Title: Wild Youth, Volume 1.

Author: Gilbert Parker

Release Date: August, 2004 [EBook #6289]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on December 12, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

This eBook was produced by David Widger <widger@cecomet.net>

WILD YOUTH

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 1.

Volume 2.

WILD YOUTH

CHAPTER I

THE MAZARINES TAKE POSSESSION

From the beginning, Askatoon had had more character and idiosyncrasy than any other town in the West. Perhaps that was because many of its citizens had marked personality, while some were distinctly original--a few so original as to be almost bizarre. The general intelligence was high, and this made the place alert for the new observer. It slept with one eye open; it waked with both eyes wide--as wide as the windows of the world. The virtue of being bright and clever was a doctrine which had never been taught in Askatoon; it was as natural as eating and drinking. Nothing ever really shook the place out of a wholesome control and composure. Now and then, however, the flag of distress was hoisted, and everybody in the place--from Patsy Kernaghan, the casual, at one end of the scale, and the Young Doctor, so called because he was young-looking when he first came to the place, who represented Askatoon in the meridian of its intellect, at the other--had sudden paralysis. That was the outstanding feature of Askatoon. Some places made a noise and flung things about in times of distress; but Askatoon always stood still and

fumbled with its collar-buttons, as though to get more air. When it was poignantly moved, it leaned against the wall of its common sense, abashed, but vigilant and careful.

That is what it did when Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mazarine arrived at Askatoon to take possession of Tralee, the ranch which Michael Turley, abandoning because he had an unavoidable engagement in another world, left to his next of kin, with a legacy to another kinsman a little farther off. The next of kin had proved to be Joel Mazarine, from one of those stern English counties on the borders of Quebec, where ancient tribal prejudices and religious hatreds give a necessary relief to hard-driven human nature.

Michael Turley had lived much to himself on his ranch, but that was because in his latter days he had developed a secret taste for spirituous liquors which he had no wish to share with others. With the assistance of a bad cook and a constant spleen caused by resentment against the intervention of his priest, good Father Roche, he finished his career with great haste and without either becoming a nuisance to his neighbours or ruining his property. The property was clear of mortgage or debt when he set out on his endless journey.

When the prophet-bearded, huge, swarthy-faced Joel Mazarine, with a beautiful young girl behind him, stepped from the West-bound train and was greeted by the Mayor, who was one of the executors of Michael Turley's will, a shiver passed through Askatoon, and for one instant animation was suspended; for the jungle-looking newcomer, motioning forward the young girl, said to the Mayor:

"Mayor, this is Mrs. Mazarine. Shake hands with the Mayor, Mrs. Mazarine."

Mazarine did not speak very loud, but as an animal senses the truth of a danger far off with an unshakable certainty, the crowd at the station seemed to know by instinct what he said.

"Hell--that old whale and her!" growled Jonas Billings, the keeper of the livery-stable.

At Mazarine's words the Young Doctor, a man of rare gifts, individuality and authority in the place, who had come to the station to see a patient off to the mountains by this train, drew in his breath sharply, as though a spirit of repugnance was in his heart. This happened during the first years of the Young Doctor's career at Askatoon, when he was still alive with human prejudices, although he had a nature well balanced and singularly just. The strife between his prejudices and his sense of justice was what made him always interesting in all the great prairie and foothill country of which Askatoon was the centre.

He had got his shock, indeed, before Mazarine had introduced his wife to the Mayor. Not for nothing had he studied the human mind in its relation to the human body, and the expression of that mind speaking through the

body. The instant Joel Mazarine and his wife stepped out of the train, he knew they were what they were to each other. That was a real achievement in knowledge, because Mazarine was certainly sixty-five if he was a day, and his wife was a slim, willowy slip of a girl, not more than nineteen years of age, with the most wonderful Irish blue eyes and long dark lashes. There was nothing of the wife or woman about her, save something in the eyes, which seemed to belong to ages past and gone, something so solemnly wise, yet so painfully confused, that there flashed into the Young Doctor's mind at first glance of her the vision of a young bird caught from its thoughtless, sunbright journeyings, its reckless freedom of winged life, into the captivity of a cage.

She smiled, this child, as she shook hands with the Mayor, and it had the appeal of one who had learned the value of smiling--as though it answered many a question and took the place of words and the trials of the tongue. It was pitifully mechanical. As the Young Doctor saw, it was the smile of a captive in a strange uncomprehended world, more a dream than a reality.

"Mrs. Mazarine, welcome," said the Mayor after an abashed pause. "We're proud of this town, but we'll be prouder still, now you've come."

The girl-wife smiled again. At the same time it was as though she glanced apprehensively out of the corner of her eye at the old man by her side, as she said:

"Thank you. There seems to be plenty of room for us out here, so we needn't get in each other's way.... I've never been on the prairie before," she added.

The Young Doctor realized that her reply had meanings which would escape the understanding of the Mayor, and her apprehensive glance had told him of the gruesome jealousy of this old man at her side. The Mayor's polite words had caused the long, clean-shaven upper lip of the old man with the look of a debauched prophet, to lengthen surlily; and he noticed that a wide, flat foot in a big knee-boot, inside trousers too short, tapped the ground impatiently.

"We must be getting on to Tralee," said a voice that seemed to force its way through bronchial obstructions. "Come, Mrs. Mazarine."

He laid a big, flat, tropical hand, which gave the impression of being splayed, on the girl's shoulder. The gallant words of the Mayor--a chivalrous mountain man--had set dark elements working. As the new master of Tralee stepped forward, the Young Doctor could not help noticing how large and hairy were the ears that stood far out from the devilish head. It was a huge, steel-twisted, primitive man, who somehow gave the impression of a gorilla. The face was repulsive in its combination of surly smugness, as shown by the long upper lip, by a repellent darkness round the small, furtive eyes, by a hardness in the huge, bearded jaw, and by a mouth of primary animalism.

The Mayor caught sight of the Young Doctor, and he stopped the

incongruous pair as they moved to the station doorway, the girl in front, as though driven.

"Mr. Mazarine, you've got to know the man who counts for more in Askatoon than anybody else; Doctor, you've got to know Mr. Mazarine," said the generous Mayor.

Repugnance was in full possession of the Young Doctor, but he was scientific and he was philosophic, if nothing else. He shook hands with Mazarine deliberately. If he could prevent it, there should be, where he was concerned, no jealousy, such as Mazarine had shown towards the Mayor, in connection with this helpless, exquisite creature in the grip of hard fate. Shaking hands with the girl with only a friendly politeness in his glance, he felt a sudden eager, clinging clasp of her fingers. It was like lightning, and gone like lightning, as was the look that flashed between them. Somehow the girl instinctively felt the nature of the man, and in spirit flew to him for protection. No one saw the swift look, and in it there was nothing which spoke of youth or heart, of the feeling of man for woman or woman for man; but only the longing for help on the girl's part, undefined as it was. On the man's part there was a soul whose gift and duty were healing. As the two passed on, the Young Doctor looked around him at the exclaiming crowd, for few had left the station when the train rolled out. Curiosity was an obsession with the people of Askatoon.

"Well, I never!" said round-faced Mrs. Skinner, with huge hips and gray curls. "Did you ever see the like?"

"I call it a shame," declared an indignant young woman, gripping tighter the hand of her little child, the daughter of a young butcher of twenty-three years of age.

"Poor lamb!" another motherly voice said.

"She ought to be ashamed of herself--money, I suppose," sneered Ellen Banner, a sour-faced shopkeeper's daughter, who had taught in Sunday school for twenty years and was still single.

"Beauty and the beast," remarked the Young Doctor to himself, as he saw the two drive away, Patsy Kernaghan running beside the wagon, evidently trying to make friends with the mastodon of Tralee.

CHAPTER II

"MY NAME IS LOUISE"

Askatoon never included the Mazarines in its social scheme. Certainly Tralee was some distance from the town, but, apart from that, the new-comers remained incongruous, alien and alone. The handsome, inanimate girl-wife never appeared by herself in the streets of Askatoon, but

always in the company of her morose husband, whose only human association seemed to be his membership in the Methodist body so prominent in the town. Every Sunday morning he tied his pair of bay horses with the covered buggy to the hitching-post in the church-shed and marched his wife to the very front seat in the Meeting House, having taken possession of it on his first visit, as though it had no other claimants. Subsequently he held it in almost solitary control, because other members of the congregation, feeling his repugnance to companionship, gave him the isolation he wished. As a rule he and his wife left the building before the last hymn was sung, so avoiding conversation. Now and again he stayed to a prayer-meeting and, doing so, invariably "led in prayer," to a very limited chorus of "Amens." For in spite of the position which Tralee conferred on its owner, there was a natural shrinking from "that wild boar," as outspoken Sister Skinner called him in the presence of the puzzled and troubled Minister.

This was always a time of pained confusion for the girl-wife. She had never "got religion," and there was something startling to her undeveloped nature in the thunderous apostrophes, in terms of the oldest part of the Old Testament, used by her tyrant when he wrestled with the Lord in prayer.

These were perhaps the only times when her face was the mirror of her confused, vague and troubled youth. Captive in a world bounded by a man's will, she simply did not begin to understand this strange and overpowering creature who had taken possession of her body, mind and soul. She trembled and hesitated before every cave of mystery which her daily life with him opened darkly to her abashed eyes. She felt herself going round and round and round in a circle, not forlorn enough to rebel or break away, but dazed and wondering and shrinking. She was like one robbed of will, made mechanical by a stern conformity to imposed rules of life and conduct. There were women in Askatoon who were sorry for her and made efforts to get near her; but whether it was the Methodist Minister or his wife, or the most voluble sister of the prayer-meeting, none got beyond the threshold of Tralee, as it were.

The girl-wife abashed them. She was as one who automatically spoke as she was told to speak, did what she was told to do. Yet she always smiled at the visitors when they came, or when she saw them and others at the Meeting House. It was, however, not a smile for an individual, whoever that individual might chance to be. It was only the kindness of her nature expressing itself. Talking seemed like the exercise of a foreign language to her, but her smiling was free and unconstrained, and it belonged to all, without selection.

The Young Doctor, looking at her one day as she sat in a buggy while her monster-man was inside the chemist's shop, said to himself:

"Sterilized! Absolutely, shamefully sterilized! But suppose she wakes up suddenly out of that dream between life and death--what will happen?"

He remembered that curious, sudden, delicate catch of his palm on the day when they first shook hands at the railway-station, and to him it was

like the flutter of life in a thing which seemed dead. How often he had noticed it in man and animal on the verge of extinction! He had not mistaken that fluttering appeal of her fingers. He was young enough to translate it into flattering terms of emotion, but he did not do so. He was fancy-free himself, and the time would come when he would do a tremendous thing where a woman was concerned, a woman in something the same position as this poor girl; but that shaking, thrilling thing was still far off from him. For this child he only felt the healer's desire to heal.

He was one of those men who never force an issue; he never put forward the hands of the clock. He felt that sooner or later Louise Mazarine--he did not yet know her Christian name--would command his help, as so many had done in that prairie country, and not necessarily for relief of physical pain or the curing of disease. He had helped as many men and women mentally and morally as physically; the spirit of healing was behind everything he did. His world recognized it, and that was why he was never known by his name in all the district--he was only admiringly called "The Young Doctor."

He had never been to Tralee since the Mazarines had arrived, though he had passed it often and had sometimes seen Louise in the garden with her dog, her black cat and her bright canary. The combination of the cat and the canary did not seem incongruous where she was concerned; it was as though something in her passionless self neutralized even the antagonisms of natural history. She had made the gloomy black cat and the light-hearted canary to be friends. Perhaps that came from an everlasting patience which her life had bred in her; perhaps it was the powerful gift of one in touch with the remote, primitive things.

The Young Doctor had also seen her in the paddock with the horses, bare-headed, lithe and so girlishly slim, with none of the unmistakable if elusive lines belonging to the maturity which marriage brings. He had taken off his hat to her in the distance, but she had never waved a hand in reply. She only stood and gazed at him, and her look followed him long after he passed by. He knew well that in the gaze was nothing of the interest which a woman feels in a man; it was the look of one chained to a rock, who sees a Samaritan in the cheerless distance.

In the daily round of her life she was always busy; not restlessly, but constantly, and always silently, busy. She was even more silent than her laconic half-breed hired woman, Rada. There was no talk with her gloating husband which was not monosyllabic. Her canary sang, but no music ever broke from her own lips. She murmured over her lovely yellow companion; she kissed it, pleaded with it for more song, but the only music at her own lips was the occasional music of her voice; and it had a colourless quality which, though gentle, had none of the eloquence and warmth of youth.

In form and feature she was one made for emotion and demonstration, and the passionate play of the innocent enterprises of wild youth; but there was nothing of that in her. Gray age had drunk her life and had given her nothing in return--neither companionship nor sympathy nor

understanding; only the hunger of a coarse manhood. Her obedience to the supreme will of her jealous jailer gave no ground for scolding or reproach, and that saved her much. She was even quietly cheerful, but it was only the pale reflection of a lost youth which would have been buoyant and gallant, gay and glad, had it been given the natural thing in the natural world.

There came a day, however, when the long, unchanging routine, gray with prison grayness, was broken; when the round of household duties and the prison discipline were interrupted. It was as sudden as a storm in the tropics, as final and as fateful as birth or death. That day she was taken suddenly and acutely ill. It was only a temporary malady, an agonizing pain which had its origin in a sudden chill. This chill was due, as the Young Doctor knew when he came, to a vitality which did not renew itself, which got nothing from the life to which it was sealed, which for some reason could not absorb energy from the stinging, vital life of the prairie world in the June-time.

In her sudden anguish, and in the absence of Joel Mazarine, she sent for the Young Doctor. That in itself was courageous, because it was impossible to tell what view the master of Tralee would take of her action, ill though she was. She was not supposed to exercise her will. If Joel Mazarine had been at home, he would have sent for wheezy, decrepit old Doctor Gensing, whose practice the Young Doctor had completely absorbed over a series of years.

But the Young Doctor came. Rada, the half-breed woman, had undressed Louise and put her to bed; and he found her white as snow at the end of a paroxysm of pain, her long eyelashes lying on a cheek as smooth as a piece of Satsuma ware which has had the loving polish of ten thousand friendly fingers over innumerable years. When he came and stood beside her bed, she put out her hand slowly towards him. As he took it in his firm, reassuring grasp, he felt the same fluttering appeal which had marked their handclasp on the day of their first meeting at the railway-station. Looking at the huge bed and the rancher-farmer's coarse clothes hanging on pegs, the big greased boots against the wall, a sudden savage feeling of disgust and anger took hold of him; but the spirit of healing at once emerged, and he concentrated himself upon the duty before him.

For a whole hour he worked with her, and at length subdued the convulsions of pain which distorted the beautiful face and made the childlike body writhe. He had a resentment against the crime which had been committed. Marriage had not made her into a woman; it had driven her back into an arrested youth. It was as though she ought to have worn short skirts and her hair in a long braid down her back. Hers was the body of a young boy. When she was free from pain, and the colour had come back to her cheeks a little, she smiled at him, and was about to put out her hand as a child might to a brother or a father, when suddenly a shadow stole into her eyes and crept across her face, and she drew her clenched hand close to her body. Still, she tried to smile at him.

His quiet, impersonal, though friendly look soothed her.

"Am I very sick?" she asked.

He shook his head and smiled. "You'll be all right to-morrow, I hope."

"That's too bad. I would like to be so sick that I couldn't think of anything else. My father used to say that the world was only the size of four walls to a sick person."

"I can't promise you so small a world," remarked the Young Doctor with a kind smile, his arm resting on the side of the bed, his chair drawn alongside. "You will have to face the whole universe to-morrow, same as ever."

She looked perplexed, and then said to him: "I used to think it was a beautiful world, and they try to make me think it is yet; but it isn't."

"Who try to make you?" he asked.

"Oh, my bird Richard, and Nigger the black cat, and Jumbo, the dog," she replied.

Her eyes closed, then opened strangely wide upon him in an eager, staring appeal.

"Don't you want to know about me?" she asked. "I want to tell you--I want to tell you. I'm tired of telling it all over to myself."

The Young Doctor did not want to know. As a doctor he did not want to know.

"Not now," he said firmly. "Tell me when I come again."

A look of pain came into her face. "But who can tell when you'll come again!" she pleaded.

"When I will things to be, they generally happen," he answered in a commonplace tone. "You are my patient now, and I must keep an eye on you. So I'll come."

Again, with an almost spasmodical movement towards him, she said:

"I must tell you. I wanted to tell you the first day I saw you. You seemed the same kind of man my father was. My name's Louise. It was my mother made me do it. There was a mortgage--I was only sixteen. It's three years ago. He said to my mother he'd tear up the mortgage if I married him. That's why I'm here with him--Mrs. Mazarine. But my name's Louise."

"Yes, yes, I know," the Young Doctor answered soothingly. "But you must not talk of it now. I understand perfectly. Tell me all about it another time."

"You don't think I should have--" She paused.

"Of course. I tell you I understand. Now you must be quiet. Drink this." He got up and poured some liquid into a glass.

At that moment there was a noise below in the hall. "That's my husband," the girl-wife said, and the old wan captive-look came into her face.

"That's all right," replied the Young Doctor. "He'll find you better."

At that moment the half-breed woman entered the room. "He's here," she said, and came towards the bed.

"That old woman has sense," the Young Doctor murmured to himself. "She knows her man."

A minute later Joel Mazarine was in the room, and he saw the half-breed woman lift his wife's head, while the Young Doctor held a glass to her lips.

"What's all this?" Mazarine said roughly. "What?" He stopped suddenly, for the Young Doctor faced him sharply.

"She must be left alone," he said firmly and quietly, his eyes fastening the old man's eyes; and there was that in them which would not be gainsaid. "I have just given her medicine. She has been in great pain.

"We are not needed here now." He motioned towards the door. "She must be left alone."

For an instant it seemed that the old man was going to resist the dictation; but presently, after a scrutinizing look at the still, shrinking figure in the bed, he swung round, left the room and descended the stairs, the Young Doctor following.

CHAPTER III

"I HAVE FOUGHT WITH BEASTS AT EPHESUS"

The old man led the way outside the house, as though to be rid of his visitor as soon as possible. This was so obvious that, for an instant, the Young Doctor was disposed to try conclusions with the old slaver, and summon him back to the dining-room. The Mazarine sort of man always roused fighting, masterful forces in him. He was never averse to a contest of wills, and he had had much of it; it was inseparable from his methods of healing. He knew that nine people out of ten never gave a true history of their physical troubles, never told their whole story: first because they had no gift for reporting, no observation; and also because the physical ailments of many of them were aggravated or induced by mental anxieties. Then it was that he imposed himself; as it were, fought the deceiver and his deceit, or the ignorant one and his

ignorance; and numbers of people, under his sympathetic, wordless inquiry, poured their troubles into his ears, as the girl-wife upstairs had tried to do.

When the old man turned to face him in the sunlight, his boots soiled with dust and manure, his long upper lip feeling about over the lower lip and its shaggy growth of beard like some sea-monster feeling for its prey, the Young Doctor had a sensation of rancour. His mind flashed to that upstairs room, where a comely captive creature was lying not an arm's length from the coats and trousers and shabby waistcoats of this barbarian. Somehow that row of tenantless clothes, and the top-boots, greased with tallow, standing against the wall, were more characteristic of the situation than the old land-leviathan himself, blinking his beady, greenish eyes at the Young Doctor. That blinking was a repulsive characteristic; it was like serpents gulping live things.

"What's the matter with her?" the old man asked, jerking his head towards the upper window.

The Young Doctor explained quickly the immediate trouble, and then added:

"But it would not have taken hold of her so if she was not run down. She is not in a condition to resist. When her system exhausts, it does not refill, as it were."

"What sort of dictionary talk is that? Run down--here!" The old man sniffed the air like an ancient sow. "Run down--in this life, with the best of food, warm weather, and more ozone than a sailor gets at sea! It's an insult to Jehovah, such nonsense."

"Mr. Mazarine," rejoined the Young Doctor with ominous determination in his eye, "you know a good deal, I should think, about spring wheat and fall ploughing, about making sows fat, or burning fallow land--that's your trade, and I shouldn't want to challenge you on it all; or you know when to give a horse bran-mash, or a heifer salt-petre, but--well, I know my job in the same way. They will tell you, about here, that I have a kind of hobby for keeping people from digging and crawling into their own graves. That's my business, and the habit of saving human life, because you're paid for it, becomes in time a habit of saving human life for its very own sake. I warn you--and perhaps it's a matter of some concern to you--Mrs. Mazarine is in a bad way."

Resentful and incredulous, the old man was about to speak, but the Young Doctor made an arresting gesture, and added:

"She has very little strength to go on with. She ought to be plump; her pulses ought to beat hard; her cheeks ought to be rosy; she should walk with a spring and be strong and steady as a soldier on the march; but she is none of these things, can do none of these things. You've got a thousand things to do, and you do them because you want to do them. There is something making new life in you all the time, but Mrs. Mazarine makes no new life as she goes on. Every day is taking something out of her, and there's nothing being renewed. Sometimes neither good food nor

ozone is enough; and you've got to take care, or you'll lose Mrs. Mazarine." He could not induce himself to speak of her as "wife."

For a moment the unwholesome mouth seemed to be chewing unpleasant herbs, and the beady eyes blinked viciously.

"I'm not swallowin' your meaning," Mazarine said at last. "I never studied Greek. If a woman has a disease, there it is, and you can deal with it or not; but if she hasn't no disease, then it's chicanyery--chicanyery. Doctors talk a lot of gibberish these here days. What I want to know is, has my wife got a disease? I haven't seen any signs. Is it Bright's, or cancer, or the lungs, or the liver, or the kidneys, or the heart, or what's its name?"

The Young Doctor had an impulse to flay the heathen, but for the girl-wife's sake he forbore.

"I don't think it is any of those troubles," he replied smoothly. "She needs a thorough examination. But one thing is clear: she is wasting; she is losing ground instead of going ahead. There's a malignant influence working. She's standing still, and to stand still in youth is fatal. I can imagine you don't want to lose her, eh?"

The Young Doctor's gray-blue eyes endeavoured to hold the blinking beads under the shaggy eyebrows long enough to get control of a mind which had the cunning and cruelty of an animal. He succeeded.

The old man would a thousand times rather his wife lived than died. In the first place, to lose her was to sacrifice that which he had paid for dearly--a mortgage of ten thousand dollars torn up. Louise Mazarine represented that to him first-ten thousand dollars. Secondly, she was worth it in every way. He had what hosts of others would be glad to have--men younger and better looking than himself. She represented the triumph of age. He had lived his life; he had buried two wives; he had had children; he had made money; and yet here, when other men of his years were thinking of making wills, and eating porridge, and waiting for the Dark Policeman to come and arrest them for loitering, he was left a magnificent piece of property like Tralee; and he had all the sources of pleasure open to a young man walking the primrose path. He was living right up to the last. Both his wives were gray-headed when they died--it turned them gray to live with him; both had died before they were fifty; and here he was the sole owner of a wonderful young head, with hair that reached to the waist, with lips like cool fruit from an orchard-tree, and the indescribable charm of youth and loveliness which the young themselves never really understood. That was what he used to say to himself; it was only age could appreciate youth and beauty; youth did not understand.

Thus the Young Doctor's question roused in him something at once savage and apprehensive. Of course he wanted Louise to live. Why should she not live?

"Doesn't any husband want his wife to live!" he answered sullenly.

"But I want to know what ails her. What medicine you going to give her?"

"I don't know," the Young Doctor replied meditatively. "When she is quite rid of this attack, I'll examine her again and let you know."

Suddenly there shot into the greenish old eyes a reddish look of rage; jealousy, horrible, gruesome jealousy, took possession of Joel Mazarine. This young man to come in and go out of his wife's bedroom, to--Why weren't there women doctors? He would get one over from the Coast, or from Winnipeg, or else there was old Doctor Gensing, in Askatoon--who was seventy-five at least. He would call him in and get rid of this offensive young pill-maker.

"I don't believe there's anything the matter with her," he declared stubbornly. "She's been healthy as a woman can be, living this life here. What's her disease? I've asked you. What is it?"

The other laid a hand on himself, and in the colourless voice of the expert, said: "Old age--that's her trouble, so far as I can see."

He paused, foreseeing the ferocious look which swept into the repulsive face, and the clenching of the big hands. Then in a soothing, reflective kind of voice he added:

"Senile decay--you know all about that. Well, now, it happens sometimes --not often, but it does happen--that a very young person for some cause or another suffers from senile decay. Some terrible leakage of youth occurs. It has been cured, though, and I've cured one or two cases myself."

He was almost prevaricating--but in a good cause. "Mrs. Mazarine's is a case which can be cured, I think," he continued. "As you've remarked, Mr. Mazarine,"--his voice was now persuasive,--"here is fine air, and a good, comfortable home--"

Suddenly he broke off, and as though in innocent inquiry said: "Now, has she too much to do? Has she sufficient help in the house for one so young?"

"She doesn't do more than's good for her," answered the old man, "and there's the half-breed hired critter--you've seen her--and Li Choo, a Chinaman, too. That ought to be enough," he added scornfully.

The Young Doctor seemed to reflect, and his face became urbane, because he saw he must proceed warily, if he was to be of service to his new patient.

"Yes," he said emphatically, "she appears to have help enough. I must think over her case and see her again to-morrow."

The old man's look suddenly darkened. "Ain't she better:"' he asked.

"She's not so much better that there's no danger of her being worse," the

Young Doctor replied decisively. "I certainly must see her to-morrow."

"Why," the old man remarked, waving his splayed hand up and down in a gesture of emphasis, "she's never been sick. She's in and out of this house all day. She goes about with her animals like as if she hadn't a care or an ache or pain in the world. I've heard of women that fancied they was sick because they hadn't too much to do, and was too well off, and was treated too well. Highsterics, they call it. Lots of women, lots and lots of them, would be glad to have such a home as this, and would stay healthy in it."

The Young Docor felt he had made headway, and he let it go at that. It was clear he was to be permitted to come to-morrow. "Yes, it's a fine place," he replied convincingly. "Three thousand acres is a mighty big place when you've got farm-land as well as cattle-grazing."

"It's nearly all good farm-land," answered the old man with decision. "I don't believe much in ranching or cattle. I'm for the plough and the wheat. There's more danger from cattle disease than from bad crops. I'm getting rid of my cattle. I expect to sell a lot of 'em to-day." An avaricious smile of satisfaction drew down the corners of his lips. "I've got a good customer. He ought to be on the trail now." He drew out a huge silver watch. "Yes, he's due. The party's a foreigner, I believe. He lives over at Slow Down Ranch--got a French name."

"Oh, Giggles!" said the Young Doctor with a quick smile.

The old man shook his head: "No, that ain't the name. It's Guise-Orlando Guise is the name."

"Same thing," remarked the Young Doctor. "They call him Giggles for short. You've seen him of course?"

"No, I've been dealing with him so far through a third party. Why's he called Giggles?" asked the Master of Tralee.

"Well, you'll know when you see him. He's not cut according to everybody's measure. If you're dealing with him, don't think him a fool because he chirrups, and don't size him up according to his looks. He's a dude. Some call him The Duke, but mostly he's known as Giggles."

"Fools weary me," grumbled the other.

"Well, as I said, you mustn't begin dealing with him on the basis of his looks. Looks don't often tell the truth. For instance, you're known as a Christian and a Methodist!" He looked the old man slowly up and down, and in anyone else it would have seemed gross insolence, but the urbane smile at his lips belied the malice of his words. "Well, you know you don't look like a Methodist. You look like,"--innocence showed in his eye; there was no ulterior purpose in his face, "you look like one of the bad McMahon lot of claim-jumpers over there in the foothills. I suppose that seems so, only because ranchman aren't generally pious. Well, in the same way, Giggles doesn't really look like a ranchman; but he's every

bit as good a ranchman as you are a Christian and a Methodist!"

The Young Doctor looked the old man in the face with such a semblance of honesty that he succeeded in disarming a dangerous suspicion of mockery --dangerous, if he was to continue family physician at Tralee. "Ah," he suddenly remarked, "there comes Orlando now!" He pointed to a spot about half a mile away, where a horseman could be seen cantering slowly towards Tralee.

A moment afterwards, from his buggy, the Young Doctor said: "Mrs. Mazarine must be left alone until I see her again. She must not be disturbed. The half-breed woman can look after her. I've told her what to do. You'll keep to another room, of course."

"There's a bunk in that room where I could sleep," said the other, with a note of protest.

"I'm afraid that, in our patient's interest, you must do what I say," the other insisted, with a friendly smile which caused him a great effort. "If I make her bloom again, that will suit you, won't it?"

A look of gloating came into the other's eyes: "Let it go at that," he said. "Mebbe I'll take her over to the sea before the wheat-harvest."

Out on the Askatoon trail, the Young Doctor ruminated over what he had seen and heard at Tralee. "That old geezer will get an awful jolt one day," he said to himself. "If that girl should wake! Her eyes--if somebody comes along and draws the curtains! She hasn't the least idea of where she is or what it all means. All she knows is that she's a prisoner in some strange, savage country and doesn't know its language or anybody at all--as though she'd lost her memory. Any fellow, young, handsome and with enough dash and colour to make him romantic could do it. . . . Poor little robin in the snow!" he added, and looked back towards Tralee.

As he did so, the man from Slow Down Ranch cantering towards Tralee caught his eye. "Louise-Orlando," he said musingly; then, with a sudden flick of the reins on his horse's back, he added abruptly, almost sternly, "By the great horn spoons, no!"

Thus when his prophecy took concrete form, he revolted from it. A grave look came into his face.

CHAPTER IV

TWO SIDES TO A BARGAIN

As the Young Doctor had said, Orlando Guise did not look like a real, simon-pure "cowpuncher." He had the appearance of being dressed for the part, like an actor who has never mounted a cayuse, in a Wild West play.

Yet on this particular day,--when the whole prairie country was alive with light, thrilling with elixir from the bottle of old Eden's vintage, and as comfortable as a garden where upon a red wall the peach-vines cling--he seemed far more than usual the close-fitting, soil-touched son of the prairie. His wide felt hat, turned up on one side like a trooper's, was well back on his head; his pinkish brown face was freely taking the sun, and his clear, light-blue eyes gazed ahead unblinking in the strong light. His forehead was unwrinkled--a rare thing in that prairie country where the dry air corrugates the skin; his light-brown hair curled loosely on the brow, graduating back to closer, crisper curls which in their thickness made a kind of furry cap. It was like the coat of a French poodle, so glossy and so companionable was it to the head. A bright handkerchief of scarlet was tied loosely around his throat, which was even a little more bare than was the average ranchman's; and his thick, much-pocketed flannel shirt, worn in place of a waistcoat and coat, was of a shade of red which contrasted and yet harmonized with the scarlet of the neckerchief. He did not wear the sheepskin leggings so common among the ranchmen of the West, but a pair of yellowish corduory riding-breeches, with boots that laced from the ankle to the knee. These boots had that touch of the theatrical which made him more fantastic than original in the eyes of his fellow-citizens.

Also he wore a ring with a star-sapphire, which made him incongruous, showy and foppish, and that was a thing not easy of forgiveness in the West. Certainly the West would not have tolerated him as far as it did, had it not been for three things: the extraordinary good nature which made him giggle; the fact that on more than one occasion he had given conclusive evidence that he was brave; and the knowledge that he was at least well-to-do. In a kind of vague way people had come to realize that his giggles belonged to a nature without guile and recklessly frank.

"He beats the band," Jonas Billings, the livery-stable keeper, had said of him; while Burlingame, the pernicious lawyer of shady character, had remarked that he had the name of an impostor and the frame of a fop; but he wasn't sure, as a lawyer, that he'd seen all the papers in the case--which was tantamount to saying that the Orlando nut needed some cracking.

It was generally agreed that his name was ridiculous, romantic and unreasonable. It seemed to challenge public opinion. Most names in the West were without any picturesqueness or colour; they were commonplace and almost geometric in their form, more like numbers to represent people than things of character in themselves. There were names semi-scriptural and semi-foreign in Askatoon, but no name like Orlando Guise had ever come that way before, and nothing like the man himself had ever ridden the Askatoon trails. One thing had to be said, however; he rode the trail like a broncho-buster, and he sat his horse as though he had been born in the saddle. --On this particular day, in spite of his garish "get-up," he seemed to belong to the life in which he was lightheartedly whistling a solo from one of Meyerbeer's operas. Meyerbeer was certainly incongruous to the prairie, but it and the whistling were in keeping with the man himself.

Over on Slow Down Ranch there lived a curious old lady who wore a bonnet

of Sweet Sixteen of the time of the Crimea, and with a sense of colour which would wreck the reputation of a kaleidoscope. She it was who had taught her son Orlando the tunefulness of Meyerbeer and Balfe and Offenbach, and the operatic jingles of that type of composer. Orlando Guise had come by his outward showiness naturally. Yet he was not like his mother, save in this particular. His mother was flighty and had no sense, while he, behind the gaiety of his wardrobe and his giggles, had very much sense of a quite original kind. Even as he whistled Meyerbeer, riding towards Tralee, his eyes had a look of one who was trying to see into things; and his lips, when the whistling ceased, had a cheerful pucker which seemed to show that he had seen what he wanted.

"Wonder if I'll get a glimpse of the so-called Mrs. Mazarine," he said aloud. "Bad enough to marry a back-timer, but to marry Mazarine--they don't say she's blind, either! Money--what won't we do for money, Mary? But if she's as young as they say, she could have waited a bit for the oof-bird to fly her way. Lots of men have money as well as looks. Anyhow, I'm ready to take his cattle off his hands on a fair, square deal, and if his girl-missis is what they say, I wouldn't mind--"

Having said this, he giggled and giggled again at his unspoken impertinence. He knew he had almost said something fatuous, but the suppressed idea appealed to him, nevertheless; for whatever he did, he always had a vision of doing something else; and wherever he was, he was always fancying himself to be somewhere else. That was the strain of romance in him which came from his mixed ancestry. It was the froth and bubble of a dreamer's legacy, which had made his mother, always unconsciously theatrical, have a vision of a life on the prairies, with the white mountains in the distance, where her beloved son would be master of a vast domain, over which he should ride like one of Cortez' conquistadores. Having "money to burn," she had, at a fortunate moment, bought the ranch which, by accident, had done well from the start, and bade fair, through the giggling astuteness of her spectacular son, to do far better still by design.

On the first day of their arrival at Slow Down Ranch, the mother had presented Orlando with a most magnificent Mexican bridle and head-stall covered with silver conchs, and a saddle with stirrups inlaid with silver. Wherefore, it was no wonder that most people stared and wondered, while some sneered and some even hated. On the whole, however, Orlando Guise was in the way of making a place for himself in the West in spite of natural drawbacks.

Old Mazarine did not merely sneer as he saw the gay cavalier approach, he snorted; and he would have blasphemed, if he had not been a professing Christian.

"Circus rider!" he said to himself. "Wants taking down some, and he's come to the right place to get it."

On his part, Orlando Guise showed his dislike of the repellent figure by a brusque giggle, and further expressed what was in his mind by the one word "Turk!"

His repugnance, however, was balanced by something possessing the old man still more disagreeable. Like a malignant liquid, there crept up through Joel Mazarine's body to the roots of his hair the ancient virus of Cain. It was jealous, ravenous, grim: old age hating the rich, robust, panting youth of the man be fore him. Was it that being half man, half beast, he had some animal instinct concerning this young rough-rider before him? Did he in some vague, prescient way associate this gaudy newcomer with his girl-wife? He could not himself have said. Primitive passions are corporate of many feelings but of little sight.

As Orlando Guise slid from his horse, Joel Mazarine steadied himself and said: "Come about the cattle? Ready to buy and pay cash down?"

Orlando Guise giggled.

"What are you sniggering at?" snorted the old man.

"I thought it was understood that if I liked the bunch I was to pay cash," Orlando replied. "I've got a good report of the beasts, but I want to look them over. My head cattleman told you what I'd do. That's why I smiled. Funny, too: you don't look like a man who'd talk more than was wanted." He giggled again.

"Fool--I'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouth!" the Master of Tralee said to himself; and then he motioned to where a bunch of a hundred or so cattle were grazing in a little dip of the country between them and Askatoon. "I'll get my buckboard. It's all hitched up and ready, and we can get down and see them right now," he said aloud. "Won't you find it rough going on the buckboard? Better ride," remarked Orlando Guise.

"I don't ever notice rough going," grunted the old man. "Some people ride horses to show themselves off; I ride a buckboard 'cause it suits me."

Orlando Guise chirruped. "Say, we mustn't get scrapping," he said gaily. "We've got to make a bargain."

In a few moments they were sweeping across the prairie, and sure enough the buckboard bumped, tumbled and plunged into the holes of the gophers and coyotes, but the old man sat the seat with the tenacity of a gorilla clinging to the branch of a tree.

In about three-quarters of an hour the two returned to Tralee, and in front of the house the final bargaining took place. There was a difference of five hundred dollars between them, and the old man fought stubbornly for it; and though Orlando giggled, it was clear he was no fool at a bargain, and that he had many resources. At last he threw doubt upon the pedigree of a bull. With a snarl Mazarine strode into the house. He had that pedigree, and it was indisputable. He would show the young swaggerer that he could not be caught anywhere in this game.

As Joel Mazarine entered the doorway of the house Orlando giggled again, because he had two or three other useful traps ready, and this was really like baiting a bull. Every thrust made this bull more angry; and Orlando knew that if he became angry enough he could bring things to a head with a device by which the old man would be forced to yield; for he did not want to buy, as much as Mazarine wished to sell.

The device, however, was never used, and Orlando ceased giggling suddenly, for chancing to glance up he saw a face at a window, pale, exquisite, delicate, with eyes that stared and stared at him as though he were a creature from some other world.

Such a look he had never seen in anybody's eyes; such a look Louise Mazarine had never given in her life before. Something had drawn her out of her bed in spite of herself--a voice which was not that of old Joel Mazarine, but a new, fresh, vibrant voice which broke into little spells of inconsequent laughter. She loved inconsequent laughter, and never heard it at Tralee. She had crept from her bed and to the window, and before he saw her, she had watched him with a look which slowly became an awakening: as though curtains had been drawn aside revealing a new, strange, ecstatic world.

Louise Mazarine had seen something she had never seen before, because a feeling had been born in her which she had never felt. She had never fully known what sex was, or in any real sense what man meant. This romantic, picturesque, buoyant figure of youth struck her as the rock was struck by Moses; and for the first time in all her days she was wholly alive. Also, for the first time in his life, Orlando Guise felt a wonder which in spite of the hereditary romance in him had never touched him before. Like Ferdinand and Miranda in The Tempest, "they changed eyes."

A heavy step was heard coming through the hallway, and at once the exquisite, staring face at the window vanished-while Orlando Guise turned his back upon the open doorway and walked a few steps towards the gate in an effort to recover himself. When he turned again to meet Mazarine, who had a paper in his hand, there was a flush on his cheek and a new light in his eye. The old man did not notice that, however, for his avaricious soul was fixed upon the paper in his hand. He thrust it before Orlando's eyes. "What you got to say to that, Mister?" he demanded.

Orlando appeared to examine the paper carefully, and presently he handed it back and said slowly: "That gives you the extra five hundred. It's a bargain." How suddenly he had capitulated--

"Cash?" asked the old man triumphantly. How should he know by what means Orlando had been conquered!

"I've got a cheque in my pocket. I'll fill it in." "A cheque ain't cash," growled the grizzly one.

"You can cash it in an hour. Come in to Askatoon, and I'll get you the cash with it now," said Orlando. "I can't. A man's coming for a stallion I want to sell. Give me a hundred dollars cash now to clinch

the bargain, and I'll meet you at Askatoon to-morrow and get the whole of it in cash. I don't deal with banks. I pay hard money, and I get hard money. That's my rule."

"Well, you're in luck, for I've got a hundred dollars," answered Orlando. "I've just got that, and a dollar besides, in my pocket. To-morrow you go to my lawyer, Burlingame, at Askatoon, and you'll get the rest of the money. It will be there waiting for you."

"Cash?" pressed the old man.

"Certainly: Government hundred-dollar bills. Give me a receipt for this hundred dollars."

"Come inside," said the old man almost cheerfully. He loved having his own way. He was almost insanely self-willed. It did his dark soul good to triumph over this "circus rider."

As Joel Mazarine preceded him, Orlando looked up at the window again. For one instant the beautiful, pale face of the girl-wife appeared, and then vanished.

At the doorway of the house Orlando Guise stumbled. That was an unusual thing to happen to him. He was too athletic to step carelessly, and yet he stumbled and giggled. It was not a fatuous giggle, however. In it were all kinds of strange things.

CHAPTER V

ORLANDO HAS AN ADVENTURE

Burlingame had the best practice of any lawyer in Askatoon, although his character had its shady side. The prairie standards were not low; but tolerance is natural where the community is ready-made; where people from all points of the compass come together with all sorts of things behind them; where standards have at first no organized sanction. Financially Burlingame was honest enough, his defects being associated with those ancient sources of misconduct, wine and women--and in his case the morphia habit as well. It said much for his physique that, in spite of his indulgences, he not only remained a presentable figure but a lucky and successful lawyer.

Being something of a philosopher, the Young Doctor looked upon Burlingame chiefly as one of those inevitable vintages from a vineyard which, according to the favour or disfavour of Heaven, yields from the same soil both good and bad. He had none of that Puritanism which would ruthlessly root out the vines yielding the bad wine. To his mind that could only be done by the axe, the rope or the bullet. It seemed of little use, and very unfair, to drive the wolf out of your own garden into that of your neighbour. Therefore Burlingame must be endured.

The day after the Young Doctor had paid his professional visit to Tralee, and Orlando Guise had first seen the girl-wife of, the behemoth, the Young Doctor visited Burlingame's office. Burlingame had only recently returned from England, whither he had gone on important legal business, which he had agreeably balanced by unguarded adventures in forbidden paths. He was in an animated mood. Three things had just happened which had given him great pleasure.

In the morning he had gained a verdict of acquittal in the case of one of the McMahon Gang for manslaughter connected with jumping a claim; and this meant increased reputation.

He had also got a letter from Orlando Guise, and a cheque for six thousand dollars, with instructions to pay the amount in cash to Joel Mazarine; and this meant a chance of meeting Mazarine and perhaps getting a new client.

Likewise he had received a letter of instructions from a client in Montreal, a kinsman and legatee of old Michael Turley, the late owner of Tralee, in connection with a legacy. This would involve some legal proceedings with considerable costs, and also contact with Joel Mazarine, whom he had not yet seen; for Mazarine had come while he was away in England.

His interest in Mazarine, however, was really an interest in Mrs. Mazarine, concerning whom he had heard things which stimulated his imagination. To him a woman was the supreme interest of existence, apart from making a necessary living. He was the primitive and pernicious hunter. He had been discreet enough not to question people too closely where Mazarine's wife was concerned, but there was, however, one gossip whom Burlingame questioned with some freedom. This was Patsy Kernaghan.

Before the Young Doctor arrived at his office this particular morning, Patsy, who had followed him from the Court-house, was put under a light and skillful cross-examination. He had been of service to Burlingame more than once; and he was regarded as a useful man to do odd jobs for his office, as for other offices in Askatoon.

"Aw, him--that murderin' moloch at Tralee !" exclaimed Patsy when the button was pressed. "That Methodys' fella with the face of a pirate! If there wasn't a better Protistan' than him in the world, the Meeting Houses'd be used for kindlin'-wood. Joel, they call him--a dacint prophet's name misused!

"I h'ard him praying once, as I stood outside the Meetin' House windys. To hear that holy hyena lift up his voice to the skies! Shure, I've never been the same man since, for the voice of him says wan thing, and the look of him another. Sez I to meself, Mr. Burlingame, y'r anner, the minute I first saw him, sez I, 'Askatoon's no safe place for me.' Whin wan like that gits a footin' in a place, the locks can't be too manny to shut ye in whin ye want to sleep at night. That fella's got no pedigree, and if it wouldn't hurt some dacent woman, maybe, I'd say he was

misbegotten. But still, I'll tell ye: out there at Tralee there's what'd have saved Sodom and Gomorrah-aye, that'd have saved Jerusalem, and there wouldn't ha' been a single moan from Jeremiah. Out at Tralee there's as beautiful a little lady as you'd want to see. Just a girl she is, not more than nineteen or twenty years of age. She's got a face that'd make ye want to lift the chorals an' the antiphones to her every marnin'. She's got the figure of one that was never to grow up, an' there she is the wedded wife of that crocodile great-grandfather.

"Aw, I know all about it, Mr. Burlingame, y'r anner. How do I know? Didn't Michael Turley tell me before he died what sort o' man his cousin was? Didn't he tell me Joel Mazarine married first whin he was eighteen years of age; an' his daughter was married whin she was seventeen; an' her son was married whin he was eighteen--an' Joel's a great-grandfather now. An' see him out there with her that looks as if the kindergarten was the place for her."

"Do you go to Tralee often?" asked Burlingame. "Aw yis. There's a job now and then to do. I'm ridin' an old moke on errands for him whin his hired folks is busy. A man must live, and there's that purty lass with the Irish eyes! Man alive, but it goes to me heart to luk at her."

"Well, I think I must have a 'luk' at her then," was Burlingame's half satirical remark.

Not long after Patsy Kernaghan had left Burlingame's office, the Young Doctor came. His business was brief, and he was about to leave when Burlingame said:

"The Mazarines out at Tralee-you know them? They came while I was away. Queer old goat, isn't he?"

"His exact place in natural history I'm not able to select," answered the Young Doctor dryly, "but I know him."

"And his wife--you know her?" asked Burlingame casually.

The other nodded. "Yes-in a professional way."

"Has she been sick?"

"She is ill now."

"What's the matter?"

"What's the truth about that McMahon claim-jumper who was acquitted this morning?" asked the Young Doctor with a quizzical eye and an acid note to his voice. "You've got your verdict, but you know the real truth, and you mustn't and won't tell it. Well?"

Burlingame saw. "Well, I'll have to ask the old goat myself," he said. "He's coming here to-day." He took up Orlando Guise's letter from the table, glanced at it smilingly, and threw it down again. "He must be a

queer specimen," Burlingame continued. "He wouldn't take Orlando Guise's cheque yesterday. He says he'll only be paid in hard cash. He's coming here this afternoon to get it. He's a crank, whatever else he is. They tell me he doesn't keep a bank account. If he gets a cheque, he has it changed into cash. If he wants to send a cheque away, he buys one for cash from somebody. He pays for everything in cash, if he can. Actually, he hasn't a banking account in the place. Cash--nothing but cash! What do you think of that?"

The Young Doctor nodded: "Cash as a habit is useful. Every man must have his hobby, I suppose. Considering the crimes tried at the court in this town, Mazarine's got unusual faith in human nature; or else he feels himself pretty safe at Tralee."

"Thieves?" asked Burlingame satirically.

"Yes, I believe that's still the name, though judging from some of your talk in the Court-house, it's a word that gives opportunity to take cover. I hope your successful client of to-day, and his brothers, are not familiar with the ways of Mr. Mazarine. I hope they don't know about this six thousand dollars in cold cash."

A sneering, sour smile came to Burlingame's lips. The medical man's dry allusions touched him on the raw all too often.

"Oh, of course, I told them all about that six thousand dollars! Of course! A lot of people suspect those McMahons of being crooked. Well, it has never been proved. Until it's proved, they're entitled--" Burlingame paused.

"To the benefit of the doubt, eh?"

"Why not? I've heard you hold the balance pretty fair 'twixt your patients and the undertaker."

Quite unmoved, the Young Doctor coolly replied: "In your own happy phrase--of course! I get a commission from the undertaker when the patient's a poor man; when he's a rich man, I keep him alive! It pays. The difference between your friends the criminals and me is that probably nobody will ever be able to catch me out. But the McMahons, we'll get them yet,"--a stern, determined look came into his honest eye,--"yes, we'll get them yet. They're a nasty fringe on the skirts of Askatoon.

"But there it is as it is," he continued. "You take their dirty money, and I don't refuse pay when I'm called in to attend the worst man in the West, whoever he may be. Why, Burlingame, as your family physician, I shouldn't hesitate even to present my account against your estate if, in a tussle with the devil, he got you out of my hands."

Now a large and friendly smile covered his face. He liked hard hitting, but he also liked to take human nature as it was, and not to quarrel. Burlingame, on his part, had no desire for strife with the Young Doctor. He would make a very dangerous enemy. His return smile was a great

effort, however. Ruefulness and exasperation were behind it.

The Young Doctor had only been gone a few minutes when Joel Mazarine entered Burlingame's office. "I've come about that six thousand dollars Mr. Guise of Slow Down Ranch owes me," the old man said without any formal salutation. He was evidently not good-humoured.

At sight of Mazarine, Burlingame at once accepted the general verdict concerning him. That, however, would not prejudice him greatly. Burlingame had no moral sense. Mazarine's face might revolt him, but not his character.

"I've got the cash here for you, and I'll have in a witness and hand the money over at once," he said: "The receipt is ready. I assume you are Joel Mazarine," he added, in a weak attempt at being humorous.

"Get on with the business, Mister," said the old man surlily.

In a few moments he had the six thousand dollars in good government notes in two inner pockets of his shirt. It made him feel very warm and comfortable. His face almost relaxed into a smile when he bade Burlingame good-day.

Burlingame had said nothing about the letter from the late Michael Turley's kinsman in Montreal and the question of the legacy. This was deliberate on his part. He wanted an excuse to visit Tralee and see its mistress with his own eyes. He had attempted to pluck many flowers in his day, and had not been unsuccessful. Out at Tralee was evidently a rare orchid carefully shielded by the gardener.

As Mazarine left the lawyer's office, he met in the doorway that member of the McMahon family for whom Burlingame had secured a verdict of acquittal a couple of hours before. As was his custom, Mazarine gave the other a sharp, scrutinizing look, but he saw no one he knew; and he passed on. The furtive smile which had betrayed his content at pocketing the six thousand dollars still lingered at the corners of his mouth.

Though he did not know the legally innocent McMahon whom he had just passed, McMahon was not so ignorant. There was no one in all the countryside whom the McMahons did not know. It was their habit--or something else--to be familiar with the history of everybody thereabouts, although they lived secluded lives at Arrowhead Ranch, which adjoined that belonging to Orlando Guise.

When Tom McMahon saw Mazarine leave Burlingame's office, his furtive eye lighted. Then it was true, what he had heard from the hired girl at Slow Down Ranch: that old Mazarine was to receive six thousand dollars in cash from Orlando Guise by the hands of Burlingame! Only that very morning, at the moment of his own release from jail, his brother Bill McMahon had told him of the conversation overheard between Orlando and his mother, by Milly Gorst, the hired girl.

He turned and watched Mazarine go down the street and enter a barber's

shop. If Mazarine was going to have his hair cut, he would be in the barber's shop for some time. With intense reflection in his eyes, McMahon entered Burlingame's office. He had come to settle up accounts for a clever piece of court-room work on the part of Burlingame. It was very well worth paying for liberally.

When he entered the office, Burlingame was not there. A clerk, however, informed him that Burlingame would be free within a few moments--and would he take a chair? Thereupon, the clerk left the room. McMahon took a chair--not the one towards which the clerk pointed him, but one beside the desk whereon were lying a number of open letters.

The interrogation always in the mind of a natural criminal, prompted McMahon to take a seat near the open letters. As soon as the clerk left the room, a hairy hand reached out for the nearest letter, and a swift glance took in its contents.

A grimly cheerful, vicious smile lighted up the heavily bearded face. Placing the letter on the desk again, as soon as it was read, McMahon almost threw himself over to the chair at some distance from the desk, which the clerk had first offered him. There he sat with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands when Burlingame entered the room.

Ten minutes later, with a receipted bill in his pocket, Tom McMahon made for the barber's shop which Mazarine had entered. He found it full, but seated in the red-plush chair, tipped back at a convenient angle, was Mazarine undergoing the triple operations of shaving his upper lip, beard-trimming and haircutting. From that moment and for the rest of all the long day and evening, Joel Mazarine commanded the unvarying interest of two members of the McMahon family.

Orlando Guise had had a long day, but one that somehow made him whistle or sing to himself most of the time. In a way, half a lifetime had gone since the day before, when he had first seen what he called to himself "the captive maid." He had never been so happy in his life; and yet he knew that he had not the faintest right to be happy. The girl who had so upset his self-control as to make him stumble on her doorstep was the wife of another man. It was, of course, silly to call him "another man," because he seemed a million miles away from any sphere in which Orlando lived. Yet he was another man; and he was also the husband of the girl who had made Orlando feel for the very first time a strange singing in his veins. It actually was as though some wonderful, magnetic thing was making his veins throb and every nerve tingle and sing.

"It beats me," he said to himself fifty times that day. He had never been in love. He did not know what it was like, except that he had seen it make men do silly things, just as drink did. He did not know whether he was in love or not. It was absurd that a man should be in love with a face at a window--a face with the beauty of a ghost rather than of a real live woman.

Orlando had little evil in his nature; his eyes did not look towards Tralee as did Burlingame's eyes. Nothing furtive stirred in Orlando's

intensely blue eyes. Whatever the feeling was, it was an open thing, which had neither motive nor purpose behind it--just a thing almost feminine in its nature. As yet it was like the involuntary adoration which girls at a certain period of their lives feel successively for one hero after another. What it would become, who could tell? What would happen to the young girl adoring the actor, or the hero of the North Pole, the battle-field or the sea, if the adored one was not far off, but very near? Indeed, who could tell?

But as it was, in the upper room where Louise sat all day looking out over the prairie, and on the prairie where business carried Orlando from ranch to ranch on this perfect day, no recreant thought or feeling existed. Each was a simple soul, as yet unspoiled and in one sense unsophisticated--the girl, however, with an instinctive caution, such as an animal possesses in the presence of a foe with which it is in truce; the man with an astuteness which belonged to a native instinct for finding a way of doing hard things in the battle of life.

All day Orlando wondered when he should see that face again; all day the eyes of Louise pleaded for another look at the ranchman with the dress of a dandy, the laugh of a child, and the face of an Apollo--or so it seemed to her. It was the sort of day which ministers to human emotion, which stirs the sluggish blood, revives the drooping spirit. There was a curious, delicate blueness of the sky over which an infinitely more delicate veil of mist was softly drawn. At many places on the prairie the haymakers were loading the great wagons; here and there a fallow field was burning; yonder a house was building; cattle were being rounded up; and far off, like moving specks, ranchmen were climbing the hills where the wild bronchos were, for a day of the toughest, most thrilling sport which the world knows.

Night fell, and found Orlando making for the trail between what was known as the Company's Ranch and Tralee. To reach his own ranch, he had to cross it at an angle near the Tralee homestead. It was dark, with no moon, but the stars were bright.

As he crossed the Tralee trail, he suddenly heard a cry for help. Between him and where the sound came from was a fire burning. It was the camp-fire of some prairie pioneer making for a new settlement in the North; and beside it was a tent whose owner was absent in Askatoon.

Orlando dug heels into his horse and rode for the point from which the cry for help had come. Something was undoubtedly wrong. The voice was that of one in real trouble--a hoarse, strangled sort of voice.

As he galloped through the light of the camp-fire, a pistol-shot rang out, and he felt a sharp, stinging pain in his side. Still urging his horse, he cleared the little circle of light and presently saw a man rapidly mounting a horse, while two others struggled on the ground.

He dashed forward. As he did so, one of the men on the ground freed himself, sprang to his feet, mounted his horse, and was away into the night with his companion. Orlando slid to the ground beside the figure

which was slowly raising itself from the ground.

"What's the matter? Are you all right? Have they hurt you?" he asked, as he stooped over and caught the shoulders of the victim of the two fleeing figures.

At that instant there were two more pistol-shots, and a bullet hit the ground beside Orlando. Then he saw dimly the face of the man whom he was helping to his feet.

"Mazarine! Good Lord-Mazarine!" he said in an anxious voice. "What have they done to you?" "Nothing--I'm all right. The dogs, the rogues, the thieves--but they didn't get it! It was in the pockets of my shirt." The old man was almost hysterical. "You just come in time, Mr. Guise. You frightened 'em off. They'd have found it, if it hadn't been for you."

"Found what?" asked Orlando, as he helped the old man towards the camp-fire, himself in pain, and a dizziness coming over him.

"Found your six thousand dollars that Burlingame paid me to-day," gasped the old man, spasmodically; "but it's here-it's here!" He caught at his breast with devouring greed.

Somehow the agitated joy of the old man revolted Orlando. He had a sudden rush of repulsion; but he fought it down.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "Are you all right?" Somehow the sound of his own voice was very weak. "Yes, I'm all right," Mazarine said, and he called to his horse near by.

The horse did not stir, and the old man, whose breath came almost normally now, moved over and caught its bridle.

In a dazed kind of way, and with growing unsteadiness, Orlando walked towards the camp-fire. He was leaning against his horse, and opening his coat and waistcoat to find the wound in his side and staunch it with the kerchief from his neck, when Mazarine came up.

"What's that on your coat and breeches? Say, you're all bloody!" exclaimed Mazarine. "Why, they shot you!"

"Yes, they got me," was Orlando's husky reply, and he gave a funny little laugh. Giggling, people had called it.

"How are we going to get you home?" Mazarine asked. "You can't ride."

At that moment there was the rumbling jolt of a wagon. It was the pioneer-emigrant returning from Askatoon to his camp.

A few minutes later Orlando was lying on some bags in the emigrant's wagon, while Mazarine rode beside it. "It's only a few hundred yards to the house," said the emigrant sympathetically, as he looked down at the

now unconscious figure in the wagon.

"It's four miles to his house," said Mazarine. "Well, I'm not taking him four miles to his house or any house," said the emigrant. "My horse has had enough to-day, and the sooner the lad's attended to, the better. He's going to the nearest house, and that's Tralee, as they call it, just here."

"That's my house," gruffly replied the old man. "Well, that's where you want him to go, ain't it?" asked the pioneer sharply. He could not understand the owner of Tralee.

"Yes, that's where I want him to go," replied Mazarine slowly.

"Then you ride ahead on the trail, and I'll follow," returned the other decisively.

"What's the matter? Who hurt him?" he presently called to Mazarine, riding in front.

"I'll tell you when we get to Tralee," answered the old man, with his eyes fixed on two lights in the near distance. One was in the kitchen, where a half-breed woman was giving supper to Li Choo, a faithful Chinaman roustabout; the other was in the room where a young wife sat with hands clasped, wondering why her husband did not return, yet glad that he did not.

CHAPTER VI

"THINGS MUST HAPPEN"

Between two sunrises Louise Mazarine had seen her old world pass in a flash of flame and a new world trembling with a new life spread out before her; had come to know what her old world really was. The eyes with which she looked upon her new world had in them the glimmer not only of awakened feeling but of awakened understanding. To this time she had endured her aged husband as a slave comes to bear the lashes of his master, with pain which will be renewed and renewed, but pain only, and not the deeper torture of the soul; for she had never really grasped what their relations meant. To her it had all been part of the unavoidable misery of life. But on that sunny afternoon when Orlando Guise's voice first sounded in her ears, and his eyes looked into hers as, pale and ill, she gazed at him from the window, a revelation came to her of what the three years of life with Joel Mazarine had really been. From that moment until she heard the pioneer's wagon, escorted by her husband, bringing the unconscious Orlando Guise to her door, she had lived in a dream which seemed like a year of time to her.

Since the early morning of that very day, when Joel had leaned over her bed and asked her in his slow, grinding voice how she was, she had lived

more than in all the past nineteen years of her life. The Young Doctor had come and gone, amazed at first, but presently with a look of apprehension in his eyes. There was not much trace of yesterday's illness in the alert, eager girl-wife, who twenty-four hours before had been really nearer to the end of all things than her aged husband. The Young Doctor knew all too well what the curious, throbbing light in her eyes meant. He knew that the gay and splendid Orlando Guise had made the sun for this prismatic radiance, and that the story of her life, which Louise had wished to tell him yesterday, would never now be told--for she would have no desire to tell it. The old vague misery, the ancient veiled torture, was behind her, and she was presently to suffer a new torture--but also a joy for which men and women have borne unspeakable things. No, Louise would never tell him the story of her life, because now she knew it was a thing which must not be told. Her mind understood things it had never known before. To be wise is to be secret, and she had learned some wisdom; and the Young Doctor wondered if the greater wisdom she must learn would be drunk from the cup of folly. Before he left her he had said to her with meaning in his voice:

"My dear young madam, your recovery is too rapid. It is not a cure: it is a miracle; and miracles are not easily understood. We must, therefore, make them understood; and so you will take regularly three times a day the powerful tonic I will give you."

She was about to interrupt him, but he waved a hand reprovingly and added with kindly irony:

"Yes, we both know you don't need a tonic out of a bottle; but it's just as well other people should think that the tonic bringing back the colour to your cheeks comes out of a bottle and not out of a health resort, called Slow Down Ranch, about four miles to the north-west of Tralee."

As he said this, he looked straight into the eyes which seemed, as it were, to shrink into cover from what he was saying. But when, an instant afterwards, he took her hand and said good-bye, he knew by the trembling clasp of her fingers--even more appealing than they had yet been--that she understood.

So it was a few moments later, outside the house, he had said to Joel Mazarine that he had given his wife a powerful tonic, and he hoped to see an almost instant change in her condition; but she must have her room to herself for a time, according to his instructions of the day before, as she was nervous and needed solitude, to induce sleep. He was then about to start for Askatoon when the old man said:

"I suppose you won't have to come again, as she's going on all right."

To this the Young Doctor had replied firmly: "Yes, I'm coming out to-morrow. She's not fit yet to go to Askatoon, and I must see her once again."

"Oh, keep coming--that's right, keep coming!" answered the miserly old man, who still was not so miserly that he did not want his young wife

blooming. "Coming to-morrow, eh!" he added, with something very like a sneer.

The other had a sudden flash of fury pass through his veins. The old Celtic quickness to resent insult swept over him. The ire of his forefathers waked in him. This outrageous old Caliban, to attempt to sneer at him! For an instant he was Kilkenny let loose, and then the cool, trained brain reasserted its mastery, and he replied:

"If there should be a turn for the worse, send for me to-night--not to-morrow! "And he looked the old man in the eyes with a steady, steelly glance which had nothing to do with the words he had just uttered, but was the challenge of a conquering spirit.

The Young Doctor had acted with an almost uncanny prescience. It was as though he had foreseen that Orlando Giuse would be carried upstairs to a room nearly opposite that of Louise, and laid unconscious on a bed, till he himself should come again that very night and extract a bullet from Orlando's side; that he would open Orlando's eyes to consciousness, hear Orlando say, "Where am I?" and note his startled look when told he was at Tralee.

Once during this visit, while making Orlando safe and comfortable, with the help of Li Choo, the Chinaman, and Rada, the half-breed, he had seen Louise for a moment. The old man had gone to the stables, and as he came out of the room where Orlando was, Louise's door opened softly on him. Dimly, in the half-darkness of her room, in which no light was burning, he saw her. She beckoned to him. Shutting the door of Orlando's bedroom behind him, he came quickly to her side and said:

"Go to bed at once, young woman. This will not do."

"I'm not sick now," she urged. "Say, I really am well again."

"You must not be well again so soon," he replied meaningly. "I want you to understand that you must not," he insisted.

There was a pause, which seemed interminable to the Young Doctor, who was listening for the heavy footstep of Joel Mazarine outside the house; and then at last in agitation Louise said to him:

"Will he get well? Rada told me he was shot saving Mr. Mazarine. Will he get well?"

"Yes, he will get well, and quickly, if--"

He broke off, for there was the thud of a heavy footstep for which he had been listening. Joel Mazarine was returning.

"Won't they let me help nurse him?" she whispered.

The Young Doctor shook his head in negation. "His mother will be here to-morrow," he said quickly. "Be wise, my child."

"You understand?" she whispered wistfully.

"I have no understanding. Go to bed," he answered sharply. "Shut the door at once."

When old Joel Mazarine's footsteps were heard upon the staircase again, Orlando was lying with half-closed eyes, watching, yet too weak to speak; and the Young Doctor was giving directions to Rada and Li Choo for the night-watch in Orlando's room. When Mazarine entered, the Young Doctor gave him a casual nod and went on with his directions. When he had finished, Rada said in her broken English, with an accent half-Indian, half-French:

"His mother you send for--yes? She come queeck. Some one must take care him when for me get breakfus and Li Choo do chores."

"We'll send for her in the morning," interrupted Joel Mazarine.

"Perhaps Mrs. Mazarine would be well enough to help a little in the morning," remarked the Young Doctor in a colourless voice. He knew when to be audacious; or, if he did not know, he had an instinct; and he noticed that the wounded man's eyelids did not even blink when he threw out the hint concerning Louise, while the eyes of the old man took on a sullen flame.

"Mrs. Mazarine has to be molly-coddled herself--that's what you've taught her," he snarled.

"Well, then, send for Mrs. Guise to-night," commanded the Young Doctor.

He thought Joel Mazarine made unnecessary noise as he stamped down the staircase to send a farmhand to Slow Down Ranch; and he also thought that Orlando Guise showed discretion of manner and look in a moment of delicacy and difficulty. He knew, however, that, as the children say, "Things must happen."

CHAPTER VII

"THE ZOOLYOGICAL GARDEN"

Patsy Kernaghan regarded Tralee as a kind of Lost Paradise, for the most part because it had passed from the hands of a son of the Catholic Church into those of the "prayin' Methodys," as he called them, and also because he had a "black heart ag'in" Joel Mazarine.

The spark was struck in him with some vigour one day at Tralee. It was caused by the flamboyant entrance of Mrs. Guise into the front garden, as the Young Doctor was getting into his buggy for the return journey to Askatoon, after attending Orlando, whose enforced visit to Tralee had

already extended over a week.

"Aw, Doctor dear," said Patsy, as Orlando's mother fluttered into the garden like a gorgeous hen with wings outspread, her clothes a riot of contradictory colours, all of them insistently bright, "d'ye know what this place is--this terry firmy on which we stand, that's wan mile wan way, an' half a mile the other? Ye don't? Well, I'll tell ye: it's a zoolyogical gardin. Is it like a human bein' she is, the dear ould wumman there? Isn't she just some gay ould bird from the forests of the Equaytor, wherivir it is? Look at the beautiful little white curls hanging down her cheek, tied with ribbon-pink ribbon too--an' the bonnet on her head! Did ye iver see annything like it outside a zoolyogical gardin? Isn't it like the topknot of some fine old parakeet from Pernambukoko--and oh, Father Rainbow, the maginta dress of her! Now I tell you, Doctor dear, I tell you the truth, what I know! She wears hoops, she does, the same as y'r grandmother used to. An' the bit of rose ribbon round her waist, hanging down behind--now I ask y'r anner, is it like a wumman at all? See the face of her, with the little snappin' eyes an' the yellow beak of a nose, an' the sunset in her cheeks that's put on wid a painter's brush! Look at her trippin' about! Floatin'--shure, that's what she's doin'! If you listened hard, you'd hear her buzzin'. It's the truth I tell ye. D'ye follow me?"

The Young Doctor liked talking to Patsy Kernaghan better than to any other person in Askatoon. He was always sure to be stimulated by a new point of view, but he never failed to provoke Kernaghan by scepticism.

"One wild bird from 'Pernambukoko' does not make a zoological garden, Patsy," he said with an air of dissent.

"Well, that's true for you, Doctor dear," answered Kernaghan, "but this gardin's got a bunch of specimens for all that. Listen to me now. Did ye ever notice the likeness between the faces of people and of animals an' things that fly? You never did? Well, be thinkin' of it now. Ivry man and wumman here at Tralee looks like an animal or a bird in a zoolyogical gardin. Shure, there's no likeness between anny two of them; it's as if they was gathered from ivry corner of the wide wurruld. There's a Mongolian in the kitchen an' slitherin' about outside, doin' the things that's part for man and part for wumman. Li Choo they call him. Isn't his the face of a bald-headed baboon? An' the half-breed crature--she might ha' come from Patagony. An' the ould man Mazarine--part rhinoceros and part Methody, he is. An' what do ye be thinkin' of him they call Giggles, that almost guv his life to save the ould behemoth! Doesn't he remind you of the zebra, where the wild Hottentots come from--smart and handsome, but that showy, all stripes and tail and fetlock! D'ye unnerstand what I mean, y'r anner?"

"Have you finished calling names, Kernaghan?" asked the Young Doctor in a low tone. "Have you really finished your zoological list?"

Kernaghan's eye flashed. "Aw, Doctor dear," said he, "manny's the time in County Inniskillen, where you come from, you've seen a wild thing, bare-footed, springin' from stone to stone on the hillside, wid her hair

flyin' behind like the daughter of a witch or somethin' only half human-so belongin' to the hills an' the bogs an' the cromlechs was she. Well, that's the maid that's mistress of Tralee--belongin' as much to the Gardin of Eden as to this place here. There's none of them here that belongs. Every wan of them's been caught away from where he ought to be into this zoolyogical gardin."

"Well, there's one good thing about a zoological garden, Patsy Kernaghan," said the Young Doctor; "it's generally a safe place for the birds and animals in it."

"But suppose some wan--suppose, now, the Keeper got drunk and let loose the popylashin' of the gardin upon each other, d'ye think would it be a Gardin of Eden?" Suddenly Patsy's manner changed. "Aw, I tell you this, then: I don't like what I see here, an' I like it less an' less ivry day."

"What don't you like, Patsy?" asked the other quizzically.

"I don't like the way the old fella watches that child he calls his wife. I don't like the young fella bein' the cause of the old man's watchin'."

"What has happened? What has he done?" asked the Young Doctor a little anxiously.

"Divils me own, it isn't what he's done; it's his bein' here. It's his bein' what he is. It doesn't need doin' to bring wild youth together. Look at her, y'r anner! A week ago she was like wan that 'd be called to the Land of Canaan anny minnit. Wasn't you here tendin' her, as if she was steppin' intil her grave, an' look at her now! She's like a rose in the garden, like a lark's lilt in the air. What has done it? The young man's done it. You'll be tellin' the ould fella it's the tonic you've guv her. Tonic! How long d'ye think he'll belave it?'

"But she never sees Mr. Guise, does she, Patsy? Isn't his mother always with him? Hasn't Mazarine forbidden his wife to enter the room?"

Kernaghan threw out his hands. "An' you're the man they say's the cleverest steppin' between Winnipeg and the Mountains--an'--an'--you talk to me like that! Is the ould fella always in the house? Is he always upstairs? I ask you now. I'll tell you this, y'r anner--"

The Young Doctor interrupted him. "Don't you suppose that there's somebody always watching, Patsy--the half-breed, the Chinaman?"

Kernaghan snapped a finger. "Aw, must I be y'r schoolmaster in the days of your dotage! Of course the ould fella has someone to watch, an' I dunno which it is--the Chinaman or the half-breed wumman. But I'll tell you this: they'll take his pay and lie to him about whatever's goin' on inside the house. That girl has them both in the palms of her hands. Let him set what spies he will, she'll do what she wants, if the young man lets her."

"His mother--" interjected the Young Doctor. "Her of the plumage--her! Shure, she's not livin' in this wurruld. She's only visitin' it. She's got no responsibility. If iver there was a child of a fairy tale, that wumman's the child. I belave she'd think her son was doin' right if he tied the ould fella up to a tree an' stuck him as full of Ingin arrows as a pin-cushion, an' rode off with the lovely little lady in beyant there. That's my mind about her. It isn't on her you can rely. If ye want the truth, y'r anner, them two young people have had words together and plenty of them, whether it's across the hall--her room from his; or in his room; or through the windy or down the chimney-shure, I don't care! They've spoke. There's that between them wants watchin'. Not that there's wrong in aither of them--divil a bit! I've got me own mind about Mr. Orlando Giggles. As for her, the purty thing, she doesn't know what wrong is--that's the worst of it!"

The Young Doctor tapped Kernaghan's head gently with his whip. "Patsy," said he, "you talk a lot. There's no greater talker between here and Donegal. But still I think you know what to say and whom to say it to."

Kernaghan's cap came off. He ran his fingers through his hair and looked at the other with a primitive intelligence which showed him to be what the Young Doctor knew him to be--better than his looks, or his place in the world, or his reputation.

"Thank you kindly, y'r anner," he said, softly. "I'm troubled about things here, I am. That's why I spoke to ye. I'm afraid of the old fella, for his place is not in the pen wid that young thing, an' he'll break her heart, or kill her, if he gets to know the truth."

"What do you mean by 'the truth,' Patsy?" was the sharp query.

"I mean nothin' at all, save that in there wild youth is spakin' to wild youth--honest and dacint and true. But there's manny a tragedy comes out of that, y'r anner."

"Orlando has been sitting up for two days," said the Young Doctor meditatively, "and in two days more he can be removed. Patsy, you are staying on here.--I know, and I trust you. The girl and the young man have both been my patients. I think as much of both of them as I can think of any man or woman. He's straight and--"

"But a girl's mad when the love-song rises in her heart," interjected Kernaghan.

"Yes, I know, Patsy, but it isn't so bad as you think. I had a talk with her to-day. Perhaps we can get him away to-morrow. Meanwhile, there can't much happen."

"Can't much happen, wid that ould wuman in the garden there, an' the young wife upstairs, an' the fine young fella sittin' alone in his room achin' for the sound of her voice! Shure, they're together at this minnit, p'r'aps."

The Young Doctor tapped Kernaghan again on the head with his whip. "You're a wild Irishman still," he said, "but I think none the worse of you for that. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Keep your head, Patsy." And whipping up his horse, he nodded and drove on.

It may be that Kernaghan's instinct was no truer than his own. It may be the Young Doctor knew Kernaghan's instinct to be true; and it also may be that what Kernaghan thought possible, the Young Doctor thought possible; but he also felt that things must be as they must be.

In any case Kernaghan was right; for while the little flamboyant lady from Slow Down Ranch was busy in the front garden, Louise Mazarine was with her wounded guest, with the man who had saved her husband's money and perhaps his life. The wounded guest regarded his wound as a blessing almost. Perhaps that was why he did not notice that his host had only been silently grateful.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORIENTAL WAY OF IT

Orlando Guise's mother was lacking in the caution which mothers generally have where their men-children are concerned. If she had had sense, she would have insisted on removing Orlando to Slow Down Ranch at the earliest possible moment, even at some risk to his physical well-being. She ought to have seen that Joel Mazarine was possessed of a jealousy as unreasoning as that of an animal; she ought to have discouraged Louise's kindnesses. If the kindnesses had been only the ordinary acts of a mistress of a house to a guest who had saved her husband's life--dishes made by her own hand, strengthening drinks, flowers picked and arranged by herself--there could have been no cause for nervousness. Each thing done by Louise, however, came from a personally and emotionally solicitous interest. It was to be seen in the glance of the eye, in the voice a little unsteady, in girlish over-emphasis, in that shining something in the face, which, in Ireland, they call the love-light.

So great was Mrs. Guise's vanity, so intense her content in her son, so proud was she of other people's admiration of him, no matter who they were, that she welcomed Louise's attentions. Kernaghan was wrong. Mazarine had not forbidden Louise to enter Orlando's room. That was the contradictory nature of the man. His innate savagery made him brood wickedly over her natural housewifery attentions to the man who had probably saved his own life, and certainly had saved him six thousand dollars; yet it was as though he must see the worst that might happen, must even encourage a danger which he dreaded. When the Methodist minister from Askatoon came to offer prayer for Orlando, Joel joined in it with all the unction of a class-leader, while every word of the prayer trembled in an atmosphere of hatred. As Patsy Kernaghan said, he himself watched, and he paid the Chinaman to watch, in the vain belief that money would secure faithful service.

The Young Doctor had told him that his powerful medicine had brought back the bloom to his young wife's cheeks and the light to her eyes, but how much he believed, he could not himself have said. One thing he did know: it was that Orlando seemed quite indifferent to everything except his mother, the state of the crops and the reports on his own cattle. Also Orlando had made a good impression when he resented with a funny little oath and a funnier little giggle, but with some heat in his cheek, Joel's ostentatious proposal to pay the Young Doctor's bill for attendance.

The offer had been made when Louise was standing in the doorway; but the old man did not notice that Louise coloured in sympathy with the flush in Orlando's face. It was as though a delicate nerve had been touched in each of them; but it was a nerve that had never been sensitive until they had met each other for the first time. Orlando's mother dealt with the situation in her own way. She said in a somewhat awkward pause, following the old man's proposal, that a doctor's bill was a personal thing, and she would as soon allow some one else to pay it as to pay for her washing. At this Orlando giggled again, and ventured the remark that no doctor could dispense enough medicine in a year to pay her laundry bill for a month--which pleased the old lady greatly and impelled her to swing her skirt kittenishly.

It was at this point that Li Choo came knocking at the open door with a message for Mazarine. It related to a horse-accident at what was known as One Mile Spring; and Mazarine, having frowned his wife out of the doorway, made his way downstairs and prepared for his short journey to the Spring. Before he left, however, he called Li Choo aside, and what he said caused Li Choo to answer: "Me get money, me do job. Me keep eyes open. Me tell you."

From a window Louise had watched the colloquy, and she knew, as well as though she stood beside them, what was being said. Li Choo had told the truth: he had got the cash, and he would do the job. But not alone from Joel Mazarine did he get money. Only two mornings before, Louise, for all the extra work he had had to do during Orlando's illness and without thought of bribery, had given him a beautiful gold ten-dollar-piece with a hole in it. If the piece had been minus the hole, Li Choo would have returned it to her, for he would have served her for nothing till the end of his days, had it been possible. Because there was a hole in it, however, and he could put a string through it and wear it round his neck inside his waistcoat, he took it, blinking his beady eyes at her; and he said:

"Me watch most petic'ler, mlissy. Me tell boss Mazaline ev'lytling me see!" And he giggled almost as Orlando might have done.

After which Li Choo slip-slopped away to his work behind the kitchen. When he saw Orlando's mother in the garden and the Young Doctor drive to Askatoon, and Patsy Kernaghan mount an aged cayuse and ride off, he clucked with his tongue and then went into the kitchen and prepared a tray on which he placed several pieces of a fine old set of China, which had belonged to Mazarine's grandmother and was greatly prized by the old

man. Then he clucked to the half-breed woman, and she made ready as sumptuous a tea as ever entered the room of a convalescent.

Like a waiter at a seaside hotel, Li Choo carried the tray above his head on three fingers to the staircase, and as he mounted to the landing, called out, "Welly good tea me bling gen'l'man." This was his way of warning Orlando Guise, and whoever might be with him, of his coming.

He need not have done so, for though Louise was in Orlando's room, she was much nearer to the door than she was to Orlando. She hastened to place a table near to Orlando, for the tray which Li Choo had brought, and, as she did so, remarked with a shock at the cherished china upon the tray.

"Li Choo! Li Choo!" she gasped, reprovingly, for it was as though the Ark of the Covenant had been burgled. But Li Choo, clucking, slip-slopped out of the room and down the stairs as happy as an Oriental soul could be. What was in the far recesses of that soul, where these two young people were concerned, must remain unrevealed; but Li Choo and the halfbreed woman in their own language--which was almost without words--clucked and grunted their understanding.

Left alone again, Louise found herself seated with only the table between herself and Orlando, pouring him tea and offering him white frosted cake like that dispensed at weddings; while Orlando chuckled his thanks and thought what a wonderful thing it was that a bullet in a man's side could bring the unexpected to pass and the heart's desire of a man within the touch of his fingers.

Their conversation was like that of two children. She talked of her bird Richard, which she had sent to him every morning that it might sing to him; of her black cat Nigger, which sat on his lap for many an hour of the day; of the dog Jumbo, which said its prayers for him to get well, for a piece of sugar-that was a trick Louise had taught it long ago. Orlando talked of his horses and of his mother--who, he declared, was the most unselfish person on the whole continent; how she only thought of him, and spent her money for him, and gave to him, never thinking of herself at all.

"She has the youngest heart of anyone in the world," said Orlando.

Louise did not even smile at that. No one with a heart that was not infantile could dress and talk as Orlando's mother dressed and talked; and so Louise said softly: "I am sure her heart is a thousand years younger than mine--or younger than mine was." And then she blushed, and Orlando blushed, for he understood what was in her mind--that until they two had met, she was, as the Young Doctor said, a victim to senile decay.

That was the nearest they had come as yet to saying anything which, being translated, as it were, through several languages, could mean love-making. Their love-making had only been by an inflection of the voice, by a soft abstraction, by a tuning of their spirits to each other. They were indeed like two children; and yet Li Choo was right when, in his

dark soul, he conceived them to be lovers, and thought they would do what lovers do--hold hands and kiss and whisper, with never an end to a sentence, never a beginning.

It was not that these things were impossible to them. It was not that their beating pulses, and the throbbing in them, was not the ancient passion which has overturned an empire, or made a little spot of earth as dear as Heaven above. It was that these were forbidden things, and Louise and Orlando accepted that they were forbidden.

How long would this position last? What would the future bring? This was only the fluttering approach of two natures, from everlasting distances. The girl had been roused out of sleep; from her understanding the curtains had been flung back so that she might see. How long would it last, this simple, unsoiled story of two lives?

Orlando reached out his hand to put his cup back upon the tray. As her own hand was extended to take it, her fingers touched his. Then her face flushed, and a warm cloud seemed to bedim her eyes. There flashed into her mind the deep, overwhelming fact that for three long years a rough, heavy hand had held her captive by day, by night, in a pitiless ownership. She got to her feet suddenly; her breath came quickly, and she turned towards the door as though she meant to go.

At that instant Li Choo slid softly into the room, caught up the tray, poised it on his three fingers over his head and said: "Old Mazaline, he come. Be queeck!"

They heard the heavy footsteps of Joel Mazarine coming into the hall-way just below.

The old man, as though moved by some uncanny instinct, had come back from One Mile Spring by a roundabout trail. As the Chinaman came out upon the landing at the top of the stairs, Joel appeared at the bottom, in the doorway which gave upon the staircase. Two or three steps down shuffled the Chinaman; then, as it were by accident, he stumbled and fell, the tray with the beautiful china crashing down to the feet of Joel Mazarine, followed by the tumbling, chirruping Li Choo.

Oriental duplicity had made no wrong reckoning. The old man fell back into the hall-way from the crashing china and tumbling Oriental, who plunged out into the hall-way muttering and begging pardon, cursing his soul in good Chinese and bad English.

Looking down on the wreck, Mazarine saw his treasured porcelain shattered. With a growl of rage he stooped and seized Li Choo by the collar, flung him out of the door, and then with his heavy boot kicked him once, twice, thrice, a dozen times, anywhere, everywhere!

Li Choo, however, had done his work well. Joel Mazarine never knew the reason for the Chinaman’s downfall on the stairway, for, in the turmoil, Louise had slipped away in safety. His rage had vented itself; but, if he had seen Li Choo’s face an hour after, as he talked to the half-breed

woman in the kitchen, he might have had some qualms for his cruel assault. Passion and hatred in the face of an Oriental are not lovely things to see.

CHAPTER IX

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES

"It's been a great day--great."

Orlando Guise leaned lazily on the neck of the broncho he was riding, peering between its ears, over the lonely prairie, to the sunset which was making beautiful the western sky. It was as though there was a golden fire behind vast hills of mauve and pink, purple and saffron; but the glow was so soft as to suggest a flame which did not burn; which only shed radiance, colour and an ethereal mist. All the width of land and life between was full of peace as far as eye could see. The plains were bountiful with golden harvest, and the activities of men were lost among the corn. Horses and cattle in the distance were as insects, and in the great concave sky stars still wan from the intolerant light of their master, the Sun, looked timidly out to see him burn his way down to the under-world.

"Great--but it might have been greater!" added Orlando, gazing intently at the sunset.

Yet, as he spoke, his eyes gazed at something infinitely farther away than the sunset-even to the goal of his desire. He was thinking that, great as the day had been, with all he had done and seen, it lacked a glimpse of the face he had not seen for a whole month. The voice, he had not heard it since it softly cried, "Oh, Orlando!" when the Chinaman crashed down the staircase with the tray of cherished porcelain, and had been maltreated by the owner of Tralee.

How many times since then had those words rung in his ears! Louise had never called him by name save that once, and then it was the cry of a soul surprised, the wail of one who felt a heart-break coming on, the approach of merciless Fate. It was the companionship of trouble; it was the bird, pursued by a hawk, calling across the lonely valley to its mate. "Oh, Orlando!" He had waked in the morning with the words in his ears to make him face the day with hope and cheerfulness. It had sounded in his ears at night as he sat on the wide stoop watching the moon and listening to the night-birds, or vaguely heard his mother babbling things he did not hear.

It is a memorable moment for a man when he hears for the first time his "little name," as the French call it, spoken by the woman he loves. It is as the sound of a bell in the distance, a familiar note with a new meaning, revealing new things of life in the panorama of the mind. By those two words Orlando knew what was in the mind of Louise. They were a

prayer for protection and a cry for comradeship.

When Louise first clasped hands with the Young Doctor on her arrival at Askatoon, the soft appeal of her fingers had made him understand that loneliness where she lived, and to bear which she sought help. But the "Oh, Orlando!" which was wrung from her, almost unknowingly, was the cry of one who, to loneliness, had added fear and tragedy. Yet behind the fear, tragedy and loneliness there was the revelation of a heart.

A courtship is a long or a short ceremonial or convention, a make-believe, by which people pretend that they slowly come to know and love each other; but lovers know that each understands the other by one note or inflection of the voice, by one little act of tenderness. These, or one of these, tell the whole story, the everlasting truth by which men and women learn how good at its worst life is, or speak the lightning-lie by which the bones of a dead world are exposed to the disillusioned soul.

This had been a great day, because, in it, physical being had joyously celebrated itself in a wild business of the hills; in air so fresh and sweet that it almost sparkled to the eye; in a sun that was hot, but did not punish; at a sport by which the earliest men in the earliest age of the world made life a rare sensation. The man who has not chased the wild pony in the hills with the lasso on his arm, riding, as they say in the West, "Hell for leather," down the steep hillside, over the rock and the rough land, balancing on his broncho with the dexterity of a bird or a baboon, has failed to find one of life’s supreme pleasures.

In the foothills, many miles away from Slow Down Ranch and Tralee, there lived a herd of wild ponies, and it had been the ambition of a dozen ranchmen and broncho-busters thereabouts to capture one or many. More than once Orlando had seen a little gray broncho, with legs like the wrists of a lady, with a tail like a comet, frisking among the rocks and the brushwood, or standing alert, moveless and alone upon some promontory, and he had made up his mind that if, and when, there came a day of broncho-busting, he would become a hunter of the little gray mare. When the news came that the ranchmen for miles around were preparing for the drive of the hills, he determined to take part in it, against the commands of the Young Doctor, who said that he would run risk in doing so, for, though his wound was healed, he should still avoid strain and fatigue.

There is no fatigue like that of broncho-busting. It is not galloping on the turf; it is being shaken and tossed in a saddle which the knees can never grip, on the back of something gone mad--for the maddest, wisest, carefullest thing on earth is a broncho, which itself was once a wild pony of the hills, and has been hunted down, thrown by the lasso, saddled, bridled and heart-broken all in an hour. When the broncho which was once a wild pony sets out on the chase after its own, there is nothing like it in the world; and so Orlando found.

The veteran broncho-busters and ranchmen gave him no vociferous welcome as he appeared among them. Had it not been for the reputation which he already gained for courage, such as he had shown in the recent affair

when he had driven off the men who were robbing Joel Mazarine, and also for an idea, steadily spreading, that he was masquerading, and that behind all, was a curly-headed, intrepid, out-door "white man," he would not have had what he called a great day.

He could not throw the lasso as well as many another, but he could ride as well as any man that ever rode; and the broncho given him to ride that day was one sufficiently unreliable in character and sure-footed in travel to test him to the utmost. He had endured the test; he had even got his little gray mare, lassoing her like a veteran. He had helped to break her, and had sent her home from the improvised corral by one of his men. He had then parted from the others, who had dispersed to their various ranches with their prizes, and had ridden away on the broncho with which he had done such a good day's work. He had had the thrill of the hunter, riding like any wild Indian through the hills; he had had the throb of conquest in his veins; but while other men had shouted and happily blasphemed as they rode and captured, he had only giggled in excitement.

As he looked now into the sunset, he was thinking of the little gray mare, with the legs like the wrists of a lady and the soft, bright, wild eye, which had fought and fought to resist subjection; but which, overpowered by the stronger will of man, had yielded like a lady, and had been ridden away to Slow Down Ranch, its bucking over for ever, captive and subdued.

Orlando was picturing the little gray mare with Louise on its back. He had no right to think of Louise; yet there was never an hour in which he did not think of her. And Louise had no right to think of Orlando; yet, sleeping and waking, he was with her. Their homes were four miles apart, although, in one sense, they were a million miles apart by law and the convention which shuts a woman off from the love of men other than her husband; and yet in thought they were as near together always as though they had lain in the same cradle and grown up under the same rooftree.

There was something about the gray pony, with the look of a captive in its eye, a wildness in subjection, like the girl at Tralee--the girl suddenly come to be woman, with her free soul born into understanding, yet who was as much a captive as though in prison, and guarded by a warder with a long beard, a carnivorous head, and boots greased with tallow.

Since they had parted, the day after Li Choo had averted a domestic "scene" or tragedy, the search had gone on by the Mounted Police-"the Riders of the Plains"--for the men who had attempted to rob Mazarine, and to put Orlando out of action by a bullet. Suspicion had been directed against the McMahons, but Joel Mazarine had declared that it was not the McMahons who had attacked him, although they were masked. There was nothing strange in that, because, as the Inspector of the Riders said "That lot is too fly to do the job themselves; you bet they paid others to do it."

Orlando had no wish to see the criminals caught or punished. Somehow,

secretly, he looked upon the assault and his wound as a blessing. It had brought him near to his other self, his mate in the scheme of things. There was something almost pagan and primitive, something near to the very beginning of things in what these two felt for each other. It was as though they really belonged to a world of lovers that "lived before the god of Love was born."

As Orlando sat watching the sunset, Louise's last words to him, "Oh, Orlando!" kept ringing in his ears. He thought of what had happened that very morning before he started for the hills. Soon after daybreak, Li Choo the Chinaman had come slip-slopping to him at Slow Down Ranch, and had said to him without any preliminaries, or any reason for his coming:

"I bling Mlissy Mazaline what you like. She cly. What you want me do, I do. That Mazaline, gloddam! I gloddam Mazaline!"

Orlando had no desire for intrigue, but Li Choo stood there waiting, and the devotion the Chinaman had shown made him tear a piece of paper from his pocket-book and write on it the one word "Always." He then folded the paper up until it was no bigger than a waistcoat button, and gave it to Li Choo. Also, he offered a five-dollar bill, which Li Choo refused to take. When he persisted, the Chinaman opened his loose blue jacket and showed a ten-dollar gold-piece on a string around his neck.

"Mlissy Mazaline glive me that; it all plenty me," he said. "You want me come, I come. What you say do, I do. I say gloddam Mazaline!"

That scene came to Orlando's mind now, and it agitated him as the incident itself had not stirred him when it happened. The broncho he was riding, as though the disturbance in Orlando's breast had passed into its own wilful body, suddenly became restless to be off, and as Orlando gave no encouragement, showed signs of bucking.

At that moment Orlando saw in the distance, far north of both Tralee and Slow Down Ranch, a horse, ridden by a woman, galloping on the prairie. Presently as he watched the headlong gallop, the horse came down and the rider was thrown. He watched intently for a moment, and then he saw that the woman did not move, but lay still beside the fallen horse.

He dug his heels into the broncho's side, and although it had done its day's work, it reached out upon the trail as though fresh from the corral. It bucked malevolently as it went, but it went.

It was apparent that no one else had seen the accident. Orlando had been at a point of vantage on a lonely rise about eighty feet above the level of the prairie. Where horse and rider lay was a good two miles, but within seven minutes he had reached the spot.

Flinging the bridle over the broncho's neck, he dismounted. As he did so, a cry broke from him. It was, as it were, an answer to the "Oh, Orlando!" which had been ringing in his ears. There, lying upon the ground beside the horse, with its broken leg caught in a gopher's hole,

was Louise.

Orlando's ruddy face turned white; something seemed to blind him for an instant, and then he was on his knees beside her, lifting up her head, feeling her heart. Presently the colour came back to his face with a rush. Her heart was beating; her pulse trembled under his fingers; she was only unconscious. But was there other injury? Was arm or leg broken? He called to her. Then with an exclamation of self-reproach, he laid her down again on the ground, ran to his broncho; caught the water-bottle from the saddle, lifted her head, and poured some water between the white lips.

Presently her eyes opened, and she stared confusedly at Orlando, unable to realize what had happened. Then memory came back, and with it her very life-blood seemed to flow like water through the opening gates of a flume, with all the weight of the river behind. As her face flooded, she shivered with emotion. She was resting against his knee; her head was upon his arm; his face was very near; and there was that in his eyes which told a story that any woman, loving, would be thrilled at seeing. What restrained him from clasping her to his breast? What kept her arms by her side?

The sun was gone, leaving only a glimmer behind; the swift twilight of the prairie was drawing down. Warm currents of air were passing like waves of a sea of breath over the wide plains; the stars were softly stinging the sky, and a bright moon was asserting itself in the growing dusk. Here they were who, without words or acts, had been to each other what Adam and Eve were in the Garden, without furtiveness, and guiltless of secret acts which poison Love. What restrained them was native, childlike camaraderie, intense, unusual and strange. The world would call them romancists, if they believed that this restraint could be. But there was something more. With all their frank childlikeness, there was also a shyness, a reserve, which would not have been, if either had ever eaten of the Fruit of Understanding until they met each other for the first time.

"Are you--are you hurt?" he asked, his voice calmer than his spirit, his heart beating terribly hard. "I'm all right," she answered. "I fell soft. You see, I'm very light."

"No bones broken? Are you sure?" he asked solicitously.

She sat erect, drawing away from his arms and the support of his knee." Don't you see my legs and arms are all right! Help me up, please," she added, and stretched out a hand.

Then, all at once, she saw the horse lying near. Again she shivered, and her hand was thrown out in a gesture of pain.

"Oh, see-see!" she cried. "His leg is broken." She loved animals far more than human beings. There were good reasons for it. She had fared hard in life at the hands of men and women, because the only ones with whom, in her seclusion, she had had to do, had sacrificed her, all save

one-the man beside her. Animal life had something in it akin to her own voiceless being. Her spirit had never been vocal until Orlando came.

"Oh, how wicked I've been!" she cried. . . . "I couldn't bear it any longer. He wouldn't let me ride alone, go anywhere alone. I had to do it. I'd never ridden this horse before. My own mare wasn't fit.

"See-see. It's my ankle that ought to be broken, not his."

Orlando got to his feet. "Look the other way," he said. "Turn round, please. I'll put him out of pain. He bolted with you, and he'd have killed you, if he could; but that doesn't matter. He can't be saved. Turn round, don't look this way."

She had been commanded to do things all her life, first by her mother, tyrant-hearted and selfish, and then by her husband, an overlord, with a savage soul; and she had obeyed always, because she always seemed to be in the grasp of something against which no pressure could avail. She was being commanded now, but there was that in the voice which, while commanding her, made her long to do as she was bid. It was an obedience filled with passion, resigning itself to the will of a force which was all gentleness, but oh, so compelling!

She buried her face in her hands, and presently Orlando had opened a vein in the chestnut's neck, and its life-blood slowly ebbed away.

As he turned towards her again, Orlando was startled by a sudden action on the part of his broncho. Whether it was the smell of blood which frightened it, or death itself, which has its own terrors to animal life, or whether it was as though a naked, shivering animal soul passed by, the broncho started, shied and presently broke into a trot; then, before Orlando could reach it, into a gallop, and was away down the prairie in the direction of Slow Down Ranch.

"That's queer," he said, and he gave a nervous little laugh. "It's the worst of luck, and--and we're twelve miles from Tralee," he added slowly.

"It's terrible!" Louise said, her fingers twisting together in an effort at self-control. "Don't you see how terrible it is?" she asked, looking into Orlando's troubled face but cheerful eyes.

"You couldn't walk that distance, of course," he remarked.

She endeavoured to get to her feet, but seemed to give way. He reached out his hands. She took them, and he helped her up. His face was anxious. "Are you sure you're not hurt?" he asked. "There's nothing broken," she answered. "No bones, anyway. But I don't feel--" She swayed. He put an arm around her.

"I don't feel as if I could walk even a mile," she continued. "It's shaken me so."

"Or else you're hurt badly inside," he said apprehensively.

"No, no, I'm sure not," she answered. "It's only the shock."

"Can you walk a little?" he asked. "This poor horse--let's get away from it. There's a good place over there--see!" He pointed to a little rise in the ground where were a few stunted trees and some long grass and shrubs. "Can you walk?"

"Oh, yes, I'm all right," she answered nervously. "I don't need your arm. I can walk by myself."

"I think not--well, not yet, anyhow," he answered soothingly. "Please do as you're told. I'm keeping my arm around you for the present."

Always in the past she had obeyed, when commanded by her mother or husband, with an apathy which had smothered her youth. Now her youth seemed to drink eagerly a cup of obedience--as though it were the wine of life itself. She even longed to obey the voice whispering in her soul from ever so far away: "Close--close to him! Home is in his arms."

With all her unconscious revelation of herself, however, there was that in her which was pure maidenliness. For, married as she was, she had never in any real sense been a wife, or truly understood what wifedom meant, or heard in her heart the call of the cradle. She had been the victim of possession, which had meant no more to her than to be, as it were, subjected daily to the milder tortures of the Inquisition.

Yet she knew and could realize to the full that a power which had her in control, which possessed her by the rights of the law, prevented her--and would prevent her by whatever torture was possible--from friendship, alliance, or whatever it might be, with Orlando. She knew the law: one wife to one husband; and the wife to look neither to the right nor to the left, to the east nor to the west, to the north nor to the south, but to remain, and be constant in remaining, the helpmeet, the housewife, the sole property of her husband, no matter what that husband might be--vinous, vicious, vagrant, vengeful or any other things, good or bad.

"Why don't you look glad when you see me come in?" Joel Mazarine remarked to her suddenly the day before. "If you'd had some husbands, you might have reason for bein' the statue and the dummy you are. Am I a drunkard? Am I a thief? Am I a nighthawk? Do I go off lookin' for other women? Don't I keep the commandments? Ain't you got a home here as good as any in the land? Didn't I take you out of poverty, and make you head of all this, with people to wait on you and all the rest of it?"

That was the way he had talked, and somehow she had not seemed able to bear it; and she had said to him, in unexpected revolt, that her tongue was her own, and what was in her mind was her own, even if her body wasn't.

Then, in a fury, he had caught his riding-whip from the wall to lash her with it, just when Li Choo the Chinaman appeared with a message which he delivered at the appropriate moment, though he had had it to deliver for

some time. It was to the effect that the Clerk of the Court in the neighbouring town of Waterway wished to see him at once on urgent business. The message had been left by a rancher in passing.

As Li Choo delivered the word, he managed to put himself between Mazarine and his wife in such a way as to enrage the old man, who struck the Chinaman twice savagely across the shoulders with the whip, and then stamped out of the house, invoking God to punish the rebellious and the heathen, while Li Choo, shrinking still from the cruel blows, clucked in his throat. There was something in the sound which belonged to the abyss dividing the Eastern from the Western races.

That night Louise had refused to go to bed; but at last, fearing physical force, had obeyed, and had lain with her face to the wall, close up to it, letting the cold plaster cool her hot palms, for now she burned with a fire which was consuming the debris of an old life--the fire of knowledge, for which she had to pay so heavily.

"You couldn't walk even a little of the way to Tralee, could you?" asked Orlando, when they had reached a shrub-covered hillock.

"No, I couldn't walk it, I'm so shaken. I'm terribly weak; I tremble all over," she added, as she sat down upon a stone. "But if I don't--if I don't go back--oh, you know!"

"Yes, I know," answered Orlando. "He's the sort that would horsewhip a woman."

"He started to do it yesterday," she answered, "but Li Choo came in time, and he horsewhipped Li Choo instead."

"I wouldn't myself be horsewhipping Chinamen much," said Orlando. "They're a queer lot."

Suddenly she got to her feet. "I won't stand it. I won't stand it any longer," she cried. "That is why to-day, although he told me I mustn't ride, I took that new chestnut, and saddled it and rode--I didn't care where I rode. I didn't care how fast the horse went. I didn't care what happened to me. And here I am, and--But oh, I do care what happens to me!" she added, her voice breaking. "I'm--I'm frightened of him--I'm frightened, in spite of myself. . . . He doesn't treat me right," she added. "And I'm terribly frightened."

She raised her eyes to Orlando's face in the growing dusk--there is no twilight in that prairie land--and there was that in it which made her feel that she must not give way any further. In Orlando's veins was Southern sap, mixed with Northern blood; in Orlando's eyes was a sudden look belonging to that which defies the law.

"Don't--don't look like that," she exclaimed. "Oh, Orlando!"

Once more he heard her speak his name, and it was like salve to a wound. He put a hand upon himself. "I'll go to Tralee," he said, "if you don't

mind waiting here alone."

"I can't. I will not wait alone. If you go, then I'll go too somehow.... It's twelve miles. You couldn't get there till midnight, and you couldn't get back here with a wagon for another couple of hours from that. It would be daylight then. I can't stay here alone. I'm frightened, and I'm cold."

"Wait a minute," said Orlando.

He ran back to the dead horse, unloosed the saddle from its back, detached from it a rain-coat strapped to the pommel, and brought it to her.

"This will keep you warm," he said. "It isn't cold to-night. You only feel cold because you're upset and nervous."

"I'm frightened," she answered; "frightened of everything. Listen! Don't you hear something stirring--there!" She peered fearfully into the dusk behind them.

"Probably," he answered. "There are lots of prairie dogs and things about. The more you listen, the more you hear on the prairie, especially at night."

There was silence for a moment, and then he added: "My broncho'll steer straight for Slow Down Ranch, and that'll bring my men. You can be quite sure there'll be a search-party out from Tralee, too, at the first streak of dawn. You can't make the journey, so the only thing to be done is to wait here. That coat will keep you from getting cold, and I'll cut a lot of long grass and make you a bed here. Also, the grass is warm, and I'll cover you with it and with pine branches."

"I can't lie down," she answered. "No, I can't; I'm afraid. It's all so strange, and to-morrow, he--"

"There's nothing to be frightened about," he interrupted. "Nothing at all, Louise."

It was the first time he had ever addressed her by name, and it made her shiver with a new feeling. It seemed to tell a long, long story without words.

"You must do what I ask you to do--whatever I ask you to do," he repeated. "Will you?"

"Yes, anything you ask me I'll do," she answered, and then added quickly, "For you won't ask me to do anything I don't want to do. That's the difference. You understand, Orlando."

A few minutes later he had found a suitable place to make a kind of bed of grass for her, and had prepared it, with his knife, cutting the branches of small shrubs and grass and the scanty branches of the pine.

When it was finished, he came to her and said:

"It's all ready. Come and lie down, and I'll cover you up."

She got to her feet slowly, for she was in pain greater than she knew, so absorbed was her mind in this new life suddenly enveloping her, and then she said in a low voice: "No, not yet; I can't yet. I want to sit here. I've never felt the night like this before. It's wonderful, and I'm not nearly so cold now. I know I oughtn't to be cold at all, in the middle of summer like this." She paused, and seemed lost in contemplation of the sky. After a moment she added: "I never knew I could feel so far away from all the world as I do tonight. But the sky seems so near, and the moon and the stars so friendly."

"You haven't slept out of doors as I have hundreds of times," he answered. "The night and I are brothers; the stars are my little cousins; and the moon"--he giggled in his boyish way--"is my maiden aunt. She's so prudish and so kind and friendly, as you say. She's like an aunt I had--Aunt Samantha. She was my father's sister. I used to love her to visit my mother. She always brought me things, and she gave them to me as if they were on silver dishes--like a ceremony. She was so prim, I used to call her Aunt Primrose. She made me feel as if I could do anything I liked and break any law I pleased. But all the time, like a saint in a stained-glass window, she always seemed to be saying, 'Yes, you'd like to, but you mustn't.' She was just like the moon. I'm well acquainted with the moon, and--"

"Hush!" Louise interrupted. "Don't you hear something stirring--there, behind us?"

He laughed. "Of course something's always 'stirring behind us' on the prairie, and things you can't hear at all in the day are almost loud at night. There are thousands of sounds that never get to your ears when the sun is busy, but when Aunt Primrose Moon is saying, 'Hush! Hush!' to the naughty children of this world, you can hear a whole new population at work, cracking away like mad. Say, ain't I letting myself go to-night?" he added, giggling again and sitting down beside her. "I'm going to give you just half an hour, and at the end of that half-hour you've got to go to sleep."

"I can't--I can't," she said scarcely above a whisper. As though in response to an unspoken thought, he said casually: "I'm going to walk awhile when you've lain down, and then--" He pointed to a spot about twenty yards away. "Do you see the two big stones there? Well, when I've finished my walk and my talk with Aunty Primrose"--he laughed up at the moon--"I'm going to sit down there and snooze till daylight." He pointed again: "Right over there beside those two rocks. That's my bed. Do you see?"

She did not reply at once, but a long sigh came from her lips. "You'll be cold," she said.

"No, it's a hot night," he answered. "I'm too hot as it is." And he

loosened his heavy red shirt at the throat.

"If I've got to go to bed in half an hour," she said presently, "tell me more about your Aunt Samantha, and about yourself, and your home before you came out here, and what you did when you were a little boy--tell me everything about yourself."

She was forgetting Tralee for the moment, and the man who raised his hand against her yesterday, and the life she had lived. Or was it only that she had grown young during these last two months, and the young can so easily forget!

"You want to hear? You really want to hear?" he asked. "Say, it won't be a very interesting story. Better let me tell you about the broncho-busting today."

"No, I want to hear about yourself." She looked intently at him for an instant, and then her eyes closed and the long lashes touched her cheek. There was something very wilful in her beauty, and her body too had delicate, melancholy lines strange in one so young. She was not conscious that, in her dreamy abstraction, she was leaning towards him.

It was but an instant, though it seemed to him an interminable time, in which he fought the fierce desire to clasp her in his arms, and kiss the lips which, to his ears, said things more wonderful than he had ever dreamed of in his friendship with the night and the primrose moon. He knew, however, that if he did, she would not go back to Tralee to-morrow; that tomorrow she would defy the leviathan; and that tomorrow he would not have the courage to say the things he must say to the evil-hearted master of Tralee, who, he knew, would challenge them with ugly accusations. He must be able to look old Mazarine fearlessly in the face; he would not be the slave of opportunity. He was going to fight clean. She was here beside him in the warm loneliness of the northern world, and he was full-grown in body and brain, with all the human emotions alive in him; yet he would fight clean.

Not for a half-hour, but for nearly an hour he told her what she wished to know, while she listened in a happy dream; and when at last she lay down, she refused his coverlet of dry grass, saying that she was quite warm. She declared that she did not even need the coat he had taken from the saddle of the dead horse, but he wrapped it around her, and, saying "Goodnight" almost brusquely, marched away in the light of the dying moon.

The night wore on. At first Louise's ears were sensitive to every sound, and there were stirrings in the hillock by which she slept, but she comforted herself with the thought that they were the stirrings of lonely little waifs of nature like herself. Though she dared not let the thought take form, yet she feared, too, the sound of human footsteps. By and by, however, in the sweet quiet of the night and the somnolent light of the moon, sleep captured her. When at last Orlando's footsteps did crush the dry grass, the sound failed to reach her ears, for it was then not very far from daylight, and she had slept for several hours. Sleep

had not touched Orlando’s eyes when, sitting down by the stones which were to mark his resting-place, he waited for Louise to wake.

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Highsterics, they call it
World was only the size of four walls to a sick person

also a good way to get them instantly upon announcement, as the indexes our cataloguers produce obviously take a while after an announcement goes out in the Project Gutenberg Newsletter.

http://www.ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext03 or
ftp://ftp.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/etext03

Or /etext02, 01, 00, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 92, 91 or 90

Just search by the first five letters of the filename you want, as it appears in our Newsletters.

Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)

We produce about two million dollars for each hour we work. The time it takes us, a rather conservative estimate, is fifty hours to get any eBook selected, entered, proofread, edited, copyright searched and analyzed, the copyright letters written, etc. Our projected audience is one hundred million readers. If the value per text is nominally estimated at one dollar then we produce $2 million dollars per hour in 2002 as we release over 100 new text files per month: 1240 more eBooks in 2001 for a total of 4000+
We are already on our way to trying for 2000 more eBooks in 2002
If they reach just 1-2% of the world's population then the total will reach over half a trillion eBooks given away by year's end.

The Goal of Project Gutenberg is to Give Away 1 Trillion eBooks!
This is ten thousand titles each to one hundred million readers, which is only about 4% of the present number of computer users.

Here is the briefest record of our progress (* means estimated):

eBooks Year Month

1	1971	July
10	1991	January
100	1994	January
1000	1997	August
1500	1998	October
2000	1999	December
2500	2000	December
3000	2001	November
4000	2001	October/November
6000	2002	December*
9000	2003	November*
10000	2004	January*

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been created to secure a future for Project Gutenberg into the next millennium.

We need your donations more than ever!

As of February, 2002, contributions are being solicited from people and organizations in: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

We have filed in all 50 states now, but these are the only ones that have responded.

As the requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund raising will begin in the additional states. Please feel free to ask to check the status of your state.

In answer to various questions we have received on this:

We are constantly working on finishing the paperwork to legally request donations in all 50 states. If your state is not listed and you would like to know if we have added it since the list you have, just ask.

While we cannot solicit donations from people in states where we are not yet registered, we know of no prohibition against accepting donations from donors in these states who approach us with an offer to donate.

International donations are accepted, but we don't know ANYTHING about how to make them tax-deductible, or even if they CAN be made deductible, and don't have the staff to handle it even if there are ways.

Donations by check or money order may be sent to:

Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation
PMB 113
1739 University Ave.
Oxford, MS 38655-4109

Contact us if you want to arrange for a wire transfer or payment method other than by check or money order.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been approved by the US Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN [Employee Identification Number] 64-622154. Donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. As fund-raising requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund-raising will begin in the additional states.

We need your donations more than ever!

You can get up to date donation information online at:

http://www.gutenberg.net/donation.html

***

If you can't reach Project Gutenberg,
you can always email directly to:

Michael S. Hart <hart@pobox.com>

Prof. Hart will answer or forward your message.

We would prefer to send you information by email.

The Legal Small Print

(Three Pages)

START**THE SMALL PRINT!**FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN EBOOKS**START
Why is this "Small Print!" statement here? You know: lawyers.
They tell us you might sue us if there is something wrong with
your copy of this eBook, even if you got it for free from
someone other than us, and even if what's wrong is not our
fault. So, among other things, this "Small Print!" statement
disclaims most of our liability to you. It also tells you how
you may distribute copies of this eBook if you want to.

BEFORE! YOU USE OR READ THIS EBOOK
By using or reading any part of this PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm
eBook, you indicate that you understand, agree to and accept
this "Small Print!" statement. If you do not, you can receive
a refund of the money (if any) you paid for this eBook by
sending a request within 30 days of receiving it to the person
you got it from. If you received this eBook on a physical
medium (such as a disk), you must return it with your request.

ABOUT PROJECT GUTENBERG-TM EBOOKS
This PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook, like most PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBooks,
is a "public domain" work distributed by Professor Michael S. Hart
through the Project Gutenberg Association (the "Project").
Among other things, this means that no one owns a United States copyright
on or for this work, so the Project (and you!) can copy and
distribute it in the United States without permission and
without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth
below, apply if you wish to copy and distribute this eBook
under the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark.

Please do not use the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark to market

any commercial products without permission.

To create these eBooks, the Project expends considerable efforts to identify, transcribe and proofread public domain works. Despite these efforts, the Project's eBooks and any medium they may be on may contain "Defects". Among other things, Defects may take the form of incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other eBook medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES
But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below, [1] Michael Hart and the Foundation (and any other party you may receive this eBook from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook) disclaims all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees, and [2] YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF WARRANTY OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this eBook within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that time to the person you received it from. If you received it on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and such person may choose to alternatively give you a replacement copy. If you received it electronically, such person may choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to receive it electronically.

THIS EBOOK IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS TO THE EBOOK OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Some states do not allow disclaimers of implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY
You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart, the Foundation, and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following that you do or cause: [1] distribution of this eBook, [2] alteration, modification, or addition to the eBook, or [3] any Defect.

The Project gratefully accepts contributions of money, time,
public domain materials, or royalty free copyright licenses.
Money should be paid to the:
"Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

If you are interested in contributing scanning equipment or
software or other items, please contact Michael Hart at:
hart@pobox.com

*END THE SMALL PRINT! FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN EBOOKS*Ver.02/11/02*END*

ss permission.]

*END THE SMALL PRINT! FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN EBOOKS*Ver.02/11/02*END*