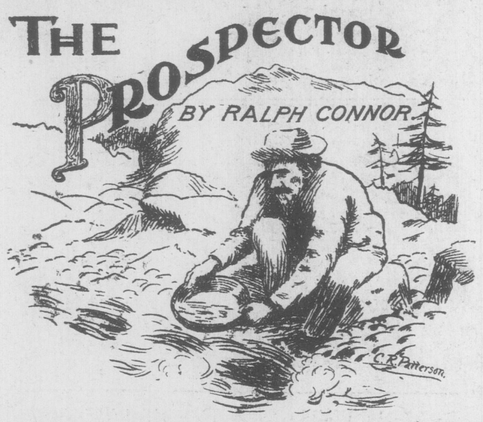

CHAPTER XVI.--(Continued.)

"What do you want of four bedrooms, Mr. Prospector?" said Ike, as they were laying out the space. "You can't sleep in more'n three of 'em at a time."

"No, but you can sleep in one, Ike, and some of the boys in another, and I want one myself."

"Oh!" said Ike, much pleased. "Going to run a kind of stoppin' place, are you?"

"Yes; I hope my friends will stop with me often."

"Guess you won't have much trouble with that side of it," said Ike. "And this here room," he continued, "will do first rate for a kind of lumber room, provisions and harness, and such like, I guess?"

"No," said Shock. "This room will be the finest room in the house. See: it will look away out toward the south and west, over the lake, and up to the mountains. The inside of the room won't be hard to beat, but the outside cannot be equalled in all the world, and I tell you what, Ike, it cannot be too good, for this room is for my mother." There was a reverent, tender tone in Shock's voice that touched Ike.

"Is she really goin' to come out here?" he asked.

"I hope so," said Shock. "Next spring."

"I say," said Ike, "won't she find it lonely?"

"I don't think so," said Shock, with a curious smile. "You know, my mother is rather peculiar. For twenty-five years, without missing a single night, she came into my room to kiss me before I went to sleep, and she's just that foolish that if I'm anywhere around I don't think she'll be lonely." And then Shock proceeded to give Ike a picture of his mother, and all her devotion to him through the long years of his life. The rough but tender-hearted cowboy was more touched than he cared to show.

"Say," he said, when Shock had finished, "how did you ever come to leave her? I couldn't 'a' done it, no-how."

"She sent me," said Shock simply. "There's One she loves better than me." And Ike understood without more explanation.

For the furnishing of the house, and for the equipment of the library and club rooms, Shock had appealed to his friends in the East through Brown, to whom he gave a full description of the building and the purpose for which it had been erected. The response was so hearty and so generous that, when the loads of house furnishings, books, magazines and papers arrived, Shock's heart was full to overflowing with gratitude, and, when a little later he received notice that a cabinet organ had arrived at the railroad depot, he felt that the difficulties and trials of a missionary's life were few and small in comparison with the triumphs and rewards.

At length everything was in place and the building ready for the opening. The preparations for this great event were in the hands of a committee, of which The Kid was chairman; the decorations were left to Ike and Perault; the programme was left to The Kid, assisted by Marion, who had been persuaded not only to sing, herself, but had agreed to train the school children in some action songs. There was to be a grand supper, of course—nothing Western would be complete without that feature—and in addition to the ordinary speeches and musical numbers there was to be a nigger-minstrel show with clog dancing furnished by the miners and lumbermen from the Pass, at Shock's urgent invitation. The whole affair was to be wound up by a grand promenade headed by young Malcom Forbes, son of a Highland chief, a shy young fellow whom Shock had dug up from a remote valley, and who was to appear in full Highland costume with his pipes. Small wonder that the whole community, from the Fort to the Pass, was tingling with delighted anticipation. Such an event was not only important of itself, but it was hailed as the inauguration of a new era in the country, for with church, school, library and club they would be abreast of the most advanced Eastern civilization.

Not only were the people of the Loon Lake district stirred with interest in the opening of their new building, but to a far greater extent than they knew their confidence and even their affection had gathered about the man to whose energy the whole enterprise was due. During these months they had come to rely upon his judgment as a man of affairs, to trust him for his true human heart, and to regard him with reverence as one touched with a spirit unlike that of the world with which they were familiar—a spirit of generous sympathy with them in all their multitudinous trials and difficulties, a spirit that made him think nothing of himself and much of them. He represented to them religion in a manner at once winning and impressive, as few of them had ever seen it represented before.

At length the great day came, and with it the gathering of the people from all parts far and near. A few farmers who lived toward the Fort came with their wives and children in ranchers with their families drove for horse wagons and ox wagons; the most part in democrats and buckboards; but many of the ranchers and their wives and all the cowboys came on horseback. There had never been such a gathering at Loon Lake within the memory of the oldest timer. The preparations for supper were elaborate and impressive. It was important that this part of the evening's proceedings should go off well. As Shock, passing up and down, witnessed the abounding hilarity of those who thronged the supper tables his mind was relieved of all anxiety as to the success of the entertainment to follow. With great difficulty Sinclair, who was a shy man, was persuaded to preside as chairman. It was only the promise of Shock to support him on the one side and of Father Mike, who was almost as much interested in the success of the entertainment as Shock himself, on the other, that induced Sinclair finally to accept this responsible and honorable position. It was indeed an hour of triumph to Shock and his fellow workers, and as the entertainment progressed they gathered satisfaction to the full from the manifestations of delight on the part of the audience that packed the building to the doors.

After the entertainment had well begun a stranger appeared at the door asking for the minister.

"Well," said Ike, who was performing the responsible duty of door-keeper, "you can't see him, not now. What's required?"

"I guess it's pretty important," the stranger said. "It's a telegram. In fact, it's bad news, so Mr. McIntyre, of Big River said."

"Bad news!" exclaimed Ike. "Mighty bad time to bring bad news. Why couldn't you wait?"

"Some things can't wait," said the man briefly. "Guess you'd better read it, it's open."

"Not me," said Ike, shrinking from this liberty. "Send for The Kid."

In a few moments The Kid appeared and, taking the telegram from Ike, read it.

"The Lord help us!" he exclaimed as he read the wire. He took Ike to one side away from the crowd and read him the words: "Your mother seriously ill. Doctors hold out no hope of recovery. Signed, Brown."

"His mother! Say, boss, what'll we do? He thinks a mighty lot of his mother. I've heerd him talk. This will purty nigh kill him, I guess."

They stood for some moments looking blankly at each other, unwilling to deliver the blow which they knew would strike deep into the heart of the man they had come to love.

"He must be told," said The Kid at length. "Let's see—he'll want to get to the end of the line, anyway, and that's over a hundred miles from here. I say, Ike, you'd better tell him, I guess."

"Well," said Ike slowly, "that there's a purty particular bit of diplomatics, and I aint used to it. I say," with a sudden inspiration, "you tell him."

"Couldn't do it, Ike. How would it do to get Father Mike or Sinclair?"

"Yes," said Ike meditatively, "they'd do all right if we weren't here, but I guess we belong to him 'most more than they do."

"That's so, Ike," said The Kid quickly. "That's so; it's one of us."

"Yes, it's one of us," said Ike, "and if I could do it well, boss, you wouldn't see no buck."

"All right, Ike," said The Kid, drawing a long breath. "I'll do it."

"I'll remeber it, boss," said Ike. "Guess there aint much time to lose. How is he goin' to git there?"

"Take the Swallow, Ike," said The Kid. "She's good for a hundred miles."

"Mr. McIntyre's team will be ready to go from his place," said the stranger, who had come near.

"Good!" said The Kid. "Where are you going, Ike?"

"To git the horses. He'll want to git right off. I guess I'll put him on Slipper, and I'll take the Swallow. Slipper rides purty easy, and he's a purty big man."

"All right, Ike," said The Kid. "Remember every minute is precious. Here, Mac," he continued, turning to Macnamara, who stood looking in at the door, craning his neck to see and hear what was going on, "slip around to the side door and tell Mr. Macgregor that I want him right away."

In a few minues Shock came running out in high spirits, elated with the success of the evening. "Hello, old boy!" he cried to The Kid. "It's great, isn't it? You're a great concert conductor! What do you want me for?"

The Kid took him by the arm and led him away in silence toward the Old Prospector's shack, which stood near by.

"What's the matter, Stanton; anything gone wrong?" Still The Kid made no reply; but, walking to the door of the shack, opened it, and went in and lit the lamp. "Sit down," he said, pushing Shock into a chair. "I have something to tell you. There's—there's bad news, I'm afraid. I'll wait outside." He put the telegram down, went hastily out, and closed the door, leaving Shock to face the blow where no eye could see.

It seemed an hour to The Kid before Ike came up with the Swallow and Slipper saddled and ready for the journey.

"Where is he?" said Ike, in a whisper.

"In there," replied The Kid, with a groan. "God help him!"

"I guess He will. He ought to," said Ike gravely.

"Got grub, Ike, and blankets?"

Ike nodded, pointing to the sack strapped to the saddle.

"He ought to start," said The Kid nervously. "That wire's two days old now. It will take till to-morrow night to reach town even if everything goes right, and every moment counts. Better go in," he continued, "and tell him the horses are ready."

Ike nodded and went toward the closed door, opened it softly, and went in. He found Shock sitting at the table gazing vacantly at the telegram in his hand as if trying to take in its meaning. He looked up at Ike as he entered and, handing him the telegram, said:

"It's my mother, Ike. Do you remember my mother?"

"Yes, I know," replied Ike, approaching timidly and laying a hand awkwardly on his shoulder. "I don't want to presume," he continued, "but I was wonderin' if there was anyone who could help you to stand it?"

"There is, there is One, there is."

"That's all right, then," said Ike, as if an important matter had been settled. "The horses are ready."

"The horses?" said Shock, with a puzzled air.

"Yes; thought you'd want to ride to town to get to send a wire or somethin'."

"Of course I do; thank you. I'll go to her at once. What a fool I am!" He rose hastily as he spoke, changed his coat, and getting his hat and riding gloves came out to where The Kid stood with the horses.

"Why, it's the Swallow, and Slipper!" he said. "Boys, this is good of you."

The Kid stood without a word, looking at Shock's white, dazed face. He could not trust his voice to speak.

"You'd best get onto Slipper," said Ike. "Rides easy and is mighty sure. The Swallow's all right, of course," he continued apologetically to The Kid, "but a leetle light."

"But I don't want both," said Shock.

"Oh! I guess I'll go along," declared Ike. "I know the trails and short cuts a little better. Can save time, perhaps. That is," he added, "if you don't mind my goin' along."

"That's awfully good of you, Ike," said Shock. "I shall be glad to have you."

"Good-bye, Kiddie," said Shock affectionately, holding out his hand to The Kid. "I cannot say much just now, but I appreciate this kindness, my boy."

"Don't don't!" said The Kid, in a husky whisper. "I wish to heaven I could help you. Good-bye.'

"Good-bye," said Shock, taking up the reins. "Oh! I say, Kid, don't tell anyone to-night. Keep the thing going; it would be a pity to spoil their fun, you know. You can do this for me, can't you?"

"I can try," said The Kid, setting his teeth together.

He stood loking after them as they went up the trail in the moonlight. "Oh! this cursed country!" he groaned. "It's so far from any place. He'll never see her again, I'm sure. Well, I must keep this thing going as I promised. But some of the numbers I'll cut out, you can bet."

Straight on through the moonlight rode the two men, the one trying to make real the words that marched with ceaseless tramp across his brain: "Doctors hold out no hope of recovery." They seemed like words of fire written across the prairie. The other, riding a little behind, except where the trail grew difficult or indistinct, silent but alert for opportunity to offer aid or show sympathy, governing carefully the pace so that the best possible speed could be got out of the superb animals that with their swinging lope covered the long slopes up and down. The memory of that ride to Shock in after years was like that of a ghastly nightmare, a strange intermingling of moonlight and shadow; the murmur of the night wind about his ears; the pause at midnight by the upper ford of the Black Dog to feed and rest their horses, and then the steady onward push through the night till the grey and gold of the eastern sky told that the morning had come. He could never forget how the first beams of the rising sun smote his eyes like the cut of a whip till he was almost forced to cry out in his pain. He remembered how it seemed to him as if he were in the grip of some mysterious force impelling him onward on that unending, relentless lope. Another pause at sunrise to give the horses breath, and then on again they rode through that terrible red light of the rising sun, till at length in the still early forenoon the manse of Big River was reached. Their horses were jaded and leg-weary, for in the thirteen hours during which they had kept up their long, swinging gait they had covered more than a hundred miles.

The McIntyres were expecting them. "We won't speak about his mother, dear," said the little woman of the manse, with a warm feeling in her heart for the missionary who had spent a night with them some seven months ago, and had told them so simply and fully of his life, a story of which the heart and soul had been his mother. "It hurts to speak of these things for a while," she added.

"Yes, my darling, I know," said her husband, his eyes lingering tenderly upon the face looking so sweet, but so wan and pale above the black dress and crepe collar. "We know, we know, darling," he repeated, taking her in his arms. They were both thinking of the little mound looking so small upon the wide prairie, small but big enough to hold all their heart's treasure. For five months the manse had been overrunning with heaven's own light; and with joy that rippled and flowed from baby laughter, that lurked in dimpled fingers and dimpled toes and dimpled cheeks, every dimple a well of light and joy—and then the little mound with its white railing, and only the echoes of the laughter and the memory of the dimpled fingers, toes and cheeks—and the empty manse! It was this memory that made their welcome of Shock so full of tender understanding. There is no speech like heart-speech, and during the hour in the Big River manse to Shock's heart there came—how he could not have told—the inarticulate message of sympathy that healed and comforted, so that he drove away rested and refreshed as with sleep. As they were hitching up the team Ike found opportunity to whisper to Shock: "I say, p'rhaps you'd rather he'd go with you; he'd help you more, p'rhaps?"

"No, no, Ike; don't leave me; I want you," Shock had replied.

"All right, boss; that suits me," was Ike's answer, glad that his offer had not been accepted.

"Good-bye," said Mr. McIntyre, waving his hand. "Do not spare them, Ike," he continued. "They can make Spruce Creek in two hours and a half easily."

"I'll take care o' them," said Ike, swinging the fiery, half-broken bronichos onto the trail. "They'd ought to do 'a little better than that, I judge." And they did; for, when the buckboard drew up at the Spruce Creek Stopping Place Ike remarked to Bill Lee, who stood in his usual position leaning again the door: "Two hours from Big River, and not much the worse, I guess."

Bill's welcome of Shock was almost effusive in its heartiness, but Ike cut him short.

"I say, Bill," he called out, walking to the stable; "got any oats in here?"

"Oh, a few. I keep some for thoroughbreds, you know." And he walked after Ike into the stable.

Ike began talking rapidly and in a low tone. As Bill listened he became unusually excited. "Eh! What! No. Say, that's bad, too blank bad! His mother, eh? My team? Certainly. There they are, fit for a good dozen an hour. Put 'em right in."

In ten minutes Bill's team, the pride of his heart, were hitched to the buckboard.

"All right, Bill," said Ike, taking the reins.

"All right, Ike," replied Bill. "Their skin don't say much, but they can talk with their feet a few. Let 'em go. They won't run away."

The performance of Bill's bony, shaggy team more then justified their owner's promise. They did "talk with their feet," and to such good purpose that in less than two hours Shock stood at the door of his convener's house, his mind bewildered, his senses numbed from the terrible strain through which he had passed.

"Come in, my dear fellow," said the convener, who had evidently been expecting him, "come right in."

But Shock stood at the door. "Is there any word?" he enquired, with a voice void of all emotion.

"Nothing further."

"When does the train go?"

"The train? Oh, at two in the morning."

"How long does it take?"

"Five days."

"Five days!" echoed Shock, in a voice of despair.

"You might wire a message in the meantime," said the convener kindly. "We will go down to the telegraph office after you have had a rest and a cup of tea."

"No, no," said Shock, turning eagerly from the door. "I am all right; cannot we go now?"

At the telegraph office a number of men stood laughing and talking. Shock drew a blank sheet toward him and set himself to compose his wire. Again and again he made the attempt, but at length he put down the pen and looked around piteously at his friend. "I cannot say it!" he exclaimed in a hurried whisper.

"Come outside a minute," said the convener, taking his arm. "Now tell me what you want to say and perhaps I can help you."

"Oh!" cried Shock, wreathing his great fingers in his agony. "I want to say—good-bye—No, no, not that! I want to tell her—give her my love and say I want to see her. She will be wanting me." His breath began to come in great heaving sobs.

"Let me try," said his friend. "You stay out here."

After some moments the convener returned and handed Shock a paper on which he had written: "God keep you, mother dear. My heart's love to you. Shall I come?"

"Will that do?" he asked.

"Yes, yes; thank you. That is good."

"Now," said the convener, when they had reached the house, "you must rest."

"I am not tired," said Shock, as if in surprise.

"My dear fellow, you are half dead."

"No, I am quite right, and besides, there's Ike. I ought to look after Ike."

"Don't you worry about Ike," said the convener. "He's able to look after himself; besides I'll look him up when I get you to sleep. Come now," and he led him into the tiny bedroom. "You get into bed; I'll bring you a cup of tea and you can sleep. No one will disturb you, and I'll wake you at the right time, never fear."

"I don't think I am sleepy," said Shock; but when in a few minutes his friend came back with his cup of tea he found Shock in a sleep so profound that he had not the heart to wake him. "Poor chap, poor chap!" said the convener, looking down upon the strong, rugged face, now so haggard. "This is a hard country!"

For hours Shock lay dead in sleep. Before nightfall the convener went to look up Ike, and on his return found his guest still asleep. "Let him sleep, it will do him good," he said to his kind-hearted wife, who would have wakened Shock to have supper. "We'll let him sleep till an answer comes to his wire."

Late at night he went down to the telegraph office.

"Yes," replied the clerk in answer to his enquiry, "there's a wire for Mr. Macgregor just come in. Bad news, too, I guess."

The convener took the message and read:

"Your mother passed away in perfect peace this evening. Your message brought her great joy. She wished me to send this reply: 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Stay at your post, lad, till He calls.'

"HELEN."

"'Stay at your post till He calls.'" read the convener again. "A great soul that. That word will do him good."

He was right. He found Shock waiting for him, calm, expectant and ready to bear whatever life might bring, nor did his face change as he read the wire over and over again. He only said: "God is very good to us. She went away in peace, and she got my wire and I hers."

"Yes," said the convener, "Good is always good. We sometimes cannot see it, but," he added, "it was a great matter that your sister could have been there with her."

"My sister?" said Shock. "Oh!" a sudden flush redenning his pale cheek. "She's not my sister—she's my—she's our friend, yes, a dear friend. It would be a great joy to my mother to have her."

There was no sign of grief in his face, but a great peace seemed to have settled upon him. Long into the night he talked over the affairs of his mission field, giving in response to the keen questions of his convener a full account of the work he had been carrying on, opening up the plans he had made for future work. In particular was he anxious to enlist the convener's sympathy in his scheme for a reading room and hospital at the Pass. The convener shook his head at the plan. "I agree with you entirely," he said, "but the committee, I fear, will not give you a grant for a hospital. If it were a church now——"

"Well," argued Shock, "it will serve for a church."

"You may count on me to do my best for you," replied the convener, "but I am not sanguine. The committee are extremely cautious and conservative." But when the convener came to ask about the difficulties and trials of his life his missionary became silent. There were no trials and difficulties to speak of, no more at least than the rest of the people had to bear. They were all good to him.

"That's all right," said the convener, "but there are difficulties, none the less. It is a hard country, and sometimes it lays burdens upon us almost greater than we can bear. There are the poor McIntyres, now," he continued. "How did you find them?"

"Very well," replied Shock. "But, indeed, I didn't notice much."

And then the convener told him of the story of their great grief.

"It is a common enough story in this country. The little baby was five months old, singularly bright and attractive. McIntyre himself was quite foolish about it; and, indeed, the whole congregation were quite worked up over it. Took suddenly ill, some mysterious trouble; no doctor within forty miles; before he arrived the baby was gone. They were dreadfully cut up about it."

"I—I never noticed," said Shock, with a sense of shame. "I wasn't thinking."

There was no demonstration of sympathy on the part of his people when Shock returned to his work. One by one they came up after the evening service to shake hands with him and then to leave him alone. But that night, when all had gone except Ike, who was hovering about downstairs within call of Shock—who was sitting upstairs alone in the room which, in the fulness of his joy, he had set apart for his mother—a voice was heard asking cautiously:

"Is he in?"

"Yes, but I guess he's pretty tired," replied Ike doubtfully.

"I'd like to see him a minute," replied the voice, with a sudden huskiness.

"Oh! It's you, is it?" said Ike. "Well, come in. Yes, come right upstairs." And Carroll came heavily up the stairs with Patsy in his arms.

"Why, Carroll, this is awfully good of you!" exclaimed Shock, going to meet him.

"It's the little lad," said Carroll. "It's Patsy; he breakin' the heart av him, an' he wants to see you, and, your riverince, it's meself—I want to——" The voice broke down completely.

"Come in, come in!" cried Shock, his tears flowing fast. "Come, Patsy, do you want to see me? Come on, old chap, I want you, too." He took the little cripple in his arms and held him tight close while his tears fell upon Patsy's face and hands.

"Is it for your mother?" whispered Patsy, in an awestruck tone.

"Yes, yes, Patsy dear," said Shock, who was fast losing control of himself, the long pent-up grief breaking through all barriers of self-control. "She's gone from me, Patsy lad."

"But," said the little boy, lifting up his beautiful face in wonder. "Sure, isn't she wid Jesus Himself and the blessed angels?"

"Oh, yes, Patsy, my boy! she is, and it's not right to grieve too much, but I cannot help it," said Shock, regaining control of himself. "But I am glad you came in to tell me, and we'll try to be good men so that some day we'll all go there, too."

For a long time they sat looking out on the moonlit lake and the distant hills, Shock telling the little lad he held in his arms of the beautiful country to which his mother had gone.

That night was the beginning of better things for the big Irishman. The revenge he had cherished for so many months passed out of his heart, and among his closest friends and his warmest companions Shock could count from that time forth Tim Carroll.

CHAPTER XVII.

Betty's Last Words.

There is a certain stimulus in grief which lends unreal strength to endure, but Nature will be avenged in a physical and emotional reaction, all the more terrible that it is unexpected. Then the full weight of the sorrow presses upon the heart already exhausted, and the sense of loss becomes the more painful because it can be fairly estimated, and the empty place can be more truly measured because it is seen in its relation to the ordinary life.

So it was with Shock. The first sharp stab of grief was over, and now he carried with him the aching ache of a wound that would not heal for many a day. His mother had filled a large part of his life. As far back into childhood as his memory could go, there she stood between him and the great world, his sure defence against all evil, his refuge in all sorrow; and as he grew into manhood she made for herself a larger and larger place in his thought and in his life. He well knew how she had toiled and denied herself comforts and endured hardships that he might gain that height of every Scottish mother's ambition for her son, a college education, and he gave her full reward in the love of his heart and the thoughtful devotion of his life. All his interests and occupations, his studies, his mission work in the ward, his triumphs on the football field, all he shared with her, and until the last year no one had ever challenged her place of supremacy in his heart. His future was built about his mother. She was to share his work, her home was to be in his manse, she was to be the centre about which his life would swing; and since coming to the West he had built up in imagination a new life structure, in which his mother had her own ancient place. In this new and fascinating work of exploring, organizing and upbuilding he felt sure, tool, of his mother's eager sympathy and her wise understanding.

It had been the happiest of all his fancies that his mother should preside over the new home, the opening of which had been attended with such pride and joy. She would be there to live with him every day, watching him go out and waiting for him to come in.

Now all that was gone. As his mind ran along its accustomed grooves every turn of thought smote him with a pang sharp and sudden. She was no longer a part of the plan. All had to be taken down, the parts readjusted, the structure rebuilt. He began to understand the convener's words, "This is a hard country." It demanded a man's life in all the full, deep meaning of the word; his work, of course of body and brain, but his heart as well, and his heart's treasures.

In the midst of his depression and bewilderment Ike brought him a letter which had lain two weeks at the Fort, and whose date was now some four weeks old. It was from Brown and ran thus.

My Dear Old Chap:

I do not know how to begin this letter. The terribly sudden and awful calamity that has overtaken us has paralysed my mind, and I can hardly think straight. One thing that stands out before me, wiping out almost every other thought, is that our dear Betty is no more. You cannot imagine it, I know, for though I saw her in her coffin, so sweet and lovely, but oh! so still, I cannot get mystif to believe it. The circumstances concerning her death, too, were awfully sad, so sad that it simply goes beyond any words I have to describe them. I will try to be coherent; but, though I shall give you an account of what happened, I cannot begin to convey the impression upon my mind. Well, let me try.

You know Mrs. Fairbanks has been opposed all along to the Don's attentions to Betty, and has tried her best to block him. After you left, the opposition grew more determined. Why, for the life of me, I cannot say. She had apparently made up her mind that the Don must quit. She worked every kind of scheme, but it was no good. That plucky little girl, in her own bright, jolly way, without coming to an open break, would not give back an inch, and the Don kept coming to the house just because Betty insisted. He would have quit long before, poor chap. You know how proud he is.

Well, Mrs. Fairbanks set to work to gain her purpose. She somehow got wind of the kind of life the Don lived in this city years ago. She set enquiries on foot and got hold of the facts pretty well. You know all about it, so I need not tell you. Poor chap, he had his black spots, sure enough. She furthermore got Lloyd somehow to corroborate her facts. Just how much he looked up for her I don't know, but I tell you I have quit Lloyd. He is a blanked cad. I know I should not write this, and you will hate to read it, but it is the truth. His conduct during the whole business has been damnable! damnable! damnable! I gnash my teeth as I write.

When she had everything ready she sprung her mine. It was in her own house one evening, when Lloyd, the Don and I were there, and the Fairbanks' new minister, Hooper, a young Trinity man, who has been a close friend of the Don's, I don't know how long, but some years at least. A fine fellow. God bless him, say I again and again.

The Don and Betty had been going it pretty strong that evening, rather unnecessarily so, I think; and Mrs. Fairbanks got more and more worked up, until she seemed to lose her head. As the Don was saying good night she spoke up and said in that haughty way of hers, "Mr. Balfour, the time has come when we must say good-bye, and I must ask you to discontinue your visits to this house, and your intimacy with my daughter."

Well, we sat up, I can tell you. The Don went white and red, and white again. Betty walked over and stood by his side, her eyes all blazing. "Mamma," she cried, "what are you saying against the man I love. Do you mean to——"

"Betty," said her mother in her haughtiest and coldest and calmest voice, before you go any further, listen to me. I do not choose that my daughter, pure and unsullied, should give herself to a roue and a libertine."

The Don took a step toward her and said: "Mrs. Fairbanks, someone has misled you. What you say is false, absolutely and utterly false." Betty glanced proudly up into his face.

"False!" cried Mrs. Fairbanks. "Then, Mr. Balfour, you force me to ask, did you not live for some months with a woman on Jarvis street? Were you not a constant visitor at houses of ill repute for months in this city?"

Poor Don. I can see him yet. His face grew livid, his eyes staring, as he stood there without a word.

"Don," cried Betty, "tell her it is false!" and she lifted her little head proudly. "Tell her it is false, and I don't care who says it is true." Still the Don stood speechless.

"Alas! my poor child," said Mrs. Fairbanks, "he could not say so. I have the proof in my hand." And she pulled a letter out of her pocket. "It is true, and much more—too true. Mr. Lloyd here knows this to be true. Is it not so, Mr. Lloyd? If this is not true, speak." The poor old Don turned his eyes imploringly toward Lloyd, like a man hanging on his last hope, but Lloyd, the beast! mumbled and stuttered something or other. Betty ran to him, caught him by the arm and shook him. "Speak out!" she said. "Say it is all a lie!" Then Lloyd said in a thick kind of voice, "I cannot say so."

Betty turned back to the Don, and may God help me from ever seeing a face like hers again. "Say it isn't true!" she said, putting her hand on his arm; and as he stood still, white and speechless, she gave a kind of cry of fear, and horror, and I don't know what else. "Oh, Don, can this be true—and—you kissed me!"

Then the Don pulled himself together, turned to Mrs. Fairbanks, and began to speak, the words pouring out in a perfect torrent. "Mrs. Fairbanks, you must listen to me. What you say was true of me eight years ago. I came here a mere boy. I fell in with a bad lot—I had plenty of money, and I confess I went bad. That was eight years ago. Then I met your daughters, and came into your home. From that time I have never done a dishonorable thing, my life has been clean. Ever since I touched your daughter's hand my hands have never touched anything unclean. The first day I saw her, eight years ago, I loved her, and since then I have been true in heart and in life to her. For my shameful past God knows I have repented bitterly, bitterly, and have sought forgiveness; and no man lives in this town, or any other, who can point to anything of which I am ashamed to speak here."

Poor Betty! She looked from one to the other in a frightened kind of way, and when the Don had finished his confession she gave a cry the like of which I never heard, "Ohh, mother, take me away!" I have heard of hearts being broken. I think hers was broken then.

I tell you we were all in a whirl. The Don fell on his knees beside her, taking hold of her skirts. "Oh, Betty, won't you forgive me? God have mercy on me! Won't you forgive me? I have done many things of which I am ashamed, but I have never been untrue to you in thought or in deed. Never, never, so help me God!" He clutched the hem of her dress, kissing it over and over again. It was a ghastly sight, I can tell you. Betty shrank from him, drawing her skirts away. "Come away, my daughter," said Mrs. Fairbanks. "There is nothing more to be said."

As she turned away up spake little Hooper. God bless him, the little five-footer, every inch clear grit. "Mrs. Fairbanks, one minute. Pardon me if I say a word. I am this young man's friend, and I am your minister. I have known this man for six years. I have known him intimately. I believe he carries a clean, pure heart, and he has lived a hard-working, honorable life. If he has sinned, he has repented, and God has forgiven him. Should not you?"

Mrs. Fairbanks turned impatiently on him. "No, forgiveness is one thing and friendship another."

"No, thank God!" cried the little chap. "No, forgiveness is not one thing and friendship another. Forgiveness means friendship, and welcome, and love, with God and with man." I could have hugged the little man where he stood.

Then Mrs. Fairbanks seemed to lose her head, and she blazed out in a perfect fury. "Do you mean deliberately to say that this man," pointing to the Don, who was still on his knees, with his face in his hands, "that this man should be received into my house?"

"Mrs. Fairbanks," said Hooper, "is there not a place for the repentant and absolved, even with the saints of God?"

Mrs. Fairbanks lost herself completely. "Mr. Hooper," she cried, "this is outrageous. I tell you, forgiven or not, repentant or not, never will he, or such as he, enter my doors or touch my daughter's hand. Never while I live."

Then Hooper drew himself up. He seemed to me six feet tall. He lifted his hand, and spoke with the kind of solemnity that you expect to come from the altar. "Then listen to me, Mrs. Fairbanks. You say you would not receive him or such as him into your house. You invite me often to your home, and here I constantly meet men who are known in society as rakes and roues. You know it, and all society women know it, too. If you cared to take half the trouble you have taken in this case, you could find out all the facts. You are a woman of society, and you know well what I say is true. I have seen you in this room place your daughter in the arms of a man you knew to be a drunkard, and must have suspected was a libertine. These men have the entree to every good family in the city, and though their character is known, they are received everywhere. They have wealth and family connection. Do not attempt to deny it, Mrs. Fairbanks. I know society, and you know it well. If you strike off the names of those men whose lives, not have been in the past, but are to-day unclean and unworthy, you will have to make a very large blank in your dancing list." Then the little fellow's voice broke right down. "Forgive me if I have spoken harshly. I beseech you, hear me. You are doing a great wrong to my friend, a cruel wrong. I pledge you my name and honor he is a good man, and he is worthy of your daughter. God has covered his sin: why have you dared to uncover it?" And then, in the tone that he uses in reading his prayers, he went on, "In the name of the Saviour of the sinful and lost, I ask you, I entreat you, receive him."

You would think that would have melted the heart of a she-devil, let alone a woman, but that woman stood there, cold, white and unmoved. "Is that all, Mr. Hooper?" she said. "Then my answer is—never! And as for you, his eloquent advocate, I never wish to see you again. Come, Betty."

As they began to move off the Don, and reached out his hands toward the and reached out hish ands toward the poor girl with a cry that stabbed my heart through and through. "I want your forgiveness, Betty, only your forgiveness." She paused, took a step towards him, then putting her hands over her face she stood still, shuddering. Her mother caught her and drew her away.

The Don rose slowly. He seemed stupefied. Te turned toward Hooper, and said in a hoarse kind of whisper: "She's gone! Oh. God, I have lost her!" He felt his way out to the hall like a blind man. Helen put out her hand to stop him, but he went on, never noticing. She followed him to the hall, weeping bitterly, and crying, "Come back, Don, come back!"

Without waiting to get coat or hat, he rushed out. "Go and get him," Helen cried to us, and we followed him as fast as we could. When I got out he had reached the gate, and was fumbling at the catch. "Hold on, Don, where are you going?" I cried. "To hell! to hell! to hell!" My dear chap, that cry of his made me believe in hell: for if lost spirits cry when the devils get hold of them, they will cry like that. It was the most unearthly, horrible sound I have ever heard, and may God save me from hearing the like again.

Next day I tried to see Betty, but it was no use, she would see no one. And soon after I heard she was ill, typoid fever. It had been working on her for some time. There was almost no hope from the very first. She became delirious at once, and in her raving kept calling on the Don for forgiveness. Your mother was a great help to them, relieving the nurse. They all seemed to depend upon her. Of course, I was in and out every day, and brought reports to the Don, who haunted our house day and night. I never saw a fellow suffer like that. He slept hardly any, ate nothing at all, but wandered about the town, spending most of his time at Hooper's when he was not with us.

(To be continued.)

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