Taken Alive

E. P. Roe

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"A NATIVE AUTHOR CALLED ROE"

Au Autobiography

Two or three years ago the editor of "Lippincott's Magazine" asked me, with many others, to take part in the very interesting "experience meeting" begun in the pages of that enterprising periodical. I gave my consent without much thought of the effort involved, but as time passed, felt slight inclination to comply with the request. There seemed little to say of interest to the general public, and I was distinctly conscious of a certain sense of awkwardness in writing about myself at all. The question, Why should I? always confronted me.

When this request was again repeated early in the current year, I resolved at least to keep my promise. This is done with less reluctance now, for the reason that floating through the press I meet with paragraphs concerning myself that are incorrect, and often absurdly untrue. These literary and personal notes, together with many questioning letters, indicate a certain amount of public interest, and I have concluded that it may be well to give the facts to those who care to know them.

It has been made more clear to me that there are many who honestly do care. One of the most prized rewards of my literary work is the ever−present consciousness that my writings have drawn around me a circle of unknown yet stanch friends, who have stood by me unfalteringly for a number of years. I should indeed be lacking if my heart did not go out to them in responsive friendliness and goodwill. If I looked upon them merely as an aggregation of customers, they would find me out speedily. A popular mood is a very different thing from an abiding popular interest. If one could address this circle of friends only, the embarrassment attendant on a certain amount of egotism would be banished by the assurance of sympathetic regard. Since, from the nature of circumstances, this is impossible, it seems to me in better taste to consider the "author called Roe" in an objective, rather than in a friendly and subjective sense. In other words, I shall try to look at him from the public point of view, and free myself from some predisposition in his favor shared by his friends. I suppose I shall not succeed in giving a colorless statement of fact, but I may avoid much special pleading in his behalf.

Like so many other people, I came from a very old family, one from which there is good proof of an unbroken line through the Dark Ages, and all ages, to the first man. I have never given any time to tracing ancestry, but have a sort of quiet satisfaction that mine is certainly American as far as it well can be. My forefathers (not "rude," to my knowledge) were among the first settlers on the Atlantic seaboard. My paternal and maternal grandfathers were stanch Whigs during the Revolution, and had the courage of their convictions. My grandmother escaped with her children from the village of Kingston almost as the British entered it, and her home was soon in ashes. Her husband, James Roe, was away in the army. My mother died some years before I attained my majority, and I cannot remember when she was not an invalid. Such literary tendencies as I have are derived from her, but I do not possess a tithe of her intellectual power. Her story− books in her youth were the classics; and when she was but twelve years of age she knew "Paradise Lost" by heart. In my recollections of her, the Bible and all works tending to elucidate its prophecies were her favorite themes of study. The retentiveness of her memory was very remarkable. If any one repeated a verse of the New Testament, she could go on and finish the chapter. Indeed, she could quote the greater part of the Bible with the ease and accuracy of one reading from the printed page. The works of Hugh Miller and the Arctic Explorations of Dr. Kane afforded her much pleasure. Confined usually to her room, she took unfailing delight in wandering about the world with the great travellers of that day, her strong fancy reproducing the scenes they described. A stirring bit of history moved her deeply. Well do I remember, when a boy, of reading to her a chapter from Motley's "Dutch Republic," and of witnessing in her flushed cheeks and sparkling black eyes proof of an excitement all too great for one in her frail health. She had the unusual gift of relating in an easy, simple way what she read; and many a book far too abstruse and dull for my boyish taste became an absorbing story from her lips. One of her chief characteristics was the love of flowers. I can scarcely recall her when a flower of some kind, usually a rose, was not within her reach; and only periods of great feebleness kept her from their daily care, winter and summer. Many descendants of her floral pets are now blooming in my garden.

My father, on the other hand, was a sturdy man of action. His love for the country was so strong that he retired from business in New York as soon as he had won a modest competence. For forty−odd years he never wearied in

the cultivation of his little valley farm, and the square, flower−bordered garden, at one side of which ran an unfailing brook. In this garden and under his tuition I acquired my love of horticulture—acquired it with many a backache—heartache too, on days good for fishing or hunting; but, taking the bitter with the sweet, the sweet predominated. I find now that I think only of the old−fashioned roses in the borders, and not of my hands bleeding from the thorns. If I groaned over the culture of many vegetables, it was much compensation to a boy that the dinner−table groaned also under the succulent dishes thus provided. I observed that my father's interest in his garden and farm never flagged, thus proving that in them is to be found a pleasure which does not pall with age. During the last summer of his life, when in his eighty−seventh year, he had the delight of a child in driving over to my home in the early morning, long before I was up, and in leaving a basket of sweet corn or some other vegetable which he knew would prove his garden to be ahead of mine.

My father was very simple and positive in his beliefs, always openly foremost in the reform movements of his day and in his neighborhood, yet never, to my knowledge, seeking or taking any office. His house often became a station of the "underground railroad" in slavery times, and on one night in the depth of winter he took a hotly−pursued fugitive in his sleigh and drove him five miles on the ice, diagonally across the Hudson, to Fishkill, thence putting the brave aspirant for freedom on the way to other friends. He incurred several risks in this act. It is rarely safe to drive on the river off the beaten tracks at night, for there are usually air−holes, and the strong tides are continually making changes in the ice. When told that he might be sent to jail for his defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law, he quietly answered, "I can go to jail." The thing he could not do was to deny the man's appeal to him for help. Before the war he was known as an Abolitionist—after it, as a Conservative, his sympathy with and for the South being very strong. During the draft riots in 1863 the spirit of lawlessness was on the point of breaking out in the river towns. I happened to be home from Virginia, and learned that my father's house was among those marked for burning on a certain night. During this night the horde gathered; but one of their leaders had received such empathetic warning of what would happen the following day should outrages be perpetrated, that he persuaded his associates to desist. I sat up that night at my father's door with a double−barrelled gun, more impressed with a sense of danger than at any other time in my experience; he, on the contrary, slept as quietly as a child.

He often practiced close economy in order to give his sons a good education. The one act of my life which I remember with unalloyed pride and pleasure occured while I was at boarding−school in Vermont, preparing for college. I learned through my mother that my father had denied himself his daily newspaper; and I knew well how much he would miss it. We burned wood in the large stone seminary building. Every autumn great ranks of hard maple were piled up, and students who wished to earn a little money were paid a dollar a cord for sawing it into three lengths. I applied for nine cords, and went at the unaccustomed task after study hours. My back aches yet as I recall the experiences of subsequent weeks, for the wood was heavy, thick, and hard as bone. I eventually had the pleasure of sending to my father the subscription price of his paper for a year. If a boy reads these lines, let me assure him that he will never know a sweeter moment in his life than when he receives the thanks of his parents for some such effort in their behalf. No investment can ever pay him better.

In one of my books, "Nature's Serial Story," my father and mother appear, slightly idealized.

Toward the close of my first year in Williams College a misfortune occurred which threatened to be very serious. Studying by defective light injured my eyes. They quickly became so sensitive that I could scarcely endure lamplight or the heat of a stove, only the cold out−door air relieving the pain; so I spent much time in wandering about in the boisterous weather of early spring in Williamstown. At last I became so discouraged that I went to President Hopkins and told him that I feared I must give up the purpose of acquiring an education. Never can I forget how that grand old man met the disheartened boy. Speaking in the wise, friendly way which subdued the heart and strengthened the will, he made the half−hour spent with him the turning−point of my life. In conclusion, he advised me to enter the Senior class the following fall, thus taking a partial course of study. How many men are living to−day who owe much of the best in their lives to that divinely inspired guide and teacher of youth!

I next went to another man great in his sphere of life—Dr. Agnew, the oculist. He gave my eyes a thorough examination, told me that he could do nothing for them; that rest and the vigor acquired from out−door life would restore them. He was as kind and sympathetic in his way as the college president, and charged but a trifle, to relieve me from the sense of taking charity. Dr. Agnew's words proved correct; and the following autumn I

entered the class of '61, and spent a happy year. Some of my classmates were very kind in reading aloud to me, while Dr. Hopkins's instruction was invaluable. By the time I entered Auburn Theological Seminary, my eyes were quite restored, and I was able to go through the first year's course of study without difficulty. In the summer of 1862 I could no longer resist the call for men in the army. Learning that the Second New York (Harris's Light) Cavalry was without a chaplain, I obtained the appointment to that position. General Kilpatrick was then lieutenant−colonel, and in command of the regiment. In December, 1862, I witnessed the bloody and disastrous battle of Fredericksburg, and can never forget the experiences of that useless tragedy. I was conscious of a sensation which struck me as too profound to be merely awe. Early in the morning we crossed the Rappahannock on a pontoon bridge and marched up the hill to an open plain. The roar of the battle was simply terrific, shading off from the sharp continuous thunder immediately about us to dull, heavy mutterings far to the right and left. A few hundred yards before us, where the ground began to slope up to the fatal heights crowned with Confederate works and ordnance, were long lines of Union batteries. From their iron mouths puffs of smoke issued incessantly, followed by tremendous reverberations. Back of these batteries the ground was covered with men lying on their arms, that they might present a less obvious target. Then a little further to the rear, on the level ground above the bluff, stood our cavalry. Heavy guns on both sides of the river were sending their great shrieking shells back and forth over our heads, and we often "ducked" instinctively when the missile was at least forty feet above us. Even our horses shuddered at the sound.

I resolved to learn if the men were sharing in my emotions—in brief, what effect the situation had upon them—and rode slowly down our regimental line. So vivid was the impression of that long array of awed, pallid faces that at this moment I can recall them distinctly. There were strange little touches of mingled pathos and humor. Meadow−larks were hemmed in on every side, too frightened to fly far beyond the rude alarms. They would flutter up into the sulphurous air with plaintive cries, then drop again into the open spaces between the troops. At one time, while we were standing at our horses' heads, a startled rabbit ran to us for cover. The poor little creature meant a dinner to the fortunate captor on a day when a dinner was extremely problematical. We engaged in a sharp scramble, the prize being won by the regimental surgeon, who kindly shared his game with me.

General Bayard, commanding our brigade, was mortally wounded, and died like a hero. He was carried to a fine mansion near which he had received his injury. Many other desperately wounded men were brought to the spacious rooms of this abode of Southern luxury, and the surgeons were kept busy all throught the day and night. It was here I gained my first experience in hospital work. This extemporized hospital on the field was so exposed as to be speedily abandoned. In the morning I recrossed the Rappahannock with my regiment, which had been ordered down the river on picket duty. Soon after we went into winter quarters in a muddy cornfield. In February I resigned, with the purpose of completing my studies, and spent the remainder of the term at the Union Theological Seminary of New York. My regiment would not get another chaplain, so I again returned to it. In November I received a month's leave of absence, and was married to Miss Anna P. Sands, of New York City. Our winter quarters in 1864 were at Stevensburg, between the town of Culpeper and the Rapidan River. During the pleasant days of late February several of the officers were enjoying the society of their wives. Mrs. Roe having expressed a willingness to rough it with me for a week, I sent for her, and one Saturday afternoon went to the nearest railroad station to meet her. The train came, but not my wife; and, much disappointed, I found the return ride of five miles a dreary one in the winter twilight. I stopped at our colonel's tent to say to him and his wife that Mrs. Roe had not come, then learned for the first time very startling tidings.

"Chaplain," said the colonel, "we are going to Richmond to−morrow. We are going to wade right through and past everything in a neck− or−nothing ride, and who will come out is a question."

His wife was weeping in her private tent, and I saw that for the first time in my acquaintance with him he was downcast. He was one of the bravest of men, yet now a foreboding of evil oppressed him. The result justified it, for he was captured during the raid, and never fully rallied after the war from the physical depression caused by his captivity. He told me that on the morrow General Kilpatrick would lead four thousand picked cavalry men in a raid on Richmond, having as its special object the release of our prisoners. I rode to the headquarters of the general, who confirmed the tidings, adding, "You need not go. Non−combatants are not expected to go."

It was most fortunate that my wife had not come. I had recently been appointed chaplain of Hampton Hospital, Virginia, by President Lincoln, and was daily expecting my confirmation by the Senate. I had fully

expected to give my wife a glimpse of army life in the field, and then to enter on my new duties. To go or not to go was a question with me that night. The raid certainly offered a sharp contrast with the anticipated week's outing with my bride. I did not possess by nature that kind of courage which is indifferent to danger; and life had never offered more attractions than at that time. I have since enjoyed Southern hospitality abundantly, and hope to again, but then its prospect was not alluring. Before morning, however, I reached the decision that I would go, and during the Sunday forenoon held my last service in the regiment. I had disposed of my horse, and so had to take a sorry beast at the last moment, the only one I could obtain.

In the dusk of Sunday evening four thousand men were masked in the woods on the banks of the Rapidan. Our scouts opened the way by wading the stream and pouncing upon the unsuspecting picket of twenty Confederates opposite. Then away we went across a cold, rapid river, marching all that night through the dim woods and openings in a country that was emphatically the enemy's. Lee's entire army was on our right, the main Confederate cavalry force on our left. The strength of our column and its objective point could not remain long unknown.

In some unimportant ways I acted as aid for Kilpatrick. A few hundred yards in advance of the main body rode a vanguard of two hundred men, thrown forward to warn us should we strike any considerable number of the enemy's cavalry. As is ever the case, the horses of a small force will walk away from a much larger body, and it was necessary from time to time to send word to the vanguard, ordering it to "slow up." This order was occasionally intrusted to me. I was to gallop over the interval between the two columns, then draw up by the roadside and sit motionless on my horse till the general with his staff came up. The slightest irregularity of action would bring a shot from our own men, while the prospect of an interview with the Johnnies while thus isolated was always good. I saw one of our officers shot that night. He had ridden carelessly into the woods, and rode out again just before the head of the column, without instantly accounting for himself. As it was of vital importance to keep the movement secret as long as possible, the poor fellow was silenced in sad error as to his identity.

On we rode, night and day, with the briefest possible halts. At one point we nearly captured a railroad train, and might easily have succeeded had not the station and warehouses been in flames. As it was, the train approached us closely, then backed, the shrieking engine itself giving the impression of being startled to the last degree.

On a dreary, drizzling, foggy day we passed a milestone on which was lettered, "Four miles to Richmond." It was still "on to Richmond" with us what seemed a long way further, and then came a considerable period of hesitancy, in which the command was drawn up for the final dash. The enemy shelled a field near us vigorously, but fortunately, or unfortunately, the fog was so dense that neither party could make accurate observations or do much execution.

For reasons that have passed into history, the attack was not made. We withdrew six miles from the city and went into camp.

I had scarcely begun to enjoy much−needed rest before the Confederates came up in the darkness and shelled us out of such quarters as we had found. We had to leave our boiling coffee behind us—one of the greatest hardships I have ever known. Then followed a long night−ride down the Peninsula, in driving sleet and rain.

The next morning the sun broke out gloriously, warming and drying our chilled, wet forms. Nearly all that day we maintained a line of battle confronting the pursuing enemy. One brigade would take a defensive position, while the other would march about five miles to a commanding point, where it in turn would form a line. The first brigade would then give way, pass through the second, and take position well to the rear. Thus, although retreating, we were always ready to fight. At one point the enemy pressed us closely, and I saw a magnificent cavalry charge down a gentle descent in the road. Every sabre seemed tipped with fire in the brilliant sunshine.

In the afternoon it became evident that there was a body of troops before us. Who or what they were was at first unknown, and for a time the impression prevailed that we should have to cut our way through by a headlong charge. We soon learned, however, that the force was a brigade of colored infantry, sent up to cover our retreat. It was the first time we had seen negro troops, but as the long line of glistening bayonets and light−blue uniforms came into view, prejudices, if any there were, vanished at once, and a cheer from the begrimed troopers rang down our line, waking the echoes. It was a pleasant thing to march past that array of faces, friendly though black, and know we were safe. They represented the F.F.V.'s of Old Virginia, we then wished to see. On the last day of the march my horse gave out, compelling me to walk and lead him.

On the day after our arrival at Yorktown, Kilpatrick gave me despatches for the authorities at Washington. President Lincoln, learning that I had just returned from the raid, sent for me, and I had a memorable interview with him alone in his private room. He expressed profound solicitude for Colonel Dahlgren and his party. They had been detached from the main force, and I could give no information concerning them. We eventually learned of the death of that heroic young officer, Colonel Dahlgren. Although partially helpless from the loss of a leg, he led a daring expedition at the cost of his life.

I expressed regret to the President that the object of the raid had not been accomplished. "Pick the flint, and try it again," said Mr. Lincoln, heartily. I went out from his presence awed by the courage and sublime simplicity of the man. While he gave the impression that he was bearing the nation on his heart, one was made to feel that it was also large enough for sympathy with all striving with him in the humblest way.

My wife joined me in Washington, and few days later accompanied me to the scene of my new labors at Hampton Hospital, near Fortress Monroe. There were not many patients at that time (March, 1864) in the large barrack wards; but as soon as the Army of the Potomac broke through the Wilderness and approached our vicinity, transports in increasing numbers, laden with desperately wounded men, came to our wharf. During the early summer the wooden barracks were speedily filled, and many tent wards were added. Duty became constant and severe, while the scenes witnessed were often painful in the last degree. More truly than on the field, the real horrors of war are learned from the long agonies in the hospital. While in the cavalry service, I gained in vigor daily; in two months of hospital work I lost thirty pounds. On one day I buried as many as twenty−nine men. Every evening, till the duty became like a nightmare, I followed the dead−cart, filled up with coffins, once, twice, and often thrice, to the cemetery. Eventually an associate chaplain was appointed, who relieved me of this task.

Fortunately, my tastes led me to employ an antidote to my daily work as useful to me as to the patients. Surrounding the hospital was much waste land. This, with the approval of the surgeon in charge, Dr. Ely McMillan, and the aid of the convalescents, I transformed into a garden, and for two successive seasons sent to the general kitchen fresh vegetables by the wagon−load. If reward were needed, the wistful delight with which a patient from the front would regard a raw onion was ample; while for me the care of the homely, growing vegetables and fruit brought a diversion of mind which made life more endurable.

One of the great needs of the patients who had to fight the winning or losing battle of life was good reading, and I speedily sought to obtain a supply. Hearts and purses at the North responded promptly and liberally; publishers threw off fifty per cent from their prices; and I was eventually able to collect, by gift and purchase, about three thousand volumes. In gathering this library, I provided what may be distinctly termed religious reading in abundance; but I also recognized the need of diversion. Long wards were filled with men who had lost a leg or an arm, and who must lie in one position for weeks. To help them get through the time was to help them to live. I therefore made the library rich in popular fiction and genial books of travel and biography. Full sets of Irving, Cooper, Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Marryat, and other standard works were bought; and many a time I have seen a poor fellow absorbed in their pages while holding his stump lest the jar of a footstep should send a dart of agony to the point of mutilation. My wife gave much assistance in my hospital duties, often reaching and influencing those beyond me. I recall one poor fellow who was actually six months in dying from a very painful wound. Profanity appeared to be his vernacular, and in bitter protest at his fate, he would curse nearly every one and everything. Mrs. Roe's sympathy and attentions changed him very much, and he would listen quietly as long as she would read to him. Some of the hospital attendants, men and women, had good voices, and we organized a choir. Every Sunday afternoon we went from ward to ward singing familiar hymns. It was touching to see rough fellows drawing their blankets over their heads to hide the emotion caused by words and melodies associated, in many instances, with home and mother.

Northern generosity, and, in the main, convalescent labor enabled me to build a large commodious chapel and to make great improvements in the hospital farm. The site of the hospital and garden is now occupied by General Armstrong's Normal and Agricultural Institute for Freedmen, and the chapel was occupied as a place of worship until very recently. Thus a noble and most useful work is being accomplished on the ground consecrated by the life−and−death struggles of so many Union soldiers.

In 1865 the blessed era of peace began, bringing its many changes. In October the hospital became practically empty, and I resigned. The books were sent to Fortress Monroe for the use of the garrison, and I found many of them there long years after, almost worn out from use.

After a little rest and some candidating for a church, I took a small parish at Highland Falls, about a mile from West Point, New York, entering on my labors in January, 1866. In this village my wife and I spent nine very happy years. They were full of trial and many cares, but free from those events which bring the deep shadows into one's life. We soon became engaged in building a new stone church, whose granite walls are so thick, and hard−wood finish so substantial that passing centuries should add only the mellowness of age. The effort to raise funds for this enterprise led me into the lecture−field and here I found my cavalry−raid and army life in general exceedingly useful. I looked around for a patch of garden−ground as instinctively as a duck seeks water. The small plot adjoining the parsonage speedily grew into about three acres, from which eventually came a book entitled "Play and Profit in my Garden."

Up to the year 1871 I had written little for publication beyond occasional contributions to the New York "Evangelist," nor had I seriously contemplated a literary life. I had always been extremely fond of fiction, and from boyhood had formed a habit of beguiling the solitary hours in weaving crude fancies around people who for any reason interested me. I usually had a mental serial running, to which I returned when it was my mood; but I had never written even a short story. In October, 1871, I was asked to preach for a far uptown congregation in New York, with the possibility of a settlement in view. On Monday following the services of the Sabbath, the officers of the church were kind enough to ask me to spend a week with them and visit among the people. Meantime, the morning papers laid before us the startling fact that the city of Chicago was burning and that its population were becoming homeless. The tidings impressed me powerfully, waking the deepest sympathy. I said to myself, "Here is a phase of life as remarkable as any witnessed during the war." I obeyed the impulse to be on the scene as soon as possible, stated my purpose to my friends, and was soon among the smoking ruins, finding an abiding−place with throngs of others in a partially finished hotel. For days and nights I wandered where a city had been, and among the extemporized places of refuge harboring all classes of people. Late one night I sat for a long time on the steps of Robert Collyer's church and watched the full moon through the roofless walls and shattered steeple. There was not an evidence of life where had been populous streets. It was there and then, as nearly as I can remember, that the vague outlines of my first story, "Barriers Burned Away," began to take form in my mind. I soon returned home, and began to dream and write, giving during the following year such hours as could be withdrawn from many other duties to the construction of the story. I wrote when and where I could—on steamboats, in railway cars, and at all odd hours of leisure, often with long breaks in the work of composition, caused by the pressure of other affairs, again getting up a sort of white heat from incessantly dwelling upon scenes and incidents that had become real to me. In brief, the story took possession of my mind, and grew as naturally as a plant or a weed in my garden.

It will thus be obvious that at nearly middle age, and in obedience to an impulse, I was launched as an author; that I had very slight literary training; and that my appearance as a novelist was quite as great a surprise to myself as to any of my friends. The writing of sermons certainly does not prepare one for the construction of a novel; and to this day certain critics contemptuously dismiss my books as "preaching." During nearly four years of army life, at a period when most young men are forming style and making the acquaintance of literature, I scarcely had a chance to read at all. The subsequent years of the pastorate were too active, except for an occasional dip into a favorite author.

While writing my first story, I rarely thought of the public, the characters and their experiences absorbing me wholly. When my narrative was actually in print, there was wakened a very deep interest as to its reception. I had none of the confidence resulting from the gradual testing of one's power or from association with literary people, and I also was aware that, when published, a book was far away from the still waters of which one's friends are the protecting headlands. That I knew my work to be exceedingly faulty goes without saying; that it was utterly bad, I was scarcely ready to believe. Dr. Field, noted for his pure English diction and taste, would not publish an irredeemable story, and the constituency of the New York "Evangelist" is well known to be one of the most intelligent in the country. Friendly opinions from serial readers were reassuring as far as they went, but of course the great majority of those who followed the story were silent. A writer cannot, like a speaker, look into the eyes of his audience and observe its mental attitude toward his thought. If my memory serves me, Mr. R. R. Bowker was the earliest critic to write some friendly words in the "Evening Mail;" but at first my venture was very generally ignored. Then some unknown friend marked an influential journal published in the interior of the State and mailed it so timely that it reached me on Christmas eve. I doubt if a book was ever more unsparingly

condemned than mine in that review, whose final words were, "The story is absolutely nauseating." In this instance and in my salad days I took pains to find out who the writer was, for if his view was correct I certainly should not engage in further efforts to make the public ill. I discovered the reviewer to be a gentleman for whom I have ever had the highest respect as an editor, legislator, and honest thinker. My story made upon him just the impression he expressed, and it would be very stupid on my part to blink the fact. Meantime, the book was rapidly making for itself friends and passing into frequent new editions. Even the editor who condemned the work would not assert that those who bought it were an aggregation of asses. People cannot be found by thousands who will pay a dollar and seventy−five cents for a dime novel or a religious tract. I wished to learn the actual truth more sincerely than any critic to write it, and at last I ventured to take a copy to Mr. George Ripley, of the New York "Tribune." "Here is a man," I thought, "whose fame and position as a critic are recognized by all. If he deigns to notice the book, he will not only say what he thinks, but I shall have much reason to think as he does." Mr. Ripley met the diffident author kindly, asked a few questions, and took the volume. A few weeks later, to my great surprise, he gave over a column to a review of the story. Although not blind to its many faults, he wrote words far more friendly and inspiring than I ever hoped to see; it would seem that the public had sanctioned his verdict. From that day to this these two instances have been types of my experience with many critics, one condemning, another commending. There is ever a third class who prove their superiority by sneering at or ignoring what is closely related to the people. Much thought over my experience led to a conclusion which the passing years confirm: the only thing for a writer is to be himself and take the consequences. Even those who regard me as a literary offender of the blackest dye have never named imitation among my sins.

As successive books appeared, I began to recognize more and more clearly another phase of an author's experience. A writer gradually forms a constituency, certain qualities in his book appealing to certain classes of minds. In my own case, I do not mean classes of people looked at from the social point of view. A writer who takes any hold on popular attention inevitably learns the character of his constituency. He appeals, and minds and temperaments in sympathy respond. Those he cannot touch go on their way indifferently; those he offends may often strike back. This is the natural result of any strong assertion of individuality. Certainly, if I had my choice, I would rather write a book interesting to the young and to the common people, whom Lincoln said "God must love, since He made so many of them." The former are open to influence; the latter can be quickened and prepared for something better. As a matter of fact, I find that there are those in all classes whom my books attract, others who are repelled, as I have said. It is perhaps one of the pleasantest experiences of an author's life to learn from letters and in other ways that he is forming a circle of friends, none the less friendly because personally unknown. Their loyalty is both a safeguard and an inspiration. On one hand, the writer shrinks from abusing such regard by careless work; on the other, he is stimulated and encouraged by the feeling that there is a group in waiting who will appreciate his best endeavor. While I clearly recognize my limitations, and have no wish to emulate the frog in the fable, I can truthfully say that I take increasing pains with each story, aiming to verify every point by experience—my own or that of others. Not long since, a critic asserted that changes in one of my characters, resulting from total loss of memory, were preposterously impossible. If the critic had consulted Ribot's "Diseases of Memory," or some experienced physician, he might have written more justly. I do not feel myself competent to form a valuable opinion as to good art in writing, and I cannot help observing that the art doctors disagree wofully among themselves. Truth to nature and the realities, and not the following of any school or fashion, has ever seemed the safest guide. I sometimes venture to think I know a little about human nature. My active life brought me in close contact with all kinds of people; there was no man in my regiment who hesitated to come to my tent or to talk confidentially by the campfire, while scores of dying men laid bare to me their hearts. I at least know the nature that exists in the human breast. It may be inartistic, or my use of it all wrong. That is a question which time will decide, and I shall accept the verdict. Over twelve years ago, certain oracles, with the voice of fate, predicted my speedy eclipse and disappearance. Are they right in their adverse judgment? I can truthfully say that now, as at the first, I wish to know the facts in the case. The moment an author is conceited about his work, he becomes absurd and is passing into a hopeless condition. If worthy to write at all, he knows that he falls far short of his ideals; if honest, he wishes to be estimated at his true worth, and to cast behind him the mean little Satan of vanity. If he walks under a conscious sense of greatness, he is a ridiculous figure, for beholders remember the literary giants of other days and of his own time, and smile at the airs of the comparatively little man. On the other hand, no self−respecting writer should ape the false deprecating

"'umbleness" of Uriah Heep. In short, he wishes to pass, like a coin, for just what he is worth. Mr. Matthew Arnold was ludicrously unjust to the West when he wrote, "The Western States are at this moment being nourished and formed, we hear, on the novels of a native author called Roe." Why could not Mr. Arnold have taken a few moments to look into the bookstores of the great cities of the West, in order to observe for himself how the demand of one of the largest and most intelligent reading publics in the world is supplied? He would have found that the works of Scott and Dickens were more liberally purchased and generally read than in his own land of "distinction." He should have discovered when in this country that American statesmen (?) are so solicitous about the intelligence of their constituents that they give publishers so disposed every opportunity to steal novels describing the nobility and English persons of distinction; that tons of such novels have been sold annually in the West, a thousand to one of the "author called Roe." The simple truth in the case is that in spite of this immense and cheap competition, my novels have made their way and are being read among multitudes of others. No one buys or reads a book under compulsion; and if any one thinks that the poorer the book the better the chance of its being read by the American people, let him try the experiment. When a critic condemns my books, I accept that as his judgment; when another critic and scores of men and women, the peers of the first in cultivation and intelligence, commend the books, I do not charge them with gratuitous lying. My one aim has become to do my work conscientiously and leave the final verdict to time and the public. I wish no other estimate than a correct one; and when the public indicate that they have had enough of Roe, I shall neither whine nor write.

As a rule, I certainly stumble on my stories, as well as stumble through them perhaps. Some incident or unexpected impulse is the beginning of their existence. One October day I was walking on a country road, and a chestnut burr lay in my path. I said to myself, "There is a book in that burr, if I could get it out." With little volition on my part, the story "Opening a Chestnut Burr" took form and was written.

One summer evening, when in New York, I went up to Thomas's Garden, near Central Park, to hear the delicious music he was educating us to appreciate. At a certain point in the programme I noticed that the next piece would be Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and I glanced around with a sort of congratulatory impulse, as much as to say, "Now we shall have a treat." My attention was immediately arrested and fixed by a young girl who, with the gentleman escorting her, was sitting near by. My first impression of her face was one of marvellous beauty, followed by a sense of dissatisfaction. Such was my distance that I could not annoy her by furtive observation; and I soon discovered that she would regard a stare as a tribute. Why was it that her face was so beautiful, yet so displeasing? Each feature analyzed seemed perfection, yet the general effect was a mocking, ill−kept promise. The truth was soon apparent. The expression was not evil, but frivolous, silly, unredeemed by any genuine womanly grace. She giggled and flirted through the sublime symphony, till in exasperation I went out into the promenade under the open sky. In less than an hour I had my story "A Face Illumined." I imagined an artist seeing what I had seen and feeling a stronger vexation in the wounding of his beauty loving nature; that he learned during the evening that the girl was a relative of a close friend, and that a sojourn at a summer hotel on the Hudson was in prospect. On his return home he conceives the idea of painting the girl's features and giving them a harmonious expression. Then the fancy takes him that the girl is a modern Undine and has not yet received her woman's soul. The story relates his effort to beautify, illumine the face itself by evoking a mind. I never learned who was the actual girl with the features of an angel and the face of a fool.

In the case of "He Fell in Love with His Wife," I merely saw a paragraph in a paper to the effect that a middle−age widower, having found it next to impossible to carry on his farm with hired help, had gone to the county poorhouse and said "If there's a decent woman here, I'll marry her." For years the homely item remained an ungerminating seed in my mind, then started to grow, and the story was written in two months.

My war experience has naturally made the picturesque phase of the Great Conflict attractive material. In the future I hope to avail myself still further of interesting periods in American history.

I find that my love of horticulture and outdoor life has grown with the years. I do not pretend to scientific accuracy or knowledge. On the contrary, I have regarded plants and birds rather as neighbors, and have associated with them. When giving to my parish, I bought a place in the near vicinity of the house which I had spent my childhood. The front windows of our house command a noble view of the Hudson, while on the east and south the Highlands are within rifle−shot. For several years I hesitated to trust solely to literary work for support. As I have said, not a few critics insisted that my books should not be read, and would soon cease to be read. But whether the prediction should prove true or not, I knew in any case that the critics themselves would eat my strawberries; so I

made the culture of small fruits the second string to my bow. This business speedily took the form of growing plants for sale, and was developing rapidly, when financial misfortune led to my failure and the devotion of my entire time to writing. Perhaps it was just as well in the end, for my health was being undermined by too great and conflicting demands on my energy. In 1878, at Dr. Holland's request, I wrote a series of papers on small fruits for "Scribner's Magazine"—papers that were expanded into a book entitled "Success with Small Fruits." I now aim merely at an abundant home supply of fruits and vegetables, but in securing this, find pleasure and profit in testing the many varieties catalogued and offered by nurserymen and seedsmen. About three years ago the editor of "Harper's Magazine" asked me to write one or two papers entitled "One Acre," telling its possessor how to make the most and best of it. When entering on the task, I found there was more in it than I had at first supposed. Changing the title to "The Home Acre," I decided to write a book or manual which might be useful in many rural homes. There are those who have neither time nor inclination to read the volumes and journals devoted to horticulture, who yet have gardens and trees in which they are interested. They wish to learn in the shortest, clearest way just what to do in order to secure success, without going into theories, whys, and wherefores, or concerning themselves with the higher mysteries of garden−lore. This work is now in course of preparation. In brief, my aim is to have the book grow out of actual experience, and not merely my own, either. As far as possible, well−known experts and authorities are consulted on every point. As a natural consequence, the book is growing, like the plants to which it relates. It cannot be written "offhand" or finished "on time" to suit any one except Dame Nature, who, being feminine, is often inscrutable and apparently capricious. The experience of one season is often reversed in the next, and the guide in gardening of whom I am most afraid is the man who is always sure he is right. It was my privilege to have the late Mr. Charles Downing as one of my teachers, and well do I remember how that honest, sagacious, yet docile student of nature would "put on the brakes" when I was passing too rapidly to conclusions. It has always been one of my most cherished purposes to interest people in the cultivation of the soil and rural life. My effort is to "boil down" information to the simplest and most practical form. Last spring, hundreds of varieties of vegetables and small fruits were planted. A carefully written record is being kept from the time of planting until the crop is gathered.

My methods of work are briefly these: I go into my study immediately after breakfast—usually about nine o'clock—and write or study until three or four in the afternoon, stopping only for a light lunch. In the early morning and late afternoon I go around my place, giving directions to the men, and observing the condition of vegetables, flowers, and trees, and the general aspect of nature at the time. After dinner, the evening is devoted to the family, friends, newspapers, and light reading. In former years I wrote at night, but after a severe attack of insomnia this practice was almost wholly abandoned. As a rule, the greater part of a year is absorbed in the production of a novel, and I am often gathering material for several years in advance of writing.

For manuscript purposes I use bound blankbooks of cheap paper. My sheets are thus kept securely together and in place—important considerations in view of the gales often blowing through my study and the habits of a careless man. This method offers peculiar advantages for interpolation, as there is always a blank page opposite the one on which I am writing. After correcting the manuscript, it is put in typewriting and again revised. There are also two revisions of the proof. While I do not shirk the tasks which approach closely to drudgery, especially since my eyesight is not so good as it was, I also obtain expert assistance. I find that when a page has become very familiar and I am rather tired of it, my mind wanders from the close, fixed attention essential to the best use of words. Perhaps few are endowed with both the inventive and the critical faculty. A certain inner sense enables one to know, according to his lights, whether the story itself is true or false; but elegance of style is due chiefly to training, to a cultivation like that of the ear for music. Possibly we are entering on an age in which the people care less for form, for phraseology, than for what seems to them true, real—for what, as they would express it, "takes hold of them." This is no plea or excuse for careless work, but rather a suggestion that the day of prolix, fine, flowery writing is passing. The immense number of well−written books in circulation has made success with careless, slovenly manuscripts impossible. Publishers and editors will not even read, much less publish them. Simplicity, lucidity, strength, a plunge in medias res, are now the qualities and conditions chiefly desired, rather than finely turned sentences in which it is apparent more labor has been expended on the vehicle than on what it contains. The questions of this eager age are, What has he to say? Does it interest us? As an author, I have felt that my only chance of gaining and keeping the attention of men and women was to know, to understand them, to feel with and for them in what constituted their life. Failing to do this, why should a line of my books be read? Who

reads a modern novel from sense of duty? There are classics which all must read and pretend to enjoy whether capable of doing so or not. No critic has ever been so daft as to call any of my books a classic. Better books are unread because the writer is not en rapport with the reader. The time has passed when either the theologian, the politician, or the critic can take the American citizen metaphorically by the shoulder and send him along the path in which they think he should go. He has become the most independent being in the world, good−humoredly tolerant of the beliefs and fancies of others, while reserving, as a matter of course, the right to think for himself.

In appealing to the intelligent American public, choosing for itself among the multitude of books now offered, it is my creed that an author should maintain completely and thoroughly his own individuality, and take the consequences. He cannot conjure strongly by imitating any one, or by representing any school or fashion. He must do his work conscientiously, for his readers know by instinct whether or not they are treated seriously and with respect. Above all, he must understand men and women sufficiently to interest them; for all the "powers that be" cannot compel them to read a book they do not like.

My early experience in respect to my books in the British Dominions has been similar to that of many others. My first stories were taken by one or more publishers without saying "by your leave," and no returns made of any kind. As time passed, Messrs. Ward, Locke Co., more than any other house, showed a disposition to treat me fairly. Increasing sums were given for successive books. Recently Mr. George Locke visited me, and offered liberal compensation for each new novel. He also agreed to give me five per cent copyright on all my old books published by him, no matter how obtained, in some instances revoking agreements which precluded the making of any such request on my part. In the case of many of these books he has no protection, for they are published by others; but he takes the simple ground that he will not sell any of my books without giving me a share in the profit. Such honorable action should tend to make piracy more odious than ever, on both sides of the sea. Other English firms have offered me the usual royalty, and I now believe that in spite of our House of Mis−Representatives at Washington, the majority of the British publishers are disposed to deal justly and honorably by American writers. In my opinion, the LOWER House in Congress has libelled and slandered the American people by acting as if their constituents, with thievish instincts, chuckled over pennies saved when buying pirated books. This great, rich, prosperous nation has been made a "fence," a receiver of stolen goods, and shamelessly committed to the crime for which poor wretches are sent to jail. Truly, when history is written, and it is learned that the whole power and statesmanship of the government were enlisted in behalf of the pork interest, while the literature of the country and the literary class were contemptuously ignored, it may be that the present period will become known as the Pork Era of the Republic. It is a strange fact that English publishers are recognizing our rights in advance of our own lawmakers.

In relating his experience in the pages of this magazine, Mr. Julian Hawthorne said in effect that one of the best rewards of the literary life was the friends it enabled the writer to make. When giving me his friendship, he proved how true this is. In my experience the literary class make good, genial, honest friends, while their keen, alert minds and knowledge of life in many of its most interesting aspects give an unfailing charm to their society. One can maintain the most cordial and intimate relations with editors of magazines and journals if he will recognize that such relations should have no influence whatever in the acceptance or declination of manuscripts. I am constantly receiving letters from literary aspirants who appear to think that if I will use a little influence their stories or papers would be taken and paid for. I have no such influence, nor do I wish any, in regard to my own work. The conscientious editor's first duty is to his periodical and its constituents, and he would and should be more scrupulous in accepting a manuscript from a friend than from a stranger. To show resentment because a manuscript is returned is absurd, however great may be our disappointment.

Perhaps one of the most perplexing and often painful experiences of an author comes from the appeals of those who hope through him to obtain immediate recognition as writers. One is asked to read manuscripts and commend them to publishers, or at least to give an opinion in regard to them, often to revise or even to rewrite certain portions. I remember that during one month I was asked to do work on the manuscripts of strangers that would require about a year of my time. The maker of such request does not realize that he or she is but one among many, and that the poor author would have to abandon all hope of supporting his family if he tried to comply. The majority who thus appeal to one know next to nothing of the literary life or the conditions of success. They write to the author in perfect good faith, often relating circumstances which touch his sympathies; yet if you tell them the truth about their manuscript, or say you have not time to read it, adding that you have no influence with

editors or publishers beyond securing a careful examination of what is written, you feel that you are often set down as a churl, and your inability to comply with their wishes is regarded as the selfishness and arrogance of success. The worried author has also his own compunctions, for while he has tried so often and vainly to secure the recognition requested, till he is in despair of such effort, he still is haunted by the fear that he may overlook some genius whom it would be a delight to guide through what seems a thorny jungle to the inexperienced.

In recalling the past, one remembers when he stood in such sore need of friends that he dislikes even the appearance of passing by on the other side. There are no riches in the world like stanch friends who prove themselves to be such in your need, your adversity, or your weakness. I have some treasured letters received after it had been telegraphed throughout the land that I was a bankrupt and had found myself many thousands of dollars worse off than nothing. The kindly words and looks, the cordial grasp of the hand, and the temporary loan occasionally, of those who stood by me when scarcely sane from overwork, trouble, and, worse than all, from insomnia, can never be forgotten while a trace of memory is left. Soon after my insolvency there came a date when all my interests in my books then published must be sold to the highest bidder. It seemed in a sense like putting my children up at auction; and yet I was powerless, since my interests under contracts were a part of my assets. These rights had been well advertised in the New York and county papers, as the statute required, and the popularity of the books was well known. Any one in the land could have purchased these books from me forever. A friend made the highest bid and secured the property. My rights in my first nine novels became his, legally and absolutely. There was even no verbal agreement between us—nothing but his kind, honest eyes to reassure me. He not only paid the sum he had bidden, but then and there wrote a check for a sum which, with my other assets, immediately liquidated my personal debts, principal and interest. The children of my fancy are again my children, for they speedily earned enough to repay my friend and to enable him to compromise with the holders of indorsed notes in a way satisfactory to them. It so happened that most of these creditors resided in my immediate neighborhood. I determined to fight out the battle in their midst and under their daily observation, and to treat all alike, without regard to their legal claims. Only one creditor tried to make life a burden; but he did his level best. The others permitted me to meet my obligations in my own time and way, and I am grateful for their consideration. When all had received the sum mutually agreed upon, and I had shaken hands with them, I went to the quaint and quiet little city of Santa Barbara, on the Pacific coast, for a change and partial rest. While there, however, I wrote my Charleston story, "The Earth Trembled." In September, 1887, I returned to my home at Cornwall−on−the−Hudson, and resumed my work in a region made dear by the memories of a lifetime. Just now I am completing a Southern story entitled "Miss Lou."

It so happens in my experience that I have discovered one who appears willing to stick closer to me than a brother, and even to pass as my "double," or else he is so helplessly in the hands of his publishers as to be an object of pity. A certain "Edward R. Roe" is also an author, and is suffering cruelly in reputation because his publishers so manage that he is identified with me. By strange coincidence, they hit upon a cover for his book which is almost a facsimile of the cover of my pamphlet novel, "An Original Belle," previously issued. The R in the name of this unfortunate man has been furnished with such a diminutive tail that it passes for a P, and even my friends supposed that the book, offered everywhere for sale, was mine. In many instances I have asked at news stands, "Whose book is that?" The prompt and invariable answer has been, "E. P. Roe's." I have seen book notices in which the volume was ascribed to me in anything but flattering terms. A distinguished judge, in a carefully written opinion, is so uncharitable as to characterize the coincidence in cover as a "fraud," and to say, "No one can look at the covers of the two publications and fail to see evidence of a design to deceive the public and to infringe upon the rights of the publisher and author"—that is, the rights of Messrs. Dodd, Mead would be well, as a rule, for other writers to begin with reputable, honorable publishers and to remain with them. A publisher can do more and better with a line of books than with isolated volumes. When an author's books are scattered, there is not sufficient inducement for any one to push them strongly, nor, as in the case above related, to protect a writer against a "double," should one appear. Authors often know little about business, and should deal with a publisher who will look after their interests as truly as his own. Unbusinesslike habits and methods are certainly not traits to be cultivated, for we often suffer grievously from their existence; yet as far as possible the author should be free from distracting cares. The novelist does his best work when abstracted from the actual world and living in its ideal counterpart which for the time he is imagining. When his creative work is completed, he should live very close to the real world, or else he will be imagining a state of things which neither God nor man had any hand in

bringing about.

CHAPTER I. SOMETHING BEFORE UNKNOWN

Clara Heyward was dressed in deep mourning, and it was evident that the emblems of bereavement were not worn merely in compliance with a social custom. Her face was pallid from grief, and her dark beautiful eyes were dim from much weeping. She sat in the little parlor of a cottage located in a large Californian city, and listened with apathetic expression as a young man pleaded for the greatest and most sacred gift that a woman can bestow. Ralph Brandt was a fine type of young vigorous manhood; and we might easily fancy that his strong, resolute face, now eloquent with deep feeling, was not one upon which a girl could look with indifference. Clara's words, however, revealed the apparent hopelessness of his suit.

"It's of no use, Ralph," she said; "I'm in no mood for such thoughts."

"You don't believe in me; you don't trust me," he resumed sadly. "You think that because I was once wild, and even worse, that I'll not be true to my promises and live an honest life. Have I not been honest when I knew that being so might cost me dear? Have I not told you of my past life and future purposes when I might have concealed almost everything?"

"It's not that, Ralph. I do believe you are sincere; and if the dreadful thing which has broken me down with sorrow had not happened, all might have been as you wish. I should have quite as much confidence in a young man who, like you, has seen evil and turned resolutely away from it, as in one who didn't know much about the world or himself either. What's more, father—"

At the word "father" her listless manner vanished, and she gave way to passionate sobs. "His foul murder is always before me," she wailed. "Oh, we were so happy! he was so kind, and made me his companion! I don't see how I can live without him. I can't think of love and marriage when I remember how he died, and that the villain who killed him is at large and unpunished. What right have I to forget this great wrong and to try to be happy? No, no! the knife that killed him pierced my heart; and it's bleeding all the time. I'm not fit to be any man's wife; and I will not bring my great sorrow into any man's home."

Brandt sprang up and paced the room for a few moments, his brow contracted in deep thought. Then, apparently coming to a decision, he sat down by his companion and took her cold, unresisting hand.

"My poor little girl," he said, kindly, "you don't half understand me yet. I love you all the more because you are heart−broken and pale with grief. That is the reason I have spoken so earnestly to− night. You will grieve yourself to death if left alone; and what good would your death do any one? It would spoil my life. Believe me, I would welcome you to my home with all your sorrow—all the more because of your sorrow; and I'd be so kind and patient that you'd begin to smile again some day. That's what your father would wish if he could speak to you, and not that you should grieve away your life for what can't be helped now. But I have a plan. It's right in my line to capture such scoundrels as the man who murdered your father; and what's more, I know the man, or rather I used to in old times. I've played many a game of euchre with him in which he cheated me out of money that I'd be glad to have now; and I'm satisfied that he does not know of any change in me. I was away on distant detective duty, you know, when your father was killed. I won't ask you to go over the painful circumstances; I can learn them at the prison. I shall try to get permission to search out Bute, desperate and dangerous as he is—"

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph," cried the girl, springing up, her eyes flashing through her tears, "if you will bring my father's murderer to justice, if you will prevent him from destroying other lives, as he surely will, you will find that I can refuse you nothing."

Then she paused, shook her head sadly, and withdrew the hand she had given him. "No," she resumed, "I shouldn't ask this; I don't ask it. As you say, he is desperate and dangerous; and he would take your life the moment he dreamed of your purpose. I should only have another cause for sorrow."

Brandt now smiled as if he were master of the situation. "Why, Clara," he exclaimed, "don't you know that running down and capturing desperadoes is now part of my business?"

"Yes; but you can get plenty of work that isn't so dangerous."

"I should be a nice fellow to ask you to be my wife and yet show I was afraid to arrest your father's murderer. You needn't ask me to do this; you are not going to be responsible for my course in the least. I shall begin operations this very night, and have no doubt that I can get a chance to work on the case. Now don't burden your

heart with any thoughts about my danger. I myself owe Bute as big a grudge as I can have against any human being. He cheated me and led me into deviltry years ago, and then I lost sight of him until he was brought to the prison of which your father was one of the keepers. I've been absent for the last three months, you know; but I didn't forget you or your father a day, and you remember I wrote you as soon as I heard of your trouble. I think your father sort of believed in me; he never made me feel I wasn't fit to see you or to be with you, and I'd do more for him living or dead than for any other man."

"He did believe in you, Ralph, and he always spoke well of you. Oh, you can't know how much I lost in him! After mother died he did not leave me to the care of strangers, but gave me most of his time when off duty. He sent me to the best schools, bought me books to read, and took me out evenings instead of going off by himself, as so many men do. He was so kind and so brave; oh, oh! you know he lost his life by trying to do his duty when another man would have given up. Bute and two others broke jail. Father saw one of his assistants stabbed, and he was knocked down himself. He might have remained quiet and escaped with a few bruises; but he caught Bute's foot, and then the wretch turned and stabbed him. He told me all with his poor pale lips before he died. Oh, oh! when shall I forget?"

"You can never forget, dear; I don't ask anything contrary to nature. You were a good daughter, and so I believe you will be a good wife. But if I bring the murderer to justice, you will feel that a great wrong has been righted—that all has been done that can be done. Then you'll begin to think that your father wouldn't wish you to grieve yourself to death, and that as he tried to make you happy while he was living, so he will wish you to be happy now he's gone."

"It isn't a question of happiness. I don't feel as if I could ever be happy again; and so I don't see how I can make you or any one else happy."

"That's my lookout, Clara. I'd be only too glad to take you as you are. Come, now, this is December. If I bring Bute in by Christmas, what will you give me?"

She silently and eloquently gave him her hand; but her lips quivered so she could not speak. He kissed her hand as gallantly as any olden−time knight, then added a little brusquely:

"See here, little girl, I'm not going to bind you by anything that looks like a bargain. I shall attempt all I've said; and then on Christmas, or whenever I get back, I'll speak my heart to you again just as I have spoken now."

"When a man acts as you do, Ralph, any girl would find it hard to keep free. I shall follow you night and day with my thoughts and prayers."

"Well, I'm superstitious enough to believe that I shall be safer and more successful on account of them. Clara, look me in the eyes before I go."

She looked up to his clear gray eyes as requested.

"I don't ask you to forget one who is dead; but don't you see how much you are to one who is living? Don't you see that in spite of all your sorrow you can still give happiness? Now, be as generous and kind as you can. Don't grieve hopelessly while I'm gone. That's what is killing you; and the thought of it fills me with dread. Try to think that you still have something and some one to live for. Perhaps you can learn to love me a little if you try, and then everything won't look so black. If you find you can't love me, I won't blame you—, and if I lose you as my wife, you won't lose a true, honest friend."

For the first time the girl became vaguely conscious of, the possibility of an affection, a tie superseding all others; she began to see how it was possible to give herself to this man, not from an impulse of gratitude or because she liked him better than any one else, but because of a feeling, new, mysterious, which gave him a sort of divine right in her. Something in the expression of his eyes had been more potent than his words; something subtle, swift as an electric spark had passed from him to her, awakening a faint, strange tumult in the heart she thought so utterly crushed. A few moments before, she could have promised resolutely to be his wife; she could have permitted his embrace with unresponsive apathy. Now she felt a sudden shyness. A faint color stole into her pale face, and she longed to be alone.

"Ralph," she faltered, "you are so generous, I—I don't know what to say."

"You needn't say anything till I come back. If possible, I will be here by Christmas, for you shouldn't be alone that day with your grief. Good−by."

The hand she gave him trembled, and her face was averted now.

"You will try to love me a little, won't you?"

"Yes," she whispered.

CHAPTER II. A VISITOR AT THE MINE

Ralph Brandt was admirably fitted for the task he had undertaken. With fearlessness he united imperturbable coolness and unwearied patience in pursuit of an object. Few knew him in his character of detective, and no one would have singled him out as an expert in his calling. The more difficult and dangerous the work, the more careless and indifferent his manner, giving the impression to superficial observers of being the very last person to be intrusted with responsible duty. But his chief and others on the force well knew that beneath Brandt's careless demeanor was concealed the relentless pertinacity of a bloodhound on track of its victim. With the trait of dogged pursuit all resemblance to the bloodthirsty animal ceased, and even the worst of criminals found him kind−hearted and good−natured AFTER they were within his power. Failure was an idea not to be entertained. If the man to be caught existed, he could certainly be found, was the principle on which our officer acted.

He readily obtained permission to attempt the capture of the escaped prisoner, Bute; but the murderer had disappeared, leaving no clew. Brandt learned that the slums of large cities and several mining camps had been searched in vain, also that the trains running east had been carefully watched. We need not try to follow his processes of thought, nor seek to learn how he soon came to the conclusion that his man was at some distant mining station working under an assumed name. By a kind of instinct his mind kept reverting to one of these stations with increasing frequency. It was not so remote in respect to mere distance; but it was isolated, off the lines of travel, with a gap of seventy miles between it and what might be termed civilization, and was suspected of being a sort of refuge for hard characters and fugitives from justice. Bute, when last seen, was making for the mountains in the direction of this mine. Invested with ample authority to bring in the outlaw dead or alive, Brandt followed this vague clew.

One afternoon, Mr. Alford, the superintendent of the mine, was informed that a man wished to see him. There was ushered into his private office an elderly gentleman who appeared as if he might be a prospecting capitalist or one of the owners of the mine. The superintendent was kept in doubt as to the character of the visitor for a few moments while Brandt sought by general remarks and leading questions to learn the disposition of the man who must, from the necessities of the case, become to some extent his ally in securing the ends of justice. Apparently the detective was satisfied, for he asked, suddenly:

"By the way, have you a man in your employ by the name of Bute?"

"No, sir," replied Mr. Alford, with a little surprise.

"Have you a man, then, who answers to the following description?" He gave a brief word photograph of the criminal.

"You want this man?" Mr. Alford asked in a low voice.

"Yes."

"Well, really, sir, I would like to know your motive, indeed, I may add, your authority, for—"

"There it is," Brand smilingly remarked, handing the superintendent a paper.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Mr. Alford, after a moment. "This is all right; and I am bound to do nothing to obstruct you in the performance of your duty." He now carefully closed the door and added, "What do you want this man for?"

"It's a case of murder."

"Phew! Apparently he is one of the best men on the force."

"Only apparently; I know him well."

Mr. Alford's brow clouded with anxiety, and after a moment he said, "Mr.—how shall I address you?"

"You had better continue to call me by the name under which I was introduced—Brown."

"Well, Mr. Brown, you have a very difficult and hazardous task, and you must be careful how you involve me in your actions. I shall not lay a straw in your way, but I cannot openly help you. It is difficult for me to get labor here at best; and it is understood that I ask no questions and deal with men on the basis simply of their relations to me. As long as I act on this understanding, I can keep public sentiment with me and enforce some degree of discipline. If it were known that I was aiding or abetting you in the enterprise you have in hand, my life would not be worth a rush. There are plenty in camp who would shoot me, just as they would you, should they learn of your

design. I fear you do not realize what you are attempting. A man like yourself, elderly and alone, has no better chance of taking such a fellow as you describe Bute to be than of carrying a ton of ore on his back down the mountain. In all sincerity, sir, I must advise you to depart quietly and expeditiously, and give no one besides myself a hint of your errand."

"Will you please step into the outer office and make sure that no one is within earshot?" said Brandt, quietly.

When Mr. Alford returned, the elderly man apparently had disappeared, and a smiling smooth−faced young fellow with short brown hair sat in his place. His host stared, the transformation was so great.

"Mr. Alford," said the detective, "I understand my business and the risks it involves. All I ask of you is that I may not be interfered with so far as you are concerned; and my chief object in calling is to prevent you being surprised by anything you may see or hear. About three miles or thereabouts from here, on the road running east, there is a fellow who keeps a tavern. Do you know him?"

"I know no good of him. He's the worst nuisance I have to contend with, for he keeps some of my men disabled much of the time."

"Well, I knew Bute years ago, and I can make him think I am now what I was then, only worse; and I will induce him to go with me to raid that tavern. If this plan fails, I shall try another, for I am either going to take Bute alive or else get ample proof that he is dead. There may be some queer goings−on before I leave, and all I ask is that you will neither interfere nor investigate. You may be as ignorant and non−committal as you please. I shall report progress to you, however, and may need your testimony, but will see to it that it is given by you as one who had nothing to do with the affair. Now please show me your quarters, so that I can find you at night if need be; also Bute's sleeping−place and the lay of the land to some extent. You'll find that I can take everything in mighty quick. See, I'm the elderly gentleman again," and he resumed his disguise with marvellous celerity.

Mr. Alford led the way through the outer office; and the two clerks writing there saw nothing to awaken the slightest suspicion. The superintendent's cottage stood on the road leading to the mine and somewhat apart from the other buildings. On the opposite side of the highway was a thicket of pines which promised cover until one plunged into the unbroken forest that covered the mountain−side.

Brandt observed this, and remarked, "I've studied the approaches to your place a little at I came along; but I suppose I shall have to give a day or two more to the work before making my attempt."

"Well," rejoined Mr. Alford, who was of rather a social turn and felt the isolation of his life, "why not be my guest for a time? I'll take the risk if you will remain incog, and keep aloof from the men."

"That I should do in any event till ready to act. Thank you for your kindness, for it may simplify my task very much. I will see to it that I do not compromise you. When I'm ready to snare my bird, you can dismiss me a little ostentatiously for New York."

Brandt's horse was now ordered to the stable. The two men entered the cottage, and soon afterward visited the different points of interest, Mr. Alford giving the natural impression that he was showing an interested stranger the appliances for working the mine. At one point he remarked in a low tone, "That's Bute's lodging−place. A half−breed, named Apache Jack, who speaks little English lives with him."

Brandt's seemingly careless and transitory glance rested on a little shanty and noted that it was separated from others of its class by a considerable interval.

"Bute, you say, is on the day−shift."

"Yes, he won't be up till six o'clock."

"I'll manage to see him then without his knowing it."

"Be careful. I take my risk on the ground of your good faith and prudence."

"Don't fear."

CHAPTER III. THWARTED

Brandt maintained his disguise admirably. His presence caused little comment, and he was spoken of as a visiting stockholder of the mine. During his walk with Mr. Alford he appeared interested only in machinery, ores, etc., but his trained eyes made a topographical map of surroundings, and everything centred about Bute's shanty. In the evening, he amply returned his host's hospitality by comic and tragic stories of criminal life. The next day he began to lay his plans carefully, and disappeared soon after breakfast with the ostensible purpose of climbing a height at some distance for the sake of the prospect. He soon doubled round, noting every covert approach to Bute's lodgings. His eye and ear were as quick as an Indian's; but he still maintained, in case he was observed, the manner of an elderly stranger strolling about to view the region.

By noon he felt that he had the immediate locality by heart. His afternoon task was to explore the possibilities of a stream that crossed the mine road something over a mile away, and for this purpose he mounted his horse. He soon reached the shallow ford, and saw that the water was backed up for a considerable distance, and that the shallows certainly extended around a high, jutting rock which hid the stream from that point and beyond from the road. The bed appeared smooth, firm, and sandy, and he waded his horse up the gentle current until he was concealed from the highway. A place, however, was soon reached where the water came tumbling down over impassable rocks; and lie was compelled to ascend the wooded shore. This he did on the side nearest to the mine house, and found that with care he could lead his horse to a point that could not be, he thought, over half a mile from the superintendent's cottage. Here there was a little dell around which the pines grew so darkly and thickly that he determined to make it his covert should he fail in his first attempt. His object now was to see if his estimate of proximity to the mine was correct; and leaving his horse, he pushed up the mountain−side. At last he reached a precipitous ledge. Skirting this a short distance, he found a place of comparatively easy ascent, and soon learned with much satisfaction that he was not over two hundred yards from the thicket opposite Mr. Alford's quarters. These discoveries all favored possible future operations; and he retraced his steps, marking his returning path by bits of white paper, held in place by stones against the high prevailing winds. Near the spot where he had left his horse he found a nook among the rocks in which a fire would be well hidden. Having marked the place carefully with his eye and obtained his bearings, he led his horse back to the stream and reached the unfrequented road again without being observed.

His next task was to discover some kind of a passageway from the mine road to a point on the main highway, leading to the west and out of the mountains. He found no better resource than to strike directly into the forest and travel by points of the compass. Fortunately, the trees were lofty and comparatively open, and he encountered no worse difficulties than some steep and rugged descents, and at last emerged on the post road at least a mile to the west of the tavern, which stood near its intersection with the mine road; Returning, he again marked out a path with paper as he had before. The sun was now low in the sky; and as he trotted toward the mine, he had but one more precaution to take, and that was to find a place where the trees were sufficiently open to permit him to ride into their shade at night in case he wished to avoid parties upon the road. Having indicated two or three such spots by a single bit of paper that would glimmer in the moonlight, he joined Mr. Alford at supper, feeling that his preparations were nearly complete. When they were alone, he told his host that it would be best not to gratify his curiosity, for then he could honestly say that he knew nothing of any detective's plans or whereabouts.

"I cannot help feeling," said Mr. Alford, "that you are playing with fire over a powder magazine. Now that I know you better, I hate to think of the risk that you are taking. It has troubled me terribly all day. I feel as if we were on the eve of a tragedy. You had better leave quietly in the morning and bring a force later that would make resistance impossible, or else give it up altogether. Why should you throw away your life? I tell you again that if the men get a hint of your character or purpose they will hunt you to death."

"It's a part of my business to incur such risks," replied Brandt, quietly. "Besides, I have a motive in this case which would lead me to take a man out of the jaws of hell."

"That's what you may find you are attempting here. Well, we're in for it now, I suppose, since you are so determined."

"I don't think you will appear involved in the affair at all. In the morning you give me a sack of grain for my

horse and some provisions for myself, and then bid farewell to Mr. Brown in the most open and natural manner possible. You may not see me again. It is possible I may have to borrow a horse of you it my scheme to−night don't work. It will be returned or paid for very soon."

"Bute has a pony. He brought it with him, and he and Apache Jack between them manage to keep it. They stable it nights in a little shed back of their shanty."

"I had discovered this, and hope to take the man away on his pony. I understand why Bute keeps the animal. He knew that he might have to travel suddenly and fast."

The next morning Mr. Alford parted with Brandt as had been arranged, the latter starting ostensibly for the nearest railway station. All day long the superintendent was nervous and anxious; but he saw no evidences of suspicion or uneasiness among those in his employ.

Brandt rode at a sharp canter as long as he was in sight, and then approached the stream slowly and warily. When satisfied that he was unobserved, he again passed up its shallow bed around the concealing rock, and sought his hiding−place on the mountain−side. Aware that the coming nights might require ceaseless activity, his first measure was to secure a few hours of sound sleep; and he had so trained himself that he could, as it were, store up rest against long and trying emergencies. The rocks sheltered him against the wind, and a fire gave all the comfort his hardy frame required, as he reposed on his couch of pine−needles. Early in the afternoon he fed his horse, took a hearty meal himself, and concealed the remaining store so that no wild creatures could get at it. At early twilight he returned by way of the stream and hid his horse well back in the woods near the mine. To this he now went boldly, and inquired for Tim Atkins, Bute's assumed name. He was directed to the shanty with which he had already made himself so familiar.

Bute was found alone, and was much surprised at sight of his old gambling acquaintance of better days, for his better days were those of robbery before he had added the deeper stain of murder. Brandt soon allayed active fears and suspicions by giving the impression that in his descensus he had reached the stage of robbery and had got on the scent of some rich booty in the mountains. "But how did you know I was here?" demanded Bute.

"I didn't know it," replied Brandt, adopting his old vernacular; "but I guessed as much, for I knew there was more'n one shady feller in this gang, and I took my chances on findin' you, for, says I to myself, if I can find Bute, I've found the right man to help me crack a ranch when there's some risk and big plunder."

He then disclosed the fact of hearing that the keeper of the tavern had accumulated a good sum of hard money, and was looking out for a chance to send it to a bank. "We can save him the trouble, yer know," he concluded, facetiously.

"Well," said Bute, musingly, "I'm gittin' tired of this dog's life, and I reckon I'll go snacks with yer and then put out fer parts unknown. I was paid t'other day, and there ain't much owin' me here. I guess it'll be safer fer me ter keep movin' on, too."

"You may well say that, Bute. I heard below that there was goin' to be some investigations inter this gang, and that there was more'n one feller here whose pictur was on exhibition."

"That so?" said Bute, hastily. "Well, I'll go with yer ter−night, fer it's time I was movin'. I kin tell yer one thing, though— there'll be no investigations here unless a fair−sized regiment makes it. Every man keeps his shooter handy."

"Hanged if we care how the thing turns out. You and me'll be far enough away from the shindy. Now make your arrangements prompt, for we must be on the road by nine o'clock, so we can get through early in the night and have a good start with the swag. My plan is to ambush the whiskey shop, go and demand drinks soon after everybody is gone, and then proceed to business."

"Can't we let my mate, Apache Jack, in with us? I'll stand for him."

"No, no, I don't know anything about Apache Jack; and I can trust you. We can manage better alone, and I'd rather have one−half than one−third."

"Trust me, kin you? you—fool," thought Bute. "So ye thinks I'll sit down and divide the plunder socially with you when I kin give yer a quiet dig in the ribs and take it all. One more man now won't matter. I'm a−goin' ter try fer enough ter−night ter take me well out of these parts."

Bute's face was sinister enough to suggest any phase of evil, and Brandt well knew that he was capable of what he meditated. It was now the policy of both parties, however, to be very friendly, and Bute was still further mellowed by a draught of liquor from Brandt's flask.

They had several games of cards in which it was managed that Bute's winnings should be the larger; and at nine in the evening they started on what was to Bute another expedition of robbery and murder. Mr. Alford, who was on the alert, saw them depart with a deep sigh of relief. The night was cloudy, but the moon gave plenty of light for travelling. Brandt soon secured his horse, and then appeared to give full rein to his careless, reckless spirit.

As they approached the stream, he remarked, "I say, Bute, it's too bad we can't use the pasteboards while on the jog; but I can win a five out of you by an old game of ours. I bet you I can empty my revolver quicker 'n you can."

"We'd better save our amernition and make no noise."

"Oh, pshaw! I always have better luck when I'm free and careless like. It's your sneaking fellers that always get caught. Besides, who'll notice? This little game is common enough all through the mountains, and everybody knows that there's no mischief in such kind of firing. I want to win back some of my money."

"Well, then, take you up; go ahead."

Instantly from Brandt's pistol there were six reports following one another so quickly that they could scarcely be distinguished.

"Now beat that if you can!" cried Brandt, who had a second and concealed revolver ready for an emergency.

"The fool!" thought Bute, "to put himself at the marcy of any man. I can pluck him to−night like a winged pa'tridge;" but he too fired almost as quickly as his companion.

"You only used five ca'tridges in that little game, my friend," said Brandt.

"Nonsense! I fired so quick you couldn't count 'em."

"Now see here, Bute," resumed Brandt, in an aggrieved tone, "you've got to play fair with me. I've cut my eye−teeth since you used to fleece me, and I'll swear you fired only five shots. Let's load and try again."

"What the use of sich——nonsense? You'll swar that you fired the quickest; and of course I'll swar the same, and there's nobody here ter jedge. What's more, Ralph Brandt, I wants you and every man ter know that I always keeps a shot in reserve, and that I never misses. So let's load and jog on, and stop foolin'."

"That scheme has failed," thought Brandt, as he replaced the shells with cartridges.

His purpose was to find a moment when his companion was completely in his power, and it came sooner than he expected. When they drew near the brook, it was evident that Bute's pony was thirsty, for it suddenly darted forward and thrust its nose into the water. Therefore, for an instant, Bute was in advance with his back toward the detective. Covering the fellow with his revolver, Brandt shouted:

"Bute, throw up your hands; surrender, or you are a dead man!"

Instantly the truth flashed through the outlaw's mind. Instead of complying, he threw himself forward over the pony's neck and urged the animal forward. Brandt fired, and Bute fell with a splash into the water. At that moment three miners, returning from the tavern, came shouting to the opposite side of the stream. The frightened pony, relieved of its burden, galloped homeward. Brandt also withdrew rapidly toward the mine for some distance, and then rode into the woods. Having tied his horse well back from the highway, he reconnoitred the party that had so inopportunely interfered with his plans. He discovered that they were carrying Bute, who, from his groans and oaths, was evidently not dead, though he might be mortally wounded. His rescuers were breathing out curses and threats of vengeance against Brandt, now known to be an officer of the law.

"The job has become a little complicated now," muttered Brandt, after they had passed; "and I must throw them off the scent. There will be a dozen out after me soon."

He remounted his horse, stole silently down the road, crossed the stream, and then galloped to the tavern, and calling out the keeper, asked if there was any shorter road out of the mountains than the one leading to the west. Being answered in the negative, he rode hastily away. On reaching the place where he had struck this road the previous day, he entered the woods, followed the rugged trail that he had marked by bits of paper, and slowly approached the mine road again near the point where the stream crossed it. He then reconnoitred and learned that there was evidently a large party exploring the woods between the stream and the mine.

At last they all gathered at the ford for consultation, and Brandt heard one say:

"We're wastin' time beatin' round here. He'd naterly put fer the lowlands as soon as he found he was balked in takin' his man. I move we call on Whiskey Bob, and see if a man's rode that way ter− night."

A call on Whiskey Bob was apparently always acceptable; and the party soon disappeared down the

road—some on horses and more on foot. Brandt then quietly crossed the road and gained his retreat on the mountain−side.

"I must camp here now till the fellow dies, and I can prove it, or until I can get another chance," was his conclusion as he rubbed down and fed his horse.

CHAPTER IV. TAKEN ALIVE

After taking some refreshment himself, Brandt decided to go to the thicket opposite the superintendent's house for a little observation. He soon reached this outlook, and saw that something unusual was occurring in the cottage. At last the door opened, and Bute was assisted to his shanty by two men. They had scarcely disappeared before Brandt darted across the road and knocked for admittance.

"Great Scott! you here?" exclaimed Mr. Alford.

"Yes, and here I'm going to stay till I take my man," replied the detective, with a laugh. "Don't be alarmed. I shall not remain in your house, but in the neighborhood."

"You are trifling with your life, and, I may add, with mine."

"Not at all. Come up to your bedroom. First draw the curtains close, and we'll compare notes. I won't stay but a few moments."

Mr. Alford felt that it was best to comply, for some one might come and find them talking in the hall. When Brandt entered the apartment, he threw himself into a chair and laughed in his low careless style as he said, "Well, I almost bagged my game to− night, and would have done so had not three of your men, returning from the tavern, interfered."

"There's a party out looking for you now."

"I know it; but I've put them on the wrong trail. What I want to learn is, will Bute live?"

"Yes; your shot made a long flesh−wound just above his shoulders. A little closer, and it would have cut his vertebrae and finished him. He has lost a good deal of blood, and could not be moved for some days except at some risk."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes."

"Well, he may have to incur the risk. I only wish to be certain that he will not take it on his own act at once. You'll soon miss him in any event."

"The sooner the better. I wish your aim had been surer."

"That wasn't my good luck. Next time I'll have to shoot closer or else take him alive."

"But you can't stay in this region. They will all be on the alert now."

"Oh, no. The impression will be general to−morrow that I've made for the lowlands as fast as my horse could carry me. Don't you worry. Till I move again, I'm safe enough. All I ask of you now is to keep Bute in his own shanty, and not to let him have more than one man to take care of him if possible. Good−night. You may not see me again, and then again you may."

"Well, now that you are here," said the superintendent, who was naturally brave enough, "spend an hour or two, or else stay till just before daylight. I confess I am becoming intensely interested in your adventure, and would take a hand in it if I could; but you know well enough that if I did, and it became known, I would have to find business elsewhere very suddenly—that is, if given the chance."

"I only wish your passive co−operation. I should be glad, however, if you would let me take a horse, if I must."

"Certainly, as long as you leave my black mare."

Brandt related what had occurred, giving a comical aspect to everything, and then, after reconnoitring the road from a darkened window, regained his cover in safety. He declined to speak of his future plans or to give any clew to his hiding−place, to which he now returned.

During the few remaining hours of darkness and most of the next day, he slept and lounged about his fire. The next night was too bright and clear for anything beyond a reconnoissance, and he saw evidences of an alertness which made him very cautious. He did not seek another interview with Mr. Alford, for now nothing was to be gained by it.

The next day proved cloudy, and with night began a violent storm of wind and rain. Brandt cowered over his fire till nine o'clock, and then taking a slight draught from his flask, chuckled, "This is glorious weather for my work. Here's to Clara's luck this time!"

In little over an hour he started for the mine, near which he concealed his horse. Stealing about in the deep shadows, he soon satisfied himself that no one was on the watch, and then approaching the rear of Bute's shanty, found to his joy that the pony was in the shed. A chink in the board siding enabled him to look into the room which contained his prey; he started as he saw Apache Jack, instantly recognizing in him another criminal for whom a large reward was offered.

"Better luck than I dreamed of," he thought. "I shall take them both; but I now shall have to borrow a horse of Alford;" and he glided away, secured an animal from the stable, and tied it near his own. In a short time he was back at his post of observation. It had now become evident that no one even imagined that there was danger while such a storm was raging. The howling wind would drown all ordinary noises; and Brandt determined that the two men in the shanty should be on their way to jail that night. When he again put his eye to the chink in the wall, Bute was saying:

"Well, no one will start fer the mountings while this storm lasts, but, wound or no wound, I must get out of this as soon as it's over. There's no safety fer me here now."

"Ef they comes fer you, like enough they'll take me," replied Apache Jack, who, now that he was alone with his confederate, could speak his style of English fast enough. His character of half−breed was a disguise which his dark complexion had suggested. "Ter−morrer night, ef it's clar, we'll put out fer the easterd. I know of a shanty in the woods not so very fur from here in which we kin put up till yer's able ter travel furder. Come, now, take a swig of whiskey with me and then we'll sleep; there's no need of our watchin' any longer on a night like this. I'll jest step out an' see ef the pony's safe; sich a storm's 'nuff ter scare him off ter the woods."

"Well, jest lay my shooter on the cha'r here aside me 'fore you go. I feel safer with the little bull−dog in reach."

This the man did, then putting his own revolver on the table, that it might not get wet, began to unbar the door. Swift as a shadow Brandt glided out of the shed and around on the opposite side of the shanty.

An instant later Bute was paralyzed by seeing his enemy enter the open door. Before the outlaw could realize that Brandt was not a feverish vision induced by his wound, the detective had captured both revolvers, and was standing behind the door awaiting Apache Jack's return.

"Hist!" whispered Brandt, "not a sound, or you will both be dead in two minutes."

Bute's nerves were so shattered that he could scarcely have spoken, even if he had been reckless enough to do so. He felt himself doomed; and when brutal natures like his succumb, they usually break utterly. Therefore, he could do no more than shiver with unspeakable dread as if he had an ague.

Soon Apache Jack came rushing in out of the storm, to be instantly confronted by Brandt's revolver. The fellow glanced at the table, and seeing his own weapon was gone, instinctively half drew a long knife.

"Put that knife on the table!" ordered Brandt, sternly. "Do you think I'd allow any such foolishness?"

The man now realized his powerlessness, and obeyed; and Brandt secured this weapon also.

"See here, Apache Jack, or whatever your name is, don't you run your head into a noose. You know I'm empowered to arrest Bute, and you don't know anything about the force I have at hand. All you've got to do is to obey me, an officer of the law, like a good citizen. If you don't, I'll shoot you; and that's all there is about it. Will you obey orders?"

"I no understan'."

"Stop lying! You understand English as well as I do, and I'll suspect YOU if you try that on again. Come, now! I've no time to lose. It's death or obedience!"

"You can't blame a feller fer standin' by his mate," was the sullen yet deprecatory reply.

"I can blame any man, and arrest or shoot him too, who obstructs the law. You must obey me for the next half−hour, to prove that you are not Bute's accomplice."

"He's only my mate, and our rule is ter stand by each other; but, as you say, I can't help myself, and there's no use of my goin' ter jail."

"I should think not," added Brandt, appealing to the fellow's selfish hope of escaping further trouble if Bute was taken. "Now get my prisoner out of bed and dress him as soon as possible,"

"But he ain't able ter be moved. The superintendent said he wasn't."

"That's my business, not yours. Do as I bid you."

"Why don't yer yell fer help?" said Bute, in a hoarse whisper.

"Because he knows I'd shoot him if he did," remarked Brandt, coolly.

"Come, old man," said Jack, "luck's agin yer. Ef there's any hollerin' ter be done, yer's as able ter do that as I be."

"Quick, quick! jerk him out of bed and get him into his clothes. I won't permit one false move."

Jack now believed that his only means of safety was to be as expeditious as possible, and that if Bute was taken safely he would be left unmolested. People of their class rarely keep faith with one another when it is wholly against their interests to do so. Therefore, in spite of the wounded man's groans, he was quickly dressed and his hands tied behind him. As he opened his mouth to give expression to his protests, he found himself suddenly gagged by Brandt, who stood behind him. Then a strap was buckled about his feet, and he lay on the floor helpless and incapable of making a sound.

"Now, Jack," said Brandt, "go before me and bridle and saddle the pony; then bring him to the door."

Jack obeyed.

"Now put Bute upon him. I'll hold his head; but remember I'm covering you with a dead bead all the time."

"No need of that. I'm civil enough now."

"Well, you know we're sort of strangers, and it's no more than prudent for me to be on the safe side till we part company. That's right, strap his feet underneath. Now lead the pony in such directions as I say. Don't try to make off till I'm through with you, or you'll be shot instantly. I shall keep within a yard of you all the time."

They were not long in reaching the horse that Brandt had borrowed, and Jack said, "I s'pose I kin go now."

"First untie Bute's hands so he can guide the pony."

As the fellow attempted to do this, and his two hands were close together, Brandt slipped a pair of light steel handcuffs over his wrists, and the man was in his power. Almost before the new prisoner could recover from his surprise, he was lifted on the borrowed horse, and his legs also tied underneath.

"This ain't fa'r. You promised ter let me go when you got Bute off."

"I haven't got him off yet. Of course I can't let you go right back and bring a dozen men after us. You must be reasonable."

The fellow yelled for help; but the wind swept the sound away.

"If you do that again, I'll gag you too," said Brandt. "I tell you both once more, and I won't repeat the caution, that your lives depend on obedience." Then he mounted, and added, "Bute, I'm going to untie your hands, and you must ride on ahead of me. I'll lead Jack's horse."

In a moment he had his prisoners in the road, and was leaving the mine at a sharp pace. Bute was so cowed and dazed with terror that he obeyed mechanically. The stream was no longer a shallow brook, but a raging torrent which almost swept them away as Brandt urged them relentlessly through it. The tavern was dark and silent as they passed quickly by it. Then Brandt took the gag from Bute's mouth, and he groaned, cursed, and pleaded by turns. Hour after hour he urged them forward, until at last Bute gave out and fell forward on the pony's neck. Brandt dismounted and gave the exhausted man a draught from his flask.

"Oh, shoot me and have done with it!" groaned Bute; "I'd rather be shot than hanged anyhow."

"Couldn't think of it," replied the detective, cheerily. "My rule is to take prisoners alive, so that they can have a fair trial and be sure that they get justice. I'd take you the rest of the way in a bed if I could, but if you can't sit up, I'll have to tie you on. We'll reach a friend of mine by daylight, and then you can ride in a wagon, so brace up."

This the outlaw did for a time, and then he gave out utterly and was tied more securely to the pony. Out of compassion, Brandt thereafter travelled more slowly; and when the sun was an hour high, he led his forlorn captives to the house of a man whom he knew could be depended upon for assistance. After a rest sufficient to give Bute time to recover somewhat, the remainder of the journey was made without any incident worth mentioning, and the prisoners were securely lodged in jail on the evening of the 24th of December.

CHAPTER V. WHAT BRANDT SAW CHRISTMAS EVE

Brandt's words and effort had had their natural effect on the mind of Clara Heyward. They proved an increasing diversion of her thoughts, and slowly dispelled the morbid, leaden grief under which she had been sinking. Her new anxiety in regard to her lover's fortune and possible fate was a healthful counter− irritant. Half consciously she yielded to the influence of his strong, hopeful spirit, and almost before she was aware of it, she too began to hope. Chief of all, his manly tenderness and unbargaining love stole into her heart like a subtle balm; and responsive love, the most potent of remedies, was renewing her life. She found herself counting the days and then the hours that must intervene before the 25th. On Christmas eve her woman's nature triumphed, and she instinctively added such little graces to her toilet as her sombre costume permitted. She also arranged her beautiful hair in the style which she knew he admired. He might come; and she determined that his first glance should reveal that he was not serving one who was coldly apathetic to his brave endeavor and loyalty.

Indeed, even she herself wondered at the changes that had taken place during the brief time which had elapsed since their parting. There was a new light in her eyes, and a delicate bloom tinged her cheeks.

"Oh," she murmured, "it's all so different now that I feel that I can live for him and make him happy."

She was sure that she could welcome him in a way that would assure him of the fulfilment of all his hopes; but when he did come with his eager, questioning eyes, she suddenly found herself under a strange restraint, tongue−tied and embarrassed. She longed to put her arms about his neck and tell him all—the new life, the new hope which his look of deep affection had kindled; and in effort for self−control, she seemed to him almost cold. He therefore became perplexed and uncertain of his ground, and took refuge in the details of his expedition, meanwhile mentally assuring himself that he must keep his word and put no constraint on the girl contrary to the dictates of her heart.

As his mind grew clearer, his keen observation began to reveal hopeful indications. She was listening intently with approval, and something more in her expression, he dared to fancy. Suddenly he exclaimed, "How changed you are for the better, Clara! You are lovelier to−night than ever you were. What is it in your face that is so sweet and bewildering? You were a pretty girl before; now you are a beautiful woman."

The color came swiftly at his words, and she faltered as she averted her eyes, "Please go on with your story, Ralph. You have scarcely begun yet. I fear you were in danger."

He came and stood beside her. "Clara," he pleaded, "look at me."

Hesitatingly she raised her eyes to his.

"Shall I tell you what I hope I see?"

The faintest suggestion of a smile hovered about her trembling lips.

"I hope I see what you surely see in mine. Come, Clara, you shall choose before you hear my story. Am I to be your husband or friend? for I've vowed that you shall not be without a loyal protector."

"Ralph, Ralph," she cried, springing up and hiding her face on his shoulder, "I have no choice at all. You know how I loved papa; but I've learned that there's another and different kind of love. I didn't half understand you when you first spoke; now I do. You will always see in my eyes what you've seen to−night."