Sally of Missouri



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Rose E. Young

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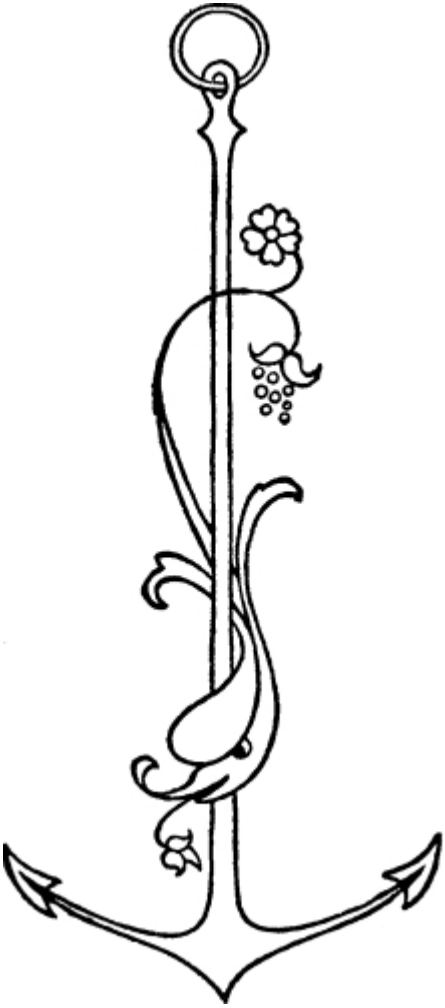
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SALLY OF MISSOURI

BY R. E. YOUNG



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Dedicated to Florence Wickliffe

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SALLY OF MISSOURI

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THE

STORY

Steering, of New York
Old Bernique, of French St. Louis
Piney, of the Woods
Crittenton Madeira, of Canaan
Sally, of Missouri

There are also some kind-hearted people:
Farmers, Housewives, Store-keepers, Miners, etc.

Chapter One

STEERING OF NEW YORK

"Hoo-ee-ow-ohme!"

It was half a sob, half a laugh, and, half sobbing, half laughing, the young man stopped his horse on the crest of the Tigmore Hills, in the Ozark Uplift, raised in his stirrups, and looked the country through and through, as though he must see into its very heart. In the brilliant mid-afternoon light the Southwest unrolled below him and around him in a ragged bigness and an unconquered loneliness. As far as eye could reach tumbled the knobs, the flats, the waste

weedy places, the gullies, the rock-pitted sweeps of table-land and the timbered hills of the Uplift. The buffalo grass trembled across the lowlands in long, shaking billows that had all the effect of scared flight. From the base of the Tigmores a line of river bottom stretched westward, and beyond the bottom curved a pale, quiet river. In the distance wraiths of blue smoke falteringly bespoke the presence of people and cabins; on a cleared hill an object that might be horse or dog or man was silhouetted, small and vague; and in the farthest west the hoister of a deserted zinc mine cut up against the sky a little lonely way. The near and dominant things were constantly those tremulous, fleeing billows of grass, the straight strong trees, the sullen rocks, the silent, shivering water.

"*Hoo-ee-ow!*"

It was too vast, too urgent. Waiting, ready, it lay there aggressively, like a challenge. As the young man faced it, it claimed him, forcing back his past life, his old habits, his old haunts, into the realm of myth and moonshine. His old habits! His old haunts! They hung aloof in his consciousness, shadow pictures, colourless and remote.... That zestful young life at New Haven, the swift years of it, the fine last day of it, Yale honours upon him, his enthusiasms cutting away into the future, his big shoulders squared, his face set toward great things, the righting of wrongs, grand reforms, the careers of nations.... A bachelor hotel; a club whose windows looked out on the avenue; an office where Carington and he had pretended to work down on Nassau Street; drawing-rooms where Carington and he had pretended to be in love, on various streets; the whole gay, meaningless panorama of his life as a homeless,

unplaced New York sojourner, who had considered that he had too much money to be anything seriously and too little money to do anything effectively.... Then another picture, jerking, mazy, a study in kinematics—"Crazy Monday" on the Street, Carington and he swept along in that day's whirlwind of speculation.... A blank in the panorama while he got used to things and thought things out.... Then a wintry twilight at the club, Carington and he by the window, talking it over, looking out upon the drifted light of the city, loving the city, in the way of New Yorkers. Then Carington's voice saying, "Bruce? Bruce, m' son? Why don't you try Missouri?" Saying it with that in his voice to indicate that there was nothing else left to try. Then the long thoughtful talk, Carington and he still by the window, while he showed Carington how little chance he had even in Missouri; then Carington's strong-hearted insistence that, in view of the agitation over the ore discoveries at Joplin, he go on "out there" and prospect; and then Carington's foolishly irrelevant heel-piece, "Miss Gossamer sails for Europe Saturday!" and the sudden appeal of the notion to go "out there," its sharp striking-in.... Carington and he taking counsel with some of the other fellows in his rooms later on, all the deep voices roaring at once, all the boys insulting him at once, belittling his cigars, saying sharp things about his pictures, that being their way of showing him that they were badly broken up over his leaving them; all their eyes shining interest in him and hope for him and even envy of him, as the young man who was "going out West," while the great soft fluff of smoke in the room made the past a dream and the present an illusion and the future a phantasm.... Then the long journey overland, the little impetus toward the new life flickering drearily, while he

gripped up his heart for any fate, growing quieter and quieter, but more and more determined to take Missouri as she came.... Then Missouri herself, the stop at St. Louis, the dip into the State southwestward, toward the lead and zinc country and his own debatable land; good-bye to the railroad; by team, in company with other prospectors, through the sang hills, up and down stony ridges, along vast cattle ranges.... And now here, quite alone, twenty miles from the railroad, Missouri on all sides of him, close-timbered, rock-ribbed, gulch-broken, mortally lonely, billowing around him, over him, possessing him.

That sense of being possessed by Missouri, committed to her, had grown upon him intolerably all day. All day he had been fighting it and resenting it. At various points along the rocky ridge road he had come upon hill cabins and hill people, and, facing them, his fight and his resentment had been momentarily vicious.

"Gudday, stranger!" the people had called from the porches of the hill cabins, "Hikin' over the Ridge?"

"Yes, friend," Steering had called back, and had then projected his unfailing, anxious question: "Can you tell me how far it is to Poetical?"

At that the people from the porches had got up and come across the baked weeds of the cabin yard. Assembled at the stile-block in front of him, the people invariably lined up as a long, gaunt farmer, a thin, flat-chested woman, a troop of dusty children, and a yellow dog.

"Yass, I cand tell you. It's six sights and a right smart chanst f'm here to Poetical, stranger," the long, gaunt

farmer had invariably drawled, with more accommodation than information.

"Six sights—six sights and a right what *what*?"

"W'y," the Missourian had explained forbearingly, blinking toward the sun, and waving his loosely jointed arms westward, "it's this-a-way—you'll git sight of Poetical f'm six hills, an' whend you git to the bottom of the sixt' hill they's a right smart chanst you won't be to Poetical evum yit awhile. You cand see far in this air. It's some mild f'm here to Poetical, an' sharp ridin' at that."

Each time that Steering had heard that, little varied in phraseology, save for the number of "sights," according to his progress, he had felt so dismal and looked so dismal that, each time, the native before him had added quickly, "Better git off an' spin' the night with us. Aint got much, but what we got's yourn."

Each time the house beyond the stile-block had looked miserably uninviting,—a plough on the front porch, harness on the porch posts; all around the house the yard litter of cheap farm life, a broken-down harrow, broken-backed furniture, straw, corn-shucks, ghosts of past winters and past summers on the farm, that had shuffled out there and died there; each time the cleared patches beyond the house had looked lean; each time the native had been sallow and toil-worn; but each time that welcome word had been a finely perfect thing, good to hear.

Steering had noticed that in declining each invitation he had suddenly stopped short in his inner fight and resentment and assumed his best manner, as though his finest and highest courtesy had responded

instinctively to something in kind.

Idling on for a more expansive moment at each cabin door, the conversation had usually shaped itself like this:

"Two has already rid over the Ridge to-day—Old Bernique and the tramp-boy. Old Bernique he's on the trail ag'in. The tramp-boy he's kim along so far with Old Bernique." In saying this, or something very like it, the hill farmer who spoke had always seemed to want it definitely understood that the neighbourhood had its excitements, and seemed to argue that if the stranger knew anything he must know Old Bernique and the tramp-boy. Proceeding leisurely and reflectively, as though he had decided in his own mind how to classify the stranger, the farmer had generally added, "Lots of prospectors ride by nowadays. They head in to the relroad f'm here,—you know you aint a-goin' to ketch the relroad at Poetical?"

"Yes, I know, but when I left my friends at Bessietown yesterday I was hoping I could make it all the way across country to Canaan before to-night."

"Oh, you goin' on to Canaan?"

"Yes, going on to Canaan." Each time the words had echoed through Steering's head with an old-time promise in a mocking refrain, "Going on to Canaan! Going on to Canaan!"

Immediately the hill tribe had eyed him with renewed interest. "Going on to Canaan!" the farmer at their head had repeated, an impressive esteem in his treatment of the word Canaan. "Gre't taown,

Canaan! You strike the relroad tha' all righty. Dog-oned ef th'aint abaout ev'thing tha'. Got the cote-haouse an' all, the relroad an' all—Miss Sally Madeira, Mist' Crit Madeira's daughter, *she* lives tha'."

It had gone like that every time. Not once in the last twenty miles had Steering exchanged a word with man or woman without this sort of reference to Canaan and, collaterally, to Miss Sally Madeira. Miss Sally, he had perceived early, excited in the hill-farm people a species of awe, as though she were on a par with the circus, thaumaturgic, almost too good to be true.

"The court house, the railroad and Miss Sally!" he had finally learned to murmur, in order to meet the demands of the situation.

"Yass, oh yass." The farmer had given his head a dogged twist, and looked as though he were cognisant of the fact that in certain essential particulars Canaan did not have to yield an inch of her title to equality with the biggest and best anywhere. "Yass, saouthwest Mizzourah's hard to beat in spots; th'aint no State in the Union quite like her. She's different," he had said, rocking on his heels, his chest lifting.

"I think you must be right about that," Steering had answered, every time with profounder emphasis.

Off here alone on the ridge road now, Missouri's unspeakable difference was coming over him in great submerging waves. Though he tried bravely to face the State and have it out with her, he couldn't do it.

"Missouri," he said at last to himself, and to her confidentially, "I'd like to cry. I'd give five hundred

plunkerinos if I might be allowed to cry." Then he flicked his riding-crop over his leg in a devilishly nonchalant way, and rode straight forward.

The road went on interminably, its dust-white line, with the rocky ridge through the middle, dipping and rising and getting nowhere. The horse grew nervous and shied repeatedly from sheer loneliness. The road entered a wood. Deep in its leafy fastness wild steers heard the beat of the horse's hoofs, laid back their ears and galloped into safer depths, bellowing with alarm. Steering gave up, as helplessly homesick as a baby, his head dropped forward on his chest in a settled melancholy, from which he did not rouse until he had cleared the timber; and then only because he saw a horseman down the ridge road ahead of him. What instantly attracted Steering's attention was the man's back. It was a small but proud back. It had none of the hill stoop. It was erect, sinewy, soldierly. Steering was so lonely that he would have welcomed companionship with a chipmunk. The chance of companionship with a man who had an interesting back grew luminous. He urged his horse forward eagerly, almost hysterically glad of his opportunity.

"Good-afternoon," he called, having recourse to his well-tried form of greeting. "Can you tell me how far it is to Poetical?"

The man addressed half turned, disclosing a thin and delicate face to Steering. Then he reined his horse in gently. "Good-evening, sair. Is it that you inquire to Poetical? It is a vair' long five miles f'm here, sair."

Steering rode up beside the man, more and more pleased, regarding and analysing. The man's hickory shirt, his warped boots, his blue jean trousers, his

heavy buskins were mean and earth-stained, but inherent in the quality of his low, musical voice and courteous manner was an intangible suggestion of something different, some bigger and happier past, to which, go where he would and clothe himself as he might, voice and manner had remained true.

"I wonder," said Steering, almost sighing, "if you will mind a little of my company. The road is terribly lonely, sir. The country is terribly lonely in fact."

"Yes, sair, a tr-r-ue word that. It is lonely. But sair, what will you of this particulaire portion? It is vair' yong in the Tigmores. It cannot be populate' in a day, a year. You, sair, come from the East, hein? Sair, relativement, effort against effort, they have not done as much in the East in feefty years as we have done in the Southwest in twenty,—believe that, sair." It was that same feeling for the State, that quick, leaping passion of nativity that Steering had thus far found in every Missourian with whom he had come in contact.

"You are a Missourian, I see," said Steering, to keep his companion talking along the line of this enlivening enthusiasm.

"Indeed, sair, yes. From that Saint Louis—François Placide DeLassus Bernique, at your service."

"Thank you. My name is Steering, from New York, if you please, but very deeply interested in Missouri just now, sir."

From that on they made easy progress into acquaintance. Bernique proved talkative, full of anecdotes about Missouri's past, and full of belief in her future. In his rich loquacity he roamed the

history of the State painstakingly for the edification of Steering, as one who stood at Missouri's gates, inquiring of her true inwardness. He told Missouri's history back to Spain and France, forward to unspeakable splendour. He was intelligent, naïve, unusual. Steering, responsive to the attraction that was by and by to hold them strongly together, listened delightedly.

"Yessair,"—through Bernique's speech ran a reminiscence of his native tongue, faint, sweet, fleeting, like the thought of home,—"yessair, it is I know the fashion in the eastern States to considaire all the West as vair' yong countree, and it is tr-r-ue, sair, that you, par example, have come upon the most yong part of thees gr-r-eat State of Missouri, but it is to be remembaire that this Missouri is not all rocks and wood, uncultivate', standing toward the future, but that her story date back to a remoter period and a fuller and finer civilisation, in that day when France and Spain held sway over the province of Louisiana, than does the story of many of the eastern States who hold this countree new, raw, uncivilise'. I myself,"—continued the speaker, spreading out one slender hand with an exquisite grace,—"have gr-r-own up in this State of Missouri, at that St. Louis, with the most profound convincement, aftaire much travel and observation, that for elegance we have in that city the most to it belong people in the United States of America, yessair!"

"Ah, well," admitted Steering, borne along rapidly on the vehement current of Bernique's ardour, "with your sort of spirit in the people of Missouri, whatever she was and whatever she is can be but a mighty promise of what she will become——"

"Ah, there you have it, the note!" interrupted François Placide DeLassus Bernique eagerly, "What she will become! That is the gr-r-and thought, sair. I who say it have preserve' my belief in what she will become through the discouragement ter-r-ible. I who speak have prospec' this land from end to end. I know her largesse. Believe me, sair, the tr-r-easures that were sought by the Castilian knights of old through all thees parts are indeed to be found here, —not the white silvaire of Castilian dreams, but iron! Coppaire! Lead! Zinc!"

"I suppose," ventured Steering, "that it would be foolish to hope for deposits in this part of the State similar to the deposits about Joplin, and all through the thirty-mile stretch?"

"Pouf!" Old Bernique made one of his pretty gestures, but said nothing.

"You have," went on Steering, "you have to the west here the Canaan Tigmores, Mr. Bernique?"

"Eh? Yessair, the Canaan Tigmores," repeated old Bernique, looking out over the ridges of hills and the flats listlessly; so listlessly that, by one of those flashes of intuitive perception that light us far along waiting paths, Steering knew suddenly that he had to deal with a man whose experience had somehow crossed the Canaan Tigmores.—"And also, Mistaire Steering, we have to the far south the Boston Range, in Arkansas, and far to the west the Kiamichi, in the Territoree."

"Yes, but about these Canaan Tigmores, Mr. Bernique," insisted Steering, not at all deflected by Bernique's effort, "what about your Canaan Tigmores, Mr. Bernique?" Steering's experience with the French

Missourian had been too fragmentary for anything but conjecture to come of it, and his own plans were too immature and too heavily conditioned for him to project them directly, but he had a feeling that he should want to know Bernique better some fine day, and he was moved to get some sort of grip upon the old man's interest while the chance lasted. "The Canaan Tigmores are not as far away as the Boston Mountains, Mr. Bernique. Much nearer than the Kiamichi. What's your idea about the Canaan Tigmores—in relation to zinc, Mr. Bernique?"

"Pouf!" The old man made airy rings of smoke from the cigar with which Steering had furnished him. He would not talk about the Canaan Tigmores at all. "You will see Mr. Crittenton Madeira in Canaan about all that," he said. "And now, sir, I have the regret to leave you. Our roads part at the sign-post yonder. I ride east."

"Well, tell you what I wish!" cried Steering, with the pertinacity that was a part of him. "I am on my way to Mr. Crittenton Madeira now, and I wish you would come to me in Canaan some soon day and let me tell you the result of my business with him." Time was limited, for the horses were close to the cross-roads sign-post. "The Canaan Tigmores won't always belong to old Bruce Grierson, Mr. Bernique!" It was a random shot, but it told against Bernique's glumness.

"Pouf! The bat-fool! The blind mole!"

"The Canaan Tigmores are entailed, Mr. Bernique! The next owner may have eyes!"

"God grant!" growled Old Bernique.

"Grey eyes, eh, Mr. Bernique?" Steering flashed his

own eyes smilingly at the French Missourian. The horses were at the sign-post.

"Eh, what?" cried Old Bernique, "is it that——?"

"We shall meet again, Mr. Bernique?"

"I ride east for many a day, I think," said Bernique dubiously.

"But you come back to Canaan?"

"Ah, God in Heaven, yes!" cried the old man then, with a sudden fierce impetuosity, "I ride east, ride west, ride the wide world ovaire, but always I come back,—come back to Canaan." He stopped abruptly, as though afraid of himself, and faced Steering for a silent moment.

Up to the silence, cleaving it gently, musically, there came unexpectedly the notes of a rollicking song:

"*The taters grow an' grow, they grow!*"

On the instant old Bernique's face relaxed pleasantly. He half grunted, half laughed. "The potato song!" he cried, his eyes gay, his mouth twitching. "Mistaire Steering, if you will ride on a little way you will have fine company. That is the tramp-boy yondaire. He is in the woods above the gulch there. He will have emerge' to the road presently. The yong scamp is musical, sair!"

"Aye, hear that!" cried Steering appreciatively, "gloriously musical!" Out of the great green timber mounted the tenor notes, piercingly sweet, pure, true, like a bird-call:

"*A tater's good 'ith 'lasses.*"

Bernique's horse was growing restless. The old man rode a little nearer Steering and regarded him searchingly. "Good-bye, sair," he said then, "it shall be what you say. I shall come back to you in Canaan."

"Good-bye, Mr. Bernique. I'm glad to have you decide that way." Steering clung to his notion that he and Bernique were to know each other better. They shook hands under the cross-roads sign-post with understanding.

The rain was coming on fast. All the east lay grey behind Steering, all the west grey before him as he moved away from the cross-roads. But out of the west rolled the melody of the carolling boy, the voice of one singing in the wilderness, young and undismayed.

Under the cross-roads sign-post old Bernique sat his horse motionless for a time, looking after Steering. From Steering his eyes roamed afar toward the Canaan Tigmores. A little shiver caught him. "The man that was expect'," he mused, "the man that was expect'!" Then he, too, rode away.

Chapter Two

PINEY OF THE WOODS

Where the ridge road dropped down close to the pale river at a dip in the hills, Steering overtook the

tramp-boy, hallooed to him, and watched him, as he turned his pony about and sat waitingly. He was a youth of sixteen or seventeen, and from under the peak of his felt hat, slouched and old, peered out a slim young gypsy face, crowned by a thick mop of black hair that tumbled about wide temples. Motionless there, the tremble of his song still on his lips and the gladness of youth and health on his face, the tramp-boy made Steering think of the rosy young shepherd Adonis, he was so glowing, so fine and fresh.

"I have been right after you all the way from the cross-roads," explained Steering, by way of a beginning, riding up to the lad's side, "I have just parted from a friend of yours,—Mr. Bernique,—so you see we are almost friends ourselves."

"A'most." The boy smiled, showing white teeth. He seemed to like Bruce's method of dealing with him. "Wuz Unc' Bernique cross because I didn't go rat back like I said I'd do?" he queried slily.

"No, I think not. And for my part, I am glad you didn't, for I am hoping that if you are going toward Poetical you won't mind my company. You see, it's pretty dog-on lonely." A very little of the ridge road sufficed to make Bruce sick for comradeship, and his voice showed it. The boy turned an impressionable, sympathetic face.

"Come rat along," he said. He looked at Bruce a moment questioningly before adding, "Reckin's haow you aint usen to the quiet yit. Taint so lonely, the woods an' the hills whend you know um." He twisted his head like a bird and looked out across the extensive sweep of the land and the long slow curve of the river, a deep inspiration swelling his chest.

"Simlike they up an' talk to you, the woods an' the hills an' the quiet, whend you know um," he said.

All on the instant Steering knew that, as in the case of Old Bernique, here again was character. "Character" seemed distinctly the richest and the pleasantest thing in Missouri. He rode in a little closer to his companion, drawn to him irresistibly, recognising in him the sweet, untutored poetry of a wildwood nature, whose young timidity was trembling and steadying into the placating, magnetic assurance of a boy, fresh-hearted as a berry. Steering had encountered the same sort of poetry in other unspoiled boys, splendid child-men whom he had known in other walks of life, and he had a quick affection for it. It was always as though on its crystal clearness a man might see the white sails of his own youth set back toward him.

"Yes," he answered, "I think you are right about that. They do talk, the hills and the woods and the quiet, —only a fellow grows dull, gets his ears full of electric gongs and push-bells, and forgets to listen."

The boy looked up with quick-witted question. "Y'aint f'm this part of the kentry, air you?" he asked.

"No. I am from—well, from Bessietown last. Where are you from?"

The boy laughed and glanced gaily at his briar-torn clothes. "F'm the woods," he said.

"My name is Bruce Steering."

"Mine's Piney."

They fell then to talking of many things, as they rode toward Poetical, but inevitably they spoke chiefly of

the great State of Missouri. On the subject of Missouri the boy talked, as old Bernique had talked, with expansive naïveté. In his roamings he had ridden the State up and down, and had found much to love in it. "You'll like her, too, all righty," he told Bruce confidently, "whend you git broke to her." On one of youth's candid impulses to speak up for the life on the inside, the cherished desire, the gallant ideal, the buoyant fancy, he made a supple, sudden divergence in the conversation. "D'you know," he said, "they aint *no* place whur I'd drur be than Mizzourah ceppen only one."

"Where's that?" asked Bruce, and to his immense astonishment the boy answered quickly:

"Italy."

"Why, how does that happen, Piney? Ever been there?"

"Nope. Hearn Unc' Bernique tell abaout it, thass all. It 'ud suit me, though. I know that." His eyes grew dreamy and he seemed to be looking far beyond Missouri. One could almost see the fine, illusory spell of the far Latin land upon him, the spiritual bond, the pull of temperament that made the hill boy at one with Italy, blest of poetry. "I d'n know huccome I want to go so bad," he went on with a deep breath, "wouldn' turn araoun' th'ee times on my heels to go anywhur else, but I shoo do want to go to Italy."

"Were your people Italians, Piney?"

"Nope. Kim f'm S'loois. But still, I got that feelin' abaout Italy. Simlike I'd be—oh, sorta at home tha'. Had that same feelin' ev' since Unc' Bernique begand to tell me abaout Italy. I'm a-goin' tha', tew, some

day, all righty," he concluded at last, waking up from his little dream slowly. "Goin' to be long over to Poetical, Mist' Steerin'?" he diverged again, with his lively mental agility.

"No, son. From Poetical I am going on to"—Bruce stopped to gather strength to project the word with the large and cadenced inflection he had enjoyed in the hill farm people,—"going on to Canaan!"

"Gre't gosh!" said the boy, and something in the way he said it made Bruce look at him quickly. Piney's brows were lifted and his lips were pulled back. He seemed to try to be as much impressed as Bruce expected him to be. To Steering this sort of comradeship was growing golden.

"Well, now," he said, playing with the little joy of being understood, "haven't they the court-house at Canaan? And the railroad? And haven't they Miss Betsy,—or Miss—Miss——"

"Sally."

"Ah, yes, Sally! Know Sally, son?"

"Ev'body in the Tigmores knows her."

"I am beginning to want to know Sally myself." Bruce let his eyes go drowsing toward the pale river up which the slow rain was beating, and talked foolishness idly: "Red-cheeked Sally! Freckled Sally! Roly-poly Sally! What's a Missouri girl like anyway, Piney?"

"Wy, people think she's purty," protested the boy with a quick palpitant shyness, "an' most people l ——," he stopped trying to talk, laughing brusquely and flushing with a very young man's self-

consciousness.

"All of which goes to prove me an ass," cried Bruce, "for talking about a lady whom I have never seen." Looking repentantly at Piney, he felt a sudden ache for him. He was not very familiar with conditions in Canaan, but it occurred to him suddenly that even in Canaan there might be social gradations, and that the tramp-boy, rare little chap though he seemed to be, was probably miles away from the daughter of the promoter, Mr. Crittenton Madeira. "I retract, Piney," he added gravely.

"Aw!—not as I keer whut you say abaout her,—or whut anybody says." Piney slashed at some brilliant sumach by the wayside and his mobile lips jerked and quivered.

"I should have supposed that she was older—well, than you," said Bruce, trying to set himself right.

"May be in what she knows,—aint in what she feels,—not as I keer——" The boy was so deliciously new to his own emotions that they flashed away beyond his control, minute by minute. His eyes looked misty, with a little spark of high light cutting bravely through. He would not finish his sentence. "Did Unc' Bernique say whend he's comin' back to Canaan?" he asked moodily.

"No, he didn't, though I urged him to. That's a fine old man, Piney."

Piney's eyes softened beautifully. "Takes mighty good keer of me," he said.

"Is he kin to you?"

"I d'n know abaout that. He's took my side always.

Y'see, I aint got no people an' I just ride araoun'. Y'see,"—Piney quivered with boyish fire,—"I just *got* to ride araoun'. I cayn't stay on no farm an' in no haouse. Kills me. I got to git to the woods an' the hills. An' Unc' Bernique he stands by me, an' keeps me in his shack whend they's any trouble abaout it. Y'see, some people think I oughter—oughter work!" Piney laughed from the gay, melodious depths of his vagabond heart and Bruce laughed with him. "An' Unc' Bernique has he'ped me abaout that," explained the tramp-boy. He let his dancing eyes dart off to the west where the hills were shouldering into a thickening drift of grey. "Hi, look yonder!" he cried. "We got to cut and run to git to Poetical before that rain."

So they cut and ran, the boy setting the pace and singing lustily, with that high melody of voice, as of temperament, of his, as they dashed down the road in the first cool scattering pelt of the rain. "Want to go to the *ho*tel, don't you?" he called over his shoulder, and Bruce called yes. It was grey, rainy twilight now, and through the gloom five or six houses sprawled out across the little plateau toward which the road twisted. Some geese flew up under the feet of the horses, squawking wildly, some "razor-back" hogs grunted from the dust-wallows, some cow-bells tinkled, some small yellow spheres of light shone through windows.

"How far from Poetical, Piney?" shouted Steering.

"'Baout a foot," answered Piney. He made his lightning-like pony go more slowly so that Bruce's horse might come alongside, and he shook his head, his ready sympathy again on his face. "Say, it's goin' to be kinder tough on you to stay here to-night, aint

it? This is ev' spittin' bit there is tew Poetical. Here's the *ho*tel."

They drew rein before a rickety two-story frame building and Bruce lifted his shoulders shudderingly. A man came out on the hotel porch, said "Howdy," and waited.

"Say,"—Piney in a lower tone, voiced a notion that evidently drifted in to him on the high tide of his sympathy,—"why don't you ride over to Mist' Crit Madeira's? Taint so far. I'll show you the way. They cand take care of you over tha'. They'd be glad to have you. You cand caount on that. It's that-a-way in Mizzourah." The boy's conscientious earnestness was sweet. He was in good spirits again and he whisked one roughly-booted foot out of its stirrup and laid it across his saddle-horn, while he regarded Bruce. "You cand git ter see Miss Sally ef you do that," he added, pursing up his lips, a subtle sense of humour on his face. "You cand see what Mizzourah girls are like."

"Now come, Piney, you know I've been thinking everything beautiful about Miss Sally since I found out—something——"

"Aw! Tisn't no such thing. She jes likes to hear me sing. *You're crazy!*" The tramp-boy's young voice had its fashion of breaking and shrilling into a high soprano, like a girl's, for emphasis; he was as red as a beet, and he put his foot back in the stirrup, thrust out his under jaw and looked at the stirrup as though he had to determine how much wood had gone into its making. Again Bruce was conscious of a little ache for the boy. "But you go on over tha'," insisted Piney.

"No! Thank you for trying to look out for me, son,

but I shouldn't like to do that. Oh, I can stand this all right," cried Bruce, with a flare of big bravery and, turning to face the hotel, was seized by his loneliness so violently that he shuddered again. "Here Piney!" he cried on a sudden inspiration, "why won't you come in and stay with me? Huh? How would that suit you? We can talk and smoke."

"Naw," Piney extended his hand and shook his head, as though to push the hotel out of the range of possibilities for him, "I couldn't. Much oblige'. But I cayn't sleep in haouses. Got to git back to the shack in the woods. Wisht you'd go on over to Madeira's."

"No. I'll buck it out here alone," lamented Bruce. He hated to lose Piney and take up the gloomy, rainy evening alone on this little, high, remote place in the Missouri hills.

"See you again some day, then," Piney promised in final farewell. "I'm up an' daown the Ridge rat frequent, I'll run 'crosst you."

"Well now, I should hope so," cried Bruce cordially. "Don't you ever come to Canaan?"

"Nope. Hate a taown! But me an' Unc' Bernique will strike you sometime, somewheres along the trail. S'long!"

"So long, Piney, so long!"

The boy turned his pony to the hills. The man on the porch came on out to take charge of Bruce and Bruce's horse. Black night settled down. Through the darkness cut the sound of the squawking geese, the tinkling cow-bells, the grunting hogs. Lonely, lonely Missouri! Bruce went inside, to sit in a little room upstairs, with his chin in his hand, his eyes staring

through the window, his thoughts roaming after Carington, the office on Nassau Street, a girl who was a dainty fluff of lace and silk. In his ears rang the sound of Carington's voice: "Why don't you try Missouri,—Miss Gossamer sails,—Why don't you try Missouri,—Miss Gossamer sails—" a faint, recedent measure, and intermingling with it the sound of a boy's voice singing gaily on the misty hills:

"*A tater's good 'ith 'lasses.*"

Steering leaned far out of the window, eager for the lad's music. It was so sweet.

Chapter Three

THE PROMISED LAND

From the remotest beginning of things for the Southwest, Canaan had been a "gre't taown." From the beginning she had been the county seat, and from the beginning there had poured through her one long street, with its two or three short tributaries, the whole volume of business of Tigmore County; the strawberries, the chickens, the ginseng. Almost from the beginning, too, she had had the newspaper and the hotel and some talk about a bank. Canaanites held their heads high. So high that when it began to be rumoured that the railroad was showing a disposition to curve down toward Tigmore County, the Canaanites, unable to see past their noses, appointed a committee to go up to Jefferson

City to protest to the Legislature against the proposed innovation. The committee contended to the Legislature that the railroad would cut off trade by starting up rival towns. It also contended that ox-teams had been used for many years and were reliable, rain or shine, whereas in wet weather the railroad tracks would get slick and be impracticable. Moreover, and moreunder, there was no danger of an ox-team blowin' up and bustin' and killin' somebody.

The railroad was melted to acquiescence by the appeal, and went its way some ten miles west of Canaan. Towns sprang into being along the line of the serpent's coil. Canaan said all right, but wait till the spring rains come. The rains came, the trains went by over the slick tracks gracefully. Canaan said all right, but wait till something busts. Time passed, nothing busted. The County was careening westward. There was no stopping it. Canaan kept her head high, but her heart grew as cold as ice. Then the paper up at the new railroad station of Shaleville crudely referred to Canaan as "that benighted hamlet." It was too much. When Crittenton Madeira reached Canaan from St. Louis, the first thing that he proposed for the city of his adoption was the Canaan Short Line, and, coming at the opportune moment, the consummation of that proposition placed Madeira at the head of Canaan's municipal life for the rest of his days. In a very short time after he came to Canaan, Canaan not only had a railroad, but her own railroad. Reassured, bland, she caught step with progress, by and by saw that she was progress, and settled back into her old superiority. Her trade prospered anew, the cotton came to her depot, she got accustomed to the noise of her two trains daily, and had lived through many contented years when the twentieth of September of 1899 opened up like a

rose, fair, fragrance-laden, warm, around her.

Out on the face of the day there was nothing to suggest change or crisis, nothing to be afraid of, nothing to be hopeful for, a day like yesterday, like to-morrow, a golden link in a golden monotony. At Court House Square, a few farm-teams, strapping mules and big Studebakers, stood at the hitching rail. A few people came and went up and down and across the Square. Occasionally a mean-natured man said "huh-y!" to a cow or "soo-y!" to a hog in the middle of Main Street. Some coatless clerks, with great elbow-deep sleeve protectors on their arms and large lumps of cravats at their throats, lounged in store doors. The most conspicuous, as the most institutional, feature of the landscape was the group idling on boxes in front of the old Grange store—just as they had idled on boxes before the war. They were the same men, it was the same store, and it was not inconceivable that they were the same boxes. As the men idled they spat, somewhat to the menace of the passers-by, though in defence of this avocation it may be argued that any truly agile person, by watching carefully and seizing opportunity unhesitatingly, could get by undefiled. Sometimes a vehicle rolled into the street toward the Square, and when this happened it was amusement to the men to say whose vehicle without looking up—jack-knives, watch-fobs, and other valuables occasionally changing hands on an erring guess between the slow, solemn trot of Mr. Azariah's Pringle's Bess and the duck-like waddling of Mrs. Molly Jenkins' Tom, or between the swinging canter of Miss Sally Madeira's Kentucky blacks and the running walk of the small-hoofed Texas ponies from We-all Prairie. Once a great waggon, piled high with cotton, creaked by; once a burnt-skinned boy, hard as a nut, shrieking

with an irrepressible sense of being alive, loped past on a mustang. Once a small, old man, in mean clothes and with a fine bearing, crossed the Square, cracking his whip nervously, his spur clicking on his boot as he walked. Once a large florid man and a tall girl came down the street and entered the door of a two-story brick building next the Grange. The man had an expansive, blustering way. The girl looked as though she were accustomed to admire the man and to badger him; her face was turned up to his adoringly, while her fun-hunting eyes, just sheathed under her lids, gleamed gaily. The building had a plate-glass window across the front of it, and on the window, in gold letters bordered in black, two legends were flung to the public:

BANK OF CANAAN

CRITTENTON MADEIRA

When the man and the girl had gone into the Bank of Canaan, the group at the Grange stopped gambling on the incoming teams and talked less drowsily.

"Looks like that girl gets purdier and purdier."

"Mighty pleasant ways she keeps. Never gone back on her raisin'. Never got too good for Mizzourah."

"As far as I go, I like her ways better'n her pappy's ways."

"Crit *is* a little toploftical."

"They mighty fond of each other, though. Seems like she's not in a hurry to marry and leave her pappy."

"Wall naow, I shouldn't be s'prised ef Miss Sally never did git married, talkin' abaout marryin'. 'Twould not s'prise me a-tall, 'twouldn't." Mr. Quin Beasley was

talking. Mr. Beasley was the keeper of the Grange store and admittedly a man of fine conversational powers. His jaws worked on and he seemed able to get nutriment out of his ruminations long after a cow would have gone back to grass hungrily. "Aint sayin' I never am s'prised, becuz am, but do say that that wouldn't s'prise me, an' no more would it." Mr. Beasley brought his jaws in from their loose meanderings just as the clatter of a horse's hoofs became audible down the side street that, a little way along, became the road to Poetical.

"Name the comer, Beasley. Up to the sugar-tree about now. Name-er, name-er!" The challenger took from his pocket a huge horn knife, covered it with his hand and shook it in the face of Mr. Beasley, who responsively got his hand into his pocket and drew forth a knife, which he held covered after the manner of his opponent.

"Unsight, unseen," said Mr. Beasley. "It's Price Mason's pony."

The challenger chuckled deprecatingly over the carelessness of judgment evinced: "Price Mason's pony comes down with a hippety-hop," he remarked pityingly—"lemme listen—it's—no, taint, aint favorin' his right front foot—it's—wy!" the challenger suddenly twisted his head to one side and held it there like a lean-crawed chicken deciding where to peck. Simultaneously the other men glanced down the side street where it came into the Square, and when someone said, or whistled, "Wy, who the h-e-double-l *is* it?" everybody was waiting for an answer.

They had not long to wait. The horseman in question galloped straight toward the group and drew rein in front of them only a few minutes later. He was a big

fellow, broad and lithe of shoulder and chest, and young and alert of face.

"Gentlemen," he called from his horse's back, "I want to find Mr. Crittenton Madeira. Ah!" he laughed, a deep, rich note, as he saw the gold and black sign, "gentlemen, I have found Mr. Madeira!" He leaped from his horse and began to tether him to a staple, set in the pavement in front of the Grange.

"Yes," replied a member of the Grange group, all of whom rose sociably, "Crit and Miss Sally,"—the young man laughed again, softly, as though he could not help it,—"Crit and Miss Sally jes went into the bank; I don't reckin they've come out again."

"Miss Sally's come out again," interposed another Granger, "because I seen her."

"It's the father that I want to see," said the horseman, with smiling emphasis, "not the daughter, not Miss Sally." He passed through the bank door, still smiling, and the Grange group looked at each other, rife with speculation on the instant.

"Hadn't-a said not, I'd-a said it wuz Miss Sally he wanted to see. Looks to me like he might be one of her beaux. Wears sumpin the same clothes."

"Looked like a Yank to me."

"Uh-huh, betchew he lets his biscuits cool before he butters 'em."

"Haven't heard Crit say he was looking for a stranger."

"Reckon if you keep up with Crit's business, my friend, you'll have to walk faster."

While the Grangers were wondering, supposing, reckoning, the man who probably let his biscuits cool before he buttered them entered the Bank of Canaan.

When the cage for the clerical force had been put into the Bank of Canaan, there was not a great deal of the bank left, so the man stopped where he thought he was least apt to be scraped, in the little space in front of the Force's window. The Force put his pen behind his ear, and, without waiting for inquiry or request, called off to the rear of the room.

"Mist' Madeira! He's here! Can he come on in? If you'll go right down there"—went on the Force,—"to that door in front of you, you can go through it."

The thing seemed feasible, as the door was half open, so the visitor attempted it. As he reached the door, however, his way was temporarily blocked by a big red-faced man who held out both hands to him and took possession of him with violent cordiality.

"God bless my soul! Howdy, howdy, howdy!" cried the big man. "Been looking for you for a week. Only last night I told Sally that I wasn't going to look for you any longer. Just eternally gave you up. How in the Sam Hill have you taken so long to get here? Come on in and have a seat."

As he talked, the Missourian led his guest inside a small private office, handed him to a chair and stood up before him, big, colossal, dominating the younger man, or at least meaning to.

"I am very rapidly concluding that you are Mr. Madeira, and that you know that I am Steering," smiled the visitor, sinking into a chair adaptably, though he realised that, for two men who had never

seen each other before, the meeting had been unusual. He also realised that, off somewhere in the sphere of imponderable influences, the effect when his hand clasped the big man's hand had been exactly that of the clashing of two swords.

"Oh, God love you, there's no black magic about my knowing you for Steering—only stranger that's been expected in Canaan for six weeks!" cried Madeira, "and as for your guessing that I'm Madeira, you don't deserve a bit of credit for it. My sign's out." His manner conveyed that his sign was quite as much his personality as the black and gold letters on the window. "Yes, I'm Madeira, and you are Steering, and we both might as well own up to it. And now what's kept you so long on the road? How'd you manage to put in a whole week between here and Springfield?" Madeira seated himself in a swivel chair in front of his desk and eyed his visitor with that aggressive geniality, that tremendous sense of himself, warm and vivid in his face and manner. And, as in the moment when he had faced Missouri from the top of the Tigmore Hills, Steering had a feeling that he was being claimed, absorbed.

"Why, the explanation is of the simplest. At the very last minute, there at Springfield, too late to get a word of advice out to you, I fell in with some fellows who were going to ride across country toward the Canaan Tigmores, and I joined them. They gave out at Bessietown, but I've come every foot of the way over the Ridge on horseback, and alone at that. I wanted to see Missouri, get acquainted with the home of my ancestors, at close range, as it were."

Madeira chuckled. "God bless you, you certainly went in at the back door to do it," he said. Madeira's

God-bless-you's and God-love-you's were valuable crutches to his conversation. With them and his bluster he seemed able to cover a great deal of ground.

"And then I didn't hurry," went on Steering, "because I thought, from what you wrote me, that it would, without doubt, be some weeks before that amiable relative of mine could be dragged around to any real attention to our projects."

"Ah, but that's where you missed out!" cried Madeira, a great ring of triumph in his voice. He crossed his legs, leaned back in his chair, and pushed out his chest. "That's where you didn't know C. Madeira. Young man, I've been hammering at Bruce Grierson night and day ever since I got you interested in this scheme,"—Steering looked at Madeira with a little quick motion of inquiry, but Madeira's arrangement of subject and object was evidently advised; Madeira showed that it was by repeating, "ever since *I* got *you* interested, I've been trying to get Grierson interested. We couldn't move hand or foot without him, you know that. The land is his, you know, even though you are the heir apparent, and there was no use trying to do anything with the land without him. I had got you into it without much trouble,"—Madeira paused just long enough to take the cigar that Steering offered him. (Steering could always see better through smoke.) "Yes, I had got you!" cried Madeira, biting off the end of the cigar with a sharp snap of his teeth, "and having got you, the next thing was to get Grierson. Well, I got him, got him since you left New York." He chuckled his spill-over chuckle again, swung around to his desk and took from one of its pigeon-holes an envelope addressed to him in a deep-gouging hand. The expression of

geniality lingered about the wings of his nose and the corners of his mouth, as though it had been moulded there by long habit, but his eyes narrowed and the play of light from them was by now like the whisk of a sharp knife through the air. "You know I chased that old fellow all over Colorado with my letters about my scheme to open up the Tigmores, until I got him mad," he said, holding the letter up to say it, as though the contents would be illumined by his saying it. Then he handed it to Steering, who took it from its cover, flapped it open, and read:

> "DEAR CRIT:
>
> "Use this power of attorney to open up hell if you want to, but don't you write to me.
>
> "Your obedient servant,
>
> "B. GRIERSON."

It was the sort of letter to make a man laugh, and Steering laughed. Then the phrase "open up hell" caught his eye again, like a sign of sinister warning.

"I've never been able to understand," he began with a questioning inflection in his voice, "what's the trouble with the scion of the house of Grierson. Why is he so indifferent to a project for the development of his property that may mean a million to him?"

"Aw, you know he's cracked!" replied Madeira quickly and harshly.

"No, I don't know him at all, you will remember. Never saw him, never had a line from him."

"Well, he's cracked. He fooled around here in the

Tigmores for twenty years hunting silver, God bless you! Spent everything he had riding that hobby, then got another hunch, for zinc this time, borrowed money, sank it, borrowed more, sank that, then got a feeling that he was abused and went away from here declaring that the Canaan Tigmores could slide into the Di before he would ever raise a finger to stop them. That's why he wouldn't write you. I've handled his affairs—what's left of them—for years, and I've had enough trouble handling them, let me tell you." He took the letter from Steering and replaced it in the pigeon-hole. "But I've got him settled now," he said, "and we can go right on—oh! for the matter of going on, things are pretty far on already." He began rummaging through his desk in other pigeon-holes. "I'll just show you what I've drawn up."

Steering found himself unable to keep up with Madeira. He took his cigar from his mouth, conscious of a sensation that he was being jerked along by the hair. He tried to get the best of the sensation by leaning back comfortably in his chair and observing Madeira leisurely. He tried to feel that he was following Madeira voluntarily, that he didn't have to if he didn't want to. When he had quitted New York he had been sustained by an idea that he had, in his correspondence, put before Madeira a plan that had some merit and promise in it, in the way that it got around the terms of a will, under which he was heir apparent to a vast acreage of land whose title now rested in another man, his relative. He and Carington had worked the thing over conscientiously, and, there in New York, they had taken some pride in the thought that they had hacked out a good base for the operations of a potential Steering-Grierson Mining and Development Company. Here, in Missouri, in Madeira's office, before the on-roll of Madeira's

manner, Steering was no longer sure that he and Carington had had anything to do with the case.

"Here's my prospectus," Madeira was saying, his voice ringing triumphantly again, "and here are the articles. God bless you, we are right up to the point where we can effect the organisation and issue the first one hundred thousand shares of stock. There are some Tigmore County men that I want you to meet, some fellows who can be used to fill out the directorate, and, first thing you know, we'll be filing an application for a charter, my boy."

"Just so," said Steering absently. He had the papers in his hand, and was running them over. Both men were pulling at their cigars with strong puffs, and the room was so vaporous with smoke that Steering was beginning to see very clearly indeed, as he went through the papers. They were couched in good, clear English, the succinct English that Carington used, with admirable changes here and there, which brought out Carington's points still more clearly. "I am familiar with these," said Steering, looking up presently. "You seem to have let it stand about as we drafted it in the New York office. What changes you have made I like."

"Oh, God bless you! you can rely upon liking the things of this kind that I do." Madeira's assumption was comprehensive and bland. There was absolutely no sense in going against that manner of his at this stage of developments. Steering began to ask questions and to wait.

"Now, according to what we set forth here,"—Steering tapped the paper,—"the object and purpose of our corporation will be the mining of zinc and lead ore in the Canaan Tigmores. We are projecting

upon the hypothesis that there is ore in the Tigmores, but we can't go too far upon hypothesis. There in New York it seemed worth while to take up the idea that, as there was ore all around through southwestern Missouri, there might be ore in the Canaan Tigmores. Then, being equipped for theorising only, Carington and I passed easily into the consideration of the possibilities *if* there were ore in the Canaan Tigmores. You say that we are ready to organise, but it looks to me just now as though before we organise it might be in order to solidify hypothesis into fact. I don't think organisation is the next step at all; the next step, according to my notion, is to get off paper into the ground. Question now is, *is* there any ore in the Canaan Tigmores?"

"Question now is," interrupted Madeira baldly, "are there enough fools in the United States to donate us a fortune while we are finding out whether there is or isn't ore in the Canaan Tigmores? Oh, God bless you, my boy, you must bear in mind that gold isn't the only thing that can be minted! You can mint a man's thirst for gold, if you are up to it. The Southwest is zinc crazy right now. The time is as ripe as a nut——"

"Well, one minute—what's your private opinion about the chance for ore in the Canaan Tigmores, Mr. Madeira?"

"I d'n know a thing about it. And God bless you, I don't care a thing about it. I know that old Bruce Grierson butted his brains out on the Tigmore rocks, on the jack-trail, for twenty years, and I know, that all over the country,—not here in Tigmore County, but farther southwest,—men are drilling into rock that looks rich, and cuts blind, quick enough to ruin

them; and I know that we are not going into this thing to lose money, but to make it, coming and going; I know that we've got to stand to win, coming and going. That's business."

Face to face with this sort of frank self-commitment to "business," Steering was impressed into silence, and Madeira took advantage of the silence to push on in the big way he had that was like the broad-paddling, tooting vehemence of a river steamer. "I'm for getting a drill into the hills right away, just as much as ever you can be, my boy, understand. It will look better. We'll do it. But Lord love you, we won't hold back the organisation for that. Just leave these things to me. I've got a programme arranged here that will suit you, I think. First thing is to take you around and let you see that document in the recorder's office,—I believe you said you wanted to read the Bruce Peele will,—then you can come out and have dinner with Sally and me. I've got a nice place three miles out, and I've got a daughter that is not to be beat, in New York or out of it. Then this evening we'll get together some of the fellows that I handle around here, and take up some of the preliminary business."

Madeira had risen, preparatory to conducting Steering to the recorder's office in accord with the first number of his programme, and Steering got up, too. While Madeira shut up his desk, Steering threw away the stump of his cigar and brought his flexed arms back to his shoulders with an expansive pull on his chest that sent a big influx of air into his lungs. After his séance with Madeira he felt as though he had been pummelled down flat. Madeira had to open his desk again for something he had forgotten and Steering passed on to the door, impatient for some

outside air. As he opened the door, with his eyes rather thoughtfully fixed upon the floor, he saw, peeping around the curve where the Force's cage elbowed its way out into the room, a foot. Being a slender foot, in a well-fitting walking boot, it held him an unconscionably long time, then drew him on mandatorily, up the little space between the Force's cage and the wall, until he had rounded the curve and had come out by the Force's window, where a bare-headed girl leaned, talking merrily, gouging a hat-pin into the hat that she had taken off.

"Oh, it's Mr. Steering,—isn't it?" she asked at once, and put her hand out to him. "I heard Father say that he was expecting you. And then, too, a friend of yours, who seemed much concerned about your fate over at Poetical, rode to our house last night and made me promise to welcome you to Canaan. I am Sally Madeira."

"Hi, Pet, you there?" Madeira's big voice came through the door of the private office and took possession of the minute and the girl—"entertain the New Yorker until I get through here, will you? I got to monkey with this blasted lock again."

"Yes, Father, I'm entertaining him," Madeira's daughter called back, while Bruce held helplessly to the hand she had given him. A peculiar mistiness had come over his senses. He could have sworn that through it he saw a picture that had been with him a good deal during the past year of his life, a picture of a woman's flower face, her fluffiness,—as of silk and lace,—lose colour, outline, significance, like a daguerreotype in the sunlight. A swift joy that he was in Canaan possessed him. All he could say was, "So you are Miss Sally?" It sounded very dull, so dull

that he hastened to add, "So you know Piney?—Awfully kind of Piney to attract your attention to me." Remembering with horror some of his conversation with Piney about Miss Madeira, he repeated solemnly, "Awfully kind."

"Well, I think you can give the little vagabond credit for a kind heart." Miss Madeira laughed softly.

"I give him credit for much more than that," said Bruce. He was envying Piney, seeing that the tramp-boy's intuitive appreciations matched his vigorous young beauty, that he was far more poet than vagabond, that he, Bruce, had attempted to play clownishly upon what was a worthy and lovely idyl in the boy's heart. As though she, too, had some faint, perturbing consciousness of Piney, the girl flushed a little, laughed a little, and turned the subject readily.

"I know yet another friend of yours," said she.

"I am glad of that." Bruce had released her hand, forgotten the business that had brought him to Missouri, forgotten Crittenton Madeira, and stood with his arms folded, looking down upon her, glad that she was so tall, glad that he was taller, glad about everything.

"Yes, another friend," she nodded with fleeting meaning, "I was at Vassar with Elsie Gossamer."

Face to face with a woman like Sally Madeira the thought of a woman like Miss Gossamer must necessarily stay hazy in a man's brain. As with another Romeo, Rosaline had but laid the velvet up which came the surer feet of Juliet. "Well," said Steering happily, "all this is going to make us

acquainted, isn't it?"

"It may, if you like." She had a splendid comradeship of manner. Her father's energy stopped short of bluster in her. Borne up on her breezy westernism was a fragrant reserve, a fine reticence that disengaged a tantalising promise.

"Oh, I'll like!" cried Bruce with conviction. "Do you live in Canaan?"

"Out at Madeira Place. Father said you were to come out to dine with us to-day. I hope you will."

"He will, he will! Trust me for that!" Madeira came through the space between the wall and the Force's cage noisily. For the first time that morning Steering felt no repugnance to that disposition of Madeira's to take charge of him, and he went off with Madeira, a moment later, across Court House Square to the recorder's office, with tread elastic and eyes sparkling.

When the two men had left her, the girl moved over to the plate-glass window and watched Steering, a little smile on her lips, an adequate enjoyment of his undoing dancing mercilessly in her long amber-hued eyes.

Steering stopped behind Madeira at the door of the recorder's office and, looking back at the plate-glass window unexpectedly, saw the girl's eyes fixed demurely on the floor where her boot showed under the hem of her long straight gown. It was a very little moment that they stood thus, he with his eyes on her, she with her eyes on her boot, but it was an electric moment. With him it was a cycle of self-abuse for the unadvised rot that he had talked to

Piney, an era of gratitude to Piney for being the sort who would not report any of it to Miss Madeira. (Even so little did Steering understand that a boy like Piney would necessarily have to tell a woman like Miss Madeira about all that he knew; tell it exuberantly, bubblingly, without ever being quite conscious that he was telling anything.) Steering followed Madeira inside the recorder's office slowly, and the girl went on standing at the plate-glass window, studying her foot.

"Yes, indeed, sir," she began calling to him soundlessly, and broke off abruptly and stood there at the window for a time, motionless and thoughtful. She was a tall girl, of a broad-shouldered, athletic type, a college girl by the sign of the austere cut of her gown, but a western girl by the sign of the flying ends of the scarf about her throat, the unafraid looseness of her bright hair. Her face, lit by her amber eyes and crowned by those loose masses of hair, had a rare, dusky-gold beauty. Despite her hair she was dark-skinned, smooth and warm like bisque, and that same gold-dusted radiance that was in her hair and that same amber-gold light that was in her eyes glowed ineffably from beneath her skin. She was a pulse of light, colourful and vibrant. "Yes, indeed, sir," she resumed after a while, jabbing the hat-pin into the hat relentlessly, "*this* is what a Missouri girl is like!"

Chapter Four

FOR THE BENEFIT OF CARINGTON

My dear Carry:

I should have written you sooner, save that the developments here have given me so little that is pleasant to write about. My experience with Grierson's agent has been too exasperating for description, and I should have given up and have got out at once had it not been for the Missouri in me, and had I not got a feeling of encouragement from other experiences.

To begin with: When I reached Missouri, I lit out for the southwestern part of the State by train. At Springfield I fell in with some English fellows who are over at Joplin in the interests of a Welsh company. They had an expedition all planned to take in some of the Southwest by team on their way back to Joplin, and as they were going to push down pretty close to my objective point, I joined the expedition. There was a great deal of enthusiasm among us about zinc,—jack they call it down here,—and the talk at first was all of the stupidity of Missourians in not getting at this part of their State, as well as the section about Joplin, in the search for ore. I noticed that as we got into the rough-going of the ridge roads, and the hills got steeper and the woods denser and the rocks thicker, the opinion seemed to grow upon us that Missourians might understand their country better than we did. We had a driver who knew the roads well, when he could find them. We had a geological expert who got sadder and sadder every time we spilled out of the waggons and speared around in the rocks for a little while. And we had a great deal of bacon. Still, when we reached Bessietown, where we struck the steam-

cars, the Joplin crowd broke for the train on a run. From Bessie there was a straight trail over the Ridge to Canaan and I decided to make the trip on horseback. I had got stubborn.

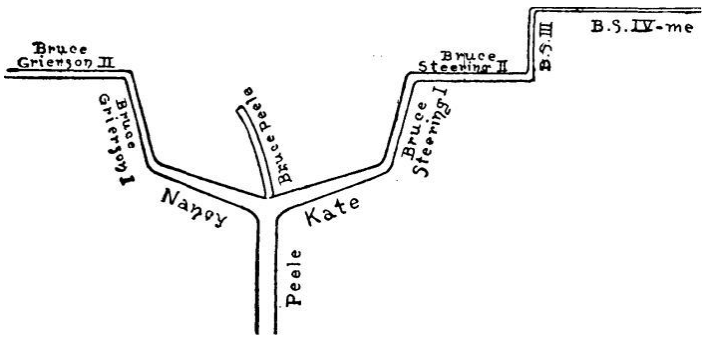
Well, by and by, and more and more full of bacon, I was at Canaan, and had found Crittenton Madeira, that agent with whom we had the correspondence. I walked in upon Madeira with a pretty little notion that you and I had had something to do with the projection of a plan for developing and mining the Tigmores; I could have sworn that we originated the idea of hypothecating my heirship to the Canaan Tigmores; I remembered that in New York the fact that I would inherit from Grierson seemed to make my association with any enterprise for the development of the Tigmores of vital importance. I had not forgotten that that was our argument, and I was nursing a feeling that I was fairly necessary to any permanency of operations in the Tigmores. I am all straightened out on that score now, thanks to Madeira. The situation that I find here is this: Madeira has calmly taken over our ideas, and his plans of organisation are about complete. He is qualified to act for Grierson absolutely. The company that he will organise is to be known as The Canaan Mining and Development Company. He appreciates stingily that it may be some advantage to have me associated with the company, for the purpose of imparting a feeling of confidence to investors, but he does not begin to attach the importance to me that you and I did. He will let me in if I want to come in, but it is quite evident that he can get along without me, and yet more evident that if he takes me in, I must resign myself to his dictation,—dictating is his strong suit. To the gentleman who expected to be the president of the Steering-Grierson Company, that is

not a pleasant programme; yet, my dear Carington, my circumstances are so precarious that I might attempt to fill it, if I did not see through Madeira's lack of principle, negatively speaking,—rascality, positively speaking. Now, I may have winked one eye occasionally during my business career, but I have never yet been able to shut both at once. It may be taste and it may be morals. Heretofore I have taken business too casually really to know how I am equipped for it. I have never before really met myself, spoken to myself, as I hustled through the few commercial hours of each day of my life. But out here business has become a thing of wider import on the instant, and already I am face to face with something stiff and hard on the inside of me that promises not to be very malleable under Madeira's hands. Madeira's hands, my dear boy, are pot-black. The plan that with us was a fair and square enterprise has become with him a clap-trap scheme to rob investors. I don't know how he means to do it, but he will do it. There is a chance that the company may get good money out of the Canaan Tigmores in zinc, but there is a much richer chance that Madeira will get good money out of the company, zinc or no zinc.

So here I am in a pleasant situation. I can take my choice between a block of shares in the new company, my vote to be in Madeira's control, and a place far back, where I can watch Madeira operate my land to his profit while I wait for old Grierson to die. I am holding off as yet, dazzled by both prospects. Meantime the organisation of Madeira's company is being effected among the local capitalists, the store-keepers and the substantial farmers, and it's only a question of a few days until the directorate shuts in my face. Madeira is to take

me over to Joplin to-morrow,—to let the showing there have its effect upon me, to let me catch the ore fever, I suspect.

Immediately upon my arrival here, I looked into the history of my relationship to Grierson, and also looked up the record of the Peele will. Grierson is the grandson of one of the sisters of old Bruce Peele, while I am the great-great-grandson of another sister. My great-grandfather did not like pioneer life and went back East to live and cultivate the Steering family-tree into me, as the last, topmast, splendid blossom. The Grierson family stayed in Missouri and petered out into this Bruce Grierson. He is of my grandfather's generation, though he is a much younger man than a grandfather of mine could possibly be with the record of my age and my father's age to be accounted for.



I got profoundly excited in studying out the two branches of the family that are involved in the entail. Here is a map of the relationship for your benefit.

You can understand from that, can't you, Carington? [1]

The Peele will is simple. Old Bruce Peele lived a long life as a bachelor, with a strong aversion to

matrimony. Toward the end he suffered one of those revolutions in valuations that sometimes upturn people of extreme prejudices. His will sets forth emphatically that he came tardily to realise that posterity is the best thing a man can leave behind him. He had two sisters, both of whom were well along in life, unmarried, and possessed of their brother's disinclination to marry. To encourage them to cross the Rubicon he made the will that entailed the Canaan Tigmores to the heirs, first of one and then the other, under the following provisions: the land was to go to the male heirs of his sister Nancy Peele, from oldest son to oldest son so long as there were male heirs, provided that in each generation the oldest male representative of Nancy married before he reached the age of thirty-five. If, in any generation, Nancy's representative fails to marry at thirty-five, the Canaan Tigmores pass to the male representative of Kate Peele, upon the death of the man who failed. Nancy Peele married a Grierson, and so pronounced was the inherited aversion to matrimony in the house of Grierson that compliance with the terms of the will has lasted through two generations only. The present Bruce Grierson let the time-limit overtake and pass him twenty years ago, but, unmarried and grouchy, he has stood between me and the Canaan Tigmores ever since. I don't count until he dies, and not then unless I am married before I am thirty-five. (However, I feel that I might be more disposed to meet the will's requirements than the Griersons have been.)

The present Grierson is utterly unapproachable. He has not lived in this section for many years. He is particularly unapproachable on the subject of the Canaan Tigmores because he spent a great part of his youth prospecting through these hills, hoping and

being disappointed. At last he turned his back upon Canaan, bitterly disillusioned, and he has been a wanderer upon the face of the earth ever since, sometimes hunting gold in the Rockies, sometimes after silver in Mexico. Half the time even Madeira does not know where he is.

The queerest thing about the mining business, Carington, is the "hunches." The Englishmen told me that down at Joplin a man would rather have a dream that he walks two miles sou'-sou-west, turns around three times on his heels and finds ore under his left heel, than to have a geologist assure him that his house sits on a ledge of Cherokee limestone that ought to be all right for zinc. I have met great numbers of miners who are hunchers. The most interesting is a man named Bernique, an old chap of education and refinement from St. Louis. He has a hunch about the Canaan Tigmores—at least so far in my intercourse with him I have not found anything more tangible than a hunch. I fell in with him just before I reached Canaan, and though he then declared his intention of being absent for some days, he did not go away, sought me out in Canaan next day and has spent a good deal of time with me ever since. He is a splendid old character. Missouri is chuck full of character, for the matter of that. Besides old Bernique, I have made another friend, named Piney. Isn't that a pretty nice name? He is a sort of gipsy lad who roams the woods in company with old Bernique. I have seen him nearly every day since I have been here, because old Bernique and I ride about the Tigmores, and Piney is sure to fall in with us somewhere along the road. I have also met some others.

You can have no conception, Carry, of the strength of

pull that Missouri can exert over a fellow. You stand up on a hill and look at her, and something, your dead forefathers maybe, comes up to you in waves of influence. "Come back to your own!" says the Something, "I am waiting for you! By me conquer!" The longer I stay in Missouri, the longer I mean to stay. I have accepted the challenge of this great unconquered, waiting land. It is my own country.

Sorry to have kept you so long over all this, but I thought that you ought to know. Shall write you the out-look after the Joplin trip. I have a notion that things will be adjusted toward the future after that.

Give my love to the fellows.
Yours, B. S.

P. S. Please express me one of those fold-up, carry-around-with-you bath-tubs.

When Carington, in the office down on Nassau Street, had read that, all of it, he turned over the last sheet and looked blankly at its blankness, quoted from the first paragraph, "Had I not got a feeling of encouragement from other experiences"; reread the entire letter, and was still afflicted with a sense of something lacking.

"Now where the dickens did he get the encouragement?" cried Carington fretfully. "Psha! he has not put that in at all!"

As a matter of entity and quiddity, it is well-nigh impossible to put into a letter the little quivering lift of spirit that may come to a man just because a girl's

hair is lustrous, her eyes winey, her voice delicious, her smile one of gay fellowship.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] Carington could not.

Chapter Five

BOOM TIME IN THE TOWN THAT JACK BUILT

"Here we are! This is the town that jack built, this is the town the poet wrote about!" Madeira was leaning forward from the rear seat of a high road-cart to talk to Steering, who sat on the front seat beside the driver. Madeira had the back seat by himself, but, leaning forward, with both arms spraddled out behind Steering and the driver, he seemed now and then to take possession of the front seat, too.

"Yes!" cried the driver, who, fearless, confident, glowing, was managing her spirited horses skilfully, "at Joplin's gates, you must chant the classic, 'Hey this, what's this?'"

"And up from the city rolls the triumphant answer, 'This is the town that jack built!'" declaimed Steering, glancing down into the driver's face with accordant appreciation. He felt accordant and he felt appreciative. He had enjoyed the little railway

journey from Canaan in company with the Madeiras. He had enjoyed the night before, which he had spent at the house of a Joplin friend of the Madeiras. He was enjoying the ride now. The friend of the Madeiras had put good horses at Madeira's disposal and Miss Sally Madeira could get speed out of good horses as easily as other women get a purr out of a kitten. Even Madeira, just behind him, crowding forward upon him, did not very much bother Steering. It was all enjoyable.

They were on a long wide street that presented violently contrasted activities, hard to encompass with one pair of eyes. For blocks the buildings lined off on either side, low, flimsy and hastily constructed —mining-camp architecture, that gave way at abrupt intervals to tall and sightly brick-and-stone structures, built for the future metropolis rather than for the present camp. A section of an electric railway that was thirty-two miles long ran through the street, and the handsomely equipped cars on it clipped past mud-encrusted mule teams from distant hill farms, prairie schooners, and dilapidated carryalls. The scene was tremendously, occidentally irregular, setting forth that merciless clutch of the future upon the past that makes the present mere transition. The town was hard pushed to catch up with its own vast possibilities. A small place, set suddenly forward as one of the world's great ore markets, it could not even house the mining business that had poured in upon it, and that made of its main thoroughfare a tossing, turbulent stream of people. Almost every building that Steering saw was crowded to the doors with mining brokers' desks, mining brokers' desks spilled out on the side-walk, desks could be seen at the doors of the retail stores and desks kept banking-house doors from shutting. The windows of the

newspaper offices and of the mineral companies were crowded with displays of ore. The hub-bub about these places was fierce, unbearable. Young men, with their handkerchiefs in their collars, hurried from one office to another, warm with excitement, flapping great bunches of letters and memoranda in their hands as they hurried. Messenger boys ran up and down the streets with telegrams. Buyers from the Kansas smelters, smelters in Illinois, smelters up about St. Louis, smelters in Indiana, smelters in Wales, nosed around like ferrets. Fine young men, who were supposed to look after the interests of the big foreign companies, sauntered out of bar-rooms, doing violence to the supposition. Map-sellers whacked their hands with folders. Wooden booths flung signs to the streets bigger than the booths themselves: "Mineral Companies Promoted," "Mining and Smelting," "Mines, Options, Leases,"—there was no end to the variations of the eternal theme of mining. Town lots, switches of flats, and hill ridges were being swapped and sold and leased from the curb-stone; leases were being made from buggies and options were being granted from a horse's back.

"Whewee!" marvelled Steering, with a little itch of fear for the ore-mad people, "legal forms are being put to fearful strains, are they not, with all this heedless buying and selling?"

Madeira laughed loudly, "God bless you, legal forms! All that a man who wants to sell has to do is to throw a plank, any little rotten plank, across the chasm of future litigation and ten buyers will walk it with nerves of steel." He patted Steering's shoulder. "My boy, it's this headlong impetus that assures the success of the Canaan Company. If I get that thing

started once, all I have to do is to advertise it down here a week. The stock will go like hot-cakes. People don't care what they buy, just so they buy. They've got no sense of value left. Why, a man found an outcrop of a zinc lode under his chicken-coop yesterday—and to-day the price of chicken-coops has gone up." Madeira patted Steering's shoulder again and laughed again, pleased at his aptness in figuring the thing out.

"He's just exactly right," said the girl, nodding at Steering. "Over here the average man needs a guardian to keep him out of the clutches of the 'boodlers.' I almost hate to see this sort of excitement come into Canaan. Father has been pretty busy all his life looking after infant men, but from now on his plight is going to be pitiable. I saw that yesterday afternoon, Dad, when the farmers were filing into the bank to put their money into your hands." The girl, turning back to smile at Madeira, was the cause of Steering's turning back, too, and he was surprised to see a patriarchal, benign expression on Madeira's face, as though a reflection of the girl's illusions about his character lay warm upon him.

"Oh, I don't mind my job as nurse for the Canaanites, Pet," said Madeira softly, and then waved one hand out toward the city and changed the subject. "Pretty good for a lazy semi-southern State, eh, Steering?" He nudged the girl next and added: "Before we are through with him we'll have convinced the New Yorker that a good deal happens outside New York. Won't we, Pet?"

"Yes, sirree," said the girl, imitating her father's manner adroitly, as she put her horses through the crowded thoroughfare, "the United States of America

has more than one way of living the life strenuous, and Broadway, New York, doesn't begin to be the only place where she lives it. Look abroad, look abroad!" She was altogether fascinating as she pointed out to Steering little typical features that he would have missed without her humourous, boastful sallies.

As they continued on their way, Madeira and the girl bowed and smiled to acquaintances, and once the horses were stopped at the curb to enable Madeira to talk to some man whom he knew well. While waiting, with the road-cart drawn up close to the curb, Steering and the girl could hear talk all about them,—zinc and lead, jack, jack, jack! Flying chips of conversation assailed their ears as the people scurried by; references to old companies and their latest projects, and to new companies and new finds; talk about the menace of the runs pinching out, and talk about the danger of over-stocking the world's zinc markets; grumbling talk about the wildcat exploitation going on at every corner, and envious talk about a report that some wildcat promoter had just succeeded in selling a face of ore that had cut blind under the drill of the buyer in a few lamentable days; condemnatory talk about what an extremely gold-brick country this was, and awed talk about the remarkable prices that some of the gold bricks fetched. All the talk was frankly of millions. The scale was gigantic. Even poor men seemed to have acquired a familiarity with the sound of great sums that made them take themselves as somehow richer and bigger. Voices shook with eagerness and avidity; hands worked constantly at button-holes, or at lapels, or with watch-guards. When acquaintances passed on the street they did not say "how-do-you-do"; they looked at each other's bulging pockets and

said, "lemme see your rock." What Steering and the girl heard as they waited in the road-cart was fragmentary but significant: "Scotch Company will divide off another one hundred thousand acres, so they say—No, sirree-bob, no more hand-jigging for me—Wouldn't take one-quarter of a million for it, if you'd give it to me—Boston Company is bound to make millions—Yes, that's Madeira,—Canaan Tigmores—Oh, he will mint money out of it, no doubt in the world about that he goes in to win——"

The girl turned to Steering with pleased pride. "You see? He always wins. People expect him to." Madeira was over at the edge of his seat, talking earnestly to the man on the curb. Steering, beside the girl, looking down at her, not seeing Madeira because of her, nodded approvingly, the approval being for her honesty, her sweetness, her vitality. Something, perhaps the near climax for her father's enterprise at Canaan, seemed to have keyed her to a high pitch. Steering, who by now had had opportunities to see her often, had never seen her so beautiful, nor so quick of expression in word and look. Her voice thrilled him; and while he was thrilling, Madeira's voice came on to him: "You needn't hold back on that account," Madeira was saying: "God bless you, I've got the next heir in the deal, too."

"Oh-ho," said the girl, who also heard, "we are taking you for granted, aren't we?" Steering only smiled at her again. He had fallen into the habit of smiling at her, and some prescience seemed to urge him to exercise the habit while he could.

Madeira was turning from the man on the curb: "All right, I'll allot you one thousand shares, eh? Good-day.—Pet, you'd better drive on out to Chitwood,

lickety-split."

Miss Madeira put the whip to her horses, and they left the Joplin streets behind them, and sped out a gritty white road that crossed a lean sweep of prairie. Ahead of them Steering could see presently a sort of settlement; wooden sheds, wide and low; hoister shafts, tall and slim, on stilts; scaffolding; pipes; chimneys; tramways; surface railways. His eyes leaped from moundlike piles of tailings, the powdery crush spit out by the concentrating mills, to boulder-like heaps of rocks that had been wheeled away to save the teeth of the mills, and his ears turned distraught from the groaning clank of unwieldy iron tubs, swinging up through skeleton shafts, to the sputtering plunk-plunk of drill engines and the booming roar of machinery.

"Hard to keep up with, eh? God bless us, it certainly *is* hard to keep up with!" cried Madeira. "Drive into the enclosure there at the Howdy-do, Pet, Throcker will be expecting us. I telephoned him. Yes, sir, this is the place to see what zinc means." Madeira was leaning forward again, one arm about his daughter and the other arm fathering Steering. "This is the place to understand what can be done by seeing what has been done." He seemed to want to fire Steering with the idea that just such another astounding development could be wrought out down there in the Canaan Tigmores, and though Steering was aware that he would soon be at a crisis where he would need an austere strength of judgment, uncoloured by enthusiasm of any kind, he could not help responding to the aura of enthusiasm into which he was entering. The great plant of the Howdy-do mine disseminated enthusiasm in shaking vibrations. Milled enthusiasm stood about in cars, ready for the

smelters. Enthusiasm roared and whirred from the concentrating mill where wheels were turning and bands were slipping; where a tub, ore-laden, was jerking and clanking through the hoister shaft; where men on an upper platform were shovelling the dump from the tub into great crusher rolls; where the rolls were grinding and pounding, and the water was fashing and gurgling down the jigs. The whirr of it all, the whizz and bang of it, the whole effect of it all, was, to any man interested in the development of ore, a great forward impetus that swung him far out, limp and dizzy.

"Waiting for you, Mr. Madeira!" cried a man, who fairly shone with enthusiasm, and whose voice tinkled gladly as he came across to the hitching rail where Miss Madeira had stopped her horses. "Mighty glad to see you, Miss Sally—Mr. Steering, glad to meet you, sir. Here you, Mike! come and look after these horses. Miss Sally, I'm a-going to have to take you round to the tool-house for some covers, please ma'am." The accommodating and friendly mine-boss of the Howdy-do led Madeira's party to a shed opposite his mill and there outfitted them with rubber coats and caps, talking to them all the while in that tinkling voice, with the glad note singing in it.

"God bless my soul, Throcker, how much did the last blast bring down?" Madeira turned to Steering before Throcker could reply. "Whenever a miner's voice shakes and sings like that, his last blast has meant a heap."

"You are right, sir!" cried Throcker, "we opened up a face yesterday that,—well, it's going to take us weeks to handle even the loose ore we've brought down, sir.

Come this way, Miss Sally, please ma'am."

Steering began to wish that the mine-boss were not so happy. It had an electric effect upon him. And he began to wish that he himself were not so happy. He dreaded developments that would surely be change.

"Well, Throcker, my boy, my ledge of Cherokee runs up here from the Canaan Tigmores, d'you know that?" said Madeira. He put his thumbs in his pockets and rocked upon the balls of his feet with a springing, tip-toe movement, as Throcker stopped them in front of a shaft out of whose cavernous depths a cage was swinging toward them. From Madeira's manner you might have inferred that the Cherokee had a Madeira permit to "run up here."

In the cage it was necessary for Steering to extend his arm behind Miss Madeira, as there were no sides between the great cables at the four corners. It was not a very large cage and the number on it crowded it, so that the girl rested lightly on Steering's arm. He could think of no place so deep down that he would not be well satisfied to journey to it like that.

But there came a jolt and a jar, the cage settled upon the stope, and the journey was over. Throcker led the way through a thick underground gloom. Great masses of crush-rock slid under foot, there was a black drip from ceiling and walls, and the excavation was filled with the hollow boom of the water-and air-pumps. With lights flaring uncertainly, they followed the mine-boss out upon a rocky crag that gave upon a deep abyss, faintly illuminated by the flicker of the lamps of the working force below and by torches set in the wall. There was an upward slope in the formation of the ledge from the bottom of the cavern to the spur upon which they stood, but

it was made by irregular juttings with ugly, saw-tooth projections. Unless they were very near the edge they could not follow the dim outline of the slope at all. Throcker in his eagerness to point out the ore, shining like specks of gold all up and down the slope, worked dangerously near the edge, but he was accustomed and recovered his balance easily when a piece of his support crumbled away under his feet. Steering, who was agile and athletic, had no difficulty in keeping up with the miner, but Madeira had to be watchful. The miner would not let Miss Madeira come far out on the crag, though he let the men follow him, calling warnings to them as they came.

"From where you stand, Miss Sally," Throcker turned toward the girl who waited below the summit of the crag, "from where you stand up to here, the loose ore is worth about sixty-five thousand dollars!"

The girl looked up at them responsively. Standing there under the strange flickering light of her torch, with the black folds of the rubber coat swathing her, her face, with its fine eyes, was cut out for Steering sharp as a cameo.

"I am delighted for your sake, Mr. Throcker," she called gaily, but with a little uneasiness in her voice. "Father, please be careful."

"Sixty-five thousand dollars! Why, Lord love you, Throcker, a hundred thousand, if one." Madeira, taking charge of the probabilities in the case, moved toward the edge to support his estimate by measuring with his eye the distance down the crag.

"Father, please be careful. Watch him, Mr. Steering, —O-h-h-h!" A woman's cry of horror rang though the

tunnelled walls as Madeira's great frame toppled on the edge of the crag, and disappeared.

Throwing out his right arm protectingly, as though in answer to the girl below, Steering had been able to knot the sinewy fingers of one hand about Madeira's collar as the latter fell. The force of the fall brought Steering to his knees, then flat out across the ledge, to get all the purchase power he could. Madeira's weight was terrific, even after Steering had brought his other hand into requisition; and though Throcker sprang to the rescue, Throcker was a weak man and the best aid that he could render was to assume a small share of Madeira's weight by getting down flat upon the ledge, after Steering's fashion. In the black hole below the miners saw what had happened and two burly men began to clamber up the treacherous slope.

"Gently, boys, gently," warned Throcker, as the men came on; he and Steering could feel the rock upon which they lay vibrate; there was a rending and splitting going on all through the ledge. "Can you hold on a minute alone, sir?" gasped Throcker suddenly. "I have a bad heart and it's going back on me,"—he fell weakly beside Steering.

"Yes, I can hold on alone." Steering's face was in the loose crush, and his lips were cut by the rock when he opened them, so he stopped trying to talk.

"Get back, Mr. Throcker—let me get my hands down and help Mr. Steering." It was the girl's voice, and the girl was beside Steering, quiet and capable.

"Oh, you?" said Steering. He had known all these seconds that he was doing this for her, but the strain that he was on had somehow pulled him beyond the

comprehension of her as actual; for the last ten seconds she had been rather a big abstraction, a high principle of his soul, a good desire in his heart. To see her there before him was to see abstraction, principle, desire becoming adequately incarnate. "No, you mustn't try to reach down here,—your arms aren't long enough,—the commotion on the edge here is dangerous,—if you will just put something, your handkerchief, under my face where the sharp little rocks are at it,—ah, you should not have done *that*!"—she had slipped her hands beneath his face, and the touch of her fingers was like velvet as she worked away the sticking, stinging bits of ore and rock that worried him. He had not known how chief a part in his sensation of discomfort those bits had played until he could bury his face in the relief of her soft hands. As a matter of fact, with those bits out of his cheeks,—and his face in her hands,—he felt no great discomfort at all. If it had not been for her shivering sigh of relief he would have been sorry when the miners drew Madeira up. Madeira had not spoken, and he was purple as they carried him to a place of safety some distance back on the ledge.

"He is just the sort of man physically who ought not to be subjected to choking experiences," said Steering. One of the miners had brought water, and Steering and Miss Madeira were reviving Madeira with it. Madeira did not seem to be unconscious, but his senses were obtunded, and it was some minutes before he could sit up.

"God bless my soul! God bless my soul!" he said, at last, and shivered. Then he turned to Steering: "My boy, you know how to hold on. I believe you've got as much stick-to-it-iveness as I have." It was his supremest form of acknowledgment, and, in making

it, he made, too, an impression upon Steering that he resented the circumstances that compelled him to make it.

They got back to the upper air presently, followed by a cheer from the mine force below. The miners had watched Steering perform one of those supernatural feats of strength and endurance that an onlooker can never explain afterward. Usually the performer knows that the thing was a matter of motive and will, not muscle.

Up in the daylight again, Madeira was quickly himself again. He resumed charge of affairs in his comprehensive way, and though the mine-boss, frightened and remorseful, was limp now, all his enthusiasm gone, Madeira's welled up again strong within him. They went back to their horses without loss of time, and, waving adieux to Throcker and some of his men who had gathered about, they were soon journeying back down the white road toward Joplin. Miss Madeira's hands were in bad condition for driving, Steering thought, but she had taken the reins just the same.

"We are all dilapidated for the matter of that," she said. "Father is as grey-faced as a rat, your cheeks are all cut and pricked—my hands don't count."

Twilight was coming on and a full moon was rising. The great sweep of flat stretched out about them in a mesh of soft light. The ride back was gay, and when they stopped at the house of the Joplin man, who was their host, all three were still in nervously high spirits. A negro servant came out for the horses, and Steering helped Miss Madeira to alight. The girl had drawn off her driving gauntlets, and the ungloved hand that she gave him was scratched and scarred

across its brown back.

"Isn't that shameful,—and you did it for me!" mourned Steering.

"Oh, if I could have done more!" she cried breathlessly, "if I could do more,—as much as you have done for me! If I have not thanked you, you know,"—what she was saying was fragmentary and confused, but her eyes were shining sweetly upon him,—"it's because I can't. You must understand that. I never can talk when I am busy feeling. How are your shoulders?"

"I don't know that I have any," replied Steering, with wretched prevarication.

"Come on, Honey, come on." Madeira was at the stone steps of the Joplin house, and the girl took his arm and climbed the steps with him. At the top Madeira turned back to Steering, who was a step behind. "Well, old man, let's have it out now, before we go in and get mixed up with these strangers. What about those shares? Coming in with us, I reckon?" It was like Madeira to select a position of advantage like that, a higher place from which he could look down and dominate, with his daughter beside him, and it was like him to select a moment like that, a moment when the three were close, on the very summit of their friendship and sympathy. "We are to be all together on that deal, aren't we?"

Though the girl, her arm linked through her father's, was waiting for his answer, and though Steering saw that she expected his acquiescence as the right and natural thing, her influence upon him, despite that, was all for the rejection of Madeira's proposition. She looked so young, so straight, so honest, that, as an

influence, she was ranged against Madeira, even though, in her ignorance, she imagined herself to be in harmony with him. Steering, looking at her first and Madeira next, knew that she really fashioned his answer, that it was really all because of her that his words came, swiftly, earnestly:

"Don't allot me any shares at all, Mr. Madeira. I have decided not to go into the company."

Madeira emitted a breezy "All right. God bless you, all right." The girl looked sorry and puzzled. Steering came on up the steps behind them, with a sense of mingled elation and sadness, and the three passed through the door of the Joplin man's house.

Chapter Six

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Madeira Place was the old Peele Farm, whose square brick house had been the boast of Canaan township ever since it had been put up,—out of brick hauled by team across three counties,—by the man who had established, but failed, despite his effort, to make permanent the fortunes of his family. When the grandnephew, Bruce Grierson, came on, the brick house was plastered with a mortgage that somehow passed eventually into the hands of the then alert young sapling land-agent, Crittenton Madeira. Crittenton took the house, and, by and by, Bruce Grierson, the second, took himself, with money

borrowed from Madeira, out of Canaan, never to return. It was not long after this that Crittenton Madeira, who was still a slight man, with a young wife and a pretty baby out at the brick house, began to be named "our esteemed fellow townsman" by the *Canaan Call*. Madeira built a hotel for Canaan, promoted the Canaan Short Line, and established the Bank of Canaan. His wife died, and his little girl grew, and he became large of girth. It was not until his daughter was twelve that he had to share honours with anyone as the foremost personage of Tigmore County. At twelve the daughter began to show that she had inherited her father's vitality, though the sphere of her activities was different. He bought and sold and made money. She lassoed heifers, broke colts, and rode up and down the Di in rickety skiffs. The community took as much pride in her adventures as it did in his achievements.

The Madeiras were very happy together all through those days, and very proud of each other. She recognised that her father was superior to the Canaan men, that they did what he told them to do, and he recognised that she was the most wonderful child, and the most beautiful, that had ever come into the world. His convictions on that score were so profound that they seemed to him something surer and bigger than the customary paternal pride and affection. As the girl grew older he spent a great deal of his money on her education and pleasure—at first blindly, guided only by a big impulse to have her as good as the best, an impulse that resulted in some funnily pathetic scenes where the little girl, frightfully over-dressed, wandered through the St. Louis shops, holding to the big man's finger, trying to think up something else that she might possibly want. Later, under the girl's own direction, the

money went to better purpose.

His daughter's way of spending the money early became, in Madeira's manner of getting at the thing, a sort of balance-wheel to his way of making it. Although he had made money in the same way before she was born, and although he would have made it in the same way had she never been born, he grew to like the feeling that what he did he did for her, and that his desire to make money had a soul in his desire to have her spend it. This feeling was in the ascendant always when he was with her. Unconsciously she fanned it within him. She had spent her young life couched rosily on his love for her and hers for him; at home she was lonely; at home Madeira was well-nigh perfect, and the girl's imagination made all her ideals live in the big, handsome, assertive man who was at once father to her and hero. Perceiving this, Madeira, with her, entered into a sort of world of make-believe, and, with her, was sometimes able to take himself for what she held him, a man whose honour matched his ability, and, with her, sometimes surprised in himself the little glow that she seemed to get when she was profoundly appreciating him.

One Sunday afternoon they were sitting, father and daughter, in the garden, behind the brick house, he with a St. Louis paper on his knee, his head bare, his waistcoat loose, his feet in slippers. His chair was tilted back against a crab-apple tree at the side of one of the garden walks. For several weeks his face had been showing some sort of strain, but at this moment he looked comfortable. She had been telling him that she was glad that he had put up the new watering trough in Court House Square, and the way she had talked about it had made him feel sure that

he had had some notion, when he did it, of benefiting the community, instead of insuring that the farmers would stop in front of the Grange store, in which he was interested.

She sat on a bench near him, quite idle; her gown, a tawny drapery, whose half-hidden suggestions of blue were like shy spring flowers, was sheathed closely about her; her eyes were following the pale wide river below the garden; her hair, so light that it made her eyes seem lighter, was piled above the warm, creamy tan of her forehead; there was a little drowsy droop on her face; the dusky-gold radiance was all about her.

"Daddy," she said, by and by, "do you know that I swam the Di once?" He laughed sleepily. He remembered. "I wonder if I could do it now—I was pretty awful as a youngster, wasn't I, Daddy?"

"You certainly had a reputation," he admitted.

"Do you know that I still have a good deal of a reputation"—she turned upon him with more directness and a little laughing pugnacity—"as though I were the same terrible child, up to the same riotous tricks as when I was twelve!"

"Hump-mmh, hump-mmh!" He looked at her from under his slanted lids and shook his head, while his big face quivered with amusement. "You haven't given up all your riotous tricks even yet—don't tell me." He spoke with the indulgence that had allowed free rein to her caprices all her life.

"Never you mind, I do precious little that is riotous any more; I am getting used to harness," she made answer, and looked as though she did not mean to be

interfered with in the precious little that was riotous that she still clung to, and then looked as though she were threatening herself with sweeping reform. "Go back to sleep, Daddy. You will be in my way presently, anyhow."

"Anybody coming?"

"Your Mr. Steering."

"'My!'" Madeira's face clouded over, and he thrust out his jaw grimacingly. "If he *were* mine, you know what I should do with him?" he asked, in a sharp voice.

"No, I don't know. What would you do with him?"

"I should send him packing back East. This country don't need,—aw, the people of this country are good enough for the country and the country is good enough for them. We don't need outsiders."

He was so vehement that she regarded him questioningly. "Don't you like him any more?" she inquired, with a little dubious shake of her head.

"I don't like"—Madeira got up and walked back and forth under the crab-apple tree—"I don't like for a man without any practical knowledge or experience to get a lot of ideas about a thing and bring them to a field and try to push other chaps out, other chaps who are already in the field."

"Yes, but——" It occurred to her that she was defending Steering—"but if he brings the ideas, he ought to have the credit for originating the ideas, oughtn't he?"

"No! No!" Madeira's voice rang up, urgent, strident; he did not seem conscious that he was talking to her;

he seemed rather to be having something out with himself. The strain of the past weeks had come back to his face. "Plenty of people before this Steering have thought of ore in the Canaan Tigmores. Look at old Grierson himself! Originate the idea! Grierson had the idea before Steering was born! We can get ideas in this country, and work 'em out, too, without any help from outsiders."

"Mr. Steering is not exactly an outsider, is he?"

"Yes, he is, too. He hasn't any more claim to this land now than you have; it isn't any more his business what's done here during Grierson's lifetime than it's Rockefeller's business. Not a bit. Let Steering wait till the land is his."

"Well,"—she was troubled,—"in the meantime, what is old Grierson going to do?"

Madeira seemed to be trying to quiet himself. He went down to the garden fence and looked at the oak forest on the other side of the Di, puckered up his mouth, as though to whistle, but stopped short of it, and came sauntering back toward his daughter. "He is going to do what I tell him to do, Honey," he made answer. "And I'm telling him to put the Canaan Mining and Development Company into the Tigmores after zinc."

"I should think, though," she said then, slowly, "that even if the matter is in your hands now, it would be to your ultimate advantage to have Mr. Steering in with you. He is the next owner, and, if old Grierson should die, whatever work you have done on the Tigmores would go for nothing. I should think it would be almost essential for you and Mr. Steering to be together."

He let his chair down angrily. "There isn't a big enough scheme in the universe to accommodate Steering and me together! He is a blamed idiot," he said doggedly. And it became clear to her that in his bull-headed way he had forged all the links of one of his intense antagonisms. He had been like that all his life; of pronounced personality himself, he had never been able to abide pronounced personality in those with whom he came in contact. He had ridden rough-shod over inferior men all his life; he liked to ride rough-shod; he was never pleased when his path crossed people over whom he could not ride rough-shod. Generally she had accepted his classification of those who opposed him strongly as "blamed idiots"; sometimes with a little of her laughing banter, but usually, his superiority standing out sharp and clear when opposed to the dull Canaanites, endorsing his opinion. "I sort of wish," he went on, with that keen, wire-edged exasperation still sawing in his voice, "that you wouldn't have much to do with that chap. He isn't my kind of people. I shouldn't mind if, now that you've given him a good high swing, you'd let him drop."

"Why, Father! You oughtn't to forget that there was one time in your life when he might have let you drop—and didn't!"

He saw that he had got himself before her in too keen a light.

"Yes, but you don't expect me to let him hold me up by the collar forever, do you, Pet? That's his dog-on way, anyhow—wants to dictate. I can't stand a man who wants to dictate. I think we've had enough of him. That's what I mean, and all I mean." He patted her hands and got up from his chair again. "There

comes Samson with the mail," he said nervously.

A negro man rode up through the big gate at the front of the grounds and came on to Madeira, who took two letters from him. "One for you, Sally," said Madeira, "and one for me."

"Oh, from Elsie Gossamer!" she cried, and took her letter and sat, unobservant of him, for several moments, the little frown that his words had brought out still on her brow. Presently she looked up and saw that he had read his letter, and had put it in his pocket; he was tilted back against the crab-apple tree again, his forehead knit, his eyes brilliant, a peculiar fixity in their gaze. "Oh, here!" she cried protestingly, "you look as though you had just decided to become the President of the United States of America! Stop scowling and listen; Elsie is after me again to join her in Europe. She is fairly eloquent with the project ——"

He broke in upon her with a sudden intensity of interest: "Do it!" he cried. "It's the very thing. You go. You go and have a good time."

"I don't want to go so awfully," she began hesitatingly. "I've been away from you a lot in the last two years. I don't care so much about it."

"Yes, you do; you go." He was always keen for her pleasure, but in the present case he seemed especially earnest.

"Want to get rid of me, huh?"

"No; you know I'll half die without you. But I am going to be fearfully busy from now on,"—his mouth seemed hot and dry as he talked,—"it will suit better now than ever. You go."

"Well, maybe," she said. She was accustomed to let her own fancy settle such questions for her. "Maybe I'll go. Maybe I shan't." There was a click at the front gate. "I expect that's Mr. Steering," she announced.

Madeira got out of his chair quickly. "If it is, I don't want to see him," he said, "he—oh, he irritates me, that man,—always wanting to dictate. I'll go in. Don't want ever to see him again,—and say, Pet?"

"Well, Dad?"

"I'd be glad if you would never see him again. Just stop where you are, will you?"

She drew a long sighing breath. "Just stop where I am? Well, I'll see," she said, laughing and flushing in the warm, rich fashion of her skin, but there was the faint far call of uneasiness in her laughter, like a wind-whisper of coming rain. "Tell Samson to bring Mr. Steering out here to me," she commanded, and Madeira went off toward the house and disappeared through the green-latticed porch.

Inside the house he retired to the room that was known as his office, locked the door and came over to his desk. As he did it a peculiar consciousness of himself suffused him like the first fumes of a deadly narcotic. He began to see that he was lifting his feet stealthily, advancing them stealthily, stealthily setting them down, with the soundless fall of a cat's foot on velvet. Reaching his desk, he half fell into a chair there, a thin line of white froth between his lips, his big face purplish. "Eh, God?" he cried, "what's this? what's this?"

The seizure passed as suddenly as it had come. By and by he heard Steering pass through the house

under Samson's escort. When the sound of Steering's foot-steps had died away, Madeira took a letter from his pocket, spread it open before him and read it over and over.

"Dear Crit," [the letter said] "I have thought this thing to a finish. I want you to turn the Tigmores over to my cousin, Bruce Steering. Let him start at once on the jack trail, that primrose path of dalliance. As for me, my dear sir, by the time this reaches you, I shall be on the long trail. You needn't blow any trumpets about it, for B. G. will have no funeral. The name that I gave you as the name that I live here under is good enough to die here under. The certain fact for your consideration is that I die at once, and that the question of this property entail is now confided to you to arrange for my heir, young Steering. Write to the clerk of Snow Mountain County for the documents that I have left with him for you. They establish everything. Tell my cousin that, besides the Tigmores, I bequeath him my debts to you. This leaves me not at all envious of the job ahead of him, and, as ever,

"Your blindly devoted servant,

"BRUCE GRIERSON."

Chapter Seven

THE GARDEN OF DREAMS

Crittenton Madeira's daughter wandered down the garden path, singing softly, after her father had left her, but there was in her song, as there had been in her laughter, a little tremble of unrest. The garden was a delicious place, whose fragrance beat up in waves of sweetness at every turn. All the flowers were in their luxuriant last bloom. There were great roses and sweet elysium, mignonette, peppermint pinks, crêpe myrtle, riotous vines and creepers. Long ago she had taken everything out of the garden that was not sweet. She had a fancy that fragrance was one of the spirit's tremulous paths into heaven, and out in the garden she liked to shut her eyes and, with her little straight nose in the air, go drifting off toward what was infinitely good, fine, strong, imperishable. It sometimes seemed to her that the most intimate and exquisite happinesses of her life had come to her with her eyes shut in that garden. She called it the Garden of Dreams.

When Steering found her, she was waiting for him, her arms on an old vine-covered stump, that dusky-gold radiance of hers playing over her and from her, the most beautifully, glowingly alive woman in the world. What he said to her was "How-do-you-do?" But what he wanted to say was, "Oh, stand there so forever, and let every grace, every beauty burn into my brain, so that all my life I may carry you about with me, your wine-warm eyes, your sunlit hair, the whole sweet glow of you,—having you perfectly, knowing you perfectly everywhere, everyhow, near, far, in the sunshine, in the dark!" And when a man wants to talk like that "how-do-you-do" is as good a catchphrase as the next to keep his tongue discreet.

"I do very well," she told him, smiling at him, maddening him, "I always do well, here in my garden,—but you, you put my sense of well-being to shame. You look so glad!"

"I am the gladdest man on earth," Bruce told her, knowing chiefly that he had her hand in his. He barely remembered in time that she was rich in gold and lands and cattle, and that he was poor, and that the positivism of his personality had already incurred the ill-will of her father. "Still, I don't think there is any doubt in the world how it is all going to end," he said hazily. He still had her hand. She had the hardest hand to put down that he had ever taken up.

"I don't quite follow? All what?" She bit her lip; her eyes flashed off across the Di, bright and swift as mating birds, as she drew her hand gently away.

"I was only thinking that a man may go on and on through so many meaningless years, of no special significance to himself or to anybody else and then suddenly,—think everything is going to be all right some day." He clasped his hands and leaned on the other side of the vine-covered stump and looked at her wishfully, and she laughed at him, with her eyes still on the pale river.

"How do you like my garden?" she asked divertingly. For answer he shut his eyes and breathed deeply. "Oh, how good!" she cried, satisfied, "that's the only way really to follow the path of fragrance,—that's my own way!" He blessed his stars that he had sniffed at the roses. "Where did the path lead you?" she queried, as he opened his eyes dreamily upon her golden beauty. "Into heaven," he murmured with sublime conviction, and she clasped her slender hands, delighted at their mystical congeniality.

"I am so glad that we like the same thing," she continued, hurrying a little; "haven't you noticed?—we both like the garden,—and we both like Piney. When did you see Piney?"

"Piney? Oh, I see Piney often." He rather wished that she had not mentioned Piney. Since he had come to know the tramp-boy better his first ache for him had become sharper and sharper. "Piney and I were out on the hills together only yesterday. Poor Piney!"

"Why," she took his hand and led him forward through a tangle of rose-bushes; she would not look at him, but the bewildering sweetness of her hair, her gown, the curve of her cheek came back to him —"why *poor* Piney?" She was guiding him to a bench of twisted grape-vines from which they might look down upon the river. "Sit down," she said, "and tell me why poor Piney?"

"Well," he sat down and looked at the river, half-frowning, "it has seemed to me—I've had a notion—oh, I don't know. I suppose it is not poor Piney after all."

"Tell me," she insisted, "tell me what you started to tell me."

"Well, it has seemed to me ever since I first met Piney that he was in the way of trouble," he dashed on more abruptly, thinking only of Piney for a moment—"I have come to love that boy. I find myself clinging to him. I think it is because he stands to me for the spirit of my own boyhood; perhaps that, perhaps because he stands for the spirit of the woods he loves; because he stands for simplicity, honesty, spontaneity. At any rate he is rare, what with his musical gift and his high melody of living—

and—oh well, I've sometimes felt sorry that he is not all wood-spirit, that he is part human." The characteristics that had made Steering stand too determinedly to suit Crittenton Madeira made him forge ahead determinedly now. "Piney would be apt to suffer less if he were wholly the sylvan, irresponsible creature, the faun, he sometimes seems to be. But, alas, Piney has a man's heart, Miss Madeira. He will have to suffer for that, for he will have to love. That's why 'poor' Piney; because he will have to love."

"Would that be so terrible?" The flash from the amber eyes that she turned up to him made the world go zig-zagging through a long space while Steering looked on with a great tremulous intake of breath. Then he steadied again to what he wanted to say to her and could say to her for Piney's sake.

"It would be for Piney. Piney is going to love hopelessly," he saw that a little shiver caught her and he was glad of it. "Yes, it would be terrible to love hopelessly, wouldn't it?" he said, to strengthen his hidden appeal for Piney. He wanted to make her realise what she was doing for Piney, realise that for sheer kindness, kindness as to a dumb thing, she should never let the lad come near her. He had forgotten the woman in her when he began to formulate that appeal. She laughed a light, mocking laugh.

"I believe that you think that Piney loves me!" she cried. "Piney, the spirit of the oaks! the song of the night-wind! Piney suffer! Piney love!" Steering was sorry to hear the note of evasion in her voice. No woman, he remembered, too late, could be brought to treat man's love or boy's love quite honestly. His

eyes clouded. He felt masculinely, sanely sympathetic with Piney.

"I wish," he said gloomily, "that you would sometimes put yourself in the place of a man who loves you, put yourself in Piney's place."

Her eyes crinkled up again. "I'll just do it," she said gaily, "I'll do it now. Presto," she shut her eyes. "Now I have his point of view. Now I'm seeing what he sees —that Miss Sally Madeira likes to hear him sing, and humours him and pets him because he is gay and glad to be alive, and because Uncle Bernique says that he needs somebody to mother him. I mother Piney. Can't you see that." She laughed again and arose and stood in front of him, gay, mocking, nonchalant. "Piney love! And if Piney could love, that you should fancy that he might dare love Salome Madeira!"

He forgot about Piney. She blocked his farther vision like a shaft of light. He could not see an inch beyond her. Madeira's voice rang down the garden walk. Steering did not hear it. "Salome! Salome!" he murmured, "Is that it, Salome?"

"Yes, that's it, Salome. Isn't it foolish? The Di down there is the Diaphanous, too. Some pioneer poet named it for its shimmer, but what good did it do? Missouri promptly called it the 'Di.' No more good is it to name a child Salome in the backwoods of Missouri. She's bound to grow up Sally. I've always been Sally, except at school. I'll always be Sally down here with my own people."

"No, you won't always be Sally—no you won't always be down here with your own people either,"—he leaned back on the bench and watched her, his eyes

half shut, his whole sense of being illumined by her, his tongue playing audaciously with his discretion.

"Yes, I shall always be Sally, too." That bisque-warm skin of hers flushed wondrously and she seemed to talk out of a little confused audacity of her own. Madeira's voice rang down the walk again. "Yes, Father!—and down here with my own people, too. Yes, Father!"

"Company's here, Sally."

"All right, Father, coming."

"And I have to go?" asked Steering piteously.

"Oh no, come up to the house and meet our sixteen-to-one congressman, Quicksilver Sam."

"No—I'll go," chose Steering. "Say, can't I get through from the garden here, and go down the river road?"

"Yes, you can. Samson shall bring your horse around, if you like. There's a bridle-path down to the river; it's Piney's way."

"Well, if you will be so good as to have the horse brought, I'll take Piney's path. I'm going to the hills to try to find Piney and Uncle Bernique. Think I'll sleep in the hills with them to-night. I feel so sad. When may I come back?"

"Well, you see," the trouble crept into her voice again, misty, tremulous—"you see, I may go away."

"Oh!" he cried, and then again, "Oh!" a bitter wailing note.

"Yes, I may," she said hastily. "You see, your friend, Miss Gossamer, wants me to join her in Europe. She

is very insistent about it."

"And you may go?"

"And I may go."

He knew that she said that she would see him again before going, if it came to pass that she decided to go, and that she pressed his hand, with the grateful look that she had bestowed upon him when she had tried to thank him for holding on to her father in the Joplin mine; and that afterwards she stole away through the garden, and a negro man-servant brought his horse around to the rear grounds and showed him a bridle-path to the river; but these things were hazy. The vivid thing was an imprecation that by and by took awful form, like a monster of the mist, hissingly, from between his clenched teeth:

"*Damn Miss—Europe!*"

Chapter Eight

WHEN A GIRL FINDS HERSELF

Sally Madeira went to her own room early that Sunday night. It was a large room, sheer and white, with its wall space broken here and there by cool, calm etchings, cows knee-deep in clover, sunsets on small rivers, old windmills, wheat fields in harvest, hills where the snow lay thick. When she had lit her

lamp a rosy light suffused the room through the tinted globe. The pictures on the walls looked so tonefully tender, intimate, in the soft glow, that the girl, noticing them for the thousandth time, moved from one to another, admiring and loving them. They were, in a way, sign-posts of her development. She had begun to buy them when she had stopped working in colour with a man who had a famous studio in New York. One day she had gone with the man to an exhibition of oil paintings which were infused with a matchless poetry of colour.

"If I paint all my life am I ever going to be able to paint like that?" she had asked of the man earnestly.

"No, my child, you are not," he had answered, quite as earnestly.

"I wonder why I should try to do something poorly that someone else can do so well?" she had mused.

And then, because she had talent, and, finest of all, an exquisite temperament in whose pulses the sense of colour beat in veritable tides of joy, the man from the studio had encouraged her with warm words of praise. "You will some day paint well enough to win a high place," he had reminded her.

But she had stayed thoughtful, and a day or two later had talked to him again.

"I don't believe, since I have thought it all out, that I can get what's in life for me out of it in a high place," she had said, shy but eager. Then, on that line, she had forged on to a swift and comprehensive conclusion. "You have told me," she had continued to the studio man, "that what I have in me for painting is not the real thing, and since I have seen the real

thing I know for myself that colour is too rich and assertive, too apt to run away with one, for any but master hands to use it. I feel that I don't want even to see poor colouring on canvas any more. I shan't ever even have poor colour pictures around me. I can get my colour stories outside. Inside, the stories shall all be told in light and shadow. And I am not going to paint bad pictures myself any more."

"Ah, but the work, the beautiful work!" cried the painter.

"Well, as for me, do you know, I've come to believe that my work is just living—for a time anyhow."

"Well, then, the fame!" cried the painter.

"I don't seem to care for the fame."

It had gone much like that with her music. She had a fine voice, and her New York teacher had told her over and over that she "must go on." She had been pleased with his praise and had worked hard for a time. Then she had gone to him, too, one day, open-eyed and inquiring.

"Go on to what?" she had asked.

"Why, to glory," the singer had said.

She had shaken her head, unconvinced. "I don't seem to care for the glory," she had said. And beyond learning to use her voice well she would not work with it. "It is not that I am lazy," she had protested to the singer, "but I couldn't get what's in life for me out of it by singing."

"What's in life for you?" queried the singer, interested, for the girl was beautiful and rich and aspirant.

"Ah, I don't quite know yet," said the girl, the pretty pathos of youth and waiting upon her, "but some day I shall find myself; then I shall know."

All through her college days she had been looking for herself. When the time had come that she had gone to Elsie Gossamer's house to visit, and there had met men—college boys at first and later on men of a larger world—she had still been looking for herself. But though in the meantime she had learned how to meet men and how to treat them—capably, Elsie Gossamer said—she had not found herself. During the past summer, since her return from college, she had idled on here through a little interim with her father, comfortable, dreamy, waiting, seeking. But she had not found herself.

As she began to make ready for bed that Sunday night she had, suddenly and subtly, a quiver of consciousness that the waiting and the seeking were nearly over. Just how she knew it she could not have told, or just what she meant by knowing it, or just what would happen because of knowing it. Moving about the large room softly, her harmonious strength and grace were revealed in the swing of her long lithe limbs, the reach of her satiny brown arms, the breadth of her sweet smooth breast, the straightness and firmness of her tall frame. Only a self-reliant girl could have moved as she moved, a girl made self-reliant by exuberant health and ideals and hope. When she stopped moving about and stood before her mirror, her hand on the great rope of shining hair that hung over her shoulder, her body assumed a rare natural poise, classically, ancestrally beautiful, Grecian. By and by she roused from the little reverie before the mirror, put out the light, and came over to the window.

"Oh," she cried at once, "that was what was the matter with me, that was why I felt that something was about to happen! It was the storm!"

Beyond the window a Missouri tempest was rising. The girl, responsive as a reed to the wind, sat down in a low chair, the subtle quiver of consciousness intensified within her, and watched the lightning that began to play over the hills, and the rain that began to beat through the trees. Strangely enough, as she sat there, in the flashes she could see little, but in the dark—a warm, wind-blown, sweet-smelling dark—she saw several things. For one thing, she saw that, most probably, she would never again in her life spend an evening with a sixteen-to-one congressman. It had been a very tiresome evening. For another thing, she saw that she was not going to Europe. Her father needed her; or if he didn't he ought to. For a third thing, she saw that, in some way, she was going to have to make her father like Bruce Steering again. Then she saw the fourth thing. There had not been a flash for some minutes. Seeing that fourth thing, in the intense dark, she gave a trembling sigh, put one of her hands on top of the other on her breast and pushed, as though she were pushing her heart down. Then presently the pressure of her hands relaxed, her head dropped down until her chin touched her fingers, and a great flush that was like a charge from something electric surged through her.

"Oh," she cried, "oh, is it you! Have you come!" It was a triumphant, shy, thrilling greeting to something, something that she had been waiting for, born for. The dark grew intenser, sweeter, warmer. She lifted her arms and held them out yearningly toward the Tigmore hills, half-leaning out the window, catching the rain on her eager young face, in her shining hair,

on her broad low breast. "I am so glad of it!" she panted, in a singing whisper, "I am so glad——" A great sheet of lightning unrolled across the Tigmore hills and held steadily magnificent for a moment, revealing everything to everybody, so it seemed to Sally Madeira. She crept into bed shaking, ecstatic, afraid.

Next morning she made her toilet away from the mirror as much as was possible, not being quite ready to face her whole found self as yet. But before she went downstairs she crossed to the window and looked out at the tumbling Tigmore line, a kissing sigh on her lips.

When she reached the dining room she found that Madeira had not yet come down, so she walked out into the garden, where she stood for a little while by the vine-covered stump, her eyes closed, her little straight nose in the air, the broad daylight beating down on her. Then presently she opened her eyes determinedly. "Yes, I can stand it," she said, as though she had been afraid that she couldn't, and looked straight up into the rain of light over-head. "I can stand it, in the daytime as in the dark, from now on forever."

In the air was an autumn mellowness that had not been there the day before. It nipped, with a strong, winey flavour, as it went down. All around her lay drifts of petals, rain-beaten roses, ragged lilies. The storm had stolen the garden's glory. "To put it into my heart!" cried the girl, in her all-conquering joy. "Oh, you Garden of Dreams, you! See, my eyes are wide open, and this, *this* is better than dreams!"

She went back to the house with her arms full of the very last roses. "For now, I must go bring my father

around," she said.

Madeira had had a bad night. He had not slept at all as far as he could tell. For hours he had had to lie on his bed and face the dark, with Bruce Grierson's letter under his pillow, licking out at his temples like a tongue of flame. But he had not taken the letter away all night long. "Let it burn," he had said. "Let it find out who's stronger, me or it. That's my way." All night long he had made plans, with his face set toward the dark. When he got to the dining room that morning he went to the window and stood there waiting for Sally, revolving one of the night's plans in his head, deciding with how much force to project it, how to hit the mark patly with it. "For I won't have him here at my house again," Madeira was telling himself there at the window. "God! I *can't* have him here." He caught at the vest pocket above his heart. His teeth were chattering. His daughter, with the roses in her arms, entered the room just then.

As long as she lived Sally Madeira never forgot the way the dining room looked that morning, as she came into it from the Garden of Dreams: the dull green wall spaces, broken by some of her beloved cool etchings, and by great walnut panels that deepened and toned and strengthened the room beautifully; the old walnut side-board that had been her mother's mother's; in the centre of the room the heavy round table, unlaid, snowy, waiting for her effective interference; Madeira, her big handsome father, idling by the window, his fine physical maturity cut out strongly against the light, his deep chest, his great height, his wide, well-featured face, his good clothes, the adaptability with which he wore them; and on beyond Madeira, outside the

window, the satin green foliage of the pet magnolia tree. It was all finely satisfying. She had tried her hardest to kiss the foolish gladness out of her eyes and voice into the roses in her hands, but things grew so increasingly pleasant that all her endeavour went for nothing. As soon as her father saw her and heard her, he said:

"Well, Honey-love, are you as happy as *that*?"

She put her roses into an old blue bowl and went over to him, and he sat down in one of the big chairs by the window and drew her to his knee. Then they fell into a caressing habit of theirs, he with both arms about her body, she with both arms about his neck, half-choking him with tenderness, rumpling his thick hair with the tip of her chin. She looked as much mother as child like that.

"What a big girl you are, Pet!"

"I have a big excuse for it, Dad."

"But your mother, now, was little, Sally. My, yes, reckon that was why I loved her so. Such a little, little thing!"

"And I'm so big—'reckon' that's why you love me so, huh?"

"Reckon," he said. They sat on for a moment silent, looking out of the window. There was a lost cardinal whisking among the satin leaves of the pet magnolia, gazing wistfully at an old nest that swung in the branches like the ragged ghost of a summer's completeness and happiness. The nest seemed to arouse memories and hopes in the cardinal's breast. He had to flirt about it nervously for some minutes before he could satisfy himself that his housekeeping

notions were unseasonable. Finally he perched himself on an humble syringa bush and stared at the nest, quiet, depressed.

"Are you betting on the magnolia tree with anybody this winter?" she asked, her eyes, too, on the high nest.

"No one left to bet with, Pet. Everybody knows now that it can live through the worst that can come to it. Let's see, it's twenty years since I planted it there, and I've won twenty jack-knives betting that it would live, twenty different winters. Twenty years! Sally, that's a good while, my honey. Why, twenty years ago you didn't come knee-high to a puddle-duck. We had just moved down here from St. Louis, your mother and I, twenty years ago."

As he talked, the moment shaped itself for Madeira as a little negligible interim, wedged in between the restless night, with its defined purposes, and the next hour, when he should have consummated at least one of the night's purposes.

"That mother of yours was a lovely little thing, Sally."

The girl was sure of it. She had felt the loveliness of her mother all her life. Once she had gone to her mother's old Kentucky home, and though her mother's people were all dead long ago, the great Kentucky house was still there, and, standing before it, she had been almost able to see the aura of influence that it had been in the moulding of the loveliness of her mother, the southern girl, lifting from it to ensphere her, the western girl.

"I know she was lovely," said Sally.

"Oh my, yes,—just about at her loveliest twenty years ago. But as for twenty years, Sally, why, I can go a lot farther back than that. I can go back forty years, close to my beginning. This is all sort of different from my beginning, Sally." Out beyond the window, into the September sunshine, rolled the fat corn lands, hundreds upon hundreds of acres, the wheat flats, the miles of cattle range of Madeira Place. Around them shut the strong walls of the old Peele house, a memorable house in its way, massive and wide-porched and staunch.

"You can hardly imagine anything more different from this than was my beginning," went on Madeira. "This is pretty luxurious, isn't it? In its way, though it is down here on the Di, it's just about as good for a country house as the places you saw on the Hudson, aint it?"

"Oh, it has a lot more soul and story than the Hudson places," she acquiesced at once. Sometimes she could feel that desire of his to give her as good as the best palpitate like a pulse through his words.

"Well, anyhow, Lord knows it's mighty different from what I began with, Sally. Why, Honey, in my boy-days living on a farm in Missouri was mighty much like living on the fringes of hellen-blazes. Br-r-rt!" He clamped and unclamped his big hand, watching the strong muscle-play in it. "I can feel my fingers burn to this day where the frozen fodder sawed and rasped 'em in winter and the hot plough-handles bit and blistered 'em in summer. And then, afterwards, those old St. Louis days meant hard pulling, too, of another kind. From grocery clerk, to dry-goods clerk, to old Peele's real estate office, it was pull, pull, if not over one thing, over another. Takes a thundering

lot of pulling to pull out in this world, Sally." All in a minute his voice sounded perplexed and resentful.

"Well, you did it, didn't you? You pulled out. I'm proud of you. I like the way you did it."

"Do you, Pet? Do you like me?" he queried with a peculiar anxiety.

"Yes, sir, I do."

Black Chloe, who had been making slow trips between kitchen and dining-room for some minutes, stopped now to say, in a sort of Arabian Nights measure, "Ef you raddy fuh yo' brekfus, yo' brekfus raddy fuh you."

"Better than anybody?" pursued Madeira, but his daughter was drawing him to the table, and he did not notice that her only answer was a quivering laugh.

They sat down to a breakfast-table whose delightful appearance was due to that sense of colour in Sally Madeira's temperament. Both ate some fruit, because it was juicy and went down easily, and both looked at their coffee-cups.

"Why don't you eat your breakfast, Daddy?"

"Why don't you?" Perhaps if he had waited for her to tell him, her gladness would have sent her story bubbling to her lips, but he did not wait. "I'm bothered, Honey, that's why I can't eat."

"What's the bother, Dad?"

Madeira, considering that this was his opportunity, closed in determinedly, with that iron grip of his. "It's that man Steering, Honey."

"Taken a foolish old dislike to him, haven't you, Dad?" She was ready for him, eager to get her case before him, to make her points quickly and surely.

"Foolish," Madeira gasped and put his hand to his vest pocket. "Sally, girl, it's a matter of life and death, I take it." He rose from his chair, his face grey. Staggering a little to the left, he moved to the window, where he stood with his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the Garden of Dreams. Behind him the girl sat on quietly. She had put one hand to her chin, so that her face was up-tilted. The light from the window was strong on it.

"Sally," began Madeira again, "I've never asked very much of you, have I? Always let you do as you please, haven't I? And it's too late now to try to force you to do anything, isn't it? Besides, I wouldn't do it anyway. I wouldn't like it that way. But I'm going to ask you to do something for me. Then I'm going to leave the doing wholly to you. I'm going to ask you to drop that man Steering. I thought it all out last night, Sally. I know that he and I are going to mix up if he doesn't keep well out of my sight. I'm going to ask you to drop him, for my sake, Pet."

He came back toward her, and again he half reeled as he started. With one hand on her shoulder, he looked down at her. By now she was staring unseeingly at the bird that stared at the nest in the magnolia tree. "Are you going to do what I want, Honey?" His hand shook on her shoulder and when she turned to look up at him the ashen hue of his face frightened her. She nestled her cheek into his hand. "It's the God's truth I'm telling you, Sally," went on Madeira, "it's life or death, I think. I've got to get rid of Steering—I—I—oh, I hate him so."

"And you won't tell me why, Daddy?"

"And I won't—I can't—there's reason enough, Sally, that's all I can say. Can't you let it go at that, and help me out?"

"Yes, Dad, yes," she said. "You've done such a lot for me, you've helped me out—it—be—a pity,"—her voice went astray in her throat, and in the strong light Madeira saw a wild pain on her upturned face —"pity if I couldn't do anything you ask me to—wouldn't it?" She got up suddenly and ran to the door.

"Sally!" he called, "Sally, you don't mean—you don't —it isn't that"—but she was gone.

Chapter Nine

GOOD-BYE!

Madeira went off in the buckboard late that morning, and, having left word with black Chloe that he might have dinner at the Canaan Hotel, did not come home at all at noon.

His daughter stayed in her room all morning, and far past her lunch hour. About the middle of the afternoon she got up from the bed where she had been lying and sat by the window that looked out across the Tigmores. Her father's face, in its frame of entreaty, trouble, unrest, hung between her and the

hills, so that, for a time, she saw nothing but Madeira. Little by little, however, the hills themselves became insistent. They were very beautiful, a long, massed glory of colour, red and gold and green, all looped about by the silver cord of the Di. As the girl watched, a lone horseman came out of one of the wooded knobs and galloped down the ridge road toward Canaan. She could see him plainly, his breadth of shoulders, his high-headedness, his good horsemanship. She got up quickly, swaying toward the window, her hands over her heart, with the strange little pushing gesture, as though she must push her heart down. The horseman went on down the road toward Canaan.

"Oh!" cried the girl presently, pleadingly, "if I may see him just once again! If I just don't have to lose him all at once!" She ran then across the room to another window, through which she whistled shrilly at the negro man dozing in the succulent grass in front of the stable.

"Samson!" she shouted, "saddle Ribbon the quickest you ever did in your life!" And when she saw that the negro had roused sufficiently to execute her commands, she turned from the window hurriedly, went to her clothes-closet hurriedly, changed her house gown for a riding-habit hurriedly, and was out in the yard at the mounting block as the saddle mare was led up from the stable. Taking the bridle from the negro's hand, she leaped into the saddle and was off across the yard like a flash, while the lip of the astonished Samson sagged with impotent inquiry.

Out on the ridge road, she urged the mare to a gallop. All the way she was talking to Madeira, almost praying to him. His face with its trouble and

pain still moved before her. "Ah, but you will forgive me!" she was saying to it. "You wait. Wait and see how this ride turns out. I'm going to give myself just one chance, Dad. I'm going to find him, and I'm going riding with him. And I'm not going to say anything. But I look nice, don't I, when I'm riding—and loving—and hoping—and maybe he can't stand it, and if he can't stand it, and rides up close, and stops his horse and tells me—oh, what I hope he will tell me—why, Daddy, dear, I *must* lean over into his arms for just one minute, mustn't I? You see that, don't you? And maybe after that, everything will be all right, and we can all be happy ever after. I don't see how we could help being happy ever after that, Dad!"

And, praying so, on the galloping mare, Sally Madeira came into the main street of Canaan, and drew rein at last in front of her father's bank. Madeira saw her at once and hurried out to her.

"I'm going to take a little last ride with Mr. Steering, Dad," she said, her head as high as a queen's and her voice strong and sweet. "I didn't want you to think that I was deceiving you. I wanted you to know about it before I did it." Often there was a good deal of the child in Sally's straight gaze, and Madeira saw it there now and loved it.

"You do just exactly whatever you want to, Honeyful," he said. "I don't know—I——" He could not go on at all for a minute, and when he could go on he said abruptly, "I'm going to see Steering, too, before I quite bust up with him, Sally." Then he went quickly back to the bank, and the girl passed on down the street to the post-office, in front of which she saw Steering's horse at the hitching-rail. She sent

a bare-footed boy inside to post a letter to Elsie Gossamer and to ask Mr. Steering to come out to her.

While she waited, she could see Steering at the pen-and-ink desk, loitering there, one arm on the desk, watching the thin stream of people that went by him to the convex glass-and-pine booth where the post-office boxes were. The men from the Canaan stores, a lonely drummer from the hotel, some belated farmers and several Canaan young ladies passed Steering, the young ladies seeming not to see him, but, in some subtly feminine way, making it impossible for Steering not to see them—their glowing young faces, their enormous hats, the way their gowns didn't fit, the slip-shod carriage of their bodies, all the differences between them and the only other real western girl he knew. None of the people went out of the post-office at once, all idling at the door for a few minutes. From time to time there was quite a little crush at the door, so that Steering did not see Miss Madeira until her messenger reached him. Then he ran out to her quickly.

"I shan't get down," she told him, speaking in a lower tone than the listening Canaanites approved of. "I was hoping that I might find you here. Get on your horse and let's go to the woods. Wouldn't you like to? The hills are one long glory to-day." It was not the note of her prayer, it was well-ordered and calm. Still, Steering's heart leaped like a boy's at her friendliness, and he began to speak his gratitude in a lyric tune:

"Ah, what fortune! Just to be young and alive and off on the hills with you!" he said, and vaulted to his horse's back from the curb, so easily that even the Missourians who were candidly watching and

listening, remarked, "Oh, well, it's because he's got some Missouri in him, that's why-for."

Side by side, the horses moved down Main Street. At the bank Crittenton Madeira was standing at the plate-glass window. He had his thumbs in his trousers pockets, and he was rocking to and fro, shifting his weight from his heels to the balls of his feet peculiarly, as though seeking for balance. His eyes were moodily thoughtful, and he kept snapping at his lower lip with his big white teeth.

"Why, God bless you, Steering!" he cried pleasantly, moving out to the curb as the horses came up, "I made a mistake in missing you at the house yesterday. Want to see you again, as soon as I can. What about to-night, young man? Going to get in home early, aren't you, Sally?"

"Yes, Dad, early."

"Well then, my boy, you just stop by the bank, when you get in from the hills, will you? I shan't leave the bank before eight o'clock. Shan't be home to supper, Honeyful."

"All right, Mr. Madeira, I'll come," assented Steering; "look for me sometime before eight."

"All right, my boy. So long, Honeyful."

Again the horses moved off, side by side. Soon the town lay far behind the riders, who were following the shimmering Di around the blue hills. Where the road ran up the bluff into heavy timber they got into deep odorous silences, the silences of young unspoiled places; musical, too, somehow, over and beyond the stillness. Where the road came down to the bottom land along the river the silence shook

with the river's silver mystery. No matter where the road ran, always off beyond them lay the hills, ridge upon ridge, beautiful, glorious.

"Aren't they tremendous?" said the girl, "Aren't you glad they are almost yours?" A sense of possession was indeed mounting into a cry of rejoicing within Steering. He admitted it and then laughed at it.

"It's the house of Grierson that should rejoice," he said longingly.

"Wait until I bring you out above Salome Park," said the girl. "I, too, have some land up here that's worth while. From my land you can look straight across the country for miles, back again into your land."

Sometimes, as they journeyed, they passed log cabins backed up against the long hills, or squatting close to the shining river. Sometimes, as they journeyed, the red bluffs beetled up above them, tall and frowning. Sometimes the trees, trailing long green veils, all but met across the Di below them. Once they passed a saw-mill, set and buzzing; once they had to wait in the woods while a string of cattle stampeded by; once they saw a man in a skiff far down the Di. He raised his hand and waved to them for loneliness' sake. He looked sick with loneliness.

"You know your Missouri by heart," Steering commented admiringly, as she led him through bridle-paths and by short cuts with a fine woodsmanship.

"Well, I ought to. The times that I have been over it, with Piney, a ragged Robin-goodfellow at my heels! This is the apple-jack country that we are in now. Did you know that? Apple-jack stands for our big red

apples and for zinc. There's some of both down here, see!" She stopped him on a high spur in the ridge road and waved her riding whip toward the flats below, whose miles upon miles of apple trees made him wonder. "But wait for Salome Park," she insisted, and led him on.

Riding along beside her, listening to her, forgetful of his complications, his hills billowing toward him, Steering grew intensely happy. Just to look at her was enough to make a man happy. Her black, semi-fitting riding-habit outlined her graces of form enchantingly, the admirable litheness of her broad deep chest, her firmly-knit back. In her vigour of well-shaped bone and sinew and muscle she constantly emphasised the unpoetic nuisance of superfluous flesh. Beneath her little black hat her burnished hair lay coiled in soft smooth masses low on her neck. The wonderful vitality that beat through her veins brought the red colour to her cheeks in delicate waves. In her sunny amber eyes the high lights danced far back, dazzlingly.

"Now," she cried at last, "one more climb, and here we are at the summit! Fine, isn't it? That's Salome Park, all of it, as far as you can see, until you see the Tigmores curving around way off yonder to the west again. Ah, yes, I thought you would like it!"

From the summit of the Tigmore Ridge, on which they had stopped, there spread out an endless stretch of country, with small cleared spaces where the wheat and corn could grow, and with trout glens gleaming here and there through the trees, and with bosky places and woodsy places in between.

"Oh, it's wonderful," said Steering.

"This is the best view in the Tigmores," said the girl. "From here you can imagine that you see the Boston Mountains on a clear day. And away off down there run the Kiamichi—you will have to take my word for it, you can't see them. Cowskin Prairie, where the three States and the Territory come together, is off that way, too."

The big Missouri loneliness hung over it all, shutting them in, shutting the world out. "Psha! there isn't any world outside," said Steering, and drew his horse nearer to hers. "There isn't any world outside. This is all there is to it, and just you and I in it. Don't you believe me?"

"We will play that's the way of it," she said, the spell of the land upon her, too, the spell of the day upon her, her own heart's red spell upon her.

"Oh, me! Oh, me!" He brought his horse up closer, his eyes finding hers, and pleading with them.

"Well?" she cried, "well?" a wavering, waiting smile on her lips. Even like that, even leaning toward him she had a splendid self-trust; she was confidential, but a little remote.

Suddenly the man beside her clamped his jaws together harshly and held his tongue imprisoned behind his teeth. His chest lifted and shook as he sucked down a deep breath. There, near her, the glory of the hills outrolled before him, the keen snap of the elixir of love, the deathless, in his blood, life seemed hard, brutally hard. Everything was hard, and wrong. He had come down here for practical purposes, he had come needing every ounce of his energies for those purposes, yet, day by day, and minute by minute, he was being confronted by

psychic or moral crises, of one kind and another, that used up all the force in him. Here and now the demand upon him was terrific. His love for Sally Madeira had grown upon him daily, hourly, engaging all that was best in him, pulling him away beyond his old best, inspiring, and remaking him. To have to fight it, even for her sake, even because he must protect her from so hard a fate as fate with him promised to be, was like sacrilege. The force of his self-conflict took all the colour from his lips, all the light from his eyes. "My God! My God!" he cried, a short, sharp cry, that beat up the Tigmores and broke and splintered into the big loneliness futilely. Then he jerked his horse about abruptly. "We must go back now," he said.

But the girl, who had been watching, turned her eyes from him and held her horse still for a short moment. The glory of the hills came on across the wide park to her and enfolded her, met in kind by the radiance of her wonderful hair, her sunny eyes, her glowing skin. The joy of the night before, the morning's passionate grief, the ingenuous hope and prayer in her ride after Steering, the sweet, anxious torture of the journey to Salome Park were all giving place to a large, impersonal comprehension of the conflict in Steering's soul. She had known before that there was trouble brewing between him and her father. She knew now, past all doubting, that he loved her, knew it from his face, his voice. And even while her heart filled and quivered with knowing it, some higher power of divination made her know, too, that he was caught between his love of her and his difficulty with her father in an inexplicable, soul-shaking way.

When Steering, a few feet below her, turned again towards her, she looked finer, fairer, more

immortally young and strong than he had ever seen her look. She rode down to him fearlessly and put her hand out. "Sometimes the thing to do is just to stand steady," she said, "isn't that it?"—bridging all the unspoken thought and feeling between them, understanding, helping.

He clung to her hand, and its answering pressure was that of a comrade's, strong and reassuring. "Miss Madeira," he said, at last, simply, "things are so bad with me that if I don't stand steady and face them exactly as they come, not giving in an inch anywhere along the line, I shan't be able to stand at all."

"Ah, but you will stand that way—steady," she said, and drew her hand from his, and led the way homeward. She had accepted her fate to wait and endure while he "faced things."

They went back into the sunset together, almost silent. Far and wide rolled the hills in their flaunting glory, and, now and again, the girl's breath trembled and stung her,—that tidal sense of colour leaping and rioting within her, perhaps. Now and again the man's jaws set together more firmly. When they talked at all it was of little things.

"Why didn't I ever meet you at Miss Gossamer's?" he asked once.

"You were in Philadelphia when I was visiting Elsie, that was why. Neither you nor Mr. Carington were in New York that month. I remember that I got an idea that Elsie missed Mr. Carington, or you, or both. Mr. Carington was in love with her, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he's always been in love with her, I think.—Do you like the East?" he asked again, not caring for the

subject of Miss Gossamer.

"To get an education in."

"You are well educated," he said, as though making comparisons.

In that matter of education, her selective abilities had been indeed good. She had taken from her opportunities developmental elements and used them within herself wisely. She had fine conceptions of art, she was well-read; and because she had foreseen that she would be too rich to have any separate use for the things of art and learning, she had seized upon and welded all her inclinations and accomplishments into an harmonious, delightful completeness as Woman. In the result, her education seemed to be one of the especial reasons that you liked her.

"But as for that," said Steering, speaking his thought aloud, "reasons don't count. There are plenty of reasons, but one really never gets at the biggest reason of all."

"You hardly expect me to understand that," she said, laughing frankly, a musical laugh that had in it the shaking, white flash of a rock-fluted hill-stream.

"No, no! I don't expect you to understand that," he said.

They went on through the deep, odorous wood, down close to the river's pale, shallow mystery again, and so back to the big gate at Madeira Place. There at the gate the girl put out her hand to him again.

"Good-bye!" she said softly, "good-bye!"

As he bent to kiss the hand his breath came hard. "It

is not good-bye," he said. "It shall not be. I swear it."

Then he dashed on down the ridge road toward Canaan, to find Crittenton Madeira.

Chapter Ten

WHO'S GOT THE TIGMORES?

That Monday was hard on Madeira. It was his normal mental habit to come to a conclusion instantly, and cut a way for it across other people's ideas and notions with the impetus and onslaught of a cannon-ball. That Monday his mentality was below —or above—normal. He kept telling himself that he was mixed. His desire to crush Steering, pick him up and crumple him and thrust him aside, stood before him constantly, like the picture of the physical thing. Up to the time that he had seen his daughter run out of the dining-room that morning, her face averted, the desire had been steadily taking on colour and size. But, with the girl's brave broken cry, there had come on to him an intolerable question. For a long time he would not let the question get into words, or in any way define itself within his brain. Still, all morning long, he recognised that the question and that desire of his to crush Steering were ranged before him in some sort of fierce competitive effort. A thousand times he wished that he had had the courage to ask Sally candidly just what she had meant, just where she stood with regard to Steering,

but he knew that he could never have asked her. Good friends though he and his daughter were, there was between them the definite reserve that lies between all good friends in the sphere of the big things of life. He could not have asked her, and she could not have told him if he had asked her.

He fretted through a busy morning in a terrible uncertainty. When Sally had come by the bank to tell him of her proposed ride with Steering, he had watched her with painful, anxious scrutiny. But the girl's control had become perfect by that hour, and Madeira had to go back into the bank with the uncertainty still thickly upon him. Pausing there in the bank at the plate-glass window for a reflectful moment, he came to a swift resolve. He saw that he could not afford to make any mistake. He resolved to give Steering another chance to get right on the company matter. When he had gone out to the curb to make an appointment for the evening with Steering, he had told himself that it was because the boy might as well have the chance as not have it, and, when he had gone back, he had known that, lie to himself about it as he might, it was because he was afraid for Sally Madeira, afraid that this Steering was about to mean something in her life, afraid that he, as the girl's father, might bring some unhappiness upon her.

All the long afternoon the thing continued to worry him; added to the torment he was suffering from the burning letter in his vest-pocket, it was well-nigh unendurable. He had to work vehemently to make the time pass. Toward six o'clock, he began to realise that he had been shaping the time toward the evening's appointment with Steering. As he got it shaped he grew more peaceful. He was arranging

things so that he could win out with Steering. Little by little he came to accept the winning out as an assured thing, and in accepting it his grievance against Steering lightened, finally appearing to him as an easy thing to dispose of. Even the letter in his pocket grew less scorching. Sometimes he forgot, for minutes together, that it was there. Upon the hypothesis that Steering would "come around" everything smoothed out. Resting securely upon that hypothesis, Madeira even formulated the words with which he would take Steering's surrender: "God love us, that's all right! You just trust to me from now on. From now on I'll look out for you, my boy." He could hear himself saying that.

At six o'clock, still shaping the day toward the appointment with Steering, he took a great bevy of men, farmers, stockmen, storekeepers, to the Canaan Hotel for supper. Headed by Madeira,—who kept close to him a man named Salver, to whom he constantly referred as "our engineering friend from Joplin,"—the party stamped into the hotel dining-room. And though various members of the party were heavily booted, big, brawny, and in other ways cut out as assertive, it was much as though they were not there, so completely did Madeira fill the room. In the hotel office, after the supper had been disposed of, though every man had a cigar or a pipe in his mouth, it seemed as though Madeira were really doing all the smoking, so insistently did the smoke wreaths twist about his big face, as the others edged nearer him and closed in upon him. On the outside, on the way back up town, the street seemed full of Madeira. Even when some few of the satellites broke away from him and scattered into other parts of the town, at the livery stable, the drug store, the Grange, talking a little dubiously, the impression was definite

that they were only meteoric scraps, cast-off clinkers that could not stand the fire and the fizz and the whirl in Madeira's orbit.

The superintendent of the Tigmore County schools, a long, lean man with a trick of covert sarcasm, happened to be in Canaan that day, and he cracked a joke about Madeira's "galley-gang," as the bevy of men swept past him on their way back to the bank. In Canaan almost any joke had a fair chance to become classic through immediate and long-drawn repetition, and the superintendent's joke was soon going up and down the street as majestically as though swathed in a Roman toga. By seven o'clock the joke had come on to Madeira's ears. At eight o'clock the superintendent was one of seven men who sat in conference with Madeira in the private office of the bank. That was Madeira's way. Besides Salver, the Joplin man, and the superintendent, there were at the conference Larriman, a man who counted his acres by the thousands in We-all Prairie; Heinkel, the German sheep-raiser from the southern part of the county; Shelby, from the cotton lands of the Upper Bottom; Pegram, the Canaan postmaster, and Quin Beasley, from the Grange store.

They were all still there when Steering came in. Fresh from the hills, young, alert, deep-lunged, brown-faced, Steering was a good sort to look at as he strode into the room. He had ridden on into Canaan to the tune of high, purposeful music, after parting with Sally Madeira. His experience with her out there on the hills, his profounder impression of her fineness, had acted upon him like unbearably sweet harmonies, urgent, inspirational. He was this minute keen for something to do, something hard, earnest, momentous. If the whole truth were told, he

wanted to fight.

Madeira got up and shook hands with him, the more vigorously and noisily because of a sharp lambent flare that leaped out from the younger man's consciousness like a warning, and, reaching Madeira, stung and irritated him. As they stood gripping each the other's hand, both big, both vigorous, both determined, there was yet a fine line of distinction between them. On one side of the line stood the younger man with his ideals. On the other side stood Madeira, without any ideals.

"Come in, Steering, my boy!" In spite of himself, in spite of the "my boy," Madeira's voice rang harshly. "Lord love us, we are having a little preliminary meeting here. You know all these gentlemen, I think? I'm just reading to them some matter that I have got ready. I'll go on reading, if you don't mind. Sit down over there and listen."

And, Steering, shaking hands with the men nearest him, and bowing to the men farthest from him, sat down and listened.

As Madeira resumed his chair at his desk, he seemed to brace himself toward some sort of finality. His voice, when he spoke, was ominously quiet for a noisy man's voice. "Here's something about the country in general," he began slowly, dispassionately, "that I think might interest a fellow who is considering coming down here either to mine or to farm. See what you think of this: 'It was in 1874 that the first carload of zinc ore went up to the zinc works in Illinois. That was the beginning. Heretofore Missouri had been supposed to be agricultural only, but here was a new Missouri, whose wheat and corn and fruit wealth was found to be supplemented by a

mineral wealth of mammoth greatness. Settlers who wanted to mine began to come in, towns to spring up, and capital to be invested. The country was developed with lightning-like speed. From the Joplin stretch as a nucleus, lines of development have been steadily projected since 1874 to this day. There are not a great many undeveloped big acreages of land left in any of the southern Missouri counties. Of the few that remain by far the largest and most promising is the country known as the Tigmore Stretch. A remarkable feature of this region, besides its great agricultural possibilities, is that the surface exposure in the hillsides shows distinct mineral-bearing horizons, beds of zinc carbonates, whose promise of zinc sulphide at a greater depth is absolutely reliable. That it needs only deep shafting and drilling to unearth more remarkable riches than even Missouri herself has as yet yielded up, is evident from the outcrops'—by the way, gentleman," Madeira here interrupted himself to say, still in his quiet, dispassionate tone, "Salver has spent a good many days in the hills lately, and he has decided that the deeper-seated sulphides are just as surely in the hills as are the carbonates. He has done a lot of verifying. Aint that right, Salver?"

Salver shuffled his feet and said yes, that was right, and Madeira read again from his notes, picking out bits here and there, and beginning each time, "Now take this. See what you think of this," his voice staying monotonously even.

"'But, besides the zinc and lead and iron and coal, Missouri's well-improved farms invite the intending settler.'" (Steering thought of the lean hill farms as he listened.) "'There is an abundance of timber, in itself a great saving to the house-builder, and there are

innumerable streams and water-courses and lakes. The altitude is over one thousand feet above the sea-level, and the climate is the healthiest in the United States. Both mining and farming can be carried on the year round.' ... And now, lastly, about this form letter that I have drafted for intending investors—it runs like this: 'Dear Mr. So-and-So,' (I mean to have the name filled in in each one, I want it to be a personal letter) 'May I ask you to examine the status of our Canaan Mining and Development Company, as set forth briefly in the enclosed pamphlet. A careful reading will convince you that we are organised for legitimate business and development, rather than for speculation. From personal knowledge, I am able to vouch for all the representations made by the Company. There are a half hundred Tigmore County men already in the Company'—which will, of course, be the fact when the letter is sent," explained Madeira. "'If you are not already one of them, I should like for you to be. I think you know my record in this part of the country, as well as the record of the enterprises for which I have stood sponsor, and I am confident that when you begin to feel interested in the mining developments through this section, you will investigate the Canaan Company before investing with the other companies that are sure to spring up like mushrooms in our track.' ... And then, this: 'The chief working properties of the Canaan Company, the Tigmores, can without doubt be made to pay from one hundred to five hundred per cent, on any investment within the first year. The Canaan Company will not have to depend upon shallow sheets of mineral against dead rock, as do many of the speculative enterprises of the mining section. The Canaan Company will not cut blind. It knows its field, it knows its chances, it

knows its future'—and so on, and so on—how do you think it goes, boys?"

They thought it went rapidly, and they said so with loud endorsement.

"Well, I decided I'd get the thing moving here at home first," elaborated Madeira; "when all's said and done, a fellow likes to see his own place and people profit by what's going on. I'm going to send that letter out first to the Tigmore County people, and then move out in wider circles later. Shouldn't you think that was the way to work it out?"

Yes, they thought that was the way. Indeed, the way seemed such a good one, and the work was evidently to be so carefully, so conscientiously performed that, to Steering, as he had listened, the crying shame of it all had been not that it wasn't true,—it might be true, there was no telling,—but that Madeira, its promoter, didn't care a rap whether it was true or not. Or, after all, was he, Steering, wrong about that? Had Madeira changed about? Been himself convinced that the actual prospects were so good that it was senseless not to depend upon them, without any of the wings that his fancy might give them? Had the thing become with Madeira, during these more recent days, something larger, something legitimate? All the other men were taking Madeira's attitude seriously. They showed that they were by the emotionalism, effusive, admiring, with which they hung upon Madeira for a few last words, by their blind dependence, their awe. When the séance broke up finally, they strayed away from him haltingly, like lost sheep.

The impression of Madeira upon the men, as he let them out of the door, was so profound that it came

on to Steering with the value of a reflection. He felt himself growing a little hopeful that the thing really was to be right and straight, as he watched Madeira turn from the door.

For his part, Madeira came back toward his desk with a peculiar revulsion of feeling upon him. This effort of his to bring Steering around by strategy was galling him. He resented that any such effort should ever have been saddled upon him. He considered that from the start Steering should have been with him. Most fiercely of all he resented that he, Crittenton Madeira, should have let himself get into the position of trying to mollify Steering. "By God!" he was saying to himself with a convulsive anger, "Me to have to mollify! By God! Me!" Then the thought of Sally came back to him, goading him and confusing him. On a sudden impulse of candour he cried out to Steering, as he came on to his desk.

"Steering! God love you, why do you want trouble between you and me? Don't you see that I have this thing here under my thumb? Don't you see that you mustn't go against me, my boy? Here's your chance back again. I'm handing it out to you. Stand by me. You won't be sorry. All my plans are made now. I have once or twice in my life thought the thing to do down here was to stir up a furore over some of the lakes and the springs and the scenery and make a health resort out of the region, but I have settled away from that now, settled straight at zinc. But Lord bless you! zinc or no zinc we can't fail to make a pile of money out of this. Why do you want to be a fool and hold back from me when I'm willing to pull you along? You ought to see by now that you can't do anything without me, or go against me. 'Tisn't everybody I'm willing to pull along, Steering. Why,

boy, from the start, I've treated you on the square, let you know me on the inside—let—and, here and now, I'm still willing to pull you along, if you'll come along!—eh, what?"

With Madeira's words, matching Madeira's excitement, blazing furiously and whitely, out leaped the slower, stronger fire of the younger man's personality.

"See here!" shouted Steering, "twice now I've done my best to hope that somehow, somewhere you were going to throw me one line of commercial honesty and decency. I haven't asked you to measure up to very high standards, I'd have been satisfied with damned little; I've waited on you and hoped for you and let you try to bull-doze me, but by God! I'm done. You hear, I'm done!" He got up and the lean strength of his determination and the long reach of his body were all-powerful. "Don't you try this game with me again, Mr. Madeira! Don't you ever try any game with me again—No! Keep back! Not that either!"

Madeira had gone crazy for the time. Possessed only by that desire to crush the thing that opposed him, he lifted his big clenched fists straight up over his head and came at Steering, fiery-eyed, perfervid with relish of the moment when he could close down on his enemy and make an end of him. He panted as he came, and as he came the veins in his temples stood out, purple and knotted. A little line of froth lay upon his lower lip.

"Eh, God! You!—Wait there!—You!—You!—--"

Steering, with the old prowess that had made the boys on the gridiron stand aside and howl for him,

reached up and brought Madeira's arms down with a circling, sweeping blow, then caught the bulky, staggering body and thrashed it into a chair, forgetful that it was Madeira, forgetful of Sally Madeira, forgetful of everything for one red instant save a savage masculine joy in his own strength.

Then he took out a cigar and lit it, and his mental readjustment followed quickly. "Mr. Madeira," he said, puffing slowly at the cigar, the match's yellow light on his face showing that he was pale, "I am sorry that you made me do that, sir. Still, I must add this to what I've said,—don't, please, ever try to pull me along with you again. I guess I'm going in a different direction. This leaves everything settled between us. Our paths aren't apt to cross again. You aren't hurt, I hope? There is nothing that I can do for you?"

Madeira made no answer. He was sitting, a wooden figure, in front of his desk where Steering had thrashed him down. His temples were still purplish, but the crazy light was no longer in his eyes. They were dull and fishy. Steering had gone to the office door, then the bank door had clanked to behind him before Madeira moved. He began working his fingers then, watching them questioningly, stupidly. They felt stiff and numb. Suddenly he leaned forward exhausted. His head rolled on the desk. "Sally?" he whimpered, in a furtive, scared way, "Sally?"

Then, all in a moment, he jumped to his feet, clutching at the pocket that held the Grierson letter, while words came from his mouth in vehement staccato yelps:

"Eh, God! He'll go against me, will he? Wait. I'll show him. Who's got the Tigmores? Answer me that now?

Who's got the Tigmores?" Off beyond his window tumbled the long Tigmore line. He crossed the room, all his strength back with him, and looked out upon the high black hills. "Eh, God!" he shouted, and beat at his chest where the letter lay, "Dead men tell no tales! *I've got the Tigmores*!"

Chapter Eleven

TALL THINGS

One late fall afternoon a man and a boy lingered under the shadow of tall trees and pondered tall things. The boy was propped against the trunk of an oak; his hat was pushed back from his face; his black tumbling hair made his slim brown face seem browner, his long eyes darker than they were; his young intensities of fancy and feeling were aroused, and manifest in the tremble of his lip, the vibrancy of his voice, the shaking light of his glance. The man lay flat on his back with a book spread out over his stomach and his long white fingers interlaced across the book fondly. Down at their feet the Di flowed swiftly, with the eyrie shiver on her bosom, making haste, like a frightened woman, past the lonely Tigmores toward the livelier corn and cotton lands. All around the horizon the sky so throbbed that here and there it rent the sheer cloud-veil that lay in delicate illusion over the blue. Through the trees played frightened flashes of colour, the whisk of a cardinal's wing, the burnt-red plume of a fox-squirrel's tail. In the air there was a palpitancy that was to the dream senses what colour vibrations are to the eye.

The man took up the book and began to read from it, and this was the burden of the reading:

"'Nobody can pretend to explain in detail the whole enigma of first love. But a general explanation is

suggested by evolutional philosophy,—namely, that the attraction depends upon an inherited individual susceptibility to special qualities of feminine influence, and subjectively represents a kind of superindividual recognition,'" the man smiled gravely and repeated the last stave with questioning care, "'and subjectively represents a kind of superindividual recognition?—a sudden wakening of that inherited composite memory which is more commonly called passional affinity.'—I have a notion that that may mean something or other, Piney?"

"Don't ast me."

The reader began again: "'Certainly if first love be evolutionally explicable, it means the perception by the lover of something differentiating the beloved from all other women,—something corresponding to an inherited ideal within himself, previously latent, but suddenly lighted and defined,'—an inherited ideal—something differentiating the beloved from all other women," murmured the reader earnestly. He put the book back upon his stomach, and there was a long silence in the woods, broken by a distant reverberation, short, sharp, suggestive. Piney jumped, like the highly strung, alert young animal that he was.

"Whut wuz it, Mist' Steerin'?"

"Uncle Bernique's blasts, Piney. He's on the trail." The silence remained unbroken for another long period.

"Mist' Steerin'," began Piney at last; he had a long spear of sere grass in his mouth and he chewed at it argumentatively, "d'you think,—I couldn't adzackly tell whut that writin' wuz a-aimin' at, but simlike f'm the way it goes on that ef the sort of thing it makes

aout to happen happens onst, it oughtn't never to happen agin, hmh?" Piney's long drawn notes of rising inflection were musical. "Simlike, ef a man onst finds the right woman they oughtn't never to be no more right women, hmh?"

"There ought not to be, Piney, son."

"Well, but they gen'ly is, hmh?" Bruce straightened out one foot with an impatient kick. Ever since they had fallen into the habit of abstracted talks on this imponderable subject, Piney had seemed able, with a sort of elfin craft, to make Bruce remember Miss Elsie Gossamer's light, fleeting touch upon his life. He had never mentioned Miss Gossamer to Piney in all their mutual experience, yet the tramp-boy was constantly skirmishing up from afar with a generalisation, like a high-held transparency, that illuminated Miss Gossamer's memory for Bruce. Three hypotheses had presented to Bruce in the way of explanation: one, that he himself was possessed by a little embarrassed consciousness that he should have had any past at all in view of the present; another, that Miss Sally Madeira had just possibly set Piney on to worry him about Miss Gossamer; and the last, that Piney, divining that a man could hardly reach Bruce's age without some pages of romance behind him, was forever, out of his own perspicacity, trying to make Bruce re-read those pages, so that this new page, that had been turned under the hand of Sally Madeira, might not be written.

"Piney," Bruce answered at last regretfully, "it's a pagan world. Men make mistakes. I think it's largely because they want so much to love that they love somebody, anybody, till the right person comes along."

"Should think they 'ud wait," demurred Piney stubbornly.

"Well, n—o, that's the notion of a man who has met the right person exactly in the beginning; or it's a woman's notion; but it isn't the notion of a man who, with a sense for beauty and sweetness, waits, like a harp for its music, out in the open where beauty and sweetness beat down upon him. Out in the open a man gets blind. Lord!" went on Steering, remembering Miss Gossamer again, and trying to explain her to himself, "how can a man help loving prettiness! That's what a man loves often and always, Piney, prettiness, grace, vivacity—and then once in his life he loves a woman—Hah!" cried Steering, as though he had at last got the best of Miss Gossamer, "that's it—that sounds good."

"Well, d'you think," went on Piney, jerking his spear of grass viciously, "d'you think that a man cand fall in love with a lady rat off, just knowin' her a few weeks?" This was one of Piney's ways of manifesting the jealousy that disquieted him, slurring covertly, and with his lips flickering peculiarly, at Steering's brief acquaintance with Miss Madeira. He was always showing in innumerable ways the hold that Bruce had taken upon his young affections, but he could not help showing, too, the sore spot of his valuation of Steering's regard for Miss Madeira. Though they mentioned Miss Madeira between them only casually, Bruce knew for himself that Piney, in his crude but vehement way, was living through a boy's own high tragedy of love for a woman older than he and beyond his reach, and Piney knew for himself that Steering, in the most perfect flower of his capacity, had attained his destiny as a perfect lover, under circumstances most unpropitious. The

fact that the woman who was the object of the boy's enraptured fancy had levied royal tribute upon the man's love in the same purple-mannered fashion brought boy and man close. Tacitly they recognised that the bond between them was strong enough to bear the weight of Piney's jealousy, and, both watching, they allowed the boy to depend from it, swing on it and strain it just enough to make both conscious that the bond was there.

"You know what I think, Piney," said Steering after a long wait, in which he had been busy remembering the fulness of one moment in the Bank of Canaan. "I think that if she is the right woman a man can fall in love in one minute. And I think that if she is the right woman all eternity will not give him time to fall out of love with her and no sort of hell of bad situations will ever be wide enough to keep his thoughts away from her." Steering spoke with a well-ordered restraint, but a sense of the combination of situations that he himself had come into lent a ringing, protesting resonance to his voice, and Piney forgot to be jealous and flashed him a long, keen look of delight. Steering realised that he sometimes put into words the things that Piney yearned toward and dreamed, but could not express; and he also realised, from the added satisfaction that he got out of his words because of Piney's satisfaction in them, that Piney sometimes enlivened and enriched his own emotions for him. Their romancing made boy and man delicately complementary to each other. Steering had taken Piney's love for the girl who was beyond him as a fine and simple thing, and, taken in that way, it played up to Bruce's love with the rich imageries and colours of youth, and made Bruce younger, quicker for it. Piney, on his side, had a keen, shy consciousness of immaturity and

inexperience that made him attend upon Bruce's outbursts of passion as upon an illumination of what this thing of man's love could be and should be at its biggest and best.

"That's just exactly the truth," maintained Steering earnestly. It was remarkable how earnest he could be on this line of opinion. Miss Elsie Gossamer would have marvelled to hear him. Time was when he had agreed with Miss Gossamer that only people who had known each other a long time, as he and she had, could depend upon their attitude toward each other. The attitude between Miss Gossamer and him had seemed very reliable in those prehistoric days when congeniality of taste, a flower face and the probability of getting through life without much worry on your mind and a good cigar in your mouth had seemed sufficient to him. Things like that seemed pitifully insufficient now. He wheeled about restlessly and considered.

From where he and Piney were they could hear the sound of a steam-drill, thud-thud-thudding into the heart of a distant knob of the Canaan Tigmores. That notion of Carington's and his about getting into the hills had undeniably balled up into the veriest nonsense under the pressure of Crittenton Madeira's control of the Tigmores. Steering pounded on the ground with one fist and clenched his hands tightly about his knees. That was not the worst, and he might as well face the worst. There was also by now the bitterest sort of animosity toward him on Madeira's part. Old Bernique, who was very fond of Miss Madeira and loathed her father, had commented to Steering upon that being Madeira's way with everyone who promised to be too much for him to handle—bah! it made Steering angry to

consider that Madeira should ever have tried to "handle" him. He loosed the clench of his hands about his knees and jumped to his feet. That was not the worst, and he might as well face the worst. Naturally enough the daughter had had to go with the father. That ride across the sunset glory of the Tigmores had been good-bye after all. It had been two weeks since he had stood with her on the spur above Salome Park, and he had seen her twice since; once at the post-office, where she had said, "Good-morning, Mr. Steering"; once on Main Street in front of her father's bank, where she had said, "Good-evening, Mr. Steering."

But for all these things, he was not done with Missouri yet. Even now he was waiting for old Bernique. When Bernique should come they would be off again on a long prospect. Bernique and he had been in the hills for two weeks, skirting the Grierson entail, picking, digging, sniffing for ore by day, sleeping long sleeps on forest leaves, heaped and aromatic, by night. He had that day ridden into Canaan for some clean clothes, and was beating back toward Old Bernique now, having picked up Piney down the river road.

"Well, Piney, son," Steering invaded the rush of his own thoughts ruthlessly, "I expect I ought to be toddling. Going to ride part of the way with me? I think we shall fall in with Uncle Bernique up-stream a mile or so."

"Why, yes," assented Piney, rising; he made a keen calculation of the time by the sun, as he got to his feet; "I'll go a-ways with you. I'd like to see Unc' Bernique—aint seen him simlike fer a long time."

Their horses were tethered in a little glade below

them and they went into the glade as they talked. "We like Uncle Bernique, don't we, Piney?" suggested Steering, relishing Piney's reference to the old Frenchman.

"Best old man in the world," answered Piney, with the soft, sweet shyness, like a girl's, that was always in his voice when he let his affections find expression.

Before this Steering had heard, from old Bernique himself, the short story that had connected the affections of the tramp-boy and the wandering prospector. Piney, Old Bernique had said, was the child of a woman whom he had known in St. Louis in the old days. Old Bernique, who was only middle-aged Bernique then, had lived as a neighbour to the woman, whom he had loved very much. But the woman had married another man, and had gone away to the Southwest. And, later on, Old Bernique had followed. And in these later days, since the woman's death, it had been given him to keep watch and ward over her child, Piney. Piney's parents had not been Italians at all, so Old Bernique told Steering, just plain, everyday Americans, from up "at that St. Louis," quite poor and always on the move. The father had been known throughout the country-side as a "blame' good fiddler" and the mother had been, oh a vair' wonderful woman, if one could believe Old Bernique. But there was no Italian blood in Piney. His feeling for Italy had to be explained in another way. It was the great sweet note of poetry, music and beauty, of that far country, vibrating across the years and the miles, taken up as a memory in the Missouri hills by Old Bernique and, through him, reaching a Missouri boy's heart, all tuned and pitched for it. That was all there was to Piney's story.

It was only a fragment.

Reaching their horses in the glade, Steering and Piney mounted and started up the river road. "Can't you come with us for the rest of the week, son?" asked Bruce, as they journeyed.

"Nope. Goin' trampin' by myse'f." It was Piney's habit to disappear for days, gipsy that he was. Perhaps the habit was growing upon him a little of late. He had no abiding place; sometimes he referred to one hill shanty, sometimes to another, as home; but the home-feeling with him was at its fullest and strongest when he was "trampin'." Ostensibly his vocation was that of a travelling farm-hand, but it was all ostentation. Piney would not work. Not while the pony could carry him from hospitable farm-house to hospitable farm-house. He was a knight of the saddle, the uncrowned king of the woods, and Bruce, riding along beside him now, regarding him, enjoying him, would not have exchanged comradeship with the boy's simple, high-tuned relish of life for comradeship with kings.

"Miss Madeira is going to Europe, I hear, Piney," adventured Steering.

"Yass." Piney said nothing more for some time. He looked very thoughtful. "Y'see," he went on after a bit, "I'm a-thinkin' abaout ridin' off—some'ere—over the Ridge,—bein' gone fer a long time."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Steering. He very well knew what was taking Piney away. It was hard on him that the boy's plan for absence should pile up on Sally Madeira's plan, but he could understand that it would be harder on the boy to stay in the Tigmores with the inspiration of the Tigmores hushed and

gone.

"Not thinking of going to Italy yet, Piney?" It had come to be an accepted joke with them, that penchant of Piney's for Italy. The boy was willing to laugh about it, but his eyes always sobered dreamily in the end, and invariably he wound up with, "but I'm a-goin', all righty, an' don't you fergit it." He did now. "But y'see, whilst I'm a-waitin' I git kinda tired the hills, Mist' Steerin'," he complained, trying to explain how it was with him without telling anything. "Lots er times I go off an' don't come back fer a long time." Not till Miss Madeira comes home, Bruce added out of his own intuition. "Git sorta tired the hills," repeated Piney stubbornly.

"Do they stop talking to you, the hills and the woods and the quiet?"

"Yass, they do, sometimes, when I'm pestered—not as I pester much," he laughed and broke off suddenly in his laughter, with a little sobbing shake in his breath, and passed on ahead of Steering, who looked away from him up the bridle road that cut into the Canaan Tigmores.

"There comes Uncle Bernique!" cried Steering then, glad of a chance to divert Piney. Gazing toward Bernique welcomingly, he was diverted himself. The old man made no answer to the shouts that Piney and Steering sent out to him. He peered straight toward them, through them, his eyes dry and brilliant. He seemed hardly able to sit on his horse, because of a sort of enervating restlessness; he paid no attention whatever to his bridle; both of his hands were in the pockets of the tattered old coat that covered his body.

"Hi there, Pard!" hallooed Piney, with a boy's rich assurance that recognises neither class nor age.

"Found!" the old man tried to speak, but made a dry, clicking sound instead. He took his hands from his pockets and held up in each hand a lump of mineral earth. As he came toward them in that way, both hands upheld, the wild fever light in his eyes, his thin body electrified with a strange new vitality, to Steering, who saw all at once what it meant, his movement was that of the last full strain of the miner's epic. "Found! Found!" he repeated, as though the sound was blessed, and he held up the rocks, as though the sight was heaven. When they reached him, trembling by now themselves, they had to help him from his horse and quiet and rest him by the roadside before he could tell his tale. Waiting nervously, Bruce took the nuggets and regarded them; beautiful specimens, one stratum opaque, and seaming on to that stratum another, reddish and glinting, like the spiked fire of gold; and on that stratum another, grey and silver-faceted.

"Pretty splendid," cried Steering, and sat down suddenly and weakly. It was not to be forgotten that Old Bernique had emerged from the bridle-path in the Canaan Tigmores.

"When did you make the find, Uncle Bernique?" he asked hoarsely.

"Thees minute," control was coming back to the old man, he raised his head from Piney's shoulder and leaned toward Bruce—"only thees minute! And for twenty year I have known that it must be here, the ore, lead and zinc, in the gr-r-eat quantity! For twenty year! And just thees minute have I found it!" At the wailing sound of time lost, life lost, in

Bernique's voice, long lines of ghostly, bent-backed miners, with ghostly, unavailing picks and shovels, seemed to defile down the bridle-path from the Canaan Tigmores in historic illustration, conjured up by the hypnosis of the old man's words.

"The troub' has been," went on Bernique feverishly, "that we have not looked for the ore in that place where the ore is——"

"That's always the troub'," muttered Piney. He had got his composure back and he seemed now rather good-naturedly contemptuous. Piney's was not a nature to accommodate itself to the exaltation of an ore find.

"The mother lode runs through the Canaan Tigmores," went on Bernique hurriedly, "of that I am now convince', but it comes to the surface,—it comes to the surface,—ah, God above! I expire with it,—let us go to Choke Gulch, and I will show you where it comes to the surface!"

He was insistent, his breath had come back to him, and they let him have his way, following him up the bridle-path into the long shadow of the Canaan Tigmores. On the top of the first bluff they tied their horses again and took a foot trail where the bluff, having rolled back a mile from the river, tumbled precipitately into a deep yawning gully. From the timbered eminence the prospect below was as dank and gloomy as a paleolithic fern forest. Sodden, mossy, and almost impenetrable, the hill split and dropped into Choke Gulch. From far down within the black and tangled fastnesses came the solemn ripple of slow-running water. A veil of weird loneliness hung over the cavernous place and the air that shivered up to the three was cool and laden with

damp, sweet odours. Old Bernique began to descend. As they proceeded, the old man's sense of something stupendous impressed itself more and more upon his companions. Farther on down, the solemn quiet of the Gulch became unbearable, but no one spoke. Little sunlight penetrated the dense curtain of brown and red leaves overhead, and what little flickered through had an electric brightness against the dead brown of the leaf-carpeted ground and the grey and hoary tree-trunks. Every bird that came to the tree-tops sang once, but it was only when he discovered his mistake, lifted his wings and careened away gladly into the upper light.

"Whayee!" Piney found a shivering voice at last, "ef I never git rich till I come down into an ugly hole fer riches I'll be mighty pore all my days." Bruce smiled absently at the boy's susceptibility, but threw a reassuring arm about his shoulder. He smiled again when presently Piney drew away. That was Piney's habit, as affectionate in instinct as a kitten, and as timid of manifestation as a wild doe.

Old Bernique called his little party to a halt at the bottommost dip of the Gulch, where a deep, clear and rock-bound spring wound murmurously over a rocky bed. Two red spots came out in the old man's cheeks, his eyes began fairly to flame again, his breath came in wheezy gasps, and his old face pinched up sharp and sensitive as a pointer's nose. He pointed to the débris of shattered rock about the spring. "The wataire fell over a cap-rock here," he said brusquely, the nervous constriction of his throat making it hard for him to say anything. "The strata underneath were soft and had been worn away by the wataire. I put a duck-nest of dynamite in there this morning,—and—see—there!"

Anybody could see; the zinc and lead ores were disseminated, rich and warm, in the loose rocks of the out-cropping. "It's a vein thirty inches thick and it runs,—it runs str-r-aight through the Canaan Tigmores,—sometimes sinking many feet from the surface,—but always there,—I am vair' sure of that, —str-r-aight through the Canaan Tigmores——" The old man's breath began to jerk with a sick, sobbing sound.

"Well,"—Steering was not so unaccustomed a miner by now but what the sight there in the Gulch had its effect upon him,—"Well," he said gingerly, "if you are right, Uncle Bernique, if the face doesn't cut blind, why, Mr. Crittenton Madeira and old Grierson have a good thing, haven't they?"

"Urg-h-h!" Old Bernique made a gnashing sound and leaned his head listeningly. The thud of the stream-drill reached them faintly from its place afar in the Canaan Tigmores. "They come fas'!" he said mournfully.

"Wisht I wuz aouter this," interrupted Piney, shivering.

"I have been track' thees mother lode,"—began old Bernique again, his feverish gaze again seeking out Bruce,—"I think,"—he stopped and fell to musing, —"What you gawn do, Mistaire Steering," he queried suddenly, with his weary old head twisted to one side, "what you gawn do about thees?"

"Lord, Uncle Bernique, I can't do anything. You might do something for yourself. You might sell your rights of discovery, might not you?"

"Non! Non! There is othaire thing,—there is a most

good possibilitee,—thees mother lode, Mistaire Steering, it come out,—I think it come out somewhere, eh?—Mistaire Steering, have you got leetle mawney?"

"That's exactly how much, Uncle Bernique, a little."

"Mistaire Steering, eef you got leetle mawney to buy leetle land, I think I know good land to buy."

"I have told you all along to consider my money your money, Uncle Bernique."

"We must be vair' quiet about all thees, Mistaire Steering,—Piney, you compr-r-ehend that we tr-r-us' you, as I have always tr-r-us' you, absolutement! We must be vair' quiet. Thees leetle piece land run down close to the rivaire, below Poetical, at those Sowfoot Crossing, and eet ees not vair' good land for the farming——"

Thud! Thud! The old man caught his temples with both hands. "I am 'most craze' by that steam-drill," he whispered. "Eet come so close to our secret. Let us get away. That sound cr-r-aze me. Found! Found! Vair' large lode, Mistaire Steering.—Sacré! The sound of that steam-drill is to me the most worse thing. That lode run through and come out by the rivaire, eef I am not mistake', Mistaire Steering. I go to buy that land to-night. You go back with Piney, please sair. Eef you come with me, you excite the question and the price. To me it will be sold without question. I am eccentrique, they say. You return to Canaan and have your mawney ready for me, Mistaire Steering. That bat Grierson, Mistaire Steering! When I think ——"

Old Bernique was still throwing out riches of

castigation at Grierson, Madeira, himself, fate, still half incoherent, when the three friends at last got back to their horses, and separated. Down at the foot of the bluff again, Steering, a little sore-headed with the ache of anticipation, hope, doubt, sat his horse in Piney's company and watched the old man ride off up the river unattended. Steering felt excited and exalted himself, but the old Frenchman was really, as he said, "craze'." Piney was the only sensible one left. Piney was not at all enthused and stayed very quiet until he parted with Bruce some distance out from Canaan. Bruce went on back to town to wait for Old Bernique at the hotel.

Piney took the path that led up to the bluff behind Madeira Place. As he came through the Madeira grounds Crittenton Madeira came out of the house and stood on the back porch, regarding him quizzically. Piney had a peculiar, poorly hidden dislike of Madeira that, taken with the boy's charm of personality, more or less amused the Canaan capitalist.

"Where have you been, young man?"

"In the woods."

"Look here, learning anything when you are out with that man Steering?"

"Yep."

"What, for instance?"

"Not to talk."

Madeira laughed carelessly. "You go and get Miss Madeira to sing, young Impudence," he said. "I'd just as soon hear the tenor, too. I am going to rest,"—he

sighed deeply,—"I'm going to try to rest out here in the garden. I'd like some music."

Madeira went to the garden and stretched out on a bench, the smile that he had given Piney staying on his face, crinkling in automatically with the grievous strain that was about his eyes and mouth in these days. After a little he closed his eyes softly, enjoyingly. From the library came the carolling sweetness of Piney's tenor. And by and by, following it, soaring up with it, the glorious fulness of Salome Madeira's velvety soprano.

Bruce, far down the river road, heard, too.

Chapter Twelve

THE COLOSSUS OF CANAAN

After Crittenton Madeira had organised the Canaan Mining and Development Company the *Canaan Call* sent him in one leaping, exultant paragraph out of his position as "our esteemed fellow townsman" into a position of far more classic significance by naming him the "Colossus of Canaan." Madeira was a man of lightning-like execution of a plan, once he had got hold of his plan, and Bruce Steering, sharpened by circumstances into a consideration of every chance about him and even beyond him, had brought Madeira the plan from far away New York. Throwing his immense energies toward the prospect of ore in the Canaan Tigmores, bringing forward every dollar

of his fortunes,—as usual not so large as they were accredited with being,—to finance his new projects, Madeira had accomplished wonders within an incredibly short time. There were those, unacquainted with the contents of an envelope in Madeira's vest pocket, who marvelled that a sharp man should let his projects be entangled with entailed property, but for the most part Canaanites were too accustomed to follow where Madeira led to marvel, or to ask foolish questions. Even for those so inclined Madeira had good answers. On the one side, he could show, from the progress already made, that there must be such a great quantity of ore in the Canaan Tigmores that it would be possible to take fortunes out of them during old Grierson's possession of the hills, even though the old man lived but a few years. On the other side he could show that it was not in the Canaan Tigmores alone that he was pushing the search for ore, but in the outlying land that had passed into his control as well. It was true that he had put a steam-drill into the Canaan Tigmores, but it was equally true that he had put steam-drills up the Di at two or three points far beyond the Tigmores. He made it as plain as day that the operations of the Canaan Mining and Development Company would extend all over that section, and that the Company's chances could not be taken away even by the death of Grierson. And he made it equally and cheerfully plain that Grierson would not die.

Out on the streets of Canaan, among the puppets who danced at his touch upon the strings, Madeira never faltered in his exposition of the Company's affairs and enterprises, and in the Company's offices behind the Bank of Canaan, his direction was steady, resourceful and comforting. He could build up

potential profits for the investing Canaanites and build down potential failure in a manner so satisfying that the Canaanites gladly gave him their money and fondly hung upon him.

It was Mr. Quin Beasley, that conclusive reasoner, who said, "Simlike ef you talk to Crit fer abaout th'ee bats of your eye he cand show you that ef innybody,—don't keer who,—would putt, wall say,—wall, don't keer haow much you say,—as much as tin thousand,—in the Comp'ny an' leave it slumber fer say—wall, don't keer haow long you say,—as much as fo', five months,—it 'ud be wuth,—be wuth,—wall, I don't keer to over-fetch, but I reckin f'm whut Crit says, th'aint no tellin' whut it *would* be wuth."

And it was the *Canaan Call* that endorsed Mr. Madeira in that emphatic editorial, which is herewith reproduced, just as it was doled out relentlessly to the few Canaan sulkers, under the caption of

"IT WILL BE DRAMATIC, BY GOSH!

"When Crit Madeira, the Colossus of Canaan, accomplishes what he surely shall accomplish, when the roar of mill machinery begins to reverberate through the hills of the future Joplin, arousing the vast energies and resources of We-all, Pewee and Big Wheat, let us be generous. If there was a sponge, kicker, shirk or drone, let us cover his selfishness with the mantle of charity. Leave him under the beating light of progress to wrestle with whatever remnant of a conscience he

> may happen to have. If he can stand by and coolly watch us work our gizzards out for the common good, and then reach out to share the fruits of our sacrifices, energies and enterprise, without a qualm, we can remember that there are many things in this world worth far more than money, one of which is that sense of having done our neighbour's share as well as our own. It will be enough for us to watch when, bewildered by the lusty life and growth and the maze of new-made streets of the future city, the laggard stands debating with that other self, that genius that has kept him what he is. Fancy his striking attitude, thumbs in arm-pits and eyes rolling up to some tall spire, crying out to his other self, 'Thou canst not say I helped do this! Shake not thy towseled locks at me!'—By gosh, it will be dramatic!"[2]

Within a month after Bruce Steering had entered the portals of Missouri, Madeira had put his first steam-drill into the hills. Within two more weeks he had put in another. It took him less time to do the things that other men think about and talk about and put off than any man Steering had ever known. One day, not so very long after old Bernique's find in Choke Gulch, word had gone over Canaan like an eagle's scream that ore had been struck in the Canaan Tigmores. Old Bernique had wrung his hands, and Steering had gone grimly back to a little up-river

shack, at Redbud, below Sowfoot Crossing, where he was spending a great deal of his time these later days.

As the winter broke, Madeira's ability to seize the pivotal point on which to turn theory into practice wrought so surely and so swiftly as to be inexplicable to anyone unaware of the fever that drove him on. His first face of ore had cut blind, but he only put two more drills to work, and in the early spring one of the drills struck ore again, a small face, but ore. They had not found the big lode yet, but every indication was that much to the good. The *Canaan Call* became so jubilant over the second find that even the sulkers lost sight of the fact that the find was on entailed property. Confidence in Madeira went to high pitch, a supreme tension that a touch might snap.

All Canaan was waking up in these days, all Tigmore County was nervous. Town and county were in a pleased, tortured, ante-boom consciousness that, first thing you know, there would be a new Canaan. Some new streets were laid out; a number of people bought chenille portières; and though Crittenton Madeira quietly drew his money out of the Grange, for other and weightier uses, the Grange secured new capital elsewhere and flourished mightily. For farmers from We-all Prairie and Pewee and Big Wheat Valley, cotton raisers from the "Upper Bottom" and corn and cattle men from the "Lower Bottom" came into Canaan "to trade," and filled the aisles of the Grange, gossiping, getting information about the ore developments, then crossing swiftly and determinedly to Madeira's bank to leave their money with the president of the Canaan Mining and Development Company.

Out at his house, in his office, in the garden, on horseback, on foot, Madeira kept his daughter Sally near him. He watched his daughter almost constantly, just for the satisfaction of seeing her. As the girl went about her household duties, or walked in the garden with her long, supple stride, or rode the high-tempered horses from the stable, or drove with him, the fine glow on her face, her magnificent health and honesty and strength radiating from her, she was, for Madeira, a continual justification.

"Catch me taking anything away from a girl like that to give it to a damn Yankee like Steering," he would tell himself over and over. "Won't she do the most good with it? It'll be hers soon. Won't she do the most good? Answer me that, now."

So much for the outside where Madeira lived in the world of realities and met the various demands of each day's relations capably and coolly. Inside his private office behind the bank, at his desk, he lived in another world, a world where shadow became substance, possibility became actuality and fear made facts out of fancy.

At night, after Canaan had put its lights out and had lapsed into the shroud-like stillness of a country town's sleep, Madeira was there, with his ghost, in his office,—figuring, figuring. On the roll-top of his desk he kept a letter spread out in front of him. It always happened that he took that letter out of his vest pocket for the purpose of destroying it, and it always happened that when he got up, far into the night, he picked the letter up and replaced it in his pocket. If the words of the letter had been seared across eternity with the red-hot iron of fate they could not have been more indestructible.

Besides the letter, Madeira always had on the desk maps, geological surveys, time estimates. Von Moltke never figured half so carefully nor on half so many shaky hypotheses as did Madeira in his office during these nights. He came to know, through awful, blood-sweating hours, that with so much blasting, so much pick-and-shovel work, allowing for so many back-sets from water and blind rock, so many shifts of men could progress to certain points, in so many days. He sometimes realised that all this was unnecessary; that it was aging him and crazing him; that he could put his work through on the Tigmores long before word of old Grierson's death would, by any unfortuitous accident, leak into Canaan, if it ever got there; that he would never have to resort to the subways that he was figuring on to steal the ore out of the Canaan Tigmores; that all this ceaseless, merciless calculation was but the reaction of a conscience, stalking, gaunt and lunatic, through the charnel-house of its own experience. But for all that he had to go on crossing bridges that he was never to reach, covering black tracks that he was never to make. Often at his desk there, his mind became strangely obtunded and he babbled vapidly; his big face pinched up till it seemed lean and grey, and he pitched forward, face down, upon the desk.

FOOTNOTE:

[2] The author acknowledges a conspicuous indebtedness to a Southwestern weekly for this editorial.

Chapter Thirteen

MISS SALLY MADEIRA'S SWEETHEART

Miss Sally Madeira, trying to make her way down Main Street one Saturday afternoon, in the early spring of the year 1900, had to go very slowly because of the country people in front of the Grange. Occasionally some of the farm-wives called to her shily. The road was noisy and dusty with the passing of mule-teams, buggies, buckboards, riders on horseback. Out of the continuous rattle a child's voice piped shrilly. The owner of the voice was a little girl who wore a hat with a bunch of cherries on it. She stood up in the bed of a farm-waggon and screamed at Miss Madeira, who at once made her way to the edge of the side-walk of broken bricks and waited for the little girl's waggon to come in to the curb. The waggon was full of children, but Miss Madeira was somehow able to call them all by name.

"He gimme fifty cents!" was what the cherry-hat little girl said immediately, with some genius for steering conversation toward the things that interested her.

"You rich thing!" cried Miss Madeira, and then foolishly, and unnecessarily, inquired, "who is he?"

"Yo' sweetheart."

Miss Madeira lowered her voice in such a suggestive manner that when the little girl spoke again her voice was lowered, too.

"When did you see him?" asked Miss Madeira.

"See him ev' day. I cand go daown to Sowfoot by myse'f. He's sick." Miss Madeira looked quickly at

some of the older members of the family in the waggon. They were a hill farm family from Sowfoot Crossing neighbourhood. "Yep, he's been sick,—with the malary simlike," was what the older members had to say upon the subject. Miss Madeira quickly left the subject and talked about the corn crop and the price of chickens for a little while, then presently went on down Main Street toward her father's bank, where her black horses were hitched.

Far down Main Street, in front of one of the frame houses that edged the street on either side, some children were enjoying a bonfire of dead leaves, front doors were opening and women were coming out to watch the fire; and, by their interest-lit eyes and by what they called to each other across the slumberous afternoon air, were showing that they were skilled in getting diversion out of smaller things than bonfires. It was the neighbourhood of Canaan's biggest and best. The doors that had opened had shown glimpses of the finest three-ply carpets in all Tigmore County, and though the women who had come out on the porches had grammatical peculiarities of their own, they were distinctly unapologetic and assured. You could easily imagine them laughing, with a consciousness of advantage, at the other grades of grammar and carpets in Canaan.

"Smells real good, don't it?" called one who was comfortable and portly, and who had her apron wrapped about her hands, "always makes me feel that spring's came when the rakin' and burnin' begin."

"Mrs. Pringle told me that they had some big fires aout toward the Ridge las' night. Burned the rakin' aout to Madeira Place. I missed that. D'you see it? I

mighta seen it just as well's not from my back porch, tew!" shrilled another woman, in whose words a well-defined jealousy was patent, the jealousy of the person whose life is too small for her to afford to miss any of it.

"Yes, you oughta saw it," chimed in another. "Cert'n'y was no little-small flame. I could see Sally movin' araoun' in the flare. Had that tramp-boy taggin' abaout with her. I declare, if he di'n' look like a gipsy!"

The neighbourly throng was at this moment augmented by the appearance of two ladies who fluttered out on the porch of a rose-trellised cottage, like small, proud pouter pigeons. They were the Misses Marion, twin-sisters, quite inseparable, and, because their minds had run in exactly the same groove for all of their lives and because they were of about equal mental readiness, apt to get the same impression at exactly the same time, and apt to attempt expression in exactly the same breath.

Occasionally this was trying, both to the Misses Marion and to their hearers, and it was particularly trying when the two now called simultaneously from the rose-embowered porch to the women in the neighbouring yards:

"Have you heard——"

"Have you heard——"

Miss Shelley Marion turned to Miss Blair Marion with delicate courtesy: "Continue, sister," she said, just as Miss Blair said, "Sister, continue."

"Have we heard what, for goodness' sake?" snapped one of the would-be hearers, breaking in rawly upon

the soft waves of the hand and the imploring taps with which each of the two gentlewomen was endeavouring to make way for the other.

"I continued last time, sister."

"I think not, Blair; I think I did. Proceed."

"Have you heard the news?" Miss Blair having yielded with great self-rebuke to Miss Shelley, the question gurgled liquidly from yard to yard, like a small twisting brook.

The two women whose yards adjoined the Misses Marions' yard came down to the separating fences and leaned their arms on the paling rails waitingly; the third woman moved up to the corner of her yard which was nearest the Misses Marion. She was the woman who had deplored missing the hill fires, and there was a resolute look on her face.

"Talk loud, Miss Blair," she said commandingly. But before Miss Blair could get her mouth open to talk at all there was the sound of horses' hoofs from up toward Court House Square, and a light vehicle, drawn by two powerful Kentucky blacks, rolled into view.

"Lawk, it's Sally Madeira!" cried Miss Blair impulsively, and then looked immediately convicted, for Miss Shelley had got only as far as "Lawk!"

When the slender equipage, with its spirited, long-tailed horses, and its high springy seat, with the erect young figure on it, had gone by, the women looked at each other, with pursed lips and knowing eyes.

"There, aint I been sayin'," cried the fat one, "she's a-lookin' peaked!"

Then somebody noticed that the Misses Marion were in the throes of another spasm of courtesy, and, reminded by that of the critical juncture where Miss Blair had left off a few minutes before, one of the women called to her:

"What news was that, Miss Blair? Say, you! Miss Blair! What news?"

"Why," said Miss Blair, having finally effected some sort of affectionate compromise with Miss Shelley, "why, these news,—they say that that N'York man *is* Sally Madeira's sweetheart, tew!"

"Lan' alive! I've heard that m'self!" said Mrs. Beasley, the wife of the Grange storekeeper. She had heard no such thing, but Mrs. Beasley was an idealist of no mean order, and she at once got a feeling about the matter that was little short of knowledge, and went on with headlong impetus, "I've heard that m'self. Yes, he's her sweetheart."

"The men up to the Grange said not, at first."

"Men never know."

Meantime, out beyond the town, Miss Madeira had circled around to the river road, and, coming up behind Madeira Place, passed it at a smart clip.

Farther along, the river road left the river to bend through Poetical on its little plateau, and the gait at which Miss Madeira went through Poetical was disturbing to the geese and hogs there. East of Poetical she got back to the river. It was very still along the Di. She could hear her own heart beating.

Once it occurred to her that life would have been much simpler if she had gone to Europe the past fall, as Miss Elsie Gossamer had insisted upon her doing. Once she murmured, "It would be all right if he would only tell me,—I can't do anything until he tells me—what *can* a woman do until he tells her!" On ahead of her she could see a little shack perched up the bluff, and in front of the shack, on a log that served for a bench, a man sat, making something out of something. His hands were busy.

He got to his feet a little unsteadily as she came toward him. It seemed to him that there was a blue veil across his eyes, but he winked it away quickly enough, shook the ache out of his shoulders, put down the shoe-string that he was making out of a squirrel's skin, and stood in front of the shack waiting, with his hat in his hand. He had on a mud-stained corduroy hunting suit and big buckskin leggings, and there was a week's growth of beard on his face. He looked not unlike a highly civilised bear, and he felt his looks. She did not seem to see him until she was close upon him.

"Oh," she cried, "I was not expecting to find you here," and when that sounded a little bald, added quickly, "I heard that you were sick and I thought it likely that you were up in Canaan."

"Oh, no, I am not sick," he told her, hastening down to the trap, the delicious excitement that possessed him well restrained, "and since you have found me here, won't you get out and have some,—well, let me see,—some coffee and bacon? And I can make a lovely corn-dodger. Also I have some kind of good stuff in a can, though I can't get the can open. Do please stop and dine." Steering, sick, gaunt, gay,

mocking at hardship, hope deferred and far-reaching disappointment, was at his best. Her eyes slipped away from his as he pressed his invitation. Then she laughed softly, with the little shake of her laughter when a notion appealed to her happily.

"I'm going to accept," she said, "I'll cook things and you can eat them."

"I'll make a sacred duty of my part," he promised gravely; he was lifting her from the buggy; her hands were on his shoulders; for a little delirious minute she was in his arms; he could not keep his hands from closing about her sweet body lingeringly as he lifted her; her eyes were looking into his, her face was coming down close to his; he had a wild fleeting hallucination that she——

"Don't imagine," she began, and his senses came back to him and he set her down, "don't imagine that I can't cook. Where's your range?"

He showed her a scooped-out place in the side of the bluff. "There are two bricks in the back, two on each side and two on the top," he explained with some pride.

"I am afraid you have brought foolish habits of luxury out of the East with you," was her reply. She made him build her a fire and bring some water and meal and then she took things entirely out of his hands.

"It's a picnic," she said. Her gown she had folded back and pinned up until a little tangle of silk and lace frou-froued beneath it bewilderingly; her sleeves she had rolled back until the creamy tan of her round slim arms showed to the elbow; her hat she had

taken off, and the sun danced in the gold lustres of her hair. She was all aglow; she belonged out in the fresh air and the sunlight like this; she could stand it; that dusky-gold radiance played from her like a burnish. Steering sat down on the log bench and watched her, hypnotised by her into haunting fancies of something, somebody, somewhere. She was one of those beings whose rich magnetism of face and personality brings them close to you, not only for the present, but also for the past, one of those people who are apt to make you feel that you have known them before, forever, a feeling that flowers into elusive fragrances, suggestions, reminiscences, flown on the first stir of a thought to catch them.

"What a long time since I even so much as saw you," he sighed happily, happy because here before him in the body again she was exactly the girl he remembered, exactly the girl he had dreamed of all winter. "What have you done all winter?" he asked.

"Nursed Father. He has stayed at home with me a good deal. It was a lovely winter, wasn't it?"

Steering thought of the long, quiet, lonely days, the weeks, the months during which he had seen her only to bow to her. Then he thought of the calendar inside his office. Every day that he had seen her on his rare trips up river to Canaan was marked with an imitation of the rising sun. There were only eight rising suns for the whole winter. Then he thought how the memory of those sun days had stayed with him and made him feel blessed. Then he answered, "Yes, it has been lovely,—nice, open weather. I have been out on the Di in a skiff almost every day." He did not add that every day his journey had been to the upper water near Madeira Place; but he might

have.

"Once or twice I have seen you." She did not add that she had stood at her window, behind a partly drawn blind, gazing after him through slow tears; but she might have. "What a very long time indeed since we saw each other,—and talked to each other!"

"Oh, about two thousand years," he answered with careful calculation.

"I wonder if you remember the ride across country into the sunset?"

Should he ever forget it? Then the spring wind blew up to them from off the Di with a coolish, dampening touch. "What do you hear from Elsie?" he asked, heeding the wind's touch.

"She is in love. What do you hear from Mr. Carington?"

"That same. It seems very right and fit. Carington and Elsie are well mated. The wedding will happen in July. Carry wants me to come back to him for it."

She was stirring the meal and water together briskly, with her back half turned to him. At his words she stopped in her work and put her hand up to her heart with her strange little pushing gesture, as though she must push her heart down. "And you will go, I suppose?"

"No, I shan't go."

She took her hand down and laughed lightly. He could not hear the joyful relief in the laugh, but she could. "My, but you have become attached to Redbud, haven't you? Hasn't it been lonely for you here?"

"Well, the cherry hat little girl up above Sowfoot has been a comfort. And then I've studied a heap."

"Studied what?"

"Mizzourah!"

"Redbud and Sowfoot are good teachers," she laughed; then her face sobered quickly, "but I don't think you should stay down here by the river when you are ill," she said. Her sweet, wistful interest was balsamic to him. For a moment he tried to look sicker than he was.

"Oh, it's nothing, nothing," he protested in a gone voice.

"Yes, it is something," she had the corn-dodgers going over a slow fire and was dubiously regarding a second skillet that he had brought her. "Don't you ever try water for it?" she interrupted herself to ask. He admitted that he was not as careful of the skillet as he should be, and she went back to her first anxiety, "Why do you stay here when you are ill?"

"Oh, I'm not ill a bit, not really." He had forgotten to be ill. Regarding her dreamily from his bench he was wishing that the moment could be eternity, that he could be hungry forever and that forever she could make corn-dodgers for him.

"I think you are sick. *Something* is the matter with you?"

"Yes," he changed his position a little on the bench, "something is the matter with me."

"Well, why don't you go on and say what?" She put the skillet on some of the coals and the coffee-pot on the skillet, being too busy to look around at him.

"Oh!"—he wanted to tell her, but his pride saved him in time. She was in rich in gold and land and cattle, in ore, too now; and he? He didn't know how he was going to fill his meal sack the next time it was empty. That was where matters had got with him. "I think I won't go on and say what, after all; let's not bother. Let's just be happy for the minute. That's something I have learned out here in Missouri, just to be happy when you get the chance, minute by minute, no matter what sort of hours are to come after. This, now, is so much more than I had hoped for. I hadn't really hoped to see you again before ——"

"Before what?"

"Well, a fellow can't go on like this forever, can he? I expect I am going to cut all this."

"*What!* And leave Uncle Bernique?"

"Uncle Bernique can hold the claim alone, you know. And I'm wasting hope and energy here. What's the use in staying longer?"

She was very busy with the bacon now and he did not see her face. There was a wild quiver on it, of grief, fright, dismay.

"You ought not to leave Uncle Bernique and Piney, I am sure of that," she said at last earnestly, almost commandingly.

"Heigh-ho! I think Bernique is getting restless, too. He will be drifting off soon on that tidal wave of ore fever that comes over him; Piney has been gone for a great while. It's pretty lonely. It's getting on my nerves. Of course I shouldn't pet my nerves if I had any hope about the run here, but I haven't. I think

that the work we have carried on is fairly conclusive."

"But wait a minute, didn't you buy this land? Didn't you put some money in it?"

Steering laughed blithely. "Not much," he said. The thing that made him laugh was the fact that though it was not much it was all that he had, and it was, in a way, amusing to consider how he was to get away from Canaan. Looking at Sally Madeira, who suggested luxury nonchalantly, trouble about ways and means was bound to be untimely and laughable. Indeed, looking at Sally Madeira all troubles were more or less laughable.

"You haven't gone to Europe?" he reminded her, after he had drunk her health in the coffee.

"No! I haven't gone."

"Are you going?"

"Not unless Father's health improves."

"Isn't he well?"

"No," her face clouded sadly, "he is over-working. Oh, you don't know how sorry I am," she began, and faltered.

"Sorry? for him?"

"Yes. And for you. And for m— and because things have come around like this."

"Let's not be sorry just now," said Steering. "Won't you, please, talk about glad things now. It's so pleasant to have you here." Since she was unhappy, he took charge of her unhappiness, and would not be

serious any longer about anything. When she brought him his corn-dodger on a shingle and more coffee in a tin dipper, he was foolish with happiness, kept his own spirits high and overcame every little disposition to seriousness on her part until their picnic had to come to an end, and she must be starting back down the river road.

"Do you feel like doing something for me?" she asked, her hand in his, as she made ready to go.

"Something? Everything."

"Then wait just as long as you can, will you?"

"Yes, I will, gladly, since you ask it, just as long as I can." Steering's voice sang as he answered.

She would not let him accompany her on her homeward journey, but went on down the river road alone, and Steering returned to the shack, and carefully measured the amount left in his meal sack, and carefully counted the money in his wallet. There was just about enough in the sack to last ten days, flanked by the potatoes and the bacon, and there was so little in the wallet that any kind of emotion about it seemed a waste. Still, he did not appear to appreciate the extremity of the situation as yet. His face was all lit up and the sound of his own voice pleased him.

"I will wait, just as long as I can," he repeated at the end of his calculations, "and I can till the meal gives out."

Chapter Fourteen

WHEN THE MEAL GAVE OUT

Steering sat on his bunk in his shack with his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, and his eyes upon an empty bag that hung from the bough of a weeping-willow tree. He had just written Carington to explain that it could not be said that he had conquered Missouri, and that he was leaving next day for Colorado to try his luck at gold on the Cripple Creek circuit. He had not explained to Carington that he would walk the greater part of the way. By some strange perversity of pride a man never does explain a thing of that kind to anybody, least of all to Carington, best friend and close sympathiser.

Arrangements for his journey were about complete. Before he had left New York he had turned everything into ready cash that could be so turned, so that even when he first reached Missouri his personal effects had not made travel a burden to him. During the past weeks all the balance of his belongings that possessed any negotiability whatsoever had been turned into meal. And his meal sack was empty! By no sort of foreknowledge can a man accustomed to enough money for current expenses,—a goodly budget as recognised by the class of which Steering was an exemplar,—imagine, during his easy circumstances, how he would feel if ever things should so go against him that he would be left staring into an empty meal sack. Steering felt an awkward incompetence to realise the case now. He had looked at the sack at close range, patted it, as though to mollify its consequences to him, pooh-

poohed it, taken it philosophically, taken it smilingly, but he had been all the time unable to get his eyes off it, even though he had finally carried it down to the river's edge and hung it upon the bough of the weeping willow tree. His eyes were still upon it, he was still regarding it at long range, through the shack door, getting the foreshorten of it, getting the middle distance, getting the perspective, utterly unable to stop his ceaseless staring into the emptiness of it, stop wondering what next and how next.

He got up and went to the door of the shack and looked out. By and by it occurred to him that the case would be much worse if there were anyone besides himself concerned. All the vague fleeting sympathies that had ever been aroused within him by newspaper stories of starving families, the nearest he had ever come to the actuality of starving families, quivered and stirred within him. The first thing he knew, he was feeling infinitely relieved that he had no starving family. He had a sensitive and active imagination, and, as he pictured the hungry little children that he did not have, tears of gratitude came into his eyes, and he blew gay kisses to those airy little folks.

It was glorious weather. Wild spring flowers were abundant, and there were cheerful whiskings among the trees where the birds and squirrels were busy again. The young shoots strained with the urge of the sap, making little popping noises. Steering started now and again and held his head waitingly. He had been watching and hoping for Piney for days, and was on the alert. Every noise, however, resolved itself into the noise of bird, squirrel, or sapling. There was never the voice nor the footfall of the

human. Once that very afternoon, he had been so sure that he had heard Piney's pony up on the bluff that he had gone up there searchingly, joyfully. But except for a little scatter, that he took to be the lift of a covey of quail somewhere off in the Gulch bushes, not a sound or sign came up to the bluff. Steering mourned for Piney. If the tramp-boy had not gone away, things might have been more bearable. But the lad's jealousy and his love for Steering were in battle royal now, and Piney kept far from his hero, on the misty hills. Uncle Bernique was off on the hills, too, almost all the time; at the moment of this present crisis Bernique had been away for days. It was the merciless loneliness of the effort there at Redbud that had been most effective in dulling Steering's endurance. If he had been less lonely he might have devised ways of standing Missouri yet longer. Up at Dade farm they kept telling him, when he went up there for one of his visits to the little girl with the cherries on her hat, that he had "malary." It did not seem to him a very able diagnosis, but, as he had admitted to Miss Madeira, something was the matter with him, and it had now become his notion that the quicker he got out of Missouri the quicker he would be cured of the something. He was all ready to commence his treatment; he had corn-dodgers for supper that night, and for breakfast next morning, and with the morning sun he meant to travel on. The only reason that he did not start now, this minute, was because—well, she had come up the river road about this hour once, and he was waiting. Circumstanced as he was now, with the only three people whom he could count as friends in Missouri almost always away from him, life had come to mean little but this feverish, alert waiting. He went out and sat down by the shivering Di for his very last wait for

any of the three.

It was there that old Bernique came upon him. Steering was shivering a little, too.

"Dieu! You have the malaria!" was the Frenchman's greeting.

"Go 'long, I have no such thing; I'm only as lonely as the devil." Steering got up and shook hands with the old man with so much energy that Bernique made a grimace of pain. "Come up here and talk," cried Steering, his eagerness to hear the sound of a human and friendly voice making him overlook the excitement under which Bernique laboured. He tied Bernique's horse to a bush and drew the old man up the bluff. "Where have you been this time? Where is Piney? Hello! what's the matter with you anyhow? struck another lode?"

Old Bernique spread out his palms avertingly. "You go fas'," he protested. "Wait, I beg. I have again had those exper-r-ience that so much disturb me. But no, I have not found anothaire lode, though I have been on the hills vair' long time. Thees day I come a-r-round by the way of Canaan. At the pos'-office I am stop'." The old man was talking now with his eyes burning into Steering's eyes, an expression of horror flattening his face; he held the four fingers of one lean hand pressed to his mouth, so that his words came out inarticulate and broken, though they seemed to scorch his throat like balls of fire. "At the pos'-office one say to me, 'Here is lettaire for you!' I take the lettaire and read.... Now, I ask you, Mistaire Steering, to take it and read." Bernique drew forth a letter from his pocket and thrust it into Steering's hand with a finely dramatic gesture. He had the appreciation of his race for climax.

The letter, Steering saw at once, was in the same gnarled handwriting as that letter which Crittenton Madeira had given him to read on the first day of his arrival in Canaan, and its contents made evident the same gnarled personality that had been made evident by that first letter.

"Read it aloud," said Bernique, and Steering read:

"'Deep Canyon, Colorado, September 23rd, 1899,' hey! what's the matter with the date, where's the slow-boy been?"

"Read on, Mistaire Steering," said Bernique grimly. But Steering looked at the post-mark on the envelope in his hand before he read on.

"Post-mark's dated April 23rd, 1900—why——"

"Read on!" cried old Bernique. "It is explain'," and Steering read on.

"'My dear Placide:—You and I were good friends in the days that we spent in prospecting over the Canaan hills, and, even though I incurred your displeasure when I abandoned the hills, I am depending upon the old friendship to influence you to do a last friendly act for me. It is not necessary for me to acquaint you with the detail of humiliations and persecutions to which I have been subjected by the man of whom I was once so foolish as to borrow money, any more than it is necessary for me to condone to you the desire that has developed within me to make him bite the dust, even as he has made me bite it. I am not remorseless in this. I gave him his chance to escape me, but, quite as I anticipated, he has fallen into the trap that I set for him; else would you not be reading this letter to-day, nearly a

year after it was written.

"'Look close now, friend Placide. Nearly a year prior to the date that you will get this, that is to say on the 23rd of last September, the same day that I write this letter to you, I wrote Crittenton Madeira that I should be dead when my letter reached him, dead under an assumed name, in a strange land. It was the God's truth. I was dead when the letter reached him. You are reading a letter from the dead now, friend Placide.'" Steering stopped for a moment with a little shiver, but Bernique urged him on, and he read again —"'Placide, in that letter to Madeira were my instructions to turn over the Canaan Tigmores to Bruce Steering, because, I being dead, the hills were due to pass on to my heir. Well, Placide, has Madeira done that? Has he carried out my instructions? Has he fulfilled his trust? Has Steering possession of the Canaan Tigmores?

"'Like the thief that he is, Madeira has not done his part. Had he done it, you would not be reading this letter to-day. I wrote it and placed it with the clerk of Snow Mountain County, the county in which I died, to be mailed to you on the 23rd of April, 1900, only in case no inquiry had ever come from Madeira to verify my death. No inquiry has ever come! So the clerk of the county, who is my executor, mails this letter to you. This letter, Placide, is to attest that for seven months Crittenton Madeira has been in unlawful possession of the Canaan Tigmores, defrauding my heir and holding land under my name after being advised of my death and of the means of verifying the advice. There are now, in the keeping of the clerk of Snow Mountain County, two sealed envelopes, to be delivered by him, the one to you, the one to Crittenton Madeira. Madeira's has never

been called for. See that yours is. In it you will find the credentials of my identity, my sworn statements, and the documents that prove my late encumbency of the entail. I am buried in the pauper's field in the cemetery of Deep Canyon. The stone slab that I have directed to be put over me bears the inscription, "James Gray, Died September 23, 1899."

"'Get your proofs together, Placide, and carry them to the defrauded heir. I have not forgotten the letters that I received from him, nor his young eagerness to get at the land that is now his and that should have been his nearly a year ago. Put the proofs before him. And I pray that he may be quick and sure to deal out judgment and retribution. He is my kinsman. Let him for me, as well as for himself, wield the lash that I put in his hands.

"'Do these things for me, friend Placide, and believe that even in the grave, I remain,

"'Very gratefully yours,

"'BRUCE GRIERSON.'"

The letter fell from Steering's hand and fluttered to the ground, while he sat with his hands hanging limply from his knees for a moment. "Grierson is dead! Grierson is dead!" he repeated. The funereal words rang through his ears like a grand Praise-God. He knew that he ought to be sorry and that he was inexpressibly glad, not because the grim old man was dead—dead, with his malevolence reaching out toward Madeira, spinning and twisting like a great cobweb snare from the grave—but because of what must now happen, because vistas of wonderful beauty were opening up through the long shadows of the Tigmores, because if the end had come to the

house of Grierson, beginning had come to the house of Steering. Life, big, splendid, stretched out before him. Old Bernique had risen and was pacing the banks of the Di nervously. Steering, too, got to his feet. Going down to Bernique, he took the old man's hands in his. Neither heard a little rustle up the bluff in the leafy bushes.

"Oh, Uncle Bernique!" said Steering, and stopped because of the wild sound of his own voice. He saw that it would be dangerous for him to try to talk with his mind in that high tremulous whirl. The old man clung to him, silent, too, for a teeming moment.

"Now God above, why not Crit Madeira tell you that tr-r-ue way of things?" shouted Bernique at last fiercely. "Why not?"

The two men looked into each other's eyes, Steering bearing up the old man, who clutched him feverishly. When the Frenchman began to talk again his teeth were chattering. "Why not? Hein? Because he t'ief. But God above! We got those proof! Dead for mont's. And Madeira know it! The Teegmores are yours for mont's, Mistaire Steering! And Madeira know it! We put that fine man where he belong. We jail him! He t'ief! We r-r-uin him, as he would r-r-uin you!"

"Ruin him!" Bruce said the words over measuredly. "We can do it easily. Everything he has has gone into the company that is getting its chief encouragement out of the Tigmores. It will be easy to ruin him."

"Yes, God above, it will be easy! We r-r-ruin him. We do that thing quick and glad." Bernique slid his lean hands up Steering's arms and held to him.

"Wait! Wait!" The Frenchman's convulsive anger received a sudden check by the sound of Steering's voice. He clung more tightly to Steering's arms as he looked into Steering's face, then shrank back helplessly.

"My God!" said the old man, "I forgot!"

"Yes," answered Steering, no hesitation in his voice. "Yes, you forgot *her*. We must not do that, you know."

After a while they sat down and talked it over at length from beginning to end, and then back again, from end to beginning. Up in the Tigmores Crit Madeira's drills beat and bore at the heart of the earth, deeper, deeper; by the Redbud shack, the two men, on the ground, bore into Madeira's trickery, deeper, deeper. By the light of that torch from the Rockies, they followed the twisting trail all the way from inception to finish. The tortuous, underhand curve of it now and then looked like the self-deceptive work of lunatic cunning. As they talked about it, they talked too earnestly for the little whisking movements in the growth up the bluff to reach their ears.

"At least," cried old Bernique at last, "at least the Teegmores are yours! At last! At last!"

At last! At last! Steering's eyes were travelling the long tumbling Tigmore line. "If they are," he said in that musing way he had developed within the last quarter of an hour, "if I take the Tigmores now, Uncle Bernique, I'll pull Madeira's house about him. That company of his is not so secure that it could stand a blow at its head. If I take the Tigmores,— Uncle Bernique, listen a minute," he was pleading,

"she has been used to much all her life. I can't take her father's fortune away from him. Don't you see that? I can't do anything. You understand?" he was commanding. Bernique jumped to his feet.

"God above, you mean——" The thought snapped in the old man's brain, the words stuck in his throat.

"I mean that we must leave things as they are. I can't ruin her father. That's all I mean!"

Bernique doubled up both fists. "I'll see him damn' before he shall keep those Teegmores! I can r-ruin him!" But Bruce caught the old man's arm in a grip that hurt. When Bernique spoke again it was to say breathlessly, "You take the Teegmores, Mistaire Steering, and protect Madeira's fortune. You can do that easy."

"I know. It looks easy. But think back a little. Madeira is sure to fight. Grierson's death occurred months ago under an assumed name. To prove that he died we must prove when he died, where he died and who he was. To prove all that is to let the light in upon dark places. I hardly see how the light can be let in, Uncle Bernique, without cutting Madeira out sharp and keen as a rascal. Madeira would never allow,—at this juncture, he couldn't allow us to establish my claim to the Tigmores on my word and yours. He has done unwise, crazy things already. He would fight us. I know it, you know it. We could win. But where would our victory leave him, Uncle Bernique? Ah, you see?"

The old man was shaking from head to foot. He clung close to Steering. "Oh, my God!" he moaned, "I will not let this thing be."

"Yes, you will let it be! It is my affair even more than it is yours. You will do as I say about it, Uncle Bernique. Here and now, you shall swear this oath with me: I by my love for Sally Madeira, you by your love for Piney's young mother, that never, so help us God, shall one or the other of us carry word of these matters to anyone, least of all to Crittenton Madeira or his daughter Salome!"

The old man's breath came gustily, his cheeks flamed, the hectic burned like fire in his shrivelled cheeks. He loosed his clinging hold and tried to shake Bruce off.

"Swear," Bruce decreed again, his powerful grip on the old man, his eyes half shut, "I by my love for Sally Madeira, you by your love for Piney's young mother! Swear!" He held up his own right hand, and Bernique said brokenly:

"God above, I swear!" The old man was crying. Neither heard the swish in the bluff growth, neither saw the brave light in the two eyes that peered through the bushes.

"Why now, everything is all right," cried Bruce. "Are you going on into Canaan to-night, or shall you sleep here with me? I think that I shall take the skiff now and go up toward Madeira Place, then drift back down-stream, a sort of good-bye journey. What will you do meantime?"

Old Bernique hardly knew. He was sore, bewildered. He thought he might spend the night on the hills, then again he might come back to the shack for the night. He wanted to go into Choke Gulch first thing.

Bruce pushed away in the skiff through the swollen

Di. Bernique got his horse and started off, climbing the yellow road up the bluff slowly, heading toward Choke Gulch. As he neared the top, he lifted his head and saw Piney and the pony outlined on the bald summit of the bluff. The boy made a trumpet of his hands and shouted to Bernique.

"Hurry! For God's sake! So I cand talk to you!" Piney's was a reckless and impassioned young figure, cut out against the sky sharply, on a pony that danced like a dervish.

The old man nodded, with a flash of pleasure at the sight of the boy, then let his head fall wearily upon his breast. He felt very powerless. When he reached Piney's side he put out his hand and held to the boy's hand as though he found its warmth and firmness sustaining.

"Let's git into the timber," said Piney, and they rode forward a little way quite silent. "I don' want Mist' Steerin' to look back an' see me here," the boy explained. In the growth where the hills began to roll down toward Choke Gulch, Piney stopped short, with a detaining hand upon Bernique's bridle.

"I hearn," he said. His young face was so grey and solemn that Bernique regarded him questioningly. "I was simlike half asleep up there in the bushes. Whend you begand to tell your story, I waked up an' I listened. I hearn all you said an' all he said. Ev'thing. Unc' Bernique, you cayn't tell nobody! Mist' Steerin', he cayn't tell nobody!—but Me!" the boy was breathing harder, his face was growing greyer, "Unc' Bernique, I'm f'm the hills, an' not like them," the blood began suddenly to come back to his lips; he raised in his stirrups and slashed at the branches of a black-jack tree with his riding switch, as though

he cut a vow across the air, high up. "But what I can, I will!" he cried, and clenched his hands proudly. "Fer her an'—an' fer him!" he choked. Whatever he meant to do, his young passion for Salome Madeira and his young affection for Steering, his hero, leaped out on his face whitely. "She loves him, too, Unc' Bernique!" he cried in a final, broken crescendo.

Old Bernique stared at the boy in exaltation. "God above!" he shouted, "if that is it, it begins to be hope in my old breast! All may come right yet, and no oaths broken!"

"None broke!" cried Piney. "One more took! I'm a-ridin' saouth, to Madeira Place, Unc' Bernique;" he gathered up the reins from his pony's neck,—"I'm a-goin' to Miss Sally Madeira to tell her abaout Mist' Steerin';" he was blind with hot, young tears. "She'll do the rat thing whend she knows, Unc' Bernique;" he had put the pony about,—"I'll see you on the hills in the mornin'!" he was gone down the yellow road like a winged Mercury.

On the hills behind him, Old Bernique, comprehending and envying, locked his hands on his saddle-horn in a vehement tension. His lips moved, and what he said seemed to float out after the flying figure of the boy like a benediction.

Chapter Fifteen

A MISTAKE SOMEWHERE

The afternoon of that day was golden out at Madeira Place. Through the kitchen windows the sun streamed in, in broad, unfretted bands of light. Just beyond the window the crab-apple trees and the quince trees and the pear trees and the damson trees were rioting in blossom.

The kitchen itself was a place to take comfort in. By a table sat fat black Chloe, seeding raisins, when she was not asleep. Before another table stood Sally Madeira, her brown, round arms bared to the elbow, flapping cake batter with a wooden paddle. With her sense of eternal fitness the girl was a fine housekeeper as easily as she was a sweet singer and a good horsewoman. She had kept the past beautifully intact in the old brick-floored room. Overhead hung strings of red peppers, streaks of scarlet on the heavy black rafters. Little white sacks of dried things, peas and beans and apples, depended from hooks. Against the walls were quaint old tin safes, their doors gone, their shelves covered with dark blue crockery. The tin and brass stuff shone brightly. On a low shelf stood a great piggin of water, a fat yellow drinking gourd sticking out of it. The whole picture was a kitchen pastel, delicately toned, a kitchen of the long ago, Sally Madeira fitting into it exquisitely, re-establishing the stately domesticity of an old régime by her fine adaptability and appreciation.

Chloe brought the raisins over to Miss Madeira at last, and let them drop slowly into the crock, watching carefully for stray bits of stem.

"Simlike nowadays ef he teef go agin a hardness spile he tas' fuh de cake," she said anxiously.

"We do have to humour his poor appetite, don't we,

Chloe? Never mind, he'll be better soon, I hope."

"Whut madder wid he, Miss Sally, innyhow, Honey?"

"Just overwork, I think, Chloe. Works all the time; in the office now, bent double over his desk."

The darky shuffled restlessly on her flat feet. "Simlike to me he pester'd. I d'n know. Miss Sally, who else gwine eat dishyer cake tumorreh, Honey?"

"I'm not expecting any company at all, Chloe. Father isn't really well enough to care to talk to people."

"Miss Honey, simlike de house gittin' mighty lonesome nowadays. Taint like it uster be."

"Do you feel it, Chloe? Do you know I've grown to like it better quiet." The girl's voice was wistful, she let the batter trickle recklessly while she gazed off out of the window. Then she sighed and began to beat the batter very hard.

"Miss Honey-love?"

"Yes, Chloe."

"That tha' Mist' Steerin' aint ben come no mo' fuh gre't while, air he?"

"No."

"Samson he say he gwine ride down by Redbud this evenin'."

"Well, Chloe, I'm sorry that I can't send an invitation to your favourite, but I'm afraid Father isn't well enough—oh, there's Piney, Chloe!"

The boy had come up the bridle-path slowly, his mission weighting him and making him languid. At

the latticed porch he jumped to the ground, turned the pony's nose into the grass and came into the kitchen.

"Howdy, Miss Sally. Hi, Chloe. Cand I have a drink, please'm, Miss Sally?"

He drank long and greedily from the gourd dipper, so long that Sally Madeira turned to him laughingly at last. "Well, Piney, son, got Texas fever?" she began, and then, being quick of wit, saw at once that the boy's pallor, his thirst, his absorption meant something especial. "I'm glad you came, Piney," she went on capably, and gave the batter paddle to Chloe. "I've been wanting to see you all day to have a little talk with you. Let's go out under the crab-apple tree."

She took off the great apron and led the way from the kitchen, the boy following her with dragging feet. Under the crab-apple tree she drew him down upon a bench beside her. The orchard blooms shut them in close. The stillness was unbroken save for the warm sibilant droning of the insect life in the air. The shadows on the orchard grass were like lace-work.

"Now, Piney, lad," began Miss Madeira at once, "what's the trouble?" Her voice sounded strong, maternal, to Piney, who had been wondering how he was to tell her, calling himself a fool for having undertaken to tell her, reminding himself that he couldn't for the life of him begin. Here, suddenly, the girl was making it easier for him, showing him that the way to begin was to begin.

"I wouldn' tell you the trouble ef I could he'p it, Miss Sally," he said pleadingly, his hands shut about his

knees, his eyes beseeching as a fawn's. "Ef they wuz inny way to make things come aout rat lessen I told, I wouldn' tell. But I don' see no way." It was easier to talk up to the thing and around the thing, than to get directly into it.

"Is it your own trouble, Piney?" she asked, helping again.

"No'm."

"Whose trouble, Piney?"

"Mist' Steerin's, Miss Sally."

"Ah!" She leaned nearer Piney. "Tell me quickly, dearie," she said, "is he ill?"

"Well'm, it's your trouble, too, Miss Sally."

"Yes, surely, Piney, go on, go on!"

"And your father's trouble, Miss Sally."

"Something about the Tigmores, I suspect, then, Piney, go on."

"Yes'm, abaout the hills." Then, fortunately for both, his youth made up in directness what it lacked in finesse. "It's this-a-way, Miss Sally," he blurted savagely, "Ole Bruce Grierson is dead an' Mist' Steerin' owns the Tigmores."

Her face shone with joy. "But, Piney, boy, where's the trouble in that? When did Mr. Grierson die? That's not trouble even for him, Piney. He was a weary old man. When did he die?"

"Las' September, Miss Sally," answered the boy gravely.

"Last September? *Last Septem*—— Why, where's the word been all this while, Piney? Why hasn't my father known?"

"He—he has known, Miss Sally. Miss Sally, it was this-a-way, simlike: that ole man writtend Mist' Madeira he wuz goin' to die an' he tol' Mist' Madeira to give the hills to Mist' Steerin'. But I don't reckon your father believed ole Grierson, Miss Sally."

The girl on the bench under the crab-apple tree was beginning to draw herself up proudly. "There is some mistake somewhere, I can see that, Piney, dear. Where did you learn all this?"

"Wy, Miss Sally," cried the boy, a great, painful reluctance in his voice, "that old varmint Grierson writtend another letter to Unc' Bernique an' had a man hold it up an' not mail it till las' week. Then he lay daown an' died. An' here las' week the letter to Unc' Bernique was mailed, aouter ole Grierson's grave like—an' Unc Bernique he's jes got it, an' it tells him that ole Grierson died las' September an' that he writtend your father to say so."

"I don't understand that, Piney. Mr. Grierson died last September and has written letters since he died, you are getting it all mixed, aren't you?"

Very slowly and laboriously Piney told then what he knew, told it over and over until she had comprehended it, whether she believed it or not. When the boy had finished she was leaning back on the bench, dull and pale.

"But it isn't true," she said, with white lips. "And Mr. Steering, Piney,—has Uncle Bernique told Mr. Steering this fantastic tale?"

"Yes'm."

"And what did Mr. Steering say and do, Piney?"

The memory of what Steering had said and done seemed to come on to Piney like an inspiration. "Miss Sally, he set his jaw an' he ketched Unc' Bernique by the arm an' helt him an' made him swear like this, 'You by your love for Piney's young mother, I by my love for Salome Madeira, that never, s'help us God, will you or I carry word of this to Crittenton Madeira and his daughter Salome'—sumpin like that, Miss Sally. I don' adzackly remember the words."

The dulness had all gone out of her eyes, the colour beat back into her cheeks. She had forgotten Crittenton Madeira. "'I by my love for Salome'—are you sure, Piney?"

"I'm sure, Miss Sally. An' so I thought as wuzn't nobody else to tell you, I'd tell you. I d'n know as I done rat," the boy's face was all a-quiver, too, as he looked up at the girl on the misty heights of her passion. His self-abnegation, his young heroism made him for the moment as finely luminous as she was. Sally Madeira took his head between her hands and gazed into his eyes tenderly, caressingly, and there was in her touch something large and sweet and tender that comforted and soothed the boy while it made his heart leap within him.

"Ah, Darling," she said, "how bitter-sweet it is, this loving! But be patient. Some day it will all seem right." She took her hands away from him and stood up straightly.

"I'm going in to my father now, Piney. There's a mistake somewhere. You wait for me here until I get

it all explained. Wait here till I come back."

She went off toward the house then, a fragrant shower of orchard blossoms falling upon her and shutting her away from the boy's eyes as she went.

Chapter Sixteen

MADEIRA'S PEACE

Sally Madeira crept to the door of her father's study and listened. In the pallid light that was stealing up to her from Piney's story her face was shadowy, with hurtful doubt, ashamed fear, and she steadied herself by the wall with hands that shook. She had stopped to put on a white gown that her father loved and her lustrous hair lay banded closely, a halo, about her shapely head. Her face looked like a saint's.

"It is not so much to save Bruce Steering's inheritance for him, it's to save my father for myself." Her lips moved stiffly as she whispered. "My old dream-father, my idol, I cannot live without him!" As she opened the door and passed in, she felt as though he had been away on a long journey and that this might be the hour of his return.

Inside Madeira sat at his desk, Bruce Grierson's letter spread out before him, the ghost of his torture. At night he heard it move, with a spectral rustling, under his pillow where he kept it. By day it writhed, a small, hot thing, over his heart. He had tried again

and again to destroy it. Everything else that had got in his way he had destroyed, but this he had not destroyed. He was trying to destroy it now, but he returned it to his pocket, unable to destroy it, ruled by it, when he raised his eyes and saw his daughter before him. She had not been without foresight even in her shame and sorrow. She had taken great pains to gown herself especially for him, especially to establish her influence over him. He held out his arms to her lovingly. In the sickness of soul and body now upon him he had turned more and more to her; she had to be with him almost constantly.

"You look so sweet," he said. "You are sweetest like this. I love you like this." Despite the relief that came when with her, he talked nervously, his mouth jerking. His hands wandered to her head, and he held her face and peered at her. "Sally, I wish I was a girl like you," he said, "girls look so peaceful. Business tangles a man,—just to have peace, Sally."

"It will come Father, it will come. Father, Piney rode in from the hills just now, and he brought me news."

He could feel the tremor of her lithe body against his breast, and he moved quickly and uneasily, suspecting danger. His dreams had so long been terror-fraught that he was all nerves and suspicion. "News of what, Sally?" The whitest, deadest voice, for so simple a question; on his face the most awful strain! She drew back on his knee and looked at him steadily, lovingly, and his eyes dropped and his hands began to drum on the chair-arm.

"Father," she said, "Piney has heard a long story. He was hid on the bluff-side, up at Redbud, and he heard a letter read at the shack there, a dead man's letter."

"A dead—oh, God bless you—wait—Sally, did that move? eh, what foolishness is this, a dead man's letter? What dead man? eh? what dead man?"

"Bruce Grierson, father."

"They lie! They lie! Let them prove it!"

"Ah, that was what I told Piney, Father! I knew, I knew that you could explain it. And you can now, and you will, Father?" She was really beseeching him to rise up against her and the accusation against him, rise up in a great storm of indignation; she was praying that he would do that, expecting that he would, so firm were her convictions of his nobility. She drew back a little, to give him room, as it were; her hands fell upon his knee, and she leaned from him the better to see him, her face aglow with her fierce hope, her big belief, while she waited for that storm, that outraged denial, that tremendous vindication. And while she waited, erect, hopeful, eager, he shrank in upon himself; crumpled and wrinkled in upon himself until he looked weazened and small.

"Let them prove it, let them," a whining mumble.

"They will not, Father." She was leaning toward him again, her face quiet as the first frightened dawn of a grey morning; her voice was beaten and sad, but she went on dauntlessly. "The letter was to Uncle Bernique, Father. And Bruce Steering read it. And though it told him that he was the owner of the Tigmores, he and Uncle Bernique will not prove it." For a moment she paused, and then, with some new purpose on her face, she began again, "There was an oath to make all sure that they would not prove it. Listen, Father, these were the words of the oath:

'Swear, I by my love for Salome Madeira, you by your love for Piney's young mother, that never, so help us God, shall one or the other of us carry word of this thing to anyone, least of all to Crittenton Madeira and his daughter, Salome!'"

"Ah-h-h!" The words of the oath seemed to bring Madeira his first brief respite in a long torture. The girl shivered at such relief, then went on resolutely:

"So now you see, Father, everything is safe. I have come to let you know that everything is safe, that you need not be troubled, sleeping or waking, any more about this thing. You may keep the Tigmores as long as you will," the light of her eyes beat upon him like a rain of pure gold, "you may be as rich as you like, Father. Mr. Steering is to leave here; you need never be dispossessed during your lifetime. It is all safe and sure. Uncle Bernique will not tell, Mr. Steering will not tell, Piney will not tell, I shall make no sign." The tragic strength of her endeavour to make him see that it was all with him; to leave it all to him; if so be that the better part were to be chosen, to make him choose it for himself; re-establish himself in so much as was possible for her loving regard, was in the hot clasp of the young hand that she laid upon him, the sweet earnestness of the face that leaned toward him. It was a strange fight, a battle of vast forces. He began to shake like an aspen leaf, but his eyes lifted to hers presently, to drink from them as from a fountain of life. His lips moved.

"Just to have peace," he gasped hoarsely, "take that letter—take it from my pocket—send it to Steering."

"Father!" It was the cry of victory well won. "Father! I am so glad!" over and over again. "All my life, Father, I have expected the good thing to happen

because of you, the right thing, I am so glad!" Laughing, crying, she kissed him, took the letter and stole to the door. "Piney shall be its bearer," she cried as she went, "Piney shall take it; he will say the very best that there is to say!"

She ran out, and the door swung quickly behind her, so that she did not see that he put his hand over his empty pocket and held his heart with a great relief; then pitched forward suddenly, his head on the desk, a look of late-come, profound peace on his face.

Chapter Seventeen

JUST A BOY

It was not quite dark when Piney left Miss Sally Madeira in the garden back of Madeira Place, the Grierson letter in the inside band of his hat. The pretty spring day had closed in grey and sullen, and a high wind tore through the bluffs. Up in Canaan people were going anxiously to their windows, and trying to decide what was about to happen out there in that whirl of dust and wind and high-spattering rain. Down at Madeira Place it was grey, windy, and damp, but the rain had not come on yet. Piney went down the bridle-path from the Madeira grounds and out into the river road at a gallop, and the pony sped on like mad toward the little shack down stream at Redbud. All the way Piney kept a watch on the Di, which was sucking and booming. Long before he

reached Redbud the boy had begun to hope that Steering had not put through his evening programme to that last number of going back to Redbud by water, after the haunting visit to the waters about Madeira Place. The river seemed very black and restless with the long urge of the spring rains within her. Now and again, he called loudly, prompted by some fear, he knew not what:

"Steerin'! Steerin'! Steerin'!"

He reached Redbud by and by, to find no Steering, only the little empty shack. The lean bunks, swaddled roughly in their bedding, looked strangely deserted. Piney sat down on Steering's bunk for a moment to take breath. Once his hand patted the covers, and once he stooped down and clung to the pillow.

"Oh, may God bless you! For I love him, my dear Piney! Bless you, for I love him, my dear Piney!" he kept saying over and over, with an hysterical quaver in his voice, his lips pale and moving constantly. "Oh, may God bless you, for I love him, my dear Piney!" It was what Salome Madeira had said to him when he had left her, a white, angelic figure, swaying a little toward him, there in the garden back of Madeira Place. "Oh, may God—for I love him!"

The odour of Bruce's cigars hung about the shack. Piney jumped up suddenly and went down close to the Di to wait and think. At Redbud the river seemed fiercer than farther up-stream. One of the two skiffs that rocked there usually was there now, swashing up and down in the current, but the other was gone. There was a strong eddy in front of Redbud. The bar, Singing Sand, and the Deerlick Rocks choked up the bed of the river and made the water dash

vehemently through a narrow channel. Logs went by and branches of trees. Piney paced the bank in a rising fever of impatience, calling, calling; but for a long time his call was without avail, the wind roared so defeatingly in the trees. Close into Deerlick Rocks drifted a great fleet of logs.

"Mist' Steerin'! Mist' Steerin'!" The sweet tenor broke again and again, but again and again Piney pitched a vast effort into it. And, at last, an answer:

"Halloo! That you, Uncle Bernique? I've been——" The voice was wind-blown, and slipped weakly away.

"It's ME! Where are you?" No answer. "Where are you? Hi! Is that you by the bar? Lif' your han' above the drif'-wood! Cayn't you lif' your han'?"

A hand shot up from the back of a log that was well hidden by other flotsam, then fell back weakly. "Ay, here I am! Dead-beat, Piney——" A long roar of wind shut off the rest.

"Hold to your log. I'm a-comin'! comin'! comin'!" The tenor rang and rang across the water as Piney loosed the skiff from its moorings, took up the oars, and pushed out into the Di. With the force in that whirl of black water he realised that there was danger; the skiff trembled and leaped as though some wrathful Ægir caught and shook it. It was well for Steering that Piney was strong, with the strength of the hills and the woods and the quiet.

As he went on some sort of revulsion seized Piney. He stopped calling and began to mutter blackly. "Wisht you'd draown! Wisht you uz dead! Wish-to-hell, you never needa been!"

The log, with its one lamed passenger was drifting slowly in toward Singing Sand, and Piney came on, hard after it. When he reached it at last, Steering was quite speechless, but, with the boy's help, scrambled into the skiff, where he slipped like water to the bottom, the fight back being altogether Piney's.

When Steering could talk at all, he gasped out how it had happened. He had gone much farther up than Madeira Place, and had not put his boat about until two hours before; and then only because a great many logs were coming down, and he decided that he did not want to be caught among them when night should drop. He had got along all right until a log smashed into his skiff and overturned him. He thought he must have struck his head as he went over. At any rate, things were very mixed for a good while. He knew that he had swum for what seemed to be hours, and that then he had realised that he was numb, and had used what little strength he had left to climb upon another log that passed him. He had been on it ever since, flat out, an eternity.

Piney was getting the skiff inshore fast, as Steering talked, and once Steering stopped to admire his youthful vigour. He was a strong man himself, and it was a new sensation to lie weakly admiring strength in somebody else. "Do you know, Piney, I'm dead-beat," he whispered.

"You've had a good deal to stan' in more ways than one to-day," replied Piney.

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

"We're a'most in."

It was only a few minutes later that Piney effected

his landing, and, river-lashed and dripping, both scrambled out and fell on the bank by the Redbud shack. For a little while, even Piney was past any further exertion, but when he could use himself again, he got up agilely, hunted up dry wood and made a roaring fire. The twilight had closed into night now; the rain had shifted with the wind and passed by Redbud. Piney brought a blanket from the shack and wrapped Steering in it. Before the fire, Steering lay with his eyes shut for a time, a smile on his face. "You are precious good to stand by me like this, Piney," he said once. "Where have you been for so long, you stingy nigger? Why have you cut me lately?"

"Well, I—oh, I d'n know adzackly." Piney's voice was flat, his face tragic. He was heaping wood on the fire, and in the yellow flare he looked pale with the exhaustion of his work on the river and the excitement under which he was labouring. During this last half hour that he had been working hard to save Steering, taking care of him, helping him, he had had another revulsion of feeling that had swung him up close to his hero again. But crisis was still following crisis in his emotions.

"Well, you turned up at just the right minute for me, Piney. How did you happen along?"

"Oh, I wuz a-huntin' fer you, I reckon. I wuz sent aout to hunt fer you. I gotta letter fer you,—f'm—f'm Miss Madeira."

Steering opened his drowsy eyes and regarded Piney.

"Yes, I have. I gotta letter fer you. Y'see, Miss Sally, she's found aout sumpin—sumpin that you didn' want her to find aout." The fire leaped and crackled;

Bruce leaned away from its scorch, nearer to Piney. "Y'see, she knows abaout the Tigmores naow," went on Piney steadily. "Unc' Bernique didn' tell her. I told her."

"Piney!" Steering, warm with wrath, turned upon Piney savagely, "You little fool! You brutal little fool!" he cried fiercely. "It's a good thing that you're just a boy, Piney—and you, *you*! profess to love——"

"Mist' Steerin'." Piney had a man's dignity all in a minute. "I didn' ast you fer no leave to tell her, an' I don't ast you fer nothin' naow. But she had to know. I hearn Unc' Bernique tellin' you abaout that Grierson letter. I hearn you read the letter. I hearn you an' Unc' Bernique swear. Then I swore, too. Then I went an' told her. And then she saw her father, an' she leffen it to her father to make things right, an' he's made things right. She told me I wuz to tell you that. She showed him that he was safe to keep the Tigmores if he wanted to keep 'em, but he didn't want to keep 'em. She told me to tell you that. An' she told me to give you this letter." Piney's young body rocked now with a hushed, sobbing fervour; he lifted his peaked hat from his head, took the letter from the inner band, and pushed it into Bruce's hand. "This letter kim to her father a long time ago, and she ast me to ast you to think of her father abaout it gentle as you can—an' I'm a-astin' you to think of him gentle," the lad's voice suddenly rose shrilly, and he jumped to his feet, "an' I'm *a-bustin'* to have you say you won't think of him gentle, er sumpin 'at I cayn't stan' an 'll hit you fer! I'm jesta boy, Mist' Steerin', but good God!"

Bruce got to his feet, too. When he caught Piney's flaming eye at last, they stood and faced each other a

great moment, then Bruce put his hand out.

"Piney," he said, "I wish I were half the man that you are."

"Oh, Mist' Steerin'! Mist' Steerin'!" On Bruce's shoulder, he sobbed like a child until the terrific strain that he had been on for hours slackened, and he could talk again.

"She's waitin' fer you," he said at last. "She's up yonder in the garden, waitin'. She loves you, Mist' Steerin'. Don't you go fergit that, with y'all's pride an' all. She loves you."

"What? What's that you are saying, Piney?"

"She loves you. I know it, Mist' Steerin'. An' I'm a-tellin' ev' durn thing I know!" declared Piney vehemently, with a high-toned, stubborn self-justification in his voice.

"Dog-on you, old man," Bruce said, turning to grip Piney's hand again. He had it in mind to say a great many other things, in the way of appreciation, thanks, enthusiasms, but all he said was "dog-on you, old man, dog-on you," gripping Piney's hand as he said it. "You make yourself comfortable here in the shack to-night, will you, old man, and I'll go on up there. They are in a little trouble over this up there, Piney." Steering tore the Grierson letter to bits as he spoke, and, then, his eyes wet and shining, he found Piney's pony and went to her in the garden.

Piney lay back on the ground beside the fire. The glow fell squarely over his features, relaxed and softened now. He looked very hopefully and comfortingly young. There was a big, shy gratification on his face.

"'Old *man*,'" he muttered once or twice. "'Old *man*.'" A little sob shivered through him. He got up quickly and went into the shack bunk, where he fell asleep at once—because he was so young—and dreamed fine dreams of Italy—because he, too, was fine.

Chapter Eighteen

A PRETTY PRECARIOUSNESS

As Bruce galloped up the river road toward Madeira Place, he found himself so weak with excitement and physical exhaustion, that he had to bow over the saddle-horn and cling there, like an old man. It was a ride to remember. Once he raised his head and looked out into the night. The storm had broken, and high in the quivering heavens the moon shone with a wild, palpitant glory. In the north and east the clouds had gathered with a mighty up-piling, from which the eye sank back affrighted, it towered so near heaven. The trees along the river, the shaking, shimmering river itself, were all shot with light. It was a grand scene, but removed, turbulent, unreal. Steering's strength failed him again, and he fell back over the saddle and hung on. There come times in a man's life, good times as well as bad times, when he can do nothing but hang on. On these dizzying peaks of happiness, Steering scarcely dared let himself look beyond the pony's nose. He was so high up, so near the consummation of—oh—of everything. It would be ridiculously easy to set matters straight now, in

one way or another. She loved him! If that were true, it would make everything else come right. And that was true. Piney had been sure of it, and Piney had just left her. Everything else, all life, could be made to close around that salient, delicate fact like the rose-leaves close around the heart of the rose. Let her father keep the hills; he did not care, if he could have the girl. He did not care about anything, if he could have the girl. And he could have the girl. Thank God for that.

Little by little he began to allow himself a meagre consciousness that he was drawing nearer, nearer! Now, just below the grounds of Madeira Place! Now, up along the bridle-path! Now, at the garden gate!

He leaned over the pony's head, slipped the gate latch, and passed into the garden. Dismounting, he tied the pony, and turned toward the house. Dark, in the shadow of the trees behind it, the house lay very quiet, unlighted, infinitely peaceful. In front of the negro cabin at the side of the house, Bruce could see Samson, his chair tilted against the cabin wall, his pipe in his mouth, his bare feet swinging contentedly. From inside the cabin came the low croon of Samson's fat black wife. Some hens clucked sleepily in the hen-house. With the moonlight disintegrated and softened by the trees, everything up toward the house breathed peace. Out here in the garden, however, where the gold light beat down straightly, there was a sense of waiting, unrest, sweet and tumultuous. Out here in the garden it was glorious, but it was not peaceful. What was it that was responsible for that misty halation of incompleteness, longing? the shaking breath of the wide-lipped roses? the secrets within the bowed slender lilies? the tortured joy of the whole garden

life of fragrance and beauty?

Over by the old vine-covered stump there was a gleam of white, swaying a little, breathing a little, it seemed, and Steering went toward it, strength coming back into his limbs, his head lifting as he came, his arms outheld.

"I hoped that you would come, Mr. Steering. I have been waiting a long time for you," she said, not moving, her eyes meeting his, something in her face, her rigidity, stopping him. Her hands were pale and still on the grey-green of the vines; her face had caught the wild, gold gleam of the moon. "I wanted to tell you myself about that letter, Mr. Steering. I wanted to tell you myself about the Tigmores being yours. I have grown afraid, out here in the dark, that Piney might not have been able to make you understand, might have misled you in some way about—what I said. I was very much excited when I talked to Piney, Mr. Steering, and I am not sure that I made it clear to him that I am very glad indeed that the hills are yours at last; glad because we are—or have been—such good friends, Mr. Steering, glad for that reason—for friendship's sake, and for nothing," her voice wandered, and the beat of her low broad breast was girlishly pitiful, "else, but friend——" she could not go on.

"Ship," suggested Bruce, with a great desire to help her, but very much at sea. Was it to be failure, after all? Had Piney made a vast mistake? This proud, pale woman here—suddenly an awful timidity seized him, but he shook himself out of that brusquely and came on. "*She loves you, don't you go fergit that!*" Piney's admonition piped up to him on a high and tuneful memory. He realised that he was walking a path

through the flower-tangled, pretty precariousness of romance as he came on toward her—potential lovers' quarrels, separation, the irate parent, a girl's pride, her foolish, solemn effort to fight him back for fear that she had led him on too far, a man's uneasy timidity, the complication of their circumstances—the memory of them all made little snares for his feet, as he came on toward her. But he came on, growing bolder as he came, deciding what to do as he came. It was a crisis for romance as he faced her across the old vine-covered stump. He put his hands down on the stump near her hands, and his face caught the gleam of the light overhead, as hers did.

"Piney has just pulled me out of the river," he said in a wan voice, "and it was all I could do to get here. I —I am as shaky as a kitten."

She looked up at him, betrayed into it by his careful conservation of that weakness in his voice, and, seeing how pale he was, her hands stole in under his. "Oh, but I am weak, *and* sick!" he went on, pursuing his advantage mercilessly, his hands closing over hers, while her face leaned toward him, all lit and trembling, "I am weak, but I love you so!"

"Ah—h!" she cried, a shaking, joyful cry, "you ought to have said that long ago, Bruce! Tying my hands all winter! *Now*, it doesn't matter which of us owns the old hills, does it?"

It was there, under the pale, wild light of the moon, with the wide-lipped roses, the slender-bowed lilies, the tremulous fragrance, the delicate unrest, the tortured joy of the garden's life of beauty all around them, that she crept into his arms shyly and radiantly. The trees rustled with low glad music, and the night air seemed full of mystic influences,

blessings, happinesses.

From the quiet house beyond, there drifted toward them the sense of late-come, profound peace.

Chapter Nineteen

WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE

There was a vast turmoil in Canaan. For the matter of that, there was a vast turmoil far out the road toward Poetical, and away across Big Wheat Valley, and all over We-all Prairie. The very air was a-tremble. In Canaan all the stores were closed or closing. Court House Square was full of vehicles that seemed poised at the very moment of departure; people were laughing or talking excitedly, with foolish good-humour, as though they did not know what they were saying, but realised that it made precious little difference whether they knew or not. Children were being lifted into waggons, surreys, buggies. Great hampers were being stowed and re-arranged under the seats of the vehicles, sometimes tied to the single-trees to swing there with solemn, heavy gaiety. Young men, very alert, in red neckties and unbuttoned kid gloves, wheeled and turned recklessly through the streets in light road sulkies, drawn by high-stepping trotters. Dogs trotted about with their tails in the air, sniffing, quivering; there was a warm, cutting smell of harness, axle-grease, horse-flesh. The sun beat down upon it all and into it

till the whole scene hung electrified, etched out in light, a supreme moment on the very top of Canaan's history.

Then a young boy, with a red sash strapped over his right shoulder and under his left arm, cantered up on a pony, pony and boy both tremendously important.

"Piney's marshal er the day," said a big man, laughing indulgently.

"D'you know the Steerin's air sendin' that tramp-scamp to Italy?" called another man with a bewildered, incredulous inflection in his voice.

"Well he cand go fer all me. You couldn' pull me aouter Mizzourah with pothooks these days," declared the big man earnestly. "What's that the tramp-boy's sayin' naow?"

The tramp-boy was making a trumpet of his hands. "All ready!" he shouted, with one of his high, musical yodels, "Le's start!"

The lesser activities of stowing away hampers, locking store doors, wiping children's noses, broadened quickly into a wide concerted movement. Everybody was picking up his reins. Everybody was clucking to his horse. Every horse was starting. Everybody was gone. Canaan was deserted.

A long irregular cavalcade crept out across the country toward Razor Ridge. And as it went it was constantly augmented at the cross-roads by farmers from We-all and Big Wheat and Pewee, until waggons and surreys and buckboards and buggies and horseback riders stretched out endlessly, the balloons of the children, the red neckties of the young men, the gaily flowered hats of the girls

making the spectacle joyous. Then, too, everybody was laughing, everybody was glad about something.

When the cavalcade began to defile past Madeira Place, wild cheers rang out. Samson at the side of the big house, inspanning the Kentucky blacks, took the demonstration to himself with hysterical joy, bowing and gesticulating, doubling over and holding his stomach, while he danced up and down, his white teeth showing, his eyes rolling.

"Hurrah furrum! Hurrah furrum!" came in a great rollicking volume of sound from the road.

"Thass all ri'. Yesseh! Thanky! Thass all ri'. Yasseh! You bet!" yelled Samson up by the house.

A girl in a gauzy black gown and a drooping black hat came out on the front porch of the house and waved to the passing people.

"We'll be along! Yes, we are coming! Yes, we'll hurry!" There were bright tears in the girl's eyes. A man came out of the house and stood behind her, his arm on the door post, his face smiling. She turned to him, the tears in her eyes, the smile on her lips.

"Aren't they pretty splendid?" she cried, a fine enthusiasm on her face as she watched the people, "Look at them! There's something in them! There's the best of all America in them! And they will have their chance now."

For answer the man put his arm about her. "Greatest State in the Union, this Missouri," he said with tremendous conviction. "Where's Uncle Bernique?"

"Gone an hour ago."

"Well then, can't we start, too?"

The same tingle of impatience seemed to reach both at once. They ran back into the house.

The cavalcade wound on up Ridge Road toward the Tigmores. At its far-away end now trotted the Kentucky blacks, drawing a light trap. The man on the box-seat was a big, deep-chested man, long and powerful of forearm. He held the exuberant, snorting blacks easily with one hand. The woman beside him was a good mate for him, firmly knit, strong in her movements. Under her black hat the burnish of her hair and skin made her look gold-dusted.

They were high up Razor Ridge. Below the Ridge, Big Wheat Valley and We-all Prairie stretched away from the Tigmore foot-hills in broad strips of harvest gold. The sky was brilliantly blue; even Choke Gulch's glooms were flecked with light. The scrub-oak, the dog-wood, the chinca-pin, the walnut, the hickory, sumach and sassafras trailed over the Tigmores like a giant green veil. On beyond the Tigmores the pale wide Di ran slowly, goldenly, a molten river.

As the procession went on up the hill the people called from one waggon to another, their tongues set going by the passing of Madeira Place and the advent of the Kentucky blacks into the procession.

"They say Miss Sally, Miz Steerin', that is, feels mighty broke up because her paw didn' live to see all that's a-goin' on this day."

"Yass, reckin's haow that's true."

"Howdy, Miz Dade, haow you come on?"

"Huccome you to come, Asa?"

"They say the Steerin's air goin' away to-night. Goin' back East on a visit."

"Yass, that's true. The tramp-boy is goin' along. D'you know that? Yass, goin' to N'York, on his way to Italy. The Steerin's air sendin' him."

"Well, they cand all go whur they please, I wouldn' leave Mizzourah these days, not me. Wy, ev' farm in the Tigmores is liable to turn into a zinc mine any night. Say, do you know air the Steerin's to be long gone?"

"Nope, not so long. Unc' Bernique's to run things while they away."

"Oh, well, then."

The cavalcade's forerunners had now reached the top of the Tigmore Uplift. They began to deploy into the woods overhanging Choke Gulch. A trail had been cut, the trees were down until it was possible to get through with the vehicles, though it was rough going. At the end of the newly made road a great clearing opened up to the on-coming people. The teams were driven over to a thicket and the people spilled out of the vehicles and swarmed over the clearing. One by one, then two by two, in their hurry, the teams came in, until everybody had arrived. The Kentucky blacks came last. Then there was a waiting, a restraint, the people looked at one another. Finally their uneasiness and unspoken question were answered by an edict from the mouth of a small upright Frenchman, who mounted a stump and declaimed with a great flourish of graceful pomposity:

"'Tis the wish of Mistaire and Meez Steering that

none go to the mill until that the bar-r-becue shall be end." He was generously applauded and his fine shoulders stiffened responsively. This was the sort of thing that François Placide DeLassus Bernique liked.

The people contented themselves within the clearing the little time that remained of the morning. At one side of the clearing, fenced off by ropes, was a long trench, across which stretched poles of tough green hickory. On top of these poles lay great quarters of beeves, whole hogs, slit through the belly and spread wide till the dressed flesh wrinkled into the back-bone in thick layers, sheep, tongues, venison, an army's rations. Down in the trench glowed the red-hot coals of a vast Vulcan fire, set going the night before and fed and beaten all night into its present perfect equability. Up and down the sides of the trench walked men in great aprons, long-handled brushes, like white-wash brushes, in their hands. These brushes they dipped into buckets of salt and pepper, strung along the trench at regular intervals, and smeared the sizzling meat, a sort of Titanic seasoning process.

Rough pine boards, supported on tree stumps, formed long lines of tables on which loaves of bread were piled two feet high. Beside the bread were great buckets of pickles, preserves, jams, whole churns of butter, cheeses, cakes, pies, hundreds and hundreds of them, as though the whole world had become one enormous maw with an enormous clamour for food. The rich aroma of the sizzling meat and the slow sweet scorch of the green hickory poles drifted up into the trees and hung there, a visible odour, tantalising, insistent. The men who had got into their wives' aprons and had begun to cut sandwiches at the long tables were invited to hurry up. The men

who were varnishing the meat with salt and pepper were told that they were too slow. The boys who had begun cracking ice were applauded. The girls who had begun to squeeze lemons were offered help. The women who had begun to set out knives and forks and plates were interrupted and set back by hoots of encouragement. Children were stepped on and soothed, a continuous performance. The committee-on-cooking got in the way of the committee-on-washing-the-dishes; the committee-on-waiting-on-the-table almost came to blows with the committee-on-slicing-the-bread. Toward noon the scramble for places began. Then the people began to gorge. There was a constant reaching and grabbing. The clearing resounded with phrases of intricate politeness:

"Thank you to trouble you fer one them pickles, Si."

"Please'm gi' me a little your tongue, Miz Dade."

"Reach me some more bread, if you don't care whut you do, Quin."

Beyond the long tables little private parties sat here and there, ranged around red table-cloths, flat on the ground, stuffing, greasy-fingered, hospitable, happy.

Beyond these little parties, off in the young trees, in the buggies and buck-boards, were still smaller parties, the red-necktie young men and the girls with bright flowers in their hats, two and two, two and two, all through the thicket, each duet very happy, drinking out of one tin cup, the red-necktie young man assiduously putting his lips to the cup on the spot where the girl's lips had touched it.

Everybody ate incessantly. At first to appease hunger; then probably because of a dim prevision

that by the middle of next week some reproachful memory might assail one if one did not do one's full part by the present abundance. It was not until the sun had long passed the zenith that the gorging and stuffing came to an end, and then it was only because word began to circulate among the people that "the mill was open"; that "the people could go down now," in fine, that the great hour of that great day had come. Following upon the rumour, François Placide DeLassus Bernique again mounted a stump. This time he said:

"I am authorise' to make to you the announcement that the first mill of the Canaan Mining and Development Company is now to commence to r-r-un, and to invite you in the name of Mistaire Steering to assemble in the Choke Gulch, there to behold the begin' of a new e-r-a of pr-r-osperitee for thees gr-r-eat State of Missouri. But before that we go, I ask your attention for the one moment to those word of our fellow-citizen, Mistaire Steering!" He stopped, reluctantly but heroically, and Steering, quitting the side of the girl in black, mounted the stump.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Steering, "it was my wife's idea to make the opening of the first mill of the Canaan Mining and Development Company a gala day, a holiday, and I believe that you are all prepared to agree with me that it was a good idea. All that I want to say to you now for myself and for Mr. Carington, and for the eastern gentlemen whose money Mr. Carington represents, is just this: A great opportunity has opened up for us all down here. A new Missouri is about to be made. All our dreams are coming true. The golden harvest of our wheat fields has been found to be rooted deep in mines of

wonderful richness. But just because we have found something inside these hills of ours, don't let's neglect the outside of the hills. We must cultivate and improve on the outside, while we dig down deep on the inside. Life is going to give us chances from now on that we have never had before. As a people we must rise to these chances all along the line. We must come up all along the line. We must get better schools, better houses, better barns, better farming implements, better kitchen implements, better roads. Our watchword down here in the Southwest must be to *come up*. Don't forget it. We've got our chance now, now we must come up!"

Bruce sat down and the people, who had listened to him attentively, the faces of the farm-women especially keen and responsive, broke into another vast applause that set the leaves astir.

Somebody began to insist then that somebody else ought to make a speech of thanks, appreciation, to the Steerings for the day, and for the general satisfaction and prosperity that had come into Canaan with the new régime of the Canaan Company's affairs. Everybody began to turn toward Mr. Quin Beasley. Those nearest him nudged him. Very slowly Mr. Beasley got to his feet, mounted the stump, fell off and mounted it again.

"Frien's an'," Mr. Beasley's scared eye lit upon some children just beneath him who were regarding him with awe and the ecstatic hope that he would fall off again, and, encouraged by the awe, he levelled his next words at them powerfully, "Fellow Citizens! Taint fer me to say anythin' more ceppen only that ef I did say anythin', which I shan't, it 'ud jes be to say over whut Mist' Steerin' has said as bein' the whole

thing, an fer that reason I'll say nothin'."

It was a master stroke! Never in his life before had Beasley refrained from saying anything because he had nothing to say. The Canaanites were impressed. They said, "Good! Good!" For fear of some anticlimax Bruce at once gave his signal and the people began to swarm down the hillside into Choke Gulch, defiling through the Gulch toward a great shed that stood backed up to the hillside arrogantly. Although all Canaan had watched the building and rigging day by day, in Choke Gulch, the sight of the shed made the people almost hysterical, as though they had never seen the "plant" of the Canaan Mining and Development Company before, the shack office, the tool-house, the big proud mill shed, the tramway, the hoister. There was a group already ranged at the door of the engine-room as the people came on. Bruce Steering and his wife, Old Bernique, and the tramp-boy were in the centre of the group.

"We are all steamed up!" cried Bruce. "Make ready there, boys! Hurrah for the greatest zinc run in the greatest State in the Union! *Now*, Piney!"

The tramp-boy, on his face an unaccustomed appreciation of this larger side of the workaday world, stepped back inside the engine-room, laid his hand on a throttle, and at the signal, as if by magic, there was a whirr of slipping bands, a mighty throb, the renewed fashing of water down the jigs, a grinding, a pounding, a crunching, a gurgling; and a long, resonant shout went up again and again from the elastic throats of the exalted Canaanites; for the first mill of the Canaan Mining and Development Company was running!

Later on someone over in the crowd spoke. "Pity

Mist' Crit Madeira aint here to see all this. Haow he woulda taken to it. That son-in-law of his woulda jes adzackly suited Mist' Crit. Pity he had to die off sudden-like jes whend ev'thing wuz comin' araoun'." It was a woman's voice and it was all softened with pity.

"Yass, oh yass," said a man next her gingerly. He was a man who had not believed in Crit Madeira, but it occurred to him that this was not the time or the place to recall that.

The evening of that gala day was a glorious evening. Rich and warm and beautiful, self-indulgent nature had swaddled herself about in barbaric bands of colour, a drowsy opulence of green and scarlet, soft-toned amber and pale, veiled azure. It was an hour when the senses riot in carnival, when colour sings and sound seems pink and gold, when light is fragrant and flowers emit sparks of light.

Steering and his wife stood in the Garden of Dreams and the hour swirled up to them out of the sunset, mystical, urgent, sweet. The house was shut and locked behind them. Below them was the shivering Di. Off beyond them tumbled the Canaan Tigmores. Canaan, the proud, lay to the West in a fecund waiting.

"Do you know," said Steering, "I do not like to leave Missouri, Sally, not even for a little while, not even to show you to Carington and Elsie. We've no business along with brides and grooms anyway, we've been married two months. I wish we weren't

going to leave Missouri, Sally."

She turned her face up to him banteringly; her travelling hat was in her hand; above her black gown her bright hair shone with its beautiful lustres. "They must get along without you here for a little while, Mr. President of the Canaan Mining and Development Company. I need some clothes."

"Lay hold on my title gently, please, Mrs. Steering. Every time I hear it I feel that it needs more glue."

"Mrs. Steering! That's something of a title, too, isn't it? But, after all, who is so proud of newcome titles as the Superintendent of the Gulch Mine, François Placide DeLassus Bernique, eh, Mistaire Steering?"

"Old chap's satisfaction is good to live in. Oh, we are all happy, happy! Elsie and Carington seem to be hitting it off well, too, don't they?" Steering heaved a benevolent sigh, as though he felt that he had missed something whose missing was little short of escape. He regarded the magnificent, glowing woman beside him worshipfully. "Hark!" he cried next, "Piney's happy too, dear boy. That's the best of all! Hear that!"

From the river road below the garden came the sound of the pony's galloping feet and down by the sheen of the river, the tramp-boy was outlined presently, a gallant young figure, full of life and fire.

"I'm a-goin' to meet you at the station," he called up to them. "I'm a-sayin' good-bye to Mizzourah! D'you think Italy's a-goin' to beat this, Miss Sally?" He indicated the shimmering river, the woods beyond, the wonderful sky in the west, with a half-homesick gesture, then dashed on down the river road, gay

with anticipation again, carolling the potato song lustily:

"*The taters grow an' grow, they grow!*"

"That was a fine idea of yours, Sally, to send him to Italy. I suppose he will have to be disappointed, for Italy, with him, is all dream-stuff; still, life would never have been fulfilled for Piney without Italy."

"No, it wouldn't. And he won't be disappointed. You see, it's the music in him. That will count big some day. And Italy is the place for him to find himself. He won't be disappointed, and we shan't be disappointed in him. He is worth his chance. But see how low the sun is, Bruce. We, too, must say good-bye to Missouri now, if we are to make the train. Take your last look until we come back to it all."

The fragrance trembled about them. The pale wide Di quivered below them. Far to the west flamed the sunset. Down through the ether dropped great swaying draperies of orange and purple. Fair into the heart of heaven unrolled a path of violet and blue and rose.

Young, ancestral, sweet, she stood there beside him, his. Steering turned his eyes from the dusky-gold radiance of her face and hair to the land beyond, where his hills billowed toward him with mighty promise, submerging him again, reclaiming him, as they had done on a lonely day not one year gone, making a Missourian of him, as it had done on that day. The girl, the land, he, all the world, seemed banded in a golden irradiation.

"Oh, Missouri! Missouri!" he cried, with a joyful, trembling, upleaping of spirit, his arms shut close

about his wife, his eyes coming back to her as to the spirit of this new and wonderful West, "You glorious State! You sweet, wide land! I adore you!"

THE END.

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