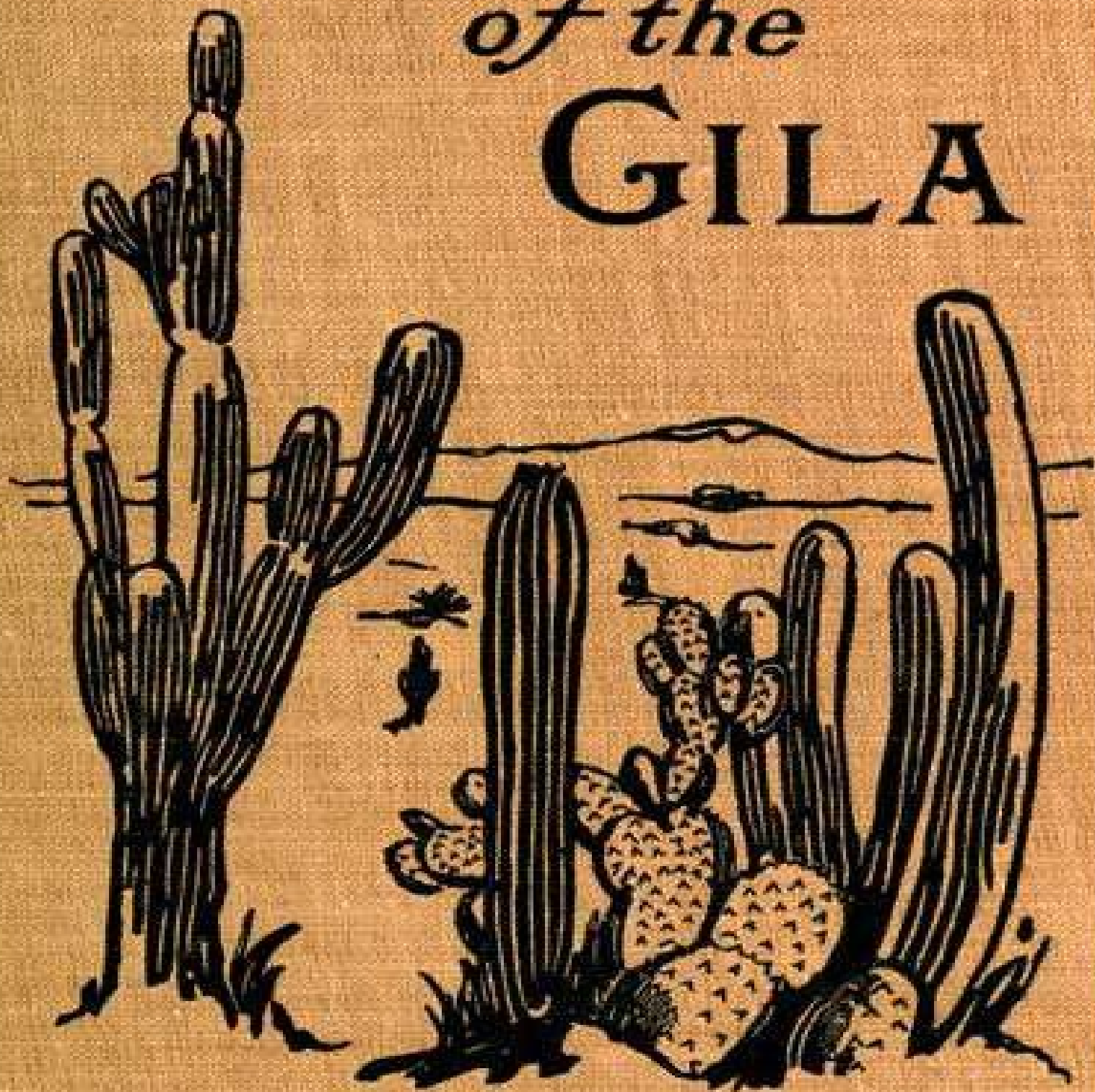


THE ANGEL *of the* GILA



CORA MARSLAND

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Front Cover

She forgot the flowers in her arms, forgot the sunset, and stood entranced in prayer.

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THE ANGEL OF THE GILA

A Tale of Arizona

CORA MARSLAND

With Illustrations by
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TO MY MOTHER

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THE ANGEL OF THE GILA

The Angel of The Gila



CHAPTER I

THE MINING CAMP

IT was an October day in Gila,^[1] Arizona. The one street of the mining camp wound around the foothills, and led eastward to Line Canyon, which, at that point, divides Arizona from New Mexico. Four saloons, an opium den, a store of general merchandise,—owned and operated by the mining company,—a repair shop, one large, pretentious adobe house,—the headquarters of the company, where superintendent, assayers, and mining engineers boarded,—several small dwelling houses, and many miners' shacks, constituted the town.

A little further to the eastward, around a bend in the foothills, and near Line Canyon, lay Clayton Ranch,—the most historic, as well as the most picturesque spot in that region. Near the dwelling house, but closer to the river than the Clayton home, stood a little adobe schoolhouse.

The town, facing south, overlooked Gila River and its wooded banks. Beyond the Gila, as in every direction, stretched foothills and mountains. Toward the south towered Mt. Graham, the highest peak of the Pinaleno range, blue in the distance, and crowned with snow.

Up a pathway of the foothills, west of the town, bounding forward as if such a climb were but joy to her, came a slight, girlish figure. She paused now and then to turn her face westward, watching the changing colors of sunset.

At last she reached a boulder, and, seating herself, leaned against it, removed her sombrero hat, pushed back the moist curls from her forehead, and turned again to the sunset. The sun, for one supreme moment, poised on a mountain peak, then slowly sank, flashing its message of splendor into the majestic dome of the sky, over snow-capped mountains, over gigantic cliffs of red sandstone, over stretches of yellow foothills, and then caught the white-robed figure, leaning against the boulder, in its rosy glow. The girl lifted her fine, sensitive

face. Again she pushed the curls from her forehead. As she lifted her arm, her sleeve slipped back, revealing an arm and hand of exquisite form, and patrician to the tips of the fingers.

She seemed absorbed in the scene before her, unconscious that she was the loveliest part of it. But if she was unconscious of the fact, a horseman who drew rein a short distance away, and who watched her intently a few moments, was not. At last the girl stirred, as though to continue on her way. Instantly the horseman gave his horse a sharp cut with his whip, and went cantering up the ascent before her.

The sudden sound of a horse's hoofs startled her, and she glanced up to see the horseman and his thoroughbred speeding toward the town.

She swung her sombrero hat over her shoulder, and gathered up her flowers; then, with a lingering glance to westward, turned and walked rapidly toward Gila.

By the time she had reached the one long street, many cowboys and miners had already congregated about the saloons. She dreaded to pass there at this hour, but this she must do in order to reach Clayton Ranch, nearly a mile beyond.

As she drew near one saloon, she heard uproarious laughter. The voices were loud and boisterous. It was impossible for her to escape hearing what was said. It was evident to her that she herself was at that moment the topic of conversation.

"She'll git all the Bible school she wants Sunday afternoon, or my name's not Pete Tompkins," ejaculated a bar-tender as he stepped to the bar of a saloon.

"What're ye goin' ter do, Pete?" asked a young miner. "I'm in f'r y'r game, or my name ain't Bill Hines."

"I?" answered the individual designated as Pete Tompkins, "I mean ter give 'er a reception, Bill, a *reception*." Here he laughed boisterously. "I repeat it," he said. "I'll give 'er a reception, an' conterive ter let 'er understan' that no sech infernal business as a Bible school 'll be tol'ated in these yere parts o' Arizony. Them as wants ter join me in smashin' this cussed Sunday business step ter the bar. I'll treat the hull blanked lot o' ye."

The girl passing along the street shuddered. The brutal voice went on:

"Set up the glasses o' whiskey, Keith. Here, Jess an' Kate. We want yer ter

have a hand in smashin' this devilish Bible school. Another glass fur Jess, Keith, an' one fur Kate."

The pedestrian quickened her pace, but still the voice followed her.

"Here's ter y'r healths, an' ter the smashin' o' the Bible school, an' ter the reception we'll give the new schoolma'am."

The stranger heard the clink of glasses, mingled with the uproar of laughter. Then she caught the words:

"Ye don't jine us, Hastings. P'r'aps y're too 'ristercratic, or p'r'aps y're gone on the gal! Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

The saloon rang with the laughter of the men and women.

The girl who had just passed quickened her pace, her cheeks tingling with indignation. As she hastened on, the man addressed as Hastings replied haughtily:

"I am a *man*, and being a man I cannot see insult offered to any woman, especially when that woman is making an effort to do some good in this Godless region."

"He's gone on 'er, sure, Bill. Ha-ha-ha-ha! Imagine me, Pete Tompkins, gone on the schoolma'am! Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

His companions joined in his laughter.

"What'ud she think o' my figger, Bill?" he asked, as he strutted across the saloon. "How 'ud I look by 'er side in Virginny reel, eh? I'm afeared it 'ud be the devil an' angel in comp'ny. Ha-ha-ha!"

"Y're right thar," replied one of the men. "Ye certain are a devil, an' she do look like a angel."

"Say, fellers," said Bill Hines, "me an' Pete an' all o' ye ought ter git some slime from the river, an' throw on them white dresses o' hern. I don't like nobody settin' theirselves up to be better'n we be, even in clo'es, do ye, Jess?"

Jess agreed with him.

"What's all this noise about?" interrupted a new comer.

"Hello, Mark Clifton, is that you? Well, me an' Bill an' Jess an' the other kids is plannin' ter smash schoolma'am's Bible school, Sunday. We're goin' ter give 'er a reception."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Clifton.

"Ye kin jine the party an' we'll show yer."

"Let me urge you to leave Miss Bright alone. She has not harmed you. Leave the Bible school alone, too, and attend to your own business."

"Oh, he's a saint, ain't he! He is!" sneered Pete Tompkins. "What about this gal as he has with him here? More whiskey! Fill up the glasses, Keith. Come, Jess. Come, Kate Harraday." And the half-intoxicated man swung one woman around and tried to dance a jig, failing in which, he fell to the floor puffing and swearing.

Mark Clifton's face darkened. He grasped a chair and stepped forward, as if to strike the speaker. He hesitated. As he did so, a handsome cowboy entered, followed by a little Indian boy of perhaps six years of age.

"What's the row, Hastings?" asked the cowboy in a low voice.

"Pete Tompkins and Bill Hines and their ilk are planning to give Miss Bright, the new teacher, some trouble when she attempts to start a Bible school tomorrow afternoon. Clifton remonstrated, and they taunted him about Carla Earle. That enraged him."

"What do they plan ter do?"

"I fancy they'll do every blackguard thing they can think of. They are drunk now, but when they are sober they may reconsider. At any rate, the decent men of the camp ought to be on the spot to protect that girl, Harding."

"I'll be there fur one, Hastings. Have yer seen 'er?"

"Yes. As I rode into camp just now I passed someone I took to be Miss Bright."

"Pretty as a picter, ain't she?" said Jack Harding.

"Look, there she goes around the bend of the road towards Claytons'. There goes y'r teacher, Wathemah."

The Indian child bounded to the door.

"Me teacher, *me* teacher," he said over and over to himself, as he watched the receding figure.

"*Your* teacher, eh, sonny," said Kenneth Hastings smiling. He laid his hand on the child's head.

"Yes, *me* teacher," said the boy proudly.

His remark was overheard by Pete Tompkins.

"Looke here, boys! There goes Wathemah's teacher. Now's y'r chance, my hearties. See the nat'ral cur'osity as is to start a religion shop, an' grind us fellers inter angels. Are my wings sproutin'?"

As he spoke the words, he flapped his elbows up and down. Kenneth Hastings and Jack Harding exchanged glances. Mark Clifton had gone.

Pete Tompkins hereupon stepped to the door and called out:

"Three cheers fur the angel o' the Gila, my hearties. One, two, three! Now! That's it. Now! Death to the Bible school!"

"Death to the Bible school!" shouted they in unison.

The little Indian heard their words. He knew that insult and, possibly, injury threatened his teacher, and, stepping up to Pete Tompkins, he kicked his shins with all his childish strength, uttering oaths that drew forth hilarious laughter from the men.

"Y're a good un," said one.

"Give 'im a trounce in the air," added another.

In a moment, the child was tossed from one to another, his passionate cries and curses mingling with their ribald laughter. At last he was caught by John Harding, who held him in his arms.

"Never mind, Wathemah," he said soothingly.

Hoarse with rage, the child shrieked, "You blankety blanked devils! You blankety blanked devils!"

A ruffian cursed him.

He was wild. He struggled to free himself, to return to the fray, but Jack Harding held him fast.

"You devils, devils, devils!" he shrieked again. His little frame trembled with anger, and he burst into tears.

"Never mind, little chap," said his captor, drawing him closer, "ye go with me."

For once John Harding left the saloon without touching liquor. The Indian child was clasped in his arms. When he reached a place beyond the sound of the men's voices, he set the little lad on his feet. He patted him on the head, and looked down compassionately into the tear-stained face.

"Poor little chap," he said, "poor little chap. Y're like me, ain't ye? Ye ain't got nobody in the world. Let's be pards, Wathemah!"

"Pards?" repeated the child between sobs.

"Yes, pards, sonny. That's what I said."

Wathemah clasped his arms about Jack's knees.

"Me *teacher* pard too?" he asked, trying bravely to stop crying.

"Yourn, not mine, sonny," answered Harding, smiling. Then hand in hand, they strolled toward Clayton Ranch. And this was the strengthening of the comradeship between the two, which was as loyal as it was tender.

Kenneth Hastings overtook them, then passed them. He reached Clayton Ranch, hesitated a moment, then walked rapidly toward Line Canyon.

For some indefinable reason he did not call that evening at Clayton Ranch as was his custom, nor did he knock at that door for many days. On the following Monday, he was called to a distant mining camp, where he was detained by business. So it happened that he was one of the last to meet the new teacher whose coming was to mean so much to his life and to the people of Gila.



CHAPTER II

THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY

FOR many days, public attention had been centered upon Esther Bright, the new teacher in Gila. Her grasp of the conditions of the school, her power to cope with the lawless element there, and her absolute mastery of the situation had now become matters of local history. Her advent in Gila had been a nine days' wonder to the Gilaites; now, her presence there had come to be regarded as a matter of course.

Every new feature introduced into the school life, every new acquaintance made, deepened her hold upon the better life of the community. Moreover, her vital interest in the people awakened in them a responsive interest in her.

Fearlessly she tramped the foothills and canyons, returning laden with flowers and geological specimens. Learning her interest in these things, many people of the camp began to contribute to her collections.

Here in the Rockies, Nature pours out her treasures with lavish hand. White men had long dwelt in the midst of her marvelous wealth of scenic beauty, amazingly ignorant of any values there save that which had a purchasing power and could be counted in dollars and cents.

The mountains were ministering to the soul life of Esther Bright. The strength of the hills became hers. Nature's pages of history lay open before her; but more interesting to her than cell or crystal, or tree or flower, or the shining company of the stars, were the human beings she found fettered by ignorance and sin. The human element made demands upon her mind and heart. Here was something for her to do. If they had been a colony of blind folk or cripples, their condition could not have appealed more strongly to her sympathy. Profanity, gambling, drunkenness and immorality were about her everywhere. The vices of the adults had long been imitated as play by the children. So one of Esther Bright's first

innovations in school work was to organize play and teach games, and be in the midst of children at play. She was philosopher enough to realize that evil habits of years could not be uprooted at once; but she did such heroic weeding that the playground soon became comparatively decent. How to save the children, and how to help the older people of the community were absorbing questions to her. She was a resourceful woman, and began at once to plan wisely, and methodically carried out her plans. In her conferences with Mr. Clayton, her school trustee, she repeatedly expressed her conviction that the greatest work before them was to bring this great human need into vital relation with God. So it came about very naturally that a movement to organize a Bible school began in Gila.

Into every home, far and near, went Esther Bright, always sympathetic, earnest and enthusiastic. Her enthusiasm proved contagious. There had been days of this house to house visitation, and now the day of the organization of the Bible school was at hand.

In the morning, Esther went to the schoolhouse to see that all was in readiness. She paused, as she so often did, to wonder at the glory of the scene. The schoolhouse itself was a part of the picture. It was built of huge blocks of reddish brown adobe, crumbled at the corners. The red tile roof added a picturesque bit of color to the landscape. Just above the roof, at the right, rose an ample chimney. At the left, and a little back of the schoolhouse, towered two giant cactuses. To the north, stretched great barren foothills, like vast sand dunes by the sea, the dreariness of their gray-white, or reddish soil relieved only by occasional bunches of gray-green sage, mesquite bushes, cacti and the Spanish dagger, with its sword-like foliage, and tall spikes of seed-pods.

Beyond the foothills, miles away, though seeming near, towered rugged, cathedral-like masses of snow-capped mountains. The shadows flitted over the earth, now darkening the mountain country, now leaving floods of light.

All along the valley of the Gila River, stretched great fields of green alfalfa. Here and there, above the green, towered feathery pampas plumes.

The river, near the schoolhouse, made a bend northward. Along its banks were cottonwood trees, aspen, and sycamore, covered with green mistletoe, and tangles of vines. No wonder Esther paused to drink in the beauty. It was a veritable garden of the gods.

At last she entered the schoolhouse. She carried with her Bibles, hymn books,

and lesson leaves, all contributions from her grandfather. Already, the room was decorated with mountain asters of brilliant colors. She looked around with apparent satisfaction, for the room had been made beautiful with the flowers. She passed out, locked the door, and returned to the Clayton home.

In the saloons, all that morning, the subject of gossip had been the Bible school. John Harding and Kenneth Hastings, occasionally sauntering in, gathered that serious trouble was brewing for the young teacher.

The hour for the meeting drew near. As Esther approached the schoolhouse, she found perhaps forty people, men, women and children, grouped near the door. Some of the children ran to meet her, Wathemah, the little Indian, outrunning all of them. He trudged along proudly by his teacher's side.

Esther Bright heard groans and hisses. As she looked at the faces before her, two stood out with peculiar distinctness,—one, a proud, high-bred face; the other, a handsome, though dissipated one.

There were more hisses and then muttered insults. There was no mistaking the sounds or meaning. The Indian child sprang forward, transformed into a fury. He shook his little fist at the men, as he shouted, "Ye Wathemah teacher hurt, Wathemah kill ye blankety blanked devils."

A coarse laugh arose from several men.

"What're yer givin' us, kid?" said one man, staggering forward.

"Wathemah show ye, ye blankety blanked devil," shrieked he again.

Wild with rage, the child rushed forward, uttering oaths that made his teacher shudder. She too stepped rapidly forward, and clasped her arms about him. He fought desperately for release, but she held him, speaking to him in low, firm tones, apparently trying to quiet him. At last, he burst into tears of anger.

For a moment, the mutterings and hisses ceased, but they burst forth again with greater strength. The child sprang from his teacher, leaped like a squirrel to the back of one of the ruffians, climbed to his shoulder, and dealt lightning blows upon his eyes and nose and mouth. The man grasped him and hurled him with terrific force to the ground. The little fellow lay in a helpless heap where he had fallen. Esther rushed to the child and bent over him. All the brute seemed roused in the drunken man. He lunged toward her with menacing fists, and a torrent of oaths.

"Blank yer!" he said, "Yer needn't interfere with me. Blank y'r hide. Yer'll git out o' Gila ter-morrer, blank yer!"

But he did not observe the three stern faces at the right and left of Esther Bright and the prostrate child. Three men with guns drawn protected them.

The men who had come to insult and annoy knew well that if they offered further violence to the young teacher and the unconscious child, they would have to reckon with John Clayton, Kenneth Hastings and John Harding. Wordless messages were telegraphed from eye to eye, and one by one the ruffians disappeared.

Esther still knelt by Wathemah. He had been stunned by the fall. Water revived him; and after a time, he was able to walk into the schoolhouse.

Oh, little child of the Open, so many years misunderstood, how generously you respond with love to a little human kindness! How bitterly you resent a wrong!

Afterwards, in describing what Miss Bright did during this trying ordeal, a Scotch miner said:

"The lass's smile fair warmed the heart. It was na muckle, but when she comforted the Indian bairn I could na be her enemy."

As Esther entered the door, she saw two middle-aged Scotch women clasp hands and exchange words of greeting. She did not dream then, nor did she know until months after, how each of these longed for her old home in Scotland; nor did she know, at that time, how the heart of each one of them had warmed towards her.

Several women and children and a few men followed the teacher into the schoolroom. All looked around curiously.

Esther looked into the faces before her, some dull, others hard; some worn by toil and exposure; others disfigured by dissipation. They were to her, above everything else, human beings to be helped; and ministration to their needs became of supreme interest to her.

There were several Scotch people in the audience. As the books and lesson leaves were passed, Esther gave out a hymn the children knew, and which she fancied might be familiar to the Scotch people present,—*"My Ain Countrie."*

She lifted her guitar, played a few opening chords, and sang,

"I am far frae my hame, an' I'm weary aftenwhiles
For the longed-for hame-bringin', an' my Faither's welcome
smiles;
An' I'll ne'er be fu' content, until mine een do see
The gowden gates o' Heaven, an' my ain countrie."

At first a few children sang with her, but finding their elders did not sing, they, too, stopped to listen.

The two Scotch women, who sat side by side, listened intently. One reached out and clasped the hand of the other; and then, over the cheeks furrowed by toil, privation and heart-hunger, tears found their unaccustomed way.

The singer sang to the close of the stanza, then urged all to sing with her. A sturdy Scotchman, after clearing his throat, spoke up:

"Please, Miss, an' will ye sing it all through y'rsel? It reminds me o' hame."

Applause followed. The singer smiled, then lifting her guitar, sang in a musical voice, the remaining stanzas.

When she prayed, the room grew still. The low, tender voice was speaking as to a loving, compassionate Father. One miner lifted his head to see the Being she addressed, and whose presence seemed to fill the room. All he saw was the shining face of the teacher. Months later, he said confidentially to a companion that he would acknowledge that though he had never believed in "such rot as a God an' all them things," yet when the teacher prayed that day, he somehow felt that there was a God, and that he was right there in that room. And he added:

"I felt mighty queer. I reckon I wasn't quite ready ter have Him look me through an' through."

From similar testimony given by others at various times, it is clear that many that day heard themselves prayed for for the first time in their lives. And they did not resent it.

The prayer ended. A hush followed. Then the lesson of the day was taught, and the school was organized. At the close, the teacher asked all who wished to help in the Bible school to remain a few moments.

Many came to express their good will. One Scotch woman said, "I dinna wonder the bairns love ye. Yir talk the day was as gude as the sermons i' the Free Kirk at hame."

Then another Scotch woman took both of Esther Bright's hands in her own, and assured her it was a long day since she had listened to the Word.

"But," she added, "whatever Jane Carmichael can dae tae help ye, Lassie, she'll dae wi' a' her heart."

The first of the two stepped forward, saying apologetically, "I forgot tae say as I am Mistress Burns, mither o' Marget an' Jamesie."

"And I," added the other, "am the mither o' Donald."

Mr. Clayton, elected superintendent at the organization of the Bible school, now joined the group about the teacher. At last the workers only remained, and after a brief business meeting, they went their several ways. Evidently they were thinking new thoughts.

Mrs. Burns overtook Mrs. Carmichael and remarked to her, "I dinna ken why the Almighty came sae near my heart the day, for I hae wandered. God be thankit, that He has sent the lassie amang us."

"Aye," responded Mrs. Carmichael, "let us be thankfu', an' come back hame tae God."

Esther Bright was the last to leave the schoolhouse. As she strolled along slowly, deep in thought over the events of the day, she was arrested by the magnificence of the sunset. She stopped and stood looking into the crystal clearness of the sky, so deep, so illimitable. Across the heavens, which were suddenly aflame with crimson and gold, floated delicate, fleecy clouds. Soon, all the colors of the rainbow were caught and softened by these swift-winged messengers of the sky. Away on the mountains, the snow glowed as if on fire. Slowly the colors faded. Still she stood, with face uplifted. Then she turned, her face shining, as though she had stood in the very presence of God.

Suddenly, in her path, stepped the little Indian, his arms full of goldenrod. He waited for her, saying as he offered the flowers:

"Flowers, me teacher."

She stooped, drew him to her, and kissed his dirty face, saying as she did so, "Flowers? How lovely!"

He clasped her hand, and they walked on together.

The life story of the little Indian had deeply touched her. It was now three years since he had been found, a baby of three, up in Line Canyon. That was just after one of the Apache raids. It was believed that he was the child of Geronimo. When the babe was discovered by the white men who pursued the Indians, he was blinking in the sun. A cowboy, one Jack Harding, had insisted upon taking the child back to the camp with them. Then the boy had found a sort of home in Keith's saloon, where he had since lived. There he had been teased and petted, and cuffed and beaten, and cursed by turns, and being a child of unusually bright mind, and the constant companion of rough men, he had learned every form of evil a child can possibly know. His naturally winsome nature had been changed by teasing and abuse until he seemed to deserve the sobriquet they gave him,—"little savage." Now at the age of perhaps six years, he had been sent to the Gila school; and there Esther Bright found him. The teacher was at once attracted to the child.

Many years after, when Wathemah had become a distinguished man, he would tell how his life began when a lovely New England girl, a remarkable teacher, found him in that little school in Gila. He never failed to add that all that he was or might become, he owed entirely to her.

The Indian child's devotion to the teacher began that first day at school, and was so marked it drew upon him persecution from the other children. Never could they make him ashamed. When the teacher was present, he ignored their comments and glances, and carried himself as proudly as a prince of the realm; but when she was absent, many a boy, often a boy larger than himself, staggered under his furious attacks. The child had splendid physical courage. Take him for all in all, he was no easy problem to solve. The teacher studied him, listened to him, reasoned with him, loved him; and from the first, he seemed to know intuitively that she was to be trusted and obeyed.

On this day, he was especially happy as he trudged along, his hand in that of his Beloved.

"Did you see how beautiful the sunset is, Wathemah?" asked the teacher, looking down at the picturesque urchin by her side. He gave a little grunt, and looked into the sky.

"Flowers in sky," he said, his face full of delight. "God canyon put flowers, he Wathemah love?"

"Yes, dear. God put flowers in the canyon because he loves you."

They stopped, and both looked up into the sky. Then, after a moment, she continued:

"You are like the flowers of the canyon, Wathemah. God put you here for me to find and love."

"Love Wathemah?"

"Yes."

Then she stooped and gathered him into her arms. He nestled to her.

"You be Wathemah's mother?" he questioned.

She put her cheek against the little dirty one. The child felt tears. As he patted her cheek with his dirty hand, he repeated anxiously:

"Me teacher be Wathemah mother?"

"Yes," she answered, as though making a sacred covenant, "I, Wathemah's teacher, promise to be Wathemah's mother, so help me God."

The child was coming into his birthright, the birthright of every child born into the world,—a mother's love. Who shall measure its power in the development of a child's life?

They had reached the Clayton home. Wathemah turned reluctantly, lingering and drawing figures in the road with his bare feet, a picture one would long remember.

He was a slender child, full of sinuous grace. His large, lustrous dark eyes, as well as his features, showed a strain of Spanish blood. He was dressed in cowboy fashion, but with more color than one sees in the cowboy costume. His trousers were of brown corduroy, slightly ragged. He wore a blue and white striped blouse, almost new. Around his neck, tied jauntily in front, was a red silk handkerchief, a gift from a cowboy. He smoothed it caressingly, as though he delighted in it. His straight, glossy black hair, except where cut short over the forehead, fell to his shoulders. Large loop-like ear-rings dangled from his ears;

but the crowning feature of his costume, and his especial pride, was a new sombrero hat, trimmed with a scarlet ribbon and a white quill. He suddenly looked at his teacher, his face lighting with a radiant smile, and said:

"Mother, *me* mother."

"Tell me, Wathemah," she said, "what you learned to-day in the Bible school."

He turned and said softly:

"Jesus love."

Then the little child of the Open walked back to the camp, repeating softly to himself:

"Jesus love! Mother love!"



CHAPTER III

CLAYTON RANCH

EARLY traders knew Clayton Ranch well, for it was on the old stage route from Santa Fe to the Pacific coast.

The house faced south, overlooking Gila River, and commanded a magnificent view of mountains and foothills and valleys. To the northeast, rose a distant mountain peak always streaked with snow.

The ranch house, built of blocks of adobe, was of a creamy cement color resembling the soil of the surrounding foothills. The building was long and low, in the Spanish style of a rectangle, opening on a central court at the rear. The red tile roof slanted in a shallow curve from the peak of the house, out over the veranda, which extended across the front. Around the pillars that supported the roof of the veranda, vines grew luxuriantly, and hung in profusion from the strong wire stretched high from pillar to pillar. The windows and doors were spacious, giving the place an atmosphere of generous hospitality. Northeast of the house, was a picturesque windmill, which explained the abundant water supply for the ranch, and the freshness of the vines along the irrigating ditch that bordered the veranda. The dooryard was separated from the highway by a low adobe wall the color of the house. In the yard, palms and cacti gave a semi-tropical setting to this attractive old building. Port-holes on two sides of the house bore evidence of its having been built as a place of defense. Here, women and children had fled for safety when the Apache raids filled everyone with terror. Here they had remained for days, with few to protect them, while the men of the region drove off the Indians.

Senor Matéo, the builder and first owner of the house, had been slain by the Apaches. On the foothills, just north of the house, ten lonely graves bore silent witness to that fatal day.

Up the road to Clayton Ranch, late one November afternoon, came Esther Bright with bounding step, accompanied, as usual, by a bevy of children. She heard one gallant observe to another that their teacher was "just a daisy."

Although this and similar compliments were interspersed with miners' and cowboys' slang, they were none the less respectful and hearty, and served to express the high esteem in which the new teacher was held by the little citizens of Gila.

As the company neared the door of the Clayton home, one little girl suddenly burst forth:

"My maw says she won't let her childern go ter Bible school ter be learned 'ligion by a Gentile. Me an' Mike an' Pat an' Brigham wanted ter go, but maw said, maw did, that she'd learn us Brigham Young's 'ligion, an' no sech trash as them Gentiles tells about; 'n' that the womern as doesn't have childern'll never go ter Heaven, maw says. My maw's got ten childern. My maw's Mormon."

Here little Katie Black paused for breath. She was a stocky, pug-nosed, freckle-faced little creature, with red hair, braided in four short pugnacious pigtails, tied with white rags.

"So your mother is a Mormon?" said the teacher to Katie.

"Yep."

"Suppose I come to see your mother, Katie, and tell her all about it. She might let you come. Shall I?"

Her question was overheard by one of Katie's brothers, who said heartily:

"Sure! I'll come fur yer. Maw said yer was too stuck up ter come, but I said I knowed better."

"Naw," said Brigham, "she ain't stuck up; be yer?"

"Not a bit." The teacher's answer seemed to give entire satisfaction to the company.

The children gathered about her as they reached the door of Clayton Ranch. Esther Bright placed her hand on Brigham's head. It was a loving touch, and her "Good night, laddie," sent the child on his way happy.

Within the house, all was cheer and welcome. The great living room was ablaze with light. A large open fireplace occupied the greater part of the space on one side. There, a fire of dry mesquite wood snapped and crackled, furnishing both light and heat this chill November evening.

The floor of the living room was covered with an English three-ply carpet. The oak chairs were both substantial and comfortable. On the walls, hung three oil paintings of English scenes. Here and there were bookcases, filled with standard works. On a round table near the fireplace, were strewn magazines and papers. A comfortable low couch, piled with sofa pillows, occupied one side of the room near the firelight. Here, resting from a long and fatiguing journey, was stretched John Clayton, the owner of the house.

As Esther Bright entered the room, he rose and greeted her cordially. His manner indicated the well-bred man of the world. He was tall and muscular, his face, bronzed from the Arizona sun. There was something very genial about the man that made him a delightful host.

"Late home, Miss Bright!" he said in playful reproof. "This is a rough country, you know."

"So I hear, mine host," she said, bowing low in mock gravity, "and that is why we have been scared to death at your long absence. I feared the Indians had carried you off."

"I was detained unwillingly," he responded. "But, really, Miss Bright, I am not joking. It is perilous for you to tramp these mountain roads as you do, and especially near nightfall. You are tempting Providence." He nodded his head warningly.

"But I am not afraid," she persisted.

"I know that. More's the pity. But you ought to be. Some day you may be captured and carried off, and no one in camp to rescue you."

"How romantic!" she answered, a smile lurking in her eyes and about her mouth.

She seated herself on a stool near the fire.

"Why didn't you ask me why I was so late? I have an excellent excuse."

"Why, prisoner at the bar?"

"Please, y'r honor, we've been making ready for Christmas." She assumed the air of a culprit, and looked so demurely funny he laughed outright.

Here Mrs. Clayton and Edith, her fifteen-year-old daughter, entered the room.

"What's the fun?" questioned Edith.

"Miss Bright is pleading guilty to working more hours than she should."

"Oh, no, I didn't, Edith," she said merrily. "I said we had been making ready for Christmas."

Edith sat on a stool at her teacher's side. She, too, was ready for a tilt.

"You're not to pronounce sentence, Mr. Judge, until you see what we have been doing. It's to be a great surprise." And Edith looked wise and mysterious.

Then Esther withdrew, returning a little later, gowned in an old-rose house dress of some soft wool stuff. She again sat near the fire.

"Papa," said Edith, "I have been telling Miss Bright about the annual Rocky Mountain ball, and that she must surely go."

John Clayton looked amused.

"I'm afraid Edith couldn't do justice to that social function. I am quite sure you never saw anything like it. It is the most primitive sort of a party, made up of a motley crowd,—cowboys, cowlassies, miners and their families, and ranchmen and theirs. They come early, have a hearty supper, and dance all night; and as many of them imbibe pretty freely, they sometimes come to blows."

He seemed amused at the consternation in Esther's face.

"You don't mean that I shall be expected to go to such a party?" she protested.

"Why not?" he asked, smiling.

"It seems dreadful," she hastened to say, "and besides that, I never go to dances. I do not dance."

"It's not as bad as it sounds," explained John Clayton. "You see these people are human. Their solitary lives are barren of pleasure. They crave intercourse

with their kind; and so this annual party offers this opportunity."

"And is this the extent of their social life? Have they nothing better?"

"Nothing better," he said seriously, "but some things much worse."

"I don't see how anything could be worse."

"Oh, yes," he said, "it could be worse. But to return to the ball. It is unquestionably a company of publicans and sinners. If you wish to do settlement work here, to study these people in their native haunts, here they are. You will have an opportunity to meet some poor creatures you would not otherwise meet. Besides, this party is given for the benefit of the school. The proceeds of the supper help support the school."

"Then I must attend?"

"I believe so. With your desire to help these people, I believe it wise for you to go with us to the ball. You remember how a great Teacher long ago ate with publicans and sinners."

"Yes, I was just thinking of it. Christ studied people as he found them; helped them where he found them." She sat with bent head, thoughtful.

"Yes," John Clayton spoke gently, "Christ studied them as he found them, helped them where he found them."

He sometimes smiled at her girlish eagerness, while more and more he marveled at her wisdom and ability. She had set him to thinking; and as he thought, he saw new duties shaping before him.

It may have been an hour later, as they were reading aloud from a new book, they heard a firm, quick step on the veranda, followed by a light knock.

"It's Kenneth," exclaimed John Clayton in a brisk, cheery tone, as he hastened to open the door. The newcomer was evidently a valued friend. Esther recognized in the distinguished looking visitor one of the men who had protected her the day of the organization of the Bible school.

John Clayton rallied him on his prolonged absence. Mrs. Clayton told him how they had missed him, and Edith chattered merrily of what had happened since his last visit.

When he was presented to Esther Bright, she rose, and at that moment, a flame leaped from the burning mesquite, and lighted up her face and form. She was lovely. The heat of the fire had brought a slight color to her cheeks, and this was accentuated by her rose-colored gown. Kenneth Hastings bowed low, lower than his wont to women. For a moment his eyes met hers. His glance was keen and searching. She met it calmly, frankly. Then her lashes swept her cheeks, and her color deepened.

They gathered about the hearth. Fresh sticks of grease woods, and pine cones, thrown on the fire, sent red and yellow and violet flames leaping up the chimney. The fire grew hotter, and they were obliged to widen their circle.

What better than an open fire to unlock the treasures of the mind and heart, when friend converses with friend? The glow of the embers seems to kindle the imagination, until the tongue forgets the commonplaces of daily life and grows eloquent with the thoughts that lie hidden in the deeps of the soul.

Such converse as this held this group of friends in thrall. Kenneth Hastings talked well, exceedingly well. All the best stops in his nature were out. Esther listened, at first taking little part in the conversation. She was a good listener, an appreciative listener, and therein lay some of her charm. When he addressed a remark to her, she noticed that he had fine eyes, wonderful eyes, such eyes as belonged to Lincoln and Webster.

One would have guessed Kenneth Hastings' age to be about thirty. He was tall, rather slender and sinewy, with broad, strong shoulders. He had a fine head, proudly poised, and an intelligent, though stern face. He was not a handsome man; there was, however, an air of distinction about him, and he had a voice of rare quality, rich and musical. Esther Bright had noticed this.

The visitor began to talk to her. His power to draw other people out and make them shine was a fine art with him. His words were like a spark to tinder. Esther's mind kindled. She grew brilliant, and said things with a freshness and sparkle that fascinated everyone. And Kenneth Hastings listened with deepening interest.

His call had been prolonged beyond his usual hour for leave-taking, when John Clayton brought Esther's guitar, that happened to be in the room, and begged her for a song. She blushed and hesitated.

"Do sing," urged the guest.

"I am not a trained musician," she protested.

But her host assured his friend that she surely could sing. Then all clamored for a song.

Esther sat thrumming the strings.

"What shall I sing?"

"Who is Sylvia," suggested Mrs. Clayton.

This she sang in a full, sweet voice. Her tone was true.

"More, more," they insisted, clapping their hands.

"Just *one* more song," pleaded Edith.

"Do you sing, 'Drink to me only with thine eyes'?" asked Kenneth. For answer, she struck the chords, and sang; then she laid down the guitar.

"Please sing one of your American ballads. Sing 'Home, Sweet Home,'" he suggested.

She had been homesick all day, so there was a home-sigh in her voice as she sang. Kenneth moved his chair into the shadow, and watched her.

At last he rose to go; and with promises of an early return, he withdrew.

Not to the saloon did he go that night, as had been his custom since coming to the mining camp. He walked on and on, out into the vast aloneness of the mountains. Once in a while he stopped, and looked down towards Clayton Ranch. At intervals he whistled softly.—The strain was "Home, Sweet Home."

John Clayton and his wife sat long before the fire after Esther and Edith had retired. Mary Clayton was a gentle being, with a fair, sweet English face. And she adored her husband. They had been talking earnestly.

"Any way, Mary," John Clayton was saying, "I believe Miss Bright could make an unusually fine man of Kenneth. I believe she could make him a better man, too."

"That might be, John," she responded, "but you wouldn't want so rare a soul as she is to marry him to reform him, would you? She's like a snow-drop."

"No, like a rose," he suggested, "all sweet at the heart. I'd really like to see her marry Kenneth. In fact, I'd like to help along a little."

"Oh, my dear! How could you?" And she looked at him reproachfully.

"Why not?" he asked. "Tell me honestly." He lifted her face and looked into it with lover-like tenderness. "You like Kenneth, don't you? And we are always glad to welcome him in our home."

"Y-e-s," she responded hesitatingly, "but—"

"But what?"

"I fear he frequents the saloons, and is sometimes in company totally unworthy of him. In fact, I fear he isn't good enough for Miss Bright. I can't bear to think of her marrying any man less pure and noble than she is herself."

He took his wife's hand in both of his.

"You forget, Mary," he said, "that Miss Bright is a very unusual woman. There are few men, possibly, who are her peers. Don't condemn Kenneth because he isn't exactly like her. He's not perfect, I admit, any more than the rest of us. But he's a fine, manly fellow, with a good mind and noble traits of character. If the right woman gets hold of him, she'll make him a good man, and possibly a great one."

"That may be," she said, "but I don't want Miss Bright to be that woman."

"Suppose he were your son, would you feel he was so unworthy of her?"

"Probably not," came her hesitating answer.

"Mary, dear," he said, "I fear you are too severe in your judgment of men. I wish you had more compassion. You see, it is this way: many who seem evil have gone astray because they have not had the influence of a good mother or sister or wife." He bent his head and kissed her.

A moment later, he leaned back and burst into a hearty laugh.

"Why, what's the matter?" she asked. "I don't think it's a laughing matter."

"It's so ridiculous, Mary. Here we've been concerning ourselves about the possible marriage of Kenneth and Miss Bright, when they have only just met, and it isn't likely they'll ever care for each other, anyway. Let's leave them

alone."

And the curtain went down on a vital introductory scene in the drama of life.



CHAPTER IV

THE ANGEL OF THE GILA

DAYS came and went. The Bible school of Gila had ceased to be an experiment. It was a fact patent to all that the adobe schoolhouse had become the social center of the community, and that the soul of that center was Esther Bright. She had studied sociology in college and abroad. She had theorized, as many do, about life; now, life itself, in its bald reality, was appealing to her heart and brain. She did not stop to analyze her fitness for the work. She indulged in no morbid introspection. It was enough for her that she had found great human need. She was now to cope, almost single handed, with the forces that drag men down. She saw the need, she realized the opportunity. She worked with the quiet, unfailing patience of a great soul, leaving the fruitage to God.

Sometimes the seriousness in Esther's face would deepen. Then she would go out into the Open. On one of these occasions, she strayed to her favorite haunt in the timber along the river, and seated herself on the trunk of a dead cottonwood tree, lying near the river bank. Trees, covered with green mistletoe, towered above her. Tremulous aspens sparkled in the sunshine. The air was crystal clear; the vast dome of the sky, of the deepest blue. She sat for a long time with face lifted, apparently forgetful of the open letter in her hand. At last she turned to it, and read as follows:

LYNN, MASS., Tenth Month, Fifth Day, 1888.

MY BELOVED GRANDDAUGHTER:

Thy letter reached me Second Day. Truly thou hast found a field that needs a worker, and I do not question that the Lord's hand led thee to Gila. What thou art doing and dost plan to do, interest me deeply; but it will tax thy strength. I am thankful that thou hast felt a deepening sense of God's nearness. His world is full of Him, only men's eyes are holden that they do not know. All who gain strength to lead and inspire their fellows, learn this surely at last:—that the soul of man finds God most surely in the Open. If men would help their fellows, they must seek inspiration and strength in communion with God.

To keep well, one must keep his mind calm and cheerful. So I urge thee not to allow the sorrowfulness of life about thee to depress thee. Thou canst not do thy most effective work if thy heart is always bowed down. The great sympathy of thy nature will lead thee to sorrow for others more than is well for thee. Joy is necessary to all of us. So, Beloved, cultivate joyousness, and teach others to do so. It keeps us sane, and strong and helpful.

I know that the conditions thou hast found shock and distress thee, as they do all godly men and women; but I beg thee to remember, Esther, that our Lord had compassion on such as these, on the sinful as well as on the good, and that He offers salvation to all. How to have compassion! Ah, my child, men are so slow in learning that. Love,—compassion, is the key of Christ's philosophy.

I am often lonely without thee; but do not think I would call thee back while the Lord hath need of thee.

Thy Uncle and Aunt are well, and send their love to thee.

I have just been reading John Whittier's 'Our Master.' Read it on next First Day, as my message to thee.

God bless thee.

Thy faithful grandfather,

DAVID BRIGHT.

As she read, her eyes filled.

In the veins of Esther Bright flowed the blood of honorable, God-fearing people; but to none of these, had humanity's needs called more insistently than to her. Her grandfather had early recognized and fostered her passion for service; and from childhood up, he had frequently taken her with him on his errands of mercy, that she might understand the condition and the needs of the unfortunate. Between the two there existed an unusual bond.

After reading the letter, Esther sat absorbed in thought. The present had slipped away, and it seemed as though her spirit had absented itself from her body and gone on a far journey. She was aroused to a consciousness of the present by a quick step. In a moment Kenneth Hastings was before her; then, seated at her side.

"Well!" he began. "How fortunate I am! Here I was on my way to call on you to give you these flowers. I've been up on the mountains for them."

"What beautiful mountain asters!" was her response, her face lighting with pleasure. "How exquisite in color! And how kind of you!"

"Yes, they're lovely." He looked into her face with undisguised admiration. Something within her shrank from it.

Three weeks had now passed since the meeting of Kenneth Hastings and Esther Bright. During this time, he had become an almost daily caller at Clayton Ranch. When he made apologies for the frequency of his calls, the Claytons always assured him of the pleasure his presence gave them, saying he was to them a younger brother, and as welcome.

It was evident to them that Kenneth's transformation had begun. John Clayton knew that important changes were taking place in his daily life; that all his social life was spent in their home; that he had ceased to enter a saloon; and that he had suddenly become fastidious about his toilet.

If Esther noted any changes in him, she did not express it. She was singularly reticent in regard to him.

At this moment, she sat listening to him as he told her of the mountain flora.

"Wait till you see the cactus blossoms in the spring and summer." He seemed very enthusiastic. "They make a glorious mass of color against the soft gray of the dry grass, or soil."

"I'd love to see them." She lifted the bunch of asters admiringly.

"I have some water colors of cacti I made a year ago. I'd like to show them to you, Miss Bright, if you are interested."

She assured him she was.

"I was out in the region of Colorado River a year ago. It is a wonderful region no white man has yet explored. Only the Indians know of its greatness. I have an idea that when that region is explored by some scientist, he will discover that canyon to be the greatest marvel of the world. What I saw was on a stupendous, magnificent scale."

"How it must have impressed you!"

"Wonderfully! I'll show you a sketch I made of a bit of what I found. It may suggest the magnificence of the coloring to you."

"How did you happen to have sketching materials with you?"

"I agreed to write a series of articles for an English magazine, and wished illustrations for one of the articles."

"How accomplished you are!" she exclaimed. "A mining engineer, a painter, an author—"

"Don't!" he protested, raising a deprecatory hand.

Having launched on the natural wonders of Arizona, he grew more and more eloquent, till Esther's imagination made a daring leap, and she looked down the gigantic gorge he pictured to her, over great acres of massive rock formation, like the splendor of successive day-dawns hardened into stone, and saw gigantic forms chiseled by ages of erosion.

"Do you ride horseback, Miss Bright?" he asked, suddenly changing the conversation.

"I am sorry to say that I do not. I do not even know how to mount."

"Let me teach you to ride," he said, with sudden interest.

"You would find me an awkward pupil," she responded, rising.

"I am willing to wager that I should not. When may I have the pleasure of giving you the first lesson?"

"Any time convenient for you when I am not teaching." She began to gather up her flowers and hat.

Then and there, a day was set for the first lesson in horsemanship.

"Sit down, please," said Kenneth. "I want you to enlighten me. I am painfully dense."

She seated herself on the tree trunk again, saying as she did so:

"I had not observed any conspicuous signs of density on your part, Mr. Hastings, save that you think I could be metamorphosed into a horsewoman. Some women are born to the saddle. I was not. I am not an Englishwoman, you see."

"But decidedly English," he retorted. "I wish you would tell me your story."

Her face flushed.

"I beg your pardon," he hastened to say. "I did not mean to be rude. You interest me deeply. Anything you think or do, anything that has made you what you are, is of deep interest to me."

"There is nothing to tell," she said simply. "Just a few pages, with here and there an entry; a few birthdays; graduation from college; foreign travel; work in Gila; a life spent in companionship with a wonderfully lovely and lovable grandfather; work at his side, and life's history in the making. That is all."

"All?" he repeated. "But that is rich in suggestion. I have studied you almost exclusively for three weeks, and I know you."

She looked up. The expression in his eyes nettled her. Her spinal column stiffened.

"Indeed! Know a woman in three weeks! You do well, better than most of your sex. Most men, I am told, find woman an unsolvable problem, and when they think they know her, they find they don't."

This was interesting to him. He liked the flash in her eye.

"Some life purpose brings you to Gila, to work so unselfishly for a lot of common, ignorant people."

"What is that to you?"

Her question sounded harsh in her own ears, and then she begged his pardon.

"No apology is necessary on your part," he said, changing from banter to a tone of seriousness. "My words roused your resentment. I am at fault. The coming of a delicately nurtured girl like you into such a place of degradation is like the coming of an angel of light down to the bottomless pit. I beg forgiveness for saying this; but, Miss Bright, a mining camp, in these days, is a hotbed of vice."

"All the more reason why people of intelligence and character should try to make the life here clean. I believe we can crowd out evil by cultivating the good."

"You are a decided optimist," he said; "and I, by force of circumstances, have become a confirmed pessimist."

"You will not continue to be a pessimist," she said, prophetically, seeing in her mind's eye what he would be in the years to come. "You will come to know deep human sympathy; you will believe in the possibility of better and better things for your fellows. You will use your strength, your intellect, your fine education, for the best service of the world about you."

Somehow that prophecy went home to him.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "you make a fellow feel he *must* be just what you want him to be, and what he ought to be."

The man studied the woman before him, with deep and increasing interest. She possessed a strength, he was sure, of which no one in Gila had yet dreamed. He continued:

"Would you mind telling me the humanitarian notions that made you willing to bury yourself in this godless place?"

She hesitated. The catechism evidently annoyed her, for it seemed to savor of impertinent curiosity. But at last she answered:

"I believe my grandfather is responsible for the humanitarian notions. It is a long story."

She hesitated.

"I am interested in what he has done, and what you are doing. Please tell me about it."

"Well, it goes back to my childhood. I was my grandfather's constant companion until I went to college. He is a well-known philanthropist of New England, interested in the poor, in convicts in prison and out, in temperance work, in the enfranchisement of woman, in education, and in everything that makes for righteousness."

She paused.

"And he discussed great questions with you?"

"Yes, as though in counsel. He would tell me certain conditions, and ask me what I thought we had better do."

"An ideal preparation for philanthropic service." He was serious now.

"There awoke within me, very early, the purpose to serve my fellow men in the largest possible way. Grandfather fostered this; and when the time came for me to go to college, he helped me plan my course of study." She looked far away.

"You followed it out?"

"Very nearly. You see, Mr. Hastings, service is no accident with me. It dates back generations. It is in my blood."

"Your blood is of the finest sort. Surely service does not mean living in close touch with immoral, disreputable people."

Her eyes kindled, grew dark in color.

"What *does* it mean, then? The strong, the pure, the godly should live among men, teach by precept and example how to live, and show the loveliness of pure living just as Jesus did. I have visited prisons with grandfather, have prayed with and for criminals, and have sung in the prisons. Is it not worth while to help these wretched creatures look away from themselves to God?"

"Oh, Miss Bright," he protested, "it is dreadful for a young girl like you even to hear of the wickedness of men."

"Women are wicked, too," she responded seriously, "but I never lose hope for any one."

"Some day hope will die out in your heart," he said discouragingly.

"God forbid!" she spoke solemnly. In a moment she continued:

"I am sure you do not realize how many poor creatures never have had a chance to be decent. Just think how many are born of sinful, ignorant parents, into an environment of sin and ignorance. They live in it, they die in it. I, by no will or merit of my own, received a blessed heritage. My ancestors for generations have been intelligent, godly people, many of them people of distinction. I was born into an atmosphere of love, of intelligence, of spirituality, and of refinement. I have lived in that atmosphere all my life. My good impulses have been fostered, my wrong ones checked."

"I'll wager you were painfully conscientious," he said.

"Why should I have been given so much," she continued, "and these poor creatures so little, unless it was that I should minister to their needs?"

"You may be right." He seemed unconvinced. "But I am sure of one thing. If I had been your grandfather, and you my grandchild, I never would have let you leave me."

He was smiling.

"You should know my grandfather, and then you would understand."

"How did you happen to come to Gila?" he asked.

"I met Mr. and Mrs. Clayton in the home of one of their friends in England. We were house guests there at the same time. We returned to America on the same steamer. Mrs. Clayton knew I was to do settlement work, and urged me to come to Gila a while instead. So I came."

How much her coming was beginning to mean to him, to others! Both were silent a while. Then it was Kenneth who spoke.

"Do you know, Miss Bright, it never occurred to me before you came, that I

had any obligations to these people? Now I know I have. I was indifferent to the fact that I had a soul myself until you came."

She looked up questioningly.

"Yes, I mean it," he said. "To all intents and purposes I had no soul. A man forgets he has a soul when he lives in the midst of vice, and no one cares whether he goes to the devil or not."

"Is it the environment, or the feeling that no one cares?" she asked.

"Both." He buried his face in his hands.

"Did you feel that no one cared? I'm sure your mother cared."

She had touched a sore spot.

"My mother?" he said, bitterly. "My mother is a woman of the world." Here he lifted his head. "She is engrossed in society. She has no interest whatever in me, and never did have, although I am her only child."

"Perhaps you are mistaken," she said softly. "I am sure you must be mistaken."

"When a mother lets year after year go by without writing to her son, do you think she cares?"

"You don't mean to say that you never receive a letter from your mother?"

"My mother has not written to me since I came to America. Suppose your mother did not write to you. Would you think she had a very deep affection for you?"

Esther's face grew wistful.

"Perhaps you do not know," she answered, "I have no living mother. She died when I was born."

"Forgive my thoughtless question," he said. "I did not know you had lost your mother. I was selfish."

"Oh, no," she said, "not selfish. You didn't know, that was all. We sometimes make mistakes, all of us, when we do not know. I lost my father when I was a very little child."

"And your grandfather reared you?"

"Yes, grandfather, assisted by my uncle and auntie."

"Tell me about your grandfather, I like to hear."

"He was my first playfellow, and a fine one he was, too."

"How I envy him!"

"You mustn't interrupt me," she said demurely.

"I am penitent. Do proceed."

Then she told him, in brief, the story of her life, simple and sweet in the telling. She told him of the work done by her grandfather.

"He preaches, you tell me."

"Yes," she said, rambling on, "he is a graduate of Yale, and prepared to be a physician. But his heart drew him into the ministry, the place where he felt the Great Physician would have him be. Grandfather is a Friend, you know, a Quaker."

"So I understood."

"He had a liberal income, so it was possible for him to devote his entire time to the poor and distressed. He has been deeply interested in the Negro and American Indian, and in fact, in every one who is oppressed by his stronger brother."

"An unusual man."

"Very."

"How could you leave him? Did you not feel that your first duty was to him?"

"It was hard to leave him," she said, while her eyes were brimming with tears; "but grandfather and I believe that opportunity to serve means obligation to serve. Besides, love is such a spiritual thing we can never be separated."

"Love is such a spiritual thing—" he repeated, and again, "Spiritual."

He was silent a moment, then he spoke abruptly.

"You have already been the salvation of at least one soul. I owe my soul to you."

"Oh, no, not to me," she protested. "That was God's gift to you from the beginning. It may have slumbered, but you had it all the while."

"What did your grandfather say to your coming to Gila?"

"When I told him of the call to come here, told him that within a radius of sixty miles there was no place of religious worship, he made no response, but sat with his head bowed. At last he looked up with the most beautiful smile you ever saw, and said, 'Go, my child, the Lord hath need of thee.'" Her voice trembled a little.

"He was right," said Kenneth earnestly. "The Lord has need of such as you everywhere. I have need of you. The people here have need of you. Help us to make something of our lives yet, Miss Bright." There was no doubting his sincerity.

She had again risen to go.

"Don't go," he said. "I would like to tell you *my* story, if you care to hear."

"I shall be glad to hear your story. I know it will not be as meager as mine."

"I wish," he said earnestly, "that I might measure up to your ideal of what a man should be. I cannot do that. But I can be honest and tell you the truth about myself.

"I belong to a proud, high-strung race of people. My father is like his forbears. He is a graduate of Cambridge; has marked literary ability.

"My mother is a society woman, once noted as a beauty at court. She craves admiration and must have it. That is all she cares for. She has never shown any affection for my father or me.

"I left England when I was twenty-two,—my senior year at Cambridge. I've been in America eight years, and during that time I have received but two letters from home, and those were from my father."

"You must have felt starved."

"That's it," he said, "*starved!* I did feel starved. You see, Miss Bright, a

fellow's home has much to do with his life and character. What is done there influences him. Wine was served on our table. My parents partook freely of it; so did our guests. I have seen some guests intoxicated. We played cards, as all society people do. We played for stakes, also. You call that gambling. My mother's men admirers were mush-headed fools."

"Such conditions obtain in certain circles in this country, too. They are a menace to the American home," she said gravely.

"I was sent to Cambridge," he continued, "as my father and his father, and father's father before him, had been sent. I was a natural student and always did well in my work. But my drinking and gambling finally got me into trouble. I was fired. My father was so incensed at my dismissal he told me never to darken his doors again. He gave me money, and told me to leave at once for America.

"I went to my mother's room to bid her good-by. She stood before a mirror while her maid was giving the final touches to her toilet. She looked regal and beautiful as she stood there, and I felt proud of her. I told her what had happened, and that I had come to bid her good-by. She turned upon me pettishly, and asked me how I could mar her pleasure just as she was going to a ball. Her last words to me were, 'I hate to be disturbed with family matters!'"

"Did she bid you good-by?"

"No."

"Forget it," she urged. "All women are not like that. I hope you will find some rare woman who will be as a mother to you."

"Forget it!" he repeated bitterly. "I can't."

"But you will sometime. You came to America. What next?"

"Then I entered the School of Mines at Columbia, and took my degree the following year, after which I joined Mr. Clayton here. That was seven years ago."

"Did you know him in England?"

"Yes. During these intervening years I have frequented the saloons. I have drank some, gambled some, as I did at home. And I have mingled with disreputable men here, but not to lift them up. I have not cared, chiefly because I

knew no one else cared."

His companion was silent.

"You despise me, Miss Bright," he continued. "I deserve your contempt, I know. But I would do anything in the power of man to do now, if I could undo the past, and have a life as blameless as your own."

He glanced at his companion.

"What a brute I have been," he exclaimed, "to pour my ugly story into your ears!"

"I am glad you told me," she assured him. She looked up with new sympathy and understanding. "You are going to live down your past now, Mr. Hastings. We'll begin here and now. You will not speak of this again unless it may be a relief to you. The matter will not cross my lips."

She flashed upon him a radiant smile. She believed in him. He could hardly comprehend it.

"You do not despise me? You forgive my past?" He looked into her face.

"It is God who forgives. Why should I despise whom God forgives?"

"If ever I find my way to God," he said in a low voice, "it will be through you."

She quoted softly:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Then she added, "I must go home now."

They walked on to Clayton Ranch. After a few commonplaces, Kenneth lifted his hat, and turning, walked swiftly toward the company's headquarters.

Esther stood a moment, watching the easy, graceful stride of the young engineer. His words then, and long afterwards, rang in her ears,—*"Help us to make something of our lives yet."* And as the words echoed in her heart, a voice aged and full of tender love, came to her like an old refrain,—*"Go, my child, the Lord hath need of thee."*

She lifted her face and looked into the sky. Suddenly she became conscious of

the beauty of the hour. The violet light of evening played about her face and form. She forgot the flowers in her arms, forgot the sunset, and stood absorbed in prayer.



CHAPTER V

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BALL

IT was the day of the ball. Parties of mountaineers, some on horseback, some in wagons, started for Jamison Ranch.

In the early evening, a wagon load made up of the members of the Clayton household, Kenneth Hastings and some Scotch neighbors, started for the same destination.

The road skirted the foothills for some distance, then followed the canyon several miles; and then, branching off, led directly to Jamison Ranch. As the twilight deepened into night, Nature took on a solemn and mysterious beauty. The rugged outline of the mountains, the valley and river below,—were all idealized in the softening light. The New England girl sat drinking in the wonder of it all. The mountains were speaking to her good tidings of great joy.

In the midst of merry chatter, some one called out:

"Sing us a song, Miss Bright."

It was Kenneth Hastings. Hearing her name, she roused from her reverie.

"A song?"

"Yes, do sing," urged several.

"Sing 'Oft in the Stilly Night,'" suggested Mrs. Clayton.

"All sing with me," responded Esther.

Then out on the stillness floated the beautiful old Irish song. Other voices joined Esther's. Kenneth Hastings was one of the singers. His voice blended with hers and enriched it.

Song after song followed, all the company participating to some extent in the singing.

Was it the majesty of the mountain scenery that inspired Esther, that sent such a thrill of gladness into her voice? Or was it perhaps the witchery of the moonlight? Whatever may have been the cause, a new quality appeared in her voice, and stirred the hearts of all who listened to her singing; it was deep and beautiful.

What wonder if Kenneth Hastings came under the spell of the song and the singer? The New England girl was a breath of summer in the hard and wintry coldness of his life.

"Who taught you to sing?" he asked abruptly.

"The birds," she answered, in a joyous, laughing tone.

"I can well believe that," he continued, "but who were your other instructors?"

Then, in brief, she told him of her musical training.

Would she sing one of his favorite arias some day? naming the aria.

She hummed a snatch of it.

"Go on," he urged.

"Not now; some other time."

"Won't you give us an evening recital soon?" asked John Clayton.

And then and there the concert was arranged for.

"Miss Bright," said Mrs. Carmichael, "I am wondering how we ever got on without you."

Esther laughed a light-hearted, merry laugh.

"That's it," Kenneth hastened to say. "We 'got on.' We simply existed. Now we live."

All laughed at this.

"You are not complimentary to our friends. I protest," said Esther.

"You are growing chivalrous, Kenneth," said Mrs. Clayton. "I'm glad you think as we do. Miss Bright, you have certainly enriched life for all of us."

"Don't embarrass me," said Esther in a tone that betrayed she was a little disconcerted.

But now they were nearing their journey's end. The baying of hounds announced a human habitation. An instant later, the house was in sight, and the dogs came bounding down the road, greeting the party with vociferous barks and growls. Mr. Jamison followed, profuse in words of welcome.

As Kenneth assisted Esther from the wagon, he said:

"Your presence during this drive has given me real pleasure."

Her simple "Thank you" was her only response.

At the door they were met by daughters of the house, buxom lasses, who ushered them into an immense living room. This opened into two other rooms, one of which had been cleared for dancing.

Esther noted every detail,—a new rag carpet on the floor; a bright-colored log-cabin quilt on one of the beds; on the other bed, was a quilt of white, on which was appliqued a menagerie of nondescript animals of red and green calico, capering in all directions. The particular charm of this work of art was its immaculate quilting,—quilting that would have made our great-grandmothers green with envy.

Cheap yellow paper covered the walls of the room. A chromo, "Fast Asleep," framed in heavy black walnut, hung close to the ceiling. A sewing machine stood in one corner.

At first, Esther did not notice the human element in the room. Suddenly a little bundle at the foot of the bed began to grunt. She lifted it, and found a speck of humanity about three months old. In his efforts to make his wants known, and so secure his rightful attention, he puckered his mouth, doubled up his fists, grew red in the face, and let forth lusty cries.

As she stood trying to soothe the child, the mother rushed in, snatched it from the teacher's arms, and gave it a slap, saying as she did so, "The brat's allus screechin' when I wanten dance!"

She left the babe screaming vociferously, and returned to dance. Four other infants promptly entered into the vocal contest, while their respective parents danced in the adjoining room, oblivious of everything save the pleasure of the hour. Then it was that the New England girl became a self-appointed nurse, patting and soothing first one, then another babe; but it was useless. They had been brought to the party under protest; and offended humanity would not be mollified.

The teacher stepped out into the living room, which was in festive array. Its picturesqueness appealed to her. A large fire crackled on the hearth, and threw its transforming glow over the dingy adobe walls, decorated for the occasion with branches of fragrant silver spruce. Blocks of pine tree-trunks, perhaps two feet in height, stood in the corners of the room. Each of these blocks contained a dozen or more candle sockets, serving the purpose of a candelabrum. Each of the sockets bore a lighted candle, which added to the weirdness of the scene.

The room was a unique background for the men and women gathered there. At least twenty of the mountaineers had already assembled. They had come at late twilight, and would stay till dawn, for their journey lay over rough mountain roads and through dangerous passes.

The guests gathered rapidly, laughing and talking as they came.

It was a motley crowd,—cowboys, in corduroy, high boots, spurs, slouch hats, and knives at belt, brawny specimens of human kind; cowlasses, who for the time, had discarded their masculine attire of short skirts, blouse, belt and gun, for feminine finery; Scotchmen in Highland costume; Mexicans in picturesque dress; English folk, clad in modest apparel; and Irishmen and Americans resplendent in colors galore.

For a moment, Esther stood studying the novel scene. Mr. Clayton, observing her, presented her to the individuals already assembled. The last introduction was to a shambling, awkward young miner. After shaking the hand of the teacher, which he did with a vigor quite commensurate to his elephantine strength, he blurted out, "Will yez dance a polky wid me?"

She asked to be excused, saying she did not dance.

"Oh, but I can learn yez," he said eagerly. "Yez put one fut so, and the other so," illustrating the step with bovine grace as he spoke.

His efforts were unavailing, so he found a partner among the cowlasses.

Again Esther was alone. She seated herself near one of the improvised pine candelabra, and continued to study the people before her. Here she found primitive life indeed, life close to the soil. How to get at these people, how to learn their natures, how to understand their needs, how to help them,—all these questions pressed upon her. Of this she was sure:—she must come in touch with them to help them. Men and women older and more experienced than she might well have knit their brows over the problem.

She was roused to a consciousness of present need by a piercing cry from one of the infants in the adjoining room. The helpless cry of a child could never appeal in vain to such a woman as Esther Bright. She returned to the bedroom, lifted the wailing bundle in her arms, seated herself in a rocker, and proceeded to quiet it. Kenneth Hastings stood watching her, while an occasional smile flitted across his face. As John Clayton joined him, the former said in a low tone:

"Do you see Miss Bright's new occupation, John?"

"Yes, by George! What will that girl do next? Who but Miss Bright would bother about other people's crying infants? But it's just like her! She is true woman to the heart. I wish there were more like her."

"So do I, John. I wish I were more like her myself in unselfish interest in people."

"She has done you great good already, Kenneth."

"Yes, I know."

Then a shadow darkened Kenneth's face. He moved toward the outer door that stood open, and looked out into the night.

At last Esther's task was accomplished, the babe was asleep, and she returned to the scene of the dancing. Kenneth sought her and asked her to dance the next waltz with him. She assured him, also, that she did not dance.

"Let me teach you," he urged. But she shook her head.

"You do not approve of dancing?" he asked, lifting his brows.

"I did not say I do not approve of dancing; I said I do not dance. By the way," she said, changing the subject of the conversation, "my lessons in riding are to

begin to-morrow, are they not?"

"To-morrow, if I may have the pleasure. Do you think riding wicked, too?"

This he said with a sly twinkle in his eye.

"Wicked, too?" she echoed. "What's the 'too' mean?"

"Dancing, of course."

"But I didn't say I thought dancing wicked. I said I do not dance."

"Oh, well, you think it wicked, or you would dance."

She looked amused.

"What would you say if I should tell you I learned to dance years ago?"

"That you are strait-laced obstinacy personified. Why not dance? It could do you no harm."

"It is not expedient, that is all. Let me tell you I really did learn. I am not an accomplished dancer, though. I was taught to dance in a school I attended. But I have never danced in social life."

"Why not put aside your scruples for once," he urged, "and dance the next waltz with me? You don't know what pleasure it would give me."

But she still refused. He saw that to pursue the matter further would be useless. The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of cowboys and cowlasses, who, as they filed past, were presented to her by Kenneth Hastings.

"How are ye?" asked one husky fellow, gripping Esther's hand like a vise.

"Happy ter know yer acquaintance," said another.

The girls snickered and looked foolish, keeping time to the music with the tapping of their feet.

"You like to dance, I see," said Esther to one girl.

"You bet I do!"

The girl's jaws kept time to the music as she vigorously chewed gum.

"Come, Jim," said another loud-voiced cowlass, "that's our set."

And away they went, hand in hand, edging their way through the crowded rooms. Soon they were in the midst of the boisterous dancers.

Kenneth joined the human fringe around the dance room. He stood watching as though what he saw amused him.

"Swing y'r pardners," shouted the fiddler, above the din of voices. Down came the bow across the strings, that responded in shrill, piercing notes. Around flew the dancers, their cheeks growing redder and redder. The clatter of the cowboys' spurs, and the tapping of the fiddler's foot kept time to the music.

While watching the dancers, Kenneth discovered Jessie Roth, a young Scotch girl, in from the range. As soon as he could do so, he presented her to Esther Bright. Jessie responded to the introduction awkwardly and shyly; but as she looked into Esther's face, she seemed to gain confidence. It was such a kindly, such a sympathetic face.

Jessie was a girl Esther had long been wishing to meet, and to interest in better things. She was at heart good, and if wisely directed would undoubtedly exercise a wholesome influence over other girls. As the teacher expressed her interest in her, and what they might do together, Jessie's face beamed.

"Mr. Hastings telt me aboot y'r Bible school, an' how ye wantit me tae come. Did ye?"

"Indeed I did."

"Dae ye want mony mair tae come?"

"Yes, as many as you can bring, Jessie."

Then the two took seats in the corner of the room, and Esther gave her an enthusiastic account of her plans for the Gila girls. The Scotch girl listened, with an occasional comment.

"Do you like the life on the range, Jessie?"

"Rael weel! Y're as free as the air!"

Here the girl gave her body and arms a swing, as though ready to leap to the back of a running horse. She seemed all muscle.

"My mustang's the best friend I hev. I broke 'er mysel'. My! She can gae like the wind!"

"You!" said the astonished teacher. "Can you break a horse?"

"Can I?" she repeated in amusement. "I'd like tae show ye. I wad like tae tak ye oot on the range wi' me. My, but ye'd like it!"

"No doubt. What do you do out on the range?"

"Oh, we rides an' rides an' looks after the cattle; we cooks, an' plays cards, an' joshes the boys."

Here Jessie laughed.

"What a dreary life this must be," thought Esther. She said aloud, "You must find the life monotonous and lonely."

"Never lonely, schoolma'am. It's full o' excitement. There's somethin' doin' all the time. Sometime ye sees herds o' antelope, or ye meets a grizzly. It's better'n a dance tae bring down a grizzly."

"A bear?" the teacher exclaimed in astonishment. "You don't mean to say you ever killed a bear?"

The cowlass's eyes sparkled as she said proudly:

"I've shot several, an' other big game too. But the greatest thing on the range is tae see a stampede o' cattle. It's as much as y'r life's worth tae be in their way."

The girl, though rough, had a vitality and picturesqueness attractive to the polished New Englander.

It was equally certain that Esther was attractive to the cowlass. Jessie left her for a moment, but soon returned, bringing three others with her. After presenting them, she said:

"Tell 'em, schoolma'am, what ye telt me."

"Tell what, Jessie?"

"Oh, aboot the Bible school an' the parties, an' how ye wants tae dae somethin' fer the lasses."

Then Esther briefly outlined her plans, during which they occasionally interrupted her by questions or comments.

"Do you mean, schoolma'am, that y're willin' to learn us outside o' school hours?"

"Yes."

"Y're mighty good. I love ye already," said one lass.

"But we're sae auld," said Jessie.

"No, you're not. You're not old,—not too old to study."

"Yes, schoolma'am, that's what mother used tae say," said Jessie in a softer tone. She turned her face aside. Another girl whispered to Esther, "Her father killed her mother when he was drunk."

Esther slipped her arm around Jessie's waist, and continued to speak her plans, and how much their co-operation would mean to her.

"Git y'r pardners!" shouted the fiddler.

Soon the lasses were led away to the dance; and for the time, nothing more was said of their plans; but Esther Bright knew that of all the days' work she had done in Gila, this would probably count the most.

The rooms were now crowded with people. The huge candles burned lower; the air grew more stifling; the noise more tiring.

As she looked up, she met the gaze of a young English girl, who flushed and turned her eyes away. An instant later, Kenneth Hastings seated himself by Esther and began speaking.

"I was glad to see you talking with the cowlasses, for they need the gentle, refining influence that you can bring them." He was evidently deeply in earnest. "You have no idea how full of peril their life is. You see there is something in this bold, free life of exposure that almost unsexes a woman. Some of the cowlasses are good-hearted, honest girls, but many are a hard lot. Your womanly influence would help them."

As he spoke, he caught sight of the girl who, a moment before, had attracted Esther's attention.

"Do you see that girl with the cameo-like face?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I have been hoping you could save that child. She can't be more than seventeen, if she is that. What her previous history is I do not know; but it is evident she has had gentle breeding."

"What a sweet face she has!"

"Yes. Lovely, isn't it? Like a flower."

"What is her name?" Esther looked sympathetically at the girlish figure.

"Earle—Carla Earle. She lives at Keith's. I see her often with Mark Clifton, a young Englishman here. He is a wild fellow. She is shy of everyone else."

"Poor child!" said Esther, glancing toward her.

"I made bold to speak to her one day, and invited her to come to your Bible school. I believe if you could meet her you would be her salvation."

Esther looked up with a grave question in her eyes.

"Well?" he asked.

"You invite her to come to the Bible school, but do not come yourself, do not offer to help."

"It does seem inconsistent, doesn't it? I will try to explain."

He studied the cracks in the floor.

"You see, I have felt that I would be a hypocrite if I came. I know nothing about religion; at least, I knew nothing about it until I began to find it in you."

"And yet religion is the great question of life. I wonder that, with your habit of thought, you have not been attracted to the study of philosophy and religion."

"Some of the most materialistic men I have known," he replied, "have been students of philosophy and religion. They seemed anything but religious. But your religion is practical. You live it. You make men believe in your religion, make them believe it is the one real thing of life. I need to be taught of you."

"Please bring this young girl to me, or take me to her," she responded.

Together they sought Carla Earle. As Esther was introduced, she clasped Carla's hand, and began to talk to her of England. Kenneth excused himself, and the two girls took seats in the corner where he had left them. At first Carla avoided looking into the face of her companion. When she did gain courage to look up, she saw that Esther's face was full of tenderness. What could it mean? Sympathy for her? Carla Earle? Her chest rose and fell. Suddenly she hid her face in her hands, while suppressed sobs shook her frame.

Quickly, Esther slipped her arm about her, and drew her to the open door, and out into the clear night air. There, Nature seemed full of peace. Up and down, the two walked in the moonlight, talking in low, earnest tones. Often they paused and looked up into the heavens. Once the English girl bowed her head on the New England girl's shoulder, and wept bitterly. The teacher listened, listened to a story whose pathos touched her heart. Then she said gently:

"You know right from wrong. Leave the wrong life. Come to me for shelter, until I can find a home for you where you will be safe, and I hope, contented."

"Oh, I can't," sobbed Carla, "I am so unhappy!"

"I know you can leave if you will," Esther said firmly. "You will have strength and courage given you to do right. It is wrong for you to continue in the life you are now living."

Carla shuddered. She was still weeping.

"God will never forgive me," she said. "He has forsaken me."

She seemed utterly hopeless.

"God always forgives those who come to Him penitent, Carla. He has not forsaken you; you have forsaken Him. I am glad you and I have found each other. Perhaps I can help you find your way back to God."

Carla gripped her hand. When they re-entered the house, the English girl slipped into the bedroom.

"Fust couple forrerd an' back!" called out the fiddler, keeping time with his foot.

There were bows, differing more in quality than in kind; bows masculine, with spurred foot to rearward; bows feminine, quite indescribable.

"Swing y'r pardners!" shouted the fiddler, flourishing his bow. Around flew the lasses, with skirts and ribbons flying; down came the boots of the cowboys, their spurs clanking time to the music. The room grew more stifling.

Among the late-comers was a middle-aged woman, immaculately clean. Her snapping black eyes were set close to her nose, which was sharp and thin. Her lips closed firmly. Her thin black hair, drawn tightly back, was fastened in a tight wad at the back of her head. She wore an antiquated black alpaca dress, sans buttons, sans collar, sans cuffs; but the crowning glory of her costume, and her particular pride, was a breastpin of hair grapes. She was accompanied by an easy-going, stubby little Irishman, and a freckle-faced, tow-headed lad of ten.

"Maw, Maw!" said the child, "there's my teacher!"

"Mind y'r mannenses," said the woman, as she cuffed him on the ear.

"I am mindin' my mannenses," he said sulkily.

The teacher saw the shadow on the child's face, stepped forward to greet him, then extended her hand to the mother, saying:

"Good evening, Mrs. Black. I am Brigham's teacher."

But Mrs. Murphy was on the warpath.

"I'm not Miz. Black," she snapped, assuming an air of offended dignity; "I'm Miz Murphy, the wife o' Patrick Murphy. This is my man," pointing to the stubby Irishman, with the air of a tragedy queen. The teacher thereupon shook hands with Patrick. Mrs. Murphy continued:

"My first husband were a Young, my second a Thompson, my third a Wigger, my fourth a Black, and my fifth a Murphy."

"I wonders who the nixt wan will be," said Patrick, grinning from ear to ear. "My woman lived wid the Mormons."

Mrs. Murphy's eyes looked daggers. He continued:

"An' she thought if it were good fur wan man to marry many women, it were equally good fur wan woman ter have many husbands, even if she didn't have all of thim ter onct." He chuckled.

"Mind y'r bizness!" snapped the irate Mrs. Murphy.

"An' so it came my turrhn, schoolma'am, an' she were that delighted wid me she have niver tried another man since. Eh, mavourneen?"

Saying which, Patrick made his escape, shaking with laughter.

Then Esther poured oil on the troubled waters, by telling Mrs. Murphy how interested she was in what Brigham had told her of his little sisters, Nora and Kathleen.

"Won't you sit down, Mrs. Murphy?"

Esther's voice and manner were very charming at that moment, as she drew a chair forward for her companion.

Somewhat mollified, Mrs. Murphy seated herself.

"Oh, I don't mind ef I do set down. I'm that tuckered out with scrubbin' and washin' an' cookin', I'm afeared I can't dance till mornin'."

As she talked, she fanned herself with her red cotton handkerchief.

"You enjoy dancing, don't you, Mrs. Murphy?" asked the teacher, with apparent interest.

"Enjoy dancin'? I should say I did!" She suddenly assumed an air of great importance. "Back East where I was riz, I went ter all the barn raisin's, an' was accounted the best dancer in the county."

She showed sudden interest in the fiddler, and tapped time to the music with her foot.

"Then I joined the Mormons. When I lived in Utah, there was plenty o' dancin', I can tell you."

"You are from New York, Mrs. Murphy, I think you said."

"Yep," complacently. "I was riz in York State, near Syrycuse. My folks was way up, my folks was. Why, my aunt's husband's sister's husband kep' a confectony, an' lived on Lexity Street, York City. She were rich, she were,—an' dressed! My landy! How she dressed! Always latest style! Ye didn't know her, I s'pose. Miz Josiah Common was her name, lived at 650 somethin' Lexity Street. Wisht you'd a knowed her."

Here she mopped her face again.

It was not often that Mrs. Murphy found herself in society, and in society where she wished to make an impression. Her voice rose higher and shriller.

"Yep," she continued, in a tone of supreme satisfaction, "I'm 'lated, as it were, to Miz Josiah Common. She gimme this here pin."

Here she took off a hair grape pin, and held it up for inspection. "A bunch o' grapes, yer see, hereditaried in the family, descended from father to son, yer know, in memory of the departed."

All this in a tone of one who gives information, and commiserates the ignorance of the listener. Suddenly Esther Bright lifted her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Got pink eye?" asked Mrs. Murphy with sudden sympathy. But at this moment Patrick Murphy joined them, and Mrs. Murphy rose to dance with him.

As the two left her, Esther saw John Clayton edging his way through the crowd. An instant later, he presented Lord Kelwin, of Dublin, Ireland.

"Really," said the newcomer, "I had no idea I should meet an American lady on the frontier. I am charmed. So delighted, Mr. Clayton, to meet Mrs. Clayton and Miss Bright. I had anticipated meeting Indians, Indian princesses, don't you know, like the people we see in the shows you send us."

"It is too bad you should be disappointed, Lord Kelwin," said the New Englander, smiling. "There are princesses galore in the southwest, and a little search will reward you."

"Beg pardon, I did not intend to give the impression that I was disappointed; rather, I am surprised that here out of civilization, ah—ah—I should find a lady, —two ladies. I count myself most fortunate."

John Clayton's eyes twinkled. At the first opportunity he drew Lord Kelwin aside, and whispered in his ear. The Irishman looked astonished.

"An Indian princess, did you say? By Jove!"

"Yes, of the blood royal," replied John Clayton, with gravity.

"And possessed of untold wealth? What was it you said?"

"Of untold wealth. I'd rather have her wealth than the crown jewels of any

royal house."

"By George! A fortune and a pretty girl thrown in!"

It was evident that this bit of information was not without effect upon Lord Kelwin, for he turned to Esther Bright effusively.

"It is such a pleasure, such a great pleasure, to meet one who so charmingly represents her race."

He bowed deferentially.

Esther looked mystified. Before she could frame a reply, their conversation was interrupted.

Lord Kelwin drew John Clayton aside.

"An American princess, did you say?"

"Yes, by divine right," responded the older man.

The Irishman adjusted his monocle, to view Esther more critically.

"She looks more like an English woman," he said meditatively. "Rather too slender to be a beauty."

"She was born on the free soil of America," continued his companion, "and has some ideas of her own."

The Irishman smiled cynically.

"As if a pretty girl ever had ideas of her own! She usually knows just what her mamma or governess teaches her. I always find a pretty girl an easy victim. I've broken more than one innocent's heart." He twirled his moustache.

"You'll not get on so well with Miss Bright. You see, she is used to meeting *men*." John Clayton looked a trifle wicked, as he continued, "She might take you for a long-headed animal with long ears."

But the last remark was lost upon the Irishman, whose attention was fixed upon Esther Bright.

"You say her ancestors were savages, Mr. Clayton?"

"I suppose they *were* savages, same as ours. She has the best heritage the ages

can give,—a healthy body, a beautiful mind, and a heroic soul."

John Clayton's voice, half ironical, had an undertone of seriousness.

"A heroic soul! A heroic soul!" The Irishman raised his monocle again. "I didn't suppose savages had souls. I've always imagined this fad about souls came with civilization."

"I have begun to think," answered his companion, "that with much of the so-called civilization, men and women are losing their souls. Miss Bright is a remarkable woman. She believes in the possibilities of every man and woman. It is her purpose in life to awaken the soul wherever she finds it dormant or atrophied."

"Indeed!"

Again the monocle was raised, and the Irishman's curious gaze was fixed upon the American girl, then engaged in conversation with a cowboy.

Patrick Murphy now interrupted this dialogue.

"Lord Kelwin, we wants yez ter dance an Irish jig."

The lord lifted his eyebrows.

"There's no one to dance an Irish jig with me unless you do it yourself, Patrick."

Here there was a general laugh.

"Come along wid yez," persisted Patrick, half carrying him toward the dance room.

"Here," he said to Lord Kelwin, "here's light-footed Janette O'Neil will dance this wid yez."

There was a stir. The center of the room was cleared, then out stepped Lord Kelwin, leading rosy, graceful Janette. She was lithe and dainty.

The fiddler flourished his bow, drew it across the strings, and brought forth the strains of "Soldier's Joy,"—a melody that sets an Irishman's feet flying.

Janette's short, red skirt showed her trim feet and ankles. Down the room came the two dancers, side by side, their feet fairly flying. Backward, again they

danced, the length of the room, still keeping up the feathery rapidity of flying feet. Then Lord Kelwin swung his partner around and around; then facing each other, they danced apart. Expressions of admiring approval were heard.

"Them's fine dancers!"

"Go it, Kelwin! I'll bet on you."

"Three cheers for ould Ireland!"

Down again the full length of the room sped the flying feet; then back again. Then, whirling as birds in flight, they faced each other once more, and danced apart, and finished the dance amid deafening applause. As it continued, Lord Kelwin raised his hand for attention.

"Give us the Highland fling. Here, Burns, you and Jessie Roth dance the Highland fling."

"Highland fling! Highland fling!" echoed many voices.

Again the center of the room was cleared, and Robert Burns led forth Jessie Roth.

In a moment the air of "Bonnie Woods and Braes" shrieked from the fiddle. With rhythmic swing of body and limb, the graceful Scotch dancers kept time to the music. Up rose the arm of the girl, with inimitable grace; forward came one foot, daintily touching the floor. It was the very poetry of motion. At the close of this dance, the applause was again deafening.

"Git y'r pardners fer Virginny reel!" shouted the weary fiddler.

In the rush of the dancers, John Clayton was jostled against Esther Bright and Kenneth Hastings.

"Well!" said he, "I believe we'd better go out to supper, and then start homeward."

A brief search brought the other members of the party. They seated themselves at a long improvised table, covered with red tablecloths. There was but one course, and that included everything from roast venison and Irish stew, hot biscuit and honey, to New England doughnuts, hot tamales and whiskey.

Near by sat an Indian half-breed, who, discovering a large plate of doughnuts,

greedily devoured every one. As he had been drinking heavily, no one interfered, or made audible comments. When the Clayton party were about to withdraw, there were sounds of scuffling, oaths and cries, from the adjoining room, followed by a heavy thud. Some one had fallen. John Clayton rushed out, and finding one of his own cowboys in the fight, dragged him out into the open air. To keep him out of the mêlée, he sent him for their team, and he himself returned to the house for the members of his party. The leave-taking over, the spirited team dashed away from Jamison Ranch. The lights of the house grew fainter and fainter, then disappeared. The babble of voices, the clink of glasses, the clatter of spurs, the sound of dancing feet, were far behind. To the New England girl, the experience of the night seemed a strange dream; and the reality, the solemn hush of the midnight sky brooding over all.



CHAPTER VI

A SOUL'S AWAKENING

THE next evening, as the Claytons gathered about the fire, heavy footsteps were heard on the veranda.

"The cowboys are just in from the range," explained the host.

The door opened, and four cowboys entered. Abashed at the presence of a stranger, they responded awkwardly to the introduction. They were a picturesque group in the flickering firelight. All were dressed in corduroy jackets, belted with heavy leather belts, each of which held a gun and a sharp knife. Each man wore leather trousers, fringed at the bottom, high boots, with clanking spurs, and sombrero hats that no one deigned to remove on entering the room. They were brawny specimens of human kind, with faces copper-colored from exposure.

The Claytons welcomed them to a place before the fire. Many a curious glance wandered toward Esther. She listened intently to their tales of hair-breadth escapes, of breaking bronchos, of stampedes of cattle, of brandings and round-ups, of encounters with Indians and wolves, and of perilous feats of mountain climbing. Noticing her interest, their tongues were loosened, and many a half-truth took on the color of whole truth.

One of the cowboys had been so absorbed in watching her that he had taken no part in the conversation. His steady, persistent gaze finally attracted her attention. She was perplexed as to where she could have seen him. His face looked strangely familiar to her. Then it came to her in a flash that it was at the schoolhouse the day of the organization of the Bible school. He was one of the men who had protected her. She saw he could not be measured at a glance.

His face, though strikingly handsome, was one men feared. Yet there were those who could tell of his deeds of gentleness and mercy. These were in his

better moments, for he had better moments.

Many tales were told of his courage and daring. Mr. Clayton sometimes expressed the belief that if this cowboy had been reared in the right kind of atmosphere, he would have achieved distinction. His eagle eye and powerful jaw indicated a forceful personality.

As Esther felt his magnetic gaze, she turned and asked:

"Were you not at the schoolhouse the day we organized the Bible school?"

"I was there a few minutes," he responded. But he did not add that he had gone away with the ruffians to prevent their disturbing her.

She expressed the wish that he would visit the Bible school.

"Oh, I haven't been in a church since I was a kid," he blurted out. "Then my stepfather turned me out ter earn my livin'. I'm now twenty-eight, an' I don't know nothin' but cattle, an' bears, an' wolves an' Indians."

"It is sad not to have a home, isn't it?" she said.

"Oh, I don't know 'bout it's bein' sad," he answered, as though embarrassed. There was a change of expression in his face.

"But then your being thrown upon your own resources has made you brave, and self-reliant, and strong."

He squared his shoulders.

"In some ways, you have had great opportunities, Mr. Harding,—"

"Oh, don't call me 'Mr. Harding,'" he interrupted, "Call me 'Jack.'"

"I'll try to remember." Her face lighted. "These opportunities have given you magnificent physical strength. I know people who would give a fortune just to have your superb strength."

He straightened up.

"Well, I'd be glad to give it to 'em, if I could only have a chance to know somethin'."

"Know what?"

"Know how a man ought ter live." There was in his voice a deep, vibrant undertone of earnestness.

"It's a great thing to live, isn't it?" She spoke as though pondering some vital question. Jack Harding watched her curiously.

"Some jest half live, schoolma'am."

"That is probably true," she responded, "but God created us capable of something better. He has given us His world to know, and the people in it."

"The people in it," he repeated contemptuously. "Some people are a bad lot, schoolma'am, an' I'm one of 'em."

"You must not speak so of yourself. A man who will protect a woman, in order that she may continue her work unmolested, is not a bad lot. Now I should call you a pretty *good* sort of a man." A luminous smile. Almost any man would have become her willing slave for that smile.

As her voice gave special emphasis to the word "good," he squared his shoulders again. She continued:

"A man doesn't know how good he really is until he begins to try to help some one else up. Then he finds out."

"I need to be helped," he said, in a tone that seemed to be intended for her ear alone. "I am ignorant,—don't know nothin'. Can't hardly read, or write, or cipher. Could yer learn me?"

She looked at the strong man before her, touched by his appeal.

"What do you wish to learn?"

"First readin' an' writin' an' cipherin'."

"What next?"

"Oh, everythin', I guess."

The others had caught fragments of the conversation, and now joined in. Mike Maloney spoke first.

"Do yez think yez are a kid again, Jack, that yez are sthartin' wid book learnin'?"

"No, Mike, not a kid, but a dunce."

Before the teacher could protest, he continued:

"Ye'll find me an ignoramus, schoolma'am. A fellow out on the range, or in a minin' camp, don't git much schoolin'. But sometimes when ye're alone under the open sky, an' the stars come out, there's somethin' in here" (striking himself on the chest) "that is—is—unsatisfied. I want somethin'. I don't know what it is I want, but I believe you can help me find out."

Let those scoff who will; there is such a thing as divine unrest; and when this takes possession of a man, his evolution has begun.

John Harding went on with increasing earnestness.

"Yer see, schoolma'am, this not knowin' is awful. Y're not all a man should measure up to. Y're in prison like, hide bound. It's come ter me ter-night, all ter onct, that an ignoramus is in bondage, an' that only education can set him free."

The tide of his feeling gave him a rough eloquence. It was evident his words found a responsive echo in the other cowboys' hearts.

The teacher had listened with deepening interest. John Harding had set her a task,—the greatest task, nay, the greatest pleasure man or woman can know, of leading a human soul out of bondage into freedom.

One of the cowboys, Jimmie Smith by name, nudged Mike Maloney, and whispered:

"Ask her to learn us, too."

Mike readily assented.

"Would yez be willin' ter bother wid us too?"

"It would be no bother. I'd be glad to help you."

There was no doubting her sincerity.

In a few moments, the men were seated around the dining table, each with pencil and paper, and a lesson in penmanship had begun.

"Gosh!" said Jimmie. "Ef that don't look like the rail fences back in Indianny!"

As he said this, he held up to view the very best he could do after repeated efforts. He laughed uproariously at himself, the others joining from pure sympathy, for Jimmie's laugh was contagious.

But Mike worked as though entered for a race. He seemed to need an astonishing amount of the teacher's attention, especially after she commended his work.

"Schoolma'am," he called out, beckoning to her with his dirty hand, "would yez be showin' me the nixt?"

She bent over him, naming principles, explaining slant and spacing, as she made a group of letters.

"Stim letthers, did yez say? Stim? Stim?"

He held up his work and looked at it critically. "Manin' no disrespict to yez, schoolma'am, I'll jist call 'em, not stim letthers, but fince posts."

After the laughs and gibes had ceased, he listened to her a moment, and then remarked, "The stims should all be sthandin' the same way, did yez say?"

He grinned as he viewed his writing o'er. It was clear to him, even at that early stage of the work, that he was not cut out for an expert penman. Yet his last effort that evening he seemed to regard with special pride and satisfaction, and this is what the teacher found on his paper when she returned to observe his work:

klass
jimme Smith
mike maloney
john harding
bill weeks
teecher
the angle of the gila

Night after night, these cowboys gathered for an hour or more at the Clayton home for study with Esther Bright. Reading, and arithmetic, and talks on physical geography followed. The cowboys did not suspect it, but she was fighting the degrading influences of the saloon.

Days came and went. The interest in the night school increased; so did the

interest in the Bible school. But for some indefinable reason, John Harding had not visited it.

One Saturday morning, when Esther sought the schoolhouse to do some work there, he joined her, entered the building, and built a fire for her. While observing the decorations of the room, he saw on the walls the words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

He read and reread the words. What could it mean? He was ashamed to ask. At last his great dark eyes sought the teacher's face. She saw a question in them.

"What is it?" she asked.

"What does it mean?"

"What does what mean?"

"Them words,—'God so loved the world', an' so on."

"What don't you understand?"

"I don't understand none of it. Yer see, us fellers uses 'God' as a cuss-word. That's all I know 'bout God."

"Have you never read in the Bible about Jesus?"

"Bible? I ain't seen one sence I was a kid, 'n' I never read it then, 'n' ef God is a father 'n' anythin' like my stepfather, I reckon I don't care ter make his acquaintance."

"He is not like your stepfather, for Jesus never turns anyone away. He invites people to come to Him. Would you like to hear about this, John?"

"Yes, mum."

"Well, sit down and I'll tell you."

So they sat down near the desk. Then the woman of twenty-four told the Christ-story to the man of twenty-eight as to a little child. He listened intently, with the eagerness of a man in whom the passion to know has just been born. The teacher's words thrilled her listener. She pictured Jesus a child. Jesus a young man in Nazareth, working among his fellows, tempted, victorious; Jesus healing the sick and afflicted, mingling with sinful men, and freeing them from

their bondage to sin. The expression of the man's face was indescribable. As she reached the story of the Crucifixion, he asked huskily:

"Why did God let the Jews kill him?"

"Many have asked that question. All we know about it is what the Bible tells us. I used to wonder if there could not have been some other way of salvation than through the suffering and death of Jesus."

Her look was far away, as of one thinking of things eternal. Again she read aloud:

"And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, 'The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.' And they were exceeding sorry."

"He knew it, then, that they would kill him?"

"It seems so." She read on:

"He taught his disciples and said unto them, 'The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.'"

She turned the leaves and read again: "'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.'"

"He died for us?"

She nodded, and continued: "'I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.'"

"The Comforter!"

"Listen, John. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

Then she closed the book.

"Greater love hath no man than this," he repeated. She took up the words, "'that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

"He—gave—his—life—for—us!"

John Harding spoke slowly. The great truth that has comforted the human heart for ages had at last reached his dormant soul. The eagle eye seemed looking inward; the iron jaw set; the strong hand clinched. In this deep inward look, the man seemed to have forgotten the presence of the teacher. At last into the hard face flashed a comprehending light, and he spoke.

"I would give my life for you."

"I believe you would," she said, never doubting. "Just so Jesus gave his life for all mankind."

He looked up.

"I begin to understand."

"He taught men how to live," explained the teacher. "He taught that great and worthy love means sacrifice, and that all who would truly love and serve their fellow men must cease to think about self, and must get about doing kind, helpful things for other people."

"I have never known the meaning of love or sacrifice," he said. "I don't know no more about them things than I do about God. But tell me about Jesus. What happened after they had crucified him?"

He listened with intense interest as she told the story.

"I want ter know more," he said. "I never knowed sech things was in the Bible. Ef I'd knowed it when I was a kid, I'd a lived a differ'nt life. I s'pose it's too late now."

"No; not too late." Her voice was low and gentle.

"I don't know how ter begin," he said helplessly. "Tell me how."

"One way is to feel deeply sorry for anything wrong in one's past; to repent of wrong thoughts, wrong words, wrong deeds."

"But, schoolma'am, my wrong deeds has been so many," and he bowed his head on his arms on the desk before him.

"Not so many—" her voice was comforting—"but God will forgive them, if you are truly sorry. Pray every day, pray many times a day, that God will not only forgive you, but help you become a better man."

He raised his head.

"I don't know how ter pray. I'm afraid ter pray. Do you know," he said desperately, "I've committed about every crime but murder?"

Again he bowed his head on his arms. His frame shook with sobs. The calm, well-poised girl had never before seen such a stirring of the deeps. A strong man in tears is not an easy thing to witness.

"Will yer pray fur me?" he said at length; but he did not lift his head.

Then upon his ears fell the comforting voice of the teacher. It was the first time in all his life anyone had prayed for him. Something choked him. At last he looked up into her eyes.

"Learn me ter pray," he said huskily.

"Say this, John, *now*: 'Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me.'"

He repeated, "'Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!'"

It was the first prayer John Harding had ever prayed. He rose to go.

"I wisht—." He hesitated.

"What do you wish?"

She reached out a delicate, expressive hand, and laid it gently on his brawny arm. It came to him, at that hour, like a benediction from God.

"*What* do you wish?" she repeated.

"I wisht you'd give me a Bible."

She lifted the Bible from her desk, one long used by her and carefully marked, and placing it in his open hand, she said:

"Never forget, John, that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, has bought your soul with a great price, and that it belongs to God."

He tried to thank her. Then turning, without a vocal word of thanks, he left the room; and with long, easy, rapid strides, sought the solitude of the mountains.

The something within him that had long been beating to be free, now asserted itself. It *would* have way. It seemed to be his real self, and yet a new man, risen up out of his dead and fruitless past. It seemed to sing within him, yet it sorrowed. And in the midst of the sorrow, a great hope was born. He knew it now,—this Something was his own Soul!

There, on the heights of the rugged foothills, he stood alone. Only the fathomless deeps of the sky saw the struggle of that human soul. For a while he seemed to be passing through the tortures of the damned. He fought his way inch by inch. Great beads of sweat covered his forehead; then, lifting one clenched hand high in the air, as though he had burst forth from a dungeon of death into the light of day, he said:

"God! God!"



CHAPTER VII

THE GILA CLUB

THE class of cowboys soon outgrew the living room at Clayton Ranch, and now occupied the schoolhouse three consecutive evenings a week. Although the class had organized as the Gila Club, for study and social life, the meetings thus far had been for the purpose of study only.

From the inception of the club, it had met with popular favor. For many a day, nothing had been so much talked of, and talked of with such unqualified approval. The knowledge of the teacher, her unselfish interest in the men, her goodness and kindness, were themes upon which many a rough man grew eloquent. Had Esther Bright been a Sister of Mercy, in the sacred garb of the Church, she could hardly have been revered more than she was. It never occurred to her as she went and came among them, that she needed a protector. Before the year was over, many a one in that group would have risked his life to save hers.

And yet, Esther Bright was not such an unusual woman. Such as she may be found almost anywhere in this land, sanctifying the home; rearing children to be true men and women; teaching in the schools; ministering to the sick; protecting the pure; rescuing the fallen; and exemplifying in every act of their lives, Christ's teachings of love and mercy. And the work of this great sisterhood goes quietly, unflinching on, making, as no other force does, for the real progress of the race.

An Esther Bright is never written up in glaring headlines of yellow journalism; an Esther Bright is never offered in barter for a foreign title and a degenerate husband; such as she are never seen at the gaming table, nor among the cigarette and cocktail devotees. We find her in places where the world's needs are great, calm, well-poised, intelligent, capable, sympathetic; the greatest moral force of the age.

The common man, if decent, always respects such a woman. She becomes to him a saint, an ideal; and in proportion to his respect for her, is his own moral uplift possible.

So those rough men of Gila, in those days of long ago, came to look upon Esther Bright as a sort of saint, their Angel, as they called her; and with this deepening respect for her, there gradually grew up in them, faint at first, but sure at last, a wholesome respect for all womankind. Such was the atmosphere of the Gila Club.

Among the first to attend the meetings, after the organization of the club, was Patrick Murphy, whom Esther had not seen since the night of the ball. He came with John Harding, and as he entered the room, he took his pipe from his mouth, jerked his slouch hat from his head, and gave a queer little duck in lieu of a bow.

"I am plazed to be wid yez, Miss." He smiled broadly.

She assured him of a cordial welcome from all, extending her hand as she spoke. He gripped it till she winced, and became so engrossed in hearing himself talk that he forgot to release it.

"The byes has been tellin' av me as yez learn 'em ter git on. Now that's what Oi allus preach,—git on. There's no use allus bein' wid yer nose ter the grindstone."

He released her hand to stuff more tobacco in his pipe. After a puff or two, he continued his remarks:

"The childthren has been gittin' on so well, Oi sez to mesilf, sez Oi, p'raps the schoolma'am can learn me ter figger, an' read an' write. So here Oi am," (slapping his chest heartily, as that portion of his anatomy rose an inch higher) "here Oi am!"

Just then Esther's attention was sought by a group of newcomers. Kenneth watched her attitude towards the people. She was gracious and cordial, but there was about her a fine reserve that the commonest man felt, and tacitly respected.

At first, this young Englishman had been attracted to the young New England girl by the delicate loveliness of her face, and the elegance of her manner. He had felt, from the first, that in his social intercourse with her, he must rise above the empty platitudes of society. There were times when he flattered himself he had made progress in her favor. Then, when he presumed upon this, he was met

by a strong wall of reserve.

Here she was now, bestowing smiles and gracious words upon just common men. He was filled with disgust. Then he, gentleman as he was, man of the world, university graduate, engineer, felt his self-love wounded; and he thereupon had an acute attack of sulks.

What was she to him, anyway?

The stern patrician face looked coldly, cynically on at the men around him. The "vulgar herd," he called them.

Just in the midst of his morbid reflections, he heard a merry, contagious laugh from Esther. He did not glance up. But, in an instant, she was at his side, telling with great glee the skit that had provoked the laughter. It was so irresistibly funny, Kenneth laughed with them, and the ice was broken.

To be sure, he did not know Esther Bright as he did the alphabet, but what of that? Who could sound the deeps of such a rare woman's soul? She *was* a rare woman. He conceded that every time he held an argument with himself, when she was the question of the argument. Always in her life, he was sure, there would be a reserve, through which no one could pass, unless it might be the ordained of God. She fascinated him more and more. One moment, in his adoration, he could have humbled himself to the dust to win one gracious word from her; at other times, his pride made him as silent and immovable as a sphinx.

On this particular night at the club, Kenneth was in one of his moods. If Esther saw, she did not betray it. She came to him, telling in a straightforward way, that the work had grown so she could not do it all herself, and do justice to the men? Would he help her? There was a class in arithmetic. Would he kindly teach that for her to-night? Kenneth looked savage.

"Oh, don't say no," she urged appealingly. "They are working in compound numbers and are doing so well. *Won't* you take the class?" she urged, again. And Kenneth consented.

It is but justice to say that the selection of the teacher proved wise. What this did for Kenneth himself is not the least part of the good resulting therefrom.

Soon the click of pencils, and occasional questions and answers indicated that the arithmetic classes were at work. In one corner, the dignified and scholarly

John Clayton sat helping a young miner learn to write. By her desk, sat Esther Bright, teaching Patrick Murphy to read.

Learning to read when a man is forty-five is no easy task. Patrick Murphy did not find it so. He found it rather humiliating, but his unfailing good humor helped him out.

The teacher began with script sentences, using objects to develop these. She wrote the sentences on the blackboard. Again and again the sentences were erased and then rewritten. But the pupil at last remembered.

One sentence was, "I am a man." Patrick hesitated; then solemnly said, as though reading:

"Oi certainly am not a woman, manin' no disrespect to women folk, Miss."

She read quietly from the blackboard again, "I am a man."

"Perhaps, Miss, it would be more intilligint fur me ter say, 'Oi am an Oirishman.'"

"Very well," she said, smiling, "I will write the sentence that way."

"You see, Miss," he continued, with droll seriousness, "it is ividint Oi am a man. Let me read the sintinces agin!" And he read them correctly.

Here the classes changed, each teacher helping a group of men with a simple reading lesson. Then followed the lesson in penmanship, taught by Esther Bright, and the work of the evening was over.

As the three teachers left the schoolhouse door, Mr. Clayton laid his hand on Kenneth's shoulder, and said:

"Come over to see Mrs. Clayton a little while. It's still early."

Kenneth hesitated.

"Yes, do," urged Esther. "We have some plans to work out for the club, you know, and we need your help."

Again there was an appeal in her voice. What a brute he had been! What a fool! So he strolled along with the two. As they stepped on the veranda, they heard a deep voice.

"Lord Kelwin!" exclaimed John Clayton.

The greetings over, the meeting of the club and its possibilities became the subject of discussion.

"Why can't you join us, Lord Kelwin?" questioned the host.

"Yes, why not?" said Esther, with sudden animation.

Kenneth Hastings' face darkened.

"Ah—I—well—" stammered Lord Kelwin. "I didn't suppose my services—ah—would—ah—would be agreeable to the *teacher*,"—and he looked first at Esther Bright, and then at Kenneth Hastings.

A single, hectic flush suddenly appeared in one of Esther's cheeks. Then Mr. Clayton spoke.

"You do not seem to understand, Lord Kelwin, that Miss Bright's class has grown so rapidly she has had to have assistance, and Mr. Hastings and I, for lack of better material, have been pressed into service. Come, yourself, and you'll want to help the good work on." Lord Kelwin raised his monocle.

Esther spoke quickly, with more enthusiasm than usual.

"The girls have been seeking the same opportunity we are giving the men. They need help just as much, and so we must plan to help them too!"

"Yes, and kill yourself!" growled Kenneth Hastings.

John Clayton smiled.

"Not if Miss Bright has sufficient help. If she will organize the work, we can surely assist her."

For a time, it seemed as though a club for girls was doomed. Then Mrs. Clayton came to Esther's rescue.

"Miss Bright is already in touch with the girls, and knows something of their great need."

"But they're such a tough lot," rejoined Lord Kelwin.

"Then they need her influence all the more. She can help them if anyone in the

world can." Again Mrs. Clayton had helped her out. The hectic flush deepened. Esther's eyes grew brilliant. Her voice, when she spoke, was low, calm, sweet, but vibrating with an earnestness the group about her had occasionally heard in her voice before. She spoke with decision:

"I shall help the girls!"

"That settles it!" responded Kenneth, half in admiration, half in disgust. He could not understand what it was that could make a girl of her fine and sensitive nature, a girl of her beauty and culture and great attainments, not only willing, but eager, to help a group of coarse, uncouth men and women, of doubtful reputation, and who, to his mind, were utterly incapable of appreciating her.

John Clayton spoke again.

"Won't you join us, Lord Kelwin?"

Again the Irishman looked at the teacher, but her eyes were fixed on the glowing fire.

"I—well—I suppose—I could."

"Suppose we have a joint meeting of the men and women next Saturday evening," said Esther. "Have a programme that would not be very long, but interesting. Then let them have a social time, and treat them to some cake and coffee."

"That is a happy thought, Miss Bright," said Mrs. Clayton in hearty approval.

Now plans began to be discussed in earnest. And before the guests departed, it had been decided that the first social function ever given by the people of Gila should be given in the schoolhouse the following Saturday night.

As the two men walked toward the camp, Lord Kelwin questioned his companion.

"What did Clayton mean by Miss Bright's being of the 'blood royal'?"

"That is what he meant."

"Related to some royal house of Europe, some native ruler here, eh?"

His companion stopped and laughed.

"Royal by nature. It is such blood as hers that should flow in the veins of the rulers of the earth."

"Then she has no vast estates coming to her?"

The darkness concealed the contempt on Kenneth's face.

"If there is a God, (and I begin to believe there is) she has a rich reward before her."

"Poor in this world's goods, eh?"

"*Rich* as few women are."

His companion whistled. Kenneth stopped. Lord Kelwin stopped too.

"Deuced fine girl, isn't she?" said the Irishman. His companion made no reply. After another remark from Lord Kelwin, Kenneth said sharply:

"I do not care to discuss Miss Bright."

So the conversation ended. But something rankled in the heart of the Englishman.

Saturday night came. Such jollity! Such overflow of spirits! The laughter was loud and frequent. People came in a steady stream until the little schoolhouse was full to overflowing.

Among the first arrivals, were Patrick Murphy and his wife. He was beaming with good nature. But Mrs. Murphy had come (as she expressed it) "agin her jedgment." She viewed the company with a chilly glance. Patrick chuckled.

"It's plazed Oi am wid this evint. Oi've persuaded me woman, here, as this is quoite equal ter anythin' she iver attinded in York State, not even barrin' a barrn raisin'."

Mrs. Murphy's beady black eyes seemed to come closer together. Her mouth set. Her nose rose by gradual gradations into the air, and her spinal column stiffened. She delivered herself to the following effect:

"I *will* confess as I have never been at a club afore. Back in York State they was only fur men folks. But my 'lations as lives on Lexity Street, York City, knows what clubs be, an' parties too, I reckon."

But here John Harding, the president of the club, called the meeting to order. He announced that the first number on the programme would be a talk on physics, by Mr. Hastings.

After the applause, Patrick Murphy, in facetious mood, exclaimed:

"Begorra, if yez are not commincin' wid physic fur our stomachs!"

"No," responded the speaker, "but physics for your head, Patrick."

When the laugh at Patrick's expense had subsided, Kenneth announced the subject of his talk as "Magnetism." He talked simply, illustrating as he talked. Occasionally he was interrupted by questions that showed a fair degree of intelligence, and a desire to know. At the close of his talk Patrick, the irrepressible, burst forth again:

"Yez said that a natural magnit could magnetize a bar o' steel, makin' the steel a sthronger magnit than the iron, an' yit this natural magnit be jist as magnitic as it was before?"

"Yes."

"Begorra!" said Patrick, slapping his knee, "yez'll have a harrd toime makin' me belave that. The idea! that anythin' can give to another more nor it has itself, an' at the same toime have as much lift itself as it had before it gave away more nor it had!"

Patrick drew himself up. He had assumed a sudden importance in the community. Did he not know?

The teacher smiled indulgently. As she spoke, there was quiet, respectful attention.

"You see, Mr. Murphy, the natural magnet is like a human being. The more strength a man puts forth, the more he will have. If we give of ourselves, of our talents, to help other people, we are enriched by it. So the magnet teaches us a lesson, don't you see?"

Patrick scratched his head dubiously. The teacher continued:

"A natural magnet may not have much power in itself, but when it shares its power with a steel bar, the bar can do vastly more than the piece of iron could. In the same way, the influence we exert, though it may not be great in itself, may

enable other people to do greater things than we could possibly do."

The lesson went home.

Patrick shook his head approvingly.

"All right, Miss, all right! Oi'll belave the sthory if yez say so. Oi foind it hard to understhand what makes a bit o' iron a natural magnit. What Oi does understhand is yez are loike the steel magnit, an' yez draws the rist av us to yez!"

And having delivered himself of this compliment, which apparently met with the hearty approval of the company, he subsided.

Then John Harding announced the next number on the programme,—a talk on Ireland by Lord Kelwin, illustrated by Mr. Clayton with his magic lantern. Again there was applause; and as the lights were put out, the giggling and laughter grew boisterous. In an instant, a picture flashed on the screen, and the laughter changed to quiet attention.

Lord Kelwin's voice soon made itself heard. He was well-known in camp, and popular. He spoke in a bright, attractive way, with occasional flashes of Irish wit, when he provoked laughter and comment again. On one of these occasions, Patrick burst forth. Patrick was in fine spirits. He had stopped at the saloon on the way to the party.

"Begorra, the ould counthry is all foine enough in a picture or lecture; but Oi loike the Imerald Oile on this soide betther. The Imerald Oile of Ameriky, bounded on the north, by the North Pole; on the east, by the Atlanthic; on the south, by the South Pole; on the wist, by the Pacific; an' on the top, by the rist o' the universe. Hoorah fur the Imerald Oile of Ameriky!"

A howl went up, and a laugh from everyone, followed by much clapping.

"Where did you learn so much geography?" asked one. Again there was a laugh.

"And this," said the speaker, as a new picture flashed before their eyes, "is Blarney Castle. Here is where Patrick learned his blarney."

But Patrick was not to be outdone. He chuckled.

"The blairney stone was all roight whin Oi was at Blairney Castle in the ould counthry; but whin Oi landed in Ameriky, Oi wint to Plymouth, an' there Oi

found an Oirish saint holdin' a rock. Oi sez ter him, sez Oi, 'Phat do yez call the rock where the Pilgrims landed'? An' he looks at me scornful loike, an' sez he ter me, sez he, 'Y're mishthaken', sez he, 'this is the blairney stone of Killairney. Ameriky imports all the bist things from the ould counthry.'

The people fairly howled.

"Includin' you, eh, Patrick?" shouted an Englishman, above the uproar of laughter.

The address held everyone's attention, and at its close, both Lord Kelwin and Mr. Clayton were loudly applauded.

"This closes our programme," said John Harding. "We hope ye'll talk an' have a good time, an' look about the room ter see what the children of the school have been doin'. Then the women folks will feed yer cake an' coffee."

This announcement, too, was applauded.

Mrs. Murphy, belle of the back East barn raisings, separated herself from the company. She came upon a good-sized play house, neatly painted and papered. It was furnished tastefully with little woven rugs, wire furniture, and crocheted window curtains. Over different articles, were placed the names of the children who had made them. Mrs. Murphy stood in amazed admiration, for her own children had been among the most skilled workers. She found simple garments, neatly made, and here and there bits of sewing, clumsy, and botched in some cases, because baby fingers had been at work.

The teacher joined Mrs. Murphy, who said to her:

"You don't say, schoolma'am, as you learns the young uns to do sich things as this?"

"Yes. Don't you like it?"

"Like it! I should say! Why, fust I know, they'll be makin' their own cloes, an' their pap's an' mine!"

"Perhaps."

But in another part of the room, a different conversation was going on.

"I tell ye," said Jessie Roth, who was talking to Bobbie Burns, "schoolma'am

kens an awfu' lot."

"How dae ye ken?" he asked with an air of scorn, "ye dinna ken muckle yirsel'."

"Ye jist shut up, Bob Burns," she replied testily. "I may not ken muckle, neither do ye. Ye has no manners. I tell ye I want ter learn. I'm a mind ter quit the range an' go ter school."

"What's the matter, Jessie?" asked the teacher, coming up at this moment, and slipping her arm about the girl's waist. "I believe Bob has been teasing you. Make up, children;" and smiling kindly, and with a reassuring grasp of Jessie's hand, she passed on.

"What'd I tell ye?" asked the girl.

"Oh, she's only a woman. Anyway, she don't care much for you lasses, or she'd had a club for girls."

This was more than Jessie could stand.

"A woman, did ye say? A woman?" Jessie's eyes flashed with anger. "An' wasna' y'r mither a woman, Bob Burns?"

"I believe she was," answered the boy with a broad grin. He was enjoying himself.

"An' as fur the schoolma'am's not carin' fur the girls, y're mistaken. I'm sure she will have a club fur us."

"Yes," taunted the burly fellow, "to hammer things into y'r heads with."

At this Jessie left him in high dudgeon. She sought Esther and asked:

"*Don't* ye like we girls as much as the boys?"

"Just a little bit better, perhaps. Why, Jessie?"

"Bob Burns says ye don't care fur the girls, an' he knows ye don't 'cause ye hain't made no club fur them."

"Bob's mistaken, isn't he? We girls," and the teacher paused and smiled into several faces, "we girls are to have a club soon. Don't you say so?"

The girls gathered about her. Bob's remark, repeated by Jessie, had been most timely, and crystallized what had been in the girls' minds,—to organize such a club for women as had been organized for the men.

They talked rapidly, several at a time; but at last they listened to Esther, as she asked them to visit the school at an hour they could agree upon, on the following Monday. This they promised to do. But at this juncture, John Harding interrupted the conversation.

"They want ter know as will yer tell 'em a short story, Miss Bright."

"A story? Let—me—see—! What shall I tell them, Jack?"

"Tell 'em about Abraham Lincoln, as didn't have no chance till he made it hisself."

So she told them a story of a hero, a plain, simple man, a man of toil, a man of great heart. She pictured his faithfulness to simple duties, his rise to the highest position his countrymen could bestow upon him, his death and the nation's sorrow.

As she finished, a cowboy asked, "Did yer say that Abraham Lincoln was onct president of the United States?"

"Yes."

"My!" he exclaimed, "I wisht I'd 'a knowed him! I wisht I could 'a fit on his side!"

"It is not too late to fight on his side," she said. "Every time you try to live a more sober, honest, decent life, every time you try to be more manly and true, you are fighting on the same side he did."

"Gosh!" he said. "I didn't know that. I thought fightin' meant jest killin' off the other fellers."

While the refreshments were being served, John Harding extended an invitation to the men to attend the club regularly, and suggested that the girls see Miss Bright about a club for girls, adding:

"I believe a club fer women is in the air."

Vociferous applause. Patrick Murphy stepped forward.

"John Harding, y'r honor, I jist wish ter say as this is the foinest toime Oi've had in Ameriky; an' I tells yez all this: that if any young feller wishes ter git on, he will have a chance here in this club. Schoolma'am learns us a lot (the Saints bliss her!). She's a foine lady! She believes in givin' a man a chance ter be a man. Instid o' wastin' our earnin's in the saloons Saturday nights, let's come here t' the club, an' learn how ter git on. Save y'r money, lads. Now who'll give three cheers f'r Miss Bright?"

The room rang with the cheers.

The festivities were over, the last guest, gone. The officers had taken their leave, and the Claytons walked on ahead, leaving Kenneth Hastings to escort Esther Bright home.

"It was a great success," he said enthusiastically.

When Esther spoke, there was an expression of weariness in her voice.

"Tired?" he asked gently, with sudden sympathy.

"A little."

She looked so slight, so fragile, to shoulder a man's work in the world, he felt a sudden shame at the insignificance of what he had done. He would stand between her and the world, this he would do.

"You gave an instructive and interesting talk," she was saying. He recalled his wandering thoughts.

After thanking her, he said he had liked Patrick's remarks about her being a magnet.

"Patrick's great fun, isn't he?" she laughed.

"Yes, but he usually hits the right nail on the head. It is true, as he said, you *do* draw people to you. You draw me to you as no one has ever done."

"Don't!" she began.

"You have taught me to believe in true womanhood. I used to despise women. I thought they were a vain, frivolous lot, at the bottom of all the wrong-doing of the world."

"Indeed! I understand that some Englishmen have very little respect for

woman; that she is regarded as the inferior of man, a little higher in the scale of intelligence than a horse or dog."

"How sarcastic we are to-night!" he said ironically.

"The Englishwoman trains her daughters to wait on their father and brothers."

"How extensive has your acquaintance been with the English?"

"Many American men grow up as their fathers have done before them, chivalrous toward the women of their families, and often chivalrous to women everywhere."

"Indeed! A paragon of animals, the American man!"

"England kept her universities closed to women, because English men were afraid bright English women would carry off scholastic honors, if admitted to the universities."

"What remarkable wisdom you possess in the matter!"

"I read the magazines."

"Indeed!"

"And the daily papers," she added, chuckling.

"Remarkable!"

"I read several English periodicals. I am interested in English politics."

"The deuce!"

"The—what?" she asked, with a suggestion of suppressed mirth in her voice.

"The gentleman with horns."

"Ah, yes," she said. "I have heard something of the gentleman. A very bad-tempered fellow, isn't he? Have you known him long?"

"By George, you think you're funny, don't you?" But by this time he laughed, too.

"Come in, Kenneth," called John Clayton, when they reached the veranda.

"No, I thank you," said Kenneth. "Miss Bright has been abusing men, and Englishmen in particular."

"Well," responded John Clayton laughingly, "you stood up for our sex, I hope."

"I tried to, but Miss Bright came out ahead. Good night, Miss Bright. I hope you'll change your opinion of the Englishman, and that he will not always suffer when compared with your pink of perfection, the American man."

When he had gone a short distance, she called him back.

"Well?" he said, turning.

"I just wished to remind you that it isn't becoming to you to be grouchy."

"You wretch!" And he turned on his heel and stalked away.

"What's the matter with Kenneth?" asked John Clayton.

"Oh," said Esther, indifferently, "he thinks altogether too much of Mr. Kenneth Hastings. He must learn there are other people in the world besides K.H."

"Don't be too hard on him," said her host warningly.

"No," she said, "I won't. I'll teach him to respect the human being, irrespective of sex, color or previous condition of servitude. Good night."



CHAPTER VIII

THE COW LASSES

IT was clear that the character of the work for the Gila girls should differ from that for the men. Esther Bright had thought it all out, but she resolved to let the girls themselves determine, in large measure, what it should be. So they came to visit the school that bright December day to observe.

School! Could this be school? Not school as they recalled it, hours of dull monotonous tasks, where punishment, merited or unmerited, stood out in conspicuous boldness. As they now listened, every moment seemed to open the door to knowledge, and a wonderland of surprising interest spread before them. The dull drone of the old-time reading lesson had given place to conversational tones. The children were reading aloud from a bright, vivacious story that caught and held the attention of these untutored girls. To learn to read like the teacher became the proud ambition of these seven visitors.

With a simple lesson in physics the interest deepened. Then came the lesson in manual training. The deft fingers of the boys and girls were busy learning the mysteries of tailoring. How to darn a rent in cloth is no easy thing for untrained fingers to learn. Little fingers, big fingers, busily plied the needle. The boys were learning how to repair their clothing. The teacher passed from one to another, helping, encouraging, commending. She held up a beautiful piece of work for the visitors to see.

When the school was dismissed for the noon hour, they gathered around Esther.

"My!" said one, "I wisht I knowed as much as you do, schoolma'am."

"Do you?" asked the teacher, as if to know as much as she did were the easiest thing in the world.

"You bet I do!" answered the girl.

"Schoolma'am," asked Jessie Roth, "do ye s'pose ye could learn us tae read as good as them kids did this mornin'?"

"Oh, yes. Even better."

"Better nor them?"

"Indeed, yes, if you will study as hard as they do. One's progress depends upon one's interest and one's application."

"Oh, we'll study all right," said Kate Keith, "if you'll give us the chance."

"You bet we will!" said another.

Then Esther told them the history of the Gila Club for men, how it had begun, how she had taught the men, how the class had grown until it had seemed imperative to meet in the schoolhouse, and how they organized as a club.

"Did *you* learn all them men yourself?" asked a girl just in from the range. She was a veritable Amazon.

"Yes," was the answer, "until we began to meet in the schoolhouse. Then I had help."

Esther stood looking into this raw girl's face as though she saw there the loveliest being on earth. What the teacher really saw there was an awakening mind and soul.

The girl, rough and uncouth as she was, admired the teacher, and longed to be like her.

"What can we dae?" asked Jessie Roth, eager to perfect plans for study.

"That is just what I wish you girls to decide. What would you like to do?"

In response to the teacher's question, all of them spoke at once.

"One at a time, please, one at a time," Esther said. "Suppose, we commence with Jessie. What do you wish to do, Jessie?"

"Oh, I'd like tae dae cipherin' an' readin' an' writin'. I wisht I could read like you, schoolma'am!"

"Could she ever?" questioned Kate Keith, a young English girl.

"Certainly." She showed such belief in them and what they might do that their enthusiasm rose still higher. Then Kate said impulsively:

"I wisht ye'd learn us to sew. I've been wishin' to know how."

She held up her big, coarse hands, looked at them a moment, and laughed as she said:

"I don't know as I could handle such a little thing as a needle."

"You wish to learn to sew? I am so glad."

This was just the turn Esther had been hoping would come. "Every woman," she continued, "ought to know how to sew. I like to sew, myself. What next?"

A comely maid spoke. "My name's Mandy Young. Me an' Marthy thought we'd like ter learn ter write letters an'—"

Here she blushed furiously.

"That's good," said the teacher. "What else?"

"Me an' Marthy wanted ter learn ter sing like you do, schoolma'am."

"Now, Martha, it is your turn," said the teacher with an encouraging smile.

Martha was a great, brawny specimen of humankind. "My name's Miss Lieben," she said.

"Lieben! Lieben! That's a good name. It means *love*." The cowlass blushed and snickered. "And Martha's a good name too. There was once a very careful housekeeper named Martha."

"Oh, I ain't no housekeeper," responded the girl, "but I want ter be. I want ter learn readin' an' writin', an' cookin', too."

"Cooking! Well! Next?" said Esther, looking into the face of the next girl.

"My name's Mary Burns."

Mary had a more modest way. "I hardly know what I dae want. I think ye could plan for us better nor we could plan for oursels. An' we'd a' be gratefu'."

"Sure," said one.

"That's right," added another. They all nodded their heads in approval. Then up spoke Bridget Flinn:

"Shure, an' she's on the right thrack. When we can do housework, we can command a high wage, an' git on. My cousin gits five dollars a week in New York, an' she says she has mere nothin' ter do, an' dthresses as good as her misthress. Oi'd loike ter learn ter write letthers, so as ter wroite ter Pat, an' Oi'd loike ter learn housekapin', so's I could go out ter sarvice."

Then a pretty Mexican girl, with a soft voice, spoke:

"Martha Castello is my name. I want to learn to read an' write an' sing."

The teacher stepped to the blackboard, and wrote the following:

Reading
Writing

Arithmetic
Singing

The girls watched her intently.

"An' letthers," suggested Bridget.

"To be sure—letters," said Esther, writing the word.

Then followed the organization of the girls' club, resulting in the election of Jessie Roth as president. It was agreed that for the present the girls should enter school, and occasionally meet with the teacher outside of school hours.

That day proved a red-letter day for them. They had come in touch with an inspiring personality, and their education had begun.

Years have come and gone since that day; but the people of Gila still tell how a young girl, the sweetest soul that ever lived, came and dwelt among them, and brought God into their lives. Even the roughest old men will pause, and say with reverence:

"The Angel of the Gila! God bless her!"

The afternoon session of the school passed quickly. Then followed a bit of kindly talk with the seven new pupils. Then Esther Bright walked homeward. She was overtaken by Brigham Murphy and Wathemah. Something mysterious seemed in the air.

"Miss Bright," blurted out Brigham, "Maw says as will yer come home with us ter-morrer, ter visit. We're goin' ter have chicken an' lots o' good things ter eat, ain't we, Wathemah? An' he's comin', too, ain't yer, Wathemah?"

The Indian child gave an affirmative grunt, and trudged along close to his teacher. It was a way he had of doing since she had promised to be his mother.

"Will yer come?" eagerly questioned the representative of the Mormon household.

"I shall be happy to if you will show me the way."

"Oh, we'll 'scort yer!" And Brigham turned several somersaults, and ran like a deer along the road leading to the Murphy ranch.

to worry."

"Stylish? We're stylish when we wants to be, an' this is one o' them times."

"Is it stylish ter go ter Bible school?" asked Brigham. He seemed greatly puzzled.

"No, sir-ee, it ain't stylish, an' you ain't goin' thar," she said, giving him a cuff on the ear by way of emphasis.

"She? What's she know 'bout *my* 'ligion or *y'r* 'ligion? She ain't had no relevations. But git off to bed, the hull lot o' yer."

"It's only eight o'clock," said one, sullenly, dragging his feet.

"Well, I don't care. The house is all red up, an' I wants it to stay red up till schoolma'am comes. Besides, y're all clean yerselfs now, an' yer won't have to wash an' comb to-morrer."

At last they were driven off to bed, and gradually they quieted down, and all were asleep in the little adobe house.

But Brigham tossed in terrifying dreams. The scene shifted. He was with Wathemah, who was telling him of Jesus. Then the teacher's life was in danger and he tried to save her. He felt her hand upon his head; a smile flitted across his face, his muscles relaxed; he was in heaven; the streets were like sunset skies. The teacher took him by the hand and led him to the loveliest Being he had ever beheld, who gathered him in His arms, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."



CHAPTER IX

THE VISIT AT MURPHY RANCH

THE hour hand of the clock was on three. Twenty pairs of restless eyes watched the minute hand as it drew close, very close to twelve. The books had been placed in the desks; there was a hush of attention. The children sang "America," saluted the flag, and marched out of the room. As Wathemah returned to visit with his teacher, she asked him what he had learned that day.

"Country love!" answered the child. As he spoke, he stepped to the flag, that hung from the staff in graceful folds, and caressed it.

"Oh, Miss Bright, Miss Bright!" shouted James Burns. "Brigham's come fur yer! He's brung his horse fur yer ter ride! Golly! But he looks fine! Come see!"

And James led the way to Brigham and the horse. Sure enough! There they were. The little lad, radiant with pride, the huge bay horse, lean and gaunt and hairy, bedight as never was horse before. He seemed conscious that this was a gala day, and that it behooved him to deport himself as became a respectable family horse.

Numerous small bouquets, tied to white muslin strings, adorned his bridle. The animal was guiltless of saddle, but there was an improvised cinch of white cotton cloth around him. This, likewise, was adorned with butterfly-like bouquets.

"Ain't he some?" said one lad, admiringly.

"Gee! but I'd like ter ride him!" shouted another.

"Brigham dressed old Jim up just 'cause yer wuz goin' ter ride him, Miss Bright," said Donald.

and Patrick, the little Murphy twins, were helped to a place behind her. Wathemah then climbed up in front of her.

"Is this all?" she asked, laughingly.

"I should think it was enough," said Kenneth Hastings, who at that moment joined the company.

As he caught Esther's eye, both laughed, and the children joined from pure sympathy.

When she recovered her composure, Esther said to Kenneth, "Nothing lacking but some white muslin harness and posies on me."

At last, amid shouts and cheers, the much-bedecked horse and his human load started up the mountain road.

By three o'clock, the pulse of the Murphy household beat faster. The temperature rose to fever heat. Three-fifteen, three-thirty; still no visitors; and what is more, no signs of visitors. Every five minutes, one of the children would run down the mountain road, and return disappointed.

"Do yer s'pose they ain't comin'?" queried Kate, who had been kept at home that day to assist in the preparations.

"Oh, yes, they're comin', I think likely," answered the hostess; "but I don't see where they're keepin' themselves."

She frequently straightened the chairs; once more she dusted the furniture with her clean apron; she straightened the pictures on the walls; she brought out an old and much-prized album, sacred to Mormon prophets and elders. The broken mirror, that adorned the wall, had been cleaned and decorated with tissue paper. Mrs. Murphy stood and looked in it. She saw reflected a sharp, severe face shining like the mirror.

"I wisht I had a collar," she said. "I uster wear a collar back in York State."

Suddenly, she heard a shout from the road.

"They're comin'! They're comin'! Schoolma'am's with 'em! Quick, Maw, quick!"

There was a rush down the path, Joseph Smith leading the line.

All was expectation. The approaching horse started into a jolting trot. As he neared the barn he began to buck. The inevitable followed. Over the horse's head went the passengers in a heap. The twins quickly extricated themselves, and sprang up uninjured; but the two visitors lay unconscious.

"Quick, Samuel, bring water!" directed Mrs. Murphy.

In a few minutes, she dashed water in the unconscious faces, and watched anxiously. The water soon restored Esther, who had been stunned by the fall. At last Wathemah opened his eyes, and saw his teacher kneeling by his side. He tried to rise, but fell back with a cry of pain. One arm lay limp by his side. It was evident that his arm was broken.

"Is there a surgeon anywhere near Gila?" she asked anxiously.

"There's one about fifteen miles away," responded Joseph.

"Then I'll try to set Wathemah's arm myself. Several times I have helped my uncle set broken bones. Could you bring me some flat splints about this size?" she asked, showing Joseph what she wanted.

"Yes, mum," answered the boy, starting on his errand.

"And some strips of muslin, and some pins, Mrs. Murphy?" she continued.

In a few moments the articles were ready. By this time Wathemah had recovered consciousness.

"You have broken your arm, dear," she said. "I am going to set it. It'll hurt you, but I want you to be brave and keep very still."

The child smiled faintly. But as she lifted his arm, he again fainted. They lifted him, and carried him into the house. Then firmly, deftly, as though experienced in such work, Esther pulled and pressed the broken bone into place. The child roused with the pain, but did not cry out again. At last the arm was bandaged, and placed on a cushion.

"You must be very careful of your arm, Wathemah," she said, patting his cheek, "until the broken bone grows together."

Before the child could speak, there was a knock at the door. The children rushed to open it, and there stood Kenneth Hastings.

two sons. One son spent all he had in riotous living. When he finally repented and came back home to his father's house, they were very happy to see him and made a great feast for him. For this purpose they killed their fatted calf."

"I see," said Mrs. Murphy with great dignity. "An' sence we are happy to see yer and have killed our fatted hens fur yer, we'll just call yer the Prodigal."

"I always knew you were prodigal of your strength and talent," Kenneth said merrily. "Prodigal. That's a good name for you. That was a happy thought of yours, Mrs. Murphy."

Mrs. Murphy still looked mystified.

"Oi see me little girrls are plazed ter see yez," said Patrick, beaming proudly upon the little ones. Kathleen held up for his inspection some paper dolls Esther had brought her. Then the smile on his face broadened. He laid his pipe on the shelf and examined the dolls critically.

"Did yez iver see the loike on it, now? Shure, an' did yez say 'Thank yez' ter the lady?"

"Yep," answered Kathleen, and "Yep," echoed Nora.

"An' phwat is the matther wid Wathemah?" asked Patrick, as he approached the little Indian.

"Got hurted."

"Broked his arm."

"Fell off old Jim."

"Miss Bright mended his arm," came in quick succession.

"Poor little lad. Oi'm sorry yez got hurted."

And the kind-hearted man patted the child on the head. He liked Wathemah. But the little visitor was intent on the two little girls and their gay paper dolls.

Esther now expressed a wish to hear some of her host's stories of pioneer life in Arizona.

Patrick drew himself up. He felt his self-respect rising.

With a smile that would have done credit to the proudest son of Erin, Patrick waved his hand toward the place of honor. Patrick Junior and his twin Michael insisted upon sitting in the same seat by their visitor. What is more, Michael dealt his brother a severe blow in the mouth to settle his superior claims. To add to the clamor, Kathleen pressed her right to the same seat. She screamed lustily.

Mrs. Murphy, family representative of law, started towards the disturbers of the peace. They dodged. The teacher hereupon made a suggestion that seemed to satisfy everyone, and so the matter was settled.

"Set right down, Mr. Hastings, set right down," urged Mrs. Murphy. He seated himself at Patrick Senior's left. They were scarcely seated before Michael exclaimed, "Ain't we got a good supper!"

He sprawled on the table, looking longingly at the huge dish of chicken potpie.

"One'd think yer never had nothin' ter eat," observed Samuel. He seemed to think it devolved upon him to preserve the decorum of the family.

While the children were waiting impatiently for their turns, a nudge started at Mrs. Murphy's right and left. Nine pairs of elbows were resting upon the table. Nine pairs of eyes were fixed longingly upon the platter of chicken. Suddenly, as the parental nudge passed along, nine pairs of elbows moved off the table, and nine figures sat erect.

The family had been instructed to observe the teacher's manners at table, "fur," observed Mrs. Murphy, "there is no better way fur yer to learn eatin' manners than to notice how folks does. Ef she sets up straight-like, yer kin do the same. Jest watch her. Ef she takes her chicken bone in her hand, y' kin; but ef she cuts her chicken off, why, y' cut yourn off."

Finally, all were served. In the preparation for the reception of the teacher, the offspring of Mrs. Murphy had been duly instructed by her to hold each little finger out stiff and straight while manipulating the knife and fork. To the dismay of all, Esther did not take her chicken bone in her hand, nor did she hold her knife and fork perpendicular, nor did she hold her little fingers out at a right angle.

The children struggled with their refractory chicken bones, as they watched the teacher. Patrick Murphy's eyes were twinkling. But at this juncture, a nudge

from Mrs. Murphy again passed around the table. Nine pairs of eyes were upon the knife and fork of the guest. Amanda was filled with admiration as she observed Esther Bright.

In talking this over afterwards, Samuel said to his sister:

"Schoolma'am wuz brung up better nor we be. Yer kin see it by the way she eats. Did yer see how dainty-like she held her knife and fork?"

"Yer don't know nuthin' about it, Sam," said Mandy. "I guess I seen her myself."

Just as the last nudge passed around, Patrick laughed outright.

"Begorra childthren," he said, "is it Frinch stoile ter eat wid y'r fingers sthuck out? Phwat ails yez?"

"Pat Murphy," said his wife, "yer never seen good eatin' manners in y'r life. I hev. Back in York State where I wuz riz, the very best people in the country come to them barn raisin's."

Her sharp chin tilted upward; her black eyes grew brighter.

"Where I growed up, folks set great store by p'liteness. They allus had clean plates fur pie when they wuz comp'ny. Yes, Pat Murphy, I wuz well trained, ef I do say it."

The visitors remained silent. Patrick grinned.

When the teacher's cup was again filled with tea, she stirred it longer than usual, thinking, possibly, how she could pour oil on troubled waters. Instantly, around the table nine other spoons were describing circles in the bottom of each cup. Again Patrick's eyes laughed. Mrs. Murphy glowered.

The supper over, and all housewife duties of the day performed, Mrs. Murphy turned to her offspring, standing in line,—at her suggestion,—on one side of the room.

"Schoolma'am," she said with an air of conscious superiority, "the childern told me yer wanted 'em to go to Bible school. Now me an' my childern has all the 'ligion as we wants. I'll show yer."

"Childern, what is y'r 'ligion?"

"Latter Day Saints," answered Joseph.

"An' who is the prophet o' the Lord?"

"Joseph Smith," piped Kate.

"An' what wuz his relevations?"

"That men should marry lots o' wives, an raise lots o' children," answered Jacob.

"Shure, an' did he have rivelations that women should be marryin' lots o' husbands?" asked Mr. Murphy with a chuckle.

This was an interruption Mrs. Murphy could ill brook. She was on the warpath; but Patrick, the good-natured, now took matters in his own hands, and spoke with firmness.

"We'll have no more Mormon talk ter-night. Childthren, set down."

They sat down. Mrs. Murphy's mouth shut like a spring trap. She was humiliated; she, a connection, so to speak, of the Commons of "Lexity Street, York City!"

"Whin me woman there," said Patrick, "was lift wid two babies, Jacob an' Kate, twelve year ago, lift 'way off in a lonesome place in Utah by her Mormon husband, Oi felt as though Oi would loike ter go wid some dacint man, an' give this Mormon who lift his wife an' babies fur the sake of goin' off wid another woman,—Oi repate it,—Oi'd 'a ben glad ter have give 'im sich a batin' as he'd remimber ter his dyin' day. He wuz kilt by the Indians. Whin Oi heerd he wuz kilt, an' knowed fur shure he wuz dead, Oi persuaded me woman here ter marry me, an' ter come let me give her an' all her childthren a dacint home in Arizony.

"Oi don't want ter hear no more about Mormons. Oi know 'em root an' branch. Oi am a Catholic. Oi belave in the Holy Mither. Oi belave in good women. Oi belave as a man should have wan wife, a wife wan husband. Oi wants me childthren an' me woman's childthren too, ter come ter y'r Bible school. What's more, they shall come. Oi wants 'em ter learn about God an' the Blissed Virgin. Y're a good woman; that Oi know. An' yez are as good a Catholic as Oi want ter see. Yer kin jist count on me fur support in all the good yez are thryin' ter do in Gila."

Mrs. Murphy's face was suppressed fury.

The teacher spoke in a low, gentle voice:

"So you are a Catholic, Mr. Murphy. Do you know, I have always admired the reverent way Catholics speak of the mother of Jesus."

Then she turned to Mrs. Murphy, saying:

"I know but little about the belief of the Mormons. Some day I wish you would tell me about it."

"Mormons are a good sight better'n Catholics," snapped Mrs. Murphy. "Intelligent people should know about 'em, and what they've done fur the world. They are honest, they don't smoke, nor chew, nor drink. They are good moral people, they are."

"Yes," said Esther, "I have heard some admirable things about them."

Kenneth rose to go.

"So you'll not return to Clayton Ranch with me, Miss Bright."

He knew by the expression of her face that she preferred to go rather than to stay. But she spoke graciously:

"I have not finished my visit yet."

In a moment more Kenneth was gone.

Then a new difficulty arose. Who was to sleep with the teacher? Kate, the twins, and Kathleen, all pressed their claims. After listening to the altercation, Esther suggested that it would be necessary for her to occupy the rocking chair by Wathemah, to see that he did not injure his broken arm, and asked that she be given the privilege of watching by him throughout the night.

Then the family withdrew. Soon Esther pretended to be asleep. Occasionally the child reached out and touched her arm to make sure his Beloved was there. Then he fell asleep.

But Esther was wakeful. Why had Kenneth come for her? Was she coming to care too much for him? How would it all end? When she at last fell asleep, her dreams were troubled.

CHAPTER X

CARLA EARLE

SCHOOL had been dismissed, and the shadows had begun to lengthen in the valley. Esther Bright sat in the doorway of the schoolhouse, leaning against the jamb of the door, her hands resting idly in her lap. At last she lifted a letter she held, and read over again the closing words, "Thy devoted grandfather, David Bright."

She brushed her hand across her cheek more than once, as she sat there, looking off, miles away, to her New England home. She heard a step, and turning, saw Carla Earle approaching. Before she could rise, Carla was at her side, half shy, uncertain of herself. Without the usual preliminary of greeting, Carla said: "Are you homesick?"

She had seen Esther wipe tears from her cheeks.

"A little. I was thinking of my grandfather, and how I'd love to see him. I am always homesick when his letters come. One came to-day."

"I am homesick, too," said Carla, "for my native land, its green turf, its stately trees, the hedges, the cottages, the gardens, the flowers and birds—and—everything!"

"Sit down, Carla. Let's talk. You are homesick for your native land, and I am homesick for my grandfather."

She took one of the English girl's hands in hers, and they talked long of England. At last Carla asked Esther to sing for her. For answer, Esther rose, entered the schoolroom, and returned, bringing her guitar. Then striking the chords of C Major, she sang softly, "Home, Sweet Home." As she sang, Carla watched her through tears.

"An exile from home," the teacher sang; but at that moment she heard a sob. She stopped singing.

"Go on, please," begged the English girl.

Again the cords vibrated to the touch of Esther's fingers, and she sang the song that has comforted many a sorrowing heart.

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold;
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold."

On she sang, her voice growing more pitifully tender.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark the night that the Lord passed through,
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the darkness He heard its cry,—
Sick and helpless and ready to die."

Then as she sang,

"And the angels echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!'"

her voice thrilled with triumphant hope.

Was she inspired, or was it simply that she was about her Master's business? Her voice seemed a message from God to the stricken girl who listened. Carla, looking into the face of Esther Bright, saw there a smile that was ineffably sweet; saw, too, the golden light of the setting sun playing about her face and form.

Song after song was sung from one heart to the other. The guitar was laid aside. Then hand in hand, the two girls sat talking till the sunset faded, talking through falling tears, talking of ideals of life, and of how sweet and good life may be. Then Esther told of the Blessed One of Galilee whose love and compassion never fail. And at last Carla told her her whole sad story.

"But you will leave the saloon, Carla, won't you? You will throw off Mr. Clifton's influence?" Esther said as they rose to go. "I can give you shelter until I can find a home for you, only leave that dreadful place."

"I can't; I love him," she answered. Then, covering her face with her hands, she wept bitterly.

"You *can* leave him, I know, and you will in time. Come often to see me, as you have done to-day. Perhaps you and I together, with God's help, can find a way."

They parted at the schoolhouse, Esther returning home, her heart sorrowful. She thought of One who centuries before had sought the mountains alone, the sorrow of a world upon His heart. She understood it now, understood at least something of the agony of that sorrow. She went to her room and prayed. When at last she rose from her knees, her face looked drawn. The feeling as of a heavy weight upon her heart increased. How helpless she seemed!

She opened her window wider, and looked up into the fathomless blue. An overwhelming desire to save the tempted English girl had taken possession of her. What should she do?

As she stood thus, she seemed conscious of a presence, and turned as though expecting to see some one; but no one was there. She heard no voice. Notwithstanding the evidence of her eyes, she could not shake off the feeling of another presence than her own. She turned again toward the window, and looked out into the crystal deeps. Then a strange peace came upon her. It seemed a foretaste of heaven. She threw herself on the lounge in her room, and fell into a refreshing sleep.

But what of Carla Earle?

On leaving Esther, she walked slowly toward Keith's saloon. Suddenly, she put her hand to her heart, staggered, and gave a sharp cry. Then trembling in every limb, she turned abruptly, and walked rapidly toward the canyon. She reached a place that seemed to have a fascination for her. She looked at the dark pool and wrung her hands. Her muscles gave way, and she sank on the bank, while great convulsive sobs shook her frame. She tried to rise, but her limbs refused to obey her will. Then it was that her agony of shame, and sorrow, and remorse burst forth in pitiful cries to God to let her die. She removed her hat and wrap, and crawled to the verge of the black pool. She shuddered as she looked.

Then a great horror-stricken cry came from her white lips as she plunged into the seething waters.

There was the sound of a human voice in answer; and a moment later, Patrick Murphy plunged after her, grasped and caught her floating skirt, pulled her by it to shore, and lifted her up the bank. He began to wring the water from her skirts.

"Lass, lass," he said, kindly, "what made yez do it? What's the matter wid yez?"

Great sobs were his only answer. It seemed as though the girl must die from the agony of her distress.

Then he lifted her in his arms, and carried her to where he had left his horse. By the dim light, he had recognized Carla Earle, and he at once concluded that Mark Clifton was responsible for her deed. His first impulse, like all of his impulses, was a generous one. He resolved to take her to his home, and become her protector. As he was about to lift her to his horse's back, he discovered that she had fainted. He succeeded in lifting her to the saddle, mounted behind her, and rode directly to his home.

A few words sufficed to explain to his wife the rescue of the girl, and the necessity of keeping her whereabouts a profound secret. Every member of the family was enjoined to strict silence about the presence of Carla Earle in their home.

Mrs. Murphy undressed Carla and put her in her own bed. The helplessness of the unconscious girl appealed to her. After a time, Carla's eyes opened. She looked startled, and began to rave, writhing and twisting as one in mortal agony. Now she called on Mark Clifton to keep his promise to her; now she asked Wathemah to go for Miss Bright; now she begged God to take her; now she was on the brink of the pool, and in the dark water.

So she raved, and the night passed. From time to time Mrs. Murphy laid wet cloths on Carla's head, or moistened her lips. The two faithful watchers did not close their eyes. The day dawned, and they were still watching; but at last their patient slept.

When Carla finally awakened, she looked around, and seeing Mrs. Murphy, asked where she was.

"With friends who are going to take good care of yer," answered her nurse.

"How did I come here?"

Mrs. Murphy explained that her husband had found her unconscious, and had brought her to his home. And, leaning down, she did an unprecedented thing. She kissed Carla Earle. At this Carla began to cry.

"Don't cry, lass, don't cry," said Patrick, who entered just then. He turned away and blew his nose violently.

"I must get up and help you," said the sick girl, trying to rise. But she did not rise that day nor for many days. Throughout her illness that followed, Mrs. Murphy's kindness was unstinted. She waited on the sick girl with unfailing patience. But Brigham was oftenest at her bedside when home, telling her of his beloved teacher and what she taught them. At last Carla begged to see her.

That very day Patrick drove down for Esther, telling her on their way back to the ranch the particulars of his finding Carla Earle, and of her subsequent illness.

"You dear, good people!" said Esther, deeply touched. "I feel so grateful to you."

"Och! That's nothin', Miss," he responded awkwardly. "Whin Oi see the girl so near destruction, Oi sez ter mesilf, sez Oi, what if me sisther or one of me little girrls wuz iver ter be in the clutches of a Mark Clifton? So Oi sez ter mesilf, sez Oi, Oi'll jist save her. That's all there wuz av it. My wife has taken care o' the lass. An' she has grown that fond av her! Beats all!"

"God will bless you for saving her, you may be sure of that," responded Esther heartily. "She must have gone directly from me to the canyon. I had urged her to leave Mr. Clifton and come to me, but she did not seem to have decision enough to promise then. The canyon must have been an after-thought, and the result of her despair."

"Poor creetur!" said Patrick, huskily.

When Carla saw Esther, she began to sob, and seemed greatly disturbed. Her pulse grew more rapid. Such remorse one seldom sees.

Esther placed her own cool hand on the sick girl's forehead, and spoke to her in low, soothing tones. Carla grasped her hand and held it tightly.

"I have wanted to see you and tell you—" But Esther interrupted her.

"Yes, dear, you shall tell me by and by. Don't try to tell me now."

"I must. The distress here" (placing her hand over her heart) "will never go until I tell you. After I left you at the schoolhouse, I was filled with despair. I felt so utterly strengthless. Then I prayed. Suddenly it came to me I must never again return to the saloon or—him. I seemed to have strength given me to go on and on in the opposite direction. All I remember now is that I resolved to make it impossible to return. Then I awakened here. They have been so kind to me, especially little Brigham. He comes in to see me as soon as he returns from school, and talks to me about you, and it comforts me."

"God has been leading you, Carla," said Esther. "I am sure of that. And He raised up this kind friend to save you in your dark hour. But the dark hour is past now, and we are going to help you learn how to grow happy."

"Can one learn how to grow happy who has made such a blunder of life?"

"Oh, yes. And it is a blessed lesson to learn."

When Esther left, she promised to return on the morrow.

That evening, there was a family council at Clayton Ranch, and the result of it was that Mrs. Clayton herself soon went to see Carla, and invited her to make her home with them.

So it came about that Carla Earle became one of the Clayton household; and in the loving, helpful atmosphere of that home, she began to lift up her lovely head, as does an early blossoming flower in the April sunshine after it has been nipped by an untimely frost. And life, with love enfolding her every hour of each happy day, began to grow worth while to the English girl.

And Carla grew into the affection of the family, for she was a refined, winsome creature. She became as a daughter to Mrs. Clayton.

One day Mrs. Clayton said to her husband:

"Do you notice how much Carla is growing like our Miss Bright?"

"Yes," he responded. "There is something very attractive about both. Only Miss Bright is a remarkably well-poised woman, and Carla is clinging and dependent. Poor Carla! How bitterly she has been wronged! I am glad she has found love and shelter at last."

"So am I, John. Why, the poor child was just starved for love."

"I believe, Mary, that she will develop into a strong character. What she has suffered has been a great lesson to her."

"Poor child! Sometimes when I speak appreciative words to her, she breaks down, and says she doesn't deserve all our kindness. One day when she cried, she said, 'Why does God take mothers away from their children when they need them so?'"

"Well," he responded, "she has at last found a good mother. God bless the mother and the unfortunate girl!"

And stooping, the husband kissed his wife, and started on a long journey to a distant mine.



CHAPTER XI

AN EVENTFUL DAY

AFTER Esther Bright and Wathemah returned from their visit at Murphy Ranch, he became a guest at the Clayton home, and there he remained until his arm was well.

His sojourn with them strengthened his devotion to Esther Bright, and brought about several changes for the better in him.

When he was allowed to run and play with the children again, he returned to school and to Keith's saloon.

The men who had always called him the "little tough," now observed him with amazement. One observed:

"I'll be blowed ef the Angel o' the Gila can't do anythin' she wants ter. See that kid? He used ter cuss like a pirate. Do ye hear him cuss now? No, sir! For why? 'Cause he knows she don't like it. That's why. Ef she wuz ter be turned loose among the Apaches, she'd civilize 'em. An' they're the blankedest Indians there be. I don't know what it is about her. She sort o' makes a feller want ter be somebody. I reckon God Almighty knows more about 'er nor we do, 'n' she knows more about us 'n' we do ourselves. Leastways, she do about me."

Having delivered himself to this effect, he left the saloon, sober.

There is no doubt Esther Bright had sown good seed broadcast, and some had fallen on good ground. The awakening of the cowlasses had been a continual joy to her. She marveled that some one had not found them before. Each successive day the little school reached out further to enrich the life of the community.

One morning, while a class was in the midst of a recitation, there came a knock at the schoolhouse door.

"I'm Robert Duncan," said a Scotch miner, as Esther opened the door. He held by the hand a little boy of about three years.

"This is Bobbie," he continued. "I've brought me bairn tae school."

Could the mother spare such a baby? Ah, could she?

Esther stooped and held out her arms to the child, but he hid behind his father.

"His mither died last week, Miss," he said with a choke in his voice. "I'd like tae leave him with ye."

"I'm very sorry," she replied, with quick sympathy. Then she promised to receive Bobbie as a pupil, providing he would stay.

"Oh, he'll stay," the father hastened to say, "if ye'll just call Donald."

So Donald was called, and he succeeded in coaxing Bobbie into the schoolroom.

When the child realized that his father had gone and left him, he ran to the door, crying, "Faither! Faither!" while tears rolled down his cheeks.

Then the mother heart of Esther Bright asserted itself. She gathered him in her arms and soothed him, until he cuddled down contentedly and fell asleep.

Soon after, Kenneth Hastings appeared at the open door, and saw Esther at her desk with the sleeping child in her arms. He heard her speaking in a soft tone to the children as she dismissed them for the morning recess; but Bobbie awakened frightened. At the moment Kenneth entered, Bobbie was carried out of the room by Donald, the other children following.

"I came to see if you could go for a horseback ride this afternoon," said Kenneth. "It's a glorious day."

"Just delighted! Nothing would please me better."

The two stood inside the open door. As Wathemah saw Kenneth talking to his teacher, he entered the door, pushed between them, nestled close to her, and said defiantly:

"Miss Bright *me* teacher; *mine*!"

"Yours, eh, sonny?" said Kenneth, smiling. Then looking into Esther's face, he

said:

"I wish I could feel as sure that some day you will be mine."

A delicate flush swept over her face. When he went on his way, life and vigor were in every step. He seemed to walk on air.

The recess over, the children returned to their seats, and Patrick Murphy entered. The school, for the hour, was transformed into a place of general merchandise, for the teacher had promised that to-day they would play store, buy and sell. Business was to be done on a strictly cash basis, and accounts kept. Several children had been busy for days, making school money. Scales for weighing, and various measures were in evidence.

Patrick watched the play of the children, as they weighed and measured, bought and sold.

At the close of the exercises, he turned to Esther, saying:

"Oi wisht Oi wuz young agin mesilf. Yez larn the chilthren more in wan hour, 'n' many folks larns in a loife toime. It's thankful Oi am that yez came ter Gila, fur the school is gittin' on."

Having delivered himself of this compliment, he withdrew, highly pleased with himself, with the teacher, with the school, and the world generally. If there was one thing that met with Patrick's unqualified approval, it was "to git on."

Near the close of the midday intermission, during the absence of Wathemah, Donald Carmichael said to the teacher, "Ye love Wathemah mair nor the rest o' us, don't ye?"

"Why?" asked Esther, as she smiled down at the urchin.

"Oh," hanging his head, "ye say 'Wathemah' as though ye likit him mair nor anybody else."

"As though I loved him?"

"Yep."

"Well," she acknowledged, "I do love Wathemah. I love all the other children, too. Don't you think I ought to love Wathemah a little better because he has no father or mother, as you have, to love him?"

Donald thought not.

"You have no idea," said Carla, who now attended school, "what brutal treatment Wathemah used to receive at the saloon. I have seen him teased and trounced and knocked around till he was frantic. And the men took delight in teaching him all the badness they knew. I used to hear them while I was helping Mrs. Keith." Carla's eyes suddenly filled.

"Poor little fellow!" said Esther, in response.

"I shall never forget his happiness," continued Carla, "the first day he went to school. He came to me and said he liked his teacher and wanted to go live with her."

"Did he? Bless his heart!"

"After that," Carla went on to say, "he came to me every morning to see if he was clean enough to go to school."

"So *you* were the good fairy, Carla, who wrought the transformation in him. He certainly was a very dirty little boy the first morning he came to school, but he has been pretty clean ever since."

Donald, who had been listening, now spoke up again.

"Oh, Wathemah's all right, only I thocht ye likit him mair nor the rest o' us."

"No, she don't, neither," stoutly maintained Brigham. "I guess I know. She's always fair."

At this moment, Wathemah himself drew near. He had been to the timber for mistletoe, and returned with his arms full of sprays of green, covered with white waxen berries. He walked proudly to his Beloved, and gave her his offering. Then he stepped back and surveyed her.

"Wathemah love he teacher," he said in a tone of deep satisfaction.

"She ain't yourn, ye Apache savage," cried Donald. "She don't love ye; she said so," added the child, maliciously.

Like a flash, Wathemah was upon him, beating him with all his strength. He took the law into his own hands, settled his score, and laid his opponent out before Esther could interfere. When she grasped Wathemah's arm, he turned

upon her like a tiger.

"Donald lie!" he cried.

"Yes, Donald did lie," she conceded, "but *you* should not punish him."

"Donald call savage. Wathemah kill he!"

The teacher continued to hold him firmly. She tried to reason with him, but her words made no impression.

The child stood resolute. He lifted a scornful finger toward Donald, and said in a tone of contempt:

"Donald lie. Wathemah no lie."

The teacher released him, and told him to see her after school. Then the afternoon session began. But Wathemah's place was vacant.

As the hours passed, it became evident that Donald was not as happy as usual. He was in disgrace. At last his class was called. He hung his head in shame. Esther did not press him to recite.

The hour for dismissal came. The little culprit sat alone in the farther corner of the room. Carla started out to find Wathemah.

The loud accusing tick of the clock beat upon Donald's ear. The teacher was busy, and at first paid no attention to him. She heard a sniffing in the corner. Still no attention. At last she sat down by the lad, and said very gently:

"Tell me about it, Donald."

No answer. He averted his face, and rubbed his dirty fists into his eyes.

"Tell me why you lied to Wathemah, Donald."

Still no answer.

"How could you hurt his feelings so?"

No answer.

Then Esther talked to him till he buried his face in his arms and sobbed. She probed down into his heart. At last she asked him what he thought he should do. Still silence. She waited. The clock ticked louder and louder in the ears of the

child: "Say it! Say it! Say it!"

At last he spoke.

"I ought tae tell Wathemah I lied; but I dinna want tae tell him afore the lads."

"Ah!" she said, "but you said your untruthful words before them; and unless you are a coward, your apology ought to be before them."

"I am nae coward," he said, lifting his head.

"Then you must apologize to Wathemah before the children to-morrow."

"Yes, mum."

Then she dismissed him, telling him to remember what he had done, when he prayed to God that night.

"Did God hear me lie?" he asked.

"I think so, Donald."

The child looked troubled.

"I didna think o' that. I'll tell Him I'm sorry," he said as he left the schoolroom.

He began to search for Wathemah, that he might make peace with him.

At first Carla's search was fruitless. Then she sought him in a place she knew he loved, away up the canyon. There, sure enough, she found him. He sat on a boulder near a cascade with his back toward her. Beyond him, on the other side of the stream, rose the overhanging cliffs. He did not hear her step as he listened to the music of the waters.

"Wathemah!" she called. He started, then turned toward her. She saw that he had been crying. She climbed up on the boulder and sat down beside him.

"Donald lie!" he said, angrily.

"Yes, Wathemah, but he is sorry for it, and I am sure will tell you so."

She saw tears roll down the dirty little face. She had the wisdom to leave him alone; and walking a short distance up the canyon, sent pebbles skipping the water. After a while this drew him to her.

"Shall we go up stream?" she asked.

He nodded. They jumped from boulder to boulder, and at last stopped where the waters go softly, making a soothing music for the ear.

"Carla!"

"Yes, Wathemah."

"Jesus forgive?"

"Yes, dear, He does." Then Carla's self-control gave way, and she sobbed out her long-suppressed grief. Instantly the child's arms were around her neck.

"No cry, Carla!" he said. "No cry, Carla!" patting her cheek.

Then, putting his tear-stained cheek close to hers, he said:

"Jesus love Carla."

She gathered the little comforter in her arms; and though her tears fell fast, they brought relief to her heart.

At last she persuaded him to return to school the following day, and to do all he could to atone for leaving it without permission.

On their return, they sought the teacher in the schoolhouse, but she was gone, and the door was locked; neither was she to be found at the Clayton ranch. The little penitent lingered a long time, but his Beloved did not come. At last he walked reluctantly in to camp.

Away up the mountain road, Esther Bright and Kenneth Hastings drew rein. The Englishman sat his horse well; but it was evident his companion was not a horsewoman. She might shine in a drawing-room or in a home, but not on a horse's back. If she had not been riding one of the finest saddle horses in the country, she would have appeared to greater disadvantage.

The canter up the mountain road had brought the color to her cheeks. It had also shaken out her hairpins; and now her wavy brown hair, with its glint of gold, tumbled about her shoulders.

"You look like a gypsy," Kenneth was saying.

She laughed.

"The last gypsies I ever saw," she said merrily, "were encamped along the road through Beekman's Woods, as you approach Tarrytown-on-Hudson from the north. The gypsy group was picturesque, but the individuals looked villainous. I hope I do not strongly resemble them," she said still laughing; then added, "They wanted to tell our fortunes."

"Did you let them tell yours?"

"Yes, just for fun."

"What did they tell you?"

"Oh, just foolishness."

"Come, tell *me* just for fun."

"Well,"—here she blushed—"the old gypsy told me that an Englishman would woo me, that I'd not know my own mind, and that I would reject him."

"Interesting! Go on."

"That something dreadful would happen to the suitor; that I'd help take care of him, and after that, all was cloudland."

"Really, this grows more interesting. The fortune teller realized how hard-hearted you were. Didn't she ask you to join their caravan? You'd make an ideal gypsy princess."

Esther touched her horse with her whip. He gave a sudden lunge, and sped onward like mad. It was all she could do to sit her horse. Before her, to her dismay, yawned a deep gulch. She could not stop her horse now, of that she was sure. She tightened her grip, and waited. She heard the sound of hoofs behind her, and Kenneth's voice shouting "Whoa!" As well shriek at a tornado to stop. She seemed to catch the spirit of the horse. The pupils of her eyes dilated. She felt the quivering of the beast when, for a moment, he reared on his haunches. Then she felt herself borne through the air, as the animal took the gulch; then she knew that he was struggling up the bank. In a moment the beast stopped, quivering all through his frame; his nostrils were dilated, and his breath came hard.

In a few minutes Kenneth Hastings overtook her. It was evident he had been alarmed.

"You have done a perilous thing for an inexperienced rider," he said. "It is dumb luck that you have escaped unhurt. I expected to find you injured or dead."

"I was dreadfully scared when we came to the gulch. I didn't know about it, you know; but I couldn't stop the horse then."

"Of course not. What made the animal run? Did you cut him with the whip?"

"Yes. I thought it'd be such fun to run away from you for calling me a gypsy."

He laughed. Then he looked grave.

Suddenly Esther Bright grew as cold as ice, and swayed in the saddle. At last she was forced to say she was ill. Her companion dismounted and lifted her from the saddle.

"Why, how you tremble!" he was saying. "How cold you are!"

"Just fright," she replied, making an effort to rally. "I am ashamed of being scared. The fright has made me deathly sick." Even her lips were white. He seemed deeply concerned.

After a while her color returned, and she assured him that she was able to go on.

"But are you sure?" he asked, showing the deepest concern.

"Quite sure," she said, positively. "Come, let us go. I have given you enough trouble already."

"No trouble, I assure you."

He did not add that the very fact that she had needed a service from him was sufficient recompense.

Then they walked their horses homeward, talking of many things of common interest to them.

Down in the valley, the soft gray of the dead gramma grass was relieved by the great beds of evergreen cacti, yucca, and the greenery of the sage and mesquite. The late afterglow in the sky mingled with the purple haze that hung like an ethereal veil over the landscape.

They stopped their horses at a turn of the road commanding a fine view of the

mountains.

"How beautiful the world is everywhere!" Esther said, half to herself.

"Especially in Arizona," said Kenneth, as he drew a deep invigorating breath.

Silence again.

"Miss Bright," he hesitated. "I believe the world would be beautiful to me anywhere, if you were there."

"You flatter," she said, lifting her hand as if to ward off what might follow.

"No flattery. Since you came, the whole world has seemed beautiful to me."

"I am glad if my coming has improved your vision," she said merrily. "Come, we must hasten, or we'll be late for dinner. You are to dine with us to-night, I believe."

"Yes, Mrs. Clayton was so kind as to invite me."

Again her horse took the lead. Kenneth touched his with the whip, and overtook her. For some distance, the horses were neck and neck. As they came to a steep ascent, they slackened their pace.

Her eyes were sparkling, and she was in excellent spirits.

"If I were a better horsewoman," she said gayly, "I'd challenge you to a race."

"Why not, anyway?" he suggested. "There are no more gulches."

"I might not be able to stick on."

"We'll try it," he responded, encouragingly, "over the next level stretch."

So try it they did. They flew like the wind. The cool evening air, the excitement of the race, the rich afterglow in the heavens,—all were exhilarating. On they sped, on and on, till they turned into the canyon road. Again Esther's horse led, but Kenneth soon overtook her, and then their horses walked slowly on together the rest of the way.

"I wonder if you are as happy as I am," he said, as he assisted her from the saddle.

"I am in the positive degree of happiness," she said, cheerily. "I am always happy except when shadowed by someone else's sorrow."

He said something to her about bearing all her future sorrows for her, adding:

"That is becoming the dearest wish of my heart."

"All must meet sorrow sometime," she responded gravely. "I hope to meet mine with fortitude when it comes."

She stood stroking the horse's neck.

"I wish I might help you to bear it when it comes. Oh, Miss Bright," he said, earnestly, "I wish I could make you realize how I honor you—and dare I say it?—how I love you! I wish you would try to understand me. I am not trifling. I am in earnest." He looked at her downcast face.

"I will try," she said, looking up frankly, with no trace of coquetry in her voice or manner.

There had been moments when Kenneth's love for Esther had led him to speak dearer words to her than her apparent interest in him would warrant. At such times she would retire within herself, surrounded by an impenetrable reserve. Kenneth Hastings was the only one she ever treated icily. One day he would be transported to the seventh heaven; another, he would sink to the depths of gloom.

It was several days after this ride that he chanced to meet Esther in the path along the river road. He stopped her, and asked abruptly:

"Why do you treat me so frigidly sometimes?"

"Do I?" she asked in surprise.

He remained silent.

"Do I?" she said, repeating her question.

"Yes, you do. Why do you treat me so?"

She looked distressed.

"I didn't realize I had treated you discourteously, Mr. Hastings. If I did, it was because I am afraid of you."

"Preposterous! Afraid of me!" Now he was smiling.

"Perhaps—" As she hesitated, she looked up at him in an appealing manner.

"Perhaps what?"

"Perhaps it is because you have given me a glimpse of your own heart, and have—"

"Have what?"

"—asked me to reveal mine to you. I can't."

"In other words, you do not love me?"

"I honor you as I do several people I know. Nothing more."

There was a long pause. Kenneth was the first to speak.

"Your friendship! Am I to be deprived of that, too?"

"My friendship is already yours," she said. "You know that."

"I thank you. I need hardly tell you that your friendship is the dearest thing I know."

Then Kenneth left her, and she walked on alone. But still those words kept repeating themselves in her mind like a haunting melody, "Your friendship is the dearest thing I know!" and, like Banquo's ghost, they would not down.



CHAPTER XII

CHRISTMAS DAY

IT was Christmas morning, early. Not a leaf was stirring. The stillness seemed aware. The sun rose in solemn majesty, heralded by scarlet runners of the sky. Just as it burst forth from behind the sleeping mountains, a splendor of coloring beyond the power of man to describe flooded the earth and the covering dome of the heavens. Then the snowy mountain peaks, grim sentinels of the ages, grew royal in crimson and gold. And the far-stretching valley, where the soft gray of dead gramma grass was relieved by the yellowish tint of desert soil, took on the glory of the morning. From zenith to horizon, the crystal clearness seemed for one supreme moment ashine with sifted gold. But, as if to protect the eyes of man from the too great splendor of this anniversary of Christ's natal day, a faint purple veil of haze dropped over the distant mountains. The waters of the Gila caught the glory of the morning, and became molten gold.

When the Gilaites awakened, the gladness of the morning was upon them; and men and women remembered, some of them for the first time in years, that it was Christmas day, and went about with "Merry Christmas" on their lips.

To the children of Gila, the day that had heretofore been as all other days, now took on new meaning. They had come to associate it with a wonderful personality they were learning to know through their teacher. Christ's birthday she had called Christmas day, Christ their elder brother, Christ the lover of children.

They had seen the splendor of the morning. What wonder that some of them were touched with a feeling of awe?

For the first time in the history of Gila, Christmas day was to be observed, and every child had come to feel a personal interest in the celebration.

The preparations for the evening exercises to be held in the schoolhouse had all been so new, so mysteriously interesting! Expectation ran high. Word had spread to the burro camps on the mountains, and to the Mexicans tending the charcoal pits up the canyon. Rumors had reached other camps also, miles away.

The Mexicans, as was their custom, had prepared immense bonfires on the mountains and foothills for firing Christmas night. But hearing of the approaching entertainment at the schoolhouse, they caught the spirit of the hour and outdid themselves.

The saguaro, or giant cactus, sometimes called the sentinel of the desert, is one of the most interesting varieties of the cactus family. Sometimes it grows in the form of a fluted column, many times reaching a height of sixty feet. Often at a distance of perhaps thirty feet from the ground, this cactus throws out fleshy arms at right angles, which, after a short distance, shoot upward in columns parallel to the main column, giving the cactus the appearance of a giant candelabrum. The saguaro has a skeleton of woody ribs bound together by tough, woody fibers. In the living cactus, this framework is filled and covered with green pulp; but when the cactus dies, the pulp dries and is blown away. The ribs are covered with quantities of resinous thorns that burn like pitch. The dead saguaro, therefore, when set on fire, becomes a most effective bonfire, having frequently been used by the Indians, in early days, as a signal fire.

On this special occasion, the Mexicans had found several of these dead sentinels of the desert so nearly in the shape of a Roman cross that a few blows from an ax made them perfectly so. When lighted Christmas night, the burning crosses on the mountains loomed up against the sky, no longer symbols of triumphant hate, but of triumphant love.

Early that day, what the Mexicans had done began to be noised abroad; and with every bulletin that passed from mouth to mouth, interest in the approaching service at the schoolhouse deepened. It looked as though the room could not hold all who would come.

The young folk had been generous helpers, and had decorated the place with spruce, pine, cedar and mistletoe. The air was heavy with spicy fragrance. Around the room were huge altar candles in improvised candlesticks of wood. Across one end of the room, was stretched a large sheet of white cotton cloth.

For many a day, John Clayton, Kenneth Hastings and Esther Bright had formed a mysterious triumvirate. The two men had been seen bringing packages

from the distant station. What it might mean became an absorbing topic of conversation. One thing was certain, Gila was alive.

On Christmas morning, these three, accompanied by Mrs. Carmichael, met at the schoolhouse to make their final preparations. The beautiful silver spruce, selected for the Christmas tree, stood out from the dark greenery of the room. It was a beautiful tree, exquisite in color, perfect in symmetry, spicy in fragrance. They decorated this with ornaments, then began to hang gifts on its branches. At one side of the tree, Esther stacked small pasteboard boxes close and high. What these contained, only she herself knew; and she preserved a mysteriously interesting silence.

As the four busied themselves at their happy task, Mrs. Carmichael suddenly uncovered a huge basket she, thus far, had managed to conceal. She looked a culprit as she said:

"An' whaur would ye be wishin' the cookies put?"

"Cookies!" they all exclaimed, with one accord, "Cookies!"

Esther sampled one.

"They're just as good as they look!" she said. "What a lot of them! How did you come to think of it? How good of you!"

"It was Donald. He telt me about y'r birthday cakes for the wains. So I thoct bein's it was the Maister's birthday, each should hae a birthday cake. A makit one hundred."

"One hundred!" Kenneth whistled. "You know how to find the way to men's hearts," he laughed. "But you found your way to mine long ago."

"Fie, fie," she said smiling. "I ken ye weel."

When their preparations were completed, they looked about with an air of satisfaction. It was evident the spirit of Christmas had taken possession of them. Such kindness! Such good will!

Jack Harding was the last to leave the room. Before he closed and locked the door, he deposited some packages in an obscure corner.

An hour before the time for the entertainment, the little adobe schoolhouse was surrounded by people, and they continued to come even after the teacher,

accompanied by the Claytons, opened the door. Soon every seat was filled; then, all standing space. Then the windows were crowded with faces. Still there were as many more outside who could not hope to see, but might possibly hear.

Those fortunate enough to enter the room sniffed the fragrance of cedar and spruce. The burning mesquite wood in the fireplace snapped and crackled, and the soft light from the huge candles idealized the beauty of the tree and the woodsy decorations of the room. And there was the teacher also, *their* teacher (for did she not belong to them?) young, lovely, doing all this for them! They noted every detail of her simple gray toilet, even to the soft lace at her throat. There was something exquisite about her that night as she stood before them in the yellow candle-light. Her face was luminous. Kenneth Hastings observed it, and said in a low tone to his friend John Clayton, "See Miss Bright's face! I never saw anything more lovely. The spirit of Christmas is in it."

John Clayton placed his hand on his friend's shoulder as he responded, "Yes. It's all due to her beautiful, generous soul."

After several Christmas carols were sung, he told them Miss Bright would now address them. There was an approving murmur.

Then she told them the old, old story, dearest story of childhood, of the little child in the khan at Bethlehem, of the star, of the song of the angels, the coming of the shepherds, and the search by the Wise Men, as they came with their rich gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, to lay them at the Christ-child's feet. She told the story briefly and simply.

Among those who listened there that night were Mexicans and half-breed Indians, Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen and Americans. There were Catholics and Protestants, Mormons, and men of no faith whatever. There were four university-bred men; there were also men and women of deepest ignorance; and there were many others between these extremes.

While the voice of the teacher still held their attention, John Harding and Kenneth Hastings put out the lights, and picture after picture, illustrating the early life of Christ (all copies of famous paintings), flashed upon the white screen. There were exclamations of approval such as these:

"Did yez iver now?"

"The Holy Mother! Bless her!"

"Oh!—Oh!—Oh!" in faint whispers.

When Murillo's "Holy Family" appeared, there was a hush. As it disappeared, some one asked for it again. After complying with this request, the candles were relighted, and the distribution of gifts began. There was a subdued hum of interest. These men and women, throwing aside care and toil for an hour, were as pleased as children.

As gifts were passed, many began to realize what the extra meetings at the schoolhouse had meant. The children had been making things, and had made them well. They had been engaged in manual training, though the teacher had not called it that. She was in advance of the age, and was doing practical work in manual training years before the pedagogues of the land had awakened to the necessity of training the hand.

The Gila children had made gingham aprons for mothers and sisters; they had crocheted lace and mats; they had made articles for domestic use, and so on.

When a new blouse waist and a pair of suspenders were given to Wathemah, his delight knew no bounds. Kenneth and Jack Harding stood watching him. The child was a favorite with both.

"Do you like your waist, little chap?" asked Kenneth.

"Yes!—Me!—Pretty!" said the child, patting and smoothing his waist as if it were an object of affection. Then he held his suspenders up for his two friends to see.

"Do you like 'em, sonny?" asked Jack Harding.

"Mine! Mine!—S'penders!—Wathemah's s'penders!"

The grown-ups smiled. The day had unlocked many a heart long barred and bolted against human sympathy.

"Two dolls, one for Nora and one for Kathleen Murphy," called out the superintendent.

"Did yez iver?" said Patrick, smiling with good humor, from the crown of his bristly head to the extremity of his bristly chin.

Gifts were passed to right and left. It seemed wonderful so many should be remembered. Some received their gifts with undisguised pleasure,—pleasure so

out of proportion to the intrinsic value of the gifts, it was pathetic. Esther felt her eyes brimming. More than one said to her that night that it was the first time he or she had ever received a Christmas present.

As yet Brigham had received no gifts, but he sat by Wathemah, apparently enjoying what his friend had received as though it had been his own. But when his turn came, and his Beloved brought him three books about animals, he seemed embarrassed, and stammered out:

"For me? All thim for me?"

The teacher stood smiling.

"Yes, for you, dear."

In a short time he and Wathemah, with heads close together, were lost in one of these books.

Esther watched them from time to time. It was evident to every one in Gila, that Brigham and Wathemah were very intimate friends of their teacher's. Brigham had confided to Kenneth that he was "intimater with her nor anybody else, 'cause she loved him, an' he loved her best of anybody in the world." He had likewise confided to Kenneth his great desire to have some animal books, as he called them. And Kenneth had seen to it that he should not be disappointed.

Suddenly, to her surprise, Esther Bright was presented with a new chair, and was asked to be seated in it. The excitement of the children rose. This, to them, was the important moment of the evening.

As one homely little gift after another was presented to her,—all the work of children's hands, she spoke homely, loving words out of her heart. Several coat sleeves were put to a new use, and some clean gingham aprons actually found their way to women's cheeks. A loving-hearted woman had entered their lives and found them worth while. What wonder that she became to them, more than ever, what they had called her at first in ridicule, but later in respect and affection and reverence,—the angel of the Gila?

When Esther Bright's lap was full of gifts, she tried to express what she felt. Her words had vanished, and happy tears had taken their place.

After her unsuccessful effort to speak, Wathemah, who could hardly comprehend her tears, ran to her, and began to wipe them away with a sleeve of

his new waist. She slipped her arm about him and drew him to her. He looked up questioningly.

"It's all right, Wathemah," she said, smiling. "I was so happy I couldn't help crying."

"Now," said the superintendent, "you are each to receive from Miss Bright a Bible, a box of candy and a Christmas card; and from Mrs. Carmichael, some delicious Christmas cookies. Here, boys," he said, beckoning to some of them, "pass these, will you?"

Esther Bright herself took a large panful of cookies to the people outside of the schoolhouse. As she approached a Mexican, she saw standing by him his wife, a blanket Indian, and on her back, a pappoose. As she passed the cakes to them, the squaw reached down and grabbed two handfuls of them, devouring them ravenously.

Esther patted the child, and smiled into the squaw's face, which she could see distinctly in the light that streamed from the window.

"Pappoose?" she said to the Indian.

But there was no answering smile in the squaw's eyes. The "emptiness of ages" was in her face. It was a face Esther was to see again under very different circumstances; but no premonition warned her of the fiery ordeal through which she would be called to pass.

Finally the multitude was fed. The boisterous laughter and the loud talk, within, seemed strangely out of harmony with the solemn stillness of the night. The moon sent a flood of silvery light over the scene before her; and, everywhere, the Christmas fires, built by the Mexicans, were leaping skyward. Esther stood watching; for on far away mountains and near by foothills, the sentinels of the desert had become gigantic burning crosses. She had heard that these were to be a unique feature of the Christmas celebration, but she was not prepared for the exceeding beauty of it all. The burning cross caught her fancy. Suddenly, she became aware of the presence of Kenneth Hastings.

"Wonderfully beautiful,—the scene,—isn't it?" she said, without turning. "I think I have never seen anything more impressive."

"Yes, beautiful. These Catholic Mexicans have a religious feeling that finds expression in splendor. Does the burning cross have any significance to you?"

"Yes," she answered, speaking slowly, as she looked toward one of them; "the cross, once a symbol of ignominy; but now become, like the flaming cross on the mountains, a symbol of light."

"Miss Bright," said John Clayton, from the doorway, "you are asked for."

As she entered the room, Patrick Murphy stepped forward. He raised his hand for attention. After several gibes from the men, and witty retorts on his part, the company quieted down again.

"Ladies an' gintlemin," he said, flourishing his empty pipe, as he made an elaborate gesture, "it's mesilf as feels as we have wid us a foine Christian lady. Ez Oi watched the picters av the Holy Mither this avenin', Oi sez ter mesilf, sez Oi, our teacher (the saints bliss her!) is as lovin' ter the children av this school, as is the blissid Virgin ter the child in thim picters. Oi sez ter mesilf, this lady is as good a Catholic as Oi wish ter see. An' she learns 'em all ter git on. Oi'll sind ivery child o' mine ter day school an' Bible school. Oi hope yez'll all do the same."

Mrs. Murphy's face was a suppressed thunder-storm; but Patrick was oblivious of this as he talked on.

"This was a godless region. Miss Bright come like a angel ter tell us av our sins. Oi belave the Lord sint her.

"See what she done fur us! Her nate little talk ter us, the picters an' her prisints. All who wish ter thank our koind frind, join wid me in three cheers fur Miss Bright!"

Then cheer on cheer rose from the people.

As Patrick took his seat, John Clayton rose.

"Now," said he, "three cheers for our good friend, Mrs. Carmichael, who made the Christmas cookies."

Again the hearty cheers echoed on the still night air.

But Mrs. Carmichael raised a protesting hand. She didn't deserve such a compliment, she said.

Then the guests went their various ways. John Harding covered the embers of the fire and took from his teacher's hands whatever she had to carry, going

directly to the Clayton home. She and Kenneth Hastings were the last to leave. Outside the door, they stood for a moment, watching the moonlit scene. In the distance, they heard a man's rich voice singing, "In the Cross of Christ I glory." They listened. Then they walked on in silence for some moments, the gaze of each fixed upon a colossal burning cross through whose yellow flames violet, and green, and red, and blue leaped and died away, then leaped again.

"The cross!" he said at last. "How it has gone in the van of civilization!"

She stopped and laid her hand on his arm. He, too, stopped and looked questioningly into her lifted face, which he could see but dimly.

"The world for Christ!" she said, deeply moved. "It will surely be! Followers of the wonderful Nazarene, filled and actuated by His spirit of brotherhood, are reaching the uttermost parts of the earth. We shall live to see the awakening of nations. We shall live to see strong men and women enlisted on the side of Christ to bring right and justice and purity into life, God into men's lives."

Again silence.

"I know nothing of God," he responded, "save as I see power manifested in the physical world. I have read the Bible so little. I am not intimately familiar with the life and words of Jesus. Before meeting you, I had always thought of religion with more or less contempt. I confess my ignorance. But I am learning to know *you*. What you are and what you do convince me there is something in your religion I have not found. I am as untaught in spiritual truth as a babe. But now I want to learn."

"I am glad you do. Will you study your Bible?"

He did not tell her he had no Bible, but he promised to study one.

"Will you pray too?" she asked, with a little choke in her voice.

"Would you have me read the prayers of the church?"

"No; the prayer of your own heart."

Then the man became rash.

"The prayer of my heart?" he repeated, with evident emotion. "The prayer of my heart? That prayer is that I may win your love, and your hand in marriage. That is my religion; you, I worship."

"Don't! Don't!" she said, withdrawing her hand from his arm. "Don't; that seems blasphemous."

"If you could only love me, I might begin to comprehend what you tell us of the love of God. I love *you*. That I *know*, I understand. You are the embodiment of all I hold sweet and dear. Can't you love me—sometime?"

"I do not know," she responded. "What I *do* know surely is that I do not love you now. I believe that love of the deep and abiding kind does not fall at man's feet as manna, nor does it grow like a mushroom in a night. It takes time for the mighty, resistless forces of nature to develop a single blade of grass. So love, I take it, must have time to grow."

"Then I may hope to win your love?" he said eagerly.

"Oh, no; don't think of love. You have my friendship; let us not spoil the friendship by dreaming of a love that I cannot give you."

"Do you believe," he asked, "that you will never love any other man?"

"I believe if such love ever grows in my heart, I shall walk in glory all my days. It is a sacred thing, and I could never speak of it lightly, as many do."

"Good night," he said, "and God bless you."

They had reached the Clayton home. The door closed, and Kenneth was alone. He turned; and before him, on the foothills, flamed the burning cross.



CHAPTER XIII

THE ADOPTION OF A MOTHER

BOBBIE had become a personality. What is more, he had adopted Esther

Bright as his mother, without any formalities of the law. He had found a mother heart, and had taken his place there by the divine right of love. No one seemed to know how it had all come about; all anyone knew, positively, was that Bobbie suddenly began to call his teacher "Mither."

At first the children laughed when Bobbie would call her by this new name; then the baby of the school was broken-hearted, until the teacher had mended the break with kisses and tender words.

Sometimes at midday recess, the drowsy child would climb into Esther's lap; and when she would cuddle him, his great blue eyes would look up into hers with a look of content and trusting love. After a while the heavy lids would close, and the flaxen hair lie moist on the ruddy forehead. Then Bobbie would be laid on an improvised bed, to finish his siesta.

Day after day went by, with increasing love on Bobbie's part, and deepening tenderness on the part of Esther Bright.

He was not always good. Far from it. He was a healthy little animal, bright and attractive. His activity sometimes got him into trouble. Then to divert his mind, his teacher would tell him little stories. When she would finish, he would say coaxingly, "More."

After a while, he would call for certain stories she had already told him, and interrupt her all the way along, his face alive with intelligent interest. At last he himself wanted to tell the stories to his teacher, with many interpolations and funny variations.

But the funniest thing happened one day when he refused to go home, and announced that he would stay with his adopted mother.

"Oh, no, Bobbie dear," she said, placing her hand on his shoulder. "What would your father do without you?"

"He tan det another wain," he said, in a tone of satisfaction.

"No, Bobbie," insisted the teacher; "you must go home."

Still he refused. Then all his Scotch stubbornness asserted itself. He could not be driven or coaxed home. And when the older children tried to carry him, he kicked and screamed and fought, till he had freed himself. He ran to his teacher with heart-rending sobs. She sent the other children home, and took him in her arms. Gradually his sobs ceased and he fell asleep. His face was wet with tears. In his sleep, great sighs, the aftermath of the storm, seemed to come from his innermost heart.

The adopted mother sat with her arms clasped about him. Such a look of tender love came into her face as one sometimes sees in the face of a young mother, bending over her sleeping babe. If ever Esther Bright was beautiful, it was at that moment. Kenneth Hastings stood a short distance away, watching her. He lifted his hat and stood with bowed head. At last he spoke her name. She turned, and nodded toward the sleeping boy in her arms.

"Come sit down," she said, moving to make room for him on the doorstep.

"You seem to be a good nurse, too," he responded, taking the proffered seat. "What's Bobbie doing here this time of day?"

She told him of the child's decision to stay with her, and his refusal to go home, his fight, and his stormy sorrow. He listened, with an amused twinkle in his eyes.

"Poor little chap," he said; "he has my sympathy in refusing to be parted from you."

She flushed slightly.

"Don't waste your sympathy," she replied saucily. Somehow that provoking smile of his nettled her. He had found her vulnerable.

"Bigger chaps than he feel the same way towards you," he said, smiling still.

He saw that she was badly teased, and the spirit of mischief led him on.

"Now *I'd* like to stay with you always, myself."

She looked as though she would annihilate him.

"And what is more, I'd like to change places with Bobbie this very minute."

She rose suddenly, but with some effort, for the child was stout and heavy for his years.

"What are you going to do?" he asked, looking admiringly upon Bobbie.

"I'm going to carry him home."

"How cruel to Bobbie!" he said, stepping near her and extending his arms for the child. "Let *me* carry him, do."

"I can carry him myself, thank you," she said, with a sudden air of independence.

Again she saw his look of amusement, and struggled with her heavy load, knowing full well that she could not carry him far.

"No, you must not carry him," he said firmly. "He is too heavy for you." And without more ado, he took Bobbie from her arms.

"Come," he said amicably, "we'll both take him home—to Mrs. Carmichael's."

So on they trudged. Bobbie roused a moment, but seeing a familiar face, he reached up his grimy hand and patted the bronzed cheeks, then cuddled comfortably into the strong arms.

"So Bobbie wanted to stay with you," he was saying.

"Yes, he calls me mither, you know."

"*I'd* like to call you 'mither' myself some day. It's a beautiful name."

She felt provoked with herself. Why in the world had she made that unfortunate remark?

"You love children, don't you?" He was not smiling now.

"Oh, yes; from my childhood up I have loved every child I have seen."

"I see."

But at this juncture Bobbie again roused, rubbed his eyes and demanded to be put down. So Kenneth set him on his feet. The little lad stood in sleepy bewilderment a moment, then with an engaging smile, offered one hand to Esther, and the other to Kenneth. He began to chatter.

"Bobbie loves his mither."

"So do I," responded Kenneth.

Esther bit her lip. She would not look up. But she felt her cheeks flush.

"Mr. Kenneth love Bobbie's mither?"

Kenneth laughed, a free, happy laugh. It was contagious, and the child laughed too. So did Esther in spite of herself.

"Mr. Kenneth tan't love Bobbie's mither."

"Can't, eh?" Again the happy laugh. "Who says I can't?"

"I do, his adopted mother," said the girl, demurely.

"I'll just capture you the way Bobbie did, and you can't help yourself." And again the stern eyes that seldom smiled, were filled with laughter.

Esther suddenly stopped.

"I can take Bobbie home."

"So can I," he said carelessly, with a suggestion of laughter still in his voice.

"I command you, Mr. Persistency, to turn about and leave me to take Bobbie home."

"I refuse to obey, Miss Obstinacy." A low chuckle.

"I suppose I'll have to endure you, then," she said, with mock seriousness.

"I suppose you will," he said. He seemed to enjoy the tilt. "But Miss Bright —." He stood still and faced her. "—I didn't know you were such a fighter. Here I have been trying to make you understand how I appreciate you, and you almost give me a black eye."

"You had two before—ever you saw me," she said.

"You have looked into them, then," he said, maliciously, "so that you know their color?"

He was, provokingly confident in his manner. Suddenly she stopped again. They were almost at Mrs. Carmichael's door, and Robert Duncan's shack was not far away.

"Really, Mr Hastings," she said, resuming a serious tone, "I do wish you would leave me."

"No," he persisted, "I am going to see you safely home."

Mrs. Carmichael met them at the door. Donald had already reached home, and had told her of Bobbie's refusal to return with him. She patted the little one on the head. He was an attractive little boy, and it was evident Mrs. Carmichael loved him. She stooped and extended her arms, and the child ran into them.

"So my Bobbie was nae coming home tae his auntie? What'd I dae wi'oot him?"

Bobbie hung his head and then said softly:

"Bobbie hae found a mither."

The call was prolonged in order to get Bobbie into a staying frame of mind. At last they spied Robert Duncan approaching his shack, when Kenneth stepped over to tell him of Bobbie's decision and afternoon experience. At first the man smiled, then the tears trickled down his face.

"Puir bairn, puir bairn," he said, huskily. Kenneth laid a kindly hand on his shoulder. He knew that Duncan was disheartened, and had spent much time, lately, in the saloons.

"Come," he said. "Come get the little chap. It is evident he misses his mother."

"Yes, he misses her, an' I miss her. I'll gie mair time tae him."

So saying, he accompanied Kenneth to the Carmichael home and soon Bobbie was in his father's arms.

The call of Kenneth and Esther drew to a close.

As the two walked briskly toward the camp, Esther Bright paused from time to time to draw in great breaths of air, and to drink in the glory of the world about her.

"Come," her companion said, "we shall be late to dinner. Did you know I am invited to dine with the Claytons to-night?"

"Really!" She tossed back the curls the stiff breeze had blown across her eyes.

"Really!" he echoed, in a tone of mockery. "Miss Bright, pardon me, but you —" He paused.

"Well?" she said. "What about *you*?"

"You look altogether charming."

She stopped. He walked on.

"You are perfectly incorrigible," she called. "Unless you promise to talk sense, I'll not go a step further with you."

He turned.

"Sense?" he said with mock seriousness, "that's what I have been talking when in your society all these weeks past. And here you make me play second fiddle to Jack Harding, Wathemah and Bobbie."

"And you prefer to be *first* fiddle?"

"Of course!"

She seemed in high spirits, ready for a tilt.

"Do be sensible," she said gayly.

"Sensible? I was never more sensible in my life." He made a long face.

"Unfortunate man!" She sighed, as though his condition were utterly hopeless.

He laughed.

"Miss Bright!"

"Mr. Hastings!"

"I have been thinking!"

"Marvelous!" She seemed like some mocking sprite.

"Why don't you ask what I am thinking about?" He seemed provokingly cool.

"Because you are just dying to tell me." She was piquant.

"I vow I'm not. I won't tell you!"

"All right," she returned, quickening her pace.

"Really, now, *don't* you wish to know what I have been thinking about?" He stepped nearer to her.

"I'm not the least bit concerned," she answered with airy indifference. "I wouldn't know for anything."

"Then I'll tell you. I was just thinking what fun it would be to meet you in society, and have a rattling flirtation with you."

"Indeed!" She lifted her head. "You'd find Greek had met Greek."

"I've no doubt. That would be the fun of it."

"And you might die of a broken heart." Her tone was full of laughter.

"That's what I'm doing already." He looked comical. "And you take no pity on me."

"You might take a dose of soothing syrup." She looked extremely solicitous.

"How extremely kind of you, Miss Bright. But my malady is in the region of the heart. I suspect you think I haven't a heart. But really, Miss Skeptic, a heart happens to be a part of my anatomy."

"I thought we were to talk sense," she reminded him.

Just then they heard a familiar call, and turning, saw Lord Kelwin hastening towards them.

"By George!" he said, breathing hard. "I have been trying to overtake you two for a half mile. You seemed to be having a mighty good time."

"Good time?" echoed Kenneth. "Miss Bright has been abusing me all the

way." He assumed an injured air.

"I have no doubt, Miss Bright, that Mr. Kenneth enjoyed the treatment he received," remarked Lord Kelwin.

"Enjoyed it?" Kenneth interjected. "I have been a perfect martyr to feminine cruelty. And would you believe it? Miss Bright has been trying to palm off on me that she is not a daughter of Eve."

"You are a veritable son of Adam," she rejoined, gayly. "And to think that I shall have to endure you at dinner!"

"You'll have to endure another son of Adam, too," interjected Lord Kelwin, "for I am invited also."

At once new light broke in upon Esther.

"I believe you are letting the cat out of the bag," she said, "for I am sure this is intended to be a surprise for me. I have a birthday to-day."

"A birthday?" Kenneth said. "Let me see—" he said with comic gravity,—"you are getting to be a venerable lady. I presume you'll never see fifty again?"

"Oh, I assure you that is altogether too young." Then she turned to Lord Kelwin.

"Do you think it proper to suggest such frivolity as a flirtation to one of my advanced years?"

"Highly improper. Highly improper," said the Irishman, "but I'd like a hand in such a flirtation myself." He seemed to enjoy the nonsense.

"Then there would be two victims."

"You and I?" questioned Lord Kelwin.

"No; you and Mr. Kenneth."

"I was just thinking—" Lord Kelwin paused, to think of something that would make him a score.

"Thinking! Thinking!" as though that were quite incomprehensible. "Mr. Hastings also claimed to be thinking."

"Better leave her alone, Kelwin," laughed Kenneth. "She will have the last word. She's like the woman with the scissors."

"Good avenin'," said a rich brogue just at hand.

"How are you, Patrick?" said Kenneth.

"Well, sir. How are yez, Miss?" He gave his slouch hat a jerk. "Good avenin', Lord Kelwin."

They walked on together, and the talk drifted to the Gila Club.

"I'm really surprised, don't you know," said Lord Kelwin, "at the interest these fellows take in the club."

"It's the first dacint thing the byes has had ter go to. Look at that saloon there!" he said, pointing to an overgrown shack, where women of the coarsest type presided. "And look at that opium den," he said, indicating a small building at their right. "And see that haythen," he said, pointing to a female who stood in the door of a saloon, her cheeks painted, and puffing away at a cigarette. "Thim is the things as has sint the byes to destruction."

Kenneth Hastings and Lord Kelwin made no reply.

"If yez kape on, schoolma'am," continued Patrick, "yez'll wipe out the saloons and opium places, an' make dacint min an' women out of these poor crathers." He nodded his head.

"So pitifully sad!" Esther's vivacious mood suddenly vanished. She was again grave and thoughtful.

"Aye," said Patrick, "but yez kin do it, Miss, niver yez doubt it. Yez can do it! Oi used ter go ter the saloon mesilf, but Oi'll go no more, no more. That's what yez has done fur me."

Just then Wathemah came running and leaping from Keith's saloon. In a moment he spied them, and ran full tilt towards them.

"It makes me sick at heart," Esther said in a low tone to Patrick, "whenever I think of Wathemah living longer in the saloon."

"Yez air right, Miss," answered Patrick, "but Misthress Keith is a purty dacint sort av a woman, and she has been good ter the lad."

"Yes, I realize that. But I wish I could take him myself."

By this time the child was trudging along beside his Beloved.

Lord Kelwin liked to tease him, and said in a bantering tone, "What are you always hanging on to Miss Bright's hand for, Wathemah? She don't allow the rest of her admirers to do that."

Wathemah placed his other hand over the hand he clasped.

"*Me* teacher *mine*!" he said, defiantly.

The men laughed. The teacher placed one hand on the child's head. He rested his cheek against her hand, as he said softly, "*Me mother*."

"Your mother, eh?" Lord Kelwin looked amused. "I wish she'd mother the rest of us."

The child did not understand the laughter, and fancying himself ridiculed by Lord Kelwin, turned, ran and leaped like a squirrel to his shoulder, and struck him in the face.

"You little savage," the Irishman said, angrily, as he grasped the child and shook him.

"Let *me* settle with Wathemah," said Esther, firmly. She stepped forward, and took him by the arm, and held him. "Go on," she said to the men, "I will follow."

They sauntered on, leaving her with the refractory urchin. When she and the child finally overtook them, Wathemah's face was tear-stained.

Nothing more was said to the child until they reached the Clayton door.

"I guess you had better go back now, dear," Esther said, placing her hand on Wathemah's shoulder.

"No," he said stoutly, "Mrs. Clayton ask Wathemah he Miss Bright party."

"Oh, yes," she said, with sudden understanding, "you came to celebrate my birthday, didn't you?"

He nodded.

"You want me to wash your face and hands, don't you, Wathemah?" she asked.

And off she went with the child.

"By George," said Lord Kelwin, "I never saw such a woman."

"Nor I," returned Kenneth. "There is no other like her."

The other whistled, and Kenneth flushed. His companion went on, "I'd like to know if she really has a fortune."

"Better ask her." Lord Kelwin did not observe the look of contempt on Kenneth's face.

But host and hostess had entered the spacious room, and were extending gracious welcomes.

"Does either of you happen to know of the whereabouts of Miss Bright?" questioned Mr. Clayton.

On learning of her arrival with them, he rallied them on spiriting her off. In the midst of the raillery, Esther and Wathemah entered the room. The latter found his way at once to Mr. Clayton's side, for they were great friends. The entrance of Esther was the signal for further badinage.

"John, what do you think of a young lady who tells her escort she supposes she'll have to endure him?"

"Mr. Clayton," she said, with a saucy tilt of her head, "what do you think of gentlemen who tell a lady they would like to flirt with her?"

"That depends," he answered, with a broad smile, "upon who the lady is. Now if I were not a staid married man—"

"You do not answer my question," she said. "You introduce an altogether extraneous matter. I asked you what you thought of gentlemen who would tell a lady they would like to flirt with her." Here both Lord Kelwin and Kenneth Hastings tried to present their cases. Esther raised her hand. "Would you not consider this great frivolity, Mr. Clayton?" And she assumed a prim, shocked expression so funny that all laughed.

"If you wish to know my candid opinion," he said, with the air of a judge, "I believe they were within the law; but, if they were guilty offenders, they have my sympathy."

Wathemah looked from one to another with a puzzled expression as he listened to their laughter. He seemed to sense the fact that his Beloved was in some way the butt of their fun. In a moment he had slid from his place on John Clayton's knee, and was standing leaning against Esther.

"That's right, Wathemah," she said, pretending to be greatly injured, "you take my part."

"Look out here, young man," said Lord Kelwin, as Wathemah approached him with a threatening fist. Kenneth caught the child, and held him close in his arms, whispering to him, "We're only fooling, Wathemah."

But he said aloud:

"Did you know, John, that Miss Bright has become an adopted mother?"

"No. Whom has she adopted? You?"

"Me? No. That's a good one. She's adopted Duncan's little boy, Bobbie. And when I suggested that I'd like to change places with Bobbie, she almost annihilated me."

All seemed to be enjoying the nonsense.

"Really, Miss Bright," continued Lord Kelwin, "I think you should be at the head of an orphanage."

"I suppose you'd like to be chief orphan," suggested John Clayton.

Then the talk drifted to serious themes, until dinner was announced. A birthday cake with sixteen lighted candles, in the center of the table, was the signal for another fusillade of fun.

"Sixteen! sixteen!" said Kenneth Hastings. "I accused Miss Bright, to-day, of being fifty, and she assured me she was not so young as that."

"Sixteen! sweet sixteen!" said Lord Kelwin, bowing low.

She, in turn, bowed *her* head.

"You see," she said, "our good prophet, Mrs. Clayton, cried out, and the shadow has turned backward on the dial of Ahaz."

"It is not so much the number of years we count on the dial, after all," spoke

Mrs. Clayton, who had thus far listened smilingly to the others; "it is what we live into those years. And you have lived already a long life in your few years, dear friend."

"You are right," Kenneth rejoined. "Miss Bright has lived more years of service to her fellow men in the few months she has been in Gila, than I have lived in my thirty years." Then, half in jest, half in earnest, he continued, "I wish Miss Bright could have been my grandmother, then my mother, then my—" He halted in embarrassment, as he saw a deep blush sweep over Esther's face.

"And then—" suggested Lord Kelwin, in a provoking tone—"and then?"

"I should like her for my *friend*."

"So say we all of us," rejoined John Clayton. Then observing Esther's face, he changed the drift of the conversation.

"How would you good people like to make up a party to go to Box Canyon sometime in the near future?"

"Delightful!" spoke several, simultaneously. And thereupon they began to describe for Esther the canyon and what she would see.

Before leaving the table, every wineglass save one was filled with sherry. That glass was turned down. John Clayton rose and lifted his glass.

"Here's to our dear friend, Miss Bright. May she always be sixteen at heart, with her ideals of life as true and as sweet as they are now; may the cares of life sit lightly upon her; may she be given strength to do all that she will always seek out and find to do; may the love of the true of heart enfold her; may the Heavenly Father keep her in all her ways; may the shadow ever turn backward on the dial."

And lifting their glasses, they drank to this toast.

Ah, little did they realize how prophetic in some ways that toast would prove to be, nor how great was the work that lay before the lovely and fragile-looking girl. All were happy and light-hearted; at least, all save Carla Earle. She sat quiet and retiring, when her duties were over. Wathemah had found refuge in her lap, and his regular breathing assured her he was fast asleep. So the evening wore on. At last all the guests except Wathemah had departed. The fire burned low. And soon all were asleep in the quiet house.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

JOHN Harding seemed a new man. If ever man fought desperately the evil in his nature, he did. It would be foolish to say that he became a saint. Far from it. He was at all times very human.

All the years of his life, his deeper nature had been lying fallow. No one had ever cared enough about him to suspect or discover its richness. Now some one had found him who did care, and who knew instinctively what lay below the forbidding exterior.

He sought Esther Bright with all sorts of questions, many of them questions a child might have asked (for he was but a child as yet in knowledge of many things); and she poured out the richness of her own knowledge, the inspiration of her transcendent faith, until the man roused from a long sleep, and began to grapple with great questions of life. He read, he thought, and he questioned.

Sometimes, when long away from Esther's influence, he yielded to the temptations of the saloon again, and drank heavily. On one of these occasions, he chanced to cross her path as he came staggering from a saloon. He tried to avoid her, but failed.

"Oh, Jack," she said, laying her hand on his arm, "is this what Jesus would have you do? Come home."

"'Taint no use," he answered, in a drunken drawl, "no use. I ain't nobody; never was nobody. Let me be, I say. Nobody cares a blank for me." He threw an arm out impatiently.

"'Sh!" she interrupted. "Jesus cares. Mr. and Mrs. Clayton care. I care. Miss Edith cares. Come home with me, John."

So saying, she led him on to the Clayton ranch.

After a field has lain fallow many years, it must be turned and overturned again, in order to yield an abundant harvest. So it is with a soul.

John Harding's soul was slowly but surely being prepared to receive the seeds of truth. There were days when it seemed as though a demon possessed him. Then he would mysteriously disappear, and be gone for days. He always returned worn and haggard, but gentle. Then he would seek Esther Bright, and say simply:

"I have conquered!"

He seemed to know intuitively that she never lost faith in him. He felt certain that he would yet become what she wished him to be,—a true man. And this conviction made every battle with himself less terrible. At last he knew that the good in him was master.

All this did not come about at once. Months passed before he knew that he could feel sure of his victory.

In the meantime, the church service had become established in Gila. Esther Bright preached with deepening spiritual power. The cowlasses now attended regularly. Other women, too, had come. Miners, dirt begrimed, had astonished their cronies by coming to hear the teacher talk. Even men from the charcoal pits and burro camps found their way to the crowded room.

One Sunday, the atmosphere of the meeting was so remarkable it still stands out in the memory of many a Gilaite of those early days.

Esther Bright had preached on the Healing of the Lepers. She had told them of the disease of leprosy, its loathsomeness, its hopelessness. Then she vividly pictured the ten lepers, the approach of Christ, and their marvelous restoration. She showed them sin, its power to degrade men and women, and to weaken the will. She urged the need of God's help, and the necessity for each one to put forth his will power. Her low, earnest, heart-searching voice seemed to move many in that audience. Again and again rough hands brushed away tears they were ashamed for others to see. Ah, could there be help for them! Could there!

The speaker seemed filled with a power outside of herself, a power that was appealing to the consciences of men.

Kenneth Hastings, caught in this great spiritual tide, was swept from his moorings, out, out, on and away from self, Godward. He rose and spoke with deep feeling. Then some one sang the first stanza of "Where are the Nine?" The singing ceased. The Spirit of God seemed brooding over all. The pregnant silence was followed by a succession of marvels. A Scotch miner rose and said:

"I am a sinner. Jesus, Maister, hae mercy on *me*."

Then voice after voice was heard confessing sin and praying for mercy.

At the close of the service, there were many touching scenes as men and women long hardened and burdened, came to this young girl for words of hope and encouragement.

If ever human being was an instrument in the hands of God, Esther Bright was that day.

The attendance at the meetings increased so that the schoolhouse could no longer accommodate the people. It was still too cool to hold out-of-door meetings. In the midst of Esther's perplexity, she received a call from one of the saloon keepers.

"I 'ave been attending the meetings," he said, "and see that you need a larger room. I 'ave come to offer you my saloon."

"Your saloon, Mr. Keith?" she said, aghast.

"Yes," he replied, "my saloon! I'm one of the lepers ye told about the other day. I 'ave decided to give up the saloon business."

This was beyond Esther's wildest dreams.

"You have decided to give up the saloon?" she said, overjoyed. "I am so glad! But how will you make your living?"

"I'll go to minin' again, an' my wife'll keep boarders. She's glad to 'ave me give up the dram shop."

Esther's eyes filled with happy tears.

The first Sunday in February had arrived. Nearly all vestiges of a saloon had disappeared from what had been Keith's saloon. Masses of mistletoe and fragrant spruce had taken the place of indecent pictures. A cabinet organ, borrowed for

the occasion, stood at one side. A small table served as the speaker's desk. The billiard tables had disappeared, and chairs now filled the room.

The crowd that gathered about the door the day of this first service in the saloon was unusually large, for word had gone out that David Bright, the grandfather of their pastor, would speak at the meeting.

The saving of the souls of men had come to be the vital question of the hour in Gila.

As the crowd caught sight of a stately white-haired man accompanying their leader, there was a respectful hush. Men and women stepped aside, leaving a passage to the door. The two entered. The singers were already in their places. The congregation assembled, and the song service began. At its close, there followed an impressive stillness, broken only by the joyous notes of a Kentucky cardinal.

The aged preacher sat with bowed head. One would hardly have been surprised to hear a voice from on high.

At last he rose. Everyone looked intently into his benevolent, kindly face. Slowly and impressively he repeated:

"Repent ye; for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

He repeated the words a second time, then took his seat.

Again the pregnant silence. When David Bright rose the second time, he read Matthew III., and closing his Bible spoke to them for an hour, holding their undivided attention.

"Beloved," he said, "this voice is speaking to us to-day. 'Repent ye: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' The kingdom comes to us individually. It comes only as men's hearts are prepared for it."

Then he carried his audience with him as he preached the need of repentance, and Christ's compassionate love for every human soul. His voice rose and fell, and the roughest men listened, while down many faces flowed repentant tears. Oh miracle of miracles,—the turning from sin to righteousness! Oh greatest experience of the human heart,—the entrance of the Divine!

As the godly man took his seat, Esther Bright rose, and sang, with face

shining, "I Love to Tell the Story." As she sang, the notes of the Kentucky cardinal burst forth, a joyous accompaniment to her glad song.

To the amazement of all, Ben Keith rose and said:

"I 'ave been a sinful man. May God forgive me. I repent me of my sins. I 'ave led men and women astray in this saloon. May God forgive me. I 'ave determined to turn face about, and to lead an honest life. I 'ave sold my last drop o' whiskey. I 'ave poured all I 'ad left on the ground. I shall keep no more saloon. May God 'ave mercy on my soul, and on the souls of them as I 'ave led astray."

A sob was heard. It came from the long-suffering Mrs. Keith. Then another stood, asking for prayers; then another, then another. Last of all, David Bright rose, and after speaking a few fatherly encouraging words, he dismissed them with the benediction.

He was soon surrounded by men waiting for a word, a hand grasp. They asked for personal conferences with him.

"Let us go down to the timber," suggested Jack Harding. So together these men strolled down to the river bank.

"Thou art troubled about the unpardonable sin, thou sayest?" the preacher said to a young man walking by his side.

"Yes," replied the youth addressed. "I've been a bad one, but now I really want to be a Christian. I fear I have committed the unpardonable sin. Do you suppose —" he asked in a voice that choked a little, "that God could pardon such a sinner as I am?"

"With God all things are possible," reverently replied the other, laying a kindly hand on the young man's shoulder. "The only sin that seems to me to be unpardonable is that unrighteous obstinacy that forever refuses the *offer* of salvation."

And into the old man's face came an expression of sorrow.

"But if the offer of salvation is forever *passed by*, what then?" asked another.

"I believe the soul is lost."

"You mean the soul is in a place of fire and torment, literal hell fire?" asked the first speaker.

"I said I believe the soul is lost."

"Then you don't believe in hell?" asked another.

"No," answered David Bright; "not as some believe in it,—literal fire. Spirit or soul is, I believe, immortal. It lives on. To know God, and Jesus Christ, His Son, is eternal life; not to know them is death. To obey the laws of God here on earth means a foretaste of heaven; to disobey them, means a foretaste of hell."

"And you think there can be hell on earth?" asked one.

"Yes: a man's own evil mind and life make for him a constant hell."

"And you believe heaven may begin on earth?"

"I do. Heaven is the rightful heritage of the soul. Heaven is accord with the Divine. It is the natural environment of the soul. It is more natural to do right than wrong. It is evil environment that perverts the soul."

They seated themselves on a dead tree trunk.

"Here," said David Bright, laying his hand on the fallen tree, "you see an illustration of what happens to many a life. Its environment has brought a parasite that lays hold upon the life of the tree, saps its strength, and decay follows. Destructive agencies in a sinful environment lay hold of human life, sap its strength, and moral decay follows. Many a strong man has fallen as has this magnificent tree. Nothing can revitalize the tree once fallen into decay; but, thanks be to God, there is a force that can revitalize the human being long after he seems dead and lost to the world, and that is the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

The look of one who bears the sorrow of his race upon his heart came into the beautiful face. And the men watched him with deepening reverence for their kind.

One who had thus far been silent spoke.

"But if the soul is immortal, spiritual death cannot come."

The old man looked keenly into the young man's eyes. He spoke with deepest conviction as he said:

"I believe there is almost no limit to the possibilities of the mind and soul to him whose ideals are high, whose courage is great, and who holds himself to the very highest ideals of living. Christ paved the way for such a life for every young man. That sort of life is real living, for it means constructive work in the world. It means growth, immortality.

"To come short of what one might be, steadily, increasingly, brings moral deterioration, atrophy;—to my mind, the saddest form of death. It is life to grow toward the Divine. My son, it will soon be too late. Turn Godward now. Shall we pray?"

Then up to the throne of God went a prayer for these young men,—sons of parents who had long ago lost their grip on them.

For about two weeks, religious meetings were held daily. Night after night the room was crowded. The services consisted of talks by David Bright, songs, short prayers and testimony. Sometimes several men and women would be on their feet at once, eager to voice their repentance, and to testify of God's mercy.

The interest did not end here. Down in the mines, brief meetings were held daily at the noon hour. One group of miners would start a hymn; then way off, another group would catch up the refrain. On many lips the oath or unclean story died unspoken.

Men sought David Bright as they would a father confessor, pouring the story of their lives into his kind and sympathetic ear. They seemed to know intuitively that he was a man of God. What mattered, if he were Catholic or Protestant? He found men evil, and left them good.

And Esther Bright's influence was hardly less marked. Her deep spirituality made her a great power for righteousness.

John Harding seemed scarcely less interested in saving men's souls than she. "Giving men a chance," he called it. He went from mining camp to mining camp, carrying the tidings of salvation, and urging men to repent. And those who heard him not only came to the meetings, but began to bring others also. And so the work grew.

It was at the close of David Bright's second week in Gila that the most impressive meeting was held. At its close, the aged evangelist bade them farewell. Then they crowded about him, thanking him for all he had done for

them, and asking him to remember them in his prayers.

Kenneth Hastings was the last to speak with him. He asked for a personal interview. Then arm in arm, they strolled up the mountain road.

What was said during that interview no one ever knew. But when the two returned to Clayton Ranch, David Bright walked with his hand resting on the young man's shoulder. Esther heard her grandfather say to him:

"I honor thee for it, my son. I believe under the same circumstances, I should feel as thou dost. It is a serious question."

Kenneth said something in reply that did not reach Esther's ears. She heard her grandfather speaking again:

"Yes, she is an unusual woman, as thou sayest. She has always been a delightful character, and Christlike in her purity. She is compassionate and loving because she has always walked in the Master's steps."

The two men entered the house, and John Clayton advanced to greet them.

"That was a great meeting," he said.

"Yes," David Bright replied, "God has touched the hearts of the people."

He sat down by his granddaughter, put his arm about her, and drew her to him.

"The field is white unto the harvest, Beloved," he said, looking into her upturned face.

"I hadn't thought of the harvest yet, Grandfather," she said simply. "We have been getting the soil ready to sow good seed at every opportunity. We are on the verge of the growing time."

"Well, well, as you will, little philosopher," he said, releasing her.

It was a lovely picture to see the two side by side. The white head of the one suggested a life work near completion; while the golden brown of the other, suggested life's work at its beginning. Happy would it be if godly and beautiful age could give up its unfinished tasks to those who are content to prepare the soil, and sow good seed, intent on the growing time!

The social hours in the Clayton home that day were ones to be long remembered. David Bright was a man enriched from many sources. He gave himself to his companions in intercourse as rare as it was beautiful. Conversation had never become to him a lost art; it was the flowering out of the life within.

And Kenneth Hastings listened. If *he* had only had such a father! He was beginning to see it all now,—life's great possibility.

At last he was drawn into the conversation.

"I hardly know," he responded to a question from David Bright. How many things he now realized he "hardly knew!" How vague a notion he had, anyhow, of many questions affecting the destiny of the human race! He thought aloud:

"You see Mr. Bright, I was reared in a worldly home, and I was brought up in the Church of England. My religion is simply a beautiful ritual. But, further than that, I know nothing about it. I never felt any interest in religion until—" here his face flushed "—until your granddaughter came. She found me a heathen—" He hesitated, and glancing toward Esther, caught her glance. How lovely she was! As he hesitated, David Bright finished his sentence, smiling genially as he did so.

"And made you a Christian, I hope."

"I fear not. I am plagued with doubts."

"You will conquer the doubts," responded David Bright, "and be stronger for the struggle. Triumphant faith is worth battling for."

"Well," said Kenneth, "I feel that I am adrift on a great sea. If anyone pilots me to a safe harbor, it will be your granddaughter."

"No," she said, looking into his face with a sudden radiance in her own, "but the Man of Galilee."

And so the talk drifted, talk where each one could be himself and speak out of his innermost heart, and not be misunderstood. So blessed is friendship of the higher sort.

The day passed and the morrow dawned. Then David Bright journeyed eastward again, to minister to the world's unfortunate ones.

He left behind him in Gila an influence that men speak of to this day. But to no one, probably, did his coming mean more than to John Harding. John's transformation was now complete. He became the self-appointed evangelist to numbers of unfortunate and tempted men. He had risen in the scale of life, and had become a Man!



CHAPTER XV

SOME SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

ONE evening about the middle of February, Kenneth Hastings called at the Clayton home. After a few moments of general conversation, he turned to Mrs. Clayton and begged to be excused from his engagement to accompany them to Box Canyon.

"Oh, Mr. Kenneth," protested Edith.

"I am sorry, Edith," he said, turning to her, "but I leave to-morrow for England."

"For England!" ejaculated Esther in astonishment; for she knew that a visit to England had been remote from his thoughts the last time she had talked with him.

"Nothing wrong at home, I hope, Kenneth?" said John Clayton, kindly.

"My uncle cabled me that my parents were killed in an accident. It is imperative that I go at once."

He paused. John Clayton reached over and laid a hand on his arm. Mrs. Clayton spoke a few words of sympathy; but Esther Bright sat silent. How she had urged him to make his parents a visit! How he had rebuffed her, saying they cared nothing for him! She remembered his saying that he had always been starved for a mother's love. Too late now to give or to receive.

She felt Kenneth looking at her, expecting her to say some word. She seemed suddenly dumb. At last she heard him speak her name. He hesitated, then continued:

"I wish I had gone when you suggested it, Miss Bright."

He bowed his head upon his hand.

"I wish you *had* gone," she said, simply. "It might have been a comfort to you."

After awhile he spoke cheerfully of his return, and of what they would do.

"Don't let Miss Bright work too hard," he said, smiling gravely. "She does enough work for five men."

"I shall miss your help," was all she said. But she felt a sudden longing to comfort him. Into her face flashed a look of sympathy. He knew it was for him.

"It almost makes me homesick, Kenneth, to hear you talk of going home," said Mrs. Clayton. "England always will seem home to me," she added, turning to Esther.

"It is a beautiful country to call home," responded the New England girl. "I love England."

They talked till late, Kenneth receiving message after message from them to kindred and friends across the sea.

He rose to go, taking leave of Esther last of all. Then he turned to her with both hands extended. She placed her own in his. He drew her towards him, and without a word, turned and was gone.

Esther withdrew, and Edith and Carla soon followed, leaving John Clayton and his wife seated before the fireplace.

"Well, John!" said the wife.

"Well, my dear?" responded the husband, apparently surmising what was coming.

"Kenneth *loves* Miss Bright."

"Well, is this the first time you have suspected that?" As though he had always suspected it.

"No! But—"

"But what?"

"Is he worthy of her, John?"

"Don't be foolish, Mary. Kenneth is a true and honorable man. Yes—" pausing to listen to her expostulations,— "I know he used to drink some; but I never saw him intoxicated. He played cards as we do here, and when he was in the company of men who gambled, he gambled too."

"But morally, John. It's goodness that a woman cares most about. Is he all right morally?"

He drew his chair close to hers.

"I believe Kenneth to be clean morally. If he had been immoral here, I should have known of it. And yet he, like the other men, has been surrounded by temptation. What is gross does not appeal to him. I have never known him to speak lightly of any woman. For you and Edith he has the deepest respect; for Carla, he has the utmost compassion; and for Miss Bright, (bless her!) he has a reverence I have never seen any man show to any woman."

"Then he loves her, doesn't he?"

"He never told me so," he answered, smiling; "I doubt if he has told her."

"But after that good-by to-night," she persisted, "*I know* he loves her."

"I hope he does, Mary, and that she cares for him. I don't see how she could help it. I'd like to see them happy,—as happy as you and I are, Mary."

He leaned toward her, resting his cheek against hers.

"As happy as we are, Beloved. Twenty years married. Am I right? And lovers still."

"Yes, twenty happy years," she said, "twenty happy years. But, John, do you think Miss Bright would make Kenneth happy? Would she give up her philanthropic ideas to devote herself to one ordinary man?"

"Oh, that's what's troubling you now, is it?" he asked, laughing outright. Then he spoke seriously:

"I believe Miss Bright could and would make Kenneth supremely happy. You know she is domestic in her tastes, and I believe home would always be her first consideration. But she is such a broad, public spirited woman she would always

be a public benefactor. And Kenneth is not an ordinary man. You know that well. He is superior. I do not know of any man for whom I have such a strong friendship."

"I like Kenneth, too," she admitted. "But I was just thinking."

He rose and covered the embers for the night.

"Better leave them alone," he suggested. "Their story is so beautiful I'd not like to have it spoiled."

"John!"

"Yes, Mary."

"I just thought of something!"

"Remarkable! What did you think of?"

"Kenneth will inherit a large fortune, won't he?"

"Of course."

"That might change his plans."

"I think not. He loves America, and the woman he loves is here. He will return. Come! Let's to sleep."

The going of Kenneth Hastings brought a shadow over the household. His departure was likewise the signal for frequent calls from Lord Kelwin. It grew more apparent that he felt a marked interest in the teacher. But whether she felt a corresponding interest in him, no one could have determined. A few times she went horseback riding with him. He assured her she was becoming an excellent horsewoman.

Lord Kelwin now became a constant attendant at the meetings of the club, on all of which occasions he was Esther's self-appointed escort.

Once he ventured a remark about how it happened that a woman of her rank and fortune and accomplishments should be teaching in a mining camp.

"My rank? My fortune? My accomplishments?" she repeated, mystified.

"Yes," he said, patronizingly, "a lady of rank and fortune. I have met several

Americans of fortune,—great fortune,—in London and Paris—ah—I—"

"But I am not a woman of rank and fortune, Lord Kelwin. I am just a plain working woman."

He did not observe the amused smile about her eyes and mouth. "You are not likely to find women of rank and fortune in a mining camp."

"It's wonderful how much these American heiresses think of titles, don't you know, Miss Bright. Why, a man of rank can marry almost any American girl he pleases."

"Just so," she assented. "He wins a fortune to pay his debts, and squander otherwise; and she wins a title, dragged into the dust by a degenerate nobleman, plus enough unhappiness to make her miserable the rest of her life. An interesting business proposition, truly!"

"Why, really, Miss Bright,—ah—I—ah—I fear you grow sarcastic."

"*Really!* Did you discern any approach to sarcasm in my remarks? I am surprised!"

He was not prepared for the mockery in her voice, nor for something about her that made him feel that she was his superior. Before he could formulate a suitable reply, one quite in accord with his sentiments and feelings, she continued:

"We shall doubtless live to see a social evolution. The American man of genius, and force, and character is too intent on his great task of carving out a fortune, or winning professional or artistic distinction, to give his days and nights to social life.

"Now there are noblewomen of the Old World who are women of real distinction, vastly superior to many men of their class, and who have not been spoiled by too great wealth simply because their profligate brothers have squandered the family fortunes.

"Now it occurs to me that it might be a great thing for the progress of the human race, if the finest noblewomen of the Old World, who are women of intellect, and culture, and character, should seek in marriage our men of brains and character.

"The time has come when the American man of the highest type needs something more than a fashion plate or a tailor's model for his mate."

"And have you no American women who could match your paragons, your American *tradesmen*?" he asked, contemptuously.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "We have fine and noble American women. I was just thinking how the Old World could be invigorated by the infusion of fresh blood from the vital, progressive New World. Just think of a brainy, womanly Lady Somebody of England, refusing to ally herself with an inane, worthless nobleman of any country, and deliberately *choosing* a man of the people here, a man whose achievements have made him great! Is there not a college of heraldry somewhere that places intellect and character and achievement above rank and fortune?"

He could not fathom her.

"How queer you are, Miss Bright! Such marriages," he continued, in a tone of disgust, "would not be tolerated."

"Why not? They would be on a higher plane than the ones you boast of. You exploit the marriage of title and money. I suggest, as an advance upon that, the marriage of the highest type of the noblewoman of the Old World, with no fortune but her intellect, her character, and her fine breeding, with the highest type of noble manhood in America, a man large enough and great enough to direct the progress of the world."

"Ally the daughters of our nobility with plebeian Americans?—with working men?"

"Why not?" she asked.

"Because we despise people in trades," he said, contemptuously.

"But the tradesmen who *make* the fortunes are quite as good as their daughters, who barter themselves and their fathers' wealth for titles. You seem to approve of such alliances."

They had reached the veranda of the Clayton home. Esther Bright's hand was on the door knob, and her companion took his leave.

How radical she must seem to him!

As she entered her own room, she found a letter bearing a London postmark. It was the first letter she had received from Kenneth Hastings, and it was a long one. She read it through, and then reread it, and buried her face in her arms on the table. After awhile there came a knock on the door. It was Carla. She had been crying. Esther slipped an arm about her, and together they sat on the edge of the bed.

"What is the matter, Carla?" she asked gently.

"Oh, I am so unhappy!"

"Has anyone hurt your feelings, dear?"

"Oh, no. It is not that. It is the other. I wish I could die!"

Esther drew Carla to her.

"You still care for Mr. Clifton; is that it?"

"Yes," she answered, with a sob, "that is it. I am so unhappy!"

"Tell me all about it, Carla," said Esther, in a soothing tone. "Perhaps it will be a relief for you to tell me. When a load is shared it grows lighter."

"Well, you see, Papa and Mamma died, and I had no one but distant kindred. They gave me a home, and I became a sort of servant in the family. Mark Clifton was their nephew. He seemed to love me, and he was the only one who did. He talked often of the home we'd have when we are married, as I told you.

"I was sixteen when he came to America. Then he sent me money to come to him, saying we'd be married on my arrival here.

"But when I reached Gila, he said he could not disgrace his *family* by marrying *me*."

These words were followed by violent weeping. Then Esther comforted her as best she could, and tucked her in her own bed. At last Carla fell into a heavy sleep.

Again Esther opened Kenneth's letter, read it, and placed it in her Bible.

So days came and went,—homely days, days of simple duties, days of ministration to human need. And Esther Bright was happy.

One day as she lingered late at the schoolhouse, she was startled to see a young Apache, dressed as a cowboy, standing in the doorway. For an instant, she felt a sickening fear. Then her habit of self-control asserted itself. She motioned him to a seat, but he did not seem to understand. He spied her guitar, tried the strings, shook his head, and muttered words unintelligible to her.

The Indian was, apparently, about her own age, tall, muscular, and handsome. His long, glossy, black hair hung about his shoulders. On his head, was a light felt hat, similar to the ones worn by the cow-punchers. His trousers and jacket were of skins and cloth respectively. In a moment he looked up at her, from his seat on the floor, and jabbered something. Apparently, he approved of her. He touched her dress and jabbered something else. ^[2] "Nē-shē-ād-nlēh'," he said, pointing southward towards the Apache reservation.

She told him, in poor Spanish, that she could not understand; but he apparently understood her, and looked pleased. Again he repeated the same words, using much gesticulation to help convey his meaning.

There was a step outside, and Robert Duncan appeared with Bobbie.

After greeting the teacher, Robert looked with unbounded astonishment at her unusual visitor. Apparently the Apache was there on a friendly visit. The Scotchman was about to pass on, when the teacher asked him to stay. He entered the room, and said something to the Indian, who answered, ^[3]"Indä-stzän' ū'-sn-bē-ceng-kě'."

Robert seemed to catch his meaning, and answered in Spanish that the people called her the Angel of the Gila.

The Apache nodded his head approvingly, and said, ^[4]"Indä-stzän' ū'-sn-bē-tse'!"

He stepped up to the teacher, and took hold of her arm as if to draw her away with him. She shook her head, and pointed to Robert Duncan, who made signs to him that she was his squaw. At last the Indian withdrew, turning, from time to time, to look back at the vision that, apparently, had bewitched him.

Then Robert explained his own errand. He was seeking a mither for Bobbie. The bairn must have a mither. He had understood her interest in the bairn to be a corresponding interest in himself. He was muckle pleased, he said, to be singled out for any woman's favor. He was nae handsome man, he kenned that weel. He

was ready tae marry her any time she telt him. Robert looked wonderfully pleased with himself, apparently confident of a successful wooing. His experience had been limited.

"You wish to marry me, Mr. Duncan?" Outwardly, she was serious.

"Yes, Miss, sen ye was sae willin', I thocht I maucht as weel tak ye, an' then I'd not be bothered wi' ither women.

"Have they troubled you?" she asked, with a look of amusement. "Have they been attentive to you?"

"Not as attentive as y'rsel'."

"In what way have I been attentive to you, Mr. Duncan?" she asked, looking still more amused.

"Ye've helpit me bairn, an' cleaned his claes, an' let him ca' ye mither. Ye'd no hae doon that wi'oot wishin' the faither, too."

His confidence was rather startling.

"But suppose I do not wish the father. What then?"

"Oh, that could never be," he said, "that could never be."

"You have made a mistake, Mr. Duncan," she said, quietly. "You will have to look elsewhere for a wife. Good afternoon."

Saying which, she turned the key in the door, and left him standing dumb with astonishment.

After she had gone some distance, he called after her: "Ye are makin' the mistak o' y'r life!"



CHAPTER XVI

OVER THE MOUNTAINS

ONE Friday early in May, Edith Clayton suddenly became ill. Esther, returning from school, found Mrs. Clayton deeply distressed.

"Oh," she said, "if Mr. Clayton or the boys were only here to take Edith to Carlisle, to see Dr. Brown!"

"How soon will they return?"

"Two days. I'm afraid to drive myself, and Edith sick."

"Does she know the way there, Mrs. Clayton?" Esther seemed weighing the matter.

"Yes; she has gone with her father several times."

"Then if she is able to ride, and you are not afraid to trust me, I'll take her. It is Friday, and still early."

"But, my dear, it is fifteen miles away, a long fatiguing journey over rough mountain roads. You'll have to ford a river, and stay all night at a ranch beyond the ford. Besides, it is a perilous drive. Oh, dear! I am so worried!" Here she broke down completely.

"Don't let us waste any time, Mrs. Clayton. If you think Edith can endure the journey, I am willing to run the risk. I'll take her myself."

"I believe Edith could go all right,—but—"

"Never mind anything else. Give us the safe team, and we'll start."

A spirited team was soon at the door, and they were placing wraps, cushions

and luncheon in the carriage. Then Esther and Edith started.

For a few miles, they repeatedly crossed bridges over the Gila, then their road followed the foothills for some distance. The hills were still yellow with the silky California poppies. Green alfalfa fields, in the valley below, looked like bits of Eden let down into the grimly majestic scene. Higher the travelers rode, and higher. At a sudden turn, they came upon the narrow and perilous canyon road, where they drove slowly, drinking in the grandeur of it all.

The tinkling of a cowbell warned them that they were approaching a human habitation. As they rounded a sharp jag, they came upon a picturesque bridge, near the farther end of which they caught a glimpse of a pine-slab cabin, half hidden by tremulous aspens. A little Mexican child stood near the door, helping himself to the pink and white blossoms of the wild sweet pea. Near by, a white cow, with her clanking bell, browsed on the green turf that bordered that side of the stream.

On and up the mountain, the travelers rode, into the heart of the Rockies.

"Just look at that rose-colored sandstone," said Esther. "How exquisitely veined! See the gigantic, overhanging mass of rock beyond! And oh, the cactus blossoms! How glorious! The large scarlet blossoms! See?"

"Yes. Exquisite, aren't they? But look at those cliffs over in that direction, Miss Bright," said Edith, pointing to her left, as she spoke. "Do you see anything unusual?"

"Yes. Quaint figures. Indian art, isn't it? I do wish I could see it nearer by."

And so they traveled on, reveling in the beauty everywhere about them.

"Does it ever occur to you," asked Edith, "that God is nearer to us here, in the mountains, than anywhere else?"

"Yes. Does God seem nearer to you here?"

"Much nearer. When we went home to England the last time, I missed something. It seemed to me it was God. We went to the churches and heard great preachers, but they did not make me feel the presence of God as the mountains do. When I come out into the open, as you call it, and see the mountains, it seems to me I could reach my hand out and find God."

"The mountains do great things for us," said Esther, looking up at the jagged cliffs.

Suddenly there was a whirl of wings. An enormous eagle roused from his perch on the rocks, made a bold swoop, and soared grandly above their heads.

"Look, look!" cried Esther, in excitement. "An eagle, isn't it? Oh, you splendid creature! How magnificently free!" Her cheeks flushed.

"Did you never see one before?"

"Yes, stuffed; but this bird is alive and free." She looked at Edith.

"You look pale, Edith," she said, with sudden alarm. "Are you feeling worse?"

"No. Only tired. We'll soon reach the clearing, and just beyond that, the ford; and just beyond that, the ranch house. So I can soon rest."

Esther drew a deep breath, and said:

"I feel as though the spirit of the eagle had entered into me."

But darkness was coming on apace. To their relief they soon entered the clearing, and reached the bank of the stream, where they halted a few minutes. The horses pricked up their ears.

"Do you think the ford is dangerous now, Edith?"

"It is usually quite safe at this season, unless there has been a cloudburst. The horses know the ford, and are used to crossing. Papa gives them the rein, and they have always brought him safely through. We had better place our luggage on the seat," she said, "and keep our feet up. Tuck your skirts up, or you'll get a drenching."

Then she leaned forward, and called each horse by name.

In a moment they were in the river, with the water up to the horses' shoulders. They felt the carriage swing with the current, and felt the team struggling with the force of the waters. Then Esther called to the horses, in tones that showed no fear, "Well done, Rocket! On, Star, on!"

It seemed hours to her before the faithful animals were once more on the shore, and safe.

"Were you frightened, Miss Bright?" asked Edith.

"Just a little. I never forded a stream before. But how nobly the horses behaved!"

"Yes. It must be a hard struggle for them, though."

In about five minutes, they stopped before a house, tied their team, and knocked at the door. A refined-looking young woman received them.

"Why, Esther Bright!" she exclaimed, with a little shriek, clasping Esther in her arms.

"Why, Grace Gale! Bless your heart! Where in the world did you come from? Grace, this is my friend, Miss Edith Clayton. She is ill, and I am taking her to see Dr. Brown in Carlisle. We are seeking the hospitality of this house overnight."

Before she was through speaking, Grace Gale was half carrying Edith into the house.

"Come right in, come right in!" she said. "I'm delighted! Tickled to death to see some one I know!"

She ushered them into a room guiltless of carpet, meagerly furnished, but immaculately clean. Then she excused herself to send some one to attend to the horses, and to tell her landlady she would entertain two guests over night. She soon returned.

"But how did *you* happen to come so far from civilization, Esther?" she questioned.

"Oh, a combination of circumstances; but chiefly through Mrs. Clayton, whom I met in England. What brought you out here?"

"I came for restoration of health," she answered, laughing merrily, as though it were all a joke.

"I don't look very sickly now, do I? I had had double pneumonia, and my physician ordered me to leave Boston, and go to a dry climate. So I came to Arizona. I happened to meet the superintendent of education. He needed teachers. So I came here, just for the fun of the thing."

"And has it been fun?", asked Esther, joining in her friend's laughter.

"Fun? There have been so many funny things I have laughed myself into stitches. For example, my landlady refuses to let me have any extra bedding for to-night."

"Never mind. We have our cushions and lap-robe to help out. Who would have dreamed, Grace, when we were at Wellesley, that we should meet way out here in the wilds of Arizona? Oh, I'm so glad to see you!"

"So am I, to see you. Now tell me all you know about the girls of our class, Esther."

They were in the midst of a vivacious conversation, when a sleek, tow-headed woman appeared at the door, and was presented to them. Then she announced supper, and disappeared.

"Don't be frightened," whispered the merry hostess to her guests. "She's tame, and won't bite, and the food is clean."

The landlady entered the kitchen, and after serving them, left the room.

The hours sped merrily. The sick girl lay on the little bed, listening to college reminiscences, and joining occasionally in the conversation and laughter.

"Esther," said Miss Gale, "let's give the Wellesley yell for Edith."

"Well! Here goes!" said Esther, joining her friend. Suddenly, the tow-head appeared at the door.

"Be ye sick?" inquired the surprised hostess.

"No," answered Miss Gale, "only giving our college yell."

"Ye don't say! Is them the kind er doin's ye has where ye goes ter school?"

"A yell is a safety-valve, don't you see, Mrs. Svenson?"

But Mrs. Svenson left the room mumbling to herself.

At a late hour, Grace Gale made a shake down of one blanket, for Esther and herself. Then Esther proposed they use Mrs. Clayton's cushions, and shawls, and robe, to complete the preparations. Edith slept in the bed.

After a while, the hostess asked:

"Are your bones coming through, Esther?"

"No, but I am sorry to put you to such inconvenience. I hope you won't take cold. There is a chill in the air to-night."

"No more o' that, honey. I'm just glad to see you. This is the biggest lark I have had since I came to Arizona."

The visitors laughed with her.

"My! It is eleven o'clock, and I must not keep this sick child awake any longer. Good night, Esther."

"Good night, Grace."

"Good night, Edith."

"Good night."

A long pause.

"Esther," softly, "are you asleep?"

"No."

"I am so glad you came. I was almost dead from homesickness."

"Were you, Grace? I'm so sorry I didn't know you were so near."

On the following morning, the vivacious hostess said:

"I can't let you go. I'm so lonely." And to her surprise, tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You dear girl!" said Esther, slipping her arm about her.

"Get your hat, and go with us on our visit to Dr. Brown. We have enough luncheon to last us a week. Come right along."

So off the three drove.

It was a perfect May day, the kind found only in Arizona. The air was crystal clear, and the sky a deep blue. All along, there were thickets of sweet briar, and

sweet peas; and cactuses, just beginning to bloom, made the way one of continual splendor. The air was exhilarating; so was the sunshine; so was Grace Gale.

"Oh, you're just as good as a tonic, Miss Gale," said Edith. All three seemed to see the funny side of everything, and laughed even when there was no excuse for laughing. The gladness of the day was contagious.

The physician looked grave when he saw the unnatural pallor of Edith's face, and noted her heart action.

"It is well Miss Bright brought you to me at once, Edith," he said. "You need immediate medical attention. I wish you could remain with us a few days."

But she insisted upon returning with her teacher.

After a due amount of rest and refreshment, they started homeward, leaving Miss Gale at her boarding place. Then the two approached the ford again. The stream was higher than on the preceding day, and the waters raging.

Once more the spirited team dashed forward. Once more the carriage swung with the current; only, now, it was swifter and stronger than on the day before.

"Oh, this is terrible!" said Edith, grasping her companion's arm.

"Keep up courage, Edith," said Esther. "I think we'll make it."

But she noted the deathly whiteness of the girl's face.

"Steady, Rocket! Steady, Star!" said the teacher. Her own face grew tense and white.

She felt the carriage swing with a sudden lurch, and it began to dawn upon her that the horses might lose in the struggle. She lifted the reins, and called out above the roar of the waters:

"On, Rocket! On, Star! Once more, my beauties! Bravo! Oh, God, give them strength! On!"

She rose in her excitement, and swung the reins.

The noble animals struggled madly. Could they gain the opposite bank? She was filled with sickening fear.

"On, Rocket! On, Star!" she urged again.

At that moment, the exhausted animals gained the mastery, sprang up the embankment, and stopped suddenly on the level beyond, quivering from their terrific struggle.

Esther gave the reins to Edith, and springing from the carriage, she stepped to the horses' heads, patting and stroking them. Her voice trembled as she said:

"Rocket, my brave, Star, my beauty, we owe our lives to you."

They whinnied as if they understood.

She put her cheek to their noses, she laughed, she cried.

"I believe they understand," she said.

"I feel sure they do," answered Edith.

When Esther climbed back into the carriage, she found Edith had fainted. She waited till her patient regained consciousness, and then they started homeward.

"Do you know," said Edith, after they had gone some distance, "we have had a very narrow escape? A little more, and we'd have been swept down the river."

"I didn't realize the full danger until we were in the midst of the torrent," said Esther. "There was no choice but to go on. I thank God that your life is safe, dear," she added, drawing the girl affectionately to her. "I hope our troubles are over now, and that you'll feel no ill effects from the fright."

They had covered miles of the return journey, and had reached the canyon road leading directly to Gila. Here, for a short distance, the canyon stream spreads wide, flowing over a pebbly bottom. The water sparkled in the sunlight like a stream of diamonds. In the shallows, the bed of the stream seemed jeweled with rubies and emeralds, opals and amethysts, as the pebbles below the crystal water shimmered in the late sunshine.

They were within a mile of Gila when they heard the sharp, shrill cry of wolves. Esther tightened the reins, and the horses fairly flew.

"Have we a gun with us, Miss Bright? We ought to have one. I always feel safer when I have a gun. You never know what you may meet on these mountain roads."

"Can you shoot?" asked Esther.

"Oh, yes; father trained me to shoot. Oh, those terrible wolves!" she said, as the shrill, mournful cries came nearer.

"On, Rocket! On, Star!" urged Esther, again.

The animals made a sudden lunge, and sped onward like mad. Around jagged turns they flew, as if inviting death; near precipitous cliffs they swung, till the driver was filled with sickening terror. On they raced, the wolves in hot pursuit.

"Oh, dear!" said Edith, looking back. "One large wolf is far in advance, and close upon us."

Quick as a flash, she stooped, took a great haunch of venison Dr. Brown had sent to her father, and flung it behind them. Then she watched in intense excitement.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, striking her hands together, "the wolf has discovered the venison, and has stopped!"

With that, she took the whip, and gave the already excited animals a stinging blow. They leaped and plunged madly forward. Esther doubled the reins around her hands, and called in low, insistent tones:

"Steady, Rocket! Steady, Star!"

They had gained upon their pursuers, and the horses were running at furious speed.

"The she-wolf," said Edith, looking back, "is again following; but the smaller wolves are snarling over the venison."

"Ow-ee-ow," came the wolf-cry, shriller, sharper, nearer. Esther shuddered. She urged the horses on. Edith grasped her arm in terror.

"The wolf is just behind us!" she said.

Suddenly there was the report of a gun. Esther glanced back, and saw the wolf fall in the road. She glanced ahead, and, at first, she saw no one. Then, out from the shade of a group of pines, rode Kenneth Hastings.

"Whoa! Whoa!" he called, as he leaped from his own horse, and caught Rocket by the bits. With a sudden lurch, the team came to a standstill.

"Whoa, Rocket! Whoa, Star!" he called soothingly, as he held and quieted the team.

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Mr. Hastings!" said Esther. "When did you reach Gila?"

"We're so glad to see you!" said both, as he stepped to the carriage and extended a hand to each.

"But how did you happen to be here?" asked Esther.

"I came in this morning. Mrs. Clayton told me you had gone to Carlisle, and would be back about this time. I have felt anxious about you ever since I heard you had undertaken this journey."

Again both repeated their gratitude for his timely assistance. He could see they were trembling.

"Your horses were running away," he said. "They are nervous creatures, and are still frightened."

After a while, he suggested that they drive on slowly, while he kept guard, in case wolves should pursue them farther. Then he mounted his horse, and rode beside their carriage.

So they covered the remaining distance, talking of many things that had happened during the weeks of his absence.

As they approached the Clayton residence, Mrs. Clayton and Carla came out to welcome them.

"How are you, Edith?" questioned the anxious mother.

"I hardly know," answered the girl. "I've been frightened nearly to death. I guess the fright cured me."

"I think she is better," added Esther. "Dr. Brown's medicine has helped her."

"But what frightened you?" asked the mother.

Then Edith told of the peril of the ford, and of the pursuit of the wolves, dwelling on Kenneth's opportune assistance.

"We owe a great deal to you, Kenneth," said Mrs. Clayton, her eyes filling with tears.

"Oh, that was only a trifle, Mrs. Clayton," he said, carelessly.

"Come dine with us to-night, Kenneth, won't you?" asked his friend.

After thanking her, he mounted his horse, lifted his cap, and went on his way to headquarters.

And Esther Bright! What was in her heart? We shall see.



CHAPTER XVII

THE DAY OF THE GREAT RACE

IT was pay-day in Gila. Miners from far and near were in camp. Cow-punchers had come from the range; cowlasses, also, were to be seen here and there, chaffing with men they knew. The one street had suddenly taken on human interest. Representatives of different nations were to be seen in all directions, some going to, and some coming from the saloons. Groups of men and women gathered to gossip. Comments on affairs of the community, and especially on the approaching race, were freely interlarded with profanity. Along the street, strolled Lord Kelwin, puffing away at a cigar. Apparently he was a good "mixer."

"So you've entered your mare fur the race," said a cow-puncher, slapping him familiarly on the back. "What in blank do you expect her to do? She ain't fit fur nothin' but takin' gals hossback ridin', eh?" And he laughed uproariously at his attempt at wit. "Better cut out that part of the race. That belongs to another brand o' cattle. Come! Have a drink." Saying which, they entered the saloon where Pete Tompkins presided.

The air was already stiff with smoke and profanity. Men had congregated there soon after receiving their wages.

In a little room apart, sat men intent on a game of cards. Lord Kelwin joined them. One of the players, a mining engineer, was a professional gambler, who frequently raked into his pockets the hard-earned wages of many laboring men. Everyone save the engineer seemed tense. Once in a while, a smothered oath was heard. At the close of the game, the Irish lord, also, began to play. He had been drinking, and though an experienced player, he was no match for the sober gambler. He lost heavily. At the close of the game, he drank again, then staggered out of the door. Ah, how many had done the same!

Pete Tompkins followed, gibing him about entering the mare in the race.

"What in blank are ye enterin' her fur?" asked the aforesaid Pete.

The men gathered about expectant of a fray.

"What am—I—entering her—for—(staggering and hiccoughing)—entering her for? Ye blanked Americans!—I'm entering her for Miss Bright—Miss Bright, ye know—Miss Bright—" He laughed a silly laugh. "I'm going to marry her." Here, he indulged in a drunken jest that sent some of the men into fits of laughter.

A few, standing outside the door, had attended the men's club and the Sunday service. Jack Harding, passing at that moment, stopped to speak with one of the men, and overheard the reference to Esther Bright. His face grew sternly white. He stepped in front of the boastful Irishman, and said in a stern, quiet voice:

"Brute, say that you lied."

"Blank you, you religious hypocrite," roared Lord Kelwin, "you can't bully me!"

Jack Harding sprang upon him, gripped his throat like a vice, and demanded that he retract every insulting word he had said about the teacher. "What is that to you? Blank you!" gasped the Irishman.

Jack Harding's grasp tightened.

"Say it," he repeated, in deadly quiet tones. "Say that all you said about that pure, good woman is a lie."

His tone was as inexorable as fate.

The Irishman's eyes grew fixed with terror, his tongue hung from his mouth, his face grew purple. Still that calm intense voice reiterating in his ear:

"Say it! Say that all you said was a lie."

Seeing Lord Kelwin's extreme danger, some one attempted to interfere. Cries were heard:

"Let them alone!"

"It's none of your funeral!"

"Jack Harding was right. Kelwin *did* lie, and he's a blackguard for saying what he did."

Then man after man took up the cry:

"Kelwin, ye blanked coward, *say* ye lied! Ye know ye lied!"

At last the Irishman gave the sign. Jack Harding released him. Then, somewhat sobered, he muttered:

"I did lie about a true woman. All I said was a lie."

He staggered from the scene, and Jack Harding passed on his way.

The race was to be on a track in the valley below. As it was Saturday, John Clayton had suggested to Esther that she and Edith take a horseback ride with him, to see the last part of the race; for, he assured her, she would see human life, as well as horse speed, there.

As they approached the track from the mountain road, hoarse cries and yells could be heard. Excitement ran high.

A few thoroughbreds had been entered for the race, but the greater number of entries were for horse-flesh that could boast neither registered sires nor grandsires. They were just "horses."

The last race began just as the Clayton party turned and looked down on the wriggling, shoving, cursing crowd below. It is doubtful if Esther Bright had ever heard such language, in all her life, as she heard that day. She shuddered, and turning to her escort, asked why he had brought her there.

"Just for you to see what animals human beings are, and how great is their need of refining, uplifting influences."

"Is John Harding here?" she asked, uneasily.

"We are all here," he answered, smiling, "including Jack. You need never worry about him again. You found him a sinner, and—"

"And he has become a saint?" she supplemented.

"Not exactly a saint," he answered, "but you have brought about a complete transformation in the man's life and character. Jack could never return to what he was, be sure of that!"

"Kelwin! Kelwin's ahead!" shouted a hoarse voice, above the noise of the crowd.

"Blank ye!" retorted another, "Bill Hines is ahead! I seen 'em turn fust!"

"Ye lie!" continued the first.

Away to the right, speeding around a curve in the race course, four horses were straining every muscle. Occasionally a cow-puncher would lift his quirt, and make it hum through the air, or lash the poor beast, already straining to its utmost speed.

For a few moments, the racers were concealed from view by a mass of rocks. When they emerged again, they were greeted by yells from bystanders. A cowlass, mounted on a spirited animal, was in the lead. She swore almost constantly at her horse, occasionally cutting him with her quirt.

Lord Kelwin, now somewhat sobered, made a close second; and Bill Hines and Bill Weeks were neck and neck behind the Irishman.

The crowd cheered and cheered.

The girl leading was as fine a specimen of the human animal as the horse she rode was of the horse kind. She sat her horse superbly.

Finally, Lord Kelwin gained upon her, and the horses were neck and neck. The girl again whirled her quirt around till it cut the air with a hissing sound, and spoke to her horse. It was enough.

The betting grew louder. The stakes grew heavier.

"I know Kelwin'll win yet."

"No, he won't. Kate Brown'll win. She's a devil to ride, that girl is!"

Again the Irishman gained upon her. Again she sent her quirt singing through the air, and her horse obeyed as though horse and rider were one. He sped faster and faster, passed Lord Kelwin, then the starting point, and the race was won.

"Hurrah for Kate Brown and Lightning!" shouted hoarse voices; and cowboys and cowlasses and everyone else yelled and shouted, and shouted and yelled. It seemed as though pandemonium had been let loose.

Jack Harding had gone to the races chiefly to dog the steps of Lord Kelwin; so, if the Irishman had been inclined to speak lightly of Esther Bright again, he would have had to reckon with him. Kelwin felt himself shadowed by the cowboy, and a great fear took possession of him.

As he dismounted, his scant clothing was wet, and clung to his person. The race had not improved his temper any. To be beaten, and beaten by a woman, and that woman an American cowlass, was the very limit of what he could endure from "raw America" that day. He swore to the right of him; he swore to the left of him. Then glancing over the crowd, he discovered the Clayton party overlooking the scene.

John Clayton, ignorant of the episode at the saloon, was beckoning him to join them. Lord Kelwin was about to do so, when Jack Harding stepped up to him and said:

"Don't you dare enter that woman's presence!"

Lord Kelwin placed his hand on his gun, saying:

"Oh, you needn't give me any of your impudent American advice, you mongrel cur!"

"Never mind what I am," said Jack; "that woman is one of the truest, purest souls on earth. You are not fit to enter her presence. You have *me* to deal with, remember."

His great eyes flashed upon the Irishman, who quailed before him.

"Oh, you needn't be so high and mighty," said Lord Kelwin, changing his tactics. "I don't care a blank about her, anyway. She's only an American working woman, an Indian at that."

"So this is nobility," Jack said to himself. "Nobility! What is it to be *noble*?"

The race was followed by a dance in one of the saloons, and the lowest of the low were there. At four o'clock in the morning, those sober enough went to their homes; the others stretched out anywhere, in a deep drunken sleep; and pay-day and its pleasuring were over. Men and women awakened to find their money gone; and for the first time in years, they felt shame.

Sunday came. The hour of the service drew near. Esther Bright had thought

out what she would say that day about the Race for Life. But when she rose to speak, she had a strange experience. All she had thought to say, vanished; and before her mind's eye, she saw the words, "The wages of sin is death."

There were perhaps a hundred people before her in the timber (where the services were now held),—men and women among them, who, the day before, had forgotten they were created in the image of God, and who had groveled to the level of beasts.

These men, these women, had come to this spot this day, why, they did not know. Why Esther Bright said the things she said that day, *she* did not know, either. All she knew was that the words came, and that there were men and women before her whom she must help.

Those who had sunken so low the day before, cried out in repentance, as they listened to her words. God's message, through Esther Bright's voice, had come to men's business and bosoms. Called of God, she said they were,—called to be true men, true women. From time to time, she quoted, "The wages of sin is death." One could almost hear his heart beat.

The meeting was over, so far as Esther Bright's part in it was concerned; then it passed from her control. First one, then another rose, confessed his sins, and asked for her prayers.

And what of Esther? She sat as pale as death, her face alight with a sweetness and compassion that did not seem of earth.

Kenneth Hastings watched her with deepening reverence. Her words had gone to his heart, too, and he sang with deep feeling:

"Just as I am, without one plea."

As the song ceased, Pete Tompkins (to everyone's amazement) sprang to his feet.

"Ye'll be s'prised ter hear from me, I reckon,"—Here he shoved his hand, lean and gaunt, up through his hair. "But I've been listenin' ter schoolma'am ever sence she begun preachin' in the timber, an' all I've got ter say is she ain't *our* brand, or the Devil's brand either. When the Boss sent out his puncher ter round up folks, he cut her out an' branded her with the mark o' God. I know she's tellin' the gospel truth. She's got more courage 'n any blanked one o' yer. I done 'er a mean trick onct. I said blanked mean things about 'er. I'm sorry I done it, blanked

ef I ain't! Ter show 'er an' you that I mean ter be differ'nt, I say, here an' now, that I wanter see these meetin's go on, 's long 's schoolma'am 'll be our angel an' pilot us. Ter prove I mean it, I'll plank down this hunderd dollars" (holding up a hundred-dollar bill) "toward buildin' a meetin' house; an' I'll give more, blanked ef I don't! How many wants a meetin' house in Gila? Stand up!"

Many stood.

"*Stand up, the hull blanked lot o' ye!*" said the self-appointed leader in forcible tones. To Esther's astonishment, the people rose, and remained standing.

The notes of a thrush were caught up by a mocking bird, then a warbler joined in, and the waiting people listened. The song of the birds "came like the benediction that follows after prayer."

At last the company dispersed, and Esther Bright sat alone, absorbed in silent prayer.



CHAPTER XVIII

NIGHT ON THE RANGE

THE cowboys and cowlasses had long been back on the range, and the attendance at the clubs had decreased in consequence.

Many still came to the Sunday service in the timber; and the children remained in the school, notwithstanding the increasing heat.

Continuous labor, and the intense heat, were beginning to tell on Esther Bright. As June approached, she occasionally spoke of going home; but whenever she did so, there was a chorus of protests, especially from Kenneth Hastings. Couldn't she spend the summer in Arizona, and they would camp on one of the forest mesas, a party of them? It would give her new life and strength.

She shook her head listlessly. One idea grew and possessed her: she must go home, home to her grandfather.

Into Esther's manner, when in the presence of Kenneth Hastings, had come a deepening reserve. And yet, from time to time, she spoke with feeling of her gratitude to him for rescuing Edith and herself on the day of his return. Her erstwhile gayety had departed, and in its place was a seriousness that seemed akin to sadness.

Kenneth Hastings studied her, puzzled. He shared the solicitude the Claytons evidently felt for her. All knew she had drawn too lavishly upon her strength in her unselfish service for others. They also knew that warnings and protests availed nothing; that she must learn through experience the necessity of conservation of energy. Too useful a woman, Kenneth Hastings said of her, to wear herself out in service for a lot of common people. But he did not understand. He was to learn.

At the close of a fatiguing day, a day of withering heat, John Clayton came home to dinner, bringing Kenneth with him. Esther Bright and Edith Clayton sat on the veranda as they approached.

"Miss Bright," said the host, "I have a proposition to make:—that you and Mrs. Clayton accompany Mr. Hastings and me to Clifton to-morrow. Fortunately, to-morrow will be Friday. We can start soon after school is dismissed, and return Saturday, riding in the cool of the day."

"Delightful!" she exclaimed, with evident pleasure, "How far is it?"

"About twenty miles, I think," he answered.

"Twenty miles? On horseback? I'm afraid I can't endure the fatigue of so long a ride. I am already so tired!"

"Really!" said Kenneth, in a mocking tone. "You at last acknowledge that you are tired! I am astonished."

But she was unresponsive.

As the plans were discussed for the long ride, Esther gradually roused, and entered into the occasion with spirit. It was decided that the four should go in the surrey. Carla and Edith were to remain at home; and as Jack Harding was still in camp, he was to be general protector of the girls until the return of the party.

As the sun began to lower, Friday afternoon, the party drove away from camp, first north, then east, toward Clifton. They crossed and recrossed the Gila River for some distance, passing many of the abandoned cliff dwellings along the canyon. Everywhere, the desert foothills, and the crevices of jagged, cliffs were ablaze with cactus blossoms. As the cool came on, the air grew delightful, and Esther seemed to awaken once more to the pure joy of living.

Could they tell her anything of the cliff dwellers? They certainly could. And John Clayton told her of the Hopi Indians, and their customs. People of peace they were; keepers of sheep, lovers of the heavens, and knew the mystery of the stars as no one else did. Their men honored their women, he said. And then he laughingly told her that the Hopi Indians were women suffragists. The Hopi women, he said, were given more rights than were the women of civilization.

"What rights?" she asked.

Then he described his visit to Hopi land, telling her of the superior place the Hopi woman occupies in the life of the Hopi people.

The talk drifted to Indians in general, Esther Bright asking many questions, indicating on her part a deep and growing interest in these native lords of the valleys and mesas.

Just as they were crossing a bridge over the river, they met Lord Kelwin on horseback. It was the first time they had met him since the race. John Harding had not seen fit to tell Kenneth or the Claytons of his experiences with the Irishman, as long as he himself was in camp to protect Esther Bright.

John Clayton reined in his horses to greet Lord Kelwin. The Irishman spoke to them, but looked at Esther. After learning their destination and the probable time of their return, he lifted his cap and rode on.

Esther Bright was annoyed. She could hardly have told why.

"Lord Kelwin is a genial fellow," John Clayton remarked, turning to speak to Esther; but, observing the expression of her face, he asked in a surprised tone:

"Don't you like Lord Kelwin, Miss Bright?"

"No," she answered, quietly.

Kenneth laughed. Then, turning around, he said in a bantering tone:

"But he told me you had gone horseback riding with him, daily, while I was away."

"He's mistaken, Kenneth," responded John Clayton. "Miss Bright went riding with him about three times."

"Three times too many," said Kenneth, apparently teasing, but with an undertone of seriousness. Mrs. Clayton adroitly turned the conversation.

"John, tell Miss Bright about your meeting General C."

Then he told how the general came to Arizona, and of his wise dealings with the red men. He explained the reason for the great unrest of the Indians after the general withdrew. He told how he was summoned from the Department of the Platte in 1882, and of the capture of Geronimo and his band.

"And Geronimo is supposed to be the father of our little Wathemah!" Esther

exclaimed.

"Some think so," he said. "I have my doubts. He looks as though he might be a mixture of Apache, Mexican and Spanish."

"Whatever he is, he is an attractive child," she said. "How did you come to meet General C.?"

"He and his troops marched through Gila. I entertained the officers at the ranch over night."

As he spoke, they came upon a pappoose, tied to a tree, and blinking in the afternoon sunshine. Just beyond, they found a group of Apaches. The women were cooking fish over live coals of fire. The men seemed to recognize John Clayton. He greeted them in the tongue of the Mexicans, as he drove by, while the Indians jabbered and gesticulated violently.

At the bridge just beyond, they crossed the Gila for the last time before turning northward. There, they saw a young Apache catching fish. He glanced up, and Esther recognized in him the visitor who had found her at the schoolhouse. It was evident he knew her, for he started towards the surrey.

"He is one of the friendly Apaches," explained John Clayton. "He's often on the range, and has adopted some of the cowboy regimentals, you see."

The driver stopped his horses.

The Indian came forward, offering John Clayton a number of fish strung on a withe. As he did so, he turned towards Esther, and said:

"Nē-shē-ād-nlēh'."

"What does he mean?" asked Esther.

"I think he wants to buy you from me with these fish," answered John Clayton, turning to her with an amused smile.

Putting his hand into a tin box, he took from it a handful of cookies, gave them to the young Indian, and drove on. As they looked back, the last cake was about to disappear down the Indian's throat.

"Poor things," said Esther, "they have had no chance."

Then Kenneth rallied her on becoming a missionary to the Indians.

"I'd be glad to help them as the early Jesuit priests did," she answered. "I cannot but feel that the Indian policy has been very faulty, and that the Indians have been the victims of grafters, some unprincipled Indian agents, and the scum of the white race. You tell me, Mr. Clayton, that the Mexican government offered a bounty of \$100 for every Apache man's scalp, \$50 for every Apache woman's scalp, and \$25 for every Apache child's scalp? I'd fight, too," she continued, indignantly. "I know I'd fight. Poor things!"

The company laughed at her championship, and told her how vicious the Apaches were, and many more matters of Indian history.

The company were approaching a narrow canyon, through which they must pass for some distance. The waters dashed and boiled in eddies, where huge bowlders obstructed the way, making a pleasant murmur to the ear, soft and musical and low.

And Esther Bright listened. Her heart, stirred to sudden anger by the stories of injustice and cruel wrong, was soothed into quiet by this slumber song of the ages. Oh, the music of the waters of the canyon! How, once heard, it echoes in the heart forever! In the midst of the unrest and discord of the world, how the memory of it keeps one close to the very heart of things! How it lingers! How it sings!

They drove under, then around, an overhanging rock, beyond which, like ruins of ancient castles, storm-scarred, majestic, towered cliffs to a height of a thousand feet or more. The shadows had deepened in the canyon, adding to the solemn grandeur of it all. From every cleft of rock, apparently, a cactus had sprung into life, and had blossomed into flowers of exquisite beauty. All the journey was like a triumphal way, garlanded with flowers.

At last they reached an open place in the canyon, and followed a track leading upward to a level plain. A short drive up a rocky way brought them to a vast mesa. Here they halted for the night.

Some distance to the west, Esther spied a covered wagon with horses tethered near. There was a man busying himself about the wagon, and about the bonfire. John Clayton explained to Esther that this was the cook for the squads of cowboys, and that near where the man was working, the men would camp for the night. She watched the movements of the cook with some curiosity.

The Clayton party had now stepped from the surrey, and removed from it the seats, blankets, and provisions. The two men returned to the canyon to gather dry driftwood for their fire for the night.

During the ride of the afternoon, as the company had wound around the foothills, they had seen great herds of cattle, thousands of cattle, on the hills and mesas. But now, Esther was to see with her own eyes, the great event of life on the range. This vast out-of-doors was all so novel to her, so intensely interesting! She stood and drew in great breaths of air. Her eyes darkened. The pupils of her eyes had a way of dilating whenever she felt deeply.

Although the cowboys and cowlasses had told Esther much about the round-ups, she felt quite ignorant of the whole matter. They had explained to her about the free range, how it was divided into imaginary sections, and how the "boss" cattleman would send groups of cow-punchers to each of these various sections to look after the cattle.

John Clayton and Kenneth Hastings returned from the canyon, bringing a can of water, and dry driftwood. They at once began to build their bonfire, and to prepare their evening meal. As they worked, they talked.

"If you watch from here," suggested Kenneth, "you'll see the close of the round-up, comfortably."

"What do they mean by 'cutting out' the cattle?" asked Esther.

"Don't you know that yet?" laughed John Clayton. "That is cowboy slang. As the cow-punchers approach (cow-punchers are cowboys, you know—)"

"Yes, I know that much."

"Well, as they approach you will see them weaving in and out among the cattle, lashing some with their quirts, and driving them out from the mass of cattle. This is called 'cutting out.' The cattle of different owners all run together on the range until time for the round-ups."

"How often do they have these?" she asked.

"There are two general round-ups, spring and fall; and others, when necessary for extra shipments of cattle."

"How can they tell which belongs to which?"

"By the brand," explained Kenneth. "Each cattle owner brands every one of his cattle with a certain mark, which determines whose property the animal is."

The two women now placed cushions on the carriage seats, and sat down to watch the close of the round-up.

The sunset was one of unusual splendor, the glory of color falling over the mesa, and the mountain peaks that loomed up far away. As they watched the sky, they spied a cloud of dust in the distance.

"At last the cattle are coming!" exclaimed Mrs. Clayton.

The dust cloud grew, coming nearer and nearer. It had a fascination for Esther. While they were speculating as to the probable number of cattle, and the cowboys and cowlasses who might be with them, Kenneth Hastings and John Clayton sauntered over to the mess wagon to await the closing scene. From that point, the men watched; and from their location, the women watched the on-coming herds. The dust cloud grew larger. The great mass of struggling cattle came steadily on. After a while, cowboys could be seen, and whirling of ropes. Nearer and nearer they came, the cowboys dealing stinging blows with their quirts. The bellowing of cattle, the cursing of men, and the choking fog of dust, all mingled together, came to the two women, who watched from a safe distance. In their intense interest, they forgot that the supper hour was long past, and watched. They saw cow-punchers, weaving in and out among the cattle, whirling ropes, and yelling, and cursing by turns, until each cowboy had separated the cattle in his charge from the others. It was an enormous task. The men were still cursing and lashing, when the last soft color of the afterglow faded from the sky.

When the work of the round-up was finally over, and the men were free for the night, Esther heard the cook call out to them:

"Grub's ready! Cut out y'r talkin'!" adding profanity, as if to whet the appetites of the hungry men. Then the cowboys, dirt begrimed, fell to, and were soon eating with a relish that would have made dyspeptics green with envy.

Slowly, John Clayton and Kenneth Hastings sauntered back, finding their own repast ready for them. They, too, had found a keen edge to their appetite. Esther even went so far as to suggest that they might have done well to have accepted the Apache's fish.

"Whom do you suppose we found over there?" asked Mr. Clayton.

"Our boys," suggested Esther.

"Yes, several who have been at the club and at the meetings. They know you are here, Miss Bright. Let's see what they'll do."

Before the meal was over, the stars began to appear in the heavens. John Clayton threw great quantities of driftwood on the bonfire, and in a few moments, the flames were licking the logs.

The voices of the cow-punchers came to them now and then, but the profanity had ceased. Suddenly, singing was heard. They listened. The cowboys were singing, "There were ninety and nine."

From the singing, it was evident that the men were approaching the Clayton camp. In a moment more, they were there.

Would they be seated? John Clayton had asked. So, around the camp fire they grouped, their faces and forms indistinct in the flickering light. They made a weird and picturesque group against the darkness of the night.

"An' phwat do yez think now of a round-up?" asked Mike Maloney, of night school celebrity. Mike had been the star pupil in arithmetic.

"Splendid!" said Esther, with contagious enthusiasm. "To see that host of cattle approach, the ropes swinging, the horses rearing and plunging, and the magnificent setting of the mountains at sunset,—why, it was glorious!"

The men grinned their delight.

Bill Weeks then grew eloquent about cattle.

"We come across a herd o' antelopes to-day," interrupted another.

Bill Weeks returned again to his favorite theme. Cattle were his life. In the midst of a dissertation on their good points, he was again interrupted with:

"Oh, cut that out! Ye kin talk cattle any old day. We wants ter hear Miss Bright sing."

"Yes, sing," all clamored. "*Do sing!*"

"What shall I sing?"

"Oft in the Stilly Night," one suggested.

But they were not satisfied with one song, and called loudly for another. Then she sang, "Flee as a bird to Your Mountain."

Esther Bright, as she stood and sang that night, was a picture one could never forget.

Then around the crackling fire, story after story was told. The fire burned low. The dome above sparkled with myriads of stars. At last the cowboys rose, and returned to their camp.

"Now we'll heap up the fire for the night, Kenneth," said John Clayton, "and arrange our shakedown."

"Shakedowns, John?" said his wife. "You don't call a blanket and cushion on a mesa a shakedown, do you?"

"Why not?"

Then the two men withdrew to the farther side of the fire. The women crawled into their blankets, and soon felt the warmth of the still heated earth upon which they lay.

"Good night!" called the men's voices, and "Good night!" returned the women. Then silence brooded over the camp.

For the first time in her life, Esther was bedded on the ground. Her face was turned upward, her eyes, fixed upon the starry deeps. Hour after hour went by. The regular breathing of her fellow-travelers assured her that all were asleep.

She could not sleep.

The marvelous scene above her grew upon her. She lay still, looking, looking into the infinite, that infinite around her, above her, beyond and beyond forever, who knows whither?

The air, at first dark about her, grew into a weird, wonderful light. The dome grew vaster and vaster; and, with the marvelous expansion, she began to realize stars. They seemed to move from their solid ebon background, and to float in space.

Stars! What do stars mean to the ordinary human? Just stars that come and go as a matter of course; just as men eat and drink, buy and sell, live and die. I say Esther Bright began to *realize* stars. I do not mean by that that she was unfamiliar with certain astronomical facts all intelligent people are supposed to know. Far from it. She knew much of mathematical astronomy. It had a fascination for her. But she had not *realized* stars, *felt* stars, as she was to realize them this night. All the world was shut out from her vision, save that marvelous dome of sky, alight with myriads and myriads of stars, from zenith to horizon. She recalled Milton's description of the floor of heaven, and reveled in the thought. She gazed on one tremulous star, till it seemed a soul in space, beckoning to her to join it, in the company of the glorified. Her vision intensified. Into the Milky Way she gazed, till it seemed to her the pathway up to God. God! What was God?

Then the stillness grew till it seemed the Infinite Presence. The stars, she was sure, made a shining pathway straight to her. Across the pathway, flashed shooting stars. She saw it all so clearly. Then the vast space, up to the shadowy shores of the Infinite Sea, filled with a strange, unearthly light. God! Was this *God*? Then she must be on holy ground! She felt herself lifted into the Everlasting Arms. The wind rose and whispered softly. And Esther Bright slept. Who shall say she did not sleep close to the very heart of God?



CHAPTER XIX

INASMUCH

WHILE the Clayton party were journeying from Clifton, John Harding was on guard, vigilant, watchful. In the Post Office that morning, he chanced to hear some one repeat a boast Lord Kelwin had made in regard to Carla Earle, whom he had heretofore treated with patronizing condescension.

John Harding returned to Clayton Ranch, and invented excuses to be about the house, saying, as he went off to do some chores, that if they needed him, just to call him, adding that he'd be within hearing.

Carla and Edith joked a little about his solicitude, and went about their daily tasks, planning surprises for the hungry company, on their return that night. Carla seemed happier this day than usual, and began to make a soft music in her throat like the warbling of a bird. She had been alone in the room for some time, when she heard a step. She stopped warbling when she recognized the voice of Lord Kelwin, whom she instinctively feared.

He had entered the house unannounced, and now walked into the dining room.

"Aha, my beauty!" he said, stepping toward her. "Aha, my bird! Caught at last!"

She saw that he was intoxicated.

"So you are alone at last, bird."

He flung himself between her and the door. Something in his face filled her with disgust and alarm. He kept coming towards her, uttering words of insolent familiarity, and she kept backing away. Finally he lunged forward, grasped her by the arm, and tried to hold her. Evidently, he had not counted on opposition from her; and when he found his will thwarted, all the beast in him seemed

roused. He struck her in the mouth, calling her vile names as he did so. In an instant, her shrieks of terror went ringing through the house. They brought Edith, in sudden alarm, and John Harding. The latter, recognizing the situation at a glance, sprang forward, and clutched the Irishman by the throat.

"Let her go," he said, "you blankety blanked coward. Let her go, I say!" As he spoke, he gripped Kelwin's throat tightly, shaking him as if he were a rat. Then he grew dangerously white.

The visitor, enraged at this unexpected interference, grew violent. He turned upon Jack Harding, and drew his gun; but Jack, sober and alert, knocked the gun from his hand; and, closing with him, dealt terrific blows in his face. All the brute in the drunken man roused. The sober man had the advantage. The struggle lasted but a few moments, though it seemed an eternity to the frightened girls. Finally, Jack Harding placed his knees on Kelwin's chest and arms, his hand on his throat, choking him until he gasped for mercy. Then the cowboy let him rise. As soon as he was free, he began to curse Carla Earle. Jack Harding promptly knocked him down. Partly sobered, the man rose, and staggered from the room.

Carla stood trembling, her face white with fear.

Harding saw her distress, and said with unusual gentleness:

"Don't ye care, Miss Carla. 'Tain't so, anyway. He lied. He'll pay for it."

"Oh, don't meddle with him, I beg you," she said with sudden alarm. "He might shoot you."

"Shoot? Let him. But he can't insult any decent woman, while I'm near to protect her. Mark that."

Carla turned to resume her duties, but fell in a limp heap on the floor. Then Edith and Jack Harding worked to bring her to. At last her eyes opened. She looked around, dazed, bewildered. When she realized what had happened, she asked:

"Has that dreadful man gone?"

On being assured that he was at a safe distance, she tried to rise, but her knees gave way, and she sank to the floor again.

So Jack and Edith prepared the evening meal, and waited. At last they heard

the sound of the returning carriage, and, a few moments later, welcomed the party at the gate.

When John Clayton heard what had happened, he seemed dumfounded.

"How dared he? How dared he?" he repeated, indignantly.

But Kenneth's mouth set hard, and it did not augur well for Lord Kelwin.

For one thing, all were thankful during the ensuing weeks,—the Irish nobleman no longer came to Clayton Ranch, socially, or otherwise. He managed to keep himself in the background, and was seldom heard of save as he figured in some drunken brawl. But Jack Harding, who understood him best of all, and who knew the venom of his tongue, hounded him day by day. And there grew up in Lord Kelwin's mind a deepening fear and hate of Jack Harding.



CHAPTER XX

A WOMAN'S NO

MILES and miles of desert country, sometimes a dull red, sometimes almost yellow of hue; over that a dome of bluest blue; between the two, air, crystalline, and full of light; and everywhere, scattered with reckless profusion, from Nature's lavish hand, the splendor of cactus blossoms. That is Arizona in June. And in this glory of color, one June day, walked Mrs. Clayton and Esther Bright, returning from a round of neighborhood calls.

As they approached Clayton Ranch, they paused to admire the cactus blossoms. The giant cactus, towering above the house, was now covered with a profusion of exquisite blossoms of deepest pink. Red blossoms, pink blossoms, white blossoms, yellow blossoms everywhere, but guarded by thousands of thorns and spines. Esther stopped and picked some yellow blossoms from the prickly pear, only to find her fingers stinging from its minute spines.

"It serves me right," she said, making a wry face. "I knew better, but I love the blossoms."

"Good evening," called a cheery voice from the veranda. It was Mr. Clayton.

"Kenneth called to see you, Miss Bright," he continued. "He would like you to go for a drive with him this evening."

"Far?" she asked.

"He didn't say."

The two women entered the house, and soon returned refreshed. On the spacious veranda, the family gathered in the cool of the day, to feast their eyes on the gorgeous sunsets.

"Do you know," said Esther, "it refreshes me whenever I *look* at snow-capped Mt. Graham?"

She looked far away to the south. "I shall miss it all," she said, pensively, "all the grandeur of scene, miss all of you here, miss my dear children, when I go home."

"Oh, I hate to think of your going," said Edith, lifting the teacher's hand to her cheek. "I'm afraid you won't come back."

"What's that I hear about not coming back?" asked Kenneth Hastings, who, at that moment, joined them.

"I said I was afraid Miss Bright wouldn't come back," explained Edith.

"I hope you are not thinking of going East soon," said Kenneth quietly.

When she announced that she should, he protested vigorously.

That evening, Esther rode with him through beautiful mountain scenes. The heavens were still colored with the soft afterglow, as they sped along the upland road. Later, the moon rose, flooding the earth with its weird, transfiguring light.

Once more, Kenneth told Esther his past. He wanted her to know all there was to know, he said simply.

Then he poured into her ears the old, old story, sweetest story ever told, when love speaks and love listens. But Esther's eyes were haunted by a sudden fear.

Kenneth paused, and waited for her to speak.

Then, with a tightening of the lips, he listened to her answer.

She had not thought of love and marriage. She had naturally grown into thinking that she would devote herself to philanthropic work, as her grandfather, before her, had done.

"Yes," Kenneth said; "but your grandfather married; and his children married, and you, I take it, are the joy of his life. Suppose he had not married. Would his philanthropic work have been greater?"

Then there was more talk, that seemed to give pain to both, for Esther said:

"I will go soon, and not return; for my presence here would only make you

unhappy."

"No," he urged, "return to Gila."

"You say you regard marriage as very solemn. So do I. You say you would feel it wrong to marry one you did not love. So should I."

"I have been candid with you," she said in evident distress. To which he responded bitterly:

"You think me a godless wretch. Well, I guess I am. But I had begun to grope after God, and stumbled in my darkness. I have been beset with tormenting doubts. The idea of God is so vast I cannot grasp even a fraction of it. You are right. I am godless."

"No, no, not godless," she said. "Jesus of Nazareth, what of Him?"

"I am coming to look upon him as a brother. I could have loved him profoundly, had I known him when he was on earth. But it all seems so far away in the past. To tell the truth, I have read the Bible very little."

"Read it," she urged.

"I should feel all the time that religion had placed a great gulf between you and me, and hate it in consequence. Ought religion to place a gulf between human souls?"

"The lack of religion might." Silence followed. Then she continued, "If I loved you, loved you deeply enough, that would sweep away all obstacles."

"And perhaps," he added, "if I had always lived up to the highest ideals of life, I might now be worthy of you. I *am* unworthy, I confess it."

"Oh, don't put it that way," she said in distress. "Let it be that I am not worthy of the love you offer me, not capable of loving enough to—to—marry."

"Miss Bright, you are capable of loving, as few women are. It is my misfortune that I have not won your love. I need you to help me live my highest and best. All these months, because of your unconscious influence, I have been learning to see myself as I am, and as I might be. For the first time in my life, I have come in contact with a deeply religious soul, and have felt myself struggling towards the light. I have wrestled with doubt, again and again, bewildered. You teach us that the founder of the Christian religion had

compassion on sinful men."

"Yes."

"But *you* have no compassion on *me*."

"You misunderstand," she said. "You see it sometimes happens that there is little real happiness, real union, where the wife is a believer in God, and the husband seeks—"

"The devil," supplemented Kenneth. "I confess I have followed the devil to some extent."

"Don't," she said. "It hurts me to the heart to hear you speak so. I meant to say if he had no sympathy with her spiritual life."

"If I were a professing Christian, do you think you would care more for me?"

"I might."

"Suppose I pretended to be a Christian. Many make that pretense, and are accounted the real thing."

"Dear Mr. Hastings, let me be a sincere and loyal friend to you, no more. Some day, I hope, you will win, in marriage, some rare woman who will make you happy."

"Some rare woman? You are that one, Miss Bright. I want no other."

"But you mustn't think of me, Mr. Hastings."

"Do you know what you are, Miss Bright? You are an iceberg."

She laughed.

"That's fortunate. You will not long care for an iceberg. I will go soon, and you will forget me."

He turned upon her.

"Forget you? Do you really wish me to forget you?" Did she? She wondered.

"No," she answered. Then over her face, lifted in the moonlight, he saw the color come.

Their talk drifted to many subjects touching the life in Gila, and the larger world outside, to which she was soon to return.

"Will you write to me?" he asked.

"That would make it harder for you to forget," she said, naïvely.

"I do not wish to forget," he said gloomily. "Why should I forget the happiest hours I have ever spent?" Why should he?

Back at Clayton Ranch, an older pair of lovers, married lovers, walked up and down the veranda in the moonlight.

"John," a soft voice was saying, "I just hope Kenneth will propose to Miss Bright to-night."

He laughed.

"You women! Always interested in a love story! How do you know Kenneth hasn't proposed to her already?"

"I don't believe he has."

Another silence.

"John?"

"Yes, Mary."

"Does Miss Bright know what a vast fortune Kenneth has inherited?"

"No. Not unless you have told her. He does not wish her to know."

"But, John, that might influence Miss Bright's decision. You know these Americans care a great deal for money."

"For shame, Mary, to think such a thing of her! Perhaps you do not know that her grandfather is a man of affluence. But he believes in the simple life, and lives it. She belongs to a fine old family, people of distinction, and wealth."

"Is that true, John? She never told me. How can she work like a galley slave here?"

"Because she is a great woman." Silence again.

"With her mind, and heart, and passion for service, and Kenneth's intellect, and force of character, and vast wealth, they might be a tremendous force for the progress of the human race."

"Can't you help matters on, John? I'm so afraid Miss Bright will reject Kenneth, and leave us."

"Well, if she does, I shall be sorry. But we must keep hands off."

On the following day, John Clayton was astounded to hear from Esther that she would not return as she had half promised to do in the fall.

But Esther offered no explanations; and Kenneth's calls, from that day, grew less frequent.

So the days passed, and two lives drifted apart.



CHAPTER XXI

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

AT the close of the religious service, the following day, Esther learned of many cases of sickness, in and about Gila, and especially along the water courses. A sort of a fever, the people told her. She resolved to make neighborhood calls the following day, and to take with her a case of medicine. She found many people sick with what seemed to be the same malady; and, thereupon, began a thorough investigation. The result was that she persuaded the people to let her call a physician.

On the following day, Dr. Mishell drove into camp, and Esther made the rounds with him. As she suspected, the malady proved to be typhoid fever.

"These people must have intelligent care," the physician said gruffly to her. "Do you know anything about nursing?"

She told him she had nursed two patients through typhoid fever.

"You know how to take respiration and temperature, then?" he said brusquely.

She assured him she did.

Then he wrote out directions for each patient, especially noting what to do, if certain conditions should arise.

"You know the importance of sponging patients?" he asked shortly.

"Yes."

"Any alcohol?"

"I can get it."

And so Esther Bright was installed head nurse in Gila. Helpers rallied to her aid.

School was dismissed at an early hour each day, so that Esther could make the rounds daily.

The heat grew almost intolerable, but the delicate girl went on her way as if made of iron. Dr. Mishell looked her over with a nod of approval.

"A woman of sense," he said, in speaking of her to Kenneth Hastings.

The physician came again in three days, only to find many new cases. Esther Bright's task was becoming enormous.

"Can you do it?" the physician had asked. And quietly she had answered:

"I can do it as long as anyone needs my care."

Again the physician nodded approvingly, and muttered:

"Some women do have some sense."

When this second visit drew to a close, he looked sharply at Esther, and said in a crusty tone:

"You are working too hard."

She protested.

"I say you *are*!" he reiterated. "I'm going to find someone to come help you. Mr. Clayton wishes it. Are you a Catholic?"

"No, a Quaker."

"Quaker! Quaker!" he repeated. "No objections to a Catholic, I suppose?"

"No objections to any human being who serves humanity."

The old man left her abruptly. As he untied his horse, preparatory to leaving, he muttered to himself:

"A very unusual woman. A *very* unusual woman!"

Late on the following day, when Esther returned from her rounds, she found the Mexican, who had come to the Christmas entertainment, awaiting her. After

learning that his Indian wife was sick, she gathered up her medical outfit, and started with him up the canyon. It was a long and fatiguing tramp.

The Indian woman proved to be another fever patient. She refused the medicine, but drank the beef juice the nurse offered her. After trying to make the Mexican understand what to do till she came again, Esther started down the canyon alone.

It was nearly dark. After walking some distance, she heard the cry of wolves. The cries came nearer. She quickened her pace to a run, when, catching her foot, she was thrown violently forward into the stream below.

She struggled to regain her footing, to climb to the boulder from which she had fallen; but suddenly discovered that she had in some way twisted her ankle, and that she could not bear her weight on that foot. What was she to do? She was still over a mile from Clayton Ranch. If she called, no one could hear her. Oh, those wolves! Their cries sent a chill of terror through her. Again she struggled to climb up on the bank, but the boulder above her was slippery, and there was nothing to cling to. At last she sent a loud cry for help echoing down the canyon. Then she listened. Suddenly she heard a step above her. It was the young Apache who had visited the school. His coming was about as welcome to her as the wolves would be.

"Nē-shē-äd-nlěh'," he said, beckoning her to join him. She shook her head, pointed to her ankle, and again tried to climb. Her efforts were futile. Then the Indian lifted her, carried her to a level place, and set her down. She was unable to bear her weight on the injured foot, and fell. She pointed to her ankle, then down towards Gila, hoping the Indian might make her plight known to the people in camp.

As if in answer to her pantomimic request, he lifted her easily in his arms, and strode swiftly down the canyon. Could it be that he had rescued her in order to return her to her friends? It seemed so.

At last it occurred to her to sing her call for help, to attract the attention of any miner, or charcoal tender who might chance to be going up or down the canyon. So with all the volume she could muster, she sang words, telling her plight.

Every little while the Apache would repeat the words:

"Nē-shē-äd-nlěh'."

What could he mean?

About the time Esther was caring for the sick squaw, Kenneth Hastings learned from Wathemah that the teacher had gone to the Mexican's shack up the canyon. He was filled with alarm.

"What's that ye are sayin', Wathemah?" asked Pete Tompkins, who, passing along, had overheard the conversation.

"Me teacher up canyon. Mexican. Sick squaw," replied the child laconically.

"Are you sure, Wathemah?" questioned Kenneth.

The child nodded his head, and pointed toward the canyon.

"Them devilish Apaches has been about camp all day," said Pete Tompkins, stopping to speak to Kenneth. "I seen some of 'em goin' up canyon jest 'fore dark."

"We must go to Miss Bright's rescue at once!" said Kenneth excitedly.

"I'm with ye," said Pete Tompkins. "If a blanked savage harms that air schoolma'am I'll smash his skull with the butt o' my gun. I'll jine y'r party. Let's take all the hounds. We're likely ter run across more'n one Apache. Hello, kids!" he called out. "Jine a rescue party. The schoolma'am's went up canyon ter tend sick squaw,—the Mexican's woman. Them devilish Apaches is up through the canyon, an' we're afeared they'll capture schoolma'am."

Ten well-armed men, some mounted, some unmounted, started up the canyon. On their way, they met John Clayton, who joined them. His horse was neck and neck with Kenneth's.

"Good God!" said the former to his companion. "What may have happened to Miss Bright? What may yet happen to her?"

Kenneth made no reply, but his face was tense.

These two men were in advance, closely followed by Jack Harding and Pete Tompkins, on their Mexican ponies.

Suddenly, the party heard the distant cry of wolves, and—was it a human voice?—they strained their ears to hear. It was a human voice, a woman's voice. They dug their spurs into their horses' sides, and fairly flew.

As they were journeying up the canyon, the savage, with his captive in his arms, was speeding down the canyon. Suddenly he turned, and took the trail leading towards the Apache reservation.

Esther's song for help died on her lips. Every moment seemed eternity; every step, miles away from hope of rescue. Then with the energy born of despair, she sang again so that her song reached the ears of her rescuers:

"Abide with me!
Fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens—
Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me!"

Then she listened. Could it be the baying of hounds she heard? Her heart beat faster. She was not mistaken; she had heard the hounds. And now she heard the shouts of men. She began to sing again, but the Indian pressed his hand over her mouth, and tightening his hold with his other arm, started to run with her. She struggled desperately. He held her like a vise. She screamed for help, as she continued to struggle.

"Courage!" came ringing back in response to her cry. She knew the voice. It was the voice of Kenneth Hastings.

Again the Apache muttered in her ear:

"Nē-shē-äd-nlěh'."

She realized that the men were gaining rapidly upon them, and struggled more violently to free herself.

As the Apache ran, his breath came harder. It was no easy task to carry his struggling captive, and escape his pursuers. Still he kept up a remarkable speed.

A moment more, the hounds came upon him. He kicked desperately, but could not free himself from them. Then, winding his fingers around Esther's throat, he choked her, and threw her to the ground. He lifted his gun, faced his pursuers, and fired. The ball entered the chest of Kenneth Hastings, who was in hot pursuit, and nearing the Indian. Kenneth fell from his horse, and the savage escaped.

"My God!" exclaimed John Clayton, as he came up. He sprang from his saddle, and knelt by Kenneth's side. A little farther on lay Esther, unconscious. Her face was ghastly in the dim light, her clothing wet.

"Brandy!" he called. "Any one got brandy?"

"Here," said Pete Tompkins, stepping forward; "here's a flask."

"With shaking hand, John Clayton tried to staunch the wound in Kenneth's shoulder. Then he put brandy between his lips, then between Esther's. She was like ice.

"The brute!" he exclaimed. "I fear he has killed her!"

Then he pulled off his coat and wrapped it about the girl, saying as he did so:

"If she is not dead, the warmth may do her good. Some one ride ahead and prepare Mrs. Clayton."

"I'll go, sir," said a Scotch miner, mounting one of the ponies.

"Thank you. Tell Mrs. Clayton that Miss Bright and Mr. Hastings have met with an accident, and both are unconscious. Tell her to have hot water and blankets ready."

"Come, John," he said, turning to Jack Harding. "Just help me lift Miss Bright to my saddle." Mechanically the cowboy obeyed.

"Can one of you fellows carry Hastings on his horse?"

Jack Harding volunteered.

Few words were spoken by any of the men, as they made their way back to camp.

Pete Tompkins had noisily boasted that he would kill the Indian; but, hearing no reply from any one, he subsided. In spite of his coarseness and vulgarity, he was touched by the tragic ending of the young teacher's life, and by the evident sorrow of his companions. He looked at the still, white face, and something tugged at his heart.

As they passed Keith's house, Mrs. Keith ran out.

"'Ere!" she said. "Wrap 'er in this 'ere warm shawl."

Wathemah ran after them, asking anxiously:

"Me teacher sick?"

"Yes, very sick, Wathemah," answered Clayton.

Just as they reached the Clayton home, Esther roused, and said in a dazed way:

"Where am I?"

"You are at home," answered her host, as he carried her into the house. "Do you feel better?" he asked, as he laid her on the couch.

"What has happened?" she asked, showing no sign of recognition.

"We don't know," said Mrs. Clayton, bending over her.

She moaned.

"Don't you remember the Indian who came to the schoolhouse?" questioned Mr. Clayton anxiously.

"Indian? Schoolhouse?" she repeated in a perplexed way. "Where am I?"

"Here with Mrs. Clayton," said her hostess.

"Mrs. Clayton? Who is *she*?" asked Esther, vacantly.

The group about her exchanged troubled glances.

John Harding was already on his way to the railway station to telegraph for Dr. Mishell.

Kenneth Hastings, now conscious, was lying on a bed in the Clayton home. John Clayton bent over him, staunching the blood the best he could. In the midst of this, they heard a sharp cry from Esther.

"What is it?" questioned Kenneth.

"Miss Bright!" exclaimed John Clayton, starting towards the room where the teacher and his wife were. Returning, he explained that Esther had apparently sprained her ankle, for it was badly swollen, and probably very painful, when Mrs. Clayton attempted to remove her shoe.

Kenneth made no response, but, for a while, lay with eyes closed. He started when John Clayton told him that, as yet, Esther had not recognized any of the family.

It was a long and anxious night for the ones who watched. In the morning, when Esther wakened, she called her companion by name.

"Carla," she said, "I dreamed something dreadful had happened."

As she spoke, she attempted to rise. A twinge of pain in her foot stopped her.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"You sprained your ankle yesterday," Carla explained.

"Yesterday?" she repeated, in a puzzled way, as if trying to think of something. "Strange, but I can't recall yesterday."

"Dr. Mishell is coming to look at your ankle soon."

"Dr. Mishell! Dr. Mishell!" Esther said, slowly. Then a light came into her face. "Oh, yes! Now I remember. He came to Gila to see our sick people once, didn't he? I must dress so as to make the rounds with him."

So saying, she started again to rise, but sank back with a pale face.

"My foot, and head, and throat are so painful. It's so queer. I feel ill, too. What has happened?" she asked again.

"You were injured, somehow," explained Carla, "and were unconscious, when found. Mr. Hastings was unconscious, too."

"Mr. Hastings? Is he here?"

"Yes."

"And sick?"

"Very. Dr. Mishell and Sister Mercy, the Catholic sister, are with him now."

"I must help take care of Mr. Hastings, Carla."

"By and by, perhaps," said the girl, soothingly. "You must get well yourself first."

Kenneth Hastings' condition proved to be more serious than they thought, and Dr. Mishell looked grave. He had removed the bullet, and Sister Mercy had assisted him. When at last the wound was dressed, Dr. Mishell visited the other patient. He examined her ankle, and pronounced it a bad sprain. He examined her head, and looking towards Mrs. Clayton, said:

"It is as you surmised, concussion. Probably due to a fall."

He gave a few directions to Sister Mercy, and after a few gruff, but kindly, words, departed, to look after his other patients in Gila.

Now, Carla Earle began her career as a nurse, and soon her ministrations were known in every house, and shack, where fever had entered.

After Esther learned the details of her rescue, and of how Kenneth Hastings had again risked his life for hers, she grew abstracted, talked little, and ate less. And after she had learned that he was critically ill, delirious, as a result of the wound received in rescuing her, her sorrow became patent to all. Could she not see him? But Sister Mercy guarded her patient, and watched, and prayed the prayers of her church. Physician and nurse both knew that Kenneth's life hung by a thread. The sick man talked in his delirium; and his heart story lodged in the heart of the nurse, who watched by him, and who nursed him back to life.

When Esther was able to go about on crutches, she visited her patients who were nearest to Clayton Ranch. One day Patrick Murphy called on her.

"How are Brigham and Kathleen?" she asked, as she greeted him. "I hope they are better."

"No better, Miss," he said, struggling for composure. "The docther has been lavin' av his midicine, an' Carla (I mean Miss Earle) has came each day (the saints bliss her!) but still the faver is bad. An' Brigham—"

He could say no more. After a while, he continued:

"An' Brigham begs me ter bring yez to him. He insists upon callin' yez his Christ teacher, ma'am. He asks ivery day has yez come, an' cries wid disappointmint, whin he foinds yez are not there. I told him I would bring yez back wid me if yez could come."

"I'll go with you," she promised, "as soon as I speak to Mrs. Clayton."

When Esther entered the sick room at the Murphy home, she found two critical cases of typhoid fever. Their temperature was so high she was filled with alarm. She questioned the mother closely, as to what had thus far been done for the children.

"Did you follow the doctor's directions?" she asked.

"No, Miss, I didn't think it worth while. Back East where I wuz riz, they didn't think it necessary ter wash sick folks with sody an' water every day, an' alkyhol besides. They jest let sick folks be in peace, an' give 'em a good washin' after they was corpses."

"But you see, Mrs. Murphy, we must sponge typhoid patients with water and with alcohol, to lower their temperature. Brigham's fever is very high."

"I done all I could fur him," sniffled the mother.

"Yes, I know," said Esther, kindly. "What has he eaten? Did you give him the beef juice?"

"No, mum. That wuz no eatin' at all. I give him meat an' potatoes an' cabbage, jest the way he liked 'em cooked," she said, wiping her eyes on her apron. "He ain't eat none sence. He jest cries an' cries fur ye, Miss."

"Brigham is very sick," the teacher said, gently. "He may not recover. Shall I take care of him?"

"Yes, Miss, I wisht yer would."

Esther called for water and clean linen. She sponged the children, made the necessary changes, ventilated the room, and closed the door into the living room; and for the first time since their illness began, the children had quiet. The angel of Death hovered near, and the Murphy family were filled with an indefinable fear.

Esther watched over the two children throughout the night. Brigham was delirious. Once he seemed terrified, and called out:

"Mamma, don't hurt my teacher! Wathemah, what did my teacher tell yer about Jesus? Has my teacher come?"

At daybreak, when Esther gave him his medicine, he knew her and smiled. As she bent over him, he said:

"I knowed ye'd come. Is Jesus near?"

"Yes, very near, dear," she answered, softly.

"An' He loves little childern?"

"Yes, dear, loves them dearly."

"I am so glad." He closed his eyes and seemed smiling in his sleep. Rousing again, he said in a weak voice:

"I am so tired. Will yer carry me ter Jesus?"

"Yes, dear."

Then tenderly the teacher's arms went around the little form. She said, aloud:

"Dear Jesus, I have brought you little Brigham, because you love little children. He is too tired to go any farther alone, so I have brought him to you. Please carry him the rest of the way home."

Gently, she drew her arm away. The child smiled as if satisfied, and dozed off again.

It was late in the morning, when Dr. Mishell reached Murphy Ranch. He looked grave as he watched Brigham.

"Better remain here if you can, Miss Bright. Good nursing will save the girl, and may save the boy; but it is doubtful. You realize he is in a critical condition."

"Yes. I will remain, Doctor; but Miss Earle will need help with the other patients."

"Oh, Miss Earle is doing finely," he assured her. "And with one exception, none of the cases are as serious as these two."

"Who is the exception?"

"I believe his name is Clifton. A cowboy by the name of Harding has gone to his shack, to-day, to nurse him."

"Just like him," she thought.

She made no reply. As the day wore on, Kathleen's fever decreased, but Brigham's increased. The boy again grew delirious. He repeatedly called

Wathemah and his teacher. As night drew near, he grew worse. The parents stood near the bed, weeping. Suddenly the child cried out:

"Papa, won't yer bring my teacher? She knows the way ter heaven."

"She's here, lad," he said, taking one of Brigham's hands in his. Then the father repeated the prayers of his church.

At dawn, Brigham lifted his arms, and smiled. He had found the Open Door.

When the Murphy children knew their brother was dead, they were filled with awe, and huddled in one corner of the living room. The mother sobbed aloud, but refused to come near or touch the still little figure.

The teacher, with tears rolling down her cheeks, prepared her little friend's body for burial. Then she spoke again to the father, reminding him of further preparations. He rose, and, going into the room, where the family were gathered, said:

"We must have a wake. Poor Brigham."

"No, yer won't have no Cath'lic doin's with Brigham," responded his wife.

"Suppose," interposed the teacher, "we have a funeral service for Brigham in the schoolhouse, among the children he loved."

"Shure!" responded the father, wiping his eyes, "that'd be jist the thing."

"Do you approve, Mrs. Murphy?" asked the teacher.

"Yes, Miss. That'd please Brigham, I know." And again she sobbed.

So Brigham was carried to the schoolhouse. The teacher placed a crucifix at the head of the coffin, and lighted several candles. It was the first time religious services for the dead had ever been held in Gila. Heretofore, the dead had simply been buried.

The schoolroom was filled to its uttermost. The girl preacher rose and told them of Brigham's lovely life ever since she had known him, of his interest in Jesus, and of his desire to know the way to heaven. She told of his last words, and how he asked her to carry him to Jesus. As she spoke, tears rolled quietly down the bronzed cheeks of many a man and woman whose life had been one long record of sin.

Near the coffin, stood Wathemah, his eyes riveted upon the face of his little comrade. The teacher saw the child take off his string of beads and lay it in the coffin.

They buried Brigham on the foothills, and left him alone;—no, not alone, for Wathemah remained standing like a sentinel beside the grave of his little friend.

Wathemah did not return to Mrs. Keith's as usual for supper. Neither was he in his little bunk that night. No Wathemah appeared for breakfast. Inquiries began to be circulated. Where was Wathemah? Esther grew very uneasy, and started out to search for him herself. She returned disappointed. An hour later, Jack Harding returned with the child. He had found him keeping watch by Brigham's grave. So deep is the Apache's affection, so real his grief.

Esther gathered Wathemah in her arms, and talked to him long of Brigham. Henceforth, to that little child, as to many of his race, the heavens would be full of the Great Spirit.

"Can Brigham see me from the sky?" asked Wathemah.

"I think so, dear. You'll want to be a good boy, won't you?"

For answer, he burst into tears, and she mingled her own with his.

From that time on, Wathemah loved the stars at night, and would stand watching them with deepening wonder and awe. Then began his questioning of things eternal, that upreach of the soul, that links it to the Divine.

The day after Esther's return to Clayton Ranch, Dr. Mishell asked her to go with him to the shack of Mark Clifton.

"He cannot recover," he said. "He realizes that. He has repeatedly asked to see you."

As they approached the shack, they heard a voice. Jack Harding was reading aloud from the Bible.

On the walls of the shack, were guns, hides, and coarse pictures; in one corner, were a case of whiskey bottles, and a pack of cards. The sick man seemed to be a man of about thirty. He greeted his visitors courteously, and at once turned to Esther.

"I have asked to see you," he said. "I think I cannot recover. I am not prepared

to die. I have attended your meetings since you have held them in the timber. I believe there is something in your religion; I believe in God."

His voice was faint.

"Is there any hope for me?" he asked, searching her face with his keen black eyes.

She shrank from his bold gaze, then answered gently:

"There is hope for every one who repents of his sins and turns to Christ."

"But," he said, impatiently, "I haven't done so very much to repent of. I haven't committed any crime, don't you know? The world doesn't hold such high ideals of what a fellow ought to be as you do. I am no better nor worse than the rest of men. I came to that conclusion long ago."

"Indeed!" She spoke coldly. "Is that all? Then you do not need me." She rose to go.

"No, it is not all!" interrupted Jack Harding. "Miss Bright, show him his sin; show him the way of repentance, as you did me."

Suddenly the cowboy knelt by the bunk, and poured forth such a heartfelt prayer for the man before him, all were touched. Clifton lay with eyes closed. Esther spoke again.

"Mr. Clifton, have you done nothing to repent of? Think. You lured to this country the sixteen-year-old orphan daughter of a clergyman. You promised to marry her, if she would join you here. You placed her to board in a saloon. You refused to marry her! Thank God, the child is safe at last!"

There was no mistaking her tone.

"Marry *her*?" he repeated, contemptuously. "Marry *her*? I'd as soon marry a cat. I think too much of my family. I wouldn't disgrace them by marrying her, the daughter of a poverty-stricken curate."

Then they saw Esther Bright's eyes flash. Her face grew as stern as the granite hills of her native state. She spoke slowly, and each word—as Dr. Mishell afterwards said—seemed to weigh a ton apiece.

"Your family?" she said. "Your family?" she repeated with scorn. "Your

family? This girl is a child of God!"

And turning, she left the shack.

Jack Harding remained all through the night, talking and praying, at intervals, with Clifton.

At dawn, the sick man cried out again and again:

"God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then, at last, he said:

"Jack, I want to atone for my wrong to Miss Earle as much as I can. I see it all now. Send for a clergyman. I can't live, I know. If Miss Earle becomes my wife, it will remove the stigma, and she will inherit a fortune willed to me. Send for her. Perhaps she will forgive me, before I die."

At the sunset hour, word passed throughout the village that Mark Clifton had just died, and that before his death he had been married to Carla Earle. The clergyman who attended the dying man wrote to his parents, telling them of their son's marriage and death, and of his farewell messages to them. He added:

"Your son died a repentant man."



CHAPTER XXII

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

ON her return from Murphy Ranch, Esther began to assist in the care of Kenneth Hastings. As yet, he had not recognized her. Sometimes, as she sat by him, tears would gather and roll down her cheeks. One day, Kenneth opened his eyes and asked:

"Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"I am Esther," she answered, "taking care of you."

"No, you're not," he said, wildly. "Get out of here!"

She stepped back where he could not see her. He rambled on.

"Some one shot!" He tried to rise. But Sister Mercy, entering, quieted him, and he lay back, muttering. Occasionally, Esther caught the words "Esther," "gulf," "doubt." About an hour later, he awakened, quiet. She sat where she could watch his face, and learn her great lesson.

"Are you an angel?" he asked, with unrecognizing eyes.

She took one of his hands in hers, and rested her cheek against it. His hand grew wet with her tears.

"Are you a soul in bliss?" he asked, softly. "I knew an angel when I was on earth. But a gulf yawned between us, a gulf, a gulf!"

Then he seemed oblivious of the presence of anyone, and muttered:

"I have lost my way—lost my way,—lost."

At last he slept again. And Esther Bright, kneeling by his bedside, with one of

his hands clasped in hers, prayed. Still he slept on. When he awakened, John Clayton stood looking down upon him. Kenneth looked around, puzzled.

"Well, John! Where am I?"

"Here in my home. Are you feeling better, Kenneth?"

"Better? What do you mean?"

"You've been very sick, and delirious. But now you'll recover."

"What was the matter?"

"An Indian blackguard shot you through the shoulder. Septic conditions set in, and you had a high fever. Keep still there," he said, as he prevented his friend from moving.

"Queer, John," said Kenneth, after a moment's pause. "I can't recall anything that has happened recently but a drive with Miss Bright just before she went away. But I can't speak of that—"

And Esther Bright, resting on the couch in the living room, heard every word. A long silence followed.

"John," said Kenneth in a low voice, "tell her sometime for me, that I have lived a clean, honorable life. You know I have gone to the saloons here sometimes, largely because other human beings were there. You know I gambled a little to kill time. So deucedly lonely! Tell her I wasn't bad at heart."

He started to say more, but suddenly stopped. And Esther, hearing in spite of herself, searched her own heart.

Dr. Mishell came the next day, and finding his patient delirious again, announced that he would stay with him till danger was past. So the physician and nurse again watched together.

It was the day Esther was to have left for Massachusetts. When questioned as to the time of her departure, she now assured everyone she would stay till her sick people were well.

While Dr. Mishell sat by Kenneth, Mr. Clayton found Esther on the veranda, in tears. He pretended not to see.

"Does Dr. Mishell give any hope of Mr. Hastings' recovery?" she asked.

"Yes. There has been a decided change for the better this past hour."

He slipped his hand under her arm, and, together, they walked up and down the path to the road.

"My dear friend," he said to her, "Kenneth *may* die, but I know a powerful restorative, that might help to save his life, if we could only bring it to him." He knew her heart better than Kenneth did.

"Oh, let *me* take it to him," she said eagerly. "I'd be so thankful to have a chance to help save his life. He's done so much for me, and he is such a loyal—friend."

"You shall be the one to bring him the medicine if you will," he said smiling.

"What is it? Where can I get it?" she asked, eager to go on her errand of mercy.

"Where can you get it?" he repeated. "You can find it in your own heart. It is love that will save Kenneth, dear Miss Bright."

Her tears fell fast.

"I fear I have made him very unhappy," she said.

"I suspect you have," he responded.

"Did he tell you so?"

"No. You know he has been delirious from the first. In his delirium, he has talked of you constantly."

At last danger was past, and nurse and physician assured the Clayton household that Kenneth Hastings would recover.

He awakened from sleep, alone. As he opened his eyes, they fell upon a copy of Tennyson's works. It was open at "The Princess." Someone had been reading, and marking passages. He at once turned to the title page, and at the top, read a name he half expected to see. Could it be possible that she was still there? He looked around the room. By his bedside, stood a small round table, on which stood a low glass dish, filled with pink cactus blossoms. Near by, was an open Bible. Here, too, was a marked passage,—"*faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love,*" He knew the Bible was Esther's. He laid it down, as

though he had trespassed upon her innermost heart. He closed his eyes, and lay in a half-dream of possible joy. Over and over, the words seemed to repeat themselves,—“the greatest of these is love.” There was a quiet step, and Esther entered, looking fresh and cool in a white dimity gown. In her hands, was a bunch of cactus flowers. She laid them down, and with a joyous cry went to him, clasping his hand in hers.

“You know me at last?” she asked. “I am so glad!”

Kenneth did not speak. She continued, “I feared you would never know me again.” She seemed to hesitate a moment, but went on. “I feared I could never tell you what I now *know*, what I want to tell you.”

“What do you know?” he asked. “What do you wish to tell me?”

“That I love you,” she answered, and stooping down, she put her cheek against his.

“Look out, Kenneth!” she said, warningly, with a happy little laugh. “You mustn’t forget about the wound in your shoulder.”

But he held her captive.

“What do I care for the wound in my shoulder, when the wound in my heart is healed?” he asked of her.

“I came to heal the wound I made in your heart,” she said, while a pink wave swept over her face.

Still he held her, drawing her closer to him.

“The lips,” he said, “on the lips, as a penance.”

“My penance is easy,” she said with a happy ring in her voice.

Then drawing a chair close to the side of his bed, she let him gather her hands in his.

“Strange!” he said. “During my illness I dreamed it would be this way. I must have dreamed a long time. You were always with me, I thought. You were always in white, and often brought me flowers. Once, I found myself in heaven. You met me, and smiled and said, ‘Come.’ You brought me the most heavenly being I ever beheld, and placing my hand in his, said significantly, ‘He loved

much!" Then you vanished. And the heavenly being smiled upon me. And my heart grew glad. I began to understand the mysteries of life. Then I thought how you had led me to the very fountain of love, that I might know how to love you purely. I began to feel I could renounce all my hopes of your love, because there was something in that other presence that taught me that great Love asks no return. It just loves on, and on. Then I thought this heavenly being called me brother. And thousands of voices began to sing, 'Glory to God in the highest!'"

"Beautiful!" she said.

"Then I seemed to float in space, and I knew that you were near me. Your arms were full of flowers, and you offered up silent prayers for me that bridged the gulf between us."

She kissed him again, saying softly:

"Beloved, I did bridge the gulf with prayers. How stupid I was not to know sooner!"

"Not to know what?"

"Not to know love when it came."

"But you know it now, Beloved?" he said, drawing the hands he clasped nearer to himself. "I thank God for that."

He closed his eyes, and lay very still, still clasping her hands. She watched by him. At last, his hands relaxed their hold, and she knew by his regular breathing that he was asleep.

John Clayton came to the door, saw how it was, and went away. So did the others who came to inquire. And Kenneth slept on, a restful, restoring sleep. And as Esther watched, she repeated to herself:

"The Greatest of These is Love."



CHAPTER XXIII

AT SUNSET

IT was Dr. Mishell speaking.

"My dear young lady, if Mr. Hastings must go to England, as he says he must, he should not go alone. He needs care. I have recommended you as a competent nurse." His eyes twinkled.

"Is it *safe* for him to travel now?" asked Esther.

"If he makes the journey by slow stages."

The physician spoke with some hesitation.

"At any rate he should get out of this intense heat as soon as possible."

"But the ocean voyage," she suggested.

"Probably do him good."

The physician had already extended his congratulations to them. Before leaving, he gripped Kenneth's hand, and said heartily:

"My nurse will be a helpmate to you. She is a woman of sense."

While he still gripped Kenneth's hand, he turned to Esther, and extended his other hand to her. He placed her hand in Kenneth's, and said impressively:

"'What *God* hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' Miss Bright, you are to marry a true man. Always *trust* him."

His eyes filled. He turned abruptly and was gone.

Poor Dr. Mishell!

The wilting heat of August was upon them.

At evening, Esther, wearied with packing trunks, joined Kenneth on the veranda. As she sat there, Wathemah ran to her, and flung a bunch of flowers in her lap.

"Why do you leave me?" he asked.

She put her arm about him, and told him she was going home, a long, long way from there, and that Mr. Hastings was going with her.

"Wathemah go, too?" he asked.

Both laughed.

"No, little chap," she said, drawing him closer to her, "not this time."

"Wathemah go, too," he said, reproachfully, looking at Kenneth with marked disapproval.

"Do you love your teacher?" asked Kenneth. He, too, liked the child.

Wathemah nodded.

"Would you like to be her boy, and live with her always?"

Wathemah placed one arm about his teacher's neck, and said softly:

"Wathemah's mother!"

Kenneth laughed again, and declared he was jealous.

Then Esther told the little fellow she would come back to Gila and get him, and he should then go to live with her always.

"Take me now," he urged.

"No, dear," she said.

With that, he sprang from her, and walked proudly out of the yard, on toward the canyon, without turning, or looking back.

"A nugget of gold from the Rockies," said Kenneth, looking after him.

"An Arizona cactus," she replied, "lovely, but hard to handle."

Wathemah trudged up the canyon, to his favorite boulder, where he went, often, to listen to the waters. There, he threw himself down, and cried himself to sleep. He had slept a half-hour, perhaps, when he was awakened by voices.

"Why, here's Wathemah," called out Jack Harding.

Another spoke, "He's a queer un. He never will be civilized."

The group of cowboys gathered about the child.

"What's the matter, sonny?" asked his friend, Jack Harding.

Then he told them of his teacher's refusal to take him with her.

"Don't cry, little kid!" said Jack. "Here, boys, let's give him money ter go home with Miss Bright. I'll jest ask her ter take him along with her, an' I'll pay fur his keep. Don't cry, sonny. It's all right. Down in y'r pockets, pards, an' fork out some money fur Wathemah. We saved him, an' raised him, yer know."

His own hand went down into his pockets, and into his hat went a roll of bills. He passed his hat, and soon it was full of bills and silver dollars.

That evening, it began to be whispered about that Wathemah was to go with Miss Bright. But of this rumor she knew nothing.

Two days later, the hands of young men and maidens were busy decorating the Clayton home for the wedding of Esther Bright and Kenneth Hastings. Cactus blossoms of exquisite form and color were used. Not only the interior of the house, but the veranda and yard as well, were one glorious mass of color.

Jack Harding worked faithfully, stopping now and then to talk with Kenneth, who lay on a couch on the veranda.

Carla, too, was busy, putting artistic touches here and there. She, too, came often to the sick man's side.

But Esther was forbidden to work, and when she persisted, Mr. Clayton captured her and took her off for a ride. She was to be married at sunset.

While they were out driving, one of John Clayton's cowboys drove up from the station, bringing David Bright and an English clergyman, a friend of Kenneth's, with him.

When Esther returned, and found her grandfather, her joy knew no bounds.

"I wish now, Kenneth, that we were to marry ourselves, as Friends do," she said, "but grandfather can give me away."

The guests who had been bidden, gathered in the yard, just as the glory of the sunset began. There was Bobbie, with the Carmichaels; there were some of the cowboys and cowlasses, miners and ranchers who had attended the meetings; all the Clayton household; Dr. Mishell and Sister Mercy, Miss Gale, and Wathemah were there. Jack Harding kept a close watch on Wathemah, not knowing just what he might do.

As the sun neared the horizon, the clergyman took his place in the yard, Kenneth stepped forward, and waited. Esther Bright, in a sheer white gown, freshly laundered,—a gown she had worn many times as she had ministered to the sick, came forward on the arm of her stately old grandfather, who gave her away. His benign face seemed to hallow the hour.

The colors in the sky seemed to vie with the cactus blossoms. Yellows, and violets, and deep crimson, faint clouds with golden edges, violet, then rose-colored, all melting into the dome of the sky.

The man and the woman were repeating the marriage ritual of the Church of England, while this miracle of beauty flashed through the heavens.

The plaintive cry of the mourning dove rang out, followed by the cheerful piping of a cardinal.

The human voices went on with the solemnest vows man and woman may speak.

The exquisite notes of the cardinal, then of a thrush, accompanied their voices. The beauty of the dying day played over Esther Bright and Kenneth Hastings, as they stood in the glory of their youth, and of their love.

Just as the clergyman pronounced the closing words of the marriage service, the heavens leaped into a splendor of color; a mocking bird caught up all the songs that had furnished an obligato to the marriage service; and, as if to outdo all the other feathered songsters, burst into a perfect ecstasy of song.

In the midst of the congratulations and feasting, Wathemah kept close to Esther's side.

The following day, Kenneth, Esther and David Bright were to begin their long journey eastward. The day dawned. All Gila gathered at the distant station to bid them God speed.

"Where is Wathemah?" Esther asked.

"I don't know," answered a miner. "I found him cryin' 'cause yer wouldn't take him with yer."

"Poor little chap! But where's Jack?" she questioned.

"There they be," said a ranchman, pointing to Jack and Wathemah, standing apart from the crowd. She stepped toward them.

"I have come to say good-by," she said. "You won't forget, Jack, to follow the Christ; you won't forget to pray?"

She laid her hand on his arm. He stood battling with himself. Her tender voice, her eyes filled with tears, almost unmanned him.

"Is it not much, do yer think, ter let yer go, as have brought me ter know God, as have learned me ter live right, an' have been like God's angel ter me? God help me!" The strong man's face worked, and he turned from her. After a moment, he put his hand in his pocket, and drew forth the Bible she had given him.

"I wisht I'd a knowed about this when I was a lad. My life'd ben differnt. I thank yer fur all yer've done fur me, and all yer've learned me. But it seems I can't let yer go. God help me!"

He stood with head bent and hands clinched.

At last, Esther spoke again:

"Good-by, John. You have fought a good fight, and conquered. Now, help the others with all your might." Ah, how much she had helped him in his battle!

He grasped her hand and held it. So they stood. Then he said:

"Take the little kid with yer. Give him a chance. I'll send him money as long as I live. I ain't got nobody else ter care fur."

She would help the strong man, now, if she could; but how could she? He had this battle to fight alone.

"You wish *me* to take Wathemah, John?"

"Yes. Give him a chance,—different surroundings."

He lifted a bag of money.

"This 'ere holds nearly one hundred dollars. The boys give it to Wathemah ter go home with yer."

"Did they? How generous!"

The child ran to her, fearful he should be left behind. She hesitated. How could she care for her convalescent husband, and this impetuous, high-strung child? She turned to Kenneth and spoke with him.

Jack lifted Wathemah in his arms and kissed him, saying:

"Good-by, little pard. Mind now, no more cussin'."

David Bright, who had overheard the conversation, now stepped forward, and said, "Let the child go with us, Esther, if those who have reared him consent."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Keith, who stood near him, signified their willingness. The party then entered the Pullman, and a few minutes later, the train drew out from the station.

Esther and Wathemah went to the rear platform, and watched till a turn in the road hid their friends from their sight. After a time Kenneth joined them.

"Tears, Esther?" he said, lifting her face.

"But not of sorrow," she returned.

He put an arm around each, and they stood looking down upon the majesty of the scene through which they were passing.

One looking back to that moment, would say it had been prophetic of the future. The man of power, destined to become a determining factor in the development of the great Southwest; the woman at his side, great of heart and brain and soul; and this little prince of the Rockies, with his splendid heritage of courage, destined to be the educational leader of his race. And it was this woman of vision, who, during the years that were to come, saw clearly the great work her husband and foster son might do, and nerved them for it by her faith in the

work, and their power to do it.



CHAPTER XXIV

AFTERMATH

IT was a substantial stone house, built against the mountainside, overlooking a picturesque canyon. A woman sat on the broad veranda. Occasionally, she turned her head, and looked down the mountain road, listening as though expecting some one. Then she walked down the path, and stood watching. A little five-year-old girl joined her, flitting about like a sprite.

"Will father come soon, mother?" she asked.

"I hope so, Edith. He said he would come to-day." There was a far away look in the mother's eyes.

"Why *doesn't* father come?" the child continued.

"Oh, he has been a long way, and has traveled many days, dear. Something may have happened to detain him."

"What could have happened, mother?" the little one asked.

"Oh, business, or the rails might have spread, or there might have been a washout, or a landslide."

The mother again looked down the road. Then she walked slowly back to the veranda and took up her sewing. The child leaned against her knee.

"Mother, when you were a little girl, did you have any little girls to play with?"

"No. I had just my dear grandfather."

"Then you know how lonely I am, mother. It's pretty hard to be a little girl and all alone."

"Do you think you are alone, little daughter, when you have father, and aunt Carla, and mother?"

"But you are big, mother, don't you see? When a little girl hasn't any other little boys and girls to play with, the world's a pretty lonesome place."

The mother sighed.

The child rested her chin in her dainty hands, and looked up through her long lashes into her mother's eyes.

"I have been thinking, mother."

The child was given to confidences, especially with her mother.

"What did you think, Edith?" The mother smiled encouragingly.

"I thought I'd pray for a brother."

A tear trembled on the mother's cheek.

"A little brother?" The mother looked far away.

"Oh, a *b-i-g* brother!" said the child, stretching her arms by way of illustration.

"What would you say, sweetheart, if a big brother should come to-day?"

The little one clapped her hands.

"A really, *truly*, big brother?" she asked, dancing about in glee.

"A really, truly, big brother,—Wathemah. You have never seen him, and he has never seen you, since you were a baby. But he is coming home soon, you know."

"Will he play with me?" she asked. "You and Aunt Carla just 'nopolize father and the big ladies and gentlemen when they come. But *sometimes* father plays with me, doesn't he, mother?"

"Yes, sometimes. He loves his little daughter."

"I don't know." She shook her head doubtfully.

"I heard father say he loved you bestest of ev'rybody in a world."

She threw up her arms and gave a little jump.

"Oh, I wish I had some one to play with!"

"Let's go watch for father again," said the mother, rising.

This time they were not disappointed. They heard the sound of wheels; then they saw the father. The little daughter ran like the wind down the road. The father stopped the horses, gave the reins to the driver, and stepped to the ground. In an instant the little sprite was in his arms, hugging him about the neck, while her ripples of laughter filled the air. The wife approached, and was folded in the man's embrace.

"Father," said the child, "I am to have a big brother, mother says."

"You are?" Great astonishment.

The parents smiled.

"An', father,"—here she coquetted with him—"you and mother are not to 'nopolize him when he comes. He's going to play with me, isn't he, mother?"

"I think so." A grave smile.

The child was given to saying her father "un'erstood."

"When did you hear from Wathemah, Esther?" the father asked.

"About ten days ago. I'll read you his letter. I shall not be surprised to see him any day, now."

"Wathemah is my big brother, Father. Mother said so. She says he's always been my big brother, only *I* didn't re'lize it, you know."

The parents looked amused.

"Yes, Edith, he is your brother, and a dear brother, too," said the father.

When they were seated on the veranda, and the child was perched on her father's knee, Esther brought Wathemah's last letter, and read it aloud to her husband.

"Dear Mother Esther:

"This is probably the last letter I shall write you from Harvard for some time.

As soon as Commencement is over, I shall go to Carlisle again for a brief visit, and then start for Arizona, to Father Kenneth and you, my dear Mother Esther, and my little sister and Carla and Jack. Now that the time approaches for me to return to you, I can hardly wait.

"I may have expressed my gratitude to you and Father Kenneth in different ways before, but I wish to do so again now.

"I am deeply indebted to him for his generosity, and for his fatherly interest and counsel. But it is to you, my beloved teacher, I owe most of all. All that I am or ever may be, I owe entirely to you. You found me a little savage, you loved me and believed in me, and made it possible for me to become a useful man. As I have grown older, I have often wondered at your patience with me, and your devotion to the interests of the Indian. You have done great things already for him, and I am confident that you will do much more to bring about a true appreciation of him, his character and his needs. The Indian in transition is a problem. You know more about that problem than almost anyone else.

"I never told you about my birthday, did I? Do you know the day I count my years by? My first day, and your first day at the Gila school. Then my real birth took place, for I began to be a living soul.

"So, in a spiritual sense, you are my real mother. I have often wondered if the poor creature who bore me is still living, and living in savagery. All a son's affection I have given to you, my beloved foster mother. It is now nearly sixteen years since you found me a little savage. I must have been about six years of age, then; so, on the next anniversary of your first day in the Gila school, I shall be twenty-two years old. From that day till now, you have been the dearest object in the world to me. I am sure no mother could be more devotedly loved by her son than you are loved by me. I strive to find words to express the affection in my heart.

"And Grandfather Bright! How tender and gentle he always was to me, from the time we had our beautiful wedding journey until his death! He came to Carlisle to see me as he might have gone to see a beloved son. He always seemed to me like God, when I was a little fellow. And as I grew older, he became to me the highest ideal of Christian manhood. I went over to Concord Cemetery not long ago, and stood with uncovered head by his grave.

"And our dear little David Bright! That was a sore loss for you and Father Kenneth.

"You don't know how often I wish to see little Edith. I was greatly disappointed that you and Father Kenneth did not bring her with you the last time you came to see me. You didn't realize such a lean, lanky, brawny fellow as I cared so much to see a little girl, did you? I had always wished I might have a little sister. I have shown her pictures to some of the fellows who come to my room, telling them she is my baby sister. They chaff me and say I do not look much like her.

"The fellows have been very courteous to me.

"Now that the time has come to leave Harvard and Cambridge and Boston, I am sorry to go. I have met such fine people.

"Dr. ——— urges me to return in the fall, to continue my work for my Master's degree; but I have thought it all over, and believe it wiser, for the present, to work among my people, and get the knowledge I seek at first hand. After that, I'll return to Harvard.

"Long ago, your words gave me my purpose in life,—to prepare myself to the uttermost for the uplift of my race.

"Daily, I thank you in my heart, for the years I had at Carlisle. But most of all, I thank you for yourself and what you have been to me.

"I must not close without telling you of a conversation I had with Col. H—— of Boston. He heard your address on 'The Indian in Transition' at the Mohonk Conference. He told me it was a masterly address, and that you presented the Indian question with a clearness and force few have done. He told me that what you said would give a new impulse to Indian legislation. He seemed to know of your conferences at Washington, too.

"I hear great things of Father Kenneth, too; his increasing wealth, his power for leadership, and his upright dealings with men.

"Do you remember how jealous I used to be of him when I was a little chap? Well, I am jealous no longer. He is the finest man I know.

"But I must stop writing. This letter has run on into an old-fashioned visit.

"I am coaching one of the fellows in mathematics. Strange work for a savage!

"With love for all of you, including my dear Carla,

"Your loving boy,

"WATHEMAH."

"He's a fine fellow, is Wathemah," said Kenneth, as he cuddled his little girl up in his arms.

"Yes, he's developed wonderfully," responded Esther.

"How's Carla?" the husband asked.

"Carla's well, and just now deeply interested in the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A. work."

Here Carla herself appeared, and joined in the welcome home. She was the picture of wholesome content.

While they were talking, there was a sound of wheels again. The wagon stopped, a young man jerked out a trunk, paid the driver, and ran towards the veranda. How happy he seemed!

"It's Wathemah," all cried, hastening to meet him. The sprite was in advance, with arms outstretched.

"I guess you don't reco'nize me," she said. "I'm your little sister."

He laughed, stooped and lifted her in his arms, and kissed her several times.

Then came Esther's turn. At the same time, Kenneth enfolded Wathemah. Then came Carla, whom Wathemah kissed as he used to do in childhood days, and laughingly repeated a question he was accustomed to ask her then—"Is my face clean, Carla?"

And all laughed and talked of the days when they had found one another, of the Claytons and Jack Harding, and Patrick Murphy and his family, and the Rosses and Carmichaels, and the changes that had taken place in Gila since they left there.

"I was so sorry to hear of Mr. Clayton's death," said Wathemah. "What a great-hearted man he was! Such a generous friend! Do you suppose Mrs. Clayton and Edith will ever come back to America?"

"No," answered Kenneth, "I fear not. Mrs. Clayton's kindred are in England, you know. She never liked America. It was a lonely life for her here, and doubly so after her husband's death."

"And how's Jack? Dear old Jack! I must see him soon," said Wathemah.

"I'll call him up," said Kenneth, going to the phone.

"Give me 148, please."

"No,—1-4-8."

"Hello! Is Mr. Harding within reach?"

"Gone to the store, you say? Send some one for him at once, please, and tell him Mr. Hastings wishes to talk with him. Important."

He hung up the receiver and returned to his place.

"Do you know, Father Kenneth, I have received a letter from Jack every week since I left Gila, except the time he was sick? He insisted upon sending me money, saying that it was he who found me, and wanted me to live."

"Yes, Jack is a generous fellow," assented Kenneth.

"I tried to make him understand that I was strong and able to earn my own way; but it made no difference."

"Just like him! Bless him!" said Esther.

"So I have invested his money for him, in his name, and it will make him very comfortable some day."

Kenneth smiled.

"Jack is becoming a rich man by his own work, and his own wise investments."

Just then the telephone rang.

"Hello! Hello! Is that you, Jack?" asked Kenneth.

"That's good.

"Yes, yes.

"Something interesting is up. Whom would you like to see at this moment?

"Mother Esther? That's good. Who next?

"Wathemah? Hold the phone a minute."

He turned to Wathemah.

"Jack says he'd like to see you. He doesn't know you're here. Here! Talk to him yourself."

So Wathemah stepped to the phone.

"Hello, old Jack!"

There was a happy laugh.

"You'll be over to-morrow?"

"What's that you say? *Your* boy? Well, I guess!"

"How happy Jack will be!" said Kenneth.

"Your little pard?" There was a chuckle from the lithe, muscular young Indian.

"To be sure, I'm still your 'pard,' only I'm far from little now. I'm a strapping fellow."

"What's that? You feel the education has come between us? No more o' that, old fellow! You're one of the biggest-hearted friends man ever had!"

"Tell him to come over as soon as he can," interrupted Kenneth.

"Father Kenneth says 'Come over as soon as you can.'"

"You will? Good! What a reunion we'll have! Good-by."

He hung up the receiver, and the conversation drifted on.

"Has Jack made a successful overseer?" questioned Wathemah.

"Very. He's a fine fellow. He is still very religious, you know, and the men respect him. He has become an indefatigable reader and student of labor questions. Recently I heard him give a speech that surprised me. He grasps his subject, and has a direct way of putting things."

"I should expect Jack to be a forceful speaker," commented Wathemah, "if he ever overcame his diffidence so as to speak at all. But tell me about the school at Gila. That little spot is dear to me."

"You should see the building there now," said Esther. "Do you know that the people who were most lawless when we were there, are now law-abiding citizens? Gila is said to be one of the best towns in Arizona."

"That seems like a miracle,—your miracle, Mother Esther." He rose from his chair and stood for a moment behind her, and said in a low voice, as in childhood, "*Me* mother, *me* teacher." There was a suspicious choke in his voice, and, turning, he lifted Edith, tossed her to his shoulder, and ran with her down toward the road. Kenneth overtook him, and as they strolled along, they talked of many things, but chiefly of Esther, and her great work for the Indian.

"How did it all come about?" asked Wathemah.

"Oh, in a roundabout way. Her magazine articles on the Indian first drew attention to her. Then her address at the Mohonk Conference brought her into further prominence. She was asked to speak before the Indian Commission. Later, she was sent by the Government to visit Indian schools, and report their condition. She certainly has shown marked ability. The more she is asked to do, the more she seems capable of doing."

"A wonderful woman, isn't she?"

"Yes. Vital. What she has done for the Indian, she has also done for the cause of general education in Arizona."

"I fear she will break down under all this, Father Kenneth."

"Never fear. Work is play to her. She thinks rapidly, speaks simply, and finds people who need her absorbingly interesting."

"Yes, but she gives herself too much to others," protested the Indian youth.

"Well, we must let her. She is happier so," responded Kenneth.

"What about your own work, Father Kenneth? I have heard in Massachusetts that you are a great force for public good throughout this region. But tell me of the mines."

"I invested much of my fortune *here*," said Kenneth, giving a broad outward sweep of his arm. "Some of the mines are paying large dividends. My fortune has more than doubled. But Arizona has been unfortunate in being infested with dishonest promoters. I am trying to bring about legislation that will protect

people from this wholesale robbery."

"I suspect you enjoy the fight," laughed the youth.

"It has created bitter enemies," said Kenneth, gravely.

So talking, they again sought the house, and found Esther and Carla on the veranda. The latter sat where Wathemah could see her delicate profile as she bent over some sewing. Quiet happiness and content had transformed her into a lovely woman.

"How beautiful you are, Carla!" said Wathemah, admiringly.

He enjoyed her confusion.

"Do you remember the day I played truant, Carla, and you found me in the canyon, and made me ashamed of myself?"

Did she?

He did not notice the shadow over the winsome face.

"Do you know, Wathemah," said Esther, "Carla would not remain at college, because she felt I needed her. But she has become an indefatigable student."

Later, Wathemah discovered for himself that she really had become a fine student. One day he asked her how she came to study Greek.

"Oh," she said, hesitatingly, "I loved Grecian literature, and history, and art. And I had often heard that my father was a fine Greek scholar. So I began by myself. Then I had Sister Esther help me. And after that, it became to me a great delight."

They were a merry party that day. All were in fine spirits. In the midst of their talk and laughter, the telephone rang.

"Some one for you, Esther," said Kenneth, returning to the veranda.

On her return, he looked up questioningly.

"The superintendent of education wishes me to give an address before the teachers at Tucson next month," she said, quietly.

"And will you do it?" asked Wathemah.

"Do it?" echoed Kenneth. "Of course she'll do it! She doesn't know how to say 'no.'"

Esther smiled indulgently.

"You see, Wathemah, the needs of the new country are great. They would not invite me to lecture so frequently, if they had enough workers. To me, the opportunity to help means obligation to help."

"Our Mother Esther has just returned from a conference at Washington, and another in Montana," said Kenneth, "and here she is going off again. The truth is she has become an educational and moral force in the Southwest."

"We are glad to share her with all who need her," said Carla, simply.

"Yes, lad," added Kenneth, rising, "we are glad she has the power to help."

The next morning, they were awakened early by John Harding, calling Wathemah to let him in. Such a meeting as that was! Jack did not seem to know how to behave. The little unkempt lad, untutored, and undisciplined, whom he had known and loved, was gone; and in his place, stood a lithe, graceful, really elegant young man. Jack stood back abashed. *His* Wathemah, his little Wathemah, was gone. Something got in his throat. He turned aside, and brushed his hand across his cheek. But Wathemah slipped his arm around his neck, and together they tramped off up the mountain for a visit. Then Jack knew that his boy had really come back to him, but developed and disciplined into a man of character and force.

That was a gala day for Jack Harding and the Hastings household. No one had ever seen Jack so happy before.

Late that afternoon all stood on the veranda.

"My little kid," said Jack, laying his hand on Wathemah's shoulder, "I've worked fur ye, prayed fur ye, all the years. And now you've come, now you've come," he kept saying, over and over.

"Say, Jack," said Wathemah, "do you remember the time you found me asleep up the canyon, and took up a collection to send me East with Mother Esther?"

Jack nodded.

"Well, that money, with all that you have since sent me, has been invested for

you. And now, Jack, my dear old pard, that money has made you a little fortune. You need work no more."

Jack choked. He tried to speak, but turned his face away. Esther slipped her arm through his, and told him she wanted to visit with him. So the two walked up and down the road in front of the house, talking.

"We are all so happy over Wathemah," she said. "I know you must be, too. He is really your boy, for you saved him, Jack."

Then Jack Harding poured his heart out to her. She understood him, all his struggles, all his great unselfish love for the boy. She knew the pain of his awakening, when he found that the child whom he had loved, whom he had toiled for all these years, needed him no more. It was pathetic to her.

"But, Jack dear," she was saying, "I am sure Wathemah will always be a joy to you. Only wait. My heart tells me he has some great purpose. He will tell us in time. When he does, you will want to help him carry out his plans, won't you?"

Up and down the veranda, walked Kenneth and Wathemah. Kenneth's hand and arm rested on the youth's shoulder.

"Yes, Wathemah," he was saying, "little David's death was a great sorrow to us. He was shot by an unfriendly Indian, you know."

For a moment his face darkened. The two walked on in silence.

"And Mother Esther?" Wathemah said in a husky tone; "how can she still give her life for the uplift of my people?"

"Oh, you know as well as I. She serves a great Master."

They talked from heart to heart, as father and son.

At last all the household gathered on the veranda to watch the afterglow in the sky. Esther slipped her arm through Wathemah's, and they stood facing the west.

"And so my boy is to enter the Indian service," she said.

"Yes," he answered. "You know I majored in anthropology and education. My summers among various Indian tribes were to help me know the Indian. My thesis for my doctorate is to be on 'The Education of the Indian in the United States.' When I have my material ready, I'll return to Harvard and remain until I

complete my work for my doctorate."

"What next, Wathemah?" There was a thrill in Esther's voice.

The Indian youth squared his shoulders, lifted his head, and said, as though making a solemn covenant:

"The uplift of my race!"

And Esther's face was shining.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Pronounced hé la.

[2] You be my squaw.

[3] The white woman is an angel.

[4] The white woman is the daughter of God.

Transcriber's Notes

Omission of punctuation and misspellings that appeared to be typesetter errors have been corrected.



Slang and colloquialisms in dialogue has been left as it appeared in the original.



In the Latin-1 text version, the following substitution system has been used for non-Latin-1 diacritical marks:-

[=e] e with Macron ē
[=u] u with Macron ū
[e] e with Breve ě

There is a Unicode version of the text file which has all diacritical marks as per the original book.



In Chapter XV, the Apache makes the statement "Nē-shē-ād-nlēh'" "You be my squaw." This is repeated several times in Chapter XXI. In the original the diacritical marks are typeset differently in the subsequent entries. On the assumption that the first entry is more accurate, all repetitions are changed to agree with the original.



In the original there is some dialogue of one sentence that has been typeset across two paragraphs. These have been closed up into the same paragraph to aid reading flow and to maintain consistency.



In Chapter XXI (page 250 in the original) there is a line that appears to be out of order.

The original reads:-

His coming was
about as welcome to her as the wolves would be.
him. She shook her head, pointed to her ankle, and

"Nē-shē-ād-nlēh'," he said, beckoning her to join
again tried to climb. Her efforts were futile. Then

This has been rearranged as:-

His coming was

about as welcome to her as the wolves would be.

"Nē-shē-äd-nlēh'," he said, beckoning her to join him. She shook her head, pointed to her ankle, and again tried to climb. Her efforts were futile. Then



In Chapter XXIV the sentence

"The child was given to confidences, especially with her father"

has been changed to

"especially with her mother"
as the reference to father made no contextual sense.

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