

"Everybody has turned against me," he exclaimed bitterly. "But still, you have no right to force my Kathie to leave me and to live with you here, when she does not want to go. Let her choose. I'll be content with her decision, for I know she still loves her old uncle. Don't you dear?" he doddered, looking at Kathie in supplication, his voice sounding hollow and sham.

"Tell him your choice, lass," said the Captain, "and let us be rid of him."

Kathie went slowly over to the old rancher.

"Uncle, I can never forget the terrible wrong you have done me," she said, "but, because you are my uncle—my dear mother's brother—I forgive you gladly. For my own safety, though, I could never live under your roof again.

"Captain Gray is my uncle also; and I love him almost as much as I loved my dear father. I should love to live with him, but that can't be either. There is someone else who has waited long and patiently, someone who has suffered for my sake."

She turned to Alick Simpson.

"His claim on me is my claim on him—and these claims must come first."

Gently she laid her hands on the broad shoulders; and, looking with confidence and tenderness into his blue eyes, she murmured:—

"Alick, my own,—I am ready now."

THE END