

MIST OF MORNING

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CHAPTER IX

LIFE and the attraction of life! Always until we find another force as mighty, will the big cities take their toll. The young, the eager, the hope-driven are hers for the asking. Like some great, heedless foster-mother she gathers them all, wanted and unwanted; using what she can, supremely careless of the rest. There is always room, for there is always growth. Life pours into her because of the life she holds.

Back in the country places and little towns Nature sits with puckered brow and wonders why her children leave her. "Am I not beautiful and bountiful and very kind?" she muses. "Do I not give my sons and daughters fresh, untainted air and winds of morning? Do I not spread my skies with turquoise and pure gold, carpet my fields with emerald and bedew my grass with diamonds? Do I not bring forth plentifully, tempting my own with fruits and seedlings? Yet the young who should sow my seed and eat of my fruit desert me for a barren heritage. Under curtains of smoke they sit; when they walk their pathways are of stone. They breathe poison and drink strange waters. What I have given they squander; what I would still give they disdain!"

So, for a while, neglected Nature muses and then, if still ignored, turns to her own purposes and forgets. The trees leaf, the streams run and all the growing things push upward whether

one eye or a thousand be there to see. Only when left too long unhusbanded will Nature take her just revenge. Let man forsake her utterly and he finds himself forsaken. Life that will not live with her finds that without her there is no life. Left with no one but herself to care for Nature will go back to the old ways, the ways she loves the best—the tangled vine, the matted wood, the long lush grass—all the waste, the riot and the beauty of the wild. Then man in his man-made cities will hunger and, hungering, will turn to her begging to be taken back a son once more.

Such would be the logic of the case but it is logic which is never strictly tested. There are always those who stay behind. Our fields are sown, our harvests are brought in, our fruits are gathered. The city roars on, undisturbed, certain of being fed somehow, by some one. And still its hidden magic draws the young and the eager unto it—and always will!

So, with the passage of a few swift years, it is in the city that we look for David and, presently, for Rosme also. Frances and Miss Mattie and Angus Greig are of those who stay behind. . .

Mrs. Carr's boarding-house on Arbutus Street was both comfortable and select. That is to say, the house was comfortable and Mrs. Carr was select. She was a frosty person with a grim eye. Her aspect was calm, her mouth tight and her nose suspicious. Long ago there had been a Mr. Carr but he departed to a better world and