

and, what was of more importance, with the half-breed guide.

If The Kid had any doubt of his reception by the girl the glad, grateful look in her eyes as he drew near was enough to assure him of her welcome; and as he took the guide's place by her side she hastened to say, "I am glad you came, Mr. Stanton. It was very kind of you to come. It was awful riding alone mile after mile."

"Alone!" echoed The Kid.

"Well, I mean—you know he cannot talk much English and——"

"Of course," promptly replied The Kid, "I am awfully glad I came, now. Wasn't sure just how you might take it. I mean, I did not like pushing myself in, you understand."

"Oh, surely one does not need to explain a kindness such as this," said the girl simply. "You see, the doctor and Mr. Macgregor are together, and will be, and the others—well, I hardly know them."

The trail wound in and out, with short curves and sharp ascents, among the hills, whose round tops were roughened with the rocks that jutted through the turf, and were decked with clumps of poplar and spruce and pine. The world seemed full of brightness to the boy. His heart overflowed with kindness to all mankind. He found it possible, indeed, to think of Crawley, even, with a benignant compassion.

Far up in the Pass they camped, in a little sheltered dell all thick with jack pines, through whose wide-spreading roots ran and chattered a little moun-

tain brook. But for the anxiety that lay like lead upon her heart, how delightful to Marion would have been this, her first, experience of a night out of doors. And when after tea Shock, sitting close by the fire, read that evening Psalm breathing a trust and peace that no circumstances of ill could break, the spicy air and the deep blue sky overhead, sown with stars that rained down their gentle beams through the silent night, made for Marion a holy place where God seemed near, and where it was good to lie down and rest. "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

And that sense of security, of being under tender, loving care, did not forsake her all through the long watches of the night, and through the weary miles of the next day's travel that brought them at length to the Old Prospector's camp.

As they neared the camp the trail emerged out of thick bushes into a wide valley, where great pines stood, with wide spaces between, and clear of all underbrush. The whole valley was carpeted thick with pine needles, and gleamed like gold in the yellow light of the evening sun. The lower boughs under which they rode were dead, and hung with long streamers of grey moss that gave the trees the appearance of hoary age.

As they entered the valley instinctively they lowered their voices and spoke in reverent tones, as if they had been ushered into an assemblage of ancient and silent sages. On every side the stately pines led

away in long vistas that suggested the aisles of some noble cathedral. There was no sign of life anywhere, no motion of leaf or bough, no sound to break the solemn stillness. The clatter of a hoof over a stone broke on the ear with startling discordance. The wide reaches of yellow carpet of pine needles, golden and with black bars of shadow, the long drawn aisles of tall pines, bearing aloft like stately pillars the high, arched roof of green, the lower limbs sticking out from the trunks bony and bare but for the pendant streamers of grey moss, all bathed in the diffused radiance of the yellow afternoon light, suggested some weird and mighty fane of a people long dead, whose spirits, haunting these solemn spaces, still kept over their temple a silent and awful watch.

Out on the trail they met Perault in a frenzy of anxious excitement.

"Tank de Bon Dieu!" he cried brokenly, with hands uplifted. "Come wit' me, queek! queek!"

"Perault, tell us how your boss is." The doctor's voice was quiet and authoritative. "And tell us how long he has been ill, and how it came on. Be very particular. Take plenty of time."

Perault's Gallic temperament responded to the doctor's quiet tone and manner.

"Oui. Bon," he said, settling down. "Listen to me. We come nice and slow to dis place, an' den we go up dat gulch for little prospect. Good ting, too. Good mine dere, sure. But old boss he can't stay. He must go, go, go. Den we go up 'noder gulch, t'ree, four day more, for 'noder mine. Pretty good,

too. Den one night we comin' back to camp, old boss feel good. Skeep along lak small sheep. By gar, he's feel too good! He's fall in crik. Dat's noting. No! Good fire, plenty blanket make dat all right. But dat night I hear de ole boss groan, and cry, and turn overe and overe. Light de fire; give him one big drink wheesky. No good. He's go bad all dat night. Nex' day he's het noting. Nex' day he's worser and worser. Wat I can do I can't tell. Den de Bon Dieu he send along dat half-breed. De ole boss he write letter, an' you come here queek."

"Thank you, Perault. A very lucid explanation, indeed. Now, we shall see the patient; and you, Miss Marion, had better remain here by the fire for a few moments."

The doctor passed with Shock into the Old Prospector's tent.

"Mr. Macgregor," cried the old man, stretching out both hands eagerly to him, "I'm glad you have come. I feared you would not be in time. But now," sinking back upon his balsam bed, "now all will be—well."

"Mr. Mowbray," said Shock, "I have brought the doctor with me. Let him examine you now, and then we shall soon have you on your feet again."

The old gentleman smiled up into Shock's face, a smile quiet and content.

"No," he said between short breaths, "I have taken the long trail. My quest is over. It is not for me."

"Let the doctor have a look at you," entreated Shock.

"Most certainly," said the Old Prospector, in his wonted calm voice. "Let the doctor examine me. I am not a man to throw away any hope, however slight."

As the doctor proceeded with his examination his face grew more and more grave. At length he said, "It is idle for me to try to conceal the truth from you, Mr. Mowbray. You are a very sick man. The inflammation has become general over both lobes of the lung. The walls of the vessels and the surrounding tissues have lost their vitality; the vessels are extremely dilated, while exudation and infiltration have proceeded to an alarming extent. The process of engorgement is complete."

"Do you consider his condition dangerous, doctor?" said Shock, breaking in upon the doctor's technical description.

"In a young person the danger would not be so great, but, Mr. Mowbray, I always tell the truth to my patients. In a man of your age I think the hope of recovery is very slight indeed."

"Thank you, doctor," said the old man cheerfully. "I knew it long ago, but I am content that my quest should cease at this point. And now, if you will give me a few moments of close attention," he said, turning to Shock, "and if you will see that the privacy of this tent is absolutely secure, there is little more that I shall require of you."

The doctor stepped to the door.

"Doctor," said the Old Prospector, "I do not wish you to go. It is more than I hoped, that there should be beside me when I passed out of this life two men that I can trust, such as yourself and Mr. Macgregor. Sit down close beside me and listen."

He pulled out from beneath his pillow an oil-skin parcel, which he opened, discovering a small bag of buckskin tied with a thong.

"Open it," he said to Shock. "Take out the paper." His voice became low and eager, and his manner bespoke intense excitement.

"My dear friend," said the doctor, "this will be too much for you. You must be calm."

"Give me something to drink, doctor, something to steady me a bit, for I must convey to you the secret of my life's quest."

The doctor administered a stimulant, and then, with less excitement, but with no less eagerness, the old man proceeded with his story.

"Here," he said, pointing with a trembling finger to a line upon the paper Shock had spread before him, "here is the trail that leads to the Lost River. At this point we are now camped. Follow the course of this stream to this point, half a day's journey, not more; turn toward the east and cross over this low mountain ridge and you come to a valley that will strike you as one of peculiar formation. It has no apparent outlet. That valley," said the Old Prospector, lowering his voice to a whisper, "is the valley of the Lost River. This end," keeping his trembling finger at a certain point on the paper,

"has been blocked up by a mountain slide. The other turns very abruptly, still to the east. Three mountain peaks, kept in perfect line, will lead you across this blockade to the source of the Lost River."

"Mr. Mowbray," said Shock, "Perault tells us you only made short excursions from this point where we are now."

"Listen," said the old man. "I made this discovery last year. I have breathed it to no one. My claim is yet unstaked, but here," said he, taking another small buckskin bag from his breast, "here is what I found."

He tried in vain with his trembling fingers to undo the knot. Shock took the bag from him and opened it up.

"Empty it out," said the old man, his eyes glittering with fever and excitement.

Shock poured forth gold dust and nuggets.

"There," he sighed. "I found these at that spot. Empty the other bag," he said to Shock. "These are the ones given me by the Indian so many years ago. The same gold, the same rock, the same nuggets. There is my Lost River. I thought to stake my claim this summer. I ought to have staked it last year, but a terrible storm drove me out of the mountains and I could not complete my work."

The old man ceased his tale, and lay back upon his couch with closed eyes, and breathing quickly. The doctor and Shock stood looking at each other in amazement and perplexity.

"Is he quite himself?" said Shock, in a low voice.

The old man caught the question and opened his eyes.

"Doctor, I am quite sane. You know I am quite sane. I am excited, I confess, but I am quite sane. For thirteen years and more I have sought for those little pieces of metal and rock, but, thank God! I have found them, not for myself, but for my girl. I ruined her life—I now redeem. And now, Mr. Macgregor, will you undertake a charge for me? Will you swear to be true, to faithfully carry out the request I am to make?"

Shock hesitated.

"Do not disappoint me," said the old man, taking hold of Shock's hand eagerly with his two hands so thin and worn and trembling. "Promise me," he said.

"I promise," said Shock solemnly.

"I want you to follow this trail, to stake out this claim, to register it in your name for my daughter, and to develop or dispose of this mine in the way that may seem best to yourself. I trust you entirely. I have watched you carefully through these months, and have regained my faith in my fellow men and my faith in God through knowing you. I will die in peace because I know you will prove true, and," after a pause, "because I know God will receive a sinful, broken man like me. You promise me this, Mr. Macgregor?" The old man in his eagerness raised himself upon his elbow and stretched out his hand to Shock.

"Once more," said Shock, in a broken voice, "I

promise you, Mr. Mowbray. I will do my best to carry out what you desire, and so may God help me!"

The old man sank quietly back on his couch. A smile spread over his face as he lay with closed eyes, and he breathed, "Thank God! I can trust you as if you were my son."

"Hark!" he said a moment afterwards in an anxious whisper. "There is someone near the tent."

The doctor hurried out, and found Crawley in the neighbourhood of the tent gathering some sticks for the fire. He hastened back.

"It is only Mr. Crawley," he said, "getting some wood for the fire."

A spasm of fear distorted the old man's face.

"Crawley!" he whispered, "I fear him. Don't let him see—or know. Now take these things—away. I have done with them—I have done with them! You will give my love—to my daughter," he said to Shock after some moments of silence.

"She is here," said Shock quietly.

"Here! Now! I feared to ask. God is good. Yes, God is good."

The doctor stepped out of the tent. The old man lay with eager eyes watching the door.

Swiftly, but with a step composed and steady, his daughter came to him.

"Father, I am here," she said, dropping on her knees beside him.

"My daughter!" he cried with a sob, while his arms held her in a close embrace. "My daughter! my daughter! God is good to us."

For a long time they remained silent with their arms about each other. Shock moved to the door. The girl was the first to master her emotions.

"Father," she said quietly, "the doctor tells me you are very ill."

"Yes, my daughter, very ill, but soon I shall be better. Soon quite well."

The girl lifted up her face quickly.

"Oh, father!" she cried joyfully, "do you think——" The look on her father's face checked her joy. She could not mistake its meaning. She threw herself with passionate sobs on the ground beside him.

"Yes, my daughter," went on the old man in a clear, steady voice, "soon I shall be well. My life has been for years a fevered dream, but the dream is past. I am about to awake. Dear child, I have spoiled your life. We have only a few precious hours left. Help me not to spoil these for you."

At once the girl sat up, wiped her eyes, and grew still.

"Yes, father, we will not lose them."

She put her hand in his.

"You make me strong, my daughter. I have much to say to you, much to say to you of my past."

She put her fingers on his lips gently.

"Is that best, father, do you think?" she said, looking lovingly into his face.

He glanced at her in quick surprise. She was a girl no longer, but a woman, wise and strong and brave.

"Perhaps you are right, my daughter. But you will remember that it was for you I lived my lonely life, for you I pursued my fevered quest. You were all I had left in the world after I had laid your mother in her grave. I feared to bring you to me. Now I know I need not have feared. Now I know what I have missed, my daughter."

"We have found each other, dear, dear father," the girl said, and while her voice broke for a moment in a sob her face was bright with smiles.

"Yes, my daughter, we have found each other at length. The doors of my heart, long closed, had grown rusty, but now they are wide open, and gladly I welcome you."

There was silence for some minutes, then the old man went on, painfully, with ever shortening breath. "Now, listen to me carefully." And then he told her the tale of his search for the Lost River, ending with the eager exclamation: "And last year I found it. It is a mine rich beyond my fondest hopes, and it is yours. It is yours, my daughter."

"Oh, father," cried the girl, losing herself for a moment, "I don't want the mine. It is you I want."

"Yes, my daughter, I know that well, but for the present it is not the will of God that I should be with you, and I have learned that it is good to trust to Him, and without fear I give you, my daughter, to His care."

Again the girl grew steady and calm.

"Call Mr. Macgregor and the doctor, my dear," her father said. "These gentlemen alone," he con-

tinued when they had come to him, "hold my secret. Even Perault does not know all. He knows the valley which we explored last year, but he does not know it is the Lost River. Mr. Macgregor has promised to see the claim staked. Perault will guide him to it. This paper," taking a packet from his breast, "is my will. In it a full disposal is made of all. Now I will sign it."

The paper was duly signed and witnessed. With a sigh of content the old man sank back upon his bed.

"Now all is done. I am well content."

For some time he lay with closed eyes. Then, waking suddenly, he looked at Shock and said: "Carry me out, Mr. Macgregor. Carry me out where I can see the trees and the stars. Through long years they have been my best friends. There, too, I would lie in my long sleep."

They made a bed of boughs and skins for him before the camp-fire, and out into the dry, warm night Shock carried him. In the wide valley there still lingered the soft light of the dying day, but the shadows were everywhere lying deeper. Night was rapidly drawing up her curtains upon the world. The great trees stood in the dim light silent, solemn, and shadowy, keeping kindly watch over the valley and all things therein. Over the eastern hill the full moon was just beginning to rise. The mingled lights of silver and gold falling through the trees lent a rare, unearthly loveliness to the whole scene.

The Old Prospector, reclining on his couch, let

his eyes wander over the valley and up through the trees to the sky and the stars, while a smile of full content rested on his face.

"It is a lovely night, dear father," said his daughter, quick to interpret his thought.

"Yes, my daughter, a rare night. Often have I seen such nights in this very spot, but never till to-night did their full joy enter my heart. My life was one long, terrible unreality. To-night the world is new, and full of loveliness and all peace."

Then he lay in long silence. The doctor came near, touched his wrist, listened to the beating of his heart, and whispered to his daughter, "It will not be long now."

The old man opened his eyes. "You are near, my daughter," he said.

"Yes, father, dear, I am here," she replied, pressing his hand between hers.

"Could you sing something, do you think?"

The girl drew in her breath sharply as with a sob of pain.

"No," said her father. "Never mind, my daughter. It is too much to ask."

"Yes, yes, father, I will sing. What shall I sing?"

"Sing Bernard's great hymn, 'The world is very evil.'"

It was a hymn she had often sung for him, selecting such of its verses as were more familiar, and as expressed more nearly the thought in their hearts.

As she began to sing the doctor passed out beyond

the firelight to the side of the tent. There he found Stanton, with his head bowed low between his knees.

"My boy," said the doctor, "that is very beautiful, but it is very hard to bear."

"Yes," said Stanton. "I'm a baby. I would like to help her, but I cannot."

"Well, my boy, she needs no help that either you or I can give."

Perault, the half-breed, and Crawley sat in silence at the other side of the fire. Shock remained near the girl, wondering at her marvellous self-control.

Verse after verse she sang in a voice low, but clear and sweet. As the refrain occurred again and again,

"O sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect,
O sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect,
Jesus, in mercy bring us to that dear land of rest,"

the only change was that the song rose a little clearer and fuller and with deeper tone.

After she had finished the camp lay in perfect silence.

"Are you asleep, father, dear?" his daughter said at length, but there was no reply. She touched his hands and his face.

"Father!" she cried in a voice of awe and fear, but still there was no reply.

The doctor came hastily into the light, looked into the old man's face, and said: "He is gone."

With a long, low, wailing cry the girl laid herself upon the ground by her father's side and put her

arms around him. They all gathered about the couch, with the doctor and Shock standing nearest.

"Poor child!" said the doctor softly. "This is a sad night for her."

"Yes," said Shock, in a voice quiet and steady. "For her the night is sad, but for him the day has dawned and there shall be night no more."

There, in that wide valley where the yellow pine needles lie deep and where morning and evening the mingling lights fall softly through the over-arching boughs, they laid the Old Prospector to rest under the pines and the stars that had been his companions for so long.

EJECTED AND REJECTED

IN the main room of the Old Prospector's house some ten or twelve stern-faced men had gathered. The easy, careless manner that was characteristic of the ranchers and cowboys of the district had given place to an air of stern and serious determination. It was evident that they had gathered for some purpose of more than ordinary moment. By common consent Sinclair, a shrewd and fair-minded Scotch rancher who possessed the complete confidence of every man in the company, both for his integrity and his intelligence, was in the chair.

"Where is Mr. Macgregor?" he enquired.

"Gone to the Fort," answered The Kid. "He is on duty there to-morrow. He wished me to say, however, that he has no desire to push this matter, as far as he is personally concerned, but that if the committee thinks the public good demands his presence and his testimony he will appear on Monday."

"He ought to be here," said Sinclair, and his tone almost conveyed a reproof.

"He'll come if he's wanted, I guess," drawled out Ike, quick to take his friend's part.

"Well, then let us proceed. Let us get the facts