

"Forgive," the girl murmured. "I have forgotten all but your sufferings. May God never forgive me if I willingly add one pang to the pains you have had to bear!"

Then, with the girl kneeling close to the chair and her head resting where an arm might have pressed her to his side with the fatherly love that was welling in his heart, the old man raised his quavering voice.

"Dick Westgarth! The boys asked me to bid you welcome in the name of all of them, and to hope that you and your wife will accept this house that we've built for you. It's the best we could raise among us, but it ain't half good enough for our pilot. But I guess you and she will understand that we mean our best, and we hope you'll live long to enjoy it among us."

A burst of applause approved this little speech, after which Dick, with characteristic impulsiveness, threw his arms wide apart and smiled around with a look that indicated how overwhelming was his gratitude.

"Boys," he said, at once dropping into the western vernacular, "I feel mean, downright mean. What have I done to deserve this?"

"Heaps!" was the reply from one.

"Nothing," answered Dick, "next to nothing." Then he pointed to the girl by the chair, while his voice rang with conscious pride. "It's she—*she* you have to thank. You know as well as I do, boys, that it was she who turned our prairie from a desert to a paradise. God bless *her*, boys, and help me to be worthy!"

At that moment, Seth was seen to whisper to one of the men at his right, and the cowboy retired hastily indoors, soon to return with a large Russian leather case