

mon, but there was little criticism. The Superintendent had won his volunteers. On Shock's face sat the serenity of a great decision, in his deep blue eyes the light of a great enterprise. As he said good-bye to Helen, she became aware that his usual hesitating, nervous awkwardness had given place to quiet, thoughtful dignity. A great resolve and a great sacrifice had lifted him far above things small and common.

V

“YEA, AND HIS OWN LIFE ALSO”

WHEN Helen entered her own room she had leisure to analyse the tumult of emotion filling her heart. Amazement, shame, anger, dismay, grief, were surging across her soul.

“How can he think of leaving his mother? It is a shame!” she cried indignantly to herself. But why this hot sense of shame? “Nonsense!” she protested vehemently to herself, “it is that poor, dear old lady I am thinking of.” She remembered that sudden stab at her heart at the old lady's broken words, “He will be going away, lassie,” and her cheek flamed hot again. “It is all nonsense,” she repeated angrily, and there being no one to contradict her, she said it again with even greater emphasis. But suddenly she sat down, and before long she found herself smiling at the memory of the old lady's proud cry, “Could not? Ay, he could.” And now she knew why her heart was so full of happy pride. It was for Shock. He was a man strong enough to see his duty and brave enough to face what to him was the bitterness of death, for well she knew what his mother was to him.

“He will go,” she whispered to her looking-glass,

"and I'd go with him to-morrow. But"—and her face flamed hot—"he must never know."

But he did come to know, to his own great amazement and overwhelming, humbling gladness.

Shock's determination to offer himself to the far West awakened in his friends various emotions.

"It is just another instance of how religious fanaticism will lead men to the most fantastic and selfish acts," was Mrs. Fairbanks' verdict, which effected in Brown a swift conversion. Hitherto he had striven with might and main to turn Shock from his purpose, using any and every argument, fair or unfair, to persuade him that his work lay where it had been begun, in the city wards. He was the more urged to this course that he had shrewdly guessed Helen's secret, so sacredly guarded. But on hearing Mrs. Fairbanks' exclamation, he at once plunged into a warm defence of his friend's course.

"The finest thing I ever heard of," he declared. "No one knows what these two are to each other, and yet there they are, both of them, arriving at the opinion that Shock's work lies in the West."

"But to leave his mother alone!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairbanks indignantly.

"She is not to be alone," said Brown, making there and then a sudden resolve. "By the greatest of luck for me I am turned out of my quarters, and she is to take me in, and while I can't fill Shock's place, still I am somebody," added Brown, fervently hoping the old lady would not refuse him shelter.

"I am not sure that a man is ever called to leave

his mother to the care of strangers," said Lloyd, who, after long indecision and much consultation with various friends, had determined that his particular gifts and training fitted him for Park Church.

"Oh! blank it all!" said Brown to Helen, "I can't stand that rot!"

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Fairbanks, looking haughtily at Brown through her glasses.

"I was about to say," replied Brown, in the sweetest of tones, "that if these two who are most interested, and who are extremely sane and reasonable persons, have come to an agreement upon a question, I'd bank on that decision as being about the thing." At which Helen gave his arm a quick squeeze.

"Well, mother," said Betty, "I think he's fine, and I never admired him so much as now. You know he may never see her again, and she has the whole of his heart."

"Not quite, I guess," said Brown in a low tone to Helen, who, blushing vividly, replied in like tone, "You seem to be remarkably well informed."

"I know," said Brown confidently. "But he is a mine of blind stupidity! If some one would dig him up, explore him—blast him, in short! Confound him!"

But when the Superintendent learned of all that Shock's decision involved, he made a point to insert among his multitudinous engagements a visit to the Macgregor cottage.

"It was a great scene, I assure you," said Brown, who was describing it afterwards to the young ladies.

"Those two old Spartans, all ice and granite outside, all molten lava within, stood up looking at each other a minute or two without the quiver of an eyelid and then the old chief burred out:

"'You are to be congratulated upon your son, Mrs. Macgregor.'"

"'Ay,' said she in a matter of fact tone, 'he will be doing his duty, I warrant.'"

"'And, believe me, your mutual sacrifice has not been unnoticed.'"

"'It is not great beside His own, but it iss all we could. It iss our life.'"

"The old chap bowed like a prince and then his voice burred like a buzz saw as he answered, 'Remember I did not ask you for him!'"

"'No, it wass not you.'"

"'But I want to tell you,' said the chief, 'I am proud to get a son who for the Cause can forsake such a mother, and I thank God for the mother that can give up such a son.'"

"And then he gripped her hand with that downward pull of his,—he gave it to me once when he heard I was Shock's friend, and nearly jerked me off my feet,—and without more words he was gone, while I stood behind them like a blubbering idiot."

"Oh, isn't she a dear!" exclaimed Betty, "poor thing."

"Poor thing!" echoed Helen warmly, "indeed she doesn't think so. She's as proud of him as she can be, and feels herself rich in his love; and so she is."

Her tone and manner struck Brown with sudden pity.

"Hang his stupidity!" he said to himself, "can't the old bloke see. But he has not such a blamed low opinion of himself that he can't imagine any girl, much less a girl like that, looking at him, and even if he did come to see it he would not think of asking her to share the life he's going to out there; and, by Jove! it would be hard enough for her. I guess I won't take the responsibility of interfering in this business."

But Brown had no need to interfere. Mrs. Fairbanks, of all people, did what was necessary. On the morning of Shock's departure it was she who declared that someone should take pity on "that dear old lady," and should stand by her in her hour of "desertion."

"So I think I shall drive over this afternoon; and, Helen, perhaps you had better come with me. You seem to have great influence with her."

But Helen was of quite another mind. She shrank from intruding upon what she knew would be a sacred hour to mother and son. But when Mrs. Fairbanks expressed her determination to go Helen finally agreed to accompany her.

"Oh, let's all go, mother," said Betty.

"I do not think they will want you, Betty, but you may go along," and so the three ladies proceeded in the afternoon to the Macgregor home.

But at the parting of Shock and his mother there were no tears or lamentations, or at least none that

any could witness. Through the long night before, they each knew the other to be keeping the watch of love and agony; yet, each alone, they drank the cup of sacrifice. It was only when the morning was nearing that Shock could bear it no longer, and hastily dressing he came into his mother's room and kneeling by her bedside put his arms about her.

"Mother, mother, why have you not been sleeping?" he whispered.

His mother turned to him and took his head to her bosom in a close embrace, but no words came from her.

"But, mother, don't be grieving like this," sobbed Shock, "or how can I leave you at all."

"Laddie, laddie, why did you come in to me? I had minded to give you up without tears, and this iss my hour of weakness. There now, let your head lie there. Whist! lad, och-hone. It iss twenty-four years since first you lay there, lad, and though grief hass come to me many's the day, yet never through you, never once through you, and you will be remembering that, lad. It will comfort you after—after—after I'm gone."

"Gone, mother!" cried Shock in surprise.

"Yess, for this iss the word given to me this night, that you will see my face no more."

"Oh, mother! mother! don't say that word, for I cannot bear it," and poor Shock buried his face in the pillow, while his great frame shook with sobs.

"Whist now, laddie! There now. It iss the Lord."

Her voice grew steady and grave. "It iss the Lord, and He gave you to me for these few happy years, and, Shock, man, you will be heeding me."

Shock turned his face toward her again and laid his face close to her cheek.

"Remember, I gave you to Himself in covenant that day, and that covenant you will keep now and—afterwards, and I must be keeping it too."

"Yes, mother," said Shock brokenly, while he held her tight. "But it is only for two years, and then I will be coming home, or you to me, and before that, perhaps."

"Yes, yes, laddie, it may be—it may be," said his mother soothingly, "but whether or no, we will not be taking back with the one hand what we give with the other. I had minded to give you without tears, but—but—oh, lad, you are all—all—all—I have. There is no one left to me."

There was a long silence between them. Under cover of darkness they let their tears freely mingle. In all his life Shock had never seen his mother sob, and now he was heart-stricken with grief and terror.

"Whist now, mother, you must not cry like that. Surely God will be good to us, and before long I will get a little place for you yonder. Why should you not come to me? There are missionaries' wives out there," he said.

"No, lad," his mother replied quietly, "I will not be deceiving myself, nor you. And yet it may be the Lord's will. But go away now and lie you down."

You will need to sleep a bit, to-morrow will be a hard day to you."

For twenty years and more she had thought first of her boy, and now, even in the midst of her own great sorrow, she thought mostly of him and his grief.

"Let me stay here, mother," whispered Shock. And so in each other's arms they lay, and from sheer exhaustion both soon fell asleep.

The morning's sun was shining through the chink by the curtain when Mrs. Macgregor awoke. Gently she slipped out of the bed and before dressing lighted the kitchen fire, put on the kettle for the tea and the pot for the porridge. Then she dressed herself and stepping about on tiptoe prepared breakfast, peering in now and then at her sleeping son.

It was with a face calm and strong, and even bright, that she went in at last to waken him.

"Now, mother," exclaimed Shock, springing off the bed, "this is really too bad, and I meant to give you your breakfast in bed to-day."

"Ay, it's myself knew that much," she cried with a little laugh of delight.

"Oh, but you're hard to manage," said Shock severely, "but wait until I get you out yonder in my own house."

"Ay, lad," answered his mother brightly, "it will be your turn then."

They were determined, these two, to look only at the bright side to-day. No sun should shine upon their tears. The parting would be sore enough with

all the help that hope could bring. And so the morning passed in last preparations for Shock's going, and the last counsels and promises, and in planning for the new home that was to be made in the shadow of the Rockies in the far West.

"And the time will soon pass, mother," said Shock cheerfully, "and it will be good for you to have Brown with you. He will need your care, you know," he hastened to add, knowing well that not for her own sake could she have been persuaded to receive even Brown into her little home.

"Ay, I will do for him what I can," she replied, "and indeed," she added warmly, "he's a kind lad, poor fellow."

"And the young ladies will be looking in on you now and then, so they said," and Shock bent low over his trunk working with the roping of it.

"Yes, indeed," replied his mother heartily, "never you fear."

And so with united and determined purpose they kept at arm's length the heart's sorrow they knew would fall upon each when alone.

To go to the ends of the earth in these globe-trotting days is attended with little anxiety, much less heart-break, but in those days when Canada was cut off at the Lakes, the land beyond was a wilderness, untravelled for the most part but by the Indian or trapper, and considered a fit dwelling place only for the Hudson Bay officer kept there by his loyalty to "the Company," or the half-breed runner to whom it was native land, or the more adventurous land-

hungry settler, or the reckless gold-fevered miner. Only under some great passion did men leave home and those dearer than life, and casting aside dreams of social, commercial, or other greatness, devote themselves to life on that rude frontier. But such a passion had seized upon Shock, and in it his mother shared. Together these two simple souls, who were all in all to each other, made their offering for the great cause, bringing each their all without stint, without measure, without grudging, though not without heart-break, and gaining that full exquisite joy, to so many unknown, of love's complete sacrifice.

To none but themselves, however, was the greatness of the sacrifice apparent. For when the carriage arrived with Mrs. Fairbanks and her daughters there was no sign of tears or heart-break in the quiet faces that welcomed them. And Mrs. Fairbanks, who had come prepared to offer overflowing sympathy to the old lady "deserted" by her "fanatical" son, was somewhat taken aback by the quiet dignity and perfect control that distinguished the lady's voice and manner. After the first effusive kiss, which Mrs. Fairbanks hurried to bestow and which Mrs. Macgregor suffered with calm surprise, it became difficult to go on with the programme of tearful consolation which had been prepared. There seemed hardly a place for sympathy, much less for tearful consolation, in this well-ordered home, and with these self-sufficient folk.

"We thought we would like to come over and—and—help, perhaps drive you to the station to see your

son off," said Mrs. Fairbanks, who was readjusting her scenery and changing her rôle with all speed.

"That was kind, indeed," said Mrs. Macgregor, "but Hamish will be walking, I doubt, and I will just be waiting at home."

She had the instinct of the wounded to hide in some sheltered and familiar haunt.

"I shall be glad to remain with you, Mrs. Macgregor, if I can be of any service," repeated Mrs. Fairbanks.

"It will not be necessary; everything is done, and there is nothing needed."

The voice was more than quiet, as if it came from a heart whose passion had been spent.

"It is very kind, indeed, and we are grateful," said Shock, feeling that his mother's manner might be misunderstood.

"Yess, yess," said the old lady hastily, "it iss very good of you and of the young ladies," turning to look at Helen with kindly eyes. "You will not be thinking me ungrateful," she added with a suspicion of tears in her voice. "I have been spoiled by Hamish yonder," turning her face toward her son.

"Whist now, mother," said Hamish to her in a low tone, in which depreciation and warning were mingled. He knew how hard the next hour would be for himself and for his mother, and he knew, too, that they could not indulge themselves in the luxury of uttered grief and love. At this moment, to the relief of all, Brown entered with an exaggerated air of carelessness.

"Here's a man for your 'settler's effects,'" he

cried cheerily. "Lucky dog, aint he," he cried, turning to Helen, "and don't I wish I was in his place. Think of the times he will have riding over the claims with those jolly cowboys, not to speak of the claims he will be staking, and the gold he will be washing out of those parish streams of his. Don't I wish I were going! I am, too, when I can persuade those old iron-livered professors to let me through. However, next year I'm to pass. Mrs. Macgregor is to see to that."

"Indeed, I hope so," cried Betty, "an hour's study, at least, before breakfast and no gallivanting at night. I will help you, Mrs. Macgregor. We will get him through this time."

"Ay, I doubt I will not be much the better of your help," replied Mrs. Macgregor, with a shrewd kindly smile.

"There now, take that," said Brown to Betty, adding ruefully to Shock, "You see what I'm in for."

"You'll survive," said Shock.

Then he rose and lifted his coat from the peg behind the door. At the same instant Helen rose hurriedly and with paling face said to her mother: "Let us go now."

"Well, Mrs. Macgregor, if we cannot serve you we will be going," said Mrs. Fairbanks; "but we would be glad to drive Mr. Macgregor to the station."

She was anxious to justify her visit to herself and her friends.

"That's a first-rate idea," cried Brown, "that is, if you can give me a lift, too."

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"Of course," cried Betty.

"Thank you, I shall be very glad," said Shock, seeing it would please Mrs. Fairbanks.

"Come along, then," said Betty. "I suppose we have not too much time."

"Good-bye, for the present," said Mrs. Fairbanks, offering her hand to the old lady, who was standing erect, white but calm, facing the hour whose bitterness she had already tasted.

"Good-bye," said Betty softly, kissing the white cheek, and trying to hurry her mother towards the door.

At this, Helen, who had been standing with face growing whiter and whiter, went to Mrs. Macgregor and put her arms around her and kissed her good-bye. When she was nearing the door she came hurriedly back. "Oh, let me stay with you. I cannot bear to go," she whispered.

The old lady turned and scrutinised steadily the young face turned so pleadingly toward her. Slowly under that steady gaze the red crept up into the white cheek, like the first dawning of day, till the whole face and neck were in a hot flame of colour. Yet the grey, lustrous eyes never wavered, but, unshrinking, answered the old lady's searching look. At that revealing wave of colour Shock's mother made as if to push the girl away from her, but, with a quick change of mood, she took her in her arms instead.

"Ay, poor lassie, you too! Yes, yes, you may stay with me now."

The motherly touch and tone and the knowledge

that her secret had been read were more than Helen could bear. She clung to Mrs. Macgregor, sobbing passionate sobs.

At this extraordinary outburst Mrs. Fairbanks came back into the room and stood with Shock and the others gazing in utter amazement upon this scene.

"Whist now, lassie, whist now," Mrs. Macgregor was saying, "never you fear, he'll come back again."

"What on earth is this nonsense, Helen?" Mrs. Fairbanks' voice was haughty and suspicious. "What does this mean?"

"It means," said Mrs. Macgregor with quiet dignity, "what neither you nor I can help or harm."

"Helen, speak to me."

At the stern command Helen lifted her face, still hot with blushes, and stood looking straight into her mother's eyes. Her mother turned from her impatiently.

"Do you know what this means?" she said to Shock.

"What? I don't understand," replied Shock, gazing helplessly at the haughty, angry face turned toward him.

"Have you dared to speak to my daughter?"

"Oh, mamma," cried Helen, in an agony of mortification, "how can you?"

"You may well be ashamed," said Mrs. Fairbanks, who had quite lost control of herself, "throwing yourself at the head of a man so far beneath you, with no prospects, and who does not even want you."

"So far beneath, did you say?" cried Mrs. Mac-

gregor quickly. "Woman, say no more. You shame yourself, let alone your child. Whist,"—checking the other's speech—"the blood in the veins of Hector Macgregor yonder" (pointing to the portrait of the Highland soldier on the wall) "was as proud as that in any Lowland trader of you."

"What sort of conduct, then, is this?" answered Mrs. Fairbanks angrily. "Have you encouraged your son?"

"Hush, mother," said Shock, suddenly awakening to an understanding of what was happening, "let me speak."

The stern voice compelled silence. Shock was a new man to them all. He was thinking quickly now for his mother, for himself, but most of all for the girl he loved, who stood with face turned away and eyes cast down in intolerable humiliation.

"Mrs. Fairbanks," said Shock, speaking slowly and with quiet dignity, "if I have not spoken of love to your daughter, it is not because I have not loved her well and for long, but because I could not feel myself worthy of her. Hush, mother; I am not worthy of her, nor shall I ever be, not by reason of any difference in blood,—for there is no difference,—but because of what she is herself, so far above me. I have never spoken with my lips of love, and yet for many and many a day I have feared that my eyes, and all else that could speak, must have told her I loved her. And if it should be—for I will not pretend to misunderstand you—if it should be that it is possible she should ever love me, then there has come to me a joy

greater than I could have hoped, and whatever may come of it, this day is the happiest of my life."

As Shock began to speak, Helen lifted her face, and as she listened her look of grief and shame fled, and in her eyes a light of joy began to dawn, then grew till it seemed to overflow in waves across her beautiful face. And as Shock continued his calm, manly words pride mingled in her joy, and her head lifted itself with a grace and dignity that matched that of the old lady standing by her side.

Mrs. Fairbanks stood fairly speechless at Shock's words and at the look of joy and pride she saw upon her daughter's face.

"This is absurd!" she cried at length. "It's preposterous, and it must end now and forever. I forbid absolutely anything in the way of—of engagement or understanding. I will not have my daughter tie herself to a man with such prospects."

"Wait, mother," said Shock, putting his hand out toward the old lady, who was about to speak. "Mrs. Fairbanks," he continued quietly, "far be it from me to take advantage of your daughter in any way, and I say to you here that she is as free now as when she came into this room. I shall not ask her to bind herself to me, but I will be false to myself, and false to her, if I do not say that I love her as dearly as man ever loved woman, and come what may, I shall love her till I die."

The ring in Shock's voice as he spoke the last words thrilled everyone in the room.

"Ay, lad, that you will," said his mother proudly.

"Oh, aint he great," whispered Brown to Betty, who in her excitement had drawn close to him.

Betty responded with a look, but could not trust herself to speak.

The moment was pregnant with possibilities.

As Shock finished speaking, Helen, with an indescribable mingling of shy grace and calm strength, came and stood by his side. For the first time Shock lost control of himself. He flushed hotly, then grew pale, then with a slightly defiant look in his face, he put his arm lightly about her.

"Time for that train," said Brown, who had slipped to the outer door. "That is," he continued in his briskest manner, "if you're going."

With a quick gasp Helen turned towards Shock. He tightened his arm about the girl, and putting his hand upon her shoulder, turned her face toward him and looked down into her face.

"Good-bye," he said gently. "Remember you are free, free as ever you were. I have no claim upon you, but don't forget that I will always love you. I will never forget you."

"Good-bye, Shock," she replied in a low, sweet tone, lifting her face to him. "I will not forget. You know I will not forget."

She slipped her arm around his neck, and while his great frame trembled with emotion she held him fast. "I'll not forget," she said again, the light in her great grey eyes quenched in a quick rush of tears. "You know, Shock, I will not forget." Her lips quivered piteously.

Then Shock cast restraint to the winds. "No," he cried aloud, "you will not forget, thank God, you will not forget, and you are mine!"

He drew her close to him, held her a moment or two, looking into her eyes, and as she lay limp and clinging in his arms he kissed her on the brow, and then on the lips, and gave her to his mother.

"Here, mother," he said, "take her, be good to her, love her for my sake."

He put his arms around his mother, kissed her twice, and was gone.

"He'll never get that train," cried Betty.

"Take the carriage," said Mrs. Fairbanks shortly, "and follow him."

"Come along! hurry!" said Betty, catching Brown's arm.

"The station, John!"

"Oh, I say," gasped Brown, seizing Betty's hand and crushing it ecstatically, "may I embrace you? It's either you or John there."

"Do be quiet. It seems to me we have had as much of that sort of thing as I can stand. Wasn't it awful?"

"Awful? Awfully jolly!" gasped Brown, hugging himself. "Haven't had a thrill approaching that since the McGill match, and even that was only a pale adumbration of what I've just been through."

"I'm sure I don't know what to think. It's so dreadfully startling."

"Startling!" cried Brown. "Come now, Miss

Betty, you don't mean to say you haven't seen this growing for the past six months!"

"No, truly I haven't."

"Well, that's only because you have been so occupied with your own affairs."

"Nonsense," cried Betty indignantly, with a sudden flame of colour in her cheeks. "You're quite rude."

"I don't care for anything now," cried Brown recklessly. "My prayers, tears, and alms-giving haven't been without avail. The terrors and agonies I've endured this last few days lest that old blockhead should take himself off without saying or doing anything, no man will ever know. And he would have gone off, too, had it not been for that lucky fluke of your mother's. Do you mind if I yell?"

"Hush! Here, let my hand go, it's quite useless," said Betty, looking at that member which Brown had just relinquished.

"John," gravely enquired Brown, "are you using both your hands?"

"I beg pardon, sir," enquired the astonished coachman, half turning round.

"Here, do stop your nonsense," cried Betty in a shocked voice.

"Oh, all right, John, this will do," said Brown, seizing Betty's hand again, as John gave his attention to the horses.

"I say, pull up beside Mr. Macgregor there, will you? Here, Shock, get in. You'll miss your train. Here, you old bloke, come along, don't gape like a

sick duck. Get in here. You have got to get that train *now*."

"Mr. Brown," said Betty in a severe whisper, "mind, don't say a word to him about this business. I can't stand it."

"Certainly not," said Brown, in a matter of fact tone. "There's nothing to be said."

But there was one last word to be said, and that was Betty's.

"Good-bye, Shock," she whispered to him, as he stepped upon his train. "I think—I know—I'm very glad."

Poor Shock could only grasp her hand in mute farewell. It was just dawning upon him that he had some further offering to bring to make his sacrifice complete.

ON THE TRAIL

"**T**HAT'S the trail. Loon Lake lies yonder."

Shock's Convener, who had charge for his Church of this district, stood by the buck-board wheel pointing southwest. He was a man about middle life, rather short but well set up, with a strong, honest face, tanned and bearded, redeemed abundantly from commonness by the eye, deep blue and fearless, that spoke of the genius in the soul. It was a kindly face withal, and with humour lurking about the eyes and mouth. During the day and night spent with him Shock had come to feel that in this man there was anchorage for any who might feel themselves adrift, and somehow the great West, with its long leagues of empty prairie through which he had passed, travelling by the slow progress of construction trains, would now seem a little less empty because of this man. Between the new field toward which this trail led and the home and folk in the far East there would always be this man who would know him, and would sometimes be thinking of him. The thought heartened Shock more than a little.

"That's the trail," repeated the Convener; "follow that; it will lead you to your home."

"Home!" thought Shock with a tug at his heart and a queer little smile on his face.