THE STRAGGLERS

A Tale of Primal Asperities

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TO

DOROTHEA ALLGOOD.

CONTENTS.

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THE STRAGGLERS.

I.

The descriptive literature published by the great transportation companies who handle the North American passenger, immigration, tourist and cargo trade, makes fascinating reading. It is with the facts about the land and its resources, crammed into attractively readable folders, more redolent of the spirit of the land than anything that could be writ or sung.

It is the great trumpet blast to the army of coming feet, the steel grip of friendship held out to willing hands. It is the apotheosis of success en masse, and the laudatory of individual enterprise. It is also the first line in the epic of a coming people, and the last in the elegy of a passing race.

One might on the strength of years of living the life, the earnest wrangling with words, the blackening of good foolscap paper hope to embody some of the spirit of it all, to find that there is better reading in a simple, yellow-bound time table.

What is the greater thing, the train that blazed the Prairie, crawled over the Rockies and dipped into the Pacific, or its human cargo set down all along the line?

Think of the Prairie with its sea of yellow corn, of the mountains with the places that trains, which look like limpets clinging to the rocks, do well to pass at night. Think of the timber lands with their giant trees, that are worth coming from the four corners of the earth to look upon before they go. Think of the first and last port of call on the Pacific, and what such a dot on the map of the world is going to mean in the history of the years to come.

And think of the people that are coming in a steady stream.

Think of them if you can.

Who are they and what?

What brought them forth, and where did they hear the call?

A steadily moving stream, a stream of human souls. Inasmuch as the body is more than the raiment, these people are more than the trains that bring them. And according to whether they are looked upon as a miscellaneous collection of individuals, or a picked primal stock, divinely chosen to give flesh and bone to a new people, this outward flow is a matter of International statistics and dividends to shareholders, or the haloed tramp of a chosen multitude.

Take the point of view which appeals to you most.

A man and a woman came out to that country on money that was sent to them.

The man had been a handy man around a gentleman's place, a sort of gardener-groom-coachman. The woman had been a cook in the same family.

They came out on the understanding that they would have to pay their passage off by having a certain sum kept out of their wages each month. They were to be fed and housed. After the deduction had taken place they were still earning twice as much as they had been earning at home.

They stayed with their contract just seven months.

"They did not like their lodgings. They did not like their food. They did not like their master, nor their work."

These were the surface reasons. The woman (she was a few years the senior of the two) gave their decision to the mistress without a blush of shame.

In Dumoulin's book special mention is made of the ability of the Anglo-Saxon people to rise. The comparison is all in favour of the Anglo-Saxon and unfavourable towards the conservative French peasantry.

One would not quarrel with the result of specialized studies, or haggle over the choice of a word. Besides, the book is right.

Locally it has application only in so far as the Anglo-Saxon importations rise more quickly than the rest. But they all rise, irrespectively of nationality.

Watch the country take hold of the mad Doukhobors. It is going to make good reading.

Bertha, a little, under-sized, pale-faced woman, with a bit of a Cockney twang, could not have given the reason why she made Charlie change into his good suit on weekdays, and why she herself wore her Sunday dress and best hat on all occasions, or why, im-

perceptibly, she had dropped her " ma'm " to the mistress.

The Germans have a good word. "Drang" is the word. To translate it, one needs a whole vocabulary, whole phrases. It means a pressing, internal warring, longing straining forward, putting forth effort, urging on earnestly.

It is a good word to use in this connection, because it idealises Bertha's hand stretching a little crudely towards the dollars.

Charlie, put down in the middle of the great woods, in the greater country, with his leather leggings, short pipe, shaven face, vacant smile, and sly thirst for small beer, caught the jingle of coin.

The sound made him sullen until Bertha showed him the way out.

This is a story, with modifications, many times repeated.

The transplanting into new soil brings human abilities and disabilities to quicker fruition.

If anyone had told these two people, each with excellent characters from their last places in their pockets, what was going to be their line of conduct at the end of six months, they would have called themselves by bad names. Yet, when the time came, they buried their scruples without a pang, and stretched eager hands towards other things.

They got to the limit of the man's capacity in a short time. The flourish lasted until he found his level. The new level was just a little above the old

one. And then the real struggle began, and in the sweat of it they came upon their slighted honor.

They paid the passage money back. Every cent of it.

"Man," the old master had said when Charlie had come to inform him of his intentions of bettering himself, "Man, I should jolly well like to . . . . ." He did not complete his sentence. What right had he to keep any man from doing the best he could for himself? He recognised more than a broken word in the move.

The "Drang" was a good deal stronger than Charlie, and came to all of them alike. That it came and had to be answered was not the thing, but the way in which the answer was given, and what the answer was going to be.

There is an old man out there but recently come with his daughter. They have bought twenty acres of land in the heart of the woods. Such woods!

He and the daughter have started to clear the land.

The two of them alone. With their own hands. She is a gentlewoman. He is a dreamer.

They are living on berries, and game, and fish, and a few groceries. With them it is a matter of faith. With outsiders a matter of years and cash.

The old man can never hope to see his nebulous farm take shape. His days cannot last out.

It is a tremendous thing to see a man caught at the throat by his own reaction. There was out there a man floating about on his enchanted isle in the Elysian

waters. He poised between the gold of the sky and the blue of the sea. With shimmering beach, shadowy woods, and laughing water, he lost track of time and the proportion of things.

He swore like a fiend when they came to wake him to attend to the milking, and to get him to put his name to the I.O.U.

He cuddled back into his dreams by using tinned milk and by burning his grocery bills.

They say that his island is going to be raffled.

If it is, it is a joke only in so far as the man will buy up his own shares.

It is too late. He will never shake free from his dream.

It is good for a man to go out there and cut twenty acres out of the forest. It re-adjusts him to the Universe. He will lead such a strenuous life that the London pavement will seem ingenuous by comparison. If he sees his first setting of good hen eggs through, and stomachs his beans and bacon, he may joke with his own echo. The land is his.

One would like to get at so much more than is apparent. One would like to give the word to the sentries watching at the gateways to look for other things besides pauperism, infectious diseases, skin and eye complaints, idiots and Anarchists.

But we are not wise enough, strong enough, to get only the best of the good of the older lands. Neither have we eyes to see in what garb the best is to come to the great woods.

Who can say which are the true proportions between Anglo-Saxon and French, German, Swede, Hungarian and Russian? Between Japanese, Chinese, and Hindoo?

What between Protestantism, Romanism, all the "isms"?

Between Jews and Buddhists and the new, old-thought theosophies?

Some say Mahommed, or Buddha, or Christ.

Put an "and" instead of the "or" and calculate the difference.

Some say man or woman.

Substitute "and" for "or" and see the immensity of it.

It has all got to come.

May be that the starting point will be here, on the Pacific. With the faces towards the rising sun, it is not at all a bad starting point. In the meantime, let us say honestly that the last shall be first, and keep faith with ourselves.

If the country is hard on its child-bearing women, it has to be hard to the kind.

It has to sort and shift to get at what it wants. So much will depend upon the choice later on. What headway can be made with this phase, if it cannot take upon itself the magnitude of holy office?

Does the Census deal with it? Ask of the woman who answers the knock of the Census-taker, and gives him the number of her children.

The Census-taker is a good man. A politically good

man. But it cannot be supposed that he should philosophise about roundness of numbers in the poor quarters, or the paucity of figures in the white bungalows. As he fills in his official report, the women with the patient lips and tired eyes, or the Asiatic cooks and Danish housemaids interest him only in so far as they lengthen or shorten his labors.

Should you, a new comer, talk about the country to the older settler (you very likely will. You all do). If your listener be a man, and turn away with a grim smile, remember that there is no connection between efforts put forth and results. Put aside your rod, or gun, or whatever else you happen to be playing with at the time, and watch him clear the land.

Better still, try your hand at it yourself. If your listener be a woman, it is more complicated.

Women are dissimilar, and have often only their sex in common.

This one may put out eager hands for all the suffragist papers you may have about you.

Do not for a moment let this mislead you; she does not really care for any of these things.

She loves the woman things. The hearth. The cradle.

Yes, if your listener be a woman, you being a person of substance and strong sympathies, go forth and do battle for her. Go, rescue for her the wisdom of the Talmud, and sift for her the best from modern science.

For there she stands between the splendid woods,

calling to her maternity, bidding her sublimate her mission and her bit of half knowledge.

If she talks to you of the deep, fine, woman things, accept it for a sign.

You want to know what all this has to do with the woods, the great unbroken tracts of the Pacific?

A tremendous lot. Take a map of North America. Put your finger on the right spot.

Realise where you are. Saturate yourself with the physical importance, the ethical importance of it all, and think.

The foregathering of new forces is there.

The Japs have come, Chinaman and Hindoo, and a pick of the white from all lands. At their back is a marvellous country, hungry for the human touch.

Do you see, why the white woman should bear sons and consecrate them to the land?

Te judice . . . .

II.

COR UNUM, VIA UNA.

After all, nothing had been harmed. There stood the barn with its meagre store of hay, and apart from a charred patch, where the sparks had fallen on the wooden roof, and had burned some of the shingles, the house remained intact.

Earlier in the afternoon, a small boy, playing among the grass in the orchard on the slope on the South side of the house, looking up from his play, had seen a thin wreath of smoke. He saw smoke and a tiny red flame creep up from the corner of one of the gables and lick its way towards the top of the roof.

It was most fascinating to watch it go up, up. The smoke going first, the little red flame following. Then both meeting for a moment, he saw them pause and rear, flame and smoke mingling their ugly orange and gray against the yellow of the afternoon sun, their union leaving in its wake the sinister black of the burnt roof.

After that, the smoke and the flame were always together, and the ominous sound of their progress caught the ear of the child.

That was fire.

That was the bad fire, the Mother had told him

about. The dreadful thing that came to punish people who disobeyed and played with it.

The dreadful, dreadful fire, that having once escaped from safe keeping would not be caught, but would go on devouring all that barred its way: people's homes, their food and clothes, their little children even, sleeping in their beds, laughing at strong men with their ladders and buckets, poor women with their prayers, and little children with their tears.

Tommy remembered how, years ago, when he was quite small, when it was winter, not summer like to-day with birds singing and with dear brown, furry bees droning over the pink clover in the orchard; no, but on a day in winter; on a day in winter at the end of a cold, sleety day, when the rain would keep on pretending it was snow come down from the gray heavens as merry snowflakes, and fall against the window, and dissolve into depressing raindrops long before reaching the bottom of the pane; on a most miserable day, with nothing to do, with dreary intervals to wait between meals, and when the gloaming coming early he remembered, night found him sitting amongst the ashes on the hearth.

He had poked the fire with sticks, and had fed it with matches and paper, so that the flames came and sat close beside him, warm and comforting. Their bright blaze played all around him, so that he felt like Christmas, like Summer.

Then the Mother came and told him.

She told him a lot of fire stories while he sat cuddling

in her lap. How, if once it got loose, the fire would go on getting fiercer and stronger all the time, eating up in a few short minutes houses and towns and big lovely woods, which it had taken God years and years to make, and even people and little children.

And how brave men, forgetting the fear that was in their hearts, might try to stem its course with water and axe. Maybe they could, and then they would count as nothing their labors, after the manner of strong men, and maybe, they could not, and that was the worst of all.

Tommy could see them standing by. Their faces shining under the grimy perspiration, their clothes torn from their limbs. Some had their hair singed, and there was one man who lay on the grass, very still. A woman like Mother was bathing his face with water. Something had fallen on his head, and he did not seem to mind about the fire any more.

But the fire went on burning, making a great crackling noise, and the men and women stood by and watched, the terrified children hiding their faces.

Yes, sometimes they might, and again they might not.

And then, the Mother had bidden him stretch out his hand, and taking up a small stick with a gleaming light at the end, had told him that she would touch his hand with it, so that he might see and feel, understand and remember.

She touched his hand ever so lightly.

It hurt, and he cried. The mother loved and kissed

him, and held his hand. She had said, it was so that he might not forget. He had the little mark that the blister had left now. There, in the middle of the back of his right hand.

He loked up at the roof of the house and he knew. The house was on fire.

"The fire!" he screamed. "The fire! Mother! Mother!"

But of the Mother, who heard the boy's cry, of her fighting the fire with the help of two children, later on. For now at the beginning, the words lack strength, are wanting in tenderness. It is hard to take some loved one, thrust her into the midst of strangers, and bid her live and move before them.

What if their eyes could discern no beauty in her body, none in her spirit, none at all in her life? If after all they saw but woman grown old, already marked by time and toil? What if they grew restive listening to the labored count of days long done with youth? What if they looked on in cold indifference upon her home, her children, the man she loved?

What if they called out to one another, made bold by discontent, bitter by their disillusion, and ruthless of their words, because of both; that she was common clay, most ordinary? Where was the plot they loved; where, their play of passions? Where their women problems, and where, the deft hands that could gather up the threads, so that the end should spell success, and make them feel the comfort of a finer readjustment?

Let us wait.

Then, while she waits their pleasure, the words grown strong and tender, the stranger eyes will hold such greeting, the stranger heart such understanding, as she may live before them unafraid.

. . . . . .

To the East of the clapboard ranch house, the ground rose, broken by great rocks and covered by fine timber, the beginning of many acres of British Columbia forest land, which stretched as far as the eye could see, and lost itself in the purple of the coming night

The house itself stood on a level bit of land, two or three acres cleared sufficiently to make room for the buildings, for a couple of meadows to the North, a young orchard to the South. To the West, the ground fell abruptly. The creek ran here, holding just sufficient water during the rainless summer months to keep the soil moist. It is here, in the rich, black loam, that the kitchen garden had been planted.

It was a pretty, small house, compact, made entirely of wood, stained a dull brown, which fell in well with the brown and green of the surrounding landscape.

Now, it being evening, its windows up, the doors wide open, the veranda brightened by some red geraniums, a gaily-striped hammock, and some restful chairs, its cheerful homeliness dispelled the too great severity of the masses of gray rock, the sombre green of the fir woods; and through its comforting presence

softened the feeling of sadnes which is wont to come over those woods at the approach of night.

A man and a woman were sitting amongst the rocks at the East of the house, looking down upon the homestead. At their feet, curled up on a heap of blankets and pillows, two children, a boy and a girl, lay asleep.

They were wont to sit there, these two, side by side, at the end of the day, their children playing about at their feet or climbing over the rocks to make merry in the woods while yet the light could penetrate and filter in between the tree trunks and dispel their too alarming shadows.

But rarely did they allow weather or season to interfere with what had become to both of them, one of their dearest pleasures.

Here, at the close of the day, they would sit. He with his pipe, she with a book or piece of needlework.

Sometimes they would speak in monosyllables. He about his work in town, the worries of his office; she about her house, the land, her mother cares.

Or they might talk at length. The place and hour invited discussion, and made for easy confidences. But no matter how hard the day had been, how disheartening the grind and toil, how this had failed, and that miscarried, here would they always find each other.

There was never a time, be the season Spring, or Autumn, Winter or Summer, when they had not felt the charm of their matchless surroundings, or when the hour had failed to leave them comforted and strengthened for greater effort.

Often the winter evening found them here, eager to catch the last of the sun, at that time of the year leaving the woods all too soon in darkness. Often with their feet in the snow, they had watched the blue smoke curling up from the chimney, and through the window caught the cheerful glimmer of the good fire of fir knots burning on the open hearth within.

It is here on the short Autumn afternoon that they stayed awhile amongst the browning bracken, watched the sudden flight of quail, and followed the fitful drifting of the snow arising from the new-made clearing. Often they stood here in the rain, with the wind blowing in the woods, so that they could hear the thump and crackle of the falling trunks, and the whining plaint of crossed and breaking branches.

And often, when the Spring was all but there, they watched the coming of the green, and marvelled at the glory of the new-made woods.

But now it was Summer, the end of Summer, and of a Summer's day. All around them each humble thing that lived or grew could hold no more. Full to breaking, replete, expectant, each gave their best, their all.

Unless quite still such notes as came and went thrilled with intense diapasons, including all the shades of joy or sorrow pent up within some little passing creature, and spent upon one call, one cry.

Soon the night would come, with its deep, dark blues, its lovely stars, its mysterious woodland scents, and noiseless tread and flight of living things.

Beautiful with peace of promise and fulfilment.

The man and woman, who sat there amongst the rocks, were very dirty. Their clothes were torn and in disorder, and they both looked weary.

Between mouthfuls of bread and cheese the man spoke to his companion.

It was very still around them. The birds had done their last fluttering, the yellow jacks had finally crept into their rotten tree trunks, their vicious buzzing and the sousing of the evening wind in the tree tops coming to an end together.

The man's voice was deep and gentle.

"That was a close call," he said.

The woman made no answer. She looked at the sleeping children at her feet, then at the house, and back at the children again.

"I felt there was something wrong with you," the man continued, "I had to come."

"I called you," the woman said, simply.

The man took another mouthful of bread, and ate hungrily. The woman continued: "The wind must have risen, and very likely it blew a spark from the burning tree by the railway track on to the roof of the house. There was no fire in the kitchen stove at the time. Tommy ran in at two o'clock screaming that the house was on fire. I made Kate ring the bell, hoping that the neighbours would hear; Tommy and I got the ladder. We spilt half the water in trying to drag it up on to the roof. Then I thought of wetting a blanket to prevent the spreading. The

crackling of the burning roof made a dreadful noise. It bewildered me so that I could hardly think. I wanted you. Oh! I wanted you so, John!"

The woman paused.

There was so much suppressed emotion in her description of the fire in the afternoon that the man looked up sharply, alarmed.

The woman sat leaning her head against an old tree trunk, her arms hugging her knees, her face turned towards the setting sun.

Even more than the expression of her face, the bent back, the way in which she clasped her knees, and looked straight before her without seeing, betrayed her fatigue and dejection.

The man, who was lying at her feet, raised himself sufficiently to be able to look into her eyes.

Thoroughly roused, he jumped to his feet.

"Mary," he said, opening his arms, "it has been too much for you."

But the woman made no move.

She did not hear him.

She was living again the hours of the afternoon, when Tommy's shrill voice had first called her away from her sewing, and brought her to the sudden realisation that the house was on fire, and that, if she did not succeed in putting it out, the next ten minutes would see her and hers homeless and penniless.

Let none try to probe the reason of her doings, for the short hour in which she did battle with the fire, or try to find some rational explanation for all she

did. At the time her brain was quick to conceive, her hands were swift to do, her feet sure and fleet. Yet for one who had watched her then there would have been but little logic in her actions. And seeing the manner of stuff the fire was feeding on, the drop of water in the well, the leaky buckets, the children, the pathetic woman, much would he have marvelled at seeing the fire go out, meek and ingloriously; unless, perchance, he could have traced some sort of link between a panting woman risking all her worldly goods to indulge in the melodramatic salvage of an old revolver and a bundle of baby clothes, the nervy way in which she both humoured and denied her woman nature, turning her weakness into strength, and a very inadequate supply of water, handled in a most deplorable manner.

Well, the fire had gone out.

Her husband had come running out of the woods just after she had thought of saturating the blanket with water. But the fire was practically over then. The detaching of a few smouldering shingles with an axe, and a final wetting of the surrounding wood saw the end of it.

The whole thing had barely occupied a couple of hours. All was finished and done with. A few dollars and half a day's work, would repair damages, and to-morrow life would go on in the same old way.

"No," thought the woman, "never again. Never."

She might just as well give in now. She was tired out, spent. It was more than disillusion, it was renunciation.

Possibly, she might live to laugh at these things flung at the bottom of the kitchen steps, quite possible. How was she to know what surprises she held in store for herself?

She had not realised. For so many years her thoughts had been for others. She had naturally been absorbed into their lives.

It needed a fire then, or some such stress to show her how little mattered the modifications of time and surroundings, a life of effort and endeavour, and that she still remained a crude and elemental creature.

And she had been so proud of her hard-worked hands!

Now she had failed him, failed herself.

"Mary" said the man again, trying in vain to read in her eyes.

"Let us sit here, John," she begged. "Put your head into my lap and sleep."

After he had stretched his six feet and odd, found the happy resting place, and caught her laughing at the disgraceful condition of his blue overalls, he was also inclined to mistrust his eyes, and persuade himself that all was well.

But he had been alarmed, and do what he liked, there were certain facts that would not be denied.

He had almost forgotten the fire. It is the woman he thought of now.

The woman he loved was getting old. It had suddenly been brought home to him when he saw her leaning against the tree trunk, and when looking into her

eyes, he could not find the light which he had always met there.

The lovelight had gone out.

Had it ever been there?

Could he have mistaken for her love the reflection of his own?

He laughed at the very thought of it. Why, true, he had loved her always, but she had lived love.

The years of their married life counted but as a day as far as his love for her was concerned. Man fashion, he could take it or leave it, it was there, always giving its fine, strong tone to his fine, strong nature. To him she was always the same, young, sweet, beautiful. If he had marked at all the imprint of time and care, it was only to find her more lovely for the patience on her lips, the softness in her eyes, the deepening of her mother heart. And now she was growing old.

She had worked at his side bravely, not at all too patiently, perhaps.

He had felt the fret of race and temperament, and loved her for it.

She had borne his children.

It was there, at her motherhood, he marvelled most.

When he thought upon this, how he had had to stay without and let her do the suffering, he looked with sorrow on his empty hands.

That he might give her rest, comfort, all the little nameless things that women care for!

All he could see before her now was more work, more care, and so, if love were dead, then they were poor indeed.

On all these things he pondered, and he knew that if her love would last but to the end he still might dare and win.

Mary, seeing him so silent, thought him asleep, slipped his head from her lap, and with the help of a near by branch, raised herself to her feet, moving her limbs slowly, as if in pain.

Her blue print dress and blouse were soiled by water and dust, she stopped a moment to rearrange her skirt, which gaped with several sad rents, and walked towards the house.

The last bit of sunlight caught her hair, and showed how beautiful it still was, how fine and glossy, without even a trace of gray; but the face was too white, and the lines too deep for the pink cosmetics of the evening sun.

She looked old.

The mouth was hard, the lips set in a straight, thin line.

She passed him where he lay, and did not speak.

The afterglow was still burning on the tree tops, but the house stood already in the shadow.

The woman walked towards the kitchen door, and almost stumbled into the heap of miscellaneous objects, gathered at her kitchen door, before she remembered. She bent down, took up her skirt, filled it with the things, went within, and restored them to their proper places.

She was calm enough now.

She felt ridiculous, when was women ever less sentimental?

Yet a moment later, she was kneeling in the middle of her room, her face buried in her hands, the little bundle on the floor, her body shaken by sobs.

John, who had watched her go downhill, saw her stoop, pick up something, and disappear into the house.

He ran after her, but so absorbed was she with her thoughts, that she did not hear him, and she had passed into her room before he reached her.

The door remained closed, and he heard her crying.

Did women cry like this?

Had this woman cried here, alone, before?

She had cried, as women will, but always on his breast, always near his heart. Were there then phases in her life into which he could not enter?

What prevented him from opening the door, and begging for a share in her sorrow?

He stayed at the bottom of the stairs, deeply moved to find himself so helpless.

What was there in her simple life that called for such a storm of weeping?

He felt yet so strong, so fit to give his best, and with his boundless faith in this new country, what was there that a man might meet and could not conquer?

Should she fail him now, they might drift on a while; but, having lost their anchor, they would drag amongst the morbid commonplaces, and the end would come for both of them, swamped by the hopelessness of joyless toil.

Well, it should never be.

Not while he lived.

He went slowly back to their beloved resting place. She would not know that he had heard her cry.

A little later, he saw her come out of the house and walk back towards the hill.

He noticed that she had changed her dress, that she wore something light, and had a white shawl around her shoulders. She had re-aranged her hair, and he saw that her face, though still white, was calm, and that the hard lines around her mouth had disappeared.

Mary came towards the hill where he sat, pausing to look back at the house, quite wrapt in darkness now, the top of the roof only, and a window here and there, delicately silvered by the moonlight.

She paused on the way.

Her silhouette caught the light. The lines of her white stuffs grew flimsy and transparent, and, for a moment, she seemed unreal, almost visionary.

It was beautiful.

The night was so peaceful. The great gaunt trees stood motionless, etched against the deep blue indigo of the sky. From the creek came the murmur of running water; from the dark woods the crackling of disturbed underwood. Then, once, twice, the call of the mosquito hawk.

Glorious woods, great and wonderful, and lands so fine, so vast, so limitless in possibilities, exhaustless in reserve forces, that seeing, one might well, for just a fleeting moment, hold the solution to all the carking problems.

The woman saw.

She stood motionless.

Her hands were crossed upon her breast, her breathing deep and rhythmical, her face turned to the sky.

She prayed.

"Mary," called the man from the hillside, "Mary."

"Have you been sleeping, John?" she called back. "Come in. You will get cold there. Help me bring in the children."

The man shook himself, and joined the woman. For a moment they stood side by side in the moonlight. He, taller in his blue overalls, she, frail, a little bent, and undecided, idealized by the light.

His eyes searched her face uneasily.

"You are dreadfully tired," he said. "You are worried."

"Well, yes, John," she admitted.

"Do not fret, dear," he said. "It will all come right."

She loved his deep voice. The comfort of it warmed her heart.

"Wait," he said, "let me get a wash, take in the children, put them to sleep, and we will make up beds on the veranda. The house won't hold me to-night. Look up."

"There is not a drop of water in the well," Mary called after him. "Unless you find some water in one of the buckets, you will have to wash in the creek."

John evidently found the necessary liquid in one of the tin cans standing around the well. He presently

returned to the hill, carried the sleeping children into the house, and re-appeared with pillows and blankets, a plate of biscuits, a glass of milk, and a pipe between his teeth.

While Mary sat on the balustrade watching him, he busied himself in making such sleepeing places for both of them as would afford the greatest amount of comfort with the best protection from dew.

He went about his work cheerfully.

Things are mending when a man can smoke.

The glorious night, and the beloved presence, his optimism could feed on lesser things.

"John," said Mary, "did you know that the insurance had run out? Yesterday?"

He stared at her, aghast, and speechless.

"Yes," she nodded.

He took a deep breath, knocked his pipe against the sole of his boot, and said "D——."

He recovered himself, and looked up with a tentative smile.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"Oh!" she said desperately, "how could I? How could I tell you, when I knew that you had no money?"

He was silent.

For a long time neither of them spoke.

She sat on the balustrade, while he lit up again, and pulled at his pipe, sending out the smoke in short, impatient puffs.

"What's to be done?" said John at last.

"I don't know."

He looked at her as she sat in the moonlight, her head turned towards the creek.

She was still pretty.

Fifteen years of ceaseless toil had not been able to destroy her beauty altogether. Her eyes were bright, her lips red. The slight droop in her shoulders was not due to age, but had been caused by her mother cares, and by those times when she was wont to round her arms, and press her babies closer to her breast.

But for her restless foot, which tapped nervously against the wood of the veranda, and the tremor in her voice, the man might have misunderstood the deeper meaning of both her attitude and her words.

"You should have reminded me," the man began.

"How could I?" she said. "I knew that you had no money. There is always something needed. It is so hard to ask for it."

"It's my business to find it," he said, shortly. "That is man's work."

Again they were silent.

"Suppose the house had burnt down?" the man went on. "What then?"

"What then, John Begin again."

John gave a short hard laugh.

"I'd chuck the whole business."

"No, you would not." Mary turned her face so that John could see every line, and her laugh was an echo of his own, hard and short.

"No, you would not. We would have begun again. You would not have been asked, you would have had

to. Oh! John," she continued, coming to where he sat on the blankets, "you could not have helped yourself. You love it all. Look about."

"Yes," broke in the man, speaking between his teeth." "I love it. But there are times when I hate it. Hate the life, because of you."

He had her by his side now, her head upon his breast.

"It's a man's country."

He had said it.

He had not wanted to admit this even to himself. But it was out, he had said it. What right had he to have brought her here, to have let her toil at his side for years, ignoring what had gone before?

Was it possible that through the simple fact of the transplanting of themselves to this new soil they had wiped out what stood behind, and could deny indefinitely, that, if modified by present ways of living, they still were part and parcel of their former selves?

It took more than the purchase of a transportation ticket to make a settler. Perhaps they had failed. They were not what the land demanded.

Again they fell into silence.

Mary was struggling with mental impressions too elusive for plain wording. She was trying to overcome the nervous shock of the afternoon. It persisted in pitching her voice higher than its accustomed key.

In the end she succeeded fairly well in giving her husband a plain account of the afternoon's business.

The sort of yea and nay account than men give to one another about everyday events of this sort, leaving

nothing to the imagination. Consciously, or unconsciously, the woman left out of her account the things which mattered most to her, and which made of the small conflagration an incident fraught to her with such deep meaning.

John was thankful to think that the house had been spared. That the barns stood unharmed.

None knew but he and his wife what they represented in labour, self-denial, patience, and faith. And after all the ceaseless toil had not been the worst of it, but the days which came when one or the other had been ill, and when the future hung, as by a thread, and they not able to see the road before them.

John had a sudden vision of a gaunt old fir tree, in height many feet above its neighbours, the bark charred from earlier forest fires, its sides made shiny by the dripping pitch, and half-way up the trunk a little gleaming light. One or two of the trees near the railway track had been on fire, had blazed a bit, and then gone out, but this old tree had carried the little torch for several days and nights.

He had not heeded it.

He turned his head involuntarily towards the railway track. He could just make out the skeleton of his old friend, but the light was out. Perhaps then, after all, the spark that did the mischief in the afternoon had come from some other source.

For all that, he cursed himself for an easy-going fool.

Yes, taking everything into consideration, John was thankful that the house was standing.

But the woman by his side, troubled him.

She was dear to him, and he felt the deep emotion that underlay her sober account. After all, a fire in British Columbia, in a wooden country, where all was wood : the houses, the shops, the streets; where whole towns were built of the same inflammable material, where fires made clean sweeps in a few minutes of years of hoarding and accumulated toil, a fire was nothing.

It was the terrible anxiety Mary had gone through when she found herself confronted by the burning house, alone with two children, but little water in the well, and the insurance not paid.

He took her hand in his.

"Mary," he said, "if I lost all and had you, I could live and be happy."

"I know, John; I know. If I could only find words to tell you, so that you might understand. I have always been frightened by fire. But when Tommy ran in to tell me that the roof was burning, I managed to do what was necessary. It suddenly flashed before my mind that all we have might be gone in a few minutes, and I prayed that you might come. You came. It was all over in a few moments. But I wonder now what is the use of it all? I am sick at heart. I have lost my bearings. I do not understand myslf. Women like me are no use in a country like this."

Her voice failed her, and she cried bitterly.

The man could find nothing to say to comfort her, for he felt that she was not crying for what might have

meant to them total material ruin, but that her tears came from some deeper source.

"I feel, as if I could not struggle any longer. Where is the use? I am tired out, and where is the end? I cannot see the way any longer, John. If it all means so little, if really after all nothing counts for much, why are we here, John? Why are we here, you and I?"

Still the man held his peace.

"We have put out the fire. The house is standing, the children are safe. You are here, John. To-morrow we will get the roof repaired. You will go to your work, I to mine. You will work from morning till night, I will do the same; but it will not be the same again."

"But," said the man, very gently, "you loved the life?"

"Loved it, John? Love it, yes. Love it always. That is part of my trouble, that I have loved it so well that nothing else does really matter much, for long. It has taken hold of me, the life is now more than I, than you, John, even the children. What matter the memories of my younger days and the other life. My strange cosmopolitan, tendencies, ancestral legacies, carefully-trained tastes? What matters it if they rise and call and will not be denied? The life is here, is stronger than they all: grinding, grinding, and it hurts, John."

"The life is the life men and women lead everywhere. It has got a different setting here. The

women carry the heavier end of the stick. It is the new country. It is clean work. It is God's work, and you and I are doing it."

"Yes, John," the woman shook her head, "it is not that, it is not the work alone that makes the strange new life, but how you, being you, take it, and how it takes you."

"Could we have done differently? Have we not done the best we could, day by day, always? What else matters?" he said, trying to look into her troubled eyes, and he continued:

"The best we do proves itself sometimes in the wrong. Perhaps often. The end is God's."

"Yes, John," she said. "There are the peaceful days, when we are part of this life, when the joyous effort stands for the best man or woman can know anywhere out of Heaven, and then again, John, there are days when there comes the terrible gnawing un-rest. It is as if the other life, the birth in other lands, had left something, some substance, which it suffices the merest touch of a chance thought, the brush of some quite unimportant external accident, to rouse into activity, and to give to a nameless nothing the almost tangible form of a presence that will not be laid. Whose voice will not be silenced, try you ever so hard."

John thought deep and long.

His pipe, still between his teeth, had gone out.

The moon was going down behind the firs. The lazy creek crept sleepily through the willows, still catching a bit of moonlight on its ripples. The light

all around was going out. Night was coming.

Long they sat side by side in silence.

A wave of warm air came from the hillsile, where the new clearing was being made, and where the fir branches and needles lay feet deep between the naked trunks, sawed into cordwood, ready for the market. The air was almost too heavy with the essence. The dear tree souls giving of their best after the end had come.

They drank in the odour eagerly. None loved these things better than those two.

"Mary," began the man at last, "if I find the money, will you take the children and go to the old country? You need the change and rest."

Mary shook her head.

"I could not leave you, John."

But he had noticed the light that had come into her eyes at his words, she did not know that, and men do not care to show when they are hurt.

"It would do you a lot of good," he went on, "you cannot get any rest here. It will be the same for years to come yet. After a year or so off you will feel fit for anything, and we will begin again."

"Oh John," she said, "what joy would there be for me if I left you here? No, dear, you and I always. Half the crust, not the whole loaf. The longing is here (she touched her breast), it is nothing I can explain. Nothing that I hold with the brain, or that I can think out. It has nothing to do with the things that I have learnt, gifts that I owe to an older civiliza-

tion, tastes inherited or acquired and half lost again. No; it is something deeper. Something which will not be caught and put into words. It is more attitude than condition. An essence rather than a substance. An earnest, not a seizable fact. I cannot say to you, John, here is the hurt; if you will do this or that you can heal it. My John, my dear John."

"You would come back fresh," he went on, "twelve months are not long, and I will find the money."

"Dear," she said, "money and two weeks' journey by land and water will not take me back to where we started from fifteen years ago, cannot build the bridge. No. The life has me. It wants me, my motherhood, claims our children. Wants you. Has taken us, chosen us, John, amongst many. Put us here, subservient to the time, when the great forces now gathering will unite and take on definite shape. Do you think it matters then, how much we struggle? Or that we shall be weighed by failure of success? Whom ever this country wants it will call, then hold."

It was so dark now that they could not see each other. He knew that she was crying by the tremor of her body. She made no sound, and it distressed him.

He found nothing to say but the dear old words which ever came to his lips when he saw the darling of his heart sad or in trouble.

"I love you, Mary."

"Nothing else matters," she said. "Be comforted, John. I love it all, even the pain of it."

The man, remembered the sudden light in her eyes, would none of her sacrifice.

"It is nothing to a man to be alone for a few months. The money does not count. It would mean so much to you. You can bring the best of it back to me, and it will be easier after the rest and change to take up the life again."

"With you, perhaps; not alone. It would feel to me as if I had left you just when you needed me most. I am happy with you here."

"Promise that you will not try to keep anything from me again. It is like a slap in the face to think of that insurance money. Is there anything we cannot face together?"

She loved the optimistic note in his voice, his ability to brace up and take the blow fair and square, and turn round and laugh, when that little strain of dilletanteism all but played him false..

He had left the burning tree standing by the railway track when he ought to have cut it down. He had forgotten the insurance money when he ought to have remembered.

"It's no use fretting. It is the stuff you and I are made of, we have got to stand the test."

"Yes," said the man, "but do not let us break our hearts while we are trying to fall on our feet. We have one another, who cares?"

It was an argument he was fond of using."

It was a very good argument for a man to use, especially in the heart of British Columbia, with fifteen

years of hard work at his back, a home not fully paid for on his hands, two young children sleeping behind the wooden partition at his back, not a cent of ready money to his name, and at his side a wife who, doubtless dazed by the smoke of the recent blaze, had unwillingly given him a glimpse into her tormented soul.

Yes, a fine argument.

If a woman tries to save from fire a revolver and a bundle of baby clothes a man is naturally limited as to the form his argument may take.

Naive words, coming from ingenious lips, but it was all the argument the woman needed.

The comfort was there, that John loved her: loved her to-day as he had loved her twenty years ago. What mattered the rest? All the rest?

They could go down together if necessary. They were such frail stuff, so incomplete; but their nerve was strong. Strong and honest.

No, in the end they must win out.

That evening, those two alone, deep in the heart of their cherished woods, they but an humble part of the sweet-scented summer night, found comfort in their love.

They took courage and slept.

III.

FESTINA LENTE.

The sober morning light was streaming into the kitchen window.

It was such a nice kitchen. The walls above the brown dado were painted a pale cream color. At the windows hung warm red curtains. The same material served for a cover to the table in the middle of the room. Opposite to the window there was a staircase leading to the bedrooms. A small pantry on the left of the window made a passage to the comfortable living room beyond.

There was a second table under the window, with a rack that held a few volumes: a cooking book, a book on bee culture, a child's History of England, a story by Anatole France, a Shakespeare in a very shabby binding, Fritz Reuter's Tales in German patois. There was a basket holding a generous supply of stockings and socks awaiting the weekly darning. It had dropped some of its contents over a stock of papers and magazines.

Bright milk tins, some old brass candlesticks, and a few blue-rimmed plates in a corner cupboard added a bit of color to the frugal lines and quiet tints of the woodwork.

A huge bunch of lavender Michaelmas daises, golden rod and bracken, stood in a brown pot in the sun by the open window.

But for these, the kitchen contained only those things necessary to do the kitchen work.

Everything was shining with cleanliness.

The bees and wasps came buzzing in, alighted on the flowers, busied themselves around the water tap, crawled about on the shelves, and knocking their silly heads against the panes, buzzed out again.

Mary Faire was sitting in her kitchen peeling potatoes.

The small boy, Tommy, his elbows on the table, supporting an exceedingly sunburnt little head, was reading aloud.

He was utterly bored. The unimpassioned tale about the well-regulated lives of sedate and rational people left him cold. He might just as well have read in Dutch or Greek for all the effect it had on his understanding. He read in a monotone. Regardless of stops, he spelt laboriously the big words, sighing deeply, and trying to get a furtive peep at his left hand.

One of his fingers was done up in a not all too clean rag. The surreptitious investigation proving most interesting, he forgot to finish his sentence, and to state "that the good boy got the cake."

The mother missed his voice. In an instant she looked up from her potato peeling, ordered him to leave his finger alone, and read "that" all over again.

The look of utter desolation that settled over the

little chap, from the top of his tousled head to the tips of his bare, brown feet, was so riduculous that the mother burst into a peal of laughter.

Before she had recovered herself the child had slipped off his chair, into his sandals, had put his arms around her neck, and looking up into her face with his eager, shining eyes, said:

"Let me go and play in the creek, please, Moddy."

The mother nodded.

The child gave a happy, violent hug, slapped his books into a cupboard, and ran towards the open kitchen door, half-way across the room he looked back at his mother.

She knew what he was going to ask. She nodded assent.

"Kate," he shouted at the top of his voice. "Come along. I am going down to the creek."

The transformation of a very melancholy little girl counting the stitches in what was some day going to be a sock for Dad, and who had almost decided, thanks to the depressing effect of Scotch heather mixture, not to marry the handsome, rich, young prince, but wear a dreadful looking bonnet and go about doing good instead, into a blue-eyed, red-headed hoyden, was instantaneous.

She tumbled down from her perch on the top of the stairs where she had been knitting, threw herself against her mother, passed out, and was gone.

For a moment she saw the red mob, the blue skirt, and Tommy's brown legs twinkle in the sun. Then a

clean pair of heels told her that there would be no lessons that morning.

She had done it again.

It was getting quite serious.

Here was Kate almost twelve, with the vaguest ideas about History and Geography, none at all about arithmetic. She had a smattering of French and music, just the few things that she had been able to teach her between her numerous occupations.

As to Tommy, his state of ignorance was appalling. He would be nine soon, and could barely read. It was almost impossible to teach him. Between his restless spirit and the constant interruptions of her housekeeping, her attempt at schooling had not been altogether a success. True, they could do anything wanting doing in or out of the house. Saddle the horse, or milk the cow, cook a meal or clean a room, chop wood, handle a boat.

They were strong, resourceful, and self-reliant. Then why trouble?

Their high, young voices reached her now. They were happy and careless. But, perhaps, it was time that they should come into contact with other things, other children. New influences. Could she always stand between them and the outside world?

Was it even desirable that she should? They would have to go to school. School to them would mean mixed public school. And in connection with this question, two aspects presented themselves to her mind.

One was embodied in the memories she had of a certain woman and of a boy she knew years ago, and who were both the product of a mixed public school education. The other, by a series of important articles recently published in an American paper.

The first stood for all that was good and fine. They, that is, this woman and this boy, had in themselves and in their subsequent lives shown that a realisation of the ideals of those who may be responsible for a mixed school education is both possible and practical.

The other aspect could not be dealt with in as few words or in so simple a way.

It took long and deep thinking, stirred up endless questions, had already spilt much good printers' ink.

It seemed that people much better versed in these things than her John and herself were pausing. Were beginning to ask what manner of thing they were handling, and if their blue books and statistics could decide for them as fathers and mothers, whether their little boy or their little girl was fit and strong, could front what evidently was more than many a child could face.

Mary thought of these things as she watched her two children scamper across the orchard down to the creek, and realised how quickly they were growing up.

Soon she must give them up. She could not hold them back much longer. Their baby days were passed.

They would have to stand the test; meet this new life, be part of it.

But she still had them. They still found all they

needed, all they wanted in her, through her. They would not have to come to a decision that day. Things had a way of adjusting themselves if left alone. Besides luncheon was the all-important question just then.

They would be back presently, dishevelled and dirty, and hungry enough to eat stones.

Mary Faire was at her best in her home.

She was naturally a home maker. Housekeeping satisfied in her some deep craving.

She liked all of it, loved all the woman things. Even the humblest occupations, from the washing of the famliy clothes to the cleaning of rooms, scrubbing of floors, found her willing and capable.

Not years of drudgery, nor the constant monotony of repetition had been able to lessen her pleasure in keeping house for John, or dulling the joy of making home for a new baby.

It was the sincerity in all she did that had made it possible for her to withstand the strain and beautify what might otherwise have become hard and unlovely mediocrity.

So far there had not been a day when she had not been able to hold back undefined longings.

To give the name of home sickness to her indistinct yearnings would have been to assign too simple a cause to a complex mental condition. As a rule, when worn out by work or care, some little incident had been able to readjust her to her surroundings. Some quite unimportant event, such as a bunch of lilies brought in from the woods, some bit of work that had satisfied

John, some beautiful thing she had read, the delicate scent of white linen fresh from the line, a merry escapade of her sunburnt children.

But now it was different. Since the day of the fire nothing was quite the same.

She longed to get away from it all. Just to get away and be alone.

Be alone and think

Not to have to cook and wash. Not to have to scrub and sew.

Get away. Leave the obsession of the woods and touch again the other life.

She had caught herself several times recently in a storm of weeping like the one in which she lost herself that evening some weeks ago, and her distress at what she herself called her selfishness was so intense that it permeated all she did and thought.

Never had Mary been a better wife, a better mother, or more passionately in love with the woods than she was at that time.

And yet it was as if all that she stood for—the resume of the old world life—made a final appeal before she could give herself irrevocably to the new country.

When they had come to British Columbia years ago, they had first made their home in one of her cities, but the town life not appealing to either of them, they had made for the woods.

It was more than ten years since they first slept under a small white tent on the very spot where the house stood now. Later after the barn had been built

they had lived in it through two winters, started to cook in the kitchen of their present home during the following Spring, and moved into the house finally at the end of the summer, in time for the coming of Tommy.

She loved every bush and tree that grew around them. She had pleaded the cause of each condemned giant in turn, trying, if possible, to revoke the death sentence, and, if that was impossible, she had managed by much cunning argument to save at least such as would fall in with the general scheme for ranch and garden without their being too much in the way.

The fruit trees in the young orchard had been planted by John with her help. The making of the vegetable garden had taken their summer evenings. She had watched the first ploughing. John's unaccustomed hands turned crooked furrows in the rich, dark soil. John had dug the well in spare moments, she putting the first good drink of cold water to his thirsty lips.

She loved her wooden clapboard house.

They had watched every board being put into place, every nail being driven in, supervised the construction of the chimneys. John and she together had designed the fireplace in the one living room; the good, generous window with the low, deep seat. They had spent hours in planning the kitchen together. The re-arrangement of shelves, better distribution of cupboards, testing of boiler, water pipes, and tank, but occupied their anxious thoughts for weeks. Their color schemes for the

living room, gun room, staircase, and the bedrooms, stowed away snugly under the roof, had meant weeks more of artful juggling with space and material, and with the dull greens and browns they loved.

Though the house could have been built comfortably in three months, it took them almost ten times as long, for their funds were low, and they had to suspend operations at several intervals for the lack of money.

But the day came at last when they lived over and in the house altogether and all at the same time, and when they could give the barn to the horse and cow, transforming their one-time sleeping place into the saddle room.

That was in September nine years ago.

Then, too, the Michaelmas daises were in bloom, and like to-day she had had a big bunch of them and golden rod and bracken about. In the evening they had brought the boy's cradle down, and had put it into the ingle nook, and had lit a fire on the hearth, just to see how it would look in the winter.

They had had to sit by the open window, for outside the weather was still playing at midsummer. As ever, the meeting between day and night behind the firs, which stood closer to the house then than they did now, was glorious, and as she had watched she was so absorbed and happy that she had forgotten the warning of pain she had had earlier in the evening.

Now that she was a much older woman, she was able to be thankful for that one night of perfect suffering.

The memory thereof carried with it a sort of ecstacy. It was well to have known the whole gamut of human pain. It was so very near to perfect joy.

She felt nothing but pity for the women, who, through a turn of fate, or a misunderstanding with themselves, had been denied the key that alone could upon the door to the complete unfolding of their womanhood.

Always, when the time came for lavender daises and golden rod to stand in the brown pot near the kitchen window, she lived through that long night again.

She had been quite alone. The boy was born in the early morning. A woman alone in the woods.

She had lived through it. Only the joy remained.

She thought of the child as part of the woods, their mysterious gift to her. His strong, young body, and brown, spare limbs, his strange virility, must have had some other foods to feed on than her maternity alone.

Mary had a habit of reading a few pages in one of her favorite authors when she had finished her preparations in the kitchen for the midday meal, and before going upstairs to attend to the bedrooms; but that day, what with the memories revived by the bunch of autumn flowers and the misgivings she had about the interrupted morning's lessons, she went about her upstairs work earlier in the day, absorbed by her thoughts, her reading forgotten.

She did not hear or see an old man coming up the road on a dusty and very shabby pony.

He had dismounted and gone into the kitchen before she realized that there was somebody downstairs.

"Anybody at home?"

"Oh! it is you, doctor," she said.

"Here is a letter for you," said the old man.

Mary found the doctor seated at the kitchen table, his hat on the floor.

Seeing him from the back, coming down the stairs into the kitchen, he looked like an old man. His bent back and hair that was almost white leading one to believe that he must be almost seventy years old.

His face belied this first impression at once. He had still very fine dark eyes, and no sign of age in their expression.

He took Mary's hand and shook it like a pump handle.

They were great friends these two. Partly because years ago Tommy had introduced them to one another, and then because they understood each other well.

He shook Mary's hand hard and long, a little absent-mindedly, then let it go with an embarrassed smile.

He gave her a sudden, searching glance.

"You are not looking well," he said.

"I feel all right," she answered.

"Been upset by the fire?" the other went on.

She turned her head away quickly.

"Had a fright?" the doctor said.

"Yes," said Mary.

The man grunted.

"It is that pony of mine. I'll have to get rid of him."

Mary laughed.

"You said that nine years ago. Do you remember?"

"Yes," drat the beast. I'm always too late to be of any use. You will have to tell those kiddies of yours not to ring the bell unless in emergencies. I thought it was a game. Been playing at church lately?"

"No," said Mary. "Not since you promised to be the congregation, and did not turn up till after the service. They have a great scheme under way now for damming the creek and making a swimming pool. I must not go down till the formal opening. I believe you will be asked to deliver the official address. They have not been properly dry for a week. My air cushion has disappearred, and, that reminds me, I was to have asked you if you had any spare corks?"

The doctor laughed, and slapped the table.

"I have not a spare thing left; but I'll find them some corks. How is Tommy's finger?"

"All right, if he would leave it alone. But you do not imagine that he will leave that dressing in place? He is dying to see the piece grow on."

The doctor scratched his head.

"Why does not John whip that boy?"

"Why, he does. You know he does, doctor."

The doctor nodded.

"Whipping him will not do him much good. He will experiment while he is being whipped," said the mother.

"Some," said the doctor, "some. I am thinking of you."

Mary went to the pump for fresh water, and put the jug before him on the table.

"I know you won't have milk or whiskey, and the roads are hot and dusty. Where is your pipe?"

It went without saying that the doctor would share their midday meal. Mary gave him the latest magazines and papers, and went on with her housework.

The doctor smoked and watched the woman come and go at her work.

He caught snatches of a merry little French song she was humming to herself.

She looked well in her plain blue print dress, with its narrow bands of white at the wrists and throat. He liked the clean white apron, suggestive of all sorts of comforting housewifery.

Her face was too pale, and he did not like the dark shadows under her eyes. How could she hope to foil him with her careless jingle?

He knew more about John and Mary than these two ingenuous souls knew about themselves.

"Why arn't you reading?" Mary said, feeling the scrutiny of his eyes.

"I came to hear about the fire."

He knew by the sudden closing of her lips that he had hit the nail upon the head.

"What is John doing?" the doctor went on.

"Getting on all right."

"Managed the fire insurance money?"

"Yes."

"You might have given the old man a chance. That was not kind of you, Mrs. Faire. What use is money to me?"

Mary turned her troubled face to him.

"You will not let me be too late again?" the old doctor asked.

Mary said rather coldly: "It would be hard to look back and think that we had had to borrow money?"

"From me?" said the man simply.

"What do you think it means to me to be able to sit here with you? Lend John a hand sometimes and have those kids to tease me? Does money count when a man has made a mess of his life?"

The idea of borrowing money in this connection had not occurred to her.

"D—— the money," said the man.

"That is the second time in half an hour," said Mary.

He apologized.

"Where is my letter?"

"I had forgotten about it. They gave it to me at the Post Office when I called for my mail."

Mary knew that he called for mail every day, had done so for years, always waiting for a letter that never came.

Mary had often thought that it would never be written now.

He fumbled about in his numberless pockets, putting his own mail in front of him on the kitchen table, with a whimsical smile.

"Here's my lot."

He pulled out an advertisement of some patent pills, a book on carpet sweepers, a free sample of soap, an empty envelope begging to be filled so as to benefit by his generosity the heathen of some foreign land, and some sort of a pictorial land agent's scheme proposing to boom their immediate neighbourhood.

"There," he said, "that is for me."

He put the lot into the kitchen fire.

"Here is yours," he said, giving Mary a pale lavender, discreetly-scented envelope, sealed with wax of a deeper hue of mauve.

"I will go and feed Cowboy," the doctor said.

Mary turned the letter in her hand curiously, sniffed the scent, and noticed that it had been stamped in town.

It was from Cousin Agatha Waring.

That is to say, John's Cousin Agatha, a far-removed kinswoman. They, that is Agatha and John, looking down a long vista of ancestors, had one that they could claim in common. Therefore their relationship.

It is doubtful if John ever thought of it at all, Agatha chose to remember whenever she found it convenient.

It was convenient now.

As there is no reason why the letter should not appear, especially as Mary was reading it to herself, it may as well come in here.

"Dear Cousin Mary."

Mary's sense of humour did not fail to notice the temporary elasticity of their relationship. The fact of herself being included, spoke volumes for the importance of what was to follow.

"Dear Cousin Mary,

"Jack has gone North, and, as far as I can "gather from his frost-bitten correspondence, "is likely to stay away all the winter. Can "you put up with a poor, lonely, grass widow "while the weather is still fine? Am I asking "too much of you?

"I shall make myself as small as possible. "Anything will do—a bit of bread, a glass of "milk.

"How are the darling babies?

"Remember me to John.

"Etc., etc.

"Yours always,

"Nenna Waring."

So she still called herself Nenna. A pet name given to her by a Spanish nurse years ago. She detested her own name, and dared anyone to call her by it.

John called her Agatha, Counsin Agatha, when he called her at all.

The letter read like a royal command, and Mary laughed.

The suspicion of scent and the Waring crest in one corner of the notepaper, helped her to reconstruct a rather faded picture that she still carried of Agatha Waring.

They met her after they first came out. Agatha claimed the relationship in a vague, disinterested sort of way.

They were poor. She encouraged their tendency to make for the woods. Mary had met her once in the street in the town, not long after the Warings had lost that little pale-faced child of theirs. Agatha had told Mary that she would write and make an appointment, so that if she came to town again he would not miss her.

Agatha had not kept her appointment.

Mary called once after that. She found that Agatha was in London. She was always in London when she was not in Paris, putting in time between whiles in British Columbia.

She found herself, therefore, with a vague, not all too pleasant an impression of a woman about her own age. She only remembered her face sufficiently to know that it was pretty, and that a very charming manner enabled her to dispose of even unpleasant things in such a manner as to leave the recipient marvelling at the woman's cleverness rather than fretting over his own hurt.

If Agatha Waring liked to come, and John and the boy cared to sleep in the tent outside, perhaps things could be arranged.

A very pungent smell of burning vegetables reminded her that she had forgotten the potatoes, and that the children would be upon her before she would be ready for them.

She heard their delighted shouts of greeting as on their way back from the creek they discovered Cowboy and Dr. Holms.

Kate, coming into the kitchen, saw the letter on the table.

"From Cousin Agatha Waring," the mother explained.

Now, in the mind of Kate, Cousin Agatha Waring was a delightful and wonderful person. She remembered the meeting in town some years ago. How she had come upon them dressed most daintily in pink organdies. Laces, flowers, and ribbons combining perfectly with a very faint odour of something like violets, and the rose tints of her sunshade.

How cool she seemed, how fragrant; how like some pretty flower blown over into the dusty summer afternoon streets from one of the lovely gardens that mother and she had passed earlier on their way into town.

" Cousin Agatha may possibly come to spend a few weeks with us," the mother said.

The child gave a delighted cry of pleasure.

" Won't that be lovely, mother? " she said.

" Go and lay the cloth for luncheon," said the mother. " But see, first, if you have anything dry left to put on."

It was true. The girl was wet from head to foot. And in view of her appearance, her explanation that Tommy and she had both tumbled into the creek was quite unnecessary.

As John had his midday meal in town, their luncheon was a simple affair. The table was laid in a shady corner of the veranda. After luncheon Kate helped her mother to wash the dishes and tidy the kitchen.

This done, she and Tommy went off to the barn to discuss the possible coming of Cousin Agatha.

Mary and the doctor went back to the veranda and talked.

"Yes," said the doctor, touching upon a subject they had discussed earlier in the morning. "Yes, your children are growing up. That girl of yours will soon be as tall as yourself. You will have to send them to school."

It was rather a strange coincidence that that letter of Agatha's had arrived to-day, to add another touch to the various things that were just then occupying her thoughts.

She would have to give up her children.

They had been so much to her. She had been everything to them. Had been their nurse and playmate. Had washed, cooked, sewed for them; had taught them to read and write.

But the time had come.

Why should she not take things calmly, and as a matter of course?

She would have to give her children sooner or later. Life was claiming them.

This was their country. They had been born here.

They would never feel her heart hunger. Never share her longings. If she was wise and brave now, she could give them to the country, and, what was more, perhaps, make the children take glad, full possession of their glorious birthright.

But she shrank from the ordeal.

They would have to come down to everyday facts of life, now, at once. Be mixed indiscriminately with undercurrents so dangerously strong, be absorbed by all those perilous strains of modern thinking, intensely and all-absorbingly present in these newly forming centres of a Western civilization.

The mere thought of it all filled her with terror.

It was like the touch of a cool, kind hand to her hot, confused head to hear the doctor's quiet, lucid talk.

"Yes," he was saying, "but there is one thing that you must not forget in all this. You and I with what we still hold of the life, and with that damnable self analysis ever present as a legacy from long years of education and life at high pressure, may not be fit to meet this new life and fall in with new conditions.

"The children are different. How do you know that they do not carry within themselves all that is necessary to face these new conditions? Even if you could keep them here in the woods with you and John indefinitely, would not the time come just the same when their life will have ceased to be a part of yours?"

Mary felt the truth of his words.

"Besides," he continued, "lowering his voice, "so many of us have gone the pace too quickly. Been over-civilized, if such a thing is possible at all. Or rather, have made intellect at the expense of character. Nerves instead of muscles. Good many of us cannot stand the plain facts of life any longer. A man must, to count with honor, be able to bear the burdens of his failure; and where are the mother women?"

His kindly eyes rested on the woman by his side, and he went on: "If there are men and women left with same ideas about life, why here is the country for them. Is it not time we corrected by a deliberate effort the too strenuous pressure brought to bear upon us by the demands of an ever-growing luxuriousness, and returned to a simpler mode of thinking and living? What else have we to keep us sound and whole if not this possibility of renewing ourselves by hard work and poverty? Do not be afraid for your children. They will solve all these questions for themselves."

It was true.

Her good old friend was right. Besides, if she had to let her children go, she would like to believe in the truth of his words, and look only at the bright side of things.

Could she do anything better for these two young beings than make them fit to lead simple lives, and in so doing spare them much of what men and women were suffering under less hopeful conditions?

Thinking of school and the town life it would involve for the children, reminded her of Cousin Agatha's letter.

"That was a letter from Agatha Waring you brought this morning," she said.

"Oh!" he drawled, thoughtfully. "So she has come out again?"

"Yes," said Mary, "has been out here off and on for years. You know she only stayed in England for a year or so after she went home that time. Came back to her husband."

The doctor made no comment, and Mary passed lightly over his silence.

"She wants to come here and spend a couple of weeks with us, or, rather, in the country." Mary corrected herself with a smile. "Jack has gone North again."

"Poor devil," said the doctor. "May I take the children back with me, and will you let them stay a day or two? I can keep an eye on Tommy's finger, and Kate has promised to do some mending for me."

They laughed.

They were amused at themselves, and at the conscientious way in which they looked about for an excuse to let the kiddies go to the old mill, when they both knew that the fact of giving the children pleasure was reason enough for either of them.

As to Tommy's finger, it was lucky if the doctor's treatment fell in with Tommy's, for his views on surgery did not always concur with the doctor's.

About Kate's mending, the least said on the subject the better. Sewing to her was an abomination, and one of the reasons why all girls ought to be boys. She would move anything under Heaven and earth rather than sew on a button. Therefore, it had become a huge joke between them that the dilapidated condition of the doctor's wardrobe should be made to furnish an excuse for these periodical visits.

The children were wild with delight at being told that they might go with the doctor. They shouted orders at one another in shrill falsetto. They gave

both their mother and the doctor hurried, but sincere, hugs between whiles, leaving messages for Dad as if they were going to be away for endless happy weeks, and things had to be hustled.

They made up two bundles.

Tommy would not have dreamt of going anywhere without a pound of nails. He simply had to find the jack-knife the man had given him once. The man had come to see Dad, and had had something to do with the Navy—an Admiral or boatswain, or something like that. He could not remember, but he knew that it had something to do with the sea. Snootles had to be caught, the old mill was his birthplace and the scene of his peaceful kittenhood. It was only right and proper, that he should be taken to his erstwhile brother Snapdragon, if only to be convinced that he was an inch longer, and that he had many a cause to be thankful for present mercies, and that there were flesh-pots out of Egypt. Snootles had to be caught, and calmed down sufficiently to suffer himself to be wrapt up in a pair of pink pajamas.

And where was Tommy's cap?

Just like Kate and her high-flown notions. What business had she to remind him that he had not got it on his head? He never wore a cap. He had not seen it anywhere for weeks. Neither his mother nor Uncle Doctor would have noticed its absence.

Why could not a boy have decent brothers instead of a sister?

The composition of Kate's bundle was more complicated.

According to her mood, so was the content of the little basket that held her travelling wardrobe more or less subtly put together.

To-day the prospect of a visit from Cousin Agatha tipped the scale. The balance hung between her playing at housekeeping or at Lady Kathleen.

The one would mean taking a homely ckecked apron and a thimble, and the other a pale blue silk riband, and a pair of high-heeled satin slippers.

It should be the Lady Kathleen, and, therefore, the ghost of a pale sash and a pair of faded shoes, hobnobbed with a clean print frock and a change of underclothing thrust upon her by a far-seeing, if trying mother.

As for Uncle Jack's wardrobe it troubled her not at all.

Full well did she know that he was good for a complete refutal of opinion at her slighest hint. True, they might set out together with the firm purpose of mending clothes, but their original intentions notwithstanding, he would play up to her Lady Kathleen in fine style, and the whole thing would finish up with their going salmon trolling. The darns would not even be mentioned between them.

She hugged herslf with delight, and graciously informed Tommy not to bother about his cap, for now she remembered that she herself had put it into the kitchen stove.

Tommy acquainted her with the fact that things were rotten, and that her hair was red.

Whereupon Kate, anticipating the Lady Kathleen by a couple of hours, told him not to be rude.

It was arranged as usual that Tommy should ride Cowboy, and that Kate should drive Uncle Doctor in the wagon. The bundles were disposed of under the seat, not without the pertinent question from Kate that if she (Kate) could leave Audrey at home, that he (Tommy) surely need not take Snootles.

Tommy, in his dull way, saw no connection whatever between a nice black tomcat and a horrid old doll, and said so.

"Well, children," said the doctor, "whenever you are ready I am. Unless you would rather fight it out. In that case, I will come back for you some other day."

The children dropped their difference instantly, showered their mother with poorly-aimed kisses, scrambled happily one on to the horse, the other into the seat by the doctor, and left their mother without a pang.

Mary saw them drive up the sunny road, pass through the gate, and disappear into the woods. For awhile she heard the regular thud of horses' feet, once she caught Kate's merry laugh, a parting whoop from Tommy, then all was still.

That was the way the doctor managed to give her a rest.

Mary's eyes filled with sudden tears. She thought of the kind old man whose hand had ever been ready to help, whose friendship had come to mean so much to John and the children.

He had given them good, practical advice, put the shoulder to the wheel of their cart more than once. John and she knew nothing about ranching when they first took up their present land, knew little about it now. He had taught them all they knew.

And with all that, the doctor himself had made nothing of his own life.

Here he was at the age of sixty a hale and strong man with a good profession, which, if he had cared to practice it, would have given him more than he could ever need, pottering about on his four acre farm at the Old Mill.

He had lived there alone for a good many years, a lonely man, attending himself to the house and the outside work, nobody knowing much about him.

Tommy's coming had brought them together, and they had been friends since that memorable night when he had come up the creaky wooden stairs, and when they had thanked God for his coming.

He had found her unconscious, the little child by her side. It was early morning, and the light was just beginning to look in at the top of the window.

To Mary his coming meant life.

To the man it meant more than life.

He had lost faith in women, faith in God.

Years ago, not so very many, to count by the course of time, ages ago by his suffering, the woman he had married was found in adultery. In a space of a few short weeks were crowded all the horrors of a Divorce

Court. Clever lawyers, an accomodating Press, a most lenient public, none of these could make sin look anything but itself.

When it was all over, he had a great longing to be alone. Alone somewhere; anywhere. Be alone and forget, and be forgotten

A friend came to the rescue.

He remembered an old mill and its four acres of land; the sea, a weedy garden, and how once, when they had passed that way together, the house then standing empty, the beauty and seclusion of the spot had appealed to both. It had once been a mill, or a drying kiln, had been re-arranged for a country inn, and had been abandoned. It stood now unoccupied, and the friend found on investigation that he could have the whole thing for a mere song. The doctor had just enough money left to make the acquisition possible, and still leave him with a small sum.

The friend managed it all. His friendly hand sweeping aside a lot of tiresome detail. When all was ready the same true hand led him to this haven of rest. The doctor did hard labor. He worked incessantly, tiring his body so that physical exhaustion might do what sheer will power was unable to accomplish.

If he had known!

If he had only known in time, so that he might have put himself between her and all that ghastly nightmare.

There came a time, when walking alone in his garden by the sea, he would carry with him a little Old

Testament he had, and read again and again the story of Joseph and Mary.

He saw Joseph put the weight of his strong arm between the woman he had taken for wife and the rest of the world.

No matter how frail the creature given into his keeping, he was there, and the yapping hounds had had to fall away.

There was no other way for man. No other way.

Tortured by the blasphemy of his comparisons, he fell back upon himself and the miserable fact that the woman he had cherished had loved her sin.

So did the shame burn and scorch that he put by his reading and groped about alone, without light, hope, or faith

The long years came and went.

Then one night, just before dawn, he heard the hurried thumping of horse's feet upon the road.

Someone shouted his name, and he heard knocking. Some pebbles were thrown against the window. Someone shouted close by.

John Faire stated his business. The two men were off and away in less time than it takes to tell.

Half way home John changed horses with the doctor. He took Cowboy, while the other man galloped off on the little brown mare.

"Be good to her," John shouted after him. "And for the love of God ride, man. Ride. Whip her up!"

The doctor answered with a grim smile.

And that was the man who found himself half an hour later in the little room under the roof where Mary Faire lay unconscious upon her bed, the dim light falling upon her pale, sweet face.

The doctor threw himself into his work body and soul. Within twenty minutes he had the life blood flowing back to her heart, the faintest color upon her cheeks, and the eyes which had opened again were smiling with understanding. She was asleep when John came in.

He found the doctor standing at the foot of the bed, his arms crossed, his head bent.

In that hour God began His healing. For many weeks the doctor remained with them, a tender and devoted nurse to both mother and child. When they had suggested to him the calling in from the town of some woman to help, he had begged so hard to be allowed to stay that they had not had the heart to refuse.

Besides in those few days, he had become part of their lives. One day they found that they had mutual acquaintances, and so stumbled, before they were aware of it themselves, upon the trail of his wretched history. They did their best to hide their discovery, but the doctor knew now that they must know.

That was a fine, whole-hearted way in which John shook his hand a little after, silently, without either of the two men betraying by word or look the depth of their feelings.

Mary had one child more. That was all.

When the man turned his face again towards the Old Mill he carried with him the memory of Mary and the child, and the warm grip of John's hand.

Slowly the great old empty house took on a more inhabitable look. The weedy old garden became a garden indeed, a veritable poem by the sea, and as he lifted his eyes at evening time towards the green islands floating between the gold of the sky and the green blue of the water, he wondered how it had been possible for him to become again part of the life around him.

Dear old man, Mary knew that he was happy. He had her children, and for a couple of days he would forget himself, play at their games, and in his lovely garden by the sea fill their two eager child souls with good things.

IV.

IN COMMENDAM.

It was milking time when Tommy and Cowboy, closely followed by the doctor and Kate in the wagon, appeared at the top of the avenue of maples. They came up at a leisurely trot. A cloud of dust and a troup of excited chickens following on their heels.

The old house, with its windows and doors open, its white paint, green shutters; its creeper-decked pillars and verandas, looked the very embodiment of friendly hospitality.

The doctor had lost or mislaid all the keys that belonged to the old place. There was not then a lock on door or cupboard that could be made use of.

It did not occur to him to lock the house when he went away. He had a habit of shutting his front door.

It meant, in case anybody should pass that way during his absence, and please go around by the back door and help yourself.

Apart from being a check to the too intrepid chickens which delighted to take an occasional short cut through the passage to the back kitchen door, this innocent rite of pulling to the front door could not blind the most casual of tramps.

The doctor would have been the last one to notice the disappearance of anything from his place.

Once on his return, he had found a man in his passage. He was full of fire water. His head lay on the door mat, his feet half-way up the stairs.

The doctor left him there.

It was young Dunraven Stubb. Good thing his mother could not see him like that.

They breakfasted together next morning. A pale lad he was, young Dunraven Stubb, but quite sober.

The doctor watched him picking at his food.

He had heard of him. He had a ranch somewhere, and was living on one of the smaller islands in the bay at the time. Said to be a remittance man. How much he had, or if anything, or how he put in his time, nobody knew.

The boy toyed with his breakfast and the doctor wondered who was responsible for sending a youth without a profession, very likely incapable of earning any sort of a living, out to a country where people must work hard to earn their bread, and where lack of money means the beginning at the bottom of the ladder and working up in competition with others, not hindered by scruples, and caring nothing at all about precedence.

It was characteristic of the doctor that the incident of the passage was not mentioned.

He pressed Dunraven to stay. The two men talked and smoked together. When the boy returned to his island it was with the promise that he would come again soon. Come in for a smoke and a glass.

The doctor had seen nothing of the boy since then, and he had wondered if it was too late. In his heart

he hoped that the country would prevail, grip him, before the insidious poison of drink and loneliness, enforced or of his own choosing, put in their deadly work.

He was young. It was hard to realize that a boy with such a line of sires at his back, with a mother who must in herself stand for what there is best at this moment in civilisation, could fail to rise to the call.

The doctor refused to believe it.

He waited.

The boy was fighting it out very likely.

It was best to leave him to himself. Nobody could help him. The doctor knew that the day on which he would see him come up to the Old Mill the boy's eye would be clear, his hand steady. There would be purpose in his step.

He would wait and trust.

Sometimes on returning from his rambles he found that Indian Susan had been at the Old Mill. He found the rooms cleared, the floor scrubbed, windows cleaned. His wardrobe hung drying on the line, the goodly array of socks and handkerchiefs giving him a pleasurable feeling of surprise. The good man would wonder mildly where Indian Susan had found such numbers of things belonging to him.

In the kitchen, looking very differently from the place he had left in the morning, and which, without these occasional visits had a way of holding finally such vastly different articles as his tobacco pouch in a tin of maple syrup, the weekly edition of the *Times*, and the remnant of a special hot feed for young

chickens, and in such a manner as would preclude the possibility of finding anything, order had been restored.

The proper things stood in their proper places.

On the kitchen table, covered with an empty flour sack, he might find rows of pies, and a tinful of freshly-made biscuits.

The doctor did not remember when or how Indian Susan had first come to the mill. She turned up one day and took his kitchen in hand. The rest of the house followed. He had not thought of remonstrating. Why should he?

There was an inverted flower pot at the back door. Under this the doctor put some money, if Indian Susan came while he was away from home she got her day's pay in this way.

The doctor and the children were greeted by the low mooing of the Jersey cow. She was awaiting them, rubbing her sides against the fence.

Snapdragon's friendly mewing was changed into a hostile demonstration as soon as he understood the full meaning of the pink parcel. The recognition was instantaneous and mutual. The offensiveness of their language was matched by the dignity of their retreat.

Snootles went to the hayloft, while Snapdragon took himself to the attic.

The doctor and Tommy looked after the animals, watered the horses, fed the chickens, and milked the cow.

Kate had gone into the house.

The front door was unlocked, and hung loosely on its hinges as usual. She pushed it open, and went into the cool passage, which led into a delightful, square old hall. This hall had been part of the old building. Some very fine, heavy, rough-hewn beams supported the ceiling. The ceiling was dark vandyke brown, almost black in places. Got that color from smoke very likely, partly from age. The walls, all of substantial, rather rough woodwork, had been whitewashed by some vandal. The charm of the old house lay in the fact that the interior was innocent of plaster, and that the delightful confusion in its architecture was due to the absence of any proper planning.

There was a huge kiln in the heart of it. Strange rooms and passages had been built around as fancy dictated or necessity demanded. Ivy had found its way into the old shaft. From rafters and crumbling brickwork its green garlands hung in riotous confusion. One came upon the gloomy depths, with their promise of unexplored corners, and all sorts of odd and unexpected turnings of passages and stairs.

Even in the middle of the day, with the light streaming in overhead, there were always at the bottom inky fastnesses.

The front of the building was of a more recent date than the old kiln and the part built around it.

It consisted of a low drawing-room with four good-sized windows set with old-fashioned square panes on the left of the front door. To the right was a similar room used as a dining-room. There was a bar beyond,

which could be entered by a passage at the back of the dining-room. There were several other rooms, one of them was a small square one with an open grate. A low, dark, rambling old kitchen, with more beams and another black ceiling, ran at the back, taking in half the width of the building.

Above there were a good many small bedrooms, all exactly alike, with one door and one window each.

Along the front of the house ran a veranda, supported by white wooden pillars. A magnificent white jasmine had climbed to the upper railing, trailing over the balustrade, and making of the old decaying woodwork a thing of beauty.

When the old place had come into the doctor's hands he had found it furnished.

It contained the most wonderful collection of odds and ends ever brought under one roof at the same time. It was difficult to say who was responsible for the choice. Those who had originally furnished the place had long gone. Some odd bits here and there might have dated back to the old mill days, but it was doubtful. The greater part of the furniture was left over from the days when the old place had been used as a country inn.

The grim unloveliness of the faded red and orange plush of the country inn parlor was relieved by the shape of the room, and the four really good windows. The stiff red rep curtains were good, and also a few faded colored prints. These, through age, had taken

on delightfully soft tones, and redeemed in their narrow gold frames the banality of their subject.

There was the pretty girl in white watching her sweetheart cut their names upon an oak. There was the peasant girl, also suitably accompanied, preferring the banter of her escort to the proper filling of her pails.

In the latter case the waste of good water had given the artist ample opportunity to bring in the sleek, well-fed farmyard inhabitants.

He had posed them in such a manner as to bring out their best and most amiable characteristics, a pigeon having responded to his treatment to the extent of having descended prettily upon the back of a pink pig.

In the former, the girl's hair seemed to have been chosen to express the artist's temperament, and register his final veto against the brunette. She had two magnificent yellow tresses, a happy blending in the color of ripe corn and sunlight.

They were charming pictures, and protested—hung there a little too high by their dark green woollen cords --against the cold criticism of the casual visitor, awaiting the sweet eyes of youth to give them the smile of recognition.

In the middle of the room stood a round mahogany table with a vase full of fading Canterbury bells. The flowers had been left untouched since the last visit from the children.

There was little else in the room besides the table and the assortment of uncomfortable, plush-covered chairs. One shuddered at the thought what this room

must have looked like at the height of the halcyon days of the inn, with the addition of crotcheted chair backs and attempts of artistic drapery over the mantel.

The good doctor had made a clean sweep of the trimmings, fire would have consumed the lot if Indian Susan had not fished them out of the bonfire in the nick of time, and carried them off to her island.

There were a bare oblong table and half-a-dozen straight-backed chairs in the dining-room. A good old cupboard stood in one corner. The window had no curtains. The light filtered in through the jasmine. As the room was absolutely bare, with the exception of these few things, and as it was a long room with a low ceiling, and the woodwork, though spoilt by grey paint, fairly good, there was nothing too aggressively pronounced, and it made a restful place for meals.

There was one very nice feature about the old house. Above every door there was nailed a tin plate. It said in gold letters on a black background parlor, or dining-room, bar, or so on. Or in case of the bedroom gave a number. It was a legacy from the time when the place had been an inn. It was a constant source of pleasure to the children, and helped them splendidly at their games. One could not for example go to bed in the evening at number four and imagine oneself on waking in the morning at number three. An investigation of the sign above the door would soon set all doubts at rest.

They never omitted their little nod of pleasurable recognition towards the sign as they crossed the parlor

or dining-room sill. When they had been smaller they had stood, a hand on the door knob, spelling out the words laboriously, as if on this successful accomplishment depended their entry into the room.

Then, though the staircase started straight up from the front door in rather a mean way, blocking out the square hall, with its fine beams and ceiling and good half light, it finished off at an upper landing, which, with just a little goodwill of the imagination, might be likened to a bit of a minstrels' gallery. The passage upstairs ran across the whole width of the house, with bedrooms on each side. The rooms that were not numbered lay towards the back of the building, and opened into more passages, stairs, built-in cupboards, and blind alleys.

All the bedrooms were exactly alike. The woodwork was painted a pale blue, the ceiling white. They each contained a bed, a dressing-table, a washing stand, and a chair. Only a few boasted curtains or a strip of carpet, but they all had pictures. Wonderful pictures.

It was by the pictures the children knew the rooms, not by the numbers.

So number four was the "man's" room. A tall young man in a top hat, white pants, and a blue frock coat, sat an elongated red horse, with arched neck and pawing forefoot, sat it rather indifferently. Again the landscape in the background contained everything, from an ancestral hall to a waterfall. Humble but pleasant villagers on cottage doorsteps disputed the

left middle distance with a yellow canary, about to alight on a standard rose. Underneath, in best printing, every word beginning with a capital letter, the title was given as "The Pride Of The Family."

It was a strange idea to put those words there. They had so evidently nothing to do with the subject in hand. Tommy—this was Tommy's room as a rule, unless he slept at number six—had sat hours on his bed, his knees drawn up under his chin, absorbed in unravelling the hidden meaning of both man and words. The man was not doing anything. Still, he must have given his relatives cause for gratification, for somebody had presented him with a pink horse. Besides, who would think of doing best printing and putting capital letters to all the words unless quite sure of all the facts?

Number six had the advantage of a window that would not shut, because the ivy had grown in at the top. It was an easy matter, and not devoid of pleasurable excitement, to drop down by one of its long streamers upon the unsuspecting chickens in the chicken-run below.

The picture that hung in number six said: "Putting His Nose To The Grindstone." The artist had been of the Holbein school. A reluctant youth, with a pointed nose, was being pushed by a firm educator against a rotating grindstone. Bits of the unfortunate olfactory organ splintered off with a fine display of pyrotechnics. For five years Tommy had wondered how it was that the nose had not been ground down to the bone before, and how both the youth and his

guardian could wear such placid countenances under what could not fail to be a severe, if interesting, ordeal.

Kate, when smaller, had shunned number six after dark. Though the crimson stream erred on the side of magenta, and Tommy assured her that it did not hurt, she grieved for the pie-faced youth, and daubed her own small nose furtively with a corner of her pinafore.

The room that Kate had chosen for her own was near the top of the stairs. It went by the name of the best bedroom. Very likely because it was a little larger than the other rooms, and had, instead of the ordinary window, a French one, opening on to the upper veranda. It had also a pair of flowered curtains and a bright quilt.

The mural decorations were represented by Lady Hamilton in gauze as "Innocence," and a cross. The cross was made vertically by pink roses and blue hyacinths, and horizontally by yellow buttercups and purple heliotrope. There had been a space reserved for an inscription in the centre, where there were no flowers. The writing had faded, and it was impossible to make out the letters. In one corner had been a lock of hair, but the glue had given way and it had slipped to the bottom and laid disconsolately between the paper and glass.

To Kate there was nothing incongrous in the beautiful lady and the melancholy card sharing the same wall.

She was wise in her simplicity.

Kate had mounted the stairs two at a time, a bundle in her arms. In the bottom drawer of the dressing-table lay folded a white muslin dress, with a high waist and train, it was sparingly trimmed with old Valenciennes at the neck and round the short sleeves. It was dress that had belonged to a French grandmother, and which she had coaxed from her mother in a weak moment. The sash and slippers which she had brought in her bundle belonged to a later period, but they would serve her purpose.

The windows were open everywhere, the humming birds were piping and taking a last sip among the jasmine. From the beach came the lap, lap of the waves; from the garden nodded familiar clumps of flowers.

They were here. Here at the Old Mill with Uncle Jack. There were three long days before them, and it was not yet time to go to bed.

Kate came down singing at the top of her voice.

She found the doctor and Tommy in the kitchen. They were making the fire. Kate swung herself on to the kitchen table, and her remark showed the doctor that he had been correct in his surmise.

"Are you two men going to make pancakes?" she asked.

This seemingly innocent question implied quite a number of things.

To begin with, it conveyed a delicate compliment to Tommy. Tommy had been known to be touchy on the subject of his age. It was, therefore, a stroke of diplomacy to propitiate him by laying responsibility upon

his shoulders. The master stroke lay in her detached manner, which, while proclaiming her intention of keeping aloof from all household matters, yet led them to understand that she could still take an interest in supper.

They rose splendidly to her bait.

"As usual," Tommy growled, "I suppose you won't do a thing."

"How many are you good for, Lady Kathleen?" said the doctor.

"Six," Kate thought.

One had supper at the Old Mill.

It was the best meal of the day, and they had it in the dining-room. Had it when they felt like it. Quite late sometimes. By candle light, and with the Moon looking in from the veranda through the jasmine. They generally had it after they had had a final ramble over the place. After having put things to bed, given the animals a last pat. If they thought of it, they locked the henhouse, pumped water.

They often ran to the end of the wharf, and looked up the bay. Sometimes when the night was coming they could see the people on the nearest island on the other side from the mill, light their lamp. They could see somebody carrying a light about the house, saw it disappear, shine in the attic window, and go out suddenly. The people had gone to bed.

Sometimes they heard the throbbing of an engine. Some steamer was passing between the islands. They could hear it, but the gathering darkness prevented

them from seeing. Joe Armstrong might hail them from a distance, he was trolling for salmon. Occasionally they saw Indian Susan. She was hugging the shore, and they watched her, she and her black canoe, pass into the night noiselessly like a spook.

After that the dining-room felt comforting, with the red circle that the candle drew. The same night that they had watched settledown upon land and sea has preceded them into the house, and had filled the passages and corners, but they sat close together around the table, with the warm light between them. They forgot that it was dark and night outside.

Tommy was directed to beat the eggs for the pancakes, an occupation he was rather partial to, and the doctor brought in the evening milk for straining.

Kathleen, the lady, dreading a conflict with Kate, the housekeeper, made for the open. She walked through the garden, picked red poppies, and stuck them into her hair, then she directed her steps towards the landing. Here she sat down. Her long legs dangling over the side of the pier. She was singing into the evening. Ever since she could remember, they had come on visits to Dr. Holms. When they had been smaller they had come for a couple of hours. Then as they grew older they came for half-days at a time. As soon as they could dress themselves they had spent whole days and nights at the mill.

They could do exactly as they pleased. Dig in the garden if they felt like it, romp in the barn, play at store-keeping in the little house on the other side of

the road, and where there had been a real Post Office and store once. They gambolled over the house at all hours of the day and night. They played the most extraordinary games in what had been the old bar room.

Milk pans held sway in place of fire water, and awaited placidly the rising of cream. The most thrilling pictures hung on the wall of this strange dairy. Strings of horses, Derby winners, hooded like mediæval knights, their slender legs bandaged. They were ridden by dapper jockeys, and underneath it gave the long list of their names. There was a picture there of what seemed to be a picnic of crowned heads. A jumble of Emperors and Kings in Coronation robes, and with a sprinkling of rusty looking Presidents, were met in a pretty field all on a summer's day. They were evidently much in need of something looking very cool and sparkling in a straight tumbler. They bowed politely to a maiden in white draperies, holding out eager and expectant hands, their lips all but forming the ungrammatical "me first."

Every time when the children came on one of their impromptu visits to the Mill, they had great difficulties in making a choice in their games. As a rule Kate's imagination decided for both of them. Her singing as she sat on the wharf did not interfere with her planning for the evening. At the proper moment, and while at supper, she would in whispers, if feasible, but otherwise by pantomime, convey to Uncle Jack the information that it was time for "children" to go to bed.

An unsuspecting Tommy would have to provide in himself the material for the plurality, for she did not intend to be included.

Uncle Jack would accept her apology for a wink, and he, feigning to be shocked at first at her plotting, would nevertheless lend an experienced and willing hand, and then, if all went well, and if Tommy went to sleep, his normal time for going off being five minutes, she and Uncle Jack would have the house to themselves.

Tommy, flushed and bearing traces of his recent occupation, called her in to supper.

They ate pancakes with butter and maple syrup, and drank cold milk out of blue mugs. The doctor drank black tea, very black tea. Snootles turned up in time to run between Tommy's legs, and if it hadn't been for Tommy's presence of mind, which prompted the forward movement of his arm, he would have landed the second relay of pancakes on the floor, instead of into Kate's lap.

No harm was done.

They ate by the light of a single candle, and looked altogether charming in the circle of indistinct light; the corners of the room being left in darkness.

Kate had still her red poppies in her hair.

Tommy's head drooped long before they had disposed of the last pancake. The doctor's suggestion about bedtime for children met, therefore, only with an official remonstrance, and he had not to draw for its support upon Kate's pantomimic resources. After

they had cleared the table and had put the things back into the kitchen, Kate helped the boy to go to bed.

Tommy looked very small in his pink pajamas, and Kate came and cuddled him. She made him say his prayers, and tucked him in. She folded his clothes for him, and put them neatly on the chair beside his bed. Tommy had a way of looking angelic when his head lay upon the pillow, and when he was asleep. Kate bent over him and whispered into his ear that he was a dear little brother.

She closed the door of his room after her, and tripped along the passage into her own room. Here she changed quickly into the white muslin frock with the high waist and train, twisted the blue riband into her hair, the pale sash around her waist, and slipped into the shoes. They were too big for her feet and clumped on the floor, so that she took them off again, and carried them in her hand. She had to hold up her dress in front, and glide along the passage carefully, so as not to make a noise. As she came out of the gloom of the passage she stepped into the light which shone full upon her from the staircase window.

Years later, the doctor was to meet her again, almost at the same spot. She was to wear the same muslin frock with the blue sash, and seeing the beauty of the girl, he was to remember the child as he saw her that evening; as he saw her with her unformed body loosely garbed, and her white frock trailing behind, her dear, child eyes looking into his with such eager joy.

The doctor saw her at the top of the stairs, and stood still, startled.

It was a premonition.

He knew that the child would grow into a beautiful woman. His visionary eyes could see her as she would be some day, sensed painfuly the marriage of her Anglo-Saxon body to her Latin temperament, and he was afraid.

It was a relief to hear the child call out to him, and see her move out of the light.

"I'm coming, Uncle Doctor. Wait for me."

He held out his hand.

She came down, stepping carefully, guarding her train.

He picked her up, carried her through the dark hall into his room.

V.

QUÆRE.

It was the square room with an open grate, which opened on the left from the hall, a bright wood fire was crackling on the hearth, a shaded lamp stood on the piano. An open grand piano occupied one corner of the room. Some fishing tackle, a bookcase, and a gun rack, with a couple of comfortable chairs and a stool, completed the furniture. It is in this room that they were wont to spend their evenings.

The walls were bare, the windows curtainless. The furniture in this room, as well as in the hall, was good. It was old. The doctor had brought it out with him, and it fitted in well with this part of the Old Mill.

The intimate coziness of the room was comforting after night had settled down upon the rambling old place, and when the darkness in the kiln had become so black that one could almost feel it. The wind would come and shake the long streamers of ivy, and the tap, tap, tapping against the beams and sides of the old shaft would mingle disturbingly with the squeaking of rats and hooting of owls. The wash from the beach as the waves tossed the pebbles to and fro reached them in drony monotones.

There was great comfort in the fire. The little girl felt its cheery presence more than she needed the warmth, for the nights, though cool, were not yet cold. She spread out her hands towards the cheerful blaze.

"Uncle Jack," she said, "have you not got any little children?"

The doctor had, when she shared his evening fireside, taken her on imaginary journeys, when it pleased her to accompany him, and re-visit together the countries he had seen in his younger days. The child was an eager listener. Her quick perceptions taking in all he could convey, in his somewhat sober accounts, of the beauty of foreign lands, or the quaintness of strange people and customs. Her warm sympathies filled in color and detail, so that as she sat on the low stool, looking into the fire, she had tramped half the world with him, her hand in his.

What could have put this strange question upon her lips, and this next one: "Have you not got any wife, Uncle Doctor?"

The man's mouth felt dry.

For one moment the whole of the terrible past rushed upon him, gripped him by the throat, so that he fumbled at his collar, gasping for breath.

He had not forgotten. No. But it was but a passing weakness; he recovered before the child had had time to notice anything strange in his demeanour.

The child repeated her second question.

It was characteristic of the intercourse between man and child that he did not try to avoid the answer.

"Yes," he said simply. "I have a wife."

"She is dead?" said the child, and very gently she put her hands upon his knees, and looked up into his face.

"No," said the man.

"She will soon come back,. Jack," the child said She noticed his sadness, and her little mother heart yearned to give him comfort.

"Yes," said the man again.

"Tell me about her," the child begged.

That was the beginning.

From that evening on they talked of different things. Of other things than had been wont to furnish the subject of their evening talks. They talked of the fine, big things of life. As time went on, the stupendous meaning of birth, marriage, death, dawned upon the child. Instead of walking away as they had been doing before to the far off misty countries, with their unreal men and women, they now walked about amongst the realities of life. He guiding her feet, so that she should step only in the fair, straight paths, and thrilled her, long before she could really understand, with the glorious magnitude of her mission.

It satisfied him after years of loneliness, was to him like an act of expurgation to feel her trusting confidence in all he said, and it helped to make her fine and brave. It was good to see her take control over her passionate temperament, and see her curb the excess of her imagination. Her deeply planted need for truth made her simple and direct, and wonderfully responsive.

There was not after that evening ever a time when Kate would not have laid bare before her old friend anything that came into her life.

That evening he took the child upon his knee, and spoke of a lovely lady.

The child listened eagerly. What was he going to tell her?

The lady was mother.

She recognised her at once, for he said: "she lived happily with her husband and children."

"Mother," said the child, with a happy smile.

For the first time in her life she was able to detach the mother idea from herself. She saw the mother as if she were taking up for the first time the picture of some well-known face of which she had not before seen a pictorial representation.

No one had spoken to her of her mother in this way before. The new way of telling made mother seem a woman also, not merely mother. Her discovery gave her a strange feeling of awe.

And then she was beautiful. She had not thought of this before. She could see now, how she looked in her straight up and down dress, with little Tommy hanging over her shoulder.

"And now," said Doctor Jack, lifting the child from his knees and putting her in front of him, "now let us go and have some music."

He had taught her to sing. Together they sang all sorts of English ballads. He accompanied the French ritournelles she had learnt from her mother. Her enun-

ciation was almost faultless. The dramatic quality of her voice was so good that it promised to amend for deficiencies in case the voice, after being formed, should lack in power.

His terrible heart hunger fed on these rare moments.

The child stood, her back towards the fire, her chin up, her arms hanging loosely by her side, singing. Her expression brightened or saddened with the story of the song. She was such a child, and yet the man felt as if that evening she filled the room with something older, something more womanly than the awkward child form and unformed treble of her voice.

The pathos of his illusion saddened him.

"Little Kate," he said, "shall we have a piece of cake and go to bed?"

The piece of cake proved acceptable, and Kate knowing where to find it brought it and a plate and knife, and they sat side by side on the floor before the fire and ate, and planned the glories of the day to come.

Neither of them breathed a word about sewing. The merry light in Kate's eyes, and a sudden lifting of her finger to her lips indicated her desire for strict circumspection, and that even the mentioning of Uncle Jack's old, much-worn knickerbocker suit would be better avoided.

The doctor blew out the lamp.

It gave one a strange feeling to leave the room in darkness, the piano standing open, showing all its white keys. Light came from the hearth, and a bit from the top of the window. It felt strange to walk

through the dark house, patches of light only wherever there was a window.

The child took comfort from the warm, strong grip of the doctor's hand. Always they went like that through the sleeping house, very carefully trying to avoid the steps that creaked so as not to wake Tommy.

Having once reached the upper landing it got very dark. One had to pass the door to the kiln, perhaps just to catch one of the queer noises, and the tap, tap, tapping from the ivy fingers along the inside of the wall. Always, when she was just going to ask to be carried they would reach the door of her room, and, on opening it, they would find it full of light, and if the moon were shining it would be almost like daytime.

They would kiss good night, and Uncle Jack would look back: "You are all right, child?" And she would answer, with her eyes on the bright window: "Quite all right. Thank you, Uncle Jack."

Or perhaps he would stay just a minute to undo the buttons of her dress.

There was nothing to undo when she wore the white muslin dress like on that night. All the buttons fastened down the front. So she had to let him go almost at once, and she could hear him go down the passage to his room.

All this was really a bit of play acting between them, and it was done to save Lady Kathleen undue humiliation. For the doctor had barely had time to get into his bed when he heard the hurried rush of bare feet

along the passage, and saw a little white figure run in through his open door.

"Jack," it said just above a whisper, "I am afraid."

Kate crept to his side and nestled her head in the hollow of his arm.

Then they laughed.

They always laughed together at this stage of the proceedings. Served her right, the silly Lady Kathleen. They knew that she was only making believe. It was not possible that she was really afraid. The Lady Kathleen would have to be told that late hours and plum cake were bad things for young people, and that she must mend her ways.

And with the laugh still on her lips the child would fall asleep.

"God bless you, Jack," she would say. That evening she added: "God bless the lady, Jack."

She was asleep.

For awhile the man dared not move lest he should wake her again, but when the regular breathing told him that he had nothing to fear, he lay down on the couch under the window.

Long before the children were awake on the next morning, the doctor was working in his garden.

It was the end of summer, and everything looked dry. It had not rained for a long time, and the doctor was carrying water from the well to water his flowers.

"Mornin', Doctor," someone called from the beach.

"Is that you, Armstrong?"

It was Armstrong. It was Joe Armstrong from the

island. Joe Armstrong and his wife lived on one of the islands in the bay. It took half an hour to row across to the Old Mill.

They lived there alone, and made a fair living by mixed farming.

When Joe Armstrong saw what the doctor was doing, he spat out. His contempt for the other man's ranching was boundless.

A hedge ran along the side of the garden which overhung the beach by several feet. Armstrong climbed over, and, ignoring the doctor's occupation, told him that he would take the sour milk.

What he said to his wife an hour later, when he got home was this: "What do you think the old man at the mill is doing now? Watering poppies. It's downright foolishness. What does he want that old garden truck for anyhow?"

To which his wife answered laconically: "He given you the sour milk?"

It seemed he had, or what was left of it, for Joe Armstrong brought it up into the kitchen presently from the boat; also an old bucket full of fat, a rusty horse shoe, two weather-beaten potato sacks, and an empty kerosene oil tin. He commented on Faire's red headed girl, who had run into him, and who had made him spill half of it. He alluded to John, and to his way of bringing up his children, in no uncertain terms. He did not hold with Faire, his knickerbockers, and his ranching; neither with the wife who had notions, and played the piano at nine in the morning.

He delivered Kate's message.

He put the things which he had picked up on his morning round away in their proper places in an open wood shed, which had to be crossed before getting into the kitchen.

The wife watched him at his occupation.

Her laconical question had been accompanied by a sour, dispirited smile.

There was no trifling with Sadie Armstrong when she was in this mood, and Armstrong took himself off and fed the doctor's sour milk to his pigs.

What he said to the doctor after they had exchanged greeting was something like this: "I can take all your sour milk this morning."

The doctor nodded.

With his pipe he pointed towards the house, which stood on the other side of the road, the garden being separated from it by an avenue of maples, and went on watering his flowers.

What has got to be said about Joe Armstrong may be said here; for not till the end has he much to do with this story.

There were three things which he detested to such a degree that to Sadie Armstrong he would decry them in rabid terms. He hated the knickerbockers, had the greatest contempt for the British newcomer, and abhorred waste of any kind.

The comparatively harmless cut and material of this special garment set his teeth on edge. If by any chance of circumstances some but recently arrived

Englishman crossed his path with some innocent question about the land, he would, masking his contempt by a rather pleasant smile and open manner, stuff him with as much as he would take. Waste he could not tolerate. Economy with him had become a fine art. He would have fattened where anyone else would have died of starvation.

But ask Sadie.

If she chose, Sadie Armstrong might speak.

Sadie knew. And once she had spoken.

Joe Armstrong had had to listen to all she had had to say. He lay abed, sick with a sorefoot. Sadie, having got up early with the daylight, for it was Monday morning, and she finished her washing before breakfast, came upon him and talked.

A woman like Sadie Armstrong would have found it quite impossilbe to explain the reason why she should suddenly after twenty-five years of wedded life, and after aiding and abetting Joe in all he did and said, denounce him in round terms for a mean and cruel husband.

Joe Armstrong rose up in bed amongst the patchwork quilts made out of his old pants, sat up and looked at Sadie with round eyes and drooping jaws.

What was it all about?

What had he to do with little Sarah's shortening clothes?

He did not remember anything about the patent leather slippers she was to have had. The child had been dead and buried more than twenty years.

What was that about Charlie's slate, and the licking? Charlie had a potato farm back East, a wife and children of his own, and was doing well for himself.

Why could not she make up a Christmas box for the children, a doll for small Sadie. They had called the child after her. Something pretty for Bertha? They were working their way up, and it would go hard with them for a few years.

Boxes cost good money, and he, Joe Armstrong did not hold with such foolishness.

Was it any use to harp back?

Bertha did not get through the winter after the last baby came, and besides her man had married again.

The woman must be crazy.

Quite crazy.

Music? New dress? Money in the bank?

Neither of them could play a note. Had he not always done the shopping?

Money in her hand? What did she know about money?

His protests died abortively in his beard, drowned by the avalanche of her accusations.

Bruised and dazed, he got back into his bedclothes, vaguely conscious that he had given her some sort of a promise.

Sadie Armstrong wanted a musical instrument. She wanted a new dress, wanted to choose it herself. She wanted some money to do with as she pleased.

No, he had not promised anything about the money. He was sure of that.

Some weeks later he rode across to the little neighbouring town to dispose of the eggs and butter.

He brought back a second-hand phonograph and ten yards of single width reddish-brown cashmere.

He walked into the kitchen about teatime, the wife was baking, utilizing the heat to do her ironing at the same time.

He pushed the two parcels under her left elbow.

"Eggs down to forty cents a dozen," he said, and went out to do the milking.

Sadie did not answer.

She looked up from her ironing with one of her dispirited smiles, then finished the piece she was doing.

Her breath came and went hard, that is all.

She untied the strings that tied the parcels carefully. She wound the string around a ball of twine made up of fragments, folded the paper neatly, and put it on a shelf.

There was no demonstration of pleasure or disappointment as the contents fell on to the kitchen table.

She replaced the phonograph and the bedraggled records in its cardboard box. It looked a paltry thing with its gaudy, scratched lacquer of purple and red, amongst the honest white of her folded linen. She took up a fold of the material, rubbed it deliberately between her fingers, and held it up to the light. She picked up the box and the stuff and carried them into the bedroom, where she put them into her trunk.

It was all done silently and deliberately.

Sadie Armstrong's wrath had burnt itself out.

Her sour, dispirited smile played about her lips as she poured the tea, but she was not going to grumble. Not she.

No, her mother had been right. She had got a good man.

She was waiting now. Who would get the money in the end?

She or Joe?

. . . . . .

Kate, the skirt of her print dress thrown over her head, had come hopping on one leg around the corner by the kitchen, and had knocked into Joe Armstrong and his two buckets of sour milk.

"Look out," he shouted.

But it was too late, and Kate, disentangling herself, found to her dismay that half the milk was running into the sand, and that a good deal was dripping off Joe Armstrong's overalls.

Kate excused herself prettily. She did not like Joe Armstrong; but she liked going to see Sadie and scramble about on his island.

She did not, therefore, underline her dislike for him, but rather dwelt upon her project of calling upon his wife some time during their stay at the mill. She further explained that the collision was due to the fact of her attempt at calling the doctor to breakfast, she to have accomplished the feat blindfolded and hopping on one leg.

Armstrong was not in the best of humours.

He recognised some of the doctor's garden stuff in Kate's hair. An aggressive bunch of blue cornflowers was stuck behind her left ear. He knew well that the child would run the old man's pantry while she was there. The smell of burning sugar informing him at that very moment that the day had been started with candy making.

While he thought of it, he would avail himself of the doctor's offer and take the bucket of old fat. It would do for Sadie's soapmaking, and with these children around nothing was safe.

Kate went her way hopping. Across the road and down into the garden she went, and told the doctor that breakfast was ready.

Arm in arm they went back to the house.

They watched Joe Armstrong get into his boat and pull away.

While at breakfast they planned their day. It was decided that they would go in the afternoon and fish for rock cod; make for the island later in the afternoon, and see if Sadie Armstrong would give them tea. In the meantime they agreed to do the most necessary things about the house and kitchen. Then everybody following his or her own devices, they would make ready for a start at an early hour.

He, Uncle Doctor, would drop in upon either of them and join in whatever was going on at the time. They could do what they liked, as long as they kept away from the well and out of the boat.

It takes a British Columbia boy or girl to realise what it meant to wake up in the Old Mill the beds made, the breakfast dishes washed and put away, no authority but their own, and the long day before them.

Their fishing in the afternoon not proving very good, they decided to take it up again on their row home, and landed on the island, Sheep Island (so called, no doubt, because there were no sheep on it), while the sun was yet high.

Sadie Armstrong saw them coming. She watched their landing on the beach at the foot of the orchard. If anyone had cared to do so, the island could have been made into a perfect dwelling-place.

It was beautifully wooded, had some good meadow land, clear springs of excellent water. The situation and view were beyond comparison. When Joe Armstrong bought the island this latter feature, though not escaping his notice, had been of secondary importance.

He got the place cheap.

He bought it from a man in knickerbockers, who had fed on the view and raised ducks. A man cannot live on that, not even on the Pacific Coast; especially if there is an inclination to paint the view and eat the ducks. The day came when he said to an agent: "I want to go home. I've had enough of the whole business. Look sharp. I won't consider anything but a cash offer."

Joe Armstrong had just arrived from the North-West Territories in search of a good climate and a

small holding, and with a fat roll of crisp notes in his pocket.

The man in knickerbockers walked out of the agent's office by one door while Joe Armstrong came in by the other.

By sundown Joe had the island, and the other man had the money, that is to say, part of it. The agent kept some, and the railway company was the richer by the equivalent of a first-class railway fare and the price of a Pullman sleeper.

But it was a return ticket the man with the knickerbockers carried in his pocket.

This man had been at that sort of thing before. Six months, more or less, of the old world would see him so deadly sick of it all and himself, that flinging what was left into a portmanteau, getting into his old knickerbocker suit seared with the good stand of tramp and toil, and still holding the return ticket, the first train that pulled out of London and into Liverpool might have him.

He would know no peace till he sat again on a bit of his own land; somewhere, anywhere,in God's own country.

There were a good many men who played at this sort of game. No one could say where or how the end would be.

One man settled it by blowing out his brains in the train after he had got half way home. The money had given out.

He had no return ticket.

That is how Joe Armstrong got Sheep Island and everything that was on it.

Sadie Armstrong watched the doctor and the children get out of the boat, and suggested to Tommy that he stay on the beach and dig for clams. She was not sure if there were any, but it would occupy him for sometime.

It would occur to very few people to kiss Sadie Armstrong.

She must occasionally have felt the rough beard of Joe upon her cheek, very likely her little children had touched her lips in years gone by.

Kate kissed her spontaneously. Her cool, moist lips always gave greeting in this way. Her Latin salutation was made without effusiveness. She excluded only the people she disliked.

There existed a peculiar sort of friendship between this sour-faced woman and the little girl.

Kate had, for example, discovered quite early in the history of their acquaintance, that Sadie Armstrong thought about things like a little girl. Not at all like Mother.

She had bought her a piece of a purple riband once, because she had found out that Sadie had wanted to have a bit to match a chair back. She had made it of colored wools years ago, and it had not been finished because Joe Armstrong could get no riband in town. She had trimmed a hat for her. She had put in some daisies, and it was surprising how differently Sadie looked when she was pleased. Kate also found out

that she could not talk to her as she did to Uncle Doctor, but that she had to explain as she went along.

She seemed not to understand about anything, unless it had something to do with the house or the farm.

Sadie was a perfect housekeeper.

It is quite wonderful to think how, with the material at hand, discouraging as she did the slightest tendency to extravagance, she dished up such decent meals. Her cakes and bread were flawless, her jams and preserves always right. She thought nothing of turning their clothes a second and third time, finishing up with wearing the things right side out again and re-dipping them before they were finaly cut up for the quilt and rag carpet.

The little white house at the top of the orchard consisted of three rooms. It had a kitchen, bedroom and best room. This latter was used occasionally on Sunday afternoon, but chiefly served the purpose of displaying a very ugly sideboard that held some silver, and in one of its drawers the woollen chair back and a photograph album.

The delightful smell of new bread and fresh cakes greeted them as they followed Sadie into the kitchen.

There was not a thing in the house that made the slightest pretence at beauty. The furniture was cheap and factory made. It was of poor finish and material, crude and ugly.

Wherever any color appeared it was harsh and inharmonious. Yet everything was so beautifully clean, so well ordered, that a feeling of comfort permeated

the newcomer and set him wondering how such a good artistic effect had been accomplished with such poor material, and in spite of the dreadful advertisements on the wall, and the terrible ornaments.

The spotless kitchen and shining stove made a good setting for Sadie in her purple cotton dress. The table stood under the window, and was laid for tea. A clean cloth had been spread over the brown oilcloth, and the table looked most inviting with its collection of odd, heavy porcelain and new bread.

A brown teapot stood at the back of the stove waiting for a final infusion, the coming of Joe.

The doctor offered to look for him. As soon as they were alone Sadie called Kate into the best room and opened her trunk.

A brown paper parcel lay on the top, stamped and addressed in clumsy writing to a small prairie town.

"It is a dress for little Sadie," the woman explained. "You ask your dad to post it for me."

Kate nodded.

Once before she had done a similar service for Sadie.

"Don't you tell Armstrong anything about it," the woman said, "I'll put it into the boat while you are getting your tea."

Kate could almost see small Sadie in big Sadie's red brown cashmere. Somewhere she lived on the big, lonely prairie, doing the chores for the family.

Her mother had been that daughter Bertha of long ago, had died, and the father had married again. There was a secret understanding between the grandmother

and Kate that some day litte Sadie should come to Sheep Island. Money, mysteriously produced from somewhere, should be sent, and the child would come to them across the prairie in the railway.

Kate was to manage the whole thing. Old Sadie would not talk over details, and would put off with a "Don't you bother your head about that, Kate, child."

If Joe Armstrong came in upon them unawares she would look up with her sour, dispirited smile, and order him to change his boots before coming into the kitchen. It is hard to say what would have become of Sadie Armstrong in those days without Kate's occasional visits.

As usual, Joe Armstrong was half way across the kitchen before his wife, noticing his boots, ordered him to go back into the shed to change them.

Tommy, whose feet were in the same condition, was arrested just in time. They cleaned themselves in the shed. Joe Armstrong gave Tommy a lecture on married life. The picture of extravagant unreasonableness that he managed to draw in a few pregnant sentences, though effective, did not move Tommy.

He had that morning decided to be a pirate. In fact, he was already well advanced in his preparations, and, if he understood right, only the chiefs had wives. He was just going to be an ordinary pirate to begin with.

They enjoyed their tea. Sadie did not sit down with them, but waited upon them. Nobody noticed her going out with the brown paper parcel under her apron.

She went down to the beach and hid it in the stern of the boat.

After tea Sadie busied herself clearing the tea things away. The two men remained sitting at the table smoking and talking. The children scrambled about on the island, inspected a new calf, picked yellow gorse, played at the spring, and joined the doctor in the boat as the sun was beginning to go down.

They left Sadie waving to them from the orchard in front of the little white house. Spare and lean she was, and unlovely with her wrinkled, fading skin and her flat bosom. But there was strength in her straight back and purpose on her brow.

It was a great pity that Joe Armstrong could see only her sour, dispirited smile.

The doctor and the children rowed away into the gold of the evening. In this light the islands, with their dark fir woods, their beaches strewn with drift-wood, their little bays covered with shimmering shells or rounded pebbles, were incomparably beautiful.

Tommy and the doctor rowed, while Kate steered and sang. They made for the rocky foreshore. They fished for rock cod in the deep, clear water near the rocks. They bespoke a seal making his way to the open sea, met some dog fish, but only got three cod.

When they arrived home, the cow waited for them under the maples. Her low mooing and her patient eyes reproached them for being an hour overdue.

The chickens, who had gone to roost, reappeared, and followed closely upon the heels of the doctor and children, clamouring for their evening meal.

Kate explained to the doctor the presence of the brown paper parcel.

He had known the gaunt, stolid woman on Sheep Island for a good many years.

The incident of the parcel threw a clearer light on the reserved nature of this woman. The doctor found himself able to understand better the strange liking his little friend had for the unprepossessing old woman.

But how, by what intuition, had the child arrived to touch upon the hidden spring which should open those dour lips, and prevail upon so secretive a disposition to put herself into the hands of a little child?

Well, he knew Kate. And perhaps he was beginning to understand Sadie Armstrong.

What had happened was this: The old woman had felt Kate's fresh lips on her withered cheeks, and life had assumd a different bearing.

Sadie had begun by drawing mental comparisons between Kate and the little grandchild on the prairie.

The little girls were about the same age. There the comparison had to stop. Kate had her mother. Her life was happy and careless.

Little Sadie could not have eyes like Kate's.

A girl child on the prairie, who had "done" for a widowed father and two younger children for two years, who had carried and taken care of the babies after her father had brought home the new Swedish wife, could not have eyes like that. Sadie Armstrong had not seen her face, but she knew just what sort of look it would bear.

She knew what those child hands must be like in the winter. Red and chapped with bitter, sore cracks at the knuckles. She could see her at the harvest time washing the stacks of dishes; standing on a box so as to be able to reach to the dishpan. Always clearing away meals. Always preparing more for those hungry, never satisfied men. And at night, at the end of the hot day, dragging herself up the stairs panting, creeping into bed by the side of her own mother's baby, she could see her fall asleep while yet her hands were fumbling with her bed jacket.

No, the face and the eyes could not be the same. Could never be like Kate's, whatever happened now.

It was too late.

But the lips were the same—sweet, fresh, young.

When Kate greeted her in her pretty way, both flippant and tender at the same time, Sadie Armstrong's mother heart quickened at the touch.

A very passion of longing for the little grandchild on the prairie she could not see, not hold near her heart, arose within her. She became hard in her purpose, almost sinister in her resolution. She must have the child near her. She must give her back her lost childhood, save a remnant of her girlhood.

All the women of her race had worked like that. They had been marvels of frugality. Their toiling encompassed uncomplaining lines of women. They had been born for several generations on farms in the East. They were of the poorer class, always working. Always working.

They had no family traditions, unless it was the tradition of work. Knew nothing further back than a grandfather, sometimes a grandmother; often not this even. Here a touch of German came in, perhaps far back a strain of French-Canadian. The Scotch blood was ever present, absorbing the rest. Occasionally one of their stock broke loose and got rich.

She had an uncle like that. He owned miles of wheatfields. A cousin, a woman, had taken in lodgers, and, thanks to perfect miracles at managing, found herself at the head of a thriving railway hotel. This one had a son at college, and a girl who went into society.

But as a rule they were poor, held small homesteads, or were striving painfully for honorable independence. The men worked hard from early boyhood, and the women worked as few women work anywhere.

It is hard to say why Sadie Armstrong should so late in life have known this sudden revulsion of feelings, or why at that last hour the spirit of her tribe should have turned and left her filled with the longings of a girl of eighteen.

She dreamt love. She thought pretty things. Her dreaming becoming finally confused and identified with that other Sadie.

The old woman thrilled when she thought what life should hold of love and joy for this girl.

The time must come when she would have little Sadie near her. The time must come.

Joe Armstrong knew nothing of all this.

He ate his well-cooked meals with a hearty appetite. He wore his much-mended clothes with content and pride. He banked his spare cash at the end of the month, and told himself that all was well.

He also told himself, with a look at Kate, with a wreath of dog roses in her hair, frolicking about among the gorse and tearing her clothes, that he, Joe Armstrong, had no use for that kind of girl, and that Mrs. Faire was a foolish woman.

He had a fine sense of security in Sadie Armstrong. Her very smile was reassuring, it meant work instead of talk.

He did not hold with women who talked, and certainly he had no use for blue ribands and red hair, and for French singing.

To hear that long-legged girl of John Faire's singing back from the boat irritated him. He could not understand the words. They mocked. They came across the water and back to the island like a challenge. It was as if the spirit of France that the cold North strain in him and his had killed, mocked and laughed at him.

He hated her singing in the strange tongue. The incomprehensible words riled him. There could never have been a doubt who should win out.

The little French girl who bore one of their men years ago died when the man child came to her. They buried her in a fine linen sheet, beautifully embroidered with crown and monogram in one corner.

She went without a plaint, French words upon her lips.

It was well so.

Only Kate's little French song riled him, and he could not say why. Joe Armstrong knew nothing of all this.

When he told Sadie Armstrong in the evening, after the doctor and the children had gone, that it was a thousand pities that Kate Faire could not be put to something more useful than gadding about the country in that fashion, he could have liked the smile that Sadie gave him a little less sour perhaps, but after all it did not matter.

A woman like Sadie was solid comfort.

When the doctor and the children got back to the mill Kate took the parcel into her room. Afterwards, Tommy having gone to bed without trouble, she and the doctor sat down on the front steps and they talked about Sadie and the little grandchild.

So far Kate had lived in the present only, had hardly thought about the future. As yet she had no past. Each morning found her eager and expectant. Nice things were always happening, and unless the mother was very determined about the lessons, she and Tommy gambolled through the day without a care. The doctor wondered at seeing her so silent at his side. The child had her chin in her hands, and looked straight before her.

She had started on her quest. For the first time her lips formed such words as "to-morrow." And why?

She lifted her face suddenly, and asked:

"Have we to go home to-morrow?"

There was just a little note of sadness in her voice.

While the doctor said yes, he added that he would drive back with them the whole of the way.

He knew by her attitude that she was deep in thought, and she continued presently: "I would not be afraid of Joe Armstrong. Why did Sadie hide the parcel?"

That evening they had their second talk about life, but they left Joe out of it. Kate was determined neither to speak nor to think of him. She hated him for the sake of the little motherless girl on the prairie and for the sake of the poor old woman who cheated in her old age.

Indian Susan came up the walk just as they were going in to bed.

She shambled along in her queer collection of garments, picked up a bit here and there in the wardrobe of her friends and patrons.

Indian Susan lived on one of the islands. She lived there alone since the death of her husband. She did washing for the neighbouring ranches, and would come in and do a day's cleaning.

She was squat, very brown, and ambled along on her bare, wrinkled feet, a stick in her hand. The Indian basket hanging over her back was slung across her forehead by a bright band of beadwork.

It was curious to see the old woman come up the avenue in the light of the evening. She made a strangely fascinating picture as she came out of the gloom of the old maple trees.

What if she had not been alone, just a harmless old Indian woman peacefully trudging back to her canoe after taking her eggs and butter to town, but instead

the treacherous forerunner of sons and brothers hidden behind there in the black woods? Or crouching on the beach? No white man's ear to hear their stealthy tread nor catch the silent fall of paddle or keep apart the grating of the prow upon the pebbles from the rumbling of the waves?

Such things had been.

Death had come in the wake of just such women. Death quick and silent, or with such ghastly horrors that white men do not care to dwell upon such memories. At least not in the presence of their womenfolk. Such things had been.

They watched her coming nearer.

What manes of her race did dwell amidst the gathering shadows?

Who could know but that her noiseless feet kept step with countless spectral companions?

To whom the gathering of the remnant of her race?

Was she the last to go? The first in the new coming?

Strange little old woman, with her fathomless eyes and mummy skin and queer musty smell of fish, repellent to the white man's nostrils.

"It is Indian Susan," whispered Kate with a sigh. "I thought——"

But she could not put into words what she had been thinking, neither could the doctor.

Indian Susan pushed the strap from her forehead, and sat down at their feet on the lower steps. She proceeded to empty the contents of her basket. It contained a couple of pounds of groceries, a red handker-

chief with some broken biscuits. A big, fine salmon lay at the bottom. There was always something in the fish line in her basket, and she did not seem to have the slightest objection to the admixture of fish or things fishy to the rest of her menu or wardrobe.

Kate knew what was coming. So did the doctor, and they looked at one another and winced. But neither of them betrayed through word or look that the biscuit which Indian Susan offered to each of them on the palm of her small, brown hand was anything but delectable. They munched it with so good a show of appreciation that they were just in time to frustrate her intention of giving them a second one by jumping up and remembering a bundle of flannels that Indian Susan had promised to wash for the doctor.

They watched the old woman draw out her canoe, cunningly hidden under the wharf, bale out the water with an old salmon tin, stow away her various bundles, and take to the water without a splash, without a sound.

Her paddles dipped in and out noiselessly. The canoe hugged the shore line, then cutting straight across the bay it disappeared under the shadow of the island on the other side.

For awhile they could trace her by the silver furrow left in the wake of the canoe.

The dip of the paddles stirred the dark water so that it gleamed with the light of silver or changed wih running colors like mother of pearl.

All night the little old Indian woman would paddle on in her black canoe, hugging the islands.

She would reach home by daybreak.

VI.

SERVABO FIDEM.

"You do not really mean it, Betty? You cannot mean it."

"Don't I."

Jim Culver went on with his occupation.

He was kneeling in the middle of the small sitting-room undressing a chubby boy. He had given the youngster his bath and evening meal, and was now helping his eldest baby, a little lad of four, into his night clothes. The other baby, a girl of two, had already been put to bed. She expressed decided views on the subject, but her laments had been cut short by closing the door into the bedroom.

"I'm going home," said Betty Culver.

The man said nothing. He went on undressing the youngster. This being accomplished he bid him say "Good night" to his mother, and disappeared with him into the bedroom.

"Betty," he said when he came back, "perhaps you are right. When will you go?"

"As soon as I can get ready," she said.

Jim Culver set about getting some order into the room. Everything was in a hopeless condition of disorder. The children's clothes and toys, some flowers

brought in from the outside, linen half washed and not ironed, half-finished meals not cleared away, lay untidily upon the table and chairs. The room and the rest of the house looked as if a tornado had blown through it, and as if it had emptied the contents of drawers and boxes, dropping things pell-mell as it listed.

Jim Culver went on in silence. He looked a grotesque figure in an old gray flannel suit rather the worse for wear, coatless, and with shirt sleeves rolled up, and a big towel tied around his waist. Every now and then he stopped, passed his hands through his short, black hair, and seemed to think.

Betty, her hands in her lap, lay back in her chair, and watched her husband.

She could remember the time when she had laughed at him when he looked like that, but things had changed. If he paused and glanced her way by chance she turned her head wearily.

She had given up doing her part.

Once when Culver stooped to pick up the baby's little shoe she noticed the weary droop in his shoulders. She moved uneasily in her chair. She took a deep breath and stifled a sigh. With her eyes half closed she sat still and watched.

Betty Culver was still a pretty woman. Her hair, which had been an undecided brown once, was beginning to show touches of gray. It was fluffy, and lent itself easily to the becoming way she had of piling it loosely around her head. Her skin usually pink and

white, was too pale. The eyes, which could look soft with blue lights, were green and hard.

As she sat there, her head thrown back on the cushions, her hands leisurely clasped in her lap, she looked dejected and weary.

Betty Culver was unhappy.

The storm had been brewing for some time, and, seemingly, such a very innocent incident had brought it to a head.

On coming home, Culver had called at the Custom House for a parcel.

A little while ago Betty had opened it. It contained a tea gown in white silk, trimmed with lace and true lovers' knots.

"How can they?" Betty gasped when she saw what had been sent to her. "How can they?"

She had thrown the flimsy garment back into the box, and, oblivious of her surroundings, had stared at it and its contents.

The heap of white silk gleamed and shone. The flimsy lace frothed between the folds, and the true lovers' knots held dainty pleatings.

Anger burnt the tears in her eyes. The words on her lips.

That was how they understood at home!

And she thought that she had made it all so plain to them!

Could they not understand anything about her life out there in the bush? With the two babies and only Jim's two hands to keep them from want? Was it

possible that she was so out of touch with all of them, that they could send to the woods a white satin tea gown at a time like this? And she . . . . well she would not think of that.

But there lay the garment. The contrast between it and the surroundings was so great that Culver, with a remnant of good sense, put the cover on the box. Even he, dull man that he was, could see how sadly the pretty frock was out of place.

The rooms in this little wooden shack were in a fearful state of disorder. The children were dirty and untidy. Something was burning on the kitchen stove.

The baby began to cry.

"Jim," Betty said between her teeth, "put the children to bed, please. I cannot stand them any longer."

With a groan she put her head on the table and began to cry hysterically.

Culver put the children to bed. First the other baby, then the boy.

There was nothing to say. It had been coming for some time. The incident of the parcel had hurried developments, that was all.

Betty could not stand the life out there any longer.

It was but right and honorable that he should let her go.

But Jim Culver felt as if his heart was broken.

The game was up. All that was left for him to do was to raise money on his place and send them home.

There was no use in looking back or in thinking ahead. He had to get them off as soon as possible.

He went on quietly and methodically, sorting things and putting them away. He emptied the contents of the frying pan into the fire. They would drink tea and eat bread and butter for supper.

How often they had laughed at their housekeeping!

It had all been like a long picnic. The merry day had ended in a storm, and it was quite possible that they might emerge from it with their lives broken.

He struggled with the slippery silk in vain attempts to get it back into its original packing. It behaved much like a butterfly might, which having once shaken its pretty wings, is bidden to creep back into the cocoon.

It was foolish to have sent such a garment to such a place. Just like Emma though. Still it would take quite a lot of imagination for them at home to realize the change that had come into Betty's life. And Emma was dull. Very dull.

Betty had worn things like that once. He remembered how charming she had looked in just such garments.

He dared not think about the five years that they had lived together. He knew she had suffered. She had bravely tried to make the best of it. He felt like a criminal when he thought of it all.

But he loved her. It would need all his love to see them through this.

He went into the kitchen and made tea, and cut the bread and butter. He could still hear her crying, and it broke his heart.

He put the things on the table in the sitting-room, and busied himself in making a fire. The cheerful blaze would help them both.

He let her have her cry out, and when he spoke he forced his voice to be even.

"Can you be ready in three days, do you think."

"Yes," she said, "I think so."

"I shall be able to raise sufficient money on the place to pay for the journey. After that I will send you what I can month by month. It won't cost you so very much living in the country."

"I intend to be very gay," she said.

'The change will do you good," he forced himself to say calmly.

"The change?" she asked. "I'm not coming back."

"It would be almost impossible for me to join you." His voice was still calm, but his hand shook.

"I will not come back," she said.

"It might be years before I could save sufficiently for a passage for myself."

Betty said nothing.

Jim looked up, all his love in his honest eyes. He tried to take her hand.

She avoided his touch. She pulled herself together, and said, almost fiercely: "Don't say anything to me. I won't listen. Don't touch me. Don't look at me. Go away."

Jim Culver's face hardened with the pain of it.

"You are right," he said. "Let us talk business."

And they talked business.

The next morning Jim Culver went to town and raised money on his place, a sufficiently large sum to pay for his wife's and children's journey to the old country, and leave them a sum of money which would provide for them for a couple of months.

The packing was a simple affair. There was little to pack.

The three days passed quickly. And finally Jim Culver and Betty had their last evening together.

Jim had worked incessantly, practically day and night for the last three days. Packed their things and planned for them, so as to make their travelling as easy as possible.

The fatigue was beginning to tell. The man looked white and haggard.

After having put the children to bed he took a bath and changed into an old smoking jacket.

It was their last evening together. They might never meet again.

Betty, acting on the same impulse, had put on the white gown.

They sat in silence, looking into the fire.

Involuntarily he raised his eyes and swept over the room, taking in the woman in the low chair.

It had been his paradise.

He would willingly go on toiling day and night if necessary, but the end had come. Had come so soon; outside in the passage stood the boxes, addressed and corded.

His sense of honor forbade him to touch on anything but commonplaces.

He made sure for the last time that she knew all she had to do, and would remember where he had put various things. Reminded her of her money arrangements and tickets.

Yes, it had been his Paradise.

He explained the workings of the straps around the bundle of rugs, and told her where to find the cushions. The picnic basket contained writing pad and thread and needle. The milk was in the padded tea caddy. If she got hot water late in the evening it would keep warm all night. She must not forget to replenish the stock in her fruit basket. There was something to read in the bag which held the toys for the babies.

His Paradise!

The man leant forward, and spoke her name.

"Tell me it is not as bad as that, darling?"

She put her head back on the cushions. Her hand pushed his head away from her gently, so that she looked down upon his face.

She was worn out.

"What can I do for you? What can I do?" he said.

"Let me go. Let me get off before I think. I do not want to think. I cannot bear to look back."

He felt her tremble and shrink away.

He released her.

Had he lost it all for ever?

What a mad business the whole thing had been.

How could he have dreamt that Betty could have fitted in with this sort of life.

Five years ago, on a June day he had married her. She had come out to him from the Old Country. They had been married from a friend's house on one of the islands. The same good friends who had filled the little church with roses, had cooked the wedding meal for them. The lights were burning, for they had followed the custom of the place, and had been married in the evening. Betty was all he remembered.

He took her away out of the light, and away from the roses, and carried her into a canoe. Four Indians rowed them across the bay to his place. Friends had arranged this for him.

He had been able to get leave for a month, and they had spent the honeymoon in their home, going away to camp in the woods or on fishing expeditions, tramping or idling about on the beaches.

Betty knew nothing about housekeeping. Nothing about cooking. Nothing about sewing.

After a time the work had to be done, at least, some of it. Culver had very little pay. There were no servants. The baby came.

They still laughed at their housekeeping.

They played with the work.

Their expenses were growing. But they still laughed bravely at their makeshifts.

Jim plodded on.

He became quite an expert in cooking. Often he washed the clothes on Sundays, and scrubbed floors after Betty and the baby were asleep.

When he first noticed that Betty had lost her pretty color he hinted to his chief at an increase in his salary, thereby risking to lose his post. It had had no effect. Any man could do what he was doing.

Things were beginning to look serious. Betty realized that it was impossible for Jim to work both day and night, and that she must turn to and do her part.

She did her best.

It was not very good.

They went on. There were days when they still laughed. He remembered one day coming into the kitchen and finding her looking forlornly at a leg of mutton. She had put it into a pan and was wondering what had to be done next.

"Put it into the oven," Jim suggested.

"Oh," she said with a sigh of relief, "is that all? I thought it had to be trussed, or that something had to be done to it. I was afraid to touch it."

But she was half crying, and he began to wonder what they would do.

She struggled on bravely, and made funny little garments for the boy, and surprised Jim with made dishes that he could not eat.

She did her best.

Then the other baby came. And she gave it up.

It did not matter how much he tried to help her. She had lost grip over herself. The house got hopelessly dirty. The babies were too much for her. She lost her head.

Always he came back in the evening and put things straight. Washed and cooked, and took the babies out of her aching arms.

It was no use.

When he came home in the evening things were just as bad again. A little worse every day. A little worse.

Once on coming home he had found Mary Faire in his wife's room. Betty was in bed asleep. Worn out.

He liked Mary Faire. He cared for her somewhat as a little boy does for a big sister.

She was fine and strong.

Mary had made him promise that he would let her come and help them.

Like the poor drowning things that they were they clung to her desperately.

Forgetting her own work she came and cleaned the house with Betty. Helped her with her sewing. She tried to teach her to cook some simple dishes. Took the babies away with her, so that the mother might have a couple of hours to herself and rest.

She had gone through it all and knew.

For awhile she was able to put herself before the breach and stem the flood. She felt what was coming long before Jim Culver did.

Betty took strength from the elder woman.

Mary's visits helped her like a tonic. They roused interest anew. While under their stimulating influence she made desperate efforts to keep up with the work.

She could not do it.

And finally when Mary came they left the house as it was. It was no use. Betty realised it, and would not let Mary tire herself out at the thankless task.

The older woman did the next best thing.

She plunged generously into the store of her experiences, and gave her the best she had. With Betty's babies upon her lap and Betty's poor, bewildered head upon her shoulder, she talked to her heart to heart. Told her that she must be patient and endure. That her sufferings were the best part of her womanhood. That she must trust her, the older woman. That later she would understand.

With her kind mother eyes she begged her earnestly to be brave. She found simple words to clothe the hard facts that threatened Betty's happiness.

Mary felt the lack of response.

It was hardly worth while to plead the cause of the country when the life had ceased to appeal.

And finally she held her peace.

Betty and Culver had talked over their final parting.

"When we have got to the boat you must leave us. Do not let there be any leavetaking. Go at once, and do not wait to see the boat go out. I wish it were all over."

Mad words rushed to Jim's lips. But he repressed them. The bitterness of it all nearly choked him. Still, he would have to be at least as brave as the woman about the parting. She was right. It would be foolish to unduly prolong their leave taking.

Neither of them had noticed that they were sitting in darkness, and that the only light that was in the room came from the embers.

They both looked up at the window. Outside the Moon was shining. It had been just such a moonlight night five years ago. Culver longed to take her into his arms. He loved her well enough to be generous. He opened the door to her bedroom, and bid her good night as she passed in.

He spent the rest of the night in front of the fire, planning.

He was not the man to let his happiness go out of his life like this. He would have to put up a better fight. He was not going to be beaten.

The time would come when he would be able to judge of their mistakes dispassionately. As it was, he tried to revise fairly the last five years. He was too loyal to his wife to allow even the shadow of a blame to add further sadness to his already heavy burden.

Where had they failed?

He began with himself.

He had had to pay for his experience. As he had no profession it had been both difficult and easy to get something to do. He had had a good education, but had never done anything to earn a living before.

While he was alone things went fairly well.

Then his appointment in a land agent's office was offered to him, and he had married. It was good enough if they lived on the land that he had out of town.

Going deeper into it, the point that struck him most was that the office work and his land divided his energies. He would have to concentrate.

The office work meant a small sum of ready money at the end of each month it was true, but ranching appealed to him. He would have to make a choice and stay with it.

At that moment money seemed the one thing needful in his life. Yet even in his present necessity he could not blind himself to the fact that no man can afford to choose an occupation which would fail to inspire him to do his best.

Which ever way it went, his work ought to take all there was in him.

And Betty? Betty knew absolutely nothing about a house or small children.

It was both incredible and pathetic that a girl of her age could have been so absolutely ignorant of the simplest rudiments of domestic science. Not for a moment had he realized what this deficiency might mean to them some day.

He was not so sure that he had not loved her because of it. Her piquant prettiness did somehow not fit in with kitchen aprons and butter-making. He remembered how when in England on a short visit her fresh carelessness had appealed to him. That hands that were so clever at tennis and golf might be useless in a new country had not occurred to him.

She had plunged into the new life bravely.

How they had laughed together in the beginning!

When ever she had felt like sinking he had been there to pull her out. They had alwavs reached dry land again, and it had been easy to look back and laugh.

But dirt and disorder are sordid facts. It is one thing to flit about in the kitchen in the morning in some frilly white thing, watching the husband getting breakfast, and another to have to get meals ready on time with two babies claiming attention.

Culver remembered Betty's talks with Mary Faire.

She had a way of pulling things together for them when they were just on the verge of becoming tragic. Betty emerged refreshed and heartened, and for awhile she went on again. But in the end she lost heart. The house, the garden, the babies, the sewing, the cow, the chickens, it all fused into one long, wild nightmare.

He remembered coming home one evening and finding her lying across the bed, her face in the pillows.

He had not been able to soothe her.

He had felt then that it must be the end. He must give her up. The life out there in the bush was too hard for her.

When he married her he had not thought of any of these things. If the two of them were going to build a nest would not the nest building come naturally to them? Was it possible that there were women who were not in any sense either home makers or true mothers?

Their engagement had lasted through a short English summer.

Their love had had the conventional setting of county life. Tennis and boating, tea on lawns, occasional drives to mutual friends. She had been interested in his life out there in the British Columbian woods, and when he had come to the end of his holiday he had gone with her promise that she would come out to him as soon as he could make it possible.

He had had moments of doubt when he thought of her luxuriant home, but they had their love, and all would be well. And he thought of the splendid women he knew, who, if they had found the life hard, had made the best of it. Now he thought of it, with the exception of a few wealthy men who came to the country to fish and to shoot, not one amongst his friends but had had to put up a hard fight.

The men had to fall back upon themselves, pluck, resourcefulness, patient endurance, strong arms for capital. And their women . . . .

Well, now that he had had an insight into the life of one of them, he was appalled at what life must have meant to some of them.

Poor Betty.

Little by little she had grown to hate the whole thing. He could see it all now.

It would have been better perhaps if she had given in at the beginning.

Her attempts at housekeeping had been so pitiful.

She had tried to make herself believe that she liked it all and had struggled on long after she had lost interest.

After one of her long talks with Mary she had always regained some sort of confidnce, but they had ceased to mean anything to her.

She shivered at night when she found herself alone in the great lonely woods. The sadness of the firs crept closer and closer. There came a time when she could scarcely realise that the very trees that sent the cold to her heart had seemed so beautiful. She turned with loathing from the constant repetition of mean details which she had not the ability and knowledge, and, in the end, not the strength to handle successfully.

She knew on waking in the morning that the evening would find her exhausted; but her house would be just as untidy, and her clothes in the same condition. Days and weeks merged into one. If she looked back she saw that she had failed; if she looked into the future she was maddened by the long vista of endless days of drudgery.

At the beginning she had striven bravely to hide her discouragement from Jim. Perhaps she would manage to learn how to do things, and then when she was more capable she would like it better. Her duties had increased out of all proportion to her ability to cope with them.

And what was the use.

Jim might as well know.

But not till the arrival of the potent parcel did Culver understand that it was time to call a halt.

Jim Culver sat by the fire and went over the five years they had lived together step by step.

He had married her because he loved her. He had never doubted but that he would be able to make her life a happy one. He had failed.

Betty was unable to stand the grind of it. She lacked all domestic training. The home-making instinct was either absent or dormant. Perhaps she was wanting in race temperament.

He had seen any number of well-born women take to the life and make a splendid success of it. Not that they had made a good thing of it financially, no, not always, but they had made homes. True homes. Can anyone do anything better anywhere?

He knew of women who had practically never put a foot into a kitchen before coming out, and who had taken up the work bravely, bringing to the rough, unaccustomed toil the refinement of education and good breeding. Their birth had helped them, not hindered them. As a matter of fact, the best bred women that he had met out there under similar conditions had invariably put the best fight.

What bitterness he may have felt during the last year, and especially during the three days just passed, dissolved into his deeper feeling of tenderness for her.

He prayed long and earnestly. His poor happiness seemed so near to passing through his hands.

As the daylight crept in upon his vigil he felt the sore need of perfect faith, and for a moment he sat with his head in his hands, bowed in sorrow.

Betty had come in noiselessly. She had not been able to sleep. Jim did not hear her. She stood at the door.

"Jim," she said, softly, "Jim."

Culver jumped to his feet.

"You have not been sleeping," he said.

"No," she said, "I could not sleep."

She still wore the white wrapper, and she and the gown and ribbons looked pale in the cold, morning light.

"Jim,' she began, "I do not want you to feel badly about this. I cannot help it."

"I know, darling," he said.

"I am no use," she said.

"You will get on better without us. Look at this room."

"Oh, do not talk in this bitter way," Culver said. "We have been happy. Why spoil the happiness we have had together by dwelling upon our wretched mistakes?"

"You have been all right, Jim. I am the failure."

"You," he said, "I shall have to do better, somehow."

She was longing to put her head upon his shoulder, longing to feel his strong arm about her, but she held back. She dreaded to see her resolution shaken. She shrank back to the open door, terrified at the thought of meeting anything that might turn her decision.

For a mad moment Culver had hoped for the

impossible, but as he saw her shrink away, he was glad he had been strong enough to hold back.

"Jim," said Betty again, "do you not think that it will be better if you let us get away by ourselves. It will make it easier. Let us say 'Good-bye' here. Now."

"No," he said, "there shall be no 'Good-bye' between you and me."

Betty was about to leave the room, when Jim was at her side.

"Forgive me, Jim," she said faintly.

"Say that you will come back," he pleaded desperately.

Betty shook her head.

"Say that you will come back, some day."

"I cannot," she said. "I cannot."

"Betty," he pleaded.

"I hate it," she said, "do not make me say it. It would be a lie. I would break my word."

Only then he let her go. He held her hands, stood back a little, and looked into her eyes.

"I want to tell you, dear," he continued earnestly, "that I love you. I want to thank you for the happiness you have given me. I shall look back on it all and thank God. What does the house mean, and the stupid cooking and washing? Nothing. I want you to remember afterwards. To me it has been you, only the babies.

He kissed each one of her hands, and let her pass out.

A few hours later Jim Culver saw the last of his wife and babies.

That is the way in which Betty Culver deserted her husband, and left him to struggle on as best he could.

Now Mary Faire had a saying that when any of her dear ones were in trouble she knew it. After the doctor had taken the children to the Old Mill she had gone down to the creek to do some weeding in the garden. For a couple of hours she was busy with spade and hoe. Then she went back to the house to prepare the evening meal. During all this time Betty's face came before her, and she began to wonder if she needed her.

Though she had been a little disappointed in the younger woman, yet she had warm sympathies for her. She knew only too well the nature of her trials. She longed to help her, and it was only when she found that there was not much depth in the young creature that she drew back and waited. But she was always kind, unselfishly eager to help them.

After supper she said to John that she would go down to the Culvers. Twenty minutes' walk through the woods took her to their bungalow near the railway track.

She found Jim cleaning the house.

The moment she entered she knew what had happened. Betty and the children had gone.

She shook hands with Jim silently, and silently they sat down on the veranda.

"Where is your pipe?" Mary asked.

Jim filled it slowly, and lit up. Mary looked at him with one of her warm, good smiles.

"They will come back, Jim," she said.

He grasped her hand and shook it, retaining it for a moment.

"Thank you," he said, simply.

There are only very few conditions under which it is permissable for a woman to speak to a man about her inner life. Rarely does a good woman speak of these sacred things.

This was such an occasion.

"Tell me," Culver said, after he had touched lightly on the departure of Betty and the babies, "tell me, how did you manage it all? How do women manage out here with half-a-dozen children, and with one pair of hands to do the work?"

"Just by working and suffering," she said.

He pulled at his pipe hard.

"A man doesn't like to think of it," he said.

"We cannot get away from it," she said. I am almost old enough now to be thankful for all that I have gone through. I have only one regret. I wish that I had always been patient. It would have made it so much finer to look back on."

"You?" he said.

"Oh, yes," Mary continued. "Half the women I know have gone through what Betty is living through now. Do not you think that I have wanted to run at times? It is hard for a man to understand how a woman feels under these new conditions. Of course,

the conditions are not new to all the women that come here. Neither are they always hard. I am thinking of such women as Betty and myself. When you men take up your new work here you take it up comparatively speaking unhampered by endless petty details.

You are free to have a go at it, putting in all your mind and body. I do not say that it is not hard and often discouraging, but it is magnificent work for men. But with us women it is different. To begin with, we have everything to do. To make a success of the life under these new conditions we ought to be experts in everything. But the most important part of our life here is not the housekeeping, serious and all-absorbing though it be. But our maternity. How are we to adjust it to these new conditions? "

The man had no answer.

"They tell us," she continued, "that hard conditions will make a hardy race. That is possible. The same authority will very likely be able to furnish the necessary points in fact to support his theory. And very likely the authority is a man."

Here she laughed.

" Can you expect a thinking gentlewoman suddenly brought face to face with the toilsome labor of existence, where everything has to be done by her own two hands, to keep a cool head and realise exactly where her duty lies? She needs the strength of giants and the faith of saints to bear her children."

Mary looked up with an embarrassed smile. Sudden tears came to her eyes.

"I am thinking of Betty," she said, her cheeks reddening with confusion.

"You are good to me. You do not know what a help you are to me to-day," said Culver earnestly.

"Peculiar conditions only touch the minority. The majority falls in with whatever happens to be. Betty had run because her maternity does not fit in with the conditions."

"How did you manage?" Culver asked.

"I" she said, answering his enquiry with the faintest smile. "I? I could not tell you. You are not a woman and would not understand. No man can understand. Think of Betty. You have had a glimpse into all the various phases, moods which make up our woman life. How much can you understand of it? Perhaps when we seem most unreasonable to you men, we are most rational."

"Your life, too, was very different before coming here?" Culver asked.

"Betty's and my case are similar, but not the same," said Mary. "I love it all. The life appeals to me immensely. And now that I am older my problems are of a different nature.

Culver noticed that as she spoke her face had saddened.

She was thinking of the fire, and what it had meant to her.

"I am not so sure that I am as brave as you think me. In a way I am quite as uncertain of myself as Betty. Only I am older. I have suffered longer. I

know now that I want to stay with it. See it through. But I have often felt that I could not do it. Have you ever felt out here that all that has been comes back and calls?"

He had.

"You know what it means to you, a man. But supposing you could enter sufficiently into the personality of a woman who had given several children to this country all feelings would be doubled in intensity. A mysterious link exists between the mother and the country where she has borne her children. When I was as old as Betty is now I was several times on the point of running. I scarcely knew at what or why. But always the country held me back. The surpassing beauty and promise of the land made all things possible."

"It is dangerous to idealise too much," he said.

"Yes," she thought, "if you lack the faculty of making the unreal become real. But can any mother give to her children a more hopeful country to call their own than this one? Think of it, all is to come yet. How puny all my wearying self-analysis seemed at times. When the babies came I was always happy. Such sweet, sane happiness it was. I had never a doubt in the holy purpose of my mission, or in the blessing of their coming.

"And now?" he asked eagerly, "now?"

She hesitated just for the space of a second.

"I will answer you when I am older," she added,

and then as an afterthought: "Perhaps . . . ." but she did not finish her sentence.

They sat without talking for some time.

"Betty did not like the life," Jim said. "She tried to make herself believe that she liked it, but she had to give in at last. I had never dreamt that housekeeping could take on such formidable proportions. It was such fun in the beginning."

"Wait a minute, Jim Culver. Think. For practically fifteen years I have done the same things in and about the house at the same time every day. It is quite appalling to think of the amount of dishes that I must have washed in that time. Remember that I cannot do things like a machine. My education has spoilt me for that. I have any amount of foolish moods and fancies. There are days when I simply cannot do that sort of work. I have to whip myself into doing it. And remember—I love it all. There is not one thing in or about the house that I do not like to do. I love the care of babies always. And yet I've gone through perfect frenzies of disgust."

"But how did you manage them? Look at your house, your children?"

"Well, I've always got to come back to the starting point. The deeper purpose of my being here, my being chosen to bear my children to this country appeals to me. Even in the arlier days when I felt the stress most, I had glimpses of this in short visionary moments, and I took courage and inspiration."

Jim Culver looked at her.

She was so simple in her plain, blue cotton dress, her wide, garden hat on her lap. He did not remember ever having seen her in anything looking like finery. He had occasionally seen her in a white frock, but generally she wore these plain blue frocks. One did not realise at once that she was still a beautiful woman, for her beauty lay in her expression, and the simplicity of her bearing. One had to know her, to understand how much of passionate response lay under a somewhat cold exterior. Her friends knew. Jim Culver was one of them.

"You mustn't leave me, Mrs. Faire,'" he said.

"Oh! boy," she said, her moist eyes full of sweet sympathy, "they will come back to you. Take that wretched sign off."

On the side of the house which faced the railway, Jim had nailed a sign. It said that the place was for sale.

He tore it off.

"They sail from Montreal to-day," he said, sadly.

"Lock up the house and come home with me. The children are at the mill. Give me the key."

Culver and Mary had this talk six or seven days after Betty and the babies had left.

"John and Mary got Culver to promise that he would stay with them for some days, or at least till he had made up his mind, and had decided what he was going to do.

The next morning, after the two men had gone to town together, Mary went to the little bungalow by the railway.

Culver must have left everything as he had found it on his return from town after seeing them off. Things were in their usual muddle. The whole place seemed to have become top drawer. Mary made a fire in the kitchen, and worked her way patiently through the four-roomed cottage.

She did it lovingly. Lingering over the little cots and the discarded toys. Full well did she know what terrible battles poor Betty must have fought in these dismantled rooms.

She came across the white frock that had brought about the final catastrophe.

It lay at the foot of Betty's bed, very likely just where she had left it after taking it off that last morning. She folded it up carefully. Stuck paper between the folds and lace. Smoothed the knots.

Lavender grew in the garden, she picked some, and put it in a bit of muslin between the folds.

She washed and cleaned and ironed all day.

In the trunk into which she had put the things she had found lying about she found a small photograph of Betty, Betty as she looked when quite a young girl. Her hair hung down her back, and she held a small fox terrier in her arms. She hung it over Jim Culver's bed.

Poor Betty, it was a thousand pities that the child eyes should have learned to shine with such hard green lights. It was best for Jim that he should remember her as she had been then.

Later in the afternoon she locked the door and went home.

When Jim Culver returned to his bungalow the first thing that met his view was Betty's photograph looking down at him.

His mind was made up. He would go in for ranching altogether. He had a little money at home; he would take it out and use it to develop his land.

It was better to put his whole heart into one thing.

It was curious even to Jim Culver himself that while every minute was taking his wife and babies further away from him, he was already planning how he could make it possible to bring them back some day under better conditions.

And Betty?

Betty was a good sailor. Once on board she found herself among acquaintances. A cousin and his friend were going home. They made themselves useful. One of them made a splendid nursemaid. Things went smoothly and pleasantly.

But Betty asked herself miserably, why was she not happy?

VII.

RIDE, SI SAPIS.

Considering the reckless way in which Agatha Waring was in the habit of ordering her life, it was wonderful what luck she had in all her undertakings. Even her lesser doings turned out well.

She had no sooner settled down comfortably in the train which was to take her up to the Faires, a small grip, a walking stick and a bundle of umbrellas laying claim to an empty seat in front of her, when a pasty-faced man with a child who seemed to have measles calmly sat down opposite to her.

Agatha lifted her eyebrows to their full limit, turned her head to see if there was an empty seat left at the rear of the carriage, and recognised Larry Browne coming up the aisle.

Larry Browne was the man she wanted to see.

He was armed cap-a-pie, two dogs at heel.

"Larry," she said, "can you get me another seat?"

He could.

"Where are you going to?" he asked, after having disposed of her bundles and his dogs.

Neither of them took the slightest notice of their surroundings. They did not see anyone, and talked as if the train had been empty.

These two curious people, though living in the country were not of it. They had not the slightest sympathy with any one phase of the life.

The man had come for years to shoot and fish and look after some investments that he had made out there. He liked it well enough. It was a good enough country for his purpose.

He came for a week, stayed for a month or months. Turned up at the club occasionally, and was off when he felt like it.

It was interesting to note the contrast between these two perfectly-groomed people—he in his tweeds and leggings, she in her short walking skirt and smart cap —with their surroundings.

"What a mongrel lot," the man said, looking over his fellow travellers, coldly critical. He understood nothing outside of himself.

" What do all these people do? "

" Work, I suppose," said Agatha.

They dismissed the subject, and attended to their own affairs. Their well-bred voices sounded clearly and distinctly above the nasal twang of American tourists and the softer drawl of the Canadians.

" Where are you going to? " Larry repeated.

" I'm going to my cousin, John Faire."

" You did not say anything of this yesterday," the man said.

" When did you make up your mind? " Agatha emphasised the " you."

Larry Browne was running away from a girl. A sweet, dark-eyed girl. He had no business to have had to run. The girl was much too good for him.

Agatha knew what he was doing the moment she saw him.

"How far up the line do you go?" he said.

"I get off at Smith's Crossing. Wherever that may be."

"We shall get there in ten minutes," he said. "That gives us ten minutes to talk in. Why did you not tell me anything about this yesterday?"

"I made up my mind to come out here some time ago. I'm dreadfully bored. Horribly bored."

"What are your cousins doing out here? Ranching, I suppose?'

"Play ranching. My Cousin John is working up some business or other in town, and I believe his wife looks after the farm. The usual thing in that sort of case. A cow, a couple of fields, some chickens, two children, an orchard, a garden, I suppose. I have not seen them for years."

"Bother the ranch. Come up the line and go shooting."

"Not good enough. No. Jack would not like it. I did that once," she added candidly.

"Who was the man?" Larry Browne asked.

"Never mind. Perhaps I shall tell you some day. It was not worth while. The man was foolish, and Jack got angry. I want to get away in the spring. I want to be in town by May."

"Again?" he asked.

They passed the Culver bungalow nestling in the woods. The blinds were drawn, the door nailed up.

"We tried ranching once," she said to her companion as they passed.

"You?" he laughed incredulously.

"Jack and I. It sounds idyllic, but it was dreadful. Quite dreadful. Is there anything we have not done out here?"

"I cannot place you on a ranch at all."

"You're quite wrong there," she said, dropping her tendency to flippancy for a moment and talking seriously. "I am quite good at that sort of thing. Quite good at all sorts of things. But I have no staying power. At the end of a week I had had enough of it, and Jack and I quarrelled most dreadfully. We woke up in the night to quarrel. And we had paid cash for the wretched place. If you had not been unkind I would tell you how we got rid of it."

"Tell," said Larry.

"I began with my wardrobe. You do not have to laugh, Larry Browne. Yes, with my clothes. Skirts and shoes. My sunbonnets were dreams. You should have seen the blue linen affair that I wore to go into the dairy, or what served as a dairy. I wore black shoes with red heels. It ran up into a sum of four figures before I had finished furnishing the house.

"There was not a muslin blind that I had not pored over for hours. I did not care. If it went up and didn't look well, I burnt it. The brute who built the

fire-place in the living-room almost killed me because when it was finished I scratched the cement that he had used in putting it together with a crooked nail, and built a fire in front and smoked it all a good brownish black color. Oh! Larry, it was a good fire-place! Rough, field stones and chains and hood and all, and it could take a six foot log. Think of it.

"In the dining-room, just a little square affair near the kitchen, I labored with a green stain that the painter man offered to drink if I would let him go home. I got stuff for the windows, innocent looking cotton in blue and white checks, wrote to Paris for it.

"I slept in a shut bed. You cannot begin to think of the mulishness of Jack and the carpenter. After I had had my way they threatened to take it to pieces again. I got into it, and Sing brought up my meals. The night-cap that goes with the bed came from Ireland. Old Limerick. Jack raved when he saw it.

"The other bedroom had bunks in it. It's a man's room. Just bunks and a huge fireplace, with a hob and a low window. I lay awake at nights to get it right. After Jack's encounter with Mary Tudor, he used to bang the door, and I could hear him creep into a bunk and heave a deep sigh of satisfaction. Poor lad, I used to wait to hear him; he was so genuinely complimentary.

"I got rose-colored crepe and matting of just the proper tints, and a mysteriously spicy scent in China-town, which I rubbed over the woodwork in the dressing-rooms. There were not two pieces of crockery

alike in the pantry. The towels alone took hours in evolving.

"Jack began to foam at the mouth. But I was ready.

"All that was left to do was to get a buyer. I wrote out descriptive directions: Knickerbockers and leather shoulder pieces; leggings; age no matter; but young to the country."

"Oh!" she said, drawing up her mobile eyebrows disapprovingly, "you would have been the man if Jack had met you then." "Well," she continued, laughing up into his amused face, "his entry fitted in perfectly. He came in in the morning just before luncheon. Almost photographically correct in detail. I was busy at the time putting blue columbines into a green pot. He had been in the country for a month, and as it turned out, it really suited us better than if he had been newer at it. He had been shown all the saleable properties within driving distance from town. All the ranches for sale up and down the line. You know the sort of meals he would have come upon unexpectedly. Sing. You know Sing?"

"When did I dine with you last?"

They both laughed.

"Sing was with us then. I have always had Sing. Imagine the effect on the poor lad of the dining-room, blue and green and green and blue, and of Sing, in white from head to foot, filling water around his lemon rafts, carrying cargoes of jasmine. Sing's treatment of the finger-bowl is always original. Sing surpassed himself. The man came straight out of the bush, the

dust of many tramps upon his feet, sweat upon his brow and homesickness beginning to gnaw at his vitals.

"The man stared. Stared, frankly rude. I tripped about, unadorned. Plain white grass linen. Shanghai's best at $5.00 a yard. He stayed to luncheon; he stayed after luncheon. He had tea. He had dinner. He had supper. And he spent the night. I played off the whole of my wardrobe. Do not look so severe, Larry. We had been ranching, remember. Every cent was on the place, and there was a stock of unpaid bills. We simply had to get out of it. No other way occurred to me, but I wish the boy had not had freckles and curly hair. Sing was to go with the ranch. Thrown in as it were. I was sorry when he mentioned Sing. I knew what would happen. Sing vanished the day after the house warming.

"I met the man a year after at a dance. Stumbled against him on a stair, sitting out alone.

"He recognized me in a moment.

"While he was cutting off my frills—I did not tell you that I had ripped the lace off my dress as I came down—he asked me what had become of my rascally Chinaman. Never a word about the ranch. I told you that I was sorry about the freckles. He came and dined. By the way, why should you not take the ranch off that boy's hands?" she said suddenly.

"I?" he said. "What good would a ranch be to me?"

"I believe," she said, jumping up in alarm, "you have let me pass my station."

"I believe I have," he said, looking out of the window.

"Stop the train," she said. "Please."

"Tell me who the man was with whom you went shooting?" he asked, as he hurriedly gathered up her belongings.

"Cannot you guess?" she laughed.

"Not the man of the ranch?"

Kate and Tommy stopped the train. They had waited on the platform in front of the little shed which played the part of station house, and went by the name of Smith's Crossing.

They had waited since eight o'clock in the morning. Cousin Agatha Waring had written that she was coming by the nine o'clock train on a certain date. Here was the date, and the hour, and the train. The engine driver saw the children waving frantically and slowed down.

Agatha making haste slowly, emerged with grip and bundles. A man in shooting clothes handed her out, got back and waved to them. The porter dumped a trunk on to the platform. The engine blew her whistle and the train pulled out and disappeared into the woods.

"You must be John Faire's children?" Agatha said, looking at the youngsters.

They nodded.

Tommy was very dirty, Kate embarassed.

"What shall we do with the trunk?" Agatha asked.

"Tommy and I are going to put it into the wagon, and I'll drive you," Kate explained.

From where they stood there was no sign of a wagon. The children got hold of the trunk and pulled it cheerfully through bracken and bramble, over stumps and stone over the embankment, and lifted it without difficulty into a wagon which stood in the road below.

Tommy stowed himself away amongst the bundles at the back.

Kate drove.

She explained that Tommy's appearance was due to the dusty condition of the roads and to his chasing a snake over the railway track, not to parent negligence or lack in sisterly admonition.

The children were strangely silent, totally absorbed in close scrutiny.

Agatha was thinking that if these were John's children it was a long time since she had seen anything of her relatives.

They jogged along over the dusty road at a moderate pace. There had been a few showers of late sufficient to give the green things a new start. But the summer was over. Leaves and brackens were beginning to turn brown. The sunlight, though still warm and comforting, was not quite so brilliant, nor the sky quite so deep.

They turned from the main road to the left. For twenty minutes they followed the road through the woods, between snake fences.

They drew up in front of a gate, which Mary held open for them.

They walked up together towards the house, the children taking the wagon round to the back door.

The two women walked side by side.

They were about the same age.

On a superficial observation, Agatha Waring seemed much the younger of the two, but the impression did not last. Mary had still the clear eyes of youth.

Agatha was agreeably surprised by the interior arrangements of the house. She could not have planned the big living-room better herself. They had not handled details or colors with her own consummate art, but the effect on the whole was excellent.

Mary had lit the fire in the open hearth. A log crackled a cheerful welcome and helped them over the first awkward moments of their meeting.

The two women were practically strangers to one another. They had hardly met more than half-a-dozen times in their lives, and then only for a few moments.

Agatha Waring was frankly worldly. But she had one most excellent quality. She did not make herself out as being better than she was.

Both her friends and enemies had often wondered why she had married Jack Waring.

The two, when they were together, which had not been often of late, quarrelled most dreadfully always. No one on seeing them together or apart could have guessed that theirs had been a love match. Yet Jack carried Agatha's photograph next to his heart, and Agatha, who went blythely from one affair to another, did turn her face occasionally towards the frozen

North and wished that things had been otherwise. But Agatha was not sentimental. And when Jack turned up occasionally at her bungalow, coming as he did unexpectedly from the mine in the North, or from some lumber camp on the mainland, the salmon cannery, or some new town growing on the West Coast, she greeted him cheerfully.

She knew it would not last.

They had had royal rows.

They had blazed out at one another. Each eloquent with bitter words, each attributing his wrecked happiness to the other's fault. But that was in the beginning. They had learned the futility of wasting good energies in this way.

Agatha, who was clever, had set Jack on the road of prosperity. If their temperaments had not clashed so sadly there would have been no need of their passing through repeated periods of poverty as they had done. Agatha had brains, Jack staying power, and between them they might have made money to burn.

They were not pulling together. With all that, it had not occurred to them break their bonds. Who could say but that deep down within either of them there were yet smouldering the embers of the holy fire?

Perhaps it was this that prevented Jack from drinking himself to death. For he did drink deep and long when he got back to the boat which took him up the coast to camp or cannery or wherever else he was going to.

Perhaps it is that which made the men say of Agatha that she was awfully nice, or whatever else men do say of such women.

She had handled some of them pretty ruthlessly, but there was not one of them who had the right to use her name lightly.

It did not occur to Mary to ask Agatha why she was giving them the pleasure of her company. She was pleased to have her, and she and Kate came at once under the charm of her personality.

They had worked hard the day before so as to be free from housework and cooking.

They helped with the unpacking, and in a few minutes the plain little bedroom had taken on a different character. It was difficult to say how or why. Was it due to the pretty garments hanging about, or to the dressing table, with its silver-topped brushes, combs, and bottles full of mysterious powders and liquids; the little table pushed a shade nearer to the window, and covered with a leather case and more things silvered and crested? It was hard to say, but within half an hour the back bedroom had become Cousin Agatha's room, and long after she had gone the children called it by this name, and fancied that it retained ever afterwards a faint illusive presence.

It was rather difficult during the day for the two women to meet on common ground. They had lived such different lives, and had very likely diametrically opposed views on most things. The children followed them about, hanging upon Agatha's words, loth to

leave her for a moment, but when the evening came, and with it John, and when the children had gone to bed, the two took better possession of one another. They found out very soon, strange as it may seem, that they were going to like one another very much.

After the slight disturbance made by the novelty of having a guest had subsided, Mary and the children had to go back to the routine of their lives.

Agatha set about reading. Sometimes she wrote letters

She retrimmed their hats, evolved finery for Kate out of bits of lace and ribands. She found that if she had the dressing of Mary Faire she would stay with the blues and white. She discovered that Mary looked best in the plain things which she wore, and that even her hair was best left in simple braids.

They had endless talks together. In the evening they sat on the rocks, or when it was too cold, as it was sometimes, as the days were rapidly shortening, they sat near the fire in the living room

John smoked his pipe and Agatha cigarettes.

"You have got hold of the wrong end of the stick," she told them one evening, after watching Mary folding endless stacks of clothes.

John looked at her with an amused smile.

"You have told us that every evening since you have been here," John said.

"Why do not you try and make money?" she said.

"Money?" John repeated, rather stupidly, "money? I'm trying my best to earn some."

"Make it. There is a difference between earning and making."

"I'm no use at that sort of thing."

"Are you going to live out here all your lives? What are you going to do with the children?"

"We are getting the place into shape little by little. It takes time. Go on planting the orchard. Add to the stock. Get labor-saving machinery. Handle the wood business better. Put savings, when there are any, out on the land. When we are old, it will feed us."

"How cheerful!" interrupted Agatha. "But what of the children?"

"They will have to work like ourselves."

"John," she said, "I have no patience with your philosophical programme. You are like Jack. You have no ambitions. It is a dog's life for your women folk to lead."

"I do not know," he said stubbornly. "I do not know."

"The man who makes money can do anything in these days."

"I do not care a rap about your money talk, Agatha Waring."

They had touched upon this subject once or twice before, and every time it had irritated the man, all the more so as he had already asked himself whether he was doing all that it was in his power to do. Since the fire he had been alarmed to notice that Mary was often pale and quiet, and sometimes sad. He had seen how

deeply stirred she had been at the time. He recalled how Jim Culver was left alone.

Near the window Mary was folding interminable heaps of linen, getting them ready for ironing. Year in and year out, week after week, day by day, she had worked on. She had had practically no recreations, no outside influences, and he knew better than anyone that years of repression had failed to impair the delicate responsiveness of her nature. Though he loved her, and though they had been the best of friends during their married life, he divined rightly that there were chambers in her heart into which he could not enter

They had not alluded to the fire again, nor had their subsequent talks been mentioned between them.

There was also the school question. The children would have to be taken in hand seriously.

"If I were a man," Agatha continued, "I would get to the top. Nothing should keep me."

"Well and good," John interrupted her, trying not very successfully to keep a certain note of irritation out of his voice, "if you care to pay the price. Some of us might think that it was not worth while, and that the price is out of proportion with the purchase. What you might call the top I might call the bottom."

"Oh, yes," she said, throwing away her cigarette and relighting a new one immediately, "you're losing yourself in common places. Some people think it is well to deride the man who makes money. It is hypocritical. Many times, when a man makes money he

deserves all he gets. Go into yourself, as the Germans say, why do not you want to make money? Is it because you think that in making it you are violating some great principle of honor? Or because you feel that you have not got it in you to make it?"

"It may be both."

"That is a way of evading my question. I'm honest with myself. I want money. Lots of it. And I can see a hundred ways of making it."

"Honorably?" John quizzed, for he had heard the ranch story.

"Honorably, if I can, John."

"Stubb was dreadfully sore," he said.

"Serve him right. Do not forget that Stubb, the honorable, and I are excellent friends. If he had not got silly scruples, I could make good money for him with that ranch. Joking apart, would not he have spent his money foolishly in any case? His patrimony was burning his pockets. He did not know what he wanted till he saw my ranch. He paid for brains and got them."

"How far North has Jack got?" John asked disrespectfully.

Agatha's eyes narrowed to mere slits, and she knocked the ashes off her cigarette with her little finger deliberately and with consummate skill.

"I'll get him to the North Pole, John. In time."

"What is Stubb doing?"

"Looking after his investments. His mother sends him money to pay for his board. He comes and stays

with me sometimes. You should hear him tell of his experiences with the shut bed. He slept in it the first night. Sing, who went with the place, had taken the mattress into his own room, and the boy slept on a couple of blankets on the slats. He had a bad night, and did not get to sleep till daylight. The cow mooing under his window woke him up late in the morning. He woke in the best spirits. He had planned ranching when he was so high." Here Agatha demonstrated the height of the Honorable Stubb by bringing her hand down to the level of one of the chairs.

"I suppose there is no use in quarrelling with your methods?" Jack asked casually.

"None at all," Agatha said frankly. "No. He called for Sing. There was no Sing. There had been no Sing for a good many hours. Sing had gone sometime in the middle of the night. There was no trace of him anywhere. The Honorable Stubb had bread and cheese and whiskey and soda for breakfast. Between two and three in the afternoon he saw that something would have to be done to the cow. And that soon. She had followed him about like a kitten. He had a weird experience. Then the cow strayed. A man brought her back and Stubb sold her to him. I suppose the transaction has passed into the legendary lore of that particular countryside. Though he sold the cow, he had to give the man good money to take her away. It seems that he lived on one of the islands, and he made out that the cost of shipping was an item. Well, after the cow was off his hands he took

to ranching seriously. Washed his own shirts and cooked, chopped down trees, and sewed on buttons. He slept in the bunk room. At the end of three months he locked up the place and went to live at the club."

"Here endeth the first chapter."

"Not at all. I met him at a dance a year after. I had ripped my dress. He did the repairing."

"He did not tell you all that while he was attending to your frills?"

"Not all of it. I told you that he comes to stay with me from time to time. The boy is beginning to laugh at himself. We are friends."

"Why do not you put your brains to better usage." John asked with kindly candour.

Agatha sat up and raised her expressive eyebrows to their full limit, and lit a new cigarette.

"Better? Do you know that I am doing a lot for the boy? What use is a man like that here? I doubt whether he had ever put on his own coat before coming out. Can you see his mother at home? He is an idealist pure and simple."

"And you are busy destroying his ideals for him?"

"No," said Agatha, "I'm helping him to do that for himself. Have not I told you that he has invested all the money that he brought out with him? He has taken every man at his word at he went along. He has not now a cent that he can realise on. John, oh! The money he has on my ranch, his ranch, is the only safe money he has got to-day."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"I cannot tell. The day is young. He was sent out to work. Do something."

"Where is he now?"

"I do not know. After we went shooting together he threatened to become a bore. I had to talk to him. He is a nice boy. I like his freckles. Such good eyes."

"Why do you play fast and loose with a chap like that?"

"I?" said Agatha again, again bringing into play her much-worked eyebrows.

"I?" The boy has had women around him all his life. Half-a-dozen women to run and fetch and carry. When he went to Paris to see the motor races he was sent with his sister's governess. Think it out, John. It is the women things on my ranch that made him buy it. He did not know that at the time. Do you realise that I had given six months of hard brain fag to get the place ready for a possible customer? Who is to say that he paid too much for a thing as long as he got what he wanted? It is too nice a point to decide in this offhand manner. Stubb has not grudged the price, and that shows that he is not quite a fool."

"What is going to teach him to work?"

"Necessity for one thing. Besides, there is splendid stuff in him. And do you know that he would trust me with his last cent? Seems curious doesn't it, after our little transaction?"

"With his money perhaps. Not with his cigarette case," John remarked ironically.

She had smoked him empty.

Mary during this time had been folding and sprinkling the clothes, listening to the two as they sat and talked in front of the fire.

Agatha, having come to the end of the mild Egyptions, looked up and met Mary's eyes.

"Queer stuff to talk about, is it not"

"Yes," Mary said. "Look out."

What was visible of the horizon between the trees was a blaze of red and gold.

Mary was wondering where the freckled boy with the nice eyes could be, and whether he was seeing the glory of the sky.

She hoped he did.

If he saw and cared for such things, all would be well with him.

The three went out on to the veranda, watched the light fade, and the moon rise above the pine woods.

VIII.

QUID PRO QUO.

Though the deeper notes of tenderness had not been sounded in years, the drift towards cynical flippancy in Agatha Waring was not congenital, but acquired. But she disliked the exhibition of sentiment as any schoolboy, and if she got hurt during her various transactions she turned around bravely and laughed at herself.

She had never held up the sore places to have them kissed.

She had fed the intellect at the expense of sentiment. Whether any woman can afford to do that, she had not paused to think.

The Faire children adored her.

Tommy did her bidding politely and with alacrity. To Kate, who was at the impressionable age, she gave her first view of a new world.

Agatha liked the children. As they had been alone in the woods with their parents only for companions they had developed a great deal of individuality. Their manners were good. Their voices had all the sweet qualities of gentle breeding. Agatha liked the little chap, with his brown skin and self-reliant ways. His

spare limbs, which carried not an unnecessary ounce of fat, were hard and lithesome.

He could do a great deal of what there was to do about the house and outside, and could do it pretty well too, if he chose to put his mind to it. He had studied nature at first hand, and startled Agatha with the result of some of his observations. He was practically the first child she had met out there who knew anything about the flying and creeping things, the birds in the air, the fish in the water, and the wild flowers that grew in such magnificent profusion around him.

He knew his way about the woods like an old woodman.

He ate sparingly as a rule. While he was busy evolving some one or other of his schemes neither food nor drink would pass his lips, but once over the inception period he would tear himself away from his beloved wheels, or dykes, or evil-smelling concoctions, and snatch greedy meals, and eat like a little pig.

Agatha watched him with interest. She had never met a child who was imprint to the same extent with the soul of the woods, or colored to his degree with the peculiarity of his surroundings.

Where was the ancestor who transmitted his latent skill through such new influences.

There was great promise in his bearing. This was good stuff to wring from the spirit of the land.

She compared him mentally to the children she knew in town, brought up under conditions called vaguely by the unitiated, wild, woolly, Western; but which, in

reality, were under conditions that were the very essence of modernity. There, in those new centres of that new country, was the foregathering of a coming race. All that goes to nourish such periods of transmission was in progress of dramatization.

Here was already the meeting between the white man and yellow; here was cosmopolitism proving itself; here was mixed education actually taking the boys and girls; here was sociology visible to the naked eye, and needed no scientist for its interpretation. And all that, while yet they were vaguely theorizing about such things in other places.

The boy came off splendidly in the comparison. It was wise to have shielded his first years, and to have given him the strong companionship of trees and fields. When the day should come that he must leave his woods he could do so, and wade through mongrel undercurrents without injury.

There were occasions when she envied Mary the little straight-limbed chap.

Years ago she had played at motherhood. The child had died. Sometimes when she watched him at his play she had that peculiar feeling that comes over women who have been mothers and have lost their children. Her arms felt empty.

Agatha, full of clever understanding, did not hold the key to the life. Mary thrilled with what she had actually lived and suffered and had entered in.

Agatha would have to remain an outsider. She had refused to pay the price. She had not, like the other woman, a claim upon the country.

It was behind the ear, where the short hair met his brown neck that Agatha used to kiss Tommy. These caresses, coming at the most unexpected moments, greatly embarassed him, and filled Kate with a dread that perhaps Cousin Agatha liked him the better of the two.

In a strange way, and rapidly, the girl developed during the three weeks that Agatha was with them.

Agatha divined the possibilities that lay dormant in the child. With worldly acumen she foresaw that if the girl was clever and had opportunities she might have a future before her.

Agatha, with good taste, refrained from worldly talk in her presence. She enjoyed the unsophisticated outpourings of her young mind. The child used to come into her room, dressed in a blue wrapper that Agatha had put together for her, and bring brush and comb, and while Agatha was brushing her truly magnificent hair, the child laid her dreams before her.

They were such sweet dreams, grandly simple: a husband, strong and true, children, and a beautiful ranch. She had seen the ranch of her dreams somewhere in the woods. She had looked into the windows of the house, for there was no one living there. She had seen a great fireplace. That is where they would sit in the evening. But she would not do like mother, work, nothing but work. They would fish together and shoot, dance, and ride, and travel to far off places. She would sing. But home should be in the woods near the sea.

Agatha was silent.

She felt as if she had come home from a feast, and that instead of finding herself filled with good things, she had found herself with her mouth full of sand. She had dreamt dreams like that, once.

She ran her hands through the soft, shining mass of hair, and said to herself as she looked down into the artless face that youth was verily a lovely thing.

It is nowhere recorded why Agatha abandoned her half-formed plan of taking the child in hand, taking her into town, and bringing her out in London later on, if possible.

If Kate could realise her dream, her life would hold all that a woman's life can hold of happiness and sorrow, but always with a fair preponderance of joy.

Agatha was just enough to see that if she had been busy pouring water through a sieve all her life that she must not complain. If through her own doing she had just missed being a great deal happier, she was too open-minded to blame anyone, and too philosophical to blame herself.

She took good care not to touch by look or word the dreams of the little dreamer who sat at the foot end of her bed.

To such ingenious confessions, the worldly wisdom of the older woman had nothing to oppose.

Agatha, with her quick appreciation of the beautiful, found true pleasure in putting little finishing touches to the child's somewhat meagre wardrobe.

However poor the girl's clothes might be, they were always in good taste. In this way Kate had grasped

the fundamental rules of good dressing. When in later years she became one of the most beautiful women in Canada first, and afterwards in England, the hand that had come to choose amongst the best of old world stores of lace and jewels knew no mistakes.

Agatha feasted upon the girl's exquisite coloring, and wondered what she would be like in a few years' time.

She was going to be so fatefully worth while.

Agatha had an involuntary movement, a yearning to shield the younger sister from the too-severe handling of her dreams, so fine in their singleness.

It was not wise to rouse too soon those sleeping arts, which, combining with the Devil's beauty, lend to all women at one period of their lives the grandeur of destiny.

Agatha put herself between the child and the looking glass, as if in so doing she could postpone the moment when the child, meeting her own reflection, must know that she was beautiful.

The lavender riband that she had twisted around her head with such elaborate care, pleased her but half, and taking the dear's face between her hands she looked into the eager eyes, kissed the young lips, and told her to run off and play.

Agatha and the two youngsters had planned a picnic together. Well stocked with sandwiches, cake and fruit they were going to follow one of the roads through the woods, and spend the day, where, and how, they pleased.

Mary undertook to look after the commissariat. When the day came she sent them off with enough good things to last them over a couple of days, should they lose their way.

Agatha was touched at the various little things that the children had planned for her comfort. They carried a couple of cushions and a rug and an elaborate tripodal erection was stowed in the wagon. It had been schemed to simplify the getting in and out. As usual Tommy carried his full complement of nails, hammer, and axe, and a kettle for boiling water.

It was after they had stopped for the first rest, and an impromptu luncheon not on the original programme that Kate suddenly conceived the brilliant idea of going on to the Old Mill. They would go and pay a visit to Uncle Doctor.

Agatha was complaisant. She listened with nice appreciation to the enumeration of the delightful possibilities of the old place and its owner. She laughed heartily at the gasconade of their merry doings there.

Could she have foreseen who was the host at the Old Mill she would not perhaps have stepped down quite so blythely between his two rows of maples.

When she saw who the man was, busy in front of the house turning his union crop, which was drying in the sun, and sifting his seeds and sorting them, she stopped, aghast.

She recovered herself quickly, and held out her hand with a very good show of self-possession not devoid of grace. The natural ease of her manner helped her

splendidly, and lent even a certain amount of dignity to a rather difficult moment.

Agatha's sensation at meeting an affianced husband after many years was peculiar in being not altogether unpleasant, if somewhat disconcerting.

She had jilted him years ago.

She knew that he had married later. She had also heard the story of his divorce.

As happens often in such cases, the woman gained her self-possession first.

She remarked upon the charm of the old place, the garden, the children. Her busy thoughts the while looking in vain for the cause why so good a man should have been so luckless in his love making. She would not admit to herself that her attachment for him had been strong. It had not been true. She had married the other man.

She knew nothing of the doctor's feelings. They had not met again after she had written the letter, and he too had married.

Maybe, that he had loved the other woman. To judge by the sort of life he must have led out there by himself, it was very likely that he had.

After the manner of women she got at all this in an incredibly short time, by intuition, without the intervention of known facts or conscious reasoning.

What bitterness there had been on either side had long since been utterly surpassed by the more momentous events of their later life.

The doctor's greeting after their mutual recognition was almost cordial.

"It is a small world, Mrs. Waring," he said, apologizing for his soiled hands and garments.

It is in just such a manner that men and women have come upon their aftermath.

Agatha and the doctor knew after having been together for a few minutes, that their erstwhile friendship had had no reason for ever assuming a differnt name.

There was no aftermath for them.

The discovery gave Agatha a certain sense of relief, and when the doctor rejoined them under the veranda, after having washed and got into some clean clothes, they spontaneously held out their hands.

Neither of them spoke, but involuntarily they looked away from one another towards the sea, where, in the misty midday light, the islands floated in the bluish haze like enchanted isles of fairy tale and mystic chant.

"Come and see my garden," he said to her.

Now if Agatha excelled in any one thing, it was in gardening.

There was not on the whole of the island or mainland another garden like her own.

If fancy took her, and it took her quite often and at a moment's notice, she was capable of leaving her garden to wither and die. It had been known to scorch through the long summer days, the lawns burnt, the path baked by heat, and choked by weeds. All the pretty flowers making haste to return to their prototypes. Pink and white ramblers rambling with the mad intemperance of freed bondmaids.

Just now Agatha was gardening, and never before had her twenty acres on the slope of a hill looking towards the straits and towards the glory of the Olympions held such beauty.

To sit in her garden under the oaks at the end of June or the beginning of July was to drink deeply at the streams of Lethe. Greater beauty did the world hold nowhere.

It was Agatha's genius which had ordered the mating between art and nature with such true mastery that none could divine the moment of the happy marriage.

There was a woman once who came into her garden. Not bid there, as were others, to her feasts of roses, and as they, decked in purple and fine linen, but called there, an afterthought.

She came alone, timid in her work-day clothes.

She raised the latch, and directed her step towards the white bungalow.

It was deserted.

She had been forgotten.

There, across the sea, the snow-tipped hills were glowing with the afterlight. The rose mauves and orange greens were shimmering through their translucent peaks.

The garden was Elysian in its beauty.

For happy hours the woman walked about, alone.

Very late in the evening, the would-be hostess returned, two men, some women. Their laughter preceded the rumbling of the wheels on the gravel.

They saw a woman walking about among the borders.

Agatha, as she recognised her, recalled the invitation given casually in an offhand way.

She was spared the futility of excuses taken at random in her store of trite untruths.

The woman came up to them with shining eyes and humble, palpitating words.

With extended hands she thanked Agatha for the joy she had given her.

The women fluttered a bit, uncomfortably.

Then they turned their heads. Their shifty eyes, though kept in leash by years of training, would not meet hers. They slipped her by, the meaning of their purpose half divined.

The woman stopped suddenly. Terribly embarrassed.

The men, God help them, taking the cue from their women friends, watched her go down the path alone, and disappear into the darkening road.

They ate one of Sing's most excellent suppers. They sang songs. They laughed and made merry.

No one made mention of the incident in the garden.

Long after they were gone Agatha sat with head in her hands, and did some tall thinking.

The finer fibres of her nature were in revolt. Nausea had her at the pit of the stomach.

Who were these men and women, her guests, who dared such things?

What they had done that night was infamous.

They had gone too far.

She went down the line of her list of acquaintances.

They were all of that type. The exceptions did not count. Cads they were at heart. And why prosperity should bring forth such progeny she could not fathom.

What was it?

Was there some subtle, potent poison that came with the coming of wealth?

What possible connection was there between those people and her lovely garden?

How came they there?

Not one of her guests of that evening had been born to wealth or position. What they had, all they had, had been acquired. Some of them had toiled for it hard and long. What corrosive metal process had they gone through since their first lucky deal or prosperous transaction?

Long since they had lost the faculty of recognising anything, anyone outside of their own plane.

Nothing interested them that bore not the stamp of wealth or position. Wealth and position by preference, and in default, the semblance of either.

Who escaped their influence?

What was there left where their pernicious ascendency did not come in and spread its insidious canker?

If the world was full of it, let the world deal with it, but here! Here?

These were holy hills, and seas and woods should stay undefiled.

That night Agatha had stretched her arms towards the glorious hills, almost divine in the moonlight.

How could they make answer to such as she?

In a land like this, to make money the standard was an act of blashemy. Who could look upon this country with its woods and waterways, its hills and girding seas without feeling that the Hand that had kept it virgin had done so to some greater purpose?

Think of the little snobs counting their little heaps of money under the shade of those great trees, and in the shadow of the stern hills! They should be wary lest the sound of their tinkling coin catch the ear of the coming multitudes.

They might thirst with the same thirst, work with the same aim, live to the same end.

And if so, what then?

For many a long day yet the country needed the hand that will work and will make light of labor, and the mind that will grapple with problems and die unrepaid.

Great souls and humble hearts go to such fundamental groundwork.

Agatha was not sentimental, rarely demonstrative, but she wept aloud when she recalled the sudden look of pain that had come into the shining face of her forgotten guest.

She would make amends.

But Agatha was a great gardener, and a true artist, and even through her contrition she did not fail to savour the magnificent compliment her poor guest had paid to her skill.

When they had come upon her, she had been like one returned from other worlds.

She would make amends.

After that sickening nausea she had longed for the woods as never before. The memory of Mary Faire grew to fill her garden, so that she came upon her at all times when walking alone.

It was much easier to get away from her companions than to get away from herself.

Agatha was never lachrymose in her retrospections; had done nothing with her good resolutions, had not humoured her periodical returns of longing for the woods, knowing too well that her mode of living was a matter of deliberate choice, and that a few days of ranch life more than satisfied her.

But if she found herself that morning in the doctor's garden it was partly due to that night's business a good many years ago.

Curiously enough, and without any apparent cause, the whole thing came back to her, and not without a sharp pang of regret.

Even at that period of the year the doctor's garden was delightful. Things grew where and how they pleased. The dry heat of summer had thinned his beds down to dahlias and chrysanthemums; but there was still a good bit of color about.

They had a delightful meal in the dining-room from the store of Mary's basket. Agatha had to inspect the picture galleries, the kiln, and what other points of interest there were in the old place. The later part of the

afternoon found them in the hall at the back of the house. It was cool there, and the old settle near the one window with the bit of top light, made a good place for an afternoon rest and chat.

The doctor and Agatha had ample time for mutual examination.

The only woman that had graced the doctor's establishment for many a long day was Mary.

His misanthropy had gradually disappeared under the influence of the life he was leading. His friendship for John and Mary and his love for their children had saved him from loneliness.

He did not escape a certain sense of pleasure in welcoming Agatha.

They had left the door open, and could see the children playing in front of the house under the maples.

"What are they going to do with them?" Agatha said, watching them at their play.

"Send them to school, I think," said the doctor. "That is, if they are wise," he added.

"You do not know what you are saying."

"I have known them for a long time, and Tommy from his birth. Both the children were born out here. This is their country. To fully make them take possession of their birthright, they must take part in the life around them."

"You argue from your point of view. What do you out here in the woods know about life in the new towns?"

"The life in your new towns is going to be the life universal everywhere, very soon. How can they make the children fit to cope with modern problems if they keep them out here to themselves? So far all has been well. All the children should be brought up in the country. Towns are poor places for nurseries. Look at the boy. What harm could come to a chap like that now?"

"I grant you the boy," said Agatha. "What of the girl?"

"That is more complicated," the doctor admitted. "She is full of imagination. But she is strong and wholesome."

"When I think of the anxiety that children must be to the gentle poor I'm almost glad to be childless."

"That is because you make the mistake that so many of us make, of assigning to yourself too great a share of responsibility, and of making too much of the tenets of modern society. Because of this we are on the verge of degenerating into neurotic weaklings. The laboring people that come out here escape all this. For a time at least they will catch up to us. Have you noticed, when reading the literature disseminated through the agency of our transportation companies, that they bid for the primary stock? Some of their pamphlets go so far as to put in notes of warning to the gentle poor?"

"'Tis melancholy reading," Agatha said.

"Muscles and bones and unclouded brains have to go to the foundations," the doctor said.

"Oh!" said Agatha, "but I do not agree with them. We lack the people with histories and precedent. It is because of this that we are going ahead at such a tremendous rate in the new centres. We are unevenly balanced."

"All these things adjust themselves, and in spite of us, not because of us. This I have learned, if the country is good to the laboring poor it is better still to the gentle poor. It gives us a chance to return to simpler things, if we have sufficient courage and strength left. Go back a step or two, and pick up where we skipped, and that not necessarily by sacrificing too much."

"You are an idealist," Agatha broke in rather impatiently.

"I do not see that. Think of the numbers of poor gentlewomen at home, with their colorless lives, with their semi-invalidism, brought about by lack of true living interests? Would they not be better out here?"

"Good many who come are failures."

"Because they misunderstand themselves. Wherever such women have become part of the life and have toiled with their hands, they have earned their fair share of happiness."

The children passed and repassed the open door, and the two in the hall thought of John and Mary.

"We must keep in touch with the simple things," the doctor continued. "What help do we get from mere clever sophistications? We have not been able to think out anything greater than birth, marriage,

death. You and I came too late to these woods," he added sadly.

"Life is getting so terribly complicated, everywhere," Agatha said. "It has become the fashion to prate to us about the simple life. Who of us can lead it?"

"Yes," the doctor laughed. "The millionaire's simple life. The milk diet in golden goblets. The Tolstoian cabbage-growing with jeweled trowels. You are right, what help is that to us? It has no meaning to people that are really poor and yet feel the constant pressure from below without being able to make headway. But if such can get loose and come out here, they may take breath and get ready for better things."

"The life is hard, and does not lead to wealth."

"They must pay the price. They get independence. That is better than mere wealth. I'm getting old, but I'm satisfied. Think what a man could make out of it, coming in the strength of his young manhood?"

And, as if to answer his question for him, young Stubb, Dunraven Stubb, came up the drive.

He came at a good swinging pace, a clear look in his eyes. His freckles had run into one another over his nose and at the temples, and there was a fine, breezy wholesomeness in his gait.

He wore blue overalls and a broad-brimmed hat, well back on his head.

The doctor got to his feet.

"I've come to say good-bye," the young fellow said.

"Where are you going to, old man?" the doctor asked.

"Not very far. I'm going on to my ranch. Jim Culver and I are going into the wood business."

Coming in as he did out of the sunlight, he did not at once see Agatha .

It was dark in the hall.

Agatha, sitting in the corner of the settle, kept as quiet as a mouse.

The boy had been growing tremendously since she had seen him last. She speculated to what extent she had been instrumental in his growth, and hoped that she had been forgiven such subordinate means.

It was her laugh that gave her away.

Stubb knew it at once.

"Wherever do you come from?" he said, as he saw Mrs. Waring in the prettiest of pink organdies come out of her dark corner.

"Oh, Stubby," she laughed. "Think of the cow."

"The brute. She is the best butter-maker for miles round. The Armstrongs have got her. I have been living with them on Sheep Island for the last month. Mrs. Armstrong has taught me some cooking."

Agatha quivered with suppressed merriment. She caught a laugh just in time, and bit her lips.

The boy was in dead earnest.

"Where do you come from?" Dunraven repeated.

"I'm staying with the Faires. It is a psychological moment in my life, and I'm waiting for the third event," Agatha ventured, not too certain of herself.

She failed to rouse any response. Her merriment was a little one-sided. Young Stubb had a way of

making his eyebrows meet over his straight nose, and Agatha, who knew the ways of man, and his ways in particular, saw the sign, and was wise.

The doctor had stood a little apart, much puzzled to find that these two knew one another, and at the tone of their banter.

Dunraven was not going to stay, and after getting the doctor to promise that he would go to see him sometimes, he took his leave.

"Stubby," Agatha said as they stood a moment under the veranda. "Won't you say, thank you."

The boy's brow contracted for a moment, then he laughed good naturedly.

"Thank you," he said.

"Say it nicely," Agatha said. "Say, thank you, dear Mrs. Waring."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Waring."

He said it nicely.

He was really fond of her, and wished that he had nothing to remember against her.

"I've been an awful fool," the boy said.

"Forgive me," she said, putting out her hand. Her eyes were moist. "Do not worry" he said taking her hand. "I'm coming out on top."

He did not tell her that his allowance from home had been stopped, nor that he had been living on an island on five dollars and oatmeal. He did not tell her of his tipsy bout, and how near he had come to making an awful mess of it all.

Young Dunraven Stubb was all right.

During the years that followed, he worked hard, and made little money.

He wrote home occasionally.

He washed his clothes, and chopped trees in earnest. He peddled his wood in town, and came into competition with Chinamen, Jap and Hindoo. He ran his one cow milk through a separator and got groceries for the butter, and sometimes money. Very little money. He fed the skimmed milk to the pig and chickens. He raised vegetables, ate them, and exchanged the surplus.

As the clearing went on, he grew grain and cut hay, and fed it to the stock. He planted an orchard. Grew raspberries, and lay out an acre in strawberry plants.

Inch by inch he took possession of his land. Did it with his two hands.

And what he did, Jim Culver did also. At home, when they got his rare letters the brother's wife read them.

The mother had died.

It is a good thing that the boy could not hear their inane remarks. They might have had the same effect upon him as the fatal box with the satin wrapper had had on poor Betty Culver.

He could not make them understand the manner of his life. He had barely got them to address his letters properly.

They knew that he was somewhere out West.

They put special directions in brackets at the right hand foot corner of the envelope.

The brother's wife was geographically obtuse, and was quite content to think that Dunraven was doing well for himself. Where, and how, was his affair.

He was not asking for money.

They sent him a plum pudding at Christmas, and all the holiday papers.

For awhile young Dunraven Stubb must walk out of the tale.

He passed Mrs. Waring, covered himself, and went down between the maples.

At the bend, he caught a glimpse of Kate sitting on the landing looking towards the islands.

Her red hair hung down her back. She was dangling her long legs over the side of the pier.

As usual in her self-absorbed moments, she was singing.

Young Dunraven stopped to look at her, wondered at the sweetness of her profile, and the wicked color of her hair, swung himself on to his pony, and was gone.

A woman who should read this would naturally ask herself why Agatha Waring wore pink organdies in the bush in the morning. It is a proper question, and should have a proper answer. Cool linen and serviceable duck were the materials she affected for such occasions as a rule.

Kate had determined her choice that morning.

The girl's innocent admiration pleased her, and Kate had pleaded the cause of the pink organdies.

Agatha was a past master in color cosmetics, and she knew what a bit of pink could do for her chin. The neck lines were getting hard to manage.

That goes to show that with all her cleverness she was but primordial.

A miserable feeling of loneliness came over her. Though she had filled her life with a hundred and one things, it was an empty life. It had no more body to it than the silly little pink frills of her silly pink dress.

At that moment she had it in her heart to envy them their hard lives, those other women like Mary Faire, with their child-bearing and endless toil.

Half the charm in Agatha lay in her shouldering her own responsibilities. She was honest with herself. She knew that her regrets would be barren of good results.

She had been a charming companion to many men, and to a few women. She had been a poor mother, an indifferent wife, but she had not pretended.

By the time the boy had disappeared at the bend of the road she had turned the laugh against herself.

Some years after there was to be another pink frock. A marvel of daintiness. It had taken ten French needlewomen ten long days for the sewing alone. It took an old Frenchwoman, artist to the finger tips in these matters, anxious hours to determine her choice of lace and ribbons.

It was a dream of a dress, and the girl who wore it was surpassingly lovely in it.

She put it on for the special purpose of confounding her young husband. Therefore, when he saw her in it and she noticed him draw his brows together, she came close and asked questions.

Nothing could she make of his answers, less it was this that she must not wear it.

Considering the color of her hair, it was wonderful to remember the meekness with which she yielded to his whim.

But it was to come stranger still.

No, she should wear her pink frock if she liked. She need not take it off at all. And he kissed her on her red lips. And this is what he said : " Poor Agatha Waring."

And then the girl bride, who still had her head upon his shoulder had nothing left of sweetness but her sweet profile.

Her hair had a wicked color, and her eyes were hot with anger.

" Agatha Waring," she said between her moist lips, all her little white teeth glistening, sharp and even. " She always wore pink organdies. She wore pink that morning. I made her put it on."

She got the dress off in a moment, made a ball of it, and threw it into a corner.

" You were in love with her," she said.

Of course, the three-fourth of Anglo-Saxon revolted at this, but see what a French great great grandmother may do with a quarter of good Latin blood.

"You were a very little girl then," her young husband remarked, marvelling at the the beauty of the girl and the smallness into which Agatha's glorified muslin (a small matter of seventy-five pounds sterling, custom house, freight, packing, ribbons, lace, material, etc., etc., not included) could squeeze.

"That is the reason why you do not like my pink frock," the girl said, and going down upon her knees she rescued the ball from the back of the couch and put it on again laboriously, for she had made a sad garment of it.

Her young husband kept his arms crossed upon his breast, and watched her with contracted brows and laughter in his eyes.

"Why do you let all sorts of women make love to you?" she said, struggling with the buttons at the back.

To this young husband held his tongue, but he offered to help her or ring for her maid.

"I shall have to wear pink for the rest of my life," she said looking down upon the wreck, ignoring his offer.

The manner of the girl's wooing had been shameless to a degree, and when she had moments of retrospection she wondered at herself.

He had learned the sign.

Though she had been the first to speak their love, he could not have told when he first loved her.

She looked up suddenly.

He knew the sign, and that never again must he let her do the wooing with her lips.

But Suzette, the French maid, who damped the frock with water and borax, and ironed it on the wrong side next morning, said that the English bread was good for sandwiches. That English cooking was English cooking. She was not going to quarrel with her pay or with her mistress. But the dress was a scandal, and as she was not going to be taken to the far off savage country they were going back to, neither she nor any of the frocks it was her special duty to care for, she might just as well go back to France, and marry Antoine.

Yes Agatha Waring had it in her heart to laugh at herself.

If there was just a little touch of bitterness in her laugh, it was the common lot of men and women to have to reap what they sow. Most of them do not see the connection between the two operations. A few clever ones do, and that is where the hurt comes in.

She saw the boy ride down the path, saw him pause for a moment looking at Kate swinging her long legs over the edge of the pier, ride away, and disappear behind the maples.

From the hall the doctor got a side view of Agatha standing on the veranda. He made her come in and sit down.

A woman does not go on looking young indefinitely.

Not even with the help of pink muslins and color cosmetics.

IX.

STET.

Gordon. Khartoum. The Mahdi.

Three names.

See, how in a few bold strokes and in a moment, they paint one of the greatest tragedies the world has known.

But how great the white stucco walls of the palace, the blue waters of the blue Nile, the peaceful rose gardens, and those tragic stairs leading into the Court, resounding with the cry of "Allah, Allah, Akbar," no one knew on that fateful morning.

A good many years have come and gone since then. But now, upon the back of the retina there lives clear and untarnishable, the picture of an Englishman going to his death.

It takes years to give the proper point of view to things historical. While yet the painter paints his work is but a labored mass of pigments. "Stand off," he says, "and wait.'

It is a long way from the waters of the blue Nile of those fateful days to the greatwoods of the Pacific of our peaceful hour. Occasionally, men upon their travels would come across the little wooden house and ask of John: "What do you think of this country?"

John, looking up with the eyes of a dreamer, and with the hands of a laborer would say: "I have little time to think. I'm working."

He was working hard, and that was a foolish question to ask.

He, John, and others like him were making history.

Deep in the struggle for his daily bread, simple and whole-hearted in all he did, he paused only to take needed rest, and did not often have time to probe into the why and wherefore.

He and Jim Culver, and later Dunraven Stubb and occasionally the doctor, over their pipes by the fire, fresh from reading some article by the pen of men or women but newly come to the country, would talk.

They were sober in their speech, and sparing of their words. But sometimes their ire rose strong and hot, and young Dunraven, being the youngest, would laugh loud and long, while the older men sat and smoked in silence.

"Why don't they come and live the life they are writing about? What do they know about it Look at this chap here. He has got a full page of stuff about the fishing. And here is this woman again with her blue sky and gush about roses and climate. She has got a full length portrait at the head of the society column. What rot," he would say.

Men who have been set down in the woods to get through as best they can have a way of taking things in grim earnest.

There was no one to record the story of their labors. It makes poor copy to write about the few pounds of butter, the bag of cabbages, the crate of fruit, the side of pig meat, wrung from the newly-cleared soil. Poor reading to write about the few dollars squeezed from the living brain, and used as purchase money for the home, and poorer reading still to write about poultry farming exchanged for faith and self-respect.

There was no one to record the lives of their women. Who ever saw their names amongst the lists of guests? Who ever read about their frocks? Who cared if they lived or died?

It makes exceedingly bad copy to write about their holy mission.

Execrable copy to write about their solitary labors, their hurried visits to the hospital, their doubts and ecstacies, their tears and hopes, and all the bitter-sweet of their humble lives.

The call is for the thick top cream; success that counts by dollars.

The man with the record bag and the woman with the smart dress and conventional rhapsodies did not touch upon the life. Did not scratch the surface of things.

The pigments were still wet on the palette. The painter held the brush between his teeth, barely had the ground plan been laid for his work. Khartoum can not be measured by the number of steps leading to the Court. Khartoum is Gordon. History says Gordon.

These were early days yet, and it takes years to give a proper point of view to things historical.

Young Dunraven, who had the pride of Lucifer over his first few dollars, took all things seriously.

The older men held back, chary of their words. They were content to work and wait.

They knew that there could be no measuring their labors by results.

The years came and went slowly. Very slowly John was making a name for himself in his profession, and paying for his home.

Since first they started upon their new life, all his spare energies had concentrated upon his bit of land.

He was steadfast in his purpose, but that does not mean that he had not had moments when he had almost despaired of ever getting to the goal.

Since the fire the thought of Mary had troubled him.

He saw that she ought to be relieved from work and care for awhile, and leave the woods.

As if in answer to his thought, Agatha on the evening after the picnic had suggested that Mary should come to town and spend sometime with her at the bungalow. To this plan Mary's objections could not hold out.

Agatha's visit to the woods was soon a thing of the past. Her stay of three weeks but a memory. To Kate it left a legacy of unrest.

She began to long for the things she could not have, she could not be.

When the day came, Kate and Tommy took Agatha to the train. They had begged that they might see her off alone. Agatha, looking out of the railway carriage, saw the children standing in front of the little station waving good-bye. There were tears in Kate's eyes and as they drove back over the lonely road they felt for the first time the sorrow of leave taking.

The woods seemed empty.

Her mother found Kate later in Agatha's room, and when she came in the child threw herself into her arms in a very passion of tears.

The mother knew then that it was time that new interests should come into her life, and that it was her duty that she herself should open the door to the outer world.

Agatha had left a trinket for Kate, a small locket on a gold chain. The mother put it around the girl's neck and spoke to her gentle words of comfort.

After that the child developed quickly. She grew like a weed.

New frocks had to be made. The tucks, even when let out, did not make last year's winter dresses long enough.

There were still days when she romped with Tommy, and others when she got out her doll, but they grew to be rarer, little by little.

She spent all her spare time in reading.

She devoured anything in print that came within her reach.

She was a strange mixture of boy and girl, child and woman.

She was marvellously capable, and wonderfully useless.

Her father understood her not at all. Her mother would speak to her as woman to woman, and find that she was talking into the ears of a child, and then again she would reach out and meet a soul deep and mysterious.

At times Kate was quite plain.

Her lanky limbs without grace. Her hair dull and small attraction in her features. And then again there would be a day when her beauty startled her mother.

What would she do with her sweet loveliness and with her inconsistencies of temperament?

Mary's visit to town had been planned to November.

There was a great deal yet to do in orchard and garden. Sometimes the morning lessons had to be left out and the three had to work outside.

It was her ambition to leave the wardrobe, house, and farm in perfect order before going on her holiday.

What heart searchings she went through during her sewing and house cleaning would puzzle anyone who had not gone through a similar experience.

She had been so absorbed by her care for her dear ones, by her love for the woods, that she could not think of herself as leading a life apart from them and away from her beloved trees. Many times a day she was on the point of drawing back, but the longing, the strange feeling of unrest was there, and if she was

to fail them now what would they do? It would be good for Kate to feel the weight of responsibility, and John was determined that she should take a rest.

For years they had had to count each incoming and outgoing coin. As things were Mary could not spend any money upon her clothes.

It is, therefore, a rather strange collection of things which found their way into the trunk when she was finally ready to pack.

It is impossible to detach a woman's personality from her clothes. Mary's wardrobe spread out on her bed, told the simple sincerity of her life much more eloquently that any words.

There were her blue house dresses, with their clean white bands, all the plain everyday garments made by her hands, two dinner dresses. They had not seen the light for many a long day. The black velvet dress that had belonged to her mother, with good old lace at the neck, and a little grey silk dress that had been fresh years ago, when she came out. There was a bundle of exquisite underclothes, remains of her trousseau, and a little box that held some old jewels.

To Kate all this was wonderful. When she had coaxed her mother into the black dress, she looked at her with new eyes, and remembered her talks with the doctor.

It is a most thrilling experience in a girl's life when she first begins to think of her mother as a woman, and Kate and Mary were getting to that point when they would be able to meet as woman with woman.

It only took twenty minutes by train, and as many more driving from the station to Agatha's bungalow, but it seemed hours to Mary since she had left her house in the woods, and when she found herself alone in the rooms which she was to occupy for the next month.

Agatha, who came in to see after the comfort of her guest, found her near the window.

Mary had that same far off look that she had had years ago when Agatha came upon her in the garden.

The garden was still beautiful with its great oak trees. The lawns and paths were strewn with leaves defying the gardener's rake, and chasing down the hill they made yellow and brown heaps under the hedges. There were still borders that gleamed with colors.

As long as the frost kept away there were roses to pick, chrysanthemums and dahlias to choose from. There were still great masses of giant daisies in secluded pots. On the hills new snow had fallen over night. Their pure white ridges showed their keen edges against the blue of the sky. Any time winter might come now.

But who cared? With roses climbing at the door and mignonette that might hold out till Christmas?

At the foot of the hill she could see the town. First homes set in gardens. Then houses and streets, and further away the business portions of the town, with churches and hotels and high buildings stretching to the wharves.

With a nucleus of the hum of life and the smoke of industries, she looked down upon what was going to be some day one of the greatest cities on the Pacific.

"Do you remember," Agatha said, pointing towards the oak trees, "we came up that drive, and you stood there?"

Mary knew what she meant.

"What did you think of us? What did you think of me?"

"I have never understood those people that night. Nor you," Mary said.

Agatha saw Mary's clothes laid out on the bed. She had begun to unpack. Nothing could have brought home to Agatha the simple beauty of the other woman's life as these few garments.

A man's coat will hang according to his station in life. No matter what he wears, he does not make himself over again.

It is not so with women always. No one but a woman, and that a Mary Faire, could have had just such a wardrobe.

Agatha took in the story of her life at a glance.

"I'm afraid I'm rather shabby. You must leave me out of your gay doings," Mary said, following the trend of the other's thoughts, a little embarassed.

Agatha laughed.

"No," she said, "They'll have to put up with your clothes this time."

A good many years had passed since that little incident in the garden. The two women had walked away from it, in different directions.

Mary towards the finer things of life, and Agatha picking her way towards the upper rung.

The two women had the house to themselves.

Sing, the cook, and Greta, the Danish housemaid, ministered to their wants.

For a week Agatha looked upon Mary as her patient and insisted upon her keeping perfectly quiet.

They read and talked together.

Her official introduction to Agatha's friends took place at the end of that time.

Agatha gave an at home.

It would make tame reading to enter into the description of such a function. Anyone passing that way, and having a sufficiently fine frock will be asked in due time to these gatherings. They occupy two or three afternoons of the would-be worldly, and mark the high water line of prosperity.

On the special afternoon in question, Agatha's bungalow was full of women. It was November. There were yellow chrysanthemums, light laughter, good things to eat, cozy fires. All the women wore pretty frocks, gay hats. The majority were well dressed.

There were no men.

Not one. The men were at work.

These were early days yet. Their absence accentuated the fact.

Agatha moved about amongst her guests in her peculiar way. Her manner was faultless. She was a charming hostess.

To tell how Agatha had learnt to handle her material is telling a good part of her life.

Waring, who had been wealthy at the time of their marriage, had lost his money.

They had come out without means. They had taken a small cottage in a quiet street. By a mere bit of chance, Jack got into an office doing a commission business.

For two years they lived a quiet life. They had no means, no servants. Agatha did her own work, did it well or not at all by fits and starts.

At the end of that time the little child died. A little, pale-faced girl.

Agatha was free.

She determined to make use of her freedom, and to put her two years of probation to good use.

She had not to count with her mother instincts. If she had had any, which was doubtful, they had died with the child.

At that time she knew her milkman, one or two trade people with whom she had had dealings, a couple of neighbours. She knew a doctor, had spoken to a clergyman.

She had had ample time to study local conditions.

Jack, who was as honest as the day, was not brilliant. He earned just enough to pay for the rent of their cottage and their food.

Agatha saw the chances that there were for brains. She used hers.

Jack's appearance was against him. Though of good family he looked ordinary. His coat did not hang well on his squat figure. He was the exception to the rule.

Agatha counteracted the effect by dropping a few good names. It was done in such a clever way that the source of information could not be traced to her.

Some man put Waring up at the club.

How she managed to become the centre of a small group of smart women, only she herself could have told.

Her progress had been rapid. She had used her opportunities with skill.

She had gone into drawing-rooms full of indifferent or hostile women, had entered into a sort of silent brain duel, and had come out triumphant.

Here is a sample.

She had been asked to a tea. It was still at the beginning of her career, and she knew practically nobody.

She sat between two women, eating sandwiches and sipping tea.

The women were very fine. Furtively appraising one another's clothes, praising the lovely flowers, and the good cheer.

"Beautiful daffodils," Agatha said pleasantly to her right hand neighbour.

The woman, a Mrs. Smith-Brown, the wife of a successful tradesman, ignored the remark. She had not met Agatha before in smart society. She was too uncertain of her position to run any risks.

"Nice sandwiches," Agatha, smiling with amusement at the inanity of her remark, ventured to her neighbour on the left, a Mrs. Brown-Smith. Source of wealth unknown.

The woman lifted her nose, and said without turning her head that he she did not like that particular kind of sandwich.

The hostess was to add her note to this characteristic incident.

Seeing Agatha, she crossed the whole length of the room, bent on introducing her to Mrs. Smith-Brown and to Mrs. Brown-Smith.

Agatha stopped her.

"Please," she said sweetly and audibly, "please don't, dear Mrs. Williams."

So far, all this is simple enough, and normal.

Yet on Agatha's day Sing, who had then taken charge of their cottage, brought on a silver salver the names of these very women.

Agatha was charming.

The two women in their very best of best clothes sat uncomfortably on the edge of their chairs.

They did their best to understand Agatha, her house, Sing.

They made their round of her tiny room, taking in what they saw without comprehending.

Agatha, knitting a domestic-looking sock, watched them.

Sing, faultless in white, brought in the tea.

His service was perfect.

Long before they had eaten their first bit of cake they knew that they were beaten.

Badly beaten, too.

Agatha used those two women for all they were worth.

Mrs. B.-S. and Mrs. S.-B. had had a long line of successors.

Agatha dropped women and picked up others as she needed them.

She knew where the weak spot lay, and made the most of her knowledge.

They were all playing the same game. With a key to their system, she used each in turn as stepping stones.

The days when Agatha had had to count with a Mrs. B.-S. and a Mrs. S.-B. were long past. The tables had been completely turned, and she had done the turning with her own clever hands.

She had exchanged dwelling-places at the same rate as she had friends.

Half-a-dozen homes lay between the cottage in the by-street they had dwelt in when they first came to the country, and the white, luxurious bungalow in the lovely garden on the hill.

If she found, after having changed her neighbourhood, that it had given her all it could, she looked about and with unerring foresight made a new and better choice.

This is not an anathema; it is not an exoneration.

Agatha's methods were her own.

During their first two years, she had had ample time to study the situation. They had had no money, no friends. Her loneliness had been appalling at times. Circumstances had put her on the index. There was no appeal. Unless she could command nothing would come to her.

A woman like Agatha could not live her life over a kitchen sink. She lacked the faculty of idealising. Her reason would have laughed, and did laugh, as a matter of fact, at such waste of intelligence.

There were others who could wash dishes, and do it infinitely better than herself. Sing for example.

While the child lived, and while both her energies and their resources were taxed to the uttermost, she had no choice. She accepted the situation.

The child died. Out there God's acre lies by the sea, open to all the winds that blow, the constant toss and moan of the waves, and the consolation of the glorious hills.

The obituary notice had said, 'No flowers,' and had named an early hour for a private burial.

Waring was not in the habit of going very deeply into his wife's moods.

At the grave, such a narrow one, the last look at the small coffin, with the single wreath of white flowers had made him shake with suppressed sobs. Agatha had looked on with dry eyes. It was she who gave the sign for leaving, and she who found words to thank the clergyman.

"Never again," she said during the drive home, "I am ready."

Waring did not understand the meaning of her words.

"We have been here for two years," she continued, looking out of the carriage window, and, as if talking to herself and marking off the fingers of her left hand, as if counting. "We are in debt. The debts will have to be paid. I do not know a living soul in the place. I have practically not spoken to a man or woman since we came."

"You have got to begin at the bottom of the ladder. It is an understood thing when you come out here as we did," Waring said.

"Not a bit of it. If you do it is your own fault. You must take the place that belongs to you in the line. We are a hard people. We despise poverty. We bully the weak and the timid. We have no sympathy with failures. I have not."

"What do you want me to do?" he said, puzzled. His thoughts were with the little one. It was a lovely churchyard, and full of peace.

"Nothing," she said. "We have no business to live as we are doing. We shall be where we are now in ten years, in twenty. Who cares if you are honest, if you are not smart? Who cares what I am, who I am, if I lead this sort of life? I have had twenty-four months of penal servitude."

The dull pain that racked Waring was not lessened by her ruthless words.

"You are not smart, and I . . ." Here she lost herself, the hopeless tears of despair repressed again, threatening to choke her.

"But," she continued, "if it is only that, I can use my brains. I will be smart for both of us. I will give them all the clothes they want."

"But," Waring said incredulously, revolting at the ugly word, "you cannot really care for that sort of thing?"

"No," she said. "I do not really care for that sort of thing. "But if I must choose between dish washing and using my brains to get someone else to do it for me, I chose the latter."

They had had to go back to an empty house. Agatha had slipped into an apron that hung on the kitchen door. There was much to do. The last few days had been like a nightmare. The waking worse than the dream.

Waring did not know that in putting her hand into one of its pockets it had closed on one of the child's toys.

The pitiful sorow of it all, and the mockery of the false words, how it burst upon him as he saw her pale and sway!

He was just in time to save her from falling. In the sorrows that were to come to him later, he always saw her with her hand clasping the toy, groping blindly with the other one for help.

Agatha wore no mourning, and three days later Sing came and took charge of the Waring establishment.

After that Agatha did not count with her hurts.

She had no compunction.

She made no true friends, only acquaintances.

She studied the women she met, as men do their professions.

From each she took in turn what she needed. The friend of yesterday, became the enemy of to-day, and the ally of to-morrow.

The house was perfectly ordered. She began to ask people to dine. As a rule she asked men, occasionally a woman, if she knew how to dress and how to be amuing.

She ignored snubbing, but made an extensive study of the methods of snobs, and improved on them, using their weapons with marvellous skill.

She resuscitated long-forgotten crests. The Waring coat of arms did good service, and so did a few dead ancestors. She was lucky in possessing a little good silver, some old jewels, a few bits of fine lace.

It all helped, and in Agatha's hands was played off with such ability that they became part of her most valuable assets.

It was a long road and a hard one. Agatha alone could have told how long and how hard. If her feet hurt she kept them well tucked away out of sight.

Jack Waring?

Jack Waring stayed with his affairs and a very small salary till Agatha had something better for him.

Waring changed occupations quite as often as they had changed their place of dwelling. And change was always towards something more remunerative.

The last bit of the run was perhaps the hardest. Agatha did it in splendid style, and came out victorious.

Counting the dead on a battlefield won't get at the cost of war.

Occasionally Agatha had felt sorry for some silly little woman anxious to play the game, but she thought of her two years' dish washing, and set her teeth.

There came a time when Waring began to make money. He began to do it on his own account. Things were coming his way.

But Jack Waring was drinking. Hard and long sometimes.

Agatha had lost her illusions. Life was as hard at the top as it was at the bottom.

What is a woman's life without love?

Jack might have taken more fully possession of her that morning when they came home from burying the child if he could have grasped her mood.

The two got into the habit of quarrelling, and as the two both felt the indignity of their fruitless disputes they lived their lives a great deal apart.

Agatha had gained her ends. She had her bungalow and lovely gardens. She had a banking account. She chose acquaintances as and when she pleased. Waring had but to stay with it, and some day he would be one of the wealthy men.

These were solid facts, and had to outweigh the more illusive ones of mere emotional sensibility.

There was no haggling over the price, unless Waring's dipsomania and Agatha's nausea could not be accepted as equivalents.

X.

ALERE FLAMMAM.

Some time after Christmas, in the early part of Spring, and on a day when the winds play with the sleet, and when the sloppy garden paths and the frost-blackened flower borders look their saddest, the post-man may bring the animal seed catalogue.

It is a nice feeling to cut the new pages, see sweet peas and roses laugh from the cover, and plan for spring sowing while yet the garden is white with snow and the Yule log burning on the hearth.

To the artist gardener these catalogues have come to mean two or three names.

The names of the great wizards in botany, who put their genius to evolving for them the new flower that is going to adorn their garden, and make the border where they bloom the Mecca of their gardening friends.

It makes the brain reel to think of the long lines of flowers involved in such productions.

But it is a lamentable fact that very little time and just a touch of nature will start them on their down-ward run, and make their seedless queens, their double cups, their giant corollas, at one again with humble protoplast.

That day of Agatha's at home, Mary, after having gone through a number of introductions, found herself absorbed in watching the throng of women as they passed her in groups or formed small coteries.

A great many of the women were pretty, some were beautiful.

Mary admired what, after her long years of seclusion, seemed a brilliant scene.

The women in their finery were, to her naive fancy, the sisters of those lovely flowers of which she had seen the illustrations in the new catalogues, and over which she and Agatha had pored in their quiet evenings.

She did not know how very close she came to the truth with her simile.

They differed only in so far from the seedless queens, the double cups, the giant corollas, in that they were not so very far removed from humble protoplast.

Mary, with her simple life, her deep sentiment, her almost elementary love for husband and children, found that she could not understand the language of these women.

Some spoke to her, and she was rational enough in her answers, but the tittle tattle that buzzed past her ears had no meaning to her, and she had to strain to catch their point of view.

To one accustomed to take even the humblest task seriously, and to look upon her life, tinted as it was by the majesty of the woods, as a solemn thing, it was not easy to take up with their complaisant babble.

The quick smile, the imperceptible nod, the scarcely moving eyelid, the little cutting word, the servile phrase, perhaps they understood one another and read by sign and countersign.

How completely Mary had been weaned from this sort of life she understood that afternoon.

In her grey dress, hiding defects and old-fashioned cut by lace cunningly arranged by Agatha, she sat, her hands folded in her lap, trying to understand what she saw.

Who were these people?

Agatha had in her drawing-room what the town boasted of society women, of women at leisure.

It would be simple enough to cite names. One could get at pedigrees, and with pencil and paper and some simple additions, at approximate values.

But that would not be dealing fairly with the question.

The importance of this woman in pink or that woman in blue might be overrated if her name stood over her six figures, and the little woman with the thin lips, with a frock not worthy of the name, taking her snubbing as a matter of course, might be last only in the sense of being at the bottom of the list. And as to the woman with the fair hair and blue eyes, clinging quite foolishly to her bit of Anglo-Saxon, it would have to be pointed out to her that she was reading her pedigree upside down. She owed her princely blood to a Klootchman.

Not by giving names, or pedigree, or banking account, could all those pretty women be sorted and put in place.

What they stood for, what they meant in this new life out in those Western centres, this head to the fabulous life forming out of the forest, all but primeval, and lands barely trod upon, who could say?

"Tell me," Mary asked in the evening, as they sat by the fire in a delightful little room, Agatha had copied from a kitchen that she had seen in Brittany on one of her tramps, "tell me, where are children of these women?"

Agatha laughed.

"Taking care of themselves. A few of the wealthier women have maids. The younger ones of the smarter set have no children."

"They look quite happy," Marry said, ingeniously.

"Some of them are happy enough," Agatha said. "We are busy evolving new types of womanhood. Life is changing for us. Most of the women you saw this afternoon have made a deliberate choice. To them it lies between the cradle and social advancement. We are very young here, and terribly old. To-morrow morning I will drive you around to the place where I'm going to build my row of flats. I'm having notices printed for the halls: "No dogs." "No children."

"Not seriously?' Mary gasped.

"Seriously enough. All my flats are taken, and the foundations are not laid yet. I'm taking from the best they have in London, Paris, and America for my

plans, and I am adopting them to local material and conditions. I'm going over to Hong Kong to get a staff of servants, boys for table service, amahs for the bedrooms. I'm going to get a cook in Bordeaux, and a butler in England. And I shall make it pay, too."

Agatha laughed again to see the other's puzzled look.

"A man chooses his profession, he does that whether he marries or not. A good many of the women are doing the same. But they're beginning to do something else too, subordinating their motherhood to their husband's interests.

It was all comprehensive enough.

"Take those women this afternoon. Take them separately and they are charming, or amiable, or good natured as the case may be; but take them as a whole and they are terrible. Exceptions cannot count. I have seen forge to the front all sorts of men and women on the strength of mediocrity, and an intuitive ability to handle the spirit of modernity alone. They get there. They are in it. They reach to the top rung and kick out vigorously at those left behind. And the crowd laughs with them."

"How can that sort of thing satisfy?"

"It does for a while," Agatha said. "After you have made your conditions you have to stay with them."

Mary, with her toes on the fender, was cuddling an imaginary baby.

Agatha divined the ingenious movement.

"Dear little mother," she said, putting her arms around her. "Mothers are at a discount. What can

a woman do here with a small nursery clinging to her skirts? She has got her way to make, or thinks she has. We are spelling society with a capital S."

The next morning they went to the spot where Agatha was planning to build her flats.

While they were there they ran across Larry Browne, who asked them to an impromptu dance given by a few of his friends.

Nothing of interest occurred at the dance, unless it was a little scene of which Mary became an unwilling witness.

She was not dancing, and as she and Agatha had arranged for an early leaving she was sitting in her wraps in the empty hall, waiting.

She noticed several times during the evening a pretty, dark-eyed girl, rather pale. The girl sat out a good deal.

She passed the hall, alone, wrapped in her cloak, evidently going home.

Not far from Mary's seat she almost collided with Larry Browne.

The girl paled to the lips.

The man, without saying a word, took her into his arms and kissed her.

They did not see Mary, who shifted uneasily in her seat, trying to attract their attention.

They did not look as if they cared if the whole world had looked on.

Mary heard Agatha's name, and the girl's sobs.

A woman's autumn has little chance against a girl's spring. And like spring the girl looked with her brown eyes, and roses in her cheeks, and red lips, kissed for the first time.

Larry put her into a hack, lingering awhile in the street, bareheaded.

Then Agatha came, and she saw him. She had caught a glimpse of the girl too.

He stopped her on the way to the dressing-room.

"Can you get me Stubb's ranch for a month?" he asked.

"When are you going to be married" Agatha said, a whimsical smile playing round the corners of her mouth.

"To-morrow," he said, laconically. "I've been a fool."

He had been a fool. Agatha agreed with him. A little more, and he would have lost the girl for ever.

Lots more girls?

True. But only one man in a woman's life, and only one woman in a man's. Occasionally two for the man.

Live on. Count.

It is quite certain that Larry Browne was nothing to Agatha, and vice-versa. It would, therefore, have been a pity if he had missed a girl's spring for the sake of an empty name. The girl would have carried the scar all her life.

A good woman cannot come upon the love story of a young girl without feeling stirred to the very depth of her womanhood.

Mary and Agatha drove home in silence.

Agatha got the Stubb ranch by inducing Dunraven to live with Jim Culver for awhile.

It took her and Mary till the end of the week to get the ranch house ready.

The woods on the Pacific are made for honeymooners, and Agatha's one-time farmhouse was an ideal one for honeymooning.

Sing cooked for them.

Larry Browne comprehending both the meaning and the immensity of the sacrifice, heaved a sigh of relief.

Men are so conceited.

Just before leaving for England they came into town to say good-bye to Agatha.

The color had come back permanently to the girl's cheeks. The man looked happy.

And so they lived happily ever after. At least their appearance at the time warrants the insertion of the old adage.

"Do you know what I am going to do?" Agatha said to Mary after they had gone, and while she was rummaging amongst her clothes. "I'm going to take to wearing lavender. A woman should anticipate. I have been puzzled to know why you look so young. It is because you are younger than your clothes."

Perhaps she was right, but Agatha can be trusted to do the best by her frocks.

How she very nearly came to have to choose black instead of lavender, came about in this way.

The two women were still lingering over their luncheon one day, when the maid told Agatha that a man wanted to speak to her.

He was waiting in the library.

Jack Waring had had his legs crushed and his side damaged by a falling tree.

He had been found in the woods twenty-four hours after the accident, still conscious.

He had been brought down on the boat coming from the North, and was now at the hospital getting ready for the operation.

The man, a fellow passenger on the boat, and a friend of Waring's, had been chosen to break the news gently, and after all he found but the plainest words to clothe the terrible fact in.

Agatha, very white, was admirable in self-control.

"I'm coming," she said simply.

At the hospital she was met by one of the nurses, who had been told off to meet her on her arrival.

It is wonderful what meaning those long passages, the rows of white beds, the private rooms with half-closed doors, the uniformed attendants, the moan, the call, and the smell of drugs and chloroform, can take at a moment like that.

Agatha stumbled into a pot of red geraniums as she passed through the sun room, and had to pull herself together before she could summon courage to go into the room where Waring lay.

Everything was ready.

They had waited for her to take him to the operating room. He was lying on the wheeled stretcher.

What Agatha had expected to see she could not have told. It could not have been as bad as the terrible pallor of his face, the flutter of the eyelids, and the dreadful quiver of his left side. The rest lay still.

He knew her, when she whispered her name.

"My Jack," she said.

He answered by groping for her with the free hand.

"Quickly, doctor," she begged.

They chloroformed him in her presence. His hand in hers. She walked by his side while they wheeled him into the operating room.

She had a glimpse of the table, of the nurses in their white uniforms of short shirts, tight caps, rolled sleeves, rows of instruments, bottles, sprays, sponges, and basins.

Two surgeons with rubber aprons and bare arms, washing their hands. A whiff of drugs and acids.

An ascetically pure room, white and silent.

The fearful tumult in Agatha's brain calmed for a moment in presence of organized science. She felt potentiality expressed in detail, attitude, atmosphere.

She grasped at the strength of it, the hopeful promise. After all there was nothing final but death.

The doctor gave the sign, and the door was closed.

Agatha went down into Hell.

How she got back to number eight she could not have told. Yet to her last day she remembered the three hours spent between those four walls.

When she got back she found a nurse busy getting the bed and room ready for her patient. The blinds were lowered, the windows open at top and bottoms The room was still full of chloroform.

She would never forget the card with the text over the fireplace. She read it over and over again, that and the hospital regulations nailed to the door. She read stupidly aloud, trying to get at the meaning of the words.

She walked about; sat in a chair, and looked out of the window.

She could hear someone playing the piano. It was a popular waltz. She had danced to it last week.

She heard the soft rumble of wheels on the corridor.

Someone going? Someone coming?

There were other rooms besides number eight.

Someone in the next room seemed grievously ill. She could hear dreadful, sickening sounds.

She heard a woman laughing merrily, laughing happily into a new life, life beginning afresh for her. She heard bits of conversations. A shrill cry of pain, and a child's plaint, sweet and patient.

"Half an hour," the nurse told Agatha when she asked about the time.

Agatha buried her head in her hands.

Thirty minutes! Thirty minutes! And there were to be three hours of this!

About five o'clock there was a change of nurses.

The new one, strong and capable-looking, brought in some tea.

"Drink this," she said.

Agatha drank.

She was glad this woman would be there presently.

The other one had been a little brown thing, with a *retrousse* nose, and a side glance over her shoulder at the looking glass.

What business had a child like that tripping about there? Involuntarily one put a red rose at her throat. Yet one could fancy the look of joy that would come to some poor ailing one at the sight of her glorious youth. Agatha could not tell, perhaps, she had her place there too. But she was glad of the plain girl, with the capable hand and way.

The nurse stirred the fire in the open grate and rearranged wood and coal. She came with blankets, Stacks of them, and hot water bottles, pillows, straps, and basins.

Agatha, after an eternity of torture, put her second question.

"When will he be here?" she asked.

"Very soon,' the nurse answered.

A nurse from the operating room came. She looked cool, soothing, in her fresh white.

"He is doing well," she said, using her stock phrase cheerily. Doctor ——— (giving the name of a great surgeon) will see you later."

She nodded to the other nurse, and went her way.

"Come," said the nurse left in charge in her quiet way, "I want you to come with me."

Agatha went.

In a small sitting-room at the end of one of the long passages she found Mary.

"There," said the nurse in her nice, comforting voice, "you are going to speak to the doctor, and then I want you to go home with your friend. I am his nurse for the night. You shall see him to-morrow."

"I cannot bear to leave him. Let me see him."

"To-morrow."

The doctor came.

He made his communication as short as possible. One leg was gone, part of the foot. They had hopes for the arm. The side was badly damaged. He was conventional, and with fine art and true sympathy addressed himself to Mary. He ignored Agatha for the moment.

Then he went.

There was nothing to do for Agatha but to go home.

Mary comforted her during that desolate night as best she could.

She stayed with her to see her through the first weeks.

The three months that followed were the happiest in the lives of Agatha and Waring, incredible as this may sound.

They had squandered the best part of their lives on the things that were not worth while. Life has a way of taking on a different meaning, who can say when or why?

To see Waring's face, when it was Agatha who opened his door and came in was almost pitiful.

Mary, who saw it once or twice, turned her head so that she might not see his love laid bare.

Agatha stayed at the hospital night and day. She slept at the bungalow only occasionally so as to get a long night's rest, and that only for the purpose of bringing all her strength to the battle.

She fought the ground with him. Inch by inch. Jack wanted to live. Think of it. With his poor mangled body.

His fight with death has gone down on the annals of the hospital. It is one of its sacred pages.

He never complained. The pain in his poor face was revoked by the joy in his eyes. His merry jokes steadied the hands of the nurses at their dreadful bandaging.

The day Agatha brought him home was not like anything that had been in their lives.

She envied the men who carried him into the hall their strong arms.

There can be no attempt to interpret, to exculpate. This is not an exoneration.

The soul quickens in obedience to hidden symbols. In a night, and in this tragic way, Agatha had become wife and mother.

This is not quite all of it.

One day on waking he found himself alone. On groping between sleeping and waking he did not find

the beloved hand. And God only knows what that meant to him.

Headlong he was hurled into the abyss of despair; the black horror that he had fought against since the thing happened. It had sat on his chest with nightmares that he had fought with, through the madness of delirium, and in the hours between night and day.

It was the re-action. It was doing its work.

How Waring induced Sing to give him a certain small mahogany case can only be explained by the fact that Sing was ignorant of the content, and anxious to please.

Agatha caught his wrist.

She was just in time.

Again she had to fight the ground inch by inch.

The man would not of her sacrifice.

What was he binding her to?

Then they made a compact between them.

Agatha brought a glass, filled it with water, and emptied the content of a small bottle into it. She held it up to the light, and together they watched the sticky brown stuff settle to the bottom, and remount in evil-looking, greenish clouds.

This was the cup. The day he should call for it she would bring it. But where he drank she must drink also.

And that was the end of it.

He went to sleep upon her breast like a little child.

XI.

OBITER DICTUM.

Mary's holiday would have come to a melancholy end if it had not been tempered by the knowledge that those two were happy. Jack and Agatha had wasted their lives on things that did not count, but they were to feast royaly on what remained.

It was the mother's turn to look upon her children with new eyes when she came back from town.

They were never again to be so entirely her own. They had decided that as soon as the weather broke up, some time in the early spring, they would have to go to school.

Mary had again taken possession of the kitchen. A few days brought the housework back to the old routine. In the evening, as she and John sat by the fire, it was hard to believe that she had been away for a whole month.

Nothing was going to alter John's character. As he grew older he deepened and broadened; his inner life went on serene and calm.

Mary's stormy fits of unrest were part of her temperament.

The rest, the opportunity she had had of getting at herself, of touching upon new phases of life, had given her a fresh view.

She greeted her beloved woods, her home, garden, and the simple creatures about stable and barn, with deep emotion. When her children clung to her, when she felt John's strong arm, the scent of the firs, the thought of the peaceful beauty of their lives filled her with joy, what mattered the struggle, the lack of wealth, if they were the means of lifting existence above the commonplace

What had they to fear for the children when they would have the memory of those glorious woods?

Her hands lingered lovingly over the humblest of her tasks. She put the best of herself to home making. She made Christmas for three lonely men. She cooked and baked, and washed and sewed. The unrest was laid, her unanswerable questions put away.

During that winter she grew frailer, a little grayer about the temples, but the look of pain around the mouth and in the eyes had disappeared.

Jim Culver had dreaded Christmas Day. Mary divining his apprehensions, took him in hand. She made him their mainstay during the festivities. She did nothing without his advice or helping hand. She brought in the hopeful note, associated the absent wife and babies to the cake-making, pudding-boiling, and decorating.

Jim Culver, who carried Betty's letters—schoolgirl letters they were and unsatisfactory at that time—in his breast pocket, clutched eagerly at the comfort of her warm sympathies.

"They will come back to you," she said again, after the children had gone to bed on Christmas Day.

Jim sat looking into the fire. The other men were brewing punch in the kitchen. He and Mary were alone, and had a long talk about her stay in town.

The attitude of the modern woman towards woman things furnished one of the subjects. Mary left out Betty's name. She would not admit for a moment but that Betty would feel the call of wifehood and country and come back to it all gladly.

It was a frank, honest talk. The man felt strengthenen, better able to understand the wife's part in the struggle, and Mary lost nothing of dignity and womanly reserve in the telling.

How true she had been in her surmise Culver realized when he got a letter from his wife a few weeks later.

He was so excited about it, that he rode to the Faire ranch as fast as his horse could take him.

Mary saw him come up the road waving something white.

"May I read this to you?" he said as soon as he came within hearing.

Betty had found a solution.

Betty, after getting home to her people, had been ill. When she was well and strong again she went to town, and with the help of Emma, of white wrapper memory, plunged into the London gaieties with nimble foot and sickening heart.

Her mother, or rather a good nurse, took care of the babies.

Betty dressed, and danced, and supped. She went to theatres, concerts, receptions. She had a couple of insipid flirtations, one serious conquest, the ghost of an affair. She did her honest best to forget Jim and the woods. And in the end she had a dreadful falling out with herself and then with Emma.

Poor Emma. She did not understand the why and wherefore. Betty explained when she tried to make it up, that it began on board ship with a wretchel feeling of unhappiness and the consciousness of wrong done to Jim.

"That dreadful wrapper! Why did you send it?"

"I bought it at a sale for five pounds. You ungrateful girl." Emma said it deeply injured, and unable to pick up the thread of Betty's thoughts.

Betty had felt the first pangs of reaction on the journey home, and at the end of three months the life palled on her.

At home nothing had changed. The house, the servants, the life, Emma; they were just as she had left them. But she herself had changed. She did not fit in again into the old life and surroundings, and it had not taken her very long to find it out.

"Why to Cousin Margaret?" her mother asked on her daughter confiding to her that she was going to a cousin of her husband, an old spinster living in a small country town.

"What an extraordinary idea."

"I have been a wretched wife to Jim," Betty explained, sadly.

"I did not know that you would have to do the cooking," the mother remarked, not too amiably. She took an unreasonable pride in the fact of her daughter not knowing anything about a house or kitchen.

Betty had given it up long ago trying to explain what life meant out there to the wife of a man without means, and who had his way to make.

Their ideas were childishly vague.

A sort of jumble between heaps of snow and Indian summers. Limitless shooting and fishing. Women in pretty clothes playing at housekeeping in fascinating and picturesque log cabins somewhere in the North of America. They took in at a general sweep the territories stretching between the Atlantic and the Pacific, and with a smattering from their random reading, Montreal and Dawson, the prairie harvest, the boom in Western townships and Alaskan gold, blended into a homogeneous whole. They did well by their children when they got their address right.

She could not make them understand how that very conception of a sylvan olla podrida had practically wrecked two lives.

Her resolution to save what she could was the outcome of that ever-present feeling of wrong done to Jim, and her longing for the woods.

She loved Jim and the woods better than all the rest. She knew it now when it was perhaps too late.

The day she blazed out in anger at the lack in Emma's imagination, quite unjustly, for Emma had

done her best to give her a jolly time, was the turning point.

"Why cannot you go into the kitchen here, and get cook to show you how to do a few things? Her savouries are excellent, and I am sure Hanning would not object to show you how to make a blouse," the mother suggested.

"It would be no use," Betty tried to explain. "I must do it myself, and get some system. What use do you think cook's savouries would be to me out there? I want to learn how to make bread, cook a roast decently, wash and iron, and make wearable clothes for the babies and myself."

"Sht'" the mother said, shutting the door, shutting themselves in and the footmen out.

Betty had forgotten. They were just a little ashamed of the life she had to lead out there. They would never understand.

Cousin Margaret understood.

Bless her old heart! It was full of romance. Romance happily tempered by an income of twenty-five shillings a week.

Her house, which had been in her family for many generations, was a museum of old things, which would have been envied her by connoisseur and amateur collectors alike.

She was a great reader. Uncompromisingly religious. Very unprepossessing in appearance, tall, thin. Very reserved. And a heart of gold.

A speck of dust, the waste of a thread, of a crumb, were things unknown in her household.

The solitary maid that she recruited from time to time in the neighbouring village, had to go through with her regime or leave. If the girl had a reasonable mother at her back, and could stand it, for the old lady took not the slightest account of changed times and conditions, and her ways were Spartan, she would live to bless the day she put her foot on the white door-step, and lifted the shining, brass knocker.

Cousin Margaret turned out a perfect servant. It was nothing short of an inspiration which had prompted Betty to appeal to Cousin Margaret. If anyone could help her it was this solitary, capable woman.

If it had not been for that strain of romance in her old heart, nothing could have induced her to open her door to that silly little girl Jim had married, and to his two toddling babies.

Imagine a creeping baby and sticky fingers in Cousin Margaret's house!

Unless one knew the cousin and the house the finest imagination could not conjure the correct picture.

But bless her old heart. The strain of romance in it made the coming of Betty and the babies possible.

Cousin Margaret promised herself to do her best by Jim's little wife. She took the girl in hand seriously and at the end of the first day Betty wrote her letter to Culver.

It was this letter that Jim read to Mary, and that was to make such a difference.

How that man worked afterwards, you could not understand unless you knew what is meant by clearing land in British Columbia.

Did he get discouraged?

Yes. Sometimes. Those were Herculean labors, and if it had not been for Betty's letters, and the knowledge of what she was doing for him, he would have lacked the courage.

He worked on. He did not look back. There could be no measuring his labors by results. The few hard dollars that lay in his hard hands were a ridiculously inadequate return for the enormous effort put forth.

But he did not complain. He trusted himself. Betty. It was the beginning of modest prosperity, and he had faith enough to see it.

A year at the work he was doing was nothing; especially as he had given up the office work, which had provided him with a small sum of money at the end of each month. It would take ten years, twenty years, of incessant labor, vigilence, frugality, to get the place into anything like shape.

In the early spring, just after Tommy and Kate had started upon their school life, Mary had received a letter from Betty.

It alarmed her, for it said that she was coming out in April. If she did, she would get into the thick of the fight.

Betty had asked Mary to keep her coming secret, to let her have the little old house in the woods without letting Culver know.

This was an easy matter, as it took half an hour's sharp walking to get from the Stubbs ranch to Culver's place. He might not find out for months that there was anyone living in his cottage.

It was a modified Betty who took possession of the little house by the railway, where her life had begun with June roses, and had ended in dismal tears.

Cousin Margaret had done nobly by her.

She could do plain cooking, had learnt how to bake, wash, and sew.

She would never be a domestic paragon; but she would be able to hold her own.

She had had another excellent idea while in England. She had taken a course in poultry raising.

This is a prosaic climax to the Culver love story.

It is perhaps. A little. And it is not necessary to dwell unduly upon the merits of best breeds for winter laying, or on hard and soft feeds, and systems of packing eggs. Betty had learned by sad experience to put great store by these things, and she would have been the last to laugh at the prose of it. The beauty of her love story dated from this time. She would gladly have shut her eyes upon the first chapters.

It all happened as Betty had hoped it would since she had dreamt of their re-union.

Culver, going in the direction of his cottage, saw smoke coming out of the chimney.

As Mary had asked him for the key a few days previously, he thought that she was airing the house and seeing if all was well.

Coming up through the woods, he saw two little figures playing amongst the trees. At a turning of the road he came upon Betty.

The mad joy with which he took her into his arms paid for their year of desolation.

Modified is a term used advisedly in connection with Betty. She was modified only, not remade. Not fifty Cousin Margarets could have achieved that.

She had on occasion, a frowsy moment. Days when the rooms took on their look of top drawer. A batch of bread that had to be fed to the chickens, and a garment that was a failure in fit and workmanship alike. But she knew the sign.

"Poultry raising?" said Joe Armstrong to Sadie. "Here is Jim Culver's wife come back again. I can't get the sour milk from the old man at the mill any longer. She (pointing over his shoulder with his thumb in the direction of the Culver ranch) is taking all he can give her."

Sadie, looking up from her ironing with her sour, dispirited smile, told him to clean his boots.

She was making mental addition of her accumulation of small coin. She had had the sour milk for the chickens and pigs. She was going to miss it. The little grand-child on the prairie had learned to write letters quite well by this time. She had written that there was another baby.

Sadie was patient and Joe was blind.

There was too much patience on the one side and too much blindness on the other, and it was not going to work well in the end.

VESTIGIA NULLA RETRORSUM.

XII.

The chap who was responsible for the condition of Tommy's face and jersey was a boy who had seen him in the morning take leave from his mother. Mary had brought the children into town herself on their first day of school.

It was many a long day since he had kissed his own mother. His mongrel soul was at variance with the ethics of the woods. He laid it on with a heavy hand.

He did Tommy a good service. He taught him how to fight, and the second boy who got him by the throat had to take his wounds to the tap.

The little chap spent half his time in fighting. The first few months at school got his clothes into rather a gory mess. His code was not the same as the other boy's. In time he got sense enough not to assert himself too aggressively, and his days were less troubled in conequence.

Then he got at his work and into his books, and the boys ceased to trouble him. If they did, he held his own easily.

Kate's school going was erratic.

Her mother ordered her going more in accordance with her moods than with a strictly adhered to plan. She had to shield the child against temperament and against conditions over which she had no control.

The mother kept the little girl's hand in her own, so that she herself might feel the strain of the seething mass of new influences, and help her with her deeper experience.

Mary had succeeded in making the realities of life so beautiful to the little daughter that she was able to tread over the ugly places and take no harm.

But she kept close to her; very close. She let her have of the greater school life just sufficient to cultivate a taste for books. She helped her with her reading. For a week that she spent at school she spent a month away from it.

How a highly-strung girl is going to develop no one can say. Not even her mother. Her growth depends on so many things.

Mary, knowing this, did not fail to recognise the potent effect the new life and associates would have on a child like Kate.

For years she walked near the girl, so that she might be the first to feel the invisible powers, and interpret herself what had to come to her through life.

Kate grew up strong, sweet, self-reliant; wonderfully responsive to all that was best in the changed conditions.

The children were so deeply rooted in their glorious woods that the wholesome influence asserted itself at all times.

After the first few months of probation Tommy went on steadily, slowly forging to the front.

He went through the High School and matriculated before he was fifteen. Then he took his first two years of Arts.

After that he gave up school for a couple of years to continue his apprenticeship with a firm of engineers. He had started his apprenticeship during the summer vacation.

In the Autumn of the following year he won a scholarship and went to Montreal to finish his two years in Arts. The scholarship paid half of his expenses. He paid for the remaining half with the money he had earned with Brown and Firth. At the same time that he took the last two years in Arts, he took the first two years in Science. This made the fees somewhat higher.

Then he graduated in Arts, and laid off to be able to earn sufficient money to go back with and finish his course.

He got his degree two years later. Came through with flying colours.

He came back looking very brown, very thin. Horribly wiry.

He is a young giant in strength.

His ambitions are boundless. His hands are capable, his eyes are bright.

Who can say, where he will go?

His mother, when she looks at him (he stands over six feet in his socks) thinks of the day when he came to her.

He has got a terribly square chin. The boy has rather a hard way of looking at the hard things. He has had a pretty stiff fight to have been able to do what he has done.

But he still puts his head into the hollow of his mother's arm, and Mary remembers with a grateful heart, how her old friend the doctor used to tell her, that it was more than probable that the young people would find within themselves, such attributes as would enable them to cope with new conditions.

Kate's test was to come later, but Tommy had won out.

XIII.

VULNUS IMMEDICABILE.

After years of waiting the doctor got his letter. It was a human document. The wife, upon her deathbed bethought herself of the man she had wronged and sent him her son.

One day as the old man was straining the morning's milk into a pan, a shadow fell upon the open barn door. He looked up and saw a man standing outside.

He was a stranger, and not till he had given his name did the old man know who he was.

If he had had the impulse to stretch out his hand, he might possibly have checked it. But he had not. Something caught him at the throat, and he spilt the milk awkwardly over the edge of the pan and on to the floor. His hands were shaking.

"I'm sorry," said the young fellow observing his action, "if I have upset you."

The words were courteous and commonplace. The doctor pulled himself together and put out his hand.

"Come in," he said.

He would have said that years ago. Circumstances had made it impossible. The doctor was the last man to separate the mother from the child. He had hoped

that the boy would have been given into his keeping. It would have been a means of wiping out the past. The mother kept the boy.

'Come in,'' he said simply.

They went into the house together, and sat down in the drawing-room. Eight years had passed since the days when Kate and Tommy used to look up to the sign over the door before turning the handle. And when the patter of their feet and the echo of their voices had made music in the old man's heart.

The doctor had thought that he had done with the past. The pangs of memory had softened as years had gone on, and he had had so much hard work to do, that his fits of melancholia had long been changed into a more consolable form of sorrow.

He had lived the past down.

The young man was telling the older one of his mother's death.

''You have no profession?'' The dctor put in the question wher the other one had come to the end of his account

No He had no profession and no means.

''What do you intend to do?' the doctor asked.

He did not know, or rather he did. He was going to make his fortune.

The young fellow, Blake Holms (he may just as well get his name here, it makes writing about him a little easier) talked like a boy.

The doctor looked up sharply at the foolish words.

The doctor had had time to look him over.

Blake was tall, not very broad shouldered. Dark hair, and yellow eyes. The eyes were good but the mouth was lose. He had well made and honest feet. The hands were both the best and the worst part of him. Their shape was perfect, but they were much too small for his height.

"We have all got to work out here," the doctor said to one of his remarks.

"It does not matter much what at, as long as we work.' "And," he added talking slowly, "you do not make fortunes here, lad any more than you would anywhere else. But if you feel like working you may start to-morrow. When you are as old as I am, you will know, that that means a great deal."

The old doctor's words sounded a little harsh but they were not in reality, for he accompanied them by a good smile. After he had got a grip on his emotions, he was able to keep the harshness out of his speech, and the stiffness from his manner.

He was too just a man to taunt Blake with the sins he had had no part in.

He did his best, not to let the other one feel, that he was a stranger and that as such, he had little claim upon his time or consideration.

Blake had brought a small grip, and he accepted the invitation to stay with alacrity.

Why the discovery of the hand bag, gave the doctor an unpleasant sensation, would lead to lengthy and unprofitable discourse, but it did, and just for a moment, as he showed his guest into one of his many

spare bedrooms, he asked himself, what profit there could be to either of them, to let the past come back, now?

The hesitation was only momentary. He felt that he could cope with anything. What had he to fear? With his past, the future mattered so little.

He shook Blake's hand and spoke to him as man to man.

"To-morrow," he repeated, shaking himself free with a final effort from the old obsession. "To-morrow, we will see what can be done."

Kate, Kate of the woods, the sea and the hills, Kate with her lovely colouring, her glorious health, her sonorous voice, her thrilling, palpitating, dazzling, heavenly youth, came upon the two men sitting over an early supper in the dining-room.

She came on one of her impromptu visits.

Say it was coincidence, fate, predestination, a turn of the pen. Anything you like.

But she came.

Blake saw her first.

She came in through the hall at the back. He stared and jumped to his feet. The doctor turned his head. He also got to his feet, and in doing so upset his chair.

Kate often met men at the Old Mill. She had played hostess to the doctor's friends on numberless occasions.

She came in, a little embarassed.

'My son," the doctor said. He took Kate's hand and added: "Miss Faire."

Kate's lips parted in a pretty way they had of doing.

She had a red cloak on. A long trailing thing of no particular cut or shape, but warm, and a most regal mantle to her white throat and simple frock.

The girl looked at the doctor's face, bewildered, then passed him at the other man.

They shook hands in silence.

"I'm glad, Uncle Doctor," she said coming closer to her old friend, "you will never be alone again."

Kate knew that she must not let the doctor press her to stay that evening, she prepared for an early start home. But he would not let her go alone and as was his custom he saddled his horse and told Blake to make himself at home during his absence.

Kate was driving. They tied the spare horse to the back of the rig, so that they might sit together and talk. The words refused to come to either of them.

Kate let the reins hang loosely, and with her disengaged hand caressed the doctor's arm.

'Uncle Doctor," the girl said, "you won't want me now."

He patted the girl's hand. What was he to say? How was he to explain?

Blake Holms was not his son.

During their silent drive home through the woods, Kate's woman intuition got at the truth without the doctor's help.

She remembered quite well the night years ago, when he had spoken of the absent wife for the first time. He had not told her about the little son.

"I know," the girl said softly to the old man.

"Little Kate," he said, "There are great sorrows in this world. God bless and keep you."

"You will come in and see mother before you go back?" Kate begged as they neared her home.

Nothing had come into her life as yet that her mother could not straighten out for her. She could make all things right for her father and for Tommy. She felt sure that her Mother would find the right word.

The house, coming in view at the bend of the road, looked much as it had done years ago when the roof caught fire, and when Kate and Tommy had helped their mother to put it out.

There were roses around the veranda that had had time to climb to the gables. The trees in the orchard had come to full bearing. The fields stretched beyond the creek and up towards the rocks. The trees stood back further, for the clearing had eaten far into their green fastness. There were flowers massed in great heaps of colors.

As yet nothing had destroyed the incomparable peace of the place.

A thin wreath of smoke came out of the chimney.

"Mother is still up," the girl said. "Do come in, Doctor."

"Not to night, little girl," the old man said. Then he hesitated a momnt and added : "You must not come

to the Mill for awhile, at least not till I tell you." The old man stammered over his request. Kate felt an immense pity for him.

"I will do as you tell me, Jack," she said.

She said "Jack" occasionally even now.

It meant no disrespect.

She watched him get on to the horse and ride away into the woods. Then she ran up the stairs, and up to her mother's room. She sat down on the foot end of her bed and talked late into the night.

The two women could make nothing of the end part of the doctor's story. They talked a long time, but what can you do with the bad, bold facts of sin?

Do you remember what the Old Mill looked like when you came up the drive, with its rows of maples on the left, and the garden on the right? Beyond that the sea with the dream isles, and the old white house with green shutters and jasmine wreathed veranda, to the left?

Coming from the top of the road, it looked not a whit altered. The house looked whiter because it had had a new coat of paint, and the shades had deepened because the Maples had grown immensely.

The garden was lovelier than ever.

Coming up the road in the evening one could hear the lap, lapping of the waves on the beach at the foot of the garden, and if it is not too late the cackling of the hens and mooing of the cows as they settle down to sleep.

When the doctor drove up, he heard all this and more.

He heard a song and an accompaniment. Both the singing and playing were a good deal removed from dilettantism. They interpreted Blake's hands perfectly.

The tune produced as unpleasant an effect upon the doctor as the discovery of the grip had done.

He went into the house and into the room where the piano stood, keeping a rising irritation well under.

Blake did not hear him. He was absorbed by his singing. He broke off in the middle of a chord to lift a glass to his lips.

The man had been drinking. He was not of the kind that gets violently drunk, he was flushed, and would have been handsome, if it had not been for the lower part of his face.

The doctor stood still and looked at him without saying a word.

One cannot tell in these things what it is. Whether a sort of thought transference, or whether he felt the other one's eyes at the back of his head.

Blake turned round on the piano stool and looked straight into his host's face.

The doctor persisted in his silence. His thoughts flew back to another young chap whom he had found in his house once, years ago.

There was no comparison.

Blake got up. He began to give some sort of an explanation.

You know the number of your room?" the doctor asked very quietly, "I would rather not talk. Not to-night."

When Blake had gone up to his room, the doctor locked the piano and put the key in his pocket. He also locked the door of his room.

He went out and sat on the veranda step in front of the house.

Indian Susan with her basket on her back, her queer assortment of cast off garments, smaller and squatter than ever, came up the road. Her bare feet made no noise in the sand. She got into her canoe under the wharf and glided out into the purple and gold of the evening. The black canoe made not a sound. She hugged the shore line and disappeared, passing in and out between the islands. All night she would paddle on in silence.

As in days gone by, she came and went, with her basket of fish and crate of eggs or fruit.

She was older and smaller and wrinkled all over and had taken to talking to herself in whispers and in her own tongue.

The doctor could not say whether she saw him or not. Very likely she did, but she gave no sign and disappeared.

It was a long vigil.

He had no intention of re-opening the past.

He would try and do what he could to help Blake to an honourable future, if it was not too late.

He had will force enough not to let the incident of the evening prejudice him, but it was almost impossible to shake off the painful impression that it had made on him.

Blake had a late breakfast. The two men met late in the afternoon in the hall.

The doctor kept the door closed resolutely to the past. He told Blake that he did not want to know anything about his past life. Not then. Let him take a blank page and begin again.

Here was his hand on it.

"I wish that you had been given into my care earlier," he said sadly, "but there's no reason, why you should not be able to make things come right. You have your youth, and strength. This is a wonderful country. Be my guest till you can make up your mind to some line of action."

Four months passed and six and eight.

Nothing happened. Blake did not seem to have any mind to make up. He pottered about aimlessly. He read and fished and played the piano. He had undertaken to do some of the cooking because he did not like the doctor's culinary efforts.

He paid visits to the various farms of the neighbourhood and on the islands and in the beginning was rather a favourite with the women. He sang well and played for them at their dances.

In the end the doctor's quixotic generosity gave out.

"What are you going to do?" he said one morning to Blake who was watching him run the morning's milk through the separator.

"If I had the money, I would go back to the old country. I do not see what there is for me to do out here."

"You have had plenty of time to form an opinion. If you are quite sure that there is nothing for you to do out here as you put it, I will help you to go back. If you accept my offer, let the parting be final."

Blake's eyes had a passing glean in them, but the doctor was busy with the cream and did not notice it.

It was the first time in the doctor's experience, that the country he loved and that he marvelled at more and more every day that he lived, had failed to bring out anything. In this case it had failed completely. As a rule it appealed tremendously to young men. All sorts and conditions rose to the call, and he knew any number of young fellows who had never done a day's work before coming out, who were living the very best sort of lives there in the woods.

It was too late.

He had feared it from the beginning, but had not cared to admit it.

"When you are ready to go," the doctor said, "let me know and I will attend to your return passage."

Blake winced.

He had found out long ago that the doctor was not a rich man, and he knew that he had no claim upon him.

The offer was not quite what he had expected. He could have wished it to have taken another form.

The doctor abstained from discussion. What was there to appeal to?

During the ten months that Blake had been at the Mill, the doctor had had time to study his guest.

He had found nothing that he could feed his optimism on. He could not blind himself to the fact, that Kate had made a great impression on the young fellow.

But Kate had come rarely during the past months, and not at all after a day, when he found Blake at the piano accompanying Kate's singing.

Kate was so beautiful at this period of her life that few who met her could ever forget her again. When she came, health, the joyousness of youth, the irrepressible charm of twenty summers, came with her. She was a lovable creature.

Blake's name should not be mentioned in connection with such a girl. I would have gladly kept him out of the story altogether, but he loved her, and and I am in honor bound to put it down.

It was the best chapter in his wretched life. For years he carried her image in his heart, and in the end the memory of a promise he made her once, set his feet on the narrow path.

He was a waster. When he was with her, he knew it, and was sorry.

It was a fruitless sorrow then, for he did not get over the stage of making good resolutions.

Perhaps, if he had had will force enough to force himself to take up some sort of work seriously, he might have corrected his failings in time.

He went visiting on the island farms and outstayed his welcome sadly. The women tired of his songs and playing. They were much too hard worked to appreciate a guest who needed waiting on and looking after.

The country had failed to appeal to him. It had taken him sometime to see that his "Getting-rich-quick" idea was an erroneous one.

He saw men and women work as he had never seen men and women work anywhere. It was most disheartening to think of the effort that had to be put forth to produce say : a pound of butter.

On the whole perhaps, the doctor's offer of sending him home again was not such a bad one, only Blake wished that it had taken a different form.

The doctor went about with a heavy heart. His friends and neighbours did not mention Blake's name in his presence.

The doctor kept his own counsel, he was a silent man at all times.

Those who loved him best were the most scrupulous in refraining from touching upon a subject, which could not fail to give pain to the poor old man.

He spoke to Mary once, asking her advice.

She would have willingly given him her help, if she had known what to do.

If a man wants to get rich without working, he has little chance as to the nature of his tools. What can he do, but use his brains and other people's money?

What had a man like Blake to do with the woods?

He must inevitably drift back to where he started from.

Mary was not the woman who could have a great influence upon a man like Blake. She was too much of an idealist. He could not have understood her language.

At that time, she had aged a good deal. Her hair had become quite gray. She was frailer, and the stoop in her shoulders was more pronounced. Her remnant of youth lay in her sweet eyes, her merry laugh and firm step.

Since Kate had done with her lessons, the hardest part of the housework had been taken off her hands.

The incessant labour of recent years barred her, from ever being able to take life less seriously again. She had grown to love work, and when a little leisure came to her, she took it so seriously that one who had not known her, could not have understood the almost painful eagerness, with which she reopened her old books.

She still wore her simple frock and often gave people an erroneous impression. She was too fastidious about her clothing to temporise with the second rate. There was not then any need for such great economy, but her plain garments had become part of her life. She could not think of herself in anything else.

No. Mary Faire could not make a great impression upon Blake.

Agatha Waring was after Kate, the woman who was to bring a lasting influence into his life.

A very subtle change had gone on in Agatha.

She had lost nothing of her old charm. Men had almost always liked her. In recent years, she had added a few women to her list of friends.

There was not then much cynicism about her. There was not room for anything but the best near the couch of poor Jack Waring.

She could not enter his room without a prayer on her lips. That sort of thing tells in the end.

From time to time, he had a day on which he suffered terribly. Agatha had to spend it alone, the closed door between them.

Do you remember the story of Mario and Tosca?

Think of the torture you may not see, nor soothe, but must listen to!

Poor Agatha.

Agatha appealed to Blake.

She was sorry for him, though he did not deserve much pity.

He felt her sympathy.

She had learnt to be lenient with the sins of others. Her past life and present were combining to make her take a very personal view of things.

She was developing on strong, almost heroic lines.

Blake seemed to her nothing but a boy who had been badly brought up. He was the sort of type that ought to have been fed on sober facts and the rod.

She knew that sentiment would play no part with him but intellect might.

She gave him a great deal from her recent readings. Some from modern, very modern American thought books. She told him a good deal of her life. She told him, how she had put Waring on the road to success, and how close she had come to losing him and herself.

She did not spare herself.

She showed him, how very easily sin can become a tangible thing and pass out of our control.

Agatha felt that she was giving him dangerous food to feed on, but the boy had to have something. He had come into life heavily handicapped. For such as he, conventional dogmatising had no message.

How much he owed to a visit he made to Jack Waring, was difficult to appreciate then. Blake was to fall so low before he righted himself.

The patient suffering of the man was so fine, Waring's face with the joyous eyes, and lines of pain so wonderful that one came away humbled and inspired.

"You cannot feed the intellect at the expense of the heart," Agatha said to Blake, "I have been given a second chance in this life. But think of the cost of it."

She looked at Jack Waring as she said this. He was lying in the sun, stretched on his wheels.

"Think of me, boy. Take hold of yourself, quickly. Before it is too late. You are breaking the heart of the

old man at the Mill. Remember. We have got to make things right, before we may go. Get to work."

Jack Waring died shortly after this visit.

After a few days of great suffering, he went quietly during the night. Agatha missed his breathing. That was the end.

It is at this time that the doctor repeated his offer to Blake. Blake accepted.

The manner of his acceptance must be postponed till Agatha Waring has been dealt by fairly.

There are a good many of her old acquaintances who have never forgiven her the masterful way in which she made use of them in her necessity.

Women detest having to eat the sauce they had prepared for others and freeze themselves, instead of freezing out someone else.

It is for their benefit, and to give them something definite to feed their curiosity upon, that they may have what there is left of Agatha's Waring's story now. For the white bungalow on the hill had grown so very still and uninteresting.

Agatha Waring did not marry Doctor Holms. All the women said that she would, but she did not.

Anyone who had seen her once, coming out of Jack's room, would have known for all time that she could not marry again.

And what had the doctor to do with marrying?

Think then, of the commotion, when it came out at an afternoon tea (there were men at their teas now,

a conservative estimate puts them at one in the dozen) that Doctor Holms who had died quite suddenly, had made a will in Agatha's favour.

He left her the Mill and his acres, and a sum in hard cash.

The sum got a little enlarged in the handling, but in the main, they were letter perfect.

It is perhaps a little unusual to talk of a wedding before bringing in the bride.

Kate's wedding was at the Old Mill. She was married on a September afternoon.

The Church and the Old Mill afterwards were full of people.

It was a good old fashioned country wedding. The whole countryside came to the clang of the bells. The women locked their houses and brought their babies, and hard worked husbands took a day off. And the men who were hunting round about in the neighbourhood came to the feast in their shooting things.

Agatha had planned everything.

Kate looked very beautiful. A little pale, when the new born tenderness came into her eyes, as she looked upon her father and mother.

Tommy was there, spare and sunburnt. He was Agatha's right hand.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the gorgeous supper, the speeches toasts and songs or the dance in the barn.

The young people slipped out and drove away into the woods. And later on Agatha got rid of the guests and with a couple of trusty women and Indian Susan, she put the house in order, quickly.

Then she locked the door and laid the key on the window sill.

You have not quite forgotten Agatha's garden on the hill and what she had done with lawn and trees, and how wonderfully she had handled her floral colour schemes?

After Jack went, she had not been able to live at the bungalow again. Since the old doctor's death, she stayed at the mill the year round.

She had reverently preserved all the old landmarks, the doctor's favourite flowers bloomed in their old corners. She had not touched the outside of the house. Whatever lent character to the interior had not been changed.

What Agatha had done to her garden and bungalow in town, in the old days, she had done better at the Old Mill.

After the wedding guests had gone, the house stood deserted. There was moonlight on the sea, the garden and in front of the house.

The rumbling of the waves came up from the beach. Indian Susan was skirting the islands. Her black canoe cut into the moonlight once or twice and disappeared noiselessly behind the rocks.

It had been Agatha's idea that the young people should begin their married life at the Mill.

They had driven into their beloved woods, they watched the night come down and the moon rise.

Then they drove back slowly, the reins hanging loosely.

As they went into the silent house, the girl called the old man's name.

One light was burning.

It came from the little room at the back of the hall; the room where Kate and her old friend had spent their evenings, where she had sung to him, and where he had told her about the fine, great things of life.

The piano stood open. There was a fire on the hearth. The settle that used to stand under the window in the hall had ben placed near the fire. Flowers were everywhere.

They went through the silent house hand in hand.

It was full of memories.

As they passed the old shaft, they caught the tapping of the ivy fingers against the walls, and the call of some night bird, heating its wings against the great beams.

The girl's eyes shone with a sudden fear.

It was the place where the door opened into the shaft

"Come," she said.

No one knew, when or how they went. Agatha came back some weeks later and found the house empty.

Agatha settled down to a comparatively quiet life. The latter part of poor Jack Waring's suffering had made such a heavy demand upon her strength both physical and mental, that it took her years to recuperate from the strain.

She never quite lost her contempt for commonplace women. She could not forget how they had made her struggles with poverty and loneliness hard and unlovely. She had men friends as a rule. They understood her better.

Life had readjusted her atttitude towards women things.

There came a time, when her views and Mary's coincided.

She had built her flats but had not hung up her notices.

She knew where, and how to make money. It was a gift, partly; and partly an acquired art. She was ruthless in her methods, for she held, that if you went in for money making at all, all means were good and bad alike. She read a great deal, and was able to digest what she read. With the exception of one phase, and that exclusively a woman one, she was very modern.

She took occasional flying trips to the old centres. Two or three months of London and Paris were a necessity to her, but as she grew older these desertions became less frequent and finally she spent all her time at the Old Mill.

No one, seeing her in her garden, with her great sun-bonnet, a pair of gardening gloves and heavy boots, sowing, transplanting and pruning, would have divined the wonderful capabilities there were in the little grey headed woman.

She loved a pretty frock, a good cigarette, a smart money transaction, a clever man to the end of her days.

To my knowledge, she has never spoken to man, woman or child of the baby who sleeps by Jack's side.

As she grew older, she loved to have young people about her.

Occasionally she borrowed a baby.

Such contradictions cannot be kept out of a woman's life.

XIV.

VIVE, VALE.

It was the evening before his leaving. His passage was paid. The ticket and a small sum of money lay in his coat pocket.

Blake had collected his few belongings, and had packed them into his grip.

The doctor, who was going to accompany him to the mainland, where Blake was going to pick up the Transcontinental, was away, taking his cows to the Faire ranch where they would be taken care of during his absence.

Like on the first day of his coming, Blake had the Mill to himself.

He watched the old man pass up the road with the cows.

He listened.

It was very still. There was no sign of life anywhere.

Blake went down to the beach, got into the boat, and rowed over to Sheep Island.

Blake and Sadie Armstrong were friends. She loved his singing. He preferred her cooking to his own.

Blake had come to know too much of the little white house on the island, and of Joe and Sadie. A good deal more than was good for him.

Sadie had trusted him with a letter for the girl on the Prairie once.

It was an important letter, and contained some final directions and named a date, when she should call at her Post Office, and receive a certain sum of money.

It had taken years of patient waiting, secret hoarding to make the coming possible. The granddaughter would be with her, if all went well, in a few weeks.

Blake rowed over to the island to say good-bye to Sadie.

The years had made no change in Sadie Armstrong. She was gaunt and straight and unlovely. The sour, dispirited smile that had been Joe Armstrong's portion for so many years, had cut two deep lines on each side of her mouth.

She wore glasses.

Sadie made a cup of tea for young Holms. She baked him some of her good biscuits. She left him to himself to get the cream to eat with her blackberry preserves.

Joe Armtsorng was not there at the time. He was looking after the sheep that he had recently put on to one of the islands.

He came back after Blake had gone.

It was beginninng to get dark when he came home.

There was a clump of gorse on the embankment. The steps leading up from the beach passed close by. There was a heap of clay at the top of the stairs, some rubble and tools. They were digging for water, and

the springs had made the ground wet all around. Some of the water was running into a pool.

Joe had to pass this corner when he came up from the beach.

Sadie was there.

She was waiting.

She stood up gaunt, straight and unlovely.

After sometime, Joe pulled in, made the boat fast, pottered about on the beach for awhile, and went up.

"Where is my money?" Sadie said as soon as he came to where she stood at the top of the stairs.

Armstrong looked up, not understanding.

Sadie took a crow bar, one of the tools left near the well, and knocked him down, savagely, the hatred of many years giving force to the blow.

He fell backwards; crashed into the gorse.

Sadie saw him fall. He made never a sound.

She screamed and tried to break his fall. He lay like a log amongst the yellow gorse.

She dipped up water with her hands, and put it on his face and forced some between his lips.

He made no sound. He did not move.

A dreadful shudder ran through the woman, when she realised what she had done.

She put her dry lips to her hand and sucked the wet fingers. She stared out to sea and groaned.

She imagined that she heard a noise and screamed again.

But she could see nothing.

She dragged the man into the house. It took sometime, for he was heavy, and the woman felt faint. She got him into the bedroom and on to the bed.

The bed was in disorder.

The small package of money, that had been sewn into the quilt, and had lain there for years, growing slowly as the result of stealthy, patient saving, had disappeared. There was cotton wool all over the place and the remains of an outer covering, torn off in a hurry.

The discovery of the theft had sent the pent up feeling of years, like a wave of madness, to the woman's brain.

She could see again; the insanity had gone.

She could not take her eyes away from the dreadful, silent thing on the bed.

And she could hear too, she had been right, she had heard a noise. She heard it again, clearly and distinctly.

Indian Susan was coming up from the beach, and she was in the room before she had time to call out to her.

"What is the matter, Miss Armstrong?" she said looking towards the man on the bed.

It was dark in the little, low room.

Sadie was groping about for matches when Indian Susan came in.

"He," here Sadie pointed towards the bed, "he, has had some sort of a fit. I have no extra eggs for you to-day." She forced her voice to be calm.

Indian Susan handed her a pair of glasses. She had picked them up near the gorse in a pool of blood.

Sadie Armstrong held out her hand for them.

"He has hurt his head," she said, "Come to-morrow. May be he will want some medicine."

She had to get rid of the woman somehow. She felt, that if the old Indian woman stayed another minute, she must go mad.

Susan went. She went in her slow, noiseless way. Stopped a moment near the gorse, stooped down, paddled off.

Then Sadie held her breath and listened again. She set to work. She worked all night.

First she locked up the dogs. Then she barred the house and lighted the lamp.

She bent over the form on the bed.

The man was breathing.

He was not dead.

Sadie Armstrong went through a series of grotesque and sinister antics which would have verged into the comic, if one had looked in through the little window unexpectedly, and had not been with her near the gorse.

Amidst the babbling of inane words and incongruous pantomime, she fell upon her knes and prayed.

She worked over the man all through the night.

If she heard his moan, she was near him before it left his lips. She went about in a short underskirt, her sleeves rolled up to her elbows. She ran backwards and forwards to the well to renew the water, so that the bandages around his head should keep cool. She kept his feet warm with hot water and blankets, and poured stimulants between his lips.

He came to, late during the following afternoon.

Though Joe Armstrong talked sensibly, his mind was a blank, as far as the gorse bush was concerned He remembered nothing of the tragedy, and accepted Sadie's explanation without misgivings.

When he got about again, Joe Armstrong looked much the same, as he had always done.

He talked quite sensibly, but there was a curious want somewhere. The eyes did not focus one properly. He broke off in the middle of a sentence, and finished with a foolish chuckle.

Sadie had no difficulty in getting the banking account into her own hands. The neighbours arranged that for her.

She managed the farm splendidly. Joe could still do a good day's work, and she got a Chinaman to help her with the sheep and the milking.

She could not bear the sight of the yellow gorse near the house, and had it dug up.

Yellow gorse is yellow gorse.

It always came up again in the spring.

Once, that was after the grand-daughter had come from the Prairie, they, that is Sadie and the girl, came upon a clump of the yellow stuff, blazing like a flaming bush, the old woman went quite mad. What she said to the affrighted girl is better not set down, the best thing to do, is to forget it.

Joe Armstrong worked hard or mooned about on the island. He had a way of putting up his arms suddenly, as if guarding his face. If Sadie was any-

where near, and saw the movement, she went white to the lips.

There are odd things in life, and it seemed quite uncalled for to waste the accoutrements of a patriarch, and saint, upon a man like Joe Armstrong. In his latter days, the old rascal grew most lovely, silvery locks, and a snow white beard, and this, with his mild blue eyes made him look like some old-world anchorite.

There is nothing left to tell about Sadie Armstrong. Sadie lived in and for the little grand-daughter who had come to her at the last.

Agatha got to know the girl, and took her in hand, and because she had some good blood in her, she was able to do much with her in a short time.

Later on the girl made a strange marriage.

Indian Susan does not like to see the old woman on Sheep Island dig up the yellow gorse, and she does not like to see her with her blanched lips looking out to sea.

She is afraid of the old man.

Indian Susan keeps away from Sheep Island. She is a visionary creature, and says that there is a phanton after dark. It takes the shape of a gaunt old woman, and it comes out of the yellow gorse at the top of the embankment.

Nobody believes her, of course. Indian Susan takes a little fire water occasionally.

It is of no importance to Indian Susan whether anybody believes her or not. She hugs the other side of

the shore, and ducks her head if she catches sight of the yellow gorse bush.

She does not talk much.

How it came about that Susan picked up the glasses under the gorse, and became a witness to a part of the tragedy, happened in this way.

She and Kate had gone fishing together. They did this sometimes, and after the manner of people who go afishing, thy had forgotten the time.

The simplest way for Kate to get home was to go to the Mill, borrow a rig from the doctor, and drive herself.

Indian Susan paddled her to the wharf, and called at Sheep Island on her way home to see if Sadie Armstrong had any eggs to send to town. She did this sometimes for her. It was one of the transactions in which Joe had no part.

When Kate got to the Mill, the door as usual, was only pulled to. She went into the hall.

There was nobody there.

She thought, that if she came across Blake Holms, she would tell him, that she was going to borrow the doctor's rig and horse. If she did not find him, she would go upstairs into the doctor's room, and write a line to let him know what she had done with his property.

There was nobody anywhere. She ran upstairs and called.

As she passed the door of the shaft, she called again.

Then she opened the door and looked in. It was dark in the great shaft. The festoons of ivy that were hanging from the rafters, almost reached to the bottom. She was about to shut the door again, when she discovered, pressing closely to the wall, Blake Holms.

"What are you doing here?' the girl asked, alarmed at the encounter in the strange place, and at the look of the man.

He was very pale.

"Playing hide and go seek," he said with a poor attempt at merriment.

"What is that in your hand?' the girl said, she had caught sight of a revolver.

"What is it?" the girl repeated, thoroughly frightened.

She fancied, that she saw him make a furtive movement with his right hand.

She sprang at his wrist.

" Take care ! ' he shouted. " It is loaded."

It was too late. The horrid thing went off.

"What have I done?" he called out.

"You have hurt my arm," the girl gasped.

The blood was trickling down her sleeve and on to her dress.

"What were you doing up there?" the girl asked, bandaging the wound with her handkerchief.

Then suddenly, she turned upon him.

" You wicked man," she said " and he has been so good to you."

The girl burst into tears.

"I'm not fit to live," the wretch said recklessly. "I'm a thief. Look. Here is Sadie Armstrong's money"

"Sadie Armstrong's money? How did you come by Sadie Armstrong's money?"

"I stole it," said the man.

"You coward."

In the scuffle, Kate had knocked the thing out of his hand. It had clattered down the shaft.

"Wait," she said passionately, "I will climb down and bring it up again. You were right. You are not fit to live."

The wretched man saw her grasp one of the ivy streamers, and no doubt, but the girl would have gone on her mad enterprise.

"Stop!" he called, catching her by the arm, "I will make it right."

The girl gave a little, hard laugh.

"You will make it right? Can you, do you think?"

"Oh, Kate, have pity. If you had not come then . . . . . I heard you call . . . I wanted to live . . . . . I will make it right. Kate, do you hear me? . . . . I will lead a different life. I swear it. For the love of God, Kate, help me. Say you will help me. Speak to me Kate . . . . . Kate'"

Before she knew what was happening, he had fainted.

She got him on to the landing and he revived. There was a seat, where the landing made a bit of a Minstrels Gallery. She got him into it.

She stood in front of him with the light at her back.

The wretch looked so pale, that Kate let him have her hand. She forgot that he was a thief. She thought of the old doctor and wondered how she was going to keep this from him.

"Give me the money," she said.

He gave her the pitifully small package, sewn up in a bit of cotton.

When she saw it, and felt it in her hand, her lips trembled again. Big tears ran down her cheeks unchecked.

"You do not know what you have been doing," the girl said terribly moved. "The doctor must never know anything of this. It would break his heart. Can I trust you here, alone? I must go."

"Kate'" said the boy. "Oh, Kate."

"Stay here," she said. "I must change this dress."

She went into the room that had been hers, when in years gone by, she had come on her visits, and where she still had some of her old clothes.

The old white frock that she used to dress up in was still there in its old place.

She put it on and wrapped herself in her old red cloak so as to hide her arm.

When she came back, he was still in the same place.

He would have caught her hand as she passed, but he dared not.

He got to his feet.

"Good-bye,' the girl said, her sweet face quite close, "remember your promise."

As she turned to go, the light fell full upon her.

At the foot of the stairs, stood Dunraven Stubb, petrified.

Now every man and woman in that neighbourhood knew, that Dunraven Stubb loved Kate Faire.

He had loved her passionately from the moment that he had seen her, and patiently, for he hoped to make her his wife some day.

He had never spoken of his love.

He was having a pretty hard fight to get his ranch into shape, and there were years of hard work before him yet.

When she saw him standing there, and saw the color of his face, and the look of his eyes, she comprehended.

She did a monstrous thing.

She called to him, and laughed, softly.

Dunraven got to the top of the stairs at a bound.

They forgot the wretch on the bench, and they did not see the old doctor when he came in.

Do you remember, how Kate, when a little girl came tripping down the passage trailing her frock and pale sash, and how she had to pick up her satin slippers, because they were too big for her?

And how she appeared to the doctor up there at the top of the landing, like some glorious vision? How he had a premonition of what she was going to be like some day? Almost too lovely, so that it was pain to look upon her?

The old man remembered, when he saw her that evening.

They could well be generous, those two young things.

When Kate bent over and saw her old friend, she called out to him.

"Wait for me, Uncle Doctor," she said.

He picked her up, as he had done years ago. And in doing so he saw the purple bandage round her arm.

The girl made a sign to Blake to keep quiet. But he came into the light, and made a clean breast of the miserable affair.

Kate and Dunraven went out into the garden.

What the two men had to say to one another was said behind closed doors.

Dunraven took the money back to Sheep Island.

He gave no explanation. Sadie Armstrong asked for none. When the woman saw the little package done up in a piece of cotton, she leant against the kitchen wall and laughed.

You will have to decide for yourself whether Stubb did well in keeping back what he did or not.

Once Indian Susan told him a most extraordinary tale about a yellow gorse bush. He did not believe a word she told him.

He put the whole thing down to fire water.

Sadie's grand-daughter made a strange marriage.

She married Blake Holms.

For a time the North West swallowed him up. Kate went with him, that is, the image of her sweet girlhood, her health and joyous strength. Agatha to whom he wrote, kept his whereabouts to herself. She sent him books to read and long letters.

When he came back, his hands were modified by toil.

Yes, he married the little girl on Sheep Island. He told her about the theft.

She loved not wisely, but too well. So what did it matter?

If I stay here, it would be like parting on a discord, for when a little son came to Blake Holms, he gnashed his teeth when he remembered. If I bring in Kate and Dunraven, I fear of closing on a minor key, for they were but just beginning to live and to find out, how very near to pain is perfect bliss. But if I speak just once again of John and Mary, the parting may be on a long, deep chord of harmony.

John and Mary are still in the woods near the Pacific. Both are still working.

They have outlived their longings. Their children come to them from time to time.

They have no banking account.

But they have the woods and they belong, by right of conquest, to them, their children and their posterity.

It is a great inheritance.

Barrow News and Mail, Limited, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness.

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