

'I don't know all that it means to be a sister of Billy Karsters,' he went on after a moment. 'I know a part of what it has meant. It has meant patience, and self-denial, and fortitude, and the charity which suffereth long and is kind—'

'My stars alive!' Miss Lovina whisked the kettle of eggs to the back of the stove, and slammed the griddle into place with ferocious energy. 'Don't! Don't you say another word— I've told Billy he shouldn't live under this roof again, and there's an end of it.'

Miss Lovina dashed away another tear. The bishop still stood looking out between the geraniums, with his hands clasped behind his back. It was a sign of profound cogitation when the bishop stood with his hands clasped behind him.

'I've borne it when he went off to Mullins's and gambled away every cent of his month's pay in one night,' Miss Lovina continued. 'I've borne it when he got so intoxicated he fell off the seat of his waggon, and the superintendent fired him, and only took him back because I went and pleaded for him. I've borne it when he skipped out, and was gone for days and nights together, nobody knew where. Folks say he's been better since I came out here to look after him, and he had a home to belong to; but land knows what he must have been like before I came, if that's true! But I got to the end of my patience last night, when he sat down in that basket of eggs I was all ready to color for the Sunday school. I wish you'd seen his overalls, bishop! And you know how scarce eggs are in Kingfisher, and what I had to pay for another lot of them. I cleaned him up once more, and then I said to him: "This is the last time, Billy Karsters. You can 'go'," I said; "and don't let me see you darken that door again."

The bishop's broad shoulders shook. He kept his face carefully turned toward the geraniums.

"It's the last straw," I told him. "You'll be just as well off now as you were before I came. Go and live in some shack with some of your cronies, and I'll be better off without you." So he picked up his hat, and went off without a word. Billy knows when I say a thing, I mean it.'

'Billy wants to ask your pardon,' the bishop remarked after a long silence. 'He wants to come back. I saw him down on Main Street just before I came up here.'

'He can't come,' said Miss Lovina.

'I think, if I were in your place,—the bishop turned now, facing the sore-hearted woman who bent above her kettle of eggs,—'I think I would let him come back. Billy is only a boy, Miss Lovina. He's been doing better lately. It was an accident about the eggs, I'm sure. Suppose you let me go and find him, and tell him to come up here to supper.'

'He can't come,' Miss Lovina repeated. 'When I say a thing, I mean it.'

The bishop knew Billy Karsters's sister well enough to say no more. He stayed at the cabin a little while longer, praising the vivid blue and crimson eggs which Miss Lovina displayed, and asking her whether she was going to spare a few of her geraniums to decorate the room above Thompson's store for the services which were to be held next day. Then he took his way down the hill again, a royal figure between the stumps of half-cleared pines; and Miss Lovina looked after the white hair beneath his shovel-hat as it moved away, and cried again.

The bishop went about his duties for the rest of the afternoon with a saddened heart. He had been fond of scape-grace Billy Karsters from the time when the boy had walked up to shake hands with him after a service held during one of his visits to Kingfisher three years earlier. It was through the bishop's influence that Billy had written home to his sister, and begged her to join him in the mining-camp.

The afternoon was growing late, and the bishop was walking slowly along the upper hill-path toward the Company boarding-house, when somebody working on the flume, a few rods to the right of the path, waved a cap toward him in greeting. The bishop struck off toward the flume, looking forward to a chat with some one of his friends among the workmen. His heart sank when he saw that the man was Billy Karsters.

'I didn't mean for you to come over here, bishop,' said Billy. 'I was just a-saying, "How d'ye do?" Been up yonder yet?' He

waved his cap again toward the cabin of Miss Lovina.

'Yes,' I have been there,' the bishop answered. 'I'm afraid you must wait a little longer, Billy.'

The boy turned back to his task, with disappointment in every line of his face. He was working with another man upon the roofing of the flume, which carried an unusually large volume of water, swift and strong in current from its heavy fall, for the use of the smelters five miles down the gulch.

'That flume is larger than I ever realized,' said the bishop. 'I reckon a man could drown in it if he happened to fall in.'

'You bet he could,' Billy answered. 'Go slow there, Robinson. That plank isn't safe.'

There was a sudden splash, and a cry. Robinson struggled shoulder-deep in the water, clutching wildly at the planks above his head. His hands were slipping as the fierce current swept him on, when Billy Karsters caught his wrists, and dragged him up. Just as Robinson grasped one of the uprights at the side of the flume, the loose plank upon which Billy stood turned and slid away beneath his feet. The boy dropped out of sight in the water, whirled on under the roofing.

Robinson drew himself up to safety, half dazed by the suddenness with which it had all occurred. The bishop was running southward at the edge of the flume where it hugged the hillside, shouting and waving his shovel-hat toward another workman who was busy on the roofing some hundreds of yards below. Comprehending in some way from the bishop's frantic signals what must be done,

the man threw aside the planks which he was preparing to nail down, and, stooping over, grasped at Billy's blue blouse as the current whirled it past. He could do no more than hold the boy's dead weight until the bishop reached him, and helped him lift the lad, unconscious as he was, to the moss and pine needles of the hillside.

There was a gash on Billy's forehead where the fierce water had hurled him against some projecting beam. The bishop's face, as he knelt with his hand beneath the torn and dripping blouse, looked graver than any man in Kingfisher had ever seen it before.

'Run for the doctor, man, fast as your feet will carry you,' he said. And, while the other workman sped away, Robinson came up, shivering but energetic, and together with the bishop did all that could be done for the life of Billy Karsters.

'He's not drowned,' said the doctor, reaching that strange group on the hillside. 'He's beginning to breathe again. If there was any water in his lungs, you've got it out. I don't know about that gash. It looks bad, on the temple there. We'll have to take him somewhere.'

'To his cabin,' said the bishop, although the boarding-house was nearer.

They carried the boy up the hill to Miss Lovina's door. At sight of him she put her hands before her eyes for one moment, retreating dizzily toward the inner room of the cabin. Then she came forward, practical and collected as ever, bringing out of her scanty supplies such restoratives as were at hand.

The bishop stayed at the cabin that night,



BILLY CAUGHT HIS WRISTS AND DRAGGED HIM UP.