

CHAPTER XLIII

LOVE IN THE DESERT

MADLINE'S recovery was rapid, and indeed phenomenal; and when, a month later, Robin went out to Egypt to take up his new work, she was already convalescent. The speedy regaining of her strength was largely due to the happy state of her mind, for, somehow, she seemed in these days to be entirely devoid of care. So exhilarating was her apparent enjoyment of life that even her grave-faced doctor was stirred to outbursts of startling hilarity by the infection of her rippling laughter.

"You see," she once explained to Robin, "I have had a sort of burden to bear all these last months, and now it has suddenly gone from my shoulders. In fact, all my life I've been oppressed by a feeling that I had something to give out, something to do; and now—I can't quite explain, but I feel as though I'd *done it*. There's a weight off my mind. I feel like somebody who has come out of the valley of the shadow of death, mentally as well as physically, and life is spread out before me in all its glory and its enticement."

In the warm summer days which followed she went down to the sea with her nurse, for nothing would induce her ever to return to Fylton, and she was joined for a few weeks by Father Gregory, whose company was always congenial to her.

From all sides she was constantly in receipt of messages of respect and affection; for, since the