

But at the sound of the piteous cry, the man had sprung to his feet, torn the bushes asunder, and seen the little struggling form in the water.

Margie was soon lying white and breathless under the tree where the man had been sleeping. He had wrapped his old coat about her, and was kneeling chafing the little cold hands, and looking at her very anxiously and tenderly.

"Just such a one as my Dottie was when I left them," he was saying to himself. "Poor Midget, 'twas she left the food for me." He felt the little heart beating under his hand, but it was some time before the large brown eyes opened wide, and looked into his face.

"Don't be scared, little one," he said, "you're all right. Fell in the water, eh? Now you tell me where to go and I'll carry you home. They oughtn't to let you go wandering alone like this."

"You got me out, didn't you?" said Margie, "I'm glad! granny can never say that the tramps are all a bad lot. I'm better now. Did you like your lunch? I left it for you."

"Bless your heart, yes," said the man, "it was elegant."

"You look very kind. Have you any little girls of your own?"

"Yes, my pretty. I'll tell you about 'em as we go along. Now which is the way?"

He lifted the child very tenderly, and following her directions took the way to the ranch-house.

Mrs. Goodwin had just begun to feel a little worried about her grandchild. She remembered that Spring always followed the wagon, and she had left her work two or three times and gone round the house looking for Margie. She was just about setting out in search of her, when she perceived the tall figure of the "tramp" in the distance, carrying—could it be the child?

The woman's heart stood still with fear for a moment, her knees shook. What had happened to the child? She remembered her constant harshness to these wayfarers, the refusal to give them even a meal—was it possible that they had thought of some dreadful way of revenging themselves! Thinking as women sometimes do of the most dreadful possibilities, she could scarcely keep herself from shrieking with fear. She could not walk, but sat down trembling, on the steps of the porch. With a feeling of relief impossible to describe, she heard the little voice of her grandchild, fainter than usual, but sweet and joyous.

"It's all right granny, I'm not hurt, but I'd a been drowned only this kind tramp got me out."

Mrs. Goodwin's strength had come back, and she stood with outstretched arms while the man laid his little burden within them.

"You must be kind to him granny, for he saved me. He's got little girls of his own, way off in Colorado."

"I'm grateful to you," said "granny" looking into the man's face, while she clasped the child close, "rest you, while I put her in bed."

"You'd best not let her speak too much," said the man, "she's kind of weak. Good bye my pretty, I guess I'll be going. My things are kinder damp, and 'he sun will dry 'em."

"No, no," said Margie anxiously, "he mustn't go, granny, till grandfather comes home."

"Wait a few moments," said the woman, "I'll be back directly."

When Margie was lying warm and dry in her little nest, granny quickly looked up some clothing of her husband's, so much better than the worn, discolored clothes which the man had been wearing, that when he reappeared, after having exchanged them, Mrs. Goodwin had to acknowledge to herself that he was a well-looking, "decent appearing" man.

She asked him where he was going, and he told her his sad story very briefly. He had worked at his trade of carpenter, at Denver, and was comfortably off, but had been induced by a friend to try his fortune in a new gold mine in Arizona. He had left his wife and little ones, and started off to make all their fortunes. But the mine proved a failure, he fell in with unprincipled people, who robbed him of the money he had; he was taken ill, and lay for weeks between life and death, and having slowly recovered, had set out to make the journey back to his family on foot. He was most anxious to work, he said, but it seemed so hard to make people believe so.

Some days he had been near starvation, but he had managed to struggle along so far.

Just then grandfather came back, Spring, dusty and tired, trotting after. The farmer came in looking tired and cross himself, he had failed to find the men he had been looking for to help him.

In a few minutes his wife had explained the presence of the stranger in the kitchen. Mr. Goodwin had thanked him in a few words, had gone in to have a peep at Margie, and came back after a while with a new expression on his face.

"I'll tell you what," he said to the stranger, "if you feel like stopping to help me on the ranch for a while, you may try it. I'll pay you what you're worth, and you can make enough to take you home."

The man agreed thankfully, and within a month had rendered himself so indispensable that his employer made the proposition that he should put up a cottage on the ranch, and send for his wife and children.

Margie, whom a few days' care and quiet