

The Chalice of Courage

Being the Story of Certain Persons Who Drank of it and Conquered
A Romance of Colorado
By Cyrus Townsend Brady

Author of "The King and the Man," "The Island of Regeneration," "The Better Man," "Harris and the Highway," "As the Sparks Fly Upward," etc., etc.

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—"Where?" was the instant question. Old Kirby stretched out his hands. "Don't ask me," he said, "he'd just gone. I ain't never seed or heard of him since. Poor little Louise Rosser, she did have a hard time."

"Yes," said End, "but I think the man had a harder time than she. He loved her."

"It looked like it," answered Kirby. "If you had seen him, his romanza his anguish, his horror," said Mattland. "You wouldn't have had any doubt about it. But it is getting late in the mountains everybody gets up at daybreak. Your sleeping bags are in the tents, ladies; time to go to bed."

As the party broke up, old Kirby rose slowly to his feet. He looked meaningly toward the young woman upon whom the spell of the tragedy still lingered. He nodded toward the young brook, and then repeated his speaking glance at her. His meaning was patent, although she else had seen the covert invitation.

"Come Kirby," said the girl in quick response, "you shall be my escort. I want a drink before I turn in. No, never mind," she said, as Bradshaw and Phillips both volunteered, "not this time."

"The old frontiersman and the young girl strolled off together. They stopped by the brink of the rushing torrent a few yards away. The noise that it made drowned the low tones of their voices and kept the others busy preparing to retire, from hearing what they said."

"That ain't quite all the story, Miss End," said the old trapper meaningly. "There was another man."

"What?" exclaimed the girl.

"Oh, there was nothin' wrong with Louise Rosser," he said. "She was Louise Newbold, but there was another man; I suspected it afore, that's why she was sad. When we found her body I knowed it."

"I don't understand," said Kirby. He drew out from his rough hunting coat a package of soiled letters; they were carefully enclosed in an oil skin and tied with a faded ribbon. "You see," he continued, holding them in his hand yet carefully concealing them from the people at the fire. "When she fell off the cliff—somehow the mule lost his footin', nobody never knowed how, leastways the mule was dead 'n' the critter—she struck on a spur or shelf about a hundred feet below the brink; evidently she was carryin' the letters in her dress. Her bosom was frightfully torn open 'n' the letters was lyin' there. Newbold didn't see 'em, because he went down into the canon 'n' came up to the shelf, or butte head, where the body was lyin'; but we dropped down. I was the first man down 'n' I got 'em. Nobody else seen 'em, 'n' there ain't no human eyes, not even my wife's, that's ever looked on 'em letters, except mine and now yours."

"You are going to give them to me?"

"I am," said Kirby.

"But why?"

"I rather guess them letters'll tell," answered the old man evasively, "an' I like you, and I don't want to see you throwed away."

"What do you mean?" asked the girl curiously, thrilling to the solemnity of the moment, the seriousness, the kind affection of the old frontiersman, the wild scene, the fire light, the tents gleaming ghostlike, the black wall of the canon and the tops of the mountain range broadening out beneath the stars in the clear sky where they twinkled above her head, the strange and terrible story, and now the letters in her hand, which somehow seemed to be imbued with human feeling. Kirby patted her on the shoulder.

"Read the letters," he said; "they'll tell the story. Good night."

CHAPTER IV.

The Pool and the Water Sprites.

Long after the others in the camp had sunk into the profound slumber of weary bodies and good consciences, a solitary candle in the small tent occupied by End Mattland alone gave evidence that she was busy over the letters which Kirby had handed to her.

It was a very thoughtful girl indeed who confronted the old frontiersman the next morning. At the first

mountains, the more experienced men thought, still it was wise for the girl always to have a weapon in readiness, so in her journeyings, either the Winchester was slung from her shoulder or carried in her hand, or else the Colt dangled at her hip. At first she took both, but finally it was with reluctance that she could be persuaded to take either. Nothing had ever happened. Save for a few birds and then she had seemed the only tenant of the wilderness of her choice.

One night after a campsite experience of nearly two weeks in the mountains and just before the time of breaking up and going back to civilization, she announced that early the next morning she was going down the canon for a day's fishing excursion.

Some of the party had ever followed the trout river very far, and it was known that some miles below the stream merged in a lovely gem-like lake in a sort of crater in the mountains. From thence by a series of water falls descended through the foothills to the distant plains beyond. The others had arranged to climb one especially dangerous and ambitious protruding peak which towered above them and which they

prayer, that he might know his end and not be terrified how long he had to live is one that will not and cannot be granted; that it has been given to but one to foresee his own future, for no power apparently could enable us to stand up against what might be, because we are only human beings not divinely alight with the spark of life, the light the flowing water, and sealed the cliff beyond which in the wilderness she was to find after all, the world.

The ascent was longer and more difficult and dangerous than she had imagined when she first confronted it, and directly toward her, the face of the canon wall for a practicable trail; more than once she had to exercise extreme care in her climb, but she was a bold and fearless mountaineer by this time and at last surmounting every difficulty she stood triumphant upon the summit.

The ground was rocky and broken, the timber line was close above her and she judged that she must be several miles from the camp. The canon was very crooked, she could see only a few hundred yards of it in any direction. She scanned her chronometer and found that she had been in the air for nearly two hours. She was evidently a thousand feet above the river whence she had come. Her

stomach growled, and she felt that she would have to descend the rocky ridge which fell away more gently on the other side for perhaps two hundred feet toward the same brook. She could see through vistas in the trees the upreared peaks of the main range, the snow-crowned, lonely, majestic, terrible.

The awe of the overlying hills is greater than that of heaving seas. Save in the infrequent periods of calm, the latter always moves; the mountains are the same for all time. The ocean is quick, noisy, living; the mountains are calm, still—dead!

The girl stood as it were on the roof of the world, a solitary human being, so far as she knew, in the eye of God above her. Ah, but the rays of the divine light look and see far; things beyond the human ken are all revealed. None of the party had ever come this far from the camp in this direction she knew. And she was glad to limit the first, as she fatuously believed, to observe that majestic solitude.

Surveying the great range she wondered where the peak climbers might be. Keen sighted though she was, she could not discover them. The crest that they were attempting lay in another direction hidden by a nearer spur. She was in the very heart of the mountains; peaks and ridges rose all about her, so much so that the general direction of the range was lost. She was at the center of a far flung cove of crest and range. She marked one towering point to the right of her that rose massively grand above all the others. Tomorrow she would climb to that high point and from its lofty elevations look upon the heavens above and the earth beneath, eye and the waters under the earth far below. Tomorrow!—it is generally known that we do not usually attempt the high points in the range at once, content are with lower altitudes today.

There was no sound above her; the rushing water over the rocks upon the nearer side she could hear faintly for several miles. The air was very still, the kind of a stillness of body which is the outward and visible complement of that stillness of the soul in which men know God. There had been no earthquake, no storm, the mountains had not heaved beneath her feet, the great and strong wind had not passed by, yet End caught herself listening as if for a voice. The thrill of majesty, silence, loneliness came upon her. She stood—she stood when there is a chance of meeting God on the way, one does not kneel until he comes—with her raised hands clasped, her head uplifted in exultation unspoken, God-conquered with her face to heaven upward, and the marvelous work of the Almighty shaping

"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills whence cometh my salvation," her heart sang voicelessly. "We praise thee, oh, God, we magnify thy holy name forever." floated through her brain in great appreciation of the marvelous work of the Almighty shaping

CHAPTER V.

The Bear, the Man and the Flood.

The water was deep enough to receive her dive and the pool was long enough to enable her to swim a few strokes. The first thing she saw when she was soon lost in the vigorous motions in which she indulged, but no more human form, however hardy and inured, could long endure that frigid bath. Reluctantly, yet with the knowledge that she must go, after one more sweeping dive and a few magnificent strokes, she raised her head from the water lapping her white shoulders and shaking her face clear from the drops of crystal, faced the shore. It was no longer untenanted, she was no longer alone.

What she saw startled and alarmed her beyond measure. Planted on her clothes, looking straight at her, having come upon her in absolute silence, nothing had moved when her least warning of his approach, and now gazing at her with red, hungry, evil, vicious eyes, the eyes of the covetous filled with the cruel lust of desire and carnal possession, and yet with a glint of surprise in them, too, the sawy devil, since the huge monster had fallen a dead heap on her clothes.

New all this, although it takes minutes to tell, had happened in but a few seconds. Seconds sometimes include hours, even a lifetime, in their brief composition. She thought it would be just as well for her to sink down and die in the water, when a sudden splashing below her caused her to look down the stream.

She was so agitated that she could make out little except that there was a man crossing below her and making directly toward the body of the bear. He was a tall black bearded man, she saw he carried a rifle, he looked neither to the right nor to the left, he did not bestow a glance upon her, she could not have cried aloud in thanksgiving for his apparent obliviousness to her as she crouched now neck deep in the beaming cold. The man stepped on the bank, shook himself like a great dog might have done and marched over to the bear. He uprooted a small nearby pine, with the ease of a Hercules—and she had time to mark and marvel at it in spite of everything—and then with that as a lever he unconcernedly and easily heaved the body of the monster from off her clothing. She was to learn later what a feat of strength it was to move that inert carcass weighing much more than half a ton.

Thereafter he dropped the pine tree by the side of the dead grizzly and without a backward look tramped swiftly and steadily up the canon through the trees, turning at the point of it and was instantly lost to sight.

The girl forgot the chill of the water in the horror of that moment. Alone, naked, defenseless, lost in the mountains, with the most powerful, sanguinary and ferocious beast of the continent in front of her, she could neither fight nor fly; she could only wait his pleasure. He snuffed at her clothing a moment and stood with one fore foot advanced for a second, or two growling deeply, evidently, she thought with almost superhuman keenness of perception, preparing to leap into the pool and seize upon her.

The rush of the current as it whirled about her caused her to sway restlessly. The girl stood as it were on the roof of the world.

How long she stayed she did not realize; she took no note of time; it did not occur to her even to look at the watch on her wrist, she had swept the bellies out of it as it were by the peaks when first she came, and when at last she turned away—even divinely moments must have an end—she looked not backward. She saw not a

otherwise she stood motionless and apprehensive, awfully expectant. She had made no sound, and save for that low growl the great bear had been equally silent. There was an awful fixity in the gaze she turned upon him and he wavered under it. It annoyed him. It bespoke a little of the dominance of the human. But she was too surprised, too unnerved, too desperately frightened to put forth the full power of mind over matter. There was piteous appeal in her gaze. The bear realized this and mastered her sufficiently.

She did not know whether she was in the water or in the air; there were but two points upon which her consciousness was focussed in the vast ellipse of her imagination. Another moment or two and all coherency of thought would be gone. The grizzly still unsettled and uneasy before her awful glance, but not deterred by it, turned its great head sideways a little to escape the direct immobile stare brought his sharp clawed foot down heavily and lurched forward.

Scarcely had a minute elapsed in which all this happened. That huge threatening heave of the great body toward her relieved the tension. She found voice at last. Although it was absolutely futile, she realized as she cried, her released lips framed the loud appeal.

"Help! for God's sake."

Although she knew she cried but to the bleak walls of the canon, the distant heaven, the rushing river, the distant heaven, the appeal went forth accompanied by the mightiest conjuration known to man.

"For God's sake, help!"

How dire poor humanity so plead, the doubtless cried. What is it to God if one suffers, another bleeds, another dies? What answer could come out of that silent sky? Sometimes the Lord speaks with the loud voice of men's

lashing, instead of in that still whisper which is his own, and the sound of which we fall to catch because of our own ignoble babble.

The answer to her prayer came with a roar in her nervous frightened ear like a clap of thunder. Ere the first echo of it died away, it was succeeded by another and another and another, echoing, rolling, reverberating among the rocks in ever diminishing but long drawn out peals.

On the instant the bear rose to his feet, as if an imaginary enemy with his weighty paws, a hoarse, frightful, guttural roar burst from his red slavering jaws, then he lurched side ways and fell forward, fighting the air madly for a moment, and lay still.

With staring eyes that missed no detail, she saw that the brute had been shot in the head and shoulder three times and that he was apparently dead. The revolver that came over her was bewildering; she swayed again, this time not from the thrust of the water, but with sick faintness. The tension suddenly taken off, unstrung, the loose bow of her spirit quivered helplessly; the arrow of her life almost fell into the stream.

And then a new and more appalling terror swept over her. Some man had fired that shot. A man had spied upon Diana. With this sudden revelation of her shame, the red blood beat to the white surface in spite of the chill water. The anguish of that moment was greater than before. She could be killed, torn to pieces, devoured, that was a small thing, but that she should be so outraged in her modesty was unendurable. She wished the hunter had not come. She sunk lower in the water for a moment faintly in its crystal clarity and realized as she did how frightfully cold she was. Yet, although she froze where she was and perished with cold, she could not get out on the bank to least warning of his approach, and the sawy devil, since the huge monster had fallen a dead heap on her clothes.

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The clouds seemed to sink lower, until they almost closed about her. Long gray ghostly arms reached out toward her. It grew darker and darker in the depths of the canon. She screamed aloud—in vain.

Suddenly the rolling thunder peals concentrated, balls of fire leaped out of the heavens and struck the mountains where she could actually see them. There were not words to describe the tremendous crashings which seemed to splinter the hills, to be succeeded by brief periods of silence, to be followed by louder and more terrific detonations.

In one of those appalling alternations from sound to silence she heard a human cry—an answering cry to her own? It came from the hills behind her. It must proceed, she thought, from the man. She could not meet that man, although she craved human companionship as never before, she did not want his. She could not bear it. Better the wrath of God, the fury of the tempest.

Headless of the sharp note of warning, of appeal, in the voice ere it was drowned by another roll of thunder,

(To be continued)



"It Was In These Very Mountains," Said Robert Mattland.

ered above them and which had never been discovered as far as they knew. End enjoyed mountain climbing. She liked the uplift in feeling that came from going higher and higher till some great was gained, but on this occasion they urged her to accompany them in vain.

When the day of her decision was established she had a number of offers to accompany her, but declined them all, bidding the others go their way. Mrs. Mattland, who was not feeling very well, old Kirby, who had climbed to many mountains before, and much interest in that game, and Pete the horse wrangler, who had to look after the stock, remained in camp; the others with the exception of End started at daybreak for their long ascent. She waited until the sun was about an hour high and then bade good-bye to the three and began the descent of the canon. Traveling light, for she was going far—farther, indeed, than she knew—she left her Winchester at home, but carried the revolver with the fishing tackle and substantial luncheon.

Now the river—a river by courtesy only—and the canon turned sharply back on themselves just beyond the little meadow where the camp was pitched. Past the tents that had been their home for this joyous period the river ran due east for a hundred feet, after which it curved sharply, doubled back and flowed westward for several miles before it again swung around to the east on its proper course again.

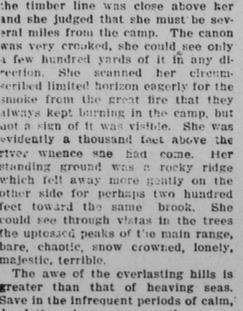
It had been End's purpose to cut across the hills and strike the river where it turned eastward once more, avoiding the long detour back, in fact, she had declared her intention of doing that to Kirby and he had given her careful directions so that she should not get lost in the mountains.

But she had plenty of time and no excuse or reason for saving it, she never tired of the charm of the canon; therefore, instead of plunging directly over the spur of the range, she followed the familiar trail and after she had passed westward far beyond the limits of the camp to the turning, she decided, in accordance with that utterly irresponsible thing, a woman's will, that she would not go down the canon that day after all, but that she would cross back over the range and strike the river a few miles above the camp and go up the canon.

She had been up in that direction a few times, but only for a short distance, as the ascent above the camp was very sharp, in fact for a mile more than a mile the brook was only a succession of water fall; the best fishing was below the camp and the finest woods were deeper in the canon. She suddenly concluded that she would like to see what was up in that unexplored section of the country and so, with scarcely a momentary hesitation, she abandoned her former plan and began the ascent of the range.

Upon decisions so lightly taken what momentous consequences depend? Whether she should go up the stream or down the stream, whether she should follow the rivulet to its source or descend it to its mouth, was apparently a matter of little moment, yet her whole life turned absolutely upon that decision. The idle and unconsidered choice of the hour was fraught with gravest possibilities. Had that election been made with any suspicion, with any foreknowledge, had it come as the result of careful reasoning or far-seeing of probabilities, it might have been understandable, but an impulse, a whim, the vagrant idea of an idle hour, the careless chance of a moment, and behold! a life is changed. On one side were youth and innocence, freedom and happiness, a happy day, a good rest by the cheerful fire at night; on the other, peril of life, struggle, love, jealousy, self sacrifice, devotion, suffering, knowledge—acquired! Eye herself when she stood up in hand with ignorance and pleasure around her and enlightenment and sorrow before her, had greater choice to make.

How fortunate we are that the future is veiled, that the realists



The Girl Stood as It Were on the Roof of the World.

ing master hand. Caught up as it were into the heavens, her soul leaped to meet its maker. Thinking to find the bellies out of it as it were by the peaks when first she came, and when at last she turned away—even divinely moments must have an end—she looked not backward. She saw not a

little cloud hid on the horizon behind the rampart of the ages, as it were, no bigger than a man's hand, a cloud full of portent and which would alarm greatly the voters of Kirby in the camp and Mattland on the mountain top. Both of them unfortunately were unable to see it, one being on the other side of the range, and the other deep in the canon, and for both of them as for the girl the sun still shone brightly.

The declivity to the river on the upper side was comparatively easy and End Mattland went slowly and thoughtfully down to it until she reached the young torrent. She got her tackle ready, but did no casting, as she made her way slowly up the ever narrowing, ever rising canon. She was charmed and thrilled by the wild beauty of the way, the spell of the mountains was deep upon her. Thoughtfully she wandered on until presently she came to another little amphitheater like that where the camp was pitched, only smaller. Strange to say, the brook or river here broadened in a little pool, here twenty feet across; a turn had thrown a full force of water against the huge boulder wall and in axes of effort a giant cup had been hollowed out of the native rock. The pool was perhaps four or five feet deep, the rocky bottom worn smooth. The clearing was upon the opposite side and the banks were heavily wooded beyond the spur of the rock which formed the back of the pool. She made ready to try her fortune, but before she did so an idea came that before—daring, unconventional, extraordinary, begot of innocence and inexperience.

The water of course was very cold, but she had been accustomed all her life to taking a bath at the natural temperature of the water at whatever season. She knew that the only people in that wilderness were the members of her own party, three of them were at the camp below; the others were ascending a mountain miles away. The canon was deep sunk, and she satisfied herself by careful observation that the pool was not overlooked by any elevations far or near.

Her ablutions in common with those of the rest of the campers had been by piecemeal of necessity. Here was an opportunity for a plunge in a natural bath tub. She was as certain that she would be under no observation as if she were in the privacy of her own chamber. Here again impulse determined the end. In spite of her assurance there was some little apprehension in the glance that she cast about her, but it soon vanished. There was no one. She was absolutely alone. The pool and the chance of the plunge had brought her down to earth again; the thought of the everlasting exhilaration of the pure cold water dashing against her own sweet warm young body changed the current of her thoughts—the anticipation of it rather.

Impulsively she dropped her rod upon the grass, unplugged her hat, threw the fishing basket from her shoulder. She was wearing a stout sweater; that, too, joined the rest. Nervous hands manipulated buttons and the fastenings. In a few moments she stood before the pool, clean, of purity and of innocence brightened the sod and shed a white luster upon the green of the grass and moss and pines, reflecting light to the gray brown rocks of the range. So Eve may have looked on some bright Eden morning. A few steps forward and this nymph of the woods, this maiden of the mountains, plunged into the clear, cold waters of the pool—a water sprite and her fountain!

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