

missionary zeal at white heat. He had renewed for the tenth time in six months his solemn consecration of himself to some great work, had made a public and penitent confession of his backslidings, and resolved to grow cold no more. And of all his spiritual leaders none were wise enough to know and point out to him that this keying himself higher than his impulsive nature would bear, was one of his chief perils. Reactions were inevitable while he continued to be Mark Bonamy.

But while he was thus, as Cartwright would have said, "under a shouting latitude," there came the letter from the great bishop like the voice of God telling him to leave his father's house, and to get him out into the wilderness to seek the lost sheep. Many a man gets committed to some high and heroic course in his best moment, often wondering afterward by what inspiration he was thus raised above himself. Happy is he whose opportunity of decision finds him at high-water mark. Happy, if he have stability enough to stand by his decision after it is made.

Mark was not without debate and hesitation. He might even now have faltered but for two things. The influence of Roxy and of his father alike impelled him to accept. As soon as the word came to Colonel Bonamy that Mark had received such a letter, he did his best, unwittingly, to confirm him in his purpose by threatening him again with disinheritance. It only needed to awaken the son's combativeness to give his resolution strength and consistency. Even the religious devotion of a martyr may gain tone from inborn oppugnancy.

Then there was the influence of Roxy. Her relation to Mark was only that of a confidential religious friend. He had had occasion to consult her rather frequently, sometimes when meeting her on the street, sometimes calling at her house. But how often does one have to remark that mere friendship between a young man and a young woman is quite impossible for any considerable time. There is no King Knud who can say to the tide of human affection, "thus far and no farther." Mark's love for Roxy had ceased to be Platonic—he was not quite Plato. But how should he even confess to himself what he loved Roxy. For loving Roxy and going on a mission to the Brazos River were quite inconsistent. A man was not supposed to want a wife to help him fight Indians, rattlesnakes, Mexican desperadoes and starvation. And to give up the mission for Roxy's sake would have been to give up Roxy also. He knew dimly that it was only in the light of a self-sacrificing hero that she admired him. Perhaps he unconsciously recognized also that this admiration of him on her part had served to keep his purpose alive.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE MEETING.

ON the Wednesday evening following Mark's reception of his call to go to Texas and his talk with Lathers, he would fain see Roxy. It was the evening of the prayer-meeting, and if he had been prone to neglect it, he would have found Roxy nowhere else. But he had no inclination in his present state of feeling to go away from the meeting.