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#21 in our series by Gilbert Parker

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MRS. FALCHION, BY PARKER, V2 ***

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MRS. FALCHION

By Gilbert Parker

BOOK II.

THE SLOPE OF THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER XI

AMONG THE HILLS OF GOD

"Your letters, sir," said my servant, on the last evening of the college year. Examinations were over at last, and I was wondering where I should spend my holidays. The choice was very wide; ranging from the Muskoka lakes to the Yosemite Valley. Because it was my first year in Canada, I really preferred not to go beyond the Dominion. With these thoughts in my mind I opened my letters. The first two did not interest me; tradesmen's bills seldom do. The third brought a thumping sensation of pleasure--though it was not from Miss Treherne. I had had one from her that morning, and this was a pleasure which never came twice in one day, for Prince's College, Toronto, was a long week's journey from London, S.W. Considering, however, that I did receive letters from her once a week, it may be concluded that Clovelly did not; and that, if he had, it would have been by a serious infringement of my rights. But, indeed, as I have learned since, Clovelly took his defeat in a very characteristic fashion, and said on an important occasion some generous things about me.

The letter that pleased me so much was from Galt Roscoe, who, as he had intended, was settled in a new but thriving district of British Columbia, near the Cascade Mountains. Soon after his complete recovery he had been ordained in England, had straightway sailed for Canada, and had gone to work at once. This note was an invitation to spend the holiday months with him, where, as he said, a man "summering high among the hills of God" could see visions and dream dreams, and hunt and fish too--especially fish. He urged that he would not talk parish concerns at me; that I should not be asked to be godfather to any young mountaineers; and that the only drawback, so far as my own predilections were concerned, was the monotonous health of the people. He described his summer cottage of red pine as being built on the edge of a lovely ravine; he said that he had the Cascades on one hand with their big glacier fields, and mighty pine forests on the other; while the balmiest breezes of June awaited "the professor of pathology and genial saw-bones." At the end of the letter he hinted something about a pleasant little secret for my ear when I came; and remarked immediately afterwards that there were one or two delightful families at Sunburst and Viking, villages in his parish. One naturally associated the little secret with some member of one of these delightful families. Finally, he said he would like to show me how it

was possible to transform a naval man into a parson.

My mind was made up. I wrote to him that I would start at once. Then I began to make preparations, and meanwhile fell to thinking again about him who was now the Reverend Galt Roscoe. After the 'Fulvia' reached London I had only seen him a few times, he having gone at once into the country to prepare for ordination. Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron I had met several times, but Mrs. Falchion forbore inquiring for Galt Roscoe: from which, and from other slight but significant matters, I gathered that she knew of his doings and whereabouts. Before I started for Toronto she said that she might see me there some day, for she was going to San Francisco to inspect the property her uncle had left her, and in all probability would make a sojourn in Canada. I gave her my address, and she then said she understood that Mr. Roscoe intended taking a missionary parish in the wilds. In his occasional letters to me while we all were in England Roscoe seldom spoke of her, but, when he did, showed that he knew of her movements. This did not strike me at the time as anything more than natural. It did later.

Within a couple of weeks I reached Viking, a lumbering town with great saw-mills, by way of San Francisco and Vancouver. Roscoe met me at the coach, and I was taken at once to the house among the hills. It stood on the edge of a ravine, and the end of the verandah looked over a verdant precipice, beautiful but terrible too. It was uniquely situated; a nest among the hills, suitable either for work or play. In one's ears was the low, continuous din of the rapids, with the music of a neighbouring waterfall.

On the way up the hills I had a chance to observe Roscoe closely. His face had not that sturdy buoyancy which his letter suggested. Still, if it was pale, it had a glow which it did not possess before, and even a stronger humanity than of old. A new look had come into his eyes, a certain absorbing earnestness, refining the past asceticism. A more amiable and unselfish comrade man never had.

The second day I was there he took me to call upon a family at Viking, the town with a great saw-mill and two smaller ones, owned by James Devlin, an enterprising man who had grown rich at lumbering, and who lived here in the mountains many months in each year.

Mr. James Devlin had a daughter who had had some advantages in the East after her father had become rich, though her earlier life was spent altogether in the mountains. I soon saw where Roscoe's secret was to be found. Ruth Devlin was a tall girl of sensitive features, beautiful eyes, and rare personality. Her life, as I came to know, had been one of great devotion and self-denial. Before her father had made his fortune, she had nursed a frail-bodied, faint-hearted mother, and had cared for, and been a mother to, her younger sisters. With wealth and ease came a brighter bloom to her cheek, but it had a touch of care which would never quite disappear, though it became in time a beautiful wistfulness rather than anxiety. Had this responsibility come to her in a city, it might have spoiled her beauty and robbed her of her youth altogether; but in the sustaining virtue of a life in the mountains, warm hues remained on

her cheek and a wonderful freshness in her nature. Her family worshipped her--as she deserved.

That evening Roscoe confided to me that he had not asked Ruth Devlin to be his wife, nor had he, indeed, given her definite tokens of his love. But the thing was in his mind as a happy possibility of the future. We talked till midnight, sitting at the end of the verandah overlooking the ravine. This corner, called the coping, became consecrated to our many conversations. We painted and sketched there in the morning (when we were not fishing or he was not at his duties), received visitors, and smoked in the evening, inhaling the balsam from the pines. An old man and his wife kept the house for us, and gave us to eat of simple but comfortable fare. The trout-fishing was good, and many a fine trout was broiled for our evening meal; and many a fine string of trout found its way to the tables of Roscoe's poorest parishioners, or else to furnish the more fashionable table at which Ruth Devlin presided. There were excursions up the valley, and picnics on the hill-sides, and occasional lunches and evening parties at the summer hotel, a mile from us farther down the valley, at which tourists were beginning to assemble.

Yet, all the time, Roscoe was abundantly faithful to his duties at Viking and in the settlement called Sunburst, which was devoted to salmon-fishing. Between Viking and Sunburst there was a great jealousy and rivalry; for the salmon-fishers thought that the mills, though on a tributary stream, interfered, by the sawdust spilled in the river, with the travel and spawning of the salmon. It needed all the tact of both Mr. Devlin and Roscoe to keep the places from open fighting. As it was, the fire smouldered. When Sunday came, however, there seemed to be truce between the villages. It appeared to me that one touched the primitive and idyllic side of life: lively, sturdy, and simple, with nature about us at once benignant and austere. It is impossible to tell how fresh, bracing, and inspiring was the climate of this new land. It seemed to glorify humanity, to make all who breathed it stalwart, and almost pardonable even in wrong-doing. Roscoe was always received respectfully, and even cordially, among the salmon-fishers of Sunburst, as among the mill-men and river-drivers of Viking: not the less so, because he had an excellent faculty for machinery, and could talk to the people in their own colloquialisms. He had, besides, though there was little exuberance in his nature, a gift of dry humour, which did more than anything else, perhaps, to make his presence among them unrestrained.

His little churches at Viking and Sunburst were always well attended--often filled to overflowing--and the people gave liberally to the offertory: and I never knew any clergyman, however holy, who did not view such a proceeding with a degree of complacency. In the pulpit Roscoe was almost powerful. His knowledge of the world, his habits of directness, his eager but not hurried speech, his unconventional but original statements of things, his occasional literary felicity and unusual tact, might have made him distinguished in a more cultured community. Yet there was something to modify all this: an occasional indefinable sadness, a constant note of pathetic warning. It struck me that I never had met a man whose words and manner were at times so charged with pathos; it was artistic in its searching simplicity. There was some

unfathomable fount in his nature which was even beyond any occurrence of his past; some radical, constitutional sorrow, coupled with a very strong, practical, and even vigorous nature.

One of his most ardent admirers was a gambler, horse-trader, and watch-dealer, who sold him a horse, and afterwards came and offered him thirty dollars, saying that the horse was worth that much less than Roscoe had paid for it, and protesting that he never could resist the opportunity of getting the best of a game. He said he did not doubt but that he would do the same with one of the archangels. He afterwards sold Roscoe a watch at cost, but confessed to me that the works of the watch had been smuggled. He said he was so fond of the parson that he felt he had to give him a chance of good things. It was not uncommon for him to discourse of Roscoe's quality in the bar-rooms of Sunburst and Viking, in which he was ably seconded by Phil Boldrick, an eccentric, warm-hearted fellow, who was so occupied in the affairs of the villages generally, and so much an advisory board to the authorities, that he had little time left to progress industrially himself.

Once when a noted bully came to Viking, and, out of sheer bravado and meanness, insulted Roscoe in the streets, two or three river-drivers came forward to avenge the insult. It was quite needless, for the clergyman had promptly taken the case in his own hands. Waving them back, he said to the bully: "I have no weapon, and if I had, I could not take your life, nor try to take it; and you know that very well. But I propose to meet your insolence--the first shown me in this town."

Here murmurs of approbation went round.

"You will, of course, take the revolver from your pocket, and throw it on the ground."

A couple of other revolvers were looking the bully in the face, and he sullenly did as he was asked.

"You have a knife: throw that down."

This also was done under the most earnest emphasis of the revolvers. Roscoe calmly took off his coat. "I have met such scoundrels as you on the quarter-deck," he said, "and I know what stuff is in you. They call you beachcombers in the South Seas. You never fight fair. You bully women, knife natives, and never meet any one in fair fight. You have mistaken your man this time."

He walked close up to the bully, his face like steel, his thumbs caught lightly in his waistcoat pockets; but it was noticeable that his hands were shut.

"Now," he said, "we are even as to opportunity. Repeat, if you please, what you said a moment ago."

The bully's eye quailed, and he answered nothing. "Then, as I said, you are a coward and a cur, who insults peaceable men and weak women. If I

know Viking right, it has no room for you." Then he picked up his coat, and put it on.

"Now," he added, "I think you had better go; but I leave that to the citizens of Viking."

What they thought is easily explained. Phil Boldrick, speaking for all, said: "Yes, you had better go--quick; but on the hop like a cur, mind you: on your hands and knees, jumping all the way."

And, with weapons menacing him, this visitor to Viking departed, swallowing as he went the red dust disturbed by his hands and feet.

This established Roscoe's position finally. Yet, with all his popularity and the solid success of his work, he showed no vanity or egotism, nor ever traded on the position he held in Viking and Sunburst. He seemed to have no ambition further than to do good work; no desire to be known beyond his own district; no fancy, indeed, for the communications of his labours to mission papers and benevolent ladies in England--so much the habit of his order. He was free from professional mannerisms.

One evening we were sitting in the accustomed spot--that is, the coping. We had been silent for a long time. At last Roscoe rose, and walked up and down the verandah nervously.

"Marmion," said he, "I am disturbed to-day, I cannot tell you how: a sense of impending evil, an anxiety."

I looked up at him inquiringly, and, of purpose, a little sceptically.

He smiled something sadly and continued: "Oh, I know you think it foolishness. But remember that all sailors are more or less superstitious: it is bred in them; it is constitutional, and I am afraid there's a good deal of the sailor in me yet."

Remembering Hungerford, I said: "I know that sailors are superstitious, the most seasoned of them are that. But it means nothing. I may think or feel that there is going to be a plague, but I should not enlarge the insurance on my life because of it."

He put his hand on my shoulder and looked down at me earnestly. "But, Marmion, these things, I assure you, are not matters of will, nor yet morbidness. They occur at the most unexpected times. I have had such sensations before, and they were followed by strange matters."

I nodded, but said nothing. I was still thinking of Hungerford. After a slight pause he continued somewhat hesitatingly:

"I dreamed last night, three times, of events that occurred in my past; events which I hoped would never disturb me in the life I am now leading."

"A life of self-denial," ventured I. I waited a minute, and then added:

"Roscoe, I think it only fair to tell you--I don't know why I haven't done so before--that when you were ill you were delirious, and talked of things that may or may not have had to do with your past."

He started, and looked at me earnestly. "They were unpleasant things?"

"Trying things; though all was vague and disconnected," I replied.

"I am glad you tell me this," he remarked quietly. "And Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron--did they hear?" He looked off to the hills.

"To a certain extent, I am sure. Mrs. Falchion's name was generally connected with--your fancies.... But really no one could place any weight on what a man said in delirium, and I only mention the fact to let you see exactly on what ground I stand with you."

"Can you give me an idea--of the thing I raved about?"

"Chiefly about a girl called Alo, not your wife, I should judge--who was killed."

At that he spoke in a cheerless voice: "Marmion, I will tell you all the story some day; but not now. I hoped that I had been able to bury it, even in memory, but I was wrong. Some things--such things--never die. They stay; and in our cheerfulest, most peaceful moments confront us, and mock the new life we are leading. There is no refuge from memory and remorse in this world. The spirits of our foolish deeds haunt us, with or without repentance." He turned again from me and set a sombre face towards the ravine. "Roscoe," I said, taking his arm, "I cannot believe that you have any sin on your conscience so dark that it is not wiped out now."

"God bless you for your confidence. But there is one woman who, I fear, could, if she would, disgrace me before the world. You understand," he added, "that there are things we repent of which cannot be repaired. One thinks a sin is dead, and starts upon a new life, locking up the past, not deceitfully, but believing that the book is closed, and that no good can come of publishing it; when suddenly it all flames out like the letters in Faust's book of conjurations."

"Wait," I said. "You need not tell me more, you must not--now; not until there is any danger. Keep your secret. If the woman--if THAT woman--ever places you in danger, then tell me all. But keep it to yourself now. And don't fret because you have had dreams."

"Well, as you wish," he replied after a long time. As he sat in silence, I smoking hard, and he buried in thought, I heard the laughter of people some distance below us in the hills. I guessed it to be some tourists from the summer hotel. The voices came nearer.

A singular thought occurred to me. I looked at Roscoe. I saw that he was brooding, and was not noticing the voices, which presently died away. This was a relief to me. We were then silent again.

CHAPTER XII

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME

Next day we had a picnic on the Whi-Whi River, which, rising in the far north, comes in varied moods to join the Long Cloud River at Viking.

[Dr. Marmion, in a note of his MSS., says that he has purposely changed the names of the rivers and towns mentioned in the second part of the book, because he does not wish the locale to be too definite.]

Ruth Devlin, her young sister, and her aunt Mrs. Revel, with Galt Roscoe and myself, constituted the party. The first part of the excursion had many delights. The morning was fresh and sweet, and we were all in excellent spirits. Roscoe's depression had vanished; but there was an amiable seriousness in his manner which, to me, portended that the faint roses in Ruth Devlin's cheeks would deepen before the day was done, unless something inopportune happened.

As we trudged gaily up the canon to the spot where we were to take a big skiff, and cross the Whi-Whi to our camping-ground, Ruth Devlin, who was walking with me, said: "A large party of tourists arrived at Viking yesterday, and have gone to the summer hotel; so I expect you will be gay up here for some time to come. Prepare, then, to rejoice."

"Don't you think it is gay enough as it is?" I answered. "Behold this festive throng."

"Oh, it is nothing to what there might be. This could never make Viking and 'surrounding country' notorious as a pleasure resort. To attract tourists you must have enough people to make romances and tragedies,--without loss of life, of course,--merely catastrophes of broken hearts, and hair-breadth escapes, and mammoth fishing and shooting achievements, such as men know how to invent,--it was delightful to hear her voice soften to an amusing suggestiveness, "and broken bridges and land-slides, with many other things which you can supply, Dr. Marmion. No, I am afraid that Viking is too humdrum to be notable."

She laughed then very lightly and quaintly. She had a sense of humour.

"Well, but, Miss Devlin," said I, "you cannot have all things at once. Climaxes like these take time. We have a few joyful things. We have splendid fishing achievements,--please do not forget that basket of trout I sent you the other morning,--and broken hearts and such tragedies are not impossible; as, for instance, if I do not send you as good a basket of trout to-morrow evening; or if you should remark that there was nothing in a basket of trout to--"

"Now," she said, "you are becoming involved and--inconsiderate. Remember, I am only a mountain girl."

"Then let us only talk of the other tragedies. But are you not a little callous to speak of such things as if you thirsted for their occurrence?"

"I am afraid you are rather silly," she replied. "You see, some of the land up here belongs to me. I am anxious that it should 'boom'--that is the correct term, is it not?--and a sensation is good for 'booming.' What an advertisement would ensue if the lovely daughter of an American millionaire should be in danger of drowning in the Long Cloud, and a rough but honest fellow--a foreman on the river, maybe a young member of the English aristocracy in disguise--perilled his life for her! The place of peril would, of course, be named Lover's Eddy, or the Maiden's Gate--very much prettier, I assure you, than such cold-blooded things as the Devil's Slide, where we are going now, and much more attractive to tourists."

"Miss Devlin," laughed I, "you have all the eagerness of the incipient millionaire. May I hope to see you in Lombard Street some day, a very Katherine among capitalists?--for, from your remarks, I judge that you would--I say it pensively--'wade through slaughter to a throne.'"

Galt Roscoe, who was just ahead with Mrs. Revel and Amy Devlin, turned and said: "Who is that quoting so dramatically? Now, this is a picnic party, and any one who introduces elegies, epics, sonnets, 'and such,' is guilty of breaking the peace at Viking and its environs. Besides, such things should always be left to the parson. He must not be outflanked, his thunder must not be stolen. The scientist has unlimited resources; all he has to do is to be vague, and look prodigious; but the parson must have his poetry as a monopoly, or he is lost to sight, and memory."

"Then," said I, "I shall leave you to deal with Miss Devlin yourself, because she is the direct cause of my wrong-doing. She has expressed the most sinister sentiments about Viking and your very extensive parish. Miss Devlin," I added, turning to her, "I leave you to your fate, and I cannot recommend you to mercy, for what Heaven made fair should remain tender and merciful, and--"

"So young and so untender!" she interjected, with a rippling laugh. "Yet Cordelia was misjudged very wickedly, and traduced very ungallantly, and so am I. And I bid you good-day, sir."

Her delicate laugh rings in my ears as I write. I think that sun and clear skies and hills go far to make us cheerful and harmonious. Somehow, I always remember her as she was that morning.

She was standing then on the brink of a new and beautiful experience, at the threshold of an acknowledged love. And that is a remarkable time to the young.

There was something thrilling about the experiences of that morning,

and I think we all felt it. Even the great frowning precipices seemed to have lost their ordinary gloom, and when some young white eagles rose from a crag and flew away, growing smaller as they passed, until they were one with the snow of the glacier on Mount Trinity, or a wapiti peeped out from the underwood and stole away with glancing feet down the valley; we could scarcely refrain from doing some foolish thing out of sheer delight. At length we emerged from a thicket of Douglas pine upon the shore of the Whi-Whi, and, loosening our boat, were soon moving slowly on the cool current. For an hour or more we rowed down the river towards the Long Cloud, and then drew into the shade of a little island for lunch. When we came to the rendezvous, where picnic parties generally feasted, we found a fire still smoking and the remnants of a lunch scattered about. A party of picnickers had evidently been there just before us. Ruth suggested that it might be some of the tourists from the hotel. This seemed very probable.

There were scraps of newspaper on the ground, and among them was an empty envelope. Mechanically I picked it up, and read the superscription. What I saw there I did not think necessary to disclose to the other members of the party; but, as unconcernedly as possible, for Ruth Devlin's eyes were on me, I used it to light a cigar--inappropriately, for lunch would soon be ready.

"What was the name on the envelope?" she said. "Was there one?"

I guessed she had seen my slight start. I said evasively: "I fancy there was, but a man who is immensely interested in a new brand of cigar--"

"You are a most deceitful man," she said. "And, at the least, you are selfish in holding your cigar more important than a woman's curiosity. Who can tell what romance was in the address on that envelope--"

"What elements of noble tragedy, what advertisement for a certain property in the Whi-Whi Valley," interrupted Roscoe, breaking off the thread of a sailor's song he was humming, as he tended the water-kettle on the fire.

This said, he went on with the song again. I was struck by the wonderful change in him now. Presentiments were far from him, yet I, having read that envelope, knew that they were not without cause. Indeed, I had an inkling of that the night before, when I heard the voices on the hill. Ruth Devlin stopped for a moment in the preparations to ask Roscoe what he was humming. I, answering for him, told her that it was an old sentimental sea-song of common sailors, often sung by officers at their jovial gatherings. At this she pretended to look shocked, and straightway demanded to hear the words, so that she could pronounce judgment on her spiritual pastor and master.

He good-naturedly said that many of these old sailor songs were amusing, and that he often found himself humming them. To this I could testify, and he sang them very well indeed--quietly, but with the rolling tone of the sailor, jovial yet fascinating. At our united request, his humming became distinct. Three of the verses I give here:

"The 'Lovely Jane' went sailing down
To anchor at the Spicy Isles;
And the wind was fair as ever was blown,
For the matter of a thousand miles.

"Then a storm arose as she crossed the line,
Which it caused her masts to crack;
And she gulped her fill of the whooping brine,
And she likewise sprained her back.

"And the capt'g cried, 'If it's Davy Jones,
Then it's Davy Jones,' says he,
'Though I don't aspire to leave my bones
In the equatorial sea.'"

What the further history of the 'Lovely Jane' was we were not informed, for Ruth Devlin announced that the song must wait, though it appeared to be innocuous and child-like in its sentiments, and that lunch would be served between the acts of the touching tragedy. When lunch was over, and we had again set forth upon the Whi-Whi, I asked Ruth to sing an old French-Canadian song which she had once before sung to us. Many a time the woods of the West had resounded to the notes of 'En Roulant ma Boule', as the 'voyageurs' traversed the long paths of the Ottawa, St. Lawrence, and Mississippi; brave light-hearted fellows, whose singing days were over.

By the light of coming events there was something weird and pathetic in this Arcadian air, sung as it was by her. Her voice was a mezzo-soprano of rare bracing quality, and she had enough natural sensibility to give the antique refinement of the words a wistful charm, particularly apparent in these verses:

"Ah, cruel Prince, my heart you break,
In killing thus my snow-white drake.

"My snow-white drake, my love, my King,
The crimson life-blood stains his wing.

"His golden bill sinks on his breast,
His plumes go floating east and west--

"En roulant ma boule:
Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule!"

As she finished the song we rounded an angle in the Whi-Whi. Ahead of us lay the Snow Rapids and the swift channel at one side of the rapids which, hurrying through a rocky archway, was known as the Devil's Slide. There was one channel through the rapids by which it was perfectly safe to pass, but that sweep of water through the Devil's Slide was sometimes a trap of death to even the most expert river-men. A half-mile below the

rapids was the confluence of the two rivers. The sight of the tumbling mass of white water, and the gloomy and colossal grandeur of the Devil's Slide, a buttress of the hills, was very fine.

But there was more than scenery to interest us here, for, moving quickly towards the Slide, was a boat with three people in it. They were evidently intending to attempt that treacherous passage, which culminated in a series of eddies, a menace to even the best oarsman ship. They certainly were not aware of their danger, for there came over the water the sound of a man's laughing voice, and the two women in the boat were in unconcerned attitudes. Roscoe shouted to them, and motioned them back, but they did not appear to understand.

The man waved his hat to us, and rowed on. There was but one thing for us to do: to make the passage quickly through the safe channel of the rapids, and to be of what service we could on the other side of the Slide, if necessary. We bent to the oars, and the boat shot through the water. Ruth held the rudder firmly, and her young sister and Mrs. Revel sat perfectly still. But the man in the other boat, thinking, doubtless, that we were attempting a race, added his efforts to the current of the channel. I am afraid that I said some words below my breath scarcely proper to be spoken in the presence of maidens and a clerk in holy orders. Roscoe was here, however, a hundred times more sailor than parson. He spoke in low, firm tones, as he now and then suggested a direction to Ruth Devlin or myself. Our boat tossed and plunged in the rapids, and the water washed over us lightly once or twice, but we went through the passage safely, and had turned towards the Slide before the other boat got to the rocky archway.

We rowed hard. The next minute was one of suspense, for we saw the boat shoot beneath the archway. Presently it emerged, a whirling plaything in treacherous eddies. The man wildly waved his arm, and shouted to us. The women were grasping the sides of the boat, but making no outcry. We could not see the faces of the women plainly yet. The boat ran forward like a race-horse; it plunged hither and thither. An oar snapped in the rocks, and the other one shot from the man's hand. Now the boat swung round and round, and dipped towards the hollow of a whirlpool. When we were within a few rods of them, it appeared to rise from the water, was hurled on a rock, and overturned. Mrs. Revel buried her face in her hands, and Ruth gave a little groan, but she held the rudder firmly, as we swiftly approached the forms struggling in the water. All, fortunately, had grasped the swamped boat, and were being carried down the stream towards us. The man was caring resolutely for himself, but one, of the women had her arm round the other, supporting her. We brought our skiff close to the swirling current. I called out words of encouragement, and was preparing to jump into the water, when Roscoe exclaimed in a husky voice: "Marmion, it is Mrs. Falchion."

Yes, it was Mrs. Falchion; but I had known that before. We heard her words to her companion: "Justine, do not look so. Your face is like death. It is hateful."

Then the craft veered towards the smoother water where we were. This was

my opportunity. Roscoe threw me a rope, and I plunged in and swam towards the boat. I saw that Mrs. Falchion recognised me; but she made no exclamation, nor did Justine Caron. Their companion, however, on the other side of the boat, was eloquent in prayers to be rescued. I caught the bow of the boat as it raced past me, and with all my strength swung it towards the smoother water. I ran the rope I had brought, through the iron ring at the bow, and was glad enough of that; for their lives perhaps depended on being able to do it. It had been a nice calculation of chances, but it was done. Roscoe immediately bent to the oars, I threw an arm around Justine, and in a moment Roscoe had towed us into safer quarters. Then he drew in the rope. As he did so, Mrs. Falchion said: "Justine would drown so easily if one would let her."

These were her first words to me. I am sure I never can sufficiently admire the mere courage of the woman and her presence of mind in danger. Immediately afterwards she said--and subsequently it seemed to me marvellous: "You are something more than the chorus to the play this time, Dr. Marmion."

A minute after, and Justine was dragged into our boat, and was followed by Mrs. Falchion, whose first words to Roscoe were: "It is not such a meeting as one would plan."

And he replied: "I am glad no harm has come to you."

The man was duly helped in. A poor creature he was, to pass from this tale as he entered it, ignominiously and finally here. I even hide his nationality, for his race are generally more gallant. But he was wealthy, had an intense admiration for Mrs. Falchion, and had managed to secure her in his boat, to separate from the rest of the picnic party--chiefly through his inefficient rowing.

Dripping with water as Mrs. Falchion was, she did not, strange to say, appear at serious disadvantage. Almost any other woman would have done so. She was a little pale, she must have felt miserable, but she accepted Ruth Devlin's good offices--as did Justine Caron those of Mrs. Revel--with much self-possession, scanning her face and form critically the while, and occasionally turning a glance on Roscoe, who was now cold and impassive. I never knew a man who could so banish expression from his countenance when necessary. Speaking to Belle Treherne long afterwards of Mrs. Falchion's self-possessed manner on this occasion, and of how she rose superior to the situation, I was told that I must have regarded the thing poetically and dramatically, for no woman could possibly look self-possessed in draggled skirts. She said that I always magnified certain of Mrs. Falchion's qualities.

That may be so, and yet it must be remembered that I was not predisposed towards her, and that I wished her well away from where Roscoe was.

As for Justine Caron, she lay with her head on Mrs. Revel's lap, and looked from beneath heavy eyelids at Roscoe with such gratitude and--but, no, she is only a subordinate in the story, and not a chief factor, and what she said or did here is of no vital consequence at this moment! We

rowed to a point near the confluence of the two rivers, where we could leave our boats to be poled back through the rapids or portaged past them.

On the way Mrs. Falchion said to Roscoe: "I knew you were somewhere in the Rockies; and at Vancouver, when I came from San Francisco, I heard of your being here. I had intended spending a month somewhere in the mountains, so I came to Viking, and on to the summer hotel: but really this is too exciting for recreation."

This was spoken with almost gay outward manner, but there was a note in her words which I did not like, nor did I think that her eye was very kind, especially when she looked at Ruth Devlin and afterwards at Roscoe.

We had several miles to go, and it was nightfall--for which Mrs. Falchion expressed herself as profoundly grateful--when we arrived at the hotel. Our parting words were as brief as, of necessity, they had been on our journey through the mountains, for the ladies had ridden the horses which we had sent over for ourselves from Viking, and we men walked in front. Besides, the thoughts of some of us were not at all free from misgiving. The spirit possessing Roscoe the night before seemed to enter into all of us, even into Mrs. Falchion, who had lost, somewhat, the aplomb with which she had held the situation in the boat. But at the door of the hotel she said cheerfully: "Of course, Dr. Marmion will find it necessary to call on his patients to-morrow--and the clergyman also on his new parishoners."

The reply was left to me. I said gravely: "Let us be thankful that both doctor and clergyman are called upon to use their functions; it might easily have been only the latter."

"Oh, do not be funereal!" she replied. "I knew that we were not to drown at the Devil's Slide. The drama is not ended yet, and the chief actors cannot go until 'the curtain.'--Though I am afraid that is not quite orthodox, is it, Mr. Roscoe?"

Roscoe looked at her gravely. "It may not be orthodox as it is said, but it is orthodox, I fancy, if we exchange God for fate, and Providence for chance. . . . Good-night."

He said this wearily. She looked up at him with an ironical look, then held out her hand, and quickly bade him good-night. Partings all round were made, and, after some injunctions to Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron from myself as to preventives against illness, the rest of us started for Sunburst.

As we went, I could not help but contrast Ruth and Amy Devlin, these two gentle yet strong mountain girls, with the woman we had left. Their lives were far from that dolorous tide which, sweeping through a selfish world, leaves behind it the stain of corroding passions; of cruelties, ingratitude, hate, and catastrophe. We are all ambitious, in one way or another. We climb mountains over scoria that frays and lava that burns. We try to call down the stars, and when, now and then, our conjuring

succeeds, we find that our stars are only blasting meteors. One moral mishap lames character for ever. A false start robs us of our natural strength, and a misplaced or unrighteous love deadens the soul and shipwrecks just conceptions of life.

A man may be forgiven for a sin, but the effect remains; it has found its place in his constitution, and it cannot be displaced by mere penitence, nor yet forgiveness. A man errs, and he must suffer; his father erred, and he must endure; or some one sinned against the man, and he hid the sin--But here a hand touched my shoulder! I was startled, for my thoughts had been far away. Roscoe's voice spoke in my ear: "It is as she said; the actors come together for 'the curtain.'"

Then his eyes met those of Ruth Devlin turned to him earnestly and inquiringly. And I felt for a moment hard against Roscoe, that he should even indirectly and involuntarily, bring suffering into her life. In youth, in early manhood, we do wrong. At the time we seem to be injuring no one but ourselves; but, as we live on, we find that we were wronging whomsoever should come into our lives in the future. At the instant I said angrily to myself: "What right has he to love a girl like that, when he has anything in his life that might make her unhappy, or endanger her in ever so little!"

But I bit my tongue, for it seemed to me that I was pharisaical; and I wondered rather scornfully if I should have been so indignant were the girl not so beautiful, young, and ingenuous. I tried not to think further of the matter, and talked much to Ruth,--Gait Roscoe walked with Mrs. Revel and Amy Devlin,--but I found I could not drive it from my mind. This was not unnatural, for was not I the "chorus to the play"?

CHAPTER XIII

THE SONG OF THE SAW

There was still a subdued note to Roscoe's manner the next morning. He was pale. He talked freely however of the affairs of Viking and Sunburst, and spoke of business which called him to Mr. Devlin's great saw mill that day. A few moments after breakfast we were standing in the doorway. "Well," he said, "shall we go?"

I was not quite sure where he meant to go, but I took my hat and joined him. I wondered if it would be to the summer hotel or the great mill. My duty lay in the direction of the hotel. When we stepped out, he added: "Let us take the bridle-path along the edge of the ravine to the hotel."

The morning was beautiful. The atmosphere of the woods was of soft, diffusive green--the sunlight filtering through the transparent leaves. Bowers of delicate ferns and vines flanked the path, and an occasional clump of giant cedars invited us: the world was eloquent.

Several tourists upon the verandah of the hotel remarked us with curiosity as we entered. A servant said that Mrs. Falchion would be glad to see us; and we were ushered into her sitting-room. She carried no trace of yesterday's misadventure. She appeared superbly well. And yet, when I looked again, when I had time to think upon and observe detail, I saw signs of change. There was excitement in the eyes, and a slight nervous darkness beneath them, which added to their charm. She rose, smiling, and said: "I fear I am hardly entitled to this visit, for I am beyond convalescence, and Justine is not in need of shrift or diagnosis, as you see."

I was not so sure of Justine Caron as she was, and when I had paid my respects to her, I said a little priggishly (for I was young), still not too solemnly: "I cannot allow you to pronounce for me upon my patients, Mrs. Falchion; I must make my own inquiries."

But Mrs. Falchion was right. Justine Caron was not suffering much from her immersion; though, speaking professionally, her temperature was higher than the normal. But that might be from some impulse of the moment, for Justine was naturally a little excitable.

We walked aside, and, looking at me with a flush of happiness in her face, she said: "You remember one day on the 'Fulvia' when I told you that money was everything to me; that I would do all I honourably could to get it?"

I nodded. She continued: "It was that I might pay a debt--you know it. Well, money is my god no longer, for I can pay all I owe. That is, I can pay the money, but not the goodness, the noble kindness. He is most good, is he not? The world is better that such men as Captain Galt Roscoe live--ah, you see I cannot quite think of him as a clergyman. I wonder if I ever shall!" She grew suddenly silent and abstracted, and, in the moment's pause, some ironical words in Mrs. Falchion's voice floated across the room to me: "It is so strange to see you so. And you preach, and baptise; and marry, and bury, and care for the poor and--ah, what is it?--'all those who, in this transitory life, are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity'? . . . And do you never long for the flesh-pots of Egypt? Never long for"--here her voice was not quite so clear--"for the past?"

I was sure that, whatever she was doing, he had been trying to keep the talk, as it were, on the surface. I was equally sure that, to her last question, he would make no reply. Though I was now speaking to Justine Caron, I heard him say quite calmly and firmly: "Yes, I preach, baptise, marry, and bury, and do all I can for those who need help."

"The people about here say that you are good and charitable. You have won the hearts of the mountaineers. But you always had a gift that way."--I did not like her tone.--"One would almost think you had founded a new dispensation. And if I had drowned yesterday, you would, I suppose, have buried me, and have preached a little sermon about me. --You could have done that better than any one else! . . . What

would you have said in such a case?"

There was an earnest, almost a bitter, protest in the reply.

"Pardon me, if I cannot answer your question. Your life was saved, and that is all we have to consider, except to be grateful to Providence. The duties of my office have nothing to do with possibilities."

She was evidently torturing him, and I longed to say a word that would torture her. She continued: "And the flesh-pots--you have not answered about them: do you not long for them--occasionally?"

"They are of a period," he answered, "too distant for regret."

"And yet," she replied softly, "I fancied sometimes in London last year, that you had not outgrown that antique time--those lotos-days."

He made no reply at once, and in the pause Justine and I passed out to the verandah.

"How long does Mrs. Falchion intend remaining here, Miss Caron?" I said.

Her reply was hesitating: "I do not quite know; but I think some time. She likes the place; it seems to amuse her."

"And you--does it amuse you?"

"It does not matter about me. I am madame's servant; but, indeed, it does not amuse me particularly."

"Do you like the place?"

The reply was somewhat hurried, and she glanced at me a little nervously.

"Oh yes," she said, "I like the place, but--"

Here Roscoe appeared at the door and said, "Mrs. Falchion wishes to see Viking and Mr. Devlin's mills, Marmion. She will go with us."

In a little time we were on our way to Viking. I walked with Mrs. Falchion, and Roscoe with Justine. I was aware of a new element in Mrs. Falchion's manner. She seemed less powerfully attractive to me than in the old days, yet she certainly was more beautiful. It was hard to trace the new characteristic. But at last I thought I saw it in a decrease of that cold composure, that impassiveness, so fascinating in the past. In its place had come an allusive, restless something, to be found in words of troublesome vagueness, in variable moods, in an increased sensitiveness of mind and an undercurrent of emotional bitterness--she was emotional at last! She puzzled me greatly, for I saw two spirits in her: one pitiless as of old; the other human, anxious, not unlovely.

At length we became silent, and walked so side by side for a time. Then, with that old delightful egotism and selfishness--delightful in its very daring--she said: "Well, amuse me!"

"And is it still the end of your existence," I rejoined--"to be amused?"

"What is there else to do?" she replied with raillery.

"Much. To amuse others, for instance; to regard human beings as something more than automata."

"Has Mr. Roscoe made you a preaching curate? I helped Amshar at the Tanks."

"One does not forget that. Yet you pushed Amshar with your foot."

"Did you expect me to kiss the black coward? Then, I nursed Mr. Roscoe in his illness."

"And before that?"

"And before that I was born into the world, and grew to years of knowledge, and learned what fools we mortals be, and--and there--is that Mr. Devlin's big sawmill?"

We had suddenly emerged on a shelf of the mountainside, and were looking down into the Long Cloud Valley. It was a noble sight. Far to the north were foothills covered with the glorious Norfolk pine, rising in steppes till they seemed to touch white plateaus of snow, which again billowed to glacier fields whose austere bosoms man's hand had never touched; and these suddenly lifted up huge, unapproachable shoulders, crowned with majestic peaks that took in their teeth the sun, the storm, and the whirlwinds of the north, never changing countenance from day to year and from year to age.

Facing this long line of glory, running irregularly on towards that sea where Franklin and M'Clintock led their gay adventurers,--the bold ships,--was another shore, not so high or superior, but tall and sombre and warm, through whose endless coverts of pine there crept and idled the generous Chinook winds--the soothing breath of the friendly Pacific. Between these shores the Long Cloud River ran; now boisterous, now soft, now wallowing away through long channels, washing gorges always dark as though shaded by winter, and valleys always green as favoured by summer. Creeping along a lofty narrow path upon that farther shore was a mule train, bearing packs which would not be opened till, through the great passes of the mountain, they were spilled upon the floors of fort and post on the east side of the Rockies.

Not far from where the mule train crept along was a great hole in the mountain-side, as though antique giants of the hills had tunnelled through to make themselves a home or to find the eternal secret of the mountains. Near to this vast dark cavity was a hut--a mere playhouse, it seemed, so small was it, viewed from where we stood. From the edge of a cliff just in front of this hut, there swung a long cable, which reached almost to the base of the shore beneath us; and, even as we looked, we saw what seemed a tiny bucket go swinging slowly down that

strange hypotenuse. We watched it till we saw it get to the end of its journey in the valley beneath, not far from the great mill to which we were bound.

"How mysterious!" said Mrs. Falchion. "What does it mean? I never saw anything like that before. What a wonderful thing!"

Roscoe explained. "Up there in that hut," he said, "there lives a man called Phil Boldrick. He is a unique fellow, with a strange history. He has been miner, sailor, woodsman, river-driver, trapper, salmon-fisher; --expert at the duties of each of these, persistent at none. He has a taste for the ingenious and the unusual. For a time he worked in Mr. Devlin's mill. It was too tame for him. He conceived the idea of supplying the valley with certain necessaries, by intercepting the mule trains as they passed across the hills, and getting them down to Viking by means of that cable. The valley laughed at him; men said it was impossible. He went to Mr. Devlin, and Mr. Devlin came to me. I have, as you know, some knowledge of machinery and engineering. I thought the thing feasible but expensive, and told Mr. Devlin so. However, the ingenuity of the thing pleased Mr. Devlin, and, with that singular enterprise which in other directions has made him a rich man, he determined on its completion. Between us we managed it. Boldrick carries on his aerial railway with considerable success, as you see."

"A singular man," said Mrs. Falchion. "I should like to see him. Come, sit down here and tell me all you know about him, will you not?"

Roscoe assented. I arranged a seat for us, and we all sat.

Roscoe was about to begin, when Mrs. Falchion said, "Wait a minute. Let us take in this scene first."

We were silent. After a moment I turned to Mrs. Falchion, and said: "It is beautiful, is it not?"

She drew in a long breath, her eyes lighted up, and she said, with a strange abandon of gaiety: "Yes, it is delightful to live."

It seemed so, in spite of the forebodings of my friend and my own uneasiness concerning him, Ruth Devlin, and Mrs. Falchion. The place was all peace: a very monotony of toil and pleasure. The heat drained through the valley back and forth in visible palpitations upon the roofs of the houses, the mills, and the vast piles of lumber: all these seemed breathing. It looked a busy Arcady. From beneath us life vibrated with the regularity of a pulse: distance gave a kind of delighted ease to toil. Event appeared asleep.

But when I look back now, after some years, at the experiences of that day, I am astonished by the running fire of events, which, unfortunately, were not all joy.

As I write I can hear that keen wild singing of the saw come to us distantly, with a pleasant, weird elation. The big mill hung above the

river, its sides all open, humming with labour, as I had seen it many a time during my visit to Roscoe. The sun beat in upon it, making a broad piazza of light about its sides. Beyond it were pleasant shadows, through which men passed and repassed at their work. Life was busy all about it. Yet the picture was bold, open, and strong. Great iron hands reached down into the water, clamped a massive log or huge timber, lightly drew it up the slide from the water, where, guided by the hand-spikes of the men, it was laid upon its cradle and carried slowly to the devouring teeth of the saws: there to be sliced through rib and bone in moist sandwiched layers, oozing the sweet sap of its fibre; and carried out again into the open to be drained to dry bones under the exhaust-pipes of the sun: piles upon piles; houses with wide chinks through which the winds wandered, looking for tenants and finding none.

To the north were booms of logs, swilling in the current, waiting for their devourer. Here and there were groups of river-drivers and their foremen, prying twisted heaps of logs from the rocks or the shore into the water. Other groups of river-drivers were scattered upon the banks, lifting their huge red canoes high up on the platforms, the spring's and summer's work of river-driving done; while others lounged upon the grass, or wandered lazily through the village, sporting with the Chinamen, or chaffing the Indian idling in the sun--a garish figure stoically watching the inroads of civilisation. The town itself was squat but amiable: small houses and large huts; the only place of note and dignity, the new town hall, which was greatly overshadowed by the big mill, and even by the two smaller ones flanking it north and south.

But Viking was full of men who had breathed the strong life of the hills, had stolen from Nature some of her brawny strength, and set themselves up before her as though a man were as great as a mountain and as good a thing to see. It was of such a man that Galt Roscoe was to tell us. His own words I will not give, but will speak of Phil Boldrick as I remember him and as Roscoe described him to us.

Of all the men in the valley, none was so striking as Phil Boldrick. Of all faces his was the most singular; of all characters his the most unique; of all men he was the most unlucky, save in one thing--the regard of his fellows. Others might lay up treasures, not he; others lose money at gambling, not he--he never had much to lose. But yet he did all things magniloquently. The wave of his hand was expansive, his stride was swaying and decisive, his over-ruling, fraternal faculty was always in full swing. Viking was his adopted child; so much so that a gentleman river-driver called it Philippi; and by that name it sometimes went, and continues still so among those who knew it in the old days.

Others might have doubts as to the proper course to pursue under certain circumstances; it was not so with Phil. They might argue a thing out orally, he did so mentally, and gave judgment on it orally. He was final, not oracular. One of his eyes was of glass, and blue; the other had an eccentricity, and was of a deep and meditative grey. It was a wise and knowing eye. It was trained to many things--like one servant in a large family. One side of his face was solemn, because of the gay but unchanging blue eye, the other was gravely humourous, shrewdly playful.

His fellow citizens respected him; so much so, that they intended to give him an office in the new-formed corporation; which means that he had courage and downrightness, and that the rough, straightforward gospel of the West was properly interpreted by him.

If a stranger came to the place, Phil was sent first to reconnoitre; if any function was desirable, Phil was requested to arrange it; if justice was to be meted out, Phil's opinion had considerable weight--for he had much greater leisure than other more prosperous men; if a man was taken ill (this was in the days before a doctor came), Phil was asked to declare if he would "shy from the finish."

I heard Roscoe more than once declare that Phil was as good as two curates to him. Not that Phil was at all pious, nor yet possessed of those abstemious qualities in language and appetite by which good men are known; but he had a gift of civic virtue--important in a wicked world, and of unusual importance in Viking. He had neither self-consciousness nor fear; and while not possessed of absolute tact in a social way, he had a knack of doing the right thing bluntly, or the wrong thing with an air of rightness. He envied no man, he coveted nothing; had once or twice made other men's fortunes by prospecting, but was poor himself. And in all he was content, and loved life and Viking.

Immediately after Roscoe had reached the mountains Phil had become his champion, declaring that there was not any reason why a man should not be treated sociably because he was a parson. Phil had been a great traveller, as had many who settled at last in these valleys to the exciting life of the river: salmon-catching or driving logs. He had lived for a time in Lower California and Mexico, and had given Roscoe the name of The Padre: which suited the genius and temper of the rude population. And so it was that Roscoe was called The Padre by every one, though he did not look the character.

As he told his story of Phil's life I could not help but contrast him with most of the clergymen I knew or had seen. He had the admirable ease and tact of a cultured man of the world, and the frankness and warmth of a hearty nature, which had, however, some inherent strain of melancholy. Wherever I had gone with him I had noticed that he was received with good-humoured deference by his rough parishioners and others who were such only in the broadest sense. Perhaps he would not have succeeded so well if he had worn clerical clothes. As it was, of a week day, he could not be distinguished from any respectable layman. The clerical uniform attracts women more than men, who, if they spoke truly, would resent it. Roscoe did not wear it, because he thought more of men than of function, of manliness than clothes; and though this sometimes got him into trouble with his clerical brethren who dearly love Roman collar, and coloured stole, and the range of ritual from a lofty intoning to the eastward position, he managed to live and himself be none the worse, while those who knew him were certainly the better.

When Roscoe had finished his tale, Mrs. Falchion said: "Mr. Boldrick must be a very interesting man;" and her eyes wandered up to the great hole in the mountain-side, and lingered there. "As I said, I must meet him," she

added; "men of individuality are rare." Then: "That great 'hole in the wall' is, of course, a natural formation."

"Yes," said Roscoe. "Nature seems to have made it for Boldrick. He uses it as a storehouse."

"Who watches it while he is away?" she said. "There is no door to the place, of course."

Roscoe smiled enigmatically. "Men do not steal up here: that is the unpardonable crime; any other may occur and go unpunished; not it."

The thought seemed to strike Mrs. Falchion. "I might have known!" she said. "It is the same in the South Seas among the natives--Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, and others. You can--as you know, Mr. Roscoe,--her voice had a subterranean meaning,--" travel from end to end of those places, and, until the white man corrupts them, never meet with a case of stealing; you will find them moral too in other ways until the white man corrupts them. But sometimes the white man pays for it in the end."

Her last words were said with a kind of dreaminess, as though they had no purpose; but though she sat now idly looking into the valley beneath, I could see that her eyes had a peculiar glance, which was presently turned on Roscoe, then withdrawn again. On him the effect was so far disturbing that he became a little pale, but I noticed that he met her glance unflinchingly and then looked at me, as if to see in how far I had been affected by her speech. I think I confessed to nothing in my face.

Justine Caron was lost in the scene before us. She had, I fancy, scarcely heard half that had been said. Roscoe said to her presently: "You like it, do you not?"

"Like it?" she said. "I never saw anything so wonderful."

"And yet it would not be so wonderful without humanity there," rejoined Mrs. Falchion. "Nature is never complete without man. All that would be splendid without the mills and the machinery and Boldrick's cable, but it would not be perfect: it needs man--Phil Boldrick and Company in the foreground. Nature is not happy by itself: it is only brooding and sorrowful. You remember the mountain of Talili in Samoa, Mr. Roscoe, and the valley about it: how entrancing yet how melancholy it is. It always seems to be haunted, for the natives never live in the valley. There is a tradition that once one of the white gods came down from heaven, and built an altar, and sacrificed a Samoan girl--though no one ever knew quite why: for there the tradition ends."

I felt again that there was a hidden meaning in her words; but Roscoe remained perfectly still. It seemed to me that I was little by little getting the threads of his story. That there was a native girl; that the girl had died or been killed; that Roscoe was in some way--innocently I dared hope--connected with it; and that Mrs. Falchion held the key to the mystery, I was certain. That it was in her mind to use the mystery, I was also certain. But for what end I could not tell. What had passed

between them in London the previous winter I did not know: but it seemed evident that she had influenced him there as she did on the 'Fulvia', had again lost her influence, and was now resenting the loss, out of pique or anger, or because she really cared for him. It might be that she cared.

She added after a moment: "Add man to nature, and it stops sulking: which goes to show that fallen humanity is better than no company at all."

She had an inherent strain of mockery, of playful satire, and she told me once, when I knew her better, that her own suffering always set her laughing at herself, even when it was greatest. It was this characteristic which made her conversation very striking, it was so sharply contrasted in its parts; a heartless kind of satire set against the most serious and acute statements. One never knew when she would turn her own or her interlocutor's gravity into mirth.

Now no one replied immediately to her remarks, and she continued: "If I were an artist I should wish to paint that scene, given that the lights were not so bright and that mill machinery not so sharply defined. There is almost too much limelight, as it were; too much earnestness in the thing. Either there should be some side-action of mirth to make it less intense, or of tragedy to render it less photographic; and unless, Dr. Marmion, you would consent to be solemn, which would indeed be droll; or that The Padre there--how amusing they should call him that!--should cease to be serious, which, being so very unusual, would be tragic, I do not know how we are to tell the artist that he has missed a chance of immortalising himself."

Roscoe said nothing, but smiled at her vivacity, while he deprecated her words by a wave of his hand. I also was silent for a moment; for there had come to my mind, while she was speaking and I was watching the scene, something that Hungerford had said to me once on board the 'Fulvia'. "Marmion," said he, "when everything at sea appears so absolutely beautiful and honest that it thrills you, and you're itching to write poetry, look out. There's trouble ahead. It's only the pretty pause in the happy scene of the play before the villain comes in and tumbles things about. When I've been on the bridge," he continued, "of a night that set my heart thumping, I knew, by Jingo! it was the devil playing his silent overture. Don't you take in the twaddle about God sending thunderbolts; it's that old war-horse down below.--And then I've kept a sharp lookout, for I knew as right as rain that a company of waterspouts would be walking down on us, or a hurricane racing to catch us broadsides. And what's gospel for sea is good for land, and you'll find it so, my son."

I was possessed of the same feeling now as I looked at the scene before us, and I suppose I seemed moody, for immediately Mrs. Falchion said: "Why, now my words have come true; the scene can be made perfect. Pray step down to the valley, Dr. Marmion, and complete the situation, for you are trying to seem serious, and it is irresistibly amusing--and professional, I suppose; one must not forget that you teach the young 'sawbones' how to saw."

I was piqued, annoyed. I said, though I admit it was not cleverly said: "Mrs. Falchion, I am willing to go and complete that situation, if you will go with me; for you would provide the tragedy--plenty of it; there would be the full perihelion of elements; your smile is the incarnation of the serious."

She looked at me full in the eyes. "Now that," she said, "is a very good 'quid pro quo'--is that right?--and I have no doubt that it is more or less true; and for a doctor to speak truth and a professor to be understood is a matter for angels. And I actually believe that, in time, you will be free from priggishness, and become a brilliant conversationalist; and--suppose we wander on to our proper places in the scene. . . . Besides, I want to see that strange man, Mr. Boldrick."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PATH OF THE EAGLE

We travelled slowly down the hillside into the village, and were about to turn towards the big mill when we saw Mr. Devlin and Ruth riding towards us. We halted and waited for them. Mr. Devlin was introduced to Mrs. Falchion by his daughter, who was sweetly solicitous concerning Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron, and seemed surprised at finding them abroad after the accident of the day before. Ruth said that her father and herself had just come from the summer hotel, where they had gone to call upon Mrs. Falchion. Mrs. Falchion heartily acknowledged the courtesy. She seemed to be playing no part, but was apparently grateful all round; yet I believe that even already Ruth had caught at something in her presence threatening Roscoe's peace; whilst she, from the beginning, had, with her more trained instincts, seen the relations between the clergyman and his young parishioner.--But what had that to do with her?

Between Roscoe and Ruth there was the slightest constraint, and I thought that it gave a troubled look to the face of the girl. Involuntarily, the eyes of both were attracted to Mrs. Falchion. I believe in that moment there was a kind of revelation among the three. While I talked to Mr. Devlin I watched them, standing a little apart, Justine Caron with us. It must have been a painful situation for them; to the young girl because a shadow was trailing across the light of her first love; to Roscoe because the shadow came out of his past; to Mrs. Falchion because she was the shadow. I felt that trouble was at hand. In this trouble I knew that I was to play a part; for, if Roscoe had his secret and Mrs. Falchion had the key to it, I also held a secret which, in case of desperate need, I should use. I did not wish to use it, for though it was mine it was also another's. I did not like the look in Mrs. Falchion's eyes as she glanced at Ruth: I was certain that she resented Roscoe's regard for Ruth and Ruth's regard for Roscoe; but, up to that moment, I had not thought it possible that she cared for him deeply. Once she had influenced me, but she had never cared for me.

I could see a change in her. Out of it came that glance at Ruth, which seemed to me the talon-like hatred that shot from the eyes of Goneril and Regan: and I was sure that if she loved Roscoe there would be mad trouble for him and for the girl. Heretofore she had been passionless, but there was a dormant power in her which had only to be wickedly aroused to wreck her own and others' happiness. Hers was one of those volcanic natures, defying calculation and ordinary conceptions of life; having the fullest capacity for all the elementary passions--hatred, love, cruelty, delight, loyalty, revolt, jealousy. She had never from her birth until now felt love for any one. She had never been awakened. Even her affection for her father had been dutiful rather than instinctive. She had provoked love, but had never given it. She had been self-centred, compulsive, unrelenting. She had unmoved seen and let her husband go to his doom--it was his doom and death so far as she knew.

Yet, as I thought of this, I found myself again admiring her. She was handsome, independent, distinctly original, and possessing capacity for great things. Besides, so far, she had not been actively vindictive--simply passively indifferent to the sufferings of others. She seemed to regard results more than means. All she did not like she could empty into the mill of the destroying gods: just as General Grant poured hundreds of thousands of men into the valley of the James, not thinking of lives but victory, not of blood but triumph. She too, even in her cruelty, seemed to have a sense of wild justice which disregarded any incidental suffering.

I could see that Mr. Devlin was attracted by her, as every man had been who had ever met her; for, after all, man is but a common slave to beauty: virtue he respects, but beauty is man's valley of suicide. Presently she turned to Mr. Devlin, having, as it seemed to me, made Roscoe and Ruth sufficiently uncomfortable. With that cheerful insouciance which was always possible to her on the most trying occasions, she immediately said, as she had often said to me, that she had come to Mr. Devlin to be amused for the morning, perhaps the whole day. It was her way, her selfish way, to make men her slaves.

Mr. Devlin gallantly said that he was at her disposal, and with a kind of pride added that there was plenty in the valley which would interest her; for he was a frank, bluff man, who would as quickly have spoken disparagingly of what belonged to himself, if it was not worthy, as have praised it.

"Where shall we go first?" he said. "To the mill?"

"To the mill, by all means," Mrs. Falchion replied; "I have never been in a great saw-mill, and I believe this is very fine. Then," she added, with a little wave of the hand towards the cable running down from Phil Boldrick's eyrie in the mountains, "then I want to see all that cable can do--all, remember."

Mr. Devlin laughed. "Well, it hasn't many tricks, but what it does it does cleverly, thanks to The Padre."

"Oh yes," responded Mrs. Falchion, still looking at the cable; "The Padre, I know, is very clever."

"He is more than clever," bluffly replied Mr. Devlin, who was not keen enough to see the faint irony in her tones.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Falchion in the same tone of voice, "he is more than clever. I have been told that he was once very brave. I have been told that once in the South Seas he did his country a great service."

She paused. I could see Ruth's eyes glisten and her face suffuse, for though she read the faint irony in the tone, still she saw that the tale which Mrs. Falchion was evidently about to tell, must be to Galt Roscoe's credit. Mrs. Falchion turned idly upon Ruth and saw the look in her face. An almost imperceptible smile came upon her lips. She looked again at the cable and Phil Boldrick's eyrie, which seemed to have a wonderful attraction for her. Not turning away from it, save now and then to glance indolently at Mr. Devlin or Ruth, and once enigmatically at myself, she said:

"Once upon a time--that is the way, I believe, to begin a pretty story--there were four men-of-war idling about a certain harbour of Samoa. One of the vessels was the flag-ship, with its admiral on board. On one of the other vessels was an officer who had years before explored this harbour. It was the hurricane season. He advised the admiral not to enter the harbour, for the indications foretold a gale, and himself was not sure that his chart was in all respects correct, for the harbour had been hurriedly explored and sounded. But the admiral gave orders, and they sailed in.

"That day a tremendous hurricane came crying down upon Samoa. It swept across the island, levelled forests of cocoa palms, battered villages to pieces, caught that little fleet in the harbour, and played with it in a horrible madness. To right and left were reefs, behind was the shore, with a monstrous surf rolling in; before was a narrow passage. One vessel made its way out--on it was the officer who had surveyed the harbour. In the open sea there was safety. He brought his vessel down the coast a little distance, put a rope about him and in the wild surf made for the shore. I believe he could have been court-martialled for leaving his ship, but he was a man who had taken a great many risks of one kind and another in his time. It was one chance out of a hundred; but he made it--he got to the shore, travelled down to the harbour where the men-of-war were careening towards the reefs, unable to make the passage out, and once again he tied a rope about him and plunged into the surf to try for the admiral's ship. He got there terribly battered. They tell how a big wave lifted him and landed him upon the quarter-deck just as big waves are not expected to do. Well, like the hero in any melodrama of the kind, he very prettily piloted monsieur the admiral and his fleet out to the open sea."

She paused, smiling in an inscrutable sort of way, then turned and said with a sudden softness in her voice, though still with the air of one who wished not to be taken with too great a seriousness: "And, ladies and

gentlemen, the name of the ship that led the way was the 'Porcupine'; and the name of the hero was Commander Galt Roscoe, R.N.; and 'of such is the kingdom of heaven!'"

There was silence for a moment. The tale had been told adroitly, and with such tact as to words that Roscoe could not take offence--need not, indeed, as he did not, I believe, feel any particular self-consciousness. I am not sure but he was a little glad that such evidence should have been given at the moment, when a kind of restraint had come between him and Ruth, by one who he had reason to think was not wholly his friend might be his enemy. It was a kind of offset to his premonitions and to the peril over which he might stumble at any moment.

To me the situation was almost inexplicable; but the woman herself was inexplicable: at this moment the evil genius of us all, at that doing us all a kind of crude, superior justice. I was the first to speak.

"Roscoe," I said, "I never had heard of this, although I remember the circumstance as told in the newspapers. But I am glad and proud that I have a friend with such a record."

"And, only think," said Mrs. Falchion, "he actually was not court-martialled for abandoning his ship to save an admiral and a fleet. But the ways of the English Admiralty are wonderful. They go out of their way to avoid a court-martial sometimes, and they go out of their way to establish it sometimes."

By this time we had started towards the mill. Roscoe walked ahead with Ruth Devlin. Mr. Devlin, Mrs. Falchion, Justine Caron and myself walked together.

Mrs. Falchion presently continued, talking, as it seemed to me, at the back of Roscoe's head:

"I have known the Admiralty to force an officer to resign the navy because he had married a native wife. But I never knew the Admiralty to court-martial an officer because he did not marry a native wife whom he OUGHT to have married: but, as I said, the ways of the Admiralty are past admiration."

I could see Roscoe's hand clinch at his side, and presently he said over his shoulder at her: "Your memory and your philosophy are as wonderful as the Admiralty are inscrutable."

She laughed. "You have not lost your old gift of retort," she said. "You are still amusing."

"Well, come," said Mr. Devlin cheerfully, "let's see if there isn't something even more amusing than Mr. Roscoe in Viking. I will show you, Mrs. Falchion, the biggest saw that ever ate the heart out of a Norfolk pine."

At the mill Mrs. Falchion was interested. She asked questions concerning

the machinery which mightily pleased Mr. Devlin, they were so apt and intelligent; and herself assisted in giving an immense log to the teeth of the largest saw, which, with its six upright blades, ate, and was never satisfied. She stooped and ran her ungloved hand into the sawdust, as sweet before the sun has dried it as the scent of a rose. The rich smell of the fresh-cut lumber filled the air, and suggested all kinds of remote and pleasant things. The industry itself is one of the first that comes with the invasion of new territory, and makes one think of man's first work in the world: to fell the tree and till the soil. It is impossible to describe that fierce, jubilant song of the saw, which even when we were near was never shrill or shrieking: never drowning our voices, but vibrant and delightful. To Mrs. Falchion it was new; she was impressed.

"I have seen," she said to Mr. Devlin, "all sorts of enterprises, but never anything like this. It all has a kind of rough music. It is enjoyable."

Mr. Devlin beamed. "I have just added something to the mill that will please you," he said.

She looked interested. We all gathered round. I stood between Mrs. Falchion and Ruth Devlin, and Roscoe beside Justine Caron.

"It is the greatest mill-whistle in the country," he continued. "It will be heard from twelve to twenty-five miles, according to the condition of the atmosphere. I want big things all round, and this is a masterpiece, I guess. Now, I'll let you hear it if you like. I didn't expect to use it until to-night at nine o'clock, when, also for the first time, I am to light the mills by electricity; a thing that's not been attempted yet in any saw-mill on the Continent. We're going to work night and day for a couple of months."

"This is all very wonderful. And are you indebted to Mr. Roscoe in these things too?--Everybody seems to need him here."

"Well," said the mill-owner, laughing, "the whistle is my own. It's the sort of thing I would propose--to blow my trumpet, as it were; but the electricity and the first experiments in it I owe to The Padre."

"As I thought," she said, and turned to Roscoe. "I remember," she added, "that you had an electrical search-light on the 'Porcupine', and that you were fond of electricity. Do you ever use search-lights here? I should think they might be of use in your parish. Then, for a change, you could let the parish turn it upon you, for the sake of contrast and edification."

For the moment I was exceedingly angry. Her sarcasm was well veiled, but I could feel the sardonic touch beneath the smiling surface. This innuendo seemed so gratuitous. I said to her, almost beneath my breath, that none of the others could hear: "How womanly!"

She did no more than lift her eyebrows in acknowledgment, and went on

talking lightly to Mr. Devlin. Roscoe was cool, but I could see now in his eyes a kind of smouldering anger; which was quite to my wish. I hoped he would be meek no longer.

Presently Ruth Devlin said: "Would it not be better to wait till to-night, when the place is lighted, before the whistle is blown? Then you can get a better first impression. And if Mrs. Falchion will come over to our home at Sunburst, we will try and amuse her for the rest of the day--that is, after she has seen all here."

Mrs. Falchion seemed struck by the frankness of the girl, and for an instant debated, but presently said: "No, thank you. When all is seen now, I will go to the hotel, and then will join you all here in the evening, if that seems feasible. Perhaps Dr. Marmion will escort me here. Mr. Roscoe, of course, has other duties."

"I shall be happy," I said, maliciously smiling, "to guide you to the sacrifice of the saw."

She was not disturbed. She touched Mr. Devlin's arm, and, looking archly at him, nodded backwards towards me. "'Beware the anaconda!'" she said.

It was impossible not to be amused; her repartee was always so unrestrained. She disarmed one by what would have been, in a man, insolent sang-froid: in her it was piquancy, daring.

Presently she added: "But if we are to have no colossal whistle and no electric light till evening, there is one thing I must have: and that is your remarkable Phil Boldrick, who seems to hold you all in the palm of his hand, and lives up there like a god on his Olympus."

"Well, suppose you go and call on him," said Roscoe, with a touch of dry humour, his eye on the cable that reached to Boldrick's perch.

She saw her opportunity, and answered promptly: "Yes, I will call on him immediately,"--here she turned towards Ruth,--"if Miss Devlin and yourself will go with me."

"Nonsense," interposed Mr. Devlin. "Besides, the cage will only hold two easily. Anyhow, it's absurd."

"Why is it absurd? Is there any danger?" queried Mrs. Falchion.

"Not unless there's an idiot at the machinery."

"I should expect you to manage it," she persisted.

"But no woman has ever done it."

"I will make the record." And, turning to Ruth: "You are not afraid?"

"No, I am not afraid," said the girl bravely, though she acknowledged to me afterwards that while she was not afraid of anything where her own

skill was called in question, such as mountain-climbing, or even puma-hunting, she did not joyfully anticipate swinging between heaven and earth on that incline. "I will go," she added, "if my father will let me. . . . May I?" she continued, turning to him.

Perhaps something of the father's pride came up in him, perhaps he had just got some suspicion that between his daughter and Mrs. Falchion there was a subterranean rivalry. However it was, he gave a quick, quizzical look at both of them, then glanced at Roscoe, and said: "I'll make no objections, if Ruth would like to introduce you to Phil. And, as Mrs. Falchion suggested, I'll 'turn the crank.'"

I could see that Roscoe had a bad moment. But presently he appeared to me perfectly willing that Ruth should go. Maybe he was as keen that she should not appear at a disadvantage beside Mrs. Falchion as was her father.

A signal was given, and the cage came slowly down the cable to the mill. We could see Boldrick, looking little bigger than a child at the other end, watching our movements. At the last moment Mr. Devlin and Roscoe seemed apprehensive, but the women were cool and determined. I noticed Mrs. Falchion look at Ruth curiously once or twice after they entered the cage, and before they started, and what she saw evidently gave her a higher opinion of the girl, for she laid her hand on Ruth's arm suddenly, and said: "We will show these mere men what nerve is."

Ruth nodded, then 'bon voyage' was said, and the signal was given. The cage ascended at first quickly, then more slowly, swaying up and down a little on the cable, and climbing higher and higher through the air to the mountain-side. What Boldrick thought when he saw the two ascending towards him, he expressed to Mr. Devlin later in the day in vigorous language: what occurred at his but Ruth Devlin told me afterwards. When the cage reached him, he helped the two passengers out, and took them to his hut. With Ruth he had always been a favourite, and he welcomed her with admiring and affectionate respect.

"Never b'lieved you could have done it, Miss Devlin--never! Not but what I knew you weren't afraid of anything on the earth below, or the waters under the earth; but when you get swinging there over the world, and not high enough to get a hold on heaven, it makes you feel as if things was droppin' away from you like. But, by gracious! you did it like an eagle--you and your friend."

By this time he was introduced, and at the name of Mrs. Falchion, he cocked his head, and looked quizzically, as if trying to remember something, then drew his hand once or twice across his forehead. After a moment he said: "Strange, now, ma'am, how your name strikes me. It isn't a common name, and I've heerd it before somewhere--somewhere. It isn't your face that I've seen before--for I'd have remembered it if it was a thousand years ago," he added admiringly. "But I've heard some one use it; and I can't tell where."

She looked curiously at him, and said: "Don't try to remember, and it

will come to you in good time. But show us everything about your place before we go back, won't you, please?"

He showed them his hut, where he lived, quite alone. It was supplied with bare necessities, and with a counter, behind which were cups and a few bottles. In reference to this, Boldrick said: "Temperance drinks for the muleteers, tobacco and tea and sugar and postage stamps and things. They don't gargle their throats with anything stronger than coffee at this tavern."

Then he took them to the cave in which puma, bear, and wapiti skins were piled, together with a few stores and the kits of travellers who had left their belongings in Boldrick's keeping till they should come again. After Mrs. Falchion and Ruth had seen all, they came out upon the mountain-side and waved their handkerchiefs to us, who were still watching from below. Then Boldrick hoisted a flag on his hut, which he used on gala occasions, to celebrate the event, and, not content with this, fired a 'feu de joie', managed in this way: He took two anvils used by the muleteers and expressmen to shoe their animals, and placed one on the other, putting powder between. Then Mrs. Falchion thrust a red-hot iron into the powder, and an explosion ensued. I was for a moment uneasy, but Mr. Devlin reassured me, and instantly a shrill whistle from the little mills answered the salute.

Just before they got into the cage, Mrs. Falchion turned to Boldrick, and said: "You have not been trying to remember where you heard my name before? Well, can you not recall it now?"

Boldrick shook his head. "Perhaps you will recall it before I see you again," she said.

They started. As they did so, Mrs. Falchion said suddenly, looking at Boldrick keenly: "Were you ever in the South Seas?"

Boldrick stood for an instant open-mouthed, and then exclaimed loudly, as the cage swung down the incline: "By Jingo! No, ma'am, I was never there, but I had a pal who come from Samoa."

She called back at him: "Tell me of him when we meet again. What was his name?"

They were too far down the cable now for Boldrick's reply to reach them distinctly. The descent seemed even more adventurous than the ascent, and, in spite of myself, I could not help a thrill of keen excitement. But they were both smiling when the cage reached us, and both had a very fine colour.

"A delightful journey, a remarkable reception, and a very singular man is your Mr. Boldrick," said Mrs. Falchion.

"Yes," replied Mr. Devlin, "you'll know Boldrick a long time before you find his limits. He is about the most curious character I ever knew, and does the most curious things. But straight--straight as a die, Mrs.

Falchion!"

"I fancy that Mr. Boldrick and I would be very good friends indeed," said Mrs. Falchion; "and I purpose visiting him again. It is quite probable that we shall find we have had mutual acquaintances." She looked at Roscoe meaningly as she said this, but he was occupied with Ruth.

"You were not afraid?" Roscoe said to Ruth. "Was it not a strange sensation?"

"Frankly, at first I was a little afraid, because the cage swings on the cable, and it makes you uncomfortable. But I enjoyed it before we got to the end."

Mrs. Falchion turned to Mr. Devlin. "I find plenty here to amuse me," she said, "and I am glad I came. To-night I want to go up that cable and call on Mr. Boldrick again, and see the mills and the electric light, and hear your whistle, from up there. Then, of course, you must show us the mill working at night, and afterwards--may I ask it?--you must all come and have supper with me at the summer hotel."

Ruth dropped her eyes. I saw she did not wish to go. Fortunately Mr. Devlin extricated her. "I'm afraid that will be impossible, Mrs. Falchion," he said: "much obliged to you all the same. But I am going to be at the mill pretty near all night, and shouldn't be able to go, and I don't want Ruth to go without me."

"Then it must be another time," said Mrs. Falchion.

"Oh, whenever it's convenient for Ruth, after a day or two, I'll be ready and glad. But I tell you what: if you want to see something fine, you must go down as soon as possible to Sunburst. We live there, you know, not here at Viking. It's funny, too, because, you see, there's a feud between Viking and Sunburst--we are all river-men and mill-hands at Viking, and they're all salmon-fishers and fruit-growers at Sunburst. By rights I ought to live here, but when I started I thought I'd build my mills at Sunburst, so I pitched my tent down there. My wife and the girls got attached to the place, and though the mills were built at Viking, and I made all my money up here, I live at Sunburst and spend my shekels there. I guess if I didn't happen to live at Sunburst, people would be trailing their coats and making Donnybrook fairs every other day between these two towns. But that's neither here nor there. Take my advice, Mrs. Falchion, and come to Sunburst and see the salmon-fishers at work, both day and night. It is about the biggest thing in the way of natural picturesqueness that you'll see--outside my mills. Indians, half-breeds, white men, Chinamen--they are all at it in weirs and cages, or in the nets, and spearing by torch-light!--Don't you think I would do to run a circus, Mrs. Falchion?--Stand at the door, and shout: 'Here's where you get the worth of your money?'"

Mrs. Falchion laughed. "I am sure you and I will be good friends; you are amusing. And, to be perfectly frank with you, I am very weary of trying to live in the intellectual altitudes of Dr. Marmion--and The

Padre."

I had never seen her in a greater strain of gaiety. It had almost a kind of feverishness--as if she relished fully the position she held towards Roscoe and Ruth, her power over their future, and her belief (as I think was in her mind then) that she could bring back to her self Roscoe's old allegiance. That she believed this, I was convinced; that she would never carry it out, was just as strong: for I, though only the chorus in the drama, might one day find it in my power to become, for a moment, one of the principal actors--from which position I had declined one day when humiliated before Mrs. Falchion on the 'Fulvia'. Boyd Madras was in my mind.

After a few minutes we parted, agreeing to meet again in the valley in the evening. I had promised, as Mrs. Falchion had suggested, to escort her and Justine Caron from the summer hotel to the mill. Roscoe had duties at both Viking and Sunburst and would not join us until we all met in the evening. Mr. Devlin and Ruth rode away towards Sunburst. Mrs. Falchion, Justine, and myself travelled slowly up the hillside, talking chiefly upon the events of the morning. Mrs. Falchion appeared to admire greatly the stalwart character of Mr. Devlin; in a few swift, complimentary words disposed of Ruth; and then made many inquiries concerning Roscoe's work, my own position, and the length of my stay in the mountains; and talked upon many trivial matters, never once referring--as it seemed to me, purposely--to our past experiences on the 'Fulvia', nor making any inquiry concerning any one except Belle Treherne.

She showed no surprise when I told her that I expected to marry Miss Treherne. She congratulated me with apparent frankness, and asked for Miss Treherne's address, saying she would write to her. As soon as she had left Roscoe's presence she had dropped all enigmatical words and phrases, and, during this hour I was with her, was the tactful, accomplished woman of the world, with the one present object: to make her conversation agreeable, and to keep things on the surface. Justine Caron scarcely spoke during the whole of our walk, although I addressed myself to her frequently. But I could see that she watched Mrs. Falchion's face curiously; and I believe that at this time her instinct was keener by far to read what was in Mrs. Falchion's mind than my own, though I knew much more of the hidden chain of events connecting Mrs. Falchion's life and Galt Roscoe's.

I parted from them at the door of the hotel, made my way down to Roscoe's house at the ravine, and busied myself for the greater part of the day in writing letters, and reading on the coping. About sunset I called for Mrs. Falchion, and found her and Justine Caron ready and waiting. There was nothing eventful in our talk as we came down the mountain-side towards Viking--Justine Caron's presence prevented that. It was dusk when we reached the valley. As yet the mills were all dark. The only lights visible were in the low houses lining the banks of the river. Against the mountainside there seemed to hang one bunch of flame like a star, large, red, and weird. It was a torch burning in front of Phil Boldrick's hut. We made our way slowly to the mill, and found Mr.

Devlin, Ruth, and Roscoe, with Ruth's sister, and one or two other friends, expecting us.

"Well," said Mr. Devlin heartily, "I have kept the show waiting for you. The house is all dark, but I guess you'll see a transformation scene pretty quick. Come out," he continued, "and let us get the front seats. They are all stalls here; nobody has a box except Boldrick, and it is up in the flies."

"Mr. Devlin," said Mrs. Falchion, "I purpose to see this show not only from the stalls, but from the box in the flies. Therefore, during the first act, I shall be here in front of the foot-lights. During the second act I shall be aloft like Tom Bowling--"

"In other words--" began Mr. Devlin.

"In other words," added Mrs. Falchion, "I am going to see the valley and hear your great horn blow from up there!" She pointed towards the star in front of Phil's hut.

"All right," said Mr. Devlin; "but you will excuse me if I say that I don't particularly want anybody to see this performance from where Tom Bowling bides."

We left the office and went out upon the platform, a little distance from the mill. Mr. Devlin gave a signal, touched a wire, and immediately it seemed as if the whole valley was alight. The mill itself was in a blaze of white. It was transfigured--a fairy palace, just as the mud barges in the Suez Canal had been transformed by the search-light of the 'Fulvia'. For the moment, in the wonder of change from darkness to light, the valley became the picture of a dream. Every man was at his post in the mill, and in an instant work was going on as we had seen it in the morning. Then, all at once, there came a great roar, as it were, from the very heart of the mill--a deep diapason, dug out of the throat of the hills: the big whistle.

"It sounds mournful--like a great animal in pain," said Mrs. Falchion. "You might have got one more cheerful."

"Wait till it gets tuned up," said Mr. Devlin. "It hasn't had a chance to get the burs out of its throat. It will be very fine as soon as the engine-man knows how to manage it."

"Yes," said Ruth, interposing, "a little toning down would do it good--it is shaking the windows in your office; feel this platform tremble!"

"Well, I bargained for a big whistle and I've got it: and I guess they'll know if ever there's a fire in the town!" Just as he said this, Roscoe gave a cry and pointed.

We all turned, and saw a sight that made Ruth Devlin cover her face with her hands and Mrs. Falchion stand horror-stricken. There, coming down the cable with the speed of lightning, was the cage. In it was a man--

Phil Boldrick. With a cry and a smothered oath, Mr. Devlin sprang towards the machinery, Roscoe with him. There was nobody near it, but they saw a boy whose duty it was that night to manage the cable, running towards it. Roscoe was the first to reach the lever; but it was too late. He partially stopped the cage, but only partially. It came with a dull, sickening thud to the ground, and Phil Boldrick--Phil Boldrick's broken, battered body--was thrown out.

A few minutes later Boldrick was lying in Mr. Devlin's office.

Ill luck for Viking in the hour of her success. Phil's shattered hulk is drifting. The masts have gone by the board, the pilot from the captain's side. Only the man's "unconquerable soul" is on the bridge, watching the craft dip at the bow till the waters, their sport out, should hugely swallow it.

We were all gathered round. Phil had asked to see the lad who, by neglecting the machinery for a moment, had wrecked his life. "My boy," he said, "you played an ugly game. It was a big mistake. I haven't any grudge agen you, but be glad I'm not one that'd haunt you for your cussed foolishness. . . . There, now, I feel better; that's off my mind!"

"If you're wanting to show remorse or anything," he continued, "there's my friend, Mr. Roscoe, The Padre--he's all right, you understand!--Are you there? . . . Why don't you speak?" He stretched out his hand. The lad took it, but he could not speak: he held it and sobbed.

Then Phil understood. His brow wrinkled with a sudden trouble. He said: "There, never mind. I'm dying, but it isn't what I expected. It doesn't smart nor tear much; not more than river-rheumatism. P'r'aps I wouldn't mind it at all if I could see."

For Phil was entirely blind now. The accident had destroyed his remaining eye. Being blind, he had already passed that first corridor of death--darkness. Roscoe stooped over him, took his hand, and spoke quietly to him. Phil knew the voice, and said with a faint smile: "Do you think they'd plant me with municipal honours--honours to pardners?"

"We'll see to that, Phil," said Mr. Devlin from behind the clergyman.

Phil recognised the voice. "You think that nobody'll kick at making it official?"

"Not one, Phil."

"And maybe they wouldn't mind firin' a volley--Lights out, as it were: and blow the big whistle? It'd look sociable, wouldn't it?"

"There'll be a volley and the whistle, Phil--if you have to go," said Mr. Devlin.

There was a silence, then the reply came musingly: "I guess I hev to go. . . . I'd hev liked to see the corporation runnin' longer, but maybe

I can trust the boys."

A river-driver at the door said in a deep voice: "By the holy! yes, you can trust us."

"Thank you kindly. . . . If it doesn't make any difference to the rest, I'd like to be alone with The Padre for a little--not for religion, you understand, for I go as I stayed, and I hev my views,--but for private business."

Slowly, awkwardly, the few river-drivers passed out--Devlin and Mrs. Falchion and Ruth and I with them--for I could do nothing now for him--he was broken all to pieces. Roscoe told me afterwards what happened then.

"Padre," he said to Roscoe, "are we alone?"

"Quite alone, Phil."

"Well, I hev'n't any crime to tell, and the business isn't weighty; but I hev a pal at Danger Mountain--" He paused.

"Yes, Phil?"

"He's low down in s'ciety; but he's square, and we've had the same blanket for many a day together. I crossed him first on the Panama level. I was broke--stony broke. He'd been shipwrecked, and was ditto. He'd been in the South Seas; I in Nicaragua. We travelled up through Mexico and Arizona, and then through California to the Canadian Rockies. At last we camped at Danger Mountain, a Hudson's Bay fort, and stayed there. It was a roughish spot, but we didn't mind that. Every place isn't Viking. One night we had a difference--not a quarrel, mind you, but a difference. He was for lynchin' a fellow called Piccadilly, a swell that'd come down in the world, bringin' the worst tricks of his tribe with him. He'd never been a bony fidy gentleman--just an imitation. He played sneak with the daughter of Five Fingers, an Injin chief. We'd set store by that girl. There wasn't one of us rough nuts but respected her. She was one of the few beautiful Injin women I've seen. Well, it come out that Piccadilly had ruined her, and one morning she was found dead. It drove my pal well-nigh crazy. Not that she was anything partik'ler to him; but the thing took hold of him unusual."

Now that I know all concerning Roscoe's past life, I can imagine that this recital must have been swords at his heart. The whole occurrence is put down minutely in his diary, but there is no word of comment upon it.

Phil had been obliged to stop for pain, and, after Roscoe had adjusted the bandages, he continued:

"My pal and the others made up their minds they'd lynch Piccadilly; they wouldn't give him the benefit of the doubt--for it wasn't certain that the girl hadn't killed herself. . . . Well, I went to Piccadilly, and give him the benefit. He left, and skipped the rope. Not, p'r'aps, that he ought to hev got away, but once he'd showed me a letter from his

mother,--he was drunk too, at the time,--and I remembered when my brother Rodney was killed in the Black Hills, and how my mother took it; so I give him the tip to travel quick."

He paused and rested. Then presently continued: "Now, Padre, I've got four hundred dollars--the most I ever had at one time in my life. And I'd like it to go to my old pal--though we had that difference, and parted. I guess we respect each other about the same as we ever did. And I wish you'd write it down so that the thing would be municipal."

Roscoe took pencil and paper and said: "What's his name, Phil?"

"Sam--Tonga Sam."

"But that isn't all his name?"

"No, I s'pose not, but it's all he ever had in general use. He'd got it because he'd been to the Tonga Islands and used to yarn about them. Put 'Tonga Sam, Phil Boldrick's Pal at Danger Mountain, ult'--add the 'ult,' it's c'rrect.--That'll find him. And write him these words, and if you ever see him say them to him--'Phil Boldrick never had a pal that crowded Tonga Sam.'"

When the document was written, Roscoe read it aloud, then both signed it, Roscoe guiding the battered hand over the paper.

This done, there was a moment's pause, and then Phil said: "I'd like to be in the open. I was born in the open--on the Madawaska. Take me out, Padre."

Roscoe stepped to the door, and silently beckoned to Devlin and myself. We carried him out, and put him beside a pine tree.

"Where am I now?" he said. "Under the white pine, Phil." "That's right. Face me to the north."

We did so. Minutes passed in silence. Only the song of the saw was heard, and the welting of the river. "Padre," he said at last hurriedly, "lift me up, so's I can breathe."

This was done.

"Am I facin' the big mill?"

"Yes."

"That's c'rrect. And the 'lectric light is burnin' in the mill and in the town, an' the saws are all goin'?"

"Yes."

"By gracious, yes--you can hear 'em! Don't they scrunch the stuff, though!" He laughed a little. "Mr. Devlin an' you and me hev been

pretty smart, hev'n't we?"

Then a spasm caught him, and after a painful pause he called: "It's the biggest thing in cables. . . . Stand close in the cage. . . . Feel her swing!--Safe, you bet, if he stands by the lever. . . ."

His face lighted with the last gleam of living, and he said slowly: "I hev a pal--at Danger Mountain."

CHAPTER XV

IN THE TROUGH OF THE WINDS

The three days following the events recorded in the preceding chapter were notable to us all. Because my own affairs and experiences are of the least account, I shall record them first: they will at least throw a little light on the history of people who appeared previously in this tale, and disappeared suddenly when the 'Fulvia' reached London, to make room for others.

The day after Phil Boldrick's death I received a letter from Hungerford, and also one from Belle Treherne. Hungerford had left the Occidental Company's service, and had been fortunate enough to get the position of first officer on a line of steamers running between England and the West Indies. The letter was brusque, incisive, and forceful, and declared that, once he got his foot firmly planted in his new position, he would get married and be done with it. He said that Clovelly the novelist had given a little dinner at his chambers in Piccadilly, and that the guests were all our fellow-passengers by the 'Fulvia'; among them Colonel Ryder, the bookmaker, Blackburn the Queenslander, and himself.

This is extracted from the letter:

. . . Clovelly was in rare form.--Don't run away with the idea that he's eating his heart out because you came in just ahead in the race for Miss Treherne. For my part--but, never mind!--You had phenomenal luck, and you will be a phenomenal fool if you don't arrange for an early marriage. You are a perfect baby in some things. Don't you know that the time a woman most yearns for a man is when she has refused him? And Clovelly is here on the ground, and they are in the same set, and though I'd take my oath she would be loyal to you if you were ten thousand miles from here for ten years, so far as a promise is concerned, yet remember that a promise and a fancy are two different things. We may do what's right for the fear o' God, and not love Him either. Marmion, let the marriage bells be rung early--a maiden's heart is a ticklish thing. . . .

But Clovelly was in rare form, as I said; and the bookmaker, who had for the first time read a novel of his, amiably quoted from it, and criticised it during the dinner, till the place reeked with

laughter. At first every one stared aghast ("stared aghast!"--how is that for literary form?); but when Clovelly gurgled, and then haw-hawed till he couldn't lift his champagne, the rest of us followed in a double-quick. And the bookmaker simply sat calm and earnest with his eye-glass in his eye, and never did more than gently smile. "See here," he said ever so candidly of Clovelly's best character, a serious, inscrutable kind of a man, the dignified figure in the book--"I liked the way you drew that muff. He was such an awful outsider, wasn't he? All talk, and hypocrite down to his heels. And when you married him to that lady who nibbled her food in public and gorged in the back pantry, and went 'slumming' and made shoulder-strings for the parson--oh, I know the kind!"-- [This was Clovelly's heroine, whom he had tried to draw, as he said himself, "with a perfect sincerity and a lovely worldly-mindedness, and a sweet creation altogether."] "I said, that's poetic justice, that's the refinement of retribution. Any other yarn-spinner would have killed the male idiot by murder, or a drop from a precipice, or a lingering fever; but Clovelly did the thing with delicate torture. He said, 'Go to blazes,' and he fixed up that marriage--and there you are! Clovelly, I drink to you; you are a master!"

Clovelly acknowledged beautifully, and brought off a fine thing about the bookmaker having pocketed L5000 at the Derby, then complimented Colonel Ryder on his success as a lecturer in London (pretty true, by the way), and congratulated Blackburn on his coming marriage with Mrs. Callendar, the Tasmanian widow. What he said of myself I am not going to repeat; but it was salaaming all round, with the liquor good, and fun bang over the bulwarks.

How is Roscoe? I didn't see as much of him as you did, but I liked him. Take my tip for it, that woman will make trouble for him some day. She is the biggest puzzle I ever met. I never could tell whether she liked him or hated him; but it seems to me that either would be the ruin of any "Christom man." I know she saw something of him while she was in London, because her quarters were next to those of my aunt the dowager (whose heart the gods soften at my wedding!) in Queen Anne's Mansions, S.W., and who actually liked Mrs. F., called on her, and asked her to dinner, and Roscoe too, whom she met at her place. I believe my aunt would have used her influence to get him a good living, if he had played his cards properly; but I expect he wouldn't be patronised, and he went for a "mickonaree," as they say in the South Seas. . . . Well, I'm off to the Spicy Isles, then back again to marry a wife. "Go thou and do likewise."

By the way, have you ever heard of or seen Boyd Madras since he slipped our cable at Aden and gave the world another chance? I trust he will spoil her wedding--if she ever tries to have one. May I be there to see!

Because we shall see nothing more of Hungerford till we finally dismiss the drama, I should like to say that this voyage of his to the West Indies made his fortune--that is, it gave him command of one of the

finest ships in the English merchant service. In a storm a disaster occurred to his vessel, his captain was washed overboard, and he was obliged to take command. His skill, fortitude, and great manliness, under tragical circumstances, sent his name booming round the world; and, coupled, as it was, with a singular act of personal valour, he had his pick of all vacancies and possible vacancies in the merchant service, boy (or little more) as he was. I am glad to say that he is now a happy husband and father too.

The letter from Belle Treherne mentioned having met Clovelly several times of late, and, with Hungerford's words hot in my mind, I determined, though I had perfect confidence in her, as in myself, to be married at Christmas-time. Her account of the courtship of Blackburn and Mrs. Callendar was as amusing as her description of an evening which the bookmaker had spent with her father, when he said he was going to marry an actress whom he had seen at Drury Lane Theatre in a racing drama. This he subsequently did, and she ran him a break-neck race for many a day, but never making him unhappy or less resourceful. His verdict, and his only verdict, upon Mrs. Falchion had been confided to Blackburn, who in turn confided it to Clovelly, who passed it on to me.

He said: "A woman is like a horse. Make her beautiful, give her a high temper and a bit of bad luck in her youth, and she'll take her revenge out of life; even though she runs straight, and wins straight every time; till she breaks her heart one day over a lost race. After that she is good to live with for ever. A heart-break for that kind is their salvation: without it they go on breaking the hearts of others."

As I read Belle's and Hungerford's letters my thoughts went back again --as they did so often indeed--to the voyage of the 'Fulvia', and then to Mrs. Falchion's presence in the Rocky Mountains. There was a strange destiny in it all, and I had no pleasant anticipations about the end; for, even if she could or did do Roscoe no harm, so far as his position was concerned, I saw that she had already begun to make trouble between him and Ruth.

That day which saw poor Boldrick's death put her in a conflicting light to me. Now I thought I saw in her unusual gentleness, again an unusual irony, an almost flippant and cruel worldliness; and though at the time she was most touched by the accident, I think her feeling of horror at it made her appear to speak in a way which showed her unpleasantly to Mr. Devlin and his daughter. It may be, however, that Ruth Devlin saw further into her character than I guessed, and understood the strange contradictions of her nature. But I shall, I suppose, never know absolutely about that; nor does it matter much now.

The day succeeding Phil's death was Sunday, and the little church at Viking was full. Many fishers had come over from Sunburst. It was evident that people expected Roscoe to make some reference to Phil's death in his sermon, or, at least, have a part of the service appropriate. By a singular chance the first morning lesson was David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan. Roscoe had a fine voice. He read easily, naturally--like a cultivated layman, not like a clergyman; like a

man who wished to convey the simple meaning of what he read, reverently, honestly. On the many occasions when I heard him read the service, I noticed that he never changed the opening sentence, though there were, of course, others from which to choose. He drew the people to their feet always with these words, spoken as it were directly to them:

"When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

I noticed this morning that he instantly attracted the attention of every one, and held it, with the first words of the lesson:

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!"

It seemed to me as if the people at first almost tried to stop breathing, so intense was the feeling. Mrs. Falchion was sitting very near me, and though she had worn her veil up at first, as I uncharitably put it then, to disconcert him, she drew it rather quickly down as his reading proceeded; but, so far as I could see, she never took her eyes off his face through the whole service; and, impelled in spite of myself, I watched her closely. Though Ruth Devlin was sitting not far from her, she scarcely looked that way.

Evidently the text of the sermon was not chosen that it might have some association with Phil's death, but there was a kind of simple grandeur, and certainly cheerful stalwartness, in his interpretation and practical rendering of the text:

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? . . . travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

A man was talking to men sensibly, directly, quietly. It was impossible to resist the wholesome eloquence of his temperament; he was a revelation of humanity: what he said had life.

I said to myself, as I had before, Is it possible that this man ever did anything unmanly?

After the service, James Devlin--with Ruth--came to Roscoe and myself, and asked us to lunch at his house. Roscoe hesitated, but I knew it was better for him not to walk up the hills and back again immediately after luncheon; so I accepted for us both; and Ruth gave me a grateful look. Roscoe seemed almost anxious not to be alone with Ruth--not from any cowardly feeling, but because he was perplexed by the old sense of coming catastrophe, which, indeed, poor fellow, he had some cause to feel. He and Mr. Devlin talked of Phil's funeral and the arrangements that had been made, and during the general conversation Ruth and I dropped behind.

Quite abruptly she said to me: "Who is Mrs. Falchion?"

"A widow--it is said--rich, unencumbered," I as abruptly answered.

"But I suppose even widows may have pedigrees, and be conjugated in the past tense," was the cool reply. She drew herself up a little proudly.

I was greatly astonished. Here was a girl living most of her life in these mountains, having only had a few years of social life in the East, practising with considerable skill those arts of conversation so much cultivated in metropolitan drawing-rooms. But I was a very dull fellow then, and had yet to learn that women may develop in a day to wonderful things.

"Well," I said in reply, "I suppose not. But I fear I cannot answer regarding the pedigree, nor a great deal about the past, for I only met her under two years ago."

"And yet I have imagined that you knew her pretty well, and that Mr. Roscoe knew her even better--perhaps," she said suggestively.

"That is so," I tried to say with apparent frankness, "for she lived in the South Seas with her father, and Roscoe knew her there."

"She is a strange woman, and quite heartless in some ways; and yet, do you know, I like her while I dislike her; and I cannot tell why."

"Do not try to tell," I answered, "for she has the gift of making people do both.--I think she likes and dislikes herself--as well as others."

"As well--as others," she replied slowly. "Yes, I think I have noticed that. You see," she added, "I do not look at people as most girls of my age: and perhaps I am no better for that. But Mrs. Falchion's introduction to me occurred in such peculiar circumstances, and the coincidence of your knowing her was so strange, that my interest is not unnatural, I suppose."

"On the contrary," I said, "I am only surprised that you have restrained your curiosity so much and so long. It was all very strange; though the meeting was quite to be expected, as Mrs. Falchion herself explained that day. She had determined on coming over to the Pacific Coast; this place was in her way; it is a fashionable resort; and she stood a good chance of finding old friends."

"Yes--of finding--old friends," was the abstracted reply. "I like Miss Caron, her companion, very much better than--most women I have met."

This was not what she was going to say, but she checked herself, lest she might be suspected of thinking uncharitably of Mrs. Falchion. I, of course, agreed with her, and told her the story of Galt Roscoe and Hector Caron, and of Justine's earnestness regarding her fancied debt to Roscoe.

I saw that the poison of anxiety had entered the girl's mind; and it might, perhaps, bear fruit of no engaging quality. In her own home,

however, it was a picture to see her with her younger sisters and brothers, and invalid mother. She went about very brightly and sweetly among them, speaking to them as if she was mother to them all, angel of them all, domestic court for them all; as indeed she was. Here there seemed no disturbing element in her; a close observer might even have said (and in this case I fancy I was that) that she had no mind or heart for anything or anybody but these few of her blood and race. Hers was a fine nature--high, wholesome, unselfish. Yet it struck me sadly also, to see how the child-like in her, and her young spirit, had been so early set to the task of defence and protection: a mother at whose breasts a child had never hung; maternal, but without the relieving joys of maternity.

I knew that she would carry through her life that too watchful, too anxious tenderness; that to her last day she would look back and not remember that she had a childhood once; because while yet a child she had been made into a woman.

Such of the daughters of men make life beautiful; but themselves are selfish who do not see the almost intolerable pathos of unselfishness and sacrifice. At the moment I was bitter with the thought that, if Mrs. Falchion intended anything which could steal away this girl's happiness from her, even for a time, I should myself seek to retaliate--which was, as may appear, in my power. But I could not go to Mrs. Falchion now and say: "You intend some harm to these two: for God's sake go away and leave them alone!" I had no real ground for making such a request. Besides, if there was any catastrophe, any trouble, coming, or possible, that might hasten it, or, at least, give it point.

I could only wait. I had laid another plan, and from a telegram I had received in answer to one I had sent, I believed it was working. I did not despair. I had, indeed, sent a cable to my agent in England, which was to be forwarded to the address given me by Boyd Madras at Aden. I had got a reply saying that Boyd Madras had sailed for Canada by the Allan Line of steamers. I had then telegraphed to a lawyer I knew in Montreal, and he had replied that he was on the track of the wanderer.

All Viking and Sunburst turned out to Phil Boldrick's funeral. Everything was done that he had requested. The great whistle roared painfully, revolvers and guns were fired over his grave, and the new-formed corporation appeared. He was buried on the top of a foot-hill, which, to this day, is known as Boldricks' Own. The grave was covered by an immense flat stone bearing his name. But a flagstaff was erected near, no stouter one stands on Beachy Head or elsewhere,--and on it was engraved:

PHIL BOLDRICK,

Buried with Municipal Honours on
the Thirtieth day of June 1883.

This to his Memory, and for the honour of
Viking and Sunburst.

"Padre," said a river-driver to Galt Roscoe after the rites were finished, "that was a man you could trust."

"Padre," added another, "that was a man you could bank on, and draw your interest reg'lar. He never done a mean thing, and he never pal'd with a mean man. He wasn't for getting his teeth on edge like some in the valley. He didn't always side with the majority, and he had a gift of doin' things on the square."

Others spoke in similar fashion, and then Viking went back to work, and we to our mountain cottage.

Many days passed quietly. I saw that Galt Roscoe wished to speak to me on the subject perplexing him, but I did not help him. I knew that it would come in good time, and the farther off it was the better. I dreaded to hear what he had to tell, lest, in spite of my confidence in him, it should really be a thing which, if made public, must bring ruin. During the evenings of these days he wrote much in his diary--the very book that lies by me now. Writing seemed a relief to him, for he was more cheerful afterwards. I know that he had received letters from the summer hotel, but whether they were from Mrs. Falchion or Justine Caron I was not then aware, though I afterwards came to know that one of them was from Justine, asking him if she might call on him. He guessed that the request was connected with Hector Caron's death; and, of course, gave his consent. During this time he did not visit Ruth Devlin, nor did he mention her name. As for myself, I was sick of the whole business, and wished it well over, whatever the result.

I make here a few extracts from Roscoe's diary, to show the state of his mind at this period:

Can a man never get away from the consequences of his wickedness, even though he repents? . . . Restitution is necessary as well as repentance; but when one cannot make restitution, when it is impossible--what then? I suppose one has to reply, Well, you have to suffer, that is all. . . . Poor Alo! To think that after all these years, you can strike me!

There is something malicious in the way Mercy Falchion crosses my path. What she knows, she knows; and what she can do if she chooses, I must endure. I cannot love Mercy Falchion again, and that, I suppose, is the last thing she would wish now. I cannot bring Alo back. But how does that concern her! Why does she hate me so? For, underneath her kindest words,--and they are kind sometimes,--I can detect the note of enmity, of calculating scorn. . . . I wish I could go to Ruth and tell her all, and ask her to decide if she can take a man with such a past. . . . What a thing it is to have had a clean record of unflinching manliness at one's back!

I add another extract:

Phil's story of Danger Mountain struck like ice at my heart. There was a horrible irony in the thing: that it should be told to me, of all the world, and at such a time. Some would say, I suppose, that it was the arrangement of Providence. Not to speak it profanely, it seems to be the achievement of the devil. The torture was too malicious for God. . . .

Phil's letter has gone to his pal at Danger Mountain. . . .

The fourth day after the funeral Justine Caron came to see Galt Roscoe. This was the substance of their conversation, as I came to know long afterwards.

"Monsieur," she said, "I have come to pay something of a debt which I owe to you. It is a long time since you gave my poor Hector burial, but I have never forgotten, and I have brought you at last--you must not shake your head so--the money you spent. . . . But you MUST take it. I should be miserable if you did not. The money is all that I can repay; the kindness is for memory and gratitude always."

He looked at her wonderingly, earnestly, she seemed so unworldly, standing there, her life's ambition not stirring beyond duty to her dead. If goodness makes beauty, she was beautiful; and yet, besides all that, she had a warm, absorbing eye, a soft, rounded cheek, and she carried in her face the light of a cheerful, engaging spirit.

"Will it make you happier if I take the money?" he said at last, and his voice showed how she had moved him.

"So much happier!" she answered, and she put a roll of notes into his hand.

"Then I will take it," he replied, with a manner not too serious, and he looked at the notes carefully; "but only what I actually spent, remember; what I told you when you wrote me at Hector's death; not this ample interest. You forget, Miss Caron, that your brother was my friend."

"No I cannot forget that. It lives with me," she rejoined softly. But she took back the surplus notes. "And I have my gratitude left still," she added, smiling.

"Believe me, there is no occasion for gratitude. Why, what less could one do?"

"One could pass by on the other side."

"He was not fallen among thieves," was his reply; "he was among Englishmen, the old allies of the French."

"But the Priests and the Levites, people of his own country--Frenchmen--passed him by. They were infamous in falsehood, cruel to him and to me. --You are an Englishman; you have heart and kindness."

He hesitated, then he gravely said: "Do not trust Englishmen more than you trust your own countrymen. We are selfish even in our friendships often. We stick to one person, and to benefit that one we sacrifice others. Have you found all Englishmen--and WOMEN unselfish?" He looked at her steadily; but immediately repented that he had asked the question, for he had in his mind one whom they both knew, too well, perhaps; and he added quickly: "You see, I am not kind."

They were standing now in the sunlight just outside the house. His hands were thrust down in the pockets of his linen coat; her hands opening and shutting her parasol slightly. They might, from their appearance, have been talking of very inconsequent things.

Her eyes lifted sorrowfully to his. "Ah, monsieur," she rejoined, "there are two times when one must fear a woman." She answered his question more directly than he could have conjectured. But she felt that she must warn him.

"I do not understand," he said.

"Of course you do not. Only women themselves understand that the two times when one must fear a woman are when she hates, and when she loves--after a kind. When she gets wicked or mad enough to hate, either through jealousy or because she cannot love where she would, she is merciless. She does not know the honour of the game. She has no pity. Then, sometimes when she loves in a way, she is, as you say, most selfish. I mean a love which--is not possible. Then she does some mad act--all women are a little mad sometimes. Most of us wish to be good, but we are quicksilver. . . ."

Roscoe's mind had been working fast. He saw she meant to warn him against Mrs. Falchion. His face flushed slightly. He knew that Justine had thought well of him, and now he knew also that she suspected something not creditable or, at least, hazardous in his life.

"And the man--the man whom the woman hates?"

"When the woman hates--and loves too, the man is in danger."

"Do you know of such a man?" he almost shrinkingly said.

"If I did I would say to him, The world is wide. There is no glory in fighting a woman who will not be fair in battle. She will say what may appear to be true, but what she knows in her own heart to be false--false and bad."

Roscoe now saw that Justine had more than an inkling of his story.

He said calmly: "You would advise that man to flee from danger?"

"Yes, to flee," she replied hurriedly, with a strange anxiety in her eyes; "for sometimes a woman is not satisfied with words that kill. She becomes less than human, and is like Jael."

Justine knew that Mrs. Falchion held a sword over Roscoe's career; she guessed that Mrs. Falchion both cared for him and hated him too; but she did not know the true reason of the hatred--that only came out afterwards. Woman-like, she exaggerated in order that she might move him; but her motive was good, and what she said was not out of keeping with the facts of life.

"The man's life even might be in danger?" he asked.

"It might."

"But surely that is not so dreadful," he still said calmly.

"Death is not the worst of evils."

"No, not the worst; one has to think of the evil word as well. The evil word can be outlived; but the man must think of those who really love him--who would die to save him--and whose hearts would break if he were killed. Love can outlive slander, but it is bitter when it has to outlive both slander and death. It is easy to love with joy so long as both live, though there are worlds between. Thoughts fly and meet; but Death makes the great division. . . . Love can only live in the pleasant world."

Very abstractedly he said: "Is it a pleasant world to you?"

She did not reply directly to that, but answered: "Monsieur, if you know of such a man as I speak of, warn him to fly." And she raised her eyes from the ground and looked earnestly at him. Now her face was slightly flushed, she looked almost beautiful.

"I know of such a man," he replied, "but he will not go. He has to answer to his own soul and his conscience. He is not without fear, but it is only fear for those who care for him, be they ever so few. And he hopes that they will be brave enough to face his misery, if it must come. For we know that courage has its hour of comfort. . . . When such a man as you speak of has his dark hour he will stand firm."

Then with a great impulse he added: "This man whom I know did wrong, but he was falsely accused of doing a still greater. The consequence of the first thing followed him. He could never make restitution. Years went by. Some one knew that dark spot in his life--his Nemesis."

"The worst Nemesis in this life, monsieur, is always a woman," she interrupted.

"Perhaps she is the surest," he continued. "The woman faced him in the hour of his peace and--" he paused. His voice was husky.

"Yes, 'and,' monsieur?"

"And he knows that she would ruin him, and kill his heart and destroy his

life."

"The waters of Marah are bitter," she murmured, and she turned her face away from him to the woods. There was no trouble there. The birds were singing, black squirrels were jumping from bough to bough, and they could hear the tapping of the woodpecker. She slowly drew on her gloves, as if for occupation.

He spoke at length as though thinking aloud: "But he knows that, whatever comes, life has had for him more compensations than he deserves. For, in his trouble, a woman came, and said kind words, and would have helped him if she could."

"There were TWO women," she said solemnly.

"Two women?" he repeated slowly.

"The one stayed in her home and prayed, and the other came."

"I do not understand," he said: and he spoke truly.

"Love is always praying for its own, therefore one woman prayed at home. The other woman who came was full of gratitude, for the man was noble, she owed him a great debt, and she believed in him always. She knew that if at any time in his life he had done wrong, the sin was without malice or evil."

"The woman is gentle and pitiful with him, God knows."

She spoke quietly now, and her gravity looked strange in one so young.

"God knows she is just, and would see him fairly treated. She is so far beneath him! and yet one can serve a friend though one is humble and poor."

"How strange," he rejoined, "that the man should think himself miserable who is befriended in such a way! Mademoiselle, he will carry to his grave the kindness of this woman."

"Monsieur," she added humbly, yet with a brave light in her eyes, "it is good to care whether the wind blows bitter or kind. Every true woman is a mother, though she have no child. She longs to protect the suffering, because to protect is in her so far as God is. . . . Well, this woman cares that way. . . ." She held out her hand to say good-bye. Her look was simple, direct, and kind. Their parting words were few and unremarkable.

Roscoe watched Justine Caron as she passed out into the shade of the woods, and he said to himself: "Gratitude like that is a wonderful thing." He should have said something else, but he did not know, and she did not wish him to know: and he never knew.

CHAPTER XVI

A DUEL IN ARCADY

The more I thought of Mrs. Falchion's attitude towards Roscoe, the more I was puzzled. But I had at last reduced the position to this: Years ago Roscoe had cared for her and she had not cared for him. Angered or indignant at her treatment of him, Roscoe's affections declined unworthily elsewhere. Then came a catastrophe of some kind, in which Alo (whoever she was) suffered. The secret of this catastrophe Mrs. Falchion, as I believe, held. There was a parting, a lapse of years, and then the meeting on the 'Fulvia': with it, partial restoration of Mrs. Falchion's influence, then its decline, and then a complete change of position. It was now Mrs. Falchion that cared, and Roscoe that shunned. It perplexed me that there seemed to be behind Mrs. Falchion's present regard for Roscoe some weird expression of vengeance, as though somehow she had been wronged, and it was her duty to punish. In no other way was the position definable. That Roscoe would never marry her was certain to my mind. That he could not marry her now was also certain--to me; I had the means to prevent it. That she wished to marry him I was not sure, though she undoubtedly cared for him. Remained, therefore, the supposition that if he cared for her she would do him no harm, as to his position. But if he married Ruth, disaster would come--Roscoe himself acknowledged that she held the key of his fortunes.

Upon an impulse, and as a last resort, I had taken action whereby in some critical moment I might be able to wield a power over Mrs. Falchion. I was playing a blind game, but it was the only card I held. I had heard from the lawyer in Montreal that Madras, under another name, had gone to the prairie country to enter the mounted police. I had then telegraphed to Winnipeg, but had got no answer.

I had seen her many times, but we had never, except very remotely, touched upon the matter which was uppermost in both our minds. It was not my wish to force the situation. I knew that my opportunity would come wherein to spy upon the mind of the enemy. It came. On the evening that Justine Caron called upon Roscoe, I accidentally met Mrs. Falchion in the grounds of the hotel. She was with several people, and as I spoke to her she made a little gesture of invitation. I went over, was introduced to her companions, and then she said:

"Dr. Marmion, I have not yet made that visit to the salmon-fishers at Sunburst. Unfortunately, on the days when I called on Miss Devlin, my time was limited. But now I have a thirst for adventure, and time hangs heavy. Will you perform your old office of escort, and join a party, which we can make up here, to go there to-morrow?"

I had little love for Mrs. Falchion, but I consented, because it seemed to me the chance had come for an effective talk with her; and I suggested that we should go late in the afternoon of the next day, and remain till night and see the Indians, the half-breeds, and white fishermen working

by torch-light on the river. The proposition was accepted with delight.

Then the conversation turned upon the feud that existed between Viking and Sunburst, the river-drivers and the fishers. During the last few days, owing to the fact that there were a great many idle river-men about, the river-driving for the season being done, there had been more than one quarrel of a serious nature at Sunburst. It had needed a great deal of watchfulness on the part of Mr. Devlin and his supporters to prevent fighting. In Sunburst itself, Mr. Devlin had much personal influence. He was a man of exceedingly strong character, bold, powerful, persuasive. But this year there had been a large number of rough, adventurous characters among the river-men, and they seemed to take delight in making sport of, and even interfering with, the salmon-fishers. We talked of these things for some time, and then I took my leave. As I went, Mrs. Falchion stepped after me, tapped me on the arm, and said in a slow, indolent tone:

"Whenever you and I meet, Dr. Marmion, something happens--something strange. What particular catastrophe have you arranged for to-morrow? For you are, you know, the chorus to the drama."

"Do not spoil the play by anticipation," I said.

"One gets very weary of tragedy," she retorted. "Comedy would be a relief. Could you not manage it?"

"I do not know about to-morrow," I said, "as to a comedy. But I promise you that one of these days I will present to you the very finest comedy imaginable."

"You speak oracularly," she said; "still you are a professor, and professors always pose. But now, to be perfectly frank with you, I do not believe that any comedy you could arrange would be as effective as your own."

"You have read 'Much Ado about Nothing'," I said.

"Oh, it is as good as that, is it?" she asked.

"Well, it has just as good a final situation," I answered. She seemed puzzled, for she saw I spoke with some undercurrent of meaning. "Mrs. Falchion," I said to her suddenly and earnestly, "I wish you to think between now and to-morrow of what I am just going to say to you."

"It sounds like the task set an undergraduate, but go on," she said.

"I wish you to think," said I, "of the fact that I helped to save your life."

She flushed; an indignant look shot into her face, and her voice vibrating, she said:

"What man would have done less?" Then, almost immediately after, as

though repenting of what she had said, she continued in a lower tone and with a kind of impulsiveness uncommon to her: "But you had courage, and I appreciate that; still, do not ask too much. Good-night."

We parted at that, and did not meet again until the next afternoon, when I joined her and her party at the summer hotel. Together we journeyed down to Sunburst.

It was the height of the salmon-fishing season. Sunburst lay cloyed among the products of field and forest and stream. At Viking one got the impression of a strong pioneer life, vibrant, eager, and with a touch of Arcady. But viewed from a distance Sunburst seemed Arcady itself. It was built in green pastures, which stretched back on one side of the river, smooth, luscious, undulating to the foot-hills. This was on one side of the Whi-Whi River. On the other side was a narrow margin, and then a sheer wall of hills in exquisite verdure. The houses were of wood, and chiefly painted white, sweet and cool in the vast greenness. Cattle wandered shoulders deep in the rich grass, and fruit of all kinds was to be had for the picking. The population was strangely mixed. Men had drifted here from all parts of the world, sometimes with their families, sometimes without them. Many of them had settled here after mining at the Caribou field and other places on the Frazer River. Mexican, Portuguese, Canadian, Californian, Australian, Chinaman, and coolie lived here, side by side, at ease in the quiet land, following a primitive occupation with primitive methods.

One could pick out the Indian section of the village, because not far from it was the Indian graveyard, with its scaffolding of poles and brush and its offerings for the dead. There were almost interminable rows of scaffolding on the river's edge and upon the high bank where hung the salmon drying in the sun. The river, as it ambled along, here over shallows, there over rapids and tiny waterfalls, was the pathway for millions and millions of salmon upon a pilgrimage to the West and North--to the happy hunting grounds of spawn. They came in droves so thick at times that, crowding up the little creeks which ran into the river, they filled them so completely as to dam up the water and make the courses a solid mass of living and dead fish. In the river itself they climbed the rapids and leaped the little waterfalls with incredible certainty; except where man had prepared his traps for them. Sometimes these traps were weirs or by-washes, made of long lateral tanks of wicker-work. Down among the boulders near the shore, scaffoldings were raised, and from these the fishermen with nets and wicker-work baskets caught the fish as they came up.

We wandered about during the afternoon immensely interested in all that we saw. During that time the party was much together, and my conversation with Mrs. Falchion was general. We had supper at a quiet little tavern, idled away an hour in drinking in the pleasant scene; and when dusk came went out again to the banks of the river.

From the time we left the tavern to wander by the river I managed to be a good deal alone with Mrs. Falchion. I do not know whether she saw that I was anxious to speak with her privately, but I fancy she did. Whatever

we had to say must, in the circumstances, however serious, be kept superficially unimportant. And, as it happened, our serious conference was carried on with an air of easy gossip, combined with a not artificial interest in all we saw. And there was much to see. Far up and down the river the fragrant dusk was spotted with the smoky red light of torches, and the atmosphere shook with shadows, through which ran the song of the river, more amiable than the song of the saw, and the low, weird cry of the Indians and white men as they toiled for salmon in the glare of the torches. Here upon a scaffolding a half-dozen swung their nets and baskets in the swift river, hauling up with their very long poles thirty or forty splendid fish in an hour; there at a small cascade, in great baskets sunk into the water, a couple of Indians caught and killed the salmon that, in trying to leap the fall, plumped into the wicker cage; beyond, others, more idle and less enterprising, speared the finny travellers, thus five hundred miles from home--the brave Pacific.

Upon the banks the cleaning and curing went on, the women and children assisting, and as the Indians and half-breeds worked they sang either the wild Indian melodies, snatches of brave old songs of the 'voyageurs' of a past century, or hymns taught by the Jesuit missionaries in the persons of such noble men as Pere Lacombe and Pere Durieu, who have wandered up and down the vast plains of both sides of the Rockies telling an old story in a picturesque, heroic way. These old hymns were written in Chinook, that strange language,--French, English, Spanish, Indian, arranged by the Hudson's Bay Company, which is, like the wampum-belt, a common tongue for tribes and peoples not speaking any language but their own. They were set to old airs--lullabies, chansons, barcarolles, serenades, taken out of the folk-lore of many lands. Time and again had these simple arcadian airs been sung as a prelude to some tribal act that would not bear the search-light of civilisation--little by the Indians east of the Rockies, for they have hard hearts and fierce tongues, but much by the Shuswaps, Siwashes, and other tribes of the Pacific slope, whose natures are for peace more than for war; who, one antique day, drifted across from Japan or the Corea, and never, even in their wild, nomadic state, forgot their skill and craft in wood and gold and silver.

We sat on the shore and watched the scene for a time, saying nothing. Now and again, as from scaffolding to scaffolding, from boat to boat, and from house to house, the Chinook song rang and was caught up in a slow monotone, so not interfering with the toil, there came the sound of an Indian drum beaten indolently, or the rattle of dry hard sticks--a fantastic accompaniment.

"Does it remind you of the South Seas?" I asked Mrs. Falchion, as, with her chin on her hand, she watched the scene.

She drew herself up, almost with an effort, as though she had been lost in thought, and looked at me curiously for a moment. She seemed trying to call back her mind to consider my question. Presently she answered me: "Very little. There is something finer, stronger here. The atmosphere has more nerve, the life more life. This is not a land for the idle or vicious, pleasant as it is."

"What a thinker you are, Mrs. Falchion!"

She seemed to recollect herself suddenly. Her voice took on an inflection of satire. "You say it with the air of a discoverer. With Columbus and Hervey and you, the world--" She stopped, laughing softly at the thrust, and moved the dust about with her foot.

"In spite of the sarcasm, I am going to add that I feel a personal satisfaction in your being a woman who does think, and acts more on thought than impulse."

"'Personal satisfaction' sounds very royal and august. It is long, I imagine, since you took a--personal satisfaction--in me."

I was not to be daunted. "People who think a good deal and live a fresh, outdoor life--you do that--naturally act most fairly and wisely in time of difficulty--and contretemps."

"But I had the impression that you thought I acted unfairly and unwisely --at such times."

We had come exactly where I wanted. In our minds we were both looking at those miserable scenes on the 'Fulvia', when Madras sought to adjust the accounts of life and sorely muddled them.

"But," said I, "you are not the same woman that you were."

"Indeed, Sir Oracle," she answered: "and by what necromancy do you know?"

"By none. I think you are sorry now--I hope you are--for what--"

She interrupted me indignantly. "You go too far. You are almost--unbearable. You said once that the matter should be buried, and yet here you work for an opportunity, Heaven knows why, to place me at a disadvantage!"

"Pardon me," I answered; "I said that I would never bring up those wretched scenes unless there was cause. There is cause."

She got to her feet. "What cause--what possible cause can there be?"

I met her eye firmly. "I am bound to stand by my friend," I said.

"I can and I will stand by him."

"If it is a game of drawn swords, beware!" she retorted. "You speak to me as if I were a common adventuress. You mistake me, and forget that you--of all men--have little margin of high morality on which to speculate."

"No, I do not forget that," I said, "nor do I think of you as an adventuress. But I am sure you hold a power over my friend, and--"

She stopped me. "Not one word more on the subject. You are not to

suppose this or that. Be wise do not irritate and annoy a woman like me. It were better to please me than to preach to me."

"Mrs. Falchion," I said firmly, "I wish to please you--so well that some day you will feel that I have been a good friend to you as well as to him--"

Again she interrupted me. "You talk in foolish riddles. No good can come of this."

"I cannot believe that," I urged; "for when once your heart is moved by the love of a man, you will be just, and then the memory of another man who loved you and sinned for you--"

"Oh, you coward!" she broke out scornfully--"you coward to persist in this!"

I made a little motion of apology with my hand, and was silent. I was satisfied. I felt that I had touched her as no words of mine had ever touched her before. If she became emotional, was vulnerable in her feelings, I knew that Roscoe's peace might be assured. That she loved Roscoe now I was quite certain. Through the mists I could see a way, even if I failed to find Madras and arrange another surprising situation. She was breathing hard with excitement.

Presently she said with incredible quietness, "Do not force me to do hard things. I have a secret."

"I have a secret too," I answered. "Let us compromise."

"I do not fear your secret," she answered. She thought I was referring to her husband's death. "Well," I replied, "I honestly hope you never will. That would be a good day for you."

"Let us go," she said; then, presently: "No, let us sit here and forget that we have been talking."

I was satisfied. We sat down. She watched the scene silently, and I watched her. I felt that it would be my lot to see stranger things happen to her than I had seen before; but all in a different fashion. I had more hope for my friend, for Ruth Devlin, for--!

I then became silent even to myself. The weltering river, the fishers and their labour and their songs, the tall dark hills, the deep gloomy pastures, the flaring lights, were then in a dream before me; but I was thinking, planning.

As we sat there, we heard noises, not very harmonious, interrupting the song of the salmon-fishers. We got up to see. A score of river-drivers were marching down through the village, mocking the fishers and making wild mirth. The Indians took little notice, but the half-breeds and white fishers were restless.

"There will be trouble here one day," said Mrs. Falchion.

"A free fight which will clear the air," I said.

"I should like to see it--it would be picturesque, at least," she added cheerfully; "for I suppose no lives would be lost."

"One cannot tell," I answered; "lives do not count so much in new lands."

"Killing is hateful, but I like to see courage."

And she did see it.

CHAPTER XVII

RIDING THE REEFS

The next afternoon Roscoe was sitting on the coping deep in thought, when Ruth rode up with her father, dismounted, and came upon him so quietly that he did not hear her. I was standing in the trees a little distance away.

She spoke to him once, but he did not seem to hear. She touched his arm. He got to his feet.

"You were so engaged that you did not hear me," she said.

"The noise of the rapids!" he answered, after a strange pause, "and your footstep is very light."

She leaned her chin on her hand, rested against the rail of the coping, looked meditatively into the torrent below, and replied: "Is it so light?" Then after a pause: "You have not asked me how I came, who came with me, or why I am here."

"It was first necessary for me to conceive the delightful fact that you are here," he said in a dazed, and, therefore, not convincing tone.

She looked him full in the eyes. "Please do not pay me the ill compliment of a compliment," she said. "Was it the sailor who spoke then or the--or yourself? It is not like you."

"I did not mean it as a compliment," he replied. "I was thinking about critical and important things."

"'Critical and important' sounds large," she returned.

"And the awakening was sudden," he continued. "You must make allowance, please, for--"

"For the brusque appearance of a very unimaginative, substantial, and undreamlike person? I do. And now, since you will not put me quite at my ease by assuming, in words, that I have been properly 'chaperoned' here, I must inform you that my father waits hard by--is, as my riotous young brother says, 'without on the mat.'"

"I am very glad," he replied with more politeness than exactness.

"That I was duly escorted, or that my father is 'without on the mat'? . . . However, you do not appear glad one way or the other. And now I must explain our business. It is to ask your company at dinner (do consider yourself honoured--actually a formal dinner party in the Rockies!) to meet the lieutenant-governor, who is coming to see our famous Viking and Sunburst. . . . But you are expected to go out where my father feeds his--there, see--his horse on your 'trim parterre.' And now that I have done my duty as page and messenger without a word of assistance, Mr. Roscoe, will you go and encourage my father to hope that you will be vis-a-vis to his excellency?" She lightly beat the air with her whip, while I took a good look at the charming scene.

Roscoe looked seriously at the girl for an instant. He understood too well the source of such gay social banter. He knew it covered a hurt. He said to her: "Is this Ruth Devlin or another?"

And she replied very gravely: "It is Ruth Devlin and another too," and she looked down to the chasm beneath with a peculiar smile; and her eyes were troubled.

He left her and went and spoke to her father whom I had joined, but, after a moment, returned to Ruth. Ruth turned slightly to meet him as he came. "And is the prestige of the house of Devlin to be supported?" she said; "and the governor to be entertained with tales of flood and field?"

His face had now settled into a peculiar calmness. He said with a touch of mock irony: "The sailor shall play his part--the obedient retainer of the house of Devlin."

"Oh," she said, "you are malicious now! You turn your long accomplished satire on a woman." And she nodded to the hills opposite, as if to tell them that it was as they had said to her: those grand old hills with which she had lived since childhood, to whom she had told all that had ever happened to her.

"No, indeed no," he replied, "though I am properly rebuked. I fear I am malicious--just a little, but it is all inner-self-malice: 'Rome turned upon itself.'"

"But one cannot always tell when irony is intended for the speaker of it. Yours did not seem applied to yourself," was her slow answer, and she seemed more interested in Mount Trinity than in him.

"No?" Then he said with a playful sadness: "A moment ago you were not completely innocent of irony, were you?"

"But a man is big and broad, and should not--he should be magnanimous, leaving it to woman, whose life is spent among little things, to be guilty of littlenesses. But see how daring I am--speaking like this to you who know so much more than I do. . . . Surely, you are still only humorous, when you speak of irony turned upon yourself--the irony so icy to your friends?"

She had developed greatly. Her mind had been sharpened by pain. The edge of her wit had become poignant, her speech rendered logical and allusive. Roscoe was wise enough to understand that the change in her had been achieved by the change in himself; that since Mrs. Falchion came, Ruth had awakened sharply to a distress not exactly definable. She felt that though he had never spoken of love to her, she had a right to share his troubles. The infrequency of his visits to her of late, and something in his manner, made her uneasy and a little bitter. For there was an understanding between them, though it had been unspoken and unwritten. They had vowed without priest or witness. The heart speaks eloquently in symbols first, and afterwards in stumbling words.

It seemed to Roscoe at this moment, as it had seemed for some time, that the words would never be spoken. And was this all that had troubled her--the belief that Mrs. Falchion had some claim upon his life? Or had she knowledge, got in some strange way, of that wretched shadow in his past?

This possibility filled him with bitterness. The old Adam in him awoke, and he said within himself "God in heaven, must one folly, one sin, kill me and her too? Why me more than another! . . . And I love her, I love her!"

His eyes flamed until their blue looked all black, and his brows grew straight over them sharply, making his face almost stern. . . . There came swift visions of renouncing his present life; of going with her--anywhere: to tell her all, beg her forgiveness, and begin life over again, admitting that this attempt at expiation was a mistake; to have his conscience clear of secret, and trust her kindness. For now he was sure that Mrs. Falchion meant to make his position as a clergyman impossible; to revenge herself on him for no wrong that, as far as he knew, he ever did directly to her. But to tell this girl, or even her father or mother, that he had been married, after a shameful, unsanctified fashion, to a savage, with what came after, and the awful thing that happened--he who ministered at the altar! Now that he looked the thing in the face it shocked him. No, he could not do it.

She said to him, while he looked at her as though he would read her through and through, though his mind was occupied with a dreadful possibility beyond her:

"Why do you look so? You are stern. You are critical. Have I--disimproved so?"

The words were full of a sudden and natural womanly fear, that something in herself had fallen in value. They had a pathos so much the more

moving because she sought to hide it.

There swam before his eyes the picture of happiness from which she herself had roused him when she came. He involuntarily, passionately, caught her hand and pressed it to his lips twice; but spoke nothing.

"Oh! oh!--please!" she said. Her voice was low and broken, and she spoke appealingly. Could he not see that he was breaking her heart, while filling it also with unbearable joy? Why did he not speak and make this possible, and not leave it a thing to flush her cheeks, and cause her to feel he had acted on a knowledge he had no right to possess till he had declared himself in speech? Could he not have spared her that?-- This Christian gentleman, whose worth had compassed these mountains and won the dwellers among them--it was bitter. Her pride and injured heart rose up and choked her.

He let go her hand. Now his face was partly turned from her, and she saw how thin and pale it was. She saw, too, what I had seen during the past week, that his hair had become almost white about the temples; and the moveless sadness of his position struck her with unnatural force, so that, in spite of herself, tears came suddenly to her eyes, and a slight moan broke from her. She would have run away; but it was too late.

He saw the tears, the look of pity, indignation, pride, and love in her face.

"My love!" he cried passionately. He opened his arms to her.

But she stood still. He came very close to her, spoke quickly, and almost despairingly: "Ruth, I love you, and I have wronged you; but here is your place, if you will come."

At first she seemed stunned, and her face was turned to her mountains, as though the echo of his words were coming back to her from them, but the thing crept into her heart and flooded it. She seemed to wake, and then all her affection carried her into his arms, and she dried her eyes upon his breast.

After a time he whispered, "My dear, I have wronged you. I should not have made you care for me."

She did not seem to notice that he spoke of wrong. She said: "I was yours, Galt, even from the beginning, I think, though I did not quite know it. I remember what you read in church the first Sunday you came, and it has always helped me; for I wanted to be good."

She paused and raised her eyes to his, and then with sweet solemnity she said: "The words were:

"The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."

"Ruth," he answered, "you have always walked on the high places. You

have never failed. And you are as safe as the nest of the eagle, a noble work of God."

"No, I am not noble; but I should like to be so. Most women like goodness. It is instinct with us, I suppose. We had rather be good than evil, and when we love we can do good things; but we quiver like the compass-needle between two poles. Oh, believe me! we are weak; but we are loving."

"Your worst, Ruth, is as much higher than my best as the heaven is--"

"Galt, you hurt my fingers!" she interrupted.

He had not noticed the almost fierce strength of his clasp. But his life was desperately hungry for her. "Forgive me, dearest.--As I said, better than my best; for, Ruth, my life was--wicked, long ago. You cannot understand how wicked!"

"You are a clergyman and a good man," she said, with pathetic negation.

"You give me a heart unsoiled, unspotted of the world. I have been in some ways worse than the worst men in the valley there below."

"Galt, Galt, you shock me!" she said.

"Why did I speak? Why did I kiss your hand as I did? Because at the moment it was the only honest thing to do; because it was due you that I should say: 'Ruth, I love you, love you so much'"--here she nestled close to him--"so well, that everything else in life is as nothing beside it --nothing! so well that I could not let you share my wretchedness."

She ran her hand along his breast and looked up at him with swimming eyes.

"And you think that this is fair to me? that a woman gives the heart for pleasant weather only? I do not know what your sorrow may be, but it is my right to share it. I am only a woman; but a woman can be strong for those she loves. Remember that I have always had to care for others--always; and I can bear much. I will not ask what your trouble is, I only ask you"--here she spoke slowly and earnestly, and rested her hand on his shoulder--"to say to me that you love no other woman; and that--that no other woman has a claim upon you. Then I shall be content to pity you, to help you, to love you. God gives women many pains, but none so great as the love that will not trust utterly; for trust is our bread of life. Yes, indeed, indeed!"

"I dare not say," he said, "that it is your misfortune to love me, for in this you show how noble a woman can be. But I will say that the cup is bitter-sweet for you. . . . I cannot tell you now what my trouble is; but I can say that no other living woman has a claim upon me. . . . My reckoning is with the dead."

"That is with God," she whispered, "and He is just and merciful too. . . ."

Can it not be repaired here?" She smoothed back his hair, then let her fingers stray lightly on his cheek.

It hurt him like death to reply. "No, but there can be punishment here."

She shuddered slightly. "Punishment, punishment," she repeated fearfully--"what punishment?"

"I do not quite know." Lines of pain grew deeper in his face. . . .

"Ruth, how much can a woman forgive?"

"A mother, everything." But she would say no more. He looked at her long and earnestly, and said at last: "Will you believe in me no matter what happens?"

"Always, always." Her smile was most winning.

"If things should appear dark against me?"

"Yes, if you give me your word."

"If I said to you that I did a wrong; that I broke the law of God, though not the laws of man?"

There was a pause in which she drew back, trembling slightly, and looked at him timidly and then steadily, but immediately put her hands bravely in his, and said: "Yes."

"I did not break the laws of man."

"It was when you were in the navy?" she inquired, in an awe-stricken tone.

"Yes, years ago."

"I know. I feel it. You must not tell me. It was a woman, and this other woman, this Mrs. Falchion knows, and she would try to ruin you, or"--here she seemed to be moved suddenly by a new thought--"or have you love her. But she shall not, she shall not--neither! For I will love you, and God will listen to me, and answer me."

"Would to Heaven I were worthy of you! I dare not think of where you might be called to follow me, Ruth."

"Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," she rejoined in a low voice.

"Thy God my God!" he repeated after her slowly. He suddenly wondered if his God was her God; whether now, in his trouble, he had that comfort which his creed and profession should give him. For the first time he felt acutely that his choice of this new life might have been more a reaction from the past, a desire for expiation, than radical belief that

this was the right and only thing for him to do. And when, some time after, he bade Ruth good-bye, as she went with her father, it came to him with appalling conviction that his life had been a mistake. The twist of a great wrong in a man's character distorts his vision; and if he has a tender conscience he magnifies his misdeeds.

In silence Roscoe and I watched the two ride down the slope. I guessed what had happened: afterwards I was told all. I was glad of it, though the end was not yet promising. When we turned to go towards the house again, a man lounged out of the trees towards us. He looked at me, then at Roscoe, and said:

"I'm Phil Boldrick's pal from Danger Mountain." Roscoe held out his hand, and the man took it, saying: "You're The Padre, I suppose, and Phil was soft on you. Didn't turn religious, did he? He always had a streak of God A'mighty in him; a kind of give-away-the-top-of-your-head chap; friend o' the widow and the orphan, and divvy to his last crust with a pal. I got your letter, and come over here straight to see that he's been tombed accordin' to his virtues; to lay out the dollars he left me on the people he had on his visitin' list; no loafers, no gophers, not one; but to them that stayed by him I stay, while prog and liquor last."

I saw Roscoe looking at him in an abstracted way, and, as he did not reply, I said: "Phil had many friends and no enemies." Then I told him the tale of his death and funeral, and how the valley mourned for him.

While I spoke he stood leaning against a tree, shaking his head and listening, his eyes occasionally resting on Roscoe with a look as abstracted and puzzled as that on Roscoe's face. When I had finished he drew his hand slowly down his beard and a thick sound came from behind his fingers. But he did not speak.

Then I suggested quietly that Phil's dollars could be put to a better use than for prog and liquor.

He did not reply to this at all; but after a moment's pause, in which he seemed to be studying the gambols of a squirrel in a pine tree, he rubbed his chin nervously, and more in soliloquy than conversation said: "I never had but two pals that was pals through and through. And one was Phil and the other was Jo--Jo Brackenbury."

Here Roscoe's hand, which had been picking at the bark of a poplar, twitched suddenly.

The man continued: "Poor Jo went down in the 'Fly Away' when she swung with her bare ribs flat before the wind, and swamped and tore upon the bloody reefs at Apia. . . . God, how they gnawed her! And never a rag holdin' nor a stick standin', and her pretty figger broke like a tin whistle in a Corliss engine. And Jo Brackenbury, the dandiest rip, the noisiest pal that ever said 'Here's how!' went out to heaven on a tearing sea."

"Jo Brackenbury--" Roscoe repeated musingly. His head was turned away

from us.

"Yes, Jo Brackenbury; and Captain Falchion said to me" (I wonder that I did not start then) "when I told him how the 'Fly Away' went down to Davy, and her lovers went aloft, reefed close afore the wind--'Then,' says he, 'they've got a damned sound seaman on the Jordan, and so help me! him that's good enough to row my girl from open sea, gales poundin' and breakers showin' teeth across the bar to Maita Point, is good enough for use where seas is still and reefs ain't fashionable.'"

Roscoe's face looked haggard as it now turned towards us. "If you will meet me," he said to the stranger, "to-morrow morning, in Mr. Devlin's office at Viking, I will hand you over Phil Boldrick's legacy."

The man made as if he would shake hands with Roscoe, who appeared not to notice the motion, and then said: "I'll be there. You can bank on that; and, as we used to say down in the Spicy Isles, where neither of you have been, I s'pose, Talofa!"

He swung away down the hillside.

Roscoe turned to me. "You see, Marmion, all things circle to a centre. The trail seems long, but the fox gets killed an arm's length from his hole."

"Not always. You take it too seriously," I said. "You are no fox."

"That man will be in at the death," he persisted.

"Nonsense, Roscoe. He does not know you. What has he to do with you? This is overwrought nerves. You are killing yourself with worry."

He was motionless and silent for a minute. Then he said very quietly: "No, I do not think that I really worry now. I have known"--here he laid his hand upon my shoulder and his eyes had a shining look--"what it is to be happy, unspeakably happy, for a moment; and that stays with me. I am a coward no longer."

He drew his finger tips slowly across his forehead. Then he continued: "To-morrow I shall be angry with myself, no doubt, for having that moment's joy, but I cannot feel so now. I shall probably condemn myself for cruel selfishness; but I have touched life's highest point this afternoon, Marmion."

I drew his hand down from my shoulder and pressed it. It was cold. He withdrew his eyes from the mountain, and said: "I have had dreams, Marmion, and they are over. I lived in one: to expiate--to wipe out--a past, by spending my life for others. The expiation is not enough. I lived in another: to win a woman's love; and I have, and was caught up by it for a moment, and it was wonderful. But it is over now, quite over. . . . And now for her sake renunciation must be made, before I have another dream--a long one, Marmion."

I had forebodings, but I pulled myself together and said firmly: "Roscoe, these are fancies. Stop it, man. You are moody. Come, let us walk, and talk of other things."

"No, we will not walk," he said, "but let us sit there on the coping and be quiet--quiet in that roar between the hills." Suddenly he swung round, caught me by the shoulders and held me gently so.

"I have a pain at my heart, Marmion, as if I'd heard my death sentence; such as a soldier feels who knows that Death looks out at him from iron eyes. You smile: I suppose you think I am mad."

I saw that it was best to let him speak his mind. So I answered: "Not mad, my friend. Say on what you like. Tell me all you feel. Only, for God's sake be brave, and don't give up until there's occasion. I am sure you exaggerate your danger, whatever it is."

"Listen for a minute," said he: "I had a brother Edward, as good a lad as ever was; a boisterous, healthy fellow. We had an old nurse in our family who came from Irish hills, faithful and kind to us both. There came a change over Edward. He appeared not to take the same interest in his sports. One day he came to me, looking a bit pale, and said: 'Galt, I think I should like to study for the Church.' I laughed at it, yet it troubled me in a way, for I saw he was not well. I told Martha, the nurse. She shook her head sadly, and said: 'Edward is not for the Church, but you, my lad. He is for heaven.'

"For heaven, Martha?' laughed I.

"In truth for heaven,' she replied, 'and that soon. The look of his eye is doom. I've seen it since I swaddled him, and he will go suddenly.'

"I was angry, and I said to her,--though she thought she spoke the truth,--'This is only Irish croaking. We'll have the banshee next.'

"She got up from her chair and answered me solemnly: 'Galt Roscoe, I HAVE heard the banshee wail, and sorrow falls upon your home. And don't you be so hard with me that have loved you, and who suffers for the lad that often and often lay upon my breast. Don't be so hard; for your day of trouble comes too. You, not he, will be priest at the altar. Death will come to him like a swift and easy sleep; but you will feel its hand upon your heart and know its hate for many a day, and bear the slow pangs of it until your life is all crushed, and you go from the world alone, Love crying after you and not able to save you, not even the love of woman--weaker than death. . . . And, in my grave, when that day comes beside a great mountain in a strange land, I will weep and pray for you; for I was mother to you too, when yours left you alone bewhiles, never, in this world, to come back.'

"And, Marmion, that night towards morning, as I lay in the same room with Edward, I heard his breath stop sharply. I jumped up and drew aside the curtains to let in the light, and then I knew that the old woman spoke true. . . . And now! . . . Well, I am like Hamlet--and I can say

with him: 'But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart
--but it is no matter!'

I tried to laugh and talk away his brooding, but there was little use,
his convictions were so strong. Besides, what can you do with a
morbidness which has its origin in fateful circumstances?

I devoutly wished that a telegram would come from Winnipeg to let me know
if Boyd Madras, under his new name, could be found. I was a hunter on a
faint trail.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STRINGS OF DESTINY

When Phil's pal left us he went wandering down the hillside, talking to
himself. Long afterwards he told me how he felt, and I reproduce his
phrases as nearly as I can.

"Knocked 'em, I guess," he said, "with that about Jo Brackenbury. . . .
Poor Jo! Stuck together, him and me did, after she got the steel in her
heart." . . . He pulled himself together, shuddering. . . . "Went
back on me, she did, and took up with a cursed swell, and got it cold--
cold. And I? By Judas! I never was shut of that. I've known women,
many of 'em, all countries, but she was different. I expect now, after
all these years, that if I got my hand on the devil that done for her,
I'd rattle his breath in his throat. There's things that clings. She
clings, Jo Brackenbury clings, and Phil Boldrick clings; and they're
gone, and I'm left to go it alone. To play the single hand--what!--by
Jiminy!"

He exclaimed thus on seeing two women approach from the direction of the
valley. He stood still, mouth open, staring. They drew near, almost
passed him. But one of them, struck by his intense gaze, suddenly turned
and came towards him.

"Miss Falchion! Miss Falchion!" he cried. Then, when she hesitated as
if with an effort of memory, he added: "Don't you know me?"

"Ah," she replied abruptly, "Sam Kilby! Are you Sam Kilby, Jo
Brackenbury's friend, from Samoa?"

"Yes, miss, I'm Jo Brackenbury's friend; and I've rowed you across the
reefs with him more than once I guess so! But it's a long way from Apia
to the Rockies, and it's funny to meet here."

"When did you come here--and from where?"

"I come to-day from the Hudson's Bay post at Danger Mountain. I'm Phil
Boldrick's pal."

"Ah," she said again, with a look in her eyes not pleasant to see, "and what brings you up here in the hills?" Hers was more than an ordinary curiosity.

"I come to see the Padre who was with Phil--when he left. And the Padre's a fair square sort, as I reckon him, but melancholy, almighty melancholy."

"Yes, melancholy, I suppose," she said, "and fair square, as you say. And what did you say and do?"

"Why, we yarned about Phil, and where I'd get the legacy to-morrow; and I s'pose I had a strong breeze on the quarter, for I talked as free as if we'd grubbed out of the same dough-pan since we was kiddies."

"Yes?"

"Yes siree; I don't know how it was, but I got to reelin' off about Jo--queer, wasn't it? And I told 'em how he went down in the 'Fly Away', and how the lovely ladies--you remember how we used to call the whitecaps lovely ladies--fondled him out to sea and on to heaven."

"And what did--the Padre--think of that?"

"Well, he's got a heart, I should say, and that's why Phil cottoned to him, maybe--for he looked as if he'd seen ghosts. I guess he'd never had a craft runnin' 'tween a sand-bar and a ragged coral bank; nor seen a girl like the 'Fly Away' take a buster in her teeth; nor a man-of-war come bundlin' down upon a nasty glacis, the captain on the bridge, engines goin' for all they're worth, every man below battened in, and every Jack above watchin' the fight between the engines and the hurricane. . . . Here she rolls six fathoms from the glacis that'll rip her copper garments off, and the quiverin' engines pull her back; and she swings and struggles and trembles between hell in the hurricane and God A'mighty in the engines; till at last she gets her nose at the neck of the open sea and crawls out safe and sound. . . . I guess he'd have more marble in his cheeks, if he saw likes o' that, Miss Falchion?"

Kilby paused and wiped his forehead.

She had listened calmly. She did not answer his question. She said: "Kilby, I am staying at the summer hotel up there. Will you call on me--let me see . . . say, to-morrow afternoon?--Some one will tell you the way, if you do not know it. . . . Ask for MRS. Falchion, Kilby, not Miss Falchion. . . . You will come?"

"Why, yes," he replied, "you can count on me; for I'd like to hear of things that happened after I left Apia--and how it is that you are Mrs. Falchion, for that's mighty queer."

"You shall hear all that and more." She held out her hand to him and smiled. He took it, and she knew that now she was gathering up the

strings of destiny.

They parted.

The two passed on, looking, in their cool elegance, as if life were the most pleasant thing; as though the very perfume of their garments would preserve them from that plague called trouble.

"Justine," said Mrs. Falchion, "there is one law stranger than all; the law of coincidence. Perhaps the convenience of modern travel assists it, but fate is in it also. Events run in circles. People connected with them travel that way also. We pass and re-pass each other many times, but on different paths, until we come close and see each other face to face."

She was speaking almost the very words which Roscoe had spoken to me. But perhaps there was nothing strange in that.

"Yes, madame," replied Justine; "it is so, but there is a law greater than coincidence."

"What, Justine?"

"The law of love, which is just and merciful, and would give peace instead of trouble."

Mrs. Falchion looked closely at Justine, and, after a moment, evidently satisfied, said: "What do you know of love?"

Justine tried hard for composure, and answered gently: "I loved my brother Hector."

"And did it make you just and merciful and--an angel?"

"Madame, you could answer that better. But it has not made me be at war; it has made me patient."

"Your love--for your brother--has made you that?" Again she looked keenly, but Justine now showed nothing but earnestness.

"Yes, madame."

Mrs. Falchion paused for a moment, and seemed intent on the beauty of the pine-belted hills, capped by snowy peaks, and wrapped in a most hearty yet delicate colour. The red of her parasol threw a warm softness upon her face. She spoke now without looking at Justine.

"Justine, did you ever love any one besides your brother?--I mean another man."

Justine was silent for a moment, and then she said: "Yes, once." She was looking at the hills now, and Mrs. Falchion at her.

"And you were happy?" Here Mrs. Falchion abstractedly toyed with a piece of lace on Justine's arm. Such acts were unusual with her.

"I was happy--in loving."

"Why did you not marry?"

"Madame--it was impossible--quite." This, with hesitation and the slightest accent of pain.

"Why impossible? You have good looks, you were born a lady; you have a foolish heart--the fond are foolish." She watched the girl keenly, the hand ceased to toy with the lace, and caught the arm itself--"Why impossible?"

"Madame, he did not love me, he never could."

"Did he know of your love?"

"Oh no, no!" This with trouble in her voice.

"And you have never forgotten?"

The catechism was merciless; but Mrs. Falchion was not merely malicious. She was inquiring of a thing infinitely important to her. She was searching the heart of another, not only because she was suspicious, but because she wanted to know herself better.

"It is easy to remember."

"Is it long since you saw him?"

The question almost carried terror with it, for she was not quite sure why Mrs. Falchion questioned her. She lifted her eyes slowly, and there was in them anxiety and joy. "It seems," she said, "like years."

"He loves some one else, perhaps?"

"Yes, I think so, madame."

"Did you hate her?"

"Oh no; I am glad for him."

Here Mrs. Falchion spoke sharply, almost bitterly. Even through her soft colour a hardness appeared. "You are glad for him? You would see another woman in his arms and not be full of anger?"

"Quite."

"Justine, you are a fool."

"Madame, there is no commandment against being a fool."

"Oh, you make me angry with your meekness!" Here Mrs. Falchion caught a twig from a tree by her, snapped it in her fingers, and petulantly threw its pieces to the ground. "Suppose that the man had once loved you, and afterwards loved another--then again another?"

"Madame, that would be my great misfortune, but it might be no wrong in him."

"How not a wrong in him?"

"It may have been my fault. There must be love in both--great love, for it to last."

"And if the woman loved him not at all?"

"Where, then, could be the wrong in him?"

"And if he went from you,"--here her voice grew dry and her words were sharp,--"and took a woman from the depths of--oh, no matter what! and made her commit--crime--and was himself a criminal?"

"It is horrible to think of; but I should ask myself how much I was to blame. . . . What would you ask yourself, madame?"

"You have a strain of the angel in you, Justine. You would forgive Judas if he said, 'Peccavi.' I have a strain of Satan--it was born in me-- I would say, You have sinned, now suffer."

"God give you a softer heart," said Justine, with tender boldness and sincerity.

At this Mrs. Falchion started slightly, and trouble covered her face. She assumed, however, a tone almost brusque, artificially airy and unimportant.

"There, that will do, thank you. . . . We have become serious and incomprehensible. Let us talk of other things. I want to be gay. . . . Amuse me."

Arrived at the hotel, she told Justine that she must not be disturbed till near dinner-time, and withdrew to her sitting-room. There she sat and thought, as she had never done in her life before. She thought upon everything that had happened since the day when she met Galt Roscoe on the 'Fulvia'; of a certain evening in England, before he took orders, when he told her, in retort to some peculiarly cutting remark of hers, that she was the evil genius of his life: that evening when her heart grew hard, as she had once said it should always be to him, and she determined again, after faltering many times, that just such a genius she would be; of the strange meeting in the rapids at the Devil's Slide, and the irony of it; and the fact that he had saved her life--on that she paused a while; of Ruth Devlin--and here she was swayed by conflicting emotions; of the scene at the mill, and Phil Boldrick's death and

funeral; of the service in the church where she meant to mock him, and, instead, mocked herself; of the meeting with Tonga Sam; of all that Justine had said to her: then again of the far past in Samoa, with which Galt Roscoe was associated, and of that first vow of vengeance for a thing he had done; and how she had hesitated to fulfil it year after year till now.

Passing herself slowly back and forth before her eyes, she saw that she had lived her life almost wholly alone; that no woman had ever cherished her as a friend, and that on no man's breast had she ever laid her head in trust and love. She had been loved, but it had never brought her satisfaction. From Justine there was devotion; but it had, as she thought, been purchased, paid for, like the labour of a ploughboy. And if she saw now in Justine's eyes a look of friendship, a note of personal allegiance, she knew it was because she herself had grown more human.

Her nature had been stirred. Her natural heart was struggling against her old bitterness towards Galt Roscoe and her partial hate of Ruth Devlin. Once Roscoe had loved her, and she had not loved him. Then, on a bitter day for him, he did a mad thing. The thing became--though neither of them knew it at the time, and he not yet--a great injury to her, and this had called for the sharp retaliation which she had the power to use. But all had not happened as she expected; for something called Love had been conceived in her very slowly, and was now being born, and sent, trembling for its timid life, into the world.

She closed her eyes with weariness, and pressed her hands to her temples.

She wondered why she could not be all evil or all good. She spoke and acted against Ruth Devlin, and yet she pitied her. She had the nettle to sting Roscoe to death, and yet she hesitated to use it. She had said to herself that she would wait till the happiest moment of his life, and then do so. Well, his happiest moment had come. Ruth Devlin's heart was all out, all blossomed--beside Mrs. Falchion's like some wild flower to the aloe. . . . Only now she had come to know that she had a heart. Something had chilled her at her birth, and when her mother died, a stranger's kiss closed up all the ways to love, and left her an icicle. She was twenty-eight years old, and yet she had never kissed a face in joy or to give joy. And now, when she had come to know herself, and understand what others understand when they are little children in their mother's arms, she had to bow to the spirit that denies. She drew herself up with a quiver of the body.

"O God!" she said, "do I hate him or love him!" Her head dropped in her hands. She sat regardless of time, now scarcely stirring, desperately quiet. The door opened softly and Justine entered. "Madame," she said, "pardon me; I am so sorry, but Miss Devlin has come to see you, and I thought--"

"You thought, Justine, that I would see her." There was unmistakable irony in her voice. "Very well. . . . Show her in."

She rose, stretched out her arms as if to free herself of a burden,

smoothed her hair, composed herself, and waited, the afternoon sun just falling across her burnished shoes, giving her feet of gold. She chanced to look down at them. A strange memory came to her: words that she had heard Roscoe read in church. The thing was almost grotesque in its association. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth glad tidings, who publisheth peace!"

Ruth Devlin entered, saying, "I have come, to ask you if you will dine with us next Monday evening?"

Then she explained the occasion of the dinner party, and said: "You see, though it is formal, I am asking our guests informally;" and she added as neutrally and as lightly as she could--"Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Marmion have been good enough to say that they will come. Of course, a dinner party as it should be is quite impossible to us simple folk, but when a lieutenant-governor commands, we must do the best we can--with the help of our friends."

Mrs. Falchion was delighted, she said, and then they talked of trivial matters, Ruth smoothing out the folds of her riding-dress with her whip more earnestly, in preoccupation, than the act called for. At last she said, in the course of the formal talk: "You have travelled much?"

"Yes, that has been my lot," was the reply; and she leaned back in the gold-trimmed cane chair, her feet still in the belt of sunlight.

"I have often wished that I might travel over the ocean," said Ruth, "but here I remain--what shall I say?--a rustic in a bandbox, seeing the world through a pin-hole. That is the way my father puts it. Except, of course, that I think it very inspiring to live out here among wonderful mountains, which, as Mr. Roscoe says, are the most aristocratic of companions."

Some one in the next room was playing the piano idly yet expressively. The notes of *Il Trovatore* kept up a continuous accompaniment to their talk, varying, as if by design, with its meaning and importance, and yet in singular contrast at times to their thoughts and words. It was almost sardonic in its monotonous persistence.

"Travel is not all, believe me, Miss Devlin," was the indolent reply.

"Perhaps the simpler life is the happier. The bandbox is not the worst that may come to one--when one is born to it. I am not sure but it is the best. I doubt that when one has had the fever of travel and the world, the bandbox is permanently habitable again."

Mrs. Falchion was keen; she had found her opportunity.

On the result of this duel, if Ruth Devlin but knew it, depends her own and another's happiness. It is not improbable, however, that something of this was in her mind. She shifted her chair so that her face was not so much in the light. But the belt of sunlight was broadening from Mrs. Falchion's feet to her dress.

"You think not?" Ruth asked slowly.

The reply was not important in tone. Mrs. Falchion had picked up a paper knife and was bending it to and fro between her fingers.

"I think not. Particularly with a man, who is, we will say, by nature, adventurous and explorative. I think if, in some mad moment, I determined to write a novel, it should be of such a man. He flies wide and far; he sees all; he feeds on novelty; he passes from experience to experience--liberal pleasures of mind and sense all the way. Well, he tires of Egypt and its flesh-pots. He has seen as he hurried on--I hope I am not growing too picturesque--too much of women, too many men. He has been unwise--most men are. Perhaps he has been more than unwise; he has made a great mistake, a social mistake--or crime--less or more. If it is a small one, the remedy is not so difficult. Money, friends, adroitness, absence, long retirement, are enough. If a great one, and he is sensitive--and sated--he flies, he seeks seclusion. He is afflicted with remorse. He is open to the convincing pleasures of the simple and unadorned life; he is satisfied with simple people. The snuff of the burnt candle of enjoyment he calls regret, repentance. He gives himself the delights of introspection, and wishes he were a child again--yes, indeed it is so, dear Miss Devlin."

Ruth sat regarding her, her deep eyes glowing. Mrs. Falchion continued: "In short, he finds the bandbox, as you call it, suited to his renunciations. Its simplicities, which he thinks is regeneration, are only new sensations. But--you have often noticed the signification of a 'but,'" she added, smiling, tapping her cheek lightly with the ivory knife--"but the hour arrives when the bandbox becomes a prison, when the simple hours cloy. Then the ordinary incident is merely gauche, and expiation a bore.

"I see by your face that you understand quite what I mean. . . . Well, these things occasionally happen. The great mistake follows the man, and, by a greater misery, breaks the misery of the bandbox; or the man himself, hating his captivity, becomes reckless, does some mad thing, and has a miserable end. Or again, some one who holds the key to his mistake comes in from the world he has left, and considers--considers, you understand!--whether to leave him to work out his servitude, or, mercifully--if he is not altogether blind--permit him the means of escape to his old world, to the life to which he was born--away from the bandbox and all therein. . . . I hope I have not tired you--I am sure I have."

Ruth saw the full meaning of Mrs. Falchion's words. She realised that her happiness, his happiness--everything--was at stake. All Mrs. Falchion's old self was battling with her new self. She had determined to abide by the result of this meeting. She had spoken in a half gay tone, but her words were not everything; the woman herself was there, speaking in every feature and glance. Ruth had listened with an occasional change of colour, but also with an outward pride to which she seemed suddenly to have grown. But her heart was sick and miserable. How could it be otherwise, reading, as she did, the tale just told her in a kind, of allegory, in all its warning, nakedness, and vengeance? But

she detected, too, an occasional painful movement of Mrs. Falchion's lips, a kind of trouble in the face. She noticed it at first vaguely as she listened to the music in the other room; but at length she interpreted it aright, and she did not despair. She did not then follow her first impulse to show that she saw the real meaning of that speech, and rise and say, "You are insulting," and bid her good-day.

After all, where was the ground for the charge of insult? The words had been spoken impersonally. So, after a moment, she said, as she drew a glove from a hand slightly trembling: "And you honestly think it is the case: that one having lived such a life as you describe so unusually, would never be satisfied with a simple life?"

"My dear, never--not such a man as I describe. I know the world."

"But suppose not quite such an one; suppose one that had not been so--intense; so much the social gladiator; who had business of life as well,"--here the girl grew pale, for this was a kind of talk unfamiliar and painful to her, but to be endured for her cause,--"as well as 'the flesh-pots of Egypt;' who had made no wicked mistakes--would he necessarily end as you say?"

"I am speaking of the kind of man who had made such mistakes, and he would end as I say. Few men, if any, would leave the world for--the bandbox, shall I still say? without having a Nemesis."

"But the Nemesis need not, as you say yourself, be inevitable. The person who holds the key of his life, the impersonation of his mistake--"

"His CRIMINAL mistake," Mrs. Falchion interrupted, her hand with the ivory knife now moveless in that belt of sunlight across her knees.

"His criminal mistake," Ruth repeated, wincing--"might not it become changed into mercy, and the man be safe?"

"Safe? Perhaps. But he would tire of the pin-hole just the same. . . . My dear, you do not know life."

"But, Mrs. Falchion," said the girl, now very bravely, "I know the crude elements of justice. That is one plain thing taught here in the mountains. We have swift reward and punishment--no hateful things called Nemesis. The meanest wretch here in the West, if he has a quarrel, avenges himself openly and at once. Actions are rough and ready, perhaps, but that is our simple way. Hate is manly--and womanly too--when it is open and brave. But when it haunts and shadows, it is not understood here."

Mrs. Falchion sat during this speech, the fingers of one hand idly drumming the arm of her chair, as idly as when on board the 'Fulvia' she listened to me telling that story of Anson and his wife. Outwardly her coolness was remarkable. But she was really admiring, and amazed at Ruth's adroitness and courage. She appreciated fully the skilful duel that had kept things on the surface, and had committed neither of them

to anything personal. It was a battle--the tragical battle of a drawing-room.

When Ruth had ended, she said slowly: "You speak very earnestly. You do your mountains justice; but each world has its code. It is good for some men to be followed by a slow hatred--it all depends on themselves. There are some who wish to meet their fate and its worst, and others who would forget it. The latter are in the most danger always."

Ruth rose.

She stepped forward slightly, so that her feet also were within the sunlight. The other saw this; it appeared to interest her. Ruth looked--as such a girl can look--with incredible sincerity into Mrs. Falchion's eyes, and said: "Oh, if I knew such a man, I would be sorry--sorry for him; and if I also knew that his was only a mistake and not a crime, or, if the crime itself had been repented of, and atonement made, I would beg some one--some one better than I--to pray for him. And I would go to the person who had his life and career at disposal, and would say to her, if it were a woman, oh, remember that it is not he alone who would suffer! I would beg that woman--if it were a woman--to be merciful, as she one day must ask for mercy."

The girl as she stood there, all pale, yet glowing with the white light of her pain, was beautiful, noble, compelling. Mrs. Falchion now rose also. She was altogether in the sunlight now. From the piano in the next room came a quick change of accompaniment, and a voice was heard singing, as if to the singer's self, 'Il balen del suo sorris'. It is hard to tell how far such little incidents affected her in what she did that afternoon; but they had their influence. She said: "You are altruistic--or are you selfish, or both? . . . And should the woman--if it were a woman--yield, and spare the man, what would you do?"

"I would say that she had been merciful and kind, and that one in this world would pray for her when she needed prayers most."

"You mean when she was old,"--Mrs. Falchion shrank a little at the sound of her own words. Now her careless abandon was gone; she seemed to be following her emotions. "When she was old," she continued, "and came to die? It is horrible to grow old, except one has been a saint--and a mother. . . . And even then--have you ever seen them, the women of that Egypt of which we spoke--powdered, smirking over their champagne, because they feel for an instant a false pulse of their past?--See how eloquent your mountains make me!--I think that would make one hard and cruel; and one would need the prayers of a churchful of good women, even as good--as you."

She could not resist a touch of irony in the last words, and Ruth, who had been ready to take her hand impulsively, was stung. But she replied nothing; and the other, after waiting, added, with a sudden and wonderful kindness: "I say what is quite true. Women might dislike you--many of them would--though you could not understand why; but you are good, and that, I suppose, is the best thing in the world. Yes, you are good," she

said musingly, and then she leaned forward and quickly kissed the girl's cheek. "Good-bye," she said, and then she turned her head resolutely away.

They stood there both in the sunlight, both very quiet, but their hearts were throbbing with new sensations. Ruth knew that she had conquered, and, with her eyes all tearful, she looked steadily, yearningly at the woman before her; but she knew it was better she should say little now, and, with a motion of the hand in good-bye,--she could do no more,--she slowly went to the door. There she paused and looked back, but the other was still turned away.

For a minute Mrs. Falchion stood looking at the door through which the girl had passed, then she caught close the curtains of the window, and threw herself upon the sofa with a sobbing laugh.

"To her--I played the game of mercy to her!" she cried. "And she has his love, the love which I rejected once, and which I want now--to my shame! A hateful and terrible love. I, who ought to say to him, as I so long determined: 'You shall be destroyed. You killed my sister, poor Alo; if not with a knife yourself you killed her heart, and that is just the same.' I never knew until now what a heart is when killed."

She caught her breast as though it hurt her, and, after a moment, continued: "Do hearts always ache so when they love? I was the wife of a good man oh! he WAS a good man, who sinned for me. I see it now!--and I let him die--die alone!" She shuddered. "Oh, now I see, and I know what love such as his can be! I am punished--punished! for my love is impossible, horrible."

There was a long silence, in which she sat looking at the floor, her face all grey with pain. At last the door of the room softly opened, and Justine entered.

"May I come in, madame?" she said.

"Yes, come, Justine." The voice was subdued, and there was in it what drew the girl swiftly to the side of Mrs. Falchion. She spoke no word, but gently undid the other's hair, and smoothed and brushed it softly.

At last Mrs. Falchion said: "Justine, on Monday we will leave here."

The girl was surprised, but she replied without comment: "Yes, madame; where do we go?"

There was a pause; then: "I do not know. I want to go where I shall get rested. A village in Italy or--" she paused.

"Or France, madame?" Justine was eager.

Mrs. Falchion made a gesture of helplessness. "Yes, France will do. . . . The way around the world is long, and I am tired." Minutes passed, and then she slowly said: "Justine, we will go to-morrow night."

"Yes, madame, to-morrow night--and not next Monday."

There was a strange only half-veiled melancholy in Mrs. Falchion's next words: "Do you think, Justine, that I could be happy anywhere?"

"I think anywhere but here, madame."

Mrs. Falchion rose to a sitting posture, and looked at the girl fixedly, almost fiercely. A crisis was at hand. The pity, gentleness, and honest solicitude of Justine's face conquered her, and her look changed to one of understanding and longing for companionship: sorrow swiftly welded their friendship.

Before Mrs. Falchion slept that night, she said again: "We will leave here to-morrow, Justine, for ever."

And Justine replied: "Yes, madame, for ever."

CHAPTER XIX

THE SENTENCE

The next morning Roscoe was quiet and calm, but he looked ten years older than when I had first seen him. After breakfast he said to me: "I have to go to the valley to pay Phil Boldrick's friend the money, and to see Mr. Devlin. I shall be back, perhaps, by lunchtime. Will you go with me, or stay here?"

"I shall try to get some fishing this morning, I fancy," I said.

"And possibly I shall idle a good deal, for my time with you here is shortening, and I want to have a great store of laziness behind me for memory, when I've got my nose to the grindstone."

He turned to the door, and said: "Marmion, I wish you weren't going. I wish that we might be comrades under the same roof till--" He paused and smiled strangely.

"Till the finish," I added, "when we should amble grey-headed, sans everything, out of the mad old world? I imagine Miss Belle Treherne would scarcely fancy that. . . . Still, we can be friends just the same. Our wives won't object to an occasional bout of loafing together, will they?"

I was determined not to take him too seriously. He said nothing, and in a moment he was gone.

I passed the morning idly enough, yet thinking, too, very much about my friend. I was anxiously hoping that the telegram from Winnipeg would come. About noon it came. It was not known quite in what part of the

North-west, Madras (under his new name) was, for the corps of mounted police had been changed about recently. My letter had, however, been forwarded into the wilds.

I saw no immediate way but to go to Mrs. Falchion and make a bold bid for his peace. I had promised Madras never to let her know that he was alive, but I would break the promise if Madras himself did not come. After considerable hesitation I started. It must be remembered that the events of the preceding chapter were only known to me afterwards.

Justine Caron was passing through the hall of the hotel when I arrived. After greetings, she said that Mrs. Falchion might see me, but that they were very busy; they were leaving in the evening for the coast. Here was a pleasant revelation! I was so confused with delight at the information, that I could think of nothing more sensible to say than that the unexpected always happens. By this time we were within Mrs. Falchion's sitting-room. And to my remark, Justine replied "Yes, it is so. One has to reckon most with the accidents of life. The expected is either pleasant or unpleasant; there is no middle place."

"You are growing philosophic," said I playfully. "Monsieur," she said gravely, "I hope as I live and travel, I grow a little wiser." Still she lingered, her hand upon the door.

"I had thought that you were always wise."

"Oh no, no! How can you say so? I have been very foolish sometimes." . . . She came back towards me. "If I am wiser I am also happier," she added.

In that moment we understood each other; that is, I read how unselfish this girl could be, and she knew thoroughly the source of my anxiety, and was glad that she could remove it.

"I would not speak to any one save you," she said, "but do you not also think that it is good we go?"

"I have been thinking so, but I hesitated to say so," was my reply.

"You need not hesitate," she said earnestly. "We have both understood, and I know that you are to be trusted."

"Not always," I said, remembering that one experience of mine with Mrs. Falchion on the 'Fulvia'. Holding the back of a chair, and looking earnestly at me, she continued: "Once, on the vessel, you remember, in a hint so very little, I made it appear that madame was selfish. . . . I am sorry. Her heart was asleep. Now, it is awake. She is unselfish. The accident of our going away is hers. She goes to leave peace behind." "I am most glad," said I. "And you think there will be peace?"

"Surely, since this has come, that will come also."

"And you--Mademoiselle?" I should not have asked that question had I

known more of the world. It was tactless and unkind.

"For me it is no matter at all. I do not come in anywhere. As I said, I am happy."

And turning quickly, yet not so quickly but that I saw her cheeks were flushed, she passed out of the room. In a moment Mrs. Falchion entered. There was something new in her carriage, in her person. She came towards me, held out her hand, and said, with the same old half-quizzical tone: "Have you, with your unerring instinct, guessed that I was leaving, and so come to say good-bye?"

"You credit me too highly. No, I came to see you because I had an inclination. I did not guess that you were going until Miss Caron told me."

"An inclination to see me is not your usual instinct, is it? Was it some special impulse, based on a scientific calculation--at which, I suppose, you are an adeptor curiosity? Or had it a purpose? Or were you bored, and therefore sought the most startling experience you could conceive?" She deftly rearranged some flowers in a jar.

"I can plead innocence of all directly; I am guilty of all indirectly: I was impelled to come. I reasoned--if that is scientific--on what I should say if I did come, knowing how inclined I was to--"

"To get beyond my depth," she interrupted, and she motioned me to a chair.

"Well, let it be so," said I. "I was curious to know what kept you in this sylvan, and I fear, to you, half-barbaric spot. I was bored with myself; and I had some purpose in coming, or I should not have had the impulse."

She was leaning back in her chair easily, not languidly. She seemed reposeful, yet alert.

"How wonderfully you talk!" she said, with good-natured mockery. "You are scientifically frank. You were bored with yourself.--Then there is some hope for your future wife. . . . We have had many talks in our acquaintance, Dr. Marmion, but none so interesting as this promises to be. But now tell me what your purpose was in coming. 'Purpose' seems portentous, but quite in keeping."

I noticed here the familiar, almost imperceptible click of the small white teeth.

Was I so glad she was going that I was playful, elated? "My purpose," said I, "has no point now; for even if I were to propose to amuse you--I believe that was the old formula--by an idle day somewhere, by an excursion, an--"

"An autobiography," she broke in soothingly.

"Or an autobiography," I repeated stolidly, "you would not, I fancy, be prepared to accept my services. There would be no chance--now that you are going away--for me to play the harlequin--"

"Whose office you could do pleasantly if it suited you--these adaptable natures!"

"Quite so. But it is all futile now, as I say."

"Yes, you mentioned that before.--Well?"

"It is well," I replied, dropping into a more meaning tone.

"You say it patriarchally, but yet flatteringly." Here she casually offered me a flower. I mechanically placed it in my buttonhole. She seemed delighted at confusing me. But I kept on firmly.

"I do not think," I rejoined gravely now, "that there need be any flattery between us."

"Why?--We are not married."

"That is as radically true as it is epigrammatic," blurted I.

"And truth is more than epigram?"

"One should delight in truth; I do delight in epigram; there seems little chance for choice here."

It seemed to me that I had said quite what I wished there, but she only looked at me enigmatically.

She arranged a flower in her dress as she almost idly replied, though she did not look me full in the face as she had done before: "Well, then, let me add to your present delight by saying that you may go play till doomsday, Dr. Marmion. Your work is done."

"I do not understand."

Her eyes were on me now with the directness she could so well use at need.

"I did not suppose you would, despite your many lessons at my hands. You have been altruistic, Dr. Marmion; I fear critical people would say that you meddled. I shall only say that you are inquiring--scientific, or feminine--what you please! . . . You can now yield up your portfolio of--foreign affairs--of war--shall I say? and retire into sedative habitations, which, believe me, you become best. . . . What concerns me need concern you no longer. The enemy retreats. She offers truce--without conditions. She retires. . . . Is that enough for even you, Professor Marmion?"

"Mrs. Falchion," I said, finding it impossible to understand why she had so suddenly determined to go away (for I did not know all the truth until afterwards--some of it long afterwards), "it is more than I dared to hope for, though less, I know, than you have heart to do if you willed so. I know that you hold some power over my friend."

"Do not think," she said, "that you have had the least influence. What you might think, or may have intended to do, has not moved me in the least. I have had wrongs that you do not know. I have changed--that is all. I admit I intended to do Galt Roscoe harm."

"I thought he deserved it. That is over. After to-night, it is not probable that we shall meet again. I hope that we shall not; as, doubtless, is your own mind."

She kept looking at me with that new deep look which I had seen when she first entered the room.

I was moved, and I saw that just at the last she had spoken under considerable strain. "Mrs. Falchion," said I, "I have THOUGHT harder things of you than I ever SAID to any one. Pray believe that, and believe, also, that I never tried to injure you. For the rest, I can make no complaint. You do not like me. I liked you once, and do now, when you do not depreciate yourself of purpose. . . . Pardon me, but I say this very humbly too. . . . I suppose I always shall like you, in spite of myself. You are one of the most gifted and fascinating women that I ever met. I have been anxious for my friend. I was concerned to make peace between you and your husband--"

"The man who WAS my husband," she interrupted musingly.

"Your husband--whom you so cruelly treated. But I confess I have found it impossible to withhold admiration of you."

For a long time she did not reply, but she never took her eyes off my face, as she leaned slightly forward. Then at last she spoke more gently than I had ever heard her, and a glow came upon her face.

"I am only human. You have me at advantage. What woman could reply unkindly to a speech like that? I admit I thought you held me utterly bad and heartless, and it made me bitter. . . . I had no heart--once. I had only a wrong, an injury, which was in my mind; not mine, but another's, and yet mine. Then strange things occurred. . . . At last I relented. I saw that I had better go. Yesterday I saw that; and I am going--that is all. . . . I wished to keep the edge of my intercourse with you sharp and uncompanionable to the end; but you have forced me at my weakest point. . . ." Here she smiled somewhat painfully. . . .

"Believe me, that is the way to turn a woman's weapon upon herself. You have learned much since we first met. . . . Here is my hand in friendliness, if you care to take it; and in good-bye, should we not meet again more formally before I go."

"I wish now that your husband, Boyd Madras, were here," I said.

She answered nothing, but she did not resent it, only shuddered a little.

Our hands grasped silently. I was too choked to speak, and I left her. At that moment she blinded me to all her faults. She was a wonderful woman.

.....

Galt Roscoe had walked slowly along the forest-road towards the valley, his mind in that state of calm which, in some, might be thought numbness of sensation, in others fortitude--the prerogative of despair. He came to the point of land jutting out over the valley, where he had stood with Mrs. Falchion, Justine, and myself, on the morning of Phil Boldrick's death.

He looked for a long time, and then, slowly descending the hillside, made his way to Mr. Devlin's office. He found Phil's pal awaiting him there. After a few preliminaries, the money was paid over, and Kilby said:

"I've been to see his camping-ground. It's right enough. Viking has done it noble. . . . Now, here's what I'm goin' to do: I'm goin' to open bottles for all that'll drink success to Viking. A place that's stood by my pal, I stand by--but not with his money, mind you! No, that goes to you, Padre, for hospital purposes. My gift an' his. . . . So, sit down and write a receipt, or whatever it's called, accordin' to Hoyle, and you'll do me proud."

Roscoe did as he requested, and handed the money over to Mr. Devlin for safe keeping, remarking, at the same time, that the matter should be announced on a bulletin outside the office at once.

As Kilby stood chewing the end of a cigar and listening to the brief conversation between Roscoe and Mr. Devlin, perplexity crossed his face. He said, as Roscoe turned round: "There's something catchy about your voice, Padre. I don't know what; but it's familiar like. You never was on the Panama level, of course?"

"Never."

"Nor in Australia?"

"Yes, in 1876."

"I wasn't there then."

Roscoe grew a shade paler, but he was firm and composed. He was determined to answer truthfully any question that was asked him, wherever it might lead.

"Nor in Samoa?"

There was the slightest pause, and then the reply came:

"Yes, in Samoa."

"Not a missionary, by gracious! Not a mickonaree in Samoa?"

"No." He said nothing further. He did not feel bound to incriminate himself.

"No? Well, you wasn't a beachcomber, nor trader, I'll swear. Was you there in the last half of the Seventies? That's when I was there."

"Yes." The reply was quiet.

"By Jingo!" The man's face was puzzled. He was about to speak again; but at that moment two river-drivers--boon companions, who had been hanging about the door--urged him to come to the tavern. This distracted him. He laughed, and said that he was coming, and then again, though with less persistency, questioned Roscoe. . "You don't remember me, I suppose?"

"No, I never saw you, so far as I know, until yesterday."

"No? Still, I've heard your voice. It keeps swingin' in my ears; and I can't remember. . . . I can't remember! . . . But we'll have a spin about it again, Padre." He turned to the impatient men. "All right, bully-boys, I'm comin'."

At the door he turned and looked again at Roscoe with a sharp, half-amused scrutiny, then the two parted. Kilby kept his word. He was liberal to Viking; and Phil's memory was drunk, not in silence, many times that day. So that when, in the afternoon, he made up his mind to keep his engagement with Mrs. Falchion, and left the valley for the hills, he was not entirely sober. But he was apparently good-natured. As he idled along he talked to himself, and finally broke out into singing:

"Then swing the long boat down the drink,
For the lads as pipe to go;
But I sink when the 'Lovely Jane' does sink,
To the mermaids down below.'

"The long boat bides on its strings,' says we,
'An' we bides where the long boat bides;
An' we'll bluff this equatorial sea,
Or swallow its hurricane tides.'

"But the 'Lovely Jane' she didn't go down,
An' she anchored at the Spicy Isles;
An' she sailed again to Wellington Town--
A matter of a thousand miles."

It will be remembered that this was part of the song sung by Galt Roscoe on the Whi-Whi River, the day we rescued Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron.

Kilby sang the whole song over to himself until he reached a point overlooking the valley. Then he stood silent for a time, his glance upon the town. The walk had sobered him a little. "Phil, old pal," he said at last, "you ain't got the taste of raw whiskey with you now. When a man loses a pal he loses a grip on the world equal to all that pal's grip was worth. . . . I'm drunk, and Phil's down there among the worms--among the worms! . . . Ah!" he added in disgust, and, dashing his hand across his eyes, struck off into the woods again, making his way to the summer hotel, where he had promised to meet Mrs. Falchion. He inquired for her, creating some astonishment by his uncouth appearance and unsteady manner.

He learned from Justine that Mrs. Falchion had gone to see Roscoe, and that he would probably meet her if he went that way. This he did. He was just about to issue into a partly open space by a ravine near the house, when he heard voices, and his own name mentioned. He stilled and listened.

"Yes, Galt Roscoe," said a voice, "Sam Kilby is the man that loved Alo--loved her not as you did. He would have given her a home, have made her happy, perhaps. You, when Kilby was away, married her--in native fashion--which is no marriage--and KILLED her."

"No, no, I did not kill her--that is not so. As God is my Judge, that is not so."

"You did not kill her with the knife? . . . Well, I will be honest now, and say that I believe that, whatever I may have hinted or said before. But you killed her just the same when you left her."

"Mercy Falchion," he said desperately, "I will not try to palliate my sin. But still I must set myself right with you in so far as I can. The very night Alo killed herself I had made up my mind to leave the navy. I was going to send in my papers, and come back to Apia, and marry her as Englishmen are married. While I remained in the navy I could not, as you know, marry her. It would be impossible to an English officer. I intended to come back and be regularly married to her."

"You say that now," was the cold reply.

"But it is the truth, the truth indeed. Nothing that you might say could make me despise myself more than I do; but I have told you all, as I shall have to tell it one day before a just God. You have spared me: He will not."

"Gait Roscoe," she replied, "I am not merciful, nor am I just. I intended to injure you, though you will remember I saved your life that night by giving you a boat for escape across the bay to the 'Porcupine', which was then under way. The band on board, you also remember, was playing the music of La Grande Duchesse. You fired on the natives who followed. Well, Sam Kilby was with them. Your brother officers did not know the cause of the trouble. It was not known to any one in Apia exactly who it was that Kilby and the natives had tracked from Alo's

hut."

He drew his hand across his forehead dazedly.

"Oh, yes I remember!" he said. "I wish I had faced the matter there and then. It would have been better."

"I doubt that," she replied. "The natives who saw you coming from Alo's hut did not know you. You wisely came straight to the Consul's office--my father's house. And I helped you, though Alo, half-caste Alo, was--my sister!"

Roscoe started back. "Alo--your--sister!" he exclaimed in horror.

"Yes, though I did not know it till afterwards, not till just before my father died. Alo's father was my father; and her mother had been honestly married to my father by a missionary; though for my sake it had never been made known. You remember, also, that you carried on your relations with Alo secretly, and my father never suspected it was you."

"Your sister!" Roscoe was white and sick.

"Yes. And now you understand my reason for wishing you ill, and for hating you to the end."

"Yes," he said despairingly, "I see."

She was determined to preserve before him the outer coldness of her nature to the last.

"Let us reckon together," she said. "I helped to--in fact, I saved your life at Apia. You helped to save my life at the Devil's Slide. That is balanced. You did me--the honour to say that you loved me once. Well, one of my race loved you. That is balanced also. My sister's death came through you. There is no balance to that. What shall balance Alo's death? . . . I leave you to think that over. It is worth thinking about. I shall keep your secret, too. Kilby does not know you. I doubt that he ever saw you, though, as I said, he followed you with the natives that night in Apia. He was to come to see me to-day. I think I intended to tell him all, and shift--the duty--of punishment on his shoulders, which I do not doubt he would fulfil. But he shall not know. Do not ask why. I have changed my mind, that is all. But still the account remains a long one. You will have your lifetime to reckon with it, free from any interference on my part; for, if I can help it, we shall never meet again in this world--never. . . . And now, good-bye."

Without a gesture of farewell she turned and left him standing there, in misery and bitterness, but in a thankfulness too, more for Ruth's sake than his own. He raised his arms with a despairing motion, then let them drop heavily to his side. . . .

And then two strong hands caught his throat, a body pressed hard against him, and he was borne backward--backward--to the cliff!

CHAPTER XX

AFTER THE STORM

I was sitting on the verandah, writing a letter to Belle Treherne. The substantial peace of a mountain evening was on me. The air was clear, and full of the scent of the pines and cedars, and the rumble of the rapids came musically down the canon. I lifted my head and saw an eagle sailing away to the snow-topped peak of Trinity, and then turned to watch the orioles in the trees. The hour was delightful. It made me feel how grave mere living is, how noble even the meanest of us becomes sometimes --in those big moments when we think the world was built for us. It is half egotism, half divinity; but why quarrel with it?

I was young, ambitious; and Love and I were at that moment the only figures in the universe really deserving attention! I looked on down a lane of cedars before me, seeing in imagination a long procession of pleasant things; of-- As I looked, another procession moved through the creatures of my dreams, so that they shrank away timidly, then utterly, and this new procession came on and on, until--I suddenly rose, and started forward fearfully, to see--unhappy reality!--the body of Galt Roscoe carried towards me.

Then a cold wind seemed to blow from the glacier above and killed all the summer. A man whispered to me: "We found him at the bottom of the ravine yonder. He'd fallen over, I suppose."

I felt his heart. "He is not dead, thank God!" I said.

"No, sir," said the other, "but he's all smashed." They brought him in and laid him on his bed. I sent one of the party for the doctor at Viking, and myself set to work, with what appliances I had, to deal with the dreadful injuries. When the doctor came, together we made him into the semblance of a man again. His face was but slightly injured, though his head had received severe hurts. I think that I alone saw the marks on his throat; and I hid them. I guessed the cause, but held my peace.

I had sent round at once to James Devlin (but asked him not to come till morning), and also to Mrs. Falchion; but I begged her not to come at all. I might have spared her that; for, as I afterwards knew, she had no intention of coming. She had learned of the accident on her way to Viking, and had turned back; but only to wait and know the worst or the best.

About midnight I was left alone with Roscoe. Once, earlier in the evening, he had recognised me and smiled faintly, but I had shaken my head, and he had said nothing. Now, however, he was looking at me earnestly. I did not speak. What he had to tell me was best told in his own time.

At last he said faintly: "Marmion, shall I die soon?"

I knew that frankness was best, and I replied: "I cannot tell, Roscoe. There is a chance of your living."

He moved his head sadly. "A very faint chance?"

"Yes, a faint one, but--"

"Yes? 'But'?" He looked at me as though he wished it over.

"But it rests with you whether the chance is worth anything. If you are content to die, it is gone."

"I am content to die," he replied.

"And there," said I, "you are wrong and selfish. You have Ruth to live for. Besides, if you are given the chance, you commit suicide if you do not take it."

There was a long pause, and then he said: "You are right; I will live if I can, Marmion."

"And now YOU are right." I nodded soothingly to him, and then asked him to talk no more; for I knew that fever would soon come on.

He lay for a moment silent, but at length whispered: "Did you know it was not a fall I had?" He raised his chin and stretched his throat slightly, with a kind of trembling.

"I thought it was not a fall," I replied.

"It was Phil's pal--Kilby."

"I thought that."

"How could you--think it? Did--others--think so?" he asked anxiously.

"No, not others; I alone. They thought it accident; they could have no ground for suspicion. But I had; and, besides, there were marks on your throat."

"Nothing must happen to him, you understand. He had been drinking, and --and he was justified. I wronged him in Samoa, him and Mrs. Falchion."

I nodded and put my fingers on my lips.

Again there was silence. I sat and watched him, his eyes closed, his body was motionless. He slept for hours so, and then he waked rather sharply, and said half deliriously: "I could have dragged him with me, Marmion."

"But you did not. Yes, I understand. Go to sleep again, Roscoe."

Later on the fever came, and he moaned and moved his head about his pillow. He could not move his body--it was too much injured.

There was a source of fear in Kilby. Would he recklessly announce what he had done, and the cause of it? After thinking it over and over, I concluded that he would not disclose his crimes. My conclusions were right, as after events showed.

As for Roscoe, I feared that if he lived he must go through life maimed. He had a private income; therefore if he determined to work no more in the ministry, he would, at least, have the comforts of life.

Ruth Devlin came. I went to Roscoe and told him that she wished to see him. He smiled sorrowfully and said: "To what end, Marmion? I am a drifting wreck. It will only shock her." I think he thought she would not love him now if he lived--a crippled man.

"But is this noble? Is it just to her?" said I.

After a long time he answered: "You are right again, quite right. I am selfish. When one is shaking between life and death, one thinks most of one's self."

"She will help to bring you back from those places, Roscoe."

"If I am delirious ever, do not let her come, will you, Marmion? Promise me that." I promised.

I went to her. She was very calm and womanly. She entered the room, went quietly to his bedside, and, sitting down, took his hand. Her smile was pitiful and anxious, but her words were brave.

"My dearest," she said, "I am so sorry. But you will soon be well, so we must be as patient and cheerful as we can."

His eyes answered, but he did not speak. She leaned over and kissed his cheek. Then he said: "I hope I may get well."

"This was the shadow over you," she ventured. "This was your presentiment of trouble--this accident."

"Yes, this was the shadow."

Some sharp thought seemed to move her, for her eyes grew suddenly hard, and she stooped and whispered: "Was SHE there--when--it happened, Galt?"

He shrank from the question, but he said immediately: "No, she was not there."

"I am glad," she added, "that it was only an accident."

Her eyes grew clear of their momentary hardness. There is nothing in life like the anger of one woman against another concerning a man.

Justine Caron came to the house, pale and anxious, to inquire. Mrs. Falchion, she said, was not going away until she knew how Mr. Roscoe's illness would turn.

"Miss Caron," I said to her, "do you not think it better that she should go?"

"Yes, for him; but she grieves now."

"For him?"

"Not alone for him," was the reply. There was a pause, and then she continued: "Madame told me to say to you that she did not wish Mr. Roscoe to know that she was still here."

I assured her that I understood, and then she added mournfully: "I cannot help you now, monsieur, as I did on board the 'Fulvia'. But he will be better cared for in Miss Devlin's hands, the poor lady! . . . Do you think that he will live?"

"I hope so. I am not sure."

Her eyes went to tears; and then I tried to speak more encouragingly.

All day people came to inquire, chief among them Mr. Devlin, whose big heart split itself in humanity and compassion. "The price of the big mill for the guarantee of his life!" he said over and over again. "We can't afford to let him go."

Although I should have been on my way back to Toronto, I determined to stay until Roscoe was entirely out of danger. It was singular, but in this illness, though the fever was high, he never was delirious. It would almost seem as if, having paid his penalty, the brain was at rest.

While Roscoe hovered between life and death, Mr. Devlin, who persisted that he would not die, was planning for a new hospital and a new church, of which Roscoe should be president and padre respectively. But the suspense to us all, for many days, was very great; until, one morning when the birds were waking the cedars, and the snow on Mount Trinity was flashing coolness down the hot valley, he waked and said to me: "Marmion, old friend; it is morning at last."

"Yes, it is morning," said I. "And you are going to live now? You are going to be reasonable and give the earth another chance?"

"Yes, I believe I shall live now."

To cheer him, I told him what Mr. Devlin intended and had planned; how river-drivers and salmon-fishers came every day from the valley to inquire after him. I did not tell him that there had been one or two

disturbances between the river-drivers and the salmon-fishers. I tried to let him see that there need be no fresh change in his life. At length he interrupted me.

"Marmion," he said, "I understand what you mean. It would be cowardly of me to leave here now if I were a whole man. I am true in intention, God knows, but I must carry a crippled arm for the rest of my life, must I not? . . . and a crippled Padre is not the kind of man for this place. They want men straight on their feet."

"Do you think," I answered, "that they will not be able to stand the test? You gave them--shall I say it?--a crippled mind before; you give them a crippled body now. Well, where do you think the odds lie? I should fancy with you as you are."

There was a long silence in which neither of us moved. At last he turned his face towards the window, and, not looking at me, said lingeringly: "This is a pleasant place."

I knew that he would remain.

I had not seen Mrs. Falchion during Roscoe's illness; but every day Justine came and inquired, or a messenger was sent. And when, this fortunate day, Justine herself came, and I told her that the crisis was past, she seemed infinitely relieved and happy. Then she said:

"Madame has been ill these three days also; but now I think she will be better; and we shall go soon."

"Ask her," said I, "not to go yet for a few days. Press it as a favour to me." Then, on second thought, I sat down and wrote Mrs. Falchion a note, hinting that there were grave reasons why she should stay a little longer: things connected with her own happiness. Truth is, I had received a note that morning which had excited me. It referred to Mrs. Falchion. For I was an arch-plotter--or had been.

I received a note in reply which said that she would do as I wished. Meanwhile I was anxiously awaiting the arrival of some one.

That night a letter came to Roscoe. After reading it shrinkingly he handed it to me. It said briefly:

I'm not sorry I did it, but I'm glad I hev'n't killed you. I was drunk and mad. If I hadn't hurt you, I'd never hev forgive myself. I reckon now, there's no need to do any forgivin' either side. We're square--though maybe you didn't kill her after all. Mrs. Falchion says you didn't. But you hurt her. Well, I've hurt you. And you will never hear no more of Phil's pal from Danger Mountain.

Immediately after sunset of this night, a storm swept suddenly down the mountains, and prevented Ruth and her father from going to Viking. I left them talking to Roscoe, he wearing such a look on his face as I like to remember now, free from distress of mind--so much more painful than

distress of body. As I was leaving the room, I looked back and saw Ruth sitting on a stool beside Roscoe's chair, holding the unmaimed hand in hers; the father's face shining with pleasure and pride. Before I went out, I turned again to look at them, and, as I did so, my eye fell on the window against which the wind and rain were beating. And through the wet there appeared a face, shocking in its paleness and misery--the face of Mrs. Falchion. Only for an instant, and then it was gone.

I opened the door and went out upon the verandah. As I did so, there was a flash of lightning, and in that flash a figure hurried by me. One moment, and there was another flash; and I saw the figure in the beating rain, making toward the precipice.

Then I heard a cry, not loud, but full of entreaty and sorrow. I moved quickly toward it. In another white gleam I saw Justine with her arms about the figure, holding it back from the abyss. She said with incredible pleading:

"No, no, madame, not that! It is wicked--wicked."

I came and stood beside them.

The figure sank upon the ground and buried a pitiful face in the wet grass.

Justine leaned over her.

She sobbed as one whose harvest of the past is all tears. Nothing human could comfort her yet.

I think she did not know that I was there. Justine lifted her face to me, appealing.

I turned and stole silently away.

CHAPTER XXI

IN PORT

That night I could not rest. It was impossible to rid myself of the picture of Mrs. Falchion as I had seen her by the precipice in the storm. What I had dared to hope for had come. She had been awakened; and with the awakening had risen a new understanding of her own life and the lives of others. The storm of wind and rain that had swept down the ravine was not wilder than her passions when I left her with Justine in the dark night.

All had gone well where the worst might have been. Roscoe's happiness was saved to him. He felt that the accident to him was the penalty he paid for the error of his past; but in the crash of penalties Mrs.

Falchion, too, was suffering; and, so far as she knew, must carry with her the remorse of having seen, without mercy, her husband sink to a suicide's grave. I knew that she was paying a great price now for a mistaken past. I wished that I might make her remorse and sorrow less. There was a way, but I was not sure that all would be as I wished. Since a certain dreadful day on the 'Fulvia', Hungerford and I had held a secret in our hands. When it seemed that Mrs. Falchion would bring a great trouble and shame into Roscoe's life, I determined to use the secret. It must be used now only for Mrs. Falchion's good. As I said in the last chapter, I had received word that somebody was coming whose presence must take a large place in the drama of these events: and I hoped the best.

Until morning I lay and planned the best way to bring things to a successful issue. The morning came--beautiful after a mad night. Soon after I got up I received a note, brought by a boy from Viking, which gave me a thrill of excitement. The note requested me to go to Sunburst. But first I sent a note to Mrs. Falchion, begging her in the name of our new friendship not to leave the mountains that day. I also asked that she would meet me in Sunburst that evening at eight o'clock, at a place indicated by me. I asked for a reply by the messenger I sent, and urged her to ask no questions, but to trust me as one who only wished to do her a great service, as I hoped her compliance would make possible. I waited for the reply, and it bore but the one word--"Yes."

Greatly pleased, I started down the valley. It was still early when I reached Sunburst. I went directly to the little tavern from whence the note had come, and remained an hour or more. The result of that hour's conversation with the writer of the note was memorable, as was the hour itself. I began to hope fondly for the success of my scheme.

From the tavern I went to the village, with an elation hardly disturbed by the fact that many of the salmon-fishers were sullen, because of foolish depredations committed the evening before by idle river-men and mill-hands of Viking. Had I not been so occupied with Mrs. Falchion and an event wherein she must figure, I should have taken more seriously the mutterings of the half-breeds, the moroseness of the Indians, and the nervous threatenings of the white fishers: the more so because I knew that Mr. Devlin had started early that morning for the Pacific Coast, and would not be back for some days.

No two classes of people could be more unlike than the salmon-fishers of Sunburst and the mill-hands and river-drivers of Viking. The life of the river-men was exciting, hardy, and perilous; tending to boisterousness, recklessness, daring, and wild humour: that of the salmon-fishers was cheerful, picturesque, infrequently dangerous, mostly simple and quiet. The river-driver chose to spend his idle hours in crude, rough sprightliness; the salmon-fisher loved to lie upon the shore and listen to the village story-teller,--almost official when successful,--who played upon the credulity and imagination of his listeners. The river-driver loved excitement for its own sake, and behind his boisterousness there was little evil. When the salmon-fisher was roused, his anger became desperately serious. It was not his practice to be boisterous for the sake of boisterousness.

All this worked for a crisis.

From Sunburst I went over to Viking, and for a time watched a handful of river-drivers upon a little island in the centre of the river, working to loosen some logs and timber and foist them into the water, to be driven down to the mill. I stood interested, because I had nothing to do of any moment for a couple of hours. I asked an Indian on the bank to take his canoe and paddle me over to the island. He did so. I do not know why I did not go alone; but the Indian was near me, his canoe was at his hand, and I did the thing almost mechanically. I landed on the island and watched with great interest the men as they pried, twisted and tumbled the pile to get at the key-log which, found and loosened, would send the heap into the water.

I was sorry I brought the Indian with me, for though the river-drivers stopped their wild sing-song cry for a moment to call a "How!" at me, they presently began to toss jeering words at the Indian. They had recognised him--I had not--as a salmon-fisher and one of the Siwash tribe from Sunburst. He remained perfectly silent, but I could see sullenness growing on his face. He appeared to take no notice of his scornful entertainers, but, instead of edging away, came nearer and nearer to the tangle of logs--came, indeed, very close to me, as I stood watching four or five men, with the foreman close by, working at a huge timber. At a certain moment the foreman was in a kind of hollow. Just behind him, near to the Indian, was a great log, which, if loosened by a slight impulse, must fall into the hollow where the foreman stood. The foreman had his face to us; the backs of the other men were on us. Suddenly the foreman gave a frightened cry, and I saw at the same instant the Indian's foot thrust out upon the big log. Before the foreman had time to get out of the hollow, it slid down, caught him just above the ankle and broke the leg.

I wheeled, to see the Indian in his canoe making for the shore. He was followed by the curses of the foreman and the gang. The foreman was very quiet, but I could see that there was danger in his eye, and the exclamations of the men satisfied me that they were planning an inter-municipal difficulty.

I improvised bandages, set the leg directly, and in a little while we got to the shore on a hastily constructed raft. After seeing the foreman safely cared for, and giving Mr. Devlin's manager the facts of the occurrence, more than sated with my morning's experience, I climbed the mountain side, and took refuge from the heat in the coolness of Roscoe's rooms.

In the afternoon I received a note from Mrs. Falchion, saying that on the following day she would start for the coast; that her luggage would be taken to Sunburst at once; and that, her engagement with me fulfilled, she would spend a night there, not returning again to the hills. I was preparing for my own departure, and was kept very busy until evening. Then I went quickly down into the valley,--for I was late,--and trudged eagerly on to Sunburst. As I neared the village I saw that there were

fewer lights--torches and fires--than usual on the river. I noticed also that there were very few fishers on the banks or in the river. But still the village seemed noisy, and, although it was dusk, I could make out much stir in the one street along which the cottages and huts ambled for nearly a mile.

All at once it came to me strongly that the friction between the two villages had consummated in the foreman's injury, and was here coming to a painful crisis. My suspicions had good grounds. As I hurried on I saw that the lights usually set on the banks of the river were scattered through the town. Bonfires were being lighted, and torches were flaring in front of the Indian huts. Coming closer, I saw excited groups of Indians, half-breeds, and white men moving here and there; and then, all at once, there came a cry--a kind of roar--from farther up the village, and the men gathered themselves together, seizing guns, sticks, irons, and other weapons, and ran up the street. I understood. I was moderately swift of foot those days. I came quickly after them, and passed them. As I did so I inquired of one or two fishers what was the trouble.

They told me, as I had guessed, that they expected an attack on the village by the mill-hands and river-drivers of Viking.

The situation was critical. I could foresee a catastrophe which would for ever unsettle the two towns, and give the valley an unenviable reputation. I was certain that, if Roscoe or Mr. Devlin were present, a prohibitive influence could be brought to bear; that some one of strong will could stand, as it were, in the gap between them, and prevent a pitched battle, and, possibly, bloodshed. I was sure that at Viking the river-drivers had laid their plans so secretly that the news of them would scarcely reach the ears of the manager of the mill, and that, therefore, his influence, as Mr. Devlin's, would not be available.

Remained only myself--as I first thought. I was unknown to a great number of the men of both villages, and familiar with but very few--chiefly those with whom I had a gossiping acquaintance. Yet, somehow, I felt that if I could but get a half-dozen men to take a firm stand with me, I might hold the rioters in check.

As I ran by the side of the excitable fishers, I urged upon one or two of them the wisdom and duty of preventing a conflict. Their reply was--and it was very convincing--that they were not forcing a struggle, but were being attacked, and in the case would fight. My hasty persuasion produced but little result. But I kept thinking hard. Suddenly it came to me that I could place my hand upon a man whose instincts in the matter would be the same as mine; who had authority; knew the world; had been in dangerous positions in his lifetime; and owed me something. I was sure that I could depend upon him: the more so that once frail of body he had developed into a strong, well-controlled man.

Even as I thought of him, I was within a few rods of the house where he was. I looked, and saw him standing in the doorway. I ran and called to him. He instantly joined me, and we ran on together: the fishermen

shouting loudly as they watched the river-drivers come armed down the hill-slope into the village.

I hastily explained the situation to my friend, and told him what we must do. A word or two assured me of all I wished to know. We reached the scene of the disorder. The fishermen were bunched together, the river on the one side, the houses and hills on the other. The river-drivers had halted not many yards away, cool, determined and quiet, save for a little muttering. In their red shirts, top boots, many of them with long black hair and brass earrings, they looked a most formidable crowd. They had evidently taken the matter seriously, and were come with the intention of carrying their point, whatever it might be. Just as we reached the space between the two parties, the massive leader of the river-drivers stepped forward, and in a rough but collected voice said that they had come determined to fight, if fighting were necessary, but that they knew what the end of the conflict would be, and they did not wish to obliterate Sunburst entirely if Sunburst accepted the conditions of peace.

There seemed no leader to the fishermen.

My friend said to me quickly: "You speak first." Instantly I stepped forward and demanded to know what the terms of peace were. As soon as I did so, there were harsh mutterings among the river-drivers. I explained at once, waving back some of the fisher-men who were clamouring about me, that I had nothing whatever to do with the quarrel; that I happened to be where I was by accident, as I had happened by accident to see the difficulty of the morning. But I said that it was the duty of every man who was a good citizen and respected the laws of his country, to see, in so far as it was possible, that there should be no breach of those laws. I spoke in a clear strong voice, and I think I produced some effect upon both parties to the quarrel. The reply of the leader was almost immediate. He said that all they demanded was the Indian who had so treacherously injured the foreman of their gangs. I saw the position at once, and was dumfounded. For a moment I did not speak.

I was not prepared for the scene that immediately followed. Some one broke through the crowd at my back, rushed past me, and stood between the two forces. It was the Indian who had injured the foreman. He was naked to the waist, and painted and feathered after the manner of his tribe going to battle. There was a wild light in his eye, but he had no weapon. He folded his arms across his breast, and said:

"Well, you want me. Here I am. I will fight with any man all alone, without a gun or arrow or anything. I will fight with my arms--to kill."

I saw revolvers raised at him instantly, but at that the man, my friend, who stood beside me, sprang in front of the Indian.

"Stop--stop!" he cried. "In the name of the law! I am a sergeant of the mounted police of Canada. My jurisdiction extends from Winnipeg to Vancouver. You cannot have this man except over my body: and for my body every one of you will pay with your lives; for every blow struck this night, there will be a hundred blows struck upon the river-drivers and

mill-hands of this valley. Take care! Behind me is the law of the land
--her police and her soldiery."

He paused. There was almost complete silence. He continued:

"This man is my prisoner; I arrest him."--He put his hand upon the Indian's shoulder.--"For the crime he committed this morning he shall pay: but to the law, not to you. Put up your revolvers, men. Go back to Viking. Don't risk your lives; don't break the law and make yourselves criminals and outlaws. Is it worth it? Be men. You have been the aggressors. There isn't one of you but feels that justice which is the boast of every man of the West. You wanted to avenge the crime of this morning. But the vengeance is the law's.--Stand back--Stand back!" he said, and drew his revolver, as the leader of the river-drivers stepped forward. "I will kill the first man that tries to lay his hand upon my prisoner. Don't be mad. I am not one man, I am a whole country."

I shall never forget the thrill that passed through me as I saw a man who, but a handful of months before, was neck deep in his grave, now blossomed out into a strong, defiant soldier.

There was a pause. At last the leader of the river-drivers spoke.

"See," he said, "Sergeant, I guess you're right. You're a man, so help me! Say, boys," he continued, turning to his followers, "let him have the Injin. I guess he's earned him."

So saying he wheeled, the men with him, and they tramped up the slope again on their way back to Viking. The man who had achieved this turned upon the fishers.

"Back to your homes!" he said. "Be thankful that blood was not shed here to-night, and let this be a lesson to you. Now, go."

The crowd turned, slowly shambled down the riverside, and left us three standing there.

But not alone. Out of the shadow of one of the houses came two women. They stepped forward into the light of the bonfire burning near us. One of the women was very pale.

It was Mrs. Falchion.

I touched the arm of the man standing beside me. He wheeled and saw her also. A cry broke from his lips, but he stood still. A whole life-time of sorrow, trouble, and love looked out of his eyes. Mrs. Falchion came nearer. Claspng her hands upon her breast, she peered up into his face, and gasped:

"Oh--oh--I thought that you were drowned--and dead! I saw you buried in the sea. No--no--it cannot be you! I have heard and seen all within these past few minutes. YOU are so strong and brave, so great a man!... Oh, tell me, tell me, are you in truth my husband?"

He spoke.

"I was your husband, Mercy Falchion. I was drowned, but this man"--he turned and touched my shoulder--"this man brought me back to life. I wanted to be dead to the world. I begged him to keep my secret. A sailor's corpse was buried in my shroud, and I lived. At Aden I stole from the boat in the night. I came to America--to Canada--to begin a new life under a new name, never to see you again. . . . Do not, do not speak to me--unless I am not to lose you again; unless I am to know that now you forgive me--that you forgive me--and wish me to live--my wife!"

She put both her hands out, a strange, sorrowful look in her eyes, and said: "I have sinned--I have sinned."

He took her hands in his.

"I know," he said, "that you do not love me yet; but you may some day."

"No," she said, "I do not love you; but . . . I am glad you live. Let us--go home."

THE END.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A heart-break for that kind is their salvation
A man may be forgiven for a sin, but the effect remains
A man you could bank on, and draw your interest reg'lar
All he has to do is to be vague, and look prodigious (Scientist)
Death is not the worst of evils
Every true woman is a mother, though she have no child
Fear a woman are when she hates, and when she loves
He didn't always side with the majority
He had neither self-consciousness nor fear
Her own suffering always set her laughing at herself
Learned what fools we mortals be
Love can outlive slander
Men do not steal up here: that is the unpardonable crime
She had provoked love, but had never given it
"Still the end of your existence," I rejoined--"to be amused?"
The happy scene of the play before the villain comes in
The threshold of an acknowledged love
There are things we repent of which cannot be repaired
There is no refuge from memory and remorse in this world
Think that a woman gives the heart for pleasant weather only?
Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart
Time a woman most yearns for a man is when she has refused him
Would look back and not remember that she had a childhood

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