concerned his errand down from the North; and when the door closed on Matthews, she burst into tears.

She saw the street lights come twinkling out, and she did not turn on the light of the sitting room chandelier. Did he love her at all; or if he did, did he know what this waiting all day meant to a woman? Then, it came to her in a flash, his wistful look in the morning behind the forced gayety, his reference to the last ride, to keeping resolutions. Was that resolution for the sake of his work at all; or for her? Of course, Matthews had told him in the Desert; and with the thought, the weight that had oppressed her rolled from her heart. She jumped from her chair and uttered a low cry of happy laughter.

“Oh, I’ll soon make short work of that resolution,” she vowed.

Alas and alas! Samson straining his manhood for strength to shore up a resolution, and here was a sharpening of scissors to shear him well!

There was a knock on the door. She thought it the waiter coming up with a late dinner and had called “come in,” when the door opened, and in the glare of light from the hall way stood the news editor, embarrassed and hesitating.

“Please come in.” She pressed the electric button, shook hands with him and shut the door. His air was at once apologetic and glad, but all the bitterness and anger seemed to have gone. He stood holding his soft felt hat in his hand and looking through his glasses, very steadily and kindly, Eleanor thought.

“Won’t you sit down?”

“We newspaper chaps should pretty nearly apologize for coming into your presence, Miss MacDonald,” he began. “I’ve wanted to tell you how we fellows all regret that. I hope you know that kind of thing doesn’t come from inside the office. It comes from influences outside.”

He had seated himself shading his eyes from the light with his hand, an old trick of his compositor days, and still looked at her in the same friendly way.

“Ever hear of the Down-East daily that black-guarded one of our greatest presidents the very day he died? I’ve often wondered if the public realized when that item appeared that not an editor on the staff knew it was coming out, that when two of the editors read it, they cried and went to pieces right there and then before their men for very shame! Item had been sent straight to the composing room just before the forms were locked up, by man who owned the paper. President had refused him some public concession. Such things sometimes happen to lesser folks than presidents.”

“Were you so kind as to come here to say all this to me?” asked Eleanor.

“No, Miss MacDonald, I wasn’t!” He blushed furiously, like a boy caught in

the act culpable. “Fact is, I’m keen to see Wayland, been such a crush of men round him all day, haven’t been able to get in a word with him.”

It was her turn to blush furiously.

“I didn’t want him to go off up the Valley before I could get hold of him. I wanted to have a shake with him. We’re in the same boat now, Miss MacDonald.”

“I don’t the very least bit in the world understand what you are saying.”

The news editor laughed and laid his hat on the onyx centre table beneath the electric lights.

“Why, we’re both fired,” he said.

“Fired?” repeated Eleanor.

This time he laughed aloud: “I don’t mean fired out of a gun,” he explained. “We’re fired out of our job. I knew after the inquest, I’d get the sack,” he went on, making light of it, “but the wire didn’t come till this morning.”

There were a lot of things the news editor didn’t tell Eleanor just here; and I beg of you, dear reader, to remember these things when you execrate the press; for they happen every day to plain fellows, some of them profane fellows, who make no professions and blow no trumpet. When the news editor walked out of the office that morning, he owned, besides the Smelter City lots, which were mortgaged to the hilt, and six “kiddies,” who had to be fed, precisely the five dollar bill in his pocket, the clothes on his back and the duster coat that he carried out on his arm. It was a mere detail, of course; but it was one of the details he didn’t tell Eleanor. When he had gone home and told his wife, she had asked, “For Heaven’s sake, Joe, what ever will we do, run a fruit stand; or peddle milk?” Joe had answered the distracted question with a lighter hearted laugh than she had heard for many a day. Then he had gone off to catch Wayland.

But Eleanor did not know all this. Her quick wit grasped one salient fact. You think, perhaps, it was that Wayland had been dismissed? It wasn’t.

“You mean that you have lost your position because of the evidence you gave for us?”

Then the news editor did what he always told his underlings not to do and to do—"Never lie; but if you have to, lie like a gentleman.”

“Not at all, Miss MacDonald! I got fired because I told the truth! If I had given evidence that was simply in your favor, I’d deserve to be fired; but it was only a matter of somebody letting in a little honest daylight. I told Wayland at the time that I’d cooked my dough! Funny enough, the wire that came firing me this morning was immediately followed by a wire from Washington announcing that he has been dismissed for taking three weeks’ absence without leave. We got it in the neck together, Miss MacDonald, and I thought maybe Wayland would be game enough to have a—a—a shake with me over it.”

“Yes, a shake,” smiled Eleanor. “I’d like to mix it for you!”

The news editor suddenly lost all shyness, burst out laughing, leaned forward

and shook hands.

"Don't know whether you know it or not," he went on, "but about a month ago one of those d—I beg your pardon, Miss MacDonald, Down-East scribblerettes, that come out to see the West from a Pullman car window and put things right, passed through here. Somebody got him and filled him up pretty full with a lot of lies about Wayland—"

"You mean Brydges gave him the facts?" asked Eleanor.

"Well, maybe, Brydges may have had him out in the forty horse power car! He sent a lot of awful rot East! That wasn't the worst of it. You'd think the Eastern fellows would know the difference between a maverick and a long-horn! He's been going round to the Eastern editors giving them doped stuff, lies dated out here written right down in New York! They've been hammering the Forest Service for the last month! I'll bet that dough-head never put a foot in National Forests once while he was West: rot about running off settlers, and shutting down mines, and hampering lumbering operations, and low down personal stuff! Anyway, between lies and dope, they've got Wayland! He's fired! I've been trying to get hold of him all day. Your old man's phrase, 'United States of the World,' kind of caught on with the crowd: they've kind of wakened up! Funny thing, the way that happens to a crowd! Your professional wind-jammer can orate till he busts his head, he never knows it has happened till the crowd has got away from him! Been a crush of men round Wayland all day, by G—, I beg your pardon —but if he isn't drowned, 'twon't be their fault! They are talking of putting him up as a candidate."

"As a what?" exclaimed Eleanor.

"Run for Congress," explained the news man.

She had gone quickly forward to the window, righting a shade to hide the flood of joy that surged up to her face.

"Excuse me—Mr.——? But I don't know your name?"

"My name? Oh, my name is—Legion," said the news editor dryly.

"Well, what was it you said the other day," she had mustered courage to turn and face him again, "what was it you said the other day about a moneyed man backing an independent paper through this fight? Don't you remember, after the inquest, Mr. Legion?"

He uttered a shout of laughter, and she understood and laughed too.

"Oh, the independent paper is floundering on the edge of failure. They'll have to swing in line with the side that pays them best at election time. One could buy up their debts now for a few thousand dollars, perhaps not twenty thousand. Another fifty or so would swing her off on an independent tack. There's been a great awakening. The people have their ears down to the ground for the coming change, Miss MacDonald; and the politicians don't know it! If we could swing her off well, she'd be a paying concern in a year; then the politicians could be d—I

beg your pardon, the special interests could go to the Devil! That's what I wanted to talk about to Wayland. He's the winning horse! We haven't either of us got anything left to lose but some frayed convictions, and by God," (this time, he did not notice he had said it), "we'd invest 'em in an independent for all we're worth! I'm hot; and I've an idea Wayland isn't just at milk and water temperature; and the public isn't; and we'd have them! We'd force the other crowd to yell at the top of their voices for reform inside of six months. There's a lot about that Rim Rocks affair even the owners of the sheep don't know; but why in the Devil am I telling all this to a woman?"

She had drawn her chair up to the table where he sat.

"Because, I suppose, the woman wants to know. In case, you don't see Wayland, do you mind giving me the exact figures about that independent paper? We are all to go home together to-morrow. Let us put the figures down. I can tell him the rest when the others are not about; and do you know, I think I have heard him speak of some one who might back this kind of scheme?"

Oh, crafty woman! Do you think the kindly eyes behind those strongly focussed glasses did not bore in behind your guarded words? Just once did she interrupt his quick run of explanations.

"Is your idea to run an altogether *staid* journal, or a yellow one?" she asked.

He was plainly taken aback. He laid down his pencil.

"If you were a man, I could explain that easier!"

"Because, I'm done with the kind of goodness that's pickled and put away in a self-sealer where it won't spoil like old-fashioned jam for company," she said.

The news editor's eyes opened very wide, indeed! She had said "*I'm done*" quite as unconsciously as he had let slip words inadmissable in polite converse.

"It isn't piety done up in homoeopathic pills the world wants," she went on.

"No, it's punch," he broke in; "and what's the use of dickering with a little two-for-a-cent high-brow, superior, exclusive, self-righteous rag of a daily that will reach only a handful of sissy people? Democracy is here; and it's here for keeps, the rule of the many good or bad; and it's as your old parson said in the court room, it's *going to be the United States of the World*. What's the use of issuing a rag sheet that will preach to a little parlorful of sissies and high-brows? You've got to get the crowd, and to educate 'em up to self-government, to pelt 'em to a pulp with facts! You've got to get 'em if you take them by the scruff of the neck, Miss MacDonald! While the churches and the teachers and the preachers sit back self-superior and self-sufficient, Miss MacDonald, where's the crowd? They're out in the street! You've got to get 'em! You've got to get the facts before 'em! People curse the yellow journals! All right! But they reach an audience of a million a day; every one of them; and your self-superior journals don't touch ten-thousand! Miss MacDonald, which is having the telling influence, for good or evil? Which is getting the crowd? Oh, I know they publish pictures of pugilists'

big toes and base ball pitchers' thumbs the size of a half page; but if I could ram a moral truth or a hard fact down the fool-public's throat on the very next page by advertising it with a pugilist's big toe, I'd do it—you bet! I'd take a leaf out of the Devil's note book and go him one better! You ask whether I'd publish a yellow journal? Miss MacDonald, if I could get the facts of exactly what is going on in this country before the public, I wouldn't publish 'em yellow! I'd publish truth bloody red!"

When the Williams and Matthews came in from the missionary meeting, Eleanor was standing under the centre light leaning against the table with her back to the door.

"Feeling better, dear?" asked Mrs. Williams.

"So much better that I'm going to bed to sleep every minute for the first night for a week."

"Surely," cried Williams clapping his hands. "A MacDonald never had nerves."

Matthews was trying to read her face as she shook hands saying good-night.

"No," she answered his look, shaking her head, "I must decide for myself, Mr. Matthews."

The three stood talking in the room she had left.

"Do you think we ought to have told her?" asked Mrs. Williams solicitously.

"No! Leave Wayland t' tell her himself t'morrow! A make no doubt that buckboard won't hold five people! Is it six o'clock we set out? A'm longin' for m' own wee uns!"

"One thing," declared Williams, throwing himself on a chair, "if Wayland runs, I'm going to stump it for him! We've got to get busy, Matthews! The old order changeth! We've got to keep up with the procession!"

If you had not known her utter conservatism as to all things pertaining to women, you could not appreciate the response of the missionary's wife. (She was an ultra-anti-suffragette.)

"I am sure, my dear," she cried, "I know a couple of hundred people on our summer circuit in the Upper Pass that I could make vote right."

CHAPTER XXVIII
THE UNITED STATES OF THE WORLD

"Wayland, for a man who's had his head cut off, you look uncommon joyous, tho' you're a bit white about the chops."

"Had a shave," answered Wayland dryly.

The yellow buckboard was rattling over the pressed brick pavement of Smelter City towards the suburbs. Williams was in the front seat with Matthews, who was driving. Eleanor and Mrs. Williams were in the second seat, with Wayland standing behind as he had stood that night going up to the Rim Rocks. Behind trotted two range ponies with empty saddles.

"I thought, perhaps, you'd prefer driving out beyond the suburbs," he had explained. "There's a good trail up to the hog's back opposite the *Brulé*."

They watched her leap down from the buckboard and mount the saddle, a little awkward at first whether to put the right knee fore or aft, from her Eastern training to a side saddle; and side saddles in the range country are rare as low neck gowns and tuxedo coats; but once she had caught the far stirrup, riding was riding. She had the pace, and the two figures loped off up the burn for the hill known as the *Brulé*, Wayland turning and waving his hat.

"Now the Lord have mercy on your soul, Williams. This ride will settle it; an' A'm not darin' t' hope which way it goes! A 'm not keen to go back empty-handed with yon little old lady payin' m' expenses heavy an' generous; but yet—but yet—"

"Yet what?" asked Mrs. Williams, leaning forward between the two men.

"Th' great joy comes only once; an' when it cam' t' me, A put a handspike thro' it, an' kept it."

He had come to her that morning with a look on his face that she had not dreamed a human face could wear. She wondered if all men crucified for right won such joy. And he did not tread earth. He trod air. Eleanor could not trust her eyes to meet his. She felt their light burning to the centre of her soul. What was it? Was it renunciation? The thought turned her faint. Her determination to break his resolution seemed the cheap obtrusion of egotism on the great mission of a devoted life. Then, going up the hog's back trail along the rim of the Ridge, they were facing the Holy Cross Mountain. The glint of the morning sun on the far snows shone like diamonds, a tiared jeweled thing poised in mid-heaven like a crown held by invisible hands; the base of the lower mountain outlines melting and losing edge in the purple shadows; the crown only, shining diademed, winged with opal light.

"Look Dick," she said pointing with her riding crop, "do you remember the

night on the Ridge? Do you remember about the snow flakes massing to the avalanche? It has—hasn't it? The Nation has wakened up."

Wayland looked ahead. He couldn't answer. 'Remember the night on the Ridge?' He had a lump in his throat and an ache at his heart from never letting himself remember it. By that strange perversity, which we all know in ourselves, he couldn't talk. The hundred and one things he had wanted to ask, died on his lips in a dumbness of gladness. Of course, you, dear reader, on the return of a husband or wife (prospective or present), on the sudden appearance of friend or kith have never been similarly affected. You didn't forget the questions you had meant to ask till thousands of miles again separated you.

It was good to leave the Valley road and go into seclusion and shelter on the Forest trail; for a hurricane September wind was blowing, the kind of Western wind that the Eastern woman with a big hat thinks is possessed by ten thousand devils; the kind of wind that the Eastern office man with sensitive eyes curses with tears that are not grief; the kind of wind that makes the Westerner put screw nails in *his* hat and look out for the fire guard round wheat, stock and timber.

Such a different home-going he had planned from this visitation of dumb devils that obsessed them both! He used to dream at night in the Desert of the day, perhaps, coming when they should set out together adventuring a life joy in the Forests; *his* Forests; when he would show her the golden cottonwoods and the pale birches nursing the pineries to strong maturity; and the fire blisters on the firs; and the sugar blisters on the sugar pines; and the rain of green-gray tempered light from the under side of the funereal hemlocks; and the park like glades of the wonderfully straight and serried soldier ranks of the engleman spruce and the lodge-pole pines; and the larches yellow as gold dust to the touch of the alchemist autumn. He wanted to bring out his violin some day with her and see if they could catch the exact tone and pitch of the pines, when they began harping those age-old melodies of Pan: they were harping them to-day in the high wind; he was sure it was the same as the bass undertone of a big orchestra. Had she ever noticed the way the seeds came fluffing out of the cinnamon cones and the asters and the golden rod and the fire flower in September, for all the world like fairies sailing pixie parachutes? People said that autumn was sad, it presaged death! Did it? A Forester did not see it so; he saw the triumphal procession of the years lighted to its consummation by the flaming torches of ten thousand golden twinkling gay, recklessly gay flowers and trees—the cottonwood and the poplar and the larch, the cone flower and the golden rod and the aster! But to-day, he could not say a word. They were no longer *his* Forests. He had been cast out from his life work—the continuity of a National Life Work broken—because he had dared to interfere with the petty plans of peanut politicians and public plunderers.

"It is level here! Let us gallop out of this bare burn to the shelter of the evergreens," she said. "I don't mind wind, but I'd just as soon get under cover

where it couldn't lash us so."

And the horses came chugging and breathing hard up on the sheltered trail below the evergreens. She reined her horse to the slowest of walks.

"Did you see the news editor before you left town?" she asked.

"Yes, he came over to my hotel last night about twelve o'clock. He had the biggest fool-scheme you ever heard of my running for Congress and buying a paper to boost out the Ring and all that! Thunder, I don't want to run! I've no ax to grind! I prefer to stay a free lance in the fighting ranks!"

"And do you think the fellows, who want to run and have an ax to grind, do best for the Nation?" asked Eleanor. "Why wouldn't you run if the people demanded it?"

"There is the plain brutal fact that it takes money," explained Wayland. "I haven't the ambition; and I have less money. I haven't more than will set me up on some little one-horse irrigation farm. Oh, I know some fool had been filling him up about my having rich friends East, who would put up money for this campaign and finance a new kind of newspaper for the Valley! I'd like to knock the fool's head off who told him that! It's all a lie! Of course, I knew lots of moneyed chaps at Yale; but thunderation, I'd have to want public office a good deal harder than I do to go round cap in hand! Why, Eleanor, a fellow who would do that wouldn't be worth shucks to represent the people."

"Did you tell him that?" asked Eleanor.

"Yes and more! I told him he was clean plumb fool-crazy! Why, Eleanor, when that fellow was fired out of his job yesterday morning, he hadn't ten dollars ahead in the world! I'm not a bank, myself; but then I haven't a wife and kiddies. Do you know, Eleanor, that fellow had more pluck than I would have had under the same circumstances? I couldn't let the results of this kind of a fight come down on a woman."

"What did he say when you told him he was crazy?"

"Oh, went locoed clean out of his head, kicked my hat off the bed post, took out a fiver, said, 'Wayland, that's my last! I'll bet it a hundred odd you do the very thing I'm outlining tonight.' "

"It was a safe bet," said Eleanor. "He had come to see me before he went to you! I was the person, who told him you had a friend, who would put up the money. I didn't tell him who the friend was; for it happens to be myself. No: you needn't blow up, Dick; or drop dead of apoplexy! He didn't come to tell me, or ask a woman's money! He had come hunting you; and I pumped it out of him. He's a brick not to mention my name to you. I like that in a man; and I am going to do it, Dick; and you needn't blow up with rage! You can swear if it would relieve pressure; but I am going to do it! I am going to do it at once! Don't you see what a cowardly foolish thing it would be of you to give up and slink into a hole just because you're defeated? It's just what you said would happen that night on

the Ridge. Don't you remember, you said it was bound to be a losing fight; and I said it didn't matter a bit if a man were crucified long as the cause won out? Well, you sent me the note saying you had set out on the Trail and would never quit till you got the Man Higher Up. How are you going to get the Man Higher Up if you don't go right after him in the House and the Senate? They've crucified you; and it's going to be the making of you. Men don't destroy an opponent unless they fear him! If he's a fool, they give him rope enough to hang himself; but if they fear him, they slander him and blacken him and misrepresent him and try to destroy him! Well, they've done all that to you and tried to destroy you; and instead of destroying you, they've only made the people call on you for a leader! Don't you see what a cowardly thing it would be to slink away now because you are defeated? Why, that's the very time a man can't afford to quit, and still call himself a man. No, don't try to stop me! I lay awake all last night thinking it out! They'll not have a chance to call you a woman-made man! I'll place a certain amount with my lawyer for Mr. Williams. You know my father always helped the Mission School more or less; and a woman is supposed to be soft on Missions. Mr. Williams will loan it to the news editor. Only, I may as well tell you, Dick, you are not going to be allowed to stop now! You wrote me that a person couldn't stab certain things to life and then expect them to lie quiet as if nothing had happened. That cuts both ways. Men are pretty good egotists; but I wonder if you ever thought what that means with me, with the people you have prodded up to resent the Ring in the Valley here. Do you know Dick, if you would quit now, I'd despise myself for ever having loved you."

Wayland could not answer. His eyes had filled. He rode with his hand on the pommel of the saddle. Her words had fallen like whiplashes. It was true. You could not cut out and disconnect with life. He had dreamed of this last ride as a sort of mid-heaven ecstasy; and behold, instead of love's dream, the lifting kick to a limp spine. If only one's friends would oftener give us that lifting kick instead of the softening sympathy! If only they would brace our back bone instead of our wish bone!

Then, she turned to him with a sudden tenderness: "What a beast I am to speak so to you when you've just had the blow of public dismissal on top of five years' continuous grilling," and he saw that the flame in her cheeks, in her eyes, was not anger but a gust of passionate love.

"I can't thank you Eleanor," he said. "This is beyond thanks."

"And your old editor man was so funny about it," she went on. "You know Dick, I think he had really come round to the hotel to have a consolation drink with you; and he almost let it out; but just at the last moment he changed the word and said he'd come 'to shake' with you on being dismissed together."

"When do you leave?" asked Wayland dully.

"I don't leave! I haven't the slightest intention of ever leaving this Valley!

Why, Dick, would you have me exchange this splendid big free new life where men and women do things, for a parish existence—working slippers for a curate and talking dress, Dick—dress like the Colonel's wife, and chronicling what Shakespeare calls 'small beer'? I don't intend ever to leave the Valley! Tennyson sung of 'the federation of the world,' Dick! You and I are seeing it in the making! Think of the fun of my staying and seeing it and having a finger in the making, just a little quiet finger that nobody knows about but you and me! United States of the World, Dick; and you are going after the Man Higher Up just as you went after those blackguards into the Desert." She laughed joyously, joyous as a child, swinging out her arms to the sweep of the roaring Forest wind. "Don't look shocked. I'll not stay on alone at the Ranch House for the Rookery to talk about! I'll insist on the foreman marrying an aged house keeper for me; or I'll move over to the Mission School; or—Oh, I'll plan out something; but I am not going to leave the West."

Wayland suddenly wheeled his horse across her way and faced her. "So you've been trouncing the hide off my back for an hour or more to make me believe all this doesn't mean renunciation? They splashed their filthy hogwash on your skirts to foil me; and *that* was nothing! The fight was to go on just the same. I was not to stop because of any injury that came to you. Then, they assassinated your father; and you know as well as I do he was shot down by that drunken Shanty Town sot in mistake for me; but the fight is to go on just the same. *That*, too, is nothing if the cause be won. Now, you take a slice of your fortune and slam it into the cause, backing me; and you renounce everything that gives meaning to life for a woman, pretending that renunciation is a privilege—"

"It is," interrupted Eleanor, "if it weaves the thing worth while into the warp and woof of your life so it can never be anything but a part of you! Turn your broncho round here and ride along side of me. Look at our Mountain ahead! It isn't a Cross: it's a Crown! Do you think I'm going to push a crown away from myself for the sake of having a lot of flunkeys in a land I don't know bending themselves in their middle at me all my life?" She laughed joyously, flinging her arms wide to the drive and toss of the rolling wind tunneling up the trail on their backs. She had pulled off her hat and the wind tossed forward her hair in a frame of curls round an enamel miniature that always haunted Wayland. "I love it," she said, "the harder it blows, the harder I want to ride! You remember that night coming down the Ridge in the storm? It was like Love and Life! And smell the air, Dick! It has all the sunbeams of the summer imprisoned, done up in balsam fir and balm of gilead and spices! Exchange *this* life in the open, here, in the very thick of things doing, for that ancient tapestry plush upholstery blue-book existence?"

"I can't ask you, Eleanor! I haven't a thing on earth to offer but a broken reputation and a lot of plans in the ditch! I ought never to have let you know I loved you! I ought never to have let you care for me! You know what you think

and you know what I think of a man who lets a woman give all. He isn't worthy of her. You know you have never been out of my thoughts day or night since I met you, dear! I couldn't have come through that Desert thing alive without you; and I'll hold you in my heart every day of my life till I die." He had taken off his hat and kicked the stirrups free and was riding with loose rein.

When a man tells a woman that he is down and out financially and dare not ask her to marry him, do you think there is an end of it, dear reader? Do you think a Silenus would hesitate and stickle and scruple over a point of honor; though some of us have seen Silenus blunder into a paradise which he promptly transformed into a sty? And do you think the descendant of the Man of the Iron Hand thought anything less of her lover for refusing to accept renunciation as his right? If Wayland could have trusted himself to look at her, he would have seen that she was riding with a whimsical smile. They came to a bend in the upward climbing trail that overlooked the Valley and faced the opal shining peak.

"There goes the buckboard," remarked Wayland.

"Dick," she said, "I'll write my lawyer about placing the loan in the bank at once. You need not lose any time."

"But, I can't take that, Eleanor! I haven't any security on earth to offer you."

"Oh, yes you have! I've thought all that out, too. You have the very best security I ever want."

"What?" asked Wayland incredulously. "Do you mean you trust to my honesty? Good intentions aren't usually a banking proposition—"

"You will do as security," she said.

Was it the old mountain talking again; or was it the break in her voice? Their eyes met. He had slipped from his horse.

"Don't," she cried averting her eyes with a tremor in her voice. "I couldn't bear This to be of Self! If I were a man, you'd shake hands with me and call it a bargain. Look Dick! We're in the light of the Cross! Shake hands with me! Is it a bargain?"

His hands closed over both of hers. There were tears in his eyes. He did not break out with any of the wild terms that had clamored and clamored for utterance these weeks past. He did not say any of the things that men and women say at such times in books and plays. They paused so, she on horseback, he standing at her side, on the crest of the Ridge gazing down on the Valley in the light of the Cross.

"So my old Mountain is talking to you, too?" she said. "Do you remember, Dick?"

"It's so God-blessed beautiful, Eleanor," he answered. "I can't thank you! If I lived a thousand years, I couldn't live out my thanks. I could only put up a bluff of trying."

"Dick the nth," she laughed whimsically, "Dick the nth for the United States

of the World."

Suddenly he looked up at her. The lashes did not veil quick enough. He caught the veil wide open. He had thought he knew before. Now, he knew that he had but touched the outer margin of her love, of the wealth of her nature, of the reach and grasp of her spirit. She felt the grip of the strong hands closed over hers.

"Mine alder-liefest," he whispered in the old clean unused phrase.

"Is it a bargain?"

"Bargain?" repeated Wayland.

Then, they both laughed. She had him at such an obvious disadvantage. I do not intend to tell how far the afternoon shadows had stretched out when Eleanor exclaimed with a jump; "Dick: the buckboard is out of sight." I do not think either of them as lovers of horses ever offered adequate reason for having ridden their bronchos such a hard pace up grade the last ten miles that the ponies came down the Ridge to the Valley road a lather of sweat.

"You are sure," he had asked as they came out of the evergreens, "that you'll never regret?"

"Mr. Matthews intended to leave to-morrow, Dick. Do you think you could persuade him to stay over a day?"

It was Mrs. Williams who sensed something unusual as the ponies came down one of the by-paths from the Ridge.

"My dear, look at their faces! I do believe it has!" Then to Eleanor, "Will you come in the rig? Are you tired?"

"I think I shall," said Eleanor.

"You've ridden y'r nags uncommon hard, Wayland," observed Matthews.

Eleanor had ascended to the back seat. Wayland had tied the bridle rein of her horse to the rear and was riding abreast of the front seat.

"I wish you could make it convenient to put off your departure for a day or two," began Wayland, very red.

"Eh? What's that?" cried Matthews; and when he looked to the back seat Eleanor and the little gray haired lady in plain back mourning bonnet were going on as fool-women will, and Williams was risking a fall out leaning over the seat shaking hands with Wayland. Somebody was flourishing a red cotton handkerchief; two for ten cents, they sell them in Smelter City. It was Williams who put a check to what Eleanor called a 'loadful of idiots.' "The wind is blowing towards the snow," he said; "but I don't like that column of smoke rising from the Homestead slope in this high gale. That Irish sot went home roaring drunk by the stage yesterday. What will you bet the fire didn't start in the timber slash?"

Wayland gave only one look. "It isn't my job any more," he said, "but I can't stand seeing *that*."

He was off at a gallop. They saw the sparks strike from the stones as he turned

up the Ridge Trail.

A week had passed. The fire had been put out with little damage except from O'Finnigan's timber slash to the lake beneath the upper snows. A new Ranger was in charge. As for O'Finnigan, like Calamity, he had dropped as completely from the Valley's knowledge as if the earth had swallowed him. The Valley, in fact, had given small thought to the mad squaw or the drunken Irishman. The Valley had had other things to talk about. There was the coming fall campaign, and Wayland's name as reform candidate, and Wayland's quiet marriage to the daughter of the dead sheep king. Eleanor and Wayland had gone round through the Pass to the Lake Behind the Peak, where he had dreamed what form of triangulation thoughts must take from the star in the water to the star on the other side of the Holy Cross; where the little waves lipped and lisped and laved the reeds; where they two could drink and drink unseen of the joy of the waters of life before the opening of the political battle.

"Make him tell y' of all that happened in th' Pass when A was with him," Matthews had called as they rode away up the narrowing trail to the jubilant shouting of the canyon waters, the little mule leading the pack ponies.

Mrs. Williams stood on the upper piazza of the Mission School waving and waving. The cottonwoods were raining down showers of gold; and the pines were clicking their gypsy tambourines; and the golden torches of countless yellow autumn flowers lighted the triumphal procession of the year to its consummation. Against the opal crown of the Holy Cross Mountain, the yellowed larches tossed flaming torches to the very sky.

"They seem to be riding away to a world of dreams," said the little lady in black.

Mr. Bat Brydges and Senator Moyese walked slowly and reflectively past the Range Cabin towards the charred burn and timber slash of O'Finnigan's abandoned homestead.

"It's that damned rant the old fellow let off in the court room," said Brydges.

"Rant doesn't win elections, Brydges! It has to be fought out! Sooner we accept the challenge and put 'em to bed for good, the better! Money talks, Brydges!"

"But that's just it, Senator! Money *does* talk; and some body's money has talked when the Independent sold out to Joe!"

"Fool and his money soon parted, Brydges! Only, in this case, I've a suspicion it's a *Her*! Never fear a known enemy, Brydges! It's the unknown factors you want to look out for! F'r instance, there is this sot of a drunken Shanty Town Irishman? What's become of him? Did he burn himself, when he set fire to the slash?"

They had paused opposite that fallen giant which bridged the Gully where Wayland had laid the saplings to cross to the Rim Rocks.

"That's a fine one; the fire didn't bring that one down! Been cheesy heart wood! Wonder who placed the saplings for a bridge? Think I'll cross and go down to the ranch by the Rim Rocks, Brydges!"

"Then, excuse me, Mr. Senator! I go back *this* way! Napoleon had aversion to mice! I've an aversion to wire walking."

He saw Moyese, hands in pockets, stroll along the great log bridging the Gully. Mid-way, he paused as if in contempt of Brydges' timidity. "Bark gives a little," he said, pressing his whole weight up and down flexibly.

"I wish you wouldn't do that, Senator," called Brydges. "Trunk looks to me as if the fire had run through the punk!"

Even as he spoke, he saw it happen, Calamity glide on the far end of the log, utter a maniacal laugh, throw her shawl to the winds and bound forward.

"Go back, you she-devil! Look out, Senator! That log won't stand the weight of two—"

There was the flash of a knife in her hand. Moyese had jumped from the stabbing onslaught—when he lost his balance: the tree crunched, bent, doubled like a jack knife, and plunged in a swirl of smoke and dust to the bottom of the Gully. It had been burnt through to the green mossed outer bark. When Brydges looked fearfully over the bank, the Indian woman had crushed below the log; and Moyese lay very still, his face to the sky, his left hand in his pocket, his right hand thrown out as if to ward a blow, gashed and bloody, whether from rock or knife cut, one could not tell.

I do not intend to repeat the "Smelter City Herald's" flare head announcement of "the deplorable and tragical accident that cut short one of the most promising political careers in the United States." "Senator Moyese had long been accustomed to search the mountains in autumn for seeds and roots of specimen flowers for his herbarium, of which he had made a hobby. That reckless disregard of danger for which he was famous, etc., etc." You'll find the salient features of it all in "Who's Who." Pad that out with Mr. Bat Brydges' imagination and devotion; and you will have an idea of the sorrow that convulsed the "Smelter City Herald."

The opposition paper opined "He would hardly have retained the confidence of the Valley had he lived;" and the "Independent"—our old friend, the news editor—paid him the straight out from the shoulder compliment, "that he had died as he had lived, an uncompromising game fighter to the end."

What became of Mr. Bat Brydges? Bless you, my friend, do you need to ask? He is shouting for Reform as loudly as his kind always shout when the tide turns. What became of the scandal story? What becomes of any scandal story? What becomes of the skunk's contribution to the gayety of nations?—Buried in the

memory of decent folks, long ago and forgotten: in the memory of indecent folk, still hauled forth and repeated and fondled under the tongue.

THE END

[The end of The Freebooters of the Wilderness by Laut, Agnes Christina]