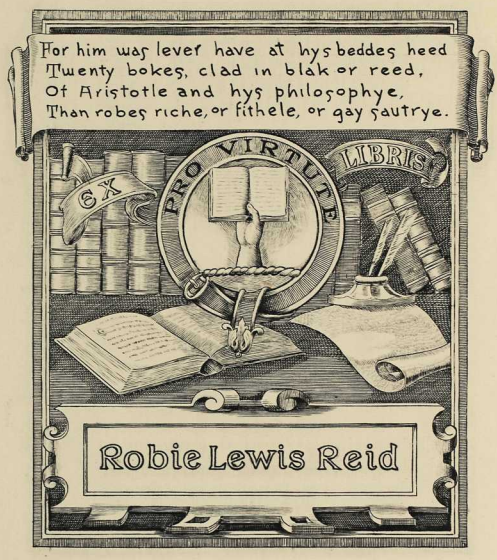
The Girl In The Silk Dress

By

M. EUGENIE PERRY



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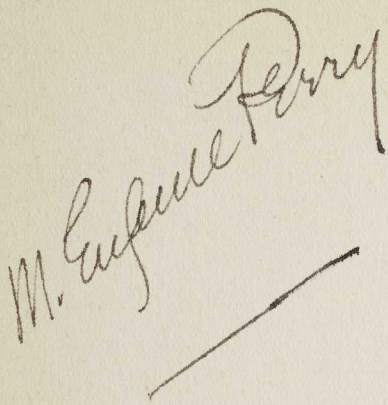

THE GIRL IN THE SILK DRESS AND OTHER STORIES

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CONTENTS

The Girl In The Silk Dress 9

Suzanne And Susanna 31

Treasure Of Leech River 51

The Shadow Of Baldy 71

The Red Lion 81

The Palace Of Faery 107

Laurie Takes A Hand 125

THE GIRL IN THE SILK DRESS

THE GIRL IN THE SILK DRESS

The eerie blueness of early winter twilight was creeping over the landscape as John March left the railroad station, and began to climb the hill towards the grey stone house which had sheltered many generations of Marches. All around him lights were springing suddenly into view, many of them shining from the windows of houses which had arisen since he left for America, twenty years before. Above him, standing out against the still faintly luminous skyline, the dark bulk of a water tower rose, grimly suggesting some embattled hold.

Near the top of the hill he paused. This, surely, was the lane leading to the March place, which he remembered as a rather superior farm-house, surrounded by but a few acres. Towards the end of the century, the land had become too valuable for farming purposes, and so had been sold off, bit by bit; and bit by bit the money realized seemed to have been dissipated, through the incompetence, or extravagance of the March men.

He could now see the house blocking the end of the lane. The darkness had almost completely closed in when he reached the steps; but light filtered dimly through the curtained windows of the room at the left of the great front door, the knocker of which was now sounding its metallic summons.

Footsteps clumped along the flagstones of the hall; the door swung slowly open; and in the flickering light of a candle, a girl's face stood out warmly against a dusky background—a welcoming, eager face, above the shimmering blue of a tight-basqued, wide-skirted gown. Oh! the Girl in the Silk Dress—he had forgotten her—it—the picture painted on the dark panel of the newel post.

A face was peeping from behind the door; a diminutive figure followed it into view; a bent, little old woman was smiling a toothless welcome.

"It be Master John? We was expectin' of you soon, sir; and it's welcome you be".

"Why, Betsy!" cried John, warmth in his voice for this old family retainer.

The door clanged to behind him; and simultaneously the door on the left opened to disclose another old woman, who leaned heavily on an ivory-headed cane.

"You are welcome, John", she said, in the thin, cultivated tones of the elderly gentlewoman," the old house needs a master. You should have told us when you would arrive".

"Thank you, Aunt Leila. I am glad to be back, and I preferred to walk up and renew the memories of former days". He gave his hand-bag, coat, and hat to Betsy, and followed his aunt into the long, paneled room, known as the Oak Parlor. A fire smoldered in the open grate. Candles shed their chastened beams over dark oak chairs, tables, and book-cases; and upon a screen behind which a four-poster bed was partially concealed. The room was very evidently both living-room, and bedroom for this sole survival of the older generation of Marches.

"Rosamond will be here, soon" Miss March told him, as she seated herself in a massive, carved chair, before the fire, and motioned to him to occupy the high settle which ran at right angles to the fireplace, and shut off the draught from the hall door. "She is giving lessons to some friends' children".

"Rosamond?" he enquired.

"Yes, of course. Your cousin Roger's only child— you must remember, surely, that she has lived with us since the death of her parents. Unfortunately they left her almost nothing". The old lady sighed. "The Marches seem to lack the gift of accumulating riches— perhaps—" she looked at him a little hopefully, not quite expectantly.

"I'm afraid", he answered the unspoken question, "that I have gathered little moss in my wanderings— the Mater's illness, you know—"

"Yes, of course".

He realized that she was thinking—and he had to admit to himself that it was the truth—that his pretty, clinging mother had been sweetly selfish, more than a little extravagant. The self-willed, high-spirited sister, also, had been a drain on his resources—especially in the recent years since they had joined him in America. But his mother had died a year or so before; his sister had recently married, and needed him no more. And, now, having given up his position and come home to take possession of the old house left him by his bachelor uncle, he seemed to have fallen heir, also, to the care of two more women of his race—for certainly every evidence here suggested that genteel poverty which is, of all forms, the most pitiful.

It seems to be the fate of some men to be eternally fettered to feminine needs and whims. John March, with every inclination to be a man's man, was, apparently, one of these. It was entirely likely, he thought ruefully, that if he married his children would all be girls.

There came the sound of an ancient car wheezing up the drive, and lights flashed passed the window.

"Rosamond is home. We'll have supper soon", said Aunt Leila, rousing from her reverie.

In a minute Rosamond appeared—a tall, slim girl, with deep blue eyes, and a flashing, welcoming smile. Odd that the March women were almost always tall and fair, while the men were dark, and of medium

height. She had been a tiny toddler, perhaps four years old, when he went away, he now remembered. And he had been seventeen, and already a grown man.

"So exciting—having you home, Cousin John—we're expecting all sorts of miracles to happen at once". She laughed, and flashed out of sight again—to prepare for supper, he surmised; and to help prepare supper, he found out later. There was no servant in the house but old Betsy, who, though willing, was unable to attend to everything that needed doing in such a house, even with the half of it closed up.

"Rosamond's so clever-handed", Aunt Leila said, rather apologetically, as they sat at supper in a little morning-room behind the hall, "and Betsy is getting old. But then, no young girl would stay, even if we could afford to keep one."

"Aunt means on account of the Girl in the Silk Dress", Rosamond explained. "We have not been able to keep any new maids for years, because they say she walks every night at midnight".

"Sounds exciting" said John, "have you seen her?" Why, of course, it was the Girl in the Silk Dress Rosamond reminded him of—but why not?—her great-great-something-or-other-grandmother. The same flashing smile, sunny hair, blue dress.

"No-o", Rosamond hesitated, and looked at her aunt, "we haven't **seen** her".

John laughed. "The plot thickens. You haven't **seen** her. Have you, then, by any chance, **heard** her?"

"It's not a matter for joking, John", Aunt Leila rebuked him, "you know there are many things that are beyond our ken".

She changed the subject then; and they soon left the table, to meet later in the Oak Parlor, after Rosamond had attended to some household duties, and John had finished smoking a pipe on the terrace before the house.

John was tired after his journey; and Aunt Leila did not encourage him to remain up late. His room was on the second floor, as were, also, those of Rosamond and Betsy. Betsy's nephew, Peter, who worked at Squire Linton's, slept in a sort of office directly behind the Oak Parlor, and would answer Aunt Leila's bell if she were nervous during the night.

John March, possessing steady nerves, and as easy a conscience as could be expected of an unattached man of thirty-seven, usually slept dreamlessly. But this night the Girl in the Silk Dress kept appearing and reappearing in his subconscious wanderings. He realized that she was a ghost, though sometimes he was equally sure she was his cousin Rosamond. Always there was upon her face the look of eager welcome. He understood that she was glad of his coming, expected something of him—something of importance to the House of March.

He was awakened to the dull, chilly greyness of winter dawn by the sound of thumping at his door.

His early morning tea, and a can of hot water had arrived. Certainly he was back in England once more.

Dressing hastily, he hurried downstairs with the intention of taking an early morning run in the grounds. Passing the Girl in the Silk Dress, he wished her good-morning; and Rosamond came, laughing, from the room behind the hall.

"I see you are trying to make friends with our restless ancestress. Are you going out? just wait till I get my hat and coat, and I'll come, too".

While waiting, he opened the door into what he remembered to have been the state drawing-room. Some shrouded furniture stood around desolately in the chill mustiness of the spacious room. He closed the door quickly as if to shut in the ghosts. It was evident that only the rooms absolutely necessary for occupation were kept open. Also, although the house had been wired for electricity, its use had been discontinued, either from preference or for purposes of economy.

"Don't think me impertinent" said John, when he and his cousin had paused at the top of a steep path behind the house, to look out over the picturesque valley, "but I'm anxious to get some understanding of the situation here. Has Aunt Leila nothing to live on?".

"Only the tiniest income. Not enough to keep up the place in any sort of style. I'm afraid there are some small debts already. Uncle Walter must have been living on his capital for years. I could perhaps get some better-paying work if I were to go somewhere

else, but I have not felt free to leave Aunt, and she would never be happy away from March Hill. She has grown very frail since last year, when she injured her hip by a fall. It was then that her bed was moved into the Oak Parlor, as she was unable to climb the stairs." She hesitated, then went on, as if taking a plunge into forbidden waters. "I'm not sure it is quite right for her to be in there so much. You know that is the room where the Girl in the Silk Dress is supposed to walk. And Aunt Leila seems to grow more absent, day by day; and to spend more time dwelling on the past".

"What form does the apparition take? But it is all nonsense, I suppose?"

"She is believed to walk slowly across the end of the room just at twelve o'clock every night. No, it's not all nonsense. I'm not unusually superstitious, but on the rare occasions when I have been courageous enough to wait for her coming, I have really felt that she was in the room; have really believed I heard the whisper of her silk dress as she passed along the wall".

Breakfast over, John wandered into the hall, and stood before the mysterious picture. It seemed to have a fascination for him, and he examined it in detail. It was painted directly on the wooden panel of the great newel post, and although very evidently not the work of a master, still, in spontaneity of treatment, and charm of coloring, it suggested much natural talent in the artist. The dark blue eyes seemed to watch him eagerly; the

silk of the dress was so convincingly touched in, he almost expected to hear it rustle.

Running his hand searchingly over the flat surface on the side of the newel post, John fancied he felt the wood give. Excitedly he slipped down on his knees, and worked at the paneling until presently a drawer slid forward, revealing some dusty books, and an interesting-looking box. But inside the box he found only a small key.

He was looking at it with curiosity when Rosamond came up behind him, startling him, so absorbed had he been in his find.

"Sorry to disappoint you" she teased, "but Aunt has known about that drawer for years, and has shown it to me. She sometimes asks for that key, and says it's a clue—though to what, I don't know".

"A clue—oh! well," John covered up his chagrin with levity, "as long as there is a clue there must be some mystery for it to unravel, so hope revives".

That evening, sitting before the fire in the Oak Parlor, he very gradually brought the conversation around to the Girl in the Silk Dress. By speaking respectfully of the ghostly visitation supposed to occur nightly, he persuaded Aunt Leila—whose white hair and transparent skin contrasted so picturesquely with the dark upholstery of her chair—to unbend sufficiently to express some of her thoughts and impressions on the subject.

"Great-great-grandmother Honoria", she told him, "whose portrait we speak of as 'the Girl in the Silk Dress',

was a March, also, before her marriage to Great-great-grandfather, so she was doubly interested in the fortunes of the house. And we were always told that she brought good luck to her husband, who was a plain farmer. Certainly she raised the family somewhat in the social scale. A notable member of the nobility, temporarily out of favor in exalted circles, is said to have taken refuge here, and to have given her the wonderful ruby ring which was lost trace of a good many years ago. My father got very strange in his later years; and after his death, when the ring could not be found, we wondered if he had concealed it somewhere around the place. But, of course, we just amused ourselves with that idea, for as he was very autocratic and asked no one's opinions where his business was concerned, it is much more likely that he sold the ring to finance some of the schemes in which he was interested. And, yet, sometimes—the old have their little fancies, you know—sometimes I wonder, lying there and listening to the whisper of her passing, if she is trying to convey some message to my dull understanding."

"Aunt, you know I want to help you"—John spoke a little awkwardly; doing was, for him, always easier than talking—"and I have a queer feeling about that picture, too. May I stay, tonight, and hear her pass?"

"You are a good boy, John, and always have been. I don't know why you should feel any responsibility—but, of course, you are the head of the family, now—and, besides, the house is yours. Yes, yes, of course,

stay—but she never comes if there is any noise of laughter, or talking, or even wind or rain—only on the still nights".

"Surely I may stay, also; and if I am frightened, John can hold my hand". Rosamond's voice brought a breath of wholesome reality back into the room.

"Ladies don't say such things". Aunt Leila seemed to protest rather from a sense of duty than from conviction. And John, who, while not unwilling to hold hands with a pretty girl, was shy in the face of such public expression, maintained a rebuking silence.

And so, when evening had worn to a close, and midnight approached, the trio still sat conversing quietly in the Oak Parlor.

"Perhaps, John" Aunt Leila then said, "you had better put out the lights. And we must move down towards the end of the room, if we are to hear her pass".

With only the light of the fading fire flickering behind them, they were waiting, the young people perhaps a little breathless, when the grandfather clock in the hall chimed out the midnight hour. No one moved. The stillness became so intense it was almost tangible. Then a faint sound arose, drew slowly near, and passed them—the soft swish as of a silk skirt swinging by. It whispered its way across the room, close to the wall, and out into the waiting night—and all was still once more.

John felt the perspiration cold on his brow. Rosamond, levity forgotten, had clutched his arm in a painful clasp. But Aunt Leila, when the candles were again lighted, rested serene in her chair, questioning eyes still turned towards the spot where the sound had ceased, as if she were striving to receive some message too faint for mortal ear to hear.

For the next few days, John March gave much thought to the mystery of the Oak Parlor, and to the best methods of bettering the March fortunes. Before leaving America, having grown indifferent, from long absence, to the traditions and home of his race, he had contemplated selling, or at least leasing the old house. Thus he would have assured for himself a modest competence which, added to his small savings, would have enabled him to live where he pleased. Now he realized that to be out of the question, partly because its present reputation of being haunted rendered the place unpopular with prospective tenants, but more particularly because he knew, now, that it would be an act of cruelty to remove Aunt Leila from her beloved home. Then, also, even so soon after his return, his old affection for the home of his ancestors had revived, and some pride of ownership had quickened in his heart.

What then? He might return to America, and take back the position he had relinquished, or find another like it, thus earning enough money to keep Aunt Leila in comfort at March Hill. But he felt a surprising reluctance to leave his home again. However, the

company with which he had been connected, had been contemplating starting an agency in England, and had suggested placing him in charge. It would be only part time work, and in consequence would pay but a small salary. That meant a bare existence for them all. Still it was better than nothing.

In his perplexity John would go and commune with the Girl in the Silk Dress, and, somehow, her eager, alive expression seemed to give him hope that some solution of his difficulties would soon be found. And that would start him puzzling again about her supposed wanderings through the Oak Parlor. The sound had seemed to come from very close to the back wall. He asked Rosamond if she thought it possible that there was a secret passage in that wall. That had been thought of, she told him, and the rooms measured, showing that there was not sufficient space between the parlor and the office for a passage.

It is possible that, in spite of his renewed interest in the house, he would have found it, in the grey, chilly winter days, a very dull and depressing place but for the cheery presence of his pretty young cousin. Yet he gave little thought to her personality, except to realize that she possessed that enduring charm, a soft, sweet voice, very soothing to the nerves of the returned wanderer.

Two weeks had passed since his coming, his difficulties were still unsolved, when John March came up

the lane, returning from a pleasant evening spent with Squire Linton, and Squire Linton's daughter.

There was a slight sharpness in the air tonight, and a pale moon was striving valiantly to pierce the lowering clouds. John was feeling slightly exhilarated, either from the effects of the Squire's wine, or from the very flattering interest in him and his affairs which Mary Linton had displayed. An attractive young woman, Mary, though of a rather sporty type. John was not averse to the thought of marriage. If his affairs should straighten themselves out—why, who knew? Hm! she would be, yes, seven years his junior. Small, dark, and vivacious—to be sure he preferred fair women. Why should the thought of the Girl in the Silk Dress be always obtruding itself into his thoughts? 'Divinely tall, and most divinely fair'.

On the terrace he turned and looked around him, as he always did when returning home. Upon the hill, above, the water tower rose, menacing and grim in its suggestion of a medieval tower. As he stood there the clock in the hall struck twelve; and immediately the twinkling lights of hill and valley winked out as if by magic. What a very rural community—everything stopped at twelve—everything but the Girl in the Silk Dress. He glanced up once more at the water tower on the hill—everything—couldn't even get a bath. Good gracious! a thought had struck him suddenly—the Girl in the Silk Dress.

His key turned in the lock. The door swung open, and closed behind him; a light had been left burning for his coming. Immediately he sensed something strange in the atmosphere of the hall. His eyes turned quickly to find those of the Girl in the Silk Dress watching him, something new in their blue depths. Then, unbelievably, gracefully, slowly, her wide blue skirt swaying gently, she seemed to move towards him. Surely the Squire's wine had been of a most potent brew. John retreated till he felt the stout oak door at his back. His ardor for the Girl in the Silk Dress turned suddenly cold. He would have given anything to be anywhere but there. He knew he was dreaming, seeing impossibilities; but now the beautiful, terrifying vision had almost reached him. A white hand fluttered out and touched his shoulder—a warm living hand! And then his glance, straying beyond the lovely head, so close to his, found the Girl in the Silk Dress still standing immovably against her newel post; and her vivid face, welcoming expression, seemed insipid now, a mere thing of paint. The living, breathing reality was in his arms—Rosamond. All the repressed passion of a reserved man sang suddenly in his veins. He held her close, closer—but she laughed now, and pushed him away.

"I thought I'd give you a surprise", she murmured, "steal some of the admiration you've been lavishing on the Girl in the Silk Dress. I copied her gown for a masquerade, last Christmas. You've been treating me

as if I were merely part of the house furnishings. Am I as nice as our ancestress—or as Mary Linton?"

"You have them both absolutely faded", he told her fervently, drawing on the fund of slang he had brought from America.

The next day John March went about with a rather preoccupied expression on his face. He tapped walls, examined pipes, and cogitated mightily. And then he was surprised that Rosamond felt herself neglected. Surely any sensible person should understand that when a man is engaged with really important matters, women and love must wait.

Shortly before midnight he crept down the stairs, and, with Aunt Leila's permission, took up his position as close as possible to the wall beside which the Girl in the Silk Dress was supposed to walk. Aunt Leila, pallid against her pillows in the faint moonlight, watched him with interest. And presently through the stillness of the room came the soft swish, swish, as of a silk skirt swinging by. Close beside him the rustle seemed to hesitate, then go slowly on once more. John's hand was against the paneling, and he moved it along to where the slight cessation of sound had suggested a pause on the part of their ghostly visitor. Had he imagined that pause? And was he imagining a slight looseness in the paneling? Taking note of the position of that particular panel, he said good-night to Aunt Leila, and went to bed.

About noon the next day, when Aunt Leila was dressed, and in her chair, John invited Rosamond—whose classes occupied her only in the afternoon—to come to the Oak Parlor, as he rather hoped to introduce her to the ghost.

His aunt, torn between a feeling that any investigation was sacrilege, and her natural human curiosity, watched him tap on the paneling with a small hammer, until he found a comparatively loose board and proceeded to remove it.

He peered into the opening he had created, and said triumphantly, "There's your ghost, the Spirit of the Water Pipe—and, by Jove! that was a real hunch I had. There was a pause at this point, and no wonder. A metal box that has evidently been here for many a year, has slipped forward and dented the pipe, so that it is almost closed".

He drew out the box, and Aunt Leila, with a cry, held out her hand for it. "My father's rosewood box—I knew that key was a clue, but I couldn't remember what it used to open. Child, run and get the key out of the secret compartment in the newel post. I'm sure it will fit this box."

It did, but some oil was needed before the lock would turn; and then was displayed a hoard of golden sovereigns, and in the midst of them, a tiny leather case.

"Honoria's ring" Aunt Leila exclaimed. And it was—three marvellous rubies in a carved setting. It glistened and gleamed and caught the light; and Rosa-

mond slipped it on her finger, her expression suggesting that she, also, had found something almost as important as love. There was in the box a paper signed by Grandfather March which stated that he was hiding the money and the ring where they would be safe from thieves, as he had seen some rough-looking men from the railway-construction gangs, hanging around the place.

"We three are his only living descendants", John told them, "so the treasure belongs equally to each of us. There will be plenty of money to keep Aunt Leila in comfort for years. And perhaps, if you are willing, Aunt, we might have the ring—for our share; and I'll deed my share in it to Rosamond for an engagement present. She's so like the Girl in the Silk Dress that we've got to keep her in the family—to bring us luck."

"But John," Rosamond beamed on him, in appreciation of his cleverness, "how did you ever happen to think of the water pipe?"

"Why, as I stood on the terrace last night, and noticed the lights wink out at twelve o'clock, I happened to look up at the water tower, and remembered that the water, also, was turned off at that hour. So it suddenly occurred to me that the water pipe ran through that wall, and that it might be the air whispering back into the pipes as the water withdrew that made the sound like the swish of a silk skirt".

Aunt Leila smiled a trifle wistfully. "There are so many things beyond our ken", she repeated, "I'd like to go on thinking it was the Girl in the Silk Dress who led us to the hiding-place; who every midnight passes, light and evanescent as a breath of air".

SUZANNE AND SUSANNA

STORY II

SUZANNE AND SUSANNA

Shoes! ! !

Reminiscent of paths already trodden, suggestive of paths still unguessed, they stood on a shelf in her wardrobe—shoes and slippers of every description, for every occasion, in every stage from perfection to dilapidation. There were stout and flimsy shoes; shabby and down-at-heel shoes saved for rainy, or quiet home days; new and stylish shoes, lately bought and reserved for rare, special occasions—and so on down the list to a pair of coquettish, up-to-the-minute black slippers with high red heels.

They hinted, those red heels, of "Suzanne", which she preferred, rather than of "Susanna" which her God-parents had wished upon her, and to which her friends clung—it seeming more appropriate to her practical ways.

Tiny feet had Susanna; and so could buy sample shoes for a song. Hence the profusion—for her salary was modest, and her parents not especially affluent.

And of course, their hearts' darlings, Dot and Biff, the sixteen-year-old twins, were quite competent to absorb any surplus.

As Susanna came down the stairs, these modern youngsters were jigging gaily to a particularly jazzy tune, turned loose by their expensive gramophone. But at sight of her they simultaneously burst into song; adapting to the jazz melody the words of a song stolen from a popular movie, and used to plague their elder sister.

"Oh! Susanna, don't you cry for me:

I'm off to Arizona, with my girl upon my knee—"

"Hey! hold on; I want you to help me with my algebra—with my French—" they called after her as she disappeared through the front door.

But this evening she paid no heed to their pleas; for from her bedroom window she had seen a slim masculine form descend the steps of the big Allen house which loomed up across the tiny park. Perhaps—if she hurried—

She met him just beside the fountain in the centre of the park; and as the path was narrow he could scarcely avoid pausing a moment to speak to Susanna, with whom he had been a fellow-student in high-school a number of years before.

"Whither away, Sue? Going to attend the meeting at the Temple, I suppose—everybody seems to be doing it. Carlyon must be some speaker".

Susanna had really intended to spend the evening at a meeting of the Business Women's Club; but as she was headed in the wrong direction for that destination, she adopted his suggestion. On such slender chances do momentous decisions turn.

"Yes—yes—I'm going to the Temple".

"Well, so long! Have to see a chap at the club—see you, I suppose, at the Creightons' dance?"

Whistling, he pursued his way. And Susanna stood looking down at the water, where some leaves, drifting idly about, proclaimed the passing of summer. She was seeing, however, only Carey Allen's face—the brushed-back brown hair; the humorous, tolerant, brown eyes; the perhaps slightly self-indulgent chin.

He had been her hero for eight years; ever since that memorable occasion on which he had fought that lubberly Dick Wilson for knocking her books into the mud, and then laughing jeeringly at her efforts to retrieve them. It had probably been, on Carey's part, only the involuntary action of a chivalrous boy; but it had meant more than that to her. Then, having thus constituted himself her champion, he had seemed to feel some obligation to pay her certain boyish attentions—for a short time—in fact, till Fifi Creighton had come back from boarding-school, and attracted his attention by her impish ways.

But Fifi was Fifi Creighton still, while Carey Allen, though intermittently attached to her train, had a new

fancy every few months, preferably some visiting charmer.

And Susanna had not been asked to Fifi's party; though, owing to long residence in the town, her family hovered on the outskirts of the exclusive crowd of which the Creightons and the Allens were the high lights; and Susanna had always before been asked at least to Fifi's larger affairs. As she walked on towards the Temple, she was turning this question over in her mind—why was she, Susanna, set aside, considered uninteresting, while Fifi, at the same age, was still queening it as belle of the town? Susanna decided comfortingly that it was because of the Creighton money, which enabled Fifi to sport a run-about, and Paris clothes.

The Temple was already filling up, and Susanna was herded into a rather prominent seat, directly before the speaker. The latter was a newcomer in the town, a woman who said plain things in a plain way, but usually gave her hearers a worth-while thought to carry home.

Susanna had never before attended service in the Temple, such religion as she had being of the orthodox variety. Perhaps she was in an unusually receptive mood, but however that may be, it seemed to her presently that the lecturer was looking straight at her, gazing into her very soul; that these words were meant exclusively for her:

"Dear ones, whatever you do, don't hang onto old things. Let go, discard, give away, throw away—for

the more you let go, the more you receive. Your old shoes, for instance, don't hang onto a shabby down-at-heels pair of shoes on the off chance that you may need them for a rainy day, a country hike. Look smart, even on rainy days, on country hikes—lots more shoes where those came from. This is a world of abundance for those who realize it. And those shabby old shoes—has it ever occurred to you that they bear the imprint of all the paths they have trodden, the sorrows, the disappointments they have carried you through? Get rid of them—buy new ones—tread new paths on smart new shoes".

Though Susanna knew the speaker could not see her shabby shoes—it had looked like rain when she was dressing—she, herself, felt terribly conscious of them. When the meeting was over she tried to slip out as unobtrusively as possible—surely **everyone** was looking right at her feet.

She arrived home in rather a dazed state of mind. However, next morning—a bright autumn morning—she awakened, filled with a new resolve. Her mother had been requesting donations for a rummage sale to be held by her church society; so, before leaving for the office, Susanna presented that surprised woman with six pairs of shoes and slippers; all past their pristine smartness, but with some good wear in them, yet, for needy feet.

"What's the big idea, Sue?" asked Dot, "surely you are not thinking of getting married, are you?"

Biff started to say: "Aw! now, use some judgment—good old Susanna isn't likely—" but stopped in the middle of his sentence. For there was something about his elder sister this morning that even an indifferent young brother could sense—a something of alertness, of new reslove. And Gosh Ding it! she had on her new suit—Gee! swanky! that's what!

As "Suzanne" tripped gaily down the street, her dainty feet and ankles displaying to advantage the smart lattice-strapped shoes which were to search out new paths for her to tread, she was pleasantly conscious of adding something to the scenery, of having suddenly become visible, as if she had just thrown off an invisible cloak. The women, perhaps, were wondering where she had purchased her shoes, her suit; the men—and you'll pardon a rejuvenated Suzanne if this seemed to her more important—surely even the most aged, the most sedate, gave a flirt of his eye towards her twinkling ankles. As for the bolder ones—

At the office the girls stared at her a little resentfully. They had certainly not expected any competition from that quarter. And later on she was rather embarrassed to find the Great Mogul, himself, when on his morning inspection tour, staring fascinatedly in the direction of her feet.

He was not one to notice feminine apparel, as such, but as a business man no detail was too insignificant for his attention. Perhaps some mental reaction on his part, to her improved appearance, was responsible for

the surprise Suzanne received in the afternoon. The manager, coming from a conference in the inner sanctum, told her that she was being promoted to a position which would mean more contact with the outside world, and carry a slightly increased salary.

Hm! And she had often wondered why girls whom she believed to possess less ability than herself, had been set over her—girls of whom she had spoken scornfully as "putting all their salary on their backs". Backsliding a little "Susanna" wondered where you got the reward for virtue.

When she went out for lunch, she saw Fifi Creighton in her run-about—waiting, no doubt, for her father. She greeted Suzanne—whom for months she had passed with an almost unseeing nod—with a bright smile, and a darting look of renewed interest.

The next day Suzanne continued to follow her new plan in regard to apparel. But, of course, the novelty had worn off a trifle; she was not such an object of interest.

When she left the office in the afternoon, it was raining. The prudence of Susanna, coming to the fore, reproached Suzanne for risking her new suit, new shoes. Then, as she hesitated in the doorway, Carey Allen came along—all the big businesses in town, including his father's were carried on in that block. He bowed casually to Suzanne; then his glance accidentally lighted on her modish, but not too serviceable shoes.

Heavens ! should shoes so dainty, so diminutive, be exposed to the rain-wet pavement? Perish the thought.

"Oh! I say", he exclaimed pleasantly, "too wet for you to walk—just wait while I run round the corner for the car—spin you home in a jiffy".

He was not sufficiently interested to suggest prolonging the trip; but she was not expecting miracles; so she ran up her home steps vastly pleased with her day.

The next morning's mail brought an invitation to the Creighton party—a masque—and Suzanne was so exhilarated that she recklessly made up another bundle for the rummage sale, including several more pairs of shoes. One pair, which was not too bad, she looked at consideringly for a while; then remembering a path of severe disappointment down which those shoes had borne her, she tossed them in the discard.

That afternoon, her half-holiday—she spent enjoyably in a round of the lady's wear shops. "No, Susanna", she said severely, to her old self, "your blue dress is **not** good enough to wear to Fifi's party". But the ultra-smart black evening gown she purchased **was!** oh, absolutely!

Then becoming reckless enough to go the whole hog—even mentally to indulge in that vulgar expression—she visited, on the afternoon preceding the masque, a hairdresser's establishment. Snip! snip! Off came her long black hair, which she had been wearing in a sedate and rather antiquated coil at the back of her

head. You should have seen how the short black waves clung to her head, how they fluffed out suddenly over the ears, adding breadth and archness to a face that before had seemed a trifle long and severe.

And then when the new black dress with the crimson slashings was slipped on, over that little black head, over the scant and abbreviated silken accessories which a fashionable toilette demands; when her already good color was accentuated by a touch of rouge from a hither-to untouched compact; when the grey eyes grew black with the excitement engendered by the vision in her mirror; when the little black slippers with the red heels found their appointed place; when she came downstairs with her new cloak over her arm—well! even the twins were awed, and they took **some** aweing.

"Why! look who's here!" Biff soon found voice enough to exclaim. "Our Suzanne, no less—**some** flapper, I'll tell the pop-eyed world".

And, truly enough, from looking her twenty-five years and a bit, she had bobbed back—literally—into her teens.

"I say, Sis, Buster's bringing over his old man's limousine to take Dot and me to the movies; just you hold on a sec', and we'll spin you over to Fifi's in style."

The Creighton door flew open at her approach; a dusky Turk bowed her into the dim interior, and waved a hand towards the cloak-room. Later, she was shown into the double drawing-room which was cleared for dancing.

Suzanne, who had provided herself with an amply-disguising mask, was immediately claimed and led to a pile of cushions along the wall by a bulky pirate, whose whispered conversation soon helped her to identify him as a young business man of her acquaintance. Disguising her voice, she absent-mindedly responded to his sallies, while she eagerly watched the guests straggling in from the hall. Some she could place, others remained mysteries.

Ah! that slim form she'd never mistake. Carey was in ordinary evening clothes, but masked.

Presently the Turk—Suzanne recognized him as Jack Sorley, Fifi's faithful shadow—came in; and with the usual appurtenances of hats, tumblers, handkerchiefs and cards, performed some supposedly magical tricks. Then a really funny clown somersaulted around the room, and made amusing quips at the expense of everyone he recognized.

The music soon started, but after a dance or two screens were brought in and placed across the archway between the two rooms. Then the girls were escorted into the back room and asked to seat themselves on a row of chairs, their feet pushed well forward under the screens. The plan was that the men should choose their partners for an "adventure", by the feet which most pleased their fancy.

A wave of excitement passed over Suzanne. Thank Heaven! her feet and slippers were irreproachable. Here was one time when she would have the ad-

vantage over the bigger girls. She looked down the line; surely hers was the prettiest pair of feet in the row. But would the men be chosen alphabetically? If so, the A's would be first. If only—

The A's had it; for surely that was Billy Adams making silly remarks on the other side of the screen. Fortunately he had been lately married, so would know his wife's shoes, and be in duty bound to choose **her.**

"The bronze pumps with the silver buckles", he chose; so Vera Adams giggled and passed around the screen.

Ah! that was surely Carey, now; Suzanne knew his laugh. Would he recognize someone's shoes, or would he choose by merit? If the latter—why—

"The little black slippers with the red heels".

Suzanne's heart almost burst with excitement as she came round the screen and was handed over to her partner, whose brown eyes, seen through the slits in his mask, twinkled approval of her appearance.

The Turk gave them the written instructions for the "adventure" which they were to seek; and in a minute or two she had retrieved her cloak, and was cosily tucked into the front seat of Carey's car.

"You're Serene Lesieur, aren't you?" he asked a trifle doubtfully. Perhaps some magnetic current emanating from Suzanne had suggested the doubt.

What with the mask, and the scarf across her mouth, her voice was muffled. "Oh, no!" she answered, but

a little laugh gave her words the lie; and he leaned back, satisfied.

"Now for the orders—'Six blocks east—five blocks north', you'll have to keep count". Later, consulting his instructions again: "Well, so far, so good. Now 'Turn to the right, and follow the river to the pine tree which leans towards the North Star; then turn to the left for a block till you come to the rough-cast house. Enter' ".

It was a warm October night; moonless but with myriad stars powdering the sky with gold. As they drove slowly along the river road, the sounds and scents of evening all around them, a sensation of peace, of the utter fitness of things enfolded them. They were sorry when at a cross-road a great pine leaning distinctly towards the north loomed up against the sky.

The left road was little more than a lane, and the car bumped alarmingly. But almost immediately they found themselves before a dilapidated rough-cast house; and Carey jumped out, Suzanne following him. They stood a moment eyeing the house. The door was slightly ajar, and a faint gleam came from within, though the shuttered windows showed no light.

"Grass a bit damp", said Carey, "those little shoes"! He swung her up into his arms; setting her down only when they reached the doorstep. And Suzanne laughed —oh! shades of Susanna!

He rapped, but received no answer. "We were told to walk in—let's", he said. And they moved a little doubtfully over the threshold.

It was not a prepossessing house. From a bare, half-ruined hall, from which a rickety stair ascended, they passed into an equally dilapidated room. Here an old man sat mumbling, and fumbling with a pack of cards—while a tame crow nodded sleepily on a perch near him.

Carey gave a startled exclamation and started to back out; but Suzanne, who was absolutely above herself tonight, shoved him forward.

The old scarecrow turned towards them a withered old face, from which queer bright eyes surveyed them curiously. Then he spoke suddenly, in a weak cracked voice: "Gals as wears red heels is allers tryin' to catch a feller".

It was Suzanne who tried to back out now; but Carey, having apparently decided that the adventure was harmless, barred her way, laughing teasingly, "No, you don't, Red Heels; we'll have our fortunes told, and see if you're going to catch that 'feller' ".

He threw a bill on the table; and the claw-like fingers clutched it and stowed it away with amazing celerity; while the crow wakened up long enough to give an approving "Caw! Caw!"

Deftly shuffling the cards, the ancient produced the queen of clubs. And then an air of uncanny unreality invaded that squalid den—as if nothing that

seemed to be, was; while the invisible became almost tangible. The grotesque figure at the table took on an air of power; and his masked visitors seemed to shrink, to become merely pawns to be moved at will, to be mumbled over as were the cards, now set in rapid succession on the table.

"Ladies first—he, he! Queen o' clubs, ace o' diamonds, two o' clubs, ten o' diamonds, jack o' diamonds, six o' hearts, nine o' spades, queen o' spades, ace o' clubs. He, he! She has her eye on a fair young man. Going to git somepin that's been in yer mind fer years—somepin been holdin' ye back. Now ye've let go. Beware of the dark woman—he'll need lookin' after—wimmen likes him. But ye'll be happy as most—not sayin' much".

He waved her aside, and Carey moved forward.

"Jack o' diamonds" the mumbling voice started in again. "He, he! four o' spades, seven o' diamonds, queen o' clubs, two o' hearts, king o' diamonds, three o' hearts, five o' hearts, six o' diamonds. He, he! She's foolin' ye". A woman's had her eye on ye fer years—ye'll find out about it soon enough—at a shindy. Ol' man—relation o' yourn—givin' ye better job soon. Ye'll need it, seems like. Guess ye'll have to settle down a bit—allers have lots o' friends—happier than ye deserve—he, he!" And "Caw, caw!" said the crow, and went to sleep again.

"Let's get out. I feel creepy all over", said Carey. He paused at the threshold to explain: "It's old Gramp

Button. He must be a hundred. Sorley and I came out here once when we were kids—suppose that's why he sent me here—knew I'd understand what to do. I didn't catch on till I got inside".

Quite unceremoniously he picked her up again, and carried her over to the motor. Then climbing in beside her, he whispered, mockingly: "Gals as wears red heels is allers tryin' to catch a feller'—eh—Serene?"

"And what about the others?" she murmured through her scarf.

"The others? oh! you mean that the demure ones may be trying, too, only they lack technique?"

"The more you let go, the more you have", quoted Suzanne, cryptically.

"Good advice—here goes". He caught her scarf with a firm hand; then her mask came away, too, and Suzanne found herself being most thoroughly and scientifically kissed.

Back at the Creighton house, they found a crowd of laughing, chattering, young people recounting their various "adventures". Then Suzanne found herself whirling around the waxed floor in Carey's arms; and she felt that whatever the future might bring forth, nothing could ever take from her the memory of this breathless, blissful, evening.

She was soon claimed by another man, and shortly afterwards came the order to unmask.

It was with some trepidation that she removed her mask—which had been returned to her at the gate—

and exclamations of surprise came from all directions when the fascinating masked lady of the red heels was revealed as erstwhile prosaic Susanna.

When she found the courage to look around for Carey, she saw that he had joined the circle of men already gathering around Serene Lesieur, Fifi's popular little French-Canadian house guest. Well, that settled it—he'd be occupied in that quarter for the rest of the evening. But Suzanne, too, was being besieged by masculine admirers—balm for any feminine heart—and she allowed herself to be monopolized for half-an-hour by the pirate who had been her attendant swain in the early part of the evening.

Anyway, it had been good while it lasted, she mused, as she circled the rooms with her prosperous-looking 'pirate'; and her new work promised to become increasingly interesting. Oh! she'd manage.

Then—"My dance", said Carey's voice close to her ear; and he whisked her off before her cavalier had time to protest.

"You've danced long enough with that porpoise", Carey went on.

"Oh! do you call him fat?" she asked mischievously.

"I think there's just two hundred pounds too much of him," said Carey, viciously.

When the music stopped, another acquaintance came up to claim Suzanne; but Carey, before he re-

sponded to a signal which Fifi was sending him, managed to whisper: "Don't forget, I'm taking you home".

That was like Carey—always a good sport—he meant to carry it off in style.

"You're a nice boy, Carey", she said, on the way home. "It was too bad to fool you like that".

"Who? Me? Where do you get that stuff?"

"You know you thought I was Serene Lesieur".

"For about a minute and a half, I did; but there was something darn familiar about you—sort of homey—so I took a good look at you out at Gramp's; and in spite of the bobbed hair and the red heels, there was something reminiscent of Suzanne, foreign to Serene. And then when I kissed you—Suzanne, do you remember that night, years ago, when I took you home from a party?"

"Ye-es-" faintly.

Well, that night—you gave a queer little gasp as if you'd never been kissed before".

"I hadn't".

"And tonight—I knew it must be you—for you gave that same little gasp—as if you'd never been kissed since".

"I hadn't".

"But, Sue—all these years—there must have been heaps of men—"

Downright Susanna might have told him that the temptations hadn't occurred as frequently as he seemed to imagine—Suzanne knew better. "Perhaps", she said, "I was just—waiting".

"Suzanne! !"

"Carey! !"

Shoo! !

TREASURE OF LEECH RIVER

STORY III

TREASURE OF LEECH RIVER

"See, there are the apple trees", cried Treasure. Brown-gold hair flying, brown-gold eyes sparkling, slim and trim and straight in her khaki hiking suit, she sped forward along the path, between the debris of ruined cabins and the singing river, and paused beneath the two old trees which, moss-covered and decrepit from age and neglect, were still struggling sparsely into bloom.

Richard Scarborough, following more leisurely, smiled appreciatively at the charming contrast of her radiant youth against the great pile of rotting timbers which marked the site of some large building of the vanished mining camp. Above her head, on the outstretched ragged limb of one of the trees, some one had hung the skeleton of a lantern picked up from among the ruins; and this somehow created a ghostly suggestion of hospitality. The sun-bright air seemed to waver before Richard's eyes; and for a moment he received the impression that Treasure was welcoming

him back after a long absence, that she had been waiting for him through the years. But how quaintly dressed she was, and her face—was it not older and harder than that of the Treasure Errington he had known but a few short hours?

"They were planted—the apple trees—by Governor Kennedy and his daughters when he came up to inspect the gold-fields in '65," Treasure was telling him. "And that"—she indicated the fallen timbers behind her—"is all that is left of the Gold Commissioner's Office, the Court-house, and the Police Station".

Richard, shaking off the strange delusion which had puzzled him, gazed in surprise at the weed-overgrown mass before him. He was just out from England, and found it hard to realize that such offices as she had mentioned could ever have been required in this wilderness. However, she assured him that at one time twenty-five hundred men had been at work near this spot. "And these must be the trees your uncle referred to".

He tossed down the spade he had been carrying, and drew a paper from his pocket. "'Three hundred yards due west from the apple trees which the Governor planted in front of the Court-house, there is a rock oddly shaped like a chair; and in a pocket under the rock I put the box'. That seems explicit enough, but the rock may have been removed. I suppose this is all new growth?"

"Yes, a fire swept through here years ago, completing the work of destruction which time and the weather had begun". She spoke as one repeating a lesson; and laughed joyously at his slightly surprised look. "I often come out here; and I have studied up all I can find out about the Leech River gold rush. It seems to have a fascination for me. But nobody can tell me much. Old Bill might; but he's getting queer, and you can't be sure how much he remembers, and how much he is just making up".

"It didn't last long, apparently" Richard mused, "My great-uncle says in his letter that he was outfitting at Victoria, in 1864, to go to the Cariboo gold fields when word came in that Lieutenant Peter Leech and his exploring party had discovered gold along the Sooke River and a tributary they named the Leech. So everybody rushed out here to stake claims".

"I'm so glad Daddy's father was your uncle's friend, and so sent you to us. I'm sort of glad Dad is away, too, so that I had to come with you to look for the gold— or whatever it was your uncle wanted you to find". She danced a bit in her excitement; and her short, flying hair tossed glints of gold around her head, and into Richard Scarborough's dazzled eyes, so that he would have dallied there in the May sunshine. But she would have none of it; laughed teasingly; was impatient to find the chair-like rock.

As they entered the underbrush a covey of quail rose with a sudden whirr-r-r of wings, and disappeared,

protesting in staccato notes at this invasion of their wilderness.

Richard had a compass, and took his bearings; but to keep straight was not easy. Trees had grown up since the camp had been abandoned; even since the fire had passed. Undergrowth made the search more difficult. So they paused for lunch, which they ate on the river bank; kindling a fire and frying bacon and potatoes. Treasure was an accomplished camper; and Richard a strong and willing helper. She smiled approval of his purposeful movements, sturdy figure, alert brown eyes, and closely cropped dark hair; and the quest, which had brought him across the world to Vancouver Island, no doubt cast round him an element of romance.

"Your uncle must have been very old if he was here in '64", she said, as Richard drew out his pipe, and sat watching the river swirl by over it's impeding boulders.

"He was eighty-five when he died, a few years ago. I couldn't get away, then, as I hadn't finished my apprenticeship in an architect's office. He left me a few thousand pounds on the understanding that I should come out within a specified time to look for his lost chest. He had grown a trifle vague towards the end of his life; but whenever I went to see him, he began to talk about the Leech River days, and would get quite excited until I promised to take a shot at finding

his cash or cache—we were never quite sure which he meant".

An old man appeared around a bend of the stream. He filled a pan with sand, dipped it into the river, whirled it dextrously, and gazed fixedly at it's contents.

"That's Leech River Bill", Treasure answered Richard's look of enquiry. "He's been wandering around in the district for years, continually searching for the mother lode; though most people believe there is no such thing, and that most of the gold was taken out of the river in the sixties. It didn't run to a million dollars, all told, and was mostly flake gold; though a negro named Booth did get a nugget worth seventy-five dollars".

"It was the flood which covered the bars in the spring of '65, and made panning impossible, that caused my uncle to leave hurriedly, and go to the Cariboo", Richard told her. "And while he was there he heard that the Leech River diggings had petered out; so he never came back. He intended to; but some new excitement always started him off hurriedly on another trail. He came out from the Klondike, at the beginning of this century, in such poor health that he thought only of getting home to his people in England. He never quite regained his health, but lingered on for twenty years".

When they had again taken up their search for the chair-like rock, Treasure pointed out a heap of logs

crowning a little knoll near at hand; and remarked that that was all that remained of Leech River's much vaunted hotel "The Mount Ararat". " 'The only hotel in the district fitted up for the accommodation of ladies', according to the advertisement in the old files of the Colonist," she told him, laughingly. "I imagine", she added, "that the ladies in question weren't overwhelmed with luxury, even at that".

But Richard had paused, and was gazing at the overgrown pile of timbers as if he had seen a ghost. "The Mount Ararat", he kept repeating. Then "Long Graham's treasure".

When the living, breathing Treasure by his side touched his arm to recall him to the present, he looked at her vaguely, so that she cried out imploringly, "Mr. Scarborough, don't look like that—you make me feel spooky—I'll be running back to the station, and leaving you to search for the rock, alone".

"This place makes **me** feel 'spooky'," he laughed a trifle shakily. "Do you know, for a moment I seemed to see that hotel standing there just as possibly it stood in the days when the camp was roaring—a sort of glorified log shack. I could hear the clink of glasses; and the voices and laughter of the men in the bar. And, absurdly enough, I saw **you** come walking down the steps. The enervating air of your lovely Island seems to make me feel groggy. I'll be going to sleep standing on my feet, next thing I know".

"You've had a long journey. You should have rested up a few days before starting off on this search," she said, with a motherly air that contrasted oddly with her child-like face and figure.

An hour later they came upon a rock which might at one time have looked somewhat like a chair; but an upright piece which might have represented the chair back, had been broken off, perhaps by the impact of a falling tree, for a large log lay just behind it. They had some difficulty in removing the brush which had hidden the rock from their view, but were presently able to start digging, except on the side where the log lay. They uncovered nothing of interest, however, and had stopped to rest, when a cracked, old voice accosted them.

"Is it the gold some says the Wells-Fargo robbers buried here, ye'll be looking fer? Why, it's Dick Scarbor' ain't it?"

Richard looked around, somewhat surprised. With the exception of his school chums, no one had ever called him Dick. He saw a withered, monkey-like face peering at them from the bushes.

"It's Old Bill", Treasure explained. "Yes, Bill, it's Mr. Scarborough. You never miss anything that happens on the Leech, do you? How do you get the news? Moccasin telegraph?"

"Oh! If he be a Mister, I don't know him" said the ancient, with a malicious chuckle; "weren't no Misters on the Leech in them days. Maybe, then, Mister,

it's Long Graham's Treasure you be lookin' fer? There be treasures, and treasures, but yon lassie's the best kind". He nodded amiably at Treasure.

"Thanks for the recommendation, Bill", Treasure said. Then she saw that Richard had forgotten her, was following some train of thought created by Old Bill's remarks.

" 'Long Graham's treasure'," Richard was repeating. "Why, my uncle used to talk about that when his mind began to wander. Perhaps that is what we are looking for. What did the treasure consist of?" he asked the old man.

"He! He!" snickered Old Bill, cunningly. "There be things as I know, and things as I don't know, and things as I don't be tellin' ".

Richard turned to Treasure. "What was it you called the Hotel? It seems—the treasure, I mean—to be mixed up in my mind with that".

"The Mount Ararat."

The old man, who had perched himself on a stone, looking like a mischievous gnome who had popped out of some book of whimsy, spoke up quickly: "The Ararat—it looked purty nifty to us fellers in them days, livin' as we did, first in tents, and then in one room shanties when it got colder, and we had time to get them built. So we no sooner got the gold out of the river, than it went over the bar at the Ararat—But havin' ladies there made a difference, o' course, so it weren't nothin' like so rough as some of the joints

farther up, past the Flats. Still, there was shootin' now and then; and it was there Long Graham died, after staggerin' in out o' the night with a knife between his ribs. Got into a row with a Chinee, who with some others had a bonanza claim down on the Flats. Graham suspicioned the heathens was workin' his claim, too, which was right next theirs, and he threatened to shoot them up—but they got him first. He died in Gentleman Dick's arms—they was pals—and Dick promised to look after his affairs—Dick Scarbor' thet was". He looked across at Richard, and his eyes took on a cunning expression. "I ain't told, an' I ain't tellin', so don't go fer blamin' me, Dick Scarbor'."

"Queer, his mistaking me for my uncle", Richard said, musingly, as the old man disappeared in the brush, "and I'm not considered like Uncle Dick, really!"

"Queer, yes, to our dim understanding", Treasure agreed, seriously. "But might it not be that Bill—some say he's nearly a hundred—growing a little absent concerning the affairs of the present, may have become more sensitive in matters intangible, veiled from us; and so feel undercurrents, of family likenesses mental and physical, which escape our blunter intelligence?"

"You startle me," Richard voiced his surprise, "speaking like a woman, and looking like a child—about eighteen, I should have guessed you to be."

"Because I'm small—I'm twenty-four, as a matter of fact".

"Oh! that accounts—" began Richard, but she interrupted him, quickly.

"For my being allowed to come away out here with you—almost a stranger. But Mother realizes I know my way about—we don't go in for chaperons, much, over here, you see".

"I was going to say 'That accounts for your air of independence". As for chaperons, what are they? The revolt of women has been world-wide, remember. Don't be living in expectation of hearing any criticism of Canadian ways from me—I've been put wise. We had Canadian boys for week-ends during the whole of the war; so I grew up with the sound of Canadian slang, and Canadian opinions in my ears. As a matter of fact I am hoping to settle over here if I can find a healthy architectural outfit looking for a junior partner".

The whistle of a locomotive on the Canadian National Railway roused them to a sense of their surroundings. "Oh! hurry", cried Treasure, "or we'll miss the gas car; and it's too far to walk across the old trail to the stage line".

They ran down the path, and over the great log with it's sapling hand-rail, which served as a bridge over the river; and the deserted mining camp was given over once more to the ghosts of old miners who might still care to visit their former haunts.

The next morning found Treasure and Richard once more at the old camp site; and this time he had brought

n axe to supplement the spade left behind the evening ›efore. But the fallen log which guarded the back of he rock was not easily disposed of, and when they ›aused for lunch they had not managed to dislodge it.

"If this isn't the right rock, and we don't find anyhing, what will you do?" enquired Treasure as she mpaled a split bun on a pointed stick, preparing to nanufacture a 'Hot Dog', with the bun and a sausage rom the pan spluttering busily over the fire.

"Keep on looking", Richard assured her; "I have ı—what do you call it?—hunch—yes—that the box s still here. Call me superstitious, if you wish, but his place has a queer effect on me. I feel as if I had ›een expected. From the moment when I first sighted he ruined cabins, I have had an impression of being velcomed; and while this impression persists, I'll not villingly give up the search". Standing there, sturdy, elf-reliant, devouring a Hot Dog with the hearty ıppetite of the healthy male, he looked anything but ı suitable subject for psychic manifestations. Perhaps he blood of some remote Celtic ancestor stirred within ıim; perhaps some emotion recently born had uneashed an undreamed-of imaginative strain.

Returning again to the chair-like rock, if such it vere, they hacked and heaved, and hacked and heaved, ınd presently the obstruction was removed; and a ittle digging sufficed to expose a natural cavity, a foot, o a foot and a half square, which had been guarded by

a sheet of some kind of metal which fell to pieces upon exposure.

Richard and Treasure sat upon the ground, too excited for a minute to speak or move. For inside the cavity was a box!

"Oh! let's guess what's in it before we look", she finally gasped.

"Very well, you guess first".

"Oh! remember what Old Bill said about Long Graham's treasure—I do hope it's treasure of some kind, don't you? maybe diamonds, or rubies? But, no, of course, in a mining camp—it must be gold".

"Treasure within the box, and Treasure without would be too much for one lone man", Richard declared, with an ardent glance at her glowing face, her gleaming hair. "But, yes, let's hope for treasure—some part of it at least will be mine; and I'm likely to need some right away to supplement my modest charms—Treasure, I haven't known you very long—but"—

Treasure looked at the box, then at the man, and probably decided that what he had to say would keep, for she answered, "Uh-huh! but honestly, I'll 'bust' if I don't soon see what's in that box".

"The eternal feminine", he jibed; but he proceeded to haul out the moss-grown, heavily clamped wooden chest, and set it on the ground between them. "But we haven't any key", he remembered.

"Stupid! the axe", she prompted.

He took the axe, and as carefully as possible broke the lock; and the 'treasure' lay before them.

There were papers and photographs, and odds and ends of many kinds, and a jeweled seal which Richard seized upon with interest. "Why, that's the Scarborough crest", he exclaimed, "this is Uncle's long-lost box, certainly." Then with a cry of surprise he picked up a faded photograph. "Why, it's you—no—she's older—dressed oddly—the woman I saw when I came up the path".

"Richard, what are you talking about? Let me see." She took the photograph, while he sat there, looking at her strangely.

"But, who can it be?", she asked. "I suppose she does look like me—I wonder—"

Richard began to go through the papers, and so absorbed he became in deciphering one of them, that he did not hear the approach of Leech River Bill.

"Ho! Ho! It's Long Graham's Treasure", he chuckled.

"There doesn't seem to be any treasure here," Richard answered, soberly.

"The picter, stoopid, she was Long Graham's darter—he called her Treasure; so everybody else did, too".

Everybody was calling him stupid, and Richard felt inclined to agree with them. He really could not understand what it was all about.

"But here's what seems to be a certificate of marriage between Richard Scarborough and Teresa Graham."

"Sure! Ain't I on it, too? Wilby Spratt?"

" 'Wilby Spratt'? Why, yes, your name is on it. But—why—my uncle spoke of you—told me to try to find you".

"Yer uncle? Who be ye?" the old man grew a trifle vague again, but brightened up when he heard Richard's explanation. "Oh! then, ye be Dick Scarbor'. Ain't I the smart one? Yer uncle, was he—Gentleman Dick? And he told ye to find me? Then I reckon it's all right to be tellin' ye."

"He was your friend. You signed the wedding certificate?" Treasure prompted, gently, so as not to break the old man's train of thought.

"She was a high-speerited one, and the boys was all after her. She sort of held court every night—in the parlor, o' course—she was a lady and them kind didn't come in the bar—except the night when her father died—and then she was rarin' and tearin' and callin' us cowards because we didn't string up the Chinee that done it, to the nearest tree. But shootin' was one thing, and knives in the dark was another, so the Chinee got away. And she never forgive Gentleman Dick fer not gettin' that heathen. She'd more than a dash of Long Graham's temper, and they set a heap of store by each other, he thinkin' no man was good enough fer her. So they hadn't dared to tell

him, though they'd been married a month or so, her and Gentleman Dick—tied up by a preacher who was here fer a while, then went off to furrin parts. Dick got tired of her tantrums after her dad's death, and when the flood came, and workin' shut down, he jest picked up and went off to the Cariboo, meanin' to come back soon. But he never come. I was with him when he heard she was dead, and he took on a bit. I heard later there was a young un; and maybe he did, too; but I never see him after the Cariboo days. He didn't hev much luck there; and soon went off to South Africa, where they'd found di'monds or suthin' ".

Richard took up the photograph again, and tried to decipher the faded writing on the back of it. He thought it might be "Love from Treasure". But the likeness—what connection had 'Long Graham's Treasure' with Treasure Errington? Mrs. Errington, he knew, had been born and educated in England.

"Could she be some connection of yours?" he asked, "the likeness is extraordinary".

"I was wondering, too," Treasure told him, "and I think I have solved the mystery. You see Dad and Mother Errington adopted me when I was three years old. My real mother was a sort of working companion to them; her husband died soon after I was born. I think my mother was brought up by a minister and his wife, and that her mother died when she was born".

"But then—it seems entirely likely that you're Uncle Dick's granddaughter", Richard marveled, "the pieces of the puzzle are beginning to fall into place. The instructions he left begin to seem more reasonable in the light of this information. He was always very secretive about his life abroad".

"Well," Treasure declared, scornfully, the gold in her eyes emitting sparks, "whatever he is to me, I don't think much of him—either as a husband, or father, or grandfather".

"These world wanderers are usually a total loss as family men", Richard admitted, "but his estate is not all settled yet; and I imagine there'll be a considerable sum of money coming to you if your claim can be established. And I'm hoping to be able to prove to you that the Scarborough men are not all quitters".

At this Old Bill, whom they had quite forgotten began to chuckle, "Dick Scarbor' and Long Graham's Treasure, allus the life o' the party—an' Wilby Spratt was their friend—but he knows when he ain't wanted, he does." He got up and wandered away, muttering vacantly, "Dick Scarbor' and Long Graham's Treasure"—

And, listening to him Richard was again vaguely conscious of a strange stir of life around him—the quick tap-tap of hammers; the slamming of logs as of cabins in the building; men rushing here and there; the sharp ring of pick and shovel from the gravelly

bed of the near-by river fork; the sound of laughter and the clink of glasses from the adjacent hotel—and, yes, that was Treasure, Long Graham's Treasure, coming down the steps, floating gracefully towards him, her long, full skirts billowing in the breeze; and her face, her lovely face with its aura of gold-brown hair, was no longer hard or worldly-wise. She seemed now to smile upon him benignly, as if well pleased; was taking his hand in hers—why, how warm they were—Oh! it was Treasure—little Treasure Errington—who had taken his hand, was speaking urgently.

"Richard—Richard—what's the matter—don't look like that—"

There was nothing around him but woods, and yonder a pile of rotting timbers which had once been a building. And through an opening in the trees he beheld a timid deer watching them curiously, poised ready for flight.

He laughed, and brushed his hand across his eyes· "I told you this enervating climate was getting me· I've been seeing visions—of the Leech River camp of other days. Such is the power of suggestion. Old Bill must be a hypnotist".

"Poor Old Bill. We must see that he has a warm place to stay in this winter", Treasure said. Then the soft note still in her voice, she murmured, regretfully, "But it's too bad, after your long journey, and all this trouble—after all you've found no tre—I mean gold or rubies".

"No treasure, you were going to say" Richard smiled down at her. "Oh! I may not have come off so badly— I'm daring to hope that I have found—at the journey's end—the treasure that is said to be far above rubies".

THE SHADOW OF BALDY

STORY IV

THE SHADOW OF BALDY

The lake lay still and lovely in the shadow of the everlasting hills, but Hayden's appreciation of the tranquil scene dimmed slightly as his gaze shifted upward to where the crest of Baldy rose, cold and bare, above the lesser peaks. Involuntarily his hand went up to the thinning spot on his own crest. Confound that impertinent mountain. He turned from the balcony, and stepped swiftly and silently into the bedroom. Then his heart almost stopped beating, for through the door of the dressing-room he could see Angela's slim form, and her face, half turned towards him was twisting and untwisting in the most horrible, hair-raising grimaces.

He stepped quickly back onto the balcony, and paused irresolute. What should he do? It was the second time that he had been the unseen witness of some such spasm, and knowing her sensitiveness, her frank pride in her fair beauty, he had hesitated to offer help or comfort, whichever should be needed, according to whether the seizure were physical or mental.

Oh! he couldn't leave her, perhaps to suffer alone. Noisily, this time, he again entered the room; and she heard him and turned around, seemingly her normal self once more, only a heightened color and an absent expression in the eyes testifying to the recent disturbance.

"Oh! Nor-man"—how he loved the way she always drawled the first syllable of his name—"I promised Derry and Dell we'd join them in a climb up Elephant to where you can see the sun shine on the glacier on Baldy".

"All right with me", he agreed; and they went down together, pausing on the front veranda to pick up Derry and Dell, and exchange pleasantries with some of the other guests of this popular little summer hotel.

And of course Angela had to have a few words with that unnecessarily sleek, and darkly handsome, Levasseur. Hayden had never imagined himself in the role of the jealous husband, but there was something about Levasseur that rendered less physically perfect men uneasy. "Hypnotism", a disgruntled male had growled in Hayden's ear, the night before.

"Give my love to Baldy", called Levasseur, as Angela ran down the steps to join her husband.

Hayden glared, and Angela laughed gleefully. "The mountain, silly," she reminded him; then a shadow flitted across her face. "I wonder why there's always a Baldy, or Baldpate, at every mountain resort one goes to—it sounds so horribly—middle-aged—somehow".

"Does it make you feel like that, too?" he asked, surprised; and thinking, as he looked at the lovely little face beneath its halo of fair hair, that she looked as young as on their wedding day, ten years before.

"Middle age? What's that?" Derry called back in his incurably youthful voice.

"It's what you know your friends are, but never admit you, yourself, can possibly be", Hayden informed him, and set out at a pace warranted to prove his youth and fitness.

But late that night, when the moon was rising over Baldy, there was gloom on his forehead, as he paced the long veranda, listening to the satisfied murmur of voices from the corner where Angela and Levasseur had secluded themselves.

"Courage, the worst is not yet", dramatically hissed Derry, in passing. "So glad you came", he added, "the Basilisk had its evil eye on Dell before that".

And then a car swung into the hotel drive, and in the illumination from its headlights, Angela's face became suddenly visible. Just for a moment, but it was long enough to bring the clutch of fear once more round Hayden's heart. Her face was twisting, untwisting, horribly, grotesquely. The mysterious seizure had come on again.

Hypnotism? Basilisk? True words are often spoken in jest. Hayden felt the perspiration damp on his forehead, yet the night air seemed chill, malignant. Resolutely, he stepped forward, and launched a remark

into the shadowed corner. For a moment there was a strained silence, then Levasseur's smooth voice answered suavely. A minute more, and Angela joined in the conversation. But her husband sensed that his intrusion was unwelcome.

Unwelcome to Angela? And they had been inseparable, everything to each other, for ten years.

Hayden spent a restless night, but with the morning light came a lightening, also, of the grim weight of foreboding which had rendered the night hours hideous. In spite of her pride in her beauty, her fondness for admiration, Angela was surely too healthy in mind and body to allow herself to be seriously unbalanced by a bounder like Levasseur. Still, he must watch her carefully, even spy a bit upon her movements if such a course of action seemed necessary to her safeguarding.

When he came to this decision, Hayden was sitting on the balcony off their room, having his after-breakfast pipe, and defying Baldy to spoil his pleasure in the smiling landscape.

"Oh! Nor-man", Angela's voice floated through the open door, "I've gone and spent all my money. Can you let me have twenty-five dollars?"

"What on earth can you find to spend money on, here?"

"Now, dar-ling, don't go and be a stingy ole pig—what's twenty-five doll-ars?"

She got it, of course. Angela's casualness in money matters rather amused Hayden; especially as he had always found himself able to meet her demands. Presently he heard her open the bedroom door to admit Dell, and then the lowered tones of their voices in animated conversation. Hayden's hearing was unusually keen, and it was perhaps rendered keener by the reiteration of Levasseur's name; so that a few detached sentences rewarded his strained attention.

". . . . The cult of youth and beauty . . . . to follow Levasseur . . . . difficult to attain . . . . the sixth movement . . . . the inseparability of love and beauty . . . ."

A new religion, perhaps, Hayden thought. But surely a dangerous one, if so unsettling to the mentality that it resulted in physical, or hypnotic spasms such as had been affecting Angela. What fools women were, always pursuing strange gods—particularly, he reflected bitterly, when the apostle happened to be as good-looking as Levasseur.

"He's reserved the summer-house," it was Angela speaking; then her voice sank to a murmur . . . . then "Four o'clock . . . ."

For a few minutes Hayden's anger almost deprived him of his sense of hearing; and by that time Dell had gone. He went out, too, to avoid having to talk to Angela, but she scarcely seemed to notice his passing.

Hayden had rarely been more agitated. He was normally a sensible man, and he now tried to bring

his common-sense to bear upon this problem. He was hurrying up a cliff path when he noticed the rustic summer-house down below him. From this spot one might see the occupants, though not hear them. Hm! he'd be here at four o'clock, and see what he could see.

Angela made an excuse and slipped away a little before four in the afternoon; and shortly afterwards Hayden was on the cliff path. As he had expected the summer-house was occupied by Levasseur and Angela. His wife keeping an appointment with another man! Levasseur was talking, gesticulating, in his annoying foreign way, and Angela was gazing at him as though fascinated, hypnotized. Hayden had a feeling that her face, which was hidden from him, might be working in that strange spasm for which he could find no explanation. And now Levasseur had taken a large card from a portfolio, and had handed it to her—a photograph, perhaps, and she put it up before her, and was moving her head to and fro as if performing some queer rite.

Hayden could stand it no longer. He hurried down the path, and around by another that brought him quickly to the summer-house.

Levasseur arose gracefully. This place is reserved", he said curtly.

"Not from me, while you have my wife here", Hayden answered furiously.

"But, sir" . . . . Levasseur tried to protest. "But Nor-man . . . ." Angela cried, indignantly.

He swept aside their protests. "I've stood enough of this foolishness, and I demand here and now to be told the meaning of this hokus-pokus, this chicanery; and I demand that you, sir, **leave my wife alone**".

"But, sir," Levasseur tried again, only to be met by another storm of indignation from the outraged husband. So, at last, finding himself unable to stem the torrent, Levasseur excused himself politely, and bowed himself out.

"Oh! dar-ling", Angela reproached her husband, "if you're not the prize idiot. You've just gone and wasted five dollars worth of the cult".

"What nonsense you are talking. There certainly seems to be an idiot in the family, but I'm not it. Give me that photograph that you are trying to hide behind your back".

Reluctantly, she handed him a large card. As he had expected, a picture of Levasseur—but what was printed below it.?

"Professeur Levasseur, originator of the Cult of Youth and Beauty, with its Muscle Movement Method of Facial Exercise. Personal lessons given on correct application of method. One lesson . . . . five dollars. Six lessons . . . . twenty-five dollars".

"I found a wrinkle the other day, and I didn't want to grow old and ugly", Angela was wailing in explanation.

But Hayden was looking away across the lake to where the crest of Baldy rose, bleak and bare, above the lesser peaks; and involuntarily his hand went up to the thinning spot on his own crest.

THE RED LION

STORY V

THE RED LION

"Grandfather, whatever do you suppose became of the Red Lion?" Leonie, sunning herself on the veranda steps of the old Carmichael homestead, looked up from her book to enquire.

"My memory has grown so bad since your grandmother left me", the old man said, in his slow way; "I'm getting old—but I seem to remember her saying something about it before she went. Donald was to have it, I know; and I sometimes wonder if she sent it to him, in France, and it went astray—or—arrived too late".

"It should have been left to me", she murmured, mutinously; "I'm Leonie, too". But her grandfather had drifted again into that realm of dreams where so much of his time was spent; and the young girl, looking up at him, where he lay, so grey and shrunken, in his great chair, felt a vague sympathy she was unable to express. His beloved wife's death, after the first shock was over, had seemed to grieve him less than the loss of his younger son, in whom all his hopes had centred.

Leonie, only child of the elder son, who had been orphaned at an early age, and brought up by her grandparents, could still remember the thrill she had experienced on that May day eleven years ago, when her young uncle—he was but fifteen years her senior—had marched away with his regiment. How slim, and dark, and handsome he had looked in his lieutenant's uniform. And he had not come back. First he had been reported as missing, and later as killed in action. The shock had hastened the death of his mother, who had been hiding a rather serious affection of the heart under a heroic assumption of her old time high spirits.

Dear Grandma Leonie, what an exceptionally brave girl she must have been—in those long ago days, when girls were supposed to be in subjection to their elders—first, to run away from her uncle's house, and then to make that long trip to this almost unknown land. But, of course, she had the Red Lion, 'to guard her from all perils in traveling'.

"How the old Tynemouth rolled." Her grandfather, sitting up suddenly, startled her by carrying on her thought. "Just think, my dear, it took us three months to come from England; and not one of the sixty girls was allowed to associate with the passengers".

"I know, Granddad," she told him, "I was just reading about it in this history, 'Our most noticeable living freight was, however, an invoice of sixty young ladies destined for the colonial and matrimonial market. They had been sent out by a home society under the

watchful care of a clergyman and a matron'—oh! yes, here it is—'and could only look on at the fun and amusements in which everyone else took part' ".

"Well, at least," her grandfather took up the story again, "they **could** look on—and be looked at. And never shall I forget how my Leonie stood out in that company of common women culled from charitable institutions, and even, by the look of some of them, from the streets. What a fine figure of a girl she was—you're like her, with the same red hair—but the girls don't seem the same, now, as in my young days—skimpier, somehow".

"Partly because we don't wear half as many clothes", laughed Leonie.

An airplane hummed busily into view, circled over the smooth oval of Cadboro Bay, then came on. Louder and louder grew the hum of the engine, lower and lower swooped the great bird, till it hovered directly over the grey old house on the hill, and Leonie rose and gazed up at it with interest. Then suddenly it seemed to slide over the fringe of trees that marked the ravine behind the house. There came a last threatening clamor—then silence.

"That's queer", said Leonie, "it seemed to stop suddenly. Could it have met with an accident? It was flying awfully low." She walked around towards the back of the house, and looked across towards the ravine.

Returning to the front of the house, she saw a young woman coming up the walk, and went forward to meet her.

"Why, Pansy, how nice to see you. Will you come in?"

"I'm afraid I haven't time. Alec is waiting to take me to town. I have a lemon pie for Mr. Carmichael, and some warm biscuits. You will have so much to do with old Annie away."

"How heavenly of you. You realize, I see, that cooking isn't exactly my forte. Yes, we're lost without Annie. She has been with us for fifteen years; but as regularly as May comes round, she must be off up-Island to visit her half-breed relatives. Dear only knows what weird celebrations they have."

"Leo, dear," Pansy's brown eyes were wistful, "I suppose there's no chance of your changing your mind—about Alec? He is taking Mildred Berry out, and I never quite warm to her pert, flapperish ways".

"No—sorry, darling—you know I adore Alec, but not just in that way".

Leonie stood looking after her friend as she went off to join her brother. Dear little Pansy, who had loved Donald—no, who still loved him, for Pansy was surely one of world's faithful—had taken all the Carmichaels to her lonely heart. And now she grieved that Leonie, who had played around with Alec for several years, was unwilling to enter into the closer relationship which he wanted.

Leonie was missing this brother of Pansy's more than she cared to admit—what a nuisance that men had to go and get serious, and spoil a pleasant and useful companionship. But, then, again, what a nuisance it would be if the right man, if he ever turned up, shouldn't feel that way. Heigh-o! how was she ever in this little backwater, to meet the man who would fulfil her ideal?

Since leaving high school she had laughed, and danced, and played, and found just living and being young and admired sufficiently satisfying. But, just lately—was it because she was twenty-three, and beginning to long for that which was surely every woman's right—a home of her own, a real place in the world's scheme? Poor little Pansy—she must be thirty-five. All right for a woman friend; but she might as well remain faithful to Donald's memory, for, of course, no man would care for her, now.

The thought of Pansy's thirty-five years made Leonie feel consolingly young. Of course it wasn't only being twenty-three that was causing this restlessness, this dissatisfaction with a hither-to agreeable existence. Probably within her was stirring the adventurous spirit of the pioneering Carmichaels, of the red Everests—hadn't the first red Leonie of English record been the daughter of a French explorer?

Leonie, having bestowed Pansy's welcome offerings within the house, walked slowly over towards a wistaria-hung arbor which stood on the north side of the house,

beside the wooded ravine—which here turned abruptly towards the Bay, forming a sheltered corner in which nestled the Carmichael homestead.

Somehow, she was not surprised to see him sitting there—a tall, slim, dark man of age somewhat over thirty, who wore a khaki suit which somehow suggested a uniform. Was it because he seemed the realization of her dream? seemed to belong? Absurd—a strange man!

He stood up, looking at her with some bewilderment, much admiration. "May I introduce myself? Geoffrey Worth. I saw you had company, so hesitated to intrude."

"I am Leonie Carmichael".

"Leonie—of course—oh! excuse me—er—I mean it suits you".

"Because of my hair", she agreed, unconsciously tossing back the heavy mane of red-gold hair which was not too short to wave luxuriantly over her ears and neck.

"Your hair—yes; and perhaps, somewhat, your carriage—or a sort of aliveness which—"

"Oh! I'm alive, all right; sometimes I feel strangled in this quiet corner—feel as if I **must** get out into the world—find excitement, color, life."

"Of course, your light was never meant to be hidden in this dead cranny at the end of nowhere."

Loyalty to her birthplace flared up in her. "There's no place like Vancouver Island—for climate, beauty,

anything—it's just that I'd like to see the world a bit".

The absurdity of their conversation as between strangers seemed to strike them, simultaneously. She looked at him, interrogatively.

"I heard—I thought—that perhaps you might have some antiques that you wished to dispose of. The house looks interesting", was his explanation.

"Why, I don't think so—we have some old stuff, of course, silver and furniture—but nothing especially valuable. Oh! perhaps you mean the Red Lion"?

An odd expression flashed for a moment across his face—puzzlement over her last remark, she supposed.

"The red lion?" he enquired.

Leonie, having disposed herself comfortably on the steps of the summerhouse, and pulled down her abbreviated green corduroy frock so that it covered her knees, was quite willing to recount the family legend.

"The family talisman. Godfrey Everest, the first red Leonie's husband, wishing to do her honor, had a set of garnet ornaments made for her, and engraved by a master craftsman. A lion was chosen as the family crest, partly because of her name, and partly because of an ancient superstition that 'the well-formed image of a lion, if engraved on a garnet, will protect and preserve honors and health, cures the wearer of all diseases, brings him honors, and guards him from all perils in traveling'. There was a ring, a brooch, and a heart-shaped pendant. Grandmother Carmichael was so like the first Leonie that the heart pendant was given to

her—much to the disgust of her uncle, who was the eldest son, and had daughters of his own. When her parents died and she had to live in this uncle's house, the family was so disagreeable to her that she ran away, and came out to Vancouver Island; and, of course, brought the red lion pendant with her. That was in 1862. My grandfather was on the same boat. He was a clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company, and had been home on leave. He fell in love with Grandmother Leonie on sight, but was never able to speak to her during all the three months of the voyage, because she was with a party of girls sent out by a society, and rigidly chaperoned. But they looked at each other every day; and he managed to get a letter to her before they landed. Queer thing—love at first sight".

"Oh! Think so?"

Leonie turned and looked into the amused blue eyes of the man lounging on the railing, and unaccountably felt the color rising to her cheeks. What a queer sense of familiarity she had whenever she looked at him; and how oddly at home she felt with him. Home—whatever the future held in store for her, she would never find a more lovely spot than this. Just beyond where her visitor sat, rose the trees of the ravine, and through the silence came the laughing ripple of water from the near-by spring, where it slipped down the bank to join the tiny creek, below.

"And you have it still? The Red Lion?" he was asking.

"No, we don't know where it is. But Grandfather thinks it is lying—somewhere in France—with Donald. Grandmother meant him to have it, may have sent it to him".

"Donald?"

A man of few words, this Geoffrey Worth, Leonie noted.

"My young uncle. He never came back from the war."

She had grown serious, a little absent-minded; so he rose to take his departure.

"I may see you again. I'll be in the neighborhood for a bit", he said, and went down the walk towards the front gate. And yet she had the impression that he hadn't come that way.

Leonie walked slowly towards the house, noting as never before the amazing beauty of the scene stretching before her eyes. The wild camass and buttercups had woven for her feet a fairy carpet of blue and gold; and to the south-west, on the unbelievable blue of the waters, dancing sail-boats seemed to guard the entrance of the Bay, shutting out all ugliness, all evil, from this favored corner of God's fair earth.

But, later on when the mystery of night enwrapped the world, Leonie stood on the front porch, wondering miserably how she had ever found the earth fair. She was assailed by such a terrible loneliness as she never before had felt. Had all her friends forgotten her? How unfriendly seemed the very night. The Bay,

where winking lights proclaimed the movement of boats, might well be the secret, sinister meeting place of vessels of the rum-running fleet, as whispered tales proclaimed; or a place where the less picturesque, less dangerous boot-legger peddled his stock. How easy for some such miserable miscreant, evading the officers of the law, to slip into the near-by ravine. A man who knew the ground might easily thread the intricacies of its paths, and escape being mired in the marshy ground, honeycombed from many springs—a stranger never could. In the stillness of the night she could hear the water from the nearest spring murmuring it's way down the bank—a chilling, lonesome sound.

Ah! Grandfather was moving, getting ready to go to bed. She would lock up, go upstairs—and in the morning the world would smile again.

She had slept an hour or so, perhaps, when some sound jerked her back to consciousness. Had the stairs creaked? Now, everything was deadly still, but for the dreadful pounding of her heart. Then came the stealthy, unmistakable sound of footsteps on the stairs.

Too paralyzed to move, she lay and watched in strained horror the dimly moon-lit area of hall visible through her half-opened door. Then the burly form of a man moved cautiously into view. In the wall, opposite her door, was the great chimney which had served the kitchen fireplace of the original house; and beside it the man seemed to pause, to fumble for a moment. By a supreme effort of will, Leonie forced her hand to

move slowly till it rested on the electric flashlight, beside her pillow. Suddenly the ray flashed out; and as the man turned, startled, there seemed to spring out of the surrounding darkness the most villainous, sinister face the terrified girl had ever seen. From the right brow, beneath the grizzled hair, a great purple scar ran the whole length of the face, twisting downward the corner of the mouth, and contorting the right eye into a permanent squint.

A strangled scream forced its way between her lips, the torch wavered, and the man was gone. There was a sound of quick, padding steps on the stairs, of a door opening—then silence.

In a moment, however, the silence was broken by Grandfather Carmichael's voice, enquiring the cause of the noise. Leonie, feeling limp from the reaction of relief which this familiar voice brought to her, dragged herself out of bed, and through the hall to his door.

"I thought I heard a sound in the hall", she told him, "did I call out?"

"I think so, I hardly know, I was dreaming. Child, do you not feel a kindly presence near? I think my Leonie is very close to us, tonight".

Leonie, though too young and healthy to share his Scotch mysticism, still found strangely soothing, tonight, the thought of that dear, protecting presence which seemed so real to him. Somehow, her fear had fallen away, the night seemed now to hold no terrors for her. Turning on the electric lights, and donning a

dressing-gown, she went down the stairs to find the front door swinging in the night breeze.

Surely she had locked it before going upstairs. She stepped outside, and saw a man coming up the walk. He spoke at once on seeing her figure in the doorway; and she recognized the man who had called himself Geoffrey Worth.

"I am camping near here, was passing, saw your lights go up suddenly"—

How magically his voice dispelled the mysterious, disturbing forces which had marshalled themselves under the darkness of this strange night. How she welcomed his presence, his strength. Somehow, she found her hands in his, was telling him of the terrifying appearance of the man with the dreadful scar.

"If he was so easily alarmed, he could not have intended you any harm. I'd go back to bed if I were you. If it will make you feel any more secure, I could sleep on the bench in the summer-house. Nonsense! it will be comfortable as compared with many places I have slept in. Yes, I'll take the blankets".

So it was arranged; and Leonie went back to bed feeling quite secure, and no longer friendless.

She slept peacefully, dreamlessly; but shortly after dawn was aroused by the sound of a starting engine, near at hand. Then an airplane roared past, flying low over the house, hummed busily off to seaward, and was gone.

Her morning work completed, Leonie went across to the Bay Post Office for the mail. She returned with a legal-looking English letter for Grandfather. It ran:—

'Sir:—

Sir James Everest has commissioned us to write you concerning an Everest heirloom which may be in your possession. It is a heart-shaped garnet pendant engraved with the image of a lion, and is believed to have been taken to British Columbia about 1862 by Leonie Everest, afterwards Leonie Carmichael, your wife.

Sir James has in his possession the other two pieces of the original set, and would be willing to pay much more than the actual value of the pendant in order to make his set complete. He therefore empowers us to offer you the sum of two thousand pounds if the original pendant is returned to him in good condition.

Kindly inform us if the pendant is in your possession; and our Canadian agent will call on you in due course.

Yours very sincerely

Burritt, Carson, and Burritt'.

"Why, Grandfather—two thousand pounds—why that's ten thousand dollars—nearly. If we could find it we could hardly afford to keep even a cherished heirloom like the Red Lion, when such a price is offered."

"Yes-s—if Donald had lived the money would have been very welcome." He sank into a revery; and Leonie, knowing that by his generation girls were sup-

posed to need only the money doled out to them by their menfolks for the bare necessities of life, forgave him for not coveting this little fortune for her sake.

Then a startling thought darted through her mind. Someone else must know that Sir James Everest was prepared to pay a handsome sum for the Red Lion. Someone who believed it was in the house. Perhaps someone who had met Donald in France, and had heard the family history. Hence that terrifying midnight visit from the man with the scar. And in all probability he would come again. Oh! Why did stolid Half-breed Annie happen to be away just at this time? Perhaps Geoffrey—Geoffrey Worth—would come sometime today, and she could ask his advice as to what she should do.

"I was remembering the first time I saw the Red Lion", Grandfather said, suddenly. "It was the day the old Tynemouth got into Esquimalt; and your grandmother looked so handsome in a dark blue dress with cherry ribbons, and the garnet heart on a chain round her neck. Everyone was glad the long voyage was at an end; and the girls in her party all put on their best clothes, and such ornaments as they possessed, that they might make as good an impression as possible on their arrival in this strange land. You know the Cariboo gold rush had started a short time before, and most of the miners outfitted in Victoria, which, from being just a fur-trading post with a fort and a few houses,

had suddenly become a town with a population of about six thousand people.

"Well, I think every man in the settlement was down at James Bay the day that long-expected party of lassies came in. They had been trans-shipped at Esquimalt to H.M.S. Forward, and were landed from small boats in front of the government buildings, and marched off to the Barracks, where temporary accommodation had been arranged for them. A number had already been bespoken for domestic service; and the majority married soon after arrival. It was a rather humiliating experience for a lady like my Leonie, that public arrival. But I had managed to send word to my friend, the Hudson's Bay factor, and he and his wife kindly consented to receive Leonie until I could make arrangements for our marriage". He continued to ramble on, but Leonie had heard the story so often that her attention began to wander.

The day dragged on, and Geoffrey Worth did not appear. But that the blankets she had given him had been left, carefully folded up, on the porch, Leonie might have thought her midnight interview with him, nothing but a dream. As evening approached, however, the incidents of the previous night began to seem less dream-like, more alarming; so she telephoned to Pansy, and asked her to come over and spend the night.

The two girls talked till nearly morning, but Leonie did not alarm her friend by speaking of the strange

visit of the man with the scar. The night passed without incident.

The next day, being Saturday, Leonie and her grandfather started off in the afternoon for their weekly shopping and business trip to the city. As their old car chugged through the gate, an airplane passed overhead, coming in from sea. Flying low over the grey old house, it seemed to slide over the fringe of trees that marked the ravine, and with a last threatening clatter, was still.

Of course an airplane was no uncommon sight in that district. The mail plane from Seattle flew over every day, but it did not fly so low, not did it suddenly disappear from sight and sound. Leonie did not spend any unnecessary time over her shopping, that day; so that it was not a great while before they turned in at their own gate.

While Grandfather went to put the car away, Leonie, her arms full of parcels, ran up the front steps. Then she paused in surprise, for the door was open.

Immediately there was a sound of running feet on the stairs; for one instant there peered out at her the sinister face of the man with the scar—then the door closed with a bang, and the lock shot into place.

Her feet refused to move. Stupidly she stood staring at the closed door. Now he was running across the living-room, had thrown up a low window. Suddenly she came to life, dropped her parcels, and ran to the

side of the porch in time to see a big man run across the lawn, past the summer-house, and disappear in the maze of the ravine.

Leonie picked up her parcels, and after unlocking the door with the key she had carried with her—the only key to the lock which she had supposed to exist—went through to the kitchen with her purchases. Should she telephone the police? Certainly it was time some action was taken. Still undecided she went rather hesitantly upstairs, to remove her wraps. Here, another shock awaited her.

She saw, first, a brick lying on the hall floor. Then raising her eyes to the old chimney, she saw a dark space which the removal of the brick had left. The aperture was just on a level with her eyes, and groping within, her hand encountered an old laquer box set with mother-of-pearl, which she remembered as having belonged to her grandmother. Her fingers trembled so she had difficulty in opening the box. A few inconsiderable trinkets lay within—but not—not the Red Lion. Of course. She might have expected that. The man with the scar had taken it. She must call the police at once.

She walked down the stairs, her mind working busily. Grandmother's secret hiding place. Grandfather had probably known about it, but since his wife's death his memory had become very unreliable. But—someone else had known about it, too. The police would take some time to get here. Had she not better

call some of the neighbors, first? Alec? No! Oh! if only Geoffrey Worth were here. **Geoffrey Worth!** Suddenly something seemed to click in her brain, and a series of mental pictures formed and passed in rapid succession . . . .

An airplane coming in from sea, coming to rest in that level, open space behind the ravine . . . . a man in aeronautic garb sitting on the railing of the summer-house, and laughing down at her—laughing, of course . . . . then the man with the scar stealing up to find the hidie-hole in the old chimney . . . . Geoffrey Worth coming up the walk—to protect her? . . . . again, in the pale dawn an airplane headed out to sea . . . . and, today, the airplane coming in, again . . . . then, again, the man with the scar . . . .

Oh! what a fool she'd been—a dupe—and she had thought . . . .

A sudden gust of anger held her still a moment—then she heard a loud sound as of a starting motor; and she flew out of the house like a whirlwind—almost upsetting her grandfather, who was coming through the door.

To the north-west, behind the house, she knew, a fallen tree had made a foot-bridge across the ravine, which was shallower at this spot. Across this bridge she sped to the open space beyond—a sheltered nook, ringed by trees. Here, as she expected, an airplane stood, snorting and trembling like a thorough-bred horse fretting to be off.

From the plane stepped Geoffrey Worth, to be confronted by a red-haired fury from whose grey-green eyes seemed to dart positive sparks of anger.

"You—you—" she gasped, then found the word she wanted, "spy! pretending you wanted to buy antiques, pretending to be a camper, pretending to admire—"

"You—" he finished her sentence. "That wasn't pretence".

"Oh! Don't add insult to injury. How I hate you! Laughing in your sleeve—waiting outside that night while the other man got away—pretending to wish to protect me—"

"That wasn't pretence", he reiterated.

"Well, you have nerve, I'll say that for you. I should think you'd be ashamed to look me in the face". Confronted by his imperturbability, Leonie's fury had unreasonably begun to abate.

"Why?"

"Why? You know very well, why. Where is that man? And where is the Red Lion? And oh! why, why ever did **you**—" her voice trailed miserably into silence.

"What do you consider that garnet trinket worth?"

"Trinket? Worth? You know very well that Sir James Everest is willing to pay ten thousand dollars for it. Otherwise, why should you—"

"Steal it? Why, indeed. And having lost an article for which someone is willing to pay ten thousand dollars, why, instead of sensibly calling the police, do

you come here—alone—and upbraid the supposed criminal—not, if I understand you, for stealing the Red Lion, but for rousing your interest under false pretences"?

The color flamed in Leonie's cheeks. The bronze flecks in her eyes again darted fire. "Oh! you—oh! you're insufferable!"

"Geoff," another voice broke in, "I can't let you in for this. I believe she's a good sport. She won't give me away". The man with the scarred face had stepped from behind the airplane; and, instinctively, Leonie recoiled, then moved nearer to Geoffrey Worth, her hand out as if seeking his protection.

"You see", continued the man with the scar—and his voice, his intonation being of her own Island made him suddenly seem less villainous—"you shrink from me. Anyone would. But money helps to smooth the way for even the most grotesque, hideous of the world's misfits; so when Geoff heard the old boy in England was willing to pay high for the Red Lion, I thought if I could get it—I didn't mean to be seen—to frighten you—"

In their absorption they had not heard someone come quickly over the foot-bridge, step into the clearing.

"Oh! Leo, I saw you coming down here—I just wanted to tell you I'll be late tonight—why—why"—then with a glad cry of "Donald, my Donald!" Pansy threw herself into the arms of the man with the scar on his face.

"Better move—what say?" suggested Geoffrey Worth to Leonie, who was staring in petrified amazement at the reunited lovers.

Holding her arm, he piloted her back across the ravine. There, still within the shelter of the trees, Leonie sank down upon a fallen tree.

"But—but—we were notified of his death"! she protested.

"They thought him dead when they got him into the dressing station, and so reported him. He revived, later; but, meanwhile, the place had been bombed and his belongings mislaid. He could not speak, and lay for months in hospital, unidentified. Then when he had recovered a little, he saw a home paper which reported both his death and his mother's. He was terribly sensitive about his disfigurement—it was much worse then than now—and decided to remain dead as far as his family and friends were concerned".

"But he might have known that Pansy was the faithful sort of creature, who, having once loved, would go on forever, whatever the circumstances."

"You wouldn't be like that?" he asked, sitting down beside her, and smiling quizzically into her eyes.

And Leonie, with a sense of shock, discovered that some sort of miracle had taken place in her mind, or vision; for she saw confronting her, not just an attractive-looking man, but the embodiment of a personality so vivid, so important to her, as to fade into insignificance any other human contact she had ever made.

"I wonder," she answered him. Then quickly reverting to the former subject of conversation, "But where do **you** come into the story"? she wanted to know".

"Of the Red Lion? Donald and I were in the same hospital, and discovered that we were cousins—my mother was an Everest, too. Later, I spent a few days at Everest Hall, and learned that Uncle James, who is bugs on antiques, was willing to pay almost anything for the pendant you call the Red Lion. Donald's mother had given it to him before he left for France, and he had put it in the old chimney. How did you know Uncle James wanted it?"

"Grandfather had a letter, yesterday, making an offer. Probably you re-aroused your uncle's interest in completing the Red Lion set. But—a cousin—why, of course, you look a little like Donald—Donald as he used to look. I suppose that's why I had a feeling of familiarity when I met you, of having known you always".

"Oh! You think that was the reason? Yes, I remember, now, you don't believe in love at first sight".

The tell-tale color flooded Leonie's face once more. "Do **you**?" she managed to ask.

"I'm telling you! Heavens! how you startled me that first day, you looked so exactly like the picture of the first Leonie which hangs at Everest, in the great hall. And I knew at once that I wanted you; so you might as well resign yourself to the inevitable. You

wish to get out and see the world—you'll see it if you throw in your lot with mine—when winter comes—what say—shall we hop off for New York, London, Paris?"

"We're being absurd, really. I don't know a thing about you, what you do, anything".

"Does it matter?"

"Not the slightest". Oddly enough she realized that she was speaking the truth. "Only," she added, "just as a matter of curiosity I'd like to know whether I'm being invited to share a throne, or will have to take in washing to help swell the family exchequer".

He laughed. "You'll do. I'm in charge of a party sent out by a big English firm to prospect, by airplane, for ore, in your great Northland. We have our headquarters on an island a bit up the coast. With the wonderful natural resources of Canada almost untouched, I see where I have my life's work cut out for me. There'll be no lack of variety, adventure, for my wife. Does the prospect please you?"

"I'll think it over", she said, then as he reached out an arm to take her, she slipped out of his reach.

"Here, wait," he begged, "I have another bribe to offer. Uncle detests the nephew who is to inherit his title; and he says if I'll take the name of Everest—my middle name—he'll leave me the family heirlooms—the first Leonie's portrait—he knows I'm crazy about that—and the jewelry. How would you like to be Leonie Everest, and own the whole Red Lion set?"

He caught her suddenly, as she stood, arrested by his proposal, and kissed her with a completeness that could only be accomplished by a certain amount of reciprocity on the part of the victim.

She broke away, and danced out of reach.

"The thought of being Leonie Everest intrigues me," she admitted. "I'll take your proposal under consideration".

Then she turned and raced towards the house, almost as precipitately as she had left it, but in what a different mood.

"Grandfather", she called; then, more gently, as she found him dozing in his favorite chair; "Oh! Granddad, wake up—such a lovely, lovely surprise—Donald has come back".

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Note—Some details about the party of girls brought out to British Columbia for the matrimonial market, in 1862, are to be found in Howay's History of British Columbia; and in the British Columbia Archives. —M.E.P.

THE PALACE OF FAERY

STORY VI

THE PALACE OF FAERY

She lived in an old, old house, in the oldest part of the city; a house tall, gaunt, and somewhat in disrepair, like her old aunt, its mistress.

The furniture, too, was old, and shabby; but was not the kind of old furniture which the many antique shops in the centre of the city bought gladly, and sold usuriously to visitors from far and far away. Just ugly-old, this furniture; except the mahogany highboy which Ariel kept polished so that it reflected her movements, when she busied herself about the room, and helped her to pretend she had a slim little girl friend to companion her in her lonely hours.

Lonely, yes; her days seemed to follow one another in a very monotony of loneliness; while Aunt sat in her great chair at the diningroom window facing the garden, and eternally nodded over some musty volume of genealogy.

Of course there was Mr. Puffin. Because he was so small and round, Ariel had thus nicknamed him, when

first he rented the two big rooms across the hall; and on overhearing the name he had laughed so heartily that it had straightway become a term of endearment.

His appearance as a roomer had been the result of Aunt's discovery, just after the war, that her always slender means were no longer adequate to support her in the manner to which she had been accustomed. A few years later, when the old servant died, matters financial had come to a crisis, and Ariel returned from boarding-school to find herself elected to the combined posts of lady's maid, and maid of all work.

Fortunately she loved the garden; and as often as the household tasks, and her rather slender strength allowed, she might have been seen waging a war in the interests of bleeding-heart, and lavender, and blue-bells, and roses, against the encroaching weeds.

And there she might have been found on a certain June afternoon, absent-mindedly snipping the withered blossoms from a rosebush, while the vagrant breeze fluffed her fair hair into a golden aura around her pretty, pointed little face, and in thought she wandered through the Palace of Faery with the grey-eyed Prince who had materialized two short weeks before in the person of a dark-haired young man, whose name, even, she did not know.

She had slipped out that evening, as was her custom when carnival was rife in the city, and walking but a few short blocks—past the grounds from which the statue of the great Queen looks out benignly over her

name city—had come to the causeway. There, leaning against the stone embankment, she listened to the band, playing further up the street where, in a roped-off space, people were dancing.

On a seat, close at hand, three old men nodded and chuckled, spinning yarns of the water-front in those 'days as was days'. And across the street, in a world-famous hotel, a ball was in progress, the strains of the orchestra blending pleasantly with the harsher music of the band.

The ships in this safe inner harbor—tiny business-like launches, pleasure yachts, bedraggled schooners, stately steamers—unromantic craft as they were, yet seemed like sentient things to her—quick with the life which had moved across their decks, wise from the diverse scenes their bows had faced. And, as she watched them swaying gently as to the rhythm of the distant music, they seemed to weave a spell, and through the luminous evening magic currents seemed to steal.

'Twas then the wonder happened—in the depths of the black and shining water the Fairy Palace sprang into view, each tower, great and small, each wall and wing, outlined by glittering stars, each tower surmounted by a diamond crown—a royal palace, this. Surely here dwelt the fairies' dearest Prince.

And then she turned to see **him** watching her. In gala dress he was, dark hair brushed back, grey eyes amused and yet with something, too, within their depths of sadness, retrospect—as if they still beheld,

though dimly now, those harrowing sights and scenes, of battlefields, wrecked countryside, wan refugees, which, to a sensitive soul suffering the shocks of war, cling through ensuing years.

What influence is that which makes one newly met seem near and dear, while others known for years are strangers still? What message passed from eye to eye, blue-black, and dreamy grey? Would he have spoken? Well, perhaps. But then a party of dancers flitted across the street, the bobbed-haired girls in pale, soft frocks; and one girl murmured in reproach, "Oh! Tony, mean old thing, that was my dance; you ran away". Another said, "Oh! See! The Buildings are lighted up. How lovely".

Then Ariel looked, and saw that stately pile where laws are born—but now how changed—against the sky it shone, its every detail marvellously defined by thousands and thousands of electric lights. A vision of beauty, lovelier, even if less fairy-like, than its reflection, which she so loved, in the waters of the harbor.

But oh! the Prince was going, reluctance in his step, and she saw that he was lame—a badge of honor, honorably won, intuitively she knew.

"Summer dreams", said a cheery voice, as Mr. Puffin came puffing along, and lowered himself into a rickety garden seat. "You should be off with your girl friends". He had a motherly heart, this old chap, and a warm spot in it for this motherless girl.

"Girl friends"? She smiled at him. "If you have to work all the time, and have no money for pretty clothes or entertaining"—she paused, thinking of the daintily-dressed, fortunate girls who had carried off her Prince. Why should he be interested in a little Cinderella? "Oh! dear! if I could take a business course, and get a position, life might be more interesting".

"No place for you, in a business office—better at home", he grunted.

She smiled again. Poor silly man, to think it easier to do all the work of a large house, than just to sit all day, and tap, tap, tap on a little machine. But she was young; it was a lovely June day, and—she had a dream. So life could not seem quite empty. She smiled again at the old man, and cut a fragrant rosebud to pin in his button-hole.

Presently the odor of toasting crumpets mingled with the scents of earth and flowers. It was evident that the woman who came in to look after Mr. Puffin's needs, was preparing his tea.

"Have tea with me, on the porch—crumpets, strawberries and cream—the silver tea-service", invited Mr. Puffin.

Ariel would love to. Aunt could have her tray near the open window, where she now sat. With a favorite book at her elbow she would not notice her niece's absence.

Mr. Puffin's rooms were more comfortable than the rest of the house, as he had replaced the ugly Victorian

furniture with some comfortable pieces of his own; and on his side porch were some wicker chairs, with bright cushions which Ariel had made for him.

A few late blossoms on the Gloire rose which garlanded the porch, nodded at them; bees hummed busily among the flowers; birds chirped their appreciation of the summer sunshine. And behind the old English tea-service Ariel sat, listening happily to Mr. Puffin's stories of his boyhood days in England, or of his trip round the Horn to the then Crown Colony of British Columbia, where he was fated to spend his remaining days. He had had a wife, too, oddly enough, in the dim past. A frail young English girl had come out to marry him, but had not long survived the ordeal of transplantation.

His tales of the 'old days' charmed Ariel's romantic soul. She loved especially the story of the beautiful Virginian who had lived in the great house next door, which loomed dimly through the trees. A prosaic boarding-house, now, it had once been the centre of fashion and gayety, the home of an American Consul of old southern family, whose lovely daughter was the belle of the Colony. Suitors aplenty had sued and sighed in vain before young Captain Merritt, having fought a duel on her account and been pricked in the arm, won the lady's hand.

Ariel, in imagination, could see the fair Southerner wandering in the fine old garden beyond the tall fence; and to her, that girl of other days was always a Princess

of beauty wandering with a grey-eyed Prince. Ariel could almost hear their gay laughter, their murmured endearments, smell the roses that bordered their path; but for some strange reason this dream always brought a feeling of desolation around her heart.

Yet for her, possessing as she did this gift of imagination, life could never be quite colorless; for lacking the reality she could conjure visions of romance, glittering balls, dashing cavaliers, tender love scenes, out of her own fertile mind.

———

A great war Lord, on an Empire tour, had reached the Pacific Coast, and the Queen City, this little bit of England in Canada, was out to do him honor.

The hot July day had merged into a warm, pleasant evening, when Ariel, clad in a soft white frock, and a pale pink jersey coat, tripped along the street to the gangway, where leaning against the railing, she awaited developments.

The same old men, or their counterparts, were spinning yarns near at hand, and from the distance came the sounds of music and laughter. A few people straggled by, and the purring motors rolled their passengers to the carriage entrance of the great hotel, where the inevitable ball was under way. Ariel envied the pretty girls the opportunity of dancing with her Prince. She, a member of one of the city's oldest families, should have had a part in these gayeties.

But hers was not a brooding, crushing envy, only the passing envy of youth. There was some stern stuff in the spirit inhabiting the sprite-like body. Her little mother had soon been smothered out of existence by the formalities, the conventionalities, the complacencies of the family into which she had married; but Ariel inherited, in bird-like, amusing style, enough of the self-satisfaction, stolidity, backbone if you like, of the paternal strain, to help her keep a solid hold on realities. She would survive, yet not miss the fairer, less tangible things of life which Aunt had never sensed.

The sun had set, and the ships on the faintly ruffled surface of the harbor were treading their stately measure, as if they, too, graced a ball-room. Ariel, only, had no ball to attend; but what of it, for tonight she thrilled with a scarce-formed hope—would he come?

Suddenly, in the black and shining water, her fairy palace sprang into view, its graceful lineaments outlined by twinkling stars. One moment, darkness; the next, this glittering vision of Fairyland. Ah! the idea—she would go to a make-believe ball in this evanescent castle—and the Prince would dance with her. There was a sound at her side—she turned—blue eyes looked into grey.

"I love it, too," he whispered, "always come when I know the Parliament Buildings are to be lighted up".

Then silently they stood there side by side, their eyes on her Palace of Faery, while they dreamed they

were treading, hand in hand, its stately halls—and the palace was also named Love.

"Oh! Tony," like a flock of brilliant butterflies, his friends flitted across the street in search of him; and the dark girl again addressed him reproachfully, while for Ariel her eyes held a hostile glint. "Oh! Tony, we missed you. What happened? Are you coming back, now?" The dark eyes held only tenderness for him; silken tendrils were being thrown out to draw him back.

Oh! he would go, Ariel knew, and she would never see him again. But what was he saying in a quiet, positive voice that left no room for argument?

"No, Rona, not just yet—later, perhaps—I don't feel in the mood for dancing".

They were gone—his friends—leaving Ariel alone with a perfectly strange man. No, no, not strange—when he looked at her like that she felt she had known him always, but "I must go home", she murmured.

"Is it far? May I come?"

She was going to protest on account of his lameness, but remembered that he could dance—he wouldn't wish to be thought handicapped. And so, unbelievably she found herself walking along the street with the man who personified all her dreams—Tony, they had called him.

At her gate they paused, beneath an old fir tree; and all round them was the scent of summer lilies whose waxen blossoms glimmered from the dusk, be-

yond the fence, in the garden next door. Said Tony, looking across the garden towards the old house—rising ghostlike in the night—: "My mother lived there. She was very beautiful, they say. Sometimes, at night, I stroll by, and imagine her walking in the garden, or dancing in the great double rooms. I went in, once, to look for lodgings; but the house was so different from what I am told it was in the old days, that I came hurriedly away, fearful of losing a beloved dream".

Again to Ariel came that faint sense of desolation which assailed her whenever she thought of the lovely Virginian, laughing, and dancing, and snaring men's hearts, in the house next door. But now, surely, she need envy no one, living or dead, for she had carried off her Prince from the city's fairest Princesses. Breathlessly she found her hand in his. Her name? "Ariel? But, of course, it belongs to you—airy-fairy Ariel".

"Yes," said Ariel, aggrievedly, "but when Miss Airy-fairy passes this gate, she turns into Cinderella again, and has to get Aunt's hot milk, and turn down Aunt's bed, and make herself generally useful".

"There, I'm glad to know you touch earth somewhere. I was expecting you to vanish with the dawn; but now I know I'll see you again—often—soon—Ariel—"

Somehow—she never quite knew how—he had kissed her—and then he was gone; and the summer night held only the scent of lilies, the drone of insects

in the grass, the twittering of sleepy birds in the branches overhead.

He would come—oh! soon he would come—so she sang blithely over her work. Cheerfully she toiled for Aunt, gayly she laughed with Mr. Puffin. And when evening came, she donned her prettiest dress, and wandered down towards the gate. And oh! the loveliness of those summer nights, warm and clear, with just the gentlest zephyrs bearing the perfume of myriad flowers.

But night succeeded night, and he did not come. He had said 'soon'; and she had thought in her eagerness that 'soon' meant in a day or so. Now, a trifle less optimistic, she felt sure it meant a week.

But when the week passed, and he had made no sign, a change began to come over the summer world. It was too hot in the daytime; the household tasks dragged; Aunt's demands were acceded to listlessly; and Mr. Puffin's cheerfulness had become tiresome. Still, if Tony had come any time during that second week the world would have changed in a moment from grey to gold.

But the second week dragged to a close. He had not come. Darkness descended upon her spirit. She became almost snappy, grumbled about the heat; and even Aunt noticed how wan and pale she had grown. No, no, she was not ill—it was only the dreadful heat. And the world grew darker, and darker, and darker, till she felt that the limit must surely have been reached.

It was hot, oh! so hot, as, coming from the Market, she boarded a street-car, and sat down in front of two stylishly-dressed, chattering girls. Presently a familiar name pierced her apathy—"Rona"—

"What do you think of Rona's engagement?"

The sudden shock which these words gave her caused Ariel to lose the thread of the gossip for a moment—then another familiar name—

"Oh! Tony is fond of her, all right—and then I suppose her money attracted him. He has only his salary—not much, these days".

Ariel never knew how she got home, but presently she was lying on her own bed, sobbing her heart out. Then up once more—Aunt's dinner must be prepared—no time to waste on grief.

But, oh! the dreadful night—lying there in the dark she touched the utmost depths of misery—if only she might die. Towards morning the blessed rain came, breaking the long dry spell, and with the soothing sound of raindrops on the roof, she fell asleep.

When she arose, she was wan, and smileless; but she had reached a decision. She must have a change of employment. Someone could be found to look after Aunt, and Ariel's father's friend, Mr. Grey, who worked in the Government offices, would tell her how to go about looking for employment.

The great grey pile of the Parliament Buildings rose before her as she crossed the grounds, and paused at

the foot of the steep stone steps. Two men were coming out—Tony—

Perhaps the sight of her surprised him, or he may have slipped on the damp steps. Whatever the reason, he came down like a log, and lay inert, unconscious.

"Oh! Tony! Oh! he's killed!" Ariel was beside him, his head on her knee, before the man who was with him realized what had happened. Then this man knelt down and felt Tony's heart.

"No", he said "his heart's beating—there's Frere in his car. He'll take us to Tony's rooms—just a block".

He would die, she knew—oh! if he would only live, Rona might have him. But a world without him—her hand touched his, and spasmodically, his fingers closed over hers, clung there, and she was forced to accompany him in the car, remain by his side till a hastily summoned doctor released her. No, the doctor said, condition probably not serious, but it might be several hours before Tony regained consciousness. Ariel went slowly home, all thought of finding work, forgotten.

There was no telephone at her home, so Ariel crept out again in the evening, and went to enquire about Tony's condition. A crisp nurse was in charge, and answered curtly. Yes, he had recovered consciousness, but could see no one—complications feared. Another night of agony was lived through somehow; but next day the report was more favorable. And then one day

he asked for her—but was only allowed to say a few words.

"Ariel—I went out of town next day—no time to call—could not write—did not know your last name".

"But—Rona?" she could not resist asking.

"Rona? What about her? Oh! yes, engaged—no, no, not to me—to a navy chap. Yes, I **did** like her—but when I saw **you**"—

Came an evening, soft, and warm, and flower-scented, when she met him at the gate—took him up to meet Aunt.

"Anthony Merritt? Yes, I knew your father. Very attentive to your mother, Ariel, before the Virginian girl came and turned all the men's heads—she was considered very beautiful. Very good family, the Merritts—I'll just look them up—the second volume, please".

So her mother had loved Tony's father? Ariel wondered if that might explain the sense of desolation she had always felt when to her came the vision of the fair Virginian strolling with her lover through the fine old garden beyond the fence.

Aunt was mumbling over her book; they were already forgotten; so they slipped out, and passed across the hall. How pleasant a place the old house seemed tonight—her house, as well at Aunt's, now that she was of age. Repaired a little, and refurnished with Tony's Virginian furniture, how different it might look.

Mr. Puffin was in, and delighted with Tony, and the news they brought. "Of course, my dear, your natural destination. I'll be able to get rid of the silver tea-service at last. Nonsense! What does an old man want with such luxuries? Only used it to please you".

The city was en fete—some convention or other—strangers from far and far away filled the streets. But for all Tony and Ariel cared, they might have been alone in the world, as they leaned against the sea wall on the causeway and awaited the miracle.

Suddenly, in the dark and shining water, the Palace of Faery sprang into view, its graceful lineaments defined by glittering stars—a royal palace, this, wherein a Prince and Princess might happily wander hand in hand; were, in imagination, wandering now. No word was spoken, as in hearts so close atune, the same sweet vision grew. Life's storms must never wreck, their dream house of rose and gold, their beautiful palace of love.

LAURIE TAKES A HAND

STORY VII

LAURIE TAKES A HAND

As Corporal Shirley Creighton, of the North West Mounted Police, rode in at the gate of her brother's ranch, Laurie sat up in the hammock, shook off the drowsiness engendered by the heat of the August day, ran her hand quickly over the waves of her short dark hair, and took a guick glance into the tiny mirror of her swinging vanity case.

The expression in his eyes, as he alighted, suggested that her appearance was sufficiently alluring. His first words confirmed it.

"Jolly pretty girl," he said, "jolly pretty dress. A certain amount of disarray is becoming to some people".

She shook out the folds of her rose-colored muslin, and waved him towards a chair. "Thanks, I'm duly flattered. Is it business, or pleasure, this time?"

"May it not be both?" he enquired, as he lowered himself into the chair she had indicated, and felt in his pocket for his pipe.

"It may; but mostly it isn't", she was prettily severe. "I suppose you work, you mounted policemen—'get your man' and so forth—but where does it get you?"

"If you mean money", he admitted ruefully, "I'm afraid it doesn't get us very far. But I'm delighted to know you find the subject of interest. And as a matter of fact I am at this moment in pursuit of what I hope may be a fair-sized chunk of filthy lucre—and, incidentally, of a criminal."

"Oh! May I know?"

"You may, and then you can be on the look-out for 'clues'. Success means promotion in the Force; and a probable couple of hundred dollars from the 'find fund'. Better still, an eccentric old uncle of mine who is touring Canada happened along last night. He has read a lot of bosh about the heroic deeds of the mounties; so he proposes to hang around and see how I come out. He says there's a generous cheque in it for me if I succeed. So I'd better be on my way".

"But why here?"

Creighton's blue eyes narrowed, and his chin seemed to harden, so that the rather boyish-looking young man of a moment ago seemed suddenly to give place to the hunter of men. "The brute I'm after is supposed to have choked a man to death, and then thrown his body under the hoofs of a team of vicious horses, in the hope that they might trample out all evidence of his crime. A sordid story. The hired man making love to the wife, and getting rid of the husband so that they might collect the insurance money, a paltry three thousand dollars. The murder occurred last night; and this morning the wife called in some neighbors saying her

husband had been trampled to death by the horses. The neighbors were suspicious, as there were marks around the dead man's throat that had not been made by horses. Besides, the hired man had disappeared, no doubt stupidly meaning to hide till the excitement had blown over. He was seen heading west early this morning; so I'm searching through the farm buildings all along this road."

"And you want to go through Harry's? Surely the men would have seen him, had he been here."

"I'm looking everywhere. You see, Laurie, I'm anxious to win the reward. I have a reason". The look in his eyes was unmistakable; but with feminine perversity she affected not to understand.

"Why, that will be very nice for you", she murmured, "I hope you get it". Then remembering that he might be running into danger, she added quickly, "Oh! but you'll be careful, won't you?"

He laughed at that, and the expression of his face softened. "Oh! I'll be all right", he assured her; and clanked away around the corner of the house.

Leaning back in the hammock, she waited tense and still, her mind following him through the barns; imagining behind every door he opened, a low-browed, shifty-eyed fugitive, with lithe, strong arms, who might spring upon the searcher, encircling his throat in a deadly death-dealing grip.

In those moments she learned beyond all shadow of doubt that her heart belonged to that handsome English-

man, whom she had known but a few short weeks. Heart-tired, body-tired, spirit-tired, a month before she had left behind her Toronto's surge and roar; and the law office where she had toiled at none too remunerative routine work.

Ah! how the shackles of city life had irked her; for in her veins there ran the blood of Celtic, pioneer ancestors, persuading her to be up and away, urging always the lure of 'further west'. Then had come the legacy of a few thousand dollars, and she had boarded the train for Alberta, and the long promised visit to her brother's ranch.

To her relief, Shirley soon returned. He had not located his quarry; but perhaps, when he looked at Laurie, saw the new light in her dark eyes, noted the heightened color in her cheeks, he realized that here, at any rate, the luck was with him, today. His eyes expressed a wish to linger in the pleasant shade of the veranda; but now, more than ever, success meant much to him.

She watched him canter over the bridge that spanned the little river, then disappear behind the fringe of trees that hid the western road. Above the trees, the serrated peaks of the Rocky Mountains shone white against the sky. Near at hand birds twittered in the trees and shrubs; butterflies flitted from flower to flower; the random breeze stole by. How peaceful the scene; yet now, somehow, the world seemed darker, less peace-

ful than before. The sordid tale of passion, of murder, had banished peace, as a serpent entering Paradise.

Next morning, the O'Days' hired girl, coming in from milking, reported that one of the cows had already been milked.

"A tramp hanging around the pasture", was Harry O'Day's suggestion; but his wife asked, "Wasn't the Corporal looking for a man, yesterday afternoon, Laurie?"

"Yes, he did take a look around", the girl answered, indifferently. Since it meant so much to him, and perhaps to her, that Shirley should make the capture, she wished to pass on to him, only, this possible clue to the supposed murderer.

"Oh! he's always looking for someone, around here," said Harry, facetiously, "didn't know it was a man, though". And so the subject was dropped.

Laurie telephoned the barracks, but found that Shirley had not returned the night before, but had spent the night at a ranch a few miles south. She got the number, and telephoned him there. He was just leaving, and said he would come across to the O'Days' immediately, and take another look around.

While waiting for his arrival, Laurie thought she would gather the eggs, her usual morning's task. Her brother was tinkering with some harness on the back porch, and surveyed, with a twinkle in his eyes, her costume of tan shoes, navy-blue muslin, and wide red

hat. "I'll say we're looking pretty nifty this morning", he complimented her. "Mounted Police colors, eh?"

"Nothing like dressing in keeping with one's environment", Laurie answered him, "you know how I appreciate the romance of the great West".

"Environment's **good**. Didn't know it had got to that stage—if you mean Creighton's doing the **environing**, and supplying the romance".

Laurie hastened to remove her blushes from her brother's gaze. As she entered the henhouse, which stood on one side of the cow shed, a hen flopped down through a little square opening, which led to the shallow loft where the overflow of hay from the big barns was stored, and set up a loud and triumphant cackling.

"Aha! Madam Hen, I caught you that time!" thought Laurie, in high glee at the prospect of discovering a hideaway nest. And she began to climb, hand over hand, up the primitive ladder which was nailed against the wall.

The hen's clatter had covered the noise of her approach; and a man who had just stopped to take an egg from a nest, gazed in terror-stricken surprise at the red hat bobbing up through the opening. When, however, he saw the bright young face beneath the wide brim, he gave a sigh of relief. He evidently thought she looked harmless.

When Laurie saw him, she would certainly have fallen back into the hen house but that her elbows caught on the edges of the opening, and held her up.

Replacing her feet on the ladder, she wondered what she had better do. He did not look as dangerous as might have been expected, so she decided to stay long enough to give Shirley a chance to arrive.

"Sorry to have startled you", said the man, in a surprisingly cultivated voice.

She surveyed him with a look of curiosity strangely unmixed with fear. He was quite unlike the degraded criminal of her mind picture. He was tall and thin, and though roughly dressed and untidy from contact with the hay, he gave an unmistakable impression of refinement.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, feeling she must say something.

"Having my breakfast, with which your hen has so obligingly supplied me." He sat down, for at that spot the loft was not high enough to allow him to stand erect.

"But you milked the cow," she accused.

"Well, yes, but I'm not much of a milker; so more milk went on the ground, than in the can I used for a pail".

She changed the subject. It seemed impossible to believe this man a murderer. "Did you kill him?" she asked abruptly.

"I'm afraid so", he said, soberly, "though God knows I didn't mean to. He set on me first. He had an awful temper—and—well—I guess I have a pretty

bad one, myself. So the first thing I knew he was lying unconscious at my feet."

"What were you doing on a farm, anyway?" she wondered.

"I came out here for my health. I'm as sound as ever, now; and I was going back in a few weeks, when the harvest was over. My wife's been pretty sick down in Dakota—is yet, for that matter".

"Your wife?" gasped Laurie, almost losing her balance again.

"Yes, the kid's a week old, now. I wanted to get home; but the old man had me on some kind of a fool contract, and wouldn't let me off."

The girl's brain was reeling. This was all so different from what she had expected, that she found a difficulty in readjusting her thoughts.

He saw the impression he had made; and was not slow in pressing his advantage.

"If there'd been only myself to think of," he told her, "I'd have stayed and faced it out. But there was Alice. It would kill her for sure if I were caught—the dreadful strain and disgrace of the trial—then, afterwards if I were—if I were sentenced to be—" the word refused to come. The man shuddered and horror and fear were depicted on his face to such a degree that they communicated themselves to the girl who watched him. She shivered in sympathy with his terror; and at the thought of the ailing, delicate wife, who, perhaps, waited and longed for his coming.

He found his voice again, and continued. "Even if I were given only a life sentence, that would be little better. Poor little Alice. I'm not much to write home about, but to her I'm the centre of the universe. Round me her whole world revolves. Are you married? If so, perhaps you will understand".

"I'm not married—but perhaps I can understand, can sympathize", Laurie answered. The feeling which so lately had blossomed in her heart for Shirley Creighton, had brought with it a passionate kinship with all loving women. So, now, though the stranger spoke again, no word reached her, for in her heart, and mind, were struggling two opposite, yet strangely allied forces. On one side ranged the promotion, the success of the man she loved; inextricably mixed, perhaps, with her own happiness; and from the other side there seemed to gaze at her anxiously, the wan and pleading face of the fugitive's wife, begging piteously for her husband's life.

"If I can reach the mountains", the man's voice came to her as from a distance, "I'll be all right, for I have friends up there who will help me to get across the border; and then I'll be safe."

Laurie heard voices outside, and knew the moment for decision had arrived. Then, because of the heart-sisterhood with all loving women which had been lately born from her love for Shirley Creighton, she gave the decision against him.

"Hide under the hay", she whispered, "and don't come out till evening. I'll bring you some food if I can".

Descending the ladder, she hastily gathered half a dozen eggs from a nest close at hand; and as she emerged from the hen house, Corporal Creighton came across the barnyard.

"You shouldn't be wandering around here alone, when we don't know where that fellow may be lurking", he said in a rather proprietary tone.

"Can if I like," she answered, with affected sauciness; "who's going to stop me?"

"I am".

"Well, you haven't; and I've been all around in here. Found a nest up in the loft".

His face clouded. "Good Heavens! Do use some sense!" he pleaded. "I want you, please, to go back to the house, now. And since you've been through that building, I may as well start at the next".

When he returned after examining the last out-building, she was still standing where he had left her.

"I thought I told you to go back to the house", he rallied her.

"Well, I'm going—with you".

Her pale, and anxious face belied the flippancy of her tone. Supposing the anxiety was for him, he reached out his arm, with the intention of placing it around her.

"No, no, don't touch me!" she cried, moving out of reach. Then seeing the hurt and puzzled look on his

face, she added, hastily. "You haven't time to be fooling around here, now—you have your work to do—perhaps if you come back tomorrow—"

He cheered up. "That's a promise, then. I'll go along, now—but tomorrow I'm coming back for my reward."

"You'll have to earn it, then", she forced herself to say lightly; and watched him mount and ride away.

Yes, tomorrow she would tell him, and take the consequences. Perhaps he would understand—but it was much more probable that, being a man, he wouldn't. Ah! well, she had made her choice. The decision was irrevocable.

By evening, having turned the matter over and over in her mind, she realized that she might have made a mistake, have allowed her sympathies to be too easily worked upon. However, she had given her promise; she would not fail the fugitive, now.

When twilight was falling, she strolled out of the house with the egg basket again in her hand, and the pockets of her sweater and blouse bulging with the articles she had managed to procure.

Finding in one of the grain bins, a battered tin pail that did duty for a dipper, she stowed her spoils within it. They were a half loaf of bread; a chunk of salt pork; some matches; and a small packet of tea.

Climbing the ladder to the loft, she called softly and a head appeared from beneath the hay. She handed up the pail, warning him to start as soon as darkness

fell; and to avoid the roads, as the police were after him

The man's voice trembled as he tried to thank her, but she cut him short.

"I'm doing it for your wife", she told him, "and if you do your duty by her, I'll have no cause to regret my decision."

Would she not, indeed? She wondered if in the future—a lonely future apart from Shirley—she might not often regret the sacrifice she had made.

In the meantime, Corporal Creighton, having turned his horse's head towards the west, took up, again, his weary quest. Late the afternoon before, some information he had received on the road, had sent him on a wild goose chase toward the south. But now he was convinced that Grattan would make for the mountains. Accordingly he rode in that direction, stopping at every ranch to make a search. He had supper at the X.Y. Ranch, and the manager had a piece of news for him.

"Seth Grattan?" said the manager, "Why, I think he's related to the Coopers over near the foothills. They're a bad lot. I'd be glad to see you clean up the whole bunch. We blame them for spiriting away several of our colts, last spring, but having no proof, we've let the matter drop. I shouldn't wonder if you'd find Grattan there."

It was twilight when Creighton arrived at the Coopers' ranch. The Cooper brothers and their hired man were as villainous-looking fellows as the young policeman had seen in many a day, and they had evi-

dently been drinking. They denied any knowledge of Grattan's whereabouts, but their apparent lack of interest in a matter which concerned seriously one supposed to be an intimate of theirs, confirmed Creighton in his suspicions that they were lying.

One of the Coopers followed him in his search, and whenever the man was behind him, he had an uneasy feeling that at any moment he might receive a bullet in his brain. Yet, he didn't shirk his task, but made a thoroughly business-like examination of the place. There was no brush about, in which a man might hide, so he soon satisfied himself that Grattan was not there. As the Cooper men suddenly became very garrulous when he returned to the house before leaving, he got the idea that they were trying to detain him. Creighton was no coward, but nevertheless he was very much relieved, when, shortly after dark, he found himself once more upon the road.

The Coopers had a telephone; and the Corporal realized that it would be easy for anyone along the road to apprise them of his approach. However, he decided that if Grattan had been there, and had imbibed as much whiskey as had the others, he would soon be quite incapable of making an intelligent get-away.

At the next house he was told that a rider, going at a terrific pace, had passed a short time before. "Didn't know him, or the horse; and I reckon I can spot any man up this way, even if it's dark when he passes me", said the rancher, who had just returned from town.

This was encouraging; so the Corporal rode on and on, till he had about decided that either Grattan was not ahead, or had not taken enough liquor to interfere with his progress. Then something happened.

He was passing a fenced-in field, when he heard a horse give a friendly whinny. Nothing remarkable about that—lots of horses in pasture along the road. But this time his own horse stopped with a loud nicker. This gave Creighton an inspiration. He remembered that the special chum of his horse, at the ranch where they had been raised, had been bought by the man for whose supposed murderer he was hunting. And a horse does not forget a pal in a hurry.

The Corporal dismounted; and leaving the two horses nosing each other over the fence, he jumped the gate, and took a survey of the field.

Had the rider, hearing the policeman coming, turned his horse adrift, and taken to his heels across the fields, thinking that a better chance of escape lay that way—for the mountains were now close at hand—? Or had he, overcome by sleepiness brought on by the whiskey, decided to sleep it off in one of the haystacks which the moonlight revealed in the centre of the enclosure?

The stacks were placed close together, and Creighton, his thirty-two calibre colt in his hand, scouted cautiously around them. The dark place in between the stacks looked a rather likely hiding-place; so he quietly advanced towards the centre. There was a dark hole seemingly hollowed out of the straw; and he gazed

at it a moment. Then hearing no sound of movement, he leaned over to make sure it was empty.

There was movement enough then. A dark form hurled itself upon him; and he felt a hot, stinging sensation in the ribs. In the scuffle which followed, his revolver accidentally went off, the bullet striking his assailant in the arm; and the fight was over almost before it began.

Creighton dragged his prisoner out into the moonlight; and from the description he had received, made sure he had captured the right man. Grattan had certainly been drinking heavily; and had the Corporal come a very little later, he would probably have met with no resistance. As it was, the blood-letting from the wound in his arm sobered the man; and he was able to walk across the field to where the two horses were still discussing the events which had occurred during their separation.

Creighton made a sling from his handkerchief for the captive's arm; and then helped him to mount the horse which had betrayed his whereabouts; and which rather resented the lead rein which the Corporal held as security against the prisoner's escape. Then, tired as he was, and suffering considerably from the knife thrust in his ribs, Corporal Creighton climbed into his own saddle, and started east. He knew if he could make the X.Y. Ranch, the manager would supply him with a flivver, in which he could more comfortably and quickly make the long ride to the station.

Late the next afternoon, a neighbor stopped on his way from town, to bring the O'Days their mail—it being customary that any neighbor who went to town should bring the mail for the whole neighborhood. He told Harry that Creighton had struck town that morning, bringing Seth Grattan with him.

"Pretty slick piece of work, too, by all accounts. The Corporal's quite some hero around town today. The fellow gave him a nasty jab in the ribs with a knife, though; and I guess Creighton's in a bad way. No one's seen him since he got in, and I saw the doctor coming out of the barracks when I went past". Then the kindly neighbor rode genially on his way, quite unconscious of the consternation he had left behind.

Laurie was reading, on the back porch, behind a screen of Virginia creeper, and heard the man pass on his budget of news to her brother, who had just come in from the fields. When the neighbor rode away, she sat as one stunned, her eyes staring into vacancy, her mind trying to grasp this tragedy which had descended upon her. Her brave, handsome young lover had been seriously wounded, was perhaps dying, or dead. And she had deceived him, worked against him—and all for the sake of the murderous wretch who had laid him low. How she hated that plausible fugitive whom she had tried to assist. Laurie was anything but cruel by nature, but at that moment she felt that, without a qualm, she could have seen him hanged.

Life, which had stretched so smilingly before her

dreaming eyes—life was as arid desert, through which she must struggle on—alone—unloved—uncared-for—for Shirley was dying.

She sat there in dazed misery till her sister-in-law came to see why she had not responded to the supper bell.

"Shirley," Laurie whispered, "he's hurt—dying".

"Who told you"?

"Mr. Bell told Harry. He was just here".

"It's probably only a rumor", said practical Mrs. O'Day. "I'll telephone the barracks, and find out".

She came back a minute or so later. "They don't answer from the barracks. So he must be all right again if he's able to be out".

"Perhaps they've taken him to the hospital", sobbed poor Laurie.

"Well, go upstairs and bathe your eyes; and I'll bring you up some tea. And if we haven't had any further news by then, Harry will get ready and take you into town."

But before Harry had finished his supper, the telephone rang; and on answering it he found Creighton was on the line, asking for Miss O'Day.

"She's upstairs", answered Harry, "shall I call her?"

"Oh! that you, Harry? No, don't call her. Tell her I'm coming right out—starting now."

"But I say, old sport, I thought the guy you pinched stuck you in the ribs; and that you were thinking of

stepping Heavenward, and singing hallelujas with the pretty little angels."

"Not a chance", Creighton assured him, "Grattan did give me a jab in the ribs which was pretty sore when I got in; and I was badly in need of sleep. But the doctor bandaged me up; and I turned in and have been dead to the world ever since. So now I feel fit as a fiddle."

Laurie was standing at the top of the stairs when Harry called up to her, "Oh! Laurie, that long-legged mountie of yours is coming out full lickety-split to tell you what a darned hero he is. So you'd better climb into your glad rags as fast as you know how."

"Oh! Shirley", Laurie murmured some time later, when the darkness had fallen and the hammock on the veranda was being made to do duty for two; "Oh! Shirley, I thought I'd lost you; and oh! how I hated that dreadful man—and to think I tried to help him to escape."

"You what?"

"Oh! I know you'll be dreadfully angry with me; but I meant to tell you as soon as you came—only you wouldn't give me a chance. And if you don't care for me any more—ever—why it can't be helped—only I hope you will." And then she told him about the man in the loft; and the mental struggle she had gone through before she finally decided to help him on his way.

Exclamations of surprise, annoyance, and bewilderment escaped Creighton's lips as he listened. Then, "What did the man look like?" he asked, as she finished.

"He was tall, and slight, and dark—rather good-looking," she informed him.

"And the man I caught was short, and stocky, and of a most villainous cast of countenance. You cornered the wrong man, my little girl!"

"But—were there two?"

"It would seem so. I met McNaughton, from the next station, when I was going west yesterday afternoon; and he told me he was out looking for Jim Bennett, who's been working for a farmer near High River. Jim didn't get on very well with his employer, who, they say, is as mean an old skinflint as there is in the country; but he put up with everything, till the farmer accused him of carelessly setting fire to some valuable stacks. Jim called him a liar, and the farmer hit him with a pitchfork. Then Jim lost his temper and administered to that old hayseed such a beating as he won't forget for some time. I imagine Jim thought he was dead, and so, left for parts unknown."

"Then he wouldn't have been hanged?"

"Hanged? Hardly. But the farmer had a pretty strong case against him; and he might have gotten a pretty stiff sentence. However, I don't think McNaughton was looking very hard. They'd had many a friendly game of cards together, and were rather good pals."

Shirley suddenly began to laugh. "A nice wife you'll make for a mounted policeman, little Miss Sentiment. So you thought you were cheating me out of my prisoner, eh? Not to mention my promotion, and the money the old man promised me? By-the-way, he's made good, all right. And I'm going to bring him out tomorrow, and let him have a look at you".

"But, Shirley, it was awful! I thought you'd hate me—or anyway, that we wouldn't be able to get married for ages and ages."

"Oh! I expect we'd have managed somehow. I've a little money of my own—not much—and anyway, it's a poor sort of chap who can't make a living in this great country of yours. However, if you're satisfied, I think I'll stay by the force for a while, yet; for just before I left town I had a message from the Inspector at McLeod, congratulating me on the capture I had made; and asking me if I'd care to take charge of a detachment which is leaving soon for the Peace River country. So now behold Sergeant Creighton, if you please. What say? Shall we go north?"

"Oh! Shirley, the Peace—I've always wanted to go up there—of course we'll go".

Again had come the call of her Celtic, pioneer ancestors, persuading her to be up and away, urging always the lure of 'further west'.

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