

THE PATH OF GOLD

A Story of Love and Endeavor

By ETHEL KIRK

"HELLO, you fellows! Heard the news?" McAllister burst impetuously into the living-room of the Kappa Delta Fraternity, and the several members assembled therein greeted him in characteristic fashion. Langford raised his eyes, but immediately lowered them to his perusal of Hartman's "Materia Medica"; Ross, with a deep sigh of relief, tossed aside a musty volume of bound examination papers, and Graham removed his feet from the mantel and assumed a fresh interest in life.

"I suppose that you're going to tell us that the final dinner—" "No chance. Jack Granger is the distinguished man once more. Did a great surgical stunt at the General this morning, and on the strength of it old Doc Mathers has offered to take him into partnership next year. What do you know about that now? Biggest practice in the city—in three years Jack will be a consulting physician on his own hook, have his own motor and private yacht—"

"Is he going to accept it?" asked Ross thoughtfully.

"Accept it! Why, man alive, who would ever dream of refusing? Windfalls don't come every day."

A cushion came whizzing through the air. "Not every day," repeated McAllister as he hurled it back again. "What makes you talk of him refusing it, Ross?"

"Oh—oh nothing. Only Jack is different, you know—ideals and all that sort of thing."

"Anything particularly lowering to a man's ideal in the mere fact of a partnership with Mathers?" queried Graham, in his most caustic accents.

"Certainly not," returned Ross with dignity. "Most chaps would jump at it, I know, and perhaps Jack will too. But—"

"Of course," put in McAllister decisively, "it is the only fitting climax to his career. Rugby champion, gold medallist, now house surgeon in the General, fine sport and all round good fellow—it's the natural outcome of the whole darned business. As for the rest of us, we third rate fellows (saving your presence, Langford) well, we'll have to take the world as it is handed out to us. Half of us missed our calling, anyhow—I should have been in the ministry."

A roar of laughter ensued. "Not too late yet, Mac," said Graham, with a most expressive grin. "There's still the little girl belonging to the minister, away down home in Blueberry Creek."

The hubbub that ensued was interrupted by the entrance of Jack Granger himself, the popular young doctor whose future had just proved so engrossing a subject of conversation.

"Hail the conquering hero, Hail!" shouted Graham.

"Heartiest congrats, Doc. Don't forget little Willie when it's two hundred to look in."

"Glad to hear of your luck, old sport."

"Oh, say, fellows, this is awfully good of you, really. Well—er—no, it's not decided yet, of course, Langford. What are you at now? Plugging away, I suppose—exams. in the air. Say, Ross, I just dropped in to see if you would walk over to the library with me, and we'll look that matter up. Why, thanks awfully. I'd like to come back to dinner, but have another engagement, unfortunately—Thanks, then I'll come to-morrow. Are you ready, Ross?"

Ross, who had long enjoyed the distinction of being Granger's special chum, rose and followed with alacrity. There was a slight silence in the room.

"Jack was all fussed up," exclaimed McAllister suddenly. "Bet it's Rosedale to dinner for him—"

"Rosedale," repeated Langford. "Sure! Awfully hard case with Miss Orme—she's a queen, too. I saw her at the last dance, and really—"

"Jimmie!" exclaimed Graham, with severity, "chase that far-away look out of your eyes. If the minister's daughter at Blueberry Creek—"

And McAllister's fighting blood was aroused once more.

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IN the meantime the two friends were busily making their way to the medical library. It was a perfect afternoon, late in March. The grey old towers of Varsity were bathed in mellow sunlight, and the campus was beginning to show a quiet but lovely hue of emerald green.

They talked of desultory matters for a few minutes. Granger, a tall, lithe-limbed fellow, with a fine, clear-cut countenance, and deep blue eyes. The scientist had not yet overshadowed the boyish attractiveness of his nature, although lines of thought were beginning to carve themselves about the firm, yet flexible mouth. His companion was the typical medical student; dark-haired, dark-eyed, and slight of build. A rather jaunty manner could not conceal the fact that he was an ardent seeker after cold, unvarnished truth, and that he dearly loved an argument.

"This is a great chance you're getting, old boy," he said presently.

"Yes," said Granger slowly, "it's a great chance all right—but—I don't know about it, Syd."

Sydney Ross was too keen a student of human nature to make any further remark just then. After a moment Granger continued: "It's the biggest chance I'll ever get—I know that, Syd, and I've been working for a chance like this all along; at least, till lately. Then I got tangled up in that work down in the Ward, and when I came to a realization of just how much misery there was in the world—"

He paused and looked out over the campus. "I've had another chance lately, Syd. No one knows about it—to go up into a mining camp in the north—it's a tough place, and they need men. I don't think a consulting physician would answer—"

He stopped and smiled, and Ross became somewhat indignant. "See here, now, Jack, just because you had to go and get interested in the Settlement work is scarcely a decent reason for you to bury yourself in some mining hole, miles away from civilization and all your brilliant prospects. You say men are needed; well, then, there are plenty. No need for a lot of the fellows to start here, because they'll never be noticed, and if they go away they won't be missed. But you—come now, Granger, be sensible. Why Jack—and he struck his friend's shoulder forcibly—"you're one of the men of the century."

Granger laughed. "Well, Syd, I did hope you would understand. I'm not carried away by sentiment; you know me well

enough for that. But a call of duty comes once to every man—and it's come to me. It calls me up north, to an obscure work, but a big one—"

"A man's work," concluded Ross. "Well, if you like."

"And what is the name of the 'lone wandering, but not lost' hole you think you're called—"

"Dogwood Valley," said Jack ruefully.

"Sounds poetic. But Jack, for heaven's sake, think it over—"

"I have. I tried not to, Syd, but in the end I had to face it. Hundreds of foreigners, poor wretches, no decent accommodation, and no medical attendance. Not much chance for them; but I've had one, and now I want to make good."

"Jack," said Ross suddenly, "there's one other phase to this matter. Kick me if you think it's none of my business; but what does Constance Orme say?"

There was a moment's silence. "I don't know, I haven't asked her."

"Not asked her?"

"Why should I?"

"Why—I thought—I understood—"

"Yes, I know. You thought I might ask her to share my destiny some day. Well, Syd, that was a good old dream of mine, too. But I have concluded that a mining doctor, and a girl from a Rosedale home, like hers, are not compatible. So that phase of the matter is settled—not an easy phase, either," he added softly.

"Granger," said his friend, "I always knew you had ideals—told the fellows at the Frat so. No slam on them. But say—you'll give her the chance to—you'll ask her once, Jack?"

Jack turned a smiling face. "Ask her, Syd? Why, what have I to offer?"

Ross did not reply. Presently, "This is a new country, Jack, and men, and women as well, are out to carve out new destinies. Don't you realize that? And Constance Orme is just one dandy Canadian girl—"

Granger turned quickly. "I know, Syd, but she's also a daughter of luxury. I've made my sacrifice—I'm not going to ask her to make one too. Besides—she may not think about—oh, pshaw! Well, here we are, old boy."

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IT was a lovely afternoon in May, and the terraced gardens of "Fernleigh," the home of the Ormes, depicted a charming scene. Early summer had thrown a delicate veil of green over the trees; the hedges were snowy with bridal wreath. Lilacs and flowering almond stood wrapped in a fairy mist, in blended hues of soft amethyst and palest rose.

Several white-clad enthusiasts were indulging in a game of tennis, while from the broad piazza came the sound of gay voices and laughter, mingled with the pleasant tinkle of tea cups, and incessant chatter of cake and strawberries.

"I say, Miss Orme, these Friday lawn parties of yours are the jolliest things I know. When I think that this is the very, very last one we'll ever see—"

"See here, McAllister, just because a lot of you chaps flatter yourselves that you are going to graduate and quit the country is no reason why Miss Orme should cut all her acquaintances. I, for one, still expect to remain in the city, carrying on a lively law practice on King Street West. And the Friday afternoons will keep on just the same, won't they, Miss Orme?"

The young hostess laughed merrily. "Why, of course they will continue—for the special benefit of Mr. Hamilton Dennison, youthful attorney-at-law. But, dear me, we certainly are going to miss all you college boys. More tea, Evelyn? Let me see—how do you take it? Oh, yes—very strong, with the merest drop of cream, and absolutely no sugar. Here, Harold—will you take this to Miss Marden, please?"

"What a deliciously overwhelming dish of strawberries," exclaimed McAllister. "You know my tastes exactly, Miss Orme."

"Yes," she responded gaily, "I am trying to be nice, for I know that when you're a struggling country practitioner—"

"Country practitioner, indeed!" A groan went up from several among the merry group on the piazza. "Miss Orme, that's sheer cruelty," said Austin Graham. Then, in a slightly mischievous tone, "Does it apply to all of us?"

There was a low ripple of mirth. Constance busied herself with the tea urn, but a deeper pink stole into her cheeks. "Time alone will tell, Mr. Graham," she answered with becoming gravity, "and I am not a witch."

"No?" said Graham, with a provoking rising inflection; "but if rumor speaketh truly, Miss Orme, here comes a worthy scion of his profession who is destined for higher things—Dr. Granger, flushed and elated from four sets of tennis. More than conqueror, Doc?"

Granger laughed. "With the invaluable assistance of Miss Lindsay, Austin, Constance, you will never know just how thirsty we are."

"You will be better able to express yourself after you have had some tea," she answered gaily. Then, as he took the cup she added in a lower tone, "I want time to congratulate you on that splendid offer, Jack. And I only heard of it to-day—what a morose creature you are!"

He started slightly at her words, and the smile died out of his eyes. Constance was busying herself elsewhere, and did not see. Only one person, indeed, did note the change, and that was Sydney Ross. He observed the way in which Granger's glance wandered abstractedly around, but ever came back to rest, lingeringly on the slight, girlish figure in white linen, with the broad white hat crowning soft dark masses of hair, and the laughing, rose-flushed face beneath.

"And he'll go away and never a word," he thought disgustedly, "and she'll think it was all a bluff and throw herself away on Graham. Oh—er—yes—were you speaking, Miss Rivers? Please excuse my absent-mindedness. I was just admiring that bush over there. Pretty thing, isn't it?"

Thus the afternoon wore merrily on. It was about half-past five, when the guests began to take their departure, waving laugh-

