

CYNTHIA WINS

Bessie Marchant



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ON

Cynthia Wins

BY BESSIE MARCHANT

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LONDON: BLACKIE & SON, LTD., 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.





97
ONE STARTLED LOOK SHE GAVE HIM, THEN TURNED HER HEAD
QUICKLY

Cynthia Wins

A Tale of the Rocky
Mountains

BY

BESSIE MARCHANT

Author of "The Gold-marked Charm"

"A Girl Muniton Worker"

"A V.A.D. in Salonika"

"Lois in Charge"

&c. &c.

Illustrated by John E. Sutcliffe

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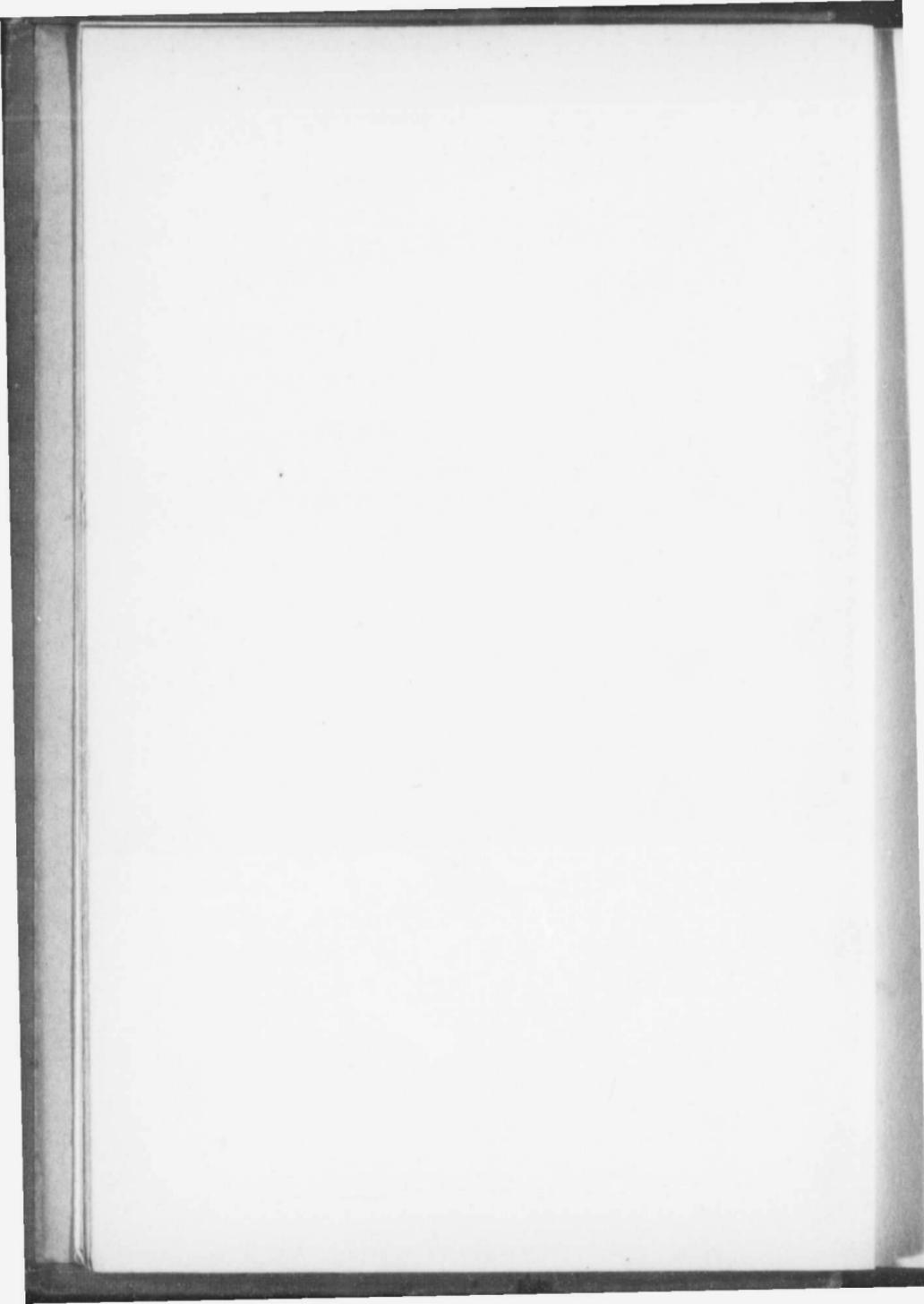
Contents

CHAP.		Page
I.	THE STRANGER	9
II.	CYNTHIA'S DEBT	24
III.	UP THE MOUNTAIN	40
IV.	A GREATER MYSTERY	55
V.	ANOTHER MOVE	73
VI.	A MOMENTOUS STROLL	85
VII.	WHERE WAS SHE?	98
VIII.	A FIERCE ORDEAL	110
IX.	SOME EXPLANATIONS	118
X.	A CHANGED OUTLOOK	133
XI.	A KINSMAN	146
XII.	A NEW CARE	161
XIII.	BEAVER CREEK	177
XIV.	RECOGNITION	193
XV.	ACTING A PART	206
XVI.	BLOW UPON BLOW	218
XVII.	THAT NIGHT!	230
XVIII.	HOW CLEAR-EYED CYRUS PAID HIS DEBT	245
XIX.	THE CABLEGRAM	265
XX.	EXPLANATIONS	273



Illustrations

	Page
ONE STARTLED LOOK SHE GAVE HIM, THEN TURNED HER HEAD QUICKLY - - - - <i>Frontispiece</i>	
IT WAS HER OWN FACE THAT STARED AT HER FROM THE PICTURE - - - - -	16
CYNTHIA STÖPPED WITH A LITTLE CHOKED CRY OF AMAZEMENT - - - - -	112
"ARE YOU HERE?" SHE CRIED - - - - -	128
"PRAY, WHY SHOULD NOT I GATHER ROSES IF I WISH?"	168
SUDDENLY A NAME CAUGHT HER EYE - - - - -	248



CYNTHIA WINS

CHAPTER I

The Stranger

It was so early in the season that no great rush of visitors was as yet expected at the Mount George House. Cynthia, in her little office just inside the main entrance, was busy checking invoices, when the cars from the west arrived. She was quite astonished when the crowd of arrivals came thronging into the wide hall.

She had a swollen face to-day. A week ago she took a chill. She had spent her off-duty time in trying to climb the lower slopes of the mountain. This had entailed fording a glacier stream, which had made her damp and given her a violent cold. An abscess had developed in her cheek, and she had packed her face in thermogene, and bandaged it to lessen the pain. Of course she looked a perfect guy; and very conscious she was of it, as the tourists came trooping up to the office window to

register their rooms and pay the deposits. A stout gentleman was there, with two daughters; great anglers these, as was shown by the style and quality of the tackle they carried. Following these came a young couple, apparently on their honeymoon trip. These were climbers; they had no fishing tackle, but helped themselves along with brand-new alpenstocks. Cynthia wanted to laugh as she looked at them. They were eager too, and pushing in front of the fishing party were the first to register, giving their names as Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins. They took some of the best rooms, and paid the usual deposit. Then came the anglers. After these there was a lively party of college girls, under the chaperonage of a severe-looking lady in spectacles. Each of the girls wanted a separate room; each clamoured for a chamber with windows looking on to the mountains. For a time Cynthia was kept very busy indeed. Some of the girls were neither kind nor well-bred. She heard one of them saying to another that it was really surprising the management were content to have such a guy in the registering office.

Poor Cynthia! In her anger and vexation she could have torn off the disfiguring bandages and cast them from her. But a swollen face even without bandages is not very nice to look at, and if she uncovered it now it would be worse to-morrow.

“Geraldine, what a bounder you are!” burst

The Stranger

11

out another girl impatiently; and the one who had made the unpleasant remark was thrust aside by this other of the party, who came up to the office window, asking in a kindly tone: "Is your face very painful?"

"It might be worse really, but it is horrid to have a swollen face, and I tied it up so that it should get better quickly," replied Cynthia. Her resentment dropped from her all at once, and she smiled with her eyes as she looked up.

It was then that she noticed a young man standing at the back of the group about the window. A late-comer up from the cars he must have been, for she had not seen him on the steps outside. He waited until the wants of the girls had all been satisfied. Then he came forward, asked to see a plan of the house, and chose a room high up in the southern gable. It was the chamber which Cynthia had always felt she would like to have, if ever she came as a visitor to the Mount George House. This similarity in taste made her glance with a sudden interest at the quiet-looking young man who gave his name as Jerrold Fane, and paid for that desirable room a week in advance. Then she remembered what an awful fright she was looking, and dropped her gaze on to the ledger in front of her in sudden confusion.

Dinner was a little late that night. While it was in process of being served, a rough countryman

Cynthia Wins

came up to the wide-open doors of the hall, and stood there uncertainly, as if he did not know what to do next.

Cynthia, who was still busy with her booking, saw him come, and called to him twice; but as he did not seem to hear, or at least to understand, she came out of her den, and walking across to the door enquired his business. She supposed that he had tried to find the way to the kitchens and had failed, so she was all the more surprised when he said that he wished to speak to Mr. Jerrold Fane, and that his business admitted of no delay.

"The visitors are at dinner now, so I am very much afraid that you will have to wait for a little while." She smiled at him as she spoke, and much she wondered what his business could be with one of the hotel visitors, then decided that probably he was a guide of some sort with whom Mr. Fane might have made an appointment.

"My business can't wait." The man spoke brusquely, and with the confidence that compelled attention. "Please tell Mr. Jerrold Fane that I have come to him with a message from Clear-eyed Cyrus, and you will see that it is not dinner that will keep him from coming to me."

Cynthia beckoned to one of the waiters who was passing, and sent him to the dining-room with the message for Mr. Fane; then she went back to her office, but not at first to her work. She was curious

to see if the countryman's expectations would be realized.

Almost at once a quick, firm step crossed the hall, and, looking from her office window, Cynthia saw Jerrold Fane go out to speak to the man who still lingered on the steps in the broad light of the July evening. Mr. Fane was still wearing the suit of light tweed in which he had arrived. Visitors at the Mount George House did not feel called upon to wear evening clothes for dinner, if there were any expeditions planned for after the meal.

From her distant point of vantage Cynthia saw the earnest look on the face of the countryman as he spoke to Mr. Fane, who after a moment turned back to take his hat from the stand, then, walking by the side of the countryman, passed down the steps and out of her sight.

Her face was so painful next day that she asked to be relieved from duty, and it was not until the day following that she heard that one of the guests was missing from the hotel, and that no one knew where he had gone.

"Who is it?" she asked of the waiter who gave her the news, and her eyes went almost involuntarily to the special plan of the house on which the running out of deposits was registered. Guests did occasionally fade away from houses like this when they could not pay. It was part of her business to make sure that deposits were kept paid up, so that

Cynthia Wins

there might be less danger of this sort of thing becoming common. She had invented a scheme of her own for being able to tell at a glance when payments were running out, and very successful it had proved so far.

"A Mr. Jerrold Fane," replied the waiter. "He got up from the table in the middle of dinner the day before yesterday, walked out of the room, and has not been seen since."

"Mr. Fane?" exclaimed Cynthia in surprise. "Why, someone came for him. I sent the message into the dining-room, and I saw him go. Did he not come back?"

"Never been heard of since," replied the waiter, then departed in all haste to tell the manager that some clue had been found to the disappearance of the guest.

The manager came to Cynthia's office to know why she had not spoken sooner. He told her that the waiter, who had taken the message to the dining-room, had left when the meal was over, going on the night cars to Banff; so there was no one in the hotel, save Cynthia, who could tell anything of the manner of Mr. Fane's going.

"And I know nothing more than that the man said his business was urgent, too urgent to wait," said Cynthia. "The man bade me tell Mr. Fane that he had come from Clear-eyed Cyrus, and he told me I should see that it would not be a dinner

that would keep Mr. Fane from coming to him. I sent the message into the dining-room by Griggs, who chanced to be passing through the hall at that moment, and Mr. Fane came out at once."

"Did he say anything to you as he went?" demanded the manager with deep suspicion in his tone.

"Certainly not. I was back in the office. Mr. Fane did not see me." There was a crushing dignity in the manner of Cynthia now, for she hotly resented the suspicion in the tone of her questioner.

The manager nodded, as if in acceptance of her explanation, and then went away. If Mr. Fane had paid for his room a week in advance, there was no sense in making a fuss at present. Time for that later on. Of course his absence was mysterious. It might even chance that something had happened to him. The manager wrinkled his brows, and had a bad quarter of an hour of hard thinking, trying to decide how best to set about making enquiries for his missing guest. At the end of the time he received an urgent message from the manager of the nearest hotel to his own, asking for help to tide over a crisis. He set off at once, and the matter of Mr. Jerrold Fane's absence went from his head as entirely as if it had never been there.

While the manager was away, the Mount George House was run by his sister, Miss Widgery, a very

capable individual, who believed it was her duty to put everyone straight, and who did it to the very best of her ability.

The days slipped past. Another batch of visitors arrived at the hotel. The place was getting full; the wide corridors echoed with light-hearted laughter; there was constant bustle of coming and going, and, early though it was, the season had begun in good earnest.

No word had come to explain the mystery of Mr. Fane's disappearance. Cynthia thought of him every morning when she sorted the mail. Strangely enough, no letters ever came for him, nor mail matter of any kind. This in itself was remarkable enough. Then she remembered that he had not given her his address when he registered. Of course, a good many people did not give their address, but it was the usual thing to do, and, considering the circumstances, it was a cause for regret that she had not asked for it.

It was exactly a week from the time of his coming, and going, that Miss Widgery came into the office to speak about the room which had been taken and paid for by Mr. Fane.

"You say he paid for it for a week," said the lady brusquely. "Well, the week is up to-day, so there can be no real reason why I should not let Miss M'Masters have it, as she is so anxious for it. It is funny that I should have had no less than



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IT WAS HER OWN FACE THAT STARED AT HER FROM THE PICTURE



three applications for that particular room since my brother went away."

"Would it not be better to wait until to-morrow morning before making the change?" suggested Cynthia rather timorously. In her heart of hearts she was a little bit afraid of Miss Widgery, who did not take advice in a kindly, or even a tolerant spirit. "Mr. Fane did not register until nearly six o'clock, so really his time would not be up until then. It would be excessively awkward if he walked in this afternoon to find that the room he had paid for in advance was being occupied by a lady."

"Humph! I suppose it would." Miss Widgery paused to consider a moment, then she burst out angrily: "But indeed it would serve him right, for having treated us so shabbily in never sending a message of any kind to explain his absence. I will wait until to-morrow morning, but not a moment longer. Even then it will be a loss, for of course the room will be standing empty to-night when it might have been occupied."

Cynthia smiled; she really could not help it, though she was careful to stoop for a fragment of blotting-paper that had fluttered down. The loss would not be very great, seeing that Mr. Fane had paid for a week's attendance as well, which of course he had not had.

All through the remainder of the day she watched

with expectancy for some sign or message from him. When she locked the office for the night, and realized that none had come, a strange foreboding that harm had happened to him stole into her heart.

She was very busy next morning getting through some arrears of work that should by rights have been done by the manager, had he not still been away at the next hotel, when a waitress came down to her from an upper corridor, saying that Miss Widgery wanted to see her at once.

"Do you mean that Miss Widgery wishes me to leave the office and go to her?" asked Cynthia in surprise. It was one of the disadvantages of her post that she was not allowed to quit the office unless she could leave a proper substitute in charge, and by a proper substitute one understood either the manager or his sister.

"So she said," replied the girl promptly, then added in explanation of the summons: "She is in an awful wax, too, and I shouldn't wonder if you get fired without much chance to help yourself, for she has found something of yours in the baggage that belongs to that Mr. Fane who never came back. So look out!"

Cynthia stared at the girl in an amazement that left her absolutely speechless. Then she shut down the lid of the desk with a nervous haste that made it drop with a bang, and, locking the office door,

took her way to the upper corridor, where was situate that most desirable chamber which Mr. Fane had paid for a week in advance.

Reaching the open door of the room, she paused on the threshold, halting in order that she might get a grip of the situation, and keenly-conscious of a very strong inclination to turn and run away.

Mr. Fane had brought only one well-travelled portmanteau with him. This had been dragged into the middle of the floor, and opened by means of a key in the possession of Miss Widgery. The contents had been all bundled out on to the floor by that lady's ruthless fingers; she was on her knees by the pile; she was holding a small framed photograph in her hand, and talking in excited tones to the chamber-maids and waitresses who were gathered in a group round her.

"I never heard of such deceit! But what can you expect from a girl brought up in a foundling asylum?" demanded the strident tones of the manageress, and it was at this moment that Cynthia halted on the threshold.

"I believe you sent for me, Miss Widgery," she said quietly, and only by the swift paling of her cheeks could anyone have told how sorely she had been hurt by the words she had heard.

"Yes, indeed, I did send for you, Miss Beauchamp. I want you to tell me how it is you have all along deceived us so grossly with regard to

Cynthia Wins

this missing man who registered as Jerrold Fane?" Miss Widgery's manner was so actively hostile that Cynthia, who had been coming forward, backed instinctively under the impression that she was going to be struck by the angry woman.

"I do not understand what you mean," said Cynthia blankly. She noticed that Miss Widgery was fairly trembling with rage, and that the little group standing round were curiously silent and expectant.

"Explain how it came about that you should give this to Mr. Fane, when you know the hotel rule that the staff should have no friendly relations with visitors." As she spoke Miss Widgery advanced upon Cynthia, and with a violent movement thrust the photograph into her hand.

Then Cynthia had the surprise of her life, for it was her own face that stared at her from the picture. A sunny, happy-faced Cynthia, who looked as if she had not a care in the world. But was it her own face? Looking steadily at the laughing eyes, Cynthia was swiftly conscious that these were the eyes of a stranger. This girl had never known the hard things she herself had had to face. The discipline of life had not come to her, and she had not had to be lonely, poor, and friendless, an orphan reared in a foundling asylum, and eating the bitter-flavoured bread of charity until she was old enough to earn her own living.

The Stranger

"This is not my photograph," she said, her voice quiet and level still, despite the whirling turmoil of heart and brain.

"That is a lie!" snapped Miss Widgery, looking more virulent than ever. She was a good woman, though prejudiced and narrow-minded. It hurt her sorely to think that Cynthia, whom she had always believed to be honest and upright, should stoop to vulgar falsehood to screen herself when she had done wrong.

"Pardon me, how could it be a lie? I have never had my picture taken since I left the Home, so I could not give away what I did not possess." Cynthia's tone was very gentle and forbearing. She was honestly sorry for Miss Widgery. She was sorry for herself, too, and she was miserably conscious of the interest the onlookers were taking in the matter.

"Look at the back!" commanded Miss Widgery, with absolute triumph in her voice.

Cynthia turned the frame over, and then she really did give a start of surprise, for written on a little card that was fixed in the back of the frame was the one word—"Cynthia".

"All the same it is not me," she said, and she tried to look more cheerful than she felt. As she spoke she handed the picture back to Miss Widgery, who, however, would have none of it.

"I do not want the thing," the manageress said

Cynthia Wins

shortly. "If you are wise, you will put it out of sight and say nothing about it. If the directors came to know of these goings-on, you might find yourself dismissed without a reference, and then where would you be?"

Again Cynthia paled. The world was a hard place for a friendless girl. But the most evil-tongued gossip could hardly make very much capital out of an incident like this, when all the facts of the case were known. Certainly the directors, who were sane and level-headed men, would not dismiss her for such a cause.

One of the girls looking on tittered audibly. They all feared Miss Widgery more or less; they all liked Cynthia, who never put on any side, and who had been quite open concerning the manner of her bringing-up. To them, one and all, the situation had a thrill in it, and they would have willingly changed places with Cynthia, just for the chance of being a heroine of romance.

The laughter made Miss Widgery still more angry. She sent the girl off with a smart reprimand, then curtly bade Cynthia go back to the office. She had the grace to say, as Cynthia went: "I have not as yet been able to find any address in this baggage to which I can write. Directly we come on some clue to the friends of Mr. Fane, we will communicate with them, and then perhaps the mystery can be cleared up."

The Stranger

23

Cynthia bowed as she turned away. She was thankful to get away from the disagreeable interview without having lost her temper, that is to say, outwardly; she was feeling very angry indeed inside. It was not until she was back in the office once more that she noticed she still had the picture of the happy-faced Cynthia tightly clasped in her hand.

CHAPTER II

Cynthia's Debt

It is wonderful how the world wags on as usual, in spite of tremendous upheavals in individual lives. So upset and perturbed was Cynthia over that disagreeable business of finding her portrait—or what looked like her portrait—in the baggage of the missing stranger, that she would not have been surprised at all sorts of disaster happening in her surroundings. The marvel was that it made no difference at all, except perhaps in the temper of Miss Widgery, but that had been always rather a big difficulty to cope with.

The manager came back two days later. The work of the hotel went on as usual. Now it was Cynthia who could not settle back into her accustomed niche as if nothing untoward had happened. Finally, she decided to give notice, and find a fresh post for herself. When she spoke to the manager about this, he had the ready understanding of her desire for fresh surroundings, and made no protest about her going, although he told her frankly that it would be a long time before the

Mount George House had a more reliable registering clerk. Then he asked her if she had any other post in view, and when she said no, told her to make no stir for a few days, for he believed he could find her what she wanted without very much trouble.

Cynthia was content to leave it at that. She had no relations, very few friends, and was about as solitary as it is possible for a human being to be. Her father and mother had died when she was a tiny child, and she had been reared in a home for orphan children in Ottawa. But she had her honest pride in herself, and a very sincere determination to make her own way in the world. She meant to succeed, and that is half-way to success. Always she had done her duty, so far as she knew it, and she would keep on doing it still.

The manager was as good as his word. In a week from the time that Cynthia had told him of her desire for a fresh post, the manager from the Banff Hotel wrote to offer her the post of registering clerk in his house. The salary at Banff would be half as much again as that she was receiving now. Cynthia at once had all sorts of visions of what she would do when the busy time was over and she would be free to take a holiday. It was funny that her desires should be not for travel, for smart frocks, or even for books, although she was a keen student. Her plans for her holiday were chiefly

Cynthia Wins

concerned with putting in unlimited time in tobogganning and ski-ing. Her girlhood had been starved as regards play. She had looked on at the happiness of other people, but her own surroundings as far back as she could remember had been of the dull drab sort. She had eaten her meals at a table without any cloth, she had taken her food from an unbreakable plate, she had drunk from an ugly mug that would not smash, and she had "exercised" with the other orphans. Of real joyous, riotous girlhood she had known nothing at all.

The letter came to her in the morning. She had no time to answer it then. She might not have time to do it before the morrow, for it did not march with her ideas of duty to spend time on her own personal business, when she should be transacting the affairs of her post. It was invoice day—always a busy time with her, just now even busier than usual because of the number of guests already in residence. Every mail, too, brought application for rooms. With a war raging in Europe, travelling Canada had to look for places of interest to visit on its own side of the Atlantic, and the Rockies easily had first claim on its attention.

A girl, who was plainly not a visitor at the hotel, walked into the office during the morning, and asked if she could speak to the manager. She seemed in a good deal of trouble. Cynthia thought

by the look of her eyes that she had been crying.

"I don't think that Mr. Widgery is in just now," Cynthia answered. "Would you like to wait until he comes, or would you rather leave a message and call again?"

The girl hesitated. She was looking at Cynthia as if to make up her mind whether this girl in the office was of the sort to prove a friend. Evidently what she saw was reassuring; her face cleared, and she burst into impulsive speech. "I am in such trouble that I really do not know what to do, nor which way to turn. I heard in the town that the Mount George House had a lot of visitors already, though it is so early in the season, and because of it I came to see if I could get work. I am stony broke, for I have lost my purse with my last month's salary. The lady I worked for has gone away from Field, so I have no one to refer to, and I am just about desperate."

The wild look in the girl's eyes was evidence as to her sincerity. She was plainly in a desperate fix, and she was afraid.

"You had better see Miss Widgery, that is the manageress," replied Cynthia, and then she told the girl to sit down on the back veranda, and sent a message to Miss Widgery asking her to come when she was at liberty.

Presently Miss Widgery bustled down from the upper part of the house. She was not in the

best of tempers. She rarely was when it came to dealings with the staff, although she was a sufficiently good business woman to know that she must show a pleasant front to the visitors staying at the hotel.

“What do you want?” she demanded sharply. To a person of her self-importance it was not pleasant to be sent for by a clerk. Only, as the clerk was not allowed to leave the office, this was one of the things that had to be endured.

“There is a girl on the back veranda, she is waiting to see you. I gather she came here with some people who paid her off here, because they were going to San Francisco and could not take her. After they had gone the poor thing lost her purse with all her money in it. She has not even enough to buy herself a meal, or a night’s lodging, and she wants work.”

“Humph!” snorted Miss Widgery. “Anyone employing her would have to take their chance of her being honest.” Then she flounced out of the office and took her way to the back veranda. Cynthia looked after her with considerable anxiety on account of the girl who waited for her. There were unexpected soft spots in the heart of the manageress, however. She heard the story the girl, Emily Robbins, had to tell her, then promptly decided to give her work for the present. The trouble was that Miss Robbins was quite of a

superior class. She had been college trained, and was so refined in speech and manner that it really seemed hard lines to put her in the kitchen to wash plates and dishes from morning till night, to scour pots and pans, and do all the rest of the hard things which came to the lot of the cook's understudy in a summer hotel. However, as Miss Widgery grimly remarked, beggars could not be choosers, and as it was that or nothing, the girl who was so nearly stranded took the work thankfully enough.

It was a day of hard work and constant interruption for Cynthia. She had no time to herself. She had to see the mail go out, without having found time to write her acceptance of the Banff post. She had had a number of business letters to write for the mail, but for her own there was no real opportunity at all.

"The post won't run away, that is one good thing," she murmured to herself, and she laughed as she touched the letter with caressing fingers. How silly to make such a fuss over a type-written business letter! But it stood to her for a chance of a playtime in the near future, and with all her heart she was yearning for a period in which she might do as she liked, and really enjoy things. "Perhaps the people at Banff will be prepared to value me all the more when they find I am not, so to say, jumping at their offer by return of post."

Cynthia Wins

There was a little chill of disappointment in her heart, however, because she had longed all day to feel that the matter was settled beyond recall. It would be so lovely to have money enough to do pleasant things, and she was so tired of drab monotony.

"Abe White has come down from the mountain with the first strawberries, and he says can he speak to you if you please?" It was the voice of the kitchen boy, which brought Cynthia's head up from the ledger with a jerk.

"Abe White?" she exclaimed joyfully. "How nice! Now I shall know how Prudence is. Run, Sammy, and ask him to come up here. I can shoo him out on to the back veranda, as if he were a troublesome chicken, if anyone of importance happens along; but the multitude are dressing for dinner now, that is, those who are going to dress, so there is not likely to be much interruption for the next half-hour."

Sammy clattered away to the kitchens, and Cynthia made short work of the next few entries. She had just closed the book, and put it away in the safe, when there was a heavy step outside in the hall, and a big, gaunt countryman appeared at the office door.

Cynthia went to meet him with outstretched hand. Her eyes were shining with welcome. "Oh, Abe, how glad I am to see you! I did not

expect the first wild strawberries would be ready for another week yet; you are uncommonly clever at finding them. How is Prudence?"

"She is bad, Cynthia, desperate bad," said the man gravely as he took Cynthia's hand in his strong grip. "She has been ailing all the winter, but for the last two weeks she has took to her bed, and there does not seem much likelihood that she will get up again."

Cynthia turned suddenly pale. "Prudence ill? How sad! Who is looking after her, Abe, and does she suffer much?"

"She is in pain all the time, that is why she took to her bed," replied the man. "There ain't no one to look after her but me."

"But while you are away who is doing it?" persisted Cynthia, and as she asked the question she was mentally dedicating some of her playtime money to providing a nurse for the sick woman.

"No one is looking after her," said the man. "I got up at dawn and picked my berries, then I went back home, and I made her as comfortable as I could. I left food and drink standing where she could reach it, and then at noon I started down the mountain. A terrible long way it seems, and I can't get back to-night, for there is no moon, and I'm clean done as well."

"Do you mean to say that Prudence will be alone up there on the mountain all through the

night, and she too sick to leave her bed?" demanded Cynthia with actual horror in her voice.

"Yes, that is what I mean," the man said heavily. "It does seem hard to leave her like that, but I shall have to do it now that the berries are getting ripe so fast. I would not mind so much if I did not have to leave her alone at night. That does seem a bit awful."

"It is too awful to be borne!" cried Cynthia sharply. Then she dropped into sudden silence. She was sitting on her high office stool, and she bowed her head on to her hands, shutting her eyes tightly because she was thinking so hard.

The picture that came up before the eyes of her mind, as she sat there, was of herself, a frightened lonely little child, in the great bare rooms of the orphan asylum at Ottawa. She used to shriek with terror at night, when she was put to bed in the great dormitory and left there alone in the dark. Then there used to come stealing up from the kitchen the squat-built figure of a clumsy country girl, Prudence White, who would gather the frightened crying child into her arms, and sit there in the dark with her until she went to sleep. There were other memories too: Prudence going out for her weekly half-holiday, and begging as an especial favour that she might take the little Cynthia with her, just for company. What riotously happy times those had been! The thought of how Pru-

dence had sacrificed herself for a lonely little girl who could not pay back, brought a sudden mist of tears to the eyes of the girl who sat on the high stool with a bowed head.

Abe shifted from one foot to another. He had been tramping since dawn, and he was almost too weary to stand. He wanted to go and lie down on a truss of hay in the stable, so that when dawn came again, he would be ready to start back up the mountain. To-morrow night he would rest at home, then the morning after he would rise again at dawn to gather a fresh lot of wild strawberries, and come tramping down the long rough trail to the hotel. It was a hard life, but the profits from the strawberries were well worth the trouble of picking the fruit and bringing it down.

Suddenly Cynthia lifted her head. Her face was set in lines of stern resolution. All in a minute she had made her decision and had put away that rosy vision of a happy playtime to come, which had filled her dreams all day. She was going to pay back as far as she could. Nothing that she might do for Prudence could really mean as much to the sick woman as the loving-kindness of Prudence had meant to the little child who was so lonely and so pining for love. She meant to do her part, however, and she meant to do it to her very best.

"What time in the morning are you going to start back up the mountain?" she asked.

"I figure to get out of this at dawn," he answered. "It is cooler walking then, and I'm keen on getting back just as soon as I can."

"I am going with you, and I shall stay and nurse Prudence until she is well again," Cynthia said briskly. "I have got to arrange with the manager though, and I expect there will be trouble, but sick people have to be considered first, and I have made up my mind. Whatever you do, don't go without me, for I am positive that I could not find my way along that trail."

"You can't come to live in our shack, it is such a poor little place," he objected; yet she could see the relief in his eyes, and the relaxing of the tense lines in his figure.

"Can't I?" She was smiling bravely at him now; her great renunciation was over, and she was putting the pain of it behind her back. "I guess that what has been good enough for Prudence all these years will be good enough for me; anyhow I am going to try it."

To her great and exceeding dismay the big gaunt man suddenly dropped his head on his arm and burst into dry hard sobs. It is a dreadful thing to see a man cry, especially when it is a big rough son of the soil like Abe White, who was hard as nails, and had been what is known as a very tough customer in his younger days. Cynthia suddenly realized how sore his trouble must have

been, and was at once pitiful for him, and thankful for herself that she had been able to rise to the occasion, and to do her duty without regard to the cost.

"Go and rest now," she said gently. "Have you had your supper? Shall I send an order down to Cook for you? It will never do for you to break down now."

Abe gulped down a big lump in his throat, and, making a mighty effort at self-control, answered in a jerky tone: "Yes, I've fed, thank you, and I shan't want nothing more to-night. You are real grit right through, Cynthia, and may God Almighty make it up to you! The Lord only knows the trouble I've been in about Prudence. She has been a real good sister to me; the thought of how I would have to leave her this berry-picking time has fair cockered me up."

"I am certain of it," she answered, with the ready sympathy she always had for anyone in trouble. "I will be sure to be ready for you at dawn, even if I have to run away in order to get off."

At first it really looked as if Cynthia would have to run away, as she had in fun told Abe White she would do, for the manager was so angry with her for wanting to go off in a hurry, that he said flatly he would not pay her what was due to her.

There was a deal of firmness in Cynthia, how-

ever. When she had made up her mind to a course, she was not to be lightly turned from it. She had just a little money, a few dollars stored against an emergency. If the manager would not let her have the salary that was due to her, then she must just take this little hoard, and be thankful that she had got it.

"Then there is that post at Banff that I got for you: are you going to throw that up too?" demanded the manager, looking as angry as he felt.

"I must. I have no choice; you see they want me next week, they will not be able to wait." Cynthia gave a little sigh, not so much of renunciation or regret for her own sacrifice, but because of the trouble she was giving, and of all the unpleasantness that came in the way of her duty.

"What a wrong-headed and mistaken girl you are!" he exclaimed, with the air of a man who has reached the end of his patience. "That Banff post is the chance of a lifetime. In a couple of seasons you might have been promoted to the post of manageress, then you would have been able to boss round to your heart's content. Look here, I do admire your kind-heartedness in wanting to do your bit for Prudence White, who, everyone knows, is a real good sort, but you are a cut above a job like this that any old woman can do as well or better than you. Give up your idea of going up the mountain with Abe to-morrow, and I will give

him enough money to pay for a woman to look after his sister for a month. By that time you will be handling your salary at Banff, and you will be able to take the job on yourself, and pay for a nurse as long as Prudence needs one. Do you agree?"

Ah, how tempting the offer was! It was so reasonable, too, what the manager had said. For a moment she was giving way. She was lifting her head and opening her lips to say that she would stay, when there came into her mind the remembrance of one especially miserable day of her childhood. She was lying in the dark and sobbing her heart out from loneliness, when Prudence came stealing through the bare echoing rooms as usual. She said that she had a raging toothache, and that Sally Ball, the laundry woman, had offered to come up instead; but Prudence, knowing that there was little of motherly kindness in the make-up of Sally Ball, had put her own comfort aside, and had come to the relief and consolation of the little frightened child.

It is debts like these that call for payment, and for personal payment too. Money is an insignificant detail when it comes to settling the price of love. Cynthia turned her head resolutely from the easy path, and said quietly: "It is very kind of you. Only, I cannot do as you wish, and you must please not be angry with me. After all, you would have had to fill my place next week; you were pre-

pared to do it then without complaining. Why don't you give the post to that nice Miss Robbins? The poor girl is really wasted in the kitchen. Please don't be angry with me. I would not have gone off in such a hurry for my own convenience, but I owe Prudence White a debt that I can never fully pay, so I am in duty bound to go and do my best for her."

The manager nodded. He hesitated a minute, then going to the safe he unlocked it, and, taking out the cash-box, proceeded to pay Cynthia her salary up to date.

"There is your money. I won't have it on my conscience that I have defrauded you. I must warn you, though, that you will never get on in the world if you are going to throw up good chances every time someone wants a helping hand. There are always people who want helping hands, in fact the world is chock-full of them. It is the duty of a man or a woman to do the best they can for themselves, and that is not to be done if you are going to put other people first."

Cynthia laughed with a sudden light-heartedness. It was good to feel that the manager had got over his anger, and was going to make her start in the morning as easy as he could. Then she bade him good night and good-bye, handing over her keys, and telling him about various matters needing immediate attention.

It was very late before she was free to go to her room. There would be no time to go to bed, dawn came so early on these summer mornings. She packed her things, those things she must take with her, and the others that for the present must be left behind. This done, there was less than an hour before she would have to be ready, and she flung herself on the bed, dressed as she was, to snatch a brief rest.

She fell asleep and dreamed. She was in her dream back in that great bare room that had been such a chamber of horrors to her in her childhood; she was crying and sobbing in her fear of the big black dark, when cutting through the awful void came the comfortable voice of Prudence White: "Don't you cry, little darling, I am coming, I am quite close to you!"

The tears were wet on the cheeks of Cynthia when she awoke. The voice of Prudence was ringing in her ears still, it was as if she were actually in the room.

Cynthia opened her eyes. A grey light was spreading over the room. Dawn had come.

CHAPTER III

Up the Mountain

Cynthia paused; then setting down the heavy bag she was carrying, she took out her handkerchief to wipe her hot face. She felt as if she had been walking for weeks. In reality it was only four hours since they had left the hotel, and the day was still young.

"Tired, are you?" asked Abe. He was striding along just in front. It was not easy to walk side by side on that rough trail, and he must of necessity go first to lead the way. All the morning Cynthia had the view of his broad back, from which her suit-case hung by a strap across his chest. On either side a wall of maple, hickory, larch, or pine had barred her vision, and the trail had lain uphill almost from the very start. It was not a stiff rise, except here and there where sharp little hills occurred. But oh, the weariness of it all! She was wearing stout boots that tired her feet; the bag she carried, and which had seemed so light at first, was by this time weighing about a ton.

Despite all these drawbacks she would not have

changed places with anyone. The smell of the earth, the fragrance of the trees and the flowers, was in her nostrils. The exaltation of the thing she was doing was upon her; she was drinking of the cup of joy which is so subtly mixed with pain, that it is only the sharp acid of the suffering which brings out the joy.

The playtime she had looked forward to was gone, perhaps for ever; in its place there stretched before her an infinity of grey days filled with hard work, hard living, and no pay. She would have to know when she was very weary that she had only herself to thank for the care and the trouble that had come upon her, but she would not have had it otherwise. She was going to pay her debt, so far as such a debt could be paid, and she was going to give devotion in return for that past kindness which had lifted the terror of the dark from her as a lonely little child.

"Yes, I am tired," she answered. "The trouble is that I am not used to walking. You see I have been stuck in that office all day, and then in my off times I have trotted out for a mile or more, and that has had to satisfy me. Have we much farther to go?"

"We'll do it in about two hours and a half, if you can keep going," Abe answered. He was secretly very anxious to be getting on. His great fear was that Cynthia would want to sit down and

Cynthia Wins

rest for an hour or so, and the delay would have been intolerable to him, knowing as he did how sorely in need of tending the sick woman must be.

Cynthia was to the full as anxious to get on as he. Two hours and a half still to be got through before the end of the journey was reached! But of course she would endure it. Her back might ache, and her arms might feel as if they were being dragged out by the sockets, but what was her discomfort compared with what Prudence must have suffered since Abe had had to go away and leave her?

"Could we go a little faster, and so get it done in two hours?" she asked. She felt that if she were in front there would be an increase in pace. His slowness irritated her dreadfully. Why could he not go quicker when the need for haste was so great?

"We might," he answered, but with no quickening of his pace. "We might even keep going faster for twenty minutes, or half an hour. By the end of that time we should have to drop dead slow, and it would be three hours or more before we got home, instead of two and a half. In walking it is the slow person that scores, because you see it is the keeping on that counts."

Cynthia dropped silent. There was no combating the wisdom of this statement. In her own heart she realized how true it was, and of more things

than walking. On and on they went. The day had grown very hot. The coat, that had been a comfort to Cynthia at the start, was a real heavy burden now. Her face was streaming with perspiration, and she was so footsore that she could hardly put her aching feet to the ground; but she managed to smile every time Abe looked round, and if her mood was quiet he would not notice it, for he had hardly spoken on the journey, save to ask at long intervals how she was getting on.

“There’s the shack over yonder, behind that big silver pine at the end of the ridge; there is the gable-end just showing through the trees.” He was pointing across the valley to something that showed on the side of the opposite hill. Cynthia looked very carefully but could see nothing, and as she scarcely knew the difference between a silver pine and a golden arbutus, she did not know what kind of tree to look for. What she did see was a brawling little stream at the bottom of the valley into which they were descending, and the sight filled her with dismay. How would they get across?

The feat was accomplished without much difficulty when they came to the water. Abe plunged in without any hesitancy, and strode through the stream, making a great splashing as he went. Then he put the suit-case on the ground, and turning, came back for Cynthia.

"Guess I'd better lift you over, then you won't get your feet wet," he said with a consideration she had not expected him to show.

"It is very kind of you, but I am fearfully heavy," she answered with a nervous laugh. She was wondering what would happen if he dropped her in the water, and whether she would be able to scramble out, or whether she would go drifting down among the cruel rocks upstanding here and there in the bed of the stream.

Abe lifted her as if she had been a year-old baby, and, striding back through the stream, deposited her, bag and all, on the opposite side; then he picked up the suit-case, and started up the hill once more. Now his pace had quickened. Indeed, he was going so fast that Cynthia could scarcely keep up with him. They had been out of sight of the shack for some time now, but suddenly the trail wound round the shoulder of the hill, and there they were close to the little house of brown, unpainted wood that stood facing to the west. They were high on the side of the mountain now, and away through a break in the trees Cynthia caught a glimpse of a mighty snow-covered peak in the dim distance, and her heart thrilled and leaped at the beauty of it all. She even forgot for the moment how very tired she was. Abe's pace had quickened to a shuffling run now, but Cynthia dropped into a slow walk. She understood that he wanted to be

first; she understood, too, something of what he must have been enduring as they slowly covered the long miles of that weary trail.

He disappeared inside the shack, was there for perhaps two minutes, then, coming to the door, he stood beckoning to Cynthia to make haste.

"Hurry, hurry if you can!" he shouted. "She is awful bad, poor thing, and it looks as if she hadn't had a mouthful of food since I went away yesterday."

All at once Cynthia's heavy bag weighed as light as if it were only a bundle of feathers. It was not her personal belongings that made it seem so heavy. She had stuffed it full of invalid comforts for the sick woman, and she had carried it herself so that the things in bottles should not be unduly shaken. Now she had something ready for Prudence without any waste of time or strength in preparation.

At first, when she came into the dark little shack out of the glare of the sunshine, she could see nothing at all. Then she shut her eyes tightly, and, when she opened them again, she saw the bed where the sick woman lay near the stove; she saw the dim, dusty interior of the little brown house, and she even noticed the ladder in the corner that led to the loft under the shingles, where Abe slept. Oh, it was a poor little place!—the very barest house she had ever been in. She had only a scant attention to give to this, however; her chief care

was for the shrunken figure on the bed. Could that really be Prudence, whom she had not seen since last fall? Prudence White had been one of the stout, comfortable sort; now the poor thing was shrunken almost to a skeleton, and the lines of pain on her face were graven deep, as with a pen of iron. She did not seem to recognize Cynthia at first, staring up into the girl's face with dim, lack-lustre eyes.

"Why, it is Cynthia!" she exclaimed presently, when she had been fed with a few spoonfuls of strong beef essence, and a little life was coming back to her enfeebled frame.

"Yes, it is Cynthia," said the girl brightly; "and I have come to stay with you until you are better."

The sick woman smiled. There was an inscrutable look in her pain-paled eyes which said more plainly than speech that she did not expect to be better; but that was not a matter for discussion now.

Abe, satisfied for the moment with the effect of Cynthia's ministrations, went to a lean-to which had been built against the wall of the shack at the back, and started to kindle a fire, so that Cynthia might have a meal after her long, hard journey. Cynthia herself was busy tending the sick woman, who was sorely in need of care. Seeing a pair of list slippers standing by the stove, she had unlaced her stout

boots, and given her tired feet the freedom and comfort of the roomy slippers; after that she got on very well. By the time Abe came to say he had made the tea, Prudence was looking like a different woman; she was even able to laugh, in a weak, languid fashion, as Cynthia told how afraid she had been lest Abe should drop her in the water.

Oh, it was good to rest, after the long hours of tramping over the rough trail! Never had sitting still seemed so good to Cynthia. For a long hour she sat in the open doorway of the shack, feasting her eyes with the glory of that wonderful view through the break in the trees, while she told Prudence of the happenings of the winter days, and beguiled the sick woman into a momentary forgetfulness of suffering.

In the late afternoon the sun got to the front of the shack. Abe went off round the shoulder of the hill to stake out a patch where he would gather strawberries in the morning. For a day or two he could manage to get them at dawn, and carry them fresh as they were down to the hotel; but when the search had to be carried farther afield, he would have to get them overnight. Indeed, it would be better to do this, because in such a case he would be able to start down the mountain at dawn, and that would make a mighty difference in the fatigue of the travel.

"I shall be able to help with the picking when

Prudence is well enough to be left," said Cynthia, and her eyes sparkled at the prospect. Strawberry picking would be play to her. She could count the times on the fingers of one hand when she had had the joy of picking wild strawberries.

"I am afraid you will be so uncomfortable, dear. Ours is such a poor, bare place for anyone to come to," said Prudence that night, when Abe had climbed the steep ladder to his loft, and Cynthia was making a bed for herself on the settle which stood on the other side of the stove.

"It won't seem half so bare to me as that awful room at the orphan asylum," said Cynthia with a laugh. "Do you remember, Prudence, that great dormitory, with its thirty beds, and my little cot at the far end? Oh, it used to seem like a day's journey from one end of that room to the other, and there were miles of corridors with the smell of soap hanging heavy in the air. Why are orphan asylums kept so clean, and made so big, when a little place that was all in a muddle would be so much more comfortable?"

Prudence laughed. "I used to wonder why the passages and corridors were made so wide, when it was such hard work to keep them properly scrubbed. As you say, it is really against nature to keep the children of the poor so clean, seeing that most of them are reared in dirt. But you were not like that, Cynthia. Your mother was a lady, I'm posi-

tive, and you were always a little lady too. I shan't forget how the other children used to stare at the way you took your food, though you were such a baby. Then your name has a grand sound."

"Names don't count for much." Cynthia was laughing too. Her mood had been sad a minute before; she never recalled those years in the orphan asylum without a shiver. "We have a kitchen help at the hotel named Hermione Gwendoline St. John. She has a drunken Irishwoman of the fishwife type for a mother, and her father is a cattleman from Texas. She can neither read, write, nor sew. In many ways she does not seem to be as bright as she should be, but she has a pair of hands, and so Miss Widgery has to make the best of her."

"All the same, you are a lady, and you came from a good stock," insisted Prudence. And then she began to tell Cynthia about herself, and the nature of the sickness that had gripped her and brought her so very low.

"Why, you ought to have had a doctor long ago," said Cynthia, who was aghast at the thought of the weeks and months that the poor creature had lain and suffered. "You might have been better by this time if you had had proper attention at the first."

Prudence shook her head in dissent. "I don't

think so. My mother had much the same sort of thing. She had a doctor from the start, but he couldn't cure her, and there seems no sense in paying a man to do what he knows is impossible. It is better to save the money to help in other ways, I think."

Cynthia hotly combated this idea, then let the subject drop. She knew of old that there was an obstinate streak in Prudence. If once the poor woman made up her mind that she would not see a doctor, then it would be as good as useless to try to persuade her to do so. Much better to leave the subject alone for the present, and wait for a moment that was more fitting.

It took some days for Cynthia to get into stride, as it were, with the demands of her new life. Prudence had been ill for so long that everything about the place was in a most fearful state of neglect. However, she brought all her energies to the task of putting things into order, and, before she had been at the shack for a week, it looked like a different place, while the invalid declared that it was almost worth while being ill to be cared for in such a fashion.

When once the arrears of work in the little house had been caught up, Cynthia found herself with quite a considerable amount of leisure on her hands. This she turned to account in strawberry-picking. Abe could carry twice the amount that his one pair

of hands could pick. The more fruit he could sell, the more chance there would be of Prudence having a doctor to see her.

It was in the afternoons that Cynthia usually went on her berry-picking expeditions. The work of the little house was done by that time, and the invalid was, as a rule, comfortable enough to sleep. Of course, being unused to the forest, there was always the danger that Cynthia might lose her way, but she was careful to take special notice of the landmarks, or rather of the tree-marks, and, so far, she had not failed to find her way back without trouble.

One afternoon, when she had been at the shack for nearly two weeks, she climbed high up on the spur behind the house, and, rounding the shoulder of the hill, came on a berry patch where the fruit was the finest she had seen. Could there be any joy like the joy of picking wild strawberries? The sun was shining in a cloudless sky, a summer wind stole with a soft murmur through the trees, and the fragrance of the fruit was in the air, and on her hands, and everywhere.

Her basket was getting heavy. Cynthia stood up, stretching her arms above her head to rest her aching back. Suddenly a shot rang out near at hand. A moment later there was a hoarse yell, as if someone was being very much hurt indeed.

Her first thought was of Abe. Then she re-

remembered that he had gone down to the Mount George House, and would not be back until about eight o'clock to-morrow morning. He had planned his journey so, in order to have it cool for walking. There was a late moon. He would leave the hotel an hour or two before dawn, when the air would be fresh for the long tramp. If it was not Abe's cry, then whose could it be? Since she had been on the mountain Cynthia had not glimpsed any person but the two with whom she was living. It was the most solitary spot she had ever seen, and she seemed to be living outside the world where men and women dwelt.

Another shot. Two reports rang out close together, and then a scream that was full of quivering agony. Cynthia waited for nothing more. Setting down her basket, away she dashed, her only weapon the stout stick she carried alike for support and protection. Round the shoulder of the hill she ran, stumbling and slipping on the uneven ground, catching her feet in bramble trails which nearly, but not quite, tripped her up.

She turned sharply round a thickly clustered group of trees, and was suddenly confronted with a sight that, for the moment, fairly took her breath away. Just before her, running back into a fold of the hill-side, was a tiny grassy glade. Lying there, stretched out dead, was a soft-furred black creature, a bear cub. Just beyond the dead body of her

young, a black bear reared on her hind legs was hugging a man in a death-clutch.

An impulse was on Cynthia to turn and flee. She had always felt that at heart she was a coward. But before she could drag her feet from the spot, to which they seemed rooted, the man had caught sight of her.

"Help! help!" he shouted. "Hit the beast over the head with a stick, can't you?"

Indeed she could. Cynthia's courage came back with a rush, now that she understood what was required of her. Dashing forward, and not pausing for a moment to consider the question of her own personal danger, she began to rain vigorous blows with her stout staff on the snout and head of the enraged animal.

With a grunt of mingled rage and surprise the bear turned to rend Cynthia, but she was prepared for the onslaught. Dealing the creature a smashing blow across the eyes, she skipped round, picked up the man's gun that lay on the ground, and, without even knowing if there was another cartridge in it, blazed straight away at the bear as it came on.

"Well done!" gasped the man. He was quivering and swaying, but he had not fallen when the bear released him to attack Cynthia. "Give me the gun, perhaps I will be able to finish her."

But the bear had plainly had enough, for that time at least. Without stopping to look at the

dead cub, she shuffled with a waddling gait into a thick patch of brambles and was lost to view.

The man sank down, gasping, and moaning as if in fearful pain. Cynthia sprang forward to help him; then, as he turned his face towards her, uttered a cry of amazement, for she recognized him as the man who had come to summon Jerrold Fane from the Mount George House.

CHAPTER IV

A Greater Mystery

Cynthia had meant to ask: "Are you much hurt?" but the actual words that rose to her lips were: "What have you done with him?"

The man looked up at her in surprise. Blood was pouring down his face from a scratch of the bear's claws right across his cheek, one ear was badly torn, and the sleeve of his jacket had been ripped to half-way above the elbow, showing a ghastly wound on the fleshy part of his arm.

"It wasn't a he, at all; didn't you see it was an ole she-b'ar, and I had killed her cub?" he demanded. Then he burst out: "My word, you were plucky for a gal! Why, that b'ar would have done you under in less than five minutes if she had got a real grip on you. But I reckon that if you hadn't happened along when you did, and chipped in so vigorous, she would have done for me. Got me proper tight she had. I heard my ribs crack when she began to hug. Jiminy, she was a oner at hugging!"

Seeing that he was trying to get on to his feet,

Cynthia did her best to help him to stand. He swayed to and fro at first, and clutched at her shoulder to keep himself from falling. Then getting a firmer grip on himself he managed to walk a few steps, but had to pause every few minutes, standing still, and drawing long, sobbing breaths punctuated by groans.

"Can you manage to walk just a little farther round the angle of the hill?" asked Cynthia.

"I must sit down and rest pretty soon, or I'll quit for sure," he gasped, pressing his hand to his side.

"It is not more than a five-minutes' walk from here to our shack." Cynthia's tone was cheerful and encouraging. "See, that is the end of the house showing through the trees yonder."

"Why, that is Abe White's place!" exclaimed the man, and he stopped suddenly. "Is Abe at home?"

"No, he will not be home until the morning," replied Cynthia, and then was surprised to see the relief that came into the eyes of the man who was hurt.

"I'll maybe sit outside for half an hour until this pain is a bit easier," he said, and then groaned again as his foot slipped on the upstanding root of a tree, and the lurch it gave him jerked his wounds, adding to his pain.

"There is the out-shack. I can make you a place

there to lie down in quite comfortably," said Cynthia; then went on, in explanation of her seeming lack of hospitality: "I should not take you into the house, because Miss White is lying there very ill, and the sight of the blood on your face and arm might upset her rather badly."

"Sure to," grunted the man, and there was real satisfaction in his tone. "You help me to get to this out-shack, let me lie down on the floor, and give me a drink of water or something, then I won't trouble you for much more. Just to lie still is the best medicine for me. Jiminy, but that ole she-b'ar had got a grip on her!"

"I will help you all I can, and I will make you a cup of tea directly I get you settled," answered Cynthia. "But you must tell me, you really must, what did you do with Mr. Jerrold Fane?"

The man gave a great start, which fetched a groan from him; then he demanded in an angry tone: "What do you know about Mr. Jerrold Fane?"

"Not much," she admitted with a little laugh. "I was clerk at the Mount George House when he came there and disappeared so mysteriously in the middle of dinner. I recognized you as the man who came for him; that is why I asked what you did with him that he never came back again."

The man paused, tried to stand alone, then nearly fell headlong. To save himself he clutched

at the shoulder of Cynthia, and shook her roughly. "See here, girl, the fewer questions you ask about Mr. Jerrold Fane the better it will be for you. No harm has come to him. Nor will come. You had better forget that it was me what fetched him away, or perhaps it will be worse for you. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," answered Cynthia, and then she said no more. Her heart was beating with dull, heavy throbs of fear. Some harm had come to Jerrold Fane, she was sure of it. She was sure, too, that this man was somehow accountable for what had been done. Why did he pause when he knew it was Abe White's shack? Why had he been willing to come on to the house to rest for a while, when he knew that Abe was not at home?

But she had not much time for speculation. The poor fellow was in such a sorry case that she had her hands full to get him as far as the house. When she helped him in at the open door of the out-shack, he sank down on the bench by the table, and seemed entirely done. She left him a moment to run in and tell Prudence, then she came back with some broth in a cup. It had been keeping warm on the stove for the invalid, but it was the hurt man who was in the greatest need just then, so it was to him she brought it. She went back for water and a towel, then washed and bandaged his wounds to the best of her ability. He groaned

and cried out every time she touched the hurt places, but the real trouble was with the broken ribs, and there Cynthia was powerless. Having made him as comfortable as she could, her next business was to make some sort of a bed for him. The bench on which he was sitting was a long one, and, when it was lengthened by having a box put on at the end, it made quite a comfortable couch for a man who had often fared far worse.

All these things took a long time. When she had settled the man as comfortably as she could, Cynthia went back to Prudence, whom, to her surprise, she found to be sleeping. Then she remembered that basket of extra fine strawberries, and instantly resolved to run up the spur and get them. It would be a shame if all her hard work should go for nothing. Right at the back of her mind there was the fear lest she should happen upon the bear again. As a means of protection, it suddenly occurred to her that she might as well take the gun of the man who was lying in the out-shack. To her surprise he would not let her have it. Indeed, he was so angry and disturbed at the suggestion, that she wondered what there could be in the simple request for the loan.

“If you see that b'ar, which ain't likely, you just turn and run for your life, but don't you stop to show fight. There is nothing on earth more dangerous than an old she-b'ar that has lost her

cub. Take a stick with you if you like, but nothing else. Be quick about it too, for I shan't have much peace lying here until I know that you are safely back again." There was sound sense in this advice about running away, as Cynthia fully realized, but she was horribly afraid all the same.

There is no saying what queer pranks one's nerves will play one in times of heavy strain. Cynthia saw a black bear sitting behind every bush, and lurking in the shadow of every tuft of tall grass, as she climbed the narrow path up the spur, and made her way to the place where she had been picking strawberries. In reality there was nothing save her own fears to frighten her. A chipmunk scurried up the slender trunk of a young maple, the rustle of its scampering making her heart beat faster, just because she was so afraid.

Up, up, up. Would she never reach the place? Ah, there it was! And there, too, was her basket of strawberries just as she had left it. Seizing the basket in one hand, while she held the stick she carried with the other, she turned and fled back down the rough path as if the bear were already at her heels. It was so much easier going down than going up that she made the journey in record time, arriving at the shack to announce her safe return to the man who was hurt, before she went into the house to see how it fared with Prudence.

"Back safe are you?" There was so much relief

in the tone of the man that Cynthia felt he could not be altogether bad, even though there was such deep suspicion in her heart concerning his connection with the missing stranger, Jerrold Fane.

"Yes, and I did not even glimpse the bear," she answered brightly. "I don't mind admitting, though, I was really horribly scared, and every shadow I saw in grass or bushes I took for that very angry animal."

"B'ars don't lay up to jump out at people," he told her. "In an ordinary way a b'ar will shuffle off out of sight when it sees you coming. But touch a cub, and then there's bound to be trouble, like there was to-day."

When Cynthia went into the house she found that Prudence was awake, but very ill. The pain was so much worse to-night that the poor thing was wandering in her mind. In her tortured fancy she was a servant again at the orphan asylum in Ottawa, and she was excusing herself to the matron for having been found upstairs in the dormitories, when she should have been down in the kitchens. "The child was crying, ma'am, not noisy, nor stormy, but just with a frightened wail that went to the heart of me. No, I haven't blacked the range yet, but I will be sure to do it before you come down to lock up for the night. I have scrubbed all the tables, and the porridge is made for breakfast. I won't be behind, ma'am. Oh, this pain! Will

it never stop? Does pain always go on? But it is not pain, it is red-hot knives, and they are being thrust into me. Oh, God in Heaven, give me strength to bear, and to endure right to the end!"

The voice of the poor woman trailed off in a moan of agony, and then for a time she lay too exhausted for speech. Cynthia was feeling desperate. What did people do to relieve suffering like this? If only she were not so ignorant, how much easier she might make things for the sufferer! She had heard that hot flannels applied to the tortured part sometimes brought relief. She roused up the fire in the stove, that had been allowed to get low because the night was so warm. Then she made flannel very hot, and laid it on the parts of the body where the agony was the fiercest.

The night was wearing on. No thought of rest came to the mind of Cynthia, there was far too much to do. She found that she could bring at least temporary relief to Prudence by means of the hot flannels, so through the long hours of the night she resolutely set herself to the task of chasing the pain from place to place. She succeeded so well, that when dawn came the poor woman lay at rest—haggard and worn, it is true, with what she had gone through, but freed from suffering for a space.

Cynthia was so tired that she fairly reeled as she got up from her kneeling posture by the bed. Prudence was certainly asleep at last. Now she

herself would be able to snatch an hour of rest before starting on the manifold duties of the day. How good it was to feel the strain was over! In the greatness of the reaction she never even remembered the man who was lying so badly hurt in the out-shack. She flung herself, dressed as she was, on the settle where she made her nightly bed, and the moment her head touched the pillow she was fast asleep. She did not rouse until the sun was shining broadly in at the little end window, and then she realized that it must be very late indeed.

Up she jumped in a great hurry, and, going over to the bed, found to her relief that Prudence was still sleeping peacefully. Oh, the comfort of it! These hours of deep repose would go far to make up for the wearing agony of last night's pain.

It was then that she remembered the man who was lying so badly hurt in the out-shack. What must he think of such neglect? Opening the door, Cynthia stepped out to the beauty and freshness of the summer morning. She was too full of self-reproach for having slept so long to have much space for admiring the beauty of earth and air and sky. Going with a quick step round to the end of the house, she knocked lightly on the door of the out-shack, and receiving no answer knocked again.

How firmly asleep the man must be! There was a sudden cold dismay clutching at her heart now

because she could not rouse him. Pushing the door open she looked inside, then cried out in amazement, and, thrusting it wide, stepped over the threshold and looked about her. The place was empty. The man had gone. But where? He was much too ill, or so it had seemed to Cynthia, to walk any distance. She remembered how heavily he had leaned on her when she helped him down from the high spur. He would be still less able to move this morning, because the pain from his wounds would be worse. Perhaps he had crept away a short distance, being hurt and offended because she was so late in bringing him breakfast. She would just hunt round a little and shout to him. The difficulty was that she did not know what name to call him, so she had to call as she might have done to a nameless dog: "Here, here, where have you gone? I am just going to get you some breakfast. I am dreadfully sorry that I am so late, but I have been up nearly all night."

No one replied to her shouts. She ran for a little way along the broad trail that led down the mountain. Finding no trace of the man in that direction, she fled upwards on the narrow path that crossed the high spur. He was not to be seen. She was getting anxious now about Prudence, so she went back to the shack and got breakfast ready for the invalid.

Prudence was feeling better this morning. Weak

she was, from the strain of the night's suffering, but it was wonderful how little she remembered of the pain through which she had come. Well for her that she could forget. If her memory of it had been as vivid as was Cynthia's, she would have feared the night that was to follow.

Abe reached home between nine and ten o'clock. He was quite eager and excited, consequently more talkative than usual. He had met a mounted policeman from the United States boundary, who was following hard on the trail of a party of train-wreckers who had disappeared from their wonted haunts, after holding up a train on a branch line, and robbing the passengers. This man had talked to Abe a good deal, and he in his turn was full of all the news he had heard. It was something quite out of the common to meet anyone on this side of the mountain, and a mounted policeman was a very rare sight on the trail.

When Cynthia could get a chance, she told Abe of the man she had succoured from the bear on the previous day, and how, badly hurt though he was, the stranger had disappeared in the morning, and that without even saying thank you for all the kindness and care he had received.

"Knew me, did he?" queried Abe, looking thoughtful. "Now who would it be, I wonder? Can't you make it a bit more plain what he was like, Cynthia? I haven't got such a wide circle of

acquaintances that I can't remember most of them. It is mighty interesting too that he should know this was my shack, and only be willing to come here to rest after he had been told I was not at home. Altogether a mystery I call it. Seems to me he did not want the pleasure of seeing me just then. When I've had a bite of something to eat, I'll just go and prospect round a bit. The bear cub is lying up on the spur, did you say? Well, its skin should be worth something, only of course by this time a wandering wild-cat may have about torn it to bits."

Cynthia made haste to give Abe a meal. When he was rested, he took his gun and went off. He thought the bear might be lying wounded somewhere near the body of the cub, in which case a gun would be a sheer necessity. He applauded the wisdom of the stranger in refusing to let Cynthia have one, when she went up the hill to fetch her basket of strawberries. He said she was much safer weaponless than she would have been with a gun, especially as she was not very expert at using firearms.

Abe was a long time coming back. Cynthia had done all the work of the house; she had even made a fire under the old boiler in the out-shack, and was busy washing clothes, when presently she saw him coming out from the shadow of the trees that hung over the beginning of the upward trail.

He had a bulky bundle over his shoulder. At first, in her ignorance, she thought he had brought the dead cub back with him. When he came closer, she saw that it was the skin of the bear itself that he carried slung over his shoulder.

"Reckon you ought to be a proud gal, Cynthia," he called out. "The ole critter was dead as a door nail, so you have shot your first bear. It isn't everyone that gets a chance like that!"

"Did I kill the bear?" gasped Cynthia, and there was much more consternation than pride in her heart as she stood looking at the skin which Abe was unrolling.

"Lucky for you that you did kill her, for certain she would have done you in if she had had half a chance." Abe was patting and pulling at the skin as he spoke. He had spread it fur downwards on the grass outside the door of the out-shack, and was trying to get it laid out quite straight and flat.

"Let me do that," said Cynthia, thrusting him to one side, and going down on her knees beside the skin. "Just tell me what it is proper to do with the thing, then do you go and sit down in the house with Prudence for an hour or so. She will be so glad of your company, and you will be glad of a rest."

"I'm fair tired out," Abe answered heavily, as he got on his feet and proceeded to give Cynthia directions as to the curing and dressing of the skin.

"Got any hot water, have you? Well, take a pound of saltpetre, and a handful of borax, you'll want a handful of salt as well, then just go over the skin, every inch of it, rubbing off the bits of flesh and fat. If you don't scour it thoroughly you will have maggots, and they spoil a skin quicker than anything. Summer skin is always pretty hard to cure, and as a rule not worth very much when it is cured, but we don't get a chance of a black bear every day. If you are careful with the thing, you may reckon that the stranger, whoever he was, paid for his lodgings last night."

"Did you find the cub too?" asked Cynthia, who had darted into the out-shack for hot water, and was now mixing the saltpetre, borax, and salt ready for the scouring of the skin.

"What was left of it, which wasn't much," he answered. "Between birds, wild-cats, and stoats, that cub had pretty nigh vanished from the face of the earth. I should say there wasn't a square inch of undamaged fur to be found on him anywhere."

"Oh, dear, I wish I had gone for it last night, when I went up the spur for the basket of strawberries," she said regretfully.

"Just as well you didn't," he answered. "I can't say when this old critter pegged out, but she had crept back in the bushes almost close to where the cub was lying. If there had been any life in her at all, and anyone had come along to put a

finger on the body of the young 'un, there would have been trouble of a mighty serious sort for that person."

Abe lounged away to the house. There was the comfortable feeling of well-earned rest in front of him. He could afford to be leisurely and to move slowly; he had done his bit, and he was entitled to sit still. For an hour Cynthia worked on with unabated energy. What a lot of scouring that skin wanted to be sure! Her arms ached, the hot sun pouring down on her made her feel quite horribly sick. But she was painstaking and thorough; there should be no chance for fly-blows in odd corners if she could prevent it. Of course, it was awkward that the washing would have to wait, after she had got the water hot. But this sort of thing was all in the day's work, and what could not be done one day could well wait until the next.

She was poking and probing into corners and creases, when suddenly her fingers encountered something hard and round. She drew it out. A bullet it was, but it was a bullet that was stamped with raised lettering. She turned it round and round, washed it in her saltpetre mixture, and finally made out the letters U.S.P. It was the first time that she had seen a stamped bullet, and so she carried it off to show Abe.

He also turned the thing round and round in his

hands. His face grew very thoughtful indeed, and he shook his head with a solemn air. "That was queer company you had up here last night, Cynthia," he remarked presently. "This bullet comes from the stores of the United States Police; their ammunition is always stamped like that. Now that was not a member of the United States Police, or he would have been in uniform; so it is pretty plain he must have been one of the gang that stole that lot of police ammunition that was on the Nealyville train which was boarded by wreckers, after they had thrown the engine off the rails."

Cynthia shivered. It gave her a most uncomfortable thrill to feel that she had been in such close contact with a full-blown desperado. Certainly the man had looked as if he was a "tough", but then most dwellers in the wilderness had a rough, unkempt air about them.

"What will you do?" she asked.

"Nothing. Not in the direction of laying information that is," he answered. "It is a good thing for me that the man I met on the trail parted company with me five or six miles back. It would not have been comfortable for any of us if he and I had walked in home before your company had sloped. Gee whizz! There would have been ructions for sure, and my shack would have been a marked place for ever after. No, I don't want to know any more about him, and, thank Heaven, he didn't

want to stop and see me! It is funny what a hard job it is to keep clear of folks, even when you live in a place as far away from town as this is." Abe wiped his face as if he were too hot for comfort, and Cynthia went back to her skin-scouring, feeling as if she had just escaped from being present at a mighty explosion, which would probably have blown her to atoms.

Prudence was better to-day. That is to say, she was free from pain, and, although languid from the suffering of last night, was inclined to be cheerful, almost merry in fact.

Abe, too, was less gloomy than his wont. Thanks to Cynthia's hard work, home was more comfortable than it had been for months past. He was able to take such big lots of wild strawberries down to the hotel, and to get such good prices for the fruit, that funds were coming in much better than usual. He had enough to meet the necessities of daily life, and a little over. In winter he trapped for skins. In spring and autumn he hunted the wild goat from peak to peak, or prospected for outlying veins of silver and copper. He was a queer specimen of humanity. He could not be happy with neighbours, the more solitary his dwelling-place the happier he was. What little money he had was so hardly earned that one wondered how he could be content to toil in such a fashion. But he loved the solitudes, he knew the

forests and the mountains, and he was never happy away from them.

Cynthia was secretly very disturbed about the fate of the man who had disappeared so strangely from the Mount George House in company with the stranger she had rescued from the bear. What had Jerrold Fane in common with a man who used stolen ammunition? Why had the man told her she would be wise to forget that she had seen Jerrold Fane in his company? She would have liked to have told Abe about it, and heard his opinion on the matter, but she saw how greatly he disliked any reference to the subject of the man who had tried conclusions with the bear, and so she kept silent.

CHAPTER V

Another Move

Prudence was rapidly growing worse. The attacks of pain were more frequent, and the subsequent prostration was so great that both Abe and Cynthia decided that something must be done for her very speedily. In one of his journeys down to Field, Abe went to interview a doctor. He carried with him a carefully thought-out description of the sick woman's symptoms, written by Cynthia, and the doctor who read it decided that he ought to see the patient at once. He walked his horse up the trail with Abe. He thoroughly overhauled Prudence, and then called for Cynthia to come and talk with him in the shadow of the big trees that were well out of earshot of the house.

"The poor thing is very ill. An operation may save, or at least relieve her. Can she be got to the city?" The doctor fired off his statements and his question as if they were bullets from a gun. Cynthia stood with a stricken look, as if those bullets had really struck her.

"If it is necessary, she must be got to the city. I don't at this moment see how it is to be accomplished, but of course we shall find a way." Her voice was dry and hard. An untrained observer would have deemed her unsympathetic. The doctor, by instinct and training a student of human nature, understood how she was feeling, and respected her.

"It is urgently necessary." He was quietly emphatic. "I will write to the hospital at Vancouver City, and I will make all the necessary arrangements, if you on your part can make her willing to be taken there. I don't hesitate to tell you there is grave risk, but there is a chance for her. Left as she is now, she cannot live more than a week or two, and the end will be hideous suffering for her—yes, and for you too. It is always hard to witness agony that one cannot relieve."

"Indeed, yes. Will you tell them, or must I?" There was a dumb appeal in the eyes of Cynthia, but the doctor was not to be drawn into doing what he knew would be better done by her.

"I am going over yonder," he said, pointing to the edge of the hill, from which point the view was widest. "I shall sit down and rest for an hour, feed my eyes on the view, and perhaps go to sleep. At the end of the hour you will come and wake me. You can give me a cup of tea then, and, while I

am drinking it, we will discuss the best way of getting our patient down the mountain."

Cynthia nodded agreement. Then while the doctor walked over to the sunny bluff, she turned back to the shack where Abe sat by the side of Prudence, both waiting, in the dumb patience born of their hidden dread, for the verdict of the doctor.

"You haven't surely let him start back down the trail without a bite or sup of anything?" cried Prudence, who would have been fairly shocked at any lack of hospitality towards the doctor.

"No, he is not going yet. He will rest for an hour, and then I am to wake him, and give him a cup of tea," said Cynthia. Then she sat down on the bed beside Prudence, and began to tell her that there was a chance, a real chance for her to get better, if she would go into hospital for an immediate operation.

"But how am I to be got down the mountain?" asked Prudence, with the weary patience of one who looks out at an impossibility.

"The doctor and I are going to arrange that," answered Cynthia. "Where there is a will there is a way, you know. We have got the will, and we are bound to find the way. Are you willing to go, if we can make it easy for you?"

"Of course I am." Something of the old briskness came back to the manner of the sick woman.

"I should sure be ungrateful if I let folks take so much trouble for me, and did not do what I could in return."

"What will it cost?" demanded Abe with a set look on his face. He was wondering what he would do if he had not money enough to meet the outlay, and whether the hospital folks would trust him for payment, or whether they would let him work it out.

"Not very much," replied Cynthia in an easy tone. Full well she knew how Abe was feeling, and the dread he had lest he should not be able to meet his liabilities. She had felt like that herself in the past, and so she could understand and sympathize. "The hospital will not cost you anything, because Prudence will go in as a patient of the doctor's, and they are always free, you know. It may cost a little getting her down the mountain, and then there will be the car fare to the city. But I can pay my part, so you will only have your own expense and that of Prudence to consider."

"Will you go along too?" asked Abe, his face suddenly clearing. "That is downright good hearing. I had been wondering what I should do if Prudence turned fainty-like on the cars; I ain't very much up to sick-nursing, and looking after poorly folk."

"Of course I am coming. I flatter myself I am far too useful to be dispensed with under present

conditions. I shall find some work in the city while Prudence is in hospital; then, when she is ready to come out, I shall bring her back, and nurse her until she is quite strong." Cynthia stooped a little lower over the sick woman as she spoke, and the love and tenderness in her eyes were a sight to see.

"I can manage the car fare, and all that sort of thing," said Abe with unwonted briskness. "It was the thought of what the hospital might cost me that made me scared-like. They are such wonderful handsome places, so I'm told. Of course, the grander a place is, the more it costs to live in. That is common sense and plain reason. As to getting Prudence down the mountain, the easiest way will be to have a stretcher and a couple of bearers. She is wasted to almost nothing. If there were four of us to carry her, turn and turn about, we should do it easy enough."

"We will talk it over with the doctor," said Cynthia. "Very likely he has a stretcher that we could use; if not, we will make one. It is all going to turn out beautifully easy, I can see. Now I must make the tea, and then go to wake the poor man. Will you have to go back with him to the town, Abe? I have not picked any strawberries for you to carry with you."

"No; he said if I'd guide him through to the third cross-trail, he'd know the way from there. I

shall be back before sundown; then while I get a bit of rest, you may be able to gather the berries, and I can take them down to-morrow."

The doctor said that he would send four men and a stretcher, and that the journey down the mountain must be taken next day. Cynthia had a busy time after that, but, being a girl of resource, she was ready when the time came. She had even managed to pick a basket of strawberries for the hotel, which she carried down the mountain herself; the last Abe would be able to supply, most likely, as he would be away in the city while Prudence was in the hospital. He and Prudence had a second or third cousin living in Vancouver City, a Mrs. Samantha Higgins, the widow of a miner, and she would house Abe for the time he must be near his sister.

The four men with the stretcher came up the mountain that night. It was brilliantly moonlight, and they arrived at the shack an hour before dawn. They lay down for a couple of hours in the out-shack, and then were up and ready to start on the return journey with the invalid while the morning was still young. The last part of the journey was performed in a queer little one-horse carriage, which the doctor sent to meet them where the trail was broad enough to allow of wheeled traffic.

Prudence was so fearfully ill from the strain of travelling, that she had to stay all night at the

house of the doctor. Indeed, for hours it seemed doubtful whether she would rally for the remainder of the journey.

The doctor's wife was a trained nurse. Cynthia marvelled at the skill and patience she displayed. Prudence soon began to rally, and, after two nights of rest at Field, she was ready for the railway journey to the city. Cynthia had contrived to learn as much of nursing as it was possible to cram into the brief space, and she started on this second journey with much more hope than she had had before. Of course the poor woman was very ill again. The least sort of movement seemed to make her much worse, but she was brave and bright; there was no showing of the white feather with her, however much she might be suffering.

Cynthia took her to the hospital, waited there until the first exhaustion of the journey had worn off, and then went with Abe to the little house on a by-street in the Carberry quarter, where Mrs. Samantha Higgins made a living by boarding enginemen from the Carberry Electric-light Works.

Mrs. Samantha Higgins was a very small woman with the most fluent tongue that Cynthia had ever heard, even in a woman. She talked so much, and she talked so fast, that there was no room at all for anyone else to say anything worth consideration. It was quite plain to Cynthia that she could not endure such an infliction, even if she had had the

money to pay for board and lodging there. So the day after Prudence had been received at the hospital, and when she found the invalid was quite comfortable there, Cynthia went to the more fashionable quarter of the city, and finding out the house of Mrs. Riley, a boarding-house keeper, whose name had been given to her by the doctor's wife at Field, she rang the bell, and asked for an interview with the lady of the house.

Mrs. Riley came to her with a bustle and a flutter. She was about the most worried-looking woman that it would be possible to find, even in that country of worried housewives.

"I am very sorry, but my house is quite full just now, and I cannot take you, but I will give you the names of other houses if you like," the lady said, making a little dash at Cynthia, as if she would hustle her straight off out of the house as quickly as possible.

"Pardon me, it is work I want, not board," said Cynthia with her sweetest smile. "Dr. Farley's wife sent me to you, and she has given me a note of reference. I must be in the city for a few weeks, and, as I am poor, I must work while I am here, even if I can only earn my board. Mrs. Farley said that, even if you do not need a waitress yourself, you would probably know of someone who does, and so I should be able to get something to do straight away."

Half the worry dropped from the face of Mrs. Riley as she stretched out her hand for the note. "I am fearfully in need of help. My head waitress walked out of the house an hour ago, and I was wondering how I should get through the day without more help. Can you stay now? What wages will you want?"

"I can stay now," replied Cynthia, feeling more thankful than words could express that she would not have to go back to face again that stream of shrill talk from Mrs. Higgins. "I don't know what wages I may be worth to you, and of course I may have to leave you in a hurry when Miss White is ready to come out of hospital."

"I will give you what you are worth to me," said Mrs. Riley. "As to your having to leave in a hurry, it cannot be more of a hurry than I have had to face from some of the waitresses I have had lately. The work is hard, of course, but I think you will be able to manage it. You shall be free to go to the hospital on visiting days, and I will do what I can to make things comfortable for you. I hope you won't mind having your meals in the kitchen. I can see that you are a lady, and, though I would be glad enough to have you at my table if I could, you can easily understand that I have no choice."

"Oh, please do not let that trouble you!" Cynthia hastened to say. "A waitress cannot sit down to

table with other people. I do not mind where I take my meals. Shall I go downstairs now, and what is the first thing to be done, if you please?"

Apparently there was a good deal to be done, and Cynthia pitched into the work of her new post, feeling that life held an infinite variety after all. The crowded boarding-house was about as different as it could be from the silent forest-reaches where she had spent the last few weeks. It was fortunate for her that she was able to adapt herself to things, or else that first day at Mrs. Riley's would have confused her past the power to work at all. The waitress who had left so hurriedly had contrived to leave undone everything that she should have done. There were vast accumulations of dirty crockery and glass. Every towel in the establishment appeared to be in need of washing. The silver was so dull it might have been mistaken for pewter, and poor pewter at that. The demands of the boarders were constant, and as varying as their temperaments. But Cynthia had been trained in a hard school. She had learned that a smile and a happy word are the most potent things in creation, and so she contrived to give of her best in the way of service, and to give it ungrudgingly.

She had not been used to waiting at table. Her only helper in the serving of dinner that night was a small coloured boy, who brought the dishes to her from the basement kitchen because the lift was out

of order. Lucky for her that she was quick and resourceful. What she lacked in knowledge of her duties she made up in her desire to oblige, and there was a smiling charm of manner in her that went very far indeed towards making her a successful waitress. The company round the dinner-table was well-dressed and cultured. Mrs. Riley had always prided herself on the superior class of boarders frequenting her house, and she had the knack or skill of attracting the right sort of people, so that there were few of the glaring disharmonies that one often finds in establishments of this sort.

At first Cynthia, oppressed by her many duties, had no time or attention to spare for the ripple of lively talk that ran round the table. As the meal progressed, however, and she got matters better in hand, she found herself listening to odd fragments of the conversation, wondering too at the skill in repartee, and the extreme fluency of the talkers. How nice to be able to hold one's own in such a fashion! There were girls at the table as young, or younger than herself, yet they were as ready as any of the older people for the give-and-take of that bloodless fray.

Presently the talk dropped into more ordinary channels. They were discussing someone who had been staying in the house recently, but who was expecting to go to England shortly to help in the war.

“Jerold Fane will make a good officer, for he was born to command,” said a stout lady sitting near the upper end of the table, and at her words Cynthia nearly dropped a dish from sheer amazement. There could surely not be two Jerold Fanes, and the one they were speaking of had been staying in Mrs. Riley’s house on the previous week. If this was indeed the man who had disappeared from the Mount George House, then he had not been harmed by the countryman with whom he went away.

CHAPTER VI

A Momentous Stroll

How Cynthia got through the rest of her duties that night was a puzzle to herself when she thought of it afterwards. She must have done fairly well, too, for Mrs. Riley made time to run down to the pantry, when she was washing the glass and silver, just to give her a word of commendation for the manner in which her work had been done.

Jerrold Fane was alive and unharmed. This fact gave Cynthia a sense of comfort quite unaccounted for by her very slight acquaintance with that young man. Was the strange discovery of the photograph, so much resembling her, and signed "Cynthia", among his personal belongings the chief cause of her interest in him? She could have shouted and sung from sheer gladness of heart, but for the one little drawback that spoiled her complete satisfaction. She wondered were there two Jerrold Fanes, and was the one who had been talked about in the dining-room that night really the man who had registered at the Mount George House, and then had disappeared so strangely. She wished she had dared to question some of those smart and lively

people, who had spoken of him with such keen appreciation. But she was only a servant, a hired help; and these boarders of Mrs. Riley's, who so plainly belonged to quite another world, might very likely be offended, and think her questioning grossly impertinent. If only she had come to the city a week earlier, then she would have seen with her own eyes if this man was indeed the one concerning whose fate she had been so very anxious.

After this, whenever she was waiting at table, she was keenly alert for any mention of Mr. Fane's name, but she did not hear him spoken of again, and the stout lady who seemed to know most about him had gone away to a place high up in the mountains, where some wonderful brine baths had been recently discovered.

Of course Cynthia could ask Mrs. Riley about the boarder who had been in the house during the previous week, but for many reasons she shrank from doing this. She had such a vivid remembrance of the sour suspicion in which Miss Widgery had regarded her, that she could not lay herself open to another rebuff of the same description.

Two evenings later, when she came down from the dining-room to wash the silver and glass, she found Abe waiting for her in the pantry, and one glance at his face showed her that something very serious indeed had happened.

"Is Prudence worse?" she gasped. They had

told her at the hospital yesterday that it might be a week before the operation could take place, so she had been quite unprepared for news of serious moment.

"She has gone, poor thing," he said hoarsely, and then he sat down heavily on the seat from which he had risen when Cynthia came in at the door.

"Gone?" echoed Cynthia, staring blankly at him; and then she cried in a distressful tone: "Do you mean that she is dead?"

He nodded, breathing hard as if he had been running. But for the moment he had no words to explain, and Cynthia stood staring at him unable fully to grasp the situation.

"When I bade her good-bye yesterday she seemed better, and oh, she was so bright!" Cynthia's voice choked off in a sob as she recalled the affection in the sick woman's manner, and the happy way in which Prudence was talking of what she would do when she was well again.

"She was taken worse this morning, and the doctors thought to save her life by immediate operation, but she sank and died three hours afterwards. They say that nothing could have stopped her dying, and she couldn't have lived the day through even if they had not operated." Abe had such a broken look, and seemed so crushed by the suddenness of the blow, that Cynthia could find no words of consolation for him.

A burst of laughter came from the kitchen, where the cook and the coloured boy were busy clearing up for the night. Cynthia made a hasty movement and shut the door. It seemed horrible that Abe should be distressed by the vulgar mirth of other people at a time like this; but he did not appear to have heard the laughter, and sat with his head buried in his hands, lost to everything but his own overwhelming misery.

Cynthia stood leaning against the little sink in the corner where the washing-up was done. She was dazed and shaken. Of course, she had known that the condition of the sick woman was very serious. She had known also that an operation was a great risk, only to be undertaken as a desperate remedy, but she had not expected it yet, and it was the fact of Prudence having died so much sooner than she had expected which so appalled her now.

“Were you with her?” she asked.

“No; me and Samantha were sitting at tea when a message came from the hospital for us to go at once,” answered Abe. “We rose up then, and went, but she was gone when we got there. But she hadn’t needed us, because she died in her sleep.”

“Will you——?” began Cynthia, then stopped suddenly, thinking it was perhaps too soon to ask the question that had come into her mind.

“Shall we take her back to the shack, did you mean?” he said, lifting his head now and looking

as if it was a positive relief to set about arranging things. "Yes, of course I shall see that her wishes are carried out. She made me promise positive when we brought her away that, dead or alive, we would take her back again. Samantha and me have arranged to go by the evening train tomorrow, and we want you to come too. Prudence said she knowed that you would. I've got plenty of money for your car fare. Things haven't cost so much as I was afraid they would. I have earned enough since I have been in the city to pay my board, and a bit over, so I'm money in pocket, and there ain't no need to worry about expense."

This was a long, long speech for Abe to make, and Cynthia looked at him in surprise, wondering how best to answer him. To help or comfort Prudence she would have done anything, or made any sacrifice in her power. But with Prudence dead her responsibility ended, and she would gladly avoid going back to the shack for the funeral if she could.

"I do not know whether it can be managed," she began in a hesitating tone. "Mrs. Riley has been very good in taking me as she did, and as the house is so full now I am afraid that she would be seriously inconvenienced at my being away tomorrow night, and the next night too."

"Cynthia, you must come," burst out Abe. "Prudence reckoned on it, and talked about it.

Cynthia Wins

There's another reason, too, only it didn't seem the time to talk about it just yet. Me and Samantha have made up our minds to get spliced, that is married you know, and she thinks it wouldn't be proper for her to go off up the mountain with me, and to stay there over the funeral, unless you are there too."

Sad as she was, and shocked by the suddenness of the blow that had fallen, Cynthia could not keep back a smile of amusement at the thought of having to play gooseberry to such an unromantic couple as this. But she told Abe that, if he would wait, she would go and ask Mrs. Riley if she could be spared for two nights. To ensure gaining this favour she pledged herself to stay with Mrs. Riley for another month, and this promise proved powerful enough to gain for her the boon she asked.

Cynthia had no mourning garments, but there was no one who mourned Prudence more sincerely than she did; for garments are, after all, only the outward symbol, and count but little in reality. It was strange to be going back to Field in such a fashion. The same bearers who had brought the living, suffering woman down the long trail from the mountain were waiting at the railway depot to take her back to the shack. But oh, the difference between this journey and that! Coming down the mountain Cynthia had suffered acutely every time one of the bearers jarred or jolted the

stretcher, for she knew how it must torture the poor sufferer who was being carried. Now, there was no pain, and Cynthia had only thankfulness in her heart because suffering for Prudence was all over.

It was quite late in the evening when they reached the depot at Field, and they started up the mountain without loss of time. The summer nights were short, there was a moon to help them, and so they would not linger. On, and on, and on. Cynthia thought of her first journey up that long trail, when she went to care for Prudence. How long ago it seemed! The summer had advanced with leaps and bounds since then, and already some of the grass was dry and parched underfoot.

There was still a faint glow of light in the western sky, and the moon was shining brightly when they came to the stream that was near to the shack. Abe lifted Cynthia in his arms, and carried her over to set her down on dry ground beyond; and then he came back for Mrs. Samantha Higgins, who shrilly protested that she could not, and would not be picked up and bundled about as if she were a baby.

"Very well; then you will have to get wet, that is all," said Abe calmly, adding as he turned away: "You had best be a bit careful when you get in the middle of the stream, for there are deep holes, and if you step in one of them you will topple over most likely."

"Oh, Abe, Abe, come back and carry me!" cried Mrs. Samantha in a pleading tone; but she had to cry out twice before he turned back to help her over. Cynthia thought, as she looked on at the little scene, that perhaps the talkative little widow had met her match in more senses than one. She had been pitying Abe in her heart for his un wisdom in linking himself up to this noisy little woman, who had so much to say and such a flow of words. But maybe, after all, he was going to hold his own, and to be master not merely of himself, but of his wife also.

There was a couple of hours rest for them when they reached the shack. Abe kindled a fire in the stove. They had a meal, and felt better. Then there was another long walk down the trail on the other side of the spur, to a lonely little graveyard. There were weather-beaten pine-slabs instead of headstones to mark the graves. The little meeting-house was weather-beaten also, and the officiating clergyman was more weather-beaten than any, or at least so Cynthia thought, as she listened to him reading the Burial Service in his cracked old voice.

The sun was scorching hot. Suddenly Cynthia began to feel weak and tired, as she stood by the open grave and saw the casket lowered to its last resting-place. A feeling of being unable to bear anything more was upon her.

The service was over. They lingered a few minutes, taking their silent farewell. Abe, looking more gaunt and clumsy than ever in his ill-fitting store clothes, stood leaning a little forward, his tears dropping into the open grave. Cynthia's eyes were dry, and her gaze was fixed on a solitary white cloud that floated lazily in the deep blue of the summer sky overhead.

"Now then, Abe, you must cheer up," burst in the shrill voice of Mrs. Samantha. "You've got me, you know, so you won't be left quite desolate. You will make yourself ill if you carry on like this. A good burst of crying does a woman good, so I always say, but it takes it out of a man most cruel."

Cynthia turned away from the grave with a sudden impatience. She could not, oh, she could not bear that unceasing chatter just now. She would let Abe and Mrs. Samantha go back to the shack alone, and she would follow on behind. She could find her way easily enough, she was sure of it. Coming down from the shack she had noticed that the trail was broad and well marked, so of course there would be no difficulty in following it.

"You are going to start back now?" she asked presently, when they had left the graveside and had come as far as the entrance gate near the meeting-house door. The bearers had gone. They would go out to Rooker's Point, and catch the horse-stage from there to Field. The man who had dug the

grave was already at work filling it in, and there was nothing to linger for.

"Yes, we'll be getting on now," Abe answered. "I reckon you womenfolks will be about tuckered out by the time we get home again."

"I should like to stay a little while," Cynthia said, and her gaze went upward to where the white cloud still floated on the deep blue sky. "I will sit here under the meeting-house wall for another hour, and then I will come on up the mountain. I know the way well enough, indeed the trail is much too broad and clear for there to be any difficulty in finding it."

"Won't you be afraid to be out in the woods by yourself?" asked Mrs. Samantha. "Now, I always get dreadful twittery and nervous when I am alone in a solitary place. But then I'm so sociable, and I do like to have someone to speak to."

Cynthia looked imploringly at Abe. Would he understand, she wondered, or would he also think she wanted someone to talk to, when most of all she was craving for quiet?

"Cynthia ain't no stupid. There is no reason why she shouldn't find her way along the trail if she has a mind to come on alone," Abe answered. Then with a word or two of general direction, and a caution about the cross-trails, he turned away with Mrs. Samantha clinging to his arm, and Cynthia was left to the loneliness she craved.

Oh, the peace and quiet of it all! She leaned back on the bench that was placed on the shady side of the meeting-house wall, and for a whole hour she had the world to herself. The gravedigger had finished his work, and had gone out by the other gate. There was no sound to be heard saving the shrill chirping of the crickets in the warm grass. There was no song of birds even: the summer noon was too hot for bird-music.

When her hour of rest was over, Cynthia took the upward trail and went slowly forward. Even at this pace she reckoned that she would reach the shack nearly as soon as the other two, for Mrs. Samantha was not much of a walker, and would insist on sitting down for long and frequent resting spells.

Up, and up, and up. The trail was very steep on this side of the mountain. Cynthia panted from heat and exertion, but the joy of being out in the woods, and of being alone, was more than compensation for such minor drawbacks. It was good to be away from the city; it was especially good to be away from the stuffy pantry in Mrs. Riley's boarding-house. As she went slowly up through the scented woodland, Cynthia wondered how she would bear another month of boarding-house slavery. But she had given her word, and so she would have to endure it somehow. All the more reason why she should get the full joy out of this day in

the forest, seeing that the memory of it would have to last her through thirty days of drudgery, of running up and down stairs, of washing and wiping spoons and glasses until she grew fairly to hate the sight of a drying-towel.

"Oh, how lovely!" she gasped, then came to a sudden stand in surprise and delight at the scene that was outspread before her. Coming round a sharp bend in the trail, she found herself quite unexpectedly standing out on a little platform or shelf on the side of the mountain. As far as her eyes could reach, peak on peak rose up towards the blue of the summer sky. Some of the more distant ones still wore a crown of dazzling snow; the lower ones showed grim grey rock formation, or glowed a dull red in the strong light of the sun. The lower slopes were clothed in forests as with a garment, while at one spot far away to the west her gaze was caught by a gleam of water as from a lake or a very broad stream.

"Why did I not notice this as I was coming down?" she murmured, in surprise that she should have missed the glory of it then. Turning round, she faced the view a person would have had who had come down the spur, instead of toiling up. That sight was if anything more magnificent than the one which had burst upon her vision when she turned the angle of the hill. It was quite plain that she had not passed that way before.

"So I have lost my way, and now the trouble will be to find it again," she said to herself, but as yet there was no fear in her heart because of her blunder. At the worst it only meant that she must go back down the hill until she reached the point where she had left the right trail. Perhaps if she went a little higher she might find a cross-track that would lead her by another way to Abe White's shack. She took out her watch, and was surprised to find that it wanted only a quarter to five o'clock. What a long time she had been wandering! It had not been much past noon when Abe and Mrs. Samantha left the graveyard. Cynthia suddenly began to feel most desperately hungry. Her thirst she had slaked in a little stream farther down the trail. Oh, why had she been so stupid as to take the wrong path, when it had all seemed so easy to follow?

"No use to cry over spilt milk, no use at all!" she exclaimed with a laugh. "It has been well worth a blunder to come upon this, only now I must make haste in good earnest."

She was talking aloud as she turned away: the sound of her own voice was quite companionable in the solitude. She was going back over the way she had come as being the quickest after all. Suddenly she stopped, for the whistle of a train came plainly to her ears.

CHAPTER VII

Where was She?

"Now, where can I have got to?" said Cynthia in great surprise. "I had no idea that a railway track ran anywhere in this direction." She was still talking aloud, for now the sound of her voice seemed to give her courage, and to help her in fighting back the chill fear which had suddenly come into her heart. Without doubt she was lost. There was no one of whom she could ask the road, and even the thought of having to go all the way back to the lonely little graveyard where Prudence had been laid to rest was a weariness under present conditions. Besides, if she went back, would she strike the right trail? Or, striking it, would she be able to follow it straight on to the shack? It was the doubt of herself that suddenly became so wearing to her.

It was easier going down than coming up. She saw a patch of wild strawberries growing on a slope a little above the trail, and paused for a few moments to feed on the fruit, which was very fine, and very fragrant too. It seemed so funny to be picking

strawberries just for herself; half unconsciously her hands were moving round to find the basket that had always been her companion on berry-picking expeditions. "How greedy I feel to be stuffing in this fashion!" she murmured, then laughed aloud. She was feeling better now. The fruit was taking away the worst of her exhaustion. It was being so utterly fagged out that had brought the keen depression which was almost fear into her heart.

When she had eaten her fill, she went on down the trail until she came to a cross-trail. Certainly it was neither of these paths that she should have taken, or so she decided, and plunged onward again, only to be convinced, after about twenty minutes of walking, that she had not been that way before; for she had to go down a slope, steep as the roof of a house, and at the bottom was faced with the crossing of a turbulent stream which swirled about great upstanding rocks.

"I am lost, really properly lost, and where I shall come to in the end is a problem too big for me even to consider at this moment," she said to herself. She did not speak aloud now, but whispered as she went along. She turned her head anxiously at every opening in the trees. Perhaps she might happen on a lone shack by and by, and then of course her troubles would be over, for anyone would help a person who had lost her way.

Cross-trails again. Now, which should she take? How trying that they all looked so bewilderingly alike! Boldly Cynthia plunged into the one which looked the most trodden, and took her way onward with growing confidence. It did strike her as strange that there should be so many cross-trails, but it might be accounted for by the fact that this side of the spur had more inhabitants than that to the westward, where Abe White had his shack. It seemed quite hopeless to try to find his shack now, or indeed to find her way back to the graveyard. Her idea was to go forward along the most trodden trail until she came upon someone who could help her.

On, and on, and on. She was getting so weary that she could hardly drag her feet through the thick grasses. It was getting late too. Summer time though it was, daylight was on the wane. It would be dark soon, and she had no shelter. Well, at the worst it would not be a very great hardship to sleep in the open, with her back against the trunk of a tree. She certainly could not keep walking much longer. How many hours had she been on her feet? But no, she could not count; she felt as if the trail had been winding on before her tired eyes for years and years. How long was it since she left the city? But even that she could not remember. There was a big tree in front of her; when she reached that, she would sit down, and

would not move again until she was rested. But when she reached the big tree she saw to her delight the roof of a little house standing lower down the slope.

Half her weariness dropped from her then; she pressed forward with eager feet. It was only a small shack, but even as she came near she saw that there was a curtain at the window. Plainly a woman lived there. The sight gave her courage. The presence of a woman meant a safe shelter for the night. What a comfort! With eager fingers she knocked at the door, and waited for a summons to enter. Then she knocked again. Presently she was pounding on the door with her fists, but still there was no response. Then she tried the door. It was a little stiff, but it came open with a jerk when she gave it a hard push, and she entered, calling out to know if anyone was at home.

There was no reply. Indeed, one glance round showed her that no one was in possession of the single room, though there were signs in plenty of recent occupancy. A child's frock and pinafore lay on the settle that stood by the stove. A woman's skirt hung on the nail behind the door. There were even the remains of a meal on the table. Cynthia dropped wearily on a rough stool—chairs there were none—and seized upon the dry remnant of a loaf, feeling that she was really a very fortunate girl. There was even a little cold coffee in a mug. It did

Cynthia Wins

not look very inviting, but when one is very much in need, it does not do to be too particular. She felt all the better for the food and drink when she had finished. That is to say, when she had eaten all there was to eat, she looked round wondering what she should do next. Would it be best to kindle a fire in the stove? But no, she was really too tired for that, although there were dry sticks lying ready. In fact, she was too tired for anything. There was no bed in the room. Where, then, did the woman and the child sleep when they were at home? Why, in the loft of course! Cynthia had not noticed the ladder that led upwards until this moment. Now she set herself to climb that ladder to see what was above.

It was a real effort to drag herself up to the loft. But she managed it, and drew the ladder up after her. Then she stood looking round with a dubious air, for it was not an inviting bed-chamber. The bed had no sheets, nothing but a few soiled and tumbled blankets. There was a window, but it was shut, and the place was indescribably stuffy. Cynthia's first movement was to open this, and as she did so something made a scratching noise on the shingles close beside her. She looked round with a start, and saw that it was the branch of a big birch tree growing close to the shack.

"Another way downstairs if the ladder breaks," she said to herself with a little laugh, and never

dreamed how soon she might have to use it. For a minute or two she stood by the window looking out, and with one hand gently swaying the branch to and fro. How strong and supple it was! She even noticed that the constant scraping on the shingles at the edge of the gable was tearing them away. She wondered why the owner of the place was so careless as to leave the branch where it was literally pulling his house down, but she was really too tired for overmuch speculation, and, turning away from the open window, she flung herself, dressed as she was, on the unclean blankets.

At first the stuffiness of everything vexed her so that she could not rest. But she was so very tired that presently, in spite of the unsavoury blankets, she was asleep, and dreaming peacefully of the days when she was registering clerk at the Mount George House.

There was still a glow of light in the west, and the moon was coming up over the hill behind the shack when Cynthia awoke with a start, wondering wherever she could be. The sound of men's voices was in her ears. At first she thought that the people who were talking must be actually in the room with her. Then she remembered where she was, and that she had with considerable effort drawn the ladder up after she had mounted to the loft. She saw a glow of light through the open trap-door, and another ray of brightness that came through a

chink in the floor close beside the bed where she was lying.

Raising herself on one elbow, she looked cautiously down through the chink, and saw that four men were sitting below. They had kindled a fire in the stove. There was a big black bottle on the table, and the men were drinking from cups and mugs. A desperately rough-looking set they were, and she saw that they had revolvers stuck in their belts, while four rifles were stacked against the end of the settle.

"Look here, Long Jake, we ain't going to have you bungling this business as you did the other," said one of the four, who had a deep voice which boomed through the shack, and gave Cynthia a funny feeling that the floor was shaking under her as she crouched on the bed.

The man addressed as Long Jake lifted his head to hurl a curse at the man with the big voice; and then Cynthia had a view of his face, and recognized him as the man with whom Jerrold Fane had gone away, the same man whom she afterwards rescued from the angry she-bear.

"It ain't no manner of use to sling cusses at him, Long Jake," said another man. "You know very well that Clear-eyed Cyrus could never have managed to slope if it hadn't been for you giving him the tip that he would be wise to get out with his stuff. We let you off that time, but if you try to

spoil this little game of ours to-night, I warn you that I will put a bullet through you, let what may come of it."

"Yes, Long Jake, I reckon you'd best be saying your prayers, if you are thinking about any hanky-panky tricks in this business of chucking the cars off the rails, for we ain't going to be balked now that we have got things all nicely fixed up." It was the fourth man who spoke this time, and there was a growl of approval from the other two, while Long Jake fidgeted on his stool in an uneasy fashion, and then burst into a hot defence of himself and his actions.

"Is it likely that I should try to balk the business, when I stand to gain as much as the rest of you?" he asked savagely. "Didn't I pull up the ties myself, and wasn't it me that brought you word as there would be enough loot on the train to keep us from having to work any more, even if we lived to be a hundred. It was me that chose the place, too. You others were for having it in the middle of the bridge; then the train would have been shot right into mid-stream, and none of us would have been a cent the richer for what she carried, since it would all have been out of our reach. I told you she must run off the rails exactly at the mouth of the tunnel, then she'd strike earth and not water, and we should have our chance."

"Jes' so," said the man with the big voice. "We

mean to have our chance, too, and don't you forget it, Long Jake. We ain't a set of nursery kids, nor yet a blooming Sunday-school. We are out on stiff business, and it wouldn't be healthy for you nor anyone else to try and stop us now."

Long Jake growled some reply that Cynthia's straining ears could not catch, then a short silence fell on the group down below, while the bottle went round and the mugs were filled anew. Presently one of the men pulled a pack of dirty cards from his pocket, and suggested a game of poker-*nap* to while away the time.

"Much better go to sleep, I should say," grumbled Long Jake, who had been sitting forward with his arms on the table as if he were worn out.

"Yes, we are likely to do that!" sneered one of the others. "Then when we were all snoring, you would slip out and set an alarm going, so that we should miss our chance after all. You don't catch me sleeping this side of daylight—no, not if I know'd I'd never have a chance to sleep again."

Again Long Jake growled a fierce, but to Cynthia an inaudible, reply. Then they started playing, and very soon were quarrelling fiercely, their voices rising to shouts, whilst stools were pushed to and fro in an angry fashion.

Cynthia was sitting straight up on the bed now, and trying to get things clear in her head. They were going to wreck a train, that was pretty clear.

From what she had gathered, the train was not coming through until daylight. But then the nights were so short now. She wanted to go and warn the train, but how was she to get out, and how was she to find where the railway track ran? It could not be far away, that was certain, or they would have sought a waiting-place somewhere else. What could she do? She was a prisoner in the loft. It was impossible for her to get out. Her only chance of safety was to stay where she was until the men left the shack, and then to slip out and lose herself in the woods, so that no one should ever know where she had taken refuge for the night.

If she stayed until the men were gone, she would be too late to warn the train. There would be an appalling catastrophe: many lives would be lost, people would be maimed, and oh! the horror of it was too great even to think about. Just then a soft scraping made itself heard outside the open window, and Cynthia gave a little start, for she thought someone was trying to climb up outside. Then she remembered the birch tree, and how the branch rubbed against the gable-end of the house, and was even beginning to lift the shingles at the end of the roof.

Would she dare to climb out of the window and swing herself down by this tree? A cold shiver swept over her at the bare thought of doing such a thing. A rude burst of profanity from below, a

shout from Long Jake that he would not stand so much cheating, and then a wild scuffle, through which came the noise of breaking crockery. Dreadful things might be happening down there. She turned sick and faint at the thought of what might happen if the men should chance to find that she was in the loft, and had heard what they had been talking about.

She must get out somehow. Better to break her limbs falling from the tree, than to be caught up in the loft. Softly she put her feet on the floor. Suppose a board should creak! There was so much noise down below that it did not seem likely that anyone would hear a board creak; still, one of the four might take it into his head to inspect the loft, and, although she had drawn the ladder up, there were plenty of ways in which a resolute man might manage that climb.

Most fortunately for Cynthia, the window was at the side of the loft farthest from the open trap-door. She reached the window, she thrust her head forth, and surveyed the outside. The branch was gently scraping up and down, for a breeze was coming through the trees. How bright the moon was! The night was really not dark at all. She took hold of the branch. How awful to trust herself to the swaying of a thing like that! Would she ever manage the climb down? It seemed to her that she could not possibly face it.

A roar of fierce language from below, and another outburst of wild confusion. Cynthia hesitated no longer. Indeed she was so frightened that she would have risked jumping from the loft just to get away from the shack. Taking a firm grip of the branch with both hands, she let her weight slip on to it gently. To her horror the edge of her skirt caught on a projection of the window frame. For one tragic moment she hung suspended so, unable to move anyhow, while the branch sank slowly downwards, and there was an ominous crack. Was the branch going to break beneath her weight? What was going to happen?

The skirt broke away suddenly. Down came Cynthia, the branch dipping so low with the strain that her feet touched the ground. She let go her hold, and the next moment was sprawling face downwards on the grass.

CHAPTER VIII

A Fierce Ordeal

Just for one minute Cynthia felt as if she had broken every bone in her body. Her head seemed as if it would burst with the force of the shock. She lay gasping and trembling, her strength all gone. Then suddenly there was a louder noise from inside the shack, and something banged against the door. Were the men coming out? The fear of being found there brought back to her the power of movement. She scrambled to her feet, and set off down the trail as fast as she could run.

She chose the downward trail because she thought it would most likely lead to the railway track. Then, too, she could more quickly put a distance between herself and those fierce men in the shack. Her skirt had a long rent in it, where she had torn it when she swung out on to the branch. This impeded her running, until she stopped a moment and gathered it into her hands, after which she got on better. The trail was smooth, and fairly easy to follow, so, although she panted and puffed, she was able to get over the ground at a good rate of speed.

Ah, there was the railway track! A sob of sheer joy came up in her throat as she caught the gleam of the metals in the moonlight. Would she be in time to warn the train? Which way was it coming? She thought hard as she raced down the last bit of the hill. She had heard the men say that there was money on the train. She had heard them say also that Germany was prepared to give a sort of bonus for every eastward-bound train that was wrecked on the main lines, because all these trains carried supplies of some kind that would be going to England. So the train to be wrecked would be going east, and by the position of the moon she knew at once which was east. Then she herself must go the other way, and oh! horror of horrors, she would have to cross the bridge where the train was to be run off the line. There was one comfort: nothing could be worse to endure than what she had already gone through. Comforting herself with this thought, she pounded along as fast as she could go, jumping from tie to tie, and getting along at quite a smart pace, though now there was a sharp pain in her side from the pace she was making. She was fearful of being too late to stop the train. She felt that she would just die from the horror of it, if she arrived at the place where the train was to be derailed only in time to see the disaster take place. As she ran, her ears were strained to catch the sound of an approaching train. Twenty

Cynthia Wins

times she thought she heard a whistle shrilling through the silence of the night. But when she stopped to listen, there was no sound at all.

Ah, there was the bridge straight in front of her! It was a trestle bridge of the usual sketchy pattern, with many beams and cross-pieces, which looked fearfully insecure to walk upon. Cynthia hesitated when she reached it. Would she dare to cross it on foot? Then she laughed at her own stupidity. A bridge that was strong enough to carry a heavy train would surely carry her. She must go over, even if she had to crawl from tie to tie. Boldly she stepped out. By taking a long stride she could just manage to step from tie to tie. But looking down at the fathomless blackness below made her feel very giddy. Yet she must look, or she could not put her foot on the next tie. A strong breeze, fragrant with the odour of pine trees and the perfume of summer flowers, came sweeping up the valley, and threatened to lift her off her feet. She was breathing in loud sobbing gasps, and her heart was thumping as if it would burst.

What was that? Looking ahead in the bright moonlight, she saw in front of her a part of the track from which the ties had disappeared. A yawning blackness it was, and beyond it was the mouth of the tunnel.

Again she paused. How could she pass that void? Yet if she did not, she would not be in time

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CYNTHIA STOPPED WITH A LITTLE CHOKED CRY OF AMAZEMENT



to save the train. Every minute was precious. If she slipped and fell, it would be not only her life that would be forfeit, but the lives of those other people who were speeding to their doom. Perhaps she could crawl along the trestle-frame. She knew that her head was not strong enough for her to keep her balance if she tried to walk. Down on her knees she fell. Drawing up her skirt so that it should not impede her movement, she crawled out on to the steel framework of the bridge, and slowly squirmed her way along. What a painful progress it was! She was hampered by her ragged skirt, which would get twisted round her feet. Once she nearly rolled off, and clung with all her might, shaking and trembling, not daring to move until a little strength came back to her. But the train might be very near now. Indeed she fancied that, far away in the distance, she could hear the sound of its approaching roar. She must hurry, hurry, for oh, she must be in time!

Firm ground under her at last, instead of the fathomless blackness that had made her so giddy when she had to look down. In her joy and relief she could have kissed the earth, if only she had had the time to stop for it. As it was, she rose to her feet, stood for a moment trembling and swaying, then ran forward into the yawning blackness of the tunnel mouth. It was fearful running here. Sometimes she failed to get her foot on the ties, and fell

heavily on to her knees. Four times she crashed down. Four times she got on to her feet again, feeling that she could not run another step. The last time she scrambled up she saw in front of her a small round spot of light. That was the mouth of the tunnel! The sight brought fresh courage to her, and she toiled on again, although, a little while before, it had seemed impossible that she could make any further effort. The light grew with every step she took. She realized now that dawn was nearly here. With dawn the train was due. Oh, she must hurry, hurry! The mouth of the tunnel at last! To her great relief she saw that it was the moon that was shining so brightly. It was not quite dawn yet, so perhaps she might be in time after all. There was the signalman's hut, and there was a light shining from the window.

Cynthia dashed up to the door, and began pounding on it. Then she tried to open it, but alas, it was fast! Was it possible the signalman was asleep, or had he gone away leaving his light burning? The window was rather high, but by clinging to the framework she managed to pull herself up so that she could look inside. Apparently there was no one there at all. The place seemed deserted, but a lantern stood on the table, and she made up her mind that she must have that lantern even though she had to break down the door to get it. Back to the door she rushed, and,

picking up an iron bar that lay near, commenced a rain of blows on the door. What a mercy that it was of a flimsy make! After four smashing blows it splintered like matchwood. She dropped the heavy piece of wood then, and thrusting her hand through the hole she had made, tried to unfasten the door. But it was locked, and the key was gone. Picking up the iron bar again, she had to make the hole in the door big enough for her to crawl through. All this took time. Away in the distance she heard a faint rumble. That was the train! In through the hole she squeezed. There was more damage to her attire, her hair was pulled down; but she had no time to spare for taking care of herself. She wriggled through the hole, stepped across the floor, and reached the table where the lantern stood. Seizing it, she turned to rush back, when she nearly stumbled over the body of a man who was lying on the floor. He must be the signalman. But she had no time to stay and see if he still lived and needed help. He was only one, and the lives of hundreds were hanging on her power to stop the train before it entered the tunnel.

She scrambled back through the hole in the door. She raced along the track. The dawn was coming fast now. Such a glorious dawn it was! Already there was a rose flush in the east. Cynthia stopped. She stood in the middle of the track, and slowly waved the lantern to and fro.

What a thunder the heavy train made as it rushed along! She felt the ground shake under her as it came. Would they see her waving light, and would they stop? Oh, the strain and the terror of that waiting! She was resolved not to move from where she stood. If the train went on to destruction it would go over her body. She was crying out now, but she was quite unconscious of doing it.

Then to her ears came the sound of grinding brakes. Had there ever been such music before? A sob of sheer gratitude rose in her throat. It was worth anything to have been in time!

What was that? Something scorched her arm, and at the same moment the lantern was dashed out of her hand to fall with a crash on the permanent way. It was just then that the long train of cars came to a stand, and a couple of trainmen leaped down from the engine and came running towards her.

"Hurt, are you?" called the first man as he came nearer. Then, looking down, Cynthia saw to her great amazement that her hand and arm were dripping blood.

"Why, what is it?" she asked in profound surprise.

"That is what we are wanting to know?" panted the other man. "You stop the train by waving a light, and, just as we pull up, the lantern is shot out of your hand."

Cynthia reeled, a black chasm yawned before her. But she must not, oh! she must not give way yet. Rallying her powers by a great effort, she waved her unhurt arm impatiently. "Never mind about me for a minute. I stopped the train to warn you that the ties have been pulled up just beyond the other end of the tunnel, where the track runs out on to the bridge. There was a plot to wreck the train at that place, so that she would plunge downward into the gorge."

She stopped speaking abruptly, for she was all at once conscious of her ragged, dirty, and dishevelled appearance. Quite a crowd of men were advancing upon her now. The daylight was getting broader at every moment, and her skirt was nearly torn off her. Then a young man stripped off his light summer overcoat with a hasty movement, and, coming nearer, asked kindly:

"Would you like to slip your arms into this? You are shivering, and you will get a bad chill if you have been running."

Cynthia turned to him with quick gratitude, then stopped with a little choked cry of amazement, for this was Jerrold Fane, who had disappeared so strangely from the Mount George House.

As his gaze met hers, he too gave a start of pure astonishment, and then said in strong disapproval: "Why, Cynthia, is it you? Whatever are you doing here?"

CHAPTER IX

Some Explanations

"I do not know you—" cried Cynthia, with offence in her tone. Then suddenly remembering that she did know the man, and that it was he who was not supposed to know her, she stopped short, not knowing quite how to explain herself.

"But you are Cynthia?" There was a tinge of doubt in his tone now, and to her surprise, and great indignation, he took her by the arm, and turned her round so that he might see her face more clearly.

"I am Cynthia Beauchamp," she answered quietly; repeating with an air of desperation, "but I do not know you really, you know that I do not."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, and now his tone was as disapproving as it had been at the first. "This is no time for play-acting. Why are you roaming out here at night, when your uncle thinks that you are with Mrs. St. John and her party at Cromach? And why, in the name of all that is

wonderful, are you calling yourself Cynthia Beauchamp, I should like to know?"

"Because it is my name!" she retorted crossly. Then the absurdity of the situation struck her, and she began to laugh. She might be ragged, dirty, dishevelled, her arm might be wounded from the bullet that had smashed the lantern, but even these things could not quench the humour that was in her.

But the train officials claimed her attention now. They wanted the story of why she had stopped the train. She saw that most of those in uniform who were crowding round her carried revolvers. It was not usual for trainmen to be seen with fire-arms, but it was something of a comfort to know that they had them close at hand for use in time of need.

Cynthia told her tale of adventure as briefly as she could. Two men were sent through the tunnel, with instructions to make their way to the next signal-box and warn the man there that the bridge was impassable for trains. Then four men from among the passengers volunteered to go with two more of the trainmen to the shack where Cynthia had taken shelter, in the hope of coming upon some clue to the men who had planned the wrecking.

The train itself was to be backed to Honley Siding. There were too many valuables on board for those in charge to be willing to let it remain

Cynthia Wins

just where it was, pending instructions. The fact that the lantern had been shot from the hand of Cynthia, when she was waving the warning to stop the train, made them feel that the forest might cover more enemies than they had strength to cope with. The man in the signal-box, which Cynthia had broken into, was dead. He had been shot through the heart. Plainly every precaution had been taken for making certain of the disaster, and it was only the unexpected and unknown presence of Cynthia in the loft that had averted an appalling catastrophe.

Cynthia herself was to be taken to Honley Siding on the train. From there she would be sent to Vancouver City. The forest would not be a healthy place for her just now. The officials were concerned to hurry her on board the cars. She was still wearing the coat offered for her use by Jerrold Fane, and when she went to mount the steps on to the platform of the first car, she was met by such an ovation of cheers as fairly took her breath away and made her want to turn and run. She was keenly conscious of her untidy condition. She had lost her hat, her hair was streaming down her back. Doubtless her face was streaked with dirt, and her skirt hung in festoons of rags. Oh, it was dreadful to be so dishevelled, and to have so many people staring at her! It never once occurred to her that everyone on that crowded train looked

upon her dishevelment as a livery of honour. To them she was embodied Providence, for she had saved them from death, from awful mutilation, from a shock and a fright that would have driven some of them out of their senses. They made themselves hoarse with cheering, until, seeing Cynthia's embarrassment, some of the officials begged them to desist, and urged her along the narrow corridor to a small compartment where she could have privacy, and a chance to put herself tidy.

She had not seen Jerrold Fane again since the officials had brushed him aside, when they came to demand from her her reason for stopping the train. She would see him later, perhaps, when she was more presentable. In the privacy of the little dressing-room she surveyed the damage to her skirt, and decided that she would certainly have to beg the loan of his coat until she reached the city, for it would be impossible for her to appear in public in such a state of ruin.

Suddenly the thought of Abe White and Mrs. Samantha Higgins came to her mind. She had forgotten all about them, and she was fearfully oppressed to think of how anxious they must be because she had not turned up. She even imagined Abe toiling all the way back to the lonely little graveyard, in the hope of coming on some trace of her. Then she thought of Mrs. Samantha's fears if Abe was a long time away. "They will

Cynthia Wins

both hate me for having given them so much trouble," she murmured, and was very wretched to think that, for a time at least, they must still be in uncertainty about her.

Now that the strain was over, she was suddenly conscious that she was fearfully tired. She was fairly worn out. Every limb was aching, and a horrible depression had her in its grip. She had washed her face and had done her hair, fastening it up with hairpins kindly contributed by the lady passengers. She was looking quite passably tidy, now that she had buttoned the coat down over her rags. But she was careful not to emerge from the seclusion of the little dressing-room until Honley Siding was reached, when it was necessary for her to interview another set of officials.

There was no cheering when she came out through the train this time, but the men lifted their hats as they stood up to let her pass, and the women bowed as if she were a royal personage. Oh, it was good to be able to help one's fellows! It was even good to have endured such toil and strain so that a great disaster might be averted.

When she left the train, Cynthia was ushered into a little room smelling strongly of kerosene. There her statement was taken down in shorthand by a nervous-looking clerk, who kept peeping at her from under his half-closed eyelids, while he marvelled that a mere girl had had the courage to

crawl along the trestling of the bridge, and then to rush through the dark tunnel in order to warn the train. Cynthia was happily quite unconscious of his deep but respectful admiration, or it would have embarrassed her extremely. There was a light engine at Honley, and this had taken out a breakdown gang to start the repairs of the bridge. A message had come back from the signal-box on this side of the tunnel stating that the shack had been found, but it was deserted. It was plain that the wreckers had made themselves scarce. Now the trouble would be to catch them. Most probably it was one of the four who had shot Cynthia as she stood waving the lantern to warn the train, unless indeed there were five in the gang, and the fifth was on watch near the signal-box.

Cynthia had to wait until evening for a train back to the city. The repairs to the bridge took some hours. Until they were completed, no trains could be accepted on that section of the line. The eastward-bound train which she had saved from destruction had gone by way of Bradfield Junction. From there, a little loop-line led through the mountains to Goat Pass, where it would join the main line again near Hunt's Ford, after a detour of a hundred miles. She was profoundly thankful when it had gone, for the passengers kept sending her notes of gratitude, and there were numberless requests for interviews. An enterprising newspaper

reporter, who happened to be on the train, managed to get his head in at the door while Cynthia was telling her story to the officials. Being discovered, he was promptly ejected, and that without ceremony or regard for his feelings.

The window of the little room where she was taking shelter looked out to the railway track. When the train she had saved was about to pass this window, a conductor came to ask her if she would stand before it to give the passengers the great pleasure of seeing her as they went away. To please them she agreed to this, and smilingly bowed her acknowledgments as car after car of wildly cheering people passed by.

She was a little sore at heart, in spite of all this ovation of gratitude, that Jerrold Fane had sent her no note. Nor had he, so far as she knew, asked for any further explanation of the mystery of her presence there. It was plain that he had mistaken her for that other Cynthia whose picture had been found by Miss Widgery in his baggage left behind at the Mount George House, at Field, and mistaken by her for Cynthia the registering clerk. Who was that other Cynthia? She thought of the laughing eyes of the girl in the picture, and her air of gay irresponsibility. Why had Mr. Fane's tone been so coldly disapproving when he asked her why she was not at Cromach with Mrs. St. John? Who was Mrs. St. John?

To all her questioning there could be no answer. She did not know, and there was no one to tell her. Jerrold Fane had crossed her path again, and again he had disappeared. This second meeting had but added to the mystery of the first. Then Cynthia remembered the coat she was wearing, and wondered what she could do about restoring it to its rightful owner.

The officials at the Honley Siding were very kind to her, and because she was so tired she slept through a great part of the day. Towards evening, about an hour before train time, the wife of the official in whose house Cynthia had been resting came to waken her, and told her that a parcel had arrived for her.

"A parcel?" cried Cynthia. "Where has it come from, and how did it get here?"

"It has come from Bradfield Junction, and was brought down on the afternoon freight wagons," answered the woman, and that was all she seemed to know about it.

The parcel turned out to be two big cardboard boxes of the kind that always suggest new clothes. Cynthia, with the help of the woman, got them open as quickly as she could, and was delighted to find a coat and skirt of dark grey tweed, and a hat that she could wear without attracting notice or exciting comment.

"Oh, what a comfort!" Cynthia cried, as she

looked at the contents of the boxes. "Now I can really be tidy and respectable again. But where can the things have come from?"

"Perhaps one of the passengers on the car may have had a suit in her baggage that she could spare for you," suggested the woman. "I don't see that there was any other way in which clothes could have been got here in the time. There is no store at Bradfield Junction where things like that could have been bought."

"If we don't know where they came from, it will have to be a mystery, of course," said Cynthia with a happy laugh, and then she made haste to strip off her ragged skirt and blouse, and to clothe herself in the garments which had been sent to her. Oh, the comfort of knowing that she was decently habited again! She could have danced from sheer lightness of heart. It is all very well to be strung up to the doing of a brave deed, but when one has to face the world in rags afterwards, the price is apt to seem a very heavy one.

There was a veil in the box with the hat. Cynthia had never worn a veil before, and she put it on with a keen pleasure in the novelty. Really she did look nice when her toilet was completed; and the woman who had been her hostess all day was loud in her praise at the change wrought by the well-cut clothes.

When the cars came up, Cynthia walked out to take her place in them. There were a few people

standing about, but to her great comfort no one seemed to recognize her. The woman with whom she had been staying had a young baby that claimed her attention at that moment, and prevented her from coming out to see Cynthia into the waiting train. There was no proper platform at Honley Siding. The passengers had to board the cars as best they could. One of the trainmen told Cynthia that she had better come along to the rear car, where it was easier to reach the steps. To do this she had to pass a group of men standing quite close to the depot shed. One of these said something in a deep voice, and, looking up quickly, Cynthia with a shiver of fear recognized him as one of the men who had been in the shack last night. She had seen his face clearly when she peeped through the chink in the floor, and now to see him again, and to be so close to him, filled her with such fear that she felt as if she would faint.

Suppose he should know her! The fear and the shock made her giddy; for a moment the cars and the people swung round in a blurred confusion; it was almost as if she were about to swoon. The next minute the trainman was helping her up the steps to the rear car, and Cynthia drew a long breath of relief, though she was trembling so badly that she could hardly stand, and had to cling to the railing of the little end platform for support.

It was horrid to feel so confused and giddy. She tried to comfort herself by remembering that, although she had seen the man's face quite clearly when she was in the shack, he had not seen her. But who was it that shot her as she stood waving the lantern? Of course it might not have been one of the four men who had been in the shack, but probability pointed very plainly to them; there had been no mention in their talk of any others being involved in the business. There would have been ample time for anyone who knew the forest to have reached the spot on the other side of the tunnel, and the man who had made her a target for his shooting would probably know her again. Little wonder that she was afraid.

It was while she stood clinging to the railing, and listening in a dazed fashion to what the trainman was saying about the arrangements that had been made for her comfort in the car, that a girl, dirty, ragged, and untidy, came out of a little shack which stood in a patch of ground near the track, and came running along as if she would board one of the cars. Suddenly the man with the deep voice dragged something from an inner pocket. There was a report and a flash. Cynthia saw the girl throw up her arms and fall, with a wild shriek of fear, and then for a moment she knew no more.

"Fainted, did you?" asked a quiet voice, and a lady who had come to the help of Cynthia put a



1917

"ARE YOU HERE?" SHE CRIED

comforting arm round her, and led her to a seat farther up the car, where the motion was not so violent when the cars were running. "It was fortunate that I was standing just beside you, or you would have tumbled off the platform."

"I have never fainted before," said Cynthia. She was struggling now with a wild desire to cry and sob with hysterical violence. She felt as if she could not keep quiet. It was a most dreadful sensation, and she clenched her hands tightly, feeling as if she were hanging on to composure in that fashion.

"There must be a first time for everyone, I suppose, and you have had your first time now. Did you hurry to catch the cars?" The lady's manner was so sweetly sympathetic that Cynthia would have been thankful to have told her of what really made her feel so ill. But she could not confide in a stranger, and, looking up at that moment, she saw Jerrold Fane coming along the aisle between the seats. At the same time the cars began to move, and she was being swiftly borne away from Honley Siding.

"Are you here?" she cried, and without at all realizing the joy and relief that came into her voice. A minute before she had been feeling absolutely forsaken, the most lonely person on God's green earth.

"Yes, I am here," he answered, smiling at her

in a friendly fashion; then he said: "I had some difficulty in recognizing you at first. I did not see you board the cars, although one of the trainmen told me you were here."

"The girl who was shot, was she killed do you know?" gasped Cynthia.

He shook his head. "Hurt she might have been, killed she certainly was not, for as the cars began to move I saw her get up without assistance. I am afraid the man got clear away though. He was a long way ahead of any of his pursuers, and very near the edge of the forest. If once he reached that, there would certainly be no chance of finding him."

"Was it that which made you faint?" demanded the lady who had been so kind to Cynthia. "Those shooting affairs are getting to be horribly common, especially in these out-of-the-way places. But, to look at you, I should have thought that your nerves were too strong to give way in such a fashion."

Cynthia made some answer of a confused sort. She was not at all clear in her mind as to what it was she really said. The lady, whose husband was on the train, went away after a time, and then Jerrold Fane, who was sitting with Cynthia, leaned forward to ask:

"Was it one of the train-wreckers who shot at that girl who was running along by the train?"

"Yes," admitted Cynthia in a low and very

unwilling tone. "But how did you guess that it might be one of those men?"

"Because it is one of the things that we have been fearing for you," he replied. "Mr. MacFarlane, that is the road inspector who lives at Honley, was talking to me about the probable danger to you in boarding the train, unless we could alter your appearance. That was why I went up to Bradfield Junction to see if new clothes could be bought for you there. On the way a lady was talking to me about you. She was a motherly soul with daughters of her own. One of them was with her, a young bride with trousseau trunks. I told her my difficulty, or at least the difficulty of the officials. She at once rose to the occasion, and the things you are wearing came from the trousseau trunks. No, you need not look on it as charity; the lady promised to send the bill in to the railway people, and they will be only too glad to pay it."

"It was very kind of you and Mr. MacFarlane to be so thoughtful for me," said Cynthia, and a bright flush came into her pale cheeks. "I recognized the man as I passed him, and I felt as if I should have died with the fright, until I remembered that he had not seen me when I was in the shack. But, of course, if he was the man who shot at me when I was waving the lantern, he would be looking for someone who was fearfully ragged and untidy in appearance. I was a perfect scarecrow

by the time I had crawled through that broken door of the signal-box, after I smashed it, to get the lantern."

"I think all of us who were on the train regarded you as the most beautiful person the world could produce," Jerrold Fane answered gravely. "You were our salvation from hideous disaster. It was your courage and self-sacrifice we thought of, and it mattered not at all that your hair was streaming down your back, that your face was smudged, and your frock a ruin."

"It mattered to me a great deal," she said; and then she laughed, thinking that, after all, she had been silly to care so much about her looks at a time like that.

CHAPTER X

A Changed Outlook

It was a wonderful and delightful thing to Cynthia to be taken care of, as Jerrold Fane cared for her on that journey back to the city. He did not tell her at what personal inconvenience he had come back on his journey, or that he had done it solely on her account, and because of the strange and vivid interest she had awakened in him.

Cynthia told him that she was a waitress at the boarding-house kept by Mrs. Riley, that she had given her word to stay there for another month, after which she hoped to get a better post. But there her explanations stopped. She could not tell this man, who was so nearly a stranger, that she had given up pleasant work and a lucrative post to take care of a dying woman, to whom she owed a debt of gratitude.

Knowing him to be on a much higher social level than her own, Cynthia supposed that this confidence of hers might make some difference in his manner to her, and she watched for it with absorbed interest. She would hate him if he

changed in his manner to her because she was a nobody, yet all the same she expected the change.

"If you were registering clerk at the Mount George House, at Field, why did you leave it to become a waitress in a private boarding-house?" he asked, and there was the same disapproval in his tone that she had noticed when he mistook her for the other Cynthia.

"Circumstances over which I had no control," she answered with a smile at him, then made haste to amend her statement. "No, that is hardly a correct explanation. What I really meant to say was that circumstances forced me into doing things that otherwise I might not have done. It is not a very lucid answer, but it will have to serve."

"It will have to serve until I know you better, and you have learned to trust me more," he said gravely; and then he was so quiet that she thought he must be offended about something, so for a time was silent herself. But there was something she very badly wanted to know. If she did not ask him now, she might not have another chance, so finally she plucked up sufficient courage to put her question:

"Why did you disappear in such a strange fashion from the Mount George House? The management were in great trouble about you, fearing that some harm had come to you."

Jerrold Fane laughed. "I shall have to repeat

your own very lucid statement, and it really fits my case very well indeed. It was circumstances over which I had no control that sent me away in such a hurry. I did not mean that there should be any anxiety on my account, however, and I took care to send a messenger next day with a note to the manager; but as he was paid beforehand he did not trouble overmuch about earning his money. This I did not discover until some time later, when I sent to retrieve my belongings. It was really rough on me to be done out of my holiday, for it was a long time since I had had one, and I had not been very well; but, as you say, there are some things that can't be helped, and that was plainly one of them."

Cynthia nodded, but she was wondering that he had not told her why he went so strangely. Truth to tell, she was a little piqued about it all. She had endured so much mortification as well as anxiety because of this stranger, that she felt she had a right to know what had taken him away.

"When you sent for your baggage from the Mount George House, did you find it all right?" she asked after a little silence; but there was such visible hesitation in her manner that he immediately wanted to know why she had asked.

"I took the things out, and they seemed all there. What was missing?" he demanded, frowning heavily; only, the frown was from the effort to

remember whether there really was anything lacking from his baggage.

Cynthia flushed hotly. It was horribly embarrassing to have to speak of what had caused her so much discomfort, but of course she had no right to the picture of the girl with the laughing eyes, and she must tell him that it was in her possession.

"Miss Widgery, the manageress, opened your baggage when, at the end of a week, you had not been heard of," she began rather nervously, while her face grew more rosy still. "There was a picture among your things, the portrait of a girl, labelled 'Cynthia'. Miss Widgery thought it was my portrait, and was very angry with me. I could not really convince her it was not mine; no, not even when I told her that I had not had my photograph taken since I left the institution. She thrust it into my hand, and told me I had better keep it, because the management might dismiss me if they knew."

"And did they?" demanded Jerrold Fane, starting up in his place with such a look of anger that she was disposed to be scared at the storm she had provoked.

"No; in the end I dismissed myself, and that when I might have had a much better post; but that is another story, and does not fit in here." Cynthia laughed as she spoke; then, as the man at her side did not seem disposed to tell her who

the other Cynthia was, she blurted out another question: "Who is that other Cynthia, and is she really so much like me?"

Jerrold Fane turned in his seat, and for a moment studied in silence the face of the girl at his side. Perhaps he was glad to have a chance to look straight into Cynthia's eyes. Then he said slowly: "To a casual observer you are very like indeed. To anyone who really studied your face, you are about as unlike in expression as it is possible for two girls to be. The other Cynthia—she is Cynthia Dayrell, by the way—has laughing eyes and a care-free expression. She is just an irresponsible girl, knowing little of the real strain of life, and caring less. She has never had to earn her living, she has almost always had her own way, and she has never had any real trouble. Even the death of her mother was only a passing sorrow, and her tears were soon dried."

Cynthia nodded again. She was hugely interested; she was curious, too, to find out why the disapproving inflection had crept into his voice again. It was really thrilling to hear about a girl, happy and fortunate, who was in appearance so like herself. She did not understand why Mr. Fane's description should halt and fall short, just when she wanted to know so much. "Do you know her well? Is she kin to you that you should carry her portrait in your baggage?" she asked,

greatly daring, and shivering a little as she waited for his reply.

"I suppose I have known her all her life," he answered, but without any enthusiasm, and, as Cynthia was keen to note, without any anger either. "Two years ago we were betrothed, and we expected to marry; but she found someone she thought she liked better, and so she gave me the mitten—I mean she broke the engagement. I had got so used to carrying her picture about with me, that I suppose I forgot to take it out of the bag when I packed to go to Field."

Cynthia coloured in acute distress. How horrid she had been to press for explanation, when the telling must have been so painful. "Please forgive my most unwarrantable curiosity," she pleaded. "I had no idea that there was any pain involved in the telling."

"Nor is there." He smiled at her in a reassuring fashion which went far to set her at her ease again. "Cynthia and I are very good friends still, but she does wild and freakish things, and then someone has to play mentor for her. This has been my rôle so much, that I think it may have been one of the causes why she preferred to have another man for a husband. You can keep the picture if you like, I have several more."

When the city was reached, Jerrold Fane took Cynthia to Mrs. Riley's house, and made it his

business to inform that lady why Cynthia was late in returning to the city. He did another thing, but this without telling Cynthia. He warned Mrs. Riley to guard the girl so far as she could, so that there might be no danger of the train-wreckers finding any clue to her identity, and for this reason he begged her not to speak of the occurrence to anyone. There was no danger that Cynthia would talk. The railway officials who knew her address would not talk either, and what other people might say would not matter in the least. Mrs. Riley promised to be discreet in the matter, and, as she was a woman of her word, no harm came to Cynthia by reason of gossip. For some days she kept closely to the house. Whenever she went abroad she wore a veil, but there was a certain amount of strain about the life of those first days which tried her sorely. It was awful, the haunting dread, and the poignant memory of that moment when something had scorched her arm, and the lantern had been shot from her hand.

Of course Cynthia was suffering the inevitable reaction from the severe nervous strain of her night of wild adventure. She had written to Abe White, and apologized for the anxiety which she must have caused him in not returning to the shack. But she could enter into no explanations, they must think of her as they would. It might be dangerous to enter into any detailed statements as to why

she had not gone back to him and Samantha. It was horrid to feel that she must be misjudged, and to have no chance of putting matters straight. In short, she was feeling that most things were horrid, she was dreadfully out of joint with life in general, when one afternoon Mr. Fane arrived unexpectedly, and asked Mrs. Riley if she could spare Miss Beauchamp for a few hours, as he had brought a motor-car to take her for a little outing in the country if she would care to go.

It was most decidedly inconvenient to Mrs. Riley to spare Cynthia just then, but she was much too kind-hearted to say so. She had seen the strained look on the girl's face, and had realized what it must mean to her to be afraid to show herself in the street. Until that fear had worn off, Cynthia's life would be a burden. If Mr. Fane was so kind as to come to the rescue in this fashion, it might help to take away the nervous dread of the unknown.

"I can spare her, Mr. Fane, and I hope the outing will do her good," said Mrs. Riley. "The poor girl has looked white-faced and tired ever since she came back."

The car was rather a small one; Jerrold Fane drove himself. Cynthia had never been in a private car before, and the experience was utterly delightful, after she had mastered the first feeling of terror at the traffic through which they had to pass.

There was not much chance to talk until they were clear of the city, and speeding along the tree-shaded woods beyond the northern suburbs.

"How do you like it?" Jerrold Fane had slackened speed now, and turned to look at his companion.

"It is delightful!" she exclaimed, drawing a long breath. "But I don't mind admitting that I was just a little bit scared at first. I have never been in a private car before, and the unknown had terrors for me."

"As the unknown is apt to have," he answered; then asked abruptly: "What did you mean, that day on the cars, when you said that you had not had your portrait taken since you left the institution? What institution, and why were you there?"

Cynthia drew a quick breath, and a distressful blush spread over her face, mounting right up to the roots of her hair. It was dreadful to have to explain to this well-placed man at her side that she had been reared in a charity asylum. Of course, he knew that she was only a working girl, but the sting for her pride lay in having to admit this much deeper depth, of being charity-reared. Humiliation has strange ways of showing itself. Cynthia had never looked more proud, and truth to tell more lovely, than when she threw up her head and said quietly, as she looked Mr. Fane in the face: "I was brought up in the Institute for

Orphans in Ottawa, and I stayed there until I was sixteen. I was there from the time I was three years old. I cannot remember my home, my father died when I was an infant, and it was when my mother died that I was taken to the institute."

"What was the maiden name of your mother?" demanded Mr. Fane; and he looked so grave that Cynthia decided he must be properly disgusted to find that he had let himself in for taking a charity girl out for a joy-ride.

"I do not know," she said, and her eyes were more wistful than she knew when she thought of her defrauded childhood. It had been so hard to have no one of her own to love her. She had not been necessary to the happiness of anyone, and the knowledge always carries a sting with it. Even now she was not necessary to anyone's happiness. For a little while Prudence had needed her, but now Prudence was gone, and she was absolutely alone in the world.

"Do you know the Christian name of your father?" Jerrold Fane was insistent, and his face still wore a look of deep and absorbed gravity, as if he were pondering some problem very hard to solve.

"I think it was Harry." Cynthia's tone was low, and her eyes held a look of such keen distress that her companion hastened to apologize.

"Pardon me, I had no right to question you so closely. It was your astonishing likeness to Cynthia Dayrell that set me cross-examining you. Such resemblance can only have its rise in kinship. I will write to Uncle Sep to-night and tell him about you."

"Who is Uncle Sep?" asked Cynthia. She was conscious of a sudden interest in the subject. Was it possible that she had any kin in the world? Then came the chilling thought that they could not be worth much anyway, if they would leave a little orphan child to be reared on the bitter bread of charity.

"He is Septimus Dayrell, Cynthia's uncle, and my friend," answered Jerrold Fane, almost as if he had read the thought in her mind about the kin who had left her childhood desolate. "I am quite sure, if you are his kin, he has not known of your existence before, for he has the largest heart and the kindest nature of any man that I have seen or known. A king among men is Uncle Sep."

Cynthia nodded as if to imply that she accepted his statement. Then a little silence fell between them. The car mounted a long hill, and passed through a small village. A view of an inlet of the shore was to be had here. She was looking at it, and thinking how beautiful it was. Somehow the place reminded her of that view in the forest on the day that she was lost. That brought up another

memory, and she burst out abruptly: "Who is Clear-eyed Cyrus?"

There was no mistaking the start that Jerrold Fane gave now, and he turned to ask sharply: "What do you know of Clear-eyed Cyrus?"

Cynthia drew a long breath. She was angry to find that she was trembling from sheer nervousness. "They were talking of him that night in the shack. I mean that the four train-wreckers were talking of him. They were accusing Long Jake of having got him away out of their reach. Long Jake was the man who came to summon you from the Mount George House, was he not? Long Jake got very angry with them; then they accused him of not being loyal to them, and they started quarrelling very fiercely."

"They would," said Jerrold Fane, a grim note creeping into his voice. "I can't tell you anything about Clear-eyed Cyrus, nor about Long Jake either, except that I do not think Long Jake was the man who shot the lantern from your hand."

"I am sure that he was not," Cynthia replied with conviction in her tone. "I do not think he would do me any hurt, for I helped him to escape when a bear was hugging him, and I know he was grateful to me, even though he was so disagreeable when I asked him what he had done with you."

"That is a story I have not heard. Suppose you tell me about it," he said, smiling at her in

a friendly fashion. "You seem to have had adventures galore while you were on the mountain for that funeral."

"The bear episode came before that time," said Cynthia, smiling back. And then she told him of how she had found Long Jake in the clutches of the angry she-bear, and had done her best to help him out of his dangerous plight, and had then discovered that he was the countryman who had summoned the newly arrived guest from dinner at the Mount George House.

There was downright horror in the face of Jerrold Fane when he heard the story, for it was easy to understand how great had been Cynthia's danger. But he did not revert again to any mention of Clear-eyed Cyrus; he even seemed disinclined to talk of Long Jake.

Later, when Cynthia was back in Mrs. Riley's house, she remembered how very little he had said, and how quiet he had been when she talked on this subject.

CHAPTER XI

A Kinsman

That motor ride was the first of several for Cynthia. Jerrold Fane was staying in the city, being detained by some business that had cropped up, to the delay of his journey to England. Sometimes he would be absent from the city for three or four days, and each time when he returned he had the look of a man utterly worn out. He confessed once that he had not been in bed all the time he was away.

How much Cynthia valued his friendship and kindness, she would not admit even to herself. Always before her was the black dread of his departure; the terror of what might happen to him when he plunged into the smoke and flame of the conflict that raged on the other side of the water. She knew that he had come into her life to stay. Even if he went away and was killed, the memory of him would abide. Resolutely she pushed from her the thought of the pain that the future might hold, and gathered for herself all the joy the present could give. Her month at Mrs. Riley's was slipping away very fast. She would

have to be looking for a fresh post, unless, indeed, she was willing to go on being a waitress indefinitely. This was not to be thought of, and one day when Cynthia was riding with Jerrold Fane she suddenly began to talk of what she would do when she was free from the bondage of her present position.

"Don't do anything about getting any fresh work for a day or two, please," said Jerrold, looking at her with one of his rare smiles. "I am asking this as a personal favour. Will you promise?"

Cynthia looked dubious. Always before her was the fear and the dread of the future. A girl entirely on her own must feel that dread. Suppose she were stranded, and her money ran out, what could she do? The grim spectre rose before her eyes, and she gave an involuntary shiver. "I am afraid I do not dare give such a promise," she said quietly. "You see, I have nowhere to go between situations, and boarding is so expensive for a girl with a slender purse. If I can find nothing to do before Saturday, I must just promise Mrs. Riley to stay with her for another month. I don't want to stay there longer than I can help. It is like marking time."

"That is quite true," he answered with quick decision. "It is unthinkable that you should stay on in your present position. All the same, you must not promise yourself anywhere else for a few days."

"Why?" Cynthia's eyes met his with a sudden

challenge in their gaze. By what right did he presume to interfere in her disposal of herself? Her glance wavered and fell; she looked down in sudden confusion, for she had read something in his face to which her own heart was responding with wild and turbulent beating.

"I love you, dear, and I want to leave you in safe hands when I have to go to England." He was bending closer to her now, but Cynthia could not look up. "I was waiting to see you in safe hands before I ventured to say this to you, because I realize how much alone in the world you are. I don't want you to take me because I am your only chance of a refuge, Cynthia; I want you to take me because you love me. Can you love me—as I love you?"

Could she? Cynthia's eyes were shining with a new radiance as she looked at him. Oh, it was wonderful that he should care for her, a poor friendless girl, a waitress in a boarding-house! All the latent romance in her awoke, the world was suddenly transformed. She would not have changed places with anyone. It was worth being poor and friendless, it was worth having to toil in uncongenial places for her daily bread, since it had brought her by a straight road to a happiness like this! But she could not speak just yet, so she slipped her hand into the one stretched out to her, and let silence be eloquent for her.

Jerrold had stopped the car a few minutes before at a point on the hill road, from which there was a wide view across the gleaming strip of water separating the mainland from Vancouver Island. All the glory of high summer rested on land and on sea. Oh, the world was very fair that day! It was Cynthia's great hour, and the memory of it would gild many a dark and dreary moment with a radiance that was almost divine.

"It is betrothal, Cynthia?" There was a sudden wistfulness in the face of the man. Was he thinking of the other Cynthia, who had plighted him her troth, only to break it when someone crossed her path whom she liked better? Then their lips met, and the two who kissed realized that the bond between them was for eternity. For them there would be, there could be no backward look. From henceforth they belonged to each other, and to each other alone. No wonder that summer day was more glorious than any summer day had ever been before!

That evening, when Cynthia was waiting at table in the dining-room of Mrs. Riley's boarding-house, a letter was brought to her by special messenger. She had no time to read it then, but thrust it into the front of her frock, where it kept her heart warm as she went to and fro, looking after the needs of those who were seated at the table. The talk to-night was all of the war. She shivered as she

listened, and all the strength of her nature rose in protest because Jerrold Fane was going across the Atlantic to take his part in the struggle. Yet she would not have held him back if she could. It was not merely because he was an Englishman that he was going, it was because he had ranged himself on the side of Freedom and the Rights of the People. This was no ordinary war between the nations, it was a titanic struggle between autocracy and democracy.

"I hear that the next lot of the Vancouver City contingent sail next week, so I suppose Frank Hastings will go this time," said a lady sitting near the head of the table. Another lady, to whom Cynthia was handing the green peas, began to laugh in an amused fashion.

"I had a letter from Mrs. St. John to-day, and what do you think she told me?" The lady shovelled out another spoonful of peas as she spoke, and then paused with the spoon in her hand, looking round the table to see if she had an audience for her statement when it should be made.

"Is Mrs. St. John still away in the mountains?" asked another lady; but she with the spoon was not minded to be switched off from her intended announcement by a triviality that was not immediately relevant to what she had to say.

"Frank Hastings was to be married yesterday to that silly little chit, Cynthia Dayrell." The

spoon was waved vigorously, some of the peas fell out, and Cynthia was glad of the chance to stoop a little forward with the dish she was holding. To her keen self-consciousness it seemed as if everyone must know that she was somehow interested in this piece of information.

"What will Sep Dayrell say to that?" asked a portly grey-haired man, who was impatiently waiting for the peas.

The lady replaced the spoon in the dish, then said with a laugh: "Perhaps in his heart Mr. Dayrell will be rather grateful. Cynthia has been a bit of a trial, and more than a bit of expense. Mr. Dayrell is very hard hit by the war. I heard yesterday that he is talking of giving up that big house at Esquimault that he took when Cynthia came out a year ago."

"Poor old Sep!" sighed the portly man; but he was more concerned to get the peas than worried about the straightened finances of Sep Dayrell.

"When the honeymoon is over—it will be a painfully short one if Frank Hastings sails next week—" went on the lady who was Mrs. St. John's correspondent, "his wife is going to enter on a course of training at a private hospital in New Westminster."

A ripple of amused laughter went round the table at this piece of news; but Cynthia went out of the room to bring in some more dishes, and the feel-

ing in her heart was one of awe at the strength of love. It was amazing that a gay society butterfly like Cynthia Dayrell should be willing to marry a man who was going to risk his life in the great struggle. It was still more amazing that the bride should be willing to go in for hospital nursing, to face all the drudgery of the training, so that when she was qualified she might be ready to nurse her husband if he needed her, or to spend her energies on other sufferers. Oh, love was a wonderful and a beautiful thing! The heart of Cynthia was singing in her breast as she went to and fro, for the remainder of that seemingly interminable dinner.

How glad she was when at last she was free to go down to her basement pantry, where, surrounded with all the array of silver and glass that had to be washed, she was able to draw out her letter—her very first love-letter—and read it in peace. Its contents were sufficiently startling, and when she had mastered them she leaned against the table breathing heavily.

“MY DEAREST CYNTHIA,

“When I got in this afternoon I found news waiting me. I shall have to sail for England next week with the Vancouver City contingent. That is rather a shock, coming as it does so closely upon our betrothal. Then I find that I

must cross to the island by the night boat this evening, and I may not be back for two or three days. In fact, I may have only time to say goodbye when I come. This is very hard for me. I know, too, that it will be hard for you. But we will not despair, dear; we will look forward with hope and expectation to the time of my coming back, after which, please God, we will not part again. One bit of good news I have for you, and I cannot tell you how much it relieves my pain when I think of having to leave you. Mr. Sep Dayrell is coming to see you to-morrow. He has been in communication with the authorities of the home in Ottawa where you were reared, and he finds that you are the daughter of his eldest sister Caroline, who quarrelled with her family and went east many years ago. The only news that ever reached her kinsfolk concerning her, was that she had married a man named Harry Beauchamp, of West Ferry. The Institute people have written that Caroline Beauchamp, your mother, was the widow of Harry Beauchamp, formerly of West Ferry, who was killed in a mine explosion at Sackville, Ontario. This establishes your identity without a doubt, and I am utterly thankful to leave you in the care of your Uncle Sep. The poor old man needs you, dear. His affairs are in a sorry condition, I fear. But you will help him straighten things out, and you will make up to him for the

loss of his other niece, who has just been married to Frank Hastings. I hear that the other Cynthia is going to train for a Red Cross nurse. Truly, love has wonderful power! It will be the making of Mrs. Hastings. I dare not stop for more, or I shall lose the boat. My darling, your love is my strength. The joy of you will be my inspiration in all the hard days that may lie before me. God bless, and keep you safe from harm!

“Yours until death, and after,

“JERROLD FANE.”

The letter lay under the cheek of Cynthia through the long hours of that sleepless night. If only she could have been with Jerrold during the next few days! If only she could have been married to him before he went away, then she might have trained for a nurse like the other Cynthia, and, when she was qualified, she could have followed her husband to Europe. Instead of this, she would have to remain on here, caring for this unknown kinsman, who ought to have been the charge of the other Cynthia. Oh, it was hard! It was very hard. Why had Jerrold gone away in this fashion? Over to the island; that would be Vancouver Island, of course. He went to the island the last time he was away, when he had come back looking so worn out. Why did he have to go there? A sudden resentment seized her, as she lay with the hot tears

welling up in her eyes. She did not like it that Jerrold should keep back his confidence from her. It was surely not fair.

Dawn came very early. The room Cynthia slept in was a narrow chamber at the very top of the high house. On clear days one could catch a glimpse of blue water away in the distance. She rose from her bed when daylight came, and went to kneel by the window. Some lines from a book she had once read were surging through her mind: "It is the proof of a great love that it accepts without question. Real love does not ask the reason for this and for that; it takes things as it finds them, and makes the best of them. There is always pain in love. The more real the love, and the more exquisite the bliss, the more real the suffering and the sacrifice that love entails." She had not believed in this view of the matter when she read the book, but now that a great love had touched her, she could see for herself that it must be entire and all-engrossing, or it was not worth anything.

"It is quite worth while!" she murmured to herself. A great peace was stealing into her heart, and because it was so early, and there was no need for her to rise for her day's work just yet, she lay down on her bed again and went to sleep, untroubled as a child.

Jerrold had said that Mr. Dayrell was coming to see her, but he had not said at what time he would

come. Cynthia set about her morning's work in feverish haste to get it done and out of the way, so that she might be at liberty to give her uncle a little time without encroaching on the rights of her employer. Mrs. Riley had gone out of town by the early cars, and would not be back until shortly before dinner. This left a lot of extra things for Cynthia to do. She was in full tide of work polishing spoons and forks, when the hall boy came running down the basement stairs to say that Mr. Dayrell wished to see her. There had been some complaints in the house of things having been strangely missing of late. With all the silver spread out for cleaning, Cynthia felt that she simply could not go upstairs to interview her caller in one of the sitting-rooms, so she did the only possible thing, and told the boy to ask the gentleman if he would mind stepping downstairs to her pantry.

In a couple of minutes he was back again, ushering in a gentle-looking old man, who looked so frail, and truth to tell so forlorn, that Cynthia's heart went out to him at once. She had imagined him to be something after the pattern of the portly gentleman on whom she had waited at dinner last night, and she did not like portly men.

"Why, Cynthia, my dear, I would have known you anywhere if I had met you!" said the old man, and he held out his arms to the lonely girl.

Cynthia went to him, and put her arms round

his neck without any question. He was her uncle. She was no longer friendless or alone; she had a lover, she had a family. Why, she felt that she possessed the earth! There was no more bitterness in her heart because she was expected to stay and take care of the kinsman who had need of her. There was only joy in her soul to think that she was really needed somewhere; that she, who had so long been alone, was so no longer.

"Uncle Sep, it is just wonderful to belong to someone. It has been the great trouble of my life that I had no kin. It is horrible to be so friendless!"

"Poor child, poor lonely little girl!" Uncle Sep was stroking her hair with caressing fingers. He was not nearly so tall as his niece, and it really sounded funny to hear him calling her a little girl. Cynthia smiled as she gave him a big hug, and the thought came into her mind that she was much more fit to take care of him than he was to take care of her.

"You will come and make home for me, Cynthia, at least until you are married?" His tone was so beseeching that he seemed to be asking a favour rather than bestowing one. He looked so lonely, too, that Cynthia could not resist the temptation to hug him again.

"Of course I will come, Uncle Sep. Indeed it will be a wonderful experience for me to make home

for anyone. Except for the weeks that I was nursing poor Prudence White, it has only been hireling service that people have required of me."

"It won't be the sort of home I could have given you six months ago, little girl," he said wistfully. "I am a poor man now. I have one more iron in the fire, and, if that fails, I shall not only have to face poverty for myself, but I shall have to drag someone else down with me."

"That will be sad indeed, but perhaps if we work hard we can get on somehow," she answered cheerily. He looked wistful, and his tone was that of one who makes a confession, so she had to do her best to give him hope. "When will you want me, Uncle Sep? I am due to leave here on Saturday, and I have nowhere else to go."

"Then on Saturday you will come home to me," he said joyfully, and asked her if he should stay in the city to take her across to Esquimault as soon as she was free, or whether she had the courage to face the journey alone.

"I can come alone, of course," she answered with a laugh. "You have no idea what a capable person I am. Indeed, you may be wishing before long that I had been made after a different pattern."

"I don't think I shall," he said heavily. "I have been taking care of people ever since I was old enough to work at all. Now I am getting on in life I don't seem able to do things as I used to, and

it will be something of a change to be taken care of."

"Isn't the other Cynthia—I mean Mrs. Hastings—coming home again?" Cynthia asked a little timidly. She was wondering how the other niece would feel, at having her place usurped in such a fashion.

"I don't suppose she will," he replied, with a cloud dropping over his kindly old face. "You see, she is so keen on getting trained for nursing, so that she may follow Frank to Europe. Cynthia never wanted to do anything useful before, and I wouldn't be the one to put a straw in her way now. Besides, if she has any proper feeling at all, she would not choose to come back to my house, seeing the shabby way she treated Jerrold Fane, and the greatness of my obligation to him."

"What do you mean about obligation?" she asked. A shiver went over her as she put her question, but she got no real answer to it. Uncle Sep just shook his head and laughed, telling her that she must not expect to know everything all at once, but that when she came to Esquimault she should soon be told all there was to know about his affairs, financial and general.

Cynthia had to remind him gently, after that, that he must go, and he reluctantly took himself away. Her time was not her own to-day. When Saturday came, she would be free to devote herself to the

old man who had spent his life in caring for other people.

But when Saturday came Mrs. Riley was ill in bed, and Cynthia was forced to send a wire to her uncle telling him she could not leave until the following Tuesday. On Monday Jerrold Fane came quite unexpectedly. The draft of men to which he was attached were to start on their journey to Europe at midnight, and the moment for good-bye had come.

CHAPTER XII

A New Care

Jerrold had only a couple of hours for his farewell; but he had brought the little motor-car that he had used before, and they were able to get clear of the city, and to make their way to that spot where was the view of the sea that Cynthia loved so well.

"I wish you would tell me why you look so careworn," Cynthia burst out suddenly. Jerrold had brought the car to a stand under the big trees at the place where they had often halted before, and they were sitting hand in hand, making the most of the hour which would have to be a memory to last them through the months, perhaps years, until they could meet again.

"Isn't it enough to make me look careworn, that I must go away and leave you, just when I most want to stay near you?" he asked, turning to her with a smile.

Cynthia flushed a rosy red. It was such a wonderful thing to be loved. There was pure ecstasy for her in the thought that she was necessary to the

happiness of someone. "It is my great trouble that you must go away, and go away to danger, and all the horrors of that fearful strife. But since it is your plain duty, I could not hold you back," she said softly.

"I know you would not. That is just what helps me to go, and yet makes it harder at the same time." He was smiling at her still, but there was that in his eyes which made her feel there was more trouble behind than she knew of or understood.

"Cynthia, when you go to Esquimault you must be very kind to your uncle, for he is a sorely-stricken man." Jerrold spoke as if from impulse, and she looked at him in surprise.

"Have you seen him?" she asked. There was the same chill in her heart as had come there on the day her uncle visited her at the house of Mrs. Riley last week. There was something in the background that she did not know about. There was a grisly skeleton somewhere whose acquaintance she would soon have to make. The wish in her mind was to know at once all there was to be known. It was apprehension that was so trying to bear: the thought of something hanging over her, that would have to be faced in the near future, that would have to be faced and grappled with.

"Yes, I spent last night at his house in Esquimault, and crossed by the morning boat," he answered. Then he went on rather hurriedly, as if he

wanted to be through with the telling as quickly as he could: "He will have to leave his house in Esquimault. I am very sorry, both for his sake and for yours. It is a good house, and the garden is lovely. He is going to rent my father's old home on Shawnigan Lake. It is a wild place, but of course for me it has always had the charm of home."

"That will be its charm for me too," said Cynthia promptly. Again there was the ecstasy in her heart. It would mean so much to her to live in the house where her lover had been reared.

There was a sudden lifting of the cloud of care on the face of the man at her side. "I thought you would feel like that," he said, smiling at her. "Something had to be arranged, and quickly, for I had not much time, and Uncle Sep is so broken by the many things he has had to bear just lately that he hardly seems capable of making arrangements for himself. Beaver Creek chanced to be vacant, and it seemed a good arrangement."

"I shall love to be there." Cynthia spoke softly, and her eyes were shining with happiness. There might be heavy care for her in the near future. There would certainly be the pain of separation from the man she loved; but there were compensations in every lot, and she would find hers at Beaver Creek.

"If only I could have married you before I go!" he burst out with sudden passion. "The pain of

war is not all in bloodshed, and in broken limbs; the direst agony of all lies in the broken hearts and the sundered lives of those who love each other."

"How much worse if there were no love!" Cynthia smiled bravely, although the pain at her heart was almost more than she could bear.

For answer he held her hand in a close clasp that was more eloquent than words. Their hour was fast slipping away. The parting loomed so near now; but it was the very poignancy of the coming parting which made the ecstasy of the present moment so intense.

Cynthia waited at table that night with the dazed feeling of being two people. The one had to be prompt in watching the needs of other people, and meeting them as they came; the other was mingling with the crowd that would soon be gathering at the great railway terminus to speed Canada's sons who were going forth to fight. If only she might have been there! If only she might have seen the last of Jerrold before the train bore him away! If only—but ah, there are so many ifs that bar one's happiness in this world. Even if she had stood among the waving, cheering crowd, the pain of the parting would have come just the same. It might have been even harder to bear, coming so.

She wondered that people could laugh and be so unconcerned at the pain of their fellows, then remembered that no one there at the table, except

Mrs. Riley, knew anything about the betrothal of the well-placed Jerrold Fane and the girl who waited at table. Nor, if they knew, would it appeal as a reason to them to stop their laughter and their chatter for her sake.

Dinner was over at last. The washing-up was over too, the pantry was put tidy, and with everything done Cynthia was free to seek her room at the top of the house. From there she would be able to see across the city to the place where the east-bound trains ran out of the terminus. On her knees at the window she kept vigil. Shortly after the clocks had boomed and chimed midnight there was a roar of cheering, and then a long streak of lighted cars moved out of the terminus, and a minute later disappeared in the blackness of the night.

She had watched his going, though she had not seen his face. Ah, but distance cannot really sever those who love each other! Half the world might stretch between them, and yet they would stand side by side.

She had the feeling of starting on an adventure when she set out for Esquimault next day. She had never left the mainland before. It was like voyaging to a new world to sit on deck, to see the groups of little islands, to get a sight of the forests of masts, and all the crowd of shipping that was gathered in the roadsteads. Surely all the commerce of the world was represented there. Then

came Esquimault, with its vast shipbuilding yards and its big factories. Cynthia was immensely surprised; she had not expected to see such a big place. The crowd, and the confusion at the disembarking bothered her considerably; she was not a very great traveller, and there was no one to meet her.

There was not very much money in her purse. But it was necessary to have some sort of a vehicle to take her to her uncle's house, which was at a considerable distance from the docks. She had brought all her luggage with her, and although it was a very modest all, it was still more than she could stagger under. A man with a crazy old cart and an ancient horse offered to convey her up-town for half a dollar, and, as this was by far the cheapest way of going to work, she closed with the offer promptly, and, getting herself and her baggage laden on to the vehicle, which looked as if it would collapse under the strain, the journey was begun.

When the cart stopped before a big handsome stone house standing in its own grounds, Cynthia felt rather abashed at her daring in coming to her uncle's house in such a fashion. A house like that would doubtless be staffed by servants who would turn up their noses at a poor relation of the owner's. Then she remembered that it was practically impossible to get servants on the island.

She had heard Mrs. Riley say this, so perhaps there would be only a useful Chinaman, or at the worst a charwoman of dubious cleanliness to encounter.

Leaving the driver to get her trunk down from the old cart, Cynthia walked up to the front entrance and rang a peal at the bell, then waited in fear and trembling for the door to be opened. She waited in vain. No response came, although she pealed the bell three times. The man had got her baggage out of his cart, he had even put it inside the gate; then feeling that he had done all that he had contracted to do, he got into his cart again and drove off.

Cynthia was alone, so entirely alone that a chill of actual fear crept over her. Her uncle knew she was coming to-day. Why, if he could not come to the docks to meet the boat, had he not been at home to greet her when she reached the house? It was plainly of no use to stand ringing the bell. She would go round the house, and find out for herself if there was anyone about, or any way of getting in. She was tired. Truth to tell, she was also hungry. Most of all she wanted a welcome, and this was what she had not found. Oh, it was hard, desperately hard!

The gardens were well kept, but her quick eyes noted the uncared-for look of the windows. Some of the blinds were drawn, some were not. One

window showed a curtain hanging anyhow. Plainly the place lacked a mistress. Cynthia remembered what Jerrold had said to her about being very kind to her uncle, and how he had urged her not to misjudge the old man. She came to the kitchen door presently. It was shut, but when she turned the handle she found to her comfort that it was not locked. She could at least get into the kitchen part of the house. Perhaps her uncle had started out to meet her, and had somehow missed her. In this case he would be coming back presently, so she would be there to welcome him. Timidly she pushed the door open and entered. How stuffy the house felt! Instinctively she moved to the nearest window, and, pulling it open, let in the fresh air.

The kitchen showed confusion. The uncleared remains of a meal littered the table. A glove lay beside a plate. She picked it up. A thrill ran through her; she had seen a glove like that before. Yes, inside there were the initials "J. F." So Jerrold had taken his food in the kitchen when he spent the night at her uncle's. But where was her uncle, and why had not the meal been cleared away? Had there been no meals since?

Cynthia started a systematic search of the house now. Something must be the matter. Oh, why had she not been free to come on Saturday, as had been first arranged? There was a drawing-room, tastefully furnished, but shockingly dusty and ne-

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glected. There was a dining-room, furnished after the regulation style of well-to-do people's eating-rooms, and that also was in a state of neglect. Indeed, it looked as if it had not been used for weeks. Of what use to have a handsomely furnished house, and to keep it in such a fashion?

The stairs led up from a wide entrance hall, dusty like everything else. With quick, light steps Cynthia mounted, then hesitated on the landing, for all the doors were shut, and she did not know which to enter first. Her nerves were on the rack. She had the consciousness that she was not alone in the house, yet there was no sound of movement anywhere. Screwing up her courage, she pushed open the first door and entered. The blind was half down here, but the sunshine of the summer evening streamed broadly in at the window, lighting up the confusion of feminine apparel with which the place was strewed. There were gloves, laces, ribbons, blouses, hats, and boots all over the place. The picture of the other Cynthia laughed down at the confusion from the walls, and a portrait of Jerrold Fane stood on the bureau near the window, but it was pushed aside to let the picture of another man stand in front of it. Doubtless the other man was Frank Hastings. With a slight curling of her lip, which stood for scorn at the thought of anyone being preferred before Jerrold, Cynthia turned away, softly closing the door. Then

she opened the next, leading into an elaborately furnished guest-chamber. Here the bed was not made up, nor was there any sign that the room had ever been slept in, so she shut that door also, and tried the third.

This chamber was not so well furnished as the others. There was no drapery at window or bed. There was only one shabby rug on the floor. All this Cynthia took in at a glance, and then she saw that her uncle was lying on the bed dressed, and partly covered with a blanket. He seemed to be asleep, or was he unconscious?

She crossed the room quickly and bent over him. How old and frail he looked! But he was breathing peacefully, and he did not look as if he were ill.

"Uncle, what is the matter?" she asked, gently touching his hand, and wondering if she ought to wake him.

He opened his eyes and stared at her for a moment as if he did not know her, then he said thankfully: "Is it you, Cynthia, and have you really come? How glad I am!"

"What is the matter?" she demanded breathlessly.

"When I came up here after Jerrold had gone, I tripped over a mat and hurt my ankle. I can't seem to move my foot at all, and I can't walk. I crawled across the floor to the bed, and I've lain here ever since."

"But that was the day before yesterday!" she exclaimed in dismay. "Do you mean to say that you have had nothing to eat or drink since then?"

"There was some water up here; I have had that, and I have not felt keen on food." The old man's voice trailed off in a weak murmur, but Cynthia did not hear it; she had fled downstairs, and was hurrying round to get something immediately for her uncle, who had fasted so long.

There was a tin of condensed milk on the kitchen table, there was an oil cooker on a bench in the out-kitchen, and there were the dry crusts of bread left over from the last meal that had been taken downstairs. Inside of ten minutes she was going upstairs with a steaming bowl of bread and milk. It was difficult to make the old man understand at first that he was really in need of food. Then, when his appetite was awakened, it was equally difficult to make him understand that he must not have too much until he had recovered from the effect of his long fast.

Comforted by the bread and milk, he fell asleep. Cynthia took that opportunity to run downstairs and haul her baggage in from the garden, where she had left it after the man who had brought it up from the docks had dumped it inside the gate. How lovely the garden was! The scent of the roses hung heavy on the evening air. Almost involuntarily she put her hand up to gather a bud.

"You will leave that rose alone, if you please, Miss. There is money in them flowers, and I don't care to have them dragged off anyhow," said a gruff voice, so close at hand that she jumped in sudden fright.

At first she could not see where the voice came from, but, looking round, she caught sight of a man in his shirt-sleeves who was digging a trench for celery at the back of the belt of roses that lined the way to the entrance gate. He had stopped digging to shout to her, and now stood leaning on his spade.

"It is my uncle's garden. Pray why should not I gather roses if I wish?" she demanded, in surprise at the tone of the man, who had spoken as if the place belonged to him.

"Are you a niece of Sep Dayrell's too?" the gardener asked, with sudden interest in his tone. "When you first came out of the door and ran along the path, I thought you were Miss Dayrell, for you are as like her as two peas are like each other. Then I remembered that Sep told my wife on Saturday morning that Miss Dayrell had got married, and was going to be a trained nurse. Pity she didn't take to useful ways when she was here. Then the poor old man wouldn't have come such a cropper maybe."

"Yes, I am a niece of Mr. Dayrell's, and I have come to live with him," explained Cynthia. "I

got in on the afternoon boat from the mainland, and there was no one to meet me. When I got here I could not make anyone answer my rings and knocks, but as the door was unfastened I made my way into the house. I found my uncle lying on his bed upstairs. He had hurt his ankle—sprained it, I fear—and he had had nothing to eat since the day before yesterday. It is dreadful that he should have been so neglected. If you were working here, why did not you find out what was the matter?"

"I wasn't here," said the man, who seemed genuinely concerned. "I have been away in Nanaimo for the last two or three days. My eldest son has gone to Europe to help in the war. He went with the Vancouver City contingent, and I stayed at his house in Nanaimo helping his wife to get things a bit straight after he had gone. Poor thing! she was cut up at his going, but she will make the best of it, like the women do. When I got back here this afternoon I came round to see how the garden was getting on, and I thought I'd just open up this celery trench before I went back home."

"I don't understand," said Cynthia. "You talk as if the garden was your own."

"So it is," he answered. "You see, Miss, it is like this. At the beginning of the summer, when old Sep found himself getting in low water and

Cynthia Wins

couldn't keep things going as he wished, he came round to our shop and asked me if I would take the grounds of this place off his hands. I don't know as it would have struck me as a paying concern if it had not been for the roses. We send a lot of flowers over to Vancouver City, and the roses have done us very well indeed."

Cynthia shivered. The lovely garden surrounding the house, all the flourishing stretches of vegetables, and all the ripening fruit, as well as the flowers, belonged to someone else. When she arrived that afternoon she had felt resentful in her heart because, through misfortune, her uncle would have to leave such a desirable place and go to bury himself in the country. Now the uppermost feeling in her was a longing to get away as quickly as she could. Fancy living in a garden to which one had no right! Fancy not daring to pick a flower, or even pull a weed! Oh, she certainly would be very glad to go!

"I am sure that a doctor ought to see my uncle. Do you know where I can find one?" she asked the man, as she stooped to get a good grip of her big trunk, so that she could drag it along the path to the entrance door.

"I have to pass Dr. Grey's house on my way home. Shall I ask him to come up here this evening?" The man came out of the celery trench as he spoke, and, pushing his way through the belt

of roses, picked up the other end of the big trunk, and helped Cynthia carry it to the house.

"It will be very kind of you, and I shall be most grateful. My uncle seems very unwell this evening. He was asleep when I came out to get my baggage up to the house."

"Poor old fellow!" There was kindly pity in the tone of the gardener man. "It was a downright dreadful blow to him to have to know that he had brought young Mr. Fane to poverty, especially seeing as how Miss Dayrell had treated the young man pretty mean."

"Has my uncle brought Mr. Fane to poverty?" Cynthia's tone was fairly shocked.

"Something like it I'm afraid. I don't know the rights of the matter. I do know that, for the last year or more, Mr. Fane has been making desperate efforts to keep poor old Sep on his financial legs. Of course all the time that Mr. Fane was going to marry Miss Dayrell this seemed natural enough. Then Miss Dayrell she flung the young man over, and just about the same time Sep got himself into a muddle from which there was no honourable escape. I am not saying the old man meant to do a dishonourable thing. I am only saying that he is past doing big deals in finance; he hasn't got the head, nor the nerve, nor the judgment for that sort of thing. What the upshot of it all would have been I can't say, but I am very much afraid

it would have meant prison for him. Jerrold Fane stepped into the breach, and they are saying in the town here that it has taken pretty near every dollar the young man had to clear the business up."

"Oh, how dreadful!" The absolute horror in the tone of Cynthia was due mostly to the feeling that she herself would have to make up to Jerrold for what he had had to lose through his goodness to her kinsman, and just at that moment she did not feel that she had it in her to live up to what would be required of her.

"It's of no use to blame the poor old man," said the gardener hastily. "It is easy to see that Sep is past things, and Mr. Fane did as he liked about coming forward to save him."

Cynthia nodded, but said never a word. If only she had known all this before Jerrold went away! If only she could have expressed half of what was in her heart for him! Now there was nothing but to wait, to hope, and to pray. The future stretched out before her—a dim perspective of heart-ache and of apprehension. Suppose he never came back to give her a chance of showing him what she thought of his goodness to the poor old man, her Uncle Sep!

No use to suppose! No use to despair! What she had to do, was so to bear herself that she should be fit to meet any emergency that might arise. Would she be fit? What could she do? Ah, these were the questions that only time could answer!

CHAPTER XIII

Beaver Creek

Cynthia looked about her in bewilderment and dismay. The cars had gone on. She and Uncle Sep were left standing by the side of a great heap of baggage that had been dumped on to the ground at the side of the track. And now, what was to happen next?

There was a tank for watering the engines, there was a little depot shed, and that was all. There was one solitary trainman, who did not seem to be interested in the passengers, for he was moving off along a path that wound among the thickly clustering pine trees which bordered the track on either side. When he had gone, there would be no one to tell them anything. Plainly he must not be allowed to go until he had yielded up the stores of knowledge that she desired to tap.

"Sit down on this box, Uncle Sep, I have got to chase that trainman," said Cynthia briskly, and dragging forward a bit of their baggage that would make a comfortable seat for the invalid, she started in pursuit of the trainman.

Was there on all the earth a more solitary place than Hawley Siding? Cynthia thought not, as with flying feet she pursued the man, who seemed as if he were running away from her, judging by the haste he was making.

"Here, hi, stop, stop! please wait a minute!" she shouted; and then, as he paused, she made haste to come within comfortable speaking distance. "Can you tell me how far it is to Beaver Creek, on Shawnigan Lake?"

The man surveyed her up and down for a moment in silence, then he said slowly: "A matter of twelve miles, or it may be fifteen. It don't lay to a mile or two when the corduroy is getting rotten, and the Shawnigan roads are about as bad as any you'll find on the island."

"How can we get there?" panted Cynthia. Then, seeing that he did not seem to understand the drift of her question, she began to explain in a breathless fashion: "We, that is my uncle and I, have to get to Beaver Creek with our baggage. He is an invalid, and very unfit for exertion, or even for waiting about. Can you tell me how we can get there? Is there a stage of any sort that runs in that direction, or can I hire a wagon to take us over?"

The trainman stared at her in silence, then he answered with a slow drawl: "There ain't no stage running anywhere in these parts, and Shawnigan

Lake is the back of beyond. But it is possible that Nathan Cooper would tote you over if you can pay him." As he spoke the trainman gazed searchingly at Cynthia's rather shabby coat and skirt, as if trying to decide for himself whether she had enough money for the business.

"Oh, we can pay him all right," she said briskly; "that is to say, we can pay any reasonable demand. But where does he live, and how long will it take him to get ready to start?"

The trainman gazed at her with a solemn searching look, and then to her amazement he winked in a knowing fashion, at the same time giving his side a resounding whack. "Fact is, Miss, I'm Nathan Cooper myself, and I can tote you over to Beaver Creek if you want to get off straightaway. I didn't say so at first, because I wanted to see what you really meant to do. If you are out for business, then I am out for business too."

"But the trains; how can you leave?" asked Cynthia with a bewildered air.

"Only two trains a day, one north and the other south. They are both gone, and I'm free of the track until to-morrow. I can be ready in ten minutes, if that will suit you."

"It will do beautifully." Cynthia beamed on the trainman with full-hearted gratitude. Then she went back to Uncle Sep, who sat on the baggage looking more frail than ever. He had been very

ill for two weeks, and was only slowly getting back his strength.

It was more than a month since Cynthia had left the house of Mrs. Riley, and she had had to face all sorts of perplexities, doing battle with them as best she might. The house at Esquimault had been given up, and the furniture sold. Every liability of her uncle's had been met, and now, with a scanty store of money to meet their needs for the winter, the two were setting out for Jerrold Fane's old home in the Shawnigan country. Jerrold had spoken of the old man having rented it from him, but that was very much a figure of speech. The stark fact was that Jerrold had told him he could go there to live.

In the days when her uncle was so very ill, Cynthia had written to the other Cynthia to say that the doctor hardly thought the old man would pull through, and to ask her to come and see him.

Mrs. Hastings had waited some days before replying, and then had sent a message to say that she would come over for one night. In considerable trepidation Cynthia had awaited her arrival. With nursing to do, and no help in the house, it had been impossible to keep things very nice, and she was keenly sensitive to what her cousin might say. But when Mrs. Hastings did arrive, it took her only about five minutes to fall in love with this

other Cynthia, and five minutes more to decide that no one ever need fear her.

Mrs. Hastings was just a happy, irresponsible child. To the practical person she looked about as unfit to be a nurse as possible, yet so far her record was unblemished by any blunders or neglect, as she proudly told her new cousin. She was affectionate to the old man, hanging round his neck and hugging him, until he weakly cried to her to desist. Then she went downstairs with Cynthia and promptly hugged her.

"I reckoned it was almost the best news I had ever heard, when Uncle Sep wrote to me that he had found out Aunt Caroline had left a daughter, and that he had found that daughter," said Mrs. Hastings. "You see I wanted to be free to follow Frank all over the world if there should be a need. But my conscience would not let me be happy in leaving Uncle Sep entirely alone, for he had kept Mother and me ever since Father died. Mother was Uncle Sep's youngest sister, and she married her cousin, Luke Dayrell; that is why my name is the same as Uncle Sep's. I was named after Mother's mother, who was a very beautiful woman; and I expect you were named after her too, and that is why our names are alike. Oh, I love you for taking over the poor dear old uncle, and I love you, too, for being so good as to care for Jerrold Fane. A real good sort Jerrold is, but he's a jolly

sight too good to be my husband. Why, my dear, I should have been an everlasting disappointment to him! I could not possibly have lived up to his standards. Now, Frank is down on my own level. He does stupid things himself, and so of course he has patience with me when I do stupid things."

Cynthia laughed merrily, she really could not help it, and the cousins were the best of friends; all the better, in fact, because they were so very unlike in disposition, although outwardly they might have been easily mistaken for twins. Then Mrs. Hastings went back to the nursing home in New Westminster where she was training, and Cynthia went on caring for the lonely old man and nursing him back to health. The visit of her cousin had done her good, and she now knew better what her status with her new-found relatives was. Before it, she had felt something of an interloper; now she realized how great was the need of her; and the fact of being wanted was the best, the very best spur to endeavour that she could possibly have.

Nathan Cooper arrived with his wagon inside of the ten minutes he had mentioned. His horses were good ones, and his wagon was big enough to take the baggage comfortably. Cynthia had to lend a hand in getting it on board, but, as she was quite used to doing all sorts of things, this did not trouble her. She handled the bags and the bundles with so much promptness and skill that the things

were very soon comfortably stowed, and then the invalid was helped to mount to the seat next the driver, while Cynthia perched up beside him, and slid her arm round his shoulders to make the position easier for him when the road was very rough. Was there ever such a road? In places the corduroy of logs, patching the swampy places, showed great gaps and yawning holes. The wagon had to be driven over these with one wheel tilted up in the air, and the other down to the hub in the soft mud. It was all that Cynthia could do to keep from shrieking. With one hand she clung to the side of the wagon, with the other she gripped her uncle to keep him steady, and she set her teeth hard to prevent herself from crying out when they bumped and bounced over the worst places.

Twice there were creeks to be forded. The second was such a fearsome experience that Cynthia felt she had not courage enough to face another bit of water that day; so, when a third stream came into view, she said to the driver that she would rather get wet in going through on her feet, than in being taken over in the wagon at such imminent risk of being tipped out.

"There ain't no need to cross that creek," said Nathan. "That is Beaver Creek, and the road skirts it for half a mile or so; then, if I remember right, Mr. Fane's house stands on the rise, just where you can get a view of the lake. I brought

him over that time in the summer when he had his uncle with him, but every time he has come since he has just hired a horse and rode over alone."

"Jerrold Fane has no uncle," put in Uncle Sep, who had sat very silent during the rough experience of that drive. He was looking very old and broken, and he seemed to take little interest in what was going on.

"He hasn't now, for the poor old man is dead, so I heard," replied the trainman. "But it is certain he had his uncle with him in the summer, for I heard him say Uncle Mike to the old fellow, and he was as careful of him as if the old chap had been a baby in arms. It must be a matter of five or six weeks now since the old man died, and he was buried in the little cemetery at North Creek Shawnigan District."

Uncle Sep shook his head with a vague air as if he did not quite understand. In the heart of Cynthia there was a chill sensation of having been shut out in the cold. Five or six weeks ago must have been just before Jerrold started for Europe. She remembered his mysterious absences from the city, and how worn and sad he used to look when he came back. This was all accounted for, if he had someone dear to him who was in pain and dying. But why so much mystery? Why had he not told her, his betrothed, that he had trouble of this sort? For a few moments she felt bitterly resentful; then the

faith of her love, the love that trusts without question, and accepts what it cannot understand, rose in an overpowering stream and swept her doubts away. Little sense to fret and worry. Jerrold must have had good reason for his silence. Why not show her belief in him by just taking things as they were, and leaving out all thoughts of herself and her own importance?

The road was better at this point. The horses broke into a jolting gallop which carried them over the ground at a great rate. It was as solitary as any place that Cynthia had ever seen. Even the mountain slope where Abe White had his shack was not more lonely than this.

"There is the house!" said Nathan Cooper, pointing with his whip. Then he tightened the lines, drawing the horses up with a jerk, so that they stopped before a small house which had once been well cared for but was now falling into decay and neglect. Yet the decay was only of the surface sort. The structure was in sound repair, and, with a quick bounding of her heart, Cynthia saw at a glance what a real home it might be made.

There was cleared ground out at the back of the house, where the land rose steeply; and away in the distance she had a glimpse of a sheet of silver, which was the lake, and beyond the lake were dark hills covered with sombre forests of pine. So much Cynthia had time to see; then the weariness of

Uncle Sep claimed her attention, and she had to make haste to attend to his comfort. The jolting of the wagon over the rough roads had so worn him down that, when lifted from the wagon, he had to be half led, half carried into the house, then lifted on to the big settle near the stove, where he lay completely exhausted.

Cynthia gave him a little broth which she had in a bottle in her bag, and then she was forced to leave him lying there while she went to help Nathan Cooper take the baggage from the wagon, as he was in a hurry to start back on his return journey. It made her feel rather anxious to think of being left in such a place with an invalid on her hands, without a neighbour in any direction to help her. But since it could not be helped, it had to be borne, and so she was determined to make the best of it. She was even glad to see Nathan Cooper drive away, since his going left her free to do things in the order she preferred. Plainly no one had been in the house since Jerrold Fane had left it, when he took the key to the house of her uncle in Esquimault, just before he started for Europe. There were the ashes of a dead fire in the stove, but dry kindlings were piled in the corner close by, and she soon had a fire going that made a wonderful difference to the outlook. It was a fairly big house, as houses go in that part of the world. There were two bedrooms, a large one and a small. The

room which they had first entered was big also, and there was a smaller room behind, where was a copper, a sink, and a wide fire-place with hooks, and a rack for drying and smoking bacon or fish.

“I wonder if I could manage to catch any fish?” Cynthia murmured to herself, as she surveyed the premises and made a mental estimate of what she could do with the various things she discovered on the place. The problem of the future would of necessity become very acute in a few weeks. Uncle Sep had very little money left. Each dollar would have to be eked out by every means in her power, since she did not know where any more money was coming from, and it was quite plain that her uncle could not work.

Of course she could catch fish, if only someone would show her how to go to work. Fish was good wholesome food, and so they would not starve. The cleared ground about the house had been planted that year. The corn had been cut already, but doubtless she had no claim to that. Probably Jerrold had let the ground to some neighbour, who had got a crop from it. She made up her mind to write to Jerrold, and to ask him if he would let her rent the fields from him, so that next season she could have crops for her own use. She did not know anything about farming, except what she had learned from using her eyes. But what of that? Everyone could learn, and she meant to

work her very hardest to keep the poor old uncle in comfort for the rest of his days. It never once occurred to her that this should have been the work of the other Cynthia, whom Uncle Sep had helped so much in the past. The other Cynthia could not do it, and so she must, and she meant to do it to her best.

Outside, the house was about as ugly as it could be; inside, it was at least comfortable. Between the two smaller rooms which were at the back, there ran a deep dark cupboard, which was a step or two lower than the flooring of the rest of the house. This was the place for keeping potatoes, apples, and pears, and all the other fruits and vegetables that a dweller in the country stores in the autumn. It was empty now. Cynthia wondered rather ruefully what she could do towards getting provisions for winter, seeing that already it was late summer, and autumn would soon be upon them. Then she reflected that provisions must of necessity be bought cheaply straight from the fields and the trees, and she determined that she would set about laying out some of their money on stores. Oh, there would be heaps of things for her to do! She would work so hard that the days would absolutely fly, and Jerrold would be coming home again before she had really got over missing him. So much depended on her, that she would have to be bright and brave.

"Cynthia, couldn't we have a dog or two? It will be awful lonesome here at nights." Uncle Sep had roused from his weakness by the time Cynthia had supper ready for him, and he was eager as a child to look about the new home and to make plans for the future.

"I suppose we could, if we knew where to get them," she answered. "We shall find out in a few days. Of course we must have some live things about the place. I shall keep some fowls, and we might have a cow, if only I knew how to milk it. Oh, why was I allowed to grow up in such awful ignorance of useful things?"

"It seems to me that you know more than most girls anyhow," he said admiringly, and then he began to talk in such a happy manner of what he would do to make the place more comfortable, that Cynthia thought she had not seen him so care-free before.

It was, indeed, lonely there at night. The wind moaned and wailed through the pine trees, and Cynthia could not sleep. How dreadful it would be in winter! Would she be able to bear it? The thought of Jerrold and his certain danger was with her, to the banishing of rest. She did not remember that what was really the matter with her was that on this night she was too tired for sleep. For days past she had been working at high pressure. She had been up for most of the previous

night, so it was little wonder that she lay through the hours, tossing restlessly, until outraged nature had recovered so far as to make rest possible. It was towards morning that she went to sleep, and then for hours she lay in dreamless slumber, while the dawn came, and the world woke up to work once more. The sun was high when she woke, and saw Uncle Sep standing by her bed with a pleased look on his face, and holding a tray in his hands.

"About ready for your breakfast, are you?" he asked with a chuckle. "My word, but you were fast asleep! Downright tired out, I guess."

"Why, Uncle Sep, it is ever so late, and you are up and dressed!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Of course, of course! You didn't think I was going to lie here all day, did you?" And again the old man laughed with a keen sense of delight in having stolen a march on Cynthia, who had done so much for him.

She was sitting up in bed now, trying to collect her scattered senses and rid herself of the dazed feeling produced by her deep sleep.

"Why, I have been out in the fields talking to John Bailey. I have seen where his house is, and the way to the Corner, where the road goes through to Brindley Coalfields. It is not so solitary as it looks, Cynthia, and it will make us a very nice home indeed. John Bailey's wife was brought up

in these parts, and she used to know Jerrold's father and mother very well."

"Who is John Bailey?" Cynthia was wider awake now, and she reached out her hand for the breakfast tray which the old man had brought her. Truly it was good to be waited on, and she was very tired.

"He is the man who farms these fields, but he wants to get rid of them when the fall comes, because he has cleared a lot of his own land now, and does not want to pay rent for this. If he had known we were coming yesterday, his wife would have been over here to help us. Real nice folks they seem, and I'm ever so glad to think we shall have decent neighbours. Oh!—and, Cynthia, he says he has a couple of dogs that he can let us have."

"You seem to have settled affairs finely while I have been asleep," she said with a laugh. Then, when he had gone away to get his breakfast, she made haste to dress, so that she might start the business of the day.

The wind was not moaning now. As she looked out over the sunlit spaces, she marvelled that she had been so burdened with fear on the previous night. Yet there was in her mind the certainty that, when night came again, she would have a return of the same fear.

She had spent many nights alone with Prudence

White in that lone shack high up the mountain, and she had not known such fear. Perhaps the trouble was that the affair with the train-wreckers had rather shattered her nerves, and so she was not so fit as in the earlier summer.

Or, perhaps, it was instinct warning her that she was not yet through with all the unpleasantness of that trouble. If anywhere in the wide world she could be safe, it should surely be here. But who could tell? A wave of helplessness that was almost like despair swept over Cynthia. Again she seemed to be standing on the railway track, waving the lantern to stop the train. Again she seemed to feel the scorching pain on her arm, and to see the lantern in fragments at her feet. It had been horrible, horrible; but there was no sense at all in giving way to her nerves in such a fashion.

CHAPTER XIV

Recognition

Years before, Beaver Creek had been a fairly well-settled district. Then had come the great gold finds in Alaska. Wild stories of the fabulous riches to be found on the Klondike had penetrated to the ears of the dwellers in the Shawnigan country, and they had thrown up their farms at any sort of sacrifice, and had hurried away to the get-rich-quick land. Many of them had never returned. The bones of some lay amid the cruel snows of the Chilcoot Pass. Many of them came to an end in Dawson City, or on the tempestuous waterways of the frozen north. Of the few who struck it rich, a party of thirty were returning to Seattle in a vessel they had specially chartered for the conveyance of themselves and their wealth down from Juneau; but they never reached port, and the vessel was never heard of again.

Much of the land in the lake district had not been cultivated since that time. In many cases it had reverted to forest, and was already clothed with dense masses of scrub. On some lands young

larch trees and Douglas pine were making good headway. Another twenty years, and it would be almost like virgin forest again.

The little homestead of the Fanes had not dropped into the general ruin. The fields had been tilled year by year, and the house had been kept in decent repair. The look of decay, which had rather appalled Cynthia on that first day of her arrival at Beaver Creek, had proved to be very much a surface neglect after all. She devoted a week of real hard work to the cleaning and tidying of the place outside and in, and was surprised at the different appearance it presented. There was not much furniture, but what there was served amply for the needs of herself and Uncle Sep. The old man was busy too. He had mended the fence of the garden, and had put the garden itself into some sort of order. He was going to do great things with that garden when next spring came. Meanwhile, he was going to have it tidy and in the prime of order. Nothing was ever done by disorder. While Cynthia scrubbed and scoured indoors, the old man cleared rubbish, made bonfires, and pitted the masses of quick-growing weeds from the garden ground.

The two dogs had been brought up from John Bailey's farm, which was nearly a mile farther on, and nearer to the lake shore. Great fierce animals they were; and Cynthia was so much afraid of them

at first that she thought the night solitude was preferable. But Uncle Sep had a way of his own with a dog. Before the two animals had been at the house two days, they were following him round with a slavish devotion. They even left off growling when Cynthia came near them. Another two days, and their devotion to the old man was only equalled by their attachment to her; but that state of things was, as she owned to herself, the effect of bribery and corruption. John Bailey said that he never fed his dogs, they were worth far more if they had to find their own living by hunting in the forest. Cynthia thought the poor creatures looked half starved, as indeed they were, so she took the short way to their affections through their appetites. After that there was never another growl from either of them for her, but they were ready to tear any chance comer to pieces in her defence. She could not move without one or both of them at her heels, and sometimes their devotion was to the last degree embarrassing.

John Bailey was an Englishman whose parents had come to the island when he was a boy. All his traditions were in favour of the old country; he always spoke of England as home; he always looked forward to going back to end his days there. Indeed, he would have gone when he was grown up and able to earn his own living, but by that time there were his father and mother to be

kept. Before they died he had married, and had young children round him; but still he clung to the hope of going home in course of time, and shaped his work accordingly. He had farmed the Fanes' cleared land in preference to clearing his own, and had done this in the last years of the life of Jerrold's father. Now his eldest boy was old enough to leave school, and to talk about what he wanted in the future. And as the boy's desires were bounded by a cleared farm in the lake country, where the pasture was so good that the butter could not be surpassed, why the man's plain duty was to get his land cleared as soon as he could. To this end he set to work.

Cynthia had written to Jerrold to know if she might take the land over when John Bailey was ready to give it up. Pending his reply, she set to work to apprentice herself to the man who could teach her how best to use the land when she had it. John Bailey scratched his head, and looked hopelessly confused when she asked him if he would let her come and help him draw the corn, that had been cut and stooked, down to his house, where it must wait for the threshing outfit.

"You are a lady, and drawing corn is rough work," he said in protest.

"I am a working girl. If I am going to make the farm pay, I have got to learn how to do things," she answered. "If I come and help you draw your

corn, you will be in my debt that much, and you can pay it back by telling me how to go to work, when I have the land on my own hands. I have plenty of time to learn how to do things this harvest, now that I have got the house clean. Uncle Sep loves pottering about the house. He is quite as clever at getting meals ready as I am myself, so now is my chance, don't you see?"

John Bailey did see. That is to say, he saw very clearly that it would be a fine thing to have the use of a pair of hands for which he did not have to pay. So the bargain was struck. Cynthia was to help him through with his harvest. If the threshing outfit did not chance to come, she might even have to help him thresh his corn out with the old horse-power threshing-machine which he had used before steam-threshing was common in the district. In return for this, he was to help her to get her ground ready for the fall wheat, and tell her all the things she would want to know about farming. It was certainly a good arrangement for him just then, for he was saved the trouble of looking for hired help. He was also saved the cost of wages, which to him was a very great saving indeed.

Cynthia took to the outdoor life very kindly. The work might be rough and hard; it was far and away better than waiting at table in the boarding-house of Mrs. Riley, or washing-up in the stuffy little basement pantry. Of course she could not

look trim and tidy when she was about her work, and at first it vexed her horribly to be grimed and smeared with dust and perspiration, to have her hair hanging loose, and to be so untidy. But if she had stayed to trim herself up every half-hour she would not have been in much better case. She compromised by fixing her hair as tightly as she could manage to fasten it, and then she tried to forget what a fright she must look. John Bailey would not take any notice, whatever might be the condition of untidiness to which she was reduced. He had been used to seeing untidy women all his life; anyone very spick and span was something out of the ordinary to him, and he preferred things as he was used to them.

It was one hot day in early September that he came to Cynthia to ask if she could lend him a hand in drawing the corn in from one of his outlying fields in the direction farthest away from Beaver Creek. At last he had got the definite promise of the threshing outfit, which was to reach his place that night, stay for one day, and then pass on. It would thresh all the corn at the house for a fixed price; but it would add greatly to his expense if he had to move the scene of work to those outlying fields. So his idea was to get all the corn carried as far as the homestead, and to have it threshed there.

"You had better come too, Uncle Sep," said Cynthia gaily. The warmth and beauty of the

morning had somehow got into her blood, and she was feeling quite riotously happy. "We will make a day of it, and pretend that it is a holiday. The dogs can keep house for us. The trouble is that they won't have supper ready by the time we come home; but there are drawbacks everywhere."

It did not take long to get ready for the start. As she rushed into the bedrooms to make the beds, Cynthia reflected with joy that most probably tomorrow would bring her a letter from Jerrold. How good it was that she would have to work so hard to-day that time with her would have no chance to lag! Oh, work was a fine thing when it absorbed one, to the exclusion of everything else!

Cynthia and Uncle Sep got down to the Bailey homestead in time to ride to the distant field in the wagon. Mrs. Bailey and the younger children would unload the wagons as they came home. Cynthia and her uncle would fill them on the field, while John Bailey and his son Jim would drive the wagons to and fro between the field and the homestead. This last was a very difficult business, because the roads were so very bad that it needed considerable skill to keep the loads from being tipped over.

The day was hotter than any they had had since Cynthia had been harvesting. The perspiration ran down her face in streams, and, as she kept putting up her hand to whisk the drops away, she

Cynthia Wins

was soon all smudges. Her hair got loose and tumbled down her back. She bundled it up anyhow, and looked, as she thought, a fearful guy. Of course there was no one but her uncle to see her; and when she asked him if he did not think her a scarecrow, he told her that she looked beautiful, and was about the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

"Fancy relying on your judgment after that!" cried Cynthia with a laugh, making another not very successful attempt to put herself tidy. They were just going to load the last wagon, after which she would go down through the forest to the Bailey homestead, and see if Mrs. Bailey wanted any help in cooking supper. Most likely the poor woman would have to cook for the threshers, and that would come hard indeed after a long day at work with the corn. The last load was such a big one that it was something of a problem to get it all on the wagon, and still more of a problem to keep it there. Finally, in pure desperation, Cynthia mounted on the load with the active assistance of Uncle Sep and young Jim Bailey, and did her best to keep the sheaves from slipping. It was a very risky proceeding, for if the load had gone, she must have gone with it. But one has to take chances in most things; the main concern is to be on the alert, and ready to act in an emergency.

The wagon bumped, and bounced, and swayed over the corduroy. Sometimes there would be a side-

way lurch that nearly flung Cynthia off on one side; then, while she was fighting to keep her balance, and to prevent the sheaves from being swept off, there would come another lurch from the other side which gave her a fling back, and so the see-saw went on. By the time the wagon halted before the untidy heap of corn sheaves which had been dumped down close to the spot where the thresher was to start work, Cynthia was looking more of a scarecrow than ever.

The threshing outfit had just arrived. Most of the men were from the Brindley Coalfields, as rough a lot as could be found in the island. It was difficult to get men to go round with a threshing outfit in that part of the world. Since the great war had been raging in Europe, the labour question had been more difficult still. The men from the coalfields were sometimes willing to do the work because of the change it brought into their lives. They could work well too, when they chose. Indeed, it was their boast that they could get through more work than any class of men on the island, and, as they were careful to live up to the reputation they had gained, they were very much sought after at threshing time.

It was hateful to Cynthia to have to stand up and pitch off her load on the heap of sheaves, with all these men staring at her. She was not the first girl they had seen unloading corn. Indeed, most

of the wives and daughters of the farmers did this sort of work at harvest time. Her trouble was that she knew she was not expert at the business, and she guessed that some of the men would be making fun of her. Then, too, she was conscious of her untidiness. Nothing upset her so much as to be compelled to face other people when her hair and her clothes were out of order, yet it seemed to be her fate.

The load was off, and the wagon was empty. Cynthia slid out at the back, and was intent on making a bee-line for the door of the house, so that she could ascertain if Mrs. Bailey needed her help. Two of the men of the threshing outfit were talking. They stood a little apart from the rest of the crowd. As she passed them, the man who was talking ceased, and the other began speaking in a deep booming voice, which at once woke all sorts of troubled memories in the mind of Cynthia. One startled look she gave him, then turned her head quickly and hurried in at the open door of the house. She recognized him as one of the train-wreckers, the man who had fired a revolver at the untidy girl at Honley Siding. She, Cynthia, had escaped his recognition then: would she do so now? The perspiration was pouring down her face as she hurried in at the door, and Mrs. Bailey held up her hands in dismay at her appearance.

“Great land, Miss Beauchamp, how hot you

Recognition

203

look! What have you been doing?" she asked. She was hot herself, poor woman, and tired too, but it was easy to see that Cynthia was in worse case than herself.

Cynthia gave herself an angry shake. She had to get a grip on her unruly emotions somehow. It would never do to break down, and so give herself away. There was a big reward offered by the railway people for information that would lead to the conviction of the train-wreckers. But the person who gave the information would go in peril of his life afterwards, so there was not much likelihood that they would be brought to justice. Cynthia's great fear was that the man would know that she had recognized him. Of course there was the chance that he might not know her. He might still believe that the girl at whom he fired that day at Honley Siding was really the one who had waved the lantern and stopped the train. On the other hand, he might not; and it was the fear of the might not that was pressing on her now.

She had to act as if there was nothing to be afraid of. Could she do it? She must. So many things are possible when there is no other way. She forced herself to laugh, and stood so that the sound of her merriment might reach the ears of the two men outside, who had stopped their talk to watch her. "Of course I am hot, Mrs. Bailey; we have been loading corn against time. Now it

Cynthia Wins

is done, and I want to know if I can help you cook supper for the outfit men?"

"If only you would!" The poor woman stretched up her arms with an air of utter weariness. "I'm just tuckered out with tiredness. Would you like to carry the food out to the men when it is ready, or would you rather do the cooking?"

"I will do the cooking," replied Cynthia promptly. "I am so hot now, that the fire can't make me very much hotter. You can carry the food out, and wait upon the men, and we will have them fed in next to no time. Uncle Sep will help you. He is uncommonly good at waiting upon people. You should see how he waits on me!"

Mrs. Bailey laughed. She had begun to feel quite light-hearted, now that the burden of the cooking was off her, and she bustled to and fro with brisk energy, while Cynthia was kept busy with two great frying-pans, one of which held potatoes, and the other was for the cooking of pancakes of a very substantial variety. Then there were saucepans and a big pot to be attended to, and the next hour was as busy as could be.

When supper was over, there was the washing of the dishes. By this time darkness had fallen, and the moon was shining with a wonderful brilliance when she and Uncle Sep stepped out on to the trail to go home.

A group of men were standing at the corner of

the barn as they passed. Cynthia felt, rather than saw, that one of them was the man whom she so greatly feared. Again the talk dropped at the approach of herself and her uncle, and there was silence until they had passed. Then, to her dismay, she felt that they were being followed.

She did not dare to look round, until presently her uncle caught his foot in an upstanding root and was nearly flung down. As she turned to help him, she distinctly saw the figure of a man slink into the shadows out of the moonlight. A cold sweat broke out on her then. She felt as if she must turn and rush back to the shelter of the Bailey homestead as fast as she could run. But it would never do to give way. She must be entirely unconscious of what was going on; she must seem absolutely light-hearted and free from care. So she rallied her uncle, and laughed at him for tripping. She even forced herself into singing as they went slowly along in the moonlight. But oh, the terror of it! Years afterwards, a moonlight night in harvest would bring the horror of that experience back to her. Suddenly there was an outburst of loud barking, and a minute later the two dogs that had been left on guard came tearing down the trail. The strain was over for that time at least, and with a full heart Cynthia slid her arms round the necks of the savage animals and hugged them both.

CHAPTER XV

Acting a Part

Morning found Cynthia with renewed courage, and a disposition to laugh at herself because of the terrors of the night. How silly she had been to get into such a panic of fear all about nothing! Perhaps the man had not been following at all. He might only have come for a stroll along the trail before turning in for the night. It might not have been the man of whom she was afraid, but another. Oh, she had been a coward! The only consolation she had was that she had kept her panic to herself, and her uncle had not even guessed that anything was wrong.

She was astir bright and early. There was the work of their own house to be done, and she had promised Mrs. Bailey that she would arrive in good time for the big pie-making and baking which would be the first part of the morning's activities. Pies of every sort and kind were the first necessity of such feeds, and as the appetites were very keen indeed, the pies had to be substantial in make to meet the need.

Uncle Sep was languid and tired to-day. Cynthia could not hide from herself that he failed visibly. He was always cheerful, he was delighted with the peace and quiet of Beaver Creek, and he enjoyed pottering about the house and in the garden, where he was always making plans for altering this thing and that. His life was as full and as happy as it could be, but in spite of this he seemed to get thinner and frailer with every day that passed.

"Don't come down to the Baileys' to-day, just stop at home and have a rest," said Cynthia, when she came into his room with a breakfast tray, because he was too unwell, or too weary to get up.

"I think I will stay at home to-day; then when I feel a bit more like stirring, I will see about digging a trench for the late celery," he said. He sipped his tea in a languid fashion, and did not seem inclined to eat anything. But he was full of little jokes and funny speeches. He was more like a happy child than an old man who had been well off and had come to poverty. Indeed, for him there was no poverty. He had food enough for to-day, to-morrow, and next week. He had a home, with pleasant interests, and what was still more to the point, he had love in the home. What more could he want?

He was dressed and out of his room before Cynthia started. She was in her secret heart glad

that he was not coming. The mailman might pass the house before she got back. He came their way once every week. If he slid her letter under the door, as he had sometimes done before, who was to say that some harm might not come to it? The dogs might even chew it up, a bit of paper never came amiss to them. Sometimes they were shut out of the house, but if one of the windows happened to be open they found a way of getting in, and she did not care to take chances when it came to letters from Jerrold.

There was no fear in the forest this morning. A thin haze hung over the hollows. Here and there the leaves were beginning to show yellow at the edges, a sure and certain sign of the coming fall. Otherwise it was high summer in the land still. Cynthia hurried a little. She was later than she had meant to be, and she knew what a rush the morning would bring. When she neared the house she had to pass the place where the outfit was at work. The engine puffed and snorted, the thresher hummed with a continuous moaning noise that deepened with every sheaf that was stuffed into it. Cynthia caught sight of the man, whom she feared so greatly, standing near the shaft that was throwing out the straw. He was a big powerful man, and she shivered as she thought of the time when she had peeped through the crack in the floor of the loft, and had seen him playing poker-nap

with his pals while they spent the time of waiting for the train to come to its ruin.

The man evidently had seen her approach, for he came forward and, touching his cap, said as politely as his nature allowed: "You are early on the trail this morning, Miss. Are you going to help us with the threshing?"

Cynthia forced herself to smile, and to look as if she were utterly free from care or apprehension, as she answered: "Oh no! I have come to help Mrs. Bailey make pies and puddings, and that sort of thing. With so many people to feed, she will be glad of some help."

"I suppose she will," said the man slowly; and she felt that he was searching her face for some sign of confusion, some hint that she had seen him before and was afraid. Cynthia smiled on bravely, though she felt as if the muscles of her face were frozen. It seemed to her that she must have gone ghastly white, although as a matter of fact she had not changed colour at all. Then he asked abruptly: "Have you been brought up in the country and in these parts?"

"No, I have always lived in the city," she answered quietly. She did not say what city; and then she gave him a little nod and passed on to the house, while he went back to his work.

Cynthia's heart was beating furiously, but she was comforted. Half her burden of apprehension

had dropped from her. She was quite certain the man could not be sure in his own mind that he had ever seen her before. It had been a fierce ordeal, but she had come through it, and she would have nothing more to fear from him. What a consolation it was! She walked in upon Mrs. Bailey with her face wreathed in smiles, and her manner as gay as if she did not know what it was to have a grim shadow of fear in her life. She made little jokes as they went about the work of preparing the noonday meal, and Mrs. Bailey declared that she had not laughed so much for years as she did that morning. When they had got the noonday meal ready, had seen it eaten, and cleared away, it was time to start on the next, and so the day went on. It was so late before the threshing was finished that the outfit could not move on that night, but had to wait for the dawn of the next day, which meant that supper and breakfast had to be provided. However, that was a small matter when compared with the advantage of getting the corn threshed and sacked ready for transport. Mrs. Bailey and Cynthia both turned out to help with the sacking. Some of the corn could be carried away in box wagons, but some of the best of the wheat, that was to be sold for seeding, was put up in sacks which had been hired from the seed merchants in Victoria.

Cynthia was so tired when night came that she

felt as if every muscle in her body had been strained to its utmost limit of endurance. Yet, despite her fatigue, she danced along the trail feeling positively light-hearted. There would be a letter from Jerrold to greet her when she got home. That fact alone was enough to make her spirits high, and there was the reaction from the fear she had suffered since she recognized the man with the big voice. The threshing outfit had moved on, and the man had gone with it, without being able to connect her up with the girl who had waved the lantern, and at whom he or one of his pals had fired. Everything had turned out all right, and she was going to be happy for always now.

Was she? Even Cynthia, wise as she was from the hardly-learned lessons of life, did not remember just then that man (and woman) is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. She was quit of one perplexity, yet without a doubt there was another lying in wait for her round the next corner.

Uncle Sep met her at the door, the two dogs rushed out upon her with a tempestuous welcome, and she entered the house with the happy restful feeling of being in port after a stormy voyage.

"Has the mail come?" she asked breathlessly, as she fended off the dogs with one hand and patted Uncle Sep's shoulder with the other.

"Yes, he brought quite a lot of things for me, and there are two letters for you," said the old man.

Cynthia Wins

He began to tell her the news he had had in his letters, but Cynthia was so intent on getting possession of the one missive that was to her more than all the letters in the world, that she did not heed a word of what he said.

"Where are my letters?" she cried. Then, seeing two envelopes on the shelf beside the stove, she reached up for them, but cried out in dismay, for one was from Abe White and the other was in the handwriting of the other Cynthia. There was nothing from Jerrold at all, and immediately her world turned black. "No letter from England: then Jerrold has not written to me for this week!"

"Perhaps he wrote all right, only it got delayed somewhere," said Uncle Sep, with the rare wisdom that came to him sometimes.

"If he missed the mail, then I shall have to wait a whole week for my letter!" cried Cynthia, and she went away to her room feeling crushed.

How long that week was, no one but herself could know. When next mail day came, she felt that she could not possibly live if there were no letter for her. But again there was no letter, and again she had to live on and to bear the pain as best she could. The week after that, a letter did come, but it was very short, and to her most unsatisfactory, although she could not have told why it was so. Her instinct told her that her lover was keeping something back. She had asked him

straight out about his supposed uncle, who had been living at Beaver Creek, and had died there. All that Jerrold had said of this in his letter was that it was too long a story, and one that was too sad to be told in a letter. She should hear all about it when he came home. But when would that be? How Cynthia hated war! But then, all women hate war—all good women that is, and of course if all women were good there would be no bad men, so war would cease to be a possibility.

She had asked him, too, for permission to take over the land when John Bailey gave it up. To her surprise he made objection to this also. He told her frankly that he had not the money to advance for tillage, and seed, and all the other things that had to be paid for. If John Bailey refused to keep it on any longer, and if no one else could be found to take it, why, the land might have to drop out of cultivation until after the war, as so much other good land had done on the island since he could remember. He told Cynthia that he had arranged for all arrears of his pay to come to her if he died fighting, and that was all of provision he could make. There was no hint of sorrow because of his poverty. But she understood why. He had lost his money to keep the name of her uncle from dishonour, and he was not going to whine about it to her.

“Oh, if only I had some money of my own!”

she murmured, when she had read the letter through about half a dozen times. Something would have to be done. John Bailey certainly would not keep the land on. It was too far away from any other farm for it to be worth while for another farmer to take it.

Where there is a will there is a way. When Cynthia had slept on her letter, she put on her hat and went off to confer with John Bailey. One thing was perfectly clear to her mind, and that was that she would not let the land go out of cultivation, even though she had to dig the fields by hand, and plant them by hand also.

The farmer finds plenty to do when harvest is over. John Bailey was as busy as he could be, but he was quite willing to confer with Cynthia, especially as she pitched in at the job that was holding him, and worked as she talked. She wanted to know what he would do if he were in her place. More especially, she wanted to know what it would cost to take land over and to work it.

John Bailey scratched his head with a dubious air. He was not good at figures. He did not keep any books himself. He did not know how to put his methods into speech. He was just a man of action: he did things, and judged by results. "It doesn't cost much to carry on land when you have got the implements, and the seed, and the labour. I have got the implements, that is to say

the ploughs, harrows, hoes, and so on. I have got the seed too, but I haven't got the labour. It is that which licks me. If I could afford to pay for the labour I would keep the land going; but I haven't got it, I can't get it, I can't pay for it if I could get it, and there you are."

Cynthia was not daunted. "See here, Mr. Bailey, I am about desperate. By the spring we shan't have a dollar left, at the rate at which we are living now. I have got to turn farmer because there is nothing else for me to do. I can keep that land in cultivation, at least some of it. I will dig it by hand. But I have no seed, and no money to buy seed, so what can I do?"

"I will let you have seed, and you can pay me next harvest. You can pay me then either in money or in corn, whichever suits you best." His hesitation was gone now; he was just a man of business, out to do the wisest thing for himself and for her. "There is no need for you to dig it by hand; I can plough for you, and you can work it out if you like. I am going to fat some beasts this winter, and I am having some sheep for the pastures down by the lake. There will be more work than Jim and me can put through. You can come as hired help, if you like to take your wages out in ploughing and seeding instead of in money. It is cash payments that lick me so cruel, don't you see?"

Cynthia did see. It did not take her long to decide. She would have done anything rather than let the land drop out of cultivation. What she really failed to understand was how hard was the thing she had undertaken to do. Day after day during that long fall she was down at the Bailey homestead, feeding beasts of which she was dreadfully afraid, or trudging through the squelchy mud of the lake pastures, overlooking the sheep, or trimming roots ready for pitting. But she was earning enough to keep Jerrold's land from going out of cultivation, and she was learning to be a farmer. If she was so tired sometimes as to be completely discouraged, she was very careful not to show it when she got home to Uncle Sep. The old man seemed contented and happy, though Cynthia could not shut her eyes to the fact of his failing strength.

In late October there came a spell of wet weather. For two weeks it rained with dreary persistence. Every night Cynthia came home with wet garments. She was beginning to feel dispirited, for certainly her strength would not stand much more of that sort of thing. Then one evening she was so late in finishing her work that it was dark as she came stumbling along the sloppy trail to her home. Work had been extra difficult that day, and she was very tired.

"Why, there is no light!" she exclaimed, and a

chill dismay came into her heart as she got near to the house but failed to catch a gleam of lamp-light or firelight from the window. The dogs rushed out at her as usual; indeed, they were extra demonstrative, just as if they had been alone on the place for hours. She paid little heed to them, but, thrusting them aside, pushed open the door and entered the house. The kitchen felt damp and chill, as if the fire had been out for hours. "Uncle Sep, where are you?" she cried anxiously; then as there was no response, she made haste to grope for matches to strike a light. The first spluttered and went out; with the second she was able to get a lamp alight. Then she cried out sharply, for Uncle Sep was lying on the floor.

CHAPTER XVI

Blow upon Blow

"Are you ill, poor dear?" asked Cynthia anxiously, as she stooped over the poor man. He seemed to be quite unconscious, and for the moment she had to leave him where he was. Slipping a cushion under his head, and putting a rug over him, she flew to light more lamps, to kindle the fire in the stove, and to heat water. When the fire was blazing, she came back to kneel by the unconscious figure. She had unloosed the things about the old man's neck; now she started to unfasten his clothes as much as she could, so that there was no constriction anywhere. She knew that she must not attempt to move him while he was unconscious, but the terror of it for her was that he lay near the door of his bedroom, where the draught was very bad indeed. When the water was boiling, she put a hot bottle to his feet; she filled two jars with hot water and laid his hands against them, and very soon to her great joy she found that he was coming round.

Her great fear was that he had had a stroke, but

although she carefully examined him she could see no trace of rigidity in any of his limbs, nor was his face drawn.

"It is just weakness," she murmured to herself, and she was not far wrong either. If only there had been someone to help her! But she could not leave him to go for assistance. The nearest people were the Baileys, and they knew even less about sickness than she did herself. A doctor at that time of night was quite out of the question; no one could travel those forest trails with any hope of coming through safely. People in those parts had to rely on their common sense at times of crisis; the trouble with Cynthia was that, at the present moment, she did not feel to have any common sense at all.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the old man weakly, when he had opened his eyes and found Cynthia bending over him. "Did I fall down?"

"I suppose that is what you did, dear," she answered with a little gasping sob. "What were you doing when you felt ill?"

"I had been lying down," he said, and he lifted his hand to rub it across his face. "I thought if I had a sleep I might feel better. I must have slept for a long time, for when I woke up it was getting dark; so I got up in a hurry, for I thought that you would be coming home before I had things ready for you. I remember getting off the bed, and then I don't

Cynthia Wins

know what happened until I opened my eyes and found you bending over me."

"You got up in too much hurry, that is what happened; you will have to take more care of yourself," she said. Then she helped him to get on to his feet, and half led, half carried him to the big chair beside the stove. So thankful she was that he seemed to be recovering a little, that her own exceeding weariness and wetness went for the time unnoticed.

He was even able to eat a little supper, and afterwards she put him to bed, hoping against hope that he would be better in the morning. By that time he was too ill to lift his head from the pillow, and still Cynthia had to wait for help to come to her, because she dared not leave him to go in search of it. Oh, the fierce anxiety of that morning! She was so worn with it that she had no attention for anything, or she would have seen a roughly dressed man pass along the trail, and would have noticed that the dogs did not rush to devour him as they flew at most strangers, but crept fawning round him to be fed from his pockets before he went his way again. If she had noticed it, the sight would have filled her with the liveliest apprehension.

It was midday before John Bailey came up from his farm to see if anything was the matter. Truth to tell, he had come full of reproaches because of Cynthia's neglected work. When he found what

was the matter, the grumbling was promptly swallowed back, and he was ready to help her, as she would have helped him had he been in a like case. A doctor was the first necessity, and he went off home to send Jim to fetch him.

Jim, mounted on the fastest horse, with a couple of sacks for a saddle, set off without delay, and then the weary wait went on. Mrs. Bailey came up to see if she could do anything, but finding there was nothing to be done went back to her own house, and Cynthia was alone. Sometimes the old man seemed to wander in his mind. He was back in his young days. Strangely enough, it was the trouble about Cynthia's mother having left home that seemed to be worrying him most. Cynthia had never heard what that trouble was; even now she had to do a lot of piecing together to make the fragments into a story that she could understand. It was the old old story of a girl who had become acquainted with a young man who was no good—no good at all. Uncle Sep warned her. It fairly wrung Cynthia's heart to hear him passionately pleading with Caroline, and telling her how he loved her, and that she was too good to be thrown away on a worthless fellow like Jack Ponder. But Caroline Dayrell had plainly been self-willed, and had evidently cared very deeply for the worthless Jack, for she would not give him up without the clearest and most absolute proof of his worthless-

Cynthia Wins

ness. This the brother who loved her determined to procure, and did it, but he got no thanks. Caroline promptly broke off her friendship with Jack Ponder when her eyes were opened, but she told her brother that she would never forgive him for spoiling her fool's paradise. Perhaps she never did, for she never wrote to him, nor to any of the rest of her family, after she left home.

Worn out with so much talking and the pain of his old memories, Uncle Sep dropped into a light sleep as the afternoon wore on. Then Cynthia was free to move about and to do the many things that had been neglected. She was beginning to feel anxious because the doctor had not come. The afternoon was wearing on, the short autumn day would soon merge into night, and the forest trails were hard to travel after dark. Backwards and forwards she passed between the sick-room and the kitchen. Uncle Sep muttered much in his sleep, and kept crying out like a child that is badly frightened. But he slept again when Cynthia was there to soothe him.

Darkness came down. It was raining hard, and the wind was moaning over the forest. Cynthia, straining her ears, caught the sound of a horse's approach. "The doctor at last!" she cried, with a bounding relief at her heart, and hurried to open the door and give him a welcome.

It was not the doctor, but only Jim Bailey, who

had been riding round in pursuit of the man of medicine, and had only run him down too late for him to reach Beaver Creek that day. "He says he will be here first thing in the morning, Miss, and you are not to worry; just keep the old gentleman warm and comfortable, and don't give him nothing but slops to eat. Doctor said you was to be particular not to give him fried liver, or hot pie, or baked potatoes. I say, Miss, what are slops?" Jim was panting a little with the strain of having ridden hard, and the haste with which he had blurted out his message. He had been saying it over and over to himself to make sure he did not forget it.

Cynthia laughed. She was fearfully disappointed because the doctor had not come. But she was in a measure reassured by his message, and now she proceeded to satisfy Jim's thirst for information. "By slops we understand food that is not solid, such as broth, bread and milk, and gruel. There is no danger that I shall give him hot pie or fried liver. But I shall be very glad when the morning comes, for I am afraid Uncle Sep is very ill. It was very good of you to take so much trouble for us, Jim. Won't you get down and come into the house for something to eat before you go home?"

"No, thank you, Miss; I'll be getting along home, unless I can do something more for you. Fanny is a bit blown, and she'd most likely get a

Cynthia Wins

chill if she stood about now." As he spoke, Jim gently flicked Fanny's steaming sides, and the mare moved on again, quickening her pace to a smart trot as she realized that she had her head towards home and food.

Cynthia went in and shut the door. It was dreadful to think that she must wait until the morning for the doctor. It was dreadful, too, that she had to face the long hours of the night alone with the sick man, who seemed very sick indeed. The apprehension was really worse than anything else. Uncle Sep lay very quiet for the most part of the night, and, although when he woke he did not know her, there was no more agitated raving, as on the previous afternoon. Cynthia dozed fitfully, sitting in a chair by his bed. It was the second night that she had not been to bed. But she was young and strong, and the strain would not hurt her.

The doctor came early. He told Cynthia that the old man was very ill, but it was more a case for nature than for a doctor. If his vitality were strong enough he would recover; if it were not, no doctor on earth could save him. He left some medicine and some general instructions, then went away, and Cynthia was left to grapple with her load as best she could. There was no question of her going back to her work at the Baileys'. Mrs. Bailey would have to turn out and help Jim and his father when work was specially pressing. The trouble

was that this would prevent her from coming to relieve Cynthia at all, as she could not possibly sit up at night and do everything else as well.

It was a hard week that followed, but the end of it found Uncle Sep still alive, and, in the opinion of the doctor, just a shade better. Cynthia took heart then, and, according to her nature, at once began to make plans for the future. Uncle Sep might be an invalid for all the winter, but he would certainly get better when the spring came. The winters on the island were rarely so cold as on the mainland, so he would have the better chance.

Mail day came, but it brought no letter from Jerrold, and Cynthia had to face, as best she might, a wait that was to be for seven more long days and nights. For the first day it seemed as if she simply could not bear it; but work and weariness dulled the pain of the waiting, so that day passed and the second came. By the time the third day came she was beginning to hope again, and to look forward in bright expectation of a letter. She was getting used to having Uncle Sep ill. She had the happy art of accommodating herself to circumstances, was already used to taking her sleep by snatches, to undressing only when she changed her clothes, and to all those other small inconveniences and discomforts which are the portion of those who have to do sick-nursing single-handed and to manage a house at the same time.

Cynthia Wins

She had put aside the vexed question of ways and means. This would probably be acute again as soon as the condition of the invalid left her free to consider other things, but for the moment it must rest. There is a certain comfort in being so hard-driven in one direction that everything else has to go. The burden of responsibility is lifted, and one has patiently to wait for the moving of the waters, instead of striving and straining to make things go.

Mail day again! But it found Uncle Sep so much more ill that Cynthia had her hands more than full, while there was a terrible foreboding in her heart that he was slipping from her. All through the morning she watched him. When noon came he seemed to revive a little, and she began to hope. The man who came that way weekly with the mail was late that day. Indeed, the early dusk was beginning to fall and a wild storm of wind and rain was raging, when at last Cynthia heard the welcome sound of a horse's approach. Her heart was beating furiously. There would be news to-day. She was sure of it. Oh, yes, there must be news! She could not bear another week of such suspense as had come to her in the last seven days.

There were letters, quite a bundle of them. Yes, and there was one from Jerrold. The black weight of apprehension, that had been resting on the heart of Cynthia so long, lifted suddenly. She was all

at once quite deliriously happy, and she smiled at the man who had handed her the bundle of letters.

"Rotten weather, isn't it, Miss?" he said, after he had asked after her uncle.

"Oh, it is not so bad!" she said, flinging her head back to look at the grey murk overhead. To her, all the grey was shot through with gold, just because of the letter she held in her hand.

"Right you are; it might be worse," he answered. "Most things, however bad they are, might be worse, only we haven't the sense to remember it."

His words hung in Cynthia's ears like an echo as she turned back into the house with the two dogs at her heels. She had Jerrold's letter in her hand, and, going across to the stove, she sat down to read it. Uncle Sep was asleep. There was nothing wanted of her just then, and she was free to enjoy the letter for which she had waited so long.

Jerrold wrote in better spirits than he had done for some time past. He told Cynthia he was homesick for her, but that he thought the war could not last much longer, and then he would be free to come. Meanwhile the thought of her love was keeping his heart warm, for she was all the world to him. Cynthia read the letter over and over again, sitting crouched down before the stove to catch the light from the flaring pine-knots. Then it occurred to her to see what the other letters were about. One or two were for Uncle Sep—business

letters these. There was one for her from Mrs. Riley. That would doubtless be full of complaints about the girl at present doing the work that Cynthia had done. It could wait. Who wanted to read things like that when there was a letter from Jerrold close at hand? There was another letter at the very bottom of the lump—a letter from Europe, and at sight of it Cynthia's heart sank within her.

For a little while she could not summon courage to open it. The flaring pine-knots in the stove faded to a dull red, and the darkness of the room pressed upon her as if it were a solid body.

"But I must know, I must!" she murmured to herself, and groping for the wood-box she flung some more pine-knots on the fire. She would light the lamp presently when Uncle Sep woke up. Until then, she was glad to save the kerosene.

With a hiss and a splutter the knots burst into flame, and the flashing, dancing radiance filled the room. The "laughing light", Cynthia called it, and something of its cheer stole into her heart now.

With steady fingers she opened the letter. He was dead, of course. This was what she would have to read as soon as her vision cleared a little. Dead, and she had just been reading his letter that was so full of love and longing! But she must read it, even though the reading killed hope and left her to lifelong sorrow. What was it? She gasped, a cry of joy escaped her, as she began to

gather the sense of the written words. Wounded, right arm amputated, very ill. Then he was not dead! Oh, the relief of it! But, alas! even the relief was only momentary, for, when she read the letter again, she realized how very bad the news was. Wounded, right arm gone, and very ill! The letter was ten days old; by now he might be dead. Cynthia sat on, the laughing light died out, the room was in shadow, and the black gloom in her heart matched the dark dreariness of the world outside.

CHAPTER XVII

That Night!

“Caroline, Caroline, are you there? I want you.”

It was Uncle Sep who was calling, and Cynthia got up in a hurry from her crouching position by the stove. He often now called her Caroline, mistaking her for her mother, who had plainly been his favourite sister.

“Awake, are you?” she said, with as much cheerfulness as she could muster. “Do you feel as if you would like some tea?”

At first the 'old man said no. But when the lamp was lighted, and he could see Cynthia moving between the two rooms, setting the table, and making toast, he began to feel better. He was even induced to make a tiny meal with some semblance of an appetite. His letters would have to wait until the morning. She could not venture to let him get excited at this end of the day, and it was so difficult to keep him from over-excitement.

The moving about was good for Cynthia. It lifted the dead weight of terror from her heart.

She breathed more freely. "Wounded and very ill" were the words that were ringing in her ears like a death-knell. But she tried to console herself with remembering how strong and vigorous Jerrold was. Surely he could live through what would kill most men! If only he did live he would come home, and that very soon. He had lost his right arm, he was no use as a soldier any longer. The Government would have no further need of him. He would come home to her. Again her spirits began to rise. What a wonderful thing hope is! Cynthia's dark hour had passed. It would come again, as such hours generally do, but meanwhile she would gather a little strength to meet it when it came.

Uncle Sep was very wakeful that evening. His mind wandered a good deal. Always he was groping in the dark past, and trying to straighten out things between his sister and himself.

"It is no use going on any longer with your eyes shut, Caroline," he said earnestly, as Cynthia came to ask him if he would have some milk. "When a thing has got to be faced, it is only cowardice to shirk it. No, I don't want milk. I don't want anything except to get rid of this buzzing in my head, and to be at peace."

Of course it was cowardice to shirk it. Well did Cynthia realize that she had to look her trouble straight in the face, and to make the best of it.

Cynthia Wins

But oh, how hard it was! On other nights at this time she had lain down to sleep within reach of the old man's hand, so that if he wanted anything he could rouse her with a touch. To-night she did not attempt to lie down. The fire in the outer room was allowed to go out. The little stove in the sick-chamber did very well for night, although it was no good for cooking. It was small, but it banked well, and she could be sure of having just sufficient fire to keep the room comfortably warm. She put the lamp out. The kerosene was running low, and she must keep enough for emergencies.

A wild tempest raged outside. Cynthia could hear the roar of the wind through the trees, and the rain was dashed against the window. She hung a thick blue curtain up to keep the draught from the bed, and this effectually kept the least glimmer of light from showing outside. It was like a dead-house, so profound was the hush as the hours dragged on. There was no sleep for Cynthia. Her whole being was concentrated on picturing that corner of the base-hospital where Jerrold was lying. She was trying to realize how he would feel if he lived to face things, so maimed and broken. Perhaps he would rather die, perhaps he would not struggle to live. If only she could be at his side now to struggle for him! The pain of her longing was so acute that soul and body

quailed before it. She was so absorbed in her suffering that she did not at first notice anything strange about the behaviour of the dogs. They were both in the house to-night. Sometimes one stayed outside, but the storm was so bad that both had come in together, and had lain down by the stove in the outer room. Shortly after midnight one of them roused, walked to the door and whined, as if wanting to be let out, but Cynthia, wrapped in her sorrowful imaginings, paid no heed. The other dog got up, walked round and round the room with ears cocked and every sense on the alert, but still it did not growl, or show any sign of anger.

Uncle Sep stirred, awoke, and asked for something to drink. Cynthia gave him the milk that was keeping warm by the stove, and he fell asleep again. He had drunk all there was in the room, and because he might wake again and want some more, she went softly into the other room to get some. She had no light. She knew just where the jug stood, and she meant to bring it back with her. It was empty. But there was more milk in a bowl which stood in the long dark closet that ran the length of the kitchen and Cynthia's bedroom. There were a candle and matches which she always kept standing there, because the place was so dark.

The dogs pressed close to her when she opened

the door. "Go back!" she said sharply, for she thought they had come to steal. Neither of them was to be trusted anywhere near food; they were so big that when they reared up on their hind legs they could reach nearly every shelf in the closet, and their appetites were in proportion to their size.

The dogs halted on the threshold. Obedience had become a habit. But it was only for a moment that habit prevailed, then they were close to Cynthia again, and now they were growling fiercely. She was fumbling to strike a match, startled to see how her hands were trembling. What was the matter? What was that sound that came to her ears above the roaring of the wind? Someone was sawing. She could hear the rasping of a saw. It could not be fancy. Why, it was close to her!

How the dogs growled! One of them pushed past her, and dashing to the end of the closet, which was the outer wall of the house, barked and raged as if it would have the wall down. Cynthia had got the candle alight now despite her trembling, and she went the length of the closet to the end wall, holding the light so that it would show her what was wrong. She thought of a rat, or that a hedgehog might have gone to sleep among the roots that were stored along under the shelves. As she looked she saw the end of a saw sticking right through the wooden wall, and realized that someone was trying to get into the house.

A wild panic seized her then. What was she to do? She was alone, or as bad as alone, and she was defenceless. No, not quite defenceless, with that big dog dashing at the wall and making such a noise that even the roar of the tempest was drowned in her ears.

Something had to be done, and done quickly. Springing forward, Cynthia seized the dog that was dashing at the wall. Dragging it away by main force, she hurried to the outer door, the one that was farthest from the piece of wall which the saw had pierced. It took her a minute or so to get the door open, for she had to hold the dog with one hand and unfasten the bolts with the other. "Go, seize him!" she cried, thrusting the creature out, and then banged the door, bolted it again, and fled back to the closet. She must have reached the place just as the dog made its onslaught upon the robber, or robbers. She heard a hoarse cry. There was the sound of a revolver shot, and a roar of rage from the dog. Then she could hear no more because of the noise of the other animal which she had kept indoors with her.

How startled the sick man would be! She loosed her hold of the other dog, and darted back to her uncle's room; but he was asleep, absolutely untroubled by all the noise and commotion that was raging through the lonely little house. How could he sleep in such a noise? But she was so

thankful to find that he was not frightened, that she did not stay to wonder why it should be so. Instead, she closed the door softly upon him, and ran back to the closet to see what was happening there.

The dog was no longer dashing at the wall, but was standing on guard, as it were, by the point of the saw still sticking through the wall. The creature was not even growling, but with ears cocked forward was listening intently. It wagged a tail as Cynthia came up and spoke, but broke from her hand when she would have drawn it back, and, pressing nearer to the point of the saw, stood, as it were, rigidly at attention.

Her limbs trembled so that she could hardly stand. Sinking down on a barrel she sat watching the dog, but the creature did not move; it was listening, listening, straining its hearing against the noise of the tempest. Then suddenly it moved, walked across to the back door, and whined to be let out.

"No, no, I cannot let you go, silly; don't you see that I should be all alone?" she said sharply; and putting her hand on the dog's head, she gave the creature a little shake by way of emphasizing her words.

There was silence again after that, and a long wait. The dog stood rigid, and listening as before. Cynthia hardly dared to breathe. Then, presently,

through the stillness she heard her uncle calling, and had to hurry away to see what he needed. Quite a long time she was gone. Uncle Sep had waked up fully conscious. He said he had been having bad dreams, in which he thought that someone was trying to get into the house to steal money.

"We have no money in the house for them to steal, so they would scarcely do that," Cynthia said with a cheerful laugh. It would not do to let her uncle know how nearly true his dream had been.

"I dreamed that we had a lot of money here, only it was not our own," he answered, then began to talk of the many times in his life when he had had the money of other people to look after and take care of. His mind was quite clear to-night, or rather this morning, for now it was nearly three o'clock, the darkest, deadest part of the long autumn night. Cynthia longed to go back to the closet, where the dog was keeping guard over the point of the saw that had been driven through the wooden wall of the house. Why, oh, why had the would-be robbers chosen such a difficult way of getting in? The more she thought of it the more Cynthia was perplexed. If anyone meditated robbery with violence in such a lone place, why did they not attempt a door or a window?

It was a problem she could not solve. She had to soothe and quiet the sick man until he could sleep again. All the time she was listening to

hear if the dog should bark, but so far there had not been a sound. She went out to the kitchen to warm some milk, and, while the fire was burning up, she peeped into the closet. The dog had gone back, and was lying close to the point of the saw. It was her comfort that the creature was not standing on the alert. Plainly the robber, or robbers, had gone away for the time. She went back with the milk, gave some to the invalid, and then sat down to wait for morning to dawn. The fire in the bedroom stove had died out, but she had made a fire in the kitchen that was bright and cheerful. The old man had fallen asleep again, so she left the door open between the two rooms, and sat down in Uncle Sep's big chair by the stove.

What a fearful night it had been! Oh, the nameless fear, the terror of the unknown, the strangeness of it all! She felt as if she would never be able to face another night in that house, yet she knew that she would have to. Her uncle was far too ill to be moved. Then, too, they had nowhere else to go, and no money to spare for rent. She shivered. What a fearful thing it was to be a woman, and so defenceless! She thought of the big man with the threshing outfit, and wondered if the housebreaker was identical with him. Yet, even supposing he had recognized her, and was meditating some sort of vengeance, why should he want to saw through the wall? It was of no use, she could not find a

reasonable theory, nor even a plausible excuse. Her thoughts grew mixed and confused. In spite of herself she became drowsy and comfortable, and presently she slept.

The wind and rain spent themselves, the night waned, and a pale, washed-out dawn crept over the forest. Uncle Sep did not rouse, and Cynthia, worn out with all the fear and anxiety of the night, slept as soundly in the chair as if she had been in a comfortable bed. The fire died out, the ashes in the stove were growing cold. The dog had long since given up its watch beside the point of the saw, and was lying near the stove asleep, but with one ear cocked, watchful even now.

Presently the creature lifted its head. There was a sniffing, snuffling noise outside the door, then a whine, followed by a feeble scratching.

Cynthia woke suddenly, startled by the glad barking of the dog that had been her companion all night. She was amazed to find that it was broad daylight. What a long time she had been asleep! Her first thought was for her uncle, and dragging herself out of the chair, scarcely awake even now, she staggered across the kitchen to the bedroom. He was sleeping comfortably. He had been short of breath in the nights for some time past, but now he seemed to be feeling no discomfort at all. What a comfort it was to see him resting in such peace! She laid hold of the door-frame,

Cynthia Wins

and stood clinging to it, stretching her cramped limbs, and trying to clear all the mist of deep sleep from her brain.

There was the noise of scratching at the door again, and again the dog burst into the same glad barking that had roused Cynthia from sleep. The noise could only mean that the other dog had come home. Stepping across the floor, she pulled back the bolts and flung the door open. The dog was there, but what a sight the poor creature was! It was fairly plastered with mud, it was bleeding from a wound in its side, and it limped on three legs, one front paw having been put out of action.

"Oh, you poor creature, where have you been?" she cried, stooping down to examine it more closely, while the other dog ran round and round, barking, leaping, jumping, and making a great fuss, as if it could not be glad enough to have its comrade back. Then it started to lick the injured dog's wounded side, and, leaving the two on the step, Cynthia ran round the house to see for herself what had actually taken place there in the darkness of the night. The garden stretched along that side of the house, and she cried out in dismay at the ruin in its trim tidiness that had been wrought last night. The shrubs and plants growing close to the wall had been dragged up by the roots, and lay strewn about, trampled and broken. A big hole like a small pit had been dug close to the wall, and some of the

brickwork that formed the foundation had been dislodged, as if the first idea had been to dig through the foundations. Then the robbers had evidently given up that plan as taking too long, and had started to saw through the woodwork above. Tools lay scattered about in various directions, and, yes, there was a revolver, lying by a rose-bush that had been ruthlessly dragged up and thrown aside. What fearful havoc!

The brickwork had been so damaged by the onslaught upon it that she feared the wall would be unsafe at that point until it was mended. She would fix in the bricks herself, pile earth up against the place, and plant again what had been rooted up. Something must be done. There was only herself to do it. But the ground was wet, and she had only thin slippers on. First, she must attend to Uncle Sep; then, when he was comfortably settled, she would come out and start on the repairs herself. It had come to her mind that she did not want John Bailey to know too much about her fright of last night. She could not in the least understand what it was the robbers had wanted in attempting such a method of housebreaking. Perhaps she would find out later.

Uncle Sep was awake when she went indoors, and he seemed so much better that she felt quite comforted about him. It took a good hour for her to get him fed and made comfortable for the day.

Cynthia Wins

By the time this was done the sun was shining, and the day was so fine that it was easy to make the excuse of gardening to account for her absence from the house for a little while. The dog that was hurt crept into his room and lay down by the bed. The poor beast seemed tired out, and Cynthia vainly wished that dogs could talk, so that she might know what had really taken place out there in the dark last night.

Arming herself with a big spade for shovelling the earth into the pit that had been dug beside the wall, Cynthia went out at the back door, which was nearest to the place. She was wearing stout boots now, and could climb over the debris with ease. But oh, the ruin and the muddle! What had the robbers, or robber, been thinking of? She thought the wall was really broken through in one place, and, leaving her spade in the hole, she clambered out, went round to the back door, and so into the dark closet. No gleam of daylight showed through, however, and she was going back to fill in the hole, feeling quite comforted about things, when it struck her that the hole must touch a part of the house very much below the floor of the closet.

So far as she knew there was nothing below, except indeed the foundations of the house, and they would scarcely reach down so far. In her perplexity she stepped into the kitchen for the

candle and matches. Lighting the candle, she came back to grope along the floor. An idea had come into her head that there must be a cellar, or at least a hollowed-out place, underneath the floor of the closet, and she meant to see. She looked all over the floor for some sign of a trap-door, but could find none. Then she called herself foolish for having expected to find one in a floor that she had cleaned repeatedly since coming to live in the house. If there had been a trap-door, of course she would have found it out before. Oh, she was just being foolish this morning, and wasting time that would have been better spent in reducing the muddle outside!

With a hasty movement she turned to pick up the candlestick from the floor and to rise to her feet. But in her hurry she moved so awkwardly that the candle was tipped over, the light went out, and she was left in darkness. Not quite darkness, however. There was a streak of light from somewhere. She could see the big brown jars that stood in the corner of the closet. She could see the framework of the apple shelves that reached from floor to ceiling. Where did the light come from? Not from the door, which had been shut by the wind just as she went down on her knees to look for the trap-door. Ah! there was the place, a small round hole in the corner right under the shelf. She had always thought it was a fault in

the boarding of the floor. Looking at it closely, she could see that it was not a fault, but a place left of set purpose for pulling up a board that lay in a groove, and was not nailed or even screwed to the floor joists. Putting her hand in the hole she gave a smart tug, and up came the board with such a jerk that she was nearly upset. With that board there came another, the two having been so grooved that they fitted to a nicety, the one with the hole serving to keep the other down. This was where the wall had been broken down, disclosing a small hole about three feet deep and four feet square. But there was nothing in it save an old cooking-pot, such as are used in camp outfits. A very rusty old pot it was, and battered as if from long and rough usage. This stood within reach of a hand thrust in at the broken wall.

Cynthia reached down and took hold of the handle of the pot. It was heavy, and it took considerable effort to lift it up on to the floor of the closet. Then she had to light the candle to see what was in it. And now she had begun to tremble so violently that she could not at first strike a match.

CHAPTER XVIII

How Clear-eyed Cyrus paid his Debt

The match flickered, then flared up. Cynthia got the candle to burn; then, setting it on the shelf where it would throw the best light, she tugged at the tight-fitting lid of the cooking-pot. How hard it was to wrench open! She bent her strength to the task, and finally it came up with a jerk. A bit of old mackintosh lay just underneath. When this was lifted, a mass of papers came to view.

The top one was a legal-looking document, and, turning it over, she saw written on it in shaky characters: "The last Will and Testament of Cyrus Ponder".

"Now, I wonder who was he?" she murmured, trying to remember why the name of Ponder seemed so familiar to her. Then it suddenly flashed into her mind that Uncle Sep was always warning his sister Caroline against the man Jack Ponder, upon whom, as Cynthia gathered, her mother had set her affection when she was a girl. "I wonder if

he was any relation to this man. If so, how very queer!" she went on, talking to herself as she opened the will, which was not sealed, only folded.

The legal phraseology bothered her a little, and she was going to put the paper aside as beyond her comprehension just then, when suddenly a name caught her eye. It stood out on the paper so plainly, the name that was so constantly in her thoughts—Jerrold Fane. At sight of it she began to read again, and this time she gathered that the maker of the will left everything of which he died possessed to Jerrold Fane, his benefactor, the man who had saved his life, and had brought him away from danger to a safe hiding at this lonely house in the Shawnigan country. The date was sometime in last summer, and when Cynthia had read so much she fairly gasped with amazement. This stranger who had died in the old house shortly before she and Uncle Sep had come to occupy it, must have been Cyrus Ponder. Then why had Jerrold never spoken of him? She looked at the paper again, and her eye was caught by the words "safe hiding". Why did he need safe hiding, and what was he hiding from?

Bringing her whole power to bear on the subject, Cynthia could find no clue to the puzzle, and turned her attention instead to an inspection of the contents of the pot. But this task she relinquished in a hurry, and sat back on her heels looking the

How Cyrus paid his Debt 247

picture of consternation and dismay. So far as she could judge by her brief examination, the wealth contained in that rusty old pot went into thousands of dollars. No wonder she was scared, remembering as she did the fright of last night and her own defenceless position.

Where could she bestow the wealth so that it should be in safety? Plainly it was not safe to leave it in the place where Cyrus Ponder had deposited it. And she could not leave her uncle to take it to a place of greater safety. Could she not? Well, that is just what she would have to do. But it would not be to-day; so she had to face another night in the shack, and with this added responsibility.

Where had she heard that name of Cyrus before? Her uncle had talked so much about Jack Ponder, but she had not heard him mention Cyrus; still, she had heard the name recently, and it was mixed up in her mind with happenings that were full of strain and tragedy. Of course she remembered now! She was lying on the floor of that lone shack up the mountain, where she had taken refuge the night when she was lost; she was peering through a hole in the floor, and she was listening to the talk of the angry men who were drinking and playing cards below. They were accusing one of their number of having helped Clear-eyed Cyrus to get safely away from their

clutches before they had had a chance to rob him of his wealth. Was that man, Clear-eyed Cyrus, identical with this Cyrus Ponder, who had made a will leaving his money to Jerrold, because Jerrold had saved him? Cynthia thought he must be. There were blanks in the story that she could not piece together, but on the whole it looked feasible.

How had these men come on the track of Cyrus after all this time? Ah! that was a question easier to solve. It was more than possible that by this time some of that band of train-wreckers had discovered that she, Cynthia, was in some way connected with Jerrold Fane. The man with the threshing outfit had certainly recognized her. He would probably make it his business to find out all about her surroundings, and how it was she came to live in that place. He would hear of the unknown man who had lived there before, and who was visited only by Jerrold Fane during those last months. There might have been some clue to the identity of Cyrus Ponder, and, if they were looking for some hidden wealth, what more easy than to come to the conclusion that it was hidden somewhere in the house? The fact of Cynthia and her uncle being evidently so poor would serve to show that they at least had not benefited by the money. There was nothing to show that Jerrold Fane had benefited either. Probably the wealth was hidden somewhere in the house, in some hiding-place that



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How Cyrus paid his Debt 249

a sick man could get at, but that a casual dweller would not discover. Someone there might be who knew the Fane homestead well enough to have heard of that hiding-place under the floor of the dark closet, and hence the excavations on that side of the house.

Reasoned out in this fashion, things looked fairly clear to Cynthia. Now she had to use her mother-wit to ensure the secret safe-keeping of Jerrold's legacy. There was no bank that she knew of nearer than Esquimault. So to Esquimault she must go. But how?

By the time she had reached this stage in the settlement of things, her uncie needed her. Then, as soon as she could leave him, she went out of doors, and, by working at high pressure, she packed the bricks back into the damaged wall, filled in the pit, and, by banking the earth against the wall of the house, hid the place where the would-be robber had tried to saw through the woodwork. She even planted quite a flourishing colony of currant bushes on the bank, and when all was done the place looked as if she had had a bad attack of landscape-gardening fever.

She was in the house again, and busy with the care of the invalid, when Mrs. Bailey came along to see how it fared with the sick man, and to find out if she could do anything for Cynthia.

"I certainly do want a little help very badly,"

said Cynthia, in response to the kind enquiries. "Chiefest of all, I want a good night's rest. I am giddy with want of sleep, and I don't seem able to think clearly or to do anything in a sensible fashion. Do you think that you or Mr. Bailey could sit with Uncle Sep to-night? He does not want much real nursing at night now, but he needs someone with him. Then I have to go to Esquimault to-morrow on rather important business, and someone will have to be here then. How can we manage?"

Mrs. Bailey looked thoughtful. She was planning the best thing to do, and Cynthia waited with a beating heart. So very much depended on what could be arranged by Mrs. Bailey to cover the needs of the next few hours. Then the good woman spoke. "I think John had better come up and stay the night with your uncle. Being a man, he can come along the trail after dark alone. If it was me, well, someone would have to come along with me. It is silly, I know, but I am made that way, and I just can't help it. Then I will be along bright and early to-morrow morning, and if you will leave your washing ready for me I will do it, or anything else that you may need most."

Cynthia reached her arms out, and hugged the astonished Mrs. Bailey. "My washing! Not if I know it, when you have so much of your own to do at home. No, my dear, you just put all your mending into a bundle and bring it along with you.

How Cyrus paid his Debt 251

Then you can sit down in Uncle Sep's room and sew until I come home. It is ghastly that I must be away for all one night, but there is nothing else to be done, and so I have got to put up with it."

"He will be all right. Don't you worry. My word! It will be a real holiday for me to sit still and do up my bits of sewing!" Mrs. Bailey stretched her arms wearily above her head as she spoke, then sighed in a gusty fashion. "I just love mending and making, but I downright hate outside work. I'm what you call a feminine woman—that is, a woman that only wants to do a woman's work—and I feel it is hard lines to go out feeding cattle, looking after sheep, and all that sort of thing. John is anxious to get on in the world. I would rather be poor and comfortable than wear myself to skin and bone adding dollar to dollar."

"You must keep happy in thinking what it will mean to you to sit still altogether when the dollars have been earned," said Cynthia lightly.

"It won't be sitting I shall be then," replied Mrs. Bailey with a sigh. "I shall be lying under the green grass by that time, and John will have waked up to the fact that he had been better off as a poorer man maybe."

Cynthia shivered. She hated to hear Mrs. Bailey talk in this fashion, it sounded so shockingly disloyal to the marriage bond. Then suddenly she realized something of what the poor woman's point

of view must be, and how tired of everything the overworked wife was feeling. Leaning forward, she slid her arm round Mrs. Bailey's thin scraggy shoulders, giving her a mighty hug. "Dear Mrs. Bailey, it is being kind that wears you out so badly! And now you are actually going to add to your weariness by taking on my burdens, and how I can ever repay you I can't think!"

"No, no; coming here will be a holiday, as I said before." Mrs. Bailey was getting brisk and cheerful again. The mood for self-pity was passing. She was happily of the nature that could not be miserable for very long. She was smiling at Cynthia now. "I am real glad to do something for you, my dear; there is nothing that sweetens daily toil like being able to do something for someone else. I think we should lose the zest of living if it were not for what we can do for each other."

When Mrs. Bailey had gone, Cynthia called the dogs indoors, and kept them closely in the house. Every minute to-day was as long as an hour, and filled with the keenest apprehension. Her ready wit had sized up the situation with regard to the silence of the dogs when first the robber, or robbers, had come about the house on the previous night. The dogs had been made friends with, in the expectation that they would not bark a warning or make trouble if they were loose outside the house. A dog has wonderful sense up to a certain point,

but few dogs are wiser than their appetites. The animals had known who it was wandering round outside the house, and they had made little trouble until the breaking-in business had taken on serious aspects. Then their common dog-sense had risen superior to their appetites. They had raged and raged, and the one that had been let out had evidently done its duty as a good dog should, and the housebreaker had been driven away. She would be quite safe from another attack if she kept the dogs in the house. The old cooking-pot she had left in the place where she had found it. She had taken all the money, and the bundles of documents which looked like securities, from it, and she had put in their place a lot of literature that did not matter. The documents and the paper money she had made into flat packages and had stowed them about her person. Rather stout she looked; very uncomfortable she felt. But it was Jerrold's money she was safeguarding, and she would not have flinched at actual pain in such a cause. There was cash amounting to about fifty dollars in the pot. This she put in a stout canvas bag, and fixed that also among her garments. Truly she would have been very well worth stealing, if only anyone had known what was hidden under her shabby house clothes.

The night passed without incident. For all that Cynthia was so tired, she could only sleep in

snatches, and she lay on her bed staring at the patch of lighter gloom which was the window, and praying for the morning to come. One dog she had in the room with her; it was the one that had been hurt. She argued that if anyone came to disturb her peace in the night, that dog, by reason of what it had suffered, would be fiercer than the other. Towards morning her sleep became more restful. She was quite wide awake and fresh when daylight came. Her gratitude to John Bailey she contrived to express in a fashion so happy that he went away from the house feeling that he had really been a public benefactor, and had done a great deed. As a matter of fact, he had slept nearly all night, and was nearly as well rested as if he had spent the time in his own bed at home.

Jim drove his mother along the trail bright and early; then, picking up Cynthia, who was ready and waiting, he flicked the lines on the neck of the horses, and drove her over the rough miles of trail to the railway depot. What Cynthia suffered during that drive could not be put into language. Every moment she was expecting that someone would step out from the close-growing trees on to the trail, and, pointing a revolver at her, tell her to deliver up what she was carrying to safety. Again nothing happened. The depot was reached ten minutes before the train came up. Jim waited to see her safely on board the cars before he turned the heads

How Cyrus paid his Debt 255

of his team for home. Like most boys, and many girls, he would cheerfully have run half a mile any day for the sake of being close to the train when it came into the depot, and the sight of the ecstasy on his freckled, weather-browned face as the big engine roared past him made Cynthia smile. She felt safer when she had boarded the cars. It was good to be among people; she felt as if there was safety for her in the crowd this morning. Her heart was beating very fast as she looked round the car, which was very full. How would she feel if her gaze encountered that of the man with the big voice, or one of the other men who had planned and tried to carry out the wrecking of the train on the mainland last summer?

Up and down her eyes roamed. She looked here, she looked there, but every face was that of a stranger. If only she could get to the city in safety! If only she could lodge that money safely in the bank, then she would be able to breathe freely again. She had heard her uncle say that Jerrold banked at the Esquimault branch of the Island and Mainland Bank, which stood at the corner of Quay Street; and that was where she meant to go, even though it was farther from the depot. When she reached the city and stepped off the cars, she hailed a street carriage. She had kept out enough money for this, as, owing to the way in which she had stowed the money about her

person, she did not feel very trim and tidy, or fit for walking along the streets. There was an accident on the way to the bank, which nearly involved her in disaster. An automobile coming down a side street collided with a steam trolley, and in the recoil ran into the carriage in which Cynthia was sitting, flinging her in a heap on the floor, and slightly damaging the horse. Of course a crowd gathered, as crowds will. Sympathetic people pulled open the door of the stuffy little vehicle to know if she were hurt. The police bustled round, and one burly member of the force was gently but firmly ejecting an enterprising journalist from the carriage, in response to an imploring look from Cynthia, when, chancing to glance past him, she was shocked to find the man with the big voice standing close to the policeman, and gazing at her with menace in his eyes.

It was an awful moment! For the fraction of a second Cynthia thought she was going to swoon. A black gulf opened in front of her; she was sliding and sliding, she could not help herself. Then suddenly the voice of the policeman sounded in her ears.

"Anything I can get you, Miss? You are feeling shaken a bit, I expect," he was saying; and it was the consciousness of his nearness to her that gave her the strength of will to pull herself back from that deep black gulf that yawned at her feet.

How Cyrus paid his Debt 257

"Come right in here with me, if you please, I want your help." As she spoke Cynthia moved a little to one side, and motioned to the policeman to sit down beside her in the carriage.

"I am on point duty, Miss, and I can't leave. Where do you want me to go?" he asked. It was plain to him that she was in some sort of trouble, or her manner would not have been so urgent.

"I am going to the Island and Mainland Bank in Quay Street, and you must come with me, for I dare not go any farther alone." She leaned forward, speaking in a tone so low that only he could hear her. "If I had been very badly smashed up, you would have had to help carry me to the hospital. How would you have left then?"

"I should have whistled for someone to take my place here," the man answered promptly.

"Whistle now then, and come with me. You must, or you may have to take me to the hospital yet, unless indeed it is the mortuary that I should have to be carried to," she said rather grimly.

The policeman blew three shrill blasts on his whistle, and stepped in beside Cynthia without another word. He was something of a fatalist, that policeman. He argued that he might get into trouble for leaving his beat without sufficient reason. He also knew that he might get into trouble if he refused his help to anyone in need.

In any case, he would have to suffer if he made a mistake; so he might just as well follow the dictates of a kind heart, and trust to luck to see him through.

Cynthia was trembling violently. Again there was the dread and fear of being shot at. She noticed in a subconscious fashion that the man with the big voice had both hands bound up, and that his face was adorned with plentiful strips of sticking-plaster, and she wondered as the carriage moved on, carrying her beyond his reach of vision, whether, after all, he had come off only second best in his encounter with the dog.

"You must not leave me until I am safely in the presence of the bank manager. I can pay you," she said, and in her agitation her manner was more curt than she knew.

"We of the Force don't need pay for doing our duty," the man answered, with so much reproof in his tone that she at once realized her mistake in speaking so sharply to him.

"Please pardon me!" Her voice was pleading now, and she was smiling, although her face was white and drawn. "Can't you see that I am in deadly fear? I can't even tell you why just now, but if you had not been standing so close to me when I asked you to get into the carriage, I verily believe that I should have been shot at."

The policeman stared at her. It might be that

for one mad moment he wondered if he were aiding the escape of some clever thief. Then he reflected that thieves did not as a rule want police escort to the nearest bank; and he suddenly grasped the situation, and guessed that this girl with the strained white face was taking something to the safe-keeping of the bank that she was afraid would be taken from her. So he had done right in leaving his beat, and his luck had not failed him. He did not trouble her with any more questions after that, but, nodding thoughtfully in token that he understood, he sat silent until the carriage drew up at the bank entrance.

"You won't leave me?" she said, as he ducked his head to get out of the carriage.

"Certainly not, Miss," he answered gravely, and then he held out his hand to assist her in alighting.

The bank staff looked mildly surprised at the sight of Cynthia, pale, and truth to tell rather untidy, marching into the bank escorted by a policeman. She asked for the manager, and there was so much urgency in her manner that she was at once admitted to the manager's room, even though he was at that moment rather fully engrossed with business which had to be carried through with dispatch.

"Have you done with me now, Miss, or would you like me to stay longer?" asked the policeman

Cynthia Wins

as Cynthia was passing through the door which led to the private room of the manager.

She paused, flushed, and hesitated. She was remembering how she had offended him by speaking of pay, yet something she must do, for he had been so kind, and that at the moment when she most needed kindness and help. "I do not need any more help now, thank you very much," she said, with gratitude showing in her face and her manner. Then she turned to one of the clerks and spoke with authority that there was no mistaking. "Will you take the policeman's name and number, please; I shall require to write to him later on."

"Certainly, Madame," replied the clerk, and then Cynthia passed into the manager's room, and the door was shut.

"Mr. Jerrold Fane banks with you, I believe?" she said, but in a questioning tone. In the face of the heavy reverses Jerrold had been compelled to face to save poor old Uncle Sep from dishonour, she was not quite sure that he was able to have a banking account at all.

"Yes, Mr. Fane is one of our customers," the manager answered, but in a non-committal tone. He had risen from his chair at Cynthia's entrance, and stood facing her, waiting for her to state her business.

"I have found a lot of money which belongs to him. I have brought it for you to take care of.

How Cyrus paid his Debt 261

I dared not bring it in a bag, there was too much risk," she said, her voice a little unsteady, for now that the strain was over she felt suddenly weak and tired. "I had to hide it about my person. I don't know how much it is, but it must be many thousands of dollars, and I think the documents are securities, so they may be worth money too."

"Will you take a seat, and tell me all about it," said the manager in an encouraging tone, and he pushed a heavy chair forward for her.

"I will give you the money first, then when you have counted it I can tell you how it came into my possession. Will you mind if I strip off my coat and my outer waist here? You see I had to pack the notes and the papers on my person, because I was so afraid the money would be taken from me. Oh, I have been in terror ever since I found it, and I shall not have an easy moment until it has been safely placed to the account of Mr. Fane! I even got a policeman to come into the carriage with me when I found that I had been recognized on the street."

"Can I assist you with your coat? Would you like me to send for my wife to come and help you?" the manager asked, pitying the embarrassment of Cynthia.

"Thank you, no, it is quite easy." As she spoke Cynthia wriggled out of her coat, slid off the loose silk blouse she was wearing, and then started

to unfasten the packets of paper money that had been fastened to her person. The securities being long and thick had been fastened to her back, and very uncomfortable she had found them. "That is all. There is not much loose cash; you will find about forty dollars in that bag, I think. I had to take out ten dollars for my journey and my overnight expenses in the city, because I cannot go back until to-morrow."

"You cannot manage the car fare from the Shawnigan country, your food and lodging at a decent hotel, and the fare back, for ten dollars," objected the manager.

"Can I not?" There was real dismay in Cynthia's tone. She had been so anxious not to trespass further than was strictly necessary on the little hoard, and she was prepared to spend the night at a very poor shelter indeed.

The manager understood something of this, and he looked up from the papers he was rapidly turning over. "Miss Beauchamp, the money you have brought here this morning, with these securities, represents a comfortable living for Mr. Fane. He won't be a rich man, of course, but he will have enough to live on, in a quiet way. Now do you not think that he would be very much troubled if you suffered any sort of hardship in the matter of lodging or travel that a few dollars would lift?"

"Of course, if it is necessary I will take more.

How Cyrus paid his Debt 263

But I did not know how much value my find would work out at. Mr. Fane has been wounded, did you know? His right arm has been amputated, so of course he will not be able to work for his living in the future." There was a slight break in her voice as she spoke. She was thinking of the letter which had said that Jerrold was very ill, and it was only the inbred hopefulness of her nature that kept her from utter despair at this time.

"Wounded, has he? I am truly sorry," said the manager with very real sympathy. "But if Mr. Fane has lost his arm he is out of it for good and all, and he will soon be home. So it might be worse, you see. Now sit down, and tell me how you found this money, and what it is that has made you so much afraid."

The story took a good while in the telling. Indeed, before it was done, that other story of how Cynthia had been able to save the train from being wrecked had to be told, because it was necessary for her to say why she was so afraid of the man with the big voice.

Then she had to wait while the manager did some telephoning; and when he had finished he said to her: "I think, on the whole, for your own safety, I must not let you out of my care for to-day. My wife will be glad to receive you as our guest. I have 'phoned to the Chief of Police in Victoria, and to the manager of our bank there.

Cynthia Wins

They will both be over shortly. I fancy that you have put us on the track of a man we have been seeking during these many months past, and we have to be very grateful to you. I am going to send upstairs for my wife now, then I will introduce you to her, and I am sure that you will be glad to be taken away to rest in comfort and safety."

CHAPTER XIX

The Cablegram

Cynthia felt as if she were in a dream when Mrs. Bolton, the bank manager's wife, took possession of her and hustled her off to a luxurious bedroom.

"Now, you are just to rest and be comfortable," said the lady. "I was born inquisitive, and I am bursting to know why my husband is so particular about your being taken care of. But I have not been married to him for seventeen years without learning a few things, and I guess it wouldn't be healthy for me to bombard you with questions, or to bother you in any way."

"It is very kind of you to leave me alone in such a fashion," said Cynthia, looking at her hostess with grateful eyes. "I have come to the end of my power of enduring things, and I feel almost as if it is too much trouble to go on living."

"That is fine talk, and you a girl hardly out of your teens!" said Mrs. Bolton with a little toss of her head. "The fact of the matter is that you have not fed properly to-day. There is a night-

Cynthia Wins

dress; now get your clothes off and tumble into bed, while I go down to the kitchen and bring you some hot soup. Then you can go to sleep for two or three hours. Your ideas about life and living will be quite changed when you wake up."

"Mr. Bolton said that those men from Victoria would be here presently, and that I should have to see them," objected Cynthia, who, glad as she would be to have her clothes off and rest, was oppressed by the thought that she would be needed perhaps in a very short time.

"They can't be here until the five o'clock train," replied Mrs. Bolton. "I will have dinner ready by then. It will be a good two hours earlier than our usual time, but that won't matter. If I have a good feed ready for them, you may count on not being disturbed until, say, half-past six, so you will have a really comfortable rest. Now, I am going for that soup, and mind that you are in bed by the time I come back with it."

Cynthia did as she was bidden. Indeed, she had no choice save to obey. As she undressed she reflected with some private amusement that she was virtually a prisoner in the house of the bank manager. As her prison-house was so very comfortable, and it was moreover a place of refuge from the overmastering dread that was on her, she was not disposed to grumble.

In a very short time Mrs. Bolton was back with

the soup, which was followed by an appetizing lunch. It was of no use for Cynthia to protest that she was not hungry. She was made to eat a good meal, and then she was left to solitude, and the blessed sense of rest that can only be had under conditions of perfect security. Oh, the bliss of that rest! She stretched her weary limbs, and decided that she would just lie awake to enjoy the feeling of not being obliged to do anything. But in about ten minutes she was fast asleep, and she knew nothing more until Mrs. Bolton came in to tell her that the two men from Victoria were waiting for an interview with her.

It was rather painful to Cynthia to have to be mixed up in trouble of this sort. She was wondering how she would feel afterwards if she had publicly to identify any of those train-wreckers. As it turned out, however, there was no need for anything of the sort. While she was dressing to go down to the dining-room where the men were waiting to interview her, the Chief of the Esquimault Police came to see the bank manager, and told him that a man had furiously attacked one of the police force in the open street, and would doubtless have inflicted serious injury on him but for the quick intervention of some passers-by. The assailant was promptly put under arrest, when it was found that he was the notorious Sim Jackson, for whom the police of the Mainland, as well as

the United States police, had been searching for many months. Sim was wanted on so many counts—but especially for holding up trains, shooting trainmen, and walking off with the valuables contained on the cars he held up—that there would be no difficulty in securing enough convictions against him to hold him in durance for the rest of his natural life. This being so, there was no need for Cynthia to appear against him, or to be associated in any way with his case. She came down for a short interview with the two men who had come to see her. There was no need for the telling of the whole story which she had previously told to Mr. Bolton. He had put them in possession of as many of the details as seemed necessary, and they were anxious to spare her as much as possible. The policeman who had been attacked was the man who had escorted Cynthia to the bank. There seemed at first little sense in the ruffian's attack on the policeman; but, in view of the story Cynthia had told, the reason was clear to see, the motive doubtless being pure spite because the policeman had delivered a defenceless girl from the danger of a murderous attack in the open street.

Sim Jackson was safely laid by the heels. It was well known that he was the leader of the little band of train-wreckers who had wrought so much harm in the past, and the railroad officials on both sides of the international boundary would sleep the more

peacefully for knowing that their very dangerous foe was being cared for at the expense of the State.

Cynthia was up next morning bright and early, in readiness for her return journey. She had left the will of Cyrus Ponder in the care of the bank people, and she carried a receipt for the money and securities which she had found in the old cooking-pot and had deposited at the bank. Another receipt had also been sent to Jerrold, who would have the surprise of his life when he received it.

Oh, the slowness of that journey home! Cynthia was anxious to know how Uncle Sep had fared in her absence. She was remembering, too, what in the rush and worry of things had clean escaped her memory. Yesterday was mail day, and there would probably be a letter for her from France, a letter that she would be afraid to open.

At last there was the depot, and there was Nathan Cooper, who looked as if he had not moved from the spot since that other day back in the late summer, when she had arrived with Uncle Sep. Jim Bailey had not come to meet her, and a sudden horrible fear came into the heart of Cynthia lest her uncle might be worse. Then she called herself silly for being afraid. Of course, if Uncle Sep had been worse, Jim would have been there. As it was, he was doubtless on duty at the Bailey homestead, because his mother would be taking care of Uncle Sep. When the cars had gone Cynthia hurried

after Nathan Cooper, much as she had hurried on that other occasion, and asked him if he would drive her over to the lake shore at once.

"I suppose I shall have to, seeing that you want to get home, and there is no one to meet you. But my horses won't stand too much of this sort of thing. I drove out there yesterday, and it was getting late when I got back," he said, as he took off his cap to rub his head, a way he had of rubbing it when things perplexed him.

"Why did you not send by Jim Bailey when he was over to bring me to the cars?" said Cynthia. "It would have saved you trouble, and saved the horses too."

"Just so," he answered, rubbing his head harder than ever. "But then, you see, I had to go with a telegram—no, what do you call it, a cablegram, for your uncle. It was brought over from the post office with instructions for immediate delivery, and because there was no one else in these parts that could do immediate delivery just then except me, why, of course, I had to go."

"A cablegram for Uncle Sep, did you say?" Cynthia had gone white to her lips. "Oh, what was it about?"

"Now, Miss, do you suppose as the post office would let on to the messenger what the telegraph messages were about?" demanded Nathan, with such a shocked look on his face that Cynthia would

have laughed if she had not been so deadly afraid of disaster.

"But surely it was read before you left the house, and so you would at least know whether it was good news or bad?" She was in a fever of impatience, and he still rubbed his head, looking the picture of perplexity.

"No, it wasn't. Mrs. Bailey said the old gentleman was lying most peaceful and quiet, and she meant to make it her business to keep him so until you got home. If the news was good it would keep all right, and if it was bad there was no sense in being made miserable sooner than was necessary. She wanted me to bring the thing back with me, but I had had no instructions from the post office to that effect, and it isn't always healthy to go beyond your instructions when working for Government."

"Oh, make haste and get your horses ready, and please drive me home as fast as possible!" cried Cynthia, who was ready to wring her hands in despair at the slowness of things. "Can't you see that there may be most fearfully bad news waiting for me?"

"Getting in a flurry won't make it any better," he replied. Then, pulling his cap down on to his very rough hair, he went off to hitch his horses to the wagon, and was ready to start well inside ten minutes.

Poor Cynthia! If yesterday's journey had been

full of keen dread and apprehension, it was as nothing to what she suffered on this journey home. It would not have seemed so bad if the wire had been for her. The fact of it being addressed to Uncle Sep added to its sinister import in her eyes. It must mean that Jerrold was dead and they were afraid to send the news to her direct; so she told herself as she sat white-faced and silent by the side of Nathan Cooper, while the horses sped onward, and the wagon rocked and bumped over the rough corduroy of the Shawnigan trail.

Home at last! Cynthia's brain was in a whirl as she sprang down from the wagon. She was on the ground before Nathan, so he had no chance to ask her if she would allow him to lift her down. Mrs. Bailey opened the door, her face wreathed in smiles.

"So glad to see you home! But the old gentleman is keeping quite nicely for him, indeed I think he is really beginning to mend."

"The cablegram?" burst out Cynthia, cutting through Mrs. Bailey's remarks with slight ceremony. "Where is it, and what is it about?"

"It is here," said Mrs. Bailey, reaching a brown envelope down from the shelf, and holding it out to Cynthia, who took it and slit open the flap, while the noise of many waters sounded in her ears. Then she read:

"Coming next boat. Fane."

CHAPTER XX

Explanations

Coming home! Jerrold was coming home! The sudden change from keenest despair to radiant hope was almost too much for Cynthia to bear. Joy seldom kills, however, and it rarely stuns. In a moment she had recovered from the shock, and was smiling at Mrs. Bailey, although when she spoke her voice had a queer tremulous sound.

"Mrs. Bailey, it is good news, such very good news. Mr. Fare is coming home, he is coming by the next boat. Yet when I heard there was a cablegram I made up my mind it was to tell me he was dead, and what I felt like I cannot describe!"

"Poor dear, you must have felt some bad!" exclaimed Mrs. Bailey, and then she asked: "Why was the wire sent to your uncle, and not to you?"

"I don't know. Yes, I do, at least I can understand. It would be sent to Uncle Sep instead of to me because that would save a couple of words or more in the cable, don't you see. Of course, it is a very expensive business, and Mr. Fane would make it as short as he could." Cynthia smiled

again as she spoke. She was thinking of the surprise that awaited Jerrold when he reached home. He expected to be a poor man, a poor man heavily handicapped by the loss of his right arm, but he would find that the necessity to work for his daily bread was past, and he could just make the best of his life, with the grinding care lifted from him.

"There is the old gentleman calling out for you," said Mrs. Bailey, and Cynthia hurried into her uncle's room to give him a loving greeting, and to tell him that her business had sped very well indeed. She had not told him why she had been forced into that hurried journey to Esquimault, and she would not tell him now. No need to excite him, and, besides, Jerrold's business was sacred in her eyes.

Oh, the sharp admixture of joyful hope and keen apprehension that filled the next two weeks for Cynthia! She was expecting another wire. Jerrold would be certain to let her know when he landed on Canadian soil. Then somehow she would contrive to go to Esquimault to meet him. Oh, she must go to meet him, and she would go with him to the bank, and then he would explain to her all the mystery about the man whom he had sheltered here in his old home, and she would tell him of the money that had been left to him!

The days went on. A week passed. Ten days.

A fortnight. Yet never a word came through to break the silence. Her mood varied now between keen expectation and the most dreadful despair. Something had happened to the ship in which Jerrold had sailed. Or he had been taken worse, and had perhaps died before port was reached. Oh, it was awful! She could not bear much more. The weather did not help her. Day after day the rain came down with a steady persistence that could surely be matched nowhere save in old England. On the mainland keen winds were blowing, and the ground was covered in snow. The sun shone every day, though it had a cold brilliance without warmth. But the strip of sea running between the mainland and the island made a great difference; what was cold brilliance in one place was damp gloom in the other.

Uncle Sep was mending slowly. He was able now to leave his bed for a few hours every day. But Mrs. Bailey had been taken ill, and Cynthia knew that, when the news of Jerrold's arrival in Canada did come, she would not be able to go to meet him, because she would not be able to leave Uncle Sep. She had to leave him alone for two or three hours every day, while she went to do her neighbourly duty for Mrs. Bailey. But she always came back along the trail with a keen dread at heart lest anything had gone wrong with the old man during her absence.

At last there came a day when it did not rain. It was nearly three weeks since the cable had come to say that Jerrold was coming home. Cynthia's mood was mostly one of endurance now. It was dreadful to be so helpless, to wait, and to wait for news that did not come.

She made haste with her morning work, to get Uncle Sep dressed, and helped out to his chair. She was anxious to set off to the Bailey homestead before the rain came down again. Mrs. Bailey had been worse last night, and Cynthia was keenly anxious about her.

The sun was trying to shine. There was a breath of keener cold in the air. If it kept fine to-night it would probably freeze, and then the bad places on the trail would be easier to walk over. This morning Cynthia floundered through the soft places with her skirts held high. She was hoping against hope that her rubbers, which were getting the worse for wear, would not let in the wet. Before the frame house of the Baileys came into view, the creeping cold about her feet and ankles warned her that she was damp-footed, and would have to be uncomfortable until she reached home again. Why, oh, why had she not been wise enough to buy herself new rubbers when she went to Esquimault? Of course she had not had money of her own, but she might surely have borrowed some of Jerrold's money for the purpose. Oh, she had been very silly,

and now, if she caught a bad cold, everyone would have to suffer because of that foolish and entirely mistaken pride of hers. She thought of what the bank manager had said about the money she had not taken to make her comfortable during the time she was forced to stay in the town while waiting for the cars. Truly she had belittled her lover in the manner in which she had given way to her pride!

Mrs. Bailey was so much better this morning that she was even talking of getting up later in the day. Cynthia did the work that was necessary, and looked to the comfort of the invalid. She told herself that, as things had gone so well, she should be home a good half-hour before her uncle would begin to expect her.

Of course it would be dark, or nearly dark, before she got home. She had ceased to find anything to fear in the dark, however, and she sped along at a fine rate. A very cold wind raced her along, the ground was freezing under her feet, and something of the exhilaration of the air was stirring in her bones.

There was the light from the window! But why had Uncle Sep lighted the lamp so soon? As a rule he sat in the firelight until she got home. Perhaps he had put some pine-knots on the fire, but this light was steady, and not at all like the laughing light which flickered and danced, died

down and then flashed up again. This was the steady gleam of a lamp. The more she looked at it the more she wondered. In her anxiety she broke into a run, but soon paused, dropping back to a walk because she fancied she heard footsteps coming along the trail towards her, although she could see no one as yet.

Ah, what was that? She had a momentary glimpse of a moving figure that stepped between her and the light. Then it seemed to pause. A second later she heard a voice:

“Cynthia, is it you?”

“Jerrold!” she cried in unbelieving joy, scarcely able to credit the evidence of her ears. “Jerrold, is it really you?”

It was all gone—the fierce anxiety, the wearing apprehension; all the pain of doubt and fear swept away in an instant by the sound of his voice, and the touch of his hand when she reached his side. Then she cried a little, with her head resting on the empty sleeve of his coat.

“Your poor right arm!” she sighed.

“I can afford to lose it,” he answered gravely. “The loss is made up to me in the gain of seeing you again, and of knowing that nothing need part us now. Why, Cynthia, if there had been no other way, I would have bartered the sight of both eyes for the certainty of knowing I could come home to you and rest in your love.”

How she thrilled at his words! She who had been so lonely, who had been reared on the cold bread of charity, and had as a rule been made to feel that she was a superfluous article in the world's economy. Then it suddenly came to her mind that, if she had not given up that good offer of the post at Banff to go and tend poor Prudence White, she might never have crossed the path of Jerrold Fane again, and so would have missed the crowning joy of life, a good man's love.

"It is worth it!" she murmured, speaking aloud, as she stood out in the chilly dark of the falling night with her head on her lover's shoulder.

"Just what I said myself," he answered with a satisfied laugh, and his one remaining arm tightened about her waist. "I told you just now that you were well worth my right arm, that I would have given the sight of my eyes if necessary. I am jolly glad, though, that it was not necessary, because now I can see your face, and, my dear, you are looking very thin and pale. I can see that much, although it is getting dark."

"I was not thinking from your point of view, but from my own," she said, drawing back from him a little so that she could see his face.

"What is your point of view?" There was a teasing note in his tone; then he turned her round to walk to the house, for it was much too chilly for them to linger outside on this November evening.

Cynthia Wins

"I meant to have such a good time for myself as soon as I could afford it," she said, as they paced slowly along the trail side by side. "That post that was offered to me at Banff would have made a good holiday possible for me, and I meant to take it out in winter sports. Then I heard how ill Prudence White was, and to pay my debt of gratitude so far as I could I went to nurse her, and that was how it came about that our paths crossed again. Do you not see that, but for that, we might never have come to know each other. I should not have found my mother's kin, and life would have been a very dreary affair lived all on my own."

"It is generally like that. Self-sacrifice does bring a very sure reward." Jerrold was silent while they walked half a dozen yards, then he burst out abruptly: "I reached Esquimault last night. I was too late for bank hours. I knew the cars started before bank opened in the morning, so I went round and demanded an out-of-hours interview with the manager, and he gave me the astounding information that you had been lodging enough money in the bank to keep me from want for the remainder of my days. He also showed me the will that Clear-eyed Cyrus left behind him."

"Then Mr. Ponder was Clear-eyed Cyrus?" exclaimed Cynthia with a start.

"What do you know about Clear-eyed Cyrus?"

asked Jerrold; and Cynthia told him of how she had heard the men quarrelling with Long Jake about Clear-eyed Cyrus, and how they accused Long Jake of having got him clean away out of their power.

"He did get him away too," replied Jerrold. "At least he came to warn me that Cyrus was in danger, and to beg that I would save him. Do you not remember the man who came to call me from dinner that night at the Mount George House?"

Cynthia gave a great start of remembrance and surprise. "Funny that I had forgotten this since I found that money, though I remembered it often enough before. It was Long Jake who came to fetch you. But when I spoke to him of it, that day after I had helped him to escape from the bear, he told me I should be wise to forget all about it; and the advice was a threat."

"No wonder," answered Jerrold. "If it had once been known in certain quarters that Long Jake had delivered his brother Cyrus out of the hands of that lot of thieving scoundrels, then certainly he would have been shot, and very swiftly too."

"Was Long Jake the brother of Cyrus?" cried Cynthia. "And was his name Ponder too—Jake Ponder, a corruption of Jack?"

"Yes, a wild lot he had been; but down at the bottom he was not all bad. He never forgot, for

Cynthia Wins

instance, that I had helped him once when he was in a tight place. But he had got mixed up with a lot of train-wreckers from over the border, and he was as wax in their hands, poor fellow!"

"Then Long Jake was the man for whom my mother cared. It was the trouble about him which made the breach between her and her family. I found it out through the delirium of Uncle Sep. In his conscious moments he will never say a word about it. How strange it all is!"

"Strange indeed!" echoed Jerrold, and added: "I can tell you all that story now, Cynthia, and explain the mystery of Clear-eyed Cyrus living here as my uncle. While he was in life I was bound by my promise to say nothing about him, or my connection with him, to anyone. He died the week before I left for Europe, and I went straight from his funeral to see your Uncle Sep at Esquimault, then came back to the mainland for my good-bye to you."

The story, however, was not told until later in the evening, when supper was over, and Uncle Sep had gone to bed. The two dogs were both indoors to-night; they had both established friendly relations with Jerrold. They had taken to him with the slavish devotion that dogs show for certain people, and he could scarcely move without stumbling over them. Cynthia had declared with a laugh that she felt as if she were going to be very

jealous of him indeed, but a queer little pang came into her heart when Jerrold said:

"Don't begrudge me love, even if it is only the devotion of a dog. If you could only know how starved my heart has been, and how I have wanted love more than anything else!"

"How strange it should be so!" she exclaimed. "You always struck me as one having all things, and it was I who had nothing. When I was a child there was no one who cared for me except Prudence White; you were not so lonely as that."

"As a child, no; it has been since I came to manhood that my trouble of solitude began. While my father and mother lived, I was the centre of their devotion. When they died, there was no one to whom I could turn except to Clear-eyed Cyrus, and he was then living away in the heart of the Rockies."

"You have known him for a long time?" she said questioningly. She was realizing how little she knew of her lover's past, but that was not wonderful, seeing how little she had been with him since their betrothal.

"Yes, as long, or longer than I have known your uncle. I never even guessed that they knew each other though, until one day when I came here to see Cyrus, and he spoke of Sep Dayrell as a chum of his school-days. Cyrus had led a roving life. He had spent years in Australia, but he told

Cynthia Wins

me once that wherever he lived the mountains were always calling to him. It was his hope that he would die among them, and it was one of his great troubles that he had to be brought away to this tame lake-country to face the end of things."

"Why did he have to come?" Cynthia's eyes were asking the question as well as her tongue.

"I did not fully understand myself until yesterday, when the bank manager told me of the money that Cyrus had to leave. You see, I believed him to be a poor man. When Long Jake came to me at Field, he said that Cyrus was in danger of his life, because he had given information to the police about a gang of train-wreckers. Jake asked me if I could get him away. He said that Cyrus was ill, that he was in want, or so I understood. It was the fact of his poverty that made it understandable to me that Jake could not help him, for Jake never by any chance had a dollar to call his own. Jake said that he had been lounging outside the depot at Field that evening, wondering whatever he could do to get Cyrus clear away to safety without any of the gang suspecting him of having a hand in the move. When he saw me come off the cars he just jumped at the chance of my help, and so came to the Mount George House to enlist my aid. We had to walk a long way to the shack where Cyrus was living. When we got there I found my old friend in a state of fear that bordered on panic.

He had always been as brave and fearless as a lion before. It was the mortal disease that had him in its grip that made a coward of him now. The simplest thing was to make tracks for somewhere without delay. I was very much of a stranger in that part of the country. No help could be got from Jake, who had started off to keep clear away from any suspicion of being mixed up in the move of Cyrus. I wanted the old man to walk out of his shack without any baggage at all, but he would insist on taking an old camp-kettle with him. He said it had been his companion on too many journeys to be left behind now. To humour him, and because I was afraid I really should not be able to get him away without it, I let him take the pot. Indeed I carried it myself, and jolly heavy I found it. We reached the depot soon after dawn. The first cars that came along went east, so we went east too. The main thing' just at first was to make sure of getting away without anyone on our track. At the first place we stayed, Cyrus declared he was being followed. He wept and cried like a baby, saying that nothing but the sea could separate him from his enemies. It was then I thought of this house standing empty. Surely, if anywhere in the wide world he could be safe, it would be here. I was taking no risks. We went east farther still, to a place where we could board a train that had come straight through from Quebec.

Cynthia Wins

We might have been passengers from Europe now, and the old camp-kettle or cooking-pot was packed into an overland travelling-trunk. Cyrus was my invalid Uncle Mike, and I don't believe even Long Jake would have recognized him. I had been wondering whom I could get to live with him when we reached here. By that time all fear had left him, and his one desire was to be left alone. He asked me to give him a little money for his everyday needs. I also opened an account for him at the stores at Beaver Crossing. I believed him to be entirely dependent on me, and I do not believe he spent a single cent of his own money from the time he first came here until he died. I came to see him as often as I could. I was bound by my promise to him never to speak of him. The man at the stores sent for me when my uncle, as he thought, got worse, and I was here when he passed away. He never even then breathed a word to me of having money to leave."

"Perhaps when death came near to him he forgot about the money," suggested Cynthia, and Jerrold said he thought it might be so.

A silence fell between them then. The logs in the stove made little snapping noises, but the hush outside the house was very profound to-night. There was a great quiet in the forest now that the wind had dropped.

One of the dogs sighed and moaned in its sleep,

the other growled fiercely as if it were having bad dreams. Then Jerrold came out of his abstraction, and, rising, went to fumble with his one hand in the pocket of his overcoat that hung behind the outer door.

"What is it you want? Let me get it for you," said Cynthia coming to his aid, remembering how lost he must be without his right hand.

"I have it," he answered, pulling a paper from his pocket and bringing it to the lamp that stood on the table. "See, Cynthia, I bought this on the train as we were passing through the Rockies."

She looked at the paragraph he pointed out, then cried out in surprise. It was an account given by an eyewitness of a fatal accident that had happened to a too adventurous huntsman, out after wild goat in the mountains above Lake Minnewanka. The hunter was a man known as Long Jake, who was brother to a still more noted hunter known as Clear-eyed Cyrus, who had for some time past dropped out of the public ken.

"So Long Jake is dead," said Cynthia softly, and her mind went back to the day when she had intervened to save him from the grip of the angry she-bear.

"Yes, but I guess that the bit about his being brother to Clear-eyed Cyrus was put in the paper by someone who very badly wanted to know what had become of Cyrus, and incidentally of the money

Cynthia Wins

that Cyrus had made." Jerrold looked very thoughtful as he spoke. He was thinking of the fearful risk that Cynthia had run, on the day when she carried the money to the bank and was recognized by Sim Jackson.

She was thinking of it too, and a little shiver shook her at the remembrance, but her eyes were shining with happiness as she nestled closer to his side.

"Dear, however hard the things may be that we have to do for those we love, the doing is always worth while because of the love."

Jerrold nodded. Then he looked at Cynthia, and, seeing the light that danced and sparkled in her eyes, said fervently: "I am glad it was only my arm that I had to lose. If it had been my sight, I could not have seen your face, nor the love for me that is shining in your eyes. Everything is worth while, if only it strengthens and ennoble love."

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

By Blackie & Son, Limited, Glasgow

