

eyes at the tall figure of the waiting man at her side, drew a long breath and laid her hand upon his knee.

"They've gone," she said.

Still he did not move, but stood alert, suspicious, his long fingers twined around his weapon, fearing with half-savage passion some new ruse.

"Don't stand so," she pleaded. "They've gone."

The stick dropped from his hand, and he took off his hat to let the rain beat upon his hot head.

She crowded closer to his side, shivering with the cold, and yet more at peace than she had been that weary, long day. The world, which had stretched to fearsome distances, shrank again to the compass of this small yard, and a man stood between her and the gate to fight off the forces which had surged in upon her. She was mindful of nothing else. It was enough that she could stand for even a moment in the shelter of his strength; relax senses which discovered danger only to shrink back, powerless to ward it off. A woman without her man was as helpless as a soldier without his arms.

The rain soaked through to her skin, and she was faint with hunger; yet she was content to wait by his side in silence, in the full confidence that he with his man strength would stride over the seemingly impossible and provide. She was stripped to the naked woman heart of her, forced back to the sheer clinging instinct. She was simplified to the merely feminine as he was to the merely masculine. No other laws governed them but the crude necessity to live—in freedom.