

But Paw was already adventuring along a new trail that leads over the one great divide.

Ossie Laird was just twenty-four years old and looked forty, when one cloudy morning—a day when the sky seemed a floor of impalpable greyness through which light was diffused with no hint of the actual sun—a young hunter from down in the valley found his way to the log-cabin door. Ossie was finishing her sweeping. She heard the quick, unusual footsteps and, turning, ran forward. Her head was bound up in an old scrap of red calico, to keep out the dust, and her grey gingham sleeves were rolled high over elbows that looked like the jointing of twigs.

"I'm James Gaither from Dunrobin," said the stranger, removing his cap. "I was hunting up here with some comrades, and got lost. Can you direct me to the best and shortest road to the city?"

Ossie looked into pleasant brown eyes. She saw a white brow, almost as fair and smooth as Leezer's, a long delicate nose, and lips rather thin, parting now over frail blue-white teeth.

The girl's heart began to beat wildly. She had never seen such a being before,—except in pictures.

"Hit's a powerful long trail back to the low-kentry," she stammered at last. Then the quick genuine hospitality of all mountain homes came to her rescue. "You step right in here. Was you lost all night long?"