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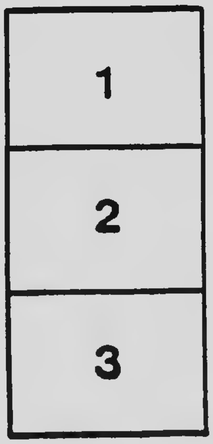

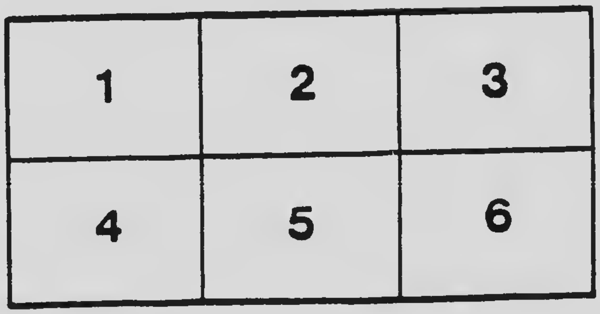

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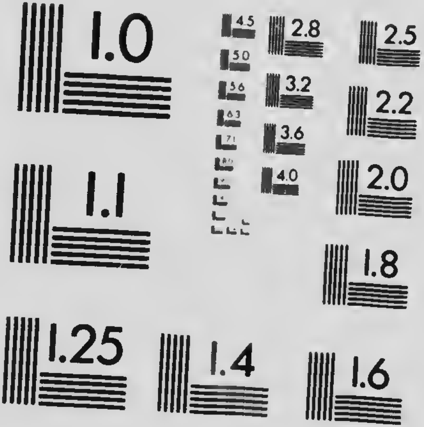
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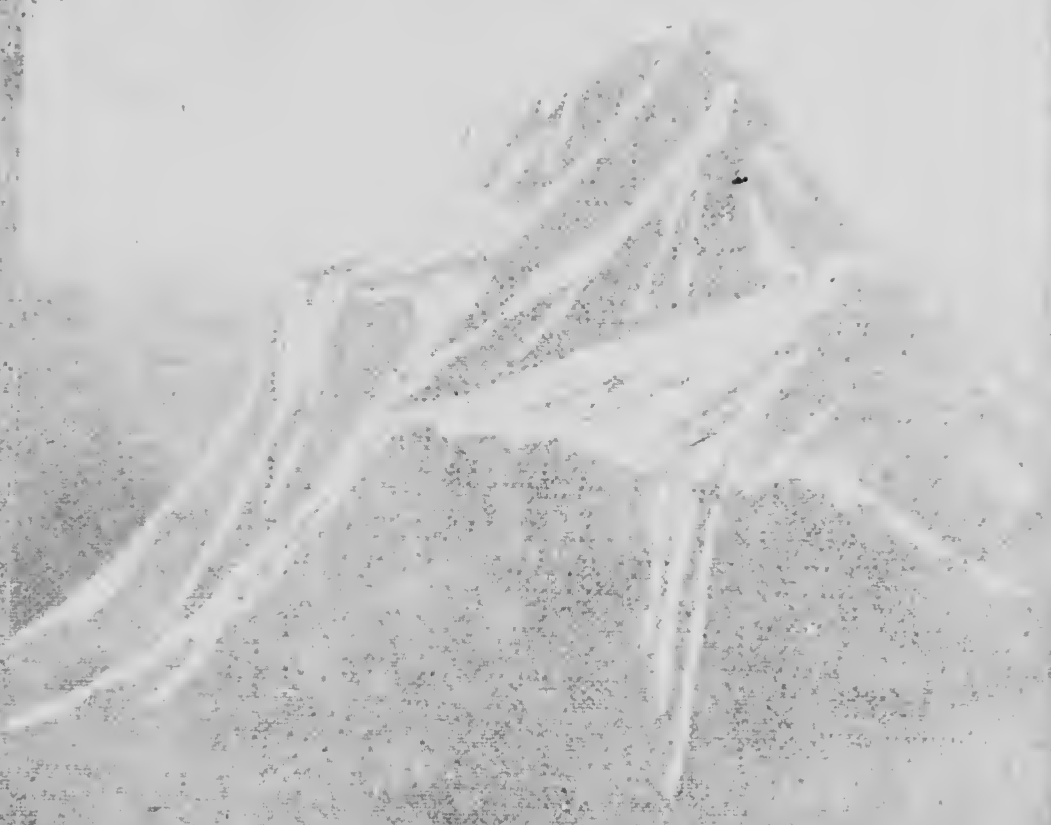

# THE SINGER OF THE KOOTENAY

ROBERT·E·KNOWLES

To Dunham
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# THE SINGER OF THE KOOTENAY

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*ROBERT E. KNOWLES*

The Singer of the Kootenay: A Tale of To-day.

The Handicap: A Novel of Pioneer Days.

The Attic Guest: A Story of the South and North.

The Web of Time: A Romance of the Human Heart.

The Undertow: A Tale of Both Sides of the Sea.

St. Cuthbert's: A Parish Romance.

The Dawn at Shanty Bay: A Christmas Story.

# The Singer of The Kootenay

## A TALE OF TO-DAY

By
ROBERT E. KNOWLES
Author of "St. Cuthbert's," "The Handicap," etc.

New York Chicago Toronto
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London and Edinburgh

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# The Singer of The Kootenay

## I

## A PROPER EMIGRANT

YES, on the whole, the congregation seemed fairly resigned to the intelligence that had just been conveyed from the lips of the Reverend Armitage Seymour, Doctor of Divinity, Minister of St. Enoch's Church, Wardsville, and one-time Lecturer on Ecclesiastical Polity in a Theological Hall in Scotland.

It required but a glance at the face and form in the pulpit this bright autumn morning to inform any observant soul that the Reverend Armitage was meant, and was fashioned in eternity, to be a lecturer. The eyes were admonitory, the nose inquisitive, the lips imperative, the neck a little long and enterprising; and the whole thin frame of the man, at the close of every appeal or intimation, had the easy gift of resolving itself into a kind of animated interrogation point, one shoulder uplifted and pertinent, one knee forward thrust even though the pulpit hid it, one hand obliquely extended with outstretched palm, while the intellectual head abutted slightly from the shoulder, its attitude and expression uniting to provide that human corkscrew effect that must, inwardly or outwardly, belong to every lecturer who has not been made but born.

Although, as has been said, this autumn morning was bright and inviting, the spacious St. Enoch's was nevertheless but scantily filled. The congregation, like that other material known to wicked and drouthy men, had crumbled under repeated operations of the corkscrew; so that fully one-half of them were denied the pain of the tidings borne to them this morning by the man now looking down from the pulpit upon the faithful few. To ensure perfect accuracy in a matter so important, let those tidings be repeated in the very words of the Reverend Armitage himself.

"I have to inform you, my beloved friends," he began, holding forth a pair of gold-rimmed glasses and glancing towards all parts of the church at once, "that I am about to leave you for some weeks—even months.

"As you are doubtless aware, our General Assembly has recently inaugurated a special department of evangelistic work, whose principal field of operation is in the remote and needy West, hard by the foundations of empire.

"I cannot say that I was directly chosen for this work by the Committee, for I was not. But the following circumstances opened up the way. One of the men who was to go—there are several to be so employed, at far separate points—was Dr. Rattray, minister at Hillburn. But his wife, unhappily, has been seized with serious illness and has been ordered a long sea voyage as soon as she shall be able to travel. Her husband, being under necessity to accompany her, was compelled to make a speedy choice of a substitute; and, although not personally acquainted, he has been kind enough to say that he considers me qualified to take his place, has asked me to do so, and I have consented. The Committee also has given its assent, entrusting Dr. Rattray with the choice. It was due largely, I doubt not, to the prominence of my congregation," the Reverend Armitage added modestly; "wherefore I start almost immediately for British Columbia, a distance of something like two thousand miles."

Here he paused, extracted his handkerchief from the pocket of his cassock, and wiped his brow as might a jaded pilgrim who had just surmounted those weary leagues so recently enumerated. "It is to the Kootenay we are to go," he continued, that peculiar relish lingering about the magic name, such as all old-countrymen indulge when they think or speak the Elysian western word, "and our design is to assist and encourage the missionaries there, our humbler brethren who hold the fort in those wild and savage regions," this last coming with the air of a man who was ready to be offered and who already saw his thought-worn scalp dangling from an Indian's girdle, or in front of a miner's hut, or from the door of a lumber shanty amid mighty pines that softly sang the requiem of the Reverend Armitage Seymour, one-time Lecturer in a Scottish Hall.

"We are to go forth two and two," continued the preacher, the peril of massacre for the moment past, "as the Apostles of old; but in our case a little different—we go two and two, one ordained, the other unordained." This last was announced after a fashion that went far to interpret the Minister of St. Enoch's; it fairly breathed of Ecclesiastical Polity; the above classification, to him, was as of the quick and the dead. "In this case the ordained man is to do the preaching—and the unordained man is to assist with the gift of song; he is to stir up the hearts of our hearers by the melodies of Zion," elaborated the Reverend Armitage, doing the best he could for the unordained appendage who was to accompany him—"that is to say, he is a singer, and, as such, has his place." At this juncture the organist and the leading tenor both of whom were behind the worthy Doctor (and carefully so retained) exchanged glances, even grimaces, that proved both of *them* to be unordained, and doomed so forever to remain unless all Ecclesiastical Polity should vanish from the earth.

"It is the hope of the General Assembly," the Doctor continued amiably, "that by these means our Western brethren will be cheered and stimulated, and our Church established in greater dignity and strength before the eyes of the enemies of Zion in those far distant regions. It is the hope of the Assembly that greater prestige will thus be added to the Church's whole enterprise in that great Western World—and that our people there will be built up in their most holy faith. Oh, yes," he made haste to add, "and that souls may be converted—by such of the outgoing band whose gift is for that really important phase of Christian work, for every different faculty has been considered in this great undertaking of the Church. And I hope that during my absence you will be faithful in your attendance on the public services of the House of God. I have secured as good supply for my pulpit as I could," he added, though his expression showed how near to despair he had been driven in his attempt to adequately stop the gap. "The collection will now be taken up," he concluded, turning with silken rustle towards the spacious chair behind him, the organist meantime falling to upon the keys in a fashion that indicated his conviction that St. Enoch's had nothing to fear so long as he too did not depart for the Western wilds that awaited his outgoing chief.

Such were the tidings which fell upon the ears of the silent congregation; and which, as has been hinted, they appeared to bear with Christian fortitude and calm.

Mrs. Seymour, wife of the Reverend Armitage, was not at church that day; wherefore she looked to her liege-lord for some report of the services as he took his seat opposite her at the dinner table.

"And so you told them you were going, did you, Armitage?" she asked as soon as grace had been said.

"Yes," he answered with a sigh; "I broke it to them as gently as I could."

"Did you tell them who was to take your pulpit in your absence?" she enquired further, taking the cover from the potatoes as she spoke.

"No," and the Doctor passed his plate as he answered; "no, I thought they'd find out soon enough. I know they hope it will be Rankin, that evangelistic fellow who supplied those four Sundays I was laid off with the gout. And I know they don't care for Murchiston, the man I have engaged to come—he's too scholarly for them. Of course, I know he's no great preacher—but he's a scholar, and a gentleman. Why, his mother was one of the Gordons of Tulloch, and he's first cousin to an earl!" with which the Reverend Armitage helped himself to the rich brown gravy, his face aglow with reverence the while. "And he's a graduate of Oxford—and his articles on the Pentateuch are recognized as authorities on the subject everywhere," looking across the table at his wife in a way that spoke volumes for the absent Murchiston.

"Did you have a good service this morning, Armitage?" his wife asked after a pause.

"Oh, yes, fairly," he answered; "only the choir forgot the Gloria—after the prayer, you know. That spoiled things a good deal. And I can't get them to give the threefold Amen after the Benediction—it seems some of the Session object, and Jenkins, the leader, is afraid of his life of them. It's discouraging, so it is," he went on; "I had hoped to have those features nicely introduced before I went away. But there's always something to try one in the work of the ministry," he added resignedly.

"When do you start for the West, Armitage?" his wife suddenly enquired, giving the conversation a new departure.

"On Tuesday, I believe. And my assistant is join me somewhere west of Winnipeg—at a place called Indian Head, I believe. He's been helping in some similar services there."

"What assistant?" queried Mrs. Seymour; her spouse had uttered the word as though it might have been his butler.

"The Singer," responded the minister; "it seems every clergyman has to have a singer with him—I do hope he'll prove congenial—so many of them are fellows of no culture, mere emotional ranters. Of course, one couldn't get on without them; I don't think I would try it at all without such a man to help me—it oils the wheels. But he'll have to conform to my ideas, that's one thing sure," he went on, wiping his lips savagely with his table napkin. "There can't be two admirals in one ship. You'll have my steamer trunk all packed in time for me, will you, dear?" he added. "Be sure to put in my warmest flannels, and my heavy overshoes—and my fur-lined coat," he went on, shivering a little as he spoke; "they say that Western climate is something terrible in its severity. And, oh, yes," he added as an afterthought, "don't forget to put in my gown and cassock—and the bands. I'd be utterly lost without them."

His wife smiled a little. "Surely you won't need your gown, and all those things, out there, Armitage? You're going to preach to miners, and shanty-men, and everything like that, I think you said?"

Her husband waved his hand slightly as he rose from his chair. "My dear, a minister is a minister, wherever he goes—and preaching is preaching, no matter who may compose the congregation. I propose, my dear, to magnify my office—and to maintain the dignity of the Church that gave me my orders, wherever I go," and Dr. Seymour closed his lips with a firmness that indicated the last word had been said on that particular theme.

The other sighed, making no answer. By this time her husband had begun to ascend the stairs.

"Are you going to the Sunday-school this afternoon, dear?" his wife asked from below. "It's your last day, you know."

"No," he replied wearily; "I'm tired out and must have some rest. I'm going to lie down—I have arduous labours before me, you know. What are you going to do?—I think you'd be better to rest as well."

"I don't feel like resting," she answered softly her face averted. He felt, but could not see, that the tender eyes were moist with tears. "I'm going to write."

"Write! What about?" he asked, pausing on the stair. Yet he felt sure he knew.

The answer was long in coming. "It's a letter to Spokane," she replied huskily at last. "I heard last night—only incidentally, and we've been disappointed so often; but a lady told me that a friend of hers saw his name—our Leonard's name—in a Western paper there. At least, he thought he did—though he paid no particular attention—recalled it when he happened to hear it mentioned after he came home. So I'm going to try once more," she added hoarsely, a wealth of longing and loneliness in the voice.

"What was it about—in the paper?" he asked, still standing, his face paler than before.

A long silence again. "It wasn't very good," she faltered at length, for he still waited. "Something about some kind of trouble—some *jail* affair," her voice broken and almost inaudible.

No word came from the figure on the stair. On he strode, upward. "Let us try to forget, Eleanor," he said falteringly as he turned on the landing. "And please call me at five if I'm not awake—I wish to look over my notes for the evening's service," with which he went on to his spacious chamber, closed the door, leaving silence and sorrow behind.

The woman turned and made her way, groping, her sight lost in tears, into a little room with a tiny desk in the corner. Taking a key from her pocket she fumbled blindly for a minute with the lock.

Opening the desk she drew forth a little picture, beautifully set in a golden frame; then, through all the mist and darkness, her eyes leaped passionately to the face within—the sweet and fascinating face of a lad in his middle teens. She went back and closed the door behind her, then returned to the desk, knelt beside it, the picture clasped convulsively to her heart. "I won't!" she cried through bitter tears; "I won't forget—God doesn't—and while He won't, I won't. What are they doing to you to-day, my child?" she sobbed through a storm of tears. "Oh, Leonard! Oh, Leonard, my son, my son!"

## II

## AN EXILE INDEED

THE world has heard much concerning the sadness of farewell. But there is one form of sadness deeper still; it is the hollow pain of a parting that is untouched with sorrow. How many a once devoted wife, life's bloom of love long dead, must sit with folded hands after the door has closed upon the outgoing husband who was once the lover of her youth, remembering with anguish how different far were the farewells of other days before love's lamp had burned low and pale, then flickered in dying hope, then gone out in blackness!

So, alas! was it with the wife of the cultured and distinguished minister of St. Enoch's when, a few days later, he took his departure on his distant mission. She could hear the rumble of the wheels, hearse like, as they bore him forth—and the lack of anguish in her breast filled that breast with the deepest anguish a woman's heart can know.

But if womanhood is thus equipped for sorrow, it has its holy compensations. Though the well of married bliss may, and often does, become choked and dry, the all-compensating Hand has opened in the woman-heart another spring of joy, less passionate and maddening perhaps, less intoxicating in its bliss, but whose calmer waters are fed from all Eternity. Such a fountain, flowing with unfaltering stream, is the unchanging tide of a mother's love. Unlike the other, time does not diminish, nor silence quench, nor neglect temper the ardour of its passion. The wife-love must be fed of human hands; the mother-love God Himself guards and replenishes. Wherefore, granted a Mother and a Son, and you have a living spring of love and happiness, defiant of all desolation, feeding the roots of life with Romance and Passion, though all life's upper branches be touched with barrenness and death.

On the very day, almost at the very hour, in which the Reverend Armitage Seymour parted from his wife and betook himself towards Western wilds, another scene of parting might have been witnessed in a far humbler home. Which home was situated in a little Canadian village, not so far removed from the scene of the clerical life and labours already referred to.

Two inmates occupied this latter home, and two alone—and both were bended above a rusty trunk, now waiting to be closed and locked. These two were mother and son. The former was a woman of between fifty and sixty years of age, her hair already whitened with the copious gray that had gathered so quickly in the last few years of widowhood. Perhaps the sorrow that evidently was fresh upon her heart had gone far to deepen these signs of age. The pure face, crowned with the dignity which sorrow gives beyond recall, sweet in its gentleness, strong in the patience and resignation that rested on it, was turned upon her son with a wealth of yearning, of loneliness too, that left no doubt as to who it was for whom the shabby trunk was thus prepared with its scant possessions.

The stalwart youth had his mother's face; the same brown eyes; the same wavy hair, nut brown and ruddy all; the same oval cast of countenance, mobile lips, chin of not too resolute a type—the same general look of tenderness, of amiable and kindly nature, of purity too, though untested like the other's, and unenriched, like hers, by some Power from afar. Even as he looked up at her now, the real business of the hour done, his eyes had a sort of laughing hopefulness that contrasted strangely with the brooding seriousness, almost fear, that shadowed the mother's face. They were obviously thinking of the same thing, speaking of it, indeed—but no sense of tragedy, no dark misgiving, mingled with his outlook on the pathless way to which his feet were now waiting to be turned.

The story was a sad one, even bitter in its pathos.

Struggling against poverty, her widowed heart had yet devised great things for her only son. By dint of toil and sacrifice such as he could never know, she had contrived to send him to college. Two or three years had passed peacefully, hopefully—so far as his mother knew, at least. Then came the tragedy.

Among all the students at old Queen's, there had been no greater favourite than Murray McLean. A manly frame, a handsome face, a nature warm and ingenuous, had all combined to win the liking of his college mates. There was yet another factor which added to his charm; from childhood he had possessed a voice of rare sweetness and beauty. The great gift of song was his. Even when the merest lad, his ear had had that quick sensitiveness to rhythm, his voice that commanding and magnetic quality, which bespeak the true singer. His mother, not slow to note and to prize the gift, had sedulously trained and developed it; till, with opening manhood, there were but few anywhere of his age with voice of finer range or sweeter quality.

But this golden gift—so painful to relate but so often to be told—had brought this first dark cloud about his youthful head. It came about after this wise. Among the college professors there was one singularly obnoxious to the students—perhaps justly so—who had been for [illegible]s the target for their banter and derision. Yet it had never gone quite so far as on that particular night that proved so disastrous to this widow's son. Some public function or other was under way in the Convocation Hall, in which function this unpalatable professor duly arose to take some part. Whereupon, all having been previously arranged, there suddenly floated out a rich full voice from the students' gallery—and every other sound was hushed. The voice was Murray McLean's; and the verse it sang was one of biting doggerel, gathered about this professor's name. It had been arranged that the song was to be general; but, whether from ignorance of the words, or timidity, or surrender to the master voice, that voice was allowed to sing the verse alone.

Wherefore the stroke fell on its unhappy owner—and Murray McLean was forthwith sternly dismissed from the classic halls. Homeward he turned his way, having no otherwhere to go. But if, on the long journey, he tried his best to consider the whole thing a joke, even recounting it gaily to one or two of his fellow travellers, the bitterness and the tragedy of it all were abundantly clear to him before he had faltered out the sickening story to the broken-hearted woman at whose knees he was bending before the tale was done. There is no voice that can call forth the hidden forces of the heart of youth like the low wail of an anguished mother—and she had worked so hard, and saved so pitifully, and prayed so earnestly, and hoped so proudly!

So now Murray was going forth. Two or three weeks had passed, intolerable to him because of the still deeper tenderness and still gentler love with which his mother had borne herself to him—and the great resolve had gathered in his heart that, cost what it might, he would go away. Not only away, but far away! where he could start afresh in the vast regions of the opening West, and begin over again, unknown and unbranded, the life that heretofore had been so fruitless and so frivolous.

"But what will you do, my son, when you get out there?" the mother's voice was asking, her words choked and trembling as they came. "You'll be all alone—and we have no money."

The youth straightened himself beside the slender form. Coming closer to her he rested his hands upon her shoulders and looked down into the wistful face. Her own hands moved upward till they took the ruddy cheeks between them, her eyes seeming to search his very soul.

"Mother," he began, his voice low and tense, every word touched with passion and purpose; "I don't know what I'm going to do, mother—or how I'm going to get on. But I do know this—that I'll do the first thing, the first honest thing, my hands get a chance to work at. I know I've been weak and silly, mother, and I got in with a worthless bunch, and I've played the fool—yes, in lots of ways besides that last crazy scrape that I got expelled for. I've got many enemies to fight, mother—and they're mostly here," as he laid his hand upon his breast. "I haven't done anything so bad, dear—nothing low or base—but I'll own up that I've been wild, and reckless, and selfish. But I'm going to play the man, mother—and I'm going to do something to pay you back—and I'm going to make you proud of me yet, mother, you wait and see if I don't. That country's big—away out there among the mountains—and my arms are strong; and I'll get along, don't you ever fear about me."

The yearning eyes that looked up into his were a mist of tears. Twice she tried to speak before the words would come. "I know you will, my bonnie," she faltered at last, "and there's just one thing I want you always to remember; there'll be no morning, Murray, and no evening—and no hour—that your mother won't be thinking of you—and loving you—and trusting you. And praying for you, Murray! Yes, my son, and waiting for you —— Oh, my boy, my darling!" she suddenly broke forth in passion, drawing him down upon her bosom, "please don't be long—come home soon, and let us be happy again. And Murray, Murray," as she released him once again and poured her soul into his eyes, "promise me you'll keep your heart pure and good, for me, unstained, my darling, for your mother, from all the temptations that I know will beset you there. Promise me, won't you promise me, my son?"

She stopped, her breath coming fitfully, and gazed into his face. That face was flushed, and perplexity seemed to rest on it. "I'll try to play the man, mother," he answered firmly, looking in turn to see if she were satisfied.

"But I want more, Murray," she retorted. "I want you to be—to be—religious; to be like your father was, you know. To be out and out, my son—to be a Christian, a real Christian, Murray!"

He hesitated again. "Isn't playing the man Christian enough?" he returned—"if a fellow does the square thing, the straight thing, and leads a good clean life, isn't that Christian enough, mother?"

She sighed and sank back in her chair. "I'm so frightened about you, Murray," she resumed in a moment. "You know, my son—or if you don't I'll tell you—you have a peculiar temptation because of, because of the gift you've got," she went on impulsively. "It's your voice, Murray, that wonderful voice of yours—you must know, I suppose you do know it, that God has given you a great gift in that. But oh, my boy, how many have been ruined by it, instead of blessed! It brings you so much into company—and it makes you popular—and it's so easy to spoil everything," she faltered, scarce knowing what to say. "So I want you to promise me, Murray, I want you to tell me now, that you'll never, never, let it debase or lower you—or lead you into company that isn't good. And I want more than that. I want your promise, dear, that if you ever get a chance, no matter how it comes, you'll use your voice for good, for helping somebody—for the glory of God," she added reverently, a faint blush stealing to her cheek, for such language was unfamiliar between them.

He stood, smiling down at her.

"That's putting it pretty strong for me, mother," he said shyly; "that's quite a programme for a fellow that's just been fired out of college. But I'll promise you the first part," he went on reflectively; "of course I don't admit I've got such a whale of a voice as you seem to think. But, such as it is, I'll promise the first part. I'll promise the whole thing," he suddenly broke out; "for I don't believe it's so very religious after all. Yes, I'll promise the whole business—if I get a chance to do any good with it, I'll get in the game. Come now, mother," his arm stealing about her as he spoke, "I guess I'll have to be going

—I haven't any more than time, I'm afraid," with which he took hold of the lid of the trunk and proceeded to press it down.

She helped him close down the cover and lock the old-fashioned chest. Just as the key turned in the lock the carter could be heard coming up the path. A moment later, the old trunk upon his shoulders, he had begun to retrace his steps towards his wagon.

Then came the last farewell. Even as she held him passionately in her arms the eyes of the departing youth roved fondly about the familiar scene. The flower pots blooming in the window; the kettle singing on the stove; the ancestral Bible still open on the table, his mother's glasses resting on the page; the great clock, stoic-like, grimly ticking in the hall without; the homely fare, almost untasted, still standing on the table—all these burned themselves into his memory as he took that long last loving look.

His mother's tears were falling fast. "Hark!" she murmured, "the wind is rising; the night is cold, my son. Oh, God, keep him, and protect him, and open up the way for him," she pleaded, as if alone. "Here, my darling," her tone changing as she spoke; "take this—no, it isn't much, it's only a dollar," her voice breaking piteously as she overbore his protest and pressed the poor endowment, "but it was all I could save—and maybe it will help. Oh, dear Lord, find the path for him, he's all I've got—and bring him back, to me, to me. Go, my son—wait, let your mother button your coat once more; tight, tight and warm, for the wind is rising and the night is cold Good-bye!"

She turned, almost abruptly, and he went out into the gloom, the poor piteous dollar still held tightly in his hand, like a sacred thing.

The night had darkened fast; but suddenly, as from afar, a silvery gleam of light flowed clear upon his path as he picked his steps outward to the road. Glancing back and upward, he saw for a moment the bright flame of a lamp held aloft at the little gable window. And he saw a fragile hand that held it; and, above the hand and the lamp, pale and wistful, a face peering out into the night, the holy light of prayer still resting on it.

Then he pressed on again—on, in that lane of light.

## III

# THE REFLECTIONS OF A PULLMAN PORTER

THE Reverend Armitage Seymour had every reason to be resigned to his lot as he snuggled back in the luxurious sleeping car that was to be his fixed abode for the next two or three thousand miles. His slippers were on his feet, his little skullcap upon his head; his broadcloth coat, infinite of tail, swung to and fro from the hook above him, replaced, so far as the Doctor's shoulders were concerned, by a dressing jacket of rather gayer hue than befitted the clerical face of him who wore it. Which face, relaxed in pleasant anticipation, was turned with some eagerness towards that great waiting West, nearer and nearer to which it was being borne with every onward leap of the mighty engine.

And, indeed, there are few sensations more delightful, of a travel sort at least, than the prospect of the trans-continental journey to the Canadian West. The vastness of it all; the mighty plane of action; the vision of a continent about to be traversed, and in comfort; the fifteen hundred miles of hill and plain and lake and forest, rich and enriching, that must be crossed before old Ontario itself is left behind—and then only at the portal of this bewildering heritage! The throbbing life of Winnipeg, gateway city, giant youth; then mighty sweep of prairie, to north and south, to east and west illimitable, staggering the imagination, yet foreboding destiny not to be described; then at last the subduing Shadow of the distant Rockies, stern sentinels that guard the Mystic Mazes of Columbia, with all her obvious resources and all her hidden treasure. And Beyond, laved by the western sea, The Coast!—not designated Pacific, but arbitrarily named The Coast—that Elysian shore where gold and health and romance and happiness are all sublimely mingled, the waves of its friendly ocean already chanting welcome to the stranger, lullaby to the weary.

The morning of the third day of journeying found the worthy Doctor, a substantial breakfast comfortably stowed away, gazing over the rolling prairie, beautiful in the golden light of the sharp autumn morning. Here and there were great regions fresh upturned from the plough, rolling beyond the eye like stretches of tawny ocean, the rich dark loam still showing the frost of the night before. And, side by side, lay the broad acres of stubble, their rich wheaten harvest evident in the innumerable stacks that rose, tripod-shaped, all over the bosom of the patient mother that had borne then. Grayish clouds, half of dust and half of smoke, beneath which human figures could be seen in busy action, bespoke the threshing industry that was already far advanced. Far as the eye could reach, and farther than the imagination could conceive, lay these vast fertile acres, waiting for the tread of approaching millions, scene of a future Nation's life, base of supplies for the Empire that was as yet all unconscious of the mighty heritage.

"Porter!" suddenly called the minister; "have you got a time-table, porter?"

"Yes, suh," responded the darkey, pausing in the aisle; "yes, suh, got it in my head, suh--I knows ebery station from Montreal to Vancouver."

"Indeed!" replied Dr. Seymour, by no means overcome; "then please tell me what time we get to Indian Head."

The porter scratched his own. "Fifteen thirty," he replied in a moment; "that's half-past three in the mawnin', back East time, suh. Why? you doesn't get off at Indian Head, suh. You'se a-gwine down through the Crow's Nest Pass, suh—you change at Medicine Hat; yes, suh, that's where me an' you parts company, at Medicine Hat. Dunmore Junction, that is—same thing, suh."

"No, I don't get off at Indian Head—but I expect somebody to join me there. I'm expecting a gentleman by the name of Owen. But I won't be up at that unearthly hour, I assure you."

"No, suh," responded the porter. He had seen enough of this particular passenger to be quite assured of *that* long before this.

"But he'll be asking for me. He'll ask you if the Reverend Dr. Seymour is aboard—well, that is I."

"Yes, suh. I'll sho' tell him you're him," responded the porter, who had not enjoyed the early educational advantages of the other. "An' I'll tell him to be quiet, suh. Is he a-gwine through the Crow with you, suh?"

"Yes," responded the Doctor, unbending a little; "we're going on the same errand—in a sense. At least, he's to lead the singing at my meetings, in the Kootenay."

"Well, suh," the porter responded cheerfully, "I'll take pow'ful good care of the gen'leman, suh. I'll get hot bricks fo' his feet—an' have a little hot watah ready; dey mos' gen'lly wants hot watah, dey does, suh."

Dr. Seymour turned a questioning eye. "Hot water!—and hot bricks! What do you mean, porter?"

"'Zactly what I says, suh. Dere ain't nobody so pahtikklah as dem singin' gen'lemen; got to hab eberythin' jes' so. Dey always has sore throats, fo' one thing. An' dey always wants hot whiskey, fo' another—an' plenty sugar, too. So I gives dem the hot watah—dey does the rest. An' the debbil can't get 'em up in the mawnin', suh," he added plaintively, yet grinning amiably the while.

"He's going to sing the Gospel, sir," Dr. Seymour interpolated.

"I knows dat," responded the darkey; "dat's all right, suh—I ain't got nuffin agen the Gospel; my own pop was a 'xhorter down in ole Kaintuck—but dem singin' gents is funny birds, suh."

The Doctor seemed disinclined to pursue the conversation. Leaning back in hi [illegible] he picked up his book, "The Threefold Orde [illegible] he Ministry," and pretended to read it. Yet it was dry, cruel dry! and doubtless the porter knew it.

"Dere's a pow'ful fine singer in the Colonist," he resumed gravely, still intent on matters musical.

The Doctor laid down the "Threefold Order." "Where?—what do you mean by the Colonist?" he asked.

"Colonist car," the porter answered laconically; "third car forrahd. He's a peach, all right. Sometimes I goes forrahd to see Mose—he's the attendant there, an' when he ain't doin' nuffin an' I'm doin' the same, me an' him has a cup o' coffee. Got their own kit in the Colonist, you know, suh."

"Is he an evangelist, too?" enquired the Doctor.

The Ethiopian indulged in a low drawling chuckle. "Not 'zactly; no, suh, he ain't no divine, suh—he's too gay fo' dat. Don't believe he's eben a Christian, to say nuffin 'bout bein' a preacher. He's sho' well up on cards, suh—an' I was brought up to think no one could be a Christian an' know much 'bout *dem.* He sho' raised de debbil in de Colonist last night when he seed a sharper doin' up a fellah, a baby kind o' fellah, that thought he knowed a thing or two. Mose said dat dere singer was a terrah when he got mad; then he done showed 'em some awful clevah tricks—dey was all babies alongside o' *him,* Mose said. But he sho' has a voice like a' angel, suh," the porter concluded fervently, wagging his head as one to whom words were of small avail.

"I never was in a Colonist car," the Doctor ventured after a pause. "What is it like—what class of people patronize it?"

"Tol'ble poh, on the whole, suh," the porter replied reflectively; "mos'ly hard up folks. But some o' dem's awful decent too—Mose told me dey sometimes gives him a dollah, suh, when dey're gettin' off," and the porter looked whole volumes at his fare; "an' he don't do nuffin at all for 'em, like what we does in here," glancing round the palatial car.

"I think I'd like to see this Colonist coach," the

Doctor returned irrelevantly, not caring to dwell on the sordid vein the porter had opened up—"I'm a great student of humanity, you know."

The porter pondered. "Dere's mos' too much 'manity in dere, suh—if you *does* go in, don't go in the ebenin', suh; no, suh, not when dey's beginnin' to stretch out, suh. Dere's mos' too much 'manity jes' then, suh. I'se got to go," he suddenly broke in —"dere's a bell; it's dat fat woman with the cork leg; I hab to ram it under the berth ebery night, an' give it back to her in the mawnin'," and the faithful attendant departed on his errand of restoration.

The Reverend Armitage Seymour returned to the "Threefold Order"—and the day wore on.

The encircling gloom of evening was beginning to throw its far-flung pall about the darkening plains before the porter presented himself again. But suddenly, just as the train was pulling out of some insignificant station, he appeared with something in his hand. "A telegram fo' you, suh," he announced briefly. "Here's a blank—if dere's an answer, I'll send it fo' you at the next station."

Dr. Seymour hurriedly opened the envelope. It was from the Secretary of the Assembly's Committee on Evangelism, and this was the news it brought:

"Owen wires us sick with pneumonia at Indian Head. Absolutely disabled. No other singer available here. Do best you can. Try secure good local talent or otherwise. Fill place if possible."

The Doctor pondered long and deeply. And the more he pondered the more serious did the situation appear to him. While not particularly enthusiastic himself about singers in general, yet he recalled how the Committee, in the correspondence Dr. Rattray had forwarded, had emphasized the importance of this feature in the projected campaign. Besides, a little reflection strengthened the fear of helplessness if he had to begin to work thus unaided—without oil for the wheels, as his own figurative mind suggested. Perhaps, too, the growing sense of distance, and loneliness, and the subduing thought of those mighty mountains—and all that was there entrenched in hostile attitude—deepened the feeling that some human aid would be as welcome as it would be necessary. What if there should be no singing at all! he even thought once, stirring uneasily in his seat.

An hour or two later, the matter having been more or less dismissed from his mind, and the time dragging rather heavily, the Reverend Armitage suddenly decided to carry into effect his resolve of visiting the Colonist car. Wherefore, without further ado, he arose and made his way onward through the fast flying train. He was past the front sleeper, and half-way through the dining car, when, smiling reproachfully to himself and shaking his head in mild wonder that such a thing should have happened, he turned and hurried quickly back. He had forgotten to discard the rather festive jacket; which was now soon replaced by the black frock coat of copious tail. Thus repaired he made his way forward once more and was soon standing in the aisle of the car the porter had so vividly described.

Surely there is not in all this vale of tears any aggregation quite so full of human interest as that which may be found within the confines of a transcontinental Colonist car! All sorts and conditions of men are there. The shabby genteel, disgusted but compelled to endure; the frankly poor, thankful that they are there at all; the land seeker, beguiled by visions of home and happiness; the prospector, ravished by the gleam of gold that as yet lies hidden; the domestic servant, matrimonially bent; the weary mother, struggling with weary children, all summoned by the husband and father who waits in the distant wilderness; the callow youth, suspicious of all advances from never so friendly fellow travellers; the aged, hopeful of a home with prosperous children beyond the mountains; the broken in health, most often the consumptive, whose last hope is linked with the gentle breezes of the Okanagan or the mild saline of the Pacific shore—but all moving on, ever on, and all hoping for Something; something better, in that enchanted West.

As Dr. Seymour entered the car the first thing to attract his eye was the spectacle of a little girl, of ten or eleven years of age, who was being tenderly cared for on the bosom of a woman whose face gave abundant evidence of the solicitude she felt. Just at that moment the conductor came through the coach, making for the rear. The minister ventured an enquiry.

"Yes," the official answered, "she's pretty sick; poor child, her mother died last week, back in Ontario—that woman that's holding her is her aunt, I believe. And they're going to the child's father he has a ranch near Calgary. It's heart trouble—inflammatory rheumatism five years ago, it seems, and it always leaves something. They had a doctor in to look at her, at Regina—and that's what he said. Sad case, sir," as he thrust his wrist through the ring of his lantern, gave a tug at his peaked cap, and passed on to the rear.

## IV

## *THE DIVERSIONS OF A COLONIST CAR*

THE clergyman stood for a few minutes at the back of the car, surveying the scene before him. The bedraggled travellers, or a goodly number of them, were bestrewing themselves in various fantastic attitudes, pitifully trying to compose themselves to sleep. Half-way down the car, in two seats that faced each other, were three or four young men, evidently little inclined for slumber. One of the windows at their left was open, the car being close, as the porter had opined. Just opposite them, across the aisle, were two gentle-faced girls, of twenty or thereabout, evidently sisters, who seemed to preserve a dignified indifference to all that was going on.

Suddenly one of the young men, ogling the girls as he proceeded, began a snatch of song. The women started where they sat, flushing painfully. This seemed to amuse the singer, his voice now trilling with merriment. The suggestive words could be distinctly heard all over the car. Just then Dr. Seymour noticed one of the younger fellows of the group, a tall, well-formed youth with a great shock of ruddy, rebellious hair, lean over and ejaculate something to the singer in what was evidently a voice of much animation, even indignation. The vocalist, smiling defiantly, waved his hand carelessly towards the interrupter; then gaily threw a kiss in the direction of the passengers across the aisle, still going on with the offensive strain.

To his dying day the Reverend Armitage Seymour never forgot the picture of strength and passion that leaped before him as he saw the face of that ruddy-haired youth that night. As the clergyman slipped up the aisle closer to the scene of action he saw a face ashy pale, lips compressed, eyes flashing with purpose and indignation. As the youth reached forward towards the audacious singer, the latter, alive to the situation, sprang out into the aisle and struck an attitude of defense.

" Let them alone," shouted a couple of the men as others showed signs of interfering; " let him get what's coming to him—he's big enough."

Which was quite true, the burly form of the blackguard looming large as he poised himself for action. " He's ready for you, Mac ! " one of the group shouted, already well familiar with the assailant's name.

Then came the impact. The aggressor, the youth of the ruddy hair, went wildly at his opponent—and a blow from the other's fist sent him reeling back along the aisle. In an instant he had rallied. But, immediately afterwards, he seemed mysteriously to falter again, turned dizzily about, stood uncertainly in the narrow passage, clinging to a seat as if for support. All this time it was noticeable that he kept his back carefully turned on his antagonist, reeling slightly—but always reeling a little closer to his enemy. The latter looked down at him rather pityingly. "Comin' to find out this is a free country, I reckon, ain't you, sonny?" he sneered drawlingly; can't set up Sunday-school just when you take a notion, can you?" as he made a mock motion with his foot towards the still swaying figure.

But the swaying was to the ruddy-haired youth what the crouch is to the tiger of the jungle. Quicker than a flash of light, with the sudden swirl that had been practiced on a hundred football fields, maddened with rage and pain, he flung himself, bodily lifted from his feet, into the very arms of the other—through them, too, the wild momentum hurling him on; and in an instant he was on his bosom, his hands clutching at his throat as though they were a steel trap that had just been sprung.

It was all over in a moment—yet not all over either. Forcing the breath from the ruffian, he loosened one hand just long enough to deal him a smashing blow that turned the songster's attention, for the time at least, to the study of astronomy; then one more—yet once again he drew back his fist, but forebore. With a quick movement of his foot and a quick action of his knee, aided by corresponding movements farther up, he laid his enemy on his back in the aisle. Quick as a flash, his eye leaping wildly about, he snatched a pot of treacle, heedless of the poor immigrant's protest above the din, at the same time clutching a mottled napkin that lay beside it.

"I'll clean your dirty mouth for you, damn you," he panted hotly, smearing the molasses over every feature of the sensual face, then faithfully rubbing it in till the quondam singer shone like old mahogany; "you're a devil of a fellow at insulting ladies, aren't you?—but then I'm no lady; say, I believe I'll cool you off—the prairie air will do you good," as he turned and looked significantly at the open window on the left.

A sort of uncanny strength seemed to have taken possession of him; for, without great apparent effort and with marvellous quickness, he lifted the burly form and actually thrust the man, now roaring lustily, outward through the window. One or two leaped up in protest, but by this time a sort of contemptuous grin had replaced the frenzy on the conqueror's face. "Don't be afraid—I'll keep him in the game," he murmured, winking significantly to the men; "anyhow, he doesn't fit this way—too broad in the shoulders—have to end for end him," he muttered—and in a trice he had actually turned the sprawling and kicking figure around, feet foremost as he slid him along the sill till his shoulders were jammed against the frame, the nether regions of the erstwhile merry vocalist now dangling in the cool prairie air as the train bounded on at forty miles an hour.

"For God's sake, don't!" gasped the chorister, his face showing white even through the amber varnish; "this is murder—and I have five children in Ontario—for the love of heaven let me in, and I'll never—I'll never do it again."

His subduer held him in a grip of iron, the victim clawing wildly at his garments, at the edge of the seat, at everything. "Tell those ladies so," he demanded sternly; "tell them you're sorry—out with it."

The burnished one mumbled his apology.

"Louder!" ordered the other; "they can't hear that—train making quite a racket, you know."

The penitent repeated his vow in a louder tone.

"Louder yet!" shouted his keeper; "I want them all to hear."

Then the dangling one roared his penitence till it could be heard all over the car. "Now let me in," he pleaded, looking up appealingly, unctuous from his late anointing.

"One thing more," his controller suggested blandly; "you've got to sing first—you've got to sing for the ladies. I want you to show them you can sing something pretty."

"What is it?" gasped the appendage. "It's infernally cold out here, I tell you—what do you want me to sing?"

"A nice little verse of a hymn," replied he of the ruddy hair.

"I'll be hanged if I will," the other returned promptly, doubtless beginning to realize by now that his life at least was safe.

"Better think it over," was the calm reply; "you see, I'm your manager on this tour—shouldn't wonder if I'm your proprietor," grinning amiably round upon the brethren as he spoke; "and I kind o' think you'll have to fall in with my ideas—or else fall out," the grin broadening as he gave him a push towards the wide, wide world. The attaché howled in terror. "Besides," the manager went on, "we'll soon be at Swift Current now—and you'll cut a nice figure, coming into the station like a piece o' human wall paper."

"Yes, the dogs 'll bite at you," suggested one of the young men on the seat.

"An' the crows 'll peck at you," another cheerfully added.

"An' the Indians 'll shoot at you," contributed an elderly man, a retired farmer, from across the aisle.

Whether it was the force of the culminative argument, or the astringent influence of the prairie breezes, or the artificial colic that the unnatural attitude was beginning to provoke, it would be difficult to say. But in any case the reluctant vocalist was finally brought to yield. "What's your bloomin' hymn?" he suddenly demanded savagely.

"Not very nice language for a man hanging in the balance," the manager reflected blandly—"but you'll improve. Sing 'I want to be an Angel'—an' sing it quick."

"Can't mind the words," pleaded the shining mulatto.

"I'll give 'em to you—line for line, like the old precentors used to do," replied his proprietor. "Come now, sing it out—here goes."

And then, the whole car entranced as it listened, there floated from the betreacled lips, accompanied by a look of shame and anguish that gleamed through the rich enamel on the protruding face, the old familiar words:

"I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand,
A crown upon my forehead
And a harp within my hand."

"Yes, you'd be a bute—come in out o' the wet," said his preceptor as the last sacred strains died away, seizing him by both shoulders and restoring him with a mighty jerk to the seat he had occupied before, while a murmur of pent-up emotion broke from the enchanted audience.

The now victorious combatant, smiling placidly, walked away from the scene of action and seated himself quietly some distance down the aisle. He was scarcely settled before he was accosted by none other than the Reverend Armitage Seymour, who had been a rivetted spectator of the drama just concluded.

"I want to shake your hand, sir," he began warmly, extending his own. "I am the Reverend Dr. Seymour, of St. Enoch's Church, Wardsville—and I'm proud to make your acquaintance, sir. May I ask your name?" as he sat down beside him.

"McLean—my name is Murray McLean," replied the other.

"And may I ask where you're going, sir?" the stranger continued.

"I'm going to British Columbia," replied the younger; "to the Kootenay—to a little town called Rockcliffe. You've probably heard of it."

"Why, bless my heart," cried the minister, "that's the very place I'm going to myself. And I hope

I'll see something of you there. I was simply delighted with the part you took in the recent—the recent interview," the Doctor concluded warmly, glancing over his shoulder in the direction of the other colloquist.

His new-found acquaintance could not forbear a grin. "I thank you for your kind opinion, sir."

"Kind! it's not kind—it's only just," the clergyman responded warmly; "I'm a minister, I know—but it was magnificent, the way you handled that creature there."

"Oh, he's not half so bad as he appears," Murray replied carelessly; "only he needed a cooling—and I reckon he'll be more careful. He forgot himself."

"Magnificent!" repeated the minister, not noting the defense. "I never saw anything better done. The only thing I regretted—I hope you'll pardon me, sir—was, was the rather strong, indeed, sir, the rather vigorous language you were provoked into employing—not to say profane, sir; not to say profane," and the Reverend Armitage shook his head remonstratively.

Murray McLean flushed a little. "Is that so?" he answered calmly after a moment. "I wasn't aware of it—what did I say, sir, that was out of the way?"

Dr. Seymour looked cautiously around to make sure that no one was near enough to hear. Then, drawing close up to his companion, he whispered: "You said 'damn,' sir!"

"You don't call *that* out of the way, do you?" returned Murray; "for a brute like that!" forgetful of his former defense, glancing at the same time towards the individual in question. Which individual was imploring one or other of his erstwhile boon companions to scrape him off, neither one evidently inclined to undertake the repairs.

The minister adjusted his tie, pondering a moment. "Even if the appellation was, was a fitting one," he began elaborately, "that doesn't excuse the profanity."

"It wasn't an appellation—it was an explosive," retorted Murray, smiling.

"Oh, well, let it go," the minister returned blandly; "I know you didn't mean it."

"Mean it!—you bet I meant it," his companion answered a little warmly. "But I'm sorry you heard it, sir, if it hurt your feelings. By the way, I haven't seen you in this car before?" he went on, willing to end the argument.

The clergyman was about to make some reply, but just at that moment the conversation was interrupted by a touch on Murray's shoulder from behind, accompanied by a gentle voice. "That lady in the seat near the door wants you; she says the little girl's worse—and she's been asking for you."

"Is it that child with the pink ribbon in her hair?" Dr. Seymour asked quickly, his interest evidently aroused; "the one in charge of that elderly lady?"

"Yes," said Murray, rising, "she's from Toronto, I believe. Her name's Audrey Overend. But I thought the little thing was better; it's some heart trouble."

"So I believe," answered the other; "the conductor told me about her—what do you suppose she wants you for?"

"Oh, we're old cronies," Murray answered, smiling. "They came on at North Bay and we've chummed it more or less ever since—funny, how fond a fellow grows of a kid like that. I sang her some little songs," the manly face flushing a little, "just to pass the time for her; and I expect that's what she wants now. By Jove!" as he started down the aisle, "but the little darling's looking bad, isn't she?" catching a glimpse of the pallid face against the black of the woman's bosom.

He hurried over to where she lay, gasping a little, in the arms of her devoted guardian. White and fragile, the face was yet possessed of that random beauty we have surely all encountered in the most casual way. Who is there, if travel at all has been his portion, that does not recall some face—especially some girlish face—whose sweetness has lingered with him long after the dividing path has borne it from his sight? Across the aisle in a crowded hall, flashed swiftly by in train or carriage, gleaming for a moment from the window of a railway train, glimpsed for an instant on the crowded street, the nameless vision has still been cherished through the years, one of the wayside flowers that the Creator's hand has scattered along the dusty paths of life that weary pilgrims may snatch a moment's joy.

"I wanted you, Mr. Murray," she said faintly as he came and bended over her, employing the name he had taught her; "what were you and that man doing in the aisle?" she asked, the big eyes wide with wonder. "Were you playing?"

Murray winced. "Yes," he answered after a moment's hesitation; "yes, we were playing, Audrey."

"What were you playing at?" she persisted, the lids drooping heavily over the tired eyes.

"We were playing at—we were—oh, we were playing Bull in the Ring, dear," Murray answered, relieved by the fitting title.

"It's a pretty rough game, isn't it?" the child enquired, sinking back afresh on the woman's bosom—"and are you all through?"

"Yes," said Murray, keeping back a smile, "yes, it's all over."

"Then I want you to sing to me," she said, the note imperious (usual accompaniment to beauty) in the weakening voice.

"All right," he answered cheerfully; "what shall it be?—'Three Blind Mice' again, dear?"

The child smiled, nodding her head. Murray sang the toy thing through, gently, his back to the rest of the passengers, most of whom were now settling themselves for such rest as they might hope to snatch. "Little Moses on the Bank" came next; and one or two more of the doggerel variety known to all students.

Suddenly the child's face paled to the whiteness of death, and she laid her hand plaintively over her heart. The anguished woman bended above her. "Lift me up," the faint voice said, "up, higher—it's so hard to breathe."

They lifted her close to the half open window. The eyes were strangely dull and bright by turns, and a burning fever seemed to have kindled in a moment.

"Where are we going, Aunt Bessie?" the little voice asked strangely; "surely we are far away from home—and mother. When am I—going—home?"

"Soon, dear," came the woman's choking voice; "soon, now, dear—I think—I'm almost sure, my darling."

"Sing some more, Mr. Murray," she faltered, turning the large lustrous eyes full on his white face—"but different. Something about heaven—and home; oh, I'm so tired—and I want to go home."

Her eyes were still fixed on his face and the constraint was of the eternal. Swiftly he rummaged in memory's halls for some fitting snatch of song. And lo! so inextinguishable are the lights kindled by a mother's hand, there rose before him, clear and beautiful and sacred, the vision of far other days when the sin and the struggle and the shame were all unknown to his own childish heart. He saw again the lowly cottage, again the fragile form, her eyes shaded by her hand and with the Bible at her side; and again, sweet and ringing, he heard the dear voice of his mother as she sang, and as she taught him to sing, those words that we all believed with the simplicity of childhood's faith, that we would give all the world so to believe again. Back to his mind, like some long forgetful tide, there flowed the pure and precious words, which now he sang, careless as to who might hear, intent only on this ministry of love:

"Around the throne of God in heaven
Thousands of children stand,
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy, happy band."

The child's face showed her joy. She too had heard the noble strain before; and had drunk, further down the stream, of that holy tide. From a mother's lips, now sealed in death, she too had learned the glowing words—and some vision splendid of their reality and truth surely gleamed before her as she lay in that dying hour, unrecognized though it was, and heard the great refrain once more from a stranger's lips.

"Another," she faltered; "sing some more."

The wondrous voice, kindling with deepening passion, rose again:

"What brought them to that world above,
That heaven so bright and fair,
Where all is peace and joy and love —
How came those children there?"

She needed not to ask for the closing verse. The strong face of the man, a few minutes before so dark with stormy wrath, was now transfigured with a light —strange though it be to say it—that was none other than spiritual beauty. The majesty of this service, though he knew it not, had taken possession of his soul. Smiling down upon the dying child with an ineffable tenderness, his whole being aglow with the winsomeness of love, his voice rising clear and resonant and athrob with subtle power, the strain swelled from his lips:

> "On earth they sought the Saviour's grace,
> On earth they loved His name—
> So now they see His blessed face
> And stand before the Lamb."

Weary travellers stirred themselves from their semi-slumber. Here and there the travel-stained faces lifted themselves up into the dim light of the shabby car, turning wistfully towards the font of song as those who recognized a note Immortal amid these sordid scenes. For the words, and the passion that rendered them, were from Afar—and some there were among these humble travellers who had left little lonely graves in quiet cemeteries far behind them; and some were themselves weary of life's hard journey; and all were the Pilgrims of the Night, to whom this morning song came as a Dayspring from on high.

Silence fell. And the train rushed onward through the night. Murray was standing now, bending above the little form, his eyes fixed with infinite yearning upon the now death-like face. Suddenly the child raised herself, her arms outstretched, her eyes bright with unearthly light. "Oh, I see them!" she cried as if in rapture, "I see the lights of home. And mother!—Oh, mother, is that you?—I knew you'd come," as the dying eyes leaped out through the window into the surrounding gloom.

"It's the train light she sees," whispered the woman, with white lips—"she sees the reflection in the dark."

"No," came Murray's breaking voice; "no, it's no reflection—it's the reality."

"I knew you'd come, mother," the dying voice broke in. "And you'll go home with me now—you'll go all the way with me, won't you, mother?" as the face lightened with a great and foreign gladness. Then the eyes closed gently, the breath came in one or two fitful gusts—and the little traveller, weary of life's lonely way, went forth on the long journey to that City which hath foundations, fashioned not of time.

Murray closed the sightless eyes and laid her gently back, making a soft couch for the tired frame whose struggle was now forever past. The woman drew a handkerchief over the silent face, but Murray pleaded that it should be withdrawn. Why should we conceal anything so fair? he urged; and the lovely features made reply impossible. Then he stood beside her—watching.

Marvellous is the transforming touch of the unseen. As if by instinct, this motley throng of travellers seemed to recognize that Death, the Great Dignifier of the lowly, had come among them; and all, even the weariest, took on the [illegible] air of those who watch beside their dead. The passengers were the same as a half hour before; still a little band of pilgrims, pitifully groping th[illegible] to unknown paths; still were they but [illegible], ranchers, ploughmen—still but stained and s[illegible] emigrants. And the swaying car, just as before, was but a homely and sordid thing, disfigured by coatless forms huddling in uncomfortable corners and dishevelled women longing for the day, while disordered hampers and musty bedding made it all appear more stained and sordid still. Yet now, beneath the magic touch of Death, this was all transformed till things animate and inanimate alike took on the dignity that befits the abode of the great Conqueror—and no Cathedral with its mystic light, no mansion with its drawn blinds and muffled voices, could have been more stately in its solemn pomp than this rude funeral car had now become. A little child lay dead there—and something of the Supernatural hushed every strident noise and touched with softness every hardened face and chastened with the sense of Mystery every restless and avaricious heart.

Thus wore the night away. Midnight had passed before the train arrived at Medicine Hat, the junction point, where travellers for the Crow's Nest Pass change to the southern line.

It was in vain that Murray McLean strove to conceal his grief as he stood, his satchel in his hand, and took a long farewell of the lovely face beneath him. A week before he had not known she was living—now he felt as if he had known her always, as if she belonged to him forever.

He turned away at last, for a stentorian voice without was bidding passengers for "the Crow" to find their train on the adjoining track. The woman followed him out into the darkened vestibule. "I'll write you when we get to Calgary," she said brokenly—"as soon as it's all over. Oh, how can I meet Audrey's father!" she moaned. Then in a firmer voice: "You'll never know, sir, all you were to my little darling—all that you did for her; your singing cheered her up so much when she was lonely—and that last song you sang!" the face now buried in her hands. "Oh, sir," she resumed, struggling to control herself, "there's just one thing I want to say to you—I know she would have wanted me to say it—wherever you are, and wherever you travel, you'll find sickness and sorrow and sin. Perhaps you won't always know it—but it's always there. And wherever you get a chance, like God gave you here, I want you to help the people that need you so.

Good-bye, good-bye—quick, we're moving now—and God bless you, dear friend, and reward you for all you've been to a little dying girl. Good-bye, good-bye!" as she pressed his hand again and turned back to her lonely vigil beside her precious dead.

## V

## "A KIND OF A SPORT"

MUCH might be said, or written, concerning the relation of scenery and the soul. For instance, it can be fairly well established that no great poet was ever bred far distant from the sea. A stoical old Scot told me once, in a communicative moment, that the classification of his countrymen in terms of scenery was well worth thinking about. The ploughmen, said he, whose eyes are necessarily downward cast, are of the earth earthy. But mark, he went on reflectively, the difference with the shepherds. Roaming the eternal hills, reckoning with every wind, questioning the clouds, communing with the stars, eyes and heart bounded only by the horizon and the vaulted dome and wandering at will within those mighty limits, the Scottish shepherd of the hills is probably the noblest type of man, thoughtful, poetic, spiritual.

The richest natures are hill born and answer readily to the call of the mountain. And parable of all nobler lives, in many ways, is this vast Canadian West. For every true life, if it struggle bravely on, will one day outlive the monotony of the prairie stretches, leave their bleak uniformity behind, and breathe at last the pure air of the Uplands that lead to the everlasting hills. Treeless, arid, commonplace may be life's initial plain; but the Mountains are beyond, august in their silent dignity and kindly scorn—and there waits the many-coloured verdure, there the towering trees, there the gushing springs and leaping brooks that give life affluence and beauty.

There are few experiences so exhilarating to the soul as that which fell to the lot of our travellers twain when the light of the next morning called them to awake and behold the glories that surrounded them. The Reverend Armitage Seymour turned in his luxurious berth; Mr. Murray McLean lifted his head from the cramped and narrow seat, a somewhat aching head, for a window sill is but a sorry pillow. Yet, so impartial is the all-giving Hand in the dispensation of life's real luxuries, both men fared alike as they looked out upon the wondrous scene.

For they were among the mountains! Strange, almost intoxicating, emotion this—after half a continent of level prairie, wearisome in its unchanging outline, to find the earth so suddenly ennobled; as if in wrath, scornful of those mediocre ways, breaking forth into these sublimities that charm and overawe, into wild and bewildering non-conformity. There they stood, silently remindful of the Power that has not forgotten, attested here in a thousand wondrous ways.

Dr. Seymour rang his bell. "Are these the Rockies?" he asked the porter as he appeared; the tone would have befitted some one asking if this were the Judgment Day. And, after all, is there anything so like an Impersonation of that same Judgment Day as the awful form of some mighty mountain, its cloud-girdled head lost in the heavenlies?

"Dat's what," replied the negro. "The foot-hills, some calls 'em—but dey's pow'ful big feet, I allus tells 'em," as he drew the curtains together and disappeared.

Again and again did this parish minister draw down the springy shade and let it fly upward with a bound. He was trying to repeat his first great experience of a few minutes before; to "recapture that first fine careless rapture"—but in vain. The thrill of the first overwhelming glimpse of the Rockies can never be felt but once. Wherefore, hurriedly dressing, he betook himself to the rear platform of the train; from which vantage ground he drank his fill of the majesty about him. Tier upon tier the mountains seemed to rise, stern, silent witnesses of the fevered life beneath, yet grandly indifferent to it all, as though their concern was altogether with the heights amid which they reared their heads.

Slowly the train steamed into a station, tiny, so tiny, as it nestled at the base of the monsters that overhung it.

"What place is this?" enquired Dr. Seymour of the brakeman who had come to remove the tail-lamps of the train.

"This is Frank, sir. Frank, British Columbia," he elaborated, "where they had the terrible tragedy a few years ago. Look forward, sir—step down here and look around and you'll see it."

The Doctor did as bidden. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, awestruck, "what is that?—did mortal eyes ever see such a spectacle—what tragedy do you refer to, sir?" unconsciously walking forward as he spoke, his eyes roaming about the dreadsome scene.

"Don't go too far forward, sir," cautioned the brakeman; "the train is liable to start any minute—and it's vestibuled. This?—why, this is Frank, as I told you. Don't you remember—this is where they had the awful mountain slide some years ago. That there's the mountain that gave way," pointing to a rocky giant on the left—"at least, that's what's left of it. The track's built right over the top of the boulders, sir—an' when this slide came, every living thing was killed except one baby. It was found on top of the heap after it was all over—and there ain't any accountin' for how *it* got there. They never got nobody out—an' never will. See all them fearful boulders, sir, piled up on top of each other—see, that there one's ten times the size of this whole train. Well, them was part of a mountain once—an' the whole thing came down without a moment's warning. Just a roar—then all dark and all dead. Better climb aboard, sir—we're a-movin' now."

The clergyman tarried a while on the platform as the train steamed slowly out, viewing in sad amazement this modern Pompeii. There it lay somewhere —none knew exactly where—that once smiling hamlet, now consigned to eternal darkness, its once happy inmates buried somewhere beneath the tens of thousands of tons that were mingled in fantastic attitudes to form the mightly mausoleum.

The sight was speedily lost to view as the train, pursuing its circuitous path, went stealthily on its way. Then the Doctor, subdued but by no means inclined to fast, made his way to the dining car. "What hath man wrought," he reflected, "when one can have a luxurious breakfast, even to finger bowls, amid this primeval wildness!"

The morning meal over, and well attended to at that, the Reverend Armitage now bethought himself of his companion of the night before. He smiled as he recalled the valour of the youth and the prowess that had stood him in such good stead; then his face sobered to sadness as he saw again the winsome features of the dead child in the Colonist car. Was she still recumbent on that narrow seat? he wondered.

Thus musing, the minister made his way forward to the Colonist car; a glance from the door soon showed him that it was in every way a facsimile of that other one which had gone on with the main train to the coast.

A moment's scrutiny revealed Murray McLean sitting alone in the centre of the coach; a few orange peelings on the window-seat indicated the scope of his breakfast. Dr. Seymour went forward and sat down beside him. After each had enquired as to how the other passed the night, Murray's account being rather doleful, the two men naturally fell into a discussion of the magnificent scenery about them. In the course of the conversation Murray remarked, not without some hesitation: "The thing that strikes me most about these mountains is the way—the way they kind of comfort a fellow. There's something wonderfully soothing about them."

The other eyed him curiously. "Why," he began, "you don't mean to imply that a young fellow like you needs comforting? You haven't any sorrow, have you?"

Murray returned some evasive answer, but his companion was still on the scent.

"I should think you'd carry the sources of comfort within yourself," he ventured, smiling amiably. "It seems to me anybody with a voice like yours ought to be always happy—like the birds, you know."

"Better ask the birds," Murray replied with a laugh; "and anyhow, I think lots of people make more of my voice than it deserves—no, I'm not fishing. I suppose it's all right for singing rollicking college songs—like I did last night," his face clouding as he recalled the never-to-be-forgotten scenes.

"I had forgotten about the college songs," the minister returned soberly; "but I shall never forget that other. Say, Mr. McLean," leaning over confidentially as he spoke, "have you any idea, any conception whatever, of the power you have to touch the heart? I mean, did you hear yourself when you sang that child's hymn last night?"

Murray was looking out of the window. "I wasn't thinking of myself," he replied after a long pause—"wasn't thinking of anything but that dear child. Terrible, wasn't it, how suddenly the end came at last? They won't be so very far from Calgary now, will they?" looking at his watch. "Her poor father!—my heart aches for him."

The clergyman moved a little closer to Murray's side; something in his face showed that he was intent on some particular purpose. It was soon revealed.

"Mr. McLean," he began abruptly, evidently coming to a quick conclusion, "do you believe in special providences?"

Murray hesitated, smiling perplexedly. "Yes, I guess so—I presume I do. At least, I ought to, I was always taught to—my mother certainly does, anyhow. And I fancy her creed's mostly mine. At least, I'm sure it's good enough for me."

"That's well spoken, my man," the Doctor answered, highly pleased—"they can't improve much on a mother's creed, can they? But anyhow, I'll tell you why I asked that question. All this looks to me like a very special providence. I mean, the way you and I have been thrown together. The fact is, Mr. McLean, to come right to the point—the fact is, I believe you're the man I need. And it may be, I don't know, it may be that you need me. I think you told me yesterday that you were going to the Kootenay too—to make your own way. Without anything particular in view, I mean—isn't that so?"

"Yes," Murray answered abstractedly, staring very hard. "But what on earth has that to do with you wanting me? You're a minister—and you haven't come out here to hire men, have you?" summoning a semblance of merriment as he spoke.

"Well," replied his companion, "in a certain sense, I have. At least, I want to hire *one*. The fact is, Mr. McLean," turning squarely around till he faced his astonished auditor, "I've got to engage a singer."

"What on earth for?" gasped Murray—"going to give a series of concerts?—or what?"

"Not exactly," the other replied calmly. "But the fact remains that I've got to engage a singer. I'm going out—I thought I told you yesterday—to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings. A campaign, we call it; there are ten or twelve similarly engaged all over the Kootenay—at Fernie and Grand Forks and Fort Steele and Moyie and Nelson, and several other places. Well, each preacher—minister, I should say," amended the late lecturer on Ecclesiastical Polity—"has a singer with him. You can imagine how greatly the success of such meetings will depend upon a singer. Now, the man who was to have accompanied me—he should have joined me at Indian Head—is down with pneumonia. No doubt that kind of work is hard on the lungs," the Doctor threw in parenthetically and sympathetically; "and the Committee authorized me to fill his place as best I could. Here are their orders," as he produced the telegram from his pocket; "and, Mr. McLean—you're the man! You're the man, Mr. Mc-

Lean," he repeated fervidly, rising as he spoke and laying his hand on Murray's shoulder.

"What on earth do you mean? You don't mean you want me to help you in your—in your religious meetings, do you?" came from the lips of the younger man. "You don't mean for me to—to sing hymns, sir?" gazing with amazement at the other.

"That's it exactly," the minister replied immediately; "to conduct the musical part of the service, you see—to train the choir—and to sing solos at the meetings. These all have their place, Mr. McLean, in the great work. And you're the man—you're the very man—that can make the thing a success."

"But you don't understand, Mr. Seymour—Dr. Seymour," he corrected—"who I am; or else you wouldn't suggest anything of the kind. I'm not looking for that kind of a job."

"You might do much worse," pursued the older man. "Of course I'm not exactly sure what the Committee pays—but I don't think it would be less than twenty dollars a week, perhaps twenty-five. In fact, sir, I would almost feel prepared to guarantee you the latter amount—I know the people would be so inspired by your services that they would willingly make up the difference. And besides ——"

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Murray; "do you mean that I should sing the—the Gospel—for a weekly wage?"

"Exactly—precisely so, Mr. McLean."

"I'd starve first," broke out Murray, very red in the face.

"Why so?" remonstrated the minister, also slightly rubicund; "you know the labourer is worthy of his hire."

"I'm no labourer," retorted Murray, picking a piece of orange peel from the window sill and flinging it to the opposite side of the car with savage violence, narrowly missing a bald-headed immigrant who was gazing the other way but trying hard nevertheless to follow the dialogue across the aisle.

"Well, we needn't waste words about that," Dr. Seymour returned blandly; "if you prefer it, there's nothing to prevent you giving your services gratuitously. But it's borne in on me, it's borne in on me, sir, that nothing else but a kind Providence has brought all this to pass—it's an open door, Mr. McLean; it's an open door, I say."

Murray pondered a moment. Then he looked up firmly at the clergyman. "Perhaps you wouldn't be so strong on this providence theory, if I told you something," he began slowly. "Sit down, Dr. Seymour," for the minister was still standing; "sit down—and let me tell you about myself."

The Reverend Armitage gathered up his coat tails—the worldly dressing jacket had been discarded before he left his car—and took his place beside the young man. "I'll be glad to hear what you have to say," he murmured, looking straight ahead of him.

"Well, sir, I've been a student at Queen's College—probably I told you that."

Dr. Seymour nodded.

"And I've left college—for good."

The Doctor nodded again.

"I left it with the consent of the faculty."

"Exactly; very properly."

Murray was smiling bitterly. "And by the request of the Senate."

"Oh, no—bless my soul!" broke in the dignified but startled divine.

"Exactly so," Murray went on calmly; "they were unanimous about it—enthusiastic, I believe."

Dr. Seymour tugged violently at his peaked cap. "Well, suppose you did," he broke in after a moment's silence—"and suppose they were; that's no reason why you shouldn't help in the singing. It's quite different from the case of a minister—he's regularly ordained and set apart, you see—I've got a book on that very subject back in the Pullman. But a singer—he's quite different—he hasn't any vows on him. And any mere layman may make a mistake; and, besides ——"

"Wait a minute," Murray broke in—"there's more. I have been quite—quite—well, quite a sport, Dr. Seymour."

"Perfectly proper," broke out the minister; "every true man ought to be. Look at me—I used to play cricket when I was young. And I have a set of carpet balls back in my manse this very minute, sir. Oh, yes, every true man should have something of the sport in him—I'm a kind of sport myself, Mr. McLean."

Murray snorted, all efforts to the contrary unavailing. Whereat the Reverend Armitage cast a swift glance at him, mystified by the unseemly merriment.

"Excuse me, Dr. Seymour," he apologized, struggling with a wayward pair of lips; "but I didn't mean that exactly. Of course I've played all sorts of games myself—even billiards, and things like that," glancing cautiously at the ecclesiastic as he spoke; "and I can curl like a white-head—I was tankard skip at Queen's. But what I meant by a sport was different. I mean, Dr. Seymour, I mean that I've—well—I've kind of gone the pace. Sometimes the company was rather swift for me—nothing very bad, you know—but once or twice I'm afraid I *took* too much. And sometimes I used—used language, so to speak; you heard me yesterday when I was—was reasoning—with that bully on the train. Lots of things like that, I mean, sir—so I couldn't ever take part in your meetings, you understand."

The Doctor turned and indulged a long look at his companion. Whether it was the charm of the frank and earnest face, or the candour of his autobiography, or the Doctor's own need of the assistance he was seeking, may not be told. But there was no doubt that he had taken a pronounced and hearty liking to his travelling companion. Wherefore, with all apparent good-will, he proceeded to exhaustive argument, plying every consideration that might alter the attitude of the young man beside him. Let bygones be bygones, he urged; why not begin afresh in this new and distant land? Besides, this very decision would help him to break with the past in the most decisive way; the evident need and opportunity, moreover, constituted a call he could not lightly set aside.

"Even if you have heretofore led a vicious life," he pressed, "that's no reason why things shouldn't be different now."

"Excuse me," Murray broke in hotly; "that's a beastly ugly word, sir—and it doesn't fit, I want you to understand. I've made my mistakes, I know—and hit the trail a little sometimes. But I was never 'vicious,' sir—and I'll thank you to remember that. I could always go home and kiss my mother with lips just as pure as yours, sir—and I think you've got your nerve with you, sir, to ——"

Whereat Dr. Seymour hastened to apologize, his pace none the slower because of the ominous red that kept coming and going in a very significant way in Murray's cheek, his lips, too, quivering with an emotion that foreshadowed danger; an unfortunate word merely, the Doctor assured him, a slip of the tongue, and would he please forget that it had ever been used? To which the warm-hearted Murray was by no means slow to assent.

"Although, of course," the Doctor continued cautiously, "you'd have to be careful, if you were helping in the meetings, about any—any irregularity of language, so to speak. It might be misunderstood, you know."

"Yes, it might," agreed Murray McLean. With which he begged the importunate Doctor to say no more about the matter he had so eagerly presented. In consequence of which the clergyman gradually resigned himself to conversation along general lines, and before very long bade his companion farewell, rising to make his way back again to his car.

"I hope we'll meet in Rockcliffe, in any case," he said as he shook hands heartily; "I've still got a kind of feeling that we will see more of each other—dear me, what *will* I do without some one to help in the singing?" wherewith, disconsolate anew, he hurried back to the more congenial surroundings of the Pullman car.

"Maybe I'll drop in at the meetings anyhow," Murray called after him as he went down the aisle. And the Reverend Armitage nodded his head complacently, as if to say it would indeed be strange should he forego the privilege.

## VI

## *A PARENTAL DIALOGUE*

THE Ludlow family were at breakfast.

This, in itself, may seem a declaration tame and unimportant. But before coming to a conclusion so despondent it is necessary to ascertain three things—first, *where* the Ludlow family breakfasted; second, *what* the Ludlow family were breakfasting upon; third, *who* the Ludlow family were.

First. The Ludlow family were breakfasting in British Columbia; to be more explicit, in the Kootenay; to be still more explicit, in this selfsame town of Rockcliffe already introduced. To locate the spot still more exactly, the Ludlow family were breakfasting in what might be called the sun room of a very imposing mansion, as Western mansions go, beautifully situated on a rising slope that led to the mountainside. The house, stone half-way up and pine the rest of the way, resembling in this the hills that surrounded it, was large and imposing, abounding in spacious fireplaces and enriched by several bay windows that commanded views of sur-passing beauty. A park of generous proportions, the rolling acres richly wooded, lay between it and the mountain's base. Everything in and about the stately house was suggestive of plenteous means. And on this particular morning, gathered about their breakfast table, the Ludlow family might well have reckoned themselves among the richest heritors of heaven; for the bluest of blue skies was above them, from which the sun shone benignantly on all the glowing scene; and on every hand towered those mighty mountains that lead the soul to the Eternal; and the embannered pines swayed, with fascinating rhythm, in the autumn breeze; and here and there a gleaming stream, its tumult quite inaudible, leaped in the morning light and lent animation to the noble prospect. While, crowning and guarding all, king of these mountain kings, Old Observation reared his hoary head to the sky and brooded in silent benediction over all the kingdom at his feet.

Second. The Ludlow family were breakfasting on the fat of the land. Which is saying a great deal; for this was a pioneer land—and nowhere else can real originality of breakfastdom be found. Everybody knows that breakfast is a painfully monotonous meal. Whether it be the porridge of the Scotch or the bacon of the English or the honey of the Swiss or the fish of the Nova Scotian or the pumpkin pie of the New Englander, all attest the deadly monotony of breakfast, the perilous tendency of every nation and tribe and tongue to fall into a rut and grovel there to latest generations. But, in new countries, breakfast blossoms into something new—or into a happy combination of all that is best in the old (which is probably a correct description of all new things worthy to be prized).

Wherefore, this bright autumn morning, the Ludlow family were enjoying a breakfast over which kings might have lingered. Cereals they had, mostly from the rich soil of these surrounding valleys; bacon from their own premises, and their own curing; eggs of their own laying, so to speak—they had heard the encackled joy which had marked the advent of every one; a couple of ducks that Mr. Ludlow's gun had invited to share the family meal; and—most delicious of all—a score of tiny speckled mountain trout that only an hour before had been flashing in the stream. All of these—to say nothing of hot rolls and coffee whose aroma could be detected half-way down the valley, and to take no account of appetites such as only the mountain air provokes—made the Ludlow breakfast more like a banquet than a mere morning meal.

Third. The Ludlow family, let it be frankly conceded at the outset, was *not* an old family. This information is melancholy, but inevitable; no true author can admit, without some sense of shame, that one of his leading families is really not old.

Since all families, like all Gaul, are divided into three kinds: those who are actually and defiantly old, those who are painfully and abashedly *not* old (there are no *young* families, even among the not old), and those who are determined, by fair means or foul, to be prematurely old; and since, further, the whole classification is liable to be upset by some fiend who reckons, and can actually prove, that one family is as old as another, that is, if they have been decent people—considering all these things, I say, it is a pretty come-ashore when a family has to be introduced and baldly branded as otherwise than old, to use as pleasant a term as the most friendly heart can forge. Of course, if a story were pure fiction, then the most modern family could be endowed with age in the twinkling of a pen; but when, as here, it is the humble narrative of things as they actually were, then the family must be described as it actually was, however callow that may be.

No, the Ludlow family was not old! To prove the impeachment, one only required to ask any of the neighbours, especially the poorer neighbours. And the least venomed of them would tell you that the present head of the Ludlow family, Simon by name and a man of worthy soul, had once been a tanner—like his illustrious namesake of the Scriptures; and further, that he had borne the look, the manner, even the odour, which marked that worthy but unromantic occupation. Some—and these were only less rich than Simon—would declare that he bore them yet; but that was the voice of envy. Besides, to ensure the perpetual youth of this unfortunate family, they would inform you that Simon's father had been a blacksmith in New Brunswick, and Simon's wife had been a dairymaid, and Simon's wife's father had been a milk man, and Simon's wife's mother had often lain sick of a housemaid's knee—not the academic and polite variety, but the original and genuine kind that was not contracted by luxurious living but by faithful devotion to the kitchen floor and the back verandah, armed with nothing but the family scrubbing brush.

Wherefore the Ludlow family, now seated at their breakfast, was incurably tainted with what had best be called the lack of age. They were rich, very rich. A fortunate opening to the "ground floor" of a coal mine, of which Mr. Simon Ludlow had not been slow to avail himself, together with a thrice lucky investment in British Columbia timber limits, had achieved all that. And they had all that wealth could reasonably provide; Mrs. Simon Ludlow had attended to all *that*, heedless of Simon's tears and cries. But all this was powerless to produce the aroma of antiquity, so long as the accursed odour of a tannery lingered about Simon's history. The clothes which the honest man had worn in those disgraceful days had been long since burned, odour and all—but alas! what flame can consume a history or purge it of its shame? Wherefore, however *continuous* the Ludlow family had been; and no matter during how many hundreds of years its members, in legitimate succession, may have plied knives and shears, or hammered the anvil, or carried the foaming pail, or rung the milk bell on the street, or brandished the dripping scrubbing brush—despite all this obvious antiquity, this one time tanning, hammering, milking, scrubbing family was doomed never to be old.

The Ludlow family, as might be expected when one considers all that surrounded them and all they were busy in surrounding, were engaged in animated conversation as the morning meal went on. It is doubtful if either Mr. or Mrs. Ludlow had ever heard that it is beneficial to talk while eating; but, enjoying both industries and finding them practicable together, they seldom had much of the one without the other.

"Yes," Mr. Ludlow was saying as he passed his cup for the third time, "I'm inclined to agree with your mother."

"I should think so," his spouse hastened to interject; "who would you agree with if it wasn't with me? You'll have scales on you, Simon, if you eat any more of those trout," she threw in parenthetically.

"I caught 'em, mother," her husband suggested humbly, still furtively fishing in the platter.

"That's nothing—you often shot a moose, didn't you?" she retorted, the weight of argument in the glance. "But as I was saying, of course you agree with me," the tone indicating that anything else would be absurd on the face of it. "And you know as well as I do that meetings of that kind are no place for a daughter of ours to be going to."

"No doubt, the meetings are all right—that is, to a certain extent," Mr. Ludlow ventured to remark, making free with still another trout.

"Humph!—special meetings—revival meetings—evangelistic services!" sniffed Mrs. Ludlow, decapitating an egg as though it were the revivalist himself; "I never did believe in such goings on. Nothing but a lot of emotional excitement—emotional excitement," she repeated, by no means ill pleased with the ample phrase; "and that's the very worst kind," she elaborated. "And I say if Hilda there," nodding towards her daughter, "if she wants to be religious, let her be religious in the regular way. I believe religion's like other things—you should have your own kind and then stick to it. I stick to my own doctor—and my own lawyer—and my own grocer," she went on, her brows knitted thoughtfully; "and why shouldn't a person stick to their own preacher—their own clergyman, I mean," she amended.

"*We* didn't stick very good, mother," Mr. Ludlow ventured, his eyes fixed on his plate.

"How? Where?—what do you mean, Simon?"

"Well, I mean as how we used to be Methodys—you know that—an' then we joined the English. You used to go to class-meetin', Martha —you know you did," he affirmed further, growing mysteriously bold. "An' I often wish I was back with the Methodys," he went on with a little sigh; "they were far more sentimentaller than the English—an' besides, I never *can* find the place in the prayer-book. Last Sunday I began with the prayer for folks drownded in the sea, when the rest was at the Creed. Now, the Methodys, they don't *have* any place—they just float around," he said, trying plaintively to describe this state of flux by a little wave of the hand.

"You're talking nonsense, Simon," his wife returned a little sharply. "And anyhow, that has nothing to do with the case—we're talking about these revival meetin's they're having in the Presbyterian

Church. Besides, we didn't *leave* the Methodists, exactly—it wasn't leaving, it was evolution," she affirmed, dwelling a little proudly on the word, inwardly sure she knew what it meant and equally sure that she had her husband beyond his depth. "It was natural for people in our circle to join the English—all our friends went there—none of the people in our station went to the Methodist. And anybody with good sense ought to be able to find the place, you know that, Simon. If you'd keep those blue markers that I gave you, in your prayer-book, you wouldn't be talking so ridiculous in front of Hilda," and Mrs. Ludlow pushed back her plate, resolved to bring the meal and the argument to a common conclusion.

"That's all right," her spouse murmured feebly, trained to recognize when he had had enough, "that is, to a certain extent—but I still say the Methodys are more sentimentaller than the English," rolling his napkin extra tight, mild token that he too had a mind of his own.

"Now, Hilda, you see your father agrees with me exactly," Mrs. Ludlow remarked triumphantly to her daughter. "If you want to go to these meetings just out of curiosity, why, that's sinful; and if you want to go in earnest, well—well, it's no place for a young lady of your station. Always remember

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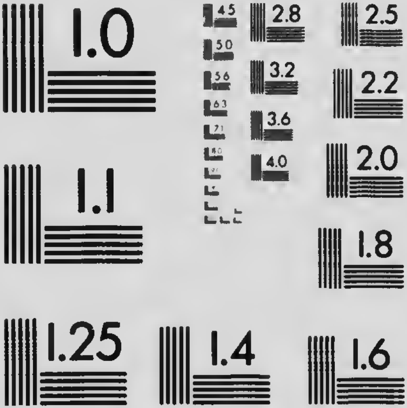
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you're a Ludlow, Hilda," as she fixed a very proud pair of eyes on the girl across the table.

And very well worth the scrutiny of any eyes whatever was this same maiden whose conduct was the subject of this remarkable discussion. Hilda Ludlow was in her twentieth year, though she looked rather older. But then young ladies whose families have suddenly risen in the world are very prone to take on the ways of womanhood earlier than they would otherwise have done. They have to answer the sudden challenge. Her face indicated that hers was a thoughtful nature, for the brow was broad and high, even if the sunny hair that floated above it took liberties that are usually reserved for the face of girlhood. The eyes were such as no pen can fittingly describe; hazel-brown, so far as that goes, and guarded by long lashes that somehow suggested tears, of joy or sorrow, in impartial measure; yet the dominant note in the wonderful eyes was that of life, abounding life, with all its collateral tides of strength and passion. Nobody at all gifted with insight could have looked into the far depths of Hilda Ludlow's eyes without seeing into the infinite. A whole cluster of possibilities lay there; one could have seen that such eyes were meant to dance with merriment, or dissolve with grief, or melt with sympathy, or flash with anger, or burn deep, like unblown furnaces, with the mystic fire of consuming love—or do any of the various other things that make such eyes the mirror, veiled though it be, of all the world within, the spiritual world, that sacred realm whose forces set a woman's breast aheaving or tell the story of their passion through these wondrous windows of the soul.

Yes, the face of Hilda Ludlow was essentially a spiritual face, and that is about all one can say of it. It was a face full of sympathy, brightness, tenderness; perhaps compassion was its foremost feature; a face in which goodness and beauty meet. Complexion clear and pure, not rosy and yet not pale, the colour tapering—if one may use the term—in fitting modulation till it left the shapely ear in the most witching shade of pink; the nose straight and delicate, if perhaps the least bit large; the lips thin, firm, mobile almost to nervousness, sensitively pure; the chin absolutely feminine—and that is the highest eulogy of a woman's chin, although the thoughtless do not know it; the neck white and shapely, sloping down to a pair of substantial shoulders whose athletic pose accorded well with the tall, firm figure that plenty of exercise and abundance of out-of-doors had nurtured into strength and gracefulness.

The girl had been—as indeed she often was compelled to be—an all but silent listener to the conversation her parents had carried on. Perhaps such oft-repeated conversations had something to do with the rather plaintive expression that marked Hilda's face when in repose. Probably no more chastening influence can cloud a young girl's life that this—to be compelled to listen to parental dialogues that have about them a more or less wintry tang.

She looked up just as her father left the room. "Well, mother," she began, "I'm not particularly set on going to those meetings—but still I want to go. At least," and she leaned back yawning as she spoke, "I want to see what they're like."

"Why, my child?" her mother demanded—"surely you've got quite enough in your life now to keep you interested."

The girl shrugged her shoulders; and the strong soulful face was suddenly overswept with a wave of emotion. Of such a sort it was that the mother, had hers been the discerning eye, would have read a warning there—and have tried no more to stem a tide so deep and strong.

"I'm sick of this kind of life," the girl suddenly broke out vehemently.

"Hilda!" exclaimed her mother with uplifted eyebrows; "how can you?—it's wicked, my child, it's positively wicked of you to speak like that. You! with all that money can do for you, with a kind father and mother—with your education! And there isn't a girl in British Columbia with a better—a better social station than you have. I'm surprised at you, Hilda," she concluded reproachfully.

The girl laughed. "Station!" she echoed; "I often wonder what that word means—I don't believe there's any such thing. People only have so much station as they win—and they have to win it for themselves. But anyhow," she resumed, the voice taking a serious turn, "I often wonder how long I'm going to go on with this old life; eating, sleeping, reading a little, riding sometimes, going to a party now and again—and Bridge, everlasting Bridge," she exploded almost violently, "it seems to me it's Bridge externally, internally, and eternally these days. If I could get hold of the fiend who invented it—I'd throttle him," the dainty hands going through the murderous motion on the imaginary neck of this benefactor of mankind.

"Don't get impatient, my child," her mother remonstrated; "you'll have lots of the serious side soon enough—when you get Monty—and a house of your own—and two or three of the consequences, with about two years between them, I guess you'll ——"

"Hush!" the girl cried, her face aflame, giving an imperious little stamp of her foot. "I won't listen to that kind of thing. I won't have any Monty—as you call him—or any house; nor any—anything else that you have in mind, unless I want to," her face crimson. "You and father seem to take it for granted that I'm to marry Mr. Holmes, whether I want to or not. And he seems to take it for granted too. And I'm a fool—I know that all right. Just a weak, silly, cowardly country girl, that doesn't know anything except how to play the piano and try to draw Gibson girls—with poodle dogs," she added contemptuously, "and go to teas, and give them to others—and order pretty clothes from Spokane; and then play Bridge with a lot of girls and men that haven't got a thought—haven't got a thought above cool drinks," she concluded, the April nature of the girl showing itself as the already tear-stained eyes, now abrim with scornful mirth, were hidden in the dimpled hands as she bent over the table. "Oh," she moaned in mock misery, "it's a cruel, cruel fate to have a rich father—there ought to be a law against rich fathers; it takes things that might be women and changes them into a bunch of pretty clothes and ostrich feathers," the musical peal gurgling out from between the half-spread fingers.

Her mother was about to make some reply, though, to tell the truth, she required just a little time to recover from this sudden gust that had rather swept her off her feet. She was one of those unhappy mothers, unhappiest of all, whose daughters are above them by the act of God; whose whole lives are spent in trying to replace a child's nobler ideal with the lower ambition of their own.

Just as Mrs. Ludlow was beginning to speak, a servant entered from the hall "Mr. Holmes is at the door," the maid announced; "shall I show him in?"

Whereat Mrs. Ludlow threw her speech to the winds; and her enthusiasm was pronounced as she bade the servant produce the visitor at once. Cordial, even effusive, was the welcome of the older woman; but more than usual reserve marked Hilda's attitude as the caller entered the room.

## VII

## *BRIDGE AND REVIVAL*

THE visitor was Mr. Montague Holmes, a Englishman. This last word, to all familiar with western Canadian life, denotes a type. To this type in its more polished form—socially at least—belonged Mr. Montague Holmes. Tall and handsome, with that nameless air of swinging athletic strength that only the true Englishman seems to develop to its highest point, his was a figure to attract attention. His face was marked by those reserved, almost sullen, signs of strength that so often are seen in the colonial Englishman—a sort of patronizing air, not far removed from contempt. For the young Englishman abroad can rarely rid himself of the feeling that he is among his inferiors; especially if he have any pride of birth—or has acquired any.

Yet behind all this hauteur that sat so naturally on the face of Mr. Montague Holmes there might have been discerned the traces of a youth in which coarser passions had been allowed their way. His was one of those faces, not rarely to be seen, in which the refinement of generations holds its ground as best it may against the encroachment of those grosser shades that wantonness of life so easily begets. There was much about him to appeal to a woman's nature; the manly form and handsome face, and, most attractive of all, the air of superiority, of familiarity with the world, with all its delicacies and refinements—this it is that awakens a woman's particular interest, especially if that woman sees in it a reflection of some far-off world of fashion it has never been her privilege to enter.

Such, in part at least, was the explanation of the relation in which Mr. Holmes stood to the two women into whose presence he had just been ushered. And perhaps it was the consciousness of this that explained the easy air of familiarity, almost of possession, with which he turned to Hilda, directing most of his remarks to her.

"I've had rather bad news from home," the young Englishman remarked after a little desultory conversation; "and as I was riding past—just having my morning canter, you know—I thought I'd drop in and tell you."

"Indeed!" Hilda was the first to say, her sympathies always easy to be roused, "nothing the matter with your folks, I hope, Mr. Holmes?"

"Well, yes, to tell the truth," responded the visitor—"only I do wish you wouldn't 'Mr. Holmes' me," a a slight frown on his face; "surely I might be Monty to you by this time, Hilda—like I am at home. Yes, it does concern my relatives; my father was thrown from his horse while hunting when he was a guest at a house party at Rusholme Park—that's the country seat of the Earl of ———," he added, speaking as carelessly as he could and looking out of the window.

Hilda uttered some expression of regret and sympathy. But her mother was almost too overcome to speak, the mention of the earl and the country seat, both in one breath, being quite too much for her.

"I do hope it isn't serious," Hilda said after a pause, her eyes on her mother—for that lady was distinctly pale.

"Oh, no," responded the aristocrat; "only a broken collar-bone, I believe—and a sprained ankle. My mother said that Earl ——— and his valet helped him up-stairs to his room—he'll get every care there, I'll assure you," and the complacent Mr. Holmes again looked out of the window as tranquilly as though he and his ancestors had been borne to bed by earls and dukes ever since beds and noblemen were first invented.

"The Earl himself?" exclaimed Mrs. Ludlow, her face whiter than before—"with his own hands?" her voice all of a quiver.

"Oh, yes," the visitor replied carelessly; "oh, that's nothing—he's quite a strong man, the Earl," utterly unmoved by the distinction. Mrs. Ludlow glanced nervously at her daughter once or twice, hopeful that the full import of the incident was borne in upon her. This, thought Mrs. Ludlow, should surely settle everything.

Just then she heard her husband calling her from outside, whereat she rose and left the room, leaving Hilda alone with her suitor. A rather unusual silence, broken by a few irrelevant remarks on either side, followed the mother's departure. Mr. Holmes' gaze was fixed on Hilda in an ardent, almost passionate, way; and in a few minutes he rose and went over beside her.

Her eyes fell and the colour came and went in the winsome face as she felt his eloquent gaze upon her. There was something strange and uncanny in the subtle power he seemed to have over her, drawing her to him even while her heart secretly recoiled. "Hilda," he began at last, "I can hardly wait for that night to come—I've never looked forward so to anything in all my life."

"Why—what night?" she asked timidly, her eyes still averted.

"You know why, my dearest," he responded, the deep English voice exquisitely modulated to tenderness, as is the gift of strong and commanding men; "you know why—sweetheart," venturing on the word after a pause. A little shudder overran her frame. "Oh, Hilda," he went on, his voice rising, "you know why—it's then we're to appear together—and then the whole world will know what I've won. I'm coming for you sharp at eight-thirty, Hilda—and you'll have on your prettiest plumage—and you'll be the sweetest thing in all the Kootenays—and everybody'll know you're mine. And I'll be prouder than any courtier in Europe," he concluded, his hand going out to her, timidly touching the trembling form as he drew closer and closer.

"Where?" she asked, the word dying on her lips.

"Where?—you know where. At Mrs. Matson's Bridge party, of course. Why, we're going together, aren't we?" leaning over her solicitously.

She lifted her eyes and looked at him. And they showed the admiration she felt for the strong and athletic figure and the handsome face on which they rested. Yet, too, there was something in them of misgiving, of deep and painful wonder, as they seemed to pry and burrow far beneath—wondering, fearing, doubting, groping for the inmost soul, searching the elusive past.

"I'm not going," she suddenly said, her lips closing firmly.

"Not going, Hilda!" he broke out; "you're trying to chaff me, my child. Why wouldn't you go?

Wasn't it agreed—didn't your mother and I decide—that this was to be the way we were to give people the first hint? Oh, my dear, my dearest," he went on impulsively, restraining the shade of anger that gathered on his face, "how long are you going to trifle with me—and badger me—and put me off? You know I've given my whole heart, my whole life, to you. You know how I've turned my back on everybody else—everybody, anybody, that I might have had," he went on with some embarrassment, "lots of girls in England, girls with titles and—and everything like that. And really, Hilda, it's just a little more than my family pride can stand, to be toyed with and bantered and treated as if——"

But he got no further. Her face was aflame now, her eyes flashing. "Pardon me, Mr. Holmes," she broke in warmly; "I know I'm only a little mountain maiden, brought up in the wilds—but I'm tired of having your grand ladies, your duchesses and countesses, pitted against me. I never asked you to give any of them up, Mr. Holmes—no, I won't call you Monty; not to-night, anyway," smiling in the most fascinating way. "But I won't go to that Bridge party with you either—I'm going to church that night. Yes, I am—I tell you I'm going to church," she repeated, noticing his start of surprise and look of incredulity.

"To church!" he echoed. "What for?—good Lord, it isn't Lent, is it? Where'll you go to church?"

Hilda looked calmly into his eyes, holding herself very straight. "I'm going to those meetings that have just begun—those evangelistic meetings—that's where I'm going, Mr. Holmes."

"Good Lord!" he gasped, "what are you going there for?"

"Going to see what they're like," she returned placidly; "to see what they do. And to get converted, perhaps."

He stared at her. "Do you know what they're about?" he asked as soon as he recovered his breath; "do you know who's going to conduct them?"

"No," she answered; "can't say I do; except that they're meant to convert people—and I fancy I could stand a lot of that." Then, the April nature of the girl again in evidence, the sweet, grave face was turned away from him, a peal of rippling laughter pealing from the parted lips. She moved over to the great bay window and stood beside a spreading palm, part of its branches overhanging her. He followed; she moved farther in, seated now on the window-ledge, her face hidden in her hands. And a moment later her frame shook with the sobs she seemed powerless to control.

He stood amazed, half indignant. "What on earth's the matter, dear?" he demanded, as tenderly as he could. "Is it because you're going to be good?" stumbling blindly.

"No," she answered in a savage little voice.

"Is it—is it because you're not going to play Bridge any more?" he fumbled, reverting to their previous conversation.

"No," more violently than before; "who said I was going to do anything like that? I'm going to play Bridge—to play anything—just whenever I get ready. So there."

"Thank the Lord for that," he ejaculated fervently, timidly trying to touch her. "I was afraid it might be some of that foolishness they're trying to work up in town just now. Say, Hilda," for by this time she was looking out of the window with amazing serenity, "please put all this nonsense out of your head. I can tell you something about those meetings if you like. But I want you to promise me first that you'll go with me that night to Matson's."

By this time she was looking at him with provoking calmness. "Tell me about the meetings," she demanded serenely; "and never mind the Bridge party."

"Well," he said, "there isn't so very much to tell. Only I've seen the guy that's going to run them."

"What guy?" The clear eyes looked now as if no storm had ever swept them.

"The clerical guy—if that's a fitting adjective for the dissenting parson that's in charge. He's staying at the Commercial Hotel—and I've seen him round the lobby. You know, it appears that Mr. Garloch—the regular minister of the Presbyterian Church—was taken ill just a day or two before this tramp preacher came on the scene, and had to leave for the Coast to recuperate. Well, I heard this new cove—Dr. Seymour's his name, I believe—pouring out his tale of woe to the proprietor of the Commercial about having to run the whole show himself; said he was even deprived of a singer to help him—it seems those fellows usually trot a warbler round with them for these shows—and how he had to undertake a whole month's services, he called it a campaign, without either resident minister or regular singer to help boost things. By Jove, I never heard anything funnier than the tale of woe he was telling to the landlord down there—and mine host was waiting till the Reverend Evangelist got out of the way, to telephone the brewery for fifty dozen more of ale; he said afterwards he was afraid things would run dry while the old bloke was bemoaning his fate to him. I told Sipes, that's the landlord, that I could give him a singer if he wanted one—by Jove, what a voice that fellow's got!"

"What fellow, Mr. Holmes?" Hilda enquired, mystified.

"Curse that Holmes business," returned the other warmly. "I won't tell you—unless you call me Monty."

"What fellow, Monty?" quick as a flash.

"That's better—you'll soon get used to it. Well, it's a young chap who has just come here from Ontario—landed the same day as this parson did, I think; same train, I believe. He seems to be in hard luck—doesn't know anybody—didn't have anything to do. I told him a man of his frame—he's a regular stalwart—wouldn't be long without a job. As a matter of fact I think he has got one of some kind or other—with his hands, I think. But anyhow, he seems discouraged, all out of sorts—most fellows in his condition would hit the booze, I tell you—and somehow or other I've got a kind of a feeling that the chap has to put up quite a fight to walk the straight and narrow path himself. But that's neither here nor there—what I was coming at is this, that he's got one of the finest voices I ever heard in my life. His room's close to mine—and sometimes he falls to warbling; and, really, the cove has a voice that would make a sensation anywhere—I've heard worse in Covent Garden. So I told Sipes we'd have to fix the parson up with this young chap —— Oh, it's funny, the whole thing's more fun than a Sunday morning in Petticoat Lane. No," he concluded thoughtfully, " I wouldn't go near that kind of a show if I were you, Hilda. I think you'll find Mrs. Matson's more congenial—I know *I* will—and it'll be heaven if you're there," as he laid one hand lightly on the sunlit hair.

She was standing again, and moving out. " I'm going," she said, shaking her head defiantly. " I'm going to see this disconsolate parson of yours—and I think your stalwart singer might do worse than let you turn him loose at the meetings. No, no, *you* needn't argue with me," as he tried to protest anew; " if you want to see me that night you'll have to come to church," moving out into the hall as she spoke.

Which aforesaid hall had abundant shade, and fitting gloom, for such farewells as these. Amid which the slightest little struggle might have been heard, Mrs. Ludlow still discreetly absent, still pondering the nobilities across the sea.

" No," Hilda's voice came low; " not this time—no, not yet."

" But why not now ?—do you know, Hilda, you've never let me yet—and it's my right, you know it, dearest," all possible tenderness in the deep bass voice.

"Not yet," came the reply, a spice of merriment in the tone; "that may be the way with duchesses and countesses—but Western girls have to learn to deny themselves," and the melodious laughter was still rippling as Mr. Montague Holmes went down the steps to remount his impatient steed.

But as Hilda went back to the window-seat the laughter fled her lips; almost ashy pale, she sat among the spreading foliage, pondering, pondering still—afraid of him, afraid of herself, afraid of life.

## VIII

## "CAN'T SHOOT WITHOUT A REST"

THE Reverend Armitage Seymour could hardly wait till he had finished dinner at the Commercial Hotel, Rockcliffe, the day of his arrival, so eager was he to go out and look about the town. A bit of depressing news had come to him at the very outset, for he had been met at the station with the melancholy tidings that the regular minister of the church in which his meetings were to be held had a day or two previously left the town. It was in search of health that this minister had first been attracted to his pastorate in the Kootenay; but, at this most ill-timed juncture, he had been seized of a sudden hemorrhage and had been hastily ordered to the Coast. This threw the entire burden, of course, upon the unfamiliar shoulders of the Reverend Armitage; and, together with the absence of a singer, went far to make his task more than ever formidable in his eyes.

While waiting for dinner to be served he employed himself in looking over a little pamphlet entitled "Hints to Missioners," with which he had been provided by the Committee. And he especially laid to heart the injunction that great diligence was to be exercised in inviting men to the meetings. Of whom, indeed, thought the lonely missioner, there seem to be multitudes about. For the dining-room of the hotel was full, every table being crowded with men of every age and size. The majority were young; and some had still upon their faces the smiling enthusiasm of youth, a few still with the light of purity and innocence. Though most had acquired the hard and hardening look of those who had only one aim in this new Western world—money; and who had gradually abandoned the influences and the ideals of the homes left behind. Old before their time, so many of the faces seemed—and all their talk was of mines, and limits, and gains and losses. Of *language*, too, there was a plenty—and the Reverend Armitage noted with amazement that even those at the same table with himself seemed indifferent to his presence, bestowing upon him but a passing glance in which there was decidedly more of contempt than anything else.

He had not been seated long before he observed that the company was not exclusively composed of men after all. Away at the farthermost corner of the room two women could be seen, the brightness of whose complexions and the gaiety of whose attire attracted even the attention of this one-time Lecturer on Ecclesiastical Polity. And the marvel grew as he heard the loudness of their tones and the boisterousness of their laughter; noted, too, that some of the men kept an eye out in their direction, sometimes exchanging remarks in a low tone, with winks and nods significant, jerking their heads in the direction of the women.

But the Reverend Dr. Seymour, with the spirit of his race, was by no means inclined to let this opportunity pass him by. Wherefore, after nervously clearing his throat once or twice and rubbing his tongue along a pair of lips that had grown mysteriously dry, he accosted the man sitting to his right. A sinister sort of individual he was, his face clouded and dark, intent on nothing but the plate before him.

Dr. Seymour handed him a card, one of many with which he had been provided by the Committee. It bore the heading "The King's Business," followed by details of the hour of service, ending with a cordial invitation to attend.

"I'll be happy to see you in the Presbyterian Church to-night," he began amiably; "I'm going to preach there for some weeks, you know—it's the first of a series of services—and I hope you'll come, sir. And I'll be glad if you'll bring your pal," the Doctor concluded, secretly proud of his Western vocabulary—he had heard the word on the train that morning.

The prospector ceased chewing, staring incredulously. "What the devil do you know about me—or about my pal—or whether I've got one at all or not?" was the reply. "Here's your ticket, guv'nor," as he pushed the card back across the table.

One or two of the youths snickered. But Dr. Seymour was not easily quenched. "I shall be glad," he said, looking round the table as calmly as he could though his face was burning red, "to see any or all of you at the meeting to-night—I extend an invitation to you all."

"Thank you, sir," replied two or three of the men, evidently ashamed of the rudeness of their companion. Just then a festive looking youth seated at the very centre of the table leaned over towards Dr. Seymour and held out his hand for the rejected card. "I want it for Monty here," he said gravely; "you'd never think of giving it to him, sir—this is Mr. Holmes, parson," bowing seriously as he spoke, "and the sky pilots all pass him by. He's the religiousest looking man in the Kootenay—but he's a gay bird, is Monty—it's him that led us all astray, sir; so if you'll just hand me that card I'll place it where 'twill do the most good," as he turned soberly and handed the pasteboard to his companion amid the excessive merriment of the men.

"Cut out your blank foolery," retorted Holmes, colouring; "when I want to go to church I won't need you fellows to help me."

"Keep your eye off that far corner of the room, Monty," his tormentor jibed; "look, there they're coming—and they're making straight for you, Monty."

A dead silence fell over the dining-room as the two women, their raiment rustling as they walked, made their way together up the passage between the tables to the door. Then a few audacious words could be heard, chiefly of an endearing kind—and a half suppressed titter broke from some of the younger men. Holmes' eyes were on his plate.

"Don't cut your old friends like that, Monty," one of the men beside him muttered; "see, she's looking back at you—that one with the flowers in her hair."

"Go to the devil," growled Holmes, giving a kick under the table.

"More fastidious than the rest of us," leered another of the men when the door had closed on the women; "you see, Monty's had great advantages—he's been at all the courts of Europe. Say, Monty," he went on in a louder tone, his words now evidently meant for the minister as well; "you hadn't ought to hold these here meetings in such contempt—even if your uncle *was* a bishop somewhere in England. Sometimes there's a heap o' [illegible] them.

I was at one once, over in Greenwood—regular Holy Roarer kind—and I never laughed so much at a circus. Tell you about it if you like."

"Go on, then," said one or two of the men, the narrative coming to a pause. "May as well get your lie off your stomach now as any other time."

"Gospel truth, this," calmly returned the raconteur; "an' it was awful funny. The preacher that night said for everybody that wanted to go to heaven to stand up. Well, natural like, 'most everybody riz. All except one bloke—an' he was a cowboy—and he gripped his seat like he was breakin' a broncho. Well, the preacher looked down at him: 'Don't you want to go to heaven too, my friend?' he says, 'you see all those other good people want to go,' pintin' at the congregation, all settin' by this time. 'Sure they don't want to go at all,' says the cowboy; 'they're only bluffin' you, mister, they're only takin' their fun off'n you.' 'Oh, no,' says the preacher, 'they all want to go.' 'Will you permit me the privilege o' that there platform for two minutes by the clock?' says the cowboy, quiet like. 'Certain sure,' says the preacher, bein' as he was a reasonable cuss. Then the bull puncher, he goes up to that there platform. An' he draws his six-shooter, an' he stands there and glares at 'em for a minute like the devil. 'Now,' says he, 'if there's any individual here,' says he, holdin' the six-shooter out in front, 'that really *wants* to go to heaven, let 'em stand up on their hind legs'—an' he waited—an' the sky-climbers jes' gripped their seats tighter'n death an' hung on. 'I tol' you so, parson—they was only takin' their fun off'n you,' says the cowboy—an' he puts his six-shooter in his belt again an' smiles kind o' sorrowful on the people like, an' goes back to his seat as quiet and harmless as a lamb. But I've often paid six bits for a far less divertin' evenin'. An' I'm goin' to your show to-night, parson," he concluded, nodding towards the latter to indicate he could count on him to the last.

The Doctor bowed gravely in return; then arose, discomfited, and quit the room. Hurriedly donning coat and hat he passed out on to the street, anxious to view his new surroundings. Square after square he traversed, eagerly taking in the signs of life about him. All struck him as cheap and flimsy. The low wooden structures, evidently rushed swiftly up to serve a temporary purpose, with flaming signs and advertisements; the houses with shining roofs; the rude, uneven sidewalks, all contrasting strangely with the mighty mountains that overtopped them, bearing the stamp of eternity from base to brow.

Men, men everywhere! Eager-eyed and intense they moved along the wide and sometimes rickety pavements, crossing and recrossing the black and miry road. Some, of course, were loitering; new-comers these, like himself—or, worse, old timers who were down and out, homeless, workless, friendless, the ache of loneliness and despair upon their faces, their early visions of this Elysium all turned to ashes now. Every sort and condition of men seemed to be in this new-born town. The Chinaman, smiling and stealthy; the Jap, stolid and confident; a Negro now and then, most alien of all; the Hindoo, like an apparition of the East, almost like an embodiment of its Menace, tall, sepulchral, grinning, looking out with dark and bodeful eyes upon this mushroom life about him, amiably contemptuous of its baby civilization. Yes, the Hindoo, ominous visitor to these Western shores, uninvited, undismayed, crafty of movement as of glance, his flashy turban suggestive of millions and millions of like turbaned heads that lie behind, willing, waiting, peering across the ocean whose vastness those Orientals are learning to despise. Yes, the Hindoo was there in ever-increasing numbers, significant of much, prophetic of more than can now be reckoned.

And the Red Indian was still to be seen. Only the Siwash, it is true—but still the Indian. Still the swarthy face and the piercing eyes and the long shiny plaited coils of hair, raven black and glistening; still with his pony, patient and bridle-wise; still with the trophies of his rude and primitive art which he offers so cavalierly for sale; the squaws still in their blankets, and with their papooses strapped on their backs, the blinking baby faces upturned to the sun. Wonderful spectacle, this, that the Reverend Armitage witnessed that autumn day—for he saw, over and over again, in that rude and shining street beneath heaven's blazing sun, the Red Indian and the Hindoo meet. And the Indian, as ever has been his wont, cast no more than a swift and contemptuous glance upon the stranger as he went his way; while the Oriental, smiling still, inspected the other frankly and laughed a little to himself as he went on with stealthy step.

Strange meeting this—collision, rather, let it be called—of the ancient Possessor and the modern Invader; upon which, unmoved, did God's complacent sun look down that day. Old Observation saw it too, frowning darkly in the distance, for he had nursed these red men on his bosom ages and ages since.

The crisp autumn air soon had its way with our responsive newcomer as he wandered here and there about the straggling town. The fresh wild breath, pure and purifying, of the mountains blew about him, health and hopefulness in every amiable breeze—for the mountains discountenance gales and storms. The discomfiture and depression that the incident at the hotel had naturally provoked soon began to disappear; for one thing, everybody seemed so friendly, the community of strangerhood tending to blend the whole population into one. Besides, it was exhilarating to stroll for the first time beneath the mighty shade of these towering hills; life's Dignity and Worth and Labour were all ennobled by these high environs.

Passing along a quiet street as he came near his hotel again, Dr. Seymour had another reminder that he was not in his orderly parish at home, much less amid the scenes of his former labours on behalf of Ecclesiastical Polity across the sea. Turning out a little from the sidewalk to avoid a dray from which two men were delivering large blocks of ice, he remarked that one of them, evidently hired for the hour, was of some race he had not observed before. In the friendliest way, pausing in his walk, the minister enquired of the Anglo-Saxon in charge:

"If you please, sir, to what nationality does that man there belong?"

The other, evidently an American, gave an impatient look: "What's that you're saying, mister?"

"Of what nationality is that man beside you there?" repeated the Doctor.

The one thus addressed gave his head a jerk towards the foreigner. "Say, what the deuce are you anyway?" he enquired tersely.

The alien hesitated and the question was repeated, unconventionally as before, with a few words of explanation added.

"Ah! ah, Eetaly!" exclaimed he of the Latin race.

"Dago!" grunted the other; "the brute says he's a Dago."

Dr. Seymour groaned involuntarily as he turned to go on his way. "Sad, sad!" he said, just loudly enough to be heard; "it's worse than I ever dreamed of."

"Don't go to pityin' him, mister," returned the informant, misinterpreting the Doctor's grief; "he don't know no better; the ——'s kind o' proud of it, I think."

Whereat the Doctor groaned afresh, though more privately this time, and strode onward to his hotel.

The hardest hearted would have felt sorry for the Reverend Armitage Seymour that night could he have followed him to the church and entered into all the difficulties with which he was beset at the opening of the campaign.

To begin with, the church was certainly an insignificant looking institution, and Dr. Seymour silently and ruefully compared it with his St. Enoch's Kirk at home. It seemed to give the Gospel but a sorry chance, thought the Reverend Armitage, when it must be preached in such a place as this. The limitations of the thing began at the very outset—for the good Doctor was hard put to it to find a place where he might assume his gown and bands without the invasion of curious and irreverent eyes. This was finally accomplished in the solitary little apartment behind the church that served as vestry, choir rendezvous, committee room, and many other things beside. But the caretaker was there, and his devoted wife was with him; and even the enmuffled and enswathed cleric, swiftly struggling to emerge from the silken medley in process of adjustment, could hear their mutual gasps of amazement, almost of alarm.

Further, to deepen the discouragement, the pastor of the church was not there to lend his aid, as has already been told. This in itself created a depressing atmosphere about the lonely stranger—and, besides, threw on him the full charge of the "preliminaries," though he had hoped to reserve himself for the great occasion of the sermon.

Shortly before the hour for beginning the service, Dr. Seymour was temporarily cheered by the intimation, loudly and jubilantly made by the caretaker and cheerily confirmed by his wife, that the elder was coming up the street. Which functionary the minister awaited eagerly, though marvelling somewhat as to what was implied by the rather solitary designation "*the* elder." A minute or two later that worthy himself appeared, puffing and breathless, but exuberant in his welcome.

"It's glad I am to see you 'ere," began the honest man, looking hopefully in the other's face for the power he had been taught to expect in all distinguished preachers from a distance. "I'm 'opin' there's a great work for you to do 'ere, sir, in this part o' the vineyard—be you wantin' a glass o' water in the pulpit, sir?"

No, Dr. Seymour would not require it. "I think —I think I'd like a meeting of the Session at the close of the service," he intimated after a little conversation had ensued.

"That's me," said the little man humbly; "there bean't any helders only me, Doctor—just me an' the minister. An' 'e's at the Coast—he has a orful cough, sir."

"Only you!" the Doctor echoed in amazement; "where are all the rest of the elders—surely there must be more?"

"Never did 'ave but four," the lone survivor assured him; "one of 'em went west to a fruit farm; another of 'em made a 'eap o' money in a mine—an' 'e got choked up wiv riches, 'e did, sir. An' the other one, 'e couldn't get his missis converted—so 'e resigned, sir. An' that leaves me to be the Session, sir—but I'm prayin' night an' day, Doctor, as 'ow you'll do a great work 'ere, an' 'ave many souls for your 'ire."

"You're an Englishman, aren't you?" the Doctor enquired, looking rather sadly at the little man. This type of elder was new to him. "And may I enquire your name?"

"'Awkins, sir," he responded cheerfully, "'Enry 'Awkins—an' Hinglish to the backbone, sir. That's the funny part about it—a Hinglishman for a helder—but in this 'ere country, they 'ave to take what they can get, sir. I used to be a Methody at 'ome, but when I came out 'ere there bean't any church but this, so I goes in wi' 't, an' now I'm the Presbyterianest one in the 'ole congregation," the little man went on, blinking slightly as he got the better of the word. "I believes in bein' fore-hordained, an' never fallin' away again. An' I learned the first ten questions in the Catechism," he added a little proudly; "bein' a little aged, my mind didn't 'old water very good—but I'd die for them ten questions, sir. An' I 'ope you'll 'ave many souls for your 'ire. Glory to God! as I used to say when I was a Methody—an' I says [illegible]."

The Doctor looked at this uncommon specimen of elder with deepening interest. The sincerity of the little man was evident in every feature of the earnest, happy face, bright with love for his fellow men and evident zeal for the cause he had at heart.

"Have *you* any advice to give me before we start the meeting, Mr. Hawkins?" Dr. Seymour enquired; he smiled inwardly as he reflected to what a pass things had come, that this request should be made—by him.

"Give it to 'em 'ot, Doctor—'ot an' 'eavy. I was a orful sinner myself, Doctor. An' I got converted wiv a club, sir—if you follows my meanin'. Yes, sir, I got thumped into the Kingdom. There wasn't ever a sin—only murder, p'raps—that I 'adn't committed—an' it was Billy Bray that thumped me in—wiv the terrors o' the law. So give it to 'em 'ot, Doctor, 'ot an' 'eavy—an' you'll 'ave souls for your 'ire. There's a plenty to get 'ot about, Doctor," the little man drew up confidentially to say; "this 'ere place's 'Ell for sartin—an' that bean't no swearin', either. But what wiv the drink—an' the gamblin'—an' what's worse, far worse, sir," the serious face darkening ominously as he drew still nearer to the minister and added something in a low and portentous voice.

"An' they do say, sir," he went on in an awestricken tone, "they do say as 'ow there's poor lost girls, poor lone, lost critters, that's in those there 'ouses against their will, sir—eatin' their 'earts out in shame, sir. Some calls it 'White Slave Traffic'—you've mebbe 'eard tell of it, sir—but I calls it the devil's press gang, Doctor, I calls it the devil's press gang. Oh, sir, it sure bean't no swearin' to say this 'ere place's 'Ell for sartin—so you give it to 'em 'ot an' 'eavy, Doctor, 'ot an' 'eavy—like I was brought into the Kingdom, wiv a club."

The Doctor pondered, moving the while towards the door that led into the church. Suddenly he turned quickly and confronted the solitary elder. "I say, Mr. Hawkins, what about the singing? Is the organist, the organist and choir—are they in the church?"

The elder scratched his Cornish head. "That's the worst of it," he began in some embarrassment. "I called round at the horganist's when I was a-comin' down—an' 'e's promised to go to a dance, sir, in Tompkins' 'All. The Maccabees, 'e said it was. It's their reg'lar night, 'e said; an' 'e said, anyhow, as 'ow 'e didn't know 'e was 'ired for these 'ere special shindigs—that was 'is own words, sir, an' I told him 'e ought to be ashamed of 'isself. An' I'm thinkin' most o' the choir'll be there too. So you'll ha' to do the best you can, Doctor—but a body doesn't need a choir, to give it to 'em 'ot an' 'eavy," the little man concluded as he opened the door and showed the minister into the main auditorium, if upon room so rude such ponderous name may rest.

Consternation and dismay, voiceless save for the deeper silence, fell on the little gathering as the silk-robed figure passed with stately step towards the pulpit. This was an apparition the like of which had never been seen in these parts before, and the wondering Westerners could but look with blank amazement, mutual faces turned in silent questioning as to what this thing might mean. But the Reverend Armitage was quite unconscious of it all as he looked out over the little congregation before he rose to begin the service. He was thinking rather of the insignificant size of the audience, and wondering how he could summon up the necessary enthusiasm to preach to these staring few, most of whom were huddled together in the back pews near the door, including but a fraction of the very class with whom he had most hoped to come in contact. For there were, as far as he could see, but three or four who bore any signs of either the lumber-shanty or the mine—and blank amazement set upon their faces as they surveyed the black-robed figure before them.

The Doctor muddled through "the preliminaries" as best he could, the singing being at the mercy of

Mr. Hawkins himself, whose sole aim seemed to be that every one should understand the words, aided by one lone spinster of serious years whose powerful staccato never failed; the congregational melody, therefore, resolved itself into a very picturesque duet which the statuesque audience calmly received through both eye and ear, joining in a rather significant and unanimous sigh as each strident operation found its close.

Then came the sermon. The Doctor's text was "To all in Rome called to be saints"; and the main theme of the sermon was "called to be saints —in Rome!!" with a double exclamation mark after the name of the wicked and profligate place. As the Doctor's thought developed, it became abundantly evident, even to the drowsiest auditor, that he was bent on convincing them that a man might be a Christian even in such a lawless and dissolute place as the very town of Rockcliffe itself.

Warming to his subject, page after page turned rapidly, the Doctor became quite animated, almost eloquent, before the sermon came to its graceful and polished close. Then followed an appropriate hymn, this also rendered by the zealous Hawkins and the indefatigable spinster of serious age, the operation heroically borne by the congregation in the same stolid silence as before.

After the little gathering had trickled slowly out, two or three young men walked down the ill-lighted street.

"Well, how did *that* catch you?" one was heard to enquire.

"Too kid-gloved for these parts," one of his companions replied; "ain't any use here, that lady-like kind o' stuff."

"An' what for did he wear that there black night-shirt—with them two white tags at the top?" the other asked in mild bewilderment.

"Search *me.* Deep mournin', I guess—mebbe for this here neck o' woods—you could see Sodom and Gomorry wasn't in it with *us*," was the despondent answer.

"Well," volunteered the remaining one of the three, silent hitherto, "I could stand the kid-glove part; an' I could stomach that there thing he wore. But what beat me was the way he read every bloomin' word he had to say; looked like a hound followin' a scent, the way he kep' his nose to the paper—no, sir, a feller that can't shoot without a rest ain't got no license to come huntin' in these parts," a sentiment that seemed to meet with hearty approval from his fellow critics.

Meantime, Dr. Seymour had returned to the little room behind the church, where he was presently rejoined by the faithful elder, who watched with friendly interest the new and impressive spectacle of a minister in process of disrobement.

"It's 'ard to give it to 'em 'ot an' 'eavy—wiv that a'oldin' of you back," he ventured sympathetically, nodding towards the silken robe as the Doctor carefully folded it up.

The minister made some inarticulate reply.

"An' why, Doctor," the zealous Hawkins went on, "why didn't you ask 'em to stand up—if they wanted to be saved? It kind o' makes it easier for 'em, sir."

The Doctor looked at him for a moment. "I don't believe in this standing up business," he said firmly; "let all things be done decently and in order."

The little man stood abashed for a moment. But his earnest soul provided quick response. "If you was a-pullin' folks out of a fire—an' if you got 'em down the ladder—by their 'ead or their 'eels—I'm thinkin' it'd all be decently an' in horder, Doctor," he returned, as much to himself as to the preacher.

And as Henry Hawkins went out into the street, hurrying towards his lonely and humble house, he might have been heard to mutter: "I'm afraid there's a good deal o' the Methody in me yet. But then I'm an old-fashioned dodger—an', anyway, I was brought into the Kingdom wiv a club."

## IX

## A PARK AMIDST THE ROCKIES

IT was but a sorry "job" that Murray McLean had secured. Night watchman about the station, with special regard to the baggage-room and special instructions that the semaphore lights were to be kept burning bright—that was the lonely position he had secured and whose duties he had been performing for some nights now. Humble enough, in very truth; but there was bread and butter in it—and that was grimly necessary.

So it was no wonder that his frame of mind was far from jubilant this frosty autumn morning as he strode forth, indifferent to sleep, to learn something more of the great new country in which his lot seemed to have been so unfortunately cast. Something of deep and crushing shame clouded all his mood as he thought of the misspent days behind, of the folly that had brought him to this pass, of the dear face at home he had seen for the last time as he had left his mother's home that night in the lane of light from the lamp she held so high.

Yet, amid it all, something of wild hope possessed him. Something, too, of strange and secret fear. An ominous sense of destiny oppressed him, half oppressed and half uplifted. He seemed to feel, in a vague and unintelligible way, that all the future was hanging in the balance. Old ways, old companions, old habits, all passed in line before him, beguiling even while they repelled his soul. He knew his weakness, knew how easy it would be for his impulsive nature—especially under the stress of discouragement amounting almost to despair—to yield to some temptation that might be to him the very brink of ruin, lapsing into all that had threatened in other days, all that he dimly felt might reappear in greater violence than before.

And still, with all this secret anguish of misgiving, he felt within him a giant strength—and a consciousness, almost a prophecy, of power—such as he had never known before. The overthrow, or the victory, would be equally great and final.

The towering mountains about him seemed—like the spirit within—to play upon his soul with ever-varying influence. For sometimes, in their sublime detachment, they seemed to darkly hint at the independence of a tiny human life, the right of puny man to go his unmarked way beneath their mighty shelter, a mere atom amid the masterpieces that mock his littleness on every hand. But again they towered above him like animate things, the very sentinels of God, eloquent of Doom to all that would grovel basely on the earth, remindful of the heavenlies towards which they soared, all but impersonating the Majesty of that Creator whose glory and purity they reflected in eternal silence.

Thus throbbed the tide of battle in his heart as he went his aimless way that morning, marvelling at the splendour of the mountains that overhung him; forgetful, yet dimly conscious, of this mighty truth—that he was greater than the mountain, since he could *choose*, nay must—that he could be saved or lost, could be glorified or damned!

He was still in the midst of his musings when they were suddenly interrupted by a decidedly pretty spectacle that brought him to a standstill, gazing in admiration. The path he had been following ran close along the side of a high fence, of netted wire, within which a sudden flash of movement attracted his attention. Peering closely, he soon descried a deer, an exclamation of delight breaking from his lips. Soon another, and yet another still, appeared in view, the graceful creatures disporting themselves in the sun. He stood, looking eagerly—and a veritable herd of them seemed to be roaming at will among the trees. A little farther off, restlessly pawing at the grass, roamed a young moose, evidently scornful of the lesser breeds about him.

Murray was not long in coming to the conclusion that this was a private park; indeed, he could just catch the outline of a stately house in the distance. What else this imposing place might enclose of interest he could only surmise—but the sight fascinated him. Still gazing intently, he started suddenly as a voice fell on his ears.

"Uncommon pretty sight, ain't it?" and as Murray turned to look he found himself face to face with a man he had never seen before.

"I should think it is," Murray answered, nodding towards the estate in general; "have you any idea whose place this is, sir?"

"Yes, tol'able good idea," the man returned, smiling; "ought to have, anyway—seein' it belongs to me. Like to look around, would you?"

"Rather!" Murray returned eagerly; "I never saw anything like this before—seems to me it must be like one of those English country places I've read about," turning enquiringly towards his new-found acquaintance.

"Well, now, shouldn't wonder if it is," replied the man, evidently well pleased; "that is, to a certain extent. That's the Missus's idea, anyhow—women's a good deal heavier on that kind o' thing than men, I fancy. My name's Ludlow," he announced abruptly; "p'raps you wouldn't mind tellin' me yours?"

"McLean," promptly answered the other, "Murray McLean—I only arrived here lately from Ontario. And I'm working at the station—in the meantime, at least," a slight blush kindling his cheek.

"Glad to hear it," the man answered rather curtly; "there's a heap o' young fellers round here that don't work at anythin'. Come on in—here's a gate, though you couldn't tell it if you didn't know."

They passed within and roamed onward through the splendid stretches of rolling forest, Murray exclaiming with delight at the beauty of it all. The soft-eyed creatures, evidently quite tame, showed but a passing interest in the intruders; once or twice their owner touched them with his hand as he passed by.

"Come on over towards the beaver dam," the guide suggested after they had taken in the main features of the place. "You'd like to see the beavers, wouldn't you? An' I've got a great bunch o' pigeons over there, too—don't believe there's another like 'em in this country."

Murray was willing enough and they turned their steps as his guide directed. Just as they reached a little eminence above a brook, a woman's voice came floating through the trees.

"Father," it cried; "are you there, father?"

"Hello!" responded the man in question. "Hello! is that you, Hilda? Here, down by the summer-house!"

Both turned their eyes in the direction of the sound, both listening. And a moment later, emerging into view beneath a spreading tree, there appeared two living things. One was a maiden; the other was a deer—and her arm was about its neck as she walked, one hand toying caressingly with the glossy ear.

She stood still, leaning back a little on the shoulder of the bea[illegible] creature beside her as her eyes fell on the stran[illegible]. Like an embodied spirit of the woods she looked in the morning light, the tall and graceful form poised in the attitude of surprise, the lips parted from her running, the colour coming and going in the girlish face, her bosom rising and falling from the exercise or the excitement of the moment. Then suddenly, her eyes fixedly turned away from the tall figure on which they had rested quite long enough to be noticeable, she gave her message.

"Mr. Wilcox is at the house waiting for you, father. And he has a surveyor with him—something about limits, I think he said," she announced, standing as still as the restive creature beside her would permit.

"Oh, yes, I know," answered her father—"but I didn't think he'd be so early. I'm sorry, Mr.—Mr. McLean," he said, Murray supplying the name as he hesitated, "but I'll really have to see this here man—it's about a big timber buy. Say, Hilda," he digressed, turning to the girl, "I was goin' to show this gentleman the pigeons, an' the beavers, an' everything. Will you take him up—an' get a hold of Martin—an' ask him to show the gentleman round? Sorry to have to leave you, sir—I'll take this short cut across the creek—but Martin'll show you everythin' worth lookin at. You'll take him up, Hilda?" as he turned and disappeared down the sloping valley.

They stood facing each other, the sound of the departing footsteps dying in the distance. For a curiously long minute they looked in silence. Murray was the first to speak.

"I'm afraid I'm proving a great nuisance," he said.

"What—what for?" she almost stammered.

"I don't know what for," he answered, smiling a little grimly; "nuisances never do."

She turned, a noticeable reserve in her manner. "Well, I'll do as father directed," she said coldly; "I'll get Martin—he looks after the dam."

Murray secretly employed her closing word, linking Martin's name with it—for the maiden was fair to look upon. "I'll go with you," he said, moving over beside her under the tree. The deer turned its eyes on him as suspiciously as is possible with such eyes as those.

She moved on in silence, the man behind her. How close behind, she evidently did not know; for once, drawing a springy branch taut as she passed, it flew back and hit him in the face. Catching the sharp exclamation he could not suppress, she turned on him in a moment, and her solicitude and self-reproach were music to the martyr's ear. It was then, as her eyes were fixed intently on the face where a slight cut appeared, that he caught for the first time the splendour of those eyes that were never so beautiful as when sympathy or tenderness shone through them.

"What a shame!" she cried, her voice actually shaking; "oh, oh, it's bleeding some!"—wherewith, forgetful of everything, she drew a dainty handkerchief from her bosom and gently applied it to his cheek. Her fingers touched him once; and Murray McLean knew then, and never before till then, what it means to have all the hot blood of youth run riot through a youthful frame.

But he made little of it, assured her that he bled on the slightest provocation anyway, and begged her to continue on her way. Which she did, and now in strictest silence. Presently they approached the little house, evidently Martin's place of abode, hard by the spacious barn and driving shed that stood in a clear space by themselves.

"Martin!" she called; "are you there, Martin?" and it seemed to Murray McLean as if he had never heard melody before. What *is* there in a maiden's voice (if beauty be her portion) when that voice is lifted up to call aloud, that awakens the very depths of a true man's heart? Is it because his imagination lends to it the note of pleading, or fear, or helplessness?—or what? Let the answer hide, as for ages past, among the heavenly mysteries.

There was no answer, and they passed together into the shadowy driving shed. But Martin was not there. "Perhaps he's in the fawn house," Hilda mused. "I'll go and see."

"Where is it?" the man interrupted; "I'll look myself, if you'll tell me."

"Just over there," she said—"under that pine. Thank you."

He started thither. And Hilda, with the woman instinct, tarried in the shadow. What keen eyes those were that followed from the shade!—and how well she used them, for his course was sidelong to her; and there was nothing about Murray McLean so interesting as the profile view; and the manly figure was so straight and strong; and the step so firm and buoyant; and the whole being of the man so charged with magnetism and strength and possibility that the girl's eyes never wandered from the stalwart frame till it was lost to view.

A moment later he appeared; and a swain, presumably the desired Martin, was at his heels.

"Yes, ma'am," roared the menial across the intervening space; "was ye wantin' me, ma'am?"

The girl's voice carried back like a bell. "Father wants you to show Mr. McLean over the place—and the pigeons, too," the words floating as buoyantly as the winged things themselves.

"I'm shinin' the harness," he replied; "it's dirty, ma'am."

The girl hesitated; then flung back another word, mildly protesting. The swain seemed about to yield.

"Well," she called again, "perhaps you'd better finish your work. Maybe I can go myself."

"Never mind, ma'am—I can set them by till another time."

"Stay at your harness," Murray ordered between his teeth; "here's a dollar for you if you stay where you are," fumbling in a sadly depleted pocket as he spoke. Pay-day came rarely enough on the railway.

"Well, ma'am," revised the avaricious yokel, inwardly convulsed, "after all, ma'am, p'raps I'd better do the harness—they're all wet with ile, ma'am."

Hilda tried to frown in the distance, stepping out into the sun; it was desirable that the stranger should behold that frown. "Very well," she called, "I'll try and do it myself. Please come, Mr. McLean," a little beckoning nod apparent as the slender neck, white as the fleece in heaven's blue, tilted the saucy head just a little backward.

And he came.

They strolled together down towards a kind of marsh, gathering such acquaintance as they could while they walked. From the very start, each seemed to be fumbling to find out something about the other; they spoke of the weather, and the mountains, and the deer that had now gone off to feed—and she asked him if he came from Ontario, and he asked in turn if she had ever been there. And each looked when the other was not supposed to know. And both were young, and the skies above were blue, and the tides within were warm—and troubled from afar.

A few minutes later they reached the bottom of the hill where flowed a little stream. And there, sure enough, were the tokens of that sagacity and insight, that industry and patience, which, more than anything else in the non-human world, suggest an almost weird relation to humankind. The beaver dam was there, visible and substantial. The chips, white and clean, were lying about, scarcely indented by the gleaming teeth that had split them off. And here and there, all ready to be inlaid, were the little logs, measured with almost mathematical exactness, that must presently be dragged to the dam and fitted into place.

"They'll be out presently," the girl said, smiling at his exclamations of wonder as he moved about gazing at the tokens of ingenious skill; "they only work at certain times of day—and it's almost time now."

"Can you see them work?" asked Murray.

"Oh, yes, they're wonderfully tame. Father says they're the only tame ones he knows of anywhere—look!" she whispered, "there's one coming now."

Which was true enough. One after another the crafty creatures emerged, proceeding to their toil without fuss or delay, apparently oblivious to the presence of spectators.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" Murray exclaimed after he had watched them a while; "and the beautiful thing about it is the way they seem to enjoy it. I wish I could relish my work as they appear to do."

The girl turned and looked at him. A deep, far-off interest—such as only experts in the soul can recognize—glowed in her eyes. And hers were beautiful eyes; perhaps, too, only a soul specialist would have said so at first sight.

"Where do you work?" she asked abruptly, as if she *would* ask it.

"At the station," he answered, meeting her gaze with eyes as intent as hers; "I'm night watchman there—and general factotum."

The girl flushed momentarily. Probably this was more due to his manner than to his tidings—for the man's words had something of the desperately candid in them, a sort of defiant note, as if he would test and challenge her by the intelligence.

Her eyes fell before his. "Then I should think you'd be sleeping now," she said—and he swiftly wondered if he were deceiving himself; or did he really catch the far-off breath of solicitude in the tone? "Surely it's a hard way to spend the nights?" she added, in a voice that tried its best to indicate she didn't really care.

He smiled bitterly. "I've spent them in far worse fashions," he answered, his eyes fixed on hers again in the same defiant way as before.

Then followed a long pause. "Wonderful how those little creatures can drag the trunk of a tree like that," she broke it to exclaim, nodding towards the field of industry.

"You know, I'm a student," he pursued, heedless of the digression. "I *was* a student, at Queen's College—and I left there."

The girl's face brightened with unmistakable interest. "I've often heard of Queen's—it's my favourite of all the colleges," she said. "I always heard it was the poor man's school."

Murray unconsciously winced a little. "It's none the worse for that," he retorted a little vigorously.

"That's the reason I like it," she replied promptly; "you had to leave for your health, I suppose? So many students overwork themselves—but they have to pay up for it later," she moralized, shaking a very pretty head.

A light breeze stirred the air, and one or two of the golden tresses, unsecured, were blowing about her brow or over the delicate ear that tapered away to its tint of pink. And the maiden's frame was tall and strong; full-breasted, with strength and tenderness moving there. And her tuition had been among the hills, scornful of trifling things beneath, and her outlook had been to the Eternal. So that there seemed to flow about her the very atmosphere of what was natural, and true, and pure, all unmoulded as she was by the narrow tenets of some narrow circle, her whole face and bearing attesting that she had dwelt among primal things—gloriously non-conformed.

Perhaps that was why these last simple words of hers hurtled in, far in, and lodged themselves in his heart with a mysterious pain. Or perhaps the words were only the highway along which her soul had found a path; so sincere, so unaffected, so unsophisticated as they were. For there was in them something of primal simplicity—to use that fell word again, which nobody can translate—spoken in gentle earnestness as though she really believed in him, and was sorry for him, and hoped that he might soon be well. Or perhaps it was because she happened to glance at him as she spoke, and his eyes met hers, finding there nothing but guilelessness and reality—and perhaps what caused the pain was this, that he knew, as she could not know, all the hidden things in that past she was interpreting so kindly.

His face was flushed and hot. "Yes," he said as soon as he could; "yes—they pay up for lots of things. Yes, lots of things besides overwork—of which I was never guilty."

She gave a little laugh. "I've been a prize idler myself," she said with mock contempt, tapping her bosom as she spoke, the right arm across her breast after a fashion that reverent eyes have often marked in the eternal womanly. "So you needn't confess to me—but I'm going to reform," she went on, tossing her head back gaily in a very unbecoming way for a reformer. "I'm not going to have those wretched little creatures there," snuffing savagely towards the furry toilers, "rebuking me all my life. That's a fact," she went on, commanding a very serious tone; "I've never done a really useful thing in all my life."

He stooped, picked up a chip and threw it towards the stream. "I wish that were the worst thing I could say about my career," he returned, and the defiant note was in his voice—(what ailed the man, anyway?)—"it's the things a fellow *has* done that keep him awake at nights. At least," with a bitter little laugh, "that's why *I* don't sleep any these nights. If a fellow could only ship all his old memories like he does the baggage—and send them off with the trunks—what a happy man he'd be!"

Then he stopped, abruptly. Inwardly he felt that he had gone too far. Yet he was glad. She turned a quick searching glance on him; then her lips opened as if some fateful word, or equally fateful question, were waiting there. But his own look was so full of stern reality—as though he cared not what she asked or knew, almost as if to say she had a right to know—that her eyes fell before it, and she was still.

"Let's go and see the pigeons," she said coldly a moment later. "And we mustn't be long—I think mother needs me."

## X

## THE WAY OF A SOUL

THE path they now took led them some distance backward towards the house. As they drew nearer, for the most part in silence, Hilda's keen eyes suddenly discerned a figure coming in their direction.

"That's mother," she announced, her hand shading her eyes, "and I guess she wants me, as I said. Come on—I want you to meet her."

"Were you looking for me, mother?" the girl asked as they came within speaking distance; "have you been needing me?"

"Oh, no," her mother answered absently, her eyes fixed in an interrogative way on the stranger; "only Mr. Holmes is at the house—and he was asking for you, of course."

What was there in those last two words, apparently so innocent, to make Murray McLean start so suddenly? Wonderful, is it not, how two trifling words, mere privates in the ranks, can make a man oblivious to the glories of an autumn morning, to the splendour of surrounding mountains, to the beauty of distant cascades gleaming like silvery curtains in the morning light?

"Oh!" said the girl. "Mother, this is Mr. McLean—he's a student, from Queen's College; and father wanted him to see round the place—and Martin was busy with the harness."

Mrs. Ludlow advanced cordially with outstretched hand. A few words of greeting were given and returned.

After which: "And I suppose you're out here for your vacation, Mr. McLean?" she enquired; "but isn't it rather late—hasn't the college opened again?"

"Yes," Murray answered promptly; "but my college days are over—I'm night watchman at the railway station now," turning a very serene pair of eyes on his new acquaintance.

Whereat mountain, and morning light, and silvery cascade all disappeared from before the eyes of Mrs. Ludlow. "Oh!" she said, almost gasped, the words touched with frost, still surveying with wonder the attractive face, the well-trained form, both so significant of all that marks the gentleman—if she knew, and she reckoned she *did* know, just what constitutes that particular article. "Oh!" she repeated, the frost deepening. "Hilda, I think you'll have to ask to be excused—you'll excuse my daughter, sir?" with a slight bow that Mrs. Ludlow had not learned for nothing; "I think Mr. Holmes is wondering what has kept you so long—and I'll send Martin."

She turned imperiously, without further notice of their guest, and began retracing her steps towards the house.

Hilda's face was gray. Suddenly her resolve seemed to be taken. "He really can't come, mother," she remonstrated; "you know how particular father is about the harness. And I'm almost through—and you may tell Mr. Holmes he can just wait," a note of annoyance in the voice. "Come on," she said in a low tone to Murray; "you see I can't be long."

In a few minutes they were beside the pigeon house. Adjacent to it was a great space, all carefully enclosed by netting; while without, and above it, hundreds of the airy creatures were circling in graceful curves or resting placidly on poles or trees, or daintily strutting about while their soft gutturals filled the air.

"Don't they fly away?" Murray enquired, trying his best to appear interested, though his thoughts were all with the retreating figure in the distance.

"Almost never," answered the girl; "although we had a really wonderful experience about a month ago. Father imported a pair from Boston—some rare breed—and they came here all shut up in a box, in an express car. Well, after a few days they seemed to be so much at home Martin let them out to fly around with the others—and do you know what they did?"

"No—what did they do?"

"They just flew straight up in the air, as if there weren't another pigeon in the Kootenay; and they circled round and round about a dozen times; and then," the large eyes filled with wonder like a child's, "then they just started out, due East, like a streak of lightning. And then—what do you think then?"

He shook his head.

"Well, that was on a Friday—and on Monday night father got a telegram saying they were back in Boston, at the very place they came from! Wasn't that wonderful?"

"Instinct," said Murray laconically.

"Instinct rubbish!" the girl returned contemptuously; "it worries me, the wise way people try to dispose of it like that. It's a mystery, that's what it is; it's something preachers ought to talk about. It's just as wonderful as the faith they preach about so much; there's nothing in the way of a soul—I mean, the spiritual way," blushing slightly as she spoke—"that's any more incredible, any more unexplainable, than that. It proves all the unseen world—and the unseen faculties—that are all about us. But everybody just says 'instinct,' and thinks no more about it," she concluded scornfully, the white forehead all knitted now with the psychology of the moment.

"It's a cheap way of travelling, anyhow," Murray responded irreverently, while the girl frowned at the words. "I wouldn't be long getting home if I could clip it off the way they do."

"Do you want to go back then?" she asked. The frown was all gone now.

"No," he said.

"Oh!" said she.

"But all the same," he went on, "I believe if I had to be anything, anything else than a man, I'd sooner be a pigeon," as he watched the airy flight of a love-lorn pair that were taking their morning outing in company.

"I wouldn't," she returned with equal earnestness. "I'd rather be a beaver," nodding in the direction of the dam. "They're some use in the world—and they have some work to do—and they love it, that's best of all."

He turned daringly, controlling the corners of his mouth with an effort. "You shan't," he said sternly; "you'll be a pigeon."

"And why, sir, may I ask?" the lithe form straightening up defiantly.

His eyes were now fixed on the love-lorn pair above. They were fairly between him and a silvery curtain on the mountainside; beyond them, high above both, was a fleecy floating cloud—and all alike was touched with golden light. "Because I'd be one myself," he mused absently, still staring at the separate pair; "and, anyhow—they're beautiful."

The girl bit her lip till the colour left it. "I guess I'll have to go," she said abruptly; "Mr. Holmes is waiting for me. You know the way back to the gate you came in at, Mr. McLean—that is, if you're going back the same way?"

"Yes," he answered, still as if a thousand miles away. "Yes, I want to go over every bit of it again—and I know the way. And I can never thank you enough, Miss Ludlow," lifting his hat and bowing in farewell; "the whole thing ——"

"I really can hardly afford the time," she broke in a little petulantly, "but I believe I'll have to go with you as far as the gate. There's a young moose somewhere in the grounds—father got an Indian to bring it—and he just *hates* strangers," she declared savagely; "I don't suppose he could hurt you much, but he might try—anyhow, he's getting horns. Come on—we'll have to hurry," as she turned and started towards the intervening grove of trees.

He followed, jauntily now—for he resented the turn things had taken. It was well assumed, this air of careless independence, whistling to himself as he swung along beside her. And it seemed to annoy the girl. "You've grown very gay all of a sudden," she said with a sidelong glance; "but you shouldn't whistle till you're out of the woods, you know."

"It's these glorious trees," he answered; "a scene like this always stirs up all the music that's in me—only I hope I haven't been rude. But this kind of thing always makes me want to whistle, or sing, or something like that—by the way, you didn't know I could sing, did you?" he added banteringly as he suddenly stood still, turning his back almost full upon her. Then a moment later, sweetly floating out upon the sylvan scene, the words came low and clear, athrob with a sudden passion that made the girl start with wonder:

"I have heard the mavis singing
His love song to the morn;
I have seen the dewdrop clinging
To the rose just newly born."

He ceased as suddenly as he had begun. "Say, where's that warlike moose of yours?" he began carelessly—"shouldn't wonder if he'll think some one's trying to call him," breaking into a rather forced laugh as he spoke.

But the girl stood in her tracks, enchanted. "Oh!"

she exclaimed, her bosom rising and falling in her agitation, " oh—why ? why didn't you tell me ? "

" Tell you what ? " he enquired gravely.

" About that—about your voice. Oh, it's beautiful, beautiful ! " she went on in a kind of ecstatic candour, her glowing eyes fixed on him. And as his own met them a surge of passion overswept him from head to foot ; the mighty trees, the chirping birds, the towering hills beyond, the all-encircling sunshine—everything seemed beautiful and holy to him as he looked into the far depths of the eyes that were fixed on his.

" You're very kind," he answered, more carelessly than before. " But it doesn't amount to as much as you seem to think ; although "—and now a broad smile wreathed his face—" although, to tell the truth, I've been offered an engagement. So what do you think of that ? "

" Splendid," she responded, now beginning to move on ; " perfectly splendid ! Tell me about it—an operatic company, I suppose ? "

" No," he answered bluntly—" religion—it's those revival meetings they're holding in the Presbyterian Church. The man that's running them wanted me to accept an engagement as solo singer, and all the rest of it. Come on—I'm afraid that moose may get us."

She answered never a word, stealing a furtive glance, mystified at this strange new acquaintance she had made. But the melody kept ringing in her heart, and every twig and flower seemed to be different for it. They were getting near the gate before she spoke.

"I'm going to some of those meetings myself," she said, the voice as chastened now as it had been imperious before.

"Good for you," he returned, as though he were speaking to a child; "maybe I will myself some time—though I don't just take my religion that way. Oh, aren't those beautiful?" he suddenly exclaimed, stooping eagerly to pluck something at the base of a great pine; "simply lovely!—and I thought it was too late for anything like this to be blooming now."

His face was turned from her as he plucked the sweet survivors of the autumn; then he searched in his pocket for an envelope and gently laid the flowers away within it.

"What are you going to keep those for?" she asked impulsively, catching at her words as though she would recall them when it was too late.

"Shan't keep them at all," he answered, his eyes still searching the ground; "I'll press them and send them away this afternoon. I know somebody that'll just love them."

Her lips opened again—then she checked herself and moved onward to the gate. She held it open as he passed through, grave and grateful in his farewell.

"But I'm sorry you didn't see the baby beaver," she said with downcast eyes; "I guess it was asleep this morning—but if you care to come again some time, I'm almost sure you'd see it. And we'd be glad to show you the squirrel-house, too—father would show you both those things, or Martin. Either father or Martin would be glad, I know," struggling to stem the colour she felt was rising in her face.

He thanked her seriously and went on, the white envelope still in his hand.

And as the maiden went back through the dewy park her eyes were much upon the ground; and once or twice she murmured to herself: "I'm sure those flowers were for his mother; yes, I could tell from his face that it wasn't anybody else—I'm almost *sure* it was his mother."

## XI

## A FRIENDLY FEUD

AS Murray McLean made his way back to his shabby room at the Commercial Hotel, the very angels seemed to be his escort. For he beheld about him a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelt so much of which he had never dreamed. It were foolish to imply that any definite plan—hope, that is to say—had been born within him as a result of the accident of the morning. Nothing had place in his heart, of purpose or prospect or even desire; but there ran riot there the strange and nameless thrill that never makes advent to the human heart but once, the sensation, heaven-born, that comes to a man when first he knows! And yet, what had he come to know? Nothing, nothing at all.

But it was morning! And he had heard music! And the great waterfall in life's monotonous stream had flung it spray at last upward towards the heavens! A strange feeling possessed him, such as a convalescent might know, for whom the dark days of suffering are past! or a prisoner, to whom tidings of release have come! or an exile, who at length has caught a glimpse of the shores of his fatherland! Yet no one of these things suggested itself to the mind of Murray McLean as he wended his way back to the apartment he now called home. But he was happy—happy, because he had seen, and heard, and felt. And because he knew—what he had never known before—that, possessed or denied as all the fates might order, there was yet in the universe one Presence that could fill all the firmament with light.

The methodical will smile; and the deliberate will doubt; and the majority of lovers will disagree, stoutly contending that such sweet revelation never comes so suddenly, never sets up in a day its throne within the heart—in an hour—even in a minute. But their poor cold theories can be successfully disputed and defied and eternally put to rout by all the blessed whose experience (one summer's morning long ago, ah, me!) is far above all argument, and scornful of all reason, and evermore persuaded that what happened must have come to pass! After all, has not any explosion worthy of the name, material or spiritual come in the twinkling of an eye?

Wherefore Murray knew. And when he sought his couch that morning it was with but little hope of sleep. Nor did he care. A strange defiance filled his soul. What if he *had* made ducks and drakes of other days and their opportunities! And what if he *was* a night watchman at a railway station! And what if life's battle—moral and of every other kind—still lay grim before him! What matters any of these things [illegible], to the man whose eyes have seen the [illegible]? All Murray knew and felt was this, that life [illegible] now before him—that he was only beginning—that he would be worthy; yes, worthy, true and pure and faithful in every word and act. With all of which he felt the joy of the conqueror—in advance.

Yes—and alas!—in advance. Fatal joy! satisfaction premature and ominous! Life's gladness is a tortuous stream, mostly made up of eddies.

The evening had come, and Murray was descending the narrow stairs that led to the office of the hotel, when he was accosted by a boy coming upward, a "call-boy," with a message in his hand addressed to himself. He hurriedly opened it, moving downward to the light. Its tidings were brief and painfully to the point. The Railway Company would not require his services further—and such wages as were due him would be paid on his calling at the office.

Stung to the quick, smarting under the humiliation, his first act was to hurry over to the station only a square distant, and to demand an instant explanation. With what result, everybody knows who is familiar with dismissals in railroad life. Wherefore, after a few hot words which the surly deputy of the absent superintendent pretended not to hear, he returned to the hotel and took his place moodily on a chair in the lobby, amid the miscellany of loungers that usually adorn that particular locality in a Western tavern.

There it was that the tide began to ebb. The hideous revulsion of feeling, so often consequent on an exalted mood, seemed now to come upon him. Disappointment, resentment, shock of soul, all blended with the earlier excitement of the day to make the hour one of peculiar peril for Murray McLean. He arose, tired of the gabbling company, and walked to the window, his eyes finding rest on the silent peaks now shadow-robed in the evening light. But to-night they stood distant and forbidding; sternly indifferent now, those very cliffs that in the morning light had seemed to lure and beckon to their radiant heights; how unapproachable they seemed now! and how aloof from the petty concerns of time, grandly elusive as they appeared to drift in ghostly shadow towards the sky!

He turned from the window with a quick gesture of impatience, as though the distant dignitaries had dismissed him; yet that to which he turned was as repellent as before—and a deeper loneliness settled down upon him.

Suddenly a voice, not altogether unfamiliar, fell on his ear. "I say, Mr. McLean, I want a word with you alone."

He turned quickly and found himself looking into the face of Mr. Montague Holmes. They were not absolute strangers, a few sentences having been exchanged between them since Murray had taken up his abode at the Commercial.

"I'm at your service," Murray responded, by no means reluctant. Indeed, any such interruption to his mood and his surroundings was more than welcome just then. "Shall we sit down?" as he turned towards a couple of vacant chairs.

"No," responded the Englishman; "come on up to my room—it's nice and comfortable there."

Which Murray found to be a quite accurate description of the apartment to which he was conducted. "Take a chair," Holmes said as they entered—"and a cigar; they always go well together. And I'll tell you what I wanted to speak about without further parley. There's a little favour I want to ask of you, McLean—we'll cut out the formalities—and it's this. The Masons here are going to have a smoker a week from to-night, and I've undertaken to look out for the most of the programme. Well, I want *you*, that's the plain English of it. As you may surmise, I've heard you warbling a bit about the hotel here, and of course I know you're quite a singist; as a matter of fact, it's surprising, the number of people who have got on to that already. Now, I want you to help me out, Mac," he concluded amiably, leaning forward towards the other; "I want you to give us a couple of songs that night. What d'ye say to it, eh?"

Murray was obviously pleased; and only a moment's hesitation intervened before he had given his consent. For which the Englishman thanked him cordially, then led the talk into general channels.

Nearly an hour having thus passed, and Mr. Holmes being in his most genial mood, Murray was at length led into a recital of his present difficulty, and a little of his past experience, to this new-found friend.

In the middle of his story the Englishman, evidently interested, suddenly rang the bell. A boy answered it a moment later. "Bring whiskey and soda for two—bring a bottle, a sealed bottle," ordered Mr. Holmes with the air of a man who was prescribing a panacea for all ills; and, to tell the truth, his idea of consolation for a wounded spirit was rather strictly confined to that particular prescription. "It seems to be a devilish hard country for youthful tenderfeet," he moralized as the boy disappeared, reverting to Murray's story—"and equally hard for both sexes," he added with a coarse laugh. "Although," he went on, the eyes coarsening as he spoke, "this cursed lack of employment bears a good deal heavier on the boys than it does on the girls. *They* don't find much trouble in getting a job," he added with a sinister leer and laugh. "I heard today—or was it yesterday?—about a case of one unsophisticated maiden that had just struck the town—and from all I can hear they found *her* a position, where she won't have much manual work to do—just on the outskirts of the burgh, you know," he went on, winking at Murray and pointing with his cigar in the direction of the window; "a couple of sharks took *her* in hand all right—seems a cursed shame, too, in some ways; an innocent country girl like that—although I suppose it might as well happen sooner as later," he added, with a smirk Murray was at a loss to understand. "Seems to be the final doom out here, anyhow, of poor doves like that. What in blazes d'ye suppose is keeping that boy? Hello, what makes you look so agitated, McLean?" he flung at his guest as he moved out towards the hall; "not interested in that dove case, are you?" with a burst of coarse laughter as he peered down the hall for the tardy boy.

Murray sat where he was, not knowing whether to be altogether mystified or altogether horrified; some glimmering of the man's meaning could not but break upon him, and yet his mind recoiled against it, refusing to give it entrance. He felt himself at sea; as a matter of fact, the varied experiences and conflicting emotions of the day had been almost too much for him.

But he had little time for thought. A minute or two later Holmes was back, in his hand the tray he had taken from the long-expected boy. "Here, McLean," he said as he came in; "here's something that will make you forget all the cares and jobs and Railway Superintendents that ever made life hideous. This is the Simon Pure article, mind you—never been uncorked--you're never safe in this God-forsaken country if the bottle's once opened, never know what they put in it afterwards. It's like the seven evil spirits that returned more deadly than the first. Here, pour for yourself," as he handed the now opened bottle towards Murray; "and make free with it—I'll look the other way—there's no Scotchman about me," indulging a gale of merriment the while.

"Not any, thanks," his guest answered, the swift decision soon taken in his mind; "I'm on the water wagon now—been on it for quite a while—wish to God I'd climbed on long before I did. No, thanks, Holmes—I absolutely won't," as he pushed the black thing back from him.

Holmes pressed the matter for a little. But Murray's voice began to develop a considerable edge—whereupon the former yielded. "Well, perhaps you're right," he said, reaching for his own glass, "but there's no pick-me-up in the world to equal it. Well, here's looking at you—and success to your vocal spasms a week from to-night!" as he tossed off a generous potation.

Then he sat down, tossed off another, and another—still another. As these repeated treatments began to take effect, Holmes became more and more garrulous and communicative; more and more natural, too, with all that that implies. Whereupon, when a half hour or so had passed, he was completely off his guard.

"I'll tell you, McLean," he suddenly announced, rising impulsively from his chair, ' I'll tell you where you can get a job—just occurred to me this minute—if we went together and saw old Ludlow, he could give you a post all right. We'd go right up to the house now, only I happen to know the old folks are out at some kind of a shine to-night, a silver wedding or something of that sort, and they'll be out fearfully late for them. But the old geezer has no end of interests—and of course he'd do anything for me. I kind of belong to the family, you know," he went on with a thick laugh ; " out in this wild and woolly country a fellow has to do the best he can in the way of matrimony. And that daughter of his is the finest girl in the Kootenay—I ought to know, I've tried plenty of 'em," throwing himself back with low, gurgling laughter.

" I thought there was something of that kind," Murray said, hardly knowing what else to say and with difficulty concealing his disgust. " You were there to-day—in the house, I mean—when Miss Ludlow and I were in the park. Her mother came out and said you were there."

Holmes sat up with sudden vigour. And a dark and bodeful expression came into his eyes. " Was that you?" he demanded hoarsely; " I knew some fool snipe was there—and walked with her through the grove. But I couldn't get it out of her who it was. And I'll take the liberty of asking what it meant, sir?—cursed strange proceeding, if you ask me."

By this time Murray was also sitting very straight. The terse definition of himself had doubtless provoked that. And his eyes, too, had a dangerous look as they confronted the man before him without a flinch. " If it's all the same to you, sir, I'd like an explanation myself," he said, his voice as low and tense as his mood would permit. " On what ground do you challenge the propriety of my walking through the park with the lady you've been good enough to refer to? If you'll tell me *that* without delay, sir, I'll—I'll be—be obliged to you, Mr. Holmes," struggling with his rising passion.

Holmes sprang to his feet. "That won't take long," he splurged, his voice thick with anger—"on this ground, curse you, that young bloods, especially unknown bloods, don't stroll through the woods with pretty girls unless they—unless—yes, that's the ground, damn you!"

Like a panther Murray was upon him, clutching wildly for his throat. But the Englishman, well trained for interviews such as this, gave him ready battle. Round and round the room they tossed, like some swirling tide, a muttered oath or stifled gasp being the only thing else to break the silence. Once, as they passed the table, Holmes clawed wildly out at it, his eye on the bottle that stood there. He missed it—but his fingers closed on the corkscrew that lay open on the table; with which, maddened and reckless, he gave Murray a ripping blow, the sharp point gouging his cheek as the blood spurted out over them both. It may have been this—or something else—that did it, but from that moment the Canadian's strength seemed more that of a wild animal than of a struggling man—and at last, his fingers closing like a vise, he had his enemy by the throat and on his back on the floor.

"Hah!" he gasped. "Hah! Yes!" like one drinking deep. Then, swiftly controlling himself: "Take it back!" he whispered, his voice half a whisper and half a cry, "take it back—before I kill you," leering frightfully down into the face beneath him.

The Englishman saw death there as he looked up. And it took but a moment for the parched lips to falter the word the maddened man above waited breathlessly to hear. "You didn't understand me, McLean," the prostrate one panted as the fingers on his throat relaxed; "'twas only a bit of a joke at the most—God, you're a tiger," as he lumbered heavily to his feet, his antagonist turning towards a chair, the exhaustion of a great reaction upon him now.

"I'll be hanged if I don't respect you, McLean," the Englishman suddenly broke out after one or two curious glances at the now seated form; "'pon my soul, I'd sooner shake hands with you than not—an Englishman knows when he meets his match," as he came over with extended palm.

Murray took it dreamily; but everything seemed so far away.

"Good God! he's fainting," Holmes suddenly exclaimed; "here, sit up—there, lean on me," as he held him with his arm about his neck, resting the Canadian's head on his shoulder; "here—take this," as he poured out a copious draught of the liquor and held it to the bloodless lips. "There—now you'll be better in a minute."

As indeed he was. But now Holmes' whole care seemed to be with the wounded cheek of his erstwhile antagonist. "Beastly rotten trick," he murmured to himself; "don't know what the deuce could have come over me; here, I've got the very thing," with which he turned quickly to a little cabinet in the room and in a minute or two was busy with cotton batting and a healing lotion. The wound was a trifling one after all, though it had cost Murray considerable loss of blood; and in a very little while the two men were sitting together talking, as if no such wild interruption had ever come. Very wonderful this, the charm and tenderness with which an Englishman, even the roughest, can arm himself when occasion arises to call it forth.

It would be hard to tell how it happened. It may have been because Murray had, in his collapse and weakness, tasted the seductive draught; or it may have been due to the varied tension of the day and the exhaustion of the hour; or it may have been because Holmes, evidently repentant of his folly, pressed for some pledge of good fellowship and friendship now repaired. Or it may have been all three. But, in any case, when the marble clock on Holmes' mantelpiece chimed nine, the sound fell on the ears of two men neither one of whom was altogether himself. Holmes, especially, was showing the results of his excess; and, if Murray's vision had been clearer, he could hardly have failed to see how the darker passions of the man were again showing in his face.

All of a sudden the Englishman started from his seat. "I say, old fellow," he began, his hand on the other's shoulder, "come on with me—I'm going out."

"Where to?" Murray naturally enquired.

"Oh, just to see some fellows," Holmes returned; "some jolly good fellows—I know you'll like every one of them—you'll have the time of your life. It isn't late yet—and anyhow, these particular fellows never go to bed till early morning. They all live together by themselves, you know."

"Friends of yours?" pursued Murray.

"Rather—old chums of mine; many's the good time I've had there. Come on—here's your coat," as he began to put on his own.

"How about this face?" Murray enquired ruefully, indicating the wounded part.

"Oh, that's neither here nor there—nobody ever notices the like of that in the Kootenay. Besides, it's kind of honourable to have some scar about you—like the students at Heidelberg. Though I can't help wondering how I ever came to play the cad like that. I'll really never forgive myself, old chap," and the Englishman's penitence was evidently sincere as he again inspected his handiwork, again applying the lotion with tender impact.

"Oh, that's nothing, Holmes," Murray returned, really touched by the fellow's solicitude; "all's fair in love or war—and there was a little of both, as you remember."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Holmes, "that's true enough—and jolly well put, if you ask me. You're a sport after my own heart, Mac, 'pon my soul you are. Come on—wait a minute till I put out the light."

The moon was bright overhead as the two men went out into the night. There were still a goodly number of stragglers on the street, for the hour was not yet late. But it was only a matter of five minutes or so till they had passed into the outskirts, following a muddy street that led up towards the base of Old Observation. And now these mountains, so changing with the changing mood, resumed their nobility and splendour as Murray looked up at them once more amid the holy stillness of the night. The very breath of peace, friendly and benign, seemed to be about them as they lifted their peaks to the starry sky. For he was happier now—happy in the fellowship of a brother man, in whom, he firmly believed, he was to find a friend, all the more a friend because of the conflict that was past. And perhaps this very association was to be of the greatest use to him; for Holmes knew so many men, men of influence, too—and who could tell but one of those kindred spirits he was now to meet would prove a benefactor in his hour of need? Besides, the gracious influence of the night was about him; and the healing power of the mountain air; the subduing presence of the silvery sublimities above him, too—all united to create the nameless thrill that nobler natures feel amid surroundings so majestic.

"I know who's sitting beside that light," Holmes broke in with a chuckle, pointing to a glowing window in the distance. It was a window in the Ludlow mansion. "That's where my own particular treasure is. And I know it isn't the old folks—they're out to some kind of all night splurge, as I told you. And Mrs. Ludlow'll be having the dickens of a time for fear the old man may tie his napkin under his chin, or make a noise with his soup, or slit his mouth open with his knife. Oh, yes, I know it's Hilda that's there all right—take you round some day," he concluded amiably, Murray inwardly marvelling at the man's cheap levity, the circumstances all considered.

"Here's the house," Holmes announced abruptly about ten minutes later as he stopped before a flimsy looking dwelling, high and narrow, with a little gable window. It was one of four or five similar structures in a row. Murray noticed that the blinds of all were carefully drawn—and a deep red glow streamed sullenly through the windows.

The Canadian stood still a moment. "Good God!" he suddenly broke out, "what's that?—I could have sworn I heard a cry, a woman's voice, right overhead—I thought you said they were all men here?"

"You're batty," Holmes answered gruffly—"too much refreshment, I guess—that was a mountain-cat, back in the woods, you heard. They're awfully alike. Come on—you'll like the fellows when you know them," with which, opening the door without rapping and giving his companion a slight push in front, he ushered Murray into the dimly lighted hall, slamming the door behind him.

Murray looked about him. Something in the atmosphere, so self-revealing is the blight of death, made his heart beat with a mysterious quickness, every sense on the alert. A muffled sound came from above, mingling with the clink of glassware and the stray notes of a piano, as if some one were toying with the keys.

"The *fellows* are up-stairs," Holmes said, his face averted, at the same time shuffling off his overcoat and letting it lie where it fell. "Come on—I know the way."

Moved by some indefinable impulse, Murray also slipped off his outer coat and threw it, with his hat, upon the floor. Then, all hesitation gone, he followed the man before him.

## XII

## *THE KNIGHT IN THE ATTIC*

HOLMES never paused when he reached the door. Already Murray's heart was going like a trip-hammer, his brain afire as never before in all his life. The Englishman flung the door open, letting forth sounds of revelry, and strode into the room, his companion close behind him.

Cries of welcome greeted him; and as he stood he turned smiling to Murray. "Here are the friends I told you about, McLean," he began—"girls, this is a little protégé of mine, and I want you to be good to him. He sings like an angel—and after we've had a little refreshment he's going to favour us. Now, Sally," he went on archly, "don't worry about that scratch on his pretty face—I see it pains you already—but it was only an accident, and——"

"We will soon make it better," gaily cried the one addressed as Sally, "the same treatment our mothers used to give, for cuts and bruises, you know—nothing better ever been discovered," as she moved over, a gauzy figure, towards where Murray stood.

As stand he did. And his eyes, like things aflame, took in all the bodeful scene before him as they surveyed the room and its inmates in shameful dishabille. And as he looked—and as the unhappy creature moved over towards him—the strength of years, all misspent though they had been but never soiled like this, seemed to roll back upon his heart.

Who can tell—let scoffers answer as they may—why, in a distant Ontario village and in a humble home and at that very hour, a fragile figure, moved by some nameless yearning of love and fear, rose from her bed and knelt beside it to pray for a fatherless boy far distant on the world's wide ocean, at that very hour battling for his soul? Who can tell?—let scoffers answer as they may.

Perhaps some such holy vision rose before him as he stood that night amid the surging tide of sin; of a truth, the sweet outline of that pure face flashed before him—and the memory of a Mother's Face is the Panoply of God.

Surely those who looked that night could see the traces of the struggle in his soul, the fierce, fiery conflict of a youth whose whole nature, not immune from evil, still set towards righteousness. The momentum of the years, the influence of early training, the bent of a native purity, all could be seen as they gave battle in that fateful hour. And the victory was swift, decisive. The face, the very eyes, suddenly flashed and glowed with a great revulsion; and upon both, strange as it may seem to say it, there rested the light of spiritual power, such as not the religious, nor the saintly, nor the pious, but only the essentially pure in heart may know. And mingling with it, as the lightning mingles with the storm, there gleamed a terrific anger whose home was in his heart.

He thrust the woman from him with a swift gesture of disgust, at the same time moving stealthily over to where the Englishman stood. "Holmes," he said, "I've gone something of a pace myself—and I'm no Sunday-school scholar. But I swear by the God who sees us both that I've never sunk to this—and you're a liar, Holmes, a damn sneaking liar, who doesn't care for —— "

The rest was lost as he lunged towards his erstwhile friend, erstwhile enemy, beating out wildly in front of him. But in an instant Holmes, exceeding sprightly now, had eluded the blow—and in another moment the room was in confusion, his airy friends throwing themselves between him and his assailant.

With a muttered imprecation of wrath and loathing Murray turned and left the room, one of the enraged inmates slamming the door shut behind him as he disappeared. And fortunate indeed it was that she chose that way of voicing her contempt.

For just as Murray had turned to descend the stair he heard again what he took to be a muffled cry, like the voice of a weeping woman. He stood still and listened. Then he looked up, for he was standing just where he could command with his eye the second floor above. A moment later he knew he was not mistaken; for he felt the blood surge back cold to his heart as a wan face appeared above him in the dim light, all tear-stained and wrung with grief, peering down at him in wistful yearning. Gazing still, he suddenly noticed the trembling girl beckon to him with a quick, appealing motion.

Instantly he began to retrace his steps on the stair, then swiftly and noiselessly hurried up another partial flight to the landing where she stood. A small, dainty creature, he noticed in the shadowy light, her face as innocent as a baby's, all the more appealing because of the look of trustful misery upon it. Her hand went out impulsively to his and he took it in his own.

"Oh, sir," she began low, not waiting for him to speak, "I don't know who you are—but for God's sake, help me."

"Help you!" he echoed peering down into her face.

"Yes, for God's sake, help me!" she repeated piteously. "Oh, sir, take me away—oh, take me away. I was brought here yesterday—two women told me I would get work here—I was only new out from Edinburgh, and my parents are dead, and I was going to look for work of some kind. And I never knew—I never knew," now weeping bitterly again, "till yesterday afternoon. Then that man came—the same man that brought you here just now; I could tell him from the window in the moonlight. Besides, I heard his voice; I heard him lie to you about—about who live here. Well, he tortured me, he tortured me! But I fought him," she broke out savagely like a wild thing at bay—"I fought him, bit him, fought till I was nearly dead. But they wouldn't let me go—and they said they'd keep me here till I gave in," with which she fell again to the most violent trembling and weeping, the poor hunted body creeping into Murray's side as if for warmth and shelter.

He stood, panting as excitedly as she.

Suddenly he turned and moved over to the window. "There's a shed there," he said aloud—"and it can't be very far down to the yard from it."

The girl was beside him. "Yes," she echoed faintly, "that's a shed—but it's so high."

"I've seen worse jumps," Murray murmured to himself; "however ——" with which he turned and looked about the room. His eye brightened as it fell on a piece of rope that ran across below the ceiling, evidently used for hanging clothes. Like a flash he laid hold of it, tore it from its place, and began hurriedly to attach it to the knob of the door near the window.

But just then, like the sound of doom, he heard the creaking of the door down-stairs—and some one came out into the hall. This some one descended the stairs towards the door opening on the street. And a moment later, like a pistol shot, the voice of Holmes rang out. "Good Lord! I told you so—he's in the house—here's his coat and hat!"

Murray sprang towards the girl, all occasion for silence vanished now. "Come," he said excitedly; "come, we'll have to jump!" The girl gave a loud cry and fell back half-unconscious in his arms. He gathered her up, glancing towards the window; then, seized of a sudden impulse, he shook her sternly and shouted in her ear. This had the effect he desired; she half stood before him now, trembling like a leaf.

But again he hesitated, turning towards the door, his face livid. The girl could see his eyes flash in the semi-darkness, and the sweat was on his brow. He leaped to the door, taking his place just behind it—and the veins stood out like whipcords on his forehead. The first would be Holmes—and he knew it. A moment later this very Holmes dashed in; but, before he had crossed the threshold of the room, one smashing blow from Murray's fist laid him prostrate on the floor. Then he sprang towards the trembling girl, hurling this way and that the one or two who had stumbled in over Holmes' half-conscious body, seized her in arms of iron, threw himself over the sill, hung for one throbbing moment with one sinewy arm, then dropped, his burden still held tight, on to the resounding roof. A moment later he had leaped the lesser distance from the shed to the ground, standing with his quivering charge beneath the silvery moon.

"Thank heaven!" he murmured as he straightened himself and looked about; "thank heaven, we're safe and sound. Now, come, let us go—but where to, God only knows," he muttered to himself as he fumbled for the gate and led the girl out into the narrow lane.

They unconsciously turned their steps towards the town, whose lights could be seen twinkling in the distance. Glancing at the woman by his side, he saw her shuddering, for the night was chill. "I'm so cold," she murmured, her teeth chattering now—and for the first time he noticed how scantily she was clad. A flush of maddening anger flowed over his face, warm enough in all conscience, as he noticed what this meant—and after a moment's hesitation he flung off his coat and put it over the shoulders of the protesting girl.

Thus they went on together, the homeless one still babbling, with many a broken sob, the story of her wrong. He listened, carelessly enough, for he was now in sore perplexity as to where he should take this ward so strangely thrust upon him. Still pondering and bewildered, he suddenly noted that he was once more opposite the Ludlow house; and the light previously remarked was still streaming from the window beside the door.

In an instant his resolve was taken, and some secret conviction told him that he could not be mistaken. "Come this way," he directed briefly and turned in at the gate. Then he rang the bell, and stood waiting.

Holmes had been quite correct in his surmise as to who kept vigil beside that streaming light.

And strange enough was the spectacle that greeted Hilda Ludlow as she opened the door herself that night. She started back with a half cry as she made out the odd form of the girl, so grotesquely garbed, and the hatless man in his shirt-sleeves beside her.

"It's I," he began; and the voice that had rung like a thunderbolt before was now quivering like a child's. "It's I—Murray McLean; you remember we were looking at the beavers, and the things, this morning."

"Yes," she answered in a bewildered voice; "yes, I recognize you—but where—where's your coat?"

"She's got it on," he explained abashedly; "I forgot to take it back—and she's—she's in great trouble, Miss Ludlow. And I didn't know anybody else—nor what to do—nor who could help her—so I brought her to you." His eyes were down as he stood in the flood of light flung through the open door.

"Trouble!" she answered in the same perplexed voice; "what trouble?"

"She'll tell you herself," he said briefly.

"Come in," the gentle voice responded as she moved back from the door; "come on in—father and mother are both out—but come in, to the fire."

Murray stood back to let the girl enter. "I won't come in," he said as she crossed the threshold; "I'm going to the hotel—please give me my coat."

The girl divested herself of the garment; and again, with a flood of weeping that broke forth anew, she tried to thank her deliverer. But he was gone, the tall swinging form barely visible in the shimmering light.

Hilda Ludlow drew the girl gently into the cheerful sitting-room and seated her beside the fire. "Now tell me, my child," she began, though the stranger was almost of an age with herself, "what it is that's troubling you. You're so cold," she went on, her eyes on the shuddering form—"and I'm sure you're hungry. Wait, I won't be long," and without another word she disappeared, returning in a few minutes with a bountifully laden tray.

The poor creature ate timidly, yet eagerly, starting at every sound; once or twice, in the middle of her repast, she fell to weeping bitterly. Hilda soothed her as best she could, all the strength and compassion of her woman-heart coming to the surface while she waited on this poor wastrel as though she were some long-lost friend.

"Now, tell me, child," she urged gently when the stranger at length rose from the table and returned to the fire; "tell me what it is that's wrong—at least, as much as you feel you can tell."

It was not easily told. The full heart seemed to choke as again and again it tried to pour forth its bitter burden. But more freely at last; by and by with burning words; at length with passionate tide, came the pitiful story of how she had been approached, misled, entrapped, imprisoned—till, as the dread horror of it all came over her afresh, she hid her face in the bosom of her befriender, now trembling like herself, and sobbed as though the fountain of tears would flow forever.

To have perfect pity there must needs be perfect purity. It is those most nearly sinless who know not how to be severe. Wherefore Hilda Ludlow's compassion flowed like a river; strong, unstained, pure in heart herself, her soul went out in infinite tenderness to this poor waif who had now sunk to the floor, clinging to the skirts of the compassionate one beside her. And very gently, with words of cheer and hope that were eloquent in their very brokenness, she sought to comfort the desolate spirit whom the waves of fate had borne to her door. She spoke to her of a life as yet inviolate by her own surrender; she promised protection, assistance, sympathy. And yet, through it all—for her lips were meant for an even nobler strain, though she knew it not—Hilda felt that some mighty and dominant word was wanting; some Master-note; some Healing from afar; some Reinforcement not of time; some Balm with the breath of the Infinite about it—she could not yet comfort with that consolation wherewith she herself was comforted of God.

"And so you say your parents went to Scotland from New Brunswick?" she said cheerily, reverting to the girl's story. "Why, my own mother came from there—my father, too, for that matter. That gives us something to start on, doesn't it, now?" smiling as she spoke. "So you'll stay here—right here," she said at last, "to-night—and as long as may be necessary. You'll be safe here, my dear—but now I think you'd better go to bed, and get the rest you need so badly. I'm waiting till my father and mother come back—they're later than I expected. Hark!" as she heard a footfall on the porch without; "surely I hear them now—but what can they be ringing for? —Oh, I forgot the door was locked."

Strange, is it not, how the very conscience of a bad man may be made the minister of his punishment? For a singular apprehension had possessed the unhappy Holmes from the moment when, rallying from Murray's blow, he realized that his prey and his enemy had alike escaped him. Some vague misgiving that it was yet to result disastrously for him, coupled with the gnawing of a guilty mind, had impelled him to the very step he had taken, the step that was to effect the wreckage of his cherished plans. For he had felt a strange and irresistible impulse to see Hilda Ludlow. Still more or less beclouded from his debauch, a secret uneasiness, coupled with the maudlin impulse that semi-intoxication so often gives, had prompted this untimely call.

Hilda rose and hurried to answer the summons. But no parents' faces greeted her at the door. When she opened it Holmes stood without—and an exclamation of surprise fell from her as she recognized him.

"I was only passing," he began with accustomed calm—"was coming in from the country; and I

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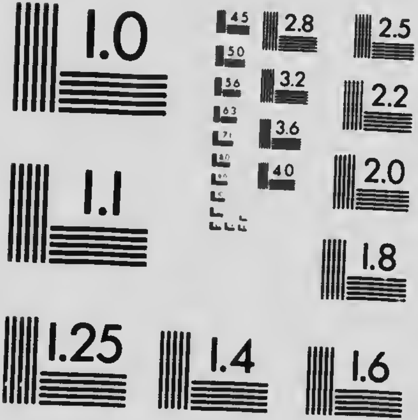
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knew the folks were going out for the evening, so I just thought I'd drop in and sit with you till they came back—if they're not home already," as he moved onward into the hall.

Hilda was trying to frame some excuse, and he could not but notice the embarrassment that possessed her. Which only confirmed him in his original purpose, and, with a familiarity bred of many previous visits, he turned nonchalantly towards the room from which the gleam of the cozy fire could be seen. Before Hilda could intervene he had stepped across the threshold.

And then, to her amazement and alarm, there broke from the cowering fugitive by the fire such a scream as Hilda Ludlow had never heard in her life before. It was alive with terror, repeated once and again, then broken off in half-hysterical moans and gasps as the poor girl, now lithe and active as some hunted thing, fairly bounded past the object of her terror and flung herself into the arms of the wondering woman in the hall.

"Oh, don't," she sobbed, shrieked, in her anguish, "don't let him get me. It was *he* that tried—that tried, to hurt me. Oh, save me, save me now—he's come to take me back,' she sobbed, clinging closer and closer to her deliverer.

Hilda demanded, almost sternly, that she be calm

—and in the midst of it all her eyes flew towards Holmes. She could not but remark that his face had turned the colour of death. A cynical smile was forced to his lips, but she could see him tremble where he stood.

Her eyes were turned to him in terrible appeal; so gentle, so playful in their wont, but now fearful in their questioning.

He rose, muttered something about the girl being crazy, about calling a policeman, about something else. But the awful questioning of a pure soul pursued him; wherewith, breaking now into stormy protest, he branded it all a parcel of lies, and would know whether or not the charge of a nameless immigrant was to be believed before the word of an English gentleman.

But the nameless one seemed slowly to revive. Outraged womanhood will not permanently suffer in silence nor yet in tears. Emboldened by the protection she had found, aglow with the passion of her wrong, kindling more and more against this monster in human form, the girl's impeachment came at last bold and ringing.

"I can prove it," she cried in growing anger, still clinging desperately to her protector; "look—look there—at the side of his face—and around the forehead! That's where that gentleman struck him—

and made him fall—that man that brought me to you," trembling closer again; "that's where he struck him before he seized me and leaped through the window—and the dust, see the dust," as she pointed to his clothes. "And, yes! Oh, yes!" a sudden gleam of triumph lighting up the ghostly face, "I've got *this*—he dropped it when he was trying to overcome me—and I slipped it into my dress, to give to the police if I ever got out of that awful place," with which, panting like a wounded thing, she drew from her bosom a crumpled handkerchief, holding it before Hilda's gaze. "See!" she cried; "see! there's the name written in little letters—there, on the margin—is it his?" and her eyes gleamed in the lamplight as she stood on tiptoe and held up the fatal evidence.

Hilda Ludlow glanced at it—then looked a moment longer—then dropped the thing upon the floor.

In an instant she turned to Holmes—but as quickly averted her gaze, as though she had seen a serpent. Her arm was around the girl—and she moved slowly towards the door. She opened it and stood aside.

"Go!" she said, her eyes still withdrawn; "go!"—and the voice had the refrain of the unearthly in it, a scorching note like that of consuming fire—"go—now—and forever. Go!" the voice almost shrill in its unnatural intensity, ablaze from a blazing soul.

Holmes cowered where he stood. By this time he was fumbling in the crowded rack for the stick he had placed there as he entered. "I wonder," he mumbled, his lips evidently dry; "I wonder what about the saint that brought you your protégé here—I wonder how *he* came to be there."

But now the nameless girl, a moment before so cowed and stricken, seemed like a lioness in her wrath. "You know!" she cried, her voice ringing through the hall; "you know—you know you lied to him—I heard you through the window. You told him you were bringing him to call on a lot of men. I heard you—what he said, and what you said—I heard you lie, through the window when you were on the street. Oh, please make him go," she turned and pleaded wistfully with the woman beside her; "please, please make him—I hate him so."

But Hilda Ludlow uttered never a word; nor ever glanced at the wretch who was now skulking towards the door. She stood instead in a sort of dreadful silence—and the power of a burning soul, of an all-conquering will, seemed to fill the place.

He went out into the night without a word. Then she closed the door, softly, but as though it were the door of doom—locked it—turned back into the light.

A few minutes later a pallid face, singularly pure and innocent, was resting on the whitest and softest of pillows; and a broken heart was healing.

"Tell me," she moaned to the woman who was bidding her compose herself to sleep, "please tell me who it was that saved me. Oh, he was so strong! he was only in that house. that dreadful house, perhaps two minutes or three, when I heard him call that other man a liar—and he tried to strike him then—and then I knew that he'd save me. He was so strong, so strong and brave—what is his name?"

Hilda Ludlow leaned low over the pillow. "You must go to sleep now, dear," she said. "And his name?—Oh, it's McLean, I think—yes, his name is Murray McLean."

The moon had sunk, having witnessed much before it gave up the world to darkness.

But two men were still abroad amid the gloom. The one, Murray McLean, was still wandering aimlessly about, careless of his still uncovered head, careless of slumber, vainly striving to quiet a stormy brain. And the other man, muttering in his madness, was devising means of vengeance!

Suddenly, and with a smothered oath, he recognized the form of his enemy, drooped and burdened, coming towards him along the silent street. That form was bowed as if lost in thought, oblivious to all that surrounded or awaited him. Wherefore, with a quick and devilish resolve, the desperate Englishman slipped within the shadow of a narrow alley, beneath the shade of a little house.

The bowed and preoccupied man came on, ignorant and indifferent. And a moment later, the alley almost past, a burly stick swung in the darkness, a heavy thud bespoke the unerring aim, and a stalwart form, slowly sinking to the sidewalk, filled the soul of Holmes with savage joy.

He left his victim where he lay and stealthily stalked off in the darkness. When morning dawned he was already well on his fugitive way—and the Kootenay knew him no more forever.

## XIII

## *THE TROPHY A TEAMSTER WON*

WHEN Murray opened his eyes the next morning, the first thing he did was to close them again. A dull pain at the top of his head was about all he was conscious of. But as he lay quietly in this unknown bed, returning consciousness slowly brought back the scenes and memories of the day before, ending with the solitary and reflective walk in the cool night air long after the moon had sunk from sight. One by one the experiences of the day floated before him, the most eventful day of all his life.

Then he opened his eyes again, for now he heard some one moving about his bed. And as he did so he looked into a very kindly face and a pair of very honest eyes, wistful with solicitous enquiry. Murray moved up on to his elbow in the bed.

"You bean't strong enough to do that, be you?" a very uncultured but very genuine voice enquired as the form of an unknown man leaned over him.

"Of course I am," Murray replied, gazing inquisitively—"there's nothing the matter with me," he declared, though his almost bloodless face told a different story. “But tell me, what am I here for?—and where am I anyhow?—and how did I get here?”

“It's my own 'ouse you be in,” the man replied, smiling broadly; “an' you're 'ere because you're 'ere. I carried you 'ere. I 'eard some one a-groanin' an' a-groanin'—like a baby—on the sidewalk underneath my windy—an' I came down—an' you was 'elpless as a hinfant—an' the blood was a-runnin' from the back o' your 'ead like it was a pump. An' I carried you in an' put you to bed—pretty goodish lump to carry, too, sir,” smiling good-naturedly down on his charge—“an' that's 'ow you come to be 'ere,” as the kindly host moved over to pull down a shade against the morning sun

“My hea [illegible] Murray, putting up his hand, only to let it [illegible] a groan of pain. Then his face grew suddenly white as the wall beside him, his eyes closed, and he fell back heavily on the pillow.

“Lor' bless my soul, it's a faintin' he is!” exclaimed the good Samaritan as he rushed hurriedly from the room. “'Ere, my lad, 'ere, take a mouthful o' this,” as he returned a moment later with a little flask; “'ere, this'll 'elp you, my boy—open your lips, there.”

But partial consciousness had returned. “No,” said the sick man—"no, not any, thanks; I'll be all right in a minute—I'm all right now. No, not any, thank you—I—I don't believe that does me any good. I've tried it before—with poor results," and even in his weakness the protesting patient indulged a rather bitter smile. "But tell me, what's the matter with my head?—do you suppose I struck something?"

"More like somethin' struck *you*, sir," the other returned. "But there—what's the use o' worryin'?—you're 'ere, there bean't any doubt o' that. An' what I want you to do now, is rest, just rest, sir, till you get strong and well again—you're just as welcome as if you was in your own 'ome, sir. An' I've got to go to work—I'm a teamster, an' as 'appy as ever was—an' I live 'ere all alone. But I'll be back at dinner time, an' get summat 'ot for the both of us. An' all you've got to do is just rest, quiet an' easy like—till you come around a bit," with which he disappeared, returning a little later with a large breadboard, serving as a tray, on which he had prepared a rude but not unpalatable breakfast of eggs and toast and tea.

Murray drank the tea, but could go no further. "I think I'll sleep, as you suggest," he said; "and please don't let me keep you from your work. But first let me tell you how sincerely I thank you for your kindness to an unlucky stranger—I'm sure I'll never forget such goodness. And may I ask your name?" as his benefactor stood over him with the tray.

"Me? I'm 'Awkins—plain 'Enry 'Awkins—an' I'm a Hinglishman, an' a teamster, an' a Christian—an' a elder, if you like—an' it was Billy Bray that brought me into the Kingdom, just at sunset the seventeenth of August—an' that's about all I could tell if I talked till that day was 'ere," as he turned with a benign smile and made his way to the tiny kitchen in the rear.

It was a long day for Murray McLean. Not till early afternoon, when he was once more alone, did sleep come to him. Waking, he felt much improved, and when his nurse returned he found him seated in a chair by the bedside. The fever seemed to have rapidly abated. When night fell the faithful Hawkins was still by the bed, to which Murray was now restored, genial and communicative as ever.

"I ought, by rights, to be goin' to the meetin' to-night," he said about eight o'clock; "for I'm 'opin' there'll be a great work done. But I bean't goin'—I be goin' to stay wiv the sick, an' I know Dr. Seymour'll say it was the right thing to do. They do be movin' hawful slow, the meetin's do," he added as if to himself, shaking his head a little ruefully.

"People not turning out very well?" Murray ventured.

"Don't seem to be a-grippin' of 'em," his host returned, "ain't many comes—an' they all try to sit on the back seat after they get there. There's two things—if you ask me—two things that's a 'oldin' of the meetin's back."

"Yes?" interrogated Murray.

"Yes, two. One is that there black nightgown he wears—'e can't give it to 'em 'ot an' 'eavy wiv 'imself all wrapped up like that. An' the other ain't any fault of 'is—but it's bad, for all that; there bean't any one to lead the singin'—that's the other thing. An' a meetin' to save souls, wivout singin', is like a ship all ready for sea wivout any water to float in. So I'm prayin' the Lord to send us some one as can sing—an' to give the Doctor souls for 'is 'ire."

Murray listened rather listlessly, and soon the conversation took a different turn. For Mr. Hawkins seemed bent on talking, and before long he was groping, with considerable astuteness too, for some tidings of a vital sort concerning this guest who had been so strangely thrust upon him.

But Murray kept his own counsel. Wherefore, baffled in that direction, the earnest Hawkins gave himself up to a recital of his own past life, laying it bare with a candid faithfulness that soon had Murray rivetted in an intensity of interest remarkable to behold. For he had never heard anything so wonderfully done. Henry Hawkins had had a past! And, as he talked, the whole wild waywardness of it seemed to rise up before him with a vividness of detail that might well have made him shrink from the recital. Yet, while he seemed to keep nothing back, there was throughout it all a reverent reticence—of soul, at least—as of one whose inmost heart could think of those days of darkness but to deplore and to bemoan them. There was no glorying in his shame, too often noticeable in conspicuous converts. Humility, deep and penitential, seemed to clothe him like a garment—and Murray could feel the wincing of his soul as he laid bare a past that seemed to have sounded every depth of sin. "Hevery sin in the catalogue—'cept murder, p'raps," as he said himself, the last word suggestive of an almost comical uncertainty.

"An' that's 'ow I knows as I was soundly converted," he went on at last, leaning far towards the reclining man, his transparent face aglow as he spoke; "because I knows as 'ow I *needed* convertin' right enough. I was like one o' those there fellows that's really drownded—drownded dead—and then gets fetched back again. There ain't never any doubt, wiv them, about whether they was under the water or not—an' they don't ever wonder if there's such a thing as fetchin' 'em back to life again. I was *under* all right—good an' deep—and so I knows there's some One can fetch the dead soul back an' make it breathe again. An' it was Billy Bray that done it—him an' God," he added reverently, the plain face of the man aglow with spiritual joy; "an' it were done wiv the terrors o' the law—not that I was afeared to die," he pointed out with emphasis, "but it was afeared to live I was—what wiv the drink, an' the cursin', an' the stealin', an' the fightin'—an' everythin' else but murder, p'raps—I was fair afeared to live. An' it were *myself* I was afeared of, sir. An' Billy Bray, 'e didn't comfort me none—not then, at any rate—he fair showed me how dark it was all round, an' how the clouds was gatherin', and the thunder an' lightnin', till I was the despairin'est man in England. An' then—then I just fair threw myself at Christ—all weak an' sinful an' ravelled like—nobody but Him could have told I was a man at all. An' He took me in—Glory, 'Allelujah!" this last with a sudden ecstasy that made Murray start where he lay; "He took me—an' He kep' me. You see, He saw I *was* a man after all—an' He saw what He was goin' to make out o' me. He saw me like I am now," the face beautiful as the spiritual lit it up, "'appy an' 'opeful, an' wiv the victory over sin—an' tryin' to 'elp somebody else into the Kingdom—an' advertisin' Him as done it. For this bean't braggin', mind *you*," the face now serious with the thought, "seein' it weren't me at all as done it—it was Him, an' the savin' grace He gave me. An' nobody can't hexplain it away—not anybody—unless they hexplains *me* away first," and the burning eyes looked out at Murray with such a light of passionate conviction as he had never seen before.

The little man paused, a self-reproachful look overcasting the wistful face. "It bean't right for me to talk so much," he suddenly announced; "it's a-tirin' of you I be."

"No, no," Murray protested, his eyes rivetted on the now remarkable face, his mind busy with this new revelation. "Not at all—I've been intensely interested."

"Well, I'm goin' to bed," the little man pursued, rising as he spoke. "Bean't there anythin' I can do for you?" he enquired, taking down a candle from the shelf above him.

"Nothing, thank you, Mr. Hawkins—I'm ever so comfortable, thank you."

"I 'ope I'm not makin' too bold," his host resumed a little timidly; "but don't you want somethin' for that—for that there cut on your cheek?" he enquired solicitously.

"No, thank you," Murray answered quickly; "it doesn't amount to anything at all," his face flushing as he spoke.

But Mr. Hawkins had not seen the flush. "Might I ask as 'ow you got it?" he ventured to enquire.

Murray forced a laugh. "Oh, that's a long story," he answered. "Not worth telling either—only it was through my own foolishness, I can tell you that much," turning over on the pillow as he spoke.

"Aye, aye," the little man responded; "aye—just so, sir. Aye. Good-night, Mr. McLean."

"Good-night, Mr. Hawkins. And please put out the light before you go."

The older man did as he was bidden and passed upward to his room, little dreaming that he was leaving his lonely guest to battle with Principalities and Powers.

For the night grew tumultuous about Murray McLean as he lay gazing into the prolific dark. He would have scorned to admit that the influence of this rude man's wonderful story was upon him—but he would still have been powerless to account for the nameless Forces that thrust battle upon his protesting soul through the silent watches of the night He did not seek the conflict—but it came; he did not consent to it—but from Afar the tide of battle swept down upon him and he had to confront the Eternal whether he would or no.

Whence arise these strange tumults of the soul? Whence come these silent storms that now and then lash the spirit into foam, all unconscious as that spirit hath been of their approach, knowing not whence they come and whither they go? Why is it that sometimes—perhaps after long torpid years—the soul of man is overswept by those winds whose source no man knows, knowing only that there is One who rideth on the wings of the wind? From Whom it seeks to escape in vain, the refuges of years all vanished as in a moment; ascending up to heaven, He is there; making the bed in hell, behold! He is there; the wings of the morning, the uttermost parts of the sea?—the former powerless, the latter instinct with His presence; the shelter of the darkness sought at last—only to be shot through and through with the same besetting Light!

There is only one great question worthy the mind of man. Not the soul, let it be remarked—but the mind. And that question is this—can a man be born again? The cynical will frown, the superior smile, the irreligious despise; yet there remaineth but that one great query—and all else is partial. This strange longing and wonder and hope within the soul—is there any reality to match it? Started it may be by means the most trivial and commonplace, or by no obvious means at all—by the snatch of a once familiar hymn, by the low sound of a child at its mother's knee, by the recurrence of a long-forgotten verse from the long-neglected Book, by the memory of a mother's face or the shadowy vision of a father as he knelt in prayer; or by the sudden sense of that forlorn obscurity which wraps us all about, or the swift recollection of days and deeds that refuse their graves as we look again into the ghastly faces of unburied sins; or by the dread acceptance of the awful truth, new and terrible, that we have yet to die—it matters not, but the hidden fear, the timid wondering, the trembling hope, never quite forget their way back to the heart they knew so well in the far-off days of childhood when the soul still dealt frankly with its God.

The hours of that night, as they went slowly by, were terrible for Murray. He was not alone—there were two in that darkened room. And a cloud of witnesses compassed them about. And the years laid bare their stained and blotted pages, lurid amid the dark. And the very day before, so crowded with all that emphasized the shameful pass to which he had come at last—that day was there, demanding to be heard. All that his soul loathed, all that he knew to have been thrust on him against his will; all the stainful touch, the defiling association that he had never known but for his weakness and his folly—this leered down upon him and claimed him for a familiar friend. And through it all, alien and inaccessible, yet adding to his torment, there glowed the pure face of a maiden, maddening as it seemed compelled to mingle with all from which his soul recoiled. And the future!—the future that might have been so pure and fair and happy—this too seemed to mock him with its reproachful glance, as if to scourge him before it should say farewell forever.

The night was at its darkest, the battle at its deepest, when he fell into a troubled sleep. And as he slumbered fitfully the night grew populous about him. A momentary peace seemed to fall suddenly upon him—for a Presence entered the room. It was his mother's face—and she looked at him with a wistfulness, an unutterable love and yearning, that melted his heart within him. He was about to speak—and the hot words of defense surged to his lips—but her finger touched them and he was dumb. Then she held out her arms to him, the hungering eyes imploring him to come—but he could not. Whereat she knelt beside his bed, and the dear worn hand was laid upon his head, his aching, wounded head; and the gentle fingers toyed with the ruddy hair as in the days of long ago and strayed, with love's inquisitive search, to the bruised and torn cheek, dwelling lovingly on the still smarting wound. And he could feel the healing breath upon his face; and the pitying eyes, like homes of silent prayer, seemed to tell him the story of her pain and longing.

Then she knelt beside the bed, her face buried as she prayed. And the words came low and trembling in their passionate entreaty.

"Oh, dear Lord, bring him back to me—to me—for he's all I've got. Oh, bring him back—to me."

He awoke, his cheeks wet with tears. And in the darkness he stretched out his hands, a faint cry breaking from his lips—while he gazed, gazed, as one might gaze into Eternity.

And the burning eyes leaped to the light. Only the dim light of darkness struggling with the dawn—and only through the little window of a humble cottage. But he saw the mountains and the stars!

He listened, as one might listen for the footfall of death. And he heard a voice—and it was the voice of prayer. Not his mother's, but the voice of another—unless all the language of true prayer be one and the same everywhere.

It was the voice of the lowly friend who had sheltered him. And it floated clear from the room above.

"Oh, God," it pleaded, "give 'im to me—he's mine.

What for was he sent to me, if it wasn't to be another soul for my 'ire? It was 'im I was askin' for all the time, oh God, though I didn't know it. Give 'im to me, oh Lord—now, while he's sleepin'—for he's mine," the prayer dying away into inarticulate pleading.

Murray groped his way to the floor, trembling in every limb. Heart and soul and mind and strength all bade him rise and kneel. And, weak and trembling as he was, something told him that his dream had been a reality—that the dear presence was actually there—and he began with the prayer of the early days of love. Still he knelt, the timid dawn gradually creeping in about him, the stricken soul drinking deep from the Font of Healing, the vanquished life making its full and complete surrender to its God.

At length he lifted his head and called faintly. A moment later the priestly pleader was beside him; he had heard, for his was the listening soul. Without a word he knelt beside the younger man, his arm going about him in infinite tenderness.

And there, as the gentle dawn disclosed the holy scene, they knelt together, the old man and the young; the cultured and the ignorant; the struggling soul and the soul long familiar with that blessed peace.

"Oh, I knowed it!" Hawkins murmured at last in a broken voice; "I knowed you was comin' 'ome—that's 'ow I 'eard you last night, when I brought you in. I wasn't sleepin'—I was on my knees, a-prayin' as 'ow the Lord would give me a soul for my 'ire, when I 'eard the groanin' in the dark. Oh, my son, I'm so 'appy you're 'ome, safe 'ome at last! Keep us both, dear Lord—me an' 'im—till we both get safe to 'eaven," the rest of the simple prayer lost in sobs of thankfulness and joy.

Then his arm tightened about the quivering form and he leaned over and kissed him on the forehead with almost reverent fondness. When they rose from their knees the room was filled with light.

## XIV

## *THE AWAKENING OF HILDA LUDLOW*

VAST was the dismay that settled over the Ludlow house when Hilda's parents, on their late return that night, learned of all that had transpired in their absence. The first impulse of Simon Ludlow himself was to pity and approve. But his wife's horror was so pronounced, her sense of propriety so evidently shocked at the thought that they were sheltering such human flotsam beneath their roof, that he too soon came to feel the indignity only less keenly than herself.

"Just to think," as Mrs. Ludlow declared dramatically, "that she's in one of our own beds up-stairs. And you expect us—you expect us, Hilda—to go to sleep with a desperate character like that in the house, and not know whether or not we'll be murdered in our beds, or find the silver all gone when we get up—or anything—anything that might happen when you have a creature like that in the house. It's preposterous, Hilda," she concluded, mechanically feeling for the strings of her bonnet, so long forgotten in the excitement.

Hilda smiled as she took the bonnet from her mother's hands. "If you'll only come up and look at the poor thing asleep on the pillow, mother," she said gently, "I think your fears would disappear—she has a lovely face. Poor, hunted thing!" Her own face beautiful in its sympathy.

"I won't trouble," her mother answered curtly—"but remember one thing, Hilda—she leaves this house in the morning."

"Yes," supplemented Mr. Ludlow, prompted by a rather stimulating glance from his wife; "yes, of course we'll let her stay all night, now that she's in bed. But your mother's right, Hilda—this ain't a children's home, you know."

"Your father doesn't understand what he's talking about," Mrs. Ludlow broke in a little impatiently; "what he means is, that it isn't a Home for Incurables—that's the term—and of course it isn't. Yes, you can go to bed, Simon," with a nod towards the drowsy man, "but I'm not coming yet a while—I want to have a talk with Hilda."

"Don't talk too much," her husband advised humbly, in the tone of one who himself had suffered. "Talkin's all right—to a certain extent; but it don't do a turrible lot o' good after all," as he yawned again and moved outward towards the stairs.

Mrs. Ludlow rose and closed the door, then turned and faced her daughter. Grim determination sat on her face.

"Are you going to defy me, Hilda?"

"No, mother." Hilda's face was very white.

"What do you intend to do with—this woman upstairs?"

The girl hesitated. "I'm—I'm going to try and help her, mother," she answered, the words very low.

"That's all right—I don't mean that. Of course, anybody would help her. But I mean—I mean, are you going to have anything to do with her—you yourself, I mean?"

Hilda's troubled eyes looked up to the stern face above her. "Yes, mother," she faltered, for that face was stern; "*yes*, I suppose I will—I'm going to stick to her, I suppose. And I can't help her much unless I do, can I, mother?" the pleading eyes turned imploringly to the woman beside her.

Her mother stepped back a pace or two. "I knew it was coming," she said in a low, tense tone. "I've said so to your father. I knew it was coming to this—when you'd set us both at defiance. And I know the end of it all is going to be—to be something terrible, Hilda," she said after a slight pause, her voice ominous. "Come here, come here and sit down—there, beside me," taking her place on a chair facing the sofa—"I've got something to say to you. Do you know what it will mean—to you, to us all—if this gets out? And if you persist in linking yourself with that, that creature, up-stairs? Have you ever thought of that?"

Hilda's voice was all broken now, and her head was bended low towards her mother. "No," she answered, trying hard to control the words, "no, I've never thought of that at all. Oh, mother, I didn't think of anything, anything at all, except that she was a poor, unhappy girl and was trying to escape—that she had been hunted like a partridge on the hills —— Oh, the cruel, wicked creatures!" and the white fist was clenched as the words gasped out. "And she needed help—and I was able to shelter her—and I did. That was all I thought about, mother—except, except, just one other thing. Yes, I thought of something else," the pale face now lifted to her mother's.

"What, may I ask?" came the icy voice.

"Well, it was this," and the girl leaned back as she spoke, the splendid head poised in unconscious power as the eyes flashed the fire of her soul; "it was this—I thought, and I know it was true, here's something at last *that's made me happy*. Oh, mother," and now the voice was openly in ruins, "I was so happy—when I was able just to do that one little tiny thing. I know it was nothing—didn't amount to anything

--but I felt as if at last I had had a taste of real happiness."

"Happiness!" the mother interrupted scornfully; "happiness, Hilda? If *you're* not happy—if you haven't had everything to make you happy—I don't know who has. Don't try to pose as a martyr, Hilda—don't. I won't stand it," and the cold eyes were fixed reprovingly on the quivering face before her.

"I'm not," the girl answered, her voice so low as to be almost inaudible; "no, I'm not posing, mother. But I've been so unhappy—oh, so wretched and miserable," the voice sharpening to a cry, "and I didn't know what it was all about. I knew I was leading an idle, silly, selfish life—without one sincere thing about it—but I didn't know it was because I was meant for something better, for something higher—as I know now, mother, as I know now," she cried, her tears mingling with the words. "Oh, mother, don't—don't look at me like that, don't draw away from me when I try to come nearer you," for the girl's arms were outstretched and she was leaning forward yearningly, desperately, towards the repelling form. "Help me, oh, help me, mother, instead of being angry with me. I'm a woman," she cried, half rising to her feet; "this heart of mine—this heaving bosom—all these tides that I feel within them—they all speak of life, mother, of a life that yearns to love, and to be loved, and to help somebody, and be useful, and play some worthy part in this busy world of ours. But you know, you know, mother, what a poor butterfly way I've lived; so small, so selfish, so frivolous!—and to-night, when I did something worthy, even if it *was* because I was shut up to it and couldn't help it; and just when I was beginning to be happy, and feeling that I had learned something about—about life's great secret," she cried passionately, "and about ——"

"You're talking nonsense, child," her mother broke in, her face whiter than Hilda's, "standing there and lecturing me like I was a schoolgirl. And I won't have your preaching, I tell you that," as she too arose and began to move away.

But Hilda followed her, like one who heard not, her arms still outstretched. "Yes," she went on in trembling earnestness, "just when I was beginning to feel that perhaps something had come at last that might really show me who I was, and what I might do, and teach me—teach me the joy of it all, then you turn and blame me, and thrust me from you, and heap scorn upon it all—and then tell me that it's all going to end in, in trouble, between us—between you and me, mother," the voice now sobbing in brokenness as she turned and flung herself into a chair, her face buried in her hands while her whole frame shook with the storm of grief.

The mother turned and came over till she stood above her. Her face was fixed and drawn. Once or twice she tried to speak, something seeming to hold her back, before the words came at last.

"Have you thought, Hilda, of how this will—will affect—your relations with Mr. Holmes?"

At the mention of the name Hilda's sobbing stopped with startling suddenness; the bended form was almost rigid now. She seemed to have stopped breathing.

"Answer my question, Hilda," her mother demanded tensely. A strange smile, as of one who has gained a point at last, was on her face. This, she thought, had struck home to her daughter's heart—this, at last, would give her pause.

"Answer me," she repeated, drawing a little closer; "what will he—what will Mr. Holmes—think of this? And what will he *do*—if you persist?"

She waited a minute. Possibly two. Then slowly the girl lifted her face from her hands and turned it towards her mother. The woman started as she saw the expression on it, so unlike what she had hoped for and expected. For no trace of fear or misgiving, of regret or weakening, was there. But instead, glowing with an almost unearthly light, the girl's face was transfigured with strength and passion. It was the face of a woman now. And the might of great emotion was upon it; great scorn, too; purity and strength seemed to look out from the flashing eyes and to glow in the flaming cheeks.

She rose from her chair, straightening herself in unconscious dignity. Then, her face turned full on the startled woman, the words came low and firm, burning with the emotion that consumed her.

"I hate him," she said, her head thrown back like some prophetess of old; "I scorn him—scorn the ground he walks on. And he will never dare to darken that door again. He was here—he was here to-night, mother. And I sent him away—out," and her voice suddenly swelled with a power she could not control, "out—into the night—where he belongs. Never to return, mother—never, never," and now it was the older woman who almost cowered before the gust of passion that broke through the words and armed this maiden with a nameless strength.

Then, summoning all her powers of resistance, Mrs. Ludlow turned on her daughter, gathering force and courage with her words, and upbraided her with bitter speech. Loudly she demanded explanation of this sudden attitude, loudly declaimed against what she called her fickleness and cruelty, to say nothing of the shipwreck she was making of the prospects for her future life.

Hilda waited till she was through. But before her mother had finished the girl's face was aglow with a light that had never been there before, the eyes shining with a wistful radiance as they seemed to look out, far out, into the future. And a strange gentleness was in her voice as she answered—and about her whole bearing an aloofness that made the woman beside her wonder.

"Mother," she began in a voice whose lowness almost startled the other; "mother, I believe you'd *make* me—make me marry him," the pallid face now flushing with sudden flame—"if you could. But you cannot, mother—never—and father cannot. And no power on earth ever can. He has gone out of my life, forever."

Her mother's face was white as death. "And what's ahead of you now?" she almost whispered in her intensity.

The girl straightened herself, and every inch of the lithe form seemed quick with purpose as she answered.

"I know what's ahead of me," she said, her voice firm though her lips were trembling. "And I'll tell you, mother—and it's this. I'll find my king yet, mother; and he shan't be rich, or of noble birth, or great—except in soul," she went on, a jubilant note thrilling through the words; "except in soul—but he shall be rich in love and strong of frame and pure of heart—and he'll find *me* some day, mother. And he'll recognize me—yes, he'll know—and I'll know. And he'll take me, mother, and teach me, and help me to be true and noble like himself. And I'll help him," the face brightening as she spoke; "and we'll make our own world—together. And we'll never be poor—no power on earth could make us poor; never poor, never lonely, never miserable any more. Oh, that *will* be lovely!" as a sudden storm swept over the soulful face, "lovely, lovely—never to be lonely, never to be miserable, and wretched—and useless—any more," with which, the face so radiant a moment before now wet with the gust of tears, the girl turned quickly towards the door and groped her way sobbing up the stairs.

## XV

## THE SINGER'S INSTALLATION

THEY really thought they were happy. At least, all but one—and that one was Hilda Ludlow. The company numbered five; and it was called a Club; and was devoted to the high interests of Bridge. On this particular afternoon they were met at the residence of Mrs. Rayfield, to whose untiring care the club really owed its being; she it was who had first conceived the idea of its birth, and who had since fostered it till its claims were recognized as taking precedence over all lesser duties. "Whatever happens, ladies," she was often heard to say, "we must not let anything interfere with our Monday afternoon gathering. You may have to give up something else, I know, but you can't carry through an enterprise of this kind without a little sacrifice. So let every one of us be in our places every Monday afternoon." Thus was the little band kept together, giving themselves as seriously to their duties as though organized for the reform of the Congo.

It was Hilda's heart that knew it was not happy. And hers the feet, slow and reluctant, that were turned this afternoon towards Mrs. Rayfield's parlour where the little company were awaiting her.

There was much, in all conscience, to becloud her. For one thing, she was not coming from her own home this afternoon, but from a humble boarding-house where she had spent the last hour or two. Thither, the morning after the night Murray had brought the poor fugitive to her door, she had taken the girl so strangely thrust upon her and found her a temporary home. And her visit now had been for no higher purpose than simply to see the lonely stranger, and talk with her, and comfort her, and confer about some employment for the future. Yet, and herein lay the brightness of it all, Hilda Ludlow was beginning to recognize that life could hardly confer any calling more lofty, any work more inspiring, than this that concerned the lowly and despised.

But affairs at home had steadily been going from bad to worse. Her mother, always imperious and exacting, seemed unable to accept the situation; she was incapable of surrender—especially on a point where her ambition was so vitally involved. It was she who, the very morning after the incident narrated in the previous chapter, had all but driven the nameless stranger from her house—and all but driven her daughter forth with her. Hilda had returned home after she had found a place for the unhappy girl, only to discover how sadly her relations with her mother had been disturbed and poisoned. For the older woman, resentful of what she was pleased to call her daughter's insubordination, seemed to have adopted a policy of frigid silence, of stern aloofness, as the most likely to effect the surrender she desired. And thus, for all its grandeur, the Ludlow mansion had become like the house of the dead.

"One would think it was a funeral Hilda was coming to, instead of a company of friends, wouldn't they?—did you ever see a more dejected figure?" one of the ladies remarked as she stood at the window and watched the slowly approaching girl.

"Something on her mind, I fancy," another made reply; "they do say there was a pretty row at the Ludlow house the other night; it seems Hilda insisted on giving house room to one of ——" the rest uttered in a low and sententious voice amid much nodding from the little group of heads about her.

"And they say things are pretty strained between Hilda and her mother," another added. "You know how rigid Mrs. Ludlow is when she takes a position—and Hilda's so strange herself. I wasn't much surprised to hear this latest thing about her," she went on confidentially; "she always *was* so queer—never *did* seem satisfied to settle down and enjoy herself like the rest of us. But then she's an only child, poor thing," she sighed apologetically, "and that is always dangerous, you know—not that it's her fault, of course," she concluded magnanimously.

"If the truth were told, I think the real difficulty," another of the ladies volunteered, "is just this—that her mother's half crazy with rage and disappointment because Hilda threw Mr. Holmes over her shoulder the way they say she did. She could have died in peace if she had once got Mr. Holmes into the family—it seems he is related to an earl, or a duke, or something of that sort, in England—any one of them would do, so far as Mrs. Ludlow is concerned. Hush! I guess that's Hilda's step in the hall—here she comes now," as a maid gently pushed back the door and Hilda appeared, some word of apology for her lateness upon her lips.

Even the frivolous eyes that searched her face when Hilda took her seat and began her play with the rest must have noticed that the girl's thoughts were far away. Although she had hoped that this recreation would afford some diversion from her distracting cares, it was soon evident that she found it difficult to keep her mind on the game; and once or twice her partner called her attention rather impatiently to a misplay whose consequences threatened to be serious. In spite of this, and only a few minutes later, Hilda was again guilty of some unpardonable oversight, whereat her partner, Mrs. Urquhart by name, broke out in a sharp cry of disappointment.

Hilda flushed to the roots of her hair. "I don't care," she answered impulsively; "the whole thing isn't worth the bother—one would think eternal life was at stake, the way you speak about it," looking very pitifully, but very earnestly, into the face of the woman across the table.

Whereupon Mrs. Urquhart, with a sudden gush of tears, threw her cards on the table and hid her face in her hands. "Oh," she said, "I won't—I can't—I cannot stand to be spoken to like that. It's cruel, that's what it is—and me so weak and nervous that I ought to be treated gently! There, I knew it—I knew it—my nose is bleeding. It always bleeds when I'm—when I'm abused," fumbling with true feminine emotion in the neighbourhood of a very agitated bosom for the all-necessary handkerchief which is never to be found in cases of real emergency. Failing to locate it, and her eyes still hidden, the dainty hand was extended in a general groping kind of appeal for such sisterly handkerchiefs as might be forthcoming. Three or four being immediately proffered, Hilda's among them, Mrs. Urquhart arose, still cherishing the afflicted and fluent member, and was gently guided from the room by Mrs. Rayfield.

When she returned a few minutes later, her nose rubicund but quenched, Hilda was still sitting like a guilty thing amid dense silence, the cards lying untouched upon the table. She murmured some faint words of apology in the direction of the convalescent.

"It's all right," Mrs. Rayfield announced jubilantly as she restored the handkerchiefs to their respective owners, some of them rather ruefully inspected; "I put the bathroom key down her back and it acted liked a charm. Let's all make up," she appealed with kittenish glee, "let's all kiss and make up—like we did when we were children," setting the example herself by performing the initial operation on Mrs. Urquhart, this followed in quick succession by a series of kindred operations, head-on collisions in every direction, till the affair resembled a firecracker celebration on a public holiday.

"Now we'll have tea!" exclaimed the hostess, happily bethinking herself of the great healer of all womankind—"and we'll finish the game afterwards," pressing a button as she spoke.

The healing fluid was soon in evidence, bringing peace and good will upon its bosom. Silence vanished now, and the arrears of conversation bade fair to be soon made up. The atmosphere became genial, then benevolent, then religious.

"Yes," Mrs. Pender was saying as she sipped her third cup of tea, "I often feel that we women don't realize what a trust is committed to us—I'll trouble you for another lettuce sandwich, Mrs. Urquhart, they're *so* tasty—or the amount of good we could do if we only tried. For instance, there's that terrible famine that's raging in India just now. Our Rector told us about it at church yesterday morning. It seems they're actually dying by the thousands—and, to make it worse, they are dying without hope. And they say those Hindoo women really still throw their children into some river out there—and they think that's religion, poor things. But I can't remember the name of the river—the Rector told us, though."

"Was it the Amazon?" one of the ladies ventured hopefully.

"I believe it was," returned the other, as soon as the lettuce obstruction would permit; "but anyhow, I can't help feeling that every woman with a mother heart in her ought to help," she added, stirring her tea sympathetically; "we have so much to be thankful for ourselves."

"I'm going to join the Zenana Mission next fall," Mrs. Rayfield intimated gravely, passing a plate of patties in the meantime.

"I'd like to, too," another concurred, "only I really feel I haven't got the time. But we can all help a little, for all that," she added piously.

"And give a little," suggested another.

"And pray a little," came from a third after a long pause, the suggestion offered very timidly. Whereat silence fell.

Hilda had taken no part in the conference. Standing at the window and gazing out, her attention had evidently been attracted by something she saw. A little way across the street, alone on a kind of common, stood a low-roofed house, dingy and insignificant. But very vital scenes may be enacted in very dingy houses; and Hilda, although she caught but a dim glimpse of one or two moving figures in the little residence across the way, vaguely sensed that something of portent was transpiring there.

For once she was sure she saw a half-reclining figure, heavily leaning, raised towards the partly open window—and she wondered uneasily why the window should be open at all, considering the sharpness of the late autumn day. Then, too, she had seen a child run hurriedly through the yard to the well, bearing back a little jug of water, agitation in every step. She could not see the child's face with any distinctness; but, nevertheless, it seemed to her to bear some nameless signal of distress.

"Come away, Miss Ludlow," the words of the hostess breaking in on her as she watched more intently than before; "we'll all feel fresher for our game after our cup of tea."

Hilda hesitated a moment. "Who lives over there, do you know, Mrs. Rayfield?" she enquired, pointing towards the little house.

Her friend stepped to the window. "I really don't know," she answered in a moment; "at least, I don't know their names. It's a widow and her two children, I believe—although I couldn't be absolutely sure. They moved in there a couple of months ago—and I think I've heard one of my maids say that the mother has never appeared since. But really, I don't know much about them; I never called, of course—one has quite enough to do to keep up with one's own circle, haven't they? And besides, I'm sure they're very common people—you could tell that by looking at the house."

Hilda was already moving towards the door. "I believe I'll ask you to excuse me from playing any more, Mrs. Rayfield," she began in slight embarrassment but in a voice that showed it would be useless to remonstrate. "I really don't feel like cards this afternoon—and besides, there are one or two things I really must do before I go home. I know Mrs. Pender will be glad to fill in for me, won't you, Mrs. Pender?" as she turned to the supernumerary.

Mrs. Rayfield's protest was rendered milder by Mrs. Pender's evident willingness to report for duty immediately, to say nothing of the determination on Hilda's face. Whereupon the latter was allowed to depart in peace.

Leaving the company to their game she made her way by a slight détour towards the little house that had so attracted her attention. Reaching the door she knocked gently and waited.

But no answer came. And, listening where she stood, she caught a moment later the sound of a muffled wail, as of a soul in deep distress. Whereat she lifted the latch and walked in. Following the low sounds of grief, she came to a sudden standstill as she gazed upon the scene before her.

On the bed in the little room lay the form of a woman, majestic in the dignity and stateliness of Death. The eyes were closed, the thin lips sealed, the whole face taking on the rigour of the last repose. And above her, dishevelled in their grief, bended two girls, evidently her daughters, the one about eighteen, the other about fourteen years of age, staring at the silent face with that strange and fruitless intensity that so often marks a vigil such as this.

Oblivious to all else but the silent face, the girls suddenly started as some motion on Hilda's part betrayed her presence. A moment's glance, however, showed them that the visitor was on an errand of love. The older girl stepped forward to the stranger, the compassion on the pale face winning her trust at once. Hilda took the trembling hands in both of hers and soon wooed from her the story of their grief.

It was easily told, like all short and simple annals of the poor. Fatherless a year or two before, they, with their mother, had turned their steps towards the Kootenay a couple of months ago. "We thought it would cure mother's cough—she caught it from father," moaned the fatherless; "but it was consumption—and we were all alone; we didn't know anybody here, except some people who gave us some sewing to do—Bessie sews the most," as she turned towards the stooping sister, "and I took in a little work too—but we've had a hard time to live, ma'am, to say nothing of the little dainties we should have had for mother. And nobody hardly ever came near us, ma'am—you see, I suppose they didn't know we were here. And mother was always so proud and independent—she'd suffer anything rather than let anybody know. But I knew she was so lonely—oh, so lonely, ma'am—for we had some nice friends where we came from in Ontario. And she was so good," the girl went on, her sobs breaking out afresh; "oh, miss, I wish you could have been in when she died—only a few minutes ago. She prayed so beautiful—and Bessie had one hand and I had the other and we both knelt beside her bed. We didn't know she was dying, ma'am—till just before she went; but *she* knew, she said she was going home—and she prayed so beautiful, ma'am."

A low surging sound of grief came from the younger girl beside the bed. Slowly she turned her face towards the other two. "But she wanted us to sing, Miss," she broke out, the voice a piteous wail; "she wanted us to sing her Paraphrase, the one about 'The White Array'—and we couldn't, neither me nor Mary could. And then she tried herself—but she couldn't either. Oh, oh! I wouldn't have cared so much—and I wouldn't cry so bad—if some one could just have sung her about 'The White Array,'' with which the poor child flung herself down on the silent form, her cheek close to the unresponsive face, and poured forth the unavailing grief that so often spends itself on the unanswering dead.

"Couldn't you sing it for her, ma'am—for them both?" enquired the older girl wistfully.

"I'm so sorry—but I cannot," Hilda answered; "I cannot sing at all—come with me."

With exquisite tenderness she drew the motherless girl towards the two before them, the one so quick with anguish, the other so majestic in the eternal rest. Gently she drew the younger one upward to her arms, and then, with a compassion that had sprung to life so suddenly within her heart, she soothed and caressed them both. It was a beautiful scene. Much there was to separate her from the clinging pair. Birth, education, wealth, yawning social gulf, difference of circumstances, opposing aims in life—all these might seem to cleave their paths asunder and deepen the chasm that divided them. But beneath the sublime and awful Influence that surrounded them, amid the Majesty that confronted them, before the Sorrow that overwhelmed them, they were kind[illegible] by the creative act of God; and sweet and holy [illegible] the hour that brought this erstwhile gay and thoughtless life into close and living contact with these broken hearts that crept within her own for warmth and shelter and found it furnished for them from all eternity.

A new peace seemed about them when Hilda arose and began to prepare for departure. Before leaving, however, she turned her attention to matters of a more practical nature, so necessary when one confronts poverty like to this; and a hurried conference soon let her know wherein she could be of service.

Promising to return soon, she stepped out on the street—and there, walking towards her, evidently indulging an aimless stroll, stood Murray McLean.

A quick impulse seized the girl and she beckoned him to come to her. He came, his face pallid and wasted some, but kindled with a light she had not seen there before. In a moment they stood together, each looking into the other's face, each beholding the strange tide of emotion surging there.

Hilda was the first to speak. "I'm so glad you've come," she began nervously, as though he had had no other purpose; "there's such a pitiful state of affairs in there," pointing towards the house and proceeding with the story of all she had encountered—"and there are a lot of things to be done," she went on, "things that can hardly be attended to by a woman—the undertaker, for instance—and I know you'll help me."

Murray's interest was keen and instant. Several questions came in quick succession, answered by Hilda as best she could. Just then a sudden purpose seemed to possess her. She turned again towards the house.

"Come on," she said, "come on back with me, and we'll go in—I know they'll be glad to see you—and I know you'll be able to help them."

He protested mildly, but was soon persuaded.

And a minute later she stood again, the man beside her now, in the stricken house. With great gravity, almost reverence, the stalwart stranger proffered his sympathy to the older of the motherless girls—for the other still lingered beside the dead.

"She's still grieving because mother's last request was denied her," the girl whispered, nodding towards her sister; "it's strange, the hold that has taken of her mind."

Hilda's face brightened as she turned to Murray. "Mr. McLean," she began, "you can be of some comfort to that poor girl. It seems there was some particular song, or hymn, her mother asked for when she was dying—and nobody could sing it for her. And Bessie—that's the younger one there—still mourns about it—and she wants to have it sung yet. She asked me—but of course I couldn't. *You* must sing it for her, Mr. McLean; you can, you know, I heard you sing," and already, strangely masterful, she had begun to move towards the bended form.

The tear-stained face lighted with sudden gladness as Hilda whispered something. Instantly she rose and turned to the stranger.

"Oh, sir, I'll be so glad if you will. It will comfort us both, so much," she said—"and perhaps she'll hear," the lip quivering as she spoke the words. "Here," she said, turning to a table by the bed, "this is mother's hymn-book—and that's the one," opening at an evidently familiar page; "it's that one there—we always called it 'The White Array.'"

Murray took the book and glanced at the words. His face showed that he recognized the sacred song; he too had heard it in far other days, and likewise from a mother's lips. The tune, St. Asaph, jubilant and stately, was a favourite with him.

He motioned the girl to sit down. The other two drew in closer to them, and thus the little circle was gathered about the dead. Every eye, even that of the singer, was fixed on the face that lay before them in eternal peace. While Murray sang:

"How bright these glorious spirits shine!
  Whence all their bright array?
How came they to the blissful seats
  Of everlasting day?"

The face of the younger sister was beautiful to behold. Steadfastly she fixed her gaze on the placid features of her mother, as though a sacred debt were being paid, almost as though she expected the closed eyes to speak their gladness.

The noble words rolled on:

"Lo! these are they from sufferings great
  Who came to realms of light
And in the blood of Christ have washed
  Their robes which shine so bright."

By this time the girlish form had slipped down beside the bed, the mourner on her knees as she laid her head, its tresses all dishevelled, beside the dear head upon the pillow. "Sweet, isn't it, mother?" she murmured, "sweet and holy—and *you* suffered so, didn't you, dear?" the words lost in a choking sob.

Murray's voice was unsteady now. But a wealth of sympathy and love and hope—Immortal Hope—mingled with it as he sang the closing words. His gaze was far away, out, beyond them all, beyond the scene of death and loneliness, fixed on the mighty hills that could be seen in the distance. And something of their everlasting calm, their spiritual aloofness from the things of Time, seemed to blend themselves with the words of the closing verse.

"Now with triumphal palms they stand
Before the throne on high
And serve the God they love amidst
The glories of the sky."

He stopped. But the room was filled with the melody of a great Peace, of an eternal Hope. The younger girl was still bended by the bed; her sister was stroking the scattered locks; Hilda was half bowed, holding a hand of each.

Murray looked down upon them all, as one who saw the drama of Life before him, touched with the light of the Unseen—then he turned swiftly and went on his way.

It was only a few minutes later when Hilda passed out on to the street and started homeward. The breath of love and gratitude was about her as the sorrowing sisters bade her good-bye, assured that she would soon return. And about her heart there flowed a peace, a deep and tranquil peace, she had never known before. The light of joy was on her face and a strange secret gladness filled her bosom. She knew not whence it came; knew not that the long thirsting soul had tasted at last of the Water of Life itself—and all that touched her joy with pain was the memory of the selfishness and frivolity that had kept her back so long from that mystic Spring.

She was already some distance past the Rayfield house when, moved by an uncontrollable impulse, she turned and made her way back to it again. Entering without knocking she found the hostess and her guests busy with the game she had renounced such a little time before. Each one was bended in intensity of interest over the cards they held—for the game was close. Looking up carelessly, they gave some little token of recognition to Hilda; one or two made mumbled enquiry as to why she had been away so long.

The girl waited till the hand was finished; whereupon the faithful Mrs. Pender rose and motioned Hilda to her chair. "Here," she said, "take your cards; I think I did fairly well for you in your absence—you'll win out if you mind your P's and Q's, Miss Ludlow."

Something in the girl's face seemed to arrest the attention of every one in the room. She was silent for a little, but all seemed waiting for her to speak.

Very deliberately, her face white and her lips quivering, she moved over to the table but did not sit down. Absently she took the cards up in her hand and looked into their garish faces. Then she laid them slowly back upon the table.

"Never again!" she said in a far-away voice—then abruptly still.

Silence reigned for more than a minute. It was broken at last by one or two impatient, almost irritable, enquiries. "Never again!—never what? Tell us what you mean," the hostess said.

Hilda turned her white face on them all. "Please don't think me prudish," she began. "Oh, I'm not—I'm not," the earnest voice quivering; "I know I'm not any better than anybody else—not as good—

but I've seen; I've seen! Never again!" she repeated, her voice strong and solemn now, her eyes far off in their almost ghostly look—for she saw again the face of the dead. "I'm through with this forever," she went on after a pause. "Look!" as she moved towards the window and stood beside it, pointing with extended hand. "You see that house—that little house over there?" They flocked to the window, looking as eagerly as though it were in flames. "While we were playing," she went on, "while we were bended over those cards, death entered there!" her hand still extended. "Yes, while we were fooling here, two broken-hearted girls, poor, friendless, alone, were bended above a dying mother; without help, without money, without friends, without love—and the dying woman struggled through the flood and left it all behind while we were *there*," turning with eyes that were now aflame and fixing them in scorn upon the table on which the cards lay scattered; "and we never heard her battling with death, never heard the wail of the motherless, the cry of the broken-hearted," her voice all broken and sobbing as she turned from the window with her face hidden in her hands, the others staring in ghastly silence towards the house of Tragedy, from one of whose windows a feeble lamp had begun to throw its gleam. "Oh, God forgive me—God forgive me, and pity me, and help me!" she moaned as she moved outward to the hall.

A moment later, still staring, they saw the half-bended form of the penitent pass swiftly along the street.

## XVI

## *THE KINDLING OF THE LIGHT*

THE night had fallen, deep and dark, when Hilda, unable to repel the prompting of her heart, turned her steps again to the house of death. The faithful Martin was her escort, and she dismissed him at the door.

Sharp and stern had been the protest of her mother at the thought of a course so foolish, so outrageous to propriety, as that her daughter should demean herself by returning to such a scene and among people so insignificant and repulsive as she had quite made up her mind to consider them. Poor Hilda, so benumbing is the influence of constant irritation—especially if it be unreasonable—had begun to feel herself almost insensible to her mother's prejudice and caprice. The yawning gulf had grown wider day by day till Hilda, adopting the language her mother had used in threatening, began indeed to tremble for the future that lay before them.

She knew it not, but little by little she was emerging from bondage to the lower; and little by little, obedient to that silent and imperious Power that lays its subtle hold upon the soul, she was coming into servitude to the Higher. Life—and the word is animate—was opening before her, its mystic allurement besetting her inmost heart. And Duty, her voice as yet unrecognized, was demanding her arrears. And God, disguised in human need and sorrow, was whispering to her awakening heart.

When she reached the house of mourning she found the motherless girls, already worn and exhausted with long watching, preparing for another night-long vigil beside the precious dust. Such had been their training, such the custom with the lowly among whom they had always moved—the silent form must never be left alone through the long hours of the night.

It was in vain that Hilda sought to turn them from their purpose, urging the need of rest and the high independence of the slumbering dead. But at length, pitiful of their exhaustion and almost stern in her demand—insisting that her presence was in vain unless she could be of use—she prevailed on them to lie down, at least for a little, while she should keep watch alone.

The arm of the older girl was about her sister as they passed into the little room across the hall from the chamber of death ; and a few minutes later Hilda could hear her voice lifted tremblingly in prayer.

Listening, she became fascinated by the pathos and earnestness with which the suppliant poured out her soul, deep calling unto deep as the simple language told to the All-pitying One the story of their loss, invoking His protection through the night, His guardian care through all the nights and days that were yet to come.

She listened breathlessly, as to a foreign tongue. Yet she felt, vaguely and yearningly, that the native note was there; and a strange hunger gathered in her heart. What was there, she marvelled, about this simple and plaintive prayer that had thus stirred her soul from the depths, voicing her own nameless longing, calling her to the holy and unfamiliar exercise? She could not tell—she only knew that she was trembling on the brink of Something, something for which her heart was fitted, for which her nature yearned, towards which she seemed to be drawn by some secret and impalpable Power that was not herself.

Soon the trembling accents died away to silence. Dense stillness fell, broken only by the now heavy breathing of the weary slumberers. Hilda's eyes turned now and then upon the regal face that could be seen through the open door. There it lay, serene and majestic in its untroubled calm—and as she looked she wondered why any should have so un-reasoning a fear of the dead, all unrebuking, uncondemning, as they lie before us in the last great aloofness that the grave itself can scarcely hide.

A little later she rose and went softly into the room where the girls were sleeping. There was no light except such as stole in from without; but it was enough to let her see the faces, tear-stained still, of the sleeping pair. Oh! blessed sleep! calling a truce till strength shall have returned before we grapple again with the enemy still crouching at the gate, levelling for the time all distinctions, all difference of circumstance or rank, endowing the peasant and the prince with the same fleeting blessedness! As Hilda gazed the faces became clearer and clearer before her. The younger girl was lying with her arm, as if still in clinging helplessness, thrown about the neck of her sister; that sister's face was touched with ineffable pity. And upon both, oh! so distinctly, there rested the light of hope, the peace that faith imparts, beautiful with a sorrow that is commingled with Another's love. Hilda could read it all as in an open book, the spiritual faculty quickening within her. And dimly, yet with the startling power of a revelation, it was borne in on her that the rest of these troubled souls was rest in God. She sighed wistfully, her lashes wet, touched reverently the flowing tresses of the younger girl, looked lovingly once more upon the unconscious faces, then turned and left the room.

Nor did she stop, mysteriously drawn, till she was within the chamber of the dead. The majestic face seemed to welcome her back; on the noble and stately features, massive with the dignity of the Eternal, she seemed to read some sympathy with the tumult of her own heart—as if the unspeaking one would call her to the Secret and point the way to rest.

Long Hilda stood, her eyes never wandering from the awesome face. And as she gazed she seemed to see, through the eyes of death, into the mystery of life. As one in a trance she stood, holding high dialogue with the dead. Her past life, the years that had ushered her to womanhood, filed in swift review before her—how pitiful, how selfish, how wasted in the froth and frivolity of Time! Heart and conscience smote her like a guilty thing—and there rose before her a vision of all life might have been, all it was meant to be, all that it still might be if the Power would but touch and kindle it. Of joy she thought, deep and real happiness, such as she had so faintly tasted, but for which her lips were burning, her heart thirsting now. The girl's bosom rose and fell in its tumult—like the ocean mysteriously troubled from its own distant depths—and the Presence seemed nearer than before; life was unfolding before her in the light of the Eternal.

She stirred, like one awaking, and turned her face towards the lamp upon the table. It was burning low, the oil near its end. Then she moved—for the first time—over nearer to the dead. A Bible, once familiar to those now folded hands, lay not far from the silent form. Reverently she stooped—oh, how still, how terribly still, that frame over which she bended!—then lifted the book and stepped back close to the darkening lamp.

A prayer breathed from her lips—the first, she thought to herself, and trembled—that some light might arise in the darkness. With shaking hands she opened the volume and let her eyes fall where they would. And there, right before her, still readable in the dying light, were the words:

"Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. . . . This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven."

The book fell to the table from her hands. In passionate pleading those hands were folded now and the pure face was upturned in prayer. Even as she stood, the lamp's feeble glow sank slowly into darkness, flickered, and went out. The moon had risen, unnoticed hitherto, its gentle beams hurrying to dispel the gloom, gilding with pale light the countenance of the slumberer. Unconsciously, her hands still folded, her eyes still upturned in prayer, the girl moved over and bowed beside the majestic form, her breath stirring the strands thatwere touched with gray.

And there, between the Living and the dead, she gave herself to God. Forever and forever, in a surrender never to be recalled—in a devotion that was never to know grudging or disobedience; to be His; to live for Him, for His poor and His prodigals, and for the Eternity that the darkness had opened to her sight.

It was long before she rose, and the radiance upon her face put to shame the glory of the night. Once she stooped reverently, her lips lightly touched to the chill forehead beneath her—and no trembling maiden whose tears bedewed the veil, no saint passing within the convent door, ever poured her soul more passionately through the vows that were to seal her life forever.

Suddenly she turned, starting violently. A white-robed form stood beside her. It was the older girl, timidly groping. "I've come," she said simply; "you must lie down and rest."

Hilda went forward and took her in her arms. "Go back to *your* sister," she whispered, the tone strange in its command; "do not disturb me now—I was alone with God."

The girl turned her white face on the maiden who held her in her arms. But something of unearthly mastery stopped her, sealed the lips that were ready with their protest. She cast a swift glance upon the dead, another upon the living, then gently moved from the relaxing arms and turned in silence to the door.

Suddenly she stopped and came back towards Hilda. "The light's gone out," she said, her face still turned away.

"No," said the other; "no, it's kindled now."

## XVII

## SOOTHING THE SAVAGE BREAST

IT was through Henry Hawkins, as has been told, that Murray McLean found his soul. And it was the same Henry Hawkins who stubbornly resisted, and effectually quenched, the merest suggestion that the now convalescent Murray should live anywhere else than beneath his humble roof. And it was that identical Hawkins, moreover, who, having at last prevailed on him to remain, cast about to find employment for him.

Which he shortly achieved. And the "job," which he offered with much humility and trepidation, was that of assistant to himself. Now, 'Enry was a teamster, as is already known; and the major portion of his work consisted in conveying heavy loads of necessary material, such as flour, sugar, molasses, vegetables, from the railway cars to the lumber camps which were scattered through all the region round about the forest-girded town of Rockcliffe.

"An' I was at my wits' end to get a 'andy man to 'elp me," he pointed out to Murray as he pleaded with him to accept the position, the latter shrewdly suspicious that his benefactor was merely making an opening for him. "I've been hanxious to get one for six month or more," the little man went on—"an' I b'lieve the Lord sent you just when I needed one the most. It's so 'ard to get a 'onest, sober man," he added, knitting his brows, "an' you'll be the greatest 'elp to me in the world."

"Do you think I'll be able to handle the job all right?" Murray asked with some misgivings.

"'Andle it!" replied his would-be employer. "You'll be as 'appy as the day is long. There's nothin' to build up the inner speerit like 'andlin' 'orses, sir. It teaches a man to control 'is passions—an' he 'as to keep the straight an' narrow path, you see—an' then there's the rod o' correction, too, an' the bit an' bridle, an' everythin' like that. Oh, yes, it's the Scripturallest kind of a job there is," he concluded triumphantly, swinging an imaginary whip and tugging at invisible reins to give vividness to his argument.

So Murray was engaged. And he was to have a weekly wage and to board with his employer. And both were happy.

It was the evening before Murray's first drive—the next day was to see him on his way to Bear Creek Camp with a load of supplies. They were sitting together in Hawkins' little house, every foot of it dear to the youth who had there found the beginning of his real life; and the older man w speaking to him about his venture of the following day.

"An' remember, my lad," he concluded after many directions as he rose to prepare for rest, the earnest face all aglow with the ruling passion of his life, "remember Who it is you're servin', sir. It isn't me—it isn't the company—it's Him, my lad. It's Him that saved you, mind. That's what I always try to remember when I goes about my work—'Mind, 'Awkins,' I say, 'as 'ow you don't belong to no man, nor no company, but to Him as saved you an' Him as keeps you. An' always be lookin' out for a little job for Him, 'Awkins, an' don't never be found off duty, 'Enry.' That's the way I talks to myself. An' that's what I want you to be doin', my lad—an' if you get a chance over at Bear Creek, where the poor fellows curses an' swears an' gambles an' drinks, an' does lots that grieves their 'eavenly Father's 'eart, don't ever be off duty, lad, don't ever be off duty. You know what I'm meanin', sir," as the earnest face was turned towards Murray, the little man standing now with the lighted candle in his hand.

Murray stammered his reply. "I'd be a pretty one," he answered, "to start in at that kind of work. Me! that only a day or two ago was as bad as any of them—in heart, at least," he added, "if not in outward conduct."

Mr. Hawkins set the candle down on the table and turned again to Murray. "My son," he began earnestly, laying a hand affectionately on his shoulder, "who was the most heloquent preacher that ever lived? Who was it now?"

Murray thought a moment. "Paul, I should say," he answered slowly; "I should say the Apostle Paul."

"That's who it was—right you are," a curious smile on the face as he hurried on with his argument; "an' it's likely you know what kind of a man *he* was afore 'e got converted—a-killin' of the Christians, an' breathin' out slaughterin's—an' hactin' up ridickilus, general like, wasn't 'e?"

Murray nodded.

"Well, 'e got converted—an' 'ow long do you think it was afore 'e was preachin' like 'e was born a saint?"

Murray nodded negatively.

"Well, I'll tell you. 'E went at it 'straightway,' so 'e did. That's in the ninth o' Acts," the old man went on triumphantly, nodding towards the shelf where a Bible rested. "No waitin' for gettin' better, or whinin' about what a sinner he was afore, or lookin' for emotions, or anythin' like that," the ardent advocate exclaimed convincingly. "'E just seen 'is dooty an' then done it, sir," with which the old debater turned and took up the candle again, bidding Murray good-night as he went on his way.

He turned quickly a moment later. "Say, you be pretty 'andy at the singin', bean't you?" he asked, shading his eyes with his hand.

Murray hesitated, tried to laugh a little. "So they say," he answered in a moment, "but I don't know that it amounts to much."

The old man turned away, carefully adjusting the wick as he paused. "Them poor prodigals at Bear Creek be orful fond o' singin'," he said quietly, disappearing before the last word was spoken.

It is easy to be religious amid mountain forests. The soul that finds no quickening amid everlasting hills and ever-whispering glades must be dead indeed. Right were the ancient Druids in their reverent suspicion that God was more accessible within forest aisles than otherwhere; all true ecclesiastical architecture is a reversion to the sylvan; and our pealing organs are but fumbling for the far-off melodies of paradise.

As Murray McLean guided his champing steeds along the forest road that frosty autumn morning his soul thrilled with the glory of the day, the purity of the air, the splendour of the scene about him. And there arose within him, not altogether for the first time, a deep desire to play some worthy part in the great Plan, to be of service in even the humblest way, to give some helpful voice to the new life within his soul. He was as one for whom the night was past, about whom the Day had broken—like one whose feet had been lifted from the fearful pit and the miry clay and in whose mouth the new song had been put by some Power from afar.

The long miles passed quickly by, beguiled by many a snatch of song, by many a secret uplifting of the heart to Him whose glory and might were evident in the Handiwork on every side; and it was still some minutes before noon when the heavily laden wagon drew up before the open door of Bear Creek Camp.

The foreman, clad chiefly in red-capped top boots and broad brimmed slouch hat and a ponderous briar pipe, was already without, awaiting his arrival, having caught the lumbering of the wheels at a distance of a mile or more. His welcome was bluff but hearty, though his gaze was principally fixed on the contents of the wagon, making such inventory as he could.

"Just got here in the nick o' time," he said; "the boys was all but out o' tobaccy."

"It's there," Murray replied briefly, nodding over his shoulder.

"That there man'll look after the team," said the official, taking his pipe from his mouth and pointing with it towards a half breed who had already begun tying up the reins. "Come on in—grub'll be ready in a few minutes."

Murray followed him into the little log structure which served as office, store, and foreman's quarters all in one. There was a tiny counter in the place, behind which were "the supplies"—mostly tobacco—that waited replenishing; a blanket-covered bunk and a sheet iron stove occupied most of the remaining space.

The overseer seated himself on a stool, pointed Murray to another, offered him pipe or cigar, devoted a moment to voicing his surprise at the refusal, then drifted into ordinary conversation. A few minutes later he suddenly began a very vigorous scratching at his right leg, between the knee and the ankle.

"That's what comes of puttin' in a night in the sleep-house," he said sadly, indicating the contagious quarter by a jerk of his head towards a rude structure a few yards away. "An old priest turned up here yesterday—several Catholics among the lumberjacks, you know—and he stayed all night. Gave him my bunk—so I had to go in with the men," he added despondently, scratching more savagely than before; "plenty of *this* sort of thing to go round—and then some left for strangers," he concluded mournfully.

Murray descried an opening. "Ever have any Protestant preachers here?" he enquired, bending over to close the damper of the stove as he spoke.

"Oh, now and again," the man answered. "The Presbyterian parson from Rockcliffe used to come out once a month, mostly, and give a talk to the boys. At dinner time, you know—most o' the men's workin' close to the shanty, so they come in for dinner. But he's away just now—sick, I believe. There's a duck from down East handin' out the goods at present—holdin' some special meetin's, at least. They call him Seymour, I believe, or some name like that. Well, he come out here one day last week," the man went on, his eye kindling a little, and he suspended the frictional operation long enough to apply a fresh match to his pipe. "An' he was a bute, now, I'm tellin' you. Drove up in a top buggy, he did. An' he had on a pair o' lavender gloves an' a dog collar an' a hat with a roof on that sheds the rain—you know them kind—o' course, he had other things on him too," he added with the air of a man who wished to be strictly truthful. "An' he couldn't eat any dinner 'cause he got a fly, a dead one, in his soup—the boys never have no use for a man that isn't a good feeder, they think he's proud if he don't like the vittles. An' then he preached," with which the foreman stopped as suddenly as though he had come up against a stone wall.

"Good sermon?" enquired Murray, listening intently.

"Pretty punk sermon," his companion replied briefly, looking out of the door and smoking very hard. "He preached on the threefold dooty—them was his exact words—the threefold dooty of goin' to church reg'lar, an' sayin' your prayers reg'lar, an' supportin' the church reg'lar—with their prayers an' their means, he said. Claimed every one should give a tithe," the foreman went on with a broad grin—"most o' the men thought it was a new kind of a coin; then he took up a collection in that there oval hat o' his that sheds water. And he got four bits, all told—oh, yes, an' six buttons, an' forty-three o' them there tin stamps the men takes off'n the T. & B. plugs, you know. Lord, but it was funny!" and the foreman showed his teeth in merriment for the first time during the conversation; "but it was his own fault, boss—the men'll do the square thing by the gen'wine article every time, but you've got to show 'em, an' you've got to deliver the goods. Shouldn't wonder if it's pretty nigh dinner time, Cap'n, judgin' by the smell," as he sniffed scientifically and cast his eyes in the direction of the eating house beneath the trees. He was still chuckling to himself as Murray followed him out. "Threefold dooty!—threefold fool!" he overheard him mutter as he crossed the threshold, smoking more furiously than ever.

A few minutes later the spacious shanty, set apart exclusively for eating, was full of husky and hungry men. In they filed, the washed and the unwashed, but every man of them intent on only one thing. Remarkably silent, almost pitifully silent, as they took their places on the rude benches beside the narrow tables that filled the room on every side, an aisle of about three feet in width running the entire length of the building. The table was already laden with the smoking products of the cook's skilful hands, borne in through a door that opened from the cooking apartment immediately to the rear. Surprisingly good, appetizing enough in itself, was the fare provided. Abundance there was of meat and potatoes, bread that the most delicate might have desired, vegetables of various kinds, among which baked beans seemed to have the place of honour, butter tasty and modern, molasses rich and amber, numerous pies and puddings, the latter chiefly rice and plentifully besprinkled with raisins, all of this little the worse for the plain tin dishes from which each man was expected to help himself. Huge kettles of tea, strong enough to float the proverbial wedge, stood about—all of which provided, as may easily be imagined, a veritable feast for hungry woodsmen.

And Murray, mindful of what the foreman had told him, set himself resolutely to eat a satisfactory meal, as though these rude appointments only added to his zest. Truth to tell, so long had been the drive and so stimulating the mountain air, he had but little difficulty in acquitting himself after a fashion to provoke the admiration of the most sensitive of his fellow diners.

But all through the meal, seated between the foreman and the clerk, he was wrestling with the question as to how best to introduce the subject of a little meeting among the men. He shrank from openly asking the man in charge. Passing strange this, how a cultured and educated man will often recoil in embarrassment before some uncouth and unlettered toiler. This timidity was so pronounced in Murray's mind that once or twice he inwardly decided to renounce the thing altogether; but this was followed by a secret uneasiness he was at a loss to account for—and there rose again, surging strangely in his heart, the conviction that it must be now or never.

At length he lit upon what he thought was an excellent introduction. "I say, Mr. Lanthorne," he began, turning to the foreman, "how would you like if I entertained these fellows a little—after dinner, I mean, while they're having their smoke?"

"Bring a monkey and a hand organ with you?" rejoined the other; "or a Punch and Judy show?"

Murray laughed. "Not exactly," he said; "but, seriously, I can sing a little—and I thought maybe those chaps would like to hear a bar or two."

The foreman was agreeable, even cordial. "I wish all the blokes that stow away our grub would chip in like that," he said gruffly. And a few minutes later, with a brief order to the men, already in the open and beginning to break up into groups, he introduced to them "a friend of mine who has kindly consented to sing us a tune or two."

Stolid, almost suspicious in their sullenness, were the faces that were turned to Murray as, with a preliminary word or two, he began his song. "Annie Laurie" was the first, that universal love song of the race—and he could detect the softening on many a face, memory casting its wistful shade. Then came "Kathleen Mavourneen"—and even the foreman could not repress a gasp of astonishment as the wonderful voice interpreted the passion of the words that have made the song a classic.

The affair was warming up. The men moved closer; and many a pipe went out in tribute to the subtle charm of the rich and moving voice, the strong and earnest face. Then Murray suddenly bethought himself of an old poem he had learned in boyhood: "Twenty years ago"—and as he began the plaintive retrospect:

> "I've wandered in the village, Tom,
> I've sat beneath the tree,"

the fixed faces and the solid silence bespoke the grip he had taken on the rough men before him, every one of whom again saw the old schoolhouse, again caught the glint of some long departed face.

The song finished, a sudden inspiration came to Murray. He leaned forward towards the men.

"Look here," he began, "I'm not going to run this entire show. I'm sure there's a lot of talent here better than any you've heard. Come on, it's your turn—some of you fellows give us a song now."

He waited. A little mutual nudging went on among the men. At length one burly toiler lumbered to his feet. "I ain't no singer, boss," he began, "but I've got a machine as does it—I'll trot out the grammyphone, if you like."

Murray hailed the suggestion. The stalwart started forthwith for the shanty and reappeared a moment later with the "machine." Whereupon his brethren of the woods began to bombard him with suggestions as to what should be selected from his repertoire. Most of the titles smacked of the Bowery.

"Go an' chase yourself—I'm a-runnin' this show," Murray heard him mutter as he fumbled among the records. A moment later he wound up the thing, standing with arms akimbo as the strain began to flow.

And then, the hard or frivolous faces gradually touched with tender memories, the old song made its way, grinding out in a kind of harsh staccato through the metallic horn:

"There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar,"

the burly woodsman looking far away as though he saw nothing, as though he cared for nothing, sphinx-like, while the old refrain of the Homeland fell on every ear and revived long slumbering memories in every heart. The chorus came, sweetly familiar to all but the foreign born:

"In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore,"

and as the unforgotten accents fell, nearly half of the men took up, in a clandestine sort of way, each hiding behind the other, the old and sweet refrain. The old and sweet refrain! dear alike to priest and peasant and prodigal, voicing the unconquerable hope of the universal heart, the hope that unbelief and worldliness and sin are powerless to extinguish.

Murray's heart was aflame as he looked round upon the men. Their faces, their demeanour, were a revelation. He detected, with the quick discernment of a loving heart, that these dwellers in the far and alien land could yet hear and recognize the speech of home, their hearts burning within them whether they would or no. He felt rebuked and humiliated—that he, whose ambition had been so high and so spiritual, whose vision of service so uplifting, should have spent his strength toying in the shallows while it had remained for a rude lumberjack, coarse of life and profane of speech, to sound the nobler note and to call the hearts of his fellows to things unseen.

A great hunger of soul seemed to seize him. A great compassion, too, not unmixed with reverence for the immortals before him, all disguised though they might be. The souls of men were there. As Michael Angelo, so it is said, would regard with feverish hope some block of marble, discarded and despised, because he saw within the gleam of an imprisoned angel's face, so did the young evangelist, illumined by a new and hidden flame, behold the kings and priests to God that sat concealed behind the forbidding clay.

He turned and spoke a few hurried words to the foreman beside him. Then he addressed himself to the men; and the least responsive could hardly have failed to mark the altered mien, the loftier note. Very simply, earnestly, humbly, he told them that he wished to speak a few words about the higher things —about the concerns of the soul. And then, with a deftness born of sincerity and love, he tried for the first time the wondrous wings of speech. And lo! they bore him. And little by little, gathering confidence as he proceeded, he talked to them, though he knew it not, of the deep things of God. Of their old home far away, of the halcyon days of boyhood, of the first temptation, the first conflict, the first defeat; of sin—and all its ghastly train. Of their mothers, of those lives so pure and holy; of their lips, some now forever stilled, that had never ceased to pray for the wandering son. He told them of his own mother, of his last night at home, of that gravel walk along which he had gone forth to the waiting world, and of that burning lamp she had held so high.

Frankly he told them, though in language all im-personal, of his own prodigal days, of the husks and the hunger, of the strange beckoning home, of the Welcome and the Caress and the Power. And then he pleaded with them; with infinite tenderness, free from all taint of condescension; with an eloquence of which he was all unconscious, born of earnestness and compassion; with a winsomeness of voice in which the charm of music lingered still, he told them of the waiting Father, told them they were homeless till they sought His love, called to them lovingly to return.

He knew it not; but his face was shining with a beauty from afar and his words were athrill with the passion of a hungering heart, and his plea was the plea of a great advocate pressing home the precedent of his own experience, pleading with them in simple manliness to come and drink at the living Spring whose waters had revived his own fainting heart.

And the men listened as to a master's voice.

His address came to a sudden and impassioned close; whereupon he intimated simply that he would sing a hymn before they returned to their work. "Rock of Ages" was the one he chose, and the men listened enchanted as the eloquent voice wooed them with the deathless words. When he was nearly through, the foreman touched his arm from behind. Murray leaned down.

"Mebbe some o' the boys'll *take* you," he whispered—"mebbe they'll close the deal. There's no good of treein' a pa'tridge if you don't bring him down," accompanied with sundry confidential jerks of the head.

Murray understood in an instant. And, without further parley, he struck for souls. He called on any who would, to take his stand, out and out, then and there.

There was long pause, a silence deep as death. Suddenly a handsome-faced youth rose swiftly to his feet, impetuous purpose in every movement, in every line of the comely but sin-stained face. One hand was on his hip pocket as he rose.

"I'll come out," he said with tremendous power, struggling with his emotion. "I'll try this Way—and this Friend—you've been talking about. I want some One to help me," he went on, a hidden cry in the voice. "All you men know what a wreck I've been—what a sot and a drunkard I've come to be. An' if He'll take me, I'll come," he went on, the voice shaking now; "if He'll take me, I'll take Him—an' if He'll help me to be a man, I'll try to help Him to make me one. I've tried all I could myself—an' I'm down an' out. I've done my damnedest in my own strength—mebbe that ain't the right word—but I've done the best I could, anyhow, an' I got the worst of it every time. So now, mister, if you say He's willin', an' He's able——"

"I do say it, I do say it," came Murray's thrilling voice; "I know it, my boy—if any one knows it, I do," and in a moment he was beside him, his hand outstretched.

"Wait a minute, mister, wait a minute—I ain't through yet," the man broke in, the veins now standing out on his forehead. "I've got somethin' here that's got to be disposed of first—an' I calc'late to do it now," holding up a small bottle flask he had taken from his pocket; and, with sudden passion, his eyes flashing with savage joy, he flung the thing from him, hurling it against the side of the adjoining shanty and smashing it into a thousand pieces. Then he put his hand in Murray's, faced him, and looked long and steadfastly into the moistened eyes.

The men were standing now, the meeting over. Intense, though suppressed, excitement reigned. A few tried to disguise their feelings by jocular remarks.

"Seems like a terrible waste o' good material, Jake," one murmured, shaking his head reproachfully.

"Could 'a' disposed o' that there fluid, Jake," muttered another, "without that particular gesture; that there stuff could 'a' been put out o' pain without a-breakin' o' the bottle, Jake."

But for the most part, the men regarded the affair in its true light, as a great transaction of the soul; and not a few gathered about him and tendered their solemn congratulations. One of the serious ones was particularly happy in his felicitations.

"You're goin' to win out, Jake," he said gravely; "never seen a man more in earnest. Gosh! but you throwed that thing for further orders—if the shanty hadn't been in the way, it'd 'a' gone plumb to hell. I believe that's what you was aimin' at—'pon my soul, I do. That there was one o' the most strikin'est ways o' pronouncin' the benediction I ever seen," he opined as he walked off, still muttering to himself.

Murray lingered, Jake still in his custody, till they were left alone. Then, after a brief word with the foreman, he drew Jake into the shelter of the office, where the two sat down side by side. Half an hour later they came out together—and both faces were above the brightness of the sun.

## XVIII

## *LOVE'S MESSENGER*

MURRAY was enquiring for his team, purposing to start immediately on his journey back, when the foreman suggested that he have a look at one department of the many activities about the camp. And a walk of less than five minutes brought them to a scene of interesting operation. A brave little donkey-engine, undaunted by the forest odds against it, was puffing cheerfully away as it performed over and over again, with what seemed deadly monotony, its unvaried task; which was that of dragging to their doom, one by one, the fallen monarchs of the forest. From afar they seemed to come, emerging from impenetrable glades, rumbling and protesting like living things, flinging themselves this way and that with many a resentful gesture, but inexorably borne on by the heavy chain that kept creeping up towards the engine like some retriever bringing in the game. Then, the mighty grip relaxed, the victim lay lifeless on the brow of a little hill—at the base of which ran the switchback railway—woefully degraded from its erstwhile towering estate. Peevy and cant-hook fell upon it, sharp saws reduced it to a fitting length, strong hands started it rolling ignominiously down the hill, so swift is the descent of the conquered—and, a goodly number of the prostrate now piled in disordered mass, the most intelligent of cranes slowly poised itself above, descended, gripped the huge log in its iron hands and bore it upward till it laid it as gently on the waiting car as some dairymaid might do with the eggs she gathers of a summer morning. When the rude train at length was laden with these fallen kings, off it went triumphantly to the mill that stood a mile or two farther down at the foot of the gentle slope.

The miniature train had started off, the tiny locomotive waking the echoes of the forest with such shrieks as befit those who bring home the spoils, and Murray had already turned his steps towards the shanty when he was attracted by the beckoning of a young fellow standing beside a log a little distance from the path.

"May I walk down with you?" he asked a little hesitatingly—"I've got something to say to you. Yes, I asked the boss—and my shift isn't particularly busy now," as he noticed the other's enquiring look.

Murray eyed him as keenly as courtesy would permit. The face interested him strangely. For it was the face of one still but a youth, and with marks of a native refinement he evidently had been at no pains to preserve. The delicate chin and mobile lips bespoke a nature probably voluptuous and certainly unstable, with impulses of a nobler sort while lacking the will power to give them execution. The features indicated good breeding, fineness of sensibility, and the frank and rather trustful eyes told the story of love and gentleness in earlier days. But the signs, alas! of coarseness of living were also there; a certain nameless something bespoke the prodigal and the far country—but something deeper betokened that he knew all this, and that even yet his heart might be often turned towards home.

"I wanted to tell you," the youth began as they made their way downward through the glade—"I wanted to thank you for that sermon, sir."

"Sermon!" echoed Murray, aghast.

"Well, I don't know what you call it," the other rejoined—"but for what you said to us anyhow. You got *me*, all right."

Murray stole a glance at the face beside him. Then, noting the obvious earnestness of the man, he turned full round and confronted him.

"What do you mean, my lad?" he asked. "First, what is your name?"

"That's the whole thing," the other answered with suppressed feeling, himself standing still and looking steadfastly into his companion's face.

"The whole thing!—What can you mean by that?"

The man beside him hesitated. "Say," he began abruptly at last, "I believe I'll tell you—I'm passing under an assumed name, here—nobody here knows my real name. I changed it."

"Well?" said Murray.

"Well—that's all," the youth replied coolly; "only I may as well tell you *why* I changed it—I did it after I got *out of jail*," and he seemed to expect the swift rush of surprise that showed itself on Murray's face.

"Jail!" he echoed; "where were you in jail, my lad?—and what for, if I may ask?"

"Seattle—forgery," was the laconic answer.

"And what is your real name?" Murray returned, rather at a loss for speech at all.

The young man smiled as he looked into the earnest face. "Don't believe I care to tell—not yet a while," he answered after a pause. "But I just wanted to speak to you—not for anything in particular, either. But I vastly admired your talk to the men at dinner time, and I thought I'd tell you so—it's only the third sermon I've heard since I heard my father preach at home. Except when we were *forced* to," he added with a slight grimace.

"Your father!" Murray returned; "then is your father a minister?"

"Sure—a Presbyterian minister—born and educated in Scotland, too. Oh, yes, he's the pure quill all right."

"Where?" pursued the other.

"Oh, down in Ontario," the knowing smile reappearing on his face; "'twouldn't do any good to tell exactly where—one of the towns down in Ontario. And I said to myself, when I was listening to you this morning: there's a chap that had a good bringing up, that's had a Christian father—just like myself."

"My father isn't living," Murray interrupted—"but my mother answers to that description."

"Better still," responded the youth; "but," he went on, "you've made a great sight better use of it than I did—you kept right and I went wrong, that's the difference."

A sudden yearning, mixed with hope, filled Murray's heart. He leaned forward and laid both hands on the broad shoulders. "My boy," he said, "that's just where you're astray—I went as far wrong as you ever did, as far, almost, as any fellow's gone—or could go—and all I was telling this morning was only the story of how a fellow can be brought back again. Won't you come back?" he asked with sudden passion, his eyes fixed in entreaty and affection on the face before him.

The wanderer shook his head. "No use," he murmured.

Murray motioned him to sit down on the mossy turf beneath a spreading pine. Then he began, the strange new fire burning in his heart again, the spirit of high covetousness upon him, as he pleaded with the alien to return. By and by he drew from his pocket a little Testament and read the immortal story from the fifteenth chapter of Luke. On he read, the other listening with rapt interest, his eyes upon the distant hills. "And when he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him," came the wondrous words, their magic picture of home and love and welcome glowing again before the mind as it has done for centuries, as it will ever do while the homeless and the sinful and the sad yearn for the light of their Father's face, for the warmth and shelter of their Father's house.

He stole a glance at the face beside him The eyes had a yearning look, reminiscent, almost despairing; tears were there—but even these seemed cold and reluctant, as if touched with iron. "That's beautiful," he said, the voice requiring some control —"I've heard it before, a long time ago. But my guv'nor isn't one of that sort—not very heavy on the kiss business, my father isn't," a note of bitterness in the words.

"But the Other?" Murray broke in; "your other Father, you know—why not come first to Him?" as he leaned over and tried to meet the gaze of the stern face beside him.

But the young man slowly rose to his feet. "I reckon I'll have to be going back to work," he said—"and anyhow, this conversation's taken a turn I didn't expect. But I'm obliged to you, all the same, sir. And I'll have another talk with you some time, I hope—going to be in Rockcliffe, aren't you?"

Murray nodded. Deep disappointment was on his face.

"Well, maybe I'll look you up—the Company, so I've heard, is going to send me to the inside office in a few days, and if that happens I'll try and see you again, in town," as he began to move away.

Thus they parted; and a quarter of an hour later Murray was on his homeward way.

But as he guided his team once more along the forest road the world seemed new to him. He had tasted power—and Jake's face gleamed before him like a precious thing. The mighty hills, the towering trees, the opulence of life about him and the richly upholstered sky above, all seemed to have a voice that testified of One, all seemed conspiring to set forth the glory and the worth of life. "Give me him, too," he found his lips murmuring as his eyes were uplifted to the silent mountains; "all that came to Jake—let it come to him as well," and the scene about him seemed to answer with the assurance of Power and Benignity and Love.

He was drawing close to the outskirts of the town when he descried, some distance along the road before him, the form of a woman. Somehow there seemed to be something familiar about it, and he had driven but a few yards farther when his heart quickened at the sight. For heart and eyes alike leaped to recognize the only face in the whole wide Kootenay that could have set Murray McLean all of a quiver as it did.

It was Hilda Ludlow. And she appeared to be expecting somebody, looking for somebody, for her hand was before her eyes to shade them from the sun as she peered along the road before her; and as soon as he was near enough to be recognized, she stood still and waited for him.

He drew in his horses as he came alongside. "Good afternoon, Miss Ludlow," he began with cordial warmth; "I'm sorry I'm not going your way—that is, if you would have consented to grace a lumber wagon."

She laughed a little; so little, indeed, and in so restrained a way that he noticed it, secretly wondering if he had made too free. "Well," she answered in a moment, "I'm not going any farther —going back now—and the wagon would suit all right. To tell the truth, I only came out here to see you—I came to meet you, Mr. McLean."

He was evidently startled. "Indeed!" he began in amazement; "why?—what did you want to see me for?" his bluntness forgotten in his surprise.

The girl's sweet face was very grave. "I suppose I had no right to come," she said slowly; "and I suppose there are many others who could have done it better—but I promised to tell you," she concluded after a pause.

He had leaped from the high seat to the ground, the reins still in his hand. "To tell me!" he echoed; "to tell me what?—what is it you have to tell me?"

"It's sad news, Mr. McLean," she answered painfully; "it was Dr. Seymour who told me—I suppose you know I've met him. A telegram came for you this morning, just after you left town—they evidently didn't know your address, so sent it in care of the Presbyterian minister; he's the only one there, so he got it—and he opened it, thinking it might need an immediate answer. And when he told me, I said I'd meet you, and let you know—you see, I knew where you were," she stammered, the colour rising in her face.

But he saw it not. With the quick intuition of sorrow, looking far into the deep eyes before him, he read all the story without further speech. Blanched and pale, he turned and peered into the forest, the stern control upon him that strong men so often know in such an hour. He could hear, and could dimly see, a tumbling cascade through the pines at the mountain's base.

"We'll go in beside that waterfall," he said in a low voice; "in there—in that little glade beneath the trees—and you shall tell me there."

He tied the horses to a tree by the wayside, making the knot secure. Then he turned, the maiden just behind, and made his silent way into the shelter of the forest, his eye fixed on the fleecy snatches of white that glistened in the sun. A minute later he motioned her to sit down on the grass, a little distance from the stream; he sat beside her, his eyes fixed on the waterfall, sometimes lifted to the hills above.

"It's my mother?" he said, turning his gaze on her and speaking very low, so low that the tumult of the fall nearly drowned his words.

She nodded, her face wrung with sympathy. For if there is one sight more calculated than another to touch the heart, it is that of a strong man struggling with the grief of the motherless.

"You saw the telegram?" he said after a moment.

"Yes—yes, Dr. Seymour read it to me. And it only said the end came suddenly—and painlessly."

"Thank God for that," he answered almost inaudibly. His eyes were still fixed on the great silent hills—and, as if unconscious of his movement, he sank to the grass beside her.

"She would know—she would know in time," he said, his gaze still far away.

The girl started, her keen eyes fixed on him. "Know!" she said; "know what?"

"Oh," said the man, "I forgot you wouldn't understand—I forgot you were there," all unconscious of how the words would sound. "I meant she would know--would know about—about something I wrote to her; something that happened to me lately," he stammered out—"and I am glad," lapsing at once into silence.

They sat, unspeaking, while the glorious hills looked down on them and the eternal tide leaped and bounded from rock to rock, its spray shining in the sun. Long they sat, the silence between them deep as death. Then slowly, furtively, she looked up at him. His lips were quivering now; and the soul-stirred eyes, home of a thousand memories, were full to overflowing. Yet, dim and blinded though they were, they seemed bent on looking up—after all, are not the heights seen best only by those who search them through their tears?—up and on, wistful in their quest of those Sublimities that transcend these hills of Time.

"You're not grieving, are you?" she ventured timidly; her hand moved towards his arm as she spoke, then convulsively withdrawn.

"Grieving!" he echoed; "oh, no—I'm just lonely, so lonely," the words athrob with the emotion he could not control.

"Because you shouldn't grieve," she went on, so anxious to comfort, yet feeling her helplessness so much. "Not after what you say has happened to you, anyway—I know what it was," she added with sudden daring. "Oh, yes, I know—I know what it means; the joy of it, the difference, the gladness," her voice touched with ecstasy.

He turned, his eyes brimming still, and looked at her in wonder. Wonder, that gave way to joy—for joy and sorrow, though we think it not, are old-time friends—this in turn displaced by a kind of reverence as he saw the peace and purity, the deep spiritual passion, that rested on her face.

"*That* comforts me a lot," he said beneath his breath; and she cast on him a look, swift and meaningful, from eyes almost as dim now as his own.

A long silence followed, vocal with the ferment of two overflowing hearts.

She was the first to speak. "Your mother was lovely, wasn't she?" her eyes on the ground, the accents gentle as a summer rain.

He did not answer. And she looked up again; the sight was like to break her heart—for now the strong man was bowed in his grief, his face hidden in his hands, the hot tears escaping them as they followed each other down his cheeks. Suddenly one hand went out in piteous groping, his eyes still hidden. It met hers and she held it close. "Oh," he said, all restraint gone now from the trembling voice, "I'm so lonely—my mother, oh, my mother!—when I saw her last her heart was broken—and all for me. And now I can never, never ——" the rest lost in silence as the stalwart form shook with grief.

It has been often said, and often still is said, that women's part is passive only, receptive, clinging. But if one could have seen the face of Hilda Ludlow in that hour, could have read the strength, the yearning, the longing to help the broken life beside her, all such theory must have been revised. Once or twice she actually moved towards him, stirred by a clamorous heart within—but as quickly she controlled herself and sat in rigid grief. A grief, too, not her own, the womanly soul of her sharing another's sorrow with an intensity of compassion that showed in the quivering lips, the heaving bosom, the ebb and flow of the hot blood that left the telltale cheek scarlet and white by turns.

Suddenly she spoke, obedient to a tender impulse. "I know yours is a great sorrow," she began hesitatingly; "but then, it's a beautiful one—it's holy," she added reverently. "There are other kinds of grief that are worse than death—and I know that kind," she panted out, the words coming swift and hot and quivering.

He controlled himself and turned about, peering into her face.

"Oh!" she went on passionately, "*why* should I tell you?—and yet why shouldn't I? I simply *must* tell somebody—*mine* is at home," she went on in a voice that was now almost a cry; "and it's all because that same thing happened to me—that you spoke about—and because I'm going to walk that path too. And because I'm trying to *help* somebody—a poor homeless girl that God sent to my door—and I'm trying to stick to her, and help her, and everything." Then she stopped, the delicate face hidden, the graceful form trembling in her grief.

"Well," he said gently—"please tell me."

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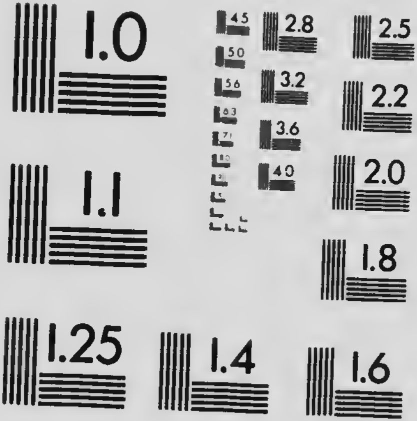
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"And mother thinks it's so awful," she went on as rapidly as though she had never stopped—"and she makes it a personal matter, and she says I am defying her. And she says it has to stop, all this religious affair—and everything like that—and that I'm bringing disgrace on the family. And only this morning she told me it had to stop—or else everything would stop," with which the flood of deep emotion, so long held in restraint, overflowed all its bounds and broke forth in a tide of weeping that made Murray for the time oblivious to the pain of his own burdened heart.

Suddenly, unable to do otherwise—for the storm that tossed this gentle frame and the gust of grief that swept over the lovely face were too much for him—he rose to his feet and moved over to where she sat dishevelled in her sorrow. He stood above her, where she could not see, and his heart yearned to tell her all—to beat back this tide of sorrow that engulfed her—to tell her with speech of flame how she should be helped and sheltered ever more while that new life should work out its holy purpose in unison with his own. He actually touched one floating strand that had strayed from the abundant tresses; his face was suffused with love and pity—and his arms strengthened with the wild yearning of his heart. But suddenly, like one who wrestles with principalities and powers, he gathered himself together and held himself reverently in control.

"Everybody has their own sorrow," he said tenderly; "and I suppose the sorest wounds are often those that bleed beneath the armour," still looking down at her with ineffable longing.

Her eyes were never lifted to his face. But in a little while, the storm having spent itself, she too arose to her feet. "I'm going home," she said simply; "I'm going back now."

"Perhaps it's better," he answered low; "but I'm going to stay here—I want to be alone."

The girl looked up at him, as any woman would have done. Surprise, curiosity, something of reproach, were in the glance. Yet she understood—and without a word she turned and made her way beneath the sunlit trees back to the common highway.

He did not look after her. He had seated himself again upon the grass, gazing in silence at the still foaming cataract. And he knew that for him—in more senses than one—there had come the great Waterfall in the stream of Time.

## XIX

## *THE ROARIN' GAME—HOW MURRAY RAN THE PORT*

WHEN Murray awoke the next morning he felt it in the air. He would not have been so surprised at this sudden dip on the part of the thermometer, had he been more familiar with the impromptu gifts of this western clime. For, as late autumn advances, it is no uncommon thing for the mercury, from the neighbourhood of freezing, to take a cheerful drop to zero or beneath it.

Thus it had happened now—a slight flurry of snow, settling down to the keenest and steadiest frost—and when Murray went forth to his work that morning his snorting team threw their breath before them in vapoury clouds, and the tang of winter was about them. The few ladies that were visible had donned their muffs and furs; and the small boy could be seen hurrying towards the pond with his skates slung over his shoulder.

But skating is only child's play, as Murray thought to himself that frosty morning—and his mind leaped to the nobler sport that the Ice King brings as his supremest gift, appreciated alone by men who find in its large perspective and its far-flung range the grandest game of life.

It need hardly be added that that game is the ancient and royal game of Curling, a pastime so essentially manly, requiring such strength of hand and keenness of vision and steadiness of nerve as would be wasted upon any other game besides. None of your toy games this, with their petty arena and their despoilment at women's imitative hands!—but a massive game, with its blocks of granite weighing from forty to fifty pounds, with its magnificent distances and its delicate exactions; for you may be asked, at a distance of near one hundred and forty feet, to move forward your partner's stone a matter of five or six inches, to wick out your opponent's by a corner rub, to lay a guard with mathematical preciseness, or to draw to the tee with absolute exactness; or, in wilder mood, you may be asked to clean the ring with a stone that must be swift as a bullet and straight as the eagle's flight, or to split an opposing pair, or to carom off one stone on to another, and thence to two or three, your own to lie at last triumphant at the tee.

And all this is to be done in that strong self-restrained spirit that befits this game so well—after a man's fashion—worthy of this supremely manly sport. And there is silence deep as death to be preserved—sometimes; and, again, the rink is to echo to the most outlandish yells that ever voiced the exuberance of strong men's hearts amid the frosts of winter—and the besoms are to be whisked about like mad, till the ice is polished like shining glass; and these same brooms are often to be flung aloft in triumph, and there are plaudits and congratulations to be shouted from the lips of skip and men alike—and auld Scotia is to be honoured in her ancient game, and every son of the heather is to rejoice like those who divide the spoil.

It is a Titan's game, this stately game of granite—and at old Queen's College Murray McLean had been a tankard skip. For was it not in his Highland blood?—and had not many a Highland Loch resounded to the roar when his sinewy ancestors had thrown the stone along the shining ice or plied the besom to prepare its path?

"It won't be long till there's curling, if this weather holds," Murray said to himself that frosty morning, then dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

But the next evening was to prove the truth of his surmise, and to involve him more strangely than he had ever dreamed. That night, in company with his friend, employer, host, Mr. Henry Hawkins, he had waited upon the ministrations of the Reverend

Dr. Seymour in the Presbyterian Church. And the whole situation struck the youth, especially in view of his present ardour, with almost sickening discouragement. The audience was of the most emaciated kind—and the pulpit was as poorly filled as the pews. For the Reverend Armitage, still pitiably robed in gown and bands, made his ponderous way through a ponderous discourse, himself evidently dismayed and sick at heart. Music, as before, there was none except such as was provided by the faithful Hawkins and the inexhaustible spinster of painful years; the congregation languished with the strain—and a harmonious torpor marked the entire service.

Indeed, and Murray started as he heard it, the discouraged Doctor threw out a sombre hint that the meetings, although originally designed for a longer life, would probably be brought to an early close unless some *freshet* should appear—the revival meetings stood in sore need of being themselves revived.

And Murray marvelled, but in silence—and still said nay to an importunate conscience that would not down.

After the service he waited for the tired minister, the faithful Hawkins also lingering. Together the three walked homeward through the twinkling night. And suddenly, with but brief preliminary, Dr. Seymour renewed his request for Murray's services, pressing the plaintive plea that his meetings were about to perish unless some such gift as he knew Murray to possess should be placed at their disposal. Earnestly he urged his claim—but still in vain. Murray still refused, though with less finality than before.

Suddenly he stood still beneath the frosty skies. For he had heard a sound he was at no loss to recognize—"his heart more truly knew that peal too well." Every Scot, native born or extracted, would have known it at once. It was a kind of union of roar and shout and shriek. He listened again—and some word fell on his ear that absolutely convinced him.

"They're curling!" he exclaimed excitedly, still standing and gazing across the common that intervened between them and a low shed about a hundred yards away.

"Oh, yes," Mr. Hawkins volunteered, evidently familiar with the situation—"it's the hopening game of the season. They're playin' Moyie," referring to a town about twelve miles farther up the railway—"an' they always hopen wiv takin' a rise out o' Moyie. An' they'll be 'avin' a 'ot time, mind you—there's a orful rivalry atween them."

"Let's go over," Murray broke in eagerly; "let us go on over and watch them." Two of the three started; but the Doctor hesitated. "Do you think,' he began—"do you think I ought to? Won't it be considered—inconsistent," he enquired nervously, "just after coming out of the pulpit?"

Murray looked back over his shoulder. "Come on," he said—"if religion can't stand that much, I wouldn't preach it;" and the Doctor allowed himself to be persuaded.

The atmosphere was electric when they entered the rink. Scots, or descendants of Scots, most of them seemed to be, the national tam-o'-shanter on many a brow and the Scottish dialect sounding now and then above the din. Grim determination was written on the face of every curler; solemn silence alternated with terrific yells; party zeal was evident in the strained tension of the seventy or eighty spectators who surveyed the battle royal between the opposing teams.

The ice was capital—for the floor was a wooden one and twenty-four hours' frost had been quite enough—and the blood was tingling in Murray's veins as he watched the recurring tests of skill. For nearly an hour he stood, passing from end to end with the trailing throng while the tide of battle ebbed and flowed as the roaring game went on. Nearer and nearer drew the contest to its close—and, alas! Moyie was steadily making good her lead.

Once, in his eagerness, Murray stepped down from the boards on to the ice—a Rockcliffe man was running a narrow port. And suddenly, with a flash of recognition, he beheld his friend of so short a time before—none other than the very Jake of the lumber camp with whom he had had the experience forever to be cherished as a pledge between his heart and heaven. He started, intending to speak to him; then quickly refrained, fearful lest he might disturb the concentration so necessary to success. He was glad to find Jake thus employed—no better safeguard, he reflected, for a fellow in the midst of the life struggle Jake had so earnestly begun. And he heard enough, from casual remarks about him, to learn that this new pilgrim on the upward way was reckoned one of the strong men of the Rockcliffe team, hurriedly summoned for the great encounter, his skill attested in many a game of yore.

The last "end" was about to be played—and Rockcliffe was still four shots down. The tension was tremendous. Before the final struggle, Murray noticed the Rockcliffe skip—Kelly by name, the proprietor of one of the most ill-odoured saloons about the town—summon his men aside to a corner of the rink near where he happened to be standing.

"It's do or die now, boys," Kelly remarked, his face hot with excitement—"and we can't afford to let those ——'s from Moyie beat us. The honour of the town's at stake, mind ye—they beat us this same game last winter."

"We'll mop up the ice with them," avowed one of the players, the lead—"let's go on."

"Wait a minute," Kelly interrupted. "Here, take a snifter o' this," as he drew a flask from his pocket. "I keep this for a tight place—got to keep our courage up, you know—we've got to make five to win, an' this is the thing'll stiffen up our nerve. Here, Charlie, quick—they're waiting."

Charlie responded cheerfully enough. "Here's success!" as he took a deep, gurgling draught, the flask showing the wound as he passed it back.

"Stick it into you, Sandy," as Kelly handed it to his second player.

Sandy took it with an alacrity worthy of his name. "Look out below!" was all he said as he submitted a generous portion to the law of gravitation.

"Here, Jake—there's just enough for you an' me. You first, Jake—toss it off."

Jake refused—he wouldn't take anything, thank you.

Kelly stared at him. "The deuce you won't!" he exclaimed as soon as his surprise permitted; "is this a gag you're trying to work off on us?—go on quick, the way you always did, an' no foolishness."

Jake still persisted. But he was pale—and the signs of conflict were on his face.

Kelly's wrath was rising. Murray drew nearer—most of the men in the rink were moving towards them by this time.

Poor Jake fought as bravely as he could, but with every refusal Kelly's anger deepened. Finally, after considerable interchange of speech, losing control of himself, he flashed his right arm round Jake, holding both of Jake's, and with the other clapped the flask close against the quivering lips. "Drink, I tell you—you've taught many a fellow how," the words hissing in his wrath.

But in the twinkling of an eye a grip of iron clutched Kelly's wrist, tore the arm loose from Jake, and wrenched it with a strength that brought a howl of pain. The liquor trickled from the inverted bottle and spattered about the boards as Kelly's left arm waved wildly in vain resistance.

Murray's teeth were set, and his eyes had the strange fire of something like madness in them that so often marks the Highland temperament when it is roused like this. The look fixed on Kelly was of fire.

"Jake's a friend of mine," came from the white lips in a voice fearfully low—"do you want any more?"

Kelly quailed before the flame. Then, rallying, he spluttered a few defiant words, moving stormily about. But it was noticeable that his movement was away from where Murray stood, panting a little as if some inward pain possessed him.

One or two of the Rockliffe team, and a few of the spectators, had made as if to interfere when the fray began, but by far the prevailing sentiment was in sympathy with Murray, and the scene was watched in silence. The general feeling now was that the game should proceed at once, and the last exciting end be played.

"Come on, Kelly, let the matter drop," was the general advice. "Cameron's waiting for you—come on and give him his medicine." Cameron was the skip of the Moyie rink.

But something seemed to ail Kelly as he sulked moodily, leaning against the row of lockers. A minute or two later, the throng growing impatient and insistent, he stepped out before them, his right wrist in his left hand.

"I can't," he began wrathily, glowering in the direction of Murray; "that there ——— has queered the game—he twisted my wrist till he nearly broke it. I can't play," he repeated, a wail of rage in the voice; "so Moyie's got us beat—we'll have to default now, an' it's all along o' him," as he moved away still holding the useless wrist.

This put a different face on matters—and the tide began to turn against Murray. Here and there low murmurings could be heard among the men, one or two jostling him rudely as they passed, and finally an angry face leered into his and an angry voice accosted him.

"Say, stranger," came in an ugly tone, "your blame freshness has cost us this game—you've put our skip out of business. What you got to say to that, eh?" coming closer, a little menacingly, as he spoke.

Murray looked him straight in the eyes. "Can't help it," he answered carelessly; "it needed doing—and you know you can't have an omelette without breaking eggs. Besides, he's no use," he added indifferently, as a matter of course.

"What?" one or two cried in amazement, "what's that you say?"

"I say he's no good," Murray returned stoutly. "*He* can't skip a game—and win, that is. I've been watching him. Why, you saw him, yourself, order a stone swept, on the eleventh end, when there was plenty in it—and it wicked out his own shot, and the enemy lay three. And he insisted on guarding a port less than eighteen inches wide—and opened the whole thing up. Besides, he hogged one of his own stones when he was asked for a draw to the tee," he added half contemptuously; "small loss, if you ask me."

"You seem to know a deuce of a lot about the game—on paper," retorted the other; "say, boys," turning to the men around him, "we've got a whale of a curler here—tankard skip, at the very least," sneering disdainfully as the laughter arose.

"That's what I am," Murray answered calmly; "at least, that's what I *was*—down at Queen's—we were runners up for the Eastern Ontario cup two years in succession; look up the Annual, if you like."

"Perhaps you'll skip this last end yourself?" jeered one of the men.

"I call your bluff," quoth Murray—"I'll skip it."

This was followed by a yell, half of derision, half of admiration. Being four shots down, they fancied they had but little to lose—and the chastening would do this stranger good. Several voices loudly approved the suggestion. Approval swiftly deepened into general demand.

"Ask the opposing skip if he's agreeable," Murray said over his shoulder as he moved down towards the ice, discarding his overcoat as he went—"can't be done otherwise."

Cameron, and all the Moyie men, were cordially willing; they, too, were catching the thrill of the situation.

"Where's your secretary?" Murray asked, turning to a responsible-looking man.

"Here he is," was the reply; "what do you want him for?"

For answer Murray moved over to where Mr. Hawkins stood, white with suppressed excitement.

"Say," he began in a low voice, "could you lend me ten dollars? I suppose that's the fee to join the club—and I really haven't got it. Then they can never contest the result, you see."

The loyal 'Enry *saw* all right—and was delighted to respond. "I'll join too," he whispered as he transferred the bill, "if it will 'elp any—we've got to give it to 'em 'ot an' 'eavy, mind you."

"Won't be necessary—the whole thing depends on this end," Murray answered, nodding towards the ice. "It's do or die, as Kelly said," moving over to the secretary with his deposit.

All eyes were fastened on this likely looking form that had so suddenly entered the lists. Several offered him their stones, even lifting them down on to the ice. "I want a forty-two pound pair," Murray said as he stooped over to try the weight; "here, these suit me exactly—you don't object to my having a trial shot or two, do you?" addressing the Moyie skip.

Cameron was willing enough. Selecting a broom, Murray pushed his stones down to the farther end of the rink, preparatory to playing them to the other tee. Calling to Kelly's vice-skip to give him the "borrow," he played; his stone, when its course was run, lay about eight feet short of the desired spot.

"Now try it again," called his vice—"I'll give you the out turn this time."

"No," Murray called back; "let me raise my first stone to the tee."

The vice placed his broom according to his new skip's request. And with marvellous accuracy the second stone came down the ice, its gentle impact promoting the first almost exactly the desired distance; for when it ceased to curl the outer edge of it was actually overhanging the tee.

A great shout went up, and expectation rose to the highest pitch. Even Kelly was caught into the tail end of the cheer, none quicker than he to recognize that this was no novice at the game.

Murray walked slowly back to the end from which he had delivered his stones, no sign of satisfaction visible—and the final tug of war began. As has been said, the Rockcliffe team was four shots down and this was the last end—they must get four to tie, five to win.

Perhaps it was the desperateness of the situation; or it may have been the sudden confidence with which Murray had inspired them—but, in any case, his men gave him glorious support in that final struggle. With the result that by the time Murray's third man had played his first stone, four Rockcliffe stones, all counters, and all reasonably well guarded, were within the rings—but no one of them actually on the tee.

Cameron, the Moyie skip, held long consultation with his third man. Then he gave him a shot of great difficulty, a dead draw to the "button"—especially hard because of an outlying guard that made the achievement one of the rarest. But, to the dismay of all Rockcliffe, Cameron's vice, by a beautiful draw, came in for shot, lying full upon the tee.

"I'll follow it—I'll draw up against him," called Murray's vice, sweeping off his stone, the last one left to him.

"No good," shouted Murray; "you *might* draw to it—but you couldn't draw with force enough to move it out. Take off that guard," pointing to the outlying stone.

The man did his best; sent the guard kiting, but alas! lay himself in absolutely the same position. He had simply replaced the guard. Another stone, also guarding, lay about thirteen inches to the left. Deep disappointment clouded the faces of the Rockcliffe team—it looked hopeless now.

"That'll give the sucker a run for his money," some of the wrathful murmured; "we'll see if he's as good at this as he's at shuttin' off a fellow's drink."

"What can you expect from an ox driver?" another added—"he teams for old Hawkins, you know."

But for the most part dead silence reigned as Cameron went down the ice to play his first stone. He tried for an additional guard, which was hardly necessary, played with great caution, the ice being keen—and as a result failed, by a couple of inches, to cross the hog line. His stone was pushed off the ice.

"Showed your savvy," his vice shouted to him; "the thing's as safe already as you want it—and you might only have opened it up."

"I'll take off that guard with my first," Murray said to his vice-skip as they leaned over and surveyed the end; "if I get that outer guard off, we can get at the shot."

"Why don't you draw to their winner?" replied the other.

"I told you it was no use," Murray answered a trifle sharply; "I *might* draw around the guard and touch it—one chance in a hundred—but, even so, I couldn't draw with speed enough to raise it more than three or four inches. I might lie shot—but that's no good—we want five to win. We have four seconds there," he muttered, looking covetously at the Rockcliffe stones around the tee; "so I'll have to open the thing up. Then, if I can get *that* out," pointing to his opponent's winner, "and lie myself—we'll have the game."

"Why don't you run that port?" his vice suggested, pointing to the narrow opening between the two guard stones, about a foot and a quarter in width.

"Only get that once in a dog's age," Murray responded—"that's a last resort. No, I'll open it up—with my first, anyway."

He played. And the stone, deadly accurate, caught the outer guard on the edge, hurling it against the boards at the side. His own stone, skilfully enough, also flew off at a tangent. Now the enemy's winner lay three-quarters exposed.

But the Moyie skip had no intention of leaving it thus unprotected. With his second stone he proposed to replace the guard Murray had removed. And it looked for a moment as if he had accomplished it; but, just when his rock was half-way down the ice, a mingled mass of snow and dust fell from the roof of the rink, so immediately before it that even the nimble sweepers failed to get it out of the way before the stone, catching the obstruction, was brought to a standstill.

A shout went up from two or three of the Rockcliffe rooters, checked in a moment.

"Hard luck, Cameron!" Murray's vice called from the other end; "you were dead on, if that hadn't happened you."

Cameron turned disappointedly and looked out of the window at the further end.

But Murray, instead of taking his turn, was now walking down the ice. He motioned his lieutenant aside. "Cameron shall play that over again," he said quietly.

"The deuce he will," responded the other, bridling up; "the rules say——"

"I don't care what the rules say," Murray retorted; "Cameron'll play his stone over again—it wasn't his fault."

The vice still protested. Finally: "Anyhow, I'm skipping now," he said rather testily—"when you're playing, I'm the skip. You know that, I suppose?"

"Yes, I know that," Murray returned quietly; "and if Cameron doesn't play that over again—I'm through," looking fixedly at the other. "So take your choice."

The man yielded in a moment, catching the look in Murray's eye. Then the latter walked back to where Cameron was still standing, and a low discussion followed, the Moyie man evidently reluctant.

But a minute or two later he turned, motioned them to throw back his stone, and took his place at the hack, waiting for the cheer to subside.

Once again his stone left his hand as accurately as before. And this time it curled to the very spot and lay almost precisely where the previous guard had been. The blockade seemed perfect, less than fourteen inches of an opening between the two stones, the winning shot barely visible beyond. The Moyie men howled like mad and freely declared themselves five shots up.

Murray and his vice-skip met at the guards. Both were critically inspecting the port--was it possible to come through and take out the winner?

"Too narrow," the vice pronounced after a long scrutiny—"that port's only about two inches more than the width of your stone, two and a half at the best. You'll have to draw—might move the winner enough to lie shot yourself anyway. It's all that's left you," as he started back, preparatory to giving the broom.

"What's the use of that?" Murray called after him just a trifle warmly; "suppose I *did* draw to it, and moved it enough to give us shot, that's no good to us—we need five to win—and the five are there, if I can get a run at their shot. *I'm going to run that port!*" as he turned and walked back to the hack.

He swept the ice clean before him as he went—for this was a shot of tremendous import. Lifting his stone from the ice, he cleaned it carefully, tightened the handle again, then poised himself to play.

"Too narrow—can't be done," shouted his vice from the other end.

"Give me the borrow," Murray shouted back. The vice, muttering to himself, placed his broom broadside on the ice.

"Give me the edge of it," Murray shouted again. The vice turned the broom as directed.

"Closer," called Murray, waving his hand inward.

"Aren't you going to draw?" came the reply.

"I'm going to take their stone out—I'll put it to the boards—that port's got to be *run*. Closer yet—it won't draw two inches—I'm coming at it."

He steadied himself, fixed his mind with terrific intensity on the white objective in the distance, then lifted his stone from the ice, brought it well back behind him, and hurled it from him with giant strength.

The silence of death was about the rink as the swift-flying thing sped down the ice, the curl barely noticeable. The sweepers stood and watched. Once past the guards, once through the port, it would be dead on the enemy's stone—and the victory would be won!

Every man of them held his breath as the flying rock came to the port. Every eye was glued on it—it was impossible to tell—there! yes, it was going to graze the guard to the left, and ruin everything!—no, it was still flying straight. Who knows—there is a difference of opinion to this day—whether it actually touched—the faintest rub, not enough to turn it from its course—or whether it passed through absolutely clear? Kelly himself said afterwards that you could have put a one dollar bill between the stones but no human power could have put a two—and the consensus of opinion favours his contention. But, be that as it may, the stone flew through—like some living thing that saw its enemy in the distance—swept onward with unabated force, fell with heavenly impact against the Moyie stone and lay still as death itself, driving the alien rock against the end of the rink with a thud that was never heard amid the wild uproar that had begun before Murray's stone was altogether through the narrow port.

The yell of victory, in the true sense of the word, is never heard in its fullness except on curlers' ice and from the throats of the victors. Now it ascended in all its glory, caps in air, brooms aloft or hurled along the ice, the rafters echoing with the terrific shout. The men made a rush for Murray—a brief fifteen minutes had transformed an unknown stranger into a conquering hero—and lifted him high on their shoulders, vainly protesting as they bore him down the ice. Kelly, to give him his due, was one of the shouting throng, striving with the rest to seize Murray's hand or thump him on the shoulder or roar some plaudit in his ear.

When at last the tumult had subsided and Murray was standing among the still excited throng, a fiery faced Scot, the president of the club, suddenly raised his hand and called loudly for order.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I just want to speak a word. As you all know, we had arranged to entertain our visiting curlers to a little supper at the Grosvenor. Well, we're going up there now—the oysters are waiting—and I wish to suggest that we ask the gentleman, who has done such a glorious stunt for us to-night, to come along and be our guest of honour," the rest lost in the acclaim that greeted the suggestion, one of the most tumultuous voices being that of Kelly himself.

Wherefore, a few minutes later, Murray found himself stepping out into the frosty night escorted by Cameron on the one hand and Kelly on the other, the victor quite the humblest looking of the three.

"Can I hinterrupt you a minute?" a voice suddenly came in the darkness—"I want a word wiv Mr. McLean." As he looked around, Murray saw the faithful Hawkins beckoning eagerly to him; "I want a word wiv you—me an' the Doctor wants a minute wiv you, sir."

Murray excused himself and stepped aside. The Doctor was the first to speak.

"I just wanted to renew my request, Mr. McLean," he began rapidly—"I want you to promise, now, that you'll give us a hand at the meetings. You must see, sir, that you've taken the men by storm—you're their hero, sir—and your influence would be tremendous, simply tremendous, sir. It looks like an open door," he added, fixing a very importunate gaze on Murray.

"It's a call, sir!" the eager Hawkins broke in; "it's a call to the ministry, sir—an' one of the loudest I ever 'eard. Oh, Lor' bless me, sir, I was like to drop dead, I was that hanxious, I was. I was a-prayin' for you, sir, when that there stone went through that there little 'ole—an' when they was all a-shoutin', I was a-sayin' 'Glory 'Allelujah!' an' a-wonderin' if the Lord could 'ear me, wiv such a row. It's a call to the ministry, sir—an' the Lord'll deal wiv you if it bean't 'eard," the little man's eyes flashing in the starlight.

Murray hesitated. Cameron and Kelly were looking restless. "Thank you," he said hurriedly; "oh, thank you so much—and I'll think it over—and I'll let you know," as he moved on to where the men stood waiting for him.

## XX

## THE ENCORE THAT MURRAY WON

THE supper was finished, the revelry begun; and the impromptu toast list was almost finished when the president of the club arose.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I have still another toast to propose. And it is to the health of a man who a few hours ago was a comparative stranger amongst us, but whom we now consider one of ourselves. He has gripped us all just about as unexpectedly as this sudden cold snap that gave him his opportunity. But I'm sure I voice all your hearts when I say that I hope he'll be with us a long time after it has gone. The gentleman who will respond to this toast has done more than prove himself a crack curler—although it's easy enough to believe what we're told, that he was Tankard Skip for his college down East—he has proved himself a true sport. While we all marvelled at his wonderful skill as we saw it on the ice to-night, I'm sure we admired even more the sportsmanlike spirit of the man; for as you will readily admit, in this particular game it's the man that makes the curler. I ask you now to charge your glasses and drink the health of the victor of the hour, Mr. Murray McLean."

Three cheers and a tiger greeted the erstwhile stranger as he rose to reply. His response was brief and modest. "I feel myself among friends," he went on after a few preliminaries, "for there is no freemasonry in all the world more real and cordial than that which prevails among 'brither curlers' wherever ice is found. I'm glad we won out on that last end—but I venture to hope that we would have taken it just the same if we had lost. To my mind that's the sign of a good curler—of a true sport anywhere—if he can snatch victory out of defeat, or keep his head when he's on top. There's no game in the world, I think, that cultivates restraint more than this ancient sport of ours—as you know, even when you're playing, there is quite as much in what you hold back, as in what you put into, your stone. I thank you all for your kindness to a man who is considerable of a stranger among you; and I hope, if I stay in Rockcliffe, to have some jolly good games with you after the winter weather really sets in. Now I'm not much of a speaker—so, with your permission, I'll throw my real response into the form of a song—a good old Scotch song, and Hielan' at that," the proposal greeted with boisterous applause.

Murray waited till silence was restored, moved back a little from the table, and presently launched out into Scotland's great battle song, the martial masterpiece ringing clear and high as his own Highland heart was stirred with the kindling words:

"Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled
Scots wham Bruce has often led
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victory."

As each verse found its close a salvo of cheers showed how the singer had gripped the men around him. And when the last great line "Let us do or dee" rolled from his lips, his face aglow with the ardour that possessed him, a storm of shouts and cheers demanded an encore.

But Murray had resumed his seat, shaking his head in denial as the din went on. But a sudden resolve came to him—and a strange seriousness marked his mien as he rose slowly to his feet.

"I thank you very much," he began as soon as he could be heard, "for this mark of your appreciation. And I wish to make an announcement. I *will* respond to your kind encore—but it shall be to-morrow night—at the service in the Presbyterian Church. I will respond then," he repeated, "and I shall expect you all to be there to hear me," the words falling amid dense stillness on the ears of the mystified assembly.

## XXI

## "NOT A CALL—BUT A 'OLLER"

THE *freshet*, so earnestly desired by Dr. Seymour, came at last. So far as the size of the audience was concerned, at least, the revival services had undergone revival. For when Murray, accompanied by the rejoicing Hawkins, presented himself at the vestry door the following evening and enquired for the Reverend Dr. Seymour, he found that worthy in high delight over the prospect of a record crowd. "They've been coming in by the score," he intimated, "for the last twenty minutes—and the beadle says the place is nearly full already. You've got the chance of your life, McLean—they're on the tiptoe of expectation. What are you going to sing?"

"I think I'll take the 'Ninety and Nine,'" answered Murray.

"Glory 'Allelujah!" broke in the fervent Hawkins.

Dr. Seymour frowned perceptibly. "Pretty Moody and Sankeyish, isn't it?" he said after a pause. "Couldn't you take something a little—a little statelier than that, don't you think?"

Murray looked rather agitated. "I thought perhaps that other might—might do some good, sir," he answered mildly.

"But we must endeavour," the Doctor replied a little testily, "we must endeavour to preserve the dignity of the service, you know. I've been making that my aim right along—I've aimed at that all through my ministry—and I hope I've succeeded."

"I 'ope so," broke in the hitherto unnoticed Hawkins. "An' I'm afeared you 'ave, sir—it's hawful easy to be dignified, sir—there ain't nobody as dignified as a hundertaker at a funeral," fixing his gaze on the silken gown the Doctor was carefully adjusting to his portly form.

"Eh? what's that?" came rather sharply from the latter.

"Of course you're in charge, Doctor," Murray interjected, thinking it wise to end the dialogue; "but all the same, I'd like to sing that hymn I mentioned—if you don't mind, sir."

The minister made no reply as he led the way to the door opening into the church; but the atmosphere was such as rather tempered Murray's ardour in this critical hour of his life. However, he almost forgot it all as he took a seat to the side of the pulpit and looked over the gathered throng.

For it was such as might have inspired any man, much more one whose heart had been touched with an ambition so high as that which animated this youthful volunteer. The church was full, every pew with its complete quota—and the vast majority were men. Murray's pulse quickened as he noticed his fellow curlers of the day before seated in a group by themselves—and the valiant Kelly was in their midst. These were the men who had spread the tidings that Murray was to sing that evening; and they had used to the full the stirring episodes of the night before—this crowded audience was the result.

The sermon was over—and the Reverend Armitage, resolved to rise to the occasion, had exhausted the resources of his eloquence and his scholarship. The audience had listened with a tepid admiration which showed their estimate of this performance as a mere preliminary to the real feature of the evening.

When the Doctor at length announced the solo "from our young friend who has kindly consented to assist in the meetings," a hush of expectation fell upon the waiting crowd. For a moment or two Murray looked silently into the faces before him, gathering inspiration for the unaccustomed duty. And as he looked, the sensation of eager longing for the souls of men, of wistful eagerness to help them, of new-born compassion for all their loneliness and need, seemed to possess his heart; even as, a few minutes later, it found a voice in the tenderness and power with which his song gripped the hearts before him.

A little timidly at first—for this was a new and wonderful experience—his voice touched with the slightest tremor but gradually gaining confidence and strength as he forgot all about himself in the exercise of his wonderful gift, Murray poured forth the melting words that have enthralled their thousands and their tens of thousands. And as he came near its close his own heart seemed to glory in the mighty hymn that Immortality had snatched so suddenly into her jealous keeping when first that hymn was born.

His face was aglow, radiant with love and pleading, as the breathless throng listened to the triumphant ending:

> "And the angels echoed around the throne
> Rejoice! for the Lord brings back His own."

The very silence, as he finished, seemed to be an appeal. Indeed, he forgot that he had been singing at all; forgot everything except the spirit and the mission of the great message he had given. And, unmindful of the minister before him, heedless of irregularity and all else beside, his own voice broke the hush as it went on in tender and passionate utterance. For he saw before him the faces of men—men like himself—strugglers against the same head winds, warriors in the same grim battle, resisting the same passions, capable of the same blessed victory. And they were looking up to him, and the stillness was as deep when he began to speak as when he had been singing—wherefore he could not help but plead with them, and beseech them to be reconciled to God.

Not more than ten or twelve minutes did he speak—but it was long enough for him to test the luxury of Influence, spiritual Influence, of power with the souls of his fellow men.

And then, still oblivious to rule or custom, just as his impassioned appeal was over, he leaned far forward towards the men, his hands outstretched in the earnestness of his entreaty.

"Is there any one," he pleaded, "any one here who will take his stand to-night? I pause for your reply. If you will—if any man will—let him show his colours now and come out boldly for his Master and his King. Let him come forward to me—it will be late before I will give him up or cease to show him the way—or let him even take his stand by rising to his feet. Come now, come—make the great decision now!"

With which one did arise. But alas! it was the minister beside him, none other than the Reverend Armitage himself. Murray's face was blanched and white as he heard his words.

"Excuse me," the Doctor began in an icy voice; "but I feel that I must protest. I appreciate the spirit that has prompted our young brother—but I am responsible for the conduct of these meetings. And this is entirely out of order—and, what is more, out of all harmony with the spirit that has marked these meetings from the beginning. I must ask you, Mr. McLean, to withdraw your invitation—it is out of all accord with Presbyterian usage—all things must be done decently and in order," moving to the desk and picking up the hymn-book that lay upon it.

Murray was completely overwhelmed by this bolt from the blue. What to say, or whether to say anything, he knew not. But the momentary hesitation relieved him of the necessity of deciding.

A slight muttering could be heard in the central group of men. Then suddenly, leaping to his feet, arose one of the burliest of them. His face was dark and lowering.

"I dunno' who's runnin' this show, parson," he began bluffly, "but I *do* know this ain't a square deal. This here's a free country—an' I reckon if one fellow wants to invite another to stan' up, an' he wants to climb, you ain't got no power to stop him, boss. An' all you fellows," turning now to the men, "all you fellows that sides with the young gaffer there, jes' stan' up—like he axed us."

There was a sudden movement; it seemed well-nigh universal—for the men rose, almost in a body, to their feet.

"There, parson," the spokesman delivered himself as he looked complacently round on the men, "you got your answer, see? Mebbe we haven't all jes' got what you might say is a dose o' religion—a change o' heart, as they call it—but we won't stan' for any one as tye-rannical as the likes o' you, see? Now we're goin' out—I reckon—an' you can run your own show, parson—the women'll be left. But the men's all votin' like you axed them, guv'nor," as he nodded confidentially in the direction of Murray, aghast and horrified where he stood.

Wherewith, fumbling beneath the seat for his hat, the burly champion of human liberty led the way to the door. And almost every man of the company followed him out into the dark.

The meeting broke up in disorder, despite the efforts of the minister to prevent it. Murray had already made his way to the vestry; whence, weary and sick at heart, he speedily turned his steps towards home. Dr. Seymour, a faint misgiving seizing him, hurried to the room, but Murray had already gone. He even went to the door and called him once or twice; but no answer came, whereat, sighing in heaviness of heart, he gave up the quest.

Fully an hour and a half later he and Mr. Henry Hawkins were still earnestly discussing the situation, both rather despondent, it must be said, when a sudden knock came to the door.

"That'll be the Doctor, comin' to hapologize," surmised Hawkins as he hurried to answer the summons.

But he was mistaken. For instead, three men were there, asking for Mr. McLean. Readily admitted, they sat down opposite the wondering Murray.

"We've had a meetin'—representin' nearly all the men in town," the leader of the delegation began abruptly, "an' a good few o' the lumberjacks from the adjoinin' camps. An' they sent us three to tell you how howlin' mad we all are about that there raw deal you got to-night. Most o' the men hadn't been in church for years—'cept at a funeral, of course—an' they were all terrible pleased, sir, with that little sermon you gave us. Weren't they, Tom?"

"Certain sure; clean carried away," endorsed Tom—"an' it done 'em a heap o' good into the bargain. Two fellows told me Jack Finlan was jes' goin' to get converted when that there codfish—that there parson—put in his oar an' spiled everythin'. Jack 'most 'lows that himself—an' any one as can convert *Jack*, or come anywheres near it, he's a cracker-jack. An' the boys thinks preachin'—an' 'specially singin'—of that there brand you put up, sir, would do us all a pile o' good. And they want you to—you tell him, Dick," turning to the spokesman.

"They want you to start up a few little meetin's o' your own, like—for all classes an' all sexes," Dick elaborated from memory, "but 'specially for men—an' women to be invited, too," he added generously. "An' they've got a meetin'-place; one o' the men—you curled with him last night—he's Noble Grand in the Odd-Fellows. An' we've got the promise o' their hall—an' we'll crowd it full till you have to take the paper off the wall—an' you'll do a power o' good, sir."

"Tell him about the stannin' up," Tom reminded him in a stage whisper.

"Oh, yes—I clean forgot. The men said you could have all the stannin' up you wanted. If a man can't net his fish after he's hooked 'em himself—without some one in a black nightgown orderin' him to let 'em go—well, it's a fierce strange thing, that's what all the men said, sir. So we calc'late to stan' up when you say so—you're the doctor—an' to get converted if we can; we're tol'able sure o' Jack Finlan for a starter. An' we appinted a committee to see about gettin' all the men to stan' up that's got the machinery for doin' it, an' ——"

"Sort of a stannin' committ-ee," interjected Tom with a grin.

"An' every man in town's solid for you, sir," Dick went on, treating the witticism with the contempt it deserved; "you certain sure got the fellows by the neck last night at the curlin' rink. An' even Kelly—him as you put it all over, you mind—Kelly says he'll give out tickets for the meetin's over the bar, 'cause you're a dead game sport. An' we hope you'll start up business right away, sir—the divil's always on *his* job, we all know *that*, sir," Dick concluded, happy in the thought that this was a truly pious vein.

The third man of the delegation, silent thus far, suddenly moved over towards the spokesman. "Tell him that other bit," he whispered vociferously, with abundant nodding of the head.

"What bit?" demanded Dick, whispering with equal power.

"You know—the bit they said you was to close with—about the Lord an' the blessin'."

"Oh, yes, certain sure," exclaimed Dick, much relieved. "I clean forgot—but *that's* understood in matters o' this kind. They said as how they hoped the Lord 'd add on His blessin', sir—it was Sandy Sinclair that said that bit ought to be in. Sandy used to be a kind of a deacon down East—but he had a relapse out here—he got a thirst—but he remembers all them trimmin's all right. So we hope the Lord'll throw in His blessin'—but it depends mostly on *you*, there ain't no doubt about that, sir," concluded Dick, evidently well pleased with his handling of this rather unfamiliar department.

Murray was pretty much at a loss for reply of any kind, the proposal almost overwhelming him, as touching as it was terrifying. Finally, after considerable interchange of question and answer, he assured the eager delegates that they should have his reply in the morning, early enough to complete or cancel the tentative arrangements.

The men were hardly gone before the rejoicing Hawkins had Murray's hand in both of his.

"It's the Lord that done it," he exclaimed fervently. "'E's a-settin' of His seal to your ministry—you 'ad them men in the 'ollow of your 'and to-night. An' that's where the good Lord's got you—you're a-goin' to 'ave souls for your 'ire, sir."

Murray looked long into his face. "Do you think it's my duty to accept?" he asked earnestly.

"Haccept! Of course you'll haccept! I thought that other was a call—that there call in the curlin' rink—but it wa'n't only a whisper alongside o' this. This ain't a call—it's a 'oller, sir. They're fair a-'ollerin' for you—an' if you don't answer, the Lord'll have summat to say wiv you, sir," the radiant eyes agleam with joy and hopefulness.

But Murray was at a loss, sadly perplexed. The sense of incapacity, the fear of failure, the shrinking from responsibility—all these held him back. And especially, hurt and wounded as he had been, he feared lest his motive might not be pure—he found it difficult to disassociate this new enterprise from the memory of the treatment meted out to him by the Reverend Armitage.

All of this, as the dialogue went on, he confided to his friend. Whereupon, after some silent pondering, the faithful Hawkins suddenly arose, beckoning him to follow. Murray did so, and he led him outside the little house.

"There," he said as he closed the door behind him, both standing now beneath the placid stars; "there—fight it out 'ere. I'll leave you alone—wiv *them*. When a man's got a 'ard problem, 'specially if another man's mixed up wiv it, there's no place to fight it out like 'ere—wiv the mountains an' the stars. It's between you an' *them*, my boy—they're God's. An' the thoughts of what any man done to you—or what any man may think—'twon't trouble you much if you let *them* speak for Him, my son. Fight it out 'ere—it's the nearest to the Judgment Day there is. An' I'll be waitin' for you in the 'ouse," as the unlettered prophet turned back and left the wrestler alone, his Jabbok all about and above him.

Murray was not long without. Matters, even great matters, are not slow of settlement, granted an earnest heart and the arbitrament of Eternity.

Silence reigned for a few minutes after Murray rejoined his friend. Then the old man rose, turned to the shelf, took down his candle and lighted it. "I'm goin' to bed," he said; "you'd better go too—you've had a 'ard day."

"Not yet a while," answered Murray; "I want to work a little—to think over something to say to the boys to-morrow night."

"Glory 'Allelujah!" said the happy Hawkins as he went on to his rest.

## XXII

## *WHEN THE HEART TAKES FIRE*

SUCCESS is the next best thing to failure—so far, at least, as concerns the interests of the soul. The first requisite to ultimate and enduring power is the sense of helplessness that drives one in on the Great Source of strength, "from whom," as the mighty Milton said, "all utterance and all knowledge come."

Moreover it is likely enough that Murray McLean himself was the only one who would have described his effort of the following evening as a failure; it is one of the standing mysteries among preachers, both clerical and lay, that what they reckon their grandest efforts are usually of little profit, while the poor spasms over which they groan in secret come oftenest back in tributes of gratitude and love.

There was much to test the young evangelist in that opening service. The Odd-Fellows' hall was crowded. While the audience was a mixed one, and many of the men had their wives and daughters, yet the great majority was composed of the sturdy toilers whose affection Murray had so completely won. All were abrim with enthusiasm for the preacher—which is not as helpful as would be generally supposed. Besides, Murray was quite untrained to this sort of work, his chief equipment being that great Endowment without which he would never have begun at all. He was, moreover, but little conscious of the strength and deftness and patience that he must have who would lay siege to the human heart.

The earlier part of the service went off very well, the men entering heartily into the singing, led by Murray himself. When the address came—carefully rehearsed beforehand by the youthful preacher—he dimly felt that it was lacking in power. The spontaneity and passion of the night before seemed somehow to be lacking—and he vainly tried to recall what he had so carefully committed to his memory.

But worse was to befall him. He had not been speaking more than five minutes or so when suddenly, his eye lighting on a row of seats near the door where most of the ladies present were congregated, his heart leaped with a mighty bound and the sentence with which he was engaged came to an abrupt and hopeless close. For his eyes were fixed on the face, pure and sweet, reverence and sympathy adding to its charm, of Hilda Ludlow! She was looking down, and he could catch the droop of the lovely lashes, could detect the faint tint of pink in the oval cheeks, could see the sweet lips, parted a little, as though some agitation troubled them—and beside her, with eyes turned in loving devotion on her benefactress, was the very girl, snatched from the hands of the destroyer, whom Murray had guided to Hilda's door and committed to her care.

The relation between the two women would surely have been apparent to any sympathetic observer. The clinging helplessness of the one and the almost maternal tenderness of the other, the joy of the deliverer and the gratitude of the delivered—these were to be seen upon those two serious faces. And Murray noted, even in the agitation [illegible] the moment, how beautiful was the light of [illegible] beauty, of strength and earnestness, upon the face of the woman whose presence had such mysterious power to kindle his heart with flame.

All Murray's carefully gathered sermonic thoughts were scattered now; scattered and flown away, like some winged covey before the huntsman's tread. He pursued them wildly, squandering four or five minutes, and as many stammering sentences, in the hopeless chase. Then, with the composure of despair, he flung from him all haunting memories of the verbal fugitives and gave himself, in an abandonment of simplicity, to a simple and unconventional talk to the souls before him.

Which seemed to him very tame and profitless; as is the way of all public speakers when their stateliest thoughts—like an angler's biggest fish—shake themselves loose and flash away into their native deep. But he knew not how gracious were his words, how winsome the yearning of his face, how touched with power the simple pleading of his untutored sentences.

He ceased to speak, bitterly aware of what he considered the failure of his effort. Deep stillness there was; but he attributed it to sympathy with his unhappy strait. Then he announced that he would sing to them, gliding almost immediately into the tender strain—and the silence became deeper than before.

And again, as on the previous night, with wistful impulse he called upon all who would to take their stand openly. Let all who would, he urged, thus bear the gracious witness by rising to their feet. And to his amazement—for the fervid guarantee of the three delegates had passed out of his mind—almost every man in the hall rose to his feet. The intrepid Dick had been the first, a little irritated, evidently, that the others were not quite so prompt in their action—for he turned on them with a quick and impatient movement, jerking his head backward and bestirring with a fiery glance two or three laggards who seemed indifferent to the invitation. Then, when all who could be reasonably expected to respond were on their feet, he turned a triumphant face towards Murray, nodding in a confidential sort of way, with much of the same complacency as one has seen in the bearing of a sagacious collie when the whole flock at last is rounded up.

Murray, aghast at the wholesale response, spoke some inarticulate word of greeting to the obedient throng and quietly motioned to them to resume their seats; which they did with the air of men who had performed their duty to the full.

But now he gave his appeal a different form; for his ardour was still unquenched—and some mysterious expectation impelled him on.

"If there are any here—if there is even one—who will come out to-night on the Master's side," he pleaded, all embarrassment vanished now, "let them come forward here—here, to me—and I will welcome them in the Master's name. If there is one, even one, who has found Him gracious, who wishes to own Him as Lord and Saviour," he repeated wistfully.

Then he waited. The men looked at each other, at a loss how to treat this new appeal. But Dick, mindful that this was not in the contract, set the example of immovable silence, cheerfully followed by them all.

Murray still waited, covetous of at least one seal to his new-born ministry. And at last, after a brief and whispered consultation, two figures arose and moved out to the aisle, then slowly forward to where he stood transfixed. One was the lithe and gracious form of Hilda Ludlow, her face beautiful in its spiritual purity, its religious earnestness, its joy of helpfulness—and the other was that of the lonely stranger she had taken to her heart.

Together they came, the homeless and friendless girl nestling close to the side of her protector, her hand in hers, tears shining in the eyes of both. Murray advanced to meet them, his face aglow with a far-off light; it was the joy of harvest.

There was an Altar there, invisible to human eyes, erected wherever the seeking heart gropes dimly for its God and in the beauty of earnestness worships there. They knelt before it; and Murray gave his soul to the highest exercise a human soul can know, tenderly leading towards the Light a trembling spirit whose darkness had but yesterday been his own. And there, before the eyes of the wondering throng, a new star swam into the firmament of Love, a new name was written in the Book of Life.

There was a closing hymn, a simple invitation to come back to-morrow night—and the congregation filed out in awesome silence.

The face of Henry Hawkins was radiant with gladness when he joined Murray at the door. They walked home together; then Murray asked his friend to excuse him—and went forth aimlessly into the night, the holy night. For a new sense of power had come into his life; he was sure of God—and his heart longed for that vocal silence to be found only beneath the stars.

It was perhaps half an hour later, his heart still burning within him by the way, when he suddenly noticed that he was close behind two who were hurriedly walking a little distance in front of him, their paths converging as the pair turned a corner and hastened on before him. He knew them in an instant; they were Hilda, and the guardian Martin. Possibly it was the reaction from the high spiritual tension in which he had been held—in any case, Murray's whole being was aflame in a moment, and he followed with tumultuous heart. A minute or two later, the girl turned and looked; then resumed her way more hurriedly than before. But gradually her footsteps lagged, and if he had not moderated his pace he would have come up with them. It was, however, but a little while till the woman turned her face again, uttered some faint word of exclamation—and waited.

"I thought it was you," she said embarrassedly as he came up. "I should have thought you would be resting now," her voice agitated; "I walked home with Abbie—that was the girl I had with me to-night; you recognized her?"

"Yes," he said absently, for the sheen of her eyes was upon him; "yes, I saw her—I saw you both."

"And Martin came to bring me home—he knew where I would be—he always knows," she added disjointedly, nodding towards the servant who had by this time moved onward, his face set towards home. "Oh! wasn't it beautiful? Abbie is so happy—and so am I," she exclaimed fervently.

"May I walk the rest of the way home with you?" he said for answer, the words seeming to come out mechanically and as if he had not heard her speech. The thrall of her wonderful eyes was still upon him—and his wildly beating heart told him that their mystic voice was all for him.

"Oh, no," she answered flutteringly—"I couldn't think of taking you out of your way like that—you must be tired."

"I want to go," he said simply, the words full of that nameless power that girds the burning heart. "Come, let us go—together."

She gave a little gasp, faintly tried to protest further, yet moved along beside him. "You may go on ahead—I will walk home with Miss Ludlow," he said quietly as they overtook the lagging Martin—and the girl's bosom rose and fell in this new strange agitation that overswept it.

They walked on together through the night. She tried to maintain a conversation, naturally reverting to the scene in which both had been engaged—but he seemed, strangely enough, given over to silence. It struck her with wonder that all the enthusiasm should be on her part and not on his—but gradually, and fearfully, she began to understand.

It was but a few minutes till they reached the low fence that stood before her home. There they paused, the gate idly swinging between them—oh, these thrice blessed gates, confidants of the ages! The moon was slowly pursuing her tender path above the glowing horizon. Old Observation, topped with the first silvery beams, looked down upon the peaceful scene—he had given his benediction to hundreds thus sacredly employed in the far-off ages when mighty men of valour and maidens of dusky beauty had walked and wooed in a forgotten language.

"You'll be back to-morrow night—to the meeting?" Murray said, breaking a long silence.

The girl's eyes were turned towards the distant mountain, its pinnacle slowly brightening in the quivering light. "If I can," she said gently—"I was ordered not to go to-night—mother forbade me to go," she concluded, her voice showing her emotion.

"And you went?" he answered.

"Yes," she said slowly; "yes, I went—I've been trying to win Abbie's soul. And I knew—something told me—that it would come to that to-night," and as the girl still turned her face towards the distant grandeur it was bright with more than earthly radiance. "You brought her to me—and I took her in," she went on as if to herself; "then I brought her to Him—and He did not cast her out," the light deepening on the lovely face.

"Well?" he said, as one might speak in a delirium. His heart was riotous to madness.

"Well," she answered; "well—I'm going in," nodding towards the massive door in the distance. "But to what—to what, I do not know. Mother told me if I went to her any more—to Abbie—or to them—the meetings, I mean—I needn't come back here," and now, in strange contrast to the jubilance of a minute before, a sudden storm of grief swept over her, the sad eyes filled to overflowing, the voice was shattered; and as she bowed above the gate her form shook with the gust of sorrow, the white shoulders rising and falling as the billows seemed to break again and again upon her.

It is a great moment,—Niagara in all the stream of life—when a man who has come to the strength of manhood, possessing still the purity of early youth, realizes to what purpose the sanctity of his inmost soul has been kept inviolate; realizes that the long garrisoning of the heart is all for this, that he may lay its treasure store in sacred passion at the feet of one whom he has come to love, to love with abandonment of life and through no volition of his own, to love regally, almost madly, his Paradise gained at last in the very luxury of loving, all the long momentum of the years pouring the forces of his soul in this mighty waterfall that sweeps all before it and enriches the future days with fruitfulness and beauty.

Thus loved Murray McLean in that trembling hour, beneath the shadow of Old Observation; and amid the light of the mystic moon—and beside the sobbing form of one whose very grief was her holy dower.

"Hilda," he began huskily, his hands going nervously out, nervously withdrawn; "Hilda," he said once more, as some sweet strain that perforce must be repeated, "oh, my love, my darling—you know, you know—come," as his hands touched hers and tried to draw them from her face, his whole frame a-tremble with the thrilling impact. "You don't need to go back home—to come here—to go anywhere—only to me, to me, my darling," his voice strange of utterance as his soul poured through it with resistless passion, "I love you so. And—and ——"

He stopped, as if fearful, bending over her in ineffable compassion. Then he waited—and it seemed an eternity.

Slowly, so slowly, and of her own accord, the delicate fingers opened, the shapely hand moved from before the white tear-stained face—and then, like the face of fate, she looked out at him in the semi-darkness. Her lips moved, but once or twice in vain. His eyes leaped to hers; but whether they spoke of reproach or gladness he could not tell.

"You should not—you must not," she murmured faintly at last, trembling like some helpless thing pursued, like one who stood on some alluring brink, struggling with the mighty fascination.

"*Why* should I not?" he cried hotly, his hand touching hers, the warm blood leaping to his face as he leaned over nearer her; "*why* not? Don't I love you?—didn't I love you the first day I saw your face, your lovely face? Wasn't it that that wakened me, that set me thinking of life—of the real life?—isn't it to that I owe my soul?" he demanded in a trembling voice, her hand still in his.

She turned her eyes full on his face, glorious now in their command. "I'll tell you why you should not—why you shall not," she began, sternly controlling herself; "for one thing—because you have—or ought to have—no thought of this, *now*. Think of that holy scene to-night—think of the work, the new great work, to which you've given your life."

"But do you love me?" he broke in passionately; "do you love me, Hilda?—tell me that," and the strength and fervour of his words almost overwhelmed the girl.

Even in the faint light he could see the crimson tide that surged up over neck and cheek and brow. But her voice was calm. "And besides," she went on, ignoring his demand, "you're speaking only under great excitement—and I am responsible for it. What I told you—what I said about my home—and about the struggle there," her voice quivering again as the flashing eyes turned towards the house, "all of that has stirred your heart—and your pity," she cried in heightened tones; "yes, your pity too—you're sorry for me, Mr. McLean," the plaintive voice went on—"you pity me—and I can't stand it—and it must not be. Oh! it must not be! No, don't—I tell you don't ——"

For suddenly, pushing the gate aside, with a low cry his full heart could not suppress, he had flung himself towards her with overpowering purpose and a moment later, so swift and masterful was his movement, she was trembling in his arms.

A low moaning cry, half terror and half rapture, broke from the girl, her face now pale as death. "Don't," she panted, so low that he could scarcely hear, for the sweet breath flowed upon his cheek; "for my sake—*Murray*—oh, for my sake—don't."

And in a moment his arms relaxed; his face, now as white as hers, was thrown back till she could see its pallor in the uncertain light; his lips moved inarticulately—but the great struggle closed in victory, and she was free.

An instant later she was hurrying, swaying some, along the gravel walk to the door. But she knew not, in that moment of delirium, that it had opened long enough for one to pass without. Murray saw it, blankly staring, as it opened again to let two forms pass through—but he marvelled not nor cared.

For now he was alone in an empty world. And the moon had risen clear of the horizon, leaving it aglow with silvery light; and the chilling wind sighed on through the mighty trees; and the silent mountains kept their vigil still; and Old Observation looked upward now, up to the bending dome, glorying in its untroubled calm.

# XXIII

## HOW HILDA FACED THE STORM

DEEP and ominous was the silence that prevailed as Mrs. Ludlow, followed by her daughter, led the way into the library, cozy and cheerful in the glow of the firelight. Ah, me! the bitterness of beautiful rooms and blazing hearths while the life is desolate and the altar fire of the heart is quenched in gloom!

The woman suddenly turned and faced her child—and the look in the set features revealed the rigour of her heart. For fully a minute she gazed, the girl's eyes involuntarily drooping before the stare.

"I know it all," she then broke out abruptly—"I know everything," her face wincing at the pain and humiliation of it. "Clara told me—she was at that meeting—where only cooks and people of that class would demean themselves by going—and she tells me you were there. That's so, isn't it?" pausing sternly for her answer.

Hilda lifted her eyes to her mother's. "Yes," she answered gently; "yes, I was there."

"I knew it. That's bad enough—but it's not the worst. Clara tells me—how can I repeat it?—she tells me you walked the length of the hall, down to the front, with—with that woman that your new friend—your singing friend—left on your hands. Is that true, Hilda?—Oh, tell me, tell me it isn't true—surely you haven't brought disgrace on us all like that?" as she came closer to the girl before her, leaning over in a sort of scornful intensity.

Hilda's voice was very low, but very calm. "Yes, mother," she answered, lifting the big eyes again to the rigid face; "yes, I went with her. She gave her heart to the Saviour to-night, mother," the pallid face brightening unconsciously as she spoke—"and she wouldn't go forward without me. So of course I went, mother. And mother, mother dear," the quivering voice went on, "if you could only know what it means to ——"

But the words seemed only to stir her mother's heart to deeper anger. "Stop it," she cried hotly—"stop your preaching and answer me a question. Who was that, that walked home with you to-night? I saw Martin when he got home—you sent him on ahead—and then I watched. Wasn't that your singing angel—the man who conducted that service—where you disgraced us all? Tell me, I say."

"It was Mr. McLean," Hilda answered, summoning all her self-control; but the furious flush would come, as come it did, till the telltale flood kindled the maiden's face, a moment before so pale, with its burning flame.

"Ah!" said her mother, "I knew it—I recognized your friend; yes," she went on with he[illegible]ened tone; "yes, you may well blush for shame—is that the usual way of saying good-night?—is that the custom among your singers and your preachers?"

All trembling was gone from Hilda now. Unconsciously her form straightened to its full height and the face she lifted undaunted to her mother's was wonderful in its strength and passion.

"He didn't," she cried hotly; "I didn't—we didn't. And you shall not—you shall not—speak like that. I am a woman now, and if you ——"

Mrs. Ludlow's lips were set and white. Interrupting, she leaned forward, her eyes flashing with a light Hilda could read too well.

"We'll settle it right now," she almost gasped, her voice low in its dread import; "I knew this hour would come. And your father knows it all—and he will agree with me. And it's this—will you give up this nonsense, this shameful nonsense?" her face close to the other's, her anger gathering strength as she went on; "these meetings, to begin with—will you?"

Hilda looked a moment into the storm-swept face.

"No," she answered calmly.

"And this, this girl, that was brought to you from—from the Red-Light district?" she added, the dread words coming after a breathless pause.

"No," said the girl, gazing into her mother's face.

"And this adventurer—this preaching singer—that lives with old Hawkins?"

"No," came again from the pallid lips.

A momentary silence followed, broken only by the woman's heavy breathing.

"Then we part," she panted out; "our paths separate now—you can't stay in this house and bring disgrace on it any more. You have chosen—and you can have your choice. If you prefer those adventurers to your own kith and kin—why, then, you have made your bed and you must lie in it. I give you one more chance," she added as a sudden afterthought, peering breathlessly into her daughter's face for an answer.

That face was white as snow. "Oh, mother, don't," she pleaded brokenly—"don't *make* me choose. How can I, mother—how could I ever—choose between you, you and father, and my duty? I cannot, oh, I cannot, give up the new life I have begun—never, never—nor you, mother; I can't give up you and father—you've both been so good to me and ——"

"Let us hear no more of this," the elder woman broke in sternly. "I gave you another chance—and you refused it. And I have no patience with your ranting—we part now; now—not to-morrow—but now," she went on more stormily than before, her wrath rising again. "And if ever the day comes when you see the shame—and the wrong—of what you're doing, you can come back to me," with which she turned and made her way towards the sitting-room where the dauntless fire was still brightly burning.

Hilda was now close to the stairs. "Where will I go, mother?" she said pitifully.

Quick as a flash came the cruel answer. "To your lady friend—you took *her* in once, you know; or to those two sisters where you acted as nurse—or to your singing preacher. You have plenty of friends, you see." The broken-hearted girl heard it all and went on in silence up the stair.

Yet a strange calm seemed to come down about her as she made her way to her own room, the room she was now to leave behind. For the ancient promise is wonderfully fulfilled that in the time of trouble He will hide in His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle hide. And, before ever the light was kindled, she knelt beside her bed and commended her sorrowing soul, her uncertain steps, to Him whose grace had so lately touched her heart—and peace like a river seemed to flow about the bruised and wounded spirit.

Few, very few, were the little possessions that she gathered together, the hot tears now and then falling fast upon them ; and at last, with a long farewell look about the room, she put out the light and crept softly down the stairs.

The library was in darkness now and no sound issued from it. Faintly, wistfully, she called her mother's name—but no response met her call. And then, the bitter sobs coming heavily now, she opened the door, closed it gently behind her, and passed out into the deep stillness of the night.

She stood long at the gate, the bewildered brain trying in vain to think. But suddenly there rose before her the faces of the two motherless girls she had befriended in their hour of need, whereat she started on afresh, the fear of utter homelessness now vanished. But she had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards when her heart bounded within her and she stood still as death—for she distinctly heard the slamming of the door she had so recently closed behind her.

And then, hurrying onward through the dark, she could descry the figure of a man, only partially dressed as she presently saw, a coat thrown loosely about his shoulders. It was her father, and he was panting in his haste. A moment later he had overtaken her, and as her eyes leaped to his face and searched it in the imperfect light she saw there a strength of resolve, almost a savagery of purpose, of which she had never dreamed him capable. Without a word, his eyes gleaming with covetous fondness, he held out his arms to her—and she fell into them like one who needed warmth and shelter for the soul.

"My daughter!" he murmured, his voice touched with a tenderness she had never heard before; "come home, my child—come back with your father. I know it all—I knew it all before. Oh, my poor child, my darling!" as he still held her close, turning as if to begin the homeward way. "I've been wrong, my daughter—weak and wrong," he murmured once or twice as they passed through the gate and made their way back to the massive door.

"Go to your bed, my child," he said when they were within the hall; all the hesitation and the uncouthness seemed to have fallen from him like a garment—"I will be—busy—busy for a little while."

She went as bidden, marvelling at the new light in his face, the new note in his voice. She knew not after what different fashions 'men come into their kingdom; nor by what strange and sudden processes are they, out of weakness, made strong, waxing valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens.

She only knew that her own heart, despite all its burden and its grief, was content now to indulge itself in the major note of joy, to snuggle down to rest again where it had rested long, and to commit its perplexing problem to the Friend she had learned to trust and love.

And the only thing that disturbed her rest befell her just before the breaking of the day; when she felt a hand touch her hair upon the pillow, a man's frame lean over her, a pair of unaccustomed lips touch her brow in tender fondness, muttering some endearing words she had scarcely heard since childhood. And she was like a child again, content indeed to take the children's place—and so to enter anew their kingdom of peace and rest.

## XXIV

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD

THE next morning found Mrs. Ludlow gradually awaking to the portent of the situation. Then began the mental struggle—and all through that day her husband's face, touched with unfamiliar fire, kept the battle waging in her heart. She had, too, encountered Hilda once or twice, but in a ghostly sort of way—and the spectral character of things in general was evidently having its effect on both. Wherefore Mrs. Ludlow, slowly recognizing the folly of her course, was in a sad strait betwixt two—resolved, on the one hand, to hold to her daughter, and, on the other, to terminate, if by any means she could, the new relationship she considered so degrading to them all.

It was towards evening when light came to her at last. A way out of the dilemma suddenly flashed upon her. She would herself accomplish Hilda's release from the self-assumed guardianship she had so impulsively undertaken; if she could once get her separated from this unknown girl, this ward she had so foolishly taken under her wing, it would be an easy matter, so reflected Mrs. Ludlow, to wean her from the meetings, and from all this religious nonsense that seemed to have taken such a hold upon her.

And she would herself achieve this desired end; she would go in person and call upon this nameless stranger; she would lay the case before her, tell her of the threatened rupture, throw the onus upon her, and appeal to her better nature to end the association and thus restore mother and daughter to each other. Any girl of spirit, to say nothing of Christian spirit, would readily make the renunciation for such an end.

Nor did she shrink from her purpose when the time came to put it into execution. The observant Martin knew well where this girl in question lodged—and Mrs. Ludlow soon also knew. But no guardian Martin for her as she went forth unaccompanied, in the early dusk, upon her diplomatic errand. And no tremor of fear, no embarrassment, no misgiving, gave pause to this masterful matron as she presented herself at the door of the house where her daughter had found temporary lodging for the hapless stranger.

"Step in, ma'am," said the woman of the house (to whom Mrs. Ludlow was Mrs. Ludlow) as she answered her summons; "Miss Merton's just stepped out to post a letter—that's the name of the person your daughter comes to see, ma'am—but she'll be back in a very few minutes. Will you ——"

"Merton!" Mrs. Ludlow interrupted the woman to exclaim; "did you say her name was Merton?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's her name—positive of it—Abbie Merton. I've seen it a dozen times on the letters she gets from Scotland. Come on in, ma'am—just step into her own room; it's the only place I can offer you, we're that busy with the ironing," as she glanced about the little living-room. "Take that chair there, ma'am—I know she won't be more than a few minutes."

Mrs. Ludlow's stately poise had vanished as she sank into the chair and motioned the garrulous landlady to leave her alone. Some strange emotion had suddenly taken possession of her; and as she glanced nervously about the room she muttered once and again the name that had so suddenly disturbed her peace of mind.

A moment later she rose, trembling some, and surveyed the little room. Almost its only ornament was a picture, cheaply framed, that stood on a tiny table beside the bed. She glanced at it. Then she seized it greedily. A moment later she was by the window, holding it to the failing light.

"Please bring me a lamp," came suddenly from her white lips as she hurried to the door and called the now invisible landlady.

"She's comin', ma'am," the latter announced as she appeared a minute later with the lamp. "I ca tell her down the street; you see, ma'am, I've kin o' come to know her a long ways off—me an' Gerti always looks out for her when she's comin' from he work. Gertie all but worships her—an' if there eve was a dear, it's her," as she set the lamp on the hurried quick! interpreting Mrs. Ludlow's evident desire [illegible] alone.

The [illegible] minutes that intervened were like an eternity to the waiting woman. Mrs. Ludlow stood motionless, her eyes still glued upon the face in the picture, while years long dead and gone filed swiftly before her troubled mind. And as they came and went, dead though they were, they touched into life and passion a thousand slumbering memories—and the sweet pure breath of girlhood flowed again about the stern and lonely heart.

She was still gazing when the door opened softly— and the girl she had come to see was now before her. Mrs. Ludlow moved over swiftly and closed the door. Then she turned towards the other, vainly striving to be calm.

"Is this your mother, child?" she asked breathlessly, holding the picture up before her.

"Yes," the maiden answered timorously; "aren't you Miss Ludlow's mother?" the lips parted as she waited for an answer.

"Yes," came the swift reply, as if begrudging the time spent on it. "Was her name Abbie—her given name, I mean?"

"Yes," the girl answered, her eyes wide with wonder mixed with mysterious fear.

"Abbie what?—her maiden name, I mean," the other pressed.

"Abbie Larmonth," came from the trembling lips.

Mrs. Ludlow uttered something like a cry and sank into the chair beside her.

"Where from?—where did she live?—as a girl, I mean."

The younger woman hesitated a moment. "From Canada," she replied a moment later; "New Brunswick, I think—near a place called Fredericton—I've often heard her speak of it. And she married my father there—and they came, they both came, to Scotland. I was born there," the utterance growing bolder as she went on; she stepped closer and held out her hand towards the photograph.

But Mrs. Ludlow held it back. "And she married Merton—Melville Merton, a Scotchman?—they ran away? And we thought she married beneath her—perhaps we were wrong; and she resented it—and we never saw her after; and ——"

"*Who* thought so?" the girl broke in excitedly, coming closer to Mrs. Ludlow, her cheeks aflame, her eyes flashing. The latter rose unconsciously to her feet. "My father's dead, Mrs. Ludlow—but he was as true a gentleman as ever breathed—he died when I was fourteen, but mother and I lived on his very memory. *Who* thought so, Mrs. Ludlow?" she demanded almost sternly.

"We—I—I thought so," the older woman stammered, her eyes turning again to the picture. "But I've regretted it long since—and I would have found her out, only I didn't know—none of us knew where she was, except that she had gone to Scotland. And she was the only sister I ever ——"

But now the girl was almost upon her. One hand clutched the woman's wrist, and the words came hot from the panting lips.

"Sister!" she cried incredulously, the word accompanied by a quick gush of tears; "what's that you say—tell me, oh, tell me—quick."

Mrs. Ludlow's eyes, all dim and misty now, were on the picture; and she scarcely seemed to hear. The girl shook the arm she held in an ever-tightening grip.

"Tell me," she demanded in a trembling voice—"are you Martha?—my Aunt Martha?—mother's only sister? Oh, tell me, quick."

Mrs. Ludlow turned with one long yearning look upon the quivering face, the fountains of her heart breaking up within her. She whispered something, unable to form the words aright, then slowly held out her arms and sought to draw the trembling girl to her.

But the younger woman leaped to her feet and turned with impassioned eagerness towards a little chest beside the bed.

"Wait," she faltered; "wait—it's here. Here, in the Bible—where I've kept it all the time. It's a letter mother gave me, to my Aunt Martha, just before she died—when she knew I was coming to America. She said ——"

"Is she dead—is your mother dead?" the woman beside her broke in, her face ghostly white.

"Yes," came brokenly from the other—"they're both dead. That is why I came away—I came just after I was left alone," the words touched with an orphan's grief. "And mother said perhaps I'd find you here, in Canada. But she never knew your married name—you see, you were only Martha Larmonth to her. But I know she loved you—and I know she forgave you, or she wouldn't have sent this. And I never dreamt of it —— Here, this is mother's letter. And it's for you—Aunt—*Aunt Martha*," she faltered faintly, trembling as she held out the sacred missive.

The woman beside her took the letter, her hand shaking so she could scarcely open it. Close to the lamp she held it while she read. Once more, and yet once again, she scanned the message from the dead, vainly trying to stem the tide that dimmed her eyes with tears.

Then she pressed it tenderly into the folds of her dress. "It's for me," she murmured; "for no one else but me. Oh, Abbie, Abbie," the voice a wail of unavailing loneliness, "come!" with which she took the now sobbing girl to her bosom and held her in a passion of tenderness and remorse and penitence that swept her soul like a summer's storm.

And, less than an hour later, when the mistress of the Ludlow mansion passed again within its door, she was not alone. And, an hour later still, the fire was blazing with unwonted merriment on the hearth and Hilda sat before it in silent bliss; for they were both beside her—both, the one given, the other restored, but both to be her own forever.

Simon Ludlow was not there. At least, not when the full hour had expired. For the great simple heart could stand no more; he had borne up against this crushing gladness till he could bear no longer—so he had stolen away and gone up-stairs alone. And, as he went, the tears that coursed down the furrowed cheeks told the story of the intolerable joy.

## XXV

## WHAT THE NEW MOON BROUGHT

WAS it *quite* by accident that Simon Ludlow, in the waning afternoon of a few days later, should have met Murray McLean as the latter was strolling along one of the streets that led outward from the town? In any case, it certainly was not by accident that he stopped him with such warmth of friendliness and entered into conversation. For Mr. Ludlow knew a thing or two—and he kept abreast of the affairs of the heart much better than his home folks gave him credit for.

"No curling this evening, Mr. Champion?" he began jocularly after a few words had passed.

"No—too mild again," returned the expert, with the air of sadness that a rising thermometer brings to your true curler.

"No meeting to-night?—nothing doing in the Odd-Fellows' hall?" Mr. Ludlow continued.

"No—it's Saturday," Murray answered, smiling, not yet accustomed to this new rôle. "But it brought me some luck—I got good news to-day."

Mr. Ludlow indicated that he wouldn't mind hearing further.

"I've been promoted," Murray went gaily on; "the company wants to take me away from my old friend Mr. Hawkins. At least, from working with him, as I've been doing for some time lately. They have offered me quite a good position in the office—director of supplies, or something like that," and Murray's face showed his satisfaction.

"You'll take it?" surmised Mr. Ludlow.

"Oh, I suppose so—though I've really enjoyed this teamster job. Glorious, these crisp, sharp days. I'll miss the mountains dreadfully, I know, if I go into the office. But I dare say it may work in better with—with this new kind of evening work that I've taken on, among the boys," he added seriously.

"Mountains is all right," rejoined Mr. Ludlow—"that is, to a certain extent. But they're not very fillin'," he added with a grin. "Say," he suddenly digressed, "you won't give up *this evenin' job* you're speakin' about—the meetin's, I mean?" looking somewhat searchingly now into Murray's face. "You won't ever jump that job, will you?"

Murray paused. "I hope not," he answered slowly; "if the boys can stand it, I guess I can."

Mr. Ludlow started to say something else. He seemed, however, to find it difficult, though evidently he had something important on his mind. "Say," he began at last—"you ought to go into it altogether."

Murray started, looking enquiringly at him.

"Yes, altogether," the other repeated. "An' you ought to get rigged up for it, in the reg'lar way. Say, you were pretty near through college, weren't you, when you got—when you stopped goin'?" he revised quickly.

Murray smiled, rather remorsefully too. "I was pretty well on with my Arts course," he replied at length. "Why?"

"Oh, well, nothin'—only I think you ought to finish it clean up. They'd be glad to have you back—now," he added, the last word more significant than he meant it to be.

Murray laughed as indifferently as he could. "That's out of the question, I'm afraid," he replied after a little pause—"I mustn't let myself think about that."

Mr. Ludlow's reply came swiftly. "I know a man that *has* been thinkin' about it a lot," he thrust in eagerly—"'specially just lately. An' he's lookin' for that kind of an—an investment," he broke out triumphantly, well pleased with the word. "An' he don't want ever to see anybody jump a job like this *evenin'* job o' yours—that is, when he's makin' good at it, you know," he added confidentially, both men unconsciously walking by this time with hurried pace in the excitement of the moment.

Murray seemed unable to maintain the dialogue further, with the exception of a few stammering protests, so utterly was his mind in a whirl as the result of these cryptic speeches.

"Say," Mr. Ludlow broke in abruptly; "that's our Great Dane barkin', there—don't you hear him?—that's our place right over there. What's the use of us walkin' no place in partik'lar? Come on over to the park—that's where we first ran agen each other, you mind—an' let's try if we can see the baby beaver!"

"What?" ejaculated Murray, his brain in more of a swirl than ever.

"The baby beaver," Mr. Ludlow repeated calmly. "That girl o' mine promised you to see it some day, didn't she?" his eyes turning away from Murray's face, fixed now on the imperturbable mountains in the distance. "The baby's bigger, of course, now—but still it's there somewheres. Come on," his eyes still fixed on a distant peak.

Murray followed, his heart beating like a wild thing, his sight unsteady from the storm that now swept his soul. He had not known till then how deep and dull that heart's ache had been.

They changed their course, turning a sharp corner in the direction of the distant baying, still to be heard from Mr. Ludlow's faithful hound. The mountains gave back the sound.

But they had proceeded less than a hundred yards when Murray suddenly stopped. Some one was calling him, hurrying forth from an adjoining yard. He recognized the man in a moment—it was Dick, the spokesman of the delegation that had come to see him about the meetings.

"I won't keep you a minute, sir," he began as he came up—"only I got ahold of him."

"Ahold of him!—ahold of whom?" echoed Murray.

"Oh, you know—I got ahold o' that cuss you've been after so long. That there geezer you said spoke to you the day you was out at Bear Creek Camp; the guy that *done time*, you know—that changed his name when he jumped the cooler."

"What's that again?" Murray was compelled to enquire; this richly coloured vocabulary was a little too much even for him.

"Oh, you know," Dick repeated a trifle testily; "I got next to that there lobster that cottoned up to you the day you preached at Bear Creek Camp—he got a line on *you* all right. Gave you part of his autybiography, you mind—said he used to wear a biled shirt down East an' go to Sunday-school. An' he told you he done time—put up a while in jail," Dick explained with distasteful baldness—" an' then he chucked his name. All the boys knew he'd been in the coop, anyhow—an', what's more, they knew he left without no partin' words. They seen traces o' buckshot in his breeches—in the seat of honour, too; so that indicated he was endeavourin' to get *out*—an' not to get *in*," Dick elaborated with great care. "Well, I got ahold of him, sir."

"Oh, did you?" the now enlightened Murray replied. "Of course I remember him—I've been looking for him myself. He's the chap who said his father was a Presbyterian minister down in Ontario."

"That's him," rejoined Dick cordially; "an' it's true as gospel—'tisn't hard to tell *he* was brought up Presbyterian, I tell you. When he gets about two fingers of 'Oh, be Joyful' into him—he liquidates, you know—he rebukes the boys for swearin'; when he gets a couple more, he mos' gen'rally sings a little hymn; when he puts two more out o' pain—his in'ards is made o' sponge, sir—he always starts on a psalm; an' when he has a little more—why, then, he always wants to argify about Perdestination an' Freewill. Oh, yes, he's a Presbyterian all right," Dick concluded confidently; "he's got his little faults like the rest of the boys—but he ain't no liar, sir."

"Did you tell him I hadn't forgotten what he promised me, or half promised me, at least—that he'd come to the meetings after he came to town? Did you remind him of that?" Murray asked, striving to preserve his gravity.

"Sure thing," responded Dick. "But he said you was referrin' to the meetin's in the Presbyterian Church—the ones that old sardine's runnin' there—Dr. Seymour, or whatever his name is, you know."

"So I was," answered Murray: "Did he go?"

"Not jes' exactly," Dick answered with a grin—"real funny, sir, the way he took on when I wanted him to go *there*. Most sing'lar, considerin' as his own guv'nor was the same kind as the fellow that's runnin' the show over there. I kind o' fancy there's been an argyment, like, between him an' the Reverend gentleman down East, from the way he talked—but then that's kind o' like the Presbyterian way o' doin', too, ain't it now?" Dick enquired seriously.

"Not necessarily," Murray responded briefly—"and isn't he coming to the meetings at all, then?"

"That's the pint exactly," Dick responded ponderously; "he's a-goin' to come, Mr. McLean—he's comin' Monday night—to *our* meetin', Mr. McLean. But he says he's goin' to sit near the door. He had Scriptur' for *that*, too, mind you—though I don't remember exactly what it was—somethin' about a fresh Johnnie that got called down an' chucked into a lower seat, I think."

"I recognize the text," Murray answered, smiling—"but it doesn't matter where he sits, so long as he's there. I'm mighty glad he's coming, Dick."

"I knew you'd be," was Dick's response—"that's why I told you. I won't keep you no longer, sir—only he'll be there Monday night," with which the bearer of good tidings turned and went back the way he had come.

"You'll get that fellow yet, between you an' Dick," Mr. Ludlow opined as he walked on with Murray; "you've got a lovely job, Mr. McLean. Don't ever jump it—leastways, not for good an' all."

A few of its antlered tenants were still stalking about the park as Murray and his host strolled through, the dead leaves rustling about their feet. Mr. Ludlow led the way towards the beaver dam.

"They're not so easy seen," he informed his guest as they went on, "when the winter's settlin' in—the little beggars stick pretty close to their burrows when it's colder. There's the dam, see, a little ways beyond that pine. Why, who's that callin'?" he suddenly interjected—"blest if it ain't Martin—here here, Martin!" he answered lustily. "It'll be some one waitin' for me at the house," he complained to

Murray; "seems as if I couldn't never get left alone," turning as he spoke to the servant now within hearing distance.

"Just what I 'lowed," he grumbled, Martin's message having been conveyed; "it's one o' them pesky engineers that's always plaguin' me. I'm terrible sorry, Mr. McLean—but I reckon I'll have to go. I'll send some one, though, to show you that there baby beaver—that is, if he ain't in his little crib. You wait right here," with which, after some additional apology, he followed the retreating Martin and moved onward to the house.

Murray waited, madly impatient, amid the fast failing light. And by and by, a white skirt fluttering as the maiden came out into the gathering gloom, appeared the tall and graceful figure he would have recognized anywhere in all the arid plain of life.

She came on, ever nearer—and as if glad to come! He marvelled, trembling, knowing not what to think or say or do. Truth to tell, he knew nothing—nothing but this, that his heart hungered for her, that his life, poor and worthless as it seemed, had its hope of usefulness, of peace, of rapture, only in the fullness and power that her love alone could give. Which she had denied—and he knew not why, as now, she came ever nearer, the sweet beauty of innocence and goodness on the placid face.

He moved towards her—then stopped and stood still. But she came on, the pure breath of the evening about her as she moved lightly through the grass, glancing once or twice at the serene sky above, at the mountains mingling gently with the dusk, at the swaying pines that sang their lullaby from the breast of the mighty hills.

As she came up to him, she held out her hand. Its touch, so warm and soft, thrilled him to the heart.

"I'm so glad you came," she began frankly. "And I hope you'll have time to come in and see us all before you go back—mother told me to ask you. Did you want to see the baby beaver?—you remember you didn't see it before." The girl's self-control was wonderful.

"No," said Murray, his lips parted wide.

She was not prepared for this—and something of a silence followed. "You haven't any meeting tonight?" she said at length.

"No," he answered, his breath still coming fast.

This was embarrassing. "Everybody's delighted that your work is going on so well," she tried again—"but I don't believe anybody's as glad as I am."

He gave no answer—and the awful cry of some wild thing could be heard, in the ensuing silence, far up on the mountainside. A new moon was timidly peeping above the mountain's crest--but the wild cry went on.

"Did you hear the news about Mr. Garloch?" she ventured again, now hard put to it for material.

"Who's he?" Murray enquired vacantly.

"Oh," she answered, with just a shade of impatience, "you know--he's the minister of the Presbyterian Church in Rockcliffe. He went away for his health. Well, it seems he likes where he's gone so well that he has taken a church there—they just heard to-day—and that leaves the church here without a minister. Whom do you suppose they'll get?"

"I don't know," Murray replied absently—"but they'll get somebody, I guess." The night wind was beginning to sigh in the trees—and a new voice broke the silence now from the wooded wilds, answering to that of its savage mate.

"Do you think they'll call Dr. Seymour?" the girl pursued, biting her lip as she spoke. This was hard ploughing—she could see the burning eyes—and her own heart was tugging at the leash.

Murray rallied himself with a mighty effort. "I don't think so," he said, trying hard to speak rationally. "But he'd be a splendid man for them," he went resolutely on, spurring himself to the effort, "if he—if he—that is, if he could only learn to love the boys. You know what I mean?"

"I heard," and Hilda's words ran swiftly, her bosom heaving against her will; "I heard—it's funny how things leak out—that he had a boy of his own. And that he doesn't know where he is—a kind of a black sheep, I fancy. I think he told the Rector something about it—and that he's away somewhere about the Coast, in the States, I believe. But that he didn't know himself."

"That's all too common out here," Murray answered as interestedly as he could. "I was just talking about a chap like that a few minutes ago. I fancy Dr. Seymour is rather discouraged in his work," he added disjointedly.

She waited for him to go on. But silence fell again, deep and dense.

Suddenly the girl took up the vein he had abandoned. "*You* won't ever be, will you, Mr. McLean? I mean, you'll never give up the work you've started—it's so noble, and so necessary—and you're having such success in it, aren't you? *You* will never give it up, will you, Mr. McLean?"

She paused, trembling now, the possible import of her words flooding all her heart with fear—with heavenly fear.

He moved closer to her. And she dimly felt that he had been coming from all eternity. His face was white, his lips were quivering, his eyes aglow with a fire she had never seen before—its power was upon her even when her own eyes fell before it. He tried to speak; a word or two came huskily—then he seemed compelled to stop, yet trembling in the effort to go on.

The girl started, her own face now touched with pallor. "I'm afraid I have—have been too personal," she faltered, her voice betraying her. And she knew it. For, in a moment, the inspiration suddenly seizing her: "Oh, look—look!" she cried gaily, an artificial mirthfulness in the voice, "look—see—there's the new moon—there, just above Old Observation! Wish—hurry up and wish—you know it never fails, if you wish just when you see it first. And I'll wish too," she stumbled on, quivering now like a frightened thing, the moon and its omen all forgotten as her eyes met the all-mastering gaze of his.

He came closer—and his arms were outstretched—and the light of an eternal yearning was on his face.

"Did you wish?" she cried in swift dismay, shrinking back and trembling. "Don't—oh, don't!"

But he heard not. Nearer he came—yet with the masterful all vanished now from face and mien. Broken and pleading, touched with the power of a soul bowed in homage before the one he loved and worshipped, his words came with the music of a great cry to her own quivering heart.

"Yes, my darling," he began hoarsely—"*that* is all I wish. Oh, my love, I wish for you! That's all I need, to make me strong, and true—and forever happy; *you*, my darling—your love—your life—your self! Oh, my love,—don't, don't," as she vainly tried to save herself, her own insurgent heart dumbly clamouring for the life, the rapture, that lay embosomed in that holy hour.

Her heart conquered all—and Hilda Ludlow suffered the sacred tide to overflow and stifle every poor protesting word, every feeble movement that sought to stay its course. And she fluttered in—far in; his arms gathering her forever to himself—to the strong shelter of a strong man's love.

And the brightening night was vocal now with those voices her soul had never heard before; and all life found its meaning and its crown in that moment of overmastering bliss.

## XXVI

## A SECOND SPRING

EVER since that night when Murray, unheeding the call of the Reverend Dr. Seymour, had passed out, crushed and broken, into the darkness, the minister's heart had been strangely restless and ill at ease. The unhappy impulse, in obedience to which he had so sternly silenced his young assistant, had more and more been regretted as the days went by. The memory of that scene in the church seemed to haunt him; and the oftener he recalled the earnest face of Murray McLean, and the part he himself had played in the tragic episode, the more he came to reproach himself for his action.

Not that he receded, even inwardly, from his position on the matter in question—order and dignity, as he still contended, must at all hazards be maintained—but his conscience troubled him upon every memory of the youthful ardour he had tried so ruthlessly to quench.

Yet he went resolutely on his way. But the chariot wheels drave heavily this particular night at

Dr. Seymour's service. It was enough to depress any man, to confront, as he had to do, an audience so decimated; and composed, as the scornful layman had predicted, almost exclusively of women and children. The men, evidently enough, had turned their steps to the Odd-Fellows' hall and to the ministrations of the younger missioner.

Wherefore, depressed and weary, almost resolved to make a speedy end of the entire enterprise, the Doctor brought his meeting to an early close and turned his desponding steps towards the lonely precincts of his room at the hotel.

He himself was at a loss to account for the strange despondency, the lack of self-confidence, that took ever deepening possession of him as he walked along through the silent night. And increasingly, as he thought it over, did his misgivings gather strength. Failure, benignest of blessings to many hearts, was beginning to bear fruit in his. And by and by, his spirit more and more broken as he pondered, the self-distrust deepened into self-accusation, the folly of his course becoming more and more apparent. The Reverend Armitage Seymour was just big enough, and just good enough, despite the trammels of his ecclesiastical prejudice and training, to recognize the tragedy of fruitlessness and failure when at last it was forced upon him. And he secretly longed—indeed, furtively prayed—that some light might arise in the darkness which had so gradually but so surely gathered in about him.

He had not deliberately selected the street which led past the Odd-Fellows' hall; and the full-voiced refrain of a familiar hymn fell on his ear with something of surprise. The Doctor stopped and looked up. Nothing anæmic about *that* singing; and, so far as he could judge, nothing emaciated about *that* audience—thus he reflected as he still gazed up at the brilliantly lighted place. Something of bitterness mingled with his thoughts as he recalled the dreary experiences of the last few evenings of his own waning mission.

As if unconsciously—he himself could never explain just why he did it—he turned towards the stairs and slowly began his ascent to the hall above. He found it crowded to the doors; but two or three, evidently recognizing him and deferential to "the cloth," made way for his entrance. He found a place in the aisle among those who were standing at the back of the long and narrow auditorium.

By this time Murray had begun to speak again; not in sermon, but in personal appeal. For five or ten minutes the burden of his remarks was of a general character, pressing home some thoughts of the more pretentious address he had given earlier in the evening—and even the order-loving Doctor could not but admire the sanity and restraint that characterized every word. What an ally, he thought regretfully, this man—with his dual gift—would have been to me, if he had but confined himself to speech like this! If he had only left the *standing up* and the *penitent bench* alone!

But even as the older man stood musing thus, the younger launched out into the very irregularity that had so unhappily sundered them. For, suddenly pausing, he broke out now into an impassioned appeal for all who would—how sinful soever they might be—to take their stand for Christ. Boldly, with burning earnestness, he bade them openly acknowledge Him and come out once and forever on His side.

"I know," he concluded, the voice thrilling in its intensity, "I know there are some here to-night who have wandered far—but you are looking, wistfully, yearningly, for the lights of home! Oh, come now! Come now, and find rest unto your weary souls!" as he leaned forward with hands outstretched, the passionate eyes pleading as eloquently as the mobile lips. "Who will come? Who will rise and walk down this aisle and kneel here before his God?—here, with me, together, beside another sinful man as un-worthy as yourself? Come—and we will both kneel before our Father's throne!"

This was too much for the now frowning minister standing in the aisle. This was alien to all his conception of the dignity of worship—this! the expedient of professional exhorters; the resource of ignorant ranters; the show feature of Salvationists and Camp-meetingers!

Too much, indeed, was this for the Reverend Armitage Seymour, graduate of Scottish University and Hall, ordained by that ancient Kirk, guardian of her dignity, exponent of her orderly and stately ways. He turned, an expression of ill-concealed contempt on the cultured face, and began to make his way back to the door. Which he had almost reached, only a step now between him and the outer dark, when a voice fell on his ear, a single word was spoken, a footfall heard upon the bare floor of the hall.

"I'm coming," a broken voice had cried, the words suppressing a sob.

And something in that voice smote the outgoing minister with a mighty fear, a crushing anguish, an overwhelming joy.

Like to what befalls a man beneath the choking billows, was that crowded moment of his life. For that choking cry had brought again before him the scenes of far other days. Again he saw the outgoing form of his son, in anger turning his back on his father's house; again he groped amid the darkness that could be felt; again he wandered in that deserted room, dumbly surveying its relics of a joy forever dead; again he heard the low wail from a mother's anguished lips—and then, like inky clouds that would not lift, there flowed about him the memory of the long bitter years, steeped in silentness, through which hope had slowly languished to its end.

He turned—like one who had heard the voice of God. He gazed—like one who was searching the secrets of eternity.

For he saw a form, still strong and straight despite the wastery of the years, that was now slowly moving outward to the aisle. The head was bowed—but he would have known it among a thousand. That glossy hair, slightly curling still—had he not stroked and fondled it a thousand times! Those eyes, averted and cast down though they were—had they not looked love to his and read their answer in his own, with a rapture that had tortured him in many a fruitless dream! Those bronzed and weather-beaten cheeks—were they not his mother's still—and had they not been pressed to his own in loving impact that had filled his heart with a joy the years were powerless to dim!

He waited, gazing, breathless as the pillar beside which he stood. Those who stood beside him looked in wonder --for they felt, in dim obscurity, the power and the pathos of it all. The burning cheeks, the parted lips, the eyes that were astorm with the tumult of a soul—all these touched every heart with reverence and every lip with silence as the men about him stood and wondered.

The penitent had reached the front by this time, and was kneeling now beside the missioner—while silence wrapped the throng like a garment. There they knelt, those two—and Murray's prayer was so low that only those close to him could hear.

Then the trembling minister made his way, for all fell back before him, down the aisle to where he could see the kneeling pair. Slowly at first, struggling to retain his self-control; but, as he came nearer, they could see him tremble as his pace quickened—and his outstretched hands were shaking as he bended low beside his son.

Yet he did not speak. Low he bowed, his hands extended still; low, like one struggling to come near to God. The shaking frame attested the sobs that the broken heart poured forth—and the hot tears that fell like rain told the story of the bitter years that were now past and gone.

Brief and simple was Murray's prayer; and, when it was finished, he lingered where he knelt.

"Leonard!" came a broken voice, the face of t older man now turned in ineffable longing on t prodigal beside him.

The other started. Still kneeling, he turned abo and looked into his father's face! Then, with a mu fled cry that spoke the very language of his soul, flung himself with outstretched arms upon the quive ing form—and the long lonely years found th recompense in the rapture of that embrace of love.

Dense silence reigned; almost every head in t hall was bowed. "Oh, Leonard, my son—my so Leonard; oh, Leonard, my son, my son!" was that those nearest could hear as the words came last from the penitent who had found his chil who had himself been found of his Father and God.

Murray was standing now, gazing, the purport it all borne in upon him like a tide—he needed words to interpret the matchless story.

"You pray," he said softly to the minister, wh was still bowed before him.

Dr. Seymour seemed to hesitate for a momen And then, without rising, almost without movin his trembling voice began:

"Oh, Lord, wilt Thou take *me* back now—Th seest how a poor sinful father takes back his ow son—and Thou wilt not do less Thyself. Oh, Go can it be—can it be—that like as a father ——?" the rest lost in the billow of an overflowing heart.

Murray had already announced the closing Psalm. The forty-sixth was the one he had chosen; and he had already read the opening lines.

But Dr. Seymour, who was standing now, beckoned him to stop. Murray leaned over from where he stood and the older man whispered something in his ear.

"We've decided to take a hymn instead," Murray intimated a moment later to the audience. He announced it, reading it through to the end.

And there may still be found, in the Kootenay some, some amid the snows of the Yukon, some on the golden slope of the Pacific, those who strive in vain to describe the wondrous burst of melody with which the service closed that night. For Leonard stood beside his father—and Henry Hawkins, glorying in his tears, had crept up beside them both. And about the father and the son there surged the mighty strain from strong men's throats, rude toilers of the woods, grimy delvers of the mines. Deep and triumphant came the swelling tide of song, touched here and there by the silvery colouring of a maiden's voice. Every head was lifted high, every soul aflame with love, every face beautiful with hope —and the very mountains that stood without seemed to fling back in gladness what the strong men flung forth in joy:

> " And the angels echoed around the throne
> Rejoice! for the Lord brings back His own."

THE END