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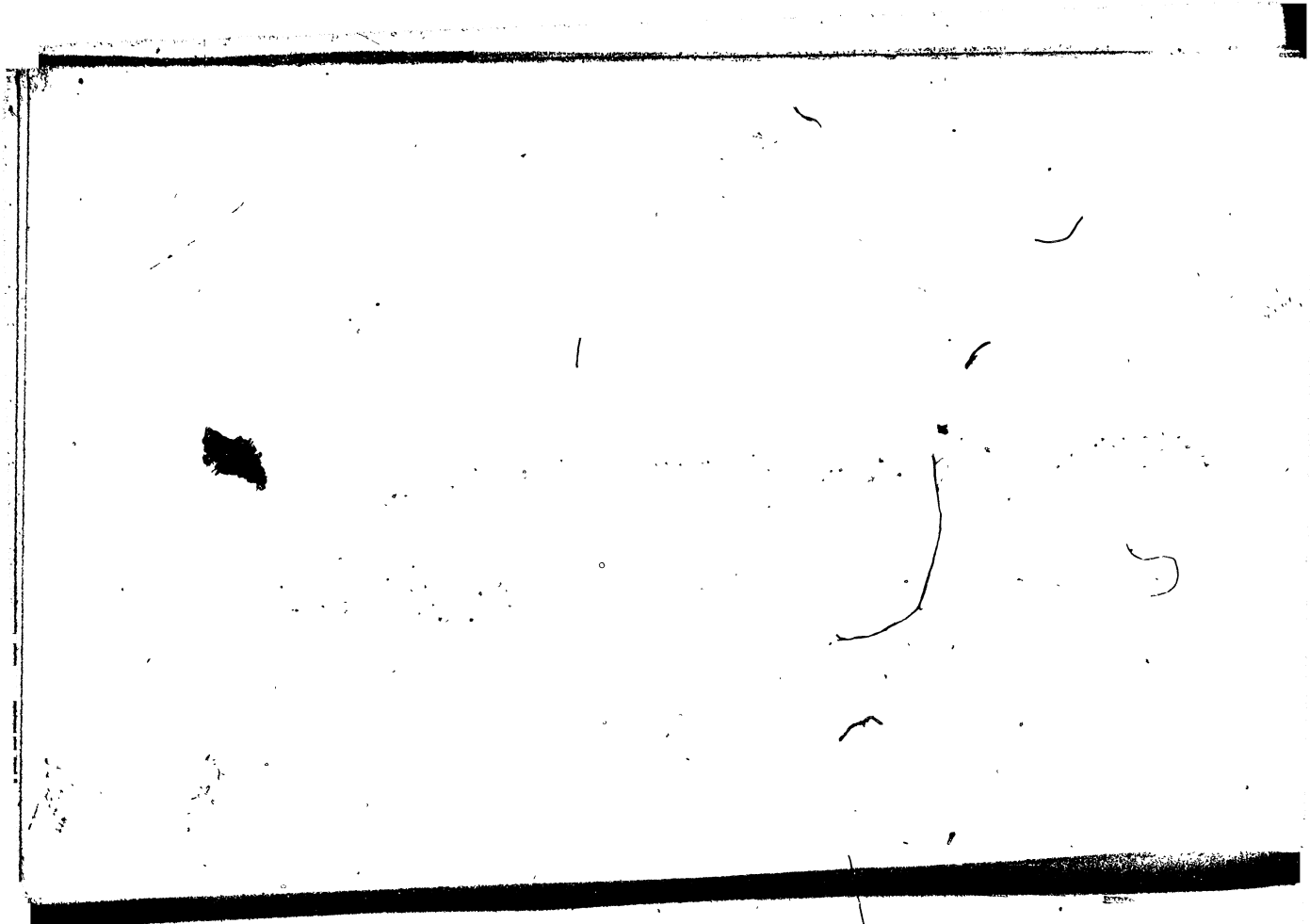

IN THE HEART OF THE HILLS

OR

THE LITTLE PREACHER OF THE PACIFIC SLOPE

BY

HATTIE E. COLTER

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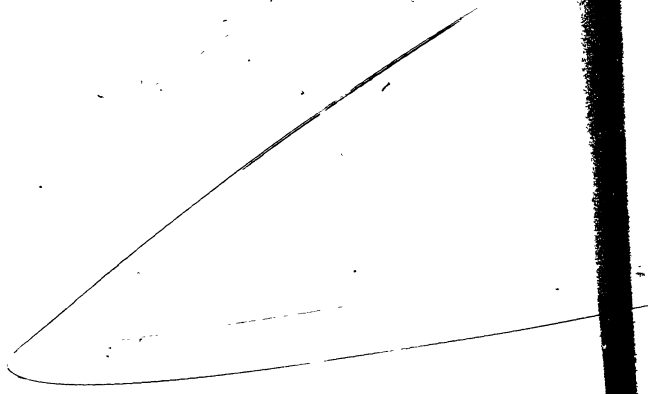

IN THE HEART OF THE HILLS

CHAPTER I

MR. BRUCE

MR. BRUCE very rarely crossed the threshold of any of his workpeople. Certainly, on former occasions when he had done so, he had not beheld such a bright, pleasant room as this of the Mansfields'. The woman who stood awaiting the statement of the object of his visit might have graced any drawing-room. Her speech was correct, her voice finely modulated, while there was a native dignity in her manner that almost involuntarily elicited that respectful deference he did not always feel towards the wife of a fellow-millionaire. He had called expecting to find her husband at home during the meal-time hour; some unforeseen duty at the mine was detaining the latter, and the wife with gentle courtesy had invited him to come into the room, and wait for her husband, which invitation he had accepted.

His swift glance had taken in the simple appointments of the room. Flowers with luxuriant leafage filled the windows, while pretty clinging

vines twined above the white muslin draperies with graceful effect. A baby's crib stood in one corner, wherein cooed a blue-eyed baby girl, while standing guard over all these household treasures was a great Danish hound which watched him closely.

For a few seconds Mr. Bruce stood as if in a brown study, and then turned to look at the pictures, framed and unframed, that lined the walls. Amongst these were drawings, water-colours, and oil-paintings of a decidedly amateurish type, with some good engravings and woodcuts. There were portraits also, evidently family pictures, Mr. Bruce thought as he went leisurely from one to another, when all at once from out a shining frame a pair of eyes glanced into his that set his pulses beating. It was a sweet, girlish face, crowned with masses of waving golden hair; the eyes were of a deep blue that might probably be violet under strong excitement, and were shaded with heavily fringed lids that added to the mystery and charm of their expression. He scarcely noticed the finely moulded features and form of the pictured maiden, the eyes had so bewitched him. He turned to the mistress of the house, who was regarding him with considerable surprise.

"Is this a real woman, or only a fancy sketch?" he demanded.

"It is my sister, but is not equal to the original."

"It is difficult to believe that; she is remarkably beautiful. I do not remember ever looking into such eyes; they are as true as steel; one

could not conceive of a girl like that condescending to an unworthy action."

"Aimée is better than she looks; we think there was never anyone quite like our Aimée."

"How old is she?"

"Only a little over twenty. That picture was taken on her last birthday. It brought the tears to my eyes when we took it from its wrappings, it looked so much like herself."

Mr. Bruce stood gazing at it silently for some time, and then muttered, as if thinking aloud: "Strange that a girl with a face like that should be so unconscious of her beauty."

"My mother was careful to warn us not to tell her how lovely she is. She always strove to prevent her children's minds getting filled with vanity. Aimée was different too from the rest of us; she is such a practical, busy little woman, spending very little time examining herself in the glass, I can assure you; besides all this, she was converted when she was only twelve years old, and it was one of those marvellous conversions of which there don't seem to be very many in any particular age of the world, and which seems to change the whole nature."

"What do you mean by conversion?" Mr. Bruce asked abruptly.

"Why, just what the Bible says."

"I seldom read the Bible."

"Your mother told you of our Lord Jesus Christ, and how He said we must be born again."

"My mother died when I was a boy, and, besides, I was brought up an agnostic."

"Oh, how sad!" The words involuntarily spoken sounded so sympathetic he did not feel offended; indeed he would have found it hard to be angry with any one while gazing into that calm pictured face.

"What form does your sister's goodness take?" said Mr. Bruce somewhat drily.

"If she were a boy she would certainly be a preacher, but as it is she does whatever she can find to do; teaches in the Sunday school, and is constantly visiting the few sick and poor people in the neighbourhood of her home. She lives in the land of Evangeline, and looks across Grand Pré at the sunset every fine day."

"Ah, indeed!" The answer was given absently.

"We have been wanting her to come here. She would do more to Christianise such a community than the average minister."

"Why do you not get her to come?" he asked eagerly.

"Father is a minister, and, like most of his profession, cannot afford to both educate his children and give them the benefit of travel; my husband was out of a situation for a year before coming here, hence we have not been in a position to pay her way, much to our regret."

"Send for her at once. I should be the one most interested in the moral condition of the men in this place, and it is my duty to defray the

expenses of her trip." He took out his cheque-book and filled in one on the spot. "I will welcome anyone who can humanise these half-civilised creatures we have to deal with in our mining enterprises."

She did not accept the bit of paper he was holding out to her.

"Neither my husband nor my parents would be willing for Aimée to receive a gift like that; we have not always been in such straits as we are now."

"It is not a gift. If your husband advised me to secure a more expert workman in my mines, would I hesitate to send him the money to come to me? If I want a worker of a different kind, the conditions are just the same. Tell your husband, as his employer, I command that your sister be communicated with directly."

Mrs. Mansfield had heard of this man's imperious ways, and was trembling lest she might offend him; but she was courageous withal.

"You will surely wait to learn if my father will consent for her to come on your terms; we must consult with him as well as my husband."

"Will you supply me with writing material? I will write to your father at once."

She hastened to comply with his request, meanwhile most heartily wishing Aimée's picture had not been hung quite so conspicuously, or that her husband had not been so inconveniently abroad at that particular time. He was holding a clerkship at the mines, though a civil engineer by profession,

and was thankful for even that subordinate position, since there seemed to be about twice as many men of his profession in the country as there were offices for them to fill. Since the boom had burst a few months before he came to the Cariboo country, he had been out of work entirely; and when, through the intervention of a friend, this situation had been secured, both he and his wife had felt they had great cause for thankfulness. Mr. Bruce had his letter written in a few moments, and, after obtaining her father's address, he rose abruptly, saying as he left the house—

"Tell your husband I will be looking for him at seven this evening."

With another glance at the picture on the wall he left the room, while Mrs. Mansfield stood watching him from her window. This was her first interview with him, and her impressions were more favourable than she expected. From neighbourhood gossip she had inferred that he was imperious and pitiless; though his workpeople acknowledged that he was just to the utmost farthing. If accident or death overtook them, they and theirs were cared for so long as they needed care, yet there was lacking that sympathy that would have made his generosity seem so much more precious. They used to say he could not regard them with greater indifference if they were mere machines like the working gear of his mines: their joys and sorrows were alike matters of contemptuous indifference to him.

"If he did not give to us the same as if he

were throwing a bone to a dog, and would as soon knock the poor brute down with it, I could a'most worship him," one of his beneficiaries, a widow with six children, used to say. John Mansfield, however, defended him on all occasions; but as it was a habit he observed towards everyone, people as a rule were not convinced by his arguments. He used to say that a word of recognition from Mr. Bruce meant more than whole sermons from some men. "He has made me feel stronger just by a glance of the eye; he seems to look so far into you; if one has nothing to conceal they need not be afraid of him."

"Why should anyone be afraid of him since he is not a good man—I mean a religious man," his wife remarked.

"Certainly not good in a religious way, but I can't conceive of that man doing a mean thing; if he were only a converted man he would be an example for even leaders in religion, let alone common folk like you and me."

"I believe he is your hero," was the laughing reply.

"Possibly he is, at anyrate I am very thankful to be in his service; I find it a mental and moral tonic to be near him, and because he is a born aristocrat, and cannot realise that working men are his equals, I am not going to quarrel with him. He always reminds me of those great men of olden times who loomed up so far above their fellows."

"I fancy the great men you compare him with

had greater sympathy with common people than he."

"Not if they were like the types we have here; I do not blame him for being disgusted with the scum of creation we have in these mountains."

Ruth Mansfield recalled to mind these words of her husband as she still stood looking out of the window in a brown study. If Aimée should come out to this wild country, would she be able to help this scum of creation, as her husband called these men, from many lands, who had been drifting hither and thither on the changing currents of life. Of one thing she felt certain, if Aimée should come, the little white church in the centre of the town, built by Mr. Bruce for any preacher who might chance to come that way, would be occupied from week to week. She tried to picture this pure, child-hearted woman moving about like a ray of light among these half-savage men and women, the latter of whom were worse even than the men, whom, in too many instances, they helped to degrade.

CHAPTER II

An Unexpected Call

THE Mansfields awaited tidings from the East with considerable anxiety. If Aimée sent back the cheque, Mr. Bruce might be angry, and, according to his imperious fashion, might say something that would make it hard for John Mansfield to retain his position. To start out again as wanderers, seeking work and a habitation, was exceedingly painful, especially after their long and expensive trip to the Cariboo.

"It might have been better if you had agreed quietly to his suggestion about sending her the money, and let your father decide what was best to do," John suggested one day when they had been talking the matter over.

"I could never do that; it seemed too much like making beggars of ourselves. Don't let us worry any more, and it will certainly come out all right."

The days wore slowly on. Work was growing brisk after the long winter. Every day men were arriving, some of them on foot, having traversed the long journey, upheld by the hope of work at the end; some of them "dead broke," as they

phrased the emptiness of their pockets; while others were fresh from the rest enforced on them in jails or penitentiaries. Some of them, alas! had wives and children hundreds and thousands of miles away, anxiously waiting for tidings of good from the absent breadwinner. Ruth Mansfield watched this pitiful procession with an aching heart. Surely, if Mr. Bruce had ever known what it was to be hungry and scantily clad, without work, in a great wilderness of granite mountains, he would not receive so indifferently this ragged army of hungry, world-worn men, she thought, as she watched a detachment of them just then moving aimlessly along the street. Many of the half-starved creatures looked upon her as an angel of mercy, as she opened her door to their gentle tapping, bringing them into her well-ordered kitchen, and supplying them with food. Other women prophesied all sorts of dire mishaps befalling her; but she felt safe in the vicinity of the most besotted specimens, partly because of the influence of purity enfolding her, but more because of Aleph, the huge Danish hound, who followed her like her own shadow when such characters were near. The food thus bestowed diminished considerably her husband's salary, for every bite was like eating gold, so costly was the carriage of supplies into the mountains; but she took it for granted that He who had bidden her share with the naked and hungry would, with the command, provide the means.

Mr. Bruce was not so unobservant of the ways

of this modest housekeeper as she fancied. He meant that she should be none the poorer ultimately; but now, when he thought of that pictured face which brightened those cottage walls, he took more interest than ever in the welfare of the little family. Meanwhile he felt a curious sense of helplessness, as well as anger, that a young girl's picture should work him such unrest. Among his possessions he had photographs by the score of elegantly apparelled women, some of them reckoned beautiful by the severest canons of latter-day taste. He tried to assure himself that it was because he had not seen a lovely woman for so long a time that this girl's face had appealed so strongly to his love of beauty. He locked his door, and exhumed these half-forgotten pictures; but he sadly confessed to himself that not one of them could touch that inner chord this girl Aimée had so easily reached. He was waiting with more impatience than he had ever felt before, for the letter from this unknown country girl. It might be several weeks before he would hear; for in those slow-moving provinces in the East they were seldom in a hurry about anything. Sometimes he was tempted to leave all this great business concern in the height of the season, and go "East" and settle the matter himself. His confidential clerk remonstrated with him as the days wore on, so eagerly was he rushing into great business enterprises.

"You will wear out before your time if you continue working at this rate; and, besides, what

is the good of money beyond a certain point? You can't make use of it on yourself."

"Why should I bury myself alive in this desert unless I am making money; besides, I may sell out any day, but I want matters booming when I do."

It was useless remonstrating with him, as his clerk well knew; but the latter was puzzled at his master's mental condition. One day, shortly after the mail came in, Mr. Bruce was surprised at a visit from Mrs. Mansfield. She approached him timidly, a pretty flush on her face, which brought out a likeness to her sister he had not noticed before. He surprised her with the cordiality of his greeting, but she proceeded at once to the cause of her presence there.

"I have just had a letter from my sister. She writes that she was going to leave for the West just a week from the day this was written, so that she is now on the way."

"Had my letter reached her?"

"Oh no, or she would have mentioned it; but she is coming with a cousin, who pays her way for the help Aimée can give in looking after the children."

"Will her cousin come all the way here?"

"No; she goes to Vancouver to join her husband, who is master of a ship, and sails between there and Australia. The doctors recommend a sea voyage for her health."

"I am glad to hear that your sister is coming, but could wish she was not to have the care of troublesome children by the way."

"Aimée would be certain to find something to do. If there were no passengers to help, she would try to get up classes for the porters or train hands, and if that failed she would volunteer to mend their stockings. She is the most industrious and unselfish creature one meets outside of fiction; she reminds me of people we read about but seldom see."

Mr. Bruce had led the way into a handsomely furnished sitting-room, while she held the letter uncertainly in her hand; evidently there was something still on her mind. At last she said, with some constraint—

"Aimée has heard that you are somewhat stern in your manner, so she has begged me to ask beforehand if she may have a Sunday school for the men, or some such gathering; she suggested a Christian Endeavour Club also, if you thought best. She has wanted ever since she was twelve years old to come to British Columbia, to look after neglected miners. I believe she made a promise to that effect to a dying friend who had lived here. She writes me in this letter that, from all she can hear, they need missionaries as much as the people who live in heathen countries.

"How did she hear that I was a stern man?"

"People have gone East who worked in your mines. Aimée was interested in your workpeople long before I came to Cariboo."

"Did you confirm these reports about me in your letters?"

"I cannot say that I did; I merely have written

that you might do a wonderful amount of good if you were so minded, but that you were not a Christian, and so had never realised your great responsibility."

There was a peculiar look on the man's face, as he listened to this courageous little woman, who expressed her honest convictions so plainly at a severe cost, as was evident to him.

"When will your sister get here?"

"I have not reckoned up the days it will take to make the trip, but probably some time next week."

"She will step off at Ashcroft; I trust you have sent her full particulars respecting the trip."

"Friends at home will tell her all about it."

"Will you tell her when she comes that she has my full consent to make Christians of every man, woman, and child in my employ."

"Yes, I will tell her; and now I must go. Aleph is minding my baby, and he is not the most judicious of nurses."

When Smithson, Mr. Bruce's confidential clerk, came in an hour later, he was surprised to learn that his employer was going to Ashcroft.

"Anything wrong, sir, that you must go?" He paused a moment waiting for the reply that was not forthcoming. "Could I not do the business for you?"

"No, it is something I want to see to myself."

Smithson looked puzzled, for he well knew what a strong antipathy Mr. Bruce had for that long wild ride. When John Mansfield came home the

following day, he surprised his wife by the announcement that the "boss" had gone to Ashcroft.

"The men were afraid something was up, for he never goes over that road if he can help it. They would, every man of them, be sorry to see the mines pass into other hands."

Ruth Mansfield stood looking at her husband with flushed face. "John Mansfield, do you think Aimée's coming has anything to do with this?"

"What nonsense. Bruce is not the man to travel over that road twice to look after a slip of a girl."

CHAPTER III

Her Summons to Work

THE long-cherished desire of her heart had been granted to Aimée Roebart at last. When she was a rosy-cheeked maiden of twelve, a young man, Frank Harris, had come home to die, from these very mountains whither her steps were now bent, and on his deathbed he made her promise that if she ever went anywhere as a missionary she would go to the Cariboo Goldfield.

The time had come now when these childish promises were to be fulfilled. She was ready to leave parents and friends; while she amazed her cousin, who was apt to take life dolorously, by seeming to enjoy every minute of the journey West. The circumstances under which that trip was made would have impressed most young women as the reverse of enjoyable. Mrs. Brown's children had been spoiled in the training, or rather by the lack of it; for they were a law unto themselves. Their mother relieved herself of their care entirely, so that wherever she might go, poor Aimée had them clinging to her skirts. The tourist car in which they travelled was

uncomfortably crowded, and Aimée, who had the food to attend to, was kept busy watching for a chance at the range, and then supplying the wants of her charges. Some of their fellow-travellers relieved their minds on the subject, but Mrs. Brown was indifferent to their criticisms. Sometimes when the children were sleeping, Aimée found time to exchange remarks with her fellow-travellers. One old miner became her particular friend. He had made a snug fortune in the Cariboo country years ago. He was one of the first explorers who struck the gold in those early days, and was pleased to describe the modes of living that obtained in the early "sixties," and even before that time, to so interested a listener. She had unlimited faith in human nature, fortunately, or she could scarcely have believed it true when he told her that flour was nearly as precious as gold dust when it rose in price to a dollar, and even in exceptional times to a dollar and a half a pound; while all the other necessaries of life, save air and water, ranged at similar famine prices. He found her so ready to hear his reminiscences, that story after story was recalled for her benefit. He knew all about the place whither she was going, and warned her that the "boss," as Bruce was called, would never let a slip of a girl like her hold meetings in the new church he had built.

"He's a regular stern sort of man, and takes no stock of anything but money-making. Whatever induced him to build a church is what puzzled us all; but I guess nobody ever asked him; he's not

the sort of man one cares to question more than is needful."

"He won't interfere if I hold meetings in a private house?" Aimée questioned anxiously.

"Oh no; he never interferes in a small way with folks; if they are sick, or meet with accidents, he looks after them better than most employers, but after that he treats them with about the same consideration that he does 'critters.'"

Aimée looked thoughtful, but she did not worry even when it was morally certain that things were not going to turn out according to her wishes.

"It's curious, a handsome young woman like you coming out into these wild parts to work among a crowd of half-heathen men. You would stand a better chance in the East to get a husband."

"I have no thought of getting married; that would spoil all my plans."

"You needn't tell me you won't be married within two or three years. Young women with your looks are as sure to get husbands as apple trees are to blossom in May."

"We see some lovely-faced women wearing nuns' bonnets; there is a party of them now in the adjoining Pullman; I see them at every station on the platforms."

"Ah, them's Roman Catholics, and they're not allowed to marry; more's the pity."

"Probably they are doing more good living

single, and we Protestants should be as willing to work for those who need us as they are."

"I am glad that it isn't a part of our religion to make men and women live single all their lives."

Aimée concluded it was wiser not to argue with him, especially as she was not certain if he were right or wrong.

"I have five girls of my own," he rambled on presently, "and I've taken them all East to get married. I don't like the men in these new places for sons-in-law, and I'd advise you to go back East, when you come to settle down for good."

Aimée thanked him, but did not make any promises on the subject. The old man bade her a friendly farewell when he left the train at Kamloops. She in turn was to leave it three hours later, and preferred snatching what sleep she could, without taking her berth. Alone in the car, with all around her sleeping for awhile, a feeling of loneliness oppressed her, while in spite of herself there would arise painful questionings if this scheme of hers were really a divine leading, or merely a girlish whim. In a few years she might have become fully equipped for work in some foreign mission field. Indeed, a wealthy member of her father's church, with whom she had been a favourite, had offered to defray the cost of a medical course, if she chose to study; but, tempting as was the offer, she resolutely held to her old promise to Frank Harris to give her life to the British Columbia miners.

But when the porter came to tell her they were at Ashcroft, she had regained her accustomed serenity, and followed him out into the night, where she was left standing alone, with only her luggage for company. A sleepy-looking telegraph agent came out presently, followed by a clerk from the little hotel across the way; the latter gathered up her rug and satchel, and asked her to follow him. A few moments after and she found herself in a low-walled, commonplace-looking room, which was dimly lighted and chill with the cool morning air.

CHAPTER IV

An Exciting Drive

AIMÉE had listened eagerly to the description given of the long stage drive that lay ahead of her, from persons who had either gone over it themselves, or had heard from the lips of others reports more or less correct concerning it.

A maid came in presently to ask if she would like to have breakfast before starting. There were several at the table beside herself, but she was the only lady. Could it be possible that she must take that long journey without one of her own sex to exchange a word with? The maid who waited on the table showed a disposition to be friendly, and her sympathy, when she learned Aimée's destination, revealed the fact that the journey was not regarded as a trifling matter. When the call was given to start, Aimée went out almost reluctantly into the grey dawn; even the friendliness of this servant girl had touched her heart, and made her unwilling to part with the only one who had spoken a kind word to her in this land of strangers. Outside she found a great, lumbering stage-coach with places for a dozen people inside

and out. To it were attached six horses, tossing their heads, pawing the ground, and apparently eager for the road. She devoutly hoped the motley crowd gathered about the stage were not all to be shut in with her. She climbed to her seat, and was anxiously waiting to discover who were going to be her travelling companions, when a gentleman came out of the hotel and joined them. It was Mr. Bruce, but as yet she knew him not. As he climbed to a seat beside her, she experienced a feeling of safety, for she felt instinctively that here was a face she could trust. One other man took his place by the driver, when she heard some one say—

"You have very few passengers to-day."

"There are others to join us later on," the driver responded, as he gathered up the reins, and the coach rolled away in a cloud of dust. Pretty soon they were going at such a rate Aimée wondered if the horses were running away, while she leaned out to assure herself that this was not the case.

"You need not be afraid; it is the way the horses on this stage route are trained to travel," said the gentleman next to her reassuringly.

Mr. Bruce was critically examining her face, and had already decided that the picture had rather understated than overstated her beauty.

At the next station a crowd of rough-looking miners were waiting for the coach, which now would be crowded.

"The young lady had better sit outside with me for

the next stage; after that there will be room enough inside in all probability," the driver suggested kindly.

"Thank you very much," Aimée said with evident relief. A half-dozen or more of dirty, unshaven individuals, reeking with odours of tobacco and rum, were anything but congenial travelling companions for a delicate girl. She looked up critically at the perch she was invited to share; with the help of the driver's strong hand she sprang to the seat beside him, and in a few seconds the horses were dashing along at their usual break-neck pace. She found it trying to the nerves, swinging along above the horses, and especially was this the case when the animals broke into a gallop and swept around those alarming curves so recklessly. To her dismay a bend in the road brought them to the top of a long hill, in some places dangerously steep.

"Hold on for dear life, Miss; it's not often a woman takes this pinch under these circumstances."

"I will do the best I can," she gasped, with white lips, as she watched the suspicious plunges of the off-leader. Surely, under ordinary circumstances, she would be certain this team was running away, but the driver seemed so collected and held the powerful brutes so steadily, she assured herself all must be right. The stage swayed from side to side alarmingly, when to her dismay the man almost hissed into her ear—

"For the life of you, sit still."

"Yes, I will, if I can," she gasped. She knew now the horses were on a mad run down this

awful hill, but she did not know what else he meant by that imperative command. He was very well aware that it is a custom with women under circumstances similar to the present to clutch the driver, or to shriek and throw themselves headlong from the flying vehicle. It was not Aimée's intention to commit either of these indiscretions, though it was only by the greatest effort of self-control that she kept her seat. If that iron rod should give way, she realised that without any doubt she would be thrown over the wheels among the rocks, or else down in front under the horses' feet.

The sharpest pinch was now just before them. "Hold on for your life," again the driver shouted, at the same time gathering the lines in his right hand and bracing his feet against the footboard; he also put his left arm in front of her, grasping as he did so the rod to which she was clinging. How safe she felt, for his hand was like a glove of steel, so sinewy and strong it looked; but how fearfully the coach was swaying now. Would it have been possible, she wondered, for her to keep her seat without the protection of his arm? Now that they were descending that most dangerous incline of all, was it right to permit him in this crisis to give her the protection of his arm? Turning a white but resolute face towards him, she said—

"You require both hands now; there are other lives than mine trusting to your skill. I will do my best to hold on; if I fall it can't be helped."

The weight of the coach was forcing the horses

on, for a tremendous jolt a few seconds before had broken the brake, and they could not slacken speed now if they wished. Aimée was left after this to her own resources; but, strange to say, she was getting used to balancing herself, and even when swung half out of her seat she managed to come back safely with the rebound. She did not shut her eyes or scream when she found herself suspended almost above the horses' backs, but held on to the rod with all her might. If only her wrists did not get dislocated, or the coach upset, she was growing hopeful that she might survive this mad race. Never in all her life was her brain so active. Incidents she had well-nigh forgotten came back vividly to her mind. Every faculty of mind and body were strung to their highest tension. They were nearing the foot of the hill; before them stretched quite a level piece of road for some distance, then a short rise, and after that a sharp curve that hid anything further from sight. It was that sharp curve that had more terror than all the rest for the driver; for, if the horses were not stopped before they reached it, no human power could save them. On one side of the narrow road was a perpendicular rock, and on the other side it fell sheer down a hundred feet, among rocks and stumps of ancient forest monarchs. To be impaled on one of them was one of the horrifying possibilities that confronted her. Aimée was able to keep her seat quite comfortably now, and was beginning to get back a faint tinge of colour in her cheeks.

"The horses will soon come to a trot, don't you think?" she asked, quite hopefully.

"If you ever prayed in your life, pray now that they may be stopped," the driver said hoarsely; "the danger all lies ahead of us; if they keep on running, we are sure to upset around that bend yonder."

Aimée looked up into the clear far heavens, and closed her eyes. Their need was desperate; there was no time to lose.

"Our Heavenly Father, Thou only canst help us; even the winds and waves obey Thy voice; these dumb brutes are not beyond Thy control. Wilt Thou not speak the word, and save our lives? Amen."

When she ended her prayer and opened her eyes, the driver was sitting with bared, bowed head, as if he, too, were joining in her brief petition.

"It will be all right; the Lord has heard our prayers." She spoke with the confidence of a little child, and then sat serenely waiting for the horses to stand stock-still. But they kept steadily on at the same wild gallop. They were ascending the hill now, and had nearly reached the curve; but Aimée had lost all fear. Christ was as pitiful there as when He saved men and women in opposition to material laws, under those Syrian skies in the long-departed centuries. The driver was using means, while she exercised faith. He was talking soothingly to the panting animals, and holding steadily at the lines, when suddenly the vicious off-leader swayed in the traces, went on a

few paces with slackened speed, and then fell headlong on the roadside. His mate was dragged down with him, but the others stood still, as Aimée had expected. The coach had scarcely come to a standstill, when Mr. Bruce was out and lifting Aimée from her perch.

"Were you not afraid?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, for a little while, and then I asked God to save us; after that I felt sure there was not to be any more danger. I got the answer directly, as you see."

A chill crept over the worldly-wise man, although his blood had been at fever heat for miles past. There seemed something uncanny about this quick response from the distant world of spirits, to a girl's cry for help. The driver was extricating his horses. Their traces had become entangled in the fall of the leader, whose neck seemed to have been broken.

"Maybe the young lady had better walk on around the curve; she is on the outside seat, and if they should be going fast it might be hard for her to keep her seat," he said thoughtfully.

Aimée very willingly started off alone, while Mr. Bruce and a Mr. Carleton, also a passenger, remained to help the driver. The miners were too drunk to be of any use.

She rounded the bend, and kept fearlessly on her way, unconscious of any other possible danger to a wayfarer on that lonely road. As she wound in and out along the zigzag track, she came suddenly upon a procession of pack mules and their

drivers. To say that they were surprised at the apparition of a young girl walking fearlessly past them would but mildly express their feelings; that she did not turn back, screaming at their wild, unkempt appearance, as many had done before, won their goodwill at once. She smiled and spoke to them one by one, as she walked leisurely down the length of the procession.

"Say, boys, is that a ghost?" one of them exclaimed, before she had passed out of hearing.

"Blest if I know. She's mighty good-looking, whatever she is."

They were all standing now, and watching her with admiring interest.

"Wish't we'd said somethin' to her," one poor fellow said wistfully, who had scarcely spoken to a decent woman in a dozen years, the waiting-maids at the hotels he stopped at excepted.

"It might a-frightened her; and she looked so sort o' trustful at us, I'd sooner never a spoke to a woman than skeered her," another remarked.

Before they had finished their admiring speculations, they heard the thundering noise of the approaching coach. They hastened to their places to keep their mules straight while it went past.

"There's been a axident; one of the horses is amissin', and that accounts for the young woman walkin' on by herself," one of the men suggested.

They saluted the driver, who did not wait to make explanations, but looked anxiously ahead for Aimée, who was hidden now by a curve in the

road. When he had helped her to her seat, he asked—

"Weren't you frightened when you saw the mule train?"

"Oh no, I knew the men would not let the mules hurt me."

The man smiled. "I wasn't thinking of the mules," he replied grimly.

Aimée did not comprehend very distinctly what he was hinting at, and she did not press for a fuller explanation.

The driver forced his horses now to a gallop for a good part of the way, to make up for lost time, and to get in in time to do justice to the dinner that would no doubt be getting cold through the delay.

Aimée regretted that so much superb scenery should be piled up here, with very few to admire it save stage drivers and prospectors. She enjoyed her seat now, which enabled her to take in the splendid stretches of landscape; while she was getting so accustomed to the jolts that they scarcely disturbed her.

CHAPTER V

Reminiscences of Early Days

IN the long twilight they continued their journey to the fifty-nine mile house, where they remained for the night. Usually the coach prolonged the first day's journey as far as the "sixty-one mile house," but there had been delays on the road that left them all tired enough to welcome the comfortable lodgings provided by Pete Egan, mine host of the inn.

Aimée had been told by Mr. Bruce and Mr. Carleton about the wonderful cañon to be seen here, and was eager to peer into its mysterious depths. She was therefore taken to visit it. The scene was a very grand and impressive one. Aimée crept to the very edge of the cañon, where she could look down into the sombre depths many hundreds of feet below.

"What mighty powers lie latent in nature when they could cut such a chasm as this during the lapse of ages. Why, tons of dynamite and gunpowder used by the cleverest miners could never accomplish such a task, yet look how quietly Nature does her work," Mr. Bruce said, as he

watched the shadows below. He had attached himself to Aimée, but still she did not know his name.

"It brings to my mind the terrors of the Day of Judgment," replied Aimée, with a slight shudder.

"I never thought of that day in connection with such things as this," he said shortly.

"I meant to say that it gives one such an idea of the power of God, and this suggested those awful changes that will take place among the manifestations of that day. Yet is it not wonderful that the great God who controls all these mighty forces yet allows us to call Him Father?"

"I have not given those subjects much thought; I have too many other"— he paused, as he saw her surprised look,—"perhaps I should not say greater things to think about."

"Do you not believe in the Fatherly care of God?" said Aimée, looking at him with large-eyed surprise, not unmingled with regret.

"I cannot say that I do"; he spoke quite seriously.

She turned her face towards him; its expression one of the deepest pity.

"I would not dare to go over this road, to cross those dangerous mountain passes in the cars, if I did not feel safe for eternity; only to think— a broken axle, a rock falling in front of the train, or a misplaced switch, and one might go plunging hundreds of feet down to death. Oh, it is terrible to think of taking such a risk without any surety being felt for eternity."

"Shall we go back to the hotel?" Mr. Bruce said quietly, while he took Aimée's hand and drew her from the giddy height where they had been standing, and which in her absorption in a new subject she seemed to have forgotten. She walked quietly back to the hotel by his side, but without saying more. She appeared plunged in thought. They retired almost as soon as they returned; it had been a long and exciting day, and they were all glad to get to rest.

Aimée was wakened at sunrise the following morning by an elderly but stout maid, who was leaning over the bed and looking down intently into the face of the sleeping girl, when the wondering eyes opened and gazed up bewildered into the forbidding countenance above her.

"You'd better be stirring, Miss, or they'll go off without you; they can't be expected to wait for young women to lie a-dreaming till the sun is briling everything up."

Aimée thanked her courteously, and waited a few moments for her to depart, which evidently she had no intention of doing; so she arose, and, kneeling down, said her prayers; whatever haste might be required, she was determined first to seek God's blessing and protection for the day. The woman waited until the devotions were ended and then took her departure, saying, with a sneer, "I guess I must be a-going." It was a relief to Aimée to see her go, for she had an instinctive dread of this masculine-looking female.

Aimée took her breakfast alone, and then went

out into the open air. She found it influenced her like an intoxicant. It was so rare and keen. The scenery was grand and beautiful in the extreme. Birds were singing everywhere, and skimming fearlessly in the brilliant sunshine across the yawning cañon. Aimée crossed over to the verge of the precipice, and stood looking down where the river was flowing, like a thread of silver, hundreds of feet below. Turning away at last half-dizzy, she went to her room and waited for the summons to start.

When she took her place this time inside the coach, she found two new passengers had joined them, while the motley crowd had left. A young man, whom she judged from his speech and dress to be a recent arrival from England. He examined her very critically through his eye-glass, until he was apparently fully satisfied with the inspection. The other was a man, apparently between fifty and sixty, yet active and alert as a boy. He had a fine expression of face, which almost instinctively begot confidence. As they bowled along through the keen bracing air, Mr. Seymour—for that was his name—looked about him from time to time with a ready, reminiscent interest. Mr. Carleton—their fellow-passenger from the first—observing this, in his thin staccato voice, said—

"You seem to be interested in this scenery, sir; were you ever this way before?"

"Yes, scores of times. I packed between Yale and Barkerville for years, along in the sixties."

"Then you would know my grandfather, who

owned the Columbian and other mines at Barkerville?" said Mr. Bruce, turning to him with evident interest.

"Yes, I knew him well; he gave me nineteen hundred dollars once for a load I packed for him from Yale, and in three days' time I gave him back every dollar of it."

"What for?"

"There came a storm of snow and sleet the night before we were to start on our return trip, which made the mountain like glass. I had one hundred and fourteen mules, and they had to be fed with grain at seventy-five cents a pound. I can tell you I didn't give them near all they could eat, but their feed cost me six hundred dollars a day. It would have paid me well to shoot them before I gave them a single feed, for when I got back to Yale with my pack, out of the lot, I had only fourteen alive."

"That was pretty hard," Carleton remarked sympathetically.

"Dewdney was packing at the same time; he lost his entire pack, and only brought off the leader's bell. We even ripped up our Mexican pack saddles, to give the hay stuffing to the poor starving brutes."

"You have not lost anything financially by coming here, from all accounts," Mr. Seymour said, with a meaning smile, to Mr. Bruce; to which remark the latter made no reply beyond a nod and a laugh.

"It's only the rich men can make money

now out of the mines," the young Englishman grumbled. "It takes a fortune to sink a shaft, and the life is as tame here as in the heart of England."

"It wasn't so five-and-twenty or thirty years ago. I have seen the saloons in Barkerville ablaze with a hundred lights gleaming on the gaming tables, which were piled with gold so that you could hardly see across them; while the men gambled there till broad daylight, with pianos and violins going all night long. There were plenty of first-class musicians, and University graduates by the dozen,—a useless lot some of them were, too. There were artists that could draw your picture as true as a daguerreotyper."

"How in the world did they get pianos over those mountain passes?" Mr. Carleton asked, his voice sharp with excitement.

"Carried them on the backs of mules; it took six or seven of our best mules to a piano. I was offered six hundred dollars once to carry one fifty miles, and I refused the job."

"How much these men must have cared for their wives and daughters, to make such sacrifices for them," Aimée interjected.

"My child, it was not for wives and daughters they ran such heavy risks and expense," replied Mr. Seymour, as he looked kindly into Aimée's eager face. "Music, you know, has great power over men's hearts; even the roughest specimens yield to its sway, and they will gamble more recklessly to the strains of stirring music. They are like soldiers on a battlefield, in this respect."

The country through which they were passing now was level, but very picturesque. An exclamation from Aimée attracted their attention. She had been craning her neck out of the coach door to take in every choice bit of landscape possible; a huge herd of deer had come into view, and it was this that brought the involuntary exclamation from her lips. The young Englishman was in a fever of excitement.

"If one had an estate like that in the old country, with such a herd of deer, he need not be afraid to invite royalty to come for a day's shooting." He spoke with such eagerness, Aimée was amused.

"I am very glad the beautiful creatures have neither royalties nor anyone else to molest them here."

"Ah, Miss, they won't be so long. A few years from now there will be castles and great estates, and a landed gentry here."

"Heaven forbid!" Mr. Seymour ejaculated fervently. "The country is overrun now with that kind of people, and the more of them that come the worse off we seem to be. A God-fearing Scotch or Irish peasant in this country seems to be worth a dozen of them in developing our resources."

They were at the seventy-five mile house now, and the conversation was not resumed until after a change of horses.

CHAPTER VI

A Remarkable Dream

AFTER they had got comfortably started again, Mr. Bruce remarked to Mr. Seymour—

"You were pretty well acquainted with the old Government road from Yale to Lytton, and on to Ashcroft, I presume?"

He added that he had many a time heard of this wild mountain track, built at vast cost by the Government for the use of the Hudson Bay Company.

"Yes," was the sober reply; "and sometimes I travelled it neck and neck with death, or so it has seemed to me during these later years."

"How was that?" Carleton asked, as he cast an approving glance through the door at the green undulating hills stretching away into the blue infinity of distance.

"It couldn't well be otherwise, seeing you were going over a narrow pass on a road barely wide enough for this coach, or, at most, with a foot or so of space to the good; with a perpendicular rock a thousand feet above, and another the same distance below you, with a raging torrent washing

its base. I shall never forget the first time I went over that road in the stage-coach. Tingley, who owned the line, and was the first, nay, indeed, only one who has run a stage over the route, offered me my passage to Barkerville if I would drive the first stage that went over the road. I was used to horses, and accepted the offer; there was a spice of adventure, not to say of danger, about the trip which suited me, and, in addition, I had business that called me there. The horses, brought from Washington and Oregon, were neither used to such roads nor to each other; not a pair of horses out of the eight that I drove had ever been in harness together until the day we started. It is something of a job to drive eight matched, high-strung horses over an average road when they must be kept going at full speed; but when you take them under the conditions that I did on that trip—well, you need to have nerves of steel, and all your faculties in full exercise. We went for some miles without any serious adventure, and were passing over one of the worst places on the entire route—a sharp curve around the face of the precipice. There was a perpendicular wall of rock hundreds of feet above us on our right; while far below, if we could have leaned over the face of the cliff, we would have seen the mad swirl of the Fraser River. The road was narrow here, perhaps as much so as anywhere on the route. There may have been eighteen inches on each side of the wheels; I doubt if it averaged more. The horses were going at a gallop, when right in front of us,

as we came around the curve, we met a mule pack, and the drivers all in the rear. It was impossible to stop the horses. The mules stood still for a second or two, giving us a look of almost human terror; they had never met such an apparition before, and did not know what to make of it. All of them, save two, had sense enough to turn sharp around, and rush for their lives down the long incline; but those two went pell-mell right in among our horses, and were carried, tail first, to the bottom. I felt the coach give a tremendous lurch after we had gone that way for a mile or more; one of the mules had fallen to the ground, and the wheels on the nigh side went over it. I could feel the coach bump against the cliff; if the beast had fallen a foot to the left, we would have been over the cliff, and down in the Fraser in less time than it takes me to tell it. I pulled at the lines with all my might; but what was my strength matched with eight runaway horses? I had no time to pay any attention to the passengers. The coach chanced to be an open one, and held at the time eight men and one woman. I did not notice if there was any screaming; very likely the woman squealed a little; women generally do in such cases. When I got the horses stopped at last, I found that every man of them, and the woman too, had managed to drop over the back of the coach; it was impossible to get out at the sides, since they would either go headlong over the cliff, or be crushed against the wall of rock on the other side."

"A man would live some years of average excitement in a drive like that," Mr. Bruce said, smiling.

"There is not gold enough in these mountains to tempt me to go through the like again. When I looked back over the road we had come, and thought of that jam of quadrupeds, it seemed that our lives had been preserved alone through a direct act of Providence."

"It's as good as a novel hearing of your adventures," said Carleton; but his own eyes showed a suspicious moisture. "I had no idea there were so many interesting episodes in this new country. But I suppose you have your tragedies too."

"Wherever there is human life there is tragedy," Mr. Bruce said calmly.

"Yes, and the tragedy is as bitter under a miner's rough jacket as beneath the laces and diamonds of the city belle," added Seymour, as he bestowed a genial smile on the girl who had been hanging with such interest on his words.

"You have had other narrow escapes from death, I reckon?" Mr. Carleton suggested, after a pause. Evidently he was anxious for further reminiscences.

"Yes, many of them; but one in particular has always appeared to me, when I have spoken of it, to border on the supernatural; at anyrate I never recall it day or night, alone or in the company of others, without a thrill of horror."

"Would you mind telling us of it, sir?"

Aimée was leaning out, the wind playing wild

pranks among the rippling waves of hair. She enjoyed watching the shifting landscape, now shut in by giant trees, and anon stretching away to misty distances, where mighty plateaux rose terrace after terrace above each other, until, far into the blue, the wild cattle and horses ranging on these illimitable pastures were outlined in the clear air against the sky, like the toy animals of some animated Noah's Ark. But she drew in her head to listen to this new experience, prefaced by remarks so tempting.

"It was on the second trip, for that season, we had made to Barkerville. I had done well on the first trip—cleared a round thousand; and, some way, I felt as if I would like another route. One gets tired going over and over the same road, especially when it is an exceptionally hard one. I had gone over this other road once before; but a couple of years had elapsed, and I forget about difficulties of that kind. My men advised me not to take it, but I was determined to do it. By the second day, however, I was thoroughly sick of it, and went to sleep that night so angry with myself that just a little before, as we were sitting around the watchfire, I said: 'If I ever go this way again, I hope I may lose every horse in the train.' That night I had a dream. I can remember now the cold shivers that were going over me as I sprang to my feet in the cold grey of the early morning, and tried to shake off its effects."

Seymour ceased speaking for a moment, and Carleton said anxiously—

"You are surely not going to disappoint us of the dream and the rest of the story."

"I never repeat it without the whole scene coming up vividly before me; I seem to be going through it all again."

There was a solemnity about Seymour's words that impressed each one of them deeply. He wiped his face; the perspiration was standing in thick drops on his brow, and, after a pause, he continued the recital.

"As we proceeded on our journey that day, the track, if possible, grew worse; it followed the sinuous windings of the Fraser. Sometimes we were hugging a precipice which loomed two or three thousand feet above us, and half as many more sheer down on our other side; at another time we would be down by the water's edge. We halted as usual at noon, took our dinner, and had only got well started, when, as we were proceeding quietly under the shadow of a huge precipice, I chanced to look up, and my dream of the night before stood above me an awful reality. I had dreamt that I was going along this identical spot, when, raising my eyes, I saw three huge projections or peaks of the mountain looming a thousand feet or more above me. A strange numbness slowly crept over me, not like a nightmare, as in my dream I stood watching them. Suddenly, as I did so, one of them appeared to break from the cliff and to come tumbling down upon me. Such was my dream. I stood in silent amazement, tracing the strange resemblance between these

peaks and the ones I saw in my dream. While I watched them, to my horror one broke off, just as I had dreamed, and I saw it come falling down upon us. I shrieked to my men to make for the river, while I led the way myself, driving the horses before me; but in a few seconds great masses of rock and earth raining down upon us made the air almost black. Our escape was miraculous, for when the dust had settled we found on every side huge rocks, some of many tons weight lying all around us, along with lesser fragments. I counted my men to see if they were all alive, and to my great relief found they had all escaped; but two of the horses were so badly hurt I had to kill them. I put my hand in my hip pocket to get my knife to cut the poor brutes' throats, to put them out of their misery, when, to my amazement, I found the knife broken in two. A falling rock had struck it, though I was unconscious of the fact. So close had I been to death during the earthquake."

He was silent for some time, evidently his feelings were deeply stirred. There was no word spoken until he himself said—

"Gentlemen, since then I have never doubted the care of Divine Providence."

"It might have been chance," said Carleton quietly.

"It may seem so to you, but if you had cried to God for help as I did, with that merciless rain of rocks falling all around you, probably you also would think a Power above yourself had interposed. I have never been the same man since.

In every way possible I have tried to prove my gratitude to Almighty God for His singular deliverance; and in this country one has abundant opportunities to work for Him."

"Amen," whispered Aimée softly, and with a smile of rare sweetness.

Mr. Seymour looked at her earnestly for a moment, and then said—

"Have you also learned that man's best friend in every situation is the God who created him?"

"Yes, and it is to try to help others to this knowledge that I have come to this country."

"You are a missionary, I presume. May I ask if you are on your way to one of our Indian schools as a teacher?"

"Oh no, I cannot call myself a missionary at all. I am just fulfilling a promise I made when I was only twelve years old. A friend was dying who worked out here, and he was very anxious that the men should have some woman to tell them about Jesus and His love; he thought they might pay more attention to a woman's teaching than a man's."

"I am sure of it," Seymour said heartily; "they get tired hearing only their own rough voices. A woman's words and prayers will take them back to childhood and their own mothers. I wonder there have never been women missionaries before; they go to heathen lands, and give their lives to converting a handful of heathen, when there is infinitely more work for them in the slums of our great cities and in such places as this."

"I am glad you approve of my plans; people generally have thought I was foolish. Sometimes I have been afraid I might be making a mistake, but your opinion on the matter ought to have more weight than that of those who are ignorant of the country."

Mr. Bruce looked at her keenly. He was getting both puzzled as well as interested in this girl, whose portrait he thought had done her but moderate justice after all; yet he could not seem to make any progress towards a closer acquaintance. He studied her carefully, but he could not discover wherein lay that inexpressible charm she had for him. Still, however, he did not declare himself to her

CHAPTER VII

Reunion

THE journey was completed in due time, leaving Aimée tired enough of stage-coaching to hail with gratitude the rest awaiting her in her sister's tiny cottage. It was in the early evening the stage-coach deposited her at the door. Mr. Bruce, to her surprise, also alighted and stood near as the sisters met, and then he held out his hand.

"Good-bye! I hope we shall be better acquainted. Your sister, probably, will tell you who I am."

"Aimée, this is Mr. Bruce, the proprietor of the mines," said Mrs. Mansfield timidly.

"Oh!" It was a curious greeting, and caused Mr. Bruce's darkly handsome, but stern face to relax into a smile. Then Aimée, after looking at him with her grave, serious eyes for a few seconds, said innocently: "I heard from the people on the tracks you were so stern, and you have been so good to me."

Mr. Bruce said, smiling, "Perhaps you have yourself to thank for that."

"I—how?"

"When I have a good workman coming to me, I always find it pays to look after him well. You are going to work for my interests, and what else ought I to have done?"

"What—do you mean to say you went to Ashcroft to meet me?" Aimée's colour came and went. There was a strange fluttering at her heart.

"Well—well—ahem—I wished to see you were all right; besides — ahem, I had some business to look after."

"God bless you, Mr. Bruce, you have been more than good," said Aimée, placing her hand in his, and gazing up into his face with a look that set all his pulses a-tingling with excitement. At last with an effort he pulled himself together—

"When shall I announce your first service in the church yonder?"

"Oh! thank you, I will be glad to meet the men there on Sunday next."

"Very well, I will order my men to be in readiness."

"Please don't force them to come; that will never do." Aimée was alarmed lest Mr. Bruce might do more harm than good.

"Very well, I will intimate that their presence there will be agreeable to me. Probably you will have a crowded house."

Mr. Seymour held out his hand to say good-bye.

"May I come to your service? I have had a class of boys in Westminster in the Sunday

school for over twenty years; they have gone out from us to all parts of the world; some of them are missionaries now."

"I shall be very glad to see you. Perhaps you will give us an address."

"I am no speaker, but if I can get something to say I will try and give it to you."

Aimée did not wish to enlist Mr. Carleton's services; he did not impress her as one calculated to be of use in a religious service. The coach rolled away, and Aimée followed her sister into the house, where she found the table laid for tea in a very tidy kitchen. Ruth apologised for the lack of accommodation.

"We have only four rooms in our house, and I like to keep one for my parlour in case anyone calls while we are at meals: house-room here, like many other things, is hard to secure."

"It will save work; really people in new countries have more to be thankful for than they realise. In the East we too often become slaves to our large houses and unnecessary appointments."

"I am glad you are so easily satisfied."

John Mansfield's welcome was warmth itself. He was very fond of his beautiful sister-in-law. While they were lingering over the tea-table, Aimée remarked musingly—

"Do you think, John, I could get a school to teach out here? I was careful to get a teacher's certificate before I left; I thought teaching would be the best way for me to earn my living."

"You must not think of doing anything of the kind, at least not for a year or two. I am getting a good salary; indeed, Mr. Bruce has raised it by ten dollars a month within the last few days, and I shall do my good works by proxy; we will go into partnership, you and I; you do the work, and I will support you while you do it; maybe when I get to another world I will find it the very best way I could have chosen to do my mite of good in the world."

They sat chatting far into the twilight; there was so much to hear on both sides, it seemed as if they could not talk enough about friends in the East, and of this new life on the frontiers of civilisation. A sharp knock at the door brought them back to things present. When John opened the door, a grimy-faced miner said hurriedly—

"There's been an accident, and they want the young preacher-woman to come and pray with the man that's dying."

Aimée's face turned very pale; mangled bodies and dying men were something she had not reckoned upon.

"Will you go?" John asked anxiously.

"Oh yes; the sooner I get accustomed to those things the better."

She followed the man, a rough, unkempt creature, with a face that told of many a wild debauch. John Mansfield followed them presently; if this innocent girl was without fear, he was not, on her behalf. Presently they turned in at a cottage door. The house itself was little

different from the Mansfield cottage as regards size and arrangement, but in the internal arrangements how vast the contrast. Squalid poverty was visible on every side; frightened ragged children were skulking around the doorway, while from within came an occasional groan, mingled with a woman's sobbing voice and the pitiful wailing of an infant. Aimée shuddered, for in her sheltered life she had never come in contact with such a scene as this, and, in addition, she felt so inexperienced and, helpless to direct a passing soul to the Saviour. Her guide paused a moment at the door.

"You'll maybe be frightened, Miss, at the sight of poor Jim; he's awfully broken up, but the boss seemed to think you might help him a bit; 'twas he sent me for you."

"Please do not let us waste a moment, when the time may be so precious."

He led the way at once to the dying man's side.

"There's a praying lass here, Jim, to fit you for the road you've got to go over to-night," he spoke gently.

"It's maybe too late now, mate," Jim muttered, with a groan.

Aimée went at once to the pallet whereon the sick man was lying; she saw large spatters of blood on pillow and quilt. For a few seconds there was a singing in her ears, while the room grew dim around her, but with an unspoken cry for help she knelt beside the blood-stained bed and

asked the dying man if she might pray with him.

"Oh yes, Miss; but I'm afraid it's too late now for prayers. I knew what was the right way once, for my mother was one of the saints of the earth, and she tried to make me do right. It will be dreadful meeting her God as I am now, with all my sins upon my soul."

"Your mother would forgive you if she were here and had the power," Aimée murmured.

"Of course she would; but mothers are different from one's Maker."

"Yes, with this difference, that mothers may forget us and even forsake us, but God never, never can; He has told us so in His Word."

The dying man turned his eyes hungrily upon her.

"You don't mean to tell me that God loves us better than our mothers, that He'd be easier with us than they are."

"Yes, that is so. A mother may desert her child, but our Father in Heaven will never desert us. Oh, my dear friend, it is so easy; if we only truly repent of our sins and ask His forgiveness, no mother could be half so eager to listen to our cries as the mighty, yet the loving, God."

"Oh, if I could only believe you," wailed the sufferer.

"Let me read you what He says in His own Word." She opened her Bible at Isaiah, forty-ninth chapter, and read from the fourteenth to the seventeenth verse.

"Oh, if I could only realise it!" But the look of agony on his face grew less acute. "I am sorry to leave Bess and the children, not but what I've been only a curse to them; it's not the leaving them or the matter of dying that hurts me, it's my dreadful life and the future life that makes my pain so great"; and he tried to move, but his face was drawn with the anguish the effort caused him.

"Will you pray?" he gasped.

Unseen worlds had never seemed so near, or the need of prayer so great; forgetting everything but the passing soul and the extremity of its need, she poured out her whole heart to God. A gasping response from the man, who was listening as for dear life, attested that her prayer was taking hold upon him. When she ceased he asked eagerly—

"Do you think the Lord hears what you say, and will He answer your prayers?"

"Yes, if you will but take Him at His word. He has promised that 'him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.' You are willing to come just now, sinful and unready though you may be?"

"Willing! of course I am; how could I be otherwise, with a dreadful eternity just before me?"

Aimée took a chair that some one placed for her, while the dying man seemed to have forgotten everything save the message of mercy this young girl was pressing upon him.

His physical agony was abating; nature was retiring vanquished from the field, since it was

beyond her powers to restore again these rent tissues and mangled limbs, caused by an explosion in the mine, through a careless discharge of dynamite.

"The doctor says I can't live beyond the turn of the night, but the dying thief had no longer time than that, and his sufferings were perhaps greater than mine; it's a mercy my thoughts are so clear; they never seemed more so. Maybe God allows it, so that I may find peace with Him before I appear in His presence."

Aimée opened her Bible again, and with an earnest prayer for direction, read passage after passage that seemed written on purpose for this passing soul. Inexperienced and ignorant as she felt herself to be, there seemed nothing so safe as to read from God's own Word the promises contained therein. There was a touching earnestness and pathos about her enunciation that made the words she read intensely real. The woman's sobbing had ceased, the infant seemed to have been lulled to sleep, intense silence reigned in the room; even the doctor, who sat unobserved at the foot of the bed, had apparently given his patient over to the young girl's care. In all the years of his practice among the miners he had never witnessed just such a scene before, and a solemn awe crept over him as he watched the death-shadows settling in the sufferer's face, and the white, eager-faced girl engaged with such passionate earnestness in compressing the greatest work of her lifetime into those few brief moments. Which would win, she or death? He had been a gambler for a

score of years, and was in the habit of deciding doubtful questions by a wager, or the shuffling of a pack of cards. Forgetting himself for the moment, he glanced around to make a bet with someone, when he bethought himself of the place and circumstance with a keen flush of shame. There, too, standing unperceived in the deep shadows of the room was Mr. Bruce—an unusual visitor at such a place—watching with as much interest as any of the company this frail young girl, who was now at hand-grips with death and the Evil One for the prize of a human soul. The scene was thrilling in the extreme.

Aimée ceased reading; the doctor came forward and moistened the stiffening lips.

"You are overdoing your strength, my poor fellow; perhaps the young lady had better leave you for awhile."

"Oh no, no! I want all my strength given to this work, if she isn't tired helping me; my mother's prayers may be answered yet, if God is as merciful as the young woman here says He is."

There were tears of joy in Aimée's eyes.

"Can't you pray to God yourself? He is certainly here right beside you, nearer to you and more pitiful than I am, and you know how readily I would save you if I had the power."

The doctor took his seat again and covered his eyes, while the dying man gasped out a few broken petitions for mercy. While he was praying his voice suddenly changed, and there burst

forth a note of supreme triumph where hitherto there had only been despair.

"I see it all now!" he cried, "Jesus has died for me. He does love me better than any mother loves her child, for He died for me. 'Not the righteous, not the righteous, sinners Jesus came to save.'" A snatch of a hymn he had many a time heard his mother sing in his Eastern home, as she walked to and fro to the music of her own voice, had flashed out of that distant past and brought the pardoning message of peace.

"She's near me now, my mother that died five-and-twenty years ago, and where she is, heaven can't be far distant from. Bless you, Miss, for helping me to find my Saviour. I can trust Him now, I can trust Him. O comrades, Mr. Bruce, Dr. Lindsay, all of you, seek the Lord now. He's better than all the world beside, for He forgives and then He forgets." His voice sank to a whisper; there was a convulsive movement of the bruised body; his end was evidently approaching rapidly. His wife drew near.

"O Jim! do you know me?" she cried, with an agony of affection that surprised them all, since it seemed impossible she could love a man who had fulfilled his marriage vows so miserably.

"Good-bye, Bess, I hope you'll forgive me as God has done. God bless you, my dear. Mr. Bruce, I'm sure, will not forget you and the children." The ashen hue of death was settling down upon his face.

Mr. Bruce came to Aimée's side, and, taking her hand, said—

"Your work is done here now, and, if I can judge, has been nobly done. I will see you safely home."

But Aimée turned back for a moment. She sank down on her knees once more by the bedside, and laying one hand gently on the dying man's brow, now growing cold and clammy, she said—

"Good-bye, Jim, until we meet in a happier world."

"Good-bye, and may God reward you." He spoke with an effort, and then closed his eyes wearily upon this world, where his lot had been so hard.

She followed Mr. Bruce from the room; some other time she would speak to the wife, soon to become a widow. They walked in silence for some distance, and then Mr. Bruce said gently—

"Your work among us began sooner than we expected, but I am glad you were here to relieve that poor creature's mind; his nerves were badly shattered by the accident, and you have a happy faculty of quieting such cases."

Aimée stood still on the road. "Mr. Bruce, you surely don't think I had anything to do with making him so happy, only so far as pointing him to the Saviour went."

"I do most assuredly think so. Nature has gifted you with unusual persuasive powers and a magnetic touch. You will be able to do what you like with our rough miners. I hope you will

be able to stop them drinking up all their poor earnings. But, by the way, we have no clergyman to officiate to-morrow; will you mind having a service over that poor fellow's coffin?"

"I will do anything you wish, if you won't give to me the honour that belongs only to God," she said, with a quiver in her voice that betrayed how deeply she felt on the subject.

"We won't waste time talking about it," he replied gently.

CHAPTER VIII

The Funeral

THE men working in the Lone Star mine were given the following afternoon to attend Jim Clarkson's funeral. He had died shortly after Mr. Bruce and Aimée took their departure. Mr. Bruce was particular, in cases where there was no doubt of death having taken place, not to permit the dead to go many hours unburied in crowded rooms like the Clarksons'. The carpenters therefore soon had the narrow "house" prepared wherein the bruised body was to sleep its last sleep.

It was a new thing for these men to have a holiday for such a purpose; which, taken with the fact that a young and very good-looking woman was to act as parson, made them anxious to present a respectable appearance in the funeral cortege. After leaving the cottage, it was decided that the procession was to go first to the church, and thence to the hillside burying-ground.

The Mansfields were very nervous about Aimée. She had always been such a tender little blossom, sheltered from every rough experience, they could

scarcely picture her facing this rugged congregation. Aimée, although inclined to be by herself during the earlier part of the day, said nothing regarding any fears she might have. John Mansfield came home at noon with the news that Mr. Bruce had given all his men a half-holiday, on condition that not one of them visited the saloon or tasted a drop of liquor, in which case they were not to be credited with the half-day, while possibly they might be visited with a heavier punishment later on. Aimée's face turned a shade paler as the subject was discussed.

"I hope you won't fail or break down, little woman," John Mansfield said at last, with some anxiety.

"I will have no need to break down. I am just going to talk a little while to the people about life, death, and the world to come; and more about this life than the other two, for that is what we have to do with at present."

"You have chosen an extensive text."

"You will pray if I ask you, John?"

John turned scarlet. "Don't think of such a thing."

"Why, you used to do so at home. I remember you had a very good gift in prayer."

Aimée's face wore a pained expression.

"The conditions there were different from here; the men would sneer if I were to attempt such a thing."

"Not if they had faith in your Christian character."

"That is the trouble, little woman. I have not lived just as I should, in order to make them respect my Christianity. You do not know how difficult it is to live a Christian life in these mining settlements."

"I expect Lot found it hard to live purely in Sodom, but it seems he did; and Stephen and all the other martyrs had temptations, no doubt, to forsake the faith, that you know nothing about. John Mansfield, I am ashamed of you."

"It's easy talking, but when it comes to practising it's a different thing. But hadn't you better be studying up something to say to your audience?" said John, anxious to change the subject.

"I have been thinking some, and praying a good deal. God can speak to me by His Spirit, if I am in a fit state for Him to do so."

"She will do all right," John said a little later to his wife, when Aimée had shut her door, and all was still within her room.

When, a few moments before the hour for gathering at the funeral, she came from her room, even John was forced to confess to himself that the picture hanging on the wall did no more than justice to the living reality. She was dressed in white muslin, that fell in soft folds to her feet, the only colour about her dress being a knot of flowers at her throat.

"To look at you will be as good as a sermon to some of those men; you look fit to walk with the angels." John spoke impulsively; but Aimée did not seem to hear him.

Baby Marjorie was going to her first service. How she might preserve the proprieties caused almost as much anxiety to her mother as the funeral itself, and the part Marjorie's aunt had to perform in connection with it. Aimée walked beside her sister; the narrow path did not permit more than two to walk abreast. John, with Marjorie in his arms, went ahead. Aimée was grateful for the shelter of John's shoulders; she assured herself that after a few funerals, and some Christian Endeavour gatherings, she would not find the work so heavy.

The house of mourning was not far away; this was a matter for thankfulness, for the street was full of men, with here and there a group of curiosity-bitten women, who were observing her closely. Ruth Mansfield noticed the waves of colour flushing the fair face; after all, she was only a girl, with all the timidity and modesty of the most sensitive of her sex. Mr. Seymour and Mr. Bruce were standing together near the cottage, and, a little apart from them, Mr. Carleton was watching the proceedings with interest. They each came forward and shook hands with Aimée, Mr. Bruce holding the trembling little hand a few seconds longer than etiquette required, but conveying in some mysterious way to the girl a sense of protection and sympathy that comforted her. She followed John Mansfield into the house, where there was gathered a small company of women and children; but there was not a single man until John's arrival. The coffin was resting on a table,

which was covered with a sheet; and on the lid of the coffin lay a paper-covered hymn-book, a handsomely bound Bible, and a prayer-book. Aimée stood at the head of the coffin; one glance into the rigid face brought to her such a sense of things eternal that she lost the overpowering fear of the work she had undertaken. She opened the Bible at the 90th Psalm, and, in a clear, well-modulated voice, read that beautiful description given by Israel's greatest statesman and lawgiver, of the brevity and frailty of human life, and God's attitude towards the rebellious children of men. The words had never seemed so real to her before; to those who listened to her voice there came a sense of the solemnity of life, death, and the existence after death, such as few of them had ever realised. The psalm ended, she offered a brief prayer, so touching in its earnestness, so full of pathos and pleading, that even John Mansfield felt the tears well to his eyes, while impressions long stifled by worldliness and his ungodly associations revived into new life. There was no hesitancy in her work. The prayer ended, she opened the hymn-book, and, announcing the number, read the lines through; and then, waiting for someone to set the tune, she sang it herself, assisted by Ruth and her husband, a few other voices joining tremulously in the melody. Her voice was not powerful, but had been carefully trained, and was sympathetic and musical. John Mansfield noticed that the crowd outside were drawing close to the open door and windows; he

wondered would they venture into the church. Some of them had splendid voices, and had sung their college songs beneath the classic shades of Oxford and Cambridge; for there were a number of graduates from these celebrated universities, scions both of the nobility and aristocracy of old England, who were waiting there in rough miners' dress. At a sign from Mr. Bruce, six men stood out from the rest, strong, sinewy fellows, with bits of crape tied above their elbows, the only funeral trappings obtainable for the occasion. They entered the house, and presently came out carrying the coffin, which they placed on a bier, and then the procession formed.

There was no one to take the lead, and the men started on their journey to the church. The widow was standing, a drooping-looking creature, just behind the coffin, a lad of eight holding her hand. Aimée went to her, and drawing the other hand within her arm, followed the bearers with their lifeless burden. They changed hands occasionally. When the church was reached, the body was carried in, and left on a table in front of the speaker's desk. The crowd of followers filed decorously into the church, until there was scarcely a foot of vacant space. They preserved the proprieties as carefully as if they had been in some grand cathedral.

It was a unique experience in such gatherings, for usually there were some flippant creatures who managed to make sport even at the grave's mouth. Aimée had wise instincts; any unnecessary hesi-

tancy would, she well knew, weaken the hold she had of her audience. She did not appear to notice the speaker's desk; but, taking her place near the coffin, and facing the congregation, she gave out a hymn. A superb tenor at the back of the church started the tune, and in a moment the whole church was filled with the rich harmony of trained male voices.

The tears sprang to a good many eyes; it was so long since most of them had heard such congregational singing. A few were carried back for half a century to the time when, in distant lands and amid scenes of childhood, they had heard such singing in the stately churches of another hemisphere. The entire hymn was sung, the singers well pleased apparently to prolong the melody. A hush followed, broken presently by a low sob from the mourner's seat, and then Aimée, with a white face, but with a manner perfectly collected, began to pray.

Judged by the canons of theological halls, it might not be considered a well-arranged prayer, but it went to a good many hearts; while men who had not prayed for years bowed their heads to conceal their tears. The prayer ended, she read a few selections from the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel and the 15th of 1st Corinthians; then, banishing from her mind the critical audience, in which perhaps were those who scoffed at all religion, she talked in a tender way of what Christ had done for them and was still doing, the intercession being made for them

at that moment; how that in all their temptations He was present to help them, to resist the evil within and without. She spoke of death and the life to come, and drew comparisons between the present and future that caused even John Mansfield to move uneasily in his seat, the fact confronting him that he was a fool to be living as he had done for the last few years. There was a deep hush over the congregation, as strong men leaned forward with bated breath to catch a glimpse of the girl-preacher, while down their seamed, sin-scarred faces great tears were rolling. The address ended, she selected a hymn suitable for the occasion, and, asking them to sing it all, stood with her eyes fixed on the book. Her courage was fast ebbing away, but the singing caused her to forget for a while the effort she had made to retain her self-control. It seemed as if those marvellously rich voices, so unused to singing hymns of adoration to their Maker, rang out more jubilantly than when the lewd song of the saloon or brothel was trolled forth in the midnight air.

A brief prayer and the benediction closed the service—one of the most solemn, Mr. Seymour declared to Mr. Bruce, that he had ever witnessed.

The bearers lifted the coffin; the procession again formed, everyone falling decorously into line, when slowly they wound their way along the sloping hillside to the spot where slept the dead of the mountains.

CHAPTER IX

A Life's History

AIMÉE felt that her duty towards Jim Clarkson's family had not been entirely fulfilled by the few words spoken over his inanimate clay. As they stood at the grave-side she went to the widow, who was holding little Jim by the hand. Although he was only eight years old, he appeared to realise very clearly that all that remained to him of his father was rapidly disappearing out of sight. He wondered why his mother was so downhearted, for she and his father had not struck him as being particularly good friends; but he was a thoughtful little boy, and concluded it must be the correct thing for widows to make a fuss when their husbands were taken from them. He clung to his mother and was softly crying, for in his childish way he had loved his father, whose removal had been so terribly sudden. He felt a soft hand clasping his, and, looking up through his tears, saw the young preacher gazing sympathetically into his mother's face.

Jim Clarkson's wife had been looked upon as peculiar by her neighbours. Between them and

herself there had been very little intercourse. She had never encouraged their overtures of friendliness, but had held herself aloof from everyone, bearing her burdens in sullen silence, for heavy burdens they instinctively recognised she had to bear. They had one and all voted her selfish and proud, so that now in her bereavement she had not a single friend to appeal to for sympathy.

Nine years before, when she married, she had left a refined home in Nova Scotia. For several years she had been engaged to Jim Clarkson; he had been in the Cariboo goldfields, and had found a good share of the yellow metal; but, unfortunately for himself and others, he had squandered it as fast as he found it. At last he saved enough to go East in princely style and marry the girl whom he loved in a selfish sort of way, and took her West in as luxurious manner as the means of travel permitted. He had scarcely a dollar left when the stage-coach deposited him and his bride at the door of his rude hut, where for years he had "batched," as the men in those places called their housekeeping. Mrs. Clarkson had trunks filled with handsome garments, and the multitudinous array of wedding gifts usually bestowed on brides in her station in her native province; all very ornamental or presumed to be so, but she had little else; hence they were still lying in their original tissue papers. She was left alone in the "shack" that night until the small hours of the following morning, when the bridegroom came home drunk and quarrelsome. She sat in her

chair till morning, her heart too full of bitterness to find relief in easy flowing tears, and too proud to acquaint her family with her wretched condition. When little Jim was born, he was such a puny, wrinkled specimen of humanity, that the women, who took care of him by turns until the mother was able to do her part, whispered that he was scarcely worth saving. She had accepted their friendly offices so ungraciously that, when three years later a little girl was born, she was, by common consent, left to the care of the doctor and her husband; but she lived through it all, and now she had another six months' old girl to inherit a drunkard's bitter legacy. Aimée walked home with the mother and little Jim from the graveyard. At the door she asked if she might come in with them.

"Oh yes, yes; I have shut my heart against everyone, but I can't against you. Let me feel that you care for me, or I shall go mad."

She flung herself into a broken chair, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed passionately.

The neighbour who had stayed behind at great personal sacrifice to take care of the baby looked on in amazement to see Mrs. Clarkson show so much feeling towards a stranger.

"It'll do her good; she's been crying most of the time since Jim was hurt, but it was in a dribbling sort of way that could not ease the pent-up trouble she's been having now for years."

Aimée was not given to caresses; she wanted

to be doing something practical, so she untied the bonnet, heavy with crape, loaned for the occasion by one of the recently-bereaved women in the neighbourhood, took down the long coils of hair, and bathed the hot, throbbing head. The other woman brought a cup of tea, with some food.

"She's not took bite nor sup since her man was fetched home; if you could persuade her to eat somethin', it would help her to bear her trouble."

"You must try to take some food, dear; you will become ill if you do not eat."

The head was lifted. "I have felt as if death would be welcome, to escape from the wretched failure I have made of my life," said Mrs. Clarkson wearily.

"Life need never continue to be a failure; you must begin afresh, and we will all help you."

"If you will help me, I will try."

"I think God must have brought me here just to be in time to help you," said Aimée cheerfully; "it's not much a weak girl like me can do, but what I can do I will."

"I had been thinking that God had ceased to have any care over me, but maybe I judged Him wrongly. My life has been so bitter—so bitter," she repeated the words as if it gave her relief.

While she was swallowing the few mouthfuls of food, her baby woke with a feeble cry, and she sprang to take her from the cradle.

"My poor Tessa," she murmured, taking the little creature in her arms.

"She'll be all right now, there's nothing like little babies to make mothers forget their trouble; besides, Jim is no real loss to her, Mr. Bruce 'll do a sight more for her than Jim ever did. We've never seen him take so much interest in a widder and a berryin' before; folks is all talkin' about it."

There was a gesture of disdain from Mrs. Clarkson; to have her affairs publicly discussed in this manner was revolting to a spirit as hard to crush as hers. Aimée saw that the woman's words were offensive, and to turn the tide of her conversation, suggested that a few words from the Bible might help them all. Mrs. Wilson, for that was the woman's name, sat down in a very contented frame of mind; it went far to atone for the loss of the funeral to have the girl-preacher here all to themselves for some length of time, for evidently she meant to make a good visit, since she had laid aside her hat and gloves. In describing that Bible-reading afterwards to her acquaintances, she said—

"You'd think she enjoyed it as much as a novel, reading her Bible there that day; I've no doubt, too, that she'd read it all over before, for she had the places marked. I never saw a book so scratched over, for I had it in my own hands and looked all through it. I never saw just such a one in all my born days."

"No wonder she could talk so glib then," one of the woman suggested, whose conscience had been disturbed by the address that day.

"I should say not; she'd stop every onct in a while and talk over what she'd read, and a preacher couldn't a talked any prettier; not that I remember much about preachers' ways, for I've not set eyes on one for years, save when an odd one now and then has been passin' my door; but if that young woman preaches here I'm bound I'll not miss a sermon, even if she goes so far as to convert me."

"She could do it a sight easier than a man. She kind of sympathises with you so, and speaks so loving-like, as if she really meant it. I saw her at the grave-side talking with Mrs. Clarkson and poor little Jim. He looked so weazened up and poor, my heart fairly ached for the pair of them, him and his mother too."

"Well, I sot there," Mrs. Wilson continued, somewhat impatient at her friend's interference in her narrative, "and so did Mrs. Clarkson; and, if you'll believe me, we both went fast asleep, and when I woke just before sundown, bless me if the two of us wasn't both sound asleep settin' there, and the children took away and the preacher-girl too; but pretty soon she came back, the baby in her arms and little Jim a-holdin' on to his sister's hand, walkin' along as chipper as if he'd got a dozen fathers, instead of nary a one. She'd took them to her sister's, and give them a good hot supper. She'd took off that lovely white gown and put on as purty a calico frock as I ever sot eyes on, but she looked just as well as she'd done in t'other one. Well, she got us all around her and had a

word of prayer, that brought a wetness into my eyes and a tightness about the collar of my gown that warn't altogether comfortable, and then she said good-night, and promised to be round early next day. It was dark by that time, but she laughed when I spoke about seeing her home.

"'Why no, indeed,' she said, so merry-like, 'the miners are all going to be my very good friends. I will be safe anywhere day or night, so you must never be afraid to send for me whenever any person in trouble asks to see me.' I slipped out and followed a piece behind her, for I knew more of the ways of 'her very good friends, the miners,' than she did; but blest if they didn't stand and watch her out of sight, like so many harmless lambs. I come back puzzled and feelin' a little in awe of her, for she wasn't a bit like any other young woman I'd ever seen; but they tell me that women nowadays out in the world are altogether different from they was when I were young, and that they do brave, queer things to help others, that they'd not dreamt of doing onct. Maybe they'll turn the world right side up after all. I believe they might, if they was all like the little preacher woman; but I'm thinkin' there's few in this world patterned after her, for she seems to be thinkin' of others first, last, and in the middle too."

The following day Aimée took a selection of good reading matter, and with them a few green leaves grouped about some sweet-scented roses and carnations, which she begged from her sister.

"Oh, how delicious!" Mrs. Clarkson murmured, as she inhaled their fragrance. "They are the first flowers I have had for years, except the ones you brought and those we left in the coffin with poor Jim. We had a lovely garden and conservatory at home"—she paused abruptly. For the moment she had forgotten that home and its comforts were subjects she had so long ceased to speak about; the mere mention of them brought pain to her heart.

"Do your friends know how hard your life has been?" Aimée asked.

"No, indeed. I have never uttered a complaint. My one cause for thankfulness has been that there was no one here that knew me, and so there was no danger of my friends learning of my degradation."

"What a sad mistake to make! If I had a sister in your condition, I could hardly forgive her if she kept me ignorant of her need."

"You are different from other people; shams and concealments are out of place where you are; but in my home we were taught to keep up appearances at whatever cost. But for that I might have been a happy wife all these years. I loved and was loved by a good man, but his social position was not equal to my own. I married Jim instead of him, because his people were aristocratic, and we believed that he was wealthy. I must tell you this; I cannot deceive you. Only God knows, however, how hard it is for me to make this confession."

Aimée did not know what to say. At last she took Mrs. Clarkson's hand in hers, and replied gently—

"But you are sorry, I am sure, for it all."

"Sorry! what a question, when my whole married life has been one long martyrdom, even though these poor children were sent to keep me from a suicide's death. The people here fancied it was grief for Jim's dreadful death that made me weep; I do not know myself why I did so. Oh, I cannot tell you what my feelings have been these past few days!"

"Where is that other suitor?"

"At home, and doing a very prosperous business. My mother has several times expressed regret that I was not living in my native town as his wife."

"Has he married anyone else?" Aimée asked eagerly.

"No, he has never married."

"Why not write and tell him you are free now, and also how you have regretted the past?"

"Really, Miss Roebart, for such a clever woman you are very unsophisticated. One should preserve the decencies of civilised society, if nothing more. Fancy sending a proposal of marriage by the same mail that I announce my husband's death."

"I was only thinking of the truth, and it did not seem necessary to waste time with make-believes; but my friends tell me I am different from everybody."

"You are indeed; but I wish I had been like you in one respect."

"What is that?"

"In hating shams; I should not have been here to-day."

"Pray don't take me as an example. I am full of faults. Christ is our model, and you can imitate Him. We may pose and make-believe, our lives becoming one long deception, and yet our lips may never utter what the world calls a lie."

Mrs. Clarkson sighed heavily. "It seems as if my life has been nothing but a lie since I have come to woman's estate. I wish my training had been different. What a responsibility mothers have!"

Aimée sighed. The work of human reformation appeared a more hopeless task than she had ever dreamed of in her sheltered, guileless life. To escape from worldly defilement herself seemed as much as she could reasonably expect, without hoping to uplift a whole mining camp from its depths of moral evil.

"I will go home now; perhaps you will have strength to write a full account of yourself to your friends when you tell them of your husband's death. It is best to be honest over the matter; but in any case remember you have always one Friend in heaven and another on earth in me."

She put her hand out, which Mrs. Clarkson held a moment. Aimée then turned away with an expression of sadness on her face. On the street

she met Mr. Bruce, who stopped to ask her about the Clarksons.

"I saw you coming from their door. I presume you have been trying to lighten her trouble."

Aimée was silent.

"Have you failed in your mission? My clerk tells me she bears the name of being very haughty and distant with everyone in the place."

"It is not that." There was a constrained pause, and then she said: "She married her husband without loving him, and has lived with him all these years, and has not cared for him. She loved another man, but was not permitted to marry him because he was not her social equal. I never met such a case before. It has saddened me."

There was a peculiar expression on Mr. Bruce's face as he met her clear, fearless gaze.

"I could not have believed it possible for a young woman of your intelligence and years to be so ignorant of the ways of the world; you are not fit for the work you have taken up. I would strongly advise you to leave these poor wretches alone, if a case like the Clarksons' gives you such pain; you will find infinitely worse revelations awaiting you."

"I will get used to them after a while."

"I do not want you to get used to such things. I would fain save you from them. Pain and suffering are not for you."

"That seems very silly. I came here to work, and, if need be, to suffer; one cannot help others

by shutting one's self off from human needs and weaknesses. It was not the way the pure Christ began His work of redemption—a work that has been sadly delayed by human selfishness." There were tears in her eyes now, and her voice was not quite steady. "People tell me that you are very generous to your employees, especially those who have met with accidents in your service; it is not necessary, perhaps, that I commend Mrs. Clarkson to your care."

"I will do anything you suggest to the Clarksons, or any family you may be interested in."

She gave him a quick, surprised glance.

"I am very grateful, but you should not promise too much; my friends complain that I am given to victimising them with my hobbies."

"If you will permit me to be your friend, you may rest assured I shall never make that complaint."

"It will be grand to have your co-operation in my work here," she remarked gleefully.

"Like making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness," Mr. Bruce said, with a merry twinkle of his usually stern, grey eyes.

"I don't like to hear the Bible quoted in play," Aimée said gravely.

"Really, I was not conscious that I was quoting Scripture. I am not particularly well up in theology, as you will find when you get to know me better."

"You cannot tempt me into an argument," Aimée said, with a smile. She understood Mr. Bruce's ruse to draw her into further conversation,

and therefore left him with a merry jest about having no time to waste upon logic-chopping.

Mrs. Mansfield and many other people on the street were astonished to see the usually stern Mr. Bruce unbending so far as to jest with anyone.

CHAPTER X

The Sunday Service

AIMÉE suffered no time to go to waste in beginning her work. On Saturday, armed with a roll of illustrated Scripture texts, she started out on a round of calls, which took in saloons, gambling hells, and all sorts of unsavoury places. She was treated everywhere with respect. Jim Clarkson's funeral had introduced her to the people, and she had so won their hearts by her earnest appeals, that when she offered the cards and gave them an invitation to the church the following afternoon, she met with scarcely an ungracious refusal. She called at the business offices along with the rest.

"Lawyers and mining superintendents have souls that need to be looked after as well as saloon keepers," she assured John Mansfield that evening, when he was inclined to criticise her efforts on the behalf of aristocratic sinners. She had not decided on the programme for this momentous service. Her répertoire of sermons was very slender; to get up a twenty minutes' talk every Sunday afternoon would be out of the question. These university-bred Englishmen, who had listened

in their youth to trained orators and profound thinkers, would scarcely repeat the mistake of listening twice over to a Scripture exegesis from her. To draw them to the meeting, she must give them a part in it, but what that part should be puzzled her. Some of them could sing splendidly, therefore music must be a prominent factor in attracting them; and here she felt renewed thankfulness for her own musical gifts, and her skill with the violin, on which, for an amateur, she was a rather brilliant performer. At college she had devoted herself principally to the violin, since from its size it would always be available in her mission work. But John Mansfield assured her it would be useless for her to expect to compete with some of their saloon and dance hall violinists, some of whom had been star performers before the footlights in other days, before strong drink and vice had reduced them to their present condition.

"Why, Aimée child, it's enough to turn the soberest heads to listen to the way they can make a fiddle talk."

"Shall we make out a programme for our Endeavour meeting?" Aimée asked slowly; to which they agreed; but after much careful planning they found the work must be done mainly by Aimée herself. When the hour appointed for the meeting arrived, they found a church full of people, and among those assembled were saloon keepers and a large representation of their customers, some of them having fortified themselves beforehand with several stiff glasses of whisky, which was made

evident to Aimée as she passed up the aisle of the church. In a brief speech, she explained the usages and rules of the Christian Endeavour Society, and asked for volunteers to join with her in the work. John Mansfield and Ruth were the first to give their names, the widow Clarkson following immediately, with two or three others, who were heartily tired of godless Sabbaths and their irreligious modes of living. But the enthusiasm that Aimée had hoped for was painfully lacking. She was only a girl, subject to the depressions as well as mental exaltations of her sex; hence the pathetic droop of the sensitive mouth spoke more eloquently than words, and was at once observed by those present. A bluff old miner, who had been in the Cariboo country since early in the sixties, rose to his feet—

"I don't know, Miss, if you allow old fellows like me into your society, but if you do, you can take my name. It don't seem the manly thing for us here to hold back, when you've come all the way from the other coast just to help us to be better men. I can't promise you to be any great of a Christian, for that ain't in my line; but if 'tending your meetings and subscribing my name to your list is any good, you're welcome to that much."

There was a murmur when he sat down; if uncertainty as to the propriety of such a course had not restrained them, he would have had a rousing cheer. Aimée's face brightened perceptibly.

"We shall be very glad to receive you on any terms. Age is no hindrance; indeed, when we come

to think of it, the older one is the more they need all the help they can get from such organisations as this. I hope there are others who will follow your example."

She looked around on her attentive audience; expectation was on tiptoe, but no one spoke for some time, until a gaily apparelled woman, a denizen of one of the lowest haunts in the place, stood up—

"If you are not particular about the quality of your members I'd like to join. I'll take in washing or I'll starve, but I've vowed since I came in here that I'd lead a clean life henceforth. I have a praying mother away down East, and if you will help me, I will try to have her prayers answered. I never expected to do this. I thought I had drifted beyond all help, human or divine; but there is something about you that reminds me of my mother. God help me." She ended with a sob. The men were watching Aimée curiously. Could she know what sort of woman this was when she called her "dear sister"? Something within them revolted at the thought. Yet who was it had helped to make this lost woman what she was?

A handsome bronzed-faced man stood up, his speech betokening that he was a well-bred Englishman.

"My father is an episcopal clergyman—in fact he is a prominent member of the bench of bishops, it never occurred to him that his son might fall so low as I have done, but, like some of the rest of you, I have felt to-day that there may be something better before me. If Miss Roebart will take

my name, and give me a share of the help she has offered to you, I will make my first attempt at reformation."

"You shall have our sympathy and prayers, those who have not given in their names will promise not to hinder you, I am sure. All who will join in this compact will please hold up their hand."

By degrees every hand in the house went up. Aimée glanced at her watch; to her dismay they were well on to five o'clock, and there were still several hymns she wanted to have sung.

"If any are anxious to leave they may retire while we are singing this hymn; but for those who can afford the time, we will gladly have them help us in singing God's praises."

Not a person stirred, and soon some very excellent harmonies were floating out through the open windows.

At the close there were hearty hand-shakings, and many a horny palm held tenderly the little ungloved hand of the girl they were beginning both to love and respect.

Ann Waters, for that was the name of the woman who had offered herself for membership, stood back with bowed head. Aimée was making her way to the corner where she stood, and when at last she clasped the jewelled hand, and looked into the powdered face, she saw that tiny rivulets of tears had made a clean space down the painted cheeks.

"You do not know how vile I am, or you would not shake hands with me."

"My dear, don't talk like that. Jesus has died for us both. He is the elder Brother of us both, and that makes us sisters. It is what you are going to be that draws me to you. Let us help each other."

"As if I could do anything to help you! I could most die for you, if you would help me to regain the purity of my womanhood. I am sick—sick unto death of my life of sin."

Aimée pressed the hand she was still holding; no words adequate for the occasion occurred to her. It was a new case in her experience—perhaps sometime she would get used to all sorts and conditions of sinners.

"May I walk home with you?" she asked presently.

"I am not going home. I shall never go there again."

"Where will you go?"

"Do you think they would let me stay here to-night? I will sell these,"—she pointed to her jewellery, of which she wore a profusion,—"they will bring money to procure me food and shelter until I can earn something."

"My sister will let me bring you home; I will ask her."

"Oh no, no; I am not going to be an incumbrance to you; they shall not say that I reformed for that."

"Wait a moment." Aimée turned to her sister,

who was anxiously waiting to hear the result of the interview.

"May I bring her home with us? She speaks of staying here to-night if permission can be gained."

"Certainly you may bring her," John Mansfield said heartily." We could not answer for her in the judgment if we left her now."

"O John!" Aimée exclaimed, with glistening eyes.

"You are to come home with us," she said, returning to Ann. "We will have nothing better to give you than a lounge, but you will be comfortable."

"A rug on the floor will serve me, with a pillow for my head."

Mrs. Clarkson came to Aimée. "Let her come home with me," she said; "the children are not much company. I seem to feel all night long as if poor Jim was in the house, and I am so nervous I don't dare to lift my head from the pillow."

"How delightful!" Aimée exclaimed; "here is a work for each of you—one to protect the other. May I come around and visit you after tea?"

"No face can be so welcome at my door as yours, ever and always," Mrs. Clarkson said earnestly.

"Good-bye then for the present. Baby Marjorie is getting hungry, and we must go home now."

In a few minutes the church was deserted.

After they had got within their own door, John Mansfield burst out enthusiastically—

"You beat everything, little woman, that I ever saw to lead a meeting. Why, Moody or some of those great evangelists could not have excelled the way you took hold of those people. I did not think you would get anyone save ourselves and perhaps Mrs. Clarkson to join with you; but here you have got some of the hardest cases in the place. That Ann Waters, or Pearl, as she has been called, has been one of the lowest of her class."

"I wonder what Mr. Bruce will say?" Ruth asked.

"What can he say but what is favourable? and then there is old Styles, with all the rest who joined; why, the next thing will be that Aimée will have him leading a meeting and telling his experience."

"I was surprised to see young Temple join," Ruth said.

"Yes, he has been one of the most high toned of anyone in the crowd. We never knew he was the son of a bishop, but he has been drinking like a fish of late. How in the world did you do it all, little girl?"

"Yes, and to think of those men sitting there for two solid hours, as much interested as if it had been a political meeting; really I was amazed," Ruth said, with great satisfaction.

"It struck me there to-day, what a pity it was that women had not taken hold of this sort of work

long ago. I verily believe if they had done so that the world would have been in better trim now by a long way than it is."

"It will be wiser for you to wait awhile before you wax too enthusiastic over woman's work," Aimée said very soberly.

CHAPTER XI

Discouragement

ON her way that evening to Mrs. Clarkson's Aimée met Mr. Bruce. He stopped to shake hands.

"My clerk told me you had a fine meeting this afternoon, with some remarkable conversions; indeed, I am not sure if he was not affected himself, for he has been humming Psalm tunes ever since," he began.

"I am very glad to hear it. I have realised to-day, as never before, what an amount of sin there is in the world; we did not have very bad people in our town, or at least I was not thrown in the way of such, and our college students were not the dreadful sinners your people here seem to be. Some of us were proud, I dare say, and apt to lose our tempers on slight provocation, and were, perhaps, hateful with each other sometimes; but I think that was about the most we did—only some tried to cheat the teachers now and then."

"Did you [illegible]ll those things?" Mr. Bruce asked gravely; [illegible]t there was an amused look on his face that Aimée failed to notice.

"Yes, I was guilty of several of them," she said hesitatingly.

"I should say that on the whole you had a pretty clean record," Mr. Bruce remarked drily.

"One may be wicked away down in the heart without others knowing anything about it."

"Yes." Mr. Bruce spoke absently as he watched the little children who were enjoying the balmy evening air as they were gathered in groups along the street.

"I wish you would come sometimes on the Sunday afternoons and talk to our men in the church. You would have more influence than the rest of us," Aimée said earnestly.

"I speak to them? why, my dear Miss Roebart, I am no better than they are, probably not so good as most of them."

Aimée gave him a startled glance. "You never do those dreadful things that my sister tells me some of these men do."

"If I did would you cease to be friendly with me?" She did not answer him, and presently he asked again: "If I confess that I have been a very wicked man, will you cast me off as unworthy of your notice, or will you try to bring me back to right ways?"

"I could never respect you as I do now, but I would not cast you off. Christ teaches us better than that; His patience with sinners is infinite, and ours should never cease."

"If I promised you that I would try to be a good man, as good and true as even you could

desire, would you forgive my past and take me as your friend?"

"Oh yes; but I should be so sorry to know that you needed to reform; do you think it is possible to be just the same again after one has gone on a long way into sin? It seems as if there must be awful scars left that might break out again into dreadful sores in some time of spiritual weakness." There was a long pause, and then she added: "I could never trust such a person with my truest affection. I should always be afraid."

Mr. Bruce was amazed at the girl's frankness. No elderly man could have come at the heart of these matters more fearlessly. But he had another cause for serious thought; the bitter pain her words brought him, and the sense of helplessness that oppressed him as he realised the task that was set him, to gain not merely the respect but the love of this peculiar maiden.

"If I promise you that henceforth I will try to live and think as purely as ever you could demand from your dearest friend, will you permit me to stand in that relationship to you?"

"Oh, Mr. Bruce, you cannot make yourself pure. I could not do it for myself, and I am only a young girl, ignorant, no doubt, of the worst sins that are committed in the world, but even the sins of my own heart are so deadly that they horrify me, and I find that Jesus only can help me in overcoming them." There was quite a long silence, and then she added: "You surely know,

Mr. Bruce, that there is only One who can save us from sins."

"I only know that I am exceedingly ignorant of everything that you deem the most important. You can have no idea how recklessly I have lived in regard to everything pertaining to another world; but I do know that one must lead a very spiritual life in order to influence others so powerfully as you do. For my own part I cannot listen to your words without being impressed in a most mysterious way. You must pray a good deal alone."

"One can pray wherever they are; it is not necessary to go away alone and kneel down in order to talk with the Lord Jesus. I had very blessed communion with Him to-day as I listened in the church to our men singing. I wish you could have heard them."

"I should, no doubt, have been there. I have no just excuse: some capitalists called to consult me about some important business matters."

"Perhaps next Sunday you may be able to come, or will it be the capitalists again?"

"Yes, it is very probable, and perhaps still worse things than that."

"While at the same time you are not certain if you shall live until next Sunday. Good-night, Mr. Bruce, there are others in this house I can help; you have drifted out beyond my reach, I fear."

She gave him her hand for an instant, while in her eyes was a look of pity that thrilled him to

his inmost heart. Then she turned abruptly away and entered the Clarksons' cottage. Mr. Bruce slowly retraced his steps to his own house, where his clerk found him an hour later with a Bible in his hand. This was the first time he knew of such a book being in his employer's possession.

The welcome given by the widow Clarkson and Ann Waters that evening was so cordial, the pleasure at having her talk with them so evident, that as she wended her way homeward she felt abundantly repaid for the trifling act of self-denial in coming. The streets were full of people, and the saloons brilliantly lighted, while strains of music from piano and violin floated out on the evening air, intermingled now and again with cries of rage and horrible curses. She trembled with horror, while her utter helplessness to combat with such scenes filled her with dismay. After she had arrived safely within her own door, she cried aloud, with white, anguished face—

"Oh, John Mansfield, what can a weak, ignorant girl like me do in this awfully wicked place?"

"Do? Why, just the best you can. The way you got hold of the hearts of your congregation is enough to prove to you that you have had a divine call to this work."

"But how can I get up a fresh address every week? Those college-bred men will pick my poor little sentences all to pieces, and they won't care to listen after a few times. You know I will soon talk myself out; I have very slender stores to draw from."

"Don't worry about the future. The wise way is to make the work of each day the best you can, and leave other days and their cares till you come to them."

She sat down with an air of deep depression, shading her face with her hand. She rose at last, saying—

"I wish I could get over this foolish habit of living whole months at a time in my mind, instead of moments."

"Courage, little woman; all will be well," said John Mansfield hopefully. "Take your own words as your strength, 'The Lord is a rod and a staff to them that trust Him.'"

Aimée mutely thanked him, and then went off to her room, to wrestle for strength and courage at the altar of the Most High.

CHAPTER XII

Under the Rod

THAT week baby Marjorie was stricken down with a virulent type of scarlet fever, and for days her life hung in the balance. The weather was getting hot; it was difficult, where ice was at famine prices, to keep her temperature reduced. The doctor came every day, sometimes sitting for hours by the poor baby's crib, watching almost as anxiously as the mother for favourable symptoms. He was still in the prime of life, but looked anxious and careworn. There was so much to sadden him in the pursuit of his profession, so much of the bitter fruits of sin to grapple with, that long ago he had well-nigh lost all faith in the possibility of human goodness. He was watching Aimée Roebart keenly. He had a feeling of antagonism to the girl, who seemed better than the average people about her. The higher type of goodness that she professed condemned himself and his intimate associates. He liked women to be moderately good, for instance, like his own mother, who had been a decorous worshipper in one of the handsomest and most aristocratic

churches in his native city, Toronto; but she as regularly frequented the opera and theatre, and the gayest parties. She was as devout in church as this Miss Roebart, but she was not troublesome in her religious duties outside. He was rather glad to have the opportunity of watching the girl in the house, to see if she could be as good and unselfish there as she seemed out among men. To his dismay, she appeared to better advantage there than any woman he had ever met in a sickroom. She never lost courage, even when the baby-life flickered down to its lowest spark; her love for the little sufferer rendered her apparently unconscious of fatigue, and through all the anxious hours she kept assuring the stricken mother that the very best for each of them would come through God's ordering of the case.

"You put more faith in the Divine Healer than in the medicines that I give," the doctor said, a little petulantly at last.

"I have faith in both, but God is at the root of all. He gives us the medicines, and you the skill to judiciously apply them; but all life is in His hands, and so I ask Him to bless the remedies. I put my trust primarily in Him."

Aimée was applying the ice-cold cloths to the baby's forehead as she spoke, the doctor noting with admiration the deft skill with which she eased the little creature's position from time to time. The crisis had come, and hour after hour Aimée had been standing over her, the baby's mother being so prostrated by grief and despair

that she was scarcely able to do anything. The hour was growing late, the clock on the mantel had struck out the hour of midnight some time before, and John Mansfield and Ruth had retired for a brief rest. The doctor came and stood over the cot. "Your baby is better," he said; "the crisis is past."

Aimée turned her face away for a moment, while the doctor watched her furtively. He saw the slender form shaken with suppressed sobs.

"Why do you weep now?" he asked gently. "Your baby niece is going to be spared to you; thanks to your skilful nursing, and perhaps prayers. I never saw a little creature so near death in my life that passed the crisis as she has done."

"God has been very good to us," she murmured, when her emotion had been mastered sufficiently to permit of speech.

"Would the goodness not have been greater had she not been permitted to take the disease?"

"We cannot tell. Sickness and disappointment may indicate God's deepest care; some of us can only be kept in the narrow way by hard discipline."

"I do not imagine that you require heavy chastisement."

"My life has been nearly as free from care as that of a bird that follows perpetual summers, and knows nothing of the winter's frosts and storms. If God sees that hard discipline will make my

character better, He will send it to me. I can trust Him under all conditions."

Dr. Dale rose with a sigh of weariness, as he said—

"I wish I could see life through your spectacles; for me it is a tiresome round. If I get the chastisement, I richly deserve it; but there, I cannot go back over the road I have travelled to rectify the mistakes I have made."

"You are young yet, and atonement can be made in part for what is amiss; besides, you will know how to sympathise with poor sinners as some others are not able to do."

"Yes, I will be equal for that; but, unfortunately, I will need all the sympathy for myself. A pure girl, like you, can never know what my life has been, what a horror of self sometimes seizes me—'myself am hell'— Milton must have experienced the effects of broken laws, or he could never have put those words into Satan's mouth."

"It is not true when you say I am pure. Men and women are fashioned much the same, only women's lives, as a rule, are more sheltered; while some of us are not inclined to stray quite so far into forbidden paths."

Dr. Dale looked down half-contemptously into the eager, upturned face.

"You speak of being my fellow-sinner, why, child, your face is as pure as a baby's. Such sinning as I meant leaves Satan's own characteristics on the countenance. I know it wherever I see it, and so does every student of human faces,

who comprehends the first principles of physiology. Go on with your preaching; the men believe in you, but you need not attempt to convince them that you are their fellow-sinner."

He took his hat and cane and the small medicine chest that accompanied him on all his rounds of healing; lingering a moment by the baby's crib, he said—

"I should not be here now; another child is struggling between life and death. I must do what I can to cheat death of its helpless victim. I hate seeing little children suffer."

"I like to think of death as a friend," Aimée said, as she accompanied him to the door, and held the lamp above her head to light him on the way.

"Good-night, Dr. Dale," she called through the darkness, in response to his assurance that the light was no longer necessary.

She stood a few moments in the doorway, looking out into the silent night, the lights having disappeared from the neighbouring windows. She turned to go in, when suddenly a slouching figure stepped inside the gate and entered the porch.

"Good evenin', ma'am; will you give me some supper?"

"Yes, if you will be very quiet. I have a very sick child here, and the least noise may waken her."

"I will promise to be quiet, if you'll only make haste; I am starvin'."

"Will you wait out here, and I will bring you some bread and meat."

"No, I am goin' in," he spoke roughly; as he

crossed the threshold, Aleph raised her huge head and growled.

"Take that brute away," he hissed.

"No, we always keep her near us; she will not molest you if you behave yourself."

"I thought you must be a fool to let me into your house this time o' night; if I had a revolver I'd soon settle the brute."

"Are you not ashamed to call yourself a man and utter such threats, when I am going to give you food?"

"Well, make haste about it, I'm 'most starvin', and I'll not tech the critter."

Aimée set the lamp upon the table, and bidding Aleph lie down by Marjorie's crib, she went to the pantry for food; returning presently with a plate of bread and meat and a pitcher of milk, she set them on a table as far from the baby's crib as possible, and left him to take his supper. When he had eaten everything clean, she went to him—

"Tell me who you are, and if you will let me help you, I will be glad to do all I can to lead you to something better."

He stared at her with an angry gleam in his bloodshot eyes, but made no answer.

"For your mother's sake, won't you try to be a better man?"

"My mother," he said contemptuously; "it's all rot this cant about mothers; mine took every dollar of my earnin's and spent it in drink, so long as I'd give it to her; when I got too cute for her two houses wouldn't hold us."

"You are the first man I ever heard speak so harshly about his mother. I would rather have you go somewhere else now that you have been fed."

"I'll not stir from here till daybreak," he muttered.

"You must keep perfectly still if you stay." She spoke with a firmness that caused him to raise his shifting evil eyes wonderingly to her face.

"If it warn't for that beast of a dog, I'd soon know if you dared to talk that way to me."

Aimée said nothing, but putting her fingers into Aleph's collar, she went to the other side of the room and sat down by the baby's cot. She was glad that the dawn came early; if he left by daybreak, there would only be an hour or two of waiting until he would leave. Aleph lay at her feet, with watchful eyes noting every movement of the unwelcome intruder. As the clock ticked off the moments, Aimée was at last relieved to see that the tramp's head was sinking on his breast in sleep. She crossed the room softly to examine him more closely; his clothes were frayed and filthy-looking, his cheeks sunken, and on his forehead, from which the hat was pushed back, lay a few matted curls streaked with grey. Sleep had softened the harsh outlines of his face, and there was something pathetic in the drooping corners of the close-shut mouth.

"I wish I could help him," she murmured softly, as he stirred uneasily in his sleep, laying his hand on his heart as if there were an aching there that even sleep did not quiet. There was nothing more

she could do then but wait for the morning, when some means of helping him might present itself. She had never waited for the slow approach of day before. Seating herself by the window, she raised the curtain and watched the rim of light along the eastern horizon widen gradually until the morning star that had hung above the mountains faded slowly out of sight.

She went to the door and stood in the growing light, Aleph's head pressing close to her dress. Presently there was the muffled sound of approaching footsteps, and a pitiable-looking object came slouching down the long street. Some warning instinct bade her enter the house and fasten the door, when she stood watching him through the lace curtain. "He seems a companion piece for my tramp," she said to Aleph, who was restlessly moving about her. The man evidently was looking for something or someone, as he went slowly on his way, peering into every door-yard. She hoped his footsteps might not waken the tramp sleeping near her; and when at last he had got safely out of sight, she drew a breath of relief, and again opened the door and went out into the fresh air. Her visitor had polluted the atmosphere of the room by his presence, and it was a necessity to get some fresh air. At five o'clock she entered the room once more, and found him still asleep; she locked the door, and, putting the key in her pocket, went to the kitchen to make preparations for their six o'clock breakfast. The homely cheerfulness of the

kitchen fire and singing tea-kettle restored her wonted composure; and she was proceeding with her morning tasks with considerable success, when an angry growl from Aleph, and a harsh cry for help from her visitor, drew her hastily back to the other room. She found the tramp cowering in a corner, with Aleph standing over him, a most ferocious look on her face.

"For Heaven's sake take that brute away!" he cried. Aimée tried to do so, but Aleph was deaf to her entreaties, and looked as if at any moment she might spring at his throat. She flew to the bedroom where John was sleeping, and roused him with her terrified cry for help. When, a few moments later, he rushed into the room, thinking to find his baby dead or dying, he saw Aimée with her arms around Aleph's neck, holding her with all her might, and a strange man crouched behind a table, with the great beads of perspiration standing on his forehead.

"What means all this excitement? you will kill the baby, Aimée."

"O John, take Aleph away, or else that poor man; she will kill him if I let her go, I am afraid."

"It might be the best thing she could do. Pat Kane, what are you doing in my house at this hour in the morning? and what have you done with Jack M'Lean?"

"Take away your dog, and I'll not be here long," was the sullen reply.

"You will not leave until I let the autho-

rities know that you are here. Where is Jack M'Lean?'

"I don't know."

"Aimée, will you waken the people next door, and ask them to come to my assistance?"

"What is wrong, John?"

"I will explain later on."

Aimée went as requested, and in an incredibly short time there was a goodly knot of men and boys on the street, before John Mansfield's cottage.

There was a ferocious gleam on Pat Kane's face as he regarded them, while a policeman was leading him away to the station-house.

"I'll be even with ye yet," he muttered

CHAPTER XIII

Under Arrest

WHEN John Mansfield returned an hour later for a hurried breakfast, he told them the particulars about Aimée's midnight visitor, and what might have been the tragic ending of his intrusion, but for Aleph.

"He is one of the most desperate and dangerous characters in the country, and no one save himself knows how many persons he has murdered. The police have been on the watch for him for months past, because of a peculiarly atrocious murder attributed to him and his accomplice M'Lean. A husband, wife, and three children were found out on their ranch brutally murdered, and circumstantial evidence is strongly against them. But, Aimée, how in the world did he get into the house here?"

Aimée explained the circumstance.

"Only that he was out of ammunition, he could easily have shot Aleph; he has been dodging justice so long, he has not been able to come to the stores to secure a fresh supply. Never trust to Aleph's protection again. Shut the door as

soon as nightfall, and don't open to friend or foe, until you are certain about their identity and honesty."

"Has M'Lean been found?" Aimée asked, while the unkempt being who had shuffled past in the early dawn came vividly to her mind.

"No; unfortunately he is still at large, and, I fear, likely to be so; they are skilful in concealing themselves; it must have been hunger that drove them in, and lack of ammunition."

Aimée described the man whom she thought might be M'Lean looking for his partner in sin. Her description coincided so nearly with his appearance, that John started at once for the police station to acquaint them with the fact. The day wore on. Baby Marjorie continued to improve while Aimée wandered restlessly about the house; she could think of little else save Kane locked in his gloomy cell, an outlaw from society, friendless, and, worse than all, with the gallows looming up in the near future.

At last she could endure the thought of his solitary misery no longer, and, putting on her hat, she proceeded to the lock-up.

Her face was unusually pale as she walked swiftly along the street. When she arrived at her destination, she found several men standing about the door; the excitement of having such a noted desperado in their midst was a great attraction to the morbidly curious. The door stood open; she entered timidly, and saw several men lounging about the room. A tall, stern-faced man with iron-

grey hair approached her. "Are you Mr. Armour, the police magistrate?" she asked nervously.

"Yes."

"If you are willing, I would like to see Pat Kane, and talk with him."

"Are you acquainted with him?"

"Slightly; he was in the house with me for three or four hours last night; I had some conversation with him then, and would like to speak with him again."

"I would not dare to trust you with him alone in his cell; he is too dangerous a character for that, and to-day he is a perfect devil."

Aimée felt every nerve quivering with fear, but she concealed her weakness from the magistrate's eyes, as she said with much calmness—

"I will do whatever you think best."

"Come this way, please. I will go with you myself."

Aimée followed through a gloomy corridor, with heavily barred doors, which opened into tiny cells. Most of these doors stood wide open, and then they came to one from which depended a heavy padlock. Mr. Armour selected a key, and, unlocking the door, led the way into a narrow cell; its only furniture a rude bunk, with some coarse blankets, a pillow, and straw mattress; there were also a wooden bench and a corner shelf; the only aperture to admit air and light was a narrow slit in the barred door, no wider than the palm of her hand. Kane was sitting on the side of his bunk, alone with his thoughts, such thoughts as might

make a lost soul shiver. He lifted a pair of bloodshot eyes to her face, and then dropped them guiltily. Aimée held out her hand—

"I have been feeling so sorry for you all day, I could not rest without coming to see you." He gave her his hand, which chilled her; it was so limp and clammy.

"I guess you're the only one there is to pity me in this world." He spoke moodily.

"God pities you, and He is more than all the world beside."

"I know nothing about Him; don't know if there is such a being; and more than that, I don't care. Very likely it would be better for me if there isn't."

"I have my Bible here. If you will allow me, I will read you a few verses from it, and perhaps you will let me offer a prayer to God for you."

"You can do what you like; it's all one to me how the time is put in."

Aimée opened her Bible and read the 51st and 139th Psalms, and Christ's last prayer before His crucifixion. The reading ended, she knelt down on the cold floor, and prayed so tenderly for the prisoner, that Mr. Armour, through his own wet lashes, looked to see how Kane was feeling, but the latter was gazing stolidly at the ceiling, apparently unmoved.

As she took the wretched man's hand, at parting, she said to him pitifully—

"It seems so hard for you not to have any

good thing in any world. Will you not realise that Jesus cares for you, as well as for us all. The Bible says, though your sins are as scarlet, or red like crimson, they would become white as wool, or as snow. Every class is included there, even thieves and murderers."

"Who says I'm a murderer?" he asked fiercely.

"He that hates his brother is a murderer, Christ tells us."

"Then most folks are murderers," he said complacently; he seemed well pleased to know there was so wide a circle like himself.

As she left his cell she promised to come the next day and bring him some flowers, and papers to read, if Mr. Armour would allow him to have them.

"You can bring flowers and any kind of reading matter, except secular papers; none of our prisoners are allowed to know what is going on in the outside world," Mr. Armour said, as he let her out of the cell.

The following morning she brought a delicious cluster of roses and pansies, with a roll of Sunday-school papers, which were handsomely illustrated. In all probability he would examine the pictures, she thought, and then out of curiosity he would want to read the explanation of the illustrations. He uttered no word of thanks for either pictures or flowers, but watched her listlessly as she busied herself getting some water in a broken bottle for the flowers. Mr. Armour had volunteered a few

items about Kane's history before they entered his cell. He was an only son, and his father was a wealthy saloon-keeper. His mother had been a barmaid before she was married, and had acquired a taste for strong drink, that her poor boy inherited. They were still living in considerable style in Toronto, and would no doubt spend money freely to save their son. He has scarcely turned thirty, but he seemed a man of fifty; dissipation had prematurely aged him, together with the exposure of a reckless life. He had already served a term of four years in Westminster Penitentiary. "When he goes down this time and gets his trial at the fall assize, it will be hanging, sure," Mr. Armour said grimly. "And, by the way, a prize of five hundred dollars has been offered for his capture, which by rights will come to you. M'Lean was included in it, and the description given by you of a man lurking about yesterday morning led us to send out a posse of men in search of him; they brought him in an hour ago, and so you will get the money."

"I shall never take a cent of it." Aimée looked the disgust she felt at doing such a thing. "It would be the price of blood."

"You saved further bloodshed by finding them; they meant mischief prowling around that way in the night; only for that Danish hound of Mansfield's, Kane would have murdered you all, and got what he could carry away of provisions to help them out of the country; they had over two thousand dollars hid on their persons when we searched

them, all of which they have got by robbery and murder. They are not very promising subjects to have flowers carried to them by a tender-hearted young woman."

Aimée understood the covert sarcasm of the magistrate's words, but she did not attempt to defend her course. As she stepped out into the dazzling light, she realised as never before the blessedness of liberty,—to be able to go anywhere on this wide earth, to drink in the air and sunshine. Her heart, however, was far from being light. A nursemaid was wheeling a lovely babe in its carriage; she paused and spoke to the girl, it was such a relief to come in contact with youth and innocence.

"What a pretty boy!" she said, to begin the conversation.

"Yes 'm; it's the mining engineer's baby; he's the first boy, and they've had four girls; you may be sure they are all proud of him."

The maid looked proudly at him herself.

"Poor little man." Aimée spoke with such pity, the girl looked at her in amazement. But Aimée was thinking that the man she had just left had once been a child.

"Indeed, ma'am, he's none to be pitied; his father gets big pay, and they say he has shares besides in some of the paying mines. Master Freddie 'll have an easy time of it in this world; as mother says, he was born with the silver spoon in his mouth. His mother says, when he's old enough they're going to send him off over the sea

to get his learning, and she said by that time she hoped they'd be rich enough to warrant him marrying a great heiress. It do seem curious to think of Freddie getting married; but mother says quality has a queer way of planning marriages a long way ahead."

"I hope Master Freddie will be a good man, never learn to drink liquor or gamble; to be a good man will be better for him than marrying a great lady. There is nothing so great as to be good, and we can all be that."

"Yes 'm," the girl spoke indifferently; evidently goodness was a minor virtue in her eyes.

"Do you try to be good?"

"Yes 'm, most of the time; I forgets now and again, specially when the children's exasperating, but missus makes 'em mind now better 'n she did before Master Freddie was born. We all stands round for him."

"Poor little laddie, it will be a long, steep climb for him to enter the gates of pearl."

"Where might 'em be, ma'am? Freddie ain't allowed to do much climbing, altho' he's main fond of doing it."

"You have surely heard of heaven."

"Laws, yes, you don't take me for a heathen, I hope. Why, missus has the new governess read prayers to me and the children for an hour every Sunday; she's very particular, is missus."

"I would like to have you come to the Sunday school."

"Oh! that would never do; missus laughs about it, and the young woman what's come here to Christianise the miners. She'd never let me go for fear I might bring home some of the Psalm-singing to the children. She's very proud about her children, and is always afraid of them picking up ornery words from poor folks." The girl evidently enjoyed having a confidential chat with this kindly-spoken young woman, but looked considerably distressed when Aimée halted at her own gate. "You don't say, ma'am, that you're Mrs. Mansfield's sister," she gasped.

"Yes."

"And the young woman what preaches?"

"Yes, I am the one."

"I'm main sorry I said what I did. I'd a thought you was too young and pretty to have such a bee in your bonnet, as mother says."

"Do you think one is crazy if they try to rescue these poor men from their sins, and all that follows sin here and hereafter?"

"No 'm, I expect not. Do you take any interest in women and girls?"

"Oh yes; have they not souls to be saved which are quite as precious?"

"If my missus 'll give me off Sunday afternoon, I'll come; she most always has the superintendents and other gentry in to dinner on Sunday evening; but maybe I can manage some way to come. She thinks it's great fun, a woman preaching. I heard her talking to Mr. Bruce and some other gentle-

men, once when I was helping wait on the dinner-table; but he took your part, and said it would be grand for this country if there were more women like you. Missus looked badly cut up, I can tell you, for she was real mad, but dassent say anything to him, for he's boss over her husband, and they're all afraid of offending Mr. Bruce, for he can bounce the whole lot, mother says, if he's a mind to."

Aimée bethought herself that there had been confidences enough, and said good-morning to her new and somewhat loquacious companion.

When she entered the house, Ruth noticed the shadow on her face, and asked if anything had gone wrong.

"Oh no; everything is about the same, only this is such an unfriendly, hard-hearted world."

"Have you only just found that out?"

"I am finding it out more and more every hour, it seems to me. At home the people were more sympathetic than they are here, I mean the respectable kind; they did not make fun of those who were trying to help others, as the people here are given to doing."

"Have you heard anything lately?"

For reply Aimée repeated the words of the nurse girl.

"You should, at least, be thankful, Aimée, that Mr. Bruce takes your part. None of the ladies here will dare to go against him, and then beyond all that he can say on your behalf, is the fact that

your own conscience approves of what you are doing. That is the main thing."

Saint Teresa needed the wise reproof. She had been hoping to combat sin in a genteel, kid-glove style. Her ideas were to be sadly changed before long.

CHAPTER XIV

I WAS SICK, AND IN PRISON

THE following morning, when Aimée presented herself at the lock-up, Mr. Armour informed her that M'Lean had asked to see her. She went at once to his cell, which was adjoining Pat Kane's, and found, to her surprise, that he was a young man, with a boyish, innocent-looking face.

"May I have a talk with the young lady alone?" he asked, with evident anxiety that his request should be granted.

"Certainly, if Miss Roebart is not afraid to be locked in with you."

There was a wistful expression in his eyes that went to Aimée's heart.

"Certainly leave me here. I am not afraid to be alone with this poor boy."

As Mr. Armour's footsteps echoed down the corridor, M'Lean said eagerly—

"I want to tell you all about my life. I am sure you will not betray me."

"I am here to help and not to harm you."

"I came from the East. I was born in the city

of Boston. My mother had a fine house on the Back Bay, and was a society woman. I went to the public schools there, and had tutors to coach me at two dollars an hour, before the examinations. I did not care for study or for anything useful; and then my father died. My mother married, before she was a year a widow, the man that she loved before I was born, and after that what should have been my own house was no longer a home to me. My stepfather was a lawyer, and by some means he got control of my father's estate; and after that he gave me to understand that one house could not hold the two of us. I came West with bitter hatred in my heart, and soon became an easy prey to the worst men in the country. I had taken what money I could lay my hands on before I left, and a few of my mother's jewels, which I easily traded with a safe confederate. I lived well while my money lasted, and then"— he paused for awhile and drank from a tin cup on the shelf beside him,—"and then I tried all sorts of work; some things I did were perfectly honest, and others— O God, if I had only died when I was born," he moaned bitterly, as he sat with dry, parched lips, and eyes staring hopelessly at the rough plastered wall. "I got a place once as bar-keeper, but I was too good a customer myself, and so got discharged in a little while. I was a cowboy for a couple of years; I tried mining, but never had a particle of luck, and, at last, I fell in with Kane. He could do what he liked with

me; only I never committed murder. I guess he enjoyed doing it himself so well he never insisted on my taking a hand in it after he found out that I was unwilling to even look on at his butcheries. I never saw him when he killed his victims, but he insisted all the same on sharing the spoil with me; he's real good-hearted in some ways, though you mightn't believe it." M'Lean, glancing furtively at Aimée, saw the look of horror on her face. He stopped suddenly. "You are too innocent to bother with such fellows as we are," he spoke half-pityingly.

"Oh! it is too dreadful to think of, and yet if I had been exposed to your temptations I might have been just as bad. But one thing is certain, God can forgive you even yet."

"It's you I am thinking about. I seem to have met just such women as you are away somewhere in the far past; but my mother was not like you. Oh, how I wish she had been! She went to receptions and balls and the theatre all the time. I was left mostly to nurses, and they weren't particular about what I saw or heard."

He bowed his head in an agony of despair.

"May I write and tell your mother all about you?" Aimée asked.

"No, no. My stepfather shall never learn how low I have fallen. No one out here knows my real name, and I will die with the secret of my own identity."

His face was bowed upon his hands, but through

the thin, nervous fingers she could see the tears dropping to the floor.

"I wish I could help you in some way," she said gently.

"Oh, you have helped me more than I can tell! There was such a load here,"—pressing his hand on his heart;—"I thought sometimes my heart would burst; but yesterday, when I heard you praying with Pat, the thought flashed across me that you could help me, if anyone on earth could do it. I made up my mind in the night that I would make a clean breast of my past to you. I felt as if I couldn't swing off into eternity without confessing to someone."

"Would you like me to pray with you?"

"Yes, but it won't do any good. I never thought of asking mercy for Kane's victims when I knew he was going to butcher them, and I can't expect any for myself; it wouldn't be fair, even if there is a God and a hereafter."

"You know there is both; every man's conscience tells him there is; it is an instinct in us all." He looked up with surprise into Aimée's face. She spoke with such an air of certainty; how could she know what thoughts were going on in men's hearts. She did not heed the look, but went on talking to him: "I can only repeat over again the promises in God's words. It is quite true He says that no murderer can enter the kingdom of heaven, and no liar, but that means without repentance; but, on the other hand, among the last promises in the Bible are:

'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' That includes you."

He looked at her keenly. "You speak as if the Bible were as real to you as the daily paper."

"The daily paper! The Bible is the most real and the most blessed thing to me on the face of the earth. If it were otherwise I would not be here trying to help you; perhaps I might be occupying your place."

Aimée knew the time was passing swiftly, and Mr. Armour would soon be back to release her. She knelt on the cold, dirty floor and prayed; when she rose the key grated in the lock, and Mr. Armour stood in the doorway.

"Shall I come again to-morrow?" she asked M'Lean.

"If you will come, I shall be very glad to see you. You will soon be sending us down to the coast, I expect?" he said, turning to Mr. Armour.

"Yes, on the next stage."

Aimée said good-bye, and the poor youth was once more locked in with his weary thoughts.

She took some of the flowers to Pat Kane. He took them with a few surly words of thanks, but did not evince either pleasure or gratitude at seeing her.

"You are not anxious to be a better man, I fear?" she spoke a little sadly.

"All I'm anxious for is my liberty; give me that, and you're welcome to keep all your religion."

"You would not be happy, even in heaven, as you are now."

"Very likely not. Psalm-singing was never in my line."

"I am sorry I can do nothing for you." She held out her hand to say good-bye.

"You get discouraged mighty easy. The prayin' women down at the coast hold on to a fellow with a death-grip when they want to convert him."

"When I have been longer in the work, perhaps I may be more successful," she murmured sadly.

The jailer smiled behind his grey imperial.

"They are not worth so much trouble on your part. I would advise you to leave the likes of them to their own thoughts," he spoke sympathetically, for he could see that she felt cast down over her apparent failure to reach a tender chord in Kane's heart.

After leaving the jail, she bent her steps to the widow Clarkson's. She had neglected them of late because of the little Marjorie's severe illness. Ann Waters admitted her. The false colouring had disappeared from her face, leaving it pinched and wan-looking.

"We thought you had forsaken us for sure," she said querulously.

"Our baby has been very ill; did you not know?"

"Oh no, we never heard; forgive me. I ought to have known better. Mrs. Clarkson has said all

along you would have a good reason for not being here."

She bustled around getting a comfortable seat for Aimée.

"Mrs. Clarkson's at the store. Mr. Bruce was here yesterday and left her some money. He says I'm to stay right on here too. I think, on the whole, he's the best man I ever knew."

Aimée interrupted Ann's panegyric by diverting the conversation into a different channel, and set her to talking about herself.

"When you were speaking that first Sunday, I shall never forget the feeling that came over me. I was fair sick of my old life long before that, but never thought there could be any hope for me. But I just took your word for it, then and there, when you said the Lord would take the very worst and the vilest. I knew that was me."

"Yes, it takes us all in," Aimée murmured softly.

"That Sunday evening when you left here after you had read and prayed with Mrs. Clarkson and me, I thought the world was never so bright before, and I was that happy I can't describe my feelings; but since then doubts have come, and dreadful temptations. I'd gladly die if I was sure I'd get safe to heaven, and forget all my dreadful past." She buried her face in her hands, rocking herself violently to and fro, her whole frame shaken with emotion. Aimée realised her own ignorance and inexperience keenly. Here was a case beyond her reach, but not beyond divine help.

She opened her Bible and read passage after passage.

"Oh, Miss Roebart, pray for me; you seem just to talk with Jesus, and it does me so much good to listen to you."

Aimée knelt with Ann's hand clasped in her own, and prayed long and earnestly, for the woman at her side did not seem to weary of her petitions. When they rose from prayer, Mrs. Clarkson was kneeling by the door and quietly weeping.

"I feel stronger now," Ann said brokenly; "if you two will only hold on to me, I may come out safe at last."

"We will help you, but the work must really be done by yourself, through God's help."

"I know that, Miss, and I mean to work. I'll wash and scrub, take care of the sick, or do anything that's honest, and that'll keep my mind occupied. It'll be hard tearing myself away from the old life, and I can't expect to become good all at once; but hard work will keep hands and heart from mischief."

She left the room to look after the children, who had strayed away during the conversation, when Mrs. Clarkson said—

"It seems like an ordering of Providence all around. I could hardly have endured the loneliness since Jim's death. I am naturally very timid. At night he seemed to be near me all the time before she came; and then it is so safe for her here."

"Yes, that is best of all."

"I never saw anyone in such mental agony as

she has been. Trying to help her has been a great blessing to myself. She is a highly-strung creature, and it might be very hard to get on with; only that she's in such dead earnest to be a Christian, I feel sure she will obtain the blessing all right yet."

"Of course she will," said Aimée joyously; "I wish every unconverted person in the town was in as fair a way to do so as Ann Waters."

CHAPTER XV

Miners' Shacks

"HAVE you had many callers?" The question was asked abruptly one evening of Aimée, as she was leaving a cottage where she had been making a sick call.

"Not very many, I believe."

"Have none of the ladies been to see you?"

"Oh yes, several ladies have been to see us."

"Has Mrs. Randall called?"

"No."

"Or Mrs. Becket, or any of their circle?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"I thought as much. I said from the first that they wouldn't notice you."

Aimée said good-evening and departed, but as she walked homewards she wondered a little sadly why these ladies, who represented the wealth and much of the culture of the town, should hold aloof from work which an angel might long for. On arriving at home she said to her sister—

"Mrs. Marks asked me if any of the ladies here had called on me."

Ruth gave her a quick glance. "You must

not mind what Mrs. Marks says. She is very ambitious, and, I am sorry to say, small-minded. She manages usually to make her acquaintances feel uncomfortable when they are with her."

"But, sister, what she hinted at is true, and you know these persons could help me so much; they have influence with our educated, bright young men, and could do almost anything with them."

"Yes, dear, I know; but you must learn to do your work without asking help from that class. Ever since Christ began His ministry the old story has repeated itself, 'Not many rich or mighty have followed closely in His steps.' You must learn to do your work alone, or else choose your helpers, as your Master did, from among the humble.

"It looks as if what you say is true. The aristocratic classes seemingly have their own way of performing their religious duties; only I wish the people here who have influence would help me."

"You will get on all right without their help, and there is no need for getting downcast. John was telling me only this morning that the poor, lonely fellows who are working in the mines are on your side, and interested in your work. I think it was a divine inspiration that prompted you to come."

"Why, of course it was. I should never have thought of such a thing of my own accord."

Aimée made very careful preparation for her Sunday's work. The congregation was rapidly

increasing, so that before many weeks the church was so full there were not seats enough for them all. Men came in their rough working clothes when they had no better, but those who had the money, or credit at the stores, procured the best fit available, when in some cases the transformation was beyond recognition. Rough beards were trimmed or shaven, while the barber had never done such a thriving business in the history of the town.

"It's worth all the trouble going to hear that young woman, for she means every word she says," Billy Anderson remarked, as he took his turn in the barber's chair for the first time since coming West. When he came to examine himself critically in the new looking-glass he purchased on his way home, he scarcely recognised his own physiognomy. "It'll end in my saving up money enough to get a woman of my own, and setting up a Christian home, I do believe," he soliloquised, while memory reverted to God-fearing parents and a home in far-away Scotland, where night and morning he had been wont to swell the psalm of praise, and join in the chapter they read at worship. Aimée soon became acquainted with the names of those who formed her congregation on Sundays, and enjoyed the hand-clasp at the close of her service as much as they did. It was pathetic the way these unkempt fellows lingered about the door to have a word with "the little preacher," as they fell into the habit of calling her,—men who had not touched hands with a

pure woman for years. As the time wore on she began to visit them in their "shacks," as the cabins of miners are called in local parlance. She never went empty-handed. The lunch-basket, with its dainty napkin and sweet-smelling nosegay lying on the top, were a sure indication to those who watched that she was speeding along to see someone who was sick or disabled. The generous fellows were planning how they could show their gratitude, and meant to do something worth while when Christmas came. Billy Anderson wondered if his turn would ever come, and rather hoped it might, with some mild form of bruise or malady. Almost the next day after his wish had been expressed, a "cave in" at the mine left him with a broken arm, and some severe bruises about the head and face. His chum, at Billy's urgent request, cleaned up their room to the best of his ability; but, as the poor fellow lay in his bunk and surveyed the place, he realised how different it was from the tidy cottage over which his mother was the presiding genius, before whom dirt and disorder vanished as mists before the sun.

He wondered what the little preacher would think of the untidy house, and its equally untidy occupant, and would she look just as bright as ever when she saw it all. He groaned aloud, but was helpless to improve matters; for his head was so dizzy, if he but lifted it from the soiled pillow, everything swam before his eyes. His partner had gone to work; there was little time there to

give to a sick comrade; nature and the physician had to attend to the work of healing.

The morning hours wore slowly away; the jug of water at his bedside was getting warm, while it was more than it was worth to get it conveyed to his parched lips. He closed his eyes in unspoken misery. "What was life any way," he asked himself, "when an accident reduced him in a few hours to such a wretched plight as this?" The doctor came and dressed his bruises, and brought him some fresh water; his partner came home to dinner, cooked his bacon and warmed over some beans, which he ate with his hard tack, washing them all down with strong black tea; but Billy had no appetite for such fare as that, and his partner left in gloomy silence, feeling very sorry for his sick friend, but not able to make him understand what he felt.

"She isn't going to come," Billy moaned despairingly. "Maybe she's sick, or don't think I'm worth visiting."

He tried to go to sleep, but his head was so hot and full of pain he could only move about uneasily on his hard bed. The sun, too, was shining fiercely now through his uncurtained window right across his bed. What could he do to get relief? He was just making up his mind to grim endurance of his misery, when a gentle tap at the door set his pulses throbbing with expectation.

"Come in!" He shouted the words at the top of his voice. A moment later a trim figure, in a

fresh print dress, stepped across the threshold and came to his bedside.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Anderson, to hear of your accident, and to find you in so much pain." It was Aimée Roebart who was standing between him and the blinding sunshine, looking down with eyes full of tender sympathy. He could hardly keep back the tears of joy, for Billy was a soft-hearted fellow. On her arm was the inevitable basket; all at once he felt as if he could do ample justice to the good things it might contain. He had heard his mates describe the delicious jellies and other compounds she was in the habit of carrying to the disabled, and he was thankful that his turn had come to sample them. Aimée saw at a glance that he was burning up with fever, caused, in part, by the glaring sunshine falling on him, and the hot, close air of his room. She opened the door and windows, and then pinned up an old newspaper to the window nearest him. She found the spring of water, and brought some to moisten his parched lips and bathe his head. Applying a wet bandage to his head, at last she proceeded to get his dinner ready—such a dinner as Billy had not tasted for many a long day, and which, he assured sympathising comrades who dropped in later on to see him, was worth a month's wages.

After this, having given a few deft touches to the untidy room, she took out her Bible and hymn-book, and, seating herself within comfortable range of vision, began to read. She was very

happy, as well as poor Billy; nature had so fashioned her, that her most exquisite pleasure came to her through making the heavy-hearted glad. To-day she could not fail to see that her efforts had been singularly successful. That poor face on the pillow was fairly beaming with satisfaction. Neither could she be desperately sorry for accidents like Billy's, where life was not endangered, when through them she got such opportunities for getting acquainted with her congregation. She sang several hymns, mostly of Billy's own choosing; while he closed his eyes and thought of the angels and his far-away home in dear old Scotland, with its glens and streams, where he used to wander in the happy hours of childhood, wondering if heaven did not lie somewhere beyond its highest hills. Afterwards she read to him the very psalms he had learned in Sunday school, in those other years; and while he listened, all the innocent, half-forgotten past came back to him, until he could hardly keep the tears from forcing their way from under his fast-closed lids. He was heartily glad when she went down on her knees to pray for him, so that he could wipe them away on his coarse blanket. But if the reading made him cry, her prayer was even harder to bear; for it seemed as if all the impurities of his past life rose up before him, while his innocent childhood and heaven were removed to immeasurable distances. He was no longer able to conceal his emotion, and when the prayer was ended, and the little preacher turned to look at him, the


JAS. ALLAN DUNCAN.

rough hand was shading his eyes, while, to her great surprise, she saw the tears trickling down his cheeks. While she was smoothing back the tangled hair from his brow, and applying fresh water, the touch of her soft hand removed his last reserve of pride.

"You'll think I'm nothing but a great baby, but this is the first time I've shed a tear since I said good-bye to my mother in Scotland. When you were praying, I found out that the way I've been living will keep me from ever getting where she has gone."

"Indeed, why cannot you go there too?"

"I'm too vile; I'd pollute heaven with my presence if I got there."

"Indeed; then the Bible is false. Though your sins are as scarlet, and as vast as mountains, the blood of our beloved Jesus can wipe them all away. Only believe that He can do so, and that He will do so, and that is all. He died for you, Bill Anderson, as much as for the greatest saint that ever lived."

"If I thought there was any chance for me, I'd try."

"Believe that there is pardon for you, and never rest until you get it. I want you to keep praying all the time while you lie here alone. You remember the publican's prayer; you can repeat that?"

"Oh yes; 'God be merciful to me, a sinner'; I learned that long ago."

"Now I will leave you for to-day, but I will come again to-morrow, when I hope I may find you

greatly better. Trust in Jesus, and all will be well."

"We will never be able to repay you for what you are doing for us, but I can tell you the boys all appreciate it."

"My dear fellow, I am not working for pay, and all the reward I want is to see you all become servants of the Lord Jesus."

The tears forced themselves once more into Billy's eyes, which reconciled him to being alone again; he felt as if he could cry like a baby, if there were no one to see him. He lay thinking for a good while very seriously. He had been such a wanderer. The heavenly home seemed so far off. There was no hope of ever finding his way there. "Though your sins be as scarlet or red like crimson, yet they shall be white as wool or snow," kept ringing in his ears. His sins had been like scarlet. Those words must refer to him.

The little preacher had said only the Sunday before, that if a man had the courage to come out squarely before his comrades, and acknowledged that he wanted to be a Christian, he had got over the hardest part of the way; and God would do the rest, if he would only let Him. "I will let Him," Billy said aloud; and his will and heart were in the words.

He wondered at the peace that came to him there and then. Could God be going to do the rest? was He indeed doing it?

Billy Anderson had spent over twenty years in these mountains; sometimes by a lucky find he

had been lifted beyond the necessity for further toil, if he had husbanded his means; but the saloon and gaming table had presented attractions he could not resist, and usually his nuggets had disappeared at the end of a few months. He was well past forty now, and was worth scarcely a month's pay in advance, in addition to his share in this poor shack and a few mining claims that might be worthless.

CHAPTER XVI

In the Cheering-up Business

THE following morning Aimée went to see her patient. She could not recognise from the expression of the swollen, disfigured face the great pleasure her presence conferred on the poor lonely fellow. A miner's wife had come in a little while before, and attempted to tidy up the place, but got discouraged and left it little better than she found it.

Aimée tried what she could do, and perhaps bringing more brains and perseverance to the task, she was able to accomplish more than her predecessor.

She had brought a roll of illuminated Scripture texts, a few of them the product of her own pencil and brush, and with them some cheerful woodcuts, clipped from illustrated papers. These brightened the room greatly.

She tried to press everything, no matter how apparently trivial, into the work of humanising these neglected men. Already she had posted numerous letters to schoolmates and friends, beseeching them to send her all the pictures,

magazines, or religious newspapers they could find, since all would be useful in her work.

A dainty breakfast was first served to her patient, and then his face and head were bathed in water fresh from the spring; and after that she proceeded with the work of turning his shack into a picture gallery, on which he might look as he lay alone through the solitary hours. He almost forgot his pain as he watched her, while a slumbering sense of the beautiful was touched into life.

"When I get round again, we'll fix this place up so it will be fit for human habitation," he said emphatically.

"How lovely that will be," Aimée responded heartily.

"What we spend in a single evening at the gaming table would change it past knowing." I mean to lead a new life after this. God helping me, I shall be a different man."

Aimée paused in her work, turning to him eagerly: "Will you come and tell us so in our meetings, when you get better?"

"If I did, I expect the boys would all laugh at me; they would think me a hypocrite, for they know how I have lived."

"So much the more need for you to repair the waste of those past years."

"If you really wanted me to, I might," he added hesitatingly.

"It is not what I wish, but what God commands," she said slowly.

"I would have to pray a great deal first, wouldn't I?"

"We all must pray earnestly to God to bless us, if we would make anything of a success of our lives. What we need is to believe that the Lord is able and willing to keep us right, and to have the courage to confess that we are on His side. Cant you meet those conditions here and now?"

"Yes, I can and will, the Lord helping me. I always thought there was a lot to be done before we could be Christians, but I see differently now; it is so plain and simple, anyone might come if they knew." He spoke slowly, as if he felt the full import of what his promise implied. "I know I shall find it hard to live up to what I say when I get out among my comrades, but it will pay in the end. I know that."

"It will pay as you go along. This is not like a life insurance that you die to win. If there was no future reward, the pay is splendid while we are living. I can't begin to tell you how happy my religion makes me; all that makes heaven perfect is not wholly held in trust for us hereafter; we get some of it without dying."

"I never heard anyone talk as you do about the joy there is in religion."

"Perhaps you did not pay much heed to what you heard Christians say in those days."

He lay with closed eyes for some time, while Aimée went back to her work; the last picture

was fastened in its place, and some frilled muslin put across the windows for curtains. The windows had first to be washed, which was quite a hard task, for flies and spiders had held possession undisturbed so long that it took a plentiful application of soap and water to remove the accumulation of months.

She was standing on a bench polishing the glass as Mr. Bruce and another gentleman were passing. Mr. Bruce recognised her and bent his head, she fancied somewhat distantly. "I wish he had not come along at this inconvenient moment," she said, half aloud; but Billy did not catch her words, whereat she was very glad. She had not seen Mr. Bruce for some time. He had been greatly engaged with a party of capitalists, examining some extensive mining properties in another part of the Province. When she was taking her leave of Billy, she suggested, if it were possible, it might be well for him to get a woman in to give his house a thorough cleaning.

"If we could find a woman to do it for us, we will gladly hire her."

"Ann Waters might come; she wants to earn an honest living. I will go and see her, if you are willing."

"Of course I'm willing. It will seem like my lost youth come back to me, to be living in a clean house once more."

Aimée surveyed her handiwork with great complacency, and when she went with her proposal to Ann Waters that she should do her part in

the "cheering-up" business, Ann went to her task with alacrity.

When Billy's chum entered his home that evening, he started back in amazement.

"Who's been here?" he asked.

"The little preacher did the prettiest part, and she got Ann Waters to do the rest. I hired Ann myself, and paid her."

Ross turned around, slowly examining the changed aspect of the place.

"I say, Billy, we are missing a lot out of our lives by not having wives of our own to make our home happy."

"I see that I have missed far more than that, mate; I have turned over a new leaf, and I hope you will do the same. There's enough and to spare for both of us."

Ross sat down, seeming to have forgotten that he had not had his supper.

"There's a bit of lunch in the locker, left over from my dinner, which the little preacher brought me. I don't want anything more to-night but a drink of water, and I want you to eat it; you don't often get such victuals."

Ross found the lunch, and, as he swallowed the last crumb, his views regarding the luxury of a good house and wife underwent still further changes.

"See here, Billy, I'm going to try if there's a chance for us to do better than work by the month in these mines. S'posin' we go on an expedition of our own, and prospect for a mine.

We've had plenty of experience, and as for luck, we've had all kinds; and, if we'd been as careful as our fathers before us, we might have as good homes as heart could wish."

"I am going to turn square about in everything, but not in my own strength, mate, not in my own strength; we neither have much resolution where the grog is concerned, but the Lord will help us, if we look to Him."

"I hope you ain't going to die, Billy," said Ross anxiously.

"Oh no; and soon as my arm gets strong, I'll go wherever you want. I'd like to get a nugget for her. I thought, as I watched her going around here to-day, as bright and cheerful as a robin, dear heart, I'll give you a keepsake in memory of this day, if the Lord gives me back my strength."

"I will chip in too, for it is all the same as if 'twas done to myself. We have not been mates for a dozen years without having a feeling for each other that we don't have for everyone."

"It is kind of you to say so when I am on my back, mate. I never had such kind feelings for you as I have to-day, but it is all along of the little preacher. She brought all the world nearer to my heart by her words. I wish you could hear her; maybe she will drop in on Sunday when you are home."

"I would rather be out of the way; praying is not much in my line, Billy."

"I know. I would have said the same thing a week ago, but I am a different man now,

and my heart was never so happy as it's been to-day."

Sandy wished he could think of something suitable to say, but failed to find anything except—"Ye'll maybe 'pan-out' a bit of a prayer for us to-night, mate."

As the days wore into weeks, Aimée's visits continued with great regularity. The change in Billy Anderson was so genuine that his comrades could not fail to take notice of it. Those who dropped in of an evening for a friendly call went home usually in a sober frame of mind. The remarkable incidents they were in the habit of recounting regarding their exploits by field and flood seemed out of place. Not infrequently a visit ended with reading and prayer. Aimée was not aware of these leavening processes going on in the hearts of her friends. Such is frequently the case with those who work for others.

CHAPTER XVII

Lionel Ashe

THE Sunday afternoon services had been held with great regularity, and without any lessening of interest. Music added very largely to the attractions of the meetings; and one evening, when Aimée took her place by the reading desk, her gaze was arrested by a new cabinet organ standing a little to one side. A good many pairs of eyes were watching to see the effect the gift, to which nearly everyone present had contributed something, would have upon her. The colour deepened in the rose-leaf cheek as she glanced from one to another, and saw the look of sympathetic joy on every face.

"I will not try, dear friends, to thank you," she said, "for this delicious surprise; I will only work all the harder to help each one of you to make sure of the glad surprises of heaven."

It was not so much the words as the way they were uttered that touched the hearts of her audience, and many a bright eye glistened with ready sympathy.

"Will one of you join me in an accompani-

ment?" She lifted her violin and waited a moment, while a whispered consultation was held down near the door among a party of young men, who, as it chanced, were most of them Oxford graduates, although some of them, if they were to be judged by their garments, would never be taken for persons favoured with such early advantages. Presently one of them stepped out into the aisle, and came to the front. After a moment's consultation about their hymns, a wave of melody floated out on the air. The organist's threadbare corduroys were forgotten, while his rapt expression revealed how keenly he enjoyed the music. His own voice swelled rich and full above the others; he had a superb tenor, which had been judiciously trained. They sang more than usual that day; indeed, it seemed to each of them that they could not better serve the Lord than in the triumphant music of the church universal which was contained in the books that some generous hand had provided. They had many creeds represented there, for many countries had sent their sons to that far-away spot among the mountains. The three sons of Noah all had their descendants present—the meek-faced Chinamen as keenly attentive as any. Billy Anderson was there for the first time after his accident, and his comrade Ross, the latter looking far from happy. Aimée was becoming a keen observer of faces, and was usually well pleased when they looked down-hearted. She had hopes for a man when he was getting dissatisfied with himself. She sometimes lengthened the meetings

indefinitely when there was unusual interest, and this particular evening she violated the rules of early closing more than ever, but no one showed signs of fatigue.

"You make your meetings every bit as enticin' as a dance. I never knowed religion could be made so enticin'," a blonde eastern man from New Brunswick said heartily. "I guess it must be your woman's knack of knowing just the right thing to do." He stood a moment holding her hand in his own roughened palm, and then said with a little break in his voice: "We are used to men out here, and we don't pay much more heed to them in the pulpit than out of it; but, since I've heard you, I've thought more about my mother than I've done for a dozen years before. She's been in another world so long, it seemed to me as if I were forgotten; but you've taught me different, and I'm thinking I'd like to get beside my mother when I leave this world."

"God grant that you may," Aimée said earnestly.

The young Englishman who had presided at the organ came up just then to speak about the music, and the other poor fellow walked slowly away, but Aimée meant to look after him, and, if possible, get him to seek in earnest for meetness for that world where he believed his mother had gone.

"My name is Lionel Ashe," the young man said, introducing himself modestly to Aimée. "I would like to come in occasionally on a week evening and practise awhile on the organ. I have practised

only on the pipe organ or piano, and the reed organ is slightly different."

Aimée's face brightened with a sudden inspiration. "Why might we not all come. I will bring my violin, and we can practise together."

"Oh, Miss Roebart, will you do it?"

"Why, yes indeed, I shall only be too glad."

"I cannot explain to you what a boon it will be to a lot of us young fellows living in our shacks, and with no place to go to but the saloons, or worse places."

"Then you may begin at once. What hour can you be here?"

He paused, and looking down thoughtfully, said—

"With a little expedition on our part, I think we can get through with our household duties by half-past seven. You see, we are not expert housekeepers, and it takes us a good while to do a little, and that little, I am sorry to say, is performed only indifferently."

Aimée was struck with the courtly bearing of this young man in soiled corduroys. Evidently he had not spent all his life in a miner's shack.

"I wish our men could have a reading-room, with some good literature; a comfortable place to sit in would be a powerful rival to the saloon," he said, as they walked down the street together.

"Shall we make the attempt? I think Mr. Bruce will help us in the matter of rent and literature, if we ask him; besides, see how they got us an organ; the men who contributed for that will help with the reading-room."

"Unfortunately, Miss Roebart, it was Mr. Bruce who paid the most towards that. Our men spend so much of their money foolishly, they have very little left for better things."

"I wish he would come to our meetings," Aimée said wistfully.

"The set he is intimate with have very little sympathy with your work. In a grand cathedral they would be very devout, but when it comes to working among ragged, unsavoury miners, they beg to be excused."

"Well, it can't be helped. God will open his heart in His own good time."

"I find that reverses are not the saddest experience that can come to a man."

Aimée looked at him with gentle sympathy.

"One might say that I have had more than my share of them, so I should be in a position to give a correct opinion," he said, with a smile.

"When I saw your fingers glancing along the organ keys, I knew they were trained for other things than the miner's pick and shovel."

"Yes, a good many of us have come to this country on a fool's errand. There are such glowing reports circulated about it, we fancy it must be a veritable El Dorado; but we are here and we must make the best of it."

Their paths now diverged. He held out his hand, saying—

"I hope you will bear our reading-room in mind."

"Yes, I will do what I can."

When Aimée spoke of it to John Mansfield he

encouraged her to go on. "If you can do anything for that young Ashe, it will be a charity," he said earnestly. "The poor fellow came out here with a pile of money and sank every dollar of it in a worthless mine; since then he has been working by the day. His father is a baronet, and he was engaged to be married to the daughter of an earl; but since his luck has gone so hard against him, he has dropped all communication with his friends in England; they suppose, of course, that he is dead. He is not a bad chap by any means, and his heart is as tender as a woman's to any poor wretch worse off than himself. I am very glad you have got hold of him."

The following day Aimée started out full of her new enterprise. Their first requirement was a room. Several were available, but the rent was so high she was afraid to venture; while there would be additional expenses—the heating, lighting, and literature would each take something. It was necessary to have their reading-room in a central position, where it could be a rival to the saloons. As she walked along the street feeling somewhat depressed, she thought what a pity it was that with so much gold hidden under ground she could not get enough for this good work. Summoning all her courage to her aid, she turned her steps towards Mr. Bruce's office. She rang the bell nervously, and was dismayed to think what a vigorous pull she had given. He opened the door himself, and before she had got well seated she plunged right into her story; for her

courage was oozing rapidly, and she was afraid she might fail outright. "I have come to thank you for our organ, and if you please I would like another favour." She felt that she was proceeding with very bad grace, but she could not think just then of any better way of expressing her wants. "If I am too bold a beggar, please tell me so honestly."

"I scarcely think you will ever ask me for more than I shall be willing to give." He spoke so kindly, she felt a lump rising in her throat; but, putting a strong restraint on her feelings, she plunged bravely into her story.

"I want to have a reading-room for my boys, where they may go in their idle moments; it will keep them perhaps from the saloon. We need money for running expenses, and I have only a little to spare. I have come first to you."

"I am very glad you did. I hope you will always come to me first, and last also. If you will allow me, I will be your banker."

She looked at him with some surprise and a good deal of gratitude, and then said gently, "Thank you very much, Mr. Bruce." She was silent for a few moments, and then proceeded eagerly with the narration of her plans. "I want to make the room home-like and pretty, so that the men when they look about them will feel really as if they were at home; and I can do that without asking any help. One always has bits of muslin, you know, that can be used for draperies, and we have woodcuts, and I can quickly paint

some rough sketches of our beautiful scenery here, and, no doubt, there are far better artists than I with the pickaxe in their hands all day. It is really wonderful, Mr. Bruce, what a number of well-educated, brainy, young fellows we have here!"

Mr. Bruce did not look particularly well pleased to hear them referred to.

"Yes, Miss Roebart," he said coldly, "but they are not always to be trusted."

"Oh, I daresay not; but we must try and help them to be better men," she said, with much cheerfulness. She was feeling so glad because of her success with Mr. Bruce, she could not afford to take a gloomy view of anything just then.

"We shall need some benches or chairs for them to sit on, and a stove when the weather gets cold, lamps, oil, and literature. I think that will be all."

"Books, newspapers, and magazines will all be needed," Mr. Bruce said absently; evidently he was thinking of something beside the reading-room, which Aimée noticing fancied must be some business matter that her entrance had interrupted.

"Yes, I know," she said eagerly; "but I have thought that all over. Don't you think your friends and people generally would give us their papers and magazines after they had read them, and perhaps a few of their books. We don't expect to begin in a large way all at once."

"How interested she is in these men!" Mr. Bruce thought, as he looked into the bright face of the girl. He had been very busy when her ring at the door bell interrupted him, but he had forgotten

about his unfinished business, and was wondering how he could prolong this fascinating interview. He entered heartily into her plans, making fresh suggestions merely for the pleasure of watching the changing expression of the lovely face turned so eagerly toward him. He promised to foot all the bills, giving her full charge of the undertaking, with liberty to select the room, the furniture, and whatever books and literature she thought best.

"You must be a very rich man"; she spoke sadly.

"From the expression of your face, I would judge that you thought abundant means was not a matter for congratulation." He smiled into the face, no longer so full of pleasant excitement as it had been.

"It would be so sad for you to have all your good things in this life, Mr. Bruce." Evidently it was a very hard struggle for her to speak the words, especially since he had been so kind to her. But she wisely did not attempt any further sermonising, but, rising hastily, said: "I am afraid I have trespassed too long on your time, Mr. Bruce. You have always been so good to me in listening to my ideas, yet you have no more time than the poorest man in your employ, and it must be so valuable."

"I assure you it is not so valuable but I will gladly devote whatever portion of it to your service that you will accept."

"Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Bruce." She held out her hand; it seemed the natural thing

now, always to shake hands with him at parting. "How can I evince my gratitude!"

"Come to me at once, if you want money or advice. I assure you no one will be so welcome."

She gave him a quick, coy glance of delight.

"I cannot understand how that can be when I always come to beg for money," she replied smilingly.

"Perhaps you may understand some day."

She went out. When the door closed behind her, Mr. Bruce still stood as if in a brown study, until another request for admittance brought him back to things present. A few moments later he was absorbed in plans for a huge undertaking that might mean the gain or loss of a good many thousands of dollars.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Public Library

TO say that Aimée was well pleased when she stepped into the street that morning would very inadequately express the measure of her satisfaction. In the first place, it was a comfort to know that Mr. Bruce took such kindly interest in her work; she was a healthy-minded young woman, and had not a taste for the pains of martyrdom in any form, and therefore craved the good opinion of everyone. She was also a good business woman, and without further delay proceeded at once to put her plans into execution. She had settled in her own mind on the room she would like to have; it had a western outlook, and was directly opposite the largest saloon in town. Its location suited her particularly well, since she knew her boys would scarcely venture to cross the threshold if they knew her eyes were watching for them from the windows across the way. The rent was heavy, but so was Mr. Bruce's purse. She engaged the room at once, lest while she waited to bargain for a reduction of rent, some interested party might secure

it. That afternoon Ann Waters was given the job of cleaning it, and the following day Aimée and she were busy with their muslin draperies and other ornamentation, and with a few books and papers to begin with, also such games as draughts, chess, and dominoes, the doors were open to the public. An artist, who had in his early days taken lessons from an R.A., painted the sign for her, but this took some days, as he was a day-labourer, and could only devote to the work the short daylight hours after his work was done. She was improvident, Ann thought, on lamps and coal-oil, since the latter was seventy cents a gallon; but Aimée said they had bright lights to entice the men into the saloon, and coal-oil was cheaper than souls. A great many curious glances were bent on her windows the first few evenings, and the saloon door swung to oftener than hers; but she waited and prayed. Lionel Ashe stood by her nobly; he sang his best songs, while she accompanied him on the violin; she left the windows wide open, and tried to persuade the men to come in with the bow of her violin. The first man to come was Sandy Ross, Billy Anderson's chum, followed a few minutes later by Billy himself, and two men with him, whom he had persuaded to accompany him. They only had a dozen men all told the first evening, but Lionel Ashe assured Aimée it was a great victory to get even that number; and no doubt it meant the loss of several dollars to the saloon-keeper across the way. Poor Ashe declared it was the happiest evening he had spent for months, and

walked all the way home with Aimée discussing plans for still greater helpfulness. His life was so lonely, he was thankful for trifling pleasures; besides, the society of a refined, cultured woman was something he scarcely dared to hope for again in this world. He was a man of considerable ability and of wide information, but there were few for him to talk to. He had relinquished all the bright dreams of his youth for the gleam of the Golden God. He had staked and lost his happiness. He had preserved a few books amid his wanderings in the mountains. These, with the weekly copy of the London *Times* and his beloved violin—now more than a century old—and, more than all, a package of letters tied with a faded ribbon, comprised his best of worldly possessions. The letters had been read until the leaves were worn thin. It was so long since the last one had been folded away with the others, that it too was as faded as they. Many a Sabbath morning he had gone away into the hills with these and his violin, his heart hot within him because of hopeless, despairing thoughts, but coming back at night with a different look upon his face.

The service that Sabbath day in the church when he had touched the organ keys had helped him to clearer vision. He realised, as never before that he was not to live merely for a lost passion. There was work to be done, men to be helped, and he had been neglecting the work right at his hand.

That evening, when he was sitting alone and thinking over his past life, a resolve seized him to write two letters home, and send them by the morning's mail. One was directed to the beautiful girl whose picture lay over his heart; the other was to his father. In each he confessed the failure of his hopes and the poverty of his condition. There were moments of regret after the mail had carried them away, when he would have recalled and burned them if he could, and have taken up once more his silent, hopeless life. Yet, now that he had confessed his failure, there came into his soul a feverish eagerness to have an answer to his letters. He began to count not only the days but the hours when letters might be looked for, while he speculated on the possibilities of accident or shipwreck by land or sea. He took hold of Aimée's plans for the benefit of her men with eager earnestness. He was glad of anything that helped to make the hours speed quickly by. Every evening he was at his post in the reading-room, remaining from beginning to end, and tried to be as jubilant as Aimée over its success. As for her, she counted her visitors each evening with a miser's greed. Half a dozen new faces of an evening was sufficient to provide her with sunshine for the next four-and-twenty hours. She improvised musical soirees every few evenings, assisted not only by Lionel Ashe, but by other singers with finely cultivated voices who joined with them. Some of these men wore garments that were rudely patched, and their general appearance was that of

the gentlemanly tramp; but they were too well bred to be painfully self-conscious.

Though she herself and her work were to a great extent ignored by the select few, who regarded themselves as the leaders of society in the mountains, Aimée went on her way trying to forget their contempt. One evening, however, in the midst of a successful musical programme, when the seats were all full, Mrs. Randall and Mrs. Becket, with a couple of young ladies whom Aimée took to be strangers, came into the room, which then looked at its best, with the bright lamps and the neat furnishings. The company were as well behaved as if they had been in a private parlour. Lionel Ashe looked earnestly on to see how Aimée would receive the new-comers. He devoutly hoped she would leave them to entertain themselves; for he very well knew how lightly they esteemed both her and her work. She received them, however, very kindly, but with the slightest suspicion of hauteur.

When the piece that was sung when they entered was ended, she went to them and treated them in exactly the same way she would have done to the raggedest stranger that might stray into the reading-room. The lady visitors seemed constrained and ill at ease. This very peculiar young woman impressed them as much superior to any one in their set. All at once the fact dawned upon them that her charm of speech and manner was the secret of her phenomenal influence over these men. They were chagrined that she took

so little interest in them; for after a few polite words she left them, not to return again for the rest of the evening. Evidently she had not felt flattered by their condescension in paying a visit to the reading-room.

CHAPTER XIX

The News the Postman brought

ONE evening as he called at the post office on his way to the reading-room, Lionel Ashe found a letter awaiting him. He failed to put in an appearance there, the first time he had been absent since it was opened, and they all missed him greatly. He had recognised the handwriting at once, and, slipping the letter into his pocket, he turned his face homeward, eager, and yet afraid, to break the seal and read his fate. Arriving at his shack, which, from choice, he occupied alone, he lighted his lamp, took the letter from his pocket, and held it unopened in his hand. He was not a coward, but for awhile he had not the courage to read it. In three years of silence on his part a great change must have taken place in Lady Claire Wriothesly. Even a loving wife might be pardoned for changing her condition in that length of time, when she believed herself to be a widow. He broke the seal at last, and then devoured the letter almost at a single glance. She was still unmarried; Claire Wriothesly stood out clearly at the end of the letter. She

urged him to leave that barren country at once; in England there was room for him, friends who would share their last penny with him; she had plenty; could he not accept from her. How he lingered over the half-veiled meaning of those words. Could it be possible she was asking him to share his poverty, his utter failure, with her abundance? A flush of shame swept over the face buried in his hands, for he tried to conceal, even from himself, that hot, passionate tears were forcing themselves from his eyes. Oh, why, when there was uncounted wealth under his feet, all around him in these mountains, could he not find enough to give him the right to claim this woman for his own! He seized his pen and wrote her such a letter as few in her position are in the habit of receiving; and then, without giving himself time to repent, he rushed to the post office and deposited it. A few days later there came a message from his father, full of sympathy, and bidding him to come home at once. "We have enough and to spare," the letter said; "and though the times are bad here as elsewhere, and there may be difficulties for one in your position making a way for himself, yet anything is preferable to your present mode of life." He was not so hasty in replying to this letter, but, taking it to Aimée, told her all the story of his life, confessing also his love for the Lady Claire, which had impelled him to leave home in the hopes of finding gold to lay at her feet. The tears came to Aimée's eyes before he had finished his story.

"Go at once; if this great lady loves you truly, she won't mind if you come to her, like the prodigal, in rags." She regarded his corduroys somewhat doubtfully. Truly they were not very presentable for a fine lady's boudoir. "If you could only find a pocket somewhere, as the miners say." She looked wistfully out over the hills. "There is gold there, if we could only find it; but that is the trouble, and it is useless to cry for the unattainable."

"Perfectly useless; I have gone hungry many a day in the vain search for gold. It seems as if gold makes gold; it comes easily enough to men like Mr. Bruce; he is all the time making lucky finds."

"Never mind, you will go back to England, and all will 'go merry as a marriage bell.' You can be assured, too, when you are there rich and happy that your coming here was not in vain; many of us have been helped by your presence."

"If I go home."

"Of course you will go home. Before a month has passed I shall be thinking of you as among your friends, and far removed from conditions such as we have here, and I shall be wondering, too, where my next tenor will come from." She tried to speak lightly, but there was a melancholy look on her face; for she had found this friend very helpful in her work, and there was no other quite like him.

It was as she had prophesied; in less than a

week he presented himself at John Mansfield's in a new suit of clothes; the faded corduroys were a thing of the past; and although the fit of the garments and texture were not of the best, yet the transformation was enough to surprise his friends.

"I did not know you were so handsome," Aimée said brightly. "You are going to leave us, I know from the look on your face."

"Yes; I go on Monday. I could leave by to-morrow's mail, but I have decided to spend one more Sunday with you. If I live, I shall have many a Sunday to spend with my friends across the sea, and but one with you."

"Will you write and let us hear how you get on? I would like to know if the realisation equals your expectation."

"I shall hope to write many times. One who has helped me as you have done will never willingly be lost sight of; but for you I would never have written; you somehow gave me to see that money and success are only a part of life, and that character is greater than all."

They talked for awhile over his future prospects. An opening had been found for him in a large commercial undertaking, his name and connections being taken in lieu of more tangible recommendations.

Lady Claire Wriothesly had come into possession of large landed estates, and in her last letter, which Aimée had been permitted to read,

had insisted with such modest grace that he would come and help her to fulfil her duty, as a great landed proprietor, with hundreds of tenants depending on her, that Aimée believed his connection with the mercantile house would be brief.

CHAPTER XX

The Night School Students

BOTH in the reading-room and the church services the help Lionel Ashe had given was greatly missed. Other men volunteered their services in singing and playing on the organ, but there was no one equal to him in the various departments of work. Of late, in addition to her other efforts to uplift these men, Aimée had started a night school. One evening, in the busiest time of lessons, she was somewhat disturbed to see a wealthy American gentleman and his wife come in to the reading-room, where the school was in session. Mr. Ames was the superintendent of the Columbian Mine, and his wife one of the elect ladies of the place. Aimée approached them with a pleasant word and smile, as was her custom with every new-comer, and then, leaving them to amuse themselves with the literature, she went on with her teaching. A lad had come in that evening for the first time, and she had taken him in hand herself, for she had become interested in his remarkable aptitude for imbibing knowledge. It was not many days until he confided to her his past history.

He had run away from his home in one of the far Eastern provinces, leaving a widowed mother and younger brothers and sisters, taking with him nothing but a few pennies and the clothes he stood in.

"You see, I had read a lot about the goldfields of British Columbia, and I concluded if I once got here I could pick it up by the bushel, much as we do potatoes there; so I started. Our farm was run out, and I knew the gold would be better for mother and the family than my help."

"Have you written to your mother?"

"For certain; I wrote soon's I'd got here."

"How did you get here?" she asked curiously.

"Stole rides on the cars, and walked. I got over a long stretch of road in a freight car. I was locked in, and had nothing but crackers to eat. I got awful dry; the sight of water as we travelled along made me most crazy, but I slept all I could."

He then proceeded to relate his experiences at length.

"Have you done pretty well since you came here?" said Aimée, when he had finished his story.

"Fine; I'm banking money, besides sending my mother some every month. You see, I don't drink, or smoke, or gamble, or anything. I am going back bimeby; I shall travel on the Pullman, and I'm going to buy the best farm in the parish, and make a good home for mother and the children."

Aimée did not tire of his long story, but watched

the deeply-glowing eyes of the lad, and thought any future might be possible to such pluck and perseverance as he had shown. Mr. Ames and his wife took their departure unobserved by Aimée; indeed, she had scarcely given them a thought again, until the following afternoon, when Mrs. Ames came knocking at their door. She was very cordial and sympathetic, and before she left offered to give an occasional evening to help in teaching the boys and men in the evening school.

"I never felt so ashamed of myself in all my life as I did last night," she said frankly. "We have been spending our summers here for four years, making lots of money out of these men, but I never once thought that I might do anything to help to make them better or happier."

"You could do so much, too, with your wealth and your husband's influence. I never craved for money so much in all my life as I do now."

"Is money required for your work?" Mrs. Ames asked.

"Oh yes, indeed; and it is needed in so many different ways. My heart is very sad sometimes."

"Not because of your own sorrows, I am sure?"

"I have no real sorrows of my own. Why should I have?"

"Such a girl as you, with your face and manner, must surely have lovers, and all the distractions and tragedies consequent to youth and beauty."

"I never seem to have leisure for such things; it must be a sad waste of precious time."

"Why, you might as well be a nun, and have

done with life altogether. I must tell my friends what you say." She certainly meant to repeat Aimée's words to Mr. Bruce. She fancied that he took more than a passing interest in this girl, with her unselfish philanthropies. Later on she remarked to her husband: "It would gratify me more than I can express to see that man desperately in love, and having a hard time to secure the object of his desire."

"Why so?"

"For various reasons. One is; he seems always to have the power of compelling circumstances to bend to his imperious will. You know yourself he always has his own way."

"I usually find it the best way."

"Well, I would like to see him lose, for once, his calm assurance. If it was on that little Roebart girl, it would be better than a play to see the look of astonishment on her face as he pressed his suit."

"He will never perpetrate such a blunder as to ask her to marry him until he is sure of having his wishes granted. He understands handling your sex just as well as he does great mining enterprises. I am not sure if he has not some deep-laid plans in reference to the young lady now. It is not his way to throw away money on such enterprises as she has started without some prospect of getting his own out of it."

"If that is so, why don't he see more of her. They never meet for any length of time except on business, and he seldom goes to her meetings."

"He is too wise a man to frighten her with love-making until the right time comes. He judges that she will get tired of this work after awhile—it is just a young girl's fad; then, at the right moment, he will step in and win her. He is too busy a man to waste much time in love-making."

"You need not tell me that; the busiest, as well as the most ambitious, drop everything else when they get in earnest in such matters."

"Well, in any case, it will afford you some amusement—in this dull place—watching developments in that love episode."

"If only there could be complications; but the men she is helping are scarcely interesting enough to make Mr. Bruce jealous. The crowd we saw at her reading-room were, I thought, a particularly degraded-looking lot."

"You looked at them with prejudiced eyes. Several of those poor fellows were University men, and honour men at that. I know at least two of them to have pedigrees leading back to the Conquest. Set them down in a city drawing-room, with tailor-made clothes on, and the transformation would astonish you. No wonder the poor fellows almost worship that little preacher. By the way, do you know they are getting up a testimonial for her for Christmas? I was telling Bruce about it, and I saw a dull flush come into his impassive face in spite of himself."

"I believe he hates to have her mixed up with those men."

"Perhaps he does, but he can't help himself."

"What did he say when you told him about the Christmas gift?" Mrs. Ames asked, with great interest.

"He made no reply. I did not expect any; it would not be like him."

CHAPTER XXI

Clothing the Naked

THE weather was growing cold, as it had the habit of doing early in those northern mountainous regions. Some of the men who frequented the Sabbath services and the reading-room wore clothing so threadbare, it made one shiver to look at them.

Aimée had watched the clothes getting more worn as the weather got colder, until at last she could stand it no longer. One frosty morning, when the sun was shining brightly on the distant mountain peaks, she started out on a new expedition of mercy. She took Mr. Bruce's office first. He was at home, and, as she rather timidly asked if he could grant her a five minutes' interview, he assured her that he had a whole forenoon to bestow upon her if she wished.

"Oh, thank you so much; but a very few minutes will suffice." She spoke with much cheerfulness, thankful to find this exceptionally busy man so prodigal of his time. She looked very intently at the ceiling for a few seconds, while Mr. Bruce quite as intently regarded her, inwardly

amused at the anxious look on her face, very fully convinced that it was the contents of his pocket-book she was after, and that it was timidity and not a devotional frame of mind that was causing that devout expression of countenance.

"I am ashamed to ask you so soon for more money, Mr. Bruce." She had dropped her gaze to a level with his face, but she was not looking into his eyes.

"It is a long time since you have been to see me; at least I have thought so."

"Surely you are not in earnest, Mr. Bruce."

"I never was more in earnest in my life."

"I was thinking, as I stood a few moments at your door, waiting to get courage to ring the bell, that you would soon get to look upon me as the greatest nuisance of your life."

"You were never farther astray from the truth."

Aimée gave him a puzzled look, her eyes now meeting his in a clear, questioning gaze. "I hope I do not misunderstand your meaning, but if I do —well, it can't be helped, and anyway, you have made it a great deal easier than I expected for me to make my request. I would like so much to have a Christmas Tree for my friends—I mean, Mr. Bruce, for my poor ones. If I had some money, I would send east to Toronto and get some coats and things for some of my men, and some flannels for the women and children. If I could get a few dollars from each person, it would help me so much."

"I should say you ought to get a great many dollars."

How heartily he spoke, and how warm the poor girl's heart grew."

"You see, Mr. Bruce, they have been so good to me, coming to my meetings and the reading-room. I want to do something for them in return, and Christmas is such a blessed time to pay back all such debts of love and gratitude. I wish I could pay you too."

His heart gave a tremendous bound as he took in the look of wistful gratitude in the lovely eyes. Presently he said, very gently, "Most persons would say the debt of gratitude should all be on the other side. I fail to see any just cause for rewarding those men for coming to listen to you."

"Please don't look at it in that way. Just think, they have listened so patiently to my poor little talks, Sunday after Sunday, all these months; why, sometimes I could hardly keep the tears back when I saw them paying such good attention, and what I said was hardly worth saying. I hope you won't look at it in that way, for I do want your help so badly. Other people pattern after you, and if you start with a few dollars, why, they will give something too."

"Did you think I was going to refuse you?"

She gave him a quick, eager look, his voice was like a caress; she did not reply, but handed him her subscription paper.

"I put my own name down for a small sum. I

could not afford any more, for I have only an allowance of fifty dollars a year."

Mr. Bruce gave her a look of utter amazement. "Do you tell me that you dress and do all that on fifty dollars a year, and have anything left for charity?"

"Why, certainly. I shall have half my allowance to give away out here, for no one expects a self-appointed missionary to be dressed like the lilies of the field."

Mr. Bruce said nothing, but going to his writing-table, signed his name to a cheque after he had filled it in, and then brought it to Aimée. She looked at it for an instant, while he watched the expression of her face. "You do not think I have given enough."

"A dollar won't help me very much, Mr. Bruce. I won't put your name down just yet, if you don't mind."

"A dollar! what do you mean? My name is down for a hundred."

There was a flame of crimson in the white face, and a pair of faltering eyes, brimming with tears, glanced for an instant into those other eyes closely watching her. She turned away without speaking, and stood for some minutes looking out across the frozen waste of hill and mountain. Turning to him presently, she said, with a break in her voice: "Perhaps I should ask you to forgive me, but I ask so many favours of you, I think I won't mind just now." She held out her hand, and though the tears were in her eyes, she smiled bravely up into his face.

"I believe it is your duty to ask my forgiveness. I thought assuredly that you had a better opinion of me than that." He was holding her hand, and seemed in no haste to dismiss her and go back to his interrupted work.

"John Mansfield says every minute of yours that I waste in my begging calls represents so many dollars wasted. I must go now, and not get any more in your debt."

"Tell John Mansfield he was never more mistaken than that. May I come to your Christmas celebration, and see those happy individuals you are going to clothe?"

"We shall be very glad to have you come, but if I may quote my brother-in-law's words again, he said you always left for the winter some time before Christmas."

"I shall not do so this year."

"Then we shall look for you—and, Mr. Bruce, if you are done with my hand I will leave."

She was herself now; all her accustomed ease of manner was restored, and the merry smile on her face warned Mr. Bruce that he had gone far enough for that day. She canvassed the place very thoroughly, but when she returned, quite tired out, to her home, after the last request for help had been made, she had not got nearly so much, all told, as Mr. Bruce's subscription amounted to; but she was very jubilant over her success.

At the reading-room that evening she studied the numerous patches and rents in her men's wearing apparel with great care, and made

a minute in her own mind of each individual's requirements, jotting down a rough draft of their needs on the spot. As she talked her plans over with her sister later on, they decided that a Christmas feast upon suitable lines would help to make their festivity a greater success.

"We can have plenty of home-made bread, with butter, tea and coffee, cake, and cold meats, and some fruit. It will taste good to the poor fellows, who never see light bread or home-made cake. A good Christmas loaf, with plenty of currants, will remind them of other days," Ruth suggested, ready in the largeness of her heart to provide the whole thing herself; but this Aimée would not permit.

"It is not fair for John to be expected to do so much; if others do not help, I will take a few dollars out of the money I have collected. It is all for my boys, and they will get more good out of the same money expended in a simple feast than in any other way."

With John's help the list was made out, and sent off at once. It was he who had the work of drawing estimates as to size of coats and pants for the different men; but he assured Aimée that a perfect fit could not be guaranteed under the circumstances, and not one of the men would be unreasonable enough to expect it. After due waiting, the package came in good time, and gave satisfaction to Aimée, whatever might be the case with the men who had to wear the clothes. She had suggested in her letter that last season's styles would

do nicely, if prices were correspondingly low, and, it would seem, the firm had an abundant supply of such stock ready to meet her wishes.

On Christmas morning she employed little Jim Clarkson to help an older boy to carry the presents around to the various shacks. She wanted her friends to appear to the best advantage at the Christmas celebration, and for some of them to come in their old soiled clothes would be a punishment to all concerned. As Jim and his assistant were passing Mr. Bruce's office on one of their trips, he called Jim to come in, and entrusted him with a letter for Aimée. Jim felt the importance of the commission, and, after he had delivered it, stood watching while she read it, with an air of proprietorship, as if he had as large a share in it as she. He was not prepared for the cry of delight that its contents evoked from Aimée.

"Just listen, all of you. Mr. Bruce writes to say that he has received from the coast all the confectionery, grapes, oranges, apples, nuts, and raisins that we shall need, and he is going to come himself; won't it be just splendid!"

"I saw some grapes once, and I've seen oranges too," Jim said proudly; his knowledge of such fruits, however, had only been through his eyes. For the rest of the day he could think or speak of little else than the unlimited supplies of fruit and confectionery; and every man, woman, and child that we met on the streets he felt it his bounden duty to acquaint with the fact that all the good things they could desire were to be had that

evening for the asking. He wondered how he could wait for evening, but when his last errand was done, and he returned to the Mansfield cottage to receive his promised reward, he forgot for the moment what further excellence of joy awaited him that day, in the gift that Aimée had provided for him.

CHAPTER XXII

Christmas Night

HOW white the snow lay across mountain and valley, as Aimée looked out over the waste before starting for the reading-room that Christmas night. She was glad the moon was so full and bright, and it helped to make Christmas joy and beauty all the more complete. It had been a very busy day, and much hard work was yet to be done; but she had sound health, and rarely felt weariness.

To many another person that evening, as they wended their way through the crisp frostiness of ice and snow to the place of general resort, this world seemed all the brighter for the presence in it of a gracious-hearted, unselfish girl. The saloons had not done such poor business on a Christmas day since the town was started. Hitherto the poor fellows, who were alone all day long in their shacks, with plain fare, and nothing to brighten the slow-moving hours, could hardly resist the craving for Christmas cheer of some sort, and so drifted to the one place open to them quite naturally. But to-day there was expectation in the air. To so many

of them had come tokens of goodwill of a useful sort from "the little preacher," that they could not yield to the enticements of the saloon, and go to the Christmas festival reeking with the fumes of whisky. In the early morning a teamster had come to Aimée with a message from Mr. Bruce, saying that a team and driver were at her disposal for the day, to bring boughs to decorate the room, or whatever dishes or food might be required. Of course the offer was joyously received; the sight, and the fragrant smell of the evergreens, would help to make the festival still more enjoyable. The teamster, though a stolid Englishman, who had been a coachman in a titled family in the old country, and had therefore been accustomed to hold himself well under control, could not help catching something of the spirit of the hour, and promised to do his best. The result was that many willing hands who had learned the art of decorating home and church at Christmastide in the old land, lent their aid, with such good results that when Aimée stepped across the doorstep it was a bower of greenery and of beauty. There was a fair-sized congregation of boys and girls alone, for Jimmie Clarkson had exerted himself to such good advantage, in making known what Mr. Bruce was going to contribute, that every boy and girl in the place was eager to share in the gift. Ann Waters had been on hand since morning, busy in a nook of her own, which was screened off from prying eyes, behind a gay chintz curtain. Here she had been cutting cake, spreading thin slices of home-made bread

with butter, and unpacking fruit, confectionery, and nuts, until her arms ached. Such quantities of these as Mr. Bruce had sent, enough she estimated to satisfy the appetite of every man, woman, and child in the place. When Aimée saw the goodly heap that Ann had arranged on plates and in baskets, she felt an uncomfortable tightness about her breast. Such generosity was more than she had dreamed of receiving from this self-absorbed man, and she began casting about in her mind how best to express her gratitude. Mrs. Clarkson had charge of the tea and coffee, and was ambitious to have it judiciously prepared, so that it might equal in excellence of flavour any that the best housekeepers might set before their guests that day. Ann was beginning to regard each fresh arrival with dismay, for while the supplies Mr. Bruce had provided would exceed their utmost need, the bread and cake might not go around till each was satisfied; but presently a huge hamper was deposited at her feet, and someone whispered that it came from Mrs. Ames, Mrs. Randall, and the other select ladies of the town. Aimée opened the hamper, and a cry of delight escaped her lips. Such loaves of frosted cake she had not seen for many a day, with pies and cold meat, jellies, and ices. The call was given for helpers to cut and carry these delicacies to the waiting crowds, who were getting seated around the rough board tables erected for the occasion, and covered with long strips of white cotton instead of table linen.

"I couldn't bear to think of anyone going with-

out, and for awhile I had my fears; but this load of good things will satisfy the hungriest," said Ann.

"The fruit and confectionery would have saved us from bankruptcy. I did not for a moment think Mr. Bruce had sent so much, until I came here and saw it."

Ann wondered if the girl had no thought that her own fair face and winning manner had not something to do with the rich man's beneficence. Aimée proved herself as expert in dissecting a loaf of cake as in leading a meeting, so that in a very short time the signal was given for supper to begin. Grace was sung heartily, and one could believe from their faces that many of those present sang it from a full heart. Each happy possessor of a new garment came in good time—some of them who were not used to good clothes, and others equally unused to receiving the bounty of strangers, falling into their appointed places somewhat shamefacedly; but they each and all soon forgot such trifles as that in the general good-fellowship that prevailed. There was some confusion, since they were none of them used to such gatherings; but as the provisions were abundant, in due time the hungriest was fully satisfied. It was certainly a mixed gathering. Mr. Bruce, one of the richest mine owners in the province, drank his cup of coffee standing side by side with a Cambridge graduate, whose picturesque tatters had been exchanged a few hours before for garments that Mr. Bruce's bounty had made possible; and yet, the easy grace with which he held his own side in the conversa-

tion proved him the man of perfect breeding. Aimée was watching the two, and was glad to notice that, even when their coffee-drinking was over, Mr. Bruce and Herbert Temple still continued to find topics mutually interesting. Temple was one of her favourites, but had been hitherto anything but a favourite of fortune, his comrades being the judges. Four years before, he had come to the country full of hope, and with a few hundred pounds in his pocket. He belonged to an aristocratic family in England, his father being a well-known prelate, and the lad was ambitious to make enough to take his rightful place among the old families in his native country in the South of England. He persisted in prospecting on his own account, and was always expecting to strike a rich vein. Aimée's admiration had been won by the man's gentle kindliness and his cheerfulness under most depressing circumstances. She had selected for him the best suit of clothes in the lot. She knew that if the men themselves had been left to decide the matter, they would have done the same thing. To watch him to-night as he sampled each article with such evident relish was of itself a delight.

When everyone had done full justice to the good things, it was found that some enterprising individuals had made out a different programme from this for the further delectation of the assembled guests. Aimée was as much surprised as anyone, when, after a few old English glees and chorals had been sung in true English fashion,

Mr. Bruce was asked to take the chair, and make the speech of the evening. She listened as eagerly as the others; but, what was this that he was saying? and why were there such thunders of applause when he mentioned her name, that he had to wait and begin again? And then Ann Waters, who was standing at her elbow, whispered, "Go right forward; they have a Christmas box for you too."

Sure enough Mr. Bruce was looking down at her, apparently waiting for her to come forward and receive something. A way was made for her through the crowd, and faces of every degree of expression were beaming kindly on her. The silence was profound as she went forward with a mystified face to where Mr. Bruce was standing, on a platform erected for the occasion. To most of them the very best part of the proceedings was the little preacher's puzzled, wondering face. Evidently she had not looked for any other Christmas cheer than that of helping to make others cheerful. They liked to think she was unworldly and unselfish, whether they were so or not. But Mr. Bruce was speaking to her now.

"It gives me great pleasure," he said, "to present this purse of money to you on behalf of each person in the community who has contributed towards it. Some three hundred dollars have been subscribed by your friends, and those, too, whom you might not think of including in that honoured list, persons who, though they do not know you, have recognised the splendid unselfishness of your work. In

addition, I have added a trifling sum, not as payment—for this I do not attempt to do—but as a recognition of what you are doing for the men in my employ. You will find in this purse ten fifty dollar bills—a very modest sum, considering the great work you have accomplished among us." He laid the purse in her hand, and then the applause burst out afresh, and was so long continued that Mr. Bruce said, "You must say a few words; they will not be content otherwise."

She drew her handkerchief across her eyes for a moment, and then, turning around, spoke a few words of thanks. The vibrant, quivering voice, however, affected them more deeply than the commonplace words she used, although they possessed that eloquence which comes direct from the heart. There were tears in a good many eyes also when she turned and said to Mr. Bruce, "What am I to do with all this money? It is not given to me, surely."

"Yes; it is all yours. I should call it very small recompense for your hard work."

"We shall all be the richer for this great gift in our work. Oh, God bless you for helping me thus! By this gift you have made my work easy."

She was facing the audience now. There was pleading in voice and gesture. She wanted them to know, then and there, that she accepted this generous gift for them rather than herself. The renewed applause that greeted her words was assurance enough, and she stepped down from the platform with a contented face. It would seem

that she was to have a double share of Christmas gifts that year, for the very next day, when the mail came in, John Mansfield brought her from the post office a good-sized package, with "duty prepaid" marked on it, and, when it was opened, they found wedding cards from Lionel Ashe and his bride, and gifts of books and precious gems, the like of which Aimée had never beheld before.

"Your bread has come back to you off the waters sooner than it comes to most," John said, as he examined the beautiful gift.

"The conditions of life are so different here from most places. We don't often come in contact with people of title elsewhere," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXIII

HEARTS AND HANDS

AIMÉE was most puzzled regarding the uses those ten beautiful bank notes were to be put to. The very next day she surprised her sister with the length of an invoice she had made out to send to the Messrs. Eaton of Toronto, in which the needs of men living in shacks had been lovingly studied. A pair of warm blankets would be worth their weight in gold, or the flannels that were to enfold a poor consumptive on some of those bitter winter nights.

"You must leave something to pay the freight on them, and you ought by all means to lay out some of it on yourself," her sister remonstrated, as she ran her eye over the first draft Aimée had made out. "You must remember there are a good many months before you can dare to expect any more money, and you do not know what fresh needs there may be for money to help others."

Aimée studied the list with a troubled face. "They need every article I have set down here. Do you think it is wise to keep the money lying idle when so many poor creatures are shivering in

their threadbare clothes, and have not so much as a blanket to wrap themselves in at night—I mean a thick, warm blanket. They have old ragged things that are only fit for mat rugs."

"Perhaps not. I was only thinking there might possibly be greater need later on."

"Well, I will keep one hundred dollars, and then I can order a new book or a magazine for our reading-room."

Ruth turned a pitying glance on the girl, who seemed by nature so unfitted to look after her own interests. The goods came in due time, and, as the huge bundles were deposited at their door one bitter winter's day, when all the gentle-hearted people in the place were nearly worn out caring for the influenza patients, the Mansfields acknowledged the warm flannels were better than their equivalent in bank notes. Mr. Bruce had left for England directly after Christmas, and expected to return in the early spring, when mining operations were to be undertaken on a much larger scale than heretofore, and many more men were to be employed in the mines. Aimée was therefore looking for a corresponding increase to her congregation. Her Sunday work she was finding more exhausting than all the rest put together. To get something suitable to bring before her people each Sabbath afternoon taxed her powers greatly, and, only that the Bible was so full of texts admirably suited to the needs of her congregation, she would have found the task heavier. She was a fine reader, especially of the Scriptures, and sometimes she let the Bible

speak for itself almost entirely, a custom that learned doctors of divinity might occasionally follow with good effect. There was no falling off in her congregation; the common people heard her gladly, and a good many took part in her meetings, both men and women. She had more confidence in the latter class, for there had not been a single backslider among her women converts, and some of them, like the widow Clarkson and Ann Waters, were her most effective helpers. It was not so with the men. She had many a time cause to mourn over their backslidings. Weak, maudlin creatures would come to the meetings fresh from the saloon, and, finding their hearts wrought upon, were ready to promise anything while this sweet-faced girl was pleading with them, and painting in vivid colours the wretched end of the course they were pursuing.

"If we could always stay in meeting, or could have you around with us, we could be Christians as easy as wink," one poor fellow solemnly assured her, after he had fallen and been restored so many times that even Aimée despaired of ever seeing him become a sober man.

"You have One with you all the time infinitely stronger than I am to help you, if you would only look to Him."

"I can see you, and I can't see Him," was the reply.

She never cast them off, so that the poor fellows would come stealing shamefacedly to church after some horrible debauch, their countenances a fair

index to their inner wretchedness. She would greet them with such pitying tenderness, they would swear to themselves that the like should never happen again. Through her long-suffering sympathy, they caught glimpses of what the infinite Christ-love must be.

That spring, before the snow had disappeared from the valleys, she had spent every dollar of her Christmas gift, and not one had been appropriated to her own use. When one bright May day John Mansfield came home with the news that the Cariboo stage-coach had brought Mr. Bruce back, and that he was going into mining operations on a tremendously large scale, there was a sorrowful look in the blue eyes, as she thought to what better uses a few of those many thousands of dollars might be put if she had her way. There were scores of ragged, hungry men haunting the place, brought to such straits no doubt by their own weakness, but they were suffering, and that was enough for her.

"If I ever get another five hundred dollars, I shall not spend it all in a few weeks."

John looked up with some amusement from his dinner plate. "Is his money all that you think of when you hear that Mr. Bruce is back?"

"Oh, certainly not; I am glad to see him for his own sake," she said very soberly; "but it is natural I should think of his money first thing, when I see so much need of it."

"You surely won't ask him for more?" John gave her a startled look.

"I cannot very well do that after all that he has given me, but I can pray God to open his heart to give me some unasked."

"You had better be careful not to ask for too much. Rich men have hearts as well as poor ones. It is whispered round that you get more than your share of marriage proposals."

Aimée flushed uneasily, but said nothing.

CHAPTER XXIV

A Question

MR. BRUCE dropped into the reading-room late that evening, and, while chatting with Aimée, his heart beat a good deal faster than usual, as he noticed the wistful manner in which she kept looking at him.

"May I walk home with you this evening?" he asked, as she was turning away to respond to a call from someone.

"Oh yes, indeed," she said heartily.

After that he waited with a good deal of impatience for the men to depart, but at last the most tedious one had gone, and Aimée, locking the door, turned to accompany him. Conversation was not very brisk between them, for Aimée was preoccupied with the question whether she should suggest that her money was gone, and the need was nearly as great as ever, while Mr. Bruce was struggling with the longing to ask for a far greater gift, uncertain if even yet the time to do so was not premature, but the misread look in those true eyes was haunting him still. How short that strip of road seemed to him, although there were neither

moon nor stars to light him on the way; and how soon it was ended. He took the little hand that lay so lightly on his arm, clasping it tightly for a moment, and then said, forgetting his usual calmness of speech: "Won't you give me this hand, Aimée, for my own? I would give every dollar I am worth to have you say 'yes,' for I love you, my darling, as deeply and fondly as any man could." It was a clumsy speech, and John Bruce felt it was so.

"What do you mean, Mr. Bruce?" There was a tremor in the voice, usually so even toned.

"What can I mean but that I want you to be my wife, Aimée? You can work on just as you are doing now; help all the stranded wretches that drift within your reach, and preach every day of your life, if you like; only let me be first, dearest of all in your heart. You shall have all the money you can desire to expend on your work; you will find me generous as well as true."

They were standing at John Mansfield's gate, the lamplight, through the windows, from which the curtains were not drawn, falling full on Aimée's face.

"I never thought of such a thing." She hesitated, and then added, scarce above her breath, "I fear I do not love you well enough for that."

"Do you love me at all, Aimée?" He spoke so eagerly, and with a ring of gladness in his voice.

"I do like you very much, Mr. Bruce; but this is different from any other proposal of marriage

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that I ever had, and I have had a great many since I came here," she said honestly.

"Take me on trust, Aimée dearest, and I will answer for the rest. I shall win your love." He was still smiling at her frank confession in spite of his anxiety.

She stood looking at him with much the same wistful expression he had noticed earlier in the evening.

"What is it, my child? Tell me everything that is in your heart."

"I would like to have the money: I am afraid, if I were to marry you, it would be partly for what you would let me do for others."

"I won't examine closely into your motives, if only you will marry me. Did you know, Aimée, it was your picture I fell in love with before I ever saw you? Did your sister not tell you?"

"No; she merely said you thought I had a good face."

"It was solely to meet and protect you that I went down to Ashcroft, waiting there several days until you came. Your picture drew me to you. You did not know that?"

"Why, certainly not, Mr. Bruce. Is it true that you did that?"

"Yes."

"You are very kind to me." Evidently his care for her was making a strong impression on her.

"I know, Aimée, that I am not good enough for you. I am not a religious man according to your ideals of Christian living, but if you will take

me, I believe you can transform me into anything you wish."

"No, Mr. Bruce; only God can make you a true Christian. It would not be right for me to marry a man who is not that."

Mr. Bruce stood looking at the drooping face thoughtfully for some moments in silence; at last he said: "If I were to tell you, Aimée, that for months I have been trying for your sake to be a better man, to become worthy of asking you to become a part of myself—my other and better self—could you dare to trust yourself with me?"

"You must wait for my answer, Mr. Bruce. I must confess that I do care for you, more than I care for anyone else, and I can never be quite so free-hearted again as I was an hour ago. This is not like any other offer of marriage I have ever had. Perhaps it is my turn now to suffer." She hesitated for a moment.

"But, Aimée, you do love me, do you not?"

"God help me, I do," she said in a low tone, hiding her face.

"Thank God for that," was the fervent response. "Nothing shall divide you and me now, Aimée. I will be anything you ask me—do anything—only I hope you won't ask me to preach."

"You take too much for granted, Mr. Bruce. I must first discover if it is right for me to give up this work, and if it is my duty to give myself to you. I believe I would like to belong to you." She looked at him with the same fearless gaze that he had so many times before been captivated with.

The man smiled, as he reached out and took the hand that had been resting on the gate—

"You must belong to me, my little darling."

"Good-night, Mr. Bruce."

She withdrew her hand demurely, and escaped into the house swiftly, but not before she had cast upon him a look of the deepest affection. He stood for a moment, uncertain if he should not follow her. He turned away presently, however, and went back to his rooms, but with such joy in his heart as he had never felt before. This girl whom he had followed at a distance with his love was sweeter, more bewitching than he could have dreamed. He knew that she had begun to love him; the transparency of her nature had betrayed it. Like Boaz of old, the man would not rest until he had won her for his own.

CHAPTER XXV

When the Rivers Meet

IT was a bright September day, and over all the little town there was an air of happy expectancy. There was a holiday in the mines, but the miners' pay was going on all the same. Every saloon was closed, so that although the men had a holiday, with leisure to fall into mischief, as idle men are wont to do, yet not a wife or mother was afraid that day of their menfolk coming home maddened with drink. While there were crowds of men around, there was not a ragged one among them, unless it might be some new-comer who had drifted in within the last few hours.

Some of the men were busy putting up green arches near the church, others nailing up flags and bunting.

On the other side of the town, four huge oxen had been butchered the day before, and were roasting now. Tables were spread, that reminded Eastern folk of the famous tea meetings of the older provinces, where good housewives vied with each other in the manufacture of all sorts of

toothsome comestibles "for the furtherance of religion in the land." Crowds of little children and those of a larger growth were hovering around excitedly, having been assured that young and old of every degree were to have their full share of good things.

"There will be enough to continue the feast all day to-morrow," Ann Waters said reassuringly, as she passed among the hungry crowd with beaming countenance. Mr. Bruce has seen to it that everyone shall be happy on his wedding day, if he can manage it."

The widow Clarkson kept saying over and over again: "It seems too good to be true, not that Mr. Bruce has had his heart opened to help all who need it, but that he is going to marry the grandest woman in the world. It is wonderful. There will be great things done wherever she may go."

An old college friend of Mr. Bruce's father had come up from the coast to perform the marriage ceremony. Although it meant the loss of two or three Sundays from his church, still, the fee lying in Mr. Bruce's vest pocket, in the shape of five crisp bank notes of one hundred dollars each, would add very materially to a slender income.

Aimée steadily refused to be married anywhere save in the little church, and if that should prove too small, they would stand in the open air, where all her friends could see her. Everyone knew that the church would be too small, and so a dozen

or more of the men set out to gather the brilliant-hued leaves of the beech and maple, which were painted now with all the gorgeous tints of autumn; while others, who had the skill necessary for such work, constructed a huge hall of leaves and boughs near the church; and here the marriage altar was arranged.

When Aimée saw it that day, as she walked in her pure white gown, with the exquisite flowers in her hand that Mr. Bruce had ordered from the coast to deck his bride, the tears that stood in her eyes were of gratitude, as every one of the men and women who lined the way leading to the marriage altar knew.

The white-haired clergyman already stood with uncovered head, waiting the coming bride; before him was the bridegroom, his usually stern face looking more gentle than any of the residents had ever seen it before. Leaning on John Mansfield's arm, Aimée walked through the line of eager, sympathetic faces, and, unlike other brides, smiled cordially from right to left. Once she stopped to kiss the widow Clarkson's baby. The little creature had laughed gleefully, when she saw the lovely girl crowned with flowers, and looking, as many a rough miner whispered to his mate, "as sweet as any angel." The baby wanted a flower, and Aimée halted long enough to select one of the choicest roses in her bouquet, and put it into the baby's hand. A shout arose from the hundreds of men around, some of them so far back in the crowd that

they did not know why they shouted, but quite certain it was because of some gracious or unselfish act of the "little preacher," who could not forget others long enough even to go away for a honeymoon trip.

As she took her place in front of the altar beside John Bruce, and as the words were pronounced which linked their lives together, a great tide of thankfulness surged through his heart. "O God, make me more worthy of her!" he murmured.

And thus we leave them to begin their life's work together, feeling that as she had lived as maid so she would live as wife, in hourly dependence upon Him who is "Jehovah Tsidkenu —The Lord Our Righteousness!"

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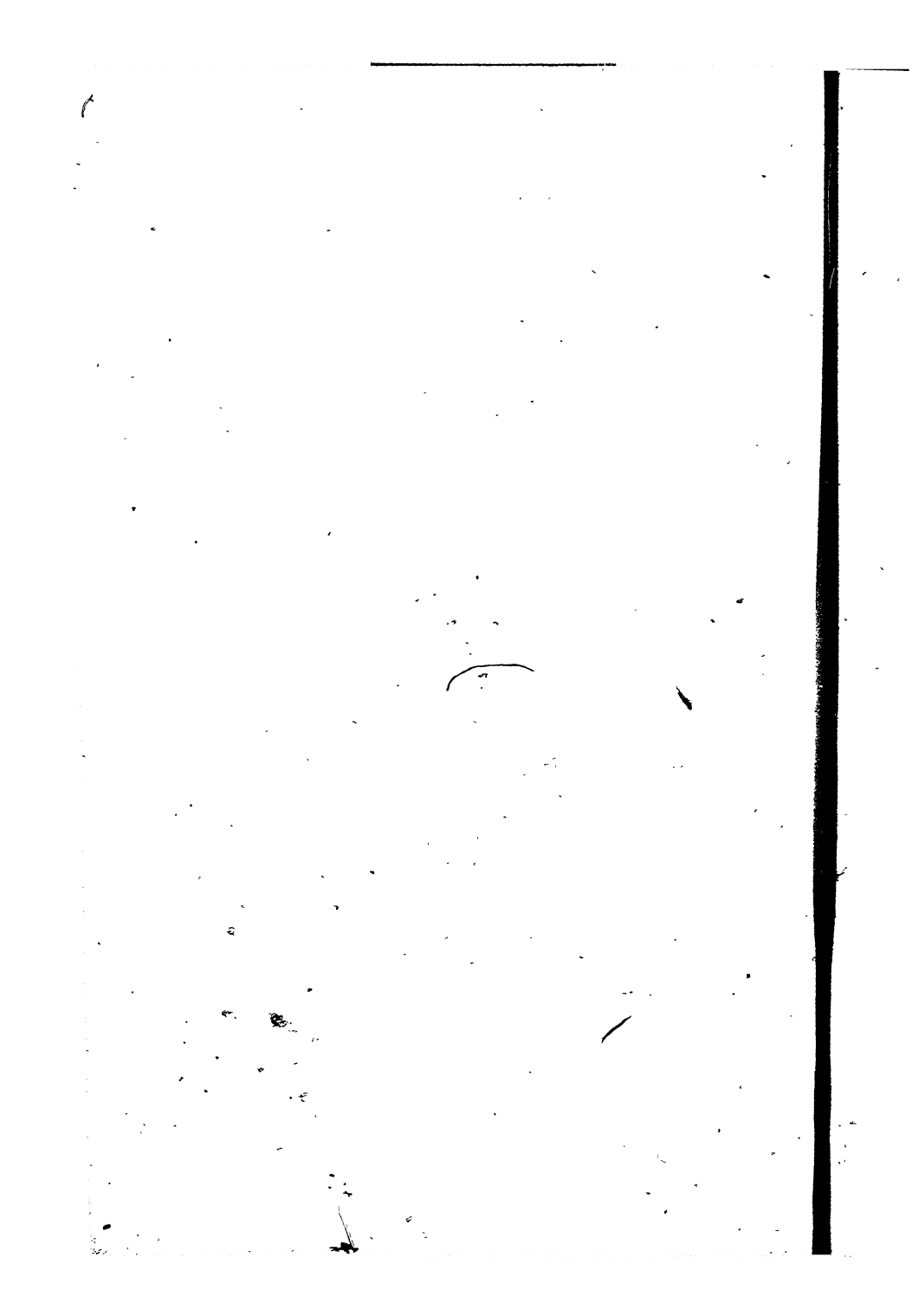
THE END



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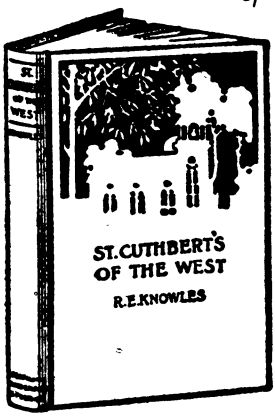

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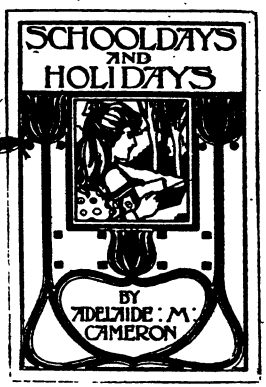

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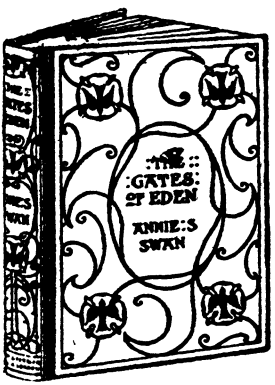

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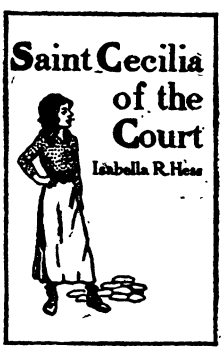

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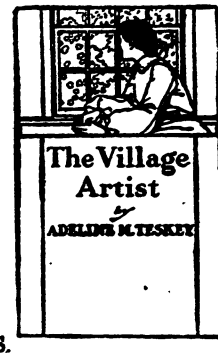

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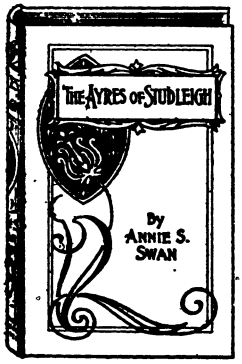

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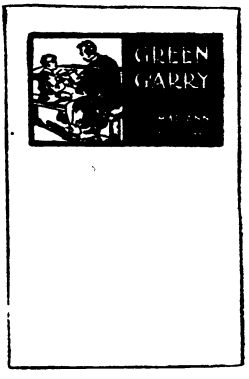

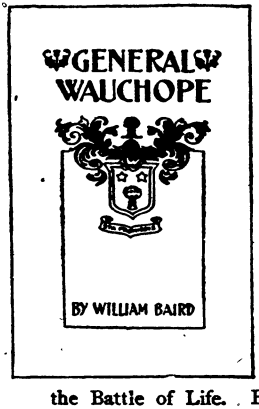

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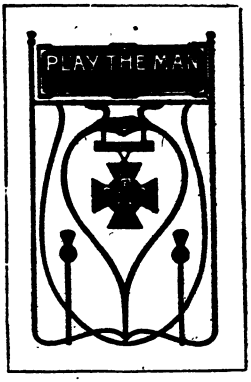

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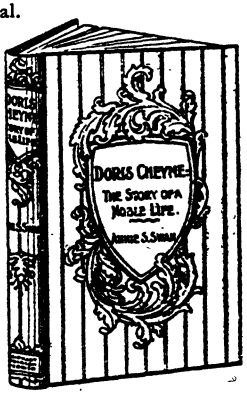

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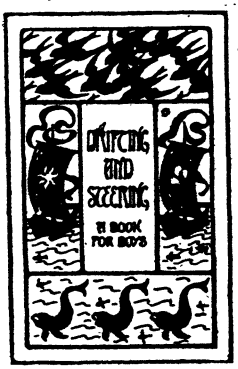

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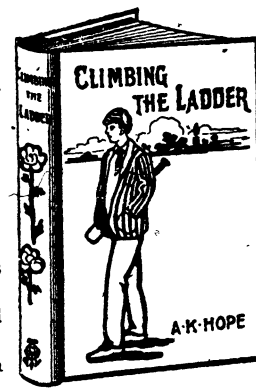

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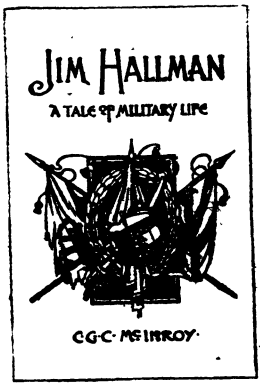

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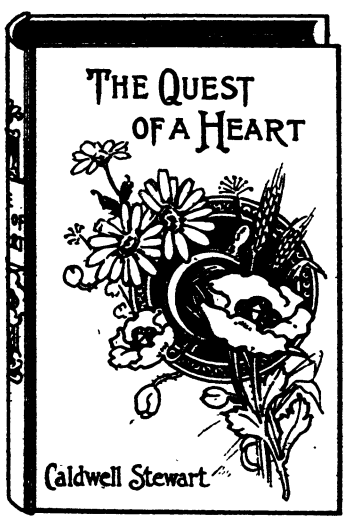

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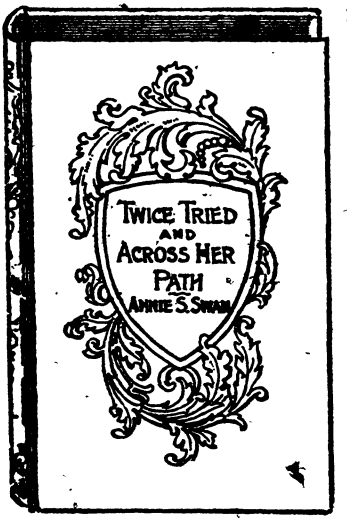

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