

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

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Author: Maud Howard Peterson

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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE POTTER AND THE
CLAY ***

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The
POTTER *and*
The CLAY



"It's a storm!" he cried.
(See page 90.)

"It's a storm!" he cried. (See page 90.)

A ROMANCE *of* TODAY

By
MAUD HOWARD PETERSON

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLOTTE HARDING

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To
 M. C. P.
 and
 M. T. C.
 WHOSE LIVES
 REVEAL THE
 POTTER'S TOUCH

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The comparatively unknown rendering of the verse from the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Kháyyám, quoted on the succeeding page, is to be found in the *first* edition of Fitzgerald's translation of the Persian poem.

"For in the Market-place, one Dusk of Day,
 I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet clay:
 And with its all-obliterated Tongue
 It murmur'd—'Gently, Brother, gently, pray!'"

From the Rubáiyát.

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The Potter's Wheel

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's
wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Robert Browning.

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***You—saw—me—then?**

***What right had he to look for a woman's face in the foam?**

***Trevelyan lay on the floor.**

PROLOGUE

The POTTER and the CLAY

PROLOGUE

The Lieutenant's small daughter was swinging on the railing of the drawbridge that spanned the moat.

Her companions, two boys, questioned each other with their eyes.

"She says she won't come," said the elder in what he fondly believed to be an undertone. "She says she won't play—"

"I never did! So there!"

The small girl wheeled about suddenly and descended from her perch and stamped her foot; her long, straight hair of an indefinite brown, shaken by the tempest the boy's words had awakened.

"No; but you won't," said Rob, promptly.

There was an ominous silence; but instead of the tirade the anxious watchers expected, a tear appeared on Cary's little nose and quietly dropped into the waters of the moat. Cary was nothing if she was not a bundle of contradictions. Johnny shuffled nervously from one foot to the other, but Rob grew impatient.

"Well, are you coming?" he asked after the pause in which he had vainly waited for Cary to smile again.

"No, I'm tired. I hate walking, too," said Cary peevishly.

"Course not—to walk," said Rob, scornfully. "We can steal Lieutenant Bur-

den's boat."

"You wouldn't dare," said Cary, but her voice was tremulous with eagerness, and the tears she had forgotten to wipe away were still shining on her cheeks.

"Wouldn't I, though! Come along and see!"

Cary balanced herself carefully on one foot and considered. It wasn't well to let Rob think she didn't have to be persuaded. He had been so cross too.

"I haven't got my sunbonnet," she began. "And I've forgotten the gun I put it in."

"I'd just as lieve hunt for it," said Johnny, politely.

"That's just like a girl! You don't need the old thing—anyway I thought you hated it," retorted Rob, who did not fill the role of pleader.

"Course Mammy Amy is 'way—gone for a week to see her grandbaby. I don't s'pose I really need my pinafore either—*if I go!*" The Lieutenant's small daughter hesitated to watch the effect of the words. Rob apparently was not to be moved, so she buried her pride and backed up to Johnny.

"Please undo me," she said, calmly, and the older boy struggled manfully with the holes and buttons.

"I'll be right back—quick as a wink," and she flew over the drawbridge back to the fort, her long hair and short dress blowing in the wind. She hid the pinafore under her arm, and when she reached the circle of the parade ground, she sidled up to one of the great guns captured in the war, and surreptitiously poked the gingham roll down its mouth. Clothes were a necessary evil, but sunbonnets and pinafores were the worst and most evil things of all—and not to be endured when Mammy Amy was not around, and the big show guns offered such a safe and charming hiding place. It only needed coolness and care to accomplish the feat without detection. Of course, a thing once buried in the heart of one of the big guns was lost forever—which was just as well, thought Cary, being one less to bother her—since it was one thing to force the articles down into the big black mouths and another to extract the sunbonnets and pinafores, even if she could have remembered which particular gun held which particular thing—which she could never do.

She hurried back to the drawbridge, and the sentry, who adored every inch of the "Post Baby," stood at "attention" and saluted her with a twinkle in his eye as she passed him. Cary slowed her walk and inclined her head graciously in greeting.

"Good evenin', Jones," she said, innocently.

Then she rejoined the boys.

"Well, are you really ready?" said Rob, a bit crossly.

The Lieutenant's small daughter did not deign to notice him.

"I think," she said, condescendingly, "*if I go*, I'll go 'round by the road way—

it's shorter."

The "road way" was a good deal longer, but it was out of the reach of Cary's father and the fort.

She wiped her dry eyes on one of Johnny's handkerchiefs—Johnny always had more than one, while Rob and herself frequently went "shares" on a stolen or a borrowed one—and then she raced Rob to the end of the drawbridge.

Cary's conscience was troubling her. She told herself it was her stomach and the lemon pie she had appropriated from the pantry shelf, but it was undoubtedly her conscience, mingled with a fear that papa-lieutenant or some of the other officers might loom in sight and inquiring into the project, carry her off.

Ahead, thirteen-year old Johnny was moralizing.

"Perhaps we oughtn't to take her—she's so little."

"She's seven," said Rob, "and what's going to hurt her?" He kept his eyes away from the over-clouding sky.

"I don't know—" said the cautious Johnny, "but—"

"I guess we can take care of a small girl like her. You're thirteen and I'm eleven."

At the water edge, conscience spoke once more but was overruled when at Johnny's question as to the judiciousness of her going, Rob declared she was afraid.

"I ain't afraid, so there! Robby Trevelyan! My papa never said I *couldn't* go!"

Cary majestically slipped into the stolen boat, and seated herself in the bow. Johnny took the rudder and Rob the oars.

The boy was as much at home on the sea as he was in his bed at night. Indeed, more so, since he hated the one and loved the other with all the passionate strength of a coast-child's heart. He had been born in inland England, but had lived most of his life in western Scotland where the great rocks rise boldly along the coast—that coast intersected by numerous sea-lochs, bounded by hills and separated from each other by mountainous peninsulas.

The burden of the deep sea's song of eternal restlessness had become the controlling passion of the boy's life. The wild freedom of wild living things appealed to him and fear was a word unknown. Not a nearby cliff he had not climbed; not a nearby, darkened cave, formed by the overhanging rocks, he had not explored. The Scottish folk forgot he was an English lad as his skiff became a familiar feature of the western sea-bound landscape. There was scarcely a Scottish boy of double his age who could outstrip him in swimming, and when the hated books had been laid to one side and the tutor had gone away for the summer months, old Mactier, a retainer of his father's, had taken the child in charge,

carrying him over to the moorland country and teaching him the meaning and the use of firearms. His mother had at first protested, but Trevelyan had only laughed. "Let the boy alone," he said, and he gloried with old Mactier at the lad's stocky build, firm muscles and enduring fearlessness, knowing that in her secret heart his wife remembered the traditions of her Scottish clan, and was glad.

Then Trevelyan's wife had died. The home on western, rock-bound Scotland had been closed, until the boy should grow to man's estate and enter on his mother's heritage. Trevelyan sent the boy to his sister—Johnny's mother—living in east Scotland, and then returned to England. The sudden loss, the still more sudden change from the wild free life lived on the western coast to the quietness of the life lived by the Stewarts, told upon the child. Mercifully, his healthy training was stronger than the inroads made by childish grief, but his mind was ill at ease and homesick. He hated the flatness of this new eastern country—the low and shelving coast. This was not Scotland to him. It was not the Scotland he had known. It was not Mactier's Scotland—and his.

His aunt was kind—overkind, her own children sometimes thought when she sat out all their bedtime hour on the foot of Robert's bed, instead of theirs—but "auntie" couldn't understand. All the three children were kind but they couldn't quite understand either. Johnny was undoubtedly the best, but Johnny loved books as passionately as Rob hated them, and would listen to his father discuss politics by the hour, if he only had the chance. Robert loathed politics.

Then one day Johnny's mother had a talk with her husband. It ended in her giving up a London season and starting with Johnny and Trevelyan's boy, for America. A long promised visit to a life friend, who had married a United States officer, was the excuse. It was not until years after, when Trevelyan's little son had grown to manhood that he knew the real reason for that sudden ocean voyage.

The change had the desired effect. He met new people. He saw new things. He watched new customs. He knew Cary.

But the wistfulness for Mactier was in the boy's eyes now as he looked over Johnny's head in front of him, to the long stretch of low sand country he was leaving. He pulled with long, even strokes.

Cary was talkative.

"Is this—" she waved her arms intending to designate the new sweep of coast line and of water, "all this I mean—is it like England or Scotland?"

"Something," said Johnny slowly. "It's really quite like home—my home," he added quickly, seeing that his younger cousin had stopped rowing and was leaning forward with hurt eyes.

Suddenly, the boy drew in his oars, resting on them and allowing the boat to drift. "It isn't like my home," he cried passionately; a wild thrill of homesickness

surging over him, "It isn't like *my* Scotland—one little bit! We have great big rocks rising out of the water—not long beaches like this! And the sea beats and beats and *beats* against them—it doesn't just lap the sand as it does here—" the boy drew in his breath quickly, hurrying on, "And you haven't got our heather and our bracken, and our country isn't flat—except the moorlands where Mactier used to take me to hunt, and even our moors are not like this!"

He stopped suddenly; and he buttoned and unbuttoned his pea-jacket. He wouldn't for the world have let Johnny see his eyes, but Johnny was looking at Cary. The child was leaning forward with angry face.

"You're a horrid, horrid boy!" she cried, "You haven't a single nice thing to say about us or our flag or—or me! You're impolite and you're dreadfully rude and I'll never play with you again!"

Trevelyan's boy continued to button and unbutton his pea-jacket. He didn't care now if Johnny did see his eyes. Johnny saw them, too, and he was frightened. One day, Rob's eyes had had that look when their tutor had threatened to strike him. He spoke hastily.

"Rob didn't mean to be rude, Cary," he said; "but Rob's home was beautiful—a great deal more beautiful than mine, and—and even more beautiful than your home, and so you mustn't—"

Cary's anger melted like a mist before the sun. She slid to the bottom of the boat and then crept along to Rob on the rower's seat. She pulled at his sleeve.

"Rob—I'm sorry—I didn't mean—really truly mean—"

Trevelyan's boy shook away the child's clinging fingers.

Cary drew back; her lips quivering.

"I'm cold," she said, for Cary never would have admitted that a boy could hurt her so, "I'm cold, and—and tired. Can't we go home, Johnny?"

"Yes," he said.

"No, we won't," said Rob, moodily, "the oars are gone."

The oars were gone—slipped from the locks when he had drawn them in, and in the excitement of the quarrel they had floated away. The two boys knew that the oars were not the only things on the surface of the deep, drifting out to sea.

Behind them a bank of storm clouds was gathering and a sudden stone-color fell upon the face of the waters.

The clouds increased in size and swept toward them, seemingly poised directly overhead. Then they parted and the rain fell in a great straight sheet of water. The oarless boat tossed dangerously, and the rain gathered in the bottom.

Cary, half rose, beside herself with terror. The storm had drenched her to the skin, and her long, straight hair lay, matted with the wet, close to her small head. Her wide gray eyes looked out dark against the pallor of her skin.

"Sit down!"

It was Johnny's voice. Mechanically, the child obeyed.

Once, years later, he so commanded her, and she yielded then as now.

She cowered in the bow and was silent. In the stern the elder boy grasped the rudder, forcing the boat for a time in the direction of the far-off Point. The rough ropes slipped through his hands, in spite of effort, and tore them cruelly.

Trevelyan's boy had crept to the bottom of the boat, the better to balance it. The wind swept across his hair, forcing it back from his forehead, as with a mighty hand. The joy of an unknown danger was in his blood and the color was in his cheeks. The wild spirit of the storm found a challenge in his eyes.

He was a being apart from the other two, and yet sharing their danger. The freedom and the peril were as elixir to his soul, and yet he never lost consciousness of the wind cloud in the distance; and he knew it to be as merciless as it was strong.

"Steer for the Point," he shouted. Johnny nodded.

They neared the shore. Then the wind came upon them and churned the bay into a white foam. It turned the frail boat around as on a pivot, heading it for the open sea, and with the effort the ropes that held the rudder broke.

The boys looked at each other. It was characteristic of both; it was characteristic of their training and their birth, that the sense of personal danger did not touch them and that it was solely for the small girl they thought.

In the face of the older boy was a strong courage that soothed and sustained the frightened child; but in the face of Trevelyan's son was defiance against the might of the storm, and the sea, and death.

He ripped open his pea-jacket; he unlaced his water-soaked boots; he stripped to his shirt.

"Keep the boat steady," cried Trevelyan's son, "I'm going to swim to the Point and get help!"

The older boy caught him by the wrist.

"You'll be drowned. I'll go!"

Trevelyan's son shook him off. He threw back his head.

"I've swum double the distance," he shouted, "Anyhow, we'll all die here."

He balanced himself on the rower's seat. Then he raised his arms above his head before he sprang. The joy of the coming struggle was in the boy's eyes—the joy of testing his strength against the sea's forces.

He dived. The boat, lightened of his weight, rocked, sprang higher in the water and then righted. From the bow came the sob of a girl-child's terror.

Trevelyan's son rose, striking out for shore.

Cary and the elder boy watched him—even as they drifted seaward.

* * * * *

Trevelyan's son was gaining. The fight had been a long one and a hard one. The rain had lessened, but the wind and tide had carried him a quarter of a mile below the landing he had intended to make. His thoughts were growing disconnected. At first, he had only gloried in his own skill; then he thought of Scotland—he could scarcely have told why—and of old Mactier. Then he remembered Cary—and after awhile, he wondered if he had ever drank as much salt water before.

Then the wind changed. That was a help. Once he trod water, looking out over the face of the sea for a sign of the boat. He saw it. It was far away and still drifting seaward, but it was upright and the coast boy knew that unless the storm began again, it could live in spite of the long swells that bore it outward.

His arms began to get numb, and a mist—he supposed it was the rain—got between him and his vision. The low banks of clouds on the horizon, too, assumed strange shapes. They looked like the gray crags at home.

Once his breath seemed to leave him and his arms grew suddenly powerless and he sank. The emersion gave him new energy. The love of life, the wild thrill of fearless conquest, swept right over him anew, and he pulled for shore. After a little he raised his right arm and sounded. The waters were up to his eyes, but he touched land. He rose and struck out again, and again, and—again.

Then he waded in and stood upon the beach, his face turned seaward.

Trevelyan's boy threw back his head and laughed at the waters and the storm.

"I beat you," he shouted passionately, "*I beat you!*"

* * * * *

The Lieutenant was in his office. It had been a busy day of petty annoyances and he was tired.

He leaned back in his chair and filled his pipe, packing it carefully. Then he lighted a match.

Some one fumbled at the door knob in an uncertain way; hesitated, and tried again.

"Come in!" shouted the Lieutenant. The noise hurt his nerves.

The door opened and Rob entered. His eyes looked shadowy by contrast to the pinched paleness of his face. He walked with difficulty. His short legs got tangled up in the long coat he had gotten from one of the men of the rescuing party, and he stumbled over it.

The Lieutenant rose. The match burned down to his fingers and he mechanically tossed it into the fire. Then he laid down his pipe.

The short odd figure in the long overcoat advanced to the middle of the room, facing Cary's father.

"Cary—" he began, and then stopped a moment and cleared his throat. It seemed still full of salt water. "I stole Lieutenant Burden's boat and I took Cary and Johnny out. The storm came. I knew it was coming, but I didn't care, and I went. And I lost the oars and—" The salt water feeling came back.

"Cary?" asked Cary's father.

Trevelyan's boy shook the long sleeves away from his hands, which he pushed down into the great pockets of the coat, where they hunted around for themselves. The Lieutenant was tall and Trevelyan's boy was short, and he had to look up a long way before he could look him full in the face.

"She's coming," he said, "and so's Johnny. They both feel sort of sick, but I'm all right, and so I've come here. I thought we'd better have it over with."

"What?" asked the Lieutenant.

"Why, the thrashing! Of course, you'll thrash me."

He came forward a step and swayed.

Cary's father caught him as he fell and laid him on the lounge.

* * * * *

That night Cary was ill. The next day she was worse. She complained of a sharp pain in her side and toward evening she began to breathe heavily.

At nine, when the post surgeon came again, she was burning with fever, and he shook his head when he listened to her lungs.

"It looks confoundedly like pneumonia," he told the Lieutenant who was standing anxiously by Cary's little brass bed, and he went off to look up a nurse.

The Lieutenant bent over the child a moment after the surgeon had left, and then he turned hastily away and lowered the lamp and shaded its glare from Cary's eyes. Then he went over to the window and stood looking out. Below him stretched the yard of his quarters. It was Cary's playground. Beyond the garden lay the parade ground and further off the other officers' quarters. He could see Cary now, her long, straight hair flying in the wind as she tore by the flagstaff to meet him on his return from duty. Way off in the distance he could see the dim, dark outline of the Fort's walls, and beyond, the strip of moonlit sea. He had used to carry Cary on his shoulders, when she was a baby, along those walls and she had used to clap her hands at the sunlight dancing on the water. Everything spoke to him of Cary. He turned and went back to the bed and knelt down by it and buried his head close to the child's—so close that he could feel her hot breath on his cheek.

"I was a fool," he told himself, passionately, "to fancy I could care for a little

flower, but I couldn't give her up after her mother died."

He rose presently and cautiously heightened the lamp and wrote a hurried line on a scrap of paper.

"Cary is ill. Pneumonia. Mam' Amy is away. Will you come?"

He signed the note and then crept down stairs and gave it to the colored boy. The colored boy carried it across the parade ground to the house where the English children were staying and waited, as he had been bidden, for an answer.

The Lieutenant went back to the window. He could see the house across the parade ground from there, and presently he saw the shadowy figure of a woman accompanied by his colored boy passing the flagstaff.

"Heaven bless her! I knew she'd come."

He went down stairs to open the door for her and it was not until he had closed it and turned to thank her that he saw it was not the wife of his comrade.

"Mary was away," the exquisitely modulated English voice fell on his overwrought nerves like a balm. "I took the liberty of opening the note, fearing something might be wrong with your little girl after yesterday's terrible experience. I have come to nurse her. I know you won't send me away."

John's mother threw off the long cloak she had flung over her shoulders.

"Really, Mrs. Stewart—"

"There—please don't! I am the mother of three children—I once was the mother of four," the English woman looked down steadily at her wedding ring, twisting it on her finger, "I am the adopted mother of another—" She raised her eyes, smiling gravely, "We are all alike—we women; be we American or English. Besides if it hadn't been for my two boys Cary would never be ill now. Come, take me to her."

There was not a nurse to be found, and at midnight the post surgeon returned, discouraged from a fruitless search.

A sense of order and exquisite peace seemed to permeate the child's sick room. It impressed him before he had crossed the threshold. A woman was sitting by the little brass bed and he could hear her speaking soothingly to Cary.

She turned when she heard his step and rose. He took in the situation at a glance.

"You're a trump," he said, concisely, and went over to the bed.

"How is she?"

"Bad—very bad! Where's the child's father?"

"In the next room. He cannot stand seeing her suffer."

"Humph! Shouldn't wonder. She's the apple of his eye. You know we call her the 'Post Baby'—have ever since her mother died."

"How're your young rascals?" he inquired, when he was leaving. "They and the 'Post Baby' here had a pretty time of it yesterday."

"God only knows what saved them."

"Well, I know. It was your two youngsters. They're both game. The Queen will have two good soldiers some day."

The English woman smiled.

"I left Rob in a perfect fury at the foot of his bed. He woke up when I was getting ready to come over, and wanted to come, too. He says Cary belongs to him. I threatened severe punishment, and—left him."

The post surgeon chuckled.

"He'll risk that if he takes it in his head to come."

"I'm afraid he will. I left Johnny consoling him."

"The two of them called seven times this afternoon."

"I know—but I never dreamed Cary was really ill."

"Well—" The post surgeon hesitated, "I'll be back after awhile and if the baby's worse, I'll spend the night with you."

He closed the front door softly; hesitated for an instant before he recrossed the shadowy parade ground, and starting to go on, stumbled over a dark object on the porch.

The dark object turned out to be a boy, who rose and pulled at the surgeon's sleeve.

"How is she? Oh! tell me how she is!" he asked. His thin, high bred face with the delicately chiseled features, showed out sharply in the waning moonlight.

"Great Scott!"

"No, it's only Johnny Stewart," said the boy, a faint flash of humor lighting up his pale face for a moment. "I couldn't sleep—tell me—is she—worse?"

"She's a pretty sick little girl," said the surgeon, amused at the situation. "Your mother has been expecting trouble from your quarter, but she rather looked for it from Rob."

"He's asleep," said the boy, simply, "I sat with him until he went to sleep, but—you know I'm the oldest, and I'm responsible for it all." He looked up gravely, self-accusing, in the post surgeon's weather-beaten face.

"Well, you're a pair of you!" said the surgeon, looking hard at the flagstaff. "Now, what do you propose to do with yourself?"

"You couldn't slip me in, somehow?" pleaded the boy. "I'd stay down stairs and I'd be awfully quiet and I wouldn't trouble a soul. There might be errands—" he broke off, "I'd like to be near her," he said. "Do you think you could manage it?"

The post surgeon thought he could, and the post surgeon did.

Then he started once more to cross the parade grounds.

As he passed the flagstaff and entered the shadows of the trees, a small

whirlwind struck him. The whirlwind proved to be Rob. He was only half dressed: his shirt being open at the throat and devoid of tie. One stocking had been forgotten in his haste and he was hatless. The surgeon caught him by his hair and pulled him back.

Then the whirlwind developed into a small tornado.

"Let me go," he cried. "*Let me go!*"

"I'll take you to the guard house if you don't behave," threatened the surgeon. "Now what in thunderation are you after?"

"Going to see Cary," said Rob, sullenly.

"You are, hey? Well, you're not going to do anything of the kind. You'd scare any little girl into a fit. You're going home."

"No, I'm not," said Rob, rebelliously.

"Yes, you are."

"I'll come out again."

"Not behind locked doors."

"Yes I will, too, through the window."

"I'll see to the window."

"I'll climb through the transom."

He made a dive under the surgeon's arm. The surgeon caught him by the seat of his small trousers.

"Where's Johnny?"

"That's the trouble—is it? Well, Johnny's a different quantity from you. Johnny's safe enough."

"Johnny's at Cary's house. I know it. I'm going, too," cried the younger boy, passionately.

"If you make a sound, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life," said the surgeon, in desperation, retracing his steps across the parade ground.

"I'd scratch your eyes out if you tried to," said the boy, a flood of crimson sweeping his face.

"Well—look out that your noise don't kill Cary," said the surgeon.

Trevelyan's boy caught the surgeon's hand.

"Indeed I'll try to be good," he said, earnestly, "if you'll only take me to Cary."

Mrs. Stewart opened the door.

"Here's one boy," said the surgeon grimly, pushing Trevelyan's son over the threshold, "There's another in the dining-room."

"You're a nice one to leave a chap asleep and then sneak off. I wouldn't have been so mean!"

Rob blinked in the glare of the dining-room lamp, and shifted from the stockingless leg to the covered one, "I didn't think Johnny Stewart—" His voice

rose.

Johnny came forward.

"Stop that shouting!" he commanded, "Don't you know Cary's very, very sick?"

Rob blinked again. It was a blink of astonishment. He had never seen Johnny quite so angry before.

"Course I know she's sick. That's why I've come." He sat down on the extreme edge of a chair.

There was a long, long silence. Johnny sat at the big table, his chin between his hands and looked straight ahead of him. Rob looked moodily into the fire. Once the younger boy rose and went to the foot of the stairs.

"What you suppose is happening up there?" he inquired when he came back.

"I don't know."

"Suppose she's dying?"

"Don't!"

The elder boy turned sharply and lowered the lamp that was smoking.

The long hours crept away. By and by the lamp flickered and went out, and the fire died down, and left only a heap of white ashes on the hearth. Then the gray dawn crept in and after awhile the gray was tinged with gold. Later, the sunrise gun boomed through the stillness, to be followed by the ringing notes of the reveille.

Upstairs, the post surgeon was leaning over the little brass bed.

"I'll spend the night," he had said briefly, on his last visit. There were symptoms about Cary's labored breathing and dry cough that he did not like.

The child's sleepless eyes and flushed face looked wan in the grayness of the early dawn.

As the hours dragged by, Cary became more restless and her mind began to wander.

"Don't let him, Johnny! Don't let him! He'll drown! He'll dro—" the voice rose in a shriek and then trailed off.

The cry had reached the children below stairs. A moment later and Rob, wide-eyed and excited, appeared at the sick-room door. He was confronted by his old foe the post surgeon.

"Can't come in here," said the surgeon briefly. "It—"

"Oh, but tell her I'm not drowned! Let me tell her—"

The surgeon took him by the shoulders and marched him down stairs.

"Is this the way you promise to keep still?"

The post surgeon was skilled in other arts than his own profession. He had appealed to the boy's honor.

Trevelyan's son flung himself face downward on the hearth rug and lay motionless. Johnny went to him and knelt beside him and touched him on the arm. Something of Johnny's childhood had vanished in the night, never to return. He did not say anything to Rob; he just continued to kneel beside him with his hand on his arm.

Presently Rob sat up. His wakeful night had not improved his appearance. His shirt was a crumpled mass; his hair was disheveled, and one of his ill-laced boots was gone.

"She shan't die!" he cried, passionately, "I won't let her die! I won't! *I won't!*"

Johnny said nothing. Once, long ago, a little brother had died, and Johnny still remembered how vainly he had tried to wake him. Johnny had seen death.

Upstairs Cary tossed in her delirium.

"Johnny, don't make me keep still! I can't keep still any longer! The water looks so cold—"

And so the day wore on. The dry cough stopped and the fever ran higher and the breathing came more labored, and Cary lay wide eyed and sleepless.

The children wandered like little ghosts through the rooms of the lower floor. They pleaded that they might see Cary once. The post surgeon tried an experiment.

"The child's strength is going fast for lack of sleep," he told Mrs. Stewart, "We'll see what your boys can do."

He brought Rob in first, and Trevelyan's son stood at the foot of the bed, and was silent as they had bidden him to be; but they could see that he trembled.

Cary's eyes, bright with delirious fever, rested on him for a moment. Then she started up in bed.

"It's Rob, dear," said Rob's aunt, bending over her.

"No, it isn't!" cried Cary. "No—it—isn't! Take him away; away—a-w-a-y!"

Rob let go of the brass railing and rushed impetuously to the little girl's side and flung himself down by the bed.

"Cary! Cary! Don't you know me? It's me! It's only Rob!"

But Cary shrank back from his touch.

"I'm frightened," she moaned.

The Lieutenant came and lifted the boy and took him from the room. Trevelyan's son was crying passionately.

The excitement proved to be the worst possible thing for Cary. The fever ran higher and sapped and sapped her strength and still she moaned and cried in her delirium and still sleep did not come.

"She can't grow much worse and stay alive," muttered the post surgeon, "And something has got to be done."

He went down stairs in search of Johnny. He found the boy standing by the window, his white face turned toward the sea. Rob, his passion of tears spent, lay sleeping heavily on the lounge. The surgeon touched the elder boy on the arm and motioned him to follow him. Outside in the little square hall, they faced each other—the skilled man of science, and the delicately featured English boy with the firm mouth.

"You're going to take me to Cary?"

The surgeon nodded.

"Yes. She wouldn't see Rob, but perhaps she'll see you. I've an idea she will. She's been calling your name all day. If I take you to her, will you be very quiet?"

"I'll be very quiet," promised the little Briton, gravely.

"And we've got to get her to sleep. Perhaps—"

The boy's firm mouth quivered for an instant.

"Yes," he said.

The post surgeon let him go into Cary's room alone, and he motioned the boy's mother and Cary's father away from the bed.

The boy went directly to the head of the bed and stood there looking down at Cary. For a long while Cary did not notice him. But he waited.

The stillness of the room grew—broken only by Cary's piteous moans. After awhile she became conscious of the boy's slim figure at her side, and she turned her restless, feverish eyes to him.

Then he stroked her long straight hair timidly.

The moans ceased suddenly.

"It's Johnny," said the boy.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and took one of the child's hot hands in his.

Then the terror of the delirium fell on her again. She sat up in bed, flinging out her arms and crying, and still the boy kept that firm pressure on her hand. The sustaining touch won her back from the thralldom of the fever and she threw herself into the boy's arms and lay there, sobbing—sobbing.

The post surgeon nodded.

"I thought so," he muttered from the doorway, and beckoned the others into the adjoining room.

For an hour they sat there. Gradually the child's sobs grew weaker; after awhile they caught their echo at long intervals and by and by they died away altogether.

The shadows of the dying day crept into the sick room and the wanness of its departing struggle was reflected on Cary's small, pinched face. She still lay in the boy's arms, quiet—spent with the effort of her delirium. The boy sat rigidly

mute, supporting her.

The day sank into evening and the post surgeon came in quietly from the adjoining room. The boy's eyes met his as he entered. It was his only movement. Otherwise he might have been carved of stone. The boy's eyes smiled and the post surgeon retraced his steps.

"She's sleeping. The boy holds her life in his hands. If he can only remain motionless—"

Another hour slipped by. The post surgeon came in again. Cary was sleeping still, her whole weight resting in the boy's rigid arms. He was growing white with the strain of his enforced position. The surgeon looked down at him.

"Can you hold out?" he asked, below his breath.

The boy nodded.

The post surgeon went down stairs noiselessly to the sideboard where the Lieutenant kept his wines.

Rob sat up as he entered.

"How's Cary? What time is it? Where's Johnny?"

The post surgeon went up and laid his finger on Rob's mouth.

"Cary's sleeping. If you wake her, you'll kill her. Don't speak above a whisper."

He filled a glass with wine and turned to leave the room.

"Where's Johnny?"

"With Cary. He put her to sleep."

Trevelyan's boy clenched his hands convulsively.

"Johnny—with—Cary," he said, slowly, and then something choked him.

He followed the post surgeon to the foot of the stairs and watched him until he disappeared. Then he went back to the dimly lighted, lonely dining-room and hesitated.

Suddenly a passionate cry rose in his throat, which he smothered.

He turned and flung himself on the lounge.

"Dear God," he moaned, "Dear God, be good to a little boy. I want to die! Quick!"

Upstairs the surgeon held the brim of the wine glass to the elder boy's white lips.

The enforced position had become an agony. Once, the surgeon saw the boy bite his under lip until a drop of blood appeared. He got a pillow; two—half a dozen and supported the boy's stiff back.

Three more hours dragged away, and then Cary stirred and woke. Great beads of perspiration stood out on her thin, drawn little face, but the fever had been broken in her sleep.

The boy's grasp suddenly relaxed and Cary sank back on the pillow.

The Lieutenant helped the boy to rise; ending, by picking him up in his arms and carrying him from the room.

He re-entered Cary's room by way of the hall. By the light of the early breaking dawn, he saw something dark lying before Cary's outer door.

He stooped over it.

It was Trevelyan's boy.

BOOK ONE

THE CLAY TAKES SHAPE

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I.

The six-foot Englishman, with the military carriage and the rough tweed cap, continued to stare at the back of the girl in the brown tailor suit, leaning over the ship's rail. There was something in the attitude that recalled a child swinging on the railing of a fort's drawbridge. He could not have told exactly why. Perhaps it was because he so often recalled that picture; perhaps it was because he had always held fast to a vague hope that some day he might meet that child again.

The girl in the brown tailor suit remained motionless, her face turned toward the Liberty that was melting into an indistinct blur. The young Englishman came a little nearer. She had not been there when he had come aboard. Of that he was sure. Well, he had probably missed half of his fellow passengers while he was changing to his seafaring clothes, and there had been a couple of letters to be written to be carried back by the pilot. All that had taken time.

The girl turned. The last faint trace of Liberty had faded; she might just as well admit that, and give her attention to the novelties of ship-board life. She looked curiously down the long white deck. Passengers were appearing every

moment, clad in ulsters and soft hats; the deck steward was hurrying to and fro adjusting steamer chairs and wraps. The voyage had undoubtedly begun.

Suddenly the line of her vision was interrupted by a tall man in a rough tweed cap. And then she noticed that he had snatched it from his head and was coming toward her with both hands outstretched.

"Isn't it—Cary?" he asked, eagerly.

The girl looked into his eyes. Somewhere in their grave depths a smile was hidden.

"Why, it's Johnny," she cried, delightedly.

"To be sure it's Johnny! And what do *you* mean by sailing under an English flag?"

She laughed again, showing her perfect teeth.

"Isn't it absurd? But Daddy dragged me into it."

"Which? The Cunarder or the trip?"

"Both. Where in the world have you been all this time, and oh! how's Rob? I declare I've so many questions to ask you I don't know where to begin."

Stewart smiled.

"You're the same old Cary," he said, "Only a bit taller. Let me find your chair for you. You're not crossing alone?"

"Do you think I'd leave my father?"

"Of course not. Where is he?"

"There, forgive me. I was rude. I'm afraid I *am* as bad as ever." Cary sighed.

"I never said that—"

"Well, Papa's writing a note to be carried back on the pilot. If he does not come up soon, I'll have to hunt him up. I'm his shadow. To tell you a secret; I'm chaperoning him on this trip!"

"Indeed!" Stewart's eyes were smiling.

"To be sure. Now, about yourself—"

"Your eyes say, 'What have you been doing in America that you failed to look me up?'" said Stewart.

"That is just what I was thinking, and when we were going to hunt for you, too, when we landed! Come!"

"There isn't much to tell," said Stewart, meeting her eyes squarely. "There have been a good many years—uneventful ones—of a pretty steady 'grind', and rather rigid military training at Woolwich—"

She looked up quickly.

"You are an officer? An engineer?"

He laughed, pleased.

"You know more about our English military schools than the majority of American girls."

"You forget I am an Army woman. Go on!"

"And so I'm a member—a young one—of the Royal Engineers. I was ordered to India, where I served out my sub-lieutenancy. I was in a bit of a row there, and after, I took the jungle fever and got sick leave. They've sent me over the Atlantic for a sea trip. I'm to be transferred later. I was only in New York two days. That's why I couldn't look you up. You see, I didn't know if you were still at the old fort down South, or in Texas or Montana or—any other of your big states." He was rapidly getting off of the subject of "self." "Now, where have you been and why didn't you keep on writing?"

"I did write, but you wouldn't answer—sent the letters to your home in Scotland."

"Ah! We were traveling; the old place has been rented almost steadily for years. They must have miscarried in the forwarding. Father has preferred London political life, and mother wanted to be near us boys when at school and afterwards when we became cadets—"

"How is your mother?"

"Well; thanks. She'll be glad to see you again."

Cary looked seaward.

"I shall never forget," she said, "how she nursed me." She was silent a moment. "How's Rob?" she asked, presently.

"I'm inclined to think he's less changed than any one of the three of us. He's fiery, fierce, affectionate, as ever, with a wonderful talent for getting into scrapes and scrambling out of them again."

"What is he—a sailor?"

"He wanted to go in the navy—bad. Poor Rob. But my uncle had set his heart on the army for him. You know he was a great fighter in his day—retired on a wound that would have killed most men. He wanted him to go to Sandhurst, but Rob kicked on that, and they compromised on Woolwich."

"I didn't know Rob would ever have brains enough for the Engineers." Cary laughed and caught wildly at her hat, which the wind was trying to tear from her head.

"Rob's clever enough—cleverer than most men, if he'd only study. He leaves Woolwich in a couple of months now—graduated. How he has ever stayed there as long as he has is a marvel. Such doings!" Stewart shook his head even as he smiled.

"I believe," he said, after a pause, "It's for his father's sake and my mother's that he has drawn the line where he has! There isn't an officer or an instructor who don't like him, though. He's as straight as a string where honor is concerned, and as brave—Well! You know how brave he could be as a child."

Stewart went on.

"As for the cadets—they swear by him—every last boy of them! Rob will be wild when he hears you are in England, and will probably take 'French leave'!" Stewart laughed again. "There! That's the family history. Now, what about yourself?"

The girl ran her hand thoughtfully along the railing.

"Papa was stationed at the Fort for three years after you left us. Since then we've been moving from pillar to post—in regular Army fashion. You know how it is?" She raised her eyes to Stewart and Stewart nodded. "He was ordered to Florida and then to Arkansas and then to Alaska—" she laughed. "He sent me to boarding school for a year but I couldn't stand not seeing him, and he was even worse about me. After that he taught me himself—dear, old Daddy—he taught me everything from calculus to colt riding. It's been a wild kind of a life, but I've missed the old Fort and the sea. None of the other places was ever much like home—" Cary raised her eyes from the railing and looked soberly toward the receding shore.

Stewart watched her; realizing that while she had not grown pretty she was possessed of an indefinable magnetism.

Cary went on.

"Then Daddy got notions about me—about my lack of advantages, social and—otherwise," Cary was laughing again. "He was retired last month and now he's carrying me off to Europe, to be polished. Am I such a rough specimen?" she asked Stewart, suddenly.

He shook his head so gravely in denial that she smiled.

"There! Of course, I was only fooling! And so I'm going over to your great, beautiful, strange Old World to be 'finished'—as if anyone could ever be 'finished' as long as they live! I'm to see all the celebrated Old Masters and to visit all the old historic places and see the old ruins—" she broke off suddenly, "I think by the time I've finished, I'll be very tired, don't you?"

"And then?" asked Stewart.

"Why, then Daddy and I will return to America and have a little home somewhere—I hope near the Fort where I lived as a child; close by the sea and the capes and the beach."

They were silent a moment. Behind them was the merry hum of voices and the rapid movement of feet hurrying to and fro, but for that moment they were as much alone as though they were in the shadow of the old fort wall.

"My home," said Stewart, looking out over the sea into nothingness. "My home in eastern Scotland is like that. Some day I hope you will see it. If you ever grow very homesick for America let me know, and I'll try to arrange to run up there for a day with you and mother. The long beach will remind you of home."

"Thank you," said the girl, gently.

There was a long quiet between them, and then the young officer's face changed suddenly and he broke into an infectious laugh.

"Oh, the guns—*do* you remember the guns, and the pinafores and the sun-bonnets? Weren't you ever caught?"

The tall girl joined in with his laugh and the two—his deep and hers low—mingled and drifted back to the passers-by who smiled sympathetically at the sound. Cary shook her head.

"No—that is, not until long afterwards. It seems that the Department issued orders that the big show guns should be recast, and when they were taken away and broken up—they were found to be storehouses for a small girl's wardrobe! Lieutenant Burden happened to be on the spot and the story he tells—" she broke off, still laughing.

"Was there anything left of the things?" asked the Briton, amused.

"Yes, indeed—some were pretty well preserved! And how poor old Mammy Amy would worry over the thief who dared to steal her 'chile's clothes!' It's all too funny!"

"And Mam' Amy?"

"Dead. She followed us out to Alaska, but she died. I suppose it must have been the climate."

Stewart's face grew a little grave.

"Lieutenant Burden—wasn't he the officer we stole the boat from?"

The girl nodded, smiling.

"And that row! Wasn't that a row we had that day," he said. "Do you remember the terrible swim Rob took and how he saved us?"

"Yes. And how you comforted me. I went to sleep—didn't I?"

"Yes; and how ill you were afterwards! Do you know I've never forgiven myself for all that. I was thirteen, and the oldest, and should have had more horse sense."

"What children we were!" Cary sighed.

"Are you wishing the time back?"

"I hardly know—" she hesitated, "No, I suppose not."

Then:

"They told me that you saved me in that illness."

"Did they?"

"Do you believe in confessions?" he asked, with an odd smile.

Cary laughed.

"That depends. Well—what have you been doing?"

"Do you know I kissed you that day when you fell asleep in the boat—when we were facing death together—and again when I was fighting death for you that long night?"

"You wretch! Well, it didn't count much then," Cary's eyes were twinkling, "You were thirteen and I was only seven. Rob! Imagine Rob ever kissing me!"

Stewart laughed a little nervously.

"Look out, Rob may yet!"

"Preposterous! Don't you remember when you said you lived in Aberdeen and Rob in Argyll, and I innocently asked whether they were not near together? How indignant Rob was! And then I crossly retorted that they both began with 'a', anyway, and—" she paused for breath, and Stewart laughingly took up the story and finished it.

"And how Rob scornfully answered that so did 'cat' and 'crow'! He's never deigned to tell me which applied to which!"

"That was Rob all over!"

Late that night the quartermaster at his lonely wheel, watched a tall man pacing the decks.

After awhile the figure paused at the ship's railing and leaned against it heavily, looking out over the moonlit sea. The deep throbbing of the mighty engines came up to him and beat and beat against his senses.

"Twice," said the Briton, slowly, speaking to the stillness of the stars and the restlessness of the ocean, "Twice, as a boy, I kissed her, when we fought death together. Some day, in an hour of danger, I shall kiss her again."

II.

Cary was singing. Trevelyan heard her before he had reached the second flight of stairs in the lodgings. The clear contralto voice sifted down into the dark passage as sunlight sifts into a ravine. It rose; swelled higher and filled the entrance way. Trevelyan's pulses kept time to its swinging measure as he came on up the stairs, and quietly opened the door of the little sitting room. The measure died away. Cary finished the running accompaniment and rose from the piano.

"Bravo!" cried Trevelyan from the doorway.

"You have deserted me of late," she said, reproachfully, coming forward to greet him.

"Impossible! Let me explain, and all will be forgiven—" Trevelyan cut his sentence short, "Why, hello, John, where did you come from?"

He nodded indifferently to Stewart standing by the window, walked over

to a table and began to idly turn over the pages of a book. It was annoying always to find Stewart hanging around. The fact that Stewart was his cousin, and had shared everything he possessed with him since he had been a child, even down to his mother, did not count for anything in the world, just at this juncture. Stewart's mother was all right; indeed, she was undoubtedly the very best woman who ever lived, excepting his own mother who had been dead so long, and possibly Cary! But against Stewart himself he bore a well-founded grudge. Stewart had been the one to meet Cary on the steamer and bring her and her father to London and help them get settled in lodgings and introduce them to his friends. That was bad enough, in all conscience, but then it had been Stewart, who had constituted himself a combined walking Baedeker, and unfailing friend of the American officer and his daughter. That had been in those last wretched weeks before he had been graduated from Woolwich, and Stewart, with that confounded sick leave, had taken advantage of the opportunity offered. Even when Stewart reported for duty again, his transfer had been to a home regiment, and in the few times that he, Trevelyan, had seen them before his graduation, John had always been with Cary, and Cary had been overflowing with their mutual experiences. Now John had taken the Captain and herself to dine at the Albion, in Russell Street, Covent Garden; and had pointed out the traditional places occupied by Dickens, and Sothorn, and Toole, and the rest. Now, it had been a morning ride with John, on Rotten Row, when Maggie, John's sister, had sent around her favorite mount. Again, it had been a trip to Hampstead Heath or Richmond Park, where, from the famous hill, standing with John, she had looked toward the towers of Windsor; or to the left had seen on the horizon, the bold outline of the Surrey Downs. It was John—or if John couldn't possibly manage it—it was John's mother or John's sister who had taken her everywhere. She had been to the Derby on the Stewarts' coach; she had been to Oxford with John's sister, and met Kenneth, John's younger brother; she had visited Stratford and seen Kenilworth, and generally "done" London almost before he had begun to serve his sub-lieutenancy. And if John had been unable to think of some new place to show her, he had walked with her down the Strand or through Fleet street or Cheapside, and the two of them had retraced Dickens's or Charles Lamb's steps, and explored all the little out of the way shops! That was just like John! Trevelyan detested such things, and Trevelyan detested them even more when John and Cary had done them together, and he had been left out!

That sub-lieutenancy was another thing that rankled! Stewart had served his, and Stewart had done good work in that "row" in India, and had even got an honorable mention. Stewart always was a lucky dog. Trevelyan envied Stewart that "mention" more than he envied any man in the world anything. Cary thought so much of that "mention," and now Cary was going away!

A wild throbbing resentment against his own position in the affair; against Cary's leaving England, rose up within him, as the sea rose up and beat against the crags at home. He did not define it, but it possessed him, as did the memory of Cary's face when he was away from her.

He let the book fall back heavily on the table and walked over and leaned his elbows on the mantel, his head in his hands, and looked moodily into the open fire.

Once Cary tried to draw him into the conversation, but Trevelyan refused to be won from the depths of his own depression, to the genial atmosphere pervading the little room, and Cary, used to his ways, let him alone. She had looked at John and shaken her head.

"I can't do a thing with him to-night," it had said, but Stewart, grown wonderfully quick-witted in regard to Cary, fancied that he heard her sigh.

Outside the daylight faded and a heavy fog crept up and fell over the Thames and London like a pall. Here and there a street lamp flickered faintly through the mist, and the rumble of carriage wheels, heard, though unseen, reached them, and Cary lighted the big red lamp, preparatory to afternoon tea and the Captain's return. Once she went to the window to look for her father, pressing her face against the glass, but she could not see through the heavy, yellow mist. Trevelyan could hear her and John talking in the window recess, although he could not distinguish what they were saying. Once Cary laughed. The sound irritated him.

After awhile Cary came back into the room and began to handle the teacups absent-mindedly. Her table was close to the fire, and Trevelyan, by turning his head, could watch the ruddy reflection play over her face. He turned back to the glowing logs.

"Sugar?" asked Cary suggestively, a little later of Trevelyan.

"No," said Trevelyan, moodily, "No sugar and no tea!"

Cary shrugged her shoulders.

"You're impossible, to-day," she said, "Bread and butter, John?"

After awhile Stewart prepared to leave. Trevelyan still leaned against the mantel, his face turned to the fire. He knew Stewart was going, but he did not move. From the doorway he could hear Stewart's voice calling out good-bye.

"Good-bye," he called back, shortly.

Cary returned to the tea table, paused and looked at Trevelyan's back in an uncertain way. Trevelyan was acutely conscious of her nearness. She sat down, resting her intertwined fingers on the edge of the table and looked down at them.

"Well?"

Trevelyan turned at the sound of her quiet voice and faced her, still resting one elbow on the mantel.

"Well!" he repeated, a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "It isn't 'well' at all! It's as confoundedly bad as it can be! Here you're going to leave London day after to-morrow, to be gone—"

"Three months," said Cary.

"Exactly!"

"I'll be back before you know it!"

Trevelyan laughed bitterly.

"You think so?" Then: "I can tell you how long two months can be! I learned that at Woolwich before I graduated, and after I had seen you." He stopped abruptly and beat his foot impatiently on the fender.

"Nonsense! You're going to be a British officer. Where's your backbone?"

"I've backbone enough—there's no trouble about that!" Trevelyan laughed oddly. "I could fight all right. I could face danger. I could lead a charge into the mouth of the cannon! I've backbone enough!"

He had turned to her full as he was speaking. His face was aflame with the possibilities his words had awakened. It was transformed back into the face of the boy who conquered the storm and the sea and death, and it was burning with a newer passion still.

Cary's eyes fell before the look in his and rested on her folded hands. After a little she began to trace an intricate pattern on the table with her forefinger. A weight of fear was resting on her breast.

Trevelyan stood silent looking down at her for a moment, and then he turned sharply and went over to the window. The perfume of the violets she wore possessed him. The clock on the mantel struck the half hour, and a log broke noisily on the hearth. Cary looked toward him. The oppressive fear had passed.

"There will be a month in Switzerland! Think of it—the Alps at last! Three weeks of Paris; three more of Ireland, and two in Scotland with the Camerons. Did you know I was going to your Scotland and to Argyll?"

Trevelyan turned away from the window.

"No. Since when?"

"The Camerons asked me last week. They are to have a house party, I think. They asked John, too—"

Trevelyan bit his lip.

"Is John going?"

"Not for the full time, but he hopes to get a three days' leave."

Trevelyan came back to the fire and drummed on the mantel.

"When we were children," he said, suddenly, "down at the Fort, I used to tell you about Scotland. I am glad you are to see it. You will like it! And when you watch the sea beat against the crags, and the breakers tossing their white heads,

you can think of me, remembering it used to be my home. I hope you will see a storm," Trevelyan went on, "such a storm as I used to glory in as a little chap! They don't have such storms anywhere else, I think!"

He stopped short, and looked hard at the fire.

"The Camerons' place is within driving distance of my home. If I can get off for a day will you let me take you there? I want you to see it, and to meet old Mactier, and go with me into the caves where I used to play as a boy, and climb the crags, way up to their topmost peaks, and breathe the freedom that is in the air!"

Cary sprang up, flinging out her hands. There was an odd pulsing in her throat.

"Go! of course I'll go!" she cried, and then the pulsing grew and grew, and choked her.

At six Trevelyan left. She did not meet his eyes in parting, and Trevelyan missed her bantering voice, that usually followed him down stairs.

"It's Stewart," he told himself with passionate resentment, and he stumbled over the lower step and swore at the darkness.

Cary went back into the empty room, over to the mantel and looked into the fire, as Trevelyan had done. She could hear the echo of the closing front door. Outside, the fog grew thicker. Inside, the red lamp threw its coloring on the crimson roses Stewart had brought that day, making them more glorious still, and the heat of the fire intensified the odor of the violets on the woman's breast. Stewart had brought the violets too.

Cary turned away from the fire, and moved restlessly about the room, fixing a chair here, straightening a book there, and fingering some familiar object. As she passed the open piano, she hesitated, put out one finger and struck a key. The sound vibrated through the quiet room, deep and full and strong. A bar of an old Scotch song rose in her throat and broke. She closed the piano hastily. Once she leaned over the roses.

"Dear John," she murmured, and her hands touched for a moment the violets on her breast.

Then she went back to the fire, and stood wide-eyed and silent, looking into the heart of it. She was dimly conscious of the violets' perfume, but it was Trevelyan's face she saw in the flames.

III.

There was a storm chill in the air. Trevelyan readjusted the carriage robe that had slipped away from Cary, and turned up the collar of his driving coat. Now and again he glanced at Cary. The girl's face was turned away and she was looking out over the gray crags to the grayer sea beyond. The last three months had wrought an indefinable change in her. Trevelyan had noticed it on his arrival at the Camerons' that morning. He wondered vaguely if it had anything to do with travel and the process of "polishing" to which Cary so often banteringly referred. Well he was not going to worry over it. He had only one day and he meant to make the most of it.

He had written the Camerons he was coming, and had not even waited for an answer. He had announced his intention and it was enough. He had known Tom Cameron since they wore kilts together, and back of their friendship, his mother's family had known the Camerons for generations. Somewhere in the history of the houses, there had been an inter-marriage. That had been the enduring seal on the intimacy. The Scotch are clannish.

It had taken him hours to reach the Camerons'. It would take him hours to return. But this one afternoon, at least, was his. After it, might come the deluge. After it—probably would come the deluge! He wasn't feeling very sure of himself or of his own self power. After a man has been in torment for three months—

Tom Cameron's horse knew the road well—almost as well as Trevelyan did—and kept up a steady pace, and Tom Cameron's cart was comfortable.

John was expected that afternoon for three days. Well; Cary would not be there to welcome him. Cary would be with him. Stewart might have her—undoubtedly would have her, for those three days, but to-day—this afternoon, was his.

The Camerons, learned in the signs of the sky, had demurred at the storm chill in the air and the threatening clouds, when after an early lunch, Trevelyan and the American girl had stepped into the cart. Trevelyan, however, had no intention of having his well laid plans frustrated, and in his masterful way, had over-ruled the objections. The storm was a possibility. His return next morning at daybreak, a necessity. Let the storm come. He defied it.

Cary shivered. Trevelyan noticed it and leaned toward her.

"You are cold?"

Cary turned her eyes away from the gray crags and the gray sea. Trevelyan's were near her own. She shook her head.

"No," she faltered. "It must be Scotland—the Scotland you told me of as a child. Once, long ago I fought you about it. If I had dreamed—if I had known—" her voice faded into the boom of the nearing surf and she turned her eyes away from Trevelyan's, coastward again.

The music of her voice and the roar of the ocean mingled and surged over

Trevelyan.

"God!" he said under his breath.

IV.

As Trevelyan and the girl drove up the long entrance way and neared the house, they could distinguish through the faint Scotch mist that had fallen, the outline of Mactier waiting for them at the door.

The old retainer hurried forward to welcome them.

"Ay, sir, but 'tis gude to see ye! My heart's been sore for a sight o' thy face this lang time!" he cried to Trevelyan.

Trevelyan jumped down from the cart.

"Hello, Mactier!" he cried. "Jove! But it's good to see *you* again!"

Then he turned to Cary and helped her to the ground.

"This is Mactier," he said, as one saying all that is sufficient. "Mactier, I used to tell Miss Cary about you when I was a little shaver."

"Aweel ye were ever a mindful lad o' me!" The old man smiled.

He opened the door for them, and stood to one side to let them enter.

"'Tis a bad day ye have for seeing the old place," he said as they passed him.

"You can bring the horse around in an hour," called Trevelyan as the old man drove away.

Then Trevelyan went back to Cary. The girl was standing at the furthest end of the great hall, looking out of the window. She could hear the beat of the sea on the near-by crags and through the faint mist catch a glimpse of the water.

Mactier had opened the long-closed blinds and the light seemed concentrated around the figure of the girl. Trevelyan tore his riding gloves from his hands and bent and unbent his fingers rapidly. "If I had dreamed—if I had known—" He reached her side.

"I'm afraid it's a gloomy day we've struck," he said quietly, "but I'm in hopes the mist won't last. On clear days from here you can see the highest crag of all. It's where I used to spend half my days, as a little shaver,—up there on the top. It was my eyrie. I used to be a robber king and a shipwrecked mariner and a Viking all rolled in one."

Trevelyan laughed, bending forward and nearer to her and looked out of the window, as though to penetrate the mist. Cary leaned against the frame of

the window listening.

"When I got a bit older," Trevelyan's voice fell heavily on the silence of the big lonely hall, "I used to climb up there—to get away from everyone, and where no one could find me; and I would hide up there, and sit by the hour, looking out at the sea and watching the white spray breaking below me. And then later I used to try and think of what love meant—what love could be—if I should ever love—"

He turned away abruptly and walked up and down the hall. After a little he came back to Cary, who had not stirred.

"And sometimes I used to dream of a woman who would some day come into my life—and I used to crawl to the edge of the crag and lean over and look into the white foam below, until I got dizzy—looking for her face. It seemed her face must be in the white foam—foolish, wasn't it?"

Cary ran her finger along the ledge of the window.

"We all have our dreams."

Trevelyan watched her, as she turned her face again to the window. The mist outside increased and seemed to muffle the beat of the sea and all the sounds of nature, and it hung around her and softened her face into wonderful curves. He turned his eyes away from her suddenly. He could have crushed that face in his hands, bringing it up to his own—

"Mactier will be around in an hour," he said after a while in a matter of fact way, "and then I'll drive you about the place a bit before we return. We can easily make it and be back for dinner."

"Yes?" asked Cary, absent-mindedly.

"Come! Wake up! And look around you! Isn't this a fine old hall?" But Trevelyan's voice lacked enthusiasm.

Cary turned and looked around her. Her dream spell had passed. The odd throbbing in her throat, she had felt long ago in London, the evening she had bidden Trevelyan good-bye, returned with triple force. A wave of color swept over the usual pallor of her skin; her eyes were shining. Cary was transformed.

"Fine?" her voice pulsed with the enthusiasm Trevelyan's had lacked. "It's the finest old hall in all the world! The dearest old home! Take me over it—from the top to the bottom, and show me where you and John and Tom Cameron used to play!"

Trevelyan led her from room to room; passing quickly this one, that held memories of his mother; pausing on the threshold of another, to tell the story of the Scotch boy's playtime; to show to her the first stag's head, shot when hunting with Mactier. Trevelyan told the story well, for he loved with all the unyielding strength of an unyielding nature, the memories his words called up. Now it was how Tom and he had slipped out of the window one night and scaled the ivy

covered turret wall, that they might investigate the old cave down at the water's edge, by the light of the waning moon. Mactier had told them strange tales of the happenings in the cave when the moon was on the wane. Again it was the day he had stumbled with his gun and the bullet had entered his thigh; how old Mactier had flung him across his shoulders, and borne him home through the darkness of the falling night. Again it was the morning his mother had died; how he had been awakened by the hurrying of many feet, and starting up in bed had found his father bending over him, calling him by name.

Never had the girl known Trevelyan to be so eloquent; never had she seen him as he was to-day. Now Trevelyan's voice was blithe with the blitheness of glad remembered things; now it broke with feeling, or vibrated with the passion of reviving scenes long dead to life. He seemed not to be speaking of himself. He was telling her the story of an English boy, Scottish bred; of his wild escapades; of his love of freedom and unrestricted things; of his dangers and his hopes; of what he meant to be when he became a man!

And Cary, held fast by the magic of the story, felt her pulses throb; her being thrill. An unreasonable regret that she had not been a Scottish child to follow where he led, up the high crags or down into the black caves, took possession of her; and she recalled a picture of a sea churned into foam; of a boat drifting out toward the waste of ocean; and above the gray surface of the stone-hued waters, a boy's head turned landward.

Once, in following Trevelyan from one room to another, she glanced out of the window and noticed vaguely that the heavy rain drops lay upon the glass. Later, she was conscious of the dull booming of thunder, echoing among the nearby crags and losing itself in the beat of the surf. Then a flash of vivid lightning lit up the sudden darkness that had fallen on the room.

Trevelyan rushed to the window. The thralldom of the Scotch boy's story was upon him still.

"It's a storm!" he cried. "It's a storm come to welcome me!"

He turned to Cary.

"Come here!" he commanded, "where you can watch the sea and the storm fight it out together!"

She came instantly.

The darkness increased until they could not distinguish each other's faces. The thunder came and beat itself against the crags and spent itself. Now and again they could see, by the glare of the prolonged lightning, the waters lashed into a white fury. Once, by its light, she looked at Trevelyan's face. It was white and he was breathing deeply. He was looking seaward and seemed unconscious of her presence. Once, he flung out his hand and it touched hers. It was colder than the storm chill in the air. Once, she looked at him again, and he, turning,

met her eyes. Some power as mighty as the storm held her look to his, and then above the beating of the thunder on the crags and the booming, of the surf, she heard his voice.

"Just you and I and the storm! You and I in all the world—all that the world holds!" She felt his hand upon her shoulder; she felt its coldness through her heavy dress and she shrank away from him, her voice and her words broken, with a nameless fear.

Above the storm she could hear Trevelyan laugh.

"Let you go, when I've got you at last! Let you go when your face has haunted me through all the days and all the nights of the long months! *Let—you—go!*"

"Oh, Robert!"

"Oh, you think I'm mad! Well, perhaps I am for love of you. You haunt me. You possess me. It was your face I dreamed of in the foam. There! don't tremble so! I won't hurt you, child!" The thunder drowned his voice.

"Do you dream what you are to me or could make of me? Do you know what it is to hold a man's soul in your hands?"

The spell of his words lifted. The instinct of an unknown danger possessed her. She slipped away in the blackness toward the door. The silence grew and grew.

Gradually the darkness lifted and the thunder and the boom of the surf lessened and the lightning came at long and longer intervals. Cary became acutely conscious of every sound. Somewhere in the distance she heard voices and the echo of men's footfalls. She kept her eyes away from Trevelyan who was standing with his back to her. Danger lay that way.

Then the spell of Trevelyan's nearness crept over her again. She tried to fight it off, trembling. She moved a step toward him, one hand pressed close to her breast. Then she paused, arrested by a voice.

"Robert! Cary! *Cary!*"

The sound echoed down the great hall, across the still deserted rooms, to the study where they stood.

Trevelyan turned sharply.

"John!"

Cary's hand crept from her breast to her face and she covered her eyes.

"John!"

Trevelyan crossed the space between them.

"Cary!"

The woman shrank back.

"Don't—you frighten me!" she moaned.

Trevelyan caught her by the wrist.

"Cary! Cary! Take that back! How can love frighten? See, I love you—love you!"

She was in his arms and he was leaning over her, his mouth close to her face.

"Cary!" he whispered.

Down the long hall, through the silence of the deserted rooms, came the voice.

"Cary! Where are you? Cary!"

She wrenched herself out of Trevelyan's arms.

"You are a coward!" she said slowly.

A wild tide of passion leaped up in Trevelyan.

"How dare you call me a coward," he said, and his lips could hardly articulate, "If you were not a woman—" he choked and his voice died away.

Cary moved nearer to the door. Once, she turned her pale face and looked at Trevelyan. Trevelyan stood rigid and mute where she had left him, the knuckles of one hand pressed to his mouth. She faltered.

"Cary! Cary! Where are you?"

She turned, her thumb and forefinger pressing her throat.

"Here!" she cried. Then, louder: "Here!"

Trevelyan passed her, and strode through the deserted rooms into the great hall.

"Cary is in the study," he said to the group of men he found there, "Hello Tom!"

"John arrived an hour after you left," said Cameron, regarding Trevelyan's rigid face curiously, "and when the storm came up nothing would do but that he must come for you both in a closed carriage. I knew you'd be safe enough—if necessary find shelter with some of the tenant's wives. But John—"

Trevelyan turned to old Mactier.

"You can close up the house," he said shortly.

Stewart found the girl standing in the study. He went up to her and drew her arm through his and quietly led her down the long dark passage that connected with the great hall. He could feel that she was trembling. He patted her hand soothingly.

"There, there! child. It's all right. I know!"

Instead of returning to London from the Camerons' place in Scotland, Cary and the Captain went to the south of France. Just what it was that had suddenly made Cary so persistent in her desire not to return to England, was not known. Trevelyan, indeed fancied that he knew, when he had finished reading Cary's brief note telling of their change of plans and their intended prolonged absence from England, and he cursed the folly that had separated him from Cary in the long months that lay ahead.

To Stewart, and indeed to the world at large, she gave the old, threadbare excuse—the London climate. If Stewart ever suspected otherwise, he kept it to himself.

The Captain, like Trevelyan, fancied he knew something of the cause, but the Captain was a wise man, and he asked no more than Cary chose to impart—which was next to nothing at all. Still Cary wanted to get away from London and Cary was not given to whims. The climate was a sufficiently good excuse. The fact that it was an excuse made no difference to the Captain, and to the south of France they went.

They were gone all winter, traveling in a desultory way, since there was no call for haste and Cary's pleasure was the chief consideration. And Cary delighted in the quaint old towns and grew enthusiastic again over the trifles of life, as she had done as a child down by the sea-coast fort, or out on the western plains. Now it was a month at Cette, on the Gulf of Naples; then it was down to the Eastern Pyrenees, and over, and a month in Spain, and back again to France and up to Bayonne and Bordeaux, and then to Paris by easy stages, and then on to Calais and to England.

There were letters from Stewart awaiting to welcome her, whenever he knew her next stopping place, and they often enclosed notes of introduction to people who could add either to her comfort or her pleasure. Stewart knew the country like a book. He had toured it on foot after his Eton days. As for London—London was duller than he had ever known it; the fogs were unusually frequent and heavy, and he was glad that she had escaped them. He hoped she was enjoying herself; she must surely see such and such a thing, or take such and such a drive. He had not taken it in years, himself, but she would tell him all about it. He supposed she would be able to brush up his French when she returned. By the way, when was she returning to England?

She returned to England in the late spring and in all that time Trevelyan had not written her a line. He was at the station to meet her though, and it was he who took possession of her while the Captain and Stewart went to see about the luggage.

Indeed, in the weeks that followed, London observed that it was Trevelyan who monopolized the American officer's daughter. It was Trevelyan who

dropped in to afternoon tea with unfailing regularity, and fought with her, and scolded her, and laughed with her, and took her driving, or riding on the Row. His superior officer fretted and speculated at the change in the young Engineer, until he passed him one day with Cary.

"There's a brilliant young chap being ruined," he said crossly to his aide. "Served out his sub-lieutenancy finely, and has behaved this winter like an officer and a gentleman. Now the barracks can't hold him, and he shirks like a weak-livered chicken. Who's the girl?"

"An American—the daughter of a retired officer. I fancy you've often seen them together—elderly man with iron gray hair; sat next to you, but one, at the Stewarts' dinner."

The aide broke off and looked fixedly after Trevelyan.

"Some day in danger—" he said, as if to himself.

VI.

Cary was drumming idly on the piano. Her attitude was the personification of listlessness. When the Captain had spoken of it that morning she said it was "the spring feeling in the air."

The Captain smiled as he walked down the stairs of the lodgings.

"It's London climate—fog and rain—in the winter; and it's London sunshine in the spring!"

Cary continued to drum on the piano after he left. Then she let her hands fall from the keys and looked absently about the room. She supposed Trevelyan would drop in later or anyhow in the evening. Trevelyan had been irreproachable since her return—since that day in Scotland.

Presently she dashed into a popular song and sung it with a touch of the old gleeful enthusiasm she had left behind in France. Trevelyan loathed that song.

She broke off suddenly and twirled around on her stool. Someone was knocking.

"Come in," she shouted, not rising, and thinking it was either Robert or John.

The landlady entered bearing a card. Cary held out her hand for it.

"But my father is out. Please tell Captain Trevelyan—"

"But miss, the Captain asked for you."

Cary rose.

"For me?"

Then she laughed.

"Oh, you must be mistaken, but if you'll ask Captain Trevelyan up, I'll explain."

She remained standing by the door of their little sitting room. She could hear the English officer tramping slowly and heavily up the stairs. She remembered Robert telling her of the charge his father had led at Inkerman, and how he had gotten that wound in his hip. After awhile she caught sight of the top of the officer's white head. She went forward to meet him and led him into the room and rolled up a big leather chair.

"It's Papa's favorite," she said, smiling and standing with one hand resting invitingly on the big tufted back.

The English officer smiled back from under his shaggy brows, and sank into the great chair with a sigh of genuine comfort. Cary drew up a chair and sat down near him.

"Papa is out," she said. "He has only just gone, too. I'm so sorry. If you care to wait—and perhaps later let me give you a cup of tea—" she went on with a certain charming spontaneity, "John says my tea is almost like the tea the English girls make—" she questioned Trevelyan's father with her laughing eyes.

"And what does my boy say about your tea?" asked the English officer, watching her curiously.

"Robert? Oh, Robert never says anything nice about it. He never says nice things to me anyway," Cary pouted. "But I notice he nearly always drinks three cups when he comes and after all I believe that counts for a good deal—don't you?"

"Undoubtedly—for a good deal of tea! And does he often come to drink it with you?"

Cary laughed.

"Oh—frequently," she said vaguely.

The old British officer drew patterns on the floor with his cane and was silent.

Cary looked at him stealthily from under her long lashes. She had only met Trevelyan's father when he had called formally on their coming to England, or sometimes when he stopped by to take the Captain to drive, and once at the Stewarts', at dinner. He had always inspired her with a certain awe. It might have been his lameness which Cary was wont to regard as a badge of an honor legion, or simply his brusque manner, not unlike his son's, but lacking much of his son's odd charm. She sometimes had fancied she had seen a physical likeness between them, and once she had caught herself wondering if the father had looked like

the son in his youth and if the son would resemble more closely the father in age. She patted thoughtfully the arm of her chair.

"Papa will be so sorry to miss you," she began.

Trevelyan's father leaned forward. He suddenly stopped drawing patterns on the floor with his cane.

"I did not come to see your father," he said, "I came especially when I knew he was out and you were in. I am calling on you." He smiled grimly, forcing the boy's face from his mind.

Cary stared. Then she recovered herself. "Yes?" she said politely.

The old officer sat up very straight grasping his cane, and then he led direct to the object of his visit, as he had led direct his famous charge into the center of the enemy's lines, on the heights of Inkerman, way back in '54.

"I've come to see you about that boy of mine," he said bluntly.

"You mean—Robert?" asked Cary slowly, and for lack of something to say.

"He's a good enough kind of a chap—" Cary suppressed a smile, remembering how the old man adored him, "but he's a bit hot-headed and reckless, and he's—mad over you, and—" he broke off. It seemed to him almost as though he was disloyal to the boy.

Cary leaned forward with burning cheeks.

"And you hope he won't do anything rash—is that it?" There was a trace of indignation in her voice.

"Jove! no, child. I haven't come to plead for him, but to ask you to be careful."

"I don't understand you," said Cary, the hot flush not fading.

"There! You must not be offended. You know the boy is the apple of my eye, but he isn't faultless. He has got good stuff in him if he is only moulded right, but there would be the very devil to pay—I beg your pardon—if he was ever thwarted in anything he'd set his stubborn mind on."

Trevelyan's father rose and crossed over to the window and stood there looking out on the lengthening English twilight. His son's face as it had looked years ago as a baby, rose before him, but the baby had reproachful eyes.

"He's brave and he's strong and he's every inch a soldier; but a woman, child, needs gentleness as well as strength."

The soft dim twilight crept into the room; passed the rigid form of the old soldier at the window and stole onward to the chair in which the girl sat motionless. The outline of her figure and the whiteness of her half averted cheek, showed vaguely through the gloom.

After a long, long time she rose.

"Thank you," she said, and the unconscious dignity in her voice touched the old warrior at the window strangely. "It was good of you to think of me so

kindly, even though it is not deserved and—not necessary.”

After a little Trevelyan’s father turned, and came toward the shadowy standing figure.

”I understand,” he said; and then: ”Good-bye.”

”Good-bye,” said Cary, gently, but she did not offer to shake hands.

Half an hour later the Captain came in. The kettle was not singing, nor the curtains drawn, nor his chair rolled up in its accustomed place, with his easy slippers near by, and the red lamp was unlighted.

”Where is she? Where’s my baby?”

Cary rose from the big chair that Trevelyan’s father had occupied, and came slowly forward.

”Here,” she said, simply, her voice quiet as the deepening twilight that surrounded her, and she rubbed her cheek up and down against the Captain’s.

The Captain lighted the red lamp, and turned to look at her, arrested by the vague trouble in the voice.

VII.

Trevelyan’s father walked slowly down the stairs and out into the long twilight.

”For all the good I’ve done, for all I’ve saved her, or learned about her real feelings for the boy, I might have spared myself the call. Gad! but she has pride though, and damn me if I don’t like it! The boy hasn’t got half bad taste anyway. Heaven bless the boy—and spare the woman he marries!”

Then he pressed his lips together suddenly as though all had been said, and he planted his cane very firmly on the pavement with each step, swinging it very high when he raised it again. But he kept on thinking of Robert, and all the memories he had ever cherished of him, assailed him now, as though charging against the breastworks he had raised of duty. And every memory had those reproachful eyes. He, his father, had gone to plead with the woman he loved. What right had he to do this thing, questioned the eyes.

The old officer walked slower.

She had told him that she thanked him, but that his call had been unnecessary. How *dared* she tell him so; how dared she be indifferent to his son, or sit in judgment on him!

Yet, hadn’t she a right?

The old British officer paused on the corner and stared at the carriages going by, beating his cane on the curb.

But he loved him, as he was, with all his faults; he loved him for his faults; and the whole thing was hard—harder than the charge at Inkerman.

Then he began to think of Cary, and the more he thought of Cary, the more resolved he became on the course to be pursued, and with the strengthening resolve the reproachful eyes retreated. The boy was ruining his life here. His career of which he had once thought so much had become dwarfed by his love for a woman. In India—but there, he could prove the stuff he was made of. An officer who has seen Indian service is always a bit better than he was before, or a bit worse. He was never quite the same again. And Cary—well, that girl was worth saving, even if the boy was his own.

The British officer turned into Grosvenor Square, and went up the broad steps of the house the Stewarts had rented for the past five years. He found the older Stewart in his library, as he knew he would, absorbed in the latest political news. The Scotchman looked up as he entered.

"Well, what do you want? I can see it is something by your face."

"Yes. I want you to use your influence with the Secretary and get Robert transferred to the regiment that sails for India next month."

"What?"

Trevelyan's father flung himself into one of the big chairs, leaned his elbow on the edge of the table and shaded his eyes, "It could be done—I suppose, without his knowing?"

"Why, y-e-s, but—" Stewart broke off doubtfully.

Trevelyan's father leaned forward, still shading his eyes and staring hard at his boots.

"I'm not much of a talker, as you know, Malcolm," he said concisely. "And what I've once done for a man I don't generally remind him of, but at Inkerman, years ago when you were a bit of a boy lieutenant, I did you a slight service—"

"You saved my life," said the Scotchman briefly.

"I suppose I did. Well, you are always harping on that, and a service to me. If you will get the boy ordered off without his suspecting—" the older Trevelyan broke off and then went on, "You're a power in politics and could do it better than I. Politics count three-fourths, now-a-days, even with the army."

"I'll do it, but may I know your reason? I always fancied you liked having Robert stationed in England—"

Trevelyan's father dropped the hand that was shading his eyes, with a dull thud on the table.

"I have. But the boy's ruining himself. He will never make even a tin soldier at this rate. He is throwing his chance of a career to the winds—and he don't care.

He was reprimanded a month ago for negligence of duty, and again yesterday," the old soldier flushed, "and he don't care! It is not the easiest thing for a man to talk so about his flesh and blood, but—the boy's whole future depends on what he makes of his life now; and I would not give a penny for what it will turn out to be, if he is not hauled up with a sharp turn and gotten out of England. The boy will do the Queen and the Service honor, where there is danger to be faced and courage needed, but the idleness of barrack life—" he broke off.

The elder Stewart nodded.

"True," he said.

"There is something else that has decided me. I went to call on the little American this afternoon."

"Ah?"

"She's game, and worth the best fellow born."

"Is not your Robert good enough for her?"

"No; but your John is."

There was a long silence. Somewhere outside a carriage drove into the Square, the echo of its wheels deadened by the heavy curtains. Somewhere in the house a door closed noisily.

"I always used to fancy I would want a Scotch lassie, for John," said the Scotchman with a slow smile, "but lately I have not been so sure; not—so—sure!"

Trevelyan's father sat silent.

"Out in India," he said after a while, "there will be something for him to do and think of besides the little American girl—" he rose, "You will see to it then?"

The elder Stewart looked thoughtfully down at the table.

"Since you think it wisest—yes."

* * * * *

"Out in India," said Trevelyan's father, to himself as he paused on the steps of the Grosvenor Square house, and stared hard into the darkness, "But, God, how I'll miss the boy."

VIII.

Trevelyan had been gone a year. His orders for Indian service had been a nine

days' wonder to London.

"Of course he will get his uncle to work him back on a home regiment or do something on the strength of his father's gallant action at Inkerman and his wound." Tom Cameron had said. "Of course he won't go."

"Of course not," London had said.

"I'll be hanged if I'll go," Trevelyan had exploded to Stewart, and he spent most of his time between his father's chambers and his uncle's house, relieved by frantic calls to every influential man he knew. But the powers that could have worked in his behalf, remained passive, and for the first time his father and uncle refused to help him. Trevelyan wondered wildly what suddenly possessed them all, and what had become of his own persuasiveness.

"Jove! I should think you would be pleased," his father had said, purposely avoiding his eyes. "As a little chap you were eternally wanting to grow up and get into active service. Here you have only been vegetating in barrack life and now that you have the chance to win your spurs—"

"Damn the spurs," Trevelyan had said.

"Sorry, but I can't help you," his uncle had answered when he had made his sixth and last desperate appeal to him. "I've seen the Secretary. He says the commander of the regiment wants just such a fellow—one of the Engineers. You can't expect to remould the entire military force of the United Kingdom, my boy, when you have just about finished serving your sub-lieutenancy."

"John's an Engineer and has seen Indian service too," Trevelyan had suggested moodily, and the elder Stewart had remained silent.

Trevelyan continued to fight passionately against the orders until the hour of sailing.

Cary went down with the family to see the transport off, and when Trevelyan caught his last glimpse of her she was standing out distinctly from the background of the faint fog that had arisen, with Stewart at her side.

He turned his face away sharply and gripped at the ship's rail. Then a sudden pressure came against his throat and breast as though the strength was being crushed from him. He swallowed hard.

For once, Fate had conquered Trevelyan.

* * * * *

He wrote to Cary just one time that year—on the voyage out—a letter that a man does not often write more than once in his life. In it were the passion and the love; the strength and weakness of his nature. On one page he stripped his heart for her, that she might know its faults, and fairly judge. On the next, he tried to vindicate his failings.

"I would be as clay in your hands," he wrote toward the close, "You could do with me what you would. I love you more than it is generally given to a man to love—more than an English officer should. I would desert for you, for I love you more than England and more than my honor—" and then there came a blot upon the page, that half covered the last word. The letter ended as a child's struggle ends—brokenly: and he asked her in a few disjointed sentences to be his wife.

Weeks later when the letter was delivered, Cary was out with John. On her return she sat far into the night to answer it, that her reply might go back to him by the next Indian mail.

"Your love frightens me," she said in part, "and I cannot bind myself through time and distance. If I loved you as I should—and as I *could* love a man—I would say 'yes'—as it is, I must say 'no.' It lies with you if my answer ever changes. I do not demand love that would prove disloyal to an officer's vow of courage in the service. I do not want such love. I am an army woman, and army women, all the world over, have one code of allegiance—which is absolute. You cheapen me when you suggest I would be satisfied with anything less. As for moulding you—a man moulds himself into the perfect and complete, or he breaks the clay with his own hands. When I marry it shall be a man whose nature is stronger than my own. It is the way of women."

And Trevelyan had been gone a year.

IX.

At the end of the twelve months Stewart got a letter from Trevelyan.

He smiled a bit curiously as he tore open the travel worn flap. He wondered what Robert had to say for himself or what he wanted. It was the first letter he had received since Robert had been ordered to India, but he laughed genuinely in the silence of the deserted club room, at the opening, and characteristic words:

"This is a damnable hole! It is hot as—well I won't swear any more—but it is hotter than I ever imagined a place could be on the *surface* of the earth. We are miles from any decent civilization, and how you can talk decently about the natives and the native regiments, staggers me! I don't trust 'em, and what's more I doubt very much if they hold me in any higher regard. But what is the good of writing so to you. You know what Indian service is. Your station was either a good deal better than mine, or you have a lot more back bone than I have. The

first idea making me jealous, and the last not being conducive to self-respect, there don't seem to be any choice! To move requires a strenuous effort. The life is stagnation. It is a living death and the death numbness is creeping into my veins. They tell me that the natives have not been so quiet for years, and most of the officers and men wish they'd stir up a bit and give them some trouble. I don't. I don't want trouble. I don't believe I could fight if I had to! Damned odd, isn't it, when my blood used to boil and my head throb queer, when I was a little shaver at home and there was danger around? I guess I wasn't cut out for the Service, after all. Mactier would wonder— * * * I think I'm going mad. As you may have caught on I am writing all this with a purpose; for it is only fair for you to know what this station is, and I'm asking more than one man ought of another, but if you'd get transferred out here— There wouldn't be any trouble about the technical part of it, for the Engineers are needed bad for surveying. Your last letter said something about your getting a commission in the Gordon Highlanders—if you could only come here instead—I suppose I am selfish, but I can't get a grip on things. If—”

Stewart looked up from the letter, toward the window and the street— seriously. Then he went over to the window and sat down in a big chair and leaned forward, still looking out. The noise of the passing carriages and the stir of the passing crowd crept in to meet the silence of the empty reading room. He sat motionless, heedless alike of the noise and the stillness. Once he thought of Cary, and his face changed swiftly.

Then he went back to the letter and finished it, and later he re-read it, and folded it, and put it in his vest pocket. Then he went back to his old occupation of looking out of the window.

The crowd was no longer one big indistinct blur, and he was vaguely conscious that he saw his mother's carriage among the others coming down the street. It came nearer and he could see that his sister was in it. There was a girl sitting beside her. The girl was Cary.

* * * * *

It was a week before Stewart called again at the lodgings. Cary firmly expected him the second day; grew bewildered as the evening of the fourth came and went without bringing him; on the fifth grew anxious and on the sixth wrote to him. Calling on his family just then for news was out of the question. They had gone to Brighton for a week.

He came to her the day her letter reached him.

”I would scold you,” the girl said, ”if it were not for these. You never forget my violets.”

She buried her face in the purple bloom, before she fastened the bunch on her dress.

"I have left the order with the florist," said Stewart quietly. "He will send you the violets every week, and when they are gone, I have told him about your roses. I am going away."

She looked up quickly from the flowers she had just fastened in her dress.

"For long?"

"I think so—yes."

"Where are you going?"

Stewart pulled at his gloves.

"India," he said briefly.

"You have received your orders?"

"Yes. I asked for them."

Cary went up to him and pulled him by the sleeve.

"I—don't—quite—understand," she said. "I—is it the Highlanders?"

He shook his head.

"No, it's Rob. He is just about mad enough to blow his brains out. I'm going to him."

"He's sent for you?"

"He's *asked* me to come."

Stewart sat with her in the little room all that long afternoon, and they had tea together, and they watched the sunset from the windows together, as they had done almost every day that year. It would seem strange to drink tea alone and watch the sunset by herself, thought Cary.

"If you would sometimes write—" he suggested once.

"Of course, I will write," she retorted quickly.

When the twilight came, he left.

End of Book One.

BOOK TWO

THE BREAK IN THE CLAY

BOOK TWO

THE BREAK IN THE CLAY

I.

Trevelyan's face was the first that greeted Stewart at his journey's end.

Trevelyan had been in the wildest spirits for days before Stewart's arrival, and his fellow officers spoke about the sudden change in him. For the first time in the year that Trevelyan had served with them, he became less moody and unsociable and whimsical, and they grew to think less critically of one who had never been a favorite. It was probably only the Colonel, remembering the stock from whence he sprang, who took the trouble to look beneath the inertia.

"The boy will come around all right in time—he's only a bit homesick and strange to the new life now. When there's an opportunity for fighting he'll show himself up true," he would say. "Why, his father at Inkerman—"

And then the officer or officers of whom he had gotten hold, would be obliged to listen all over again to the story of the charge led by Trevelyan's father in the Crimea.

But the story had its unconscious influence on their treatment of the young Engineer. They never really cared for him but they respected him—for what the Colonel believed he would some day be—which was all that Trevelyan seemed to desire. After their first trial at pleasantries which he had met with ill-concealed indifference, they left him to himself. They rarely saw him except at mess, or on duty, and his ungraciousness then did not help to heal the widening breach of unfavorable opinion.

Toward the end of the year his fellow officers found out that he was cousin to young Stewart—Stewart who had won that honorable mention—and son of Malcolm Stewart of Aberdeen. That helped matters a little. They could pardon a chap's unpardonable moodiness for young Stewart's sake.

Months later they heard that young Stewart himself had re-applied for Indian service, and that he was coming to them. It was Trevelyan who told them in confidence, first, and from then Trevelyan was changed. That night he joked them at mess, in a dry Scotch fashion, fostered long ago in the Argyll years; later he joined them at cards and proposed the toast to Stewart with a dash and a charm that made some of them wonder if they had not misjudged a deuced good chap after all.

As a matter of course Trevelyan formed one of the squad of officers and men who rode over from the Station to meet young Stewart when he came. It

was Trevelyan who got them started a needless hour before the time; it was Trevelyan who laughed at the dust and the heat of the long ride and bribed them, with all he possessed from the last cent of his pay, to his helmet and the braid on his uniform, to races which he always won, swinging himself far out of the saddle and stooping low to pick up withered bits of native growth from the ground as he swept past at a gallop.

Trevelyan's two mess companions who had been with Stewart in the "row" where he had won his mention, imbibed something of Trevelyan's spirits, and they laughed at the dust, in their turn, and the heat, as they rode from the military station to welcome back their old comrade.

They saw him long before the train had come to a dead stop and they cheered him now, in the desolate little way-station, remembering how they had cheered him that day, but it was only Trevelyan's bronzed face that Stewart saw as he descended.

"Hello, Bobby," he said, slapping him on the back, "You see I've come."

Trevelyan looked at him queerly for a moment in silence.

"I knew you would. You're a—" he broke off and turned away, and the officers and men wondered what had become of Trevelyan's spirits during the return trip.

Trevelyan sat up late into the night with Stewart, listening while he told of England and the home people. Once or twice Stewart mentioned Cary.

"How is she?" asked the younger man.

He only alluded to her once again.

At midnight he rose to leave.

"Of course there isn't anything to say to you about—your leaving England and—and all that—to come to me out here in this devilish hole—" he began disjointedly, "but it's only fair to try to say something. The fellows and the men can tell you I've been a different chap since I heard of the transfer. When I left England, and for all this year, well—I haven't much cared what happened. Out here—the loneliness without her—"

He turned sharply on his heel and left.

Young Stewart of the Engineers stood still in the middle of his quarters, listening to Trevelyan's footsteps growing fainter. Presently they were lost in the silence of the Indian night. Now and again came sounds from the jungle, but Stewart stood motionless.

Suddenly he flung his right arm across his forehead.

"The loneliness without her—"

And Cary, sleepless in far-away England, watched the sun rise, wondering

what made the nights so long.

II.

Trevelyan's excitement over Stewart's coming died away as one monotonous week followed another, and he became more moody than before. Stewart tried to draw him into the life of the station, and the pastimes by which the officers and men helped to kill the long inactive days, but Trevelyan steadily refused to be won from his taciturnity. A few used to laugh at Stewart for his pains, but the majority of the mess, grew, while watching his struggle for Trevelyan, to know him better and to appreciate him more. Before, to a few, young Stewart of the Engineers had been a man with a good name; to the most of them he had been unknown, but, aside from his devotion to Trevelyan, his knowledge of surveying and military niceties, his genial spirit and his unfailing patience, won for him the distinct approval of the officers and the absolute adoration of the rank and file.

He used to try to include Trevelyan in the atmosphere of approbation that surrounded himself, but Trevelyan obstinately refused even his advances.

Once, indeed, one evening, Stewart got him to join a game of cards. Trevelyan did more drinking than he did playing, and three hours later, Stewart carried him to his own quarters and nursed him through the long still night.

When Trevelyan awoke in the dawn of the early morning, he found Stewart still watching, and later as the wan grayness of the dawn turned to deepening gold, Stewart talked to him as an older man talks to a younger one. He spoke to him of self-respect and honor and of self-control. He spoke to him of Cary.

"Take a brace and redeem yourself with the mess and the men," he said, as he finished. "Where's your grit and your hold on things? You don't think you're growing more worthy of her; do you?"

Trevelyan sat up, supporting himself by his rigid arms, on the palms of his hands. The light of the coming sunrise gave to his bronzed face a strange reddish hue.

"Think!" he exclaimed, "I wish to God I could stop thinking! Her face haunts and haunts and *haunts* me! She says my love frightens her, and that it lies with me and what I make of myself, if her answer changes. I can't change my love—it's all of me; it's the soul of me, and if it frightens her—!" Trevelyan leaned forward, "I can't change myself! I can't see her; I know I'll never win her!

How? I can't tell you, but I know I never shall, and I don't care what becomes of me or how soon I go to hell!"

The rigidity of his arms increased and he stared straight in front of him.

Stewart sprang up, his firm mouth quivering with passion.

"If a man had ever dared to tell me that you would talk so, I would have knocked him down. You're not worthy to be born of such a father and it's a blessing that your mother's dead. You're not worthy to have had my mother foster you ever since you were a little shaver. You're not worthy of the worst woman that ever lived. You've lost your manhood. You can be cashiered from the army—and you can go to hell! You're not worth saving!"

Young Stewart of the Engineers turned on his heel and swung out of the room as he would have swung, face forward, at the head of a line, leading into action.

Later when he returned Trevelyan had gone. He stood in the doorway of the deserted room and stared fixedly at where Trevelyan had lain through the night. He was himself again, and a great shame at his lost control swept over him. He had preached of self-control to Trevelyan.

"And I'd give my life for the boy's," he said to himself.

It was remarked at mess that night that Trevelyan did not touch his food, and that he left earlier even than was his wont. Stewart followed him out into the stillness of the evening.

"Trevelyan," he called, following the quickly moving figure up the steps of his quarters.

Trevelyan turned sharply.

"I don't want any more of your talk," he said. "Good-night!" And slammed the door in Stewart's face.

Stewart stood there for a moment tapping his booted foot against the floor of the piazza. Then he went to his own quarters.

"I've come out to this cursed hole to serve the boy, and I've lost him instead! I've made a jolly mess of it all, this time!"

* * * * *

After that Trevelyan spent all of his "off duty" time alone. He used to go on long tramps or wild rides, returning with his horse flecked with foam and himself worn out, and his evenings were passed in his own quarters with no one better than himself for company. He would walk up and down and down and up again until he turned in, or he would take to studying Hindoostanee, or sit idly, staring into nothingness. At first he fastened his door against possible intrusion, but no one ever came, and his solitude was unbroken. Once his strained ears caught the

sound of Stewart's familiar step outside and he stealthily crept over to the door and unfastened it and stood by it listening. The even steady steps came nearer, and then without halting, passed on.

Trevelyan wiped his moist face. After all, why should Stewart have tried again? He had been refused so often—

Stewart pushed back his ponderous volume on military engineering and stared ahead of him, his firm lips pressed close together.

If there was only some way to help the boy—

III.

In the spring the natives grew restless.

"They're stretching themselves after a long sleep," said a young subaltern, knowingly.

"They're planning mutiny," said the Colonel to himself, and he ordered out a band of men for investigating the neighborhood.

The little band was delayed seven hours over the extremest limit set for its return.

When it came it bore a dead man back to the Station. The man had been a Briton and of the regiment.

Then the grim spirit of the military station rose, as the gray, still sea rises at the onswEEP of the gale.

War had come.

IV.

For an hour the Colonel was closeted. There was a line of attack to be planned. He would talk it over with his older officers presently; for the time being he could think better alone. It was necessary not to be too hasty—to keep a controlling hand on the lever of this engine of war, of which he was in command. It was necessary to strike decisively, when he did strike, and to the heart of it. That

was it—to the heart! The natives were on the move, the investigating band had reported. *Where* to strike? A surveying officer; an engineer could judge. Who was the best man to send. It was like ordering a man into the mouth of death.

The Colonel leaned his head in his hand and beat the end of his pen against the deal of the table. Coolness was wanted; knowledge of surveying; courage. That was it—courage!

Only two faces rose before him and haunted him, to the exclusion of all others. Of the two, Trevelyan's was the most persistent.

True, he was young and he was untried, and he was probably the most unpopular officer at the Station, but in his veins was the blood that endures and slays and conquers!

Properly executed the fulfilling of the orders would mean his proved skill as an officer. If he failed—the Colonel laid down his pen. That blood could not fail.

There was his unusual strength, too, to be taken in his favor, his strength and his endurance. He remembered that Trevelyan had stood intense heat better than any man at the Station; that he could live on less food, and had a nicer knowledge of horsemanship than any officer or trooper in his command; that technically he was brilliant at surveying. The majority of commanders would probably decide between the two in favor of Stewart, but the Colonel had run the gauntlet to success a good deal on instinct. The Colonel prided himself on instinct. It would be Trevelyan!

Two hours later Trevelyan received his orders.

"Very well, sir," "I understand, sir," "Yes, sir," he had replied, and after he had left, the Colonel nodded and smiled grimly at the young engineer's self-control in the face of an order that might mean death.

Trevelyan walked blindly back to his quarters. There was a queer singing in his head and beating at his temples. He stumbled across the threshold and he sat down on the edge of his bunk and pressed his hands hard against his temples to still that mad, incessant beating. His eyes remained wide and fixed at one spot on the floor.

It had come at last; the test and the opportunity for which he had blindly, passionately prayed as a child; for which he had striven and worked as a boy; it had come and it had found him unprepared to meet it!

He thought of the ride—alone, except for a trooper—and on the spot of the floor, he pictured the blackness and the danger, as a man brings forth a likeness on a dark plate. The picture came and went, and went and came again on the spot on the floor and he sprang up with a choked cry. To go out into that stillness and darkness; to face the blackness of death—

They might get back his body—what good would his body do anyone—and

they might get it home, but they probably wouldn't. The utter silence in that blackness of death—so great that her voice could never reach him!

He put his foot over the possessed spot on the floor, and his leg shook as he did so. He saw his leg tremble, and he knew it and he did not care! He had turned coward, and—he did not care! What was courage when her voice could not reach him in the blackness of death? He might live through it, and she might care more for him, for it, but the chances were two-thirds for death.

The man they had brought in that morning! What a ghastly sight he had been! The eyes had refused to remain closed and they had stared at him in all the horror of dead sightlessness. And the lips had been drawn back from the teeth and had stiffened so, in the agony of the death struggle. God! And they would bring him back like that—like that—*like that!*

What vision did those staring eyes see but unutterable, unpenetrable blackness? What speech could that grinning mouth ever form again? What sound could pierce the seal laid on the hearing?

They had told him that the trooper had a sweetheart waiting for him somewhere off in Ireland. Well, even love could not break the bonds of death, and make him speak and hear and caress her as of old.

There was something mightier than love after all—mightier even than the love he had for Cary.

And Trevelyan cowered, afraid.

V.

Mackenzie, the surgeon, lounging in a big wicker chair, his heels higher than his head, lazily rolled cigarettes and winked at the dazzling reflection of the sun on the walls of the barracks. Off in the distance he could see the little subaltern walking energetically down the road. The little subaltern was gotten up regardless in white linen. He was evidently on his way to drink tea with the Colonel's daughter.

"My eyes," said Mackenzie, aloud, "Will nothing interfere with his afternoon tea! The devil only knows if he'll be alive this time to-morrow. Better keep cool when he can. He's a blank little fool! Thinks Jessica Q will tumble when he says good-bye—does he? Tea and love-making *now!*" and the surgeon fanned himself with his hand. The surgeon had never taken kindly to the little subaltern.

Suddenly his feet came down with a crash and he leaned forward in the wicker chair. Bennett had stopped the little subaltern and the little subaltern was talking back excitedly and kicking up the white dust, regardless of the fresh linen suit.

Mackenzie rose and stretched himself.

"Wonder if the old man has issued orders? Something's up, sure as a gun, when that kid forgets Jessica Q and his clothes."

Three of the mess who had been talking earnestly at the end of the piazza, turned at the sound of voices in the road and joined the two there.

"Not Trevelyan, you say? It isn't Trevelyan?" one of them was saying, as Mackenzie came up.

"Yes, it is, too! Jove! If I only had his chance," sighed the little subaltern, twirling around distractedly on one heel.

"There! There! That'll do, Baby," said Bennett, patting him on the head. The little subaltern squirmed, but he kept listening to what Bennett was saying.

"He's a rum comrade, but I imagine he can do it," said Bennett looking toward the barracks, thoughtfully, "He knows the fine points of surveying from A to Z, and—"

"—He's got more nerve than any chap I ever knew," put in Mackenzie.

"Is the old man going to send an escort with him? I bet if he does, it'll be Sandy McCann," said Pearson.

"What's this? What's this I hear about Robert being sent off to-night?"

Young Stewart of the Engineers joined the group hastily. His uniform was covered with dust and he held his helmet under his arm, wiping the moisture from his face.

"Why, it's almost certain death. I—"

"That's why we're here—to face death, if we have to," said the little subaltern, with an odd new gravity, and Bennett suddenly stopped short in patting his head.

Stewart turned.

"True," he said, briefly, running his right hand up and down the sleeve of his left arm "but—"

"And it probably won't be any worse than what we'll have to face tomorrow or next day," said Bennett, as Stewart paused. "He hasn't been sociable and over decent to us, but we'll call on him and wish him luck. Come along, boys!"

The group laughed a little. "All right," they said.

Stewart followed them up to Trevelyan's quarters.

After all, why should he feel it so! It was Trevelyan's one chance to redeem himself with the regiment and turn the tide of popularity in his favor. Fate was

not as cruel as she seemed. And Trevelyan bore a charmed life. And he knew Trevelyan could do it. Trevelyan would do it—*well!* Trevelyan might have failed in the shaping of the details of life this last year, but in the supreme hour—

For Stewart remembered the climb down the turret tower and the mad scaling of the crags in Scotland, and the storm and the white fury of the waters near the American fort, and the desperate swim, and the child who had done these things because of what he would one day do as a man.

The little subaltern banged on Trevelyan's door.

VI.

Trevelyan, still standing over the spot on the floor, raised his eyes and looked vaguely in the direction of the sound. He remained silent.

The little subaltern banged again, and Trevelyan heard the echo of voices.

He put his hand up to his collar, loosening it, and then he crossed the room and flung open the door.

"Hello, you fellows," he cried, "What d'you want of a chap now?"

The little subaltern tumbled into the room, the other half dozen members of the mess on top of him.

"Hello, yourself," they cried, "How d'you like the job the Colonel's given you?"

"Like it!" Trevelyan threw back his head and his large, well formed throat pulsed as he spoke, "Why, it's the greatest thing that ever happened to a chap of my age!"

His messmates formed a little group around him.

"How's your nerve?"

Trevelyan laughed. It was only Stewart, who stood by silent, listening, who felt vaguely the jar in it.

"Oh, *my* nerve is all right. How's your own at the prospect of a row? 'I go to prepare a place for you'—" he went on in a deep chant.

"Robert!"

It was Stewart.

"Oh, I suppose that was a bit in bad taste, but when a chap's making his last will and testament, he forgets the teachings of the old kirk—"

"Sure! What time do you start?" from the little subaltern.

"Fire arms in good order?" put in Bennett.

"In an hour. No, I'm not going to trust any of these oily natives to clean them. I'll see to them myself."

Trevelyan moved away from the group.

"We'll have something on the strength of it!" said the little subaltern, "A toast: 'To the Queen—God bless her—and the Queen's courier!' How's that?"

He glanced conceitedly about the room. The men of the mess laughed good naturedly.

"Well, here's my hand on the success of it," said Mackenzie, a little later, at leaving. He suddenly regretted he had not been a bit kinder to the young engineer. A fellow with such nerve, deserved more than they had all given him.

They filed out after awhile. Stewart alone remained. He put his hand on Trevelyan's shoulder, as he had used to do long ago when they were boys, pacing the great library of a rainy afternoon, and he walked with Trevelyan up and down the length of the room.

"It's a risky business, Robert," he said, in his grave voice, "but I believe you're the man for it."

"I suppose," said Trevelyan, "if it hadn't been me it would have been Pearson."

"I suppose so, but Pearson couldn't do it."

"Neither may I."

"*You will*," said Stewart.

After a little, he went on, speaking as though to himself.

"I wish to God—"

He did not finish his sentence.

Trevelyan shook off the hand on his shoulder.

"I understand, and—I'm grateful, of course, and all that, but if you'd leave me alone for awhile. There is a letter or two and—"

"Of course."

At the door Stewart turned.

"I'll see you before you go," he said.

Trevelyan listened until his footsteps, faded away and then he sat down at his small deal table, his eyes turned away from the spot on the floor. The vision of that dead, ghastly face had come back.

If it wasn't him it would be Pearson, probably, or anyhow, some other man—glad of the chance. Why should he deprive him, whoever he was, of the chance? A grim smile crept around Trevelyan's mouth, and then he let his head fall forward against the edge of the wood; his arms hanging limp between his long legs stretched out straight under the table. The horrible fear had returned, and the darkness and the blackness of death seemed swallowing him up. Never

to see her again! Never to touch her hand again, or to hear her footsteps in passing, or the sound of her voice; to die—not with other men in the daylight and in battle—but to be shot down like a dog, alone, in the darkness—

The steady ticking of the watch he had laid in front of him on the table, throbbed feebly like a dying pulse, close to his ear, and he sat, his forehead against the edge of the table, his eyes staring down at the shadowed floor.

After awhile he got up and steadied himself and went over to the door and flung it open and looked out. Far off, the little subaltern was coming his way. He hurried back to the other end of the room and got out his fire arms and examined them, and began to polish them vigorously. The little subaltern looked in.

"Hard at work? Do you want help?"

Trevelyan looked up and nodded.

"No, I guess not," he said, pleasantly.

The little subaltern sighed enviously, hesitated, and then passed on.

Trevelyan drew a deep breath and laid down his polishing cloth and picked up his revolver. His hands played nervously over the trigger a moment. The catch seemed stiff. He tried it again.

There was a sudden glare and a loud report, and Trevelyan sank back, the blood staining the shoulder of his uniform.

After all, if one had nerve, it could be easily done and was soon over!

He turned sharply and leaned against the table, facing the window, one hand to his shoulder. He fancied he heard footsteps receding. After awhile he wiped the sweat from his face and staggered across the floor, out into the gathering dusk, to headquarters.

"I was seeing to my fire arms, sir, preparing for to-night's survey. The revolver was loaded. I didn't know it—it went off." Trevelyan's big frame began to sway a little. "I came to report, sir. If I could have it dressed, I'd be able to go. Of course, I expect to go. You won't—"

The Colonel signaled for his orderly.

"My respects to Dr. Mackenzie, and will he come over at once."

Then to Trevelyan:

"It's a most unfortunate affair, but it would be murder to allow you to undertake the trip. I'll hear the details later."

"But, sir—"

"Don't question my orders, Lieutenant," interrupted the Colonel, briefly.

"Flesh wound," Mackenzie said.

Later, when the dressing was done and Trevelyan was in the hospital, the surgeon looked down at him curiously. "Odd," he said, "that shot! I don't understand how—"

Trevelyan turned his drawn face to the surgeon's, meeting his eyes

squarably.

"Confound you! You don't think I shot myself on purpose, do you?"

Mackenzie sat down on the edge of the bed, and rubbed his chin.

"Oh—of course, not," he said slowly.

An hour later he and Vaughan, the assistant surgeon, returned.

"Well, there goes the best officer in the service to his death," the younger man was saying, as he entered, and then as he met Trevelyan's wide, questioning eyes, he broke off.

"Who's that?" asked Trevelyan, sharply.

"Your substitute."

Trevelyan picked at the sheet.

"Who did the old man send—Pearson?"

"Pearson! Not on your life! Stewart, of course."

Trevelyan stopped picking at the sheet. He rose with an effort and sat up in bed, supporting himself on his elbows and leaning forward.

"He has gone?"

The assistant standing at the foot of the bed nodded. Trevelyan sat rigid.

"And I was never told! And he's gone without coming to me!" he said, hoarsely.

"He spoke about it, but he said he wouldn't disturb you—" the assistant broke off.

Suddenly, Trevelyan flung up his arms.

"God! Why couldn't I have gone! I wouldn't have been a loss to anyone—God!" he choked, and fell back, his face buried in the pillow.

The assistant left the room and the surgeon went to the window. Once or twice he glanced at the great, motionless figure on the bed.

"Jove! that's genuine enough! Guess I must have been mistaken about the shot!"

VII.

After awhile the surgeon turned from the window, came back to Trevelyan and stooping over him, listened to his breathing, and felt his pulse. Then he went away.

Trevelyan lifted his head slowly and looked about him. The room was de-

served and he sat up in bed again, grasping its sides. It was as if everything was slipping away from him, and the agony in his brain had crept down to his feet, engulfing and making as nothing the throbbing in his shoulder, or the heat of the growing fever.

He stared at the shadows cast by the flickering lamp on the wall opposite. The vision of the trooper's ghastly face had faded for the time, but intenser visions appeared and shifted and reappeared again. First there came the shadow face of his mother, who had been dead for years, and then that of his father—his father who had led that charge at Inkerman. The face seemed turned away. Then there came the face of the aunt who had mothered him so long, and then the shadowy forms haltered as the fever grew and the wall became a glowing blank. Later a face appeared, Stewart's, against the fiery glow. It looked like a dead face—like the dead, ghastly face of the trooper; and then there came Cary's face. It haunted him in a hundred different guises. It came to him as the child-face, as he had known it years ago down at the sea coast fort; and it faded and came again as the face touched with time's maturity, as he had seen it when she first came to England; it shifted again and reappeared as it had been that day of the storm, when he and she had been housed in the old Scottish home together, and the tenderness and the fear were on it; it came again to him as he had seen it last before the receding transport and the oncoming mist had stolen it away from him. And it came once more as he had never seen it—horror-stricken, wide-eyed, and pale—as he *would* see it, when she looked at him again, knowing the truth.

"Allegiance—which is absolute." So she had written, and so she would say to him. And he had betrayed his allegiance, and he had lied, and he had turned coward, and had sent Stewart off to die!

His fingers gripped at the edges of the bed and he stared fascinated at that face of Cary on the wall—Cary as he had never seen her. It remained fixed. It would *not* fade.

She had known life's truths better than he. Honor, after all, was a tangible thing—as tangible as the devouring agony in his brain. And he had lost his honor—

She had written that a man moulds himself into the perfect and complete, or he breaks the clay with his own hands, and he had not believed her until now, when the clay lay broken.

It had been coming to this all these months, and he had gone on blindly. Cary had tried to save him by that letter; John had tried to save him, and had come out to this accursed hole to serve him, because he had been a coward and had written for him—not strong enough to serve himself—and he had sent John off to meet the death that he himself deserved. No, he was not worthy of such a death. Death would glorify John. It would have redeemed him.

The irrevocable past that had gone from his keeping haunted him ghost-like through the night watches, as did the agony of the future. If there were but a chance—the shadow of a chance—of winning back the last hours!

If that face would only fade!

And he had thought himself so strong, and he and death had looked each in the face of the other so often!

And the long line of pictures on the wall began again, fading and reappearing, but the face of Cary did not fade.

After awhile the personality of the face lost itself and it became to him but the symbol of that high living, toward the attainment of which he had failed, falling in the dust.

His stiff fingers relaxed on the sides of the bed, and he sank back with a thud like a dead weight. The dead trooper could not have fallen more heavily.

The wound in his shoulder was only a flesh hurt—he had been careful of that—he remembered with a grim, awful self-accusation. If it only *had* gone deeper than he had planned. Before the thought had died he was searching for his handkerchief and when he had found it he began to knot it feverishly and pull it around his throat—sudden strength coming to his hands. Then, with an oath, he jerked at the linen band and flung it from him to the hospital floor, where it lay—a spot of white in the darkness. The power to move deserted him, and his arms hung over the sides of the bed—limp and motionless.

And then, remembering Stewart, the agony in his brain increased.

He fancied Stewart starting out on the mission, silent, with the silence that comes with the realization of danger—grave with the gravity of its acceptance—the test of courage. Stewart had never been guided by the heedless, passionate impulses that had possessed him, Trevelyan, all his life; but he had held high the standards of life for a man, and he had lived up to the standards.

Trevelyan fancied he saw him riding into the thickness of the black shadows.

He might do it, and come back from the jaws of death. If a man could do it, he would, but was it humanly possible?

Trevelyan beat his hands against his face. No; no man could do it! The Station would wait for Stewart, and wait and wait, and Stewart would not come. They would go to look for him and they would bring him back to him, Trevelyan—dead. But he would not look like the trooper. The vision on the wall had been a mistake.

Long ago, the night that Stewart had saved Cary as a child, by his vigil; he, Trevelyan, had crept into the room where they had carried him, and he was sleeping, exhausted. The peace, born of a great sacrifice and a purpose accomplished, had rested on the boy's face. The peace of it came back to Trevelyan, a

gift from that dead year.

When they brought Stewart home to the Station he would look so.

And the minutes turned to hours and the fever increased, and later Trevelyan sank into a doze. The surgeons came in now and again and administered medicines of which he was only dimly conscious, and the fever and the drowsiness grew, and the long night wore away.

In the early dawn he was awakened by the feeling that someone was looking steadily at him. His eyes, free from the fever that had gone, met those of the assistant surgeon.

Before the full consciousness of the night's agony had come back, the young surgeon spoke.

"Stewart has returned," he said, quietly, "but he's been badly hurt and he wants you. If you feel strong enough—"

Trevelyan sprang to the floor. He was trembling with excitement and the weakness left by the fever.

"Thank God, he's safe—" and then as he looked more closely in the assistant's face, "He isn't hurt seriously—" his voice trailed off.

The assistant got Trevelyan's slippers and threw a blanket over him and drew his arm through his, giving him support. It seemed strange to be supporting Trevelyan.

"I'm afraid he is," he said. "He did the job all right and reported like the soldier he is. McCann's game, too, and not hurt. Stewart—" The assistant was killing time.

Trevelyan wiped the moisture from his face.

"Yes?"

Vaughan looked straight ahead of him, to avoid meeting Trevelyan's eyes.

"Mackenzie is with him," he said, slowly. "He's doing everything on earth, but the wound's in the back, and there—isn't the ghost of a chance—and, he's sent for you."

VIII.

The assistant walked slowly, adapting himself to Trevelyan's halting steps, and he braced his arm against the weight Trevelyan had thrown upon it. He did not speak again, and Trevelyan did not question him further.

Trevelyan's big frame reeled across the threshold, when, after what seemed to him an interminable time, the assistant led him into the room where Stewart lay. He caught himself up immediately, however, and stared at the group around the bed. The Colonel was there and one of the older officers, and Mackenzie was leaning over something long and still that lay stretched on the bed. The dead weight suddenly increased on Vaughan's arm and he winced with the pain. The two officers near the foot of the bed turned at the shuffling footsteps and Mackenzie looked up for an instant. Then he went back to feeling Stewart's pulse, and without glancing around again, spoke quietly to his assistant.

"The other syringe—this doesn't work just right."

The assistant went away and returned with the syringe. Trevelyan was left standing alone in the middle of the room. No one noticed him. He waited until the hypodermic stimulant had been administered and Mackenzie had straightened himself from his stooping position over the bed. Then he came forward, and pushed his way past the Colonel and the officer and Vaughan and Mackenzie, and leaned over the bed.

"John," he said.

The head turned on the pillow slowly, and Stewart looked up at him. He made an almost imperceptible motion of recognition with his head.

"You sent for me?"

"Yes," Stewart said, weakly.

Trevelyan remained motionless, and no one spoke. The Colonel, at the foot of the bed, stirred a little.

Stewart's hot hands drew the covering up between his fingers and crushed it with a sudden strength, born of a terrible agony. He turned his eyes to Mackenzie.

"If you could get me more on my side—that's better."

Mackenzie leaned over him.

"Don't try to talk to Trevelyan just yet," he suggested.

"I must. If you'd all leave us for a little—"

"You won't wait?"

Stewart looked straight into Mackenzie's eyes.

"There's no waiting; there's no 'yet'—is there?" he asked.

Mackenzie stared at the covering on the bed.

"You're pretty sick," he said, very slowly, and he tried to say something else, but the words refused to come.

He turned and went out of the room and Vaughan and the officers followed him.

Trevelyan still remained motionless.

"Have they gone?" Stewart asked, looking up at him, "I can't turn my head

to see.”

”They’ve gone,” said Trevelyan.

”Then sit down on the edge of the bed—carefully, if you can; jars hurt. I’ve a good deal to say and the time’s short—Mackenzie will be back before long.”

”You want to give me messages?”

”No,” said Stewart, ”It’s about yourself. Why were you afraid?”

The lump in Trevelyan’s throat broke, and something of the old strength came back then.

”It was Cary,” he said, hoarsely.

”I thought so. It was a risky thing to have tried, though—that shooting. It might have gone deeper, or someone else might have seen you.”

”You—saw—me—then?”

Stewart nodded. Speaking was exquisite torture.

”Do you realize what you’ve done—that you’ve broken your life—”

Trevelyan sat motionless on the edge of the bed, his eyes fixed on a point of the pillow. The agony of the night before had been as nothing to this.

”You were an officer and you were afraid of danger—you! And you were coward enough to be willing to send another man to his death—” the young engineer broke off, breathing with labor. ”You were willing to let me die. Did you think that would make it easier to win Cary?”

Then Trevelyan spoke.

”It’s all true,” he said, speaking so slowly that each word fell upon the deathly stillness in the room, like the slow thud of earth upon a coffin, ”It’s—all—true—-but that! I was afraid and I was all you say, coward enough to let another man die or suffer as you are suffering now; and I’ve dishonored the Service and I’ve broken my life, but before God, I didn’t know that you’d be sent in my place. As for Cary—”

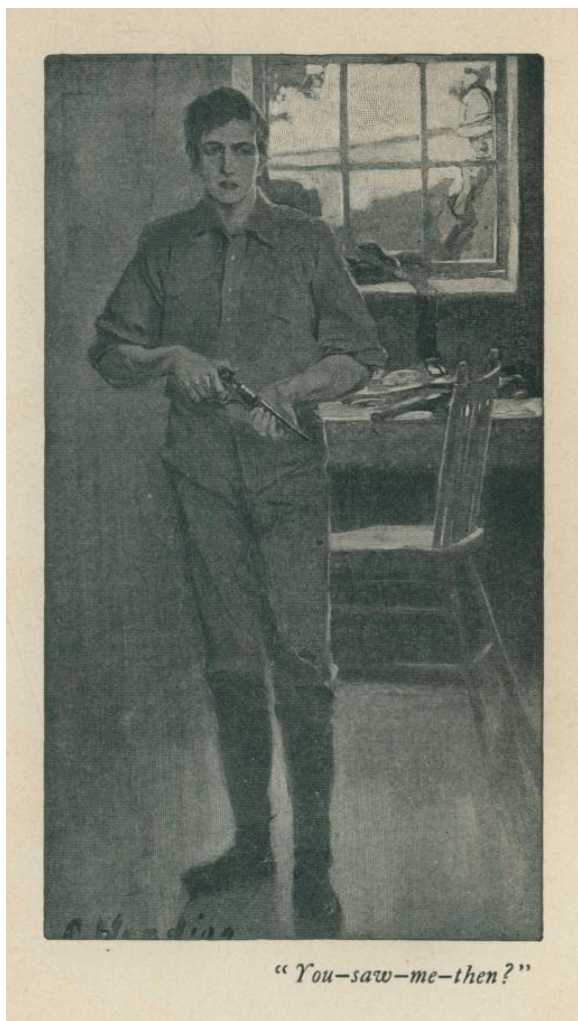
”For Cary,” said Stewart, ”and for your father and my mother you’re to swear to me to hold your tongue over this business. It’s like you to go and blurt the whole thing out, but you’re to swear you won’t open your lips on the subject—ever; and you’re to resign your commission in the Service as soon as it’s possible without exciting suspicion.”

Trevelyan drew back; his throat pulsing. There was the old, odd throbbing in his head, and the dimness of vision, too. After awhile the mist passed.

”God! man, but you’re hard!”

”I’m kind to the home people, and I’m just with you—am I not?”

”Yes; oh, yes; but to bear it in silence—never to be able to meet one of the men of the mess without the dead haunting shadow of it on me; to leave the Service—that’s the worst of all—never to be able to fight for England again as a soldier, or redeem myself—as a man!”



"You-saw-me-then?"

"You-saw-me-then?"

He rose from the bed and went over to the opposite wall, flinging his bent arm against it and leaning forward, his face hid. Stewart watched him from the bed, his eyes reflecting a great pity. If Trevelyan knew half of what his judgment cost him! If Trevelyan only knew how gladly he was dying in his stead! If only Trevelyan knew that he was more kind than cruel!

Through the window, into the absolute quiet of the room, came the hurrying of feet and the neighing of horses. The Colonel was sending out a squad of armed men to strike to the heart of the native trouble. Somewhere in the distance a bugler was playing.

Trevelyan turned, his back to the wall, his arms flung out.

"Isn't there any other way?"

Stewart struggled to a reclining position, supporting himself on one arm, and he summoned all his love and all his mercy.

"You injured me," he said. "Mackenzie says I can't pull through the day—but if I should, I'm injured for life. I have a right to judge you. There is no other way."

The music of the bugle rose, and swelled, and then melted away.

Trevelyan came back to the bed—passive!

"I'll swear anything you ask."

Then a little later:

"Am I to tell Cary?"

"You are to tell Cary or not, as you want to," said Stewart, looking at him curiously.

"Is there nothing I can say to Cary for you—when—when I—get back to England?"

Stewart shook his head. The weakness he had fought against so long came back, as did the agony.

"Nothing; but that I thought of her—of them all. Can you reach that water? Ah!"

Trevelyan flung himself down by the bed.

"You shan't slip off this way!" he said, tensely, the pain of his own crushed life disappearing before the thought of Stewart's ebbing one.

Stewart did not hear him.

"Call Mackenzie," he said, shortly, "Call Mackenzie—quick!"

IX.

Outside the hurrying and the tramping and the neighing of the horses increased and intensified the silence inside where Stewart lay unconscious, Mackenzie and Vaughan and Trevelyan working over him.

Later in the morning the fighting squad departed, and over the Station fell a stillness as great as that which brooded over the hospital.

After a desperate struggle they brought Stewart to, and then Mackenzie, happening to glance at Trevelyan, saw that the dressing had slipped from his shoulder and that his shirt was stained.

He got him into an adjoining room and redressed the shoulder and insisted on his lying down, in spite of Trevelyan's entreaties to get back to Stewart.

"Everything in the world is being done for him. Keep quiet."

"Keep quiet, while his life's slipping away!" cried Trevelyan, fiercely, "Not while there's a breath left in my own body. I'll pull him through or I'll die!"

"You'll lie still, just where you are," ordered Mackenzie. "He's holding his own just now. He'll need all the strength he's got, and yours, and all he can get—later. I'll call you."

Trevelyan slept for two hours—heavily, exhaustively; then Mackenzie woke him.

"Come," he said, briefly, "Stewart's worse."

Trevelyan sat up on the lounge and flung back his head; through his being thrilled the old lost defiance; the old lost strength. He went into Stewart's room and sat down by the bed.

The long hours crept away and the still shadows of night gathered, and through the hours and the shadows Mackenzie and Trevelyan watched. Stewart continued to sink.

At midnight, Mackenzie went over to the window, turning his back on the bed and Trevelyan.

There was no hope—but Trevelyan wouldn't believe it! Stewart was dying, and Trevelyan obstinately refused to relinquish the fight. Trevelyan didn't know when he was beaten. And Mackenzie, grown prematurely gray in the service of life against death, wondered all over again why human strength is so weak when waged against the great, mute Force of the world.

Trevelyan sat rigid; and he gathered all the strength of his life and his love; and that imperishable part that had been crushed by his crime, but not destroyed, and turned them to the conquering of this hour, and that grim Presence that was drawing nearer.

He had ceased to think of himself and the future for the first time since he had fallen. If it ever once occurred to him, he regarded it vaguely and indifferently. To-morrow, he would wake up to the living death that lay before him, but for the present, he had no thought beyond the still, motionless form stretched on

the bed. He concentrated all his passion, all his will strength, and massed them together, as a breastwork, around Stewart's ebbing life.

The grasp of the hand that was clasping his grew weaker.

Trevelyan did not think to call Mackenzie. He had forgotten he was over there by the window; that they three, Stewart and Death and he, Trevelyan, were not alone together. He forced stimulant between Stewart's blue lips. And then he went in search of Stewart's ebbing life, as a swimmer goes down into the depths to bring forth a living man, drowning.

Once the chill of the Shadowy Presence touched him, through the growing chill of Stewart's fingers; and he rubbed them, beating back into the icy veins the heat of his nature, and by and by the Shadowy Presence sullenly drew back, and back, and *back*.

After a time, Mackenzie, aroused by the oppressive stillness, turned.

He hesitated, and then came to the bed and leaned over Stewart's relaxed form. Stewart's face was turned up to his, drawn and thin and pinched, in the light of the failing lamp, but he was breathing regularly. Mackenzie touched one of his hands. It was moist and warm. And then, dumbly, he turned to Trevelyan.

Trevelyan still sat by the bed, rigid; and his eyes looked back at Mackenzie—dull and spiritless, and his fingers were cold, with the chill of the depths.

Mackenzie touched him on the arm.

Trevelyan struggled to his feet.

"If you could give me a bracer. I'm a bit gone off—"

X.

Trevelyan's hurt shoulder healed rapidly, and two weeks later, Mackenzie discharged him, and he reported for duty again.

"The row's all over, I hear," he said later, to the little subaltern.

The little subaltern nodded ruefully.

"Yes, and holy smoke, didn't the chicken-hearted things run when they caught sight of us. We gave it to 'em hot, though! Guess they'll let off their funny business for a time, and—" the little subaltern grew suddenly sober, "Of course, you've heard about Pearson and Bennett and the men?"

Trevelyan nodded.

"Yes," he said, and the little subaltern never knew how gladly Trevelyan

would lay down his life if he could have Pearson's or Bennett's chance—or the chance of the men.

Trevelyan went down the long piazza to his own quarters.

He had been in the hospital having his shoulder dressed and caring for Stewart, who was still ill; when they had brought Pearson and Bennett and the men back to the Station.

And through all the years of his life he would never have Pearson's or Bennett's chance, or the chance of Pearson's or Bennett's burial. He would die as other men died, who had failed in life; he would never be brought back from the front; he would never fall defending the Service and England.

* * * * *

A month later he filed his resignation papers, preparatory to having them endorsed and sent to the War Office.

The Colonel was in a fighting humor when the matter was brought up to him next day! The son of Trevelyan of Inkerman fame! And he sent for Trevelyan and talked to him of his duty to the Service, and the Queen, and the colonial policy of England, and a good deal more; but Trevelyan was firm. The Colonel grew apoplectic; still, Trevelyan was unmoved. Then, the Colonel, who had never lost a battle in his life, retreated ungraciously, trying to think of some reason why the order should not be endorsed and—failed. He had inquired into the shoulder affair, but that was explained by the little subaltern, who testified that he had seen and spoken to Trevelyan the moment before the shot. Trevelyan had been all eagerness to go. He had not paid any attention to the report, thinking some of the men were probably practicing at target. The Colonel had gone over that matter carefully. Then, in spite of the injury, Trevelyan had offered to undertake the survey—the Colonel could not get around that—even though he was not fit. Trevelyan might have been unpopular in the regiment, but he had always done his duty as an officer of the Service. And so the Colonel wrathfully saw the application go off on the next mail to England.

And then Trevelyan waited; waited as a man waits for the warrant that is to close his lease on life; and, as though to make the most of the time remaining, when he was not on duty, or with Stewart in the hospital, he was with the younger officers of the mess. They grew, then, to know a new phase in his character. He no longer closed the door of his quarters on them; it was Trevelyan's room to which they flocked; it was Trevelyan who joked them and teased them and smoked with them, and who played tennis with the garrison girls, and drank tea with the officers' wives; it was Trevelyan, with his great strength and courage, who shared their pastimes and helped to kill the long, inactive days that had set-

fled back over the Station like a pall. Even the little subaltern ceased to dress up regardless in white linen and go and drink tea with Jessica Q, and became Trevelyan's shadow instead.

Weeks later the official acceptance of the resignation came. It was handed to him at mess. He glanced at it indifferently and laid it to one side. Later, he left. He did not join the crowd that evening. He went back to his own quarters and closed the door and drew to the covering at the window, and he sat down in the dark and fought it out alone.

Two hours after he went over to the hospital to make his nightly inquiry for Stewart.

Stewart had had a bad day, they told him. It was a case for time.

He did not go in to see Stewart that night.

He wished that he could have waited and taken Stewart home, he thought, as he retraced his steps to his dark bungalow, but it might be months before Stewart could bear the journey, and Stewart would not hear of his waiting. Perhaps, it was because Stewart was not strong enough to bear the sight of Trevelyan's face, with its imprint of despair; it might have been he fancied something of the despair would lift when Trevelyan was once again in Scotland. At any rate, he had ordered Trevelyan home and Trevelyan had planned to leave—alone.

The next day he dismantled his quarters and made his preparations. He packed his uniforms and his helmets and his sword, and sent them home—to Scotland, to Mactier's care.

In the morning he put on civilian's clothes and left the Station.

* * * * *

The stretch of distant land grew clearer with each throb of the ship engine's heart.

The long voyage was over and Trevelyan was coming back to England.

And he had betrayed his allegiance to England because he had loved! * * *

He leaned over the ship's rail and looked idly at the whirling foam, that beat an angry protest at its birth against the ship's great side, and then grew less and lost itself in the deep waters of the Channel.

Had he loved Cary? he questioned. Had he not mistaken the baser passion for the diviner love that alone is built on honor?

She had told him to mould himself into the divine and he had broken the clay instead.

His eyes rested somberly on the long green line of land. All his honor and allegiance, with which he had broken faith, came back to him and filled him with unspeakable emotion.

He would stoop and he would gather up the broken pieces and remould them for the service of England.

End of Book Two.

BOOK THREE

THE
POTTER'S TOUCH

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THE POTTER'S TOUCH

I.

The long months had swelled into two years and more before Trevelyan came home—to England and to Cary.

Cary and the Captain had spent one winter in Palestine and on the Nile, and the summers in travel. When the Captain mildly suggested Italy or a return to America on the dawning of the second winter, Cary shook her head and begged for London and the old lodgings. Cary, for some reason never spoke of going home now. And so the Captain took her back to London, and Cary seemed to enjoy the great familiar city, better than all the sights and novelties of Egypt and the Holy Land.

The weekly gift of violets or of roses began again with her return to England. Now and then, letters came from John, but they were not frequent, and were, to Cary's critical judgment, unsatisfactory. Of course, she was glad to hear of the life of the Station, and what the men and officers did to pass the off-duty time; and how the army women spent the days in India, and how they all kept cool—or tried to. It was kind of John, too, to think to tell her all the details, and the account of their hunting trip and the "man-eater" Trevelyan had killed,—Cary

wondered if the skin was for her—and what their quarters looked like, but somehow Cary wanted more. She wasn't quite sure what she did want; perhaps she told herself it was some more definite mention of Trevelyan. Trevelyan never wrote.

She thought of Trevelyan often, and in the silences of the night she would sometimes recall the blackness and the thunder of that Scottish storm, and the terror of the hour without its charm would come back to her and she would cower among her white pillows and shut, very fast, her eyes.

In the fall the Camerons had asked her to a house party but for some reason she herself could not define, she sent regrets. The Camerons' place was so near his home! She wondered if it were because he would not be there, or if she would be afraid when she saw his home again. When Trevelyan came back—

But she was lonelier in the late afternoon when the Captain had gone to walk, than at any part of the day, and she would sit with idle hands folded in her lap and look at the silent little tea-kettle on the tea-table; or rise and watch the sunset, quite alone. She wasn't ever afraid then, she was only unutterably lonely! Perhaps when Trevelyan came back—

And then Trevelyan did come back. She heard it from the Captain one afternoon, and it was then the Captain told her, gently, of the delayed accounts of Stewart's and Trevelyan's part in the native struggle. There were no details regarding them; it was only known certainly, that both Stewart and Trevelyan had been hurt; that Stewart was still ill at the Station, and that Trevelyan had sent in a resignation. His return was expected. They would have to wait.

They waited; and Cary grew older in the waiting.

Little by little details were added to the story, and she would go around to the Stewarts' and talk it over with John's mother and John's sister, and women-like they would try to fit the ill-formed pieces together.

Then she would go back slowly to the lodgings.

She had waited so long for Trevelyan to come home, and she had thought to welcome him in promotion; she had dreamed that some day Trevelyan would do something great for the Service and for England; she had believed it, and now—Trevelyan was coming home—resigned; and all her dreams and all her faith had not been worth while.

II.

Trevelyan had landed. The Captain saw it in the morning paper and read the item out to Cary. The ship had gotten in a day before it had been looked for.

Cary pushed back her untasted cup of coffee, and she remained in doors all day, unconsciously listening for his footfall on the stairs, and when night came without bringing him, she laughed at herself for fancying that he would come direct to her.

It was three days before he did come and she met him on the stairs. She was about to do some delayed shopping, and as she was going down, she met him coming up. She turned and they went back to the quiet little sitting room together, and she ran over to the window impetuously and flung back the curtains.

"Come here," she said, gaily, "I can scarcely believe it is you, yourself! Come here, and let me see your Indian tan!"

He smiled a little, obeying her, but he did not meet her eyes.

Could he ever tell her? he wondered.

"Why you haven't got half the tan I expected! You're not chocolate at all!" she said like a grieved child.

He forgot the haunting shadow for a moment and he laughed genuinely.

"I'm sorry I don't please you."

"You don't please me at all," Cary pouted. "You're not chocolate, and you haven't returned a captain, and you're not in uniform with a medal on your breast, and what is worse than everything, you've grown chicken-hearted and turned your back on the Service and run away."

He winced.

"And you're as solemn as a funeral, and you haven't told me you're glad to see me, and—you don't please me at all!"

"That's a nice greeting for a chap!"

"Well—you deserve it!" Cary retorted; then she brightened up, "And you really got hurt? Did it come just 'within a shade of a vital spot,' like it always does in the story books?"

"I got a scratch."

"Good boy! How did it happen? You must sit down and tell me all about it. Was it one of those horrid natives?"

Trevelyan sat down near the window in the deep shadow of the curtains. He put his hand to his head and pressed it there tightly for a moment.

"No," he said, "It wasn't one of the natives. It was my own revolver."

"What?"

Trevelyan faltered.

"Must you hear the story to-day? Won't you wait? It's so long since I've seen you—"

If this brief hour could only be his, unspoiled, to remember!

"Don't be aggravating," said Cary, "I'm interested, and I want to hear." She could not have told why a dull weight should suddenly have laid itself upon her.

Trevelyan sat silent.

"First," he said presently, playing with the tassel of the curtain cord, "first, let me tell you about John."

She flushed. She had forgotten John in the dread that lay upon her.

"Yes, please tell me about John. Is he coming home soon?"

"When he is able to bear the journey—and I believe a little before. He is sick for a sight of England." Trevelyan let the last words fall slowly. He had thought to add "of you."

After a moment he went on.

"I had a long talk with Mackenzie—the surgeon, you know—before I left. He says the wound hurt something in the back and went clear through to the lung. He'll have to get out of the Service."

Cary rose quickly. She went over to the piano and stood there pressing her hands against the top and hiding her face on them.

"It's too cruel," she moaned, "both you fellows—out of the Service! *It's too cruel!*"

Trevelyan knit and unknit his fingers, and was silent.

"He'll be all right—in time," he said slowly, with a dim idea of giving her comfort, "but he just won't be physically strong enough again for the army."

"And you've resigned!"

Trevelyan still sat in the shadows cast by the curtains. He was massing all his courage and his strength against his love.

"Cary!" She raised her head from her arms, and she shivered at the tone of his voice, without knowing why. "Cary, if you'll come over here—I'll tell you why—" he broke off.

She obeyed him mechanically.

"Sit down."

She did as he bade her.

"Shall I light the lamp?" she faltered. "The days are short and—and it's dark—"

"No, not yet. Sit here where I can see your face by the fire. There! Like that!"

And then he began on the cause and the details of the native trouble. She moved restlessly. She did not understand the technicalities very well, and the odd dread and oppression would not lift. She was conscious that Trevelyan's voice filled the room, but she scarcely heeded his words. And then he told her of Stewart and something of what Stewart had tried to do for him, and grew

eloquent over it, and she forgot herself and the dread in listening to him. Even on the day of the storm in Scotland, when he had told her the stories of his childhood, he had not been as eloquent as this. Then he halted. After a while he resumed. He did not pause again, but went on rapidly with the old resoluteness born afresh, now that he had once begun. He continued steadily, mercilessly, leading up to the heart of it as he would have aimed at and hit the bull's eye at target practice with an unerring hand.

"And the Colonel ordered me to make the survey. It meant danger and probable death, and—I was afraid. I shot myself to prevent going. I lied about it. I said the revolver had gone off. He sent John."

He leaned forward, grim with the grimness of despair, and the moisture came out on his face and his throbbing throat, but she did not see his face, she only heard the words that fell heavily on the silence.

She rose to her feet; he could see her, in the beauty of her height, silhouetted against the bright firelight. Her breast was rising and falling quickly with emotion.

"I don't believe it," she cried. "There is nothing that will make me believe it! Why, you're not afraid of anything! You to turn coward!"

She paused, waiting for his denial, and remained standing.

He rose too; came from out of the shadows and sat down in the Captain's big chair by the fire, where she could see and read his face.

"I was afraid," he repeated.

It was as if he knew no other word.

She went over to him and dropped down by the chair, and looked up at him.

"Tell me that it isn't true," she said. "If you tell me that it isn't true, I'll believe you against the world."

"It is true," he said.

The girl pressed the palms of her hands against her cheeks and drew them slowly down, away from her face.

Suddenly she rose to her feet and leant over, looking steadily into his face.

The shadowy spaces at the ends of the room grew and came to meet each other.

She looked down into his face searchingly and in silence, and he met her look as a brave man meets death—squarely. Her hand dropped from his shoulder and fell at her side lifelessly. She shrank away.

"Good God," she whispered.

She went over into the shadows, to the window and stood looking out, motionless. It seemed to her that she could never look at him again.

"John saw me," said Trevelyan, over by the fire, "and he swore me to keep

quiet about it—except to you; he left that to me to decide—he made me swear to resign. I wasn't fit to serve England.”

He spoke without emotion and briefly, stating facts.

After awhile he went over to her in an uncertain manner. She shrank closer to the window.

“Don't come near me,” she said in a low voice.

He went back and sat down by the fire. The minutes passed.

“If you would say something to me,—” he began, looking toward her.

She came out of the shadows into the firelight.

“There *is* nothing to say,” she said, and her face looked then like the face on the hospital wall.

“I know it,” he answered.

She covered her face with her hands, and turned quickly and fell down by a chair, burying her face in its cushions, and sobbing as though to break her heart.

Trevelyan did not move to go to her; he did not even look at her as she was crying there over his lost honor. Honor was so much to her. He had always known it. Perhaps it was for that he had first loved her.

After awhile she moved and leaned one elbow on the seat of her chair, her cheek in her hand. She turned her face, looking into his.

“I—I didn't mean to be cruel,” she said, and her voice caught in sobs as she spoke. “I was—selfish. I—was only thinking of—myself. Of—of how I'd trusted you, and—and that! But oh, I'm—so sorry for—you. I—” she broke off, impatiently brushing the tears away with her hand.

Trevelyan stared into the fire.

“Don't talk that way,” he said slowly, “I can bear anything but—that!”

“What—what made you—afraid?”

He left the big chair by the fire and came over to where she was sitting on the floor, and looked down at her.

“I was afraid I should never see you again,” he said. “I—” and he put out his hand as though to touch her hair, “I wish—well I wish, I had known there was something besides you in the world!”

She said nothing.

“What are you going to do now?” she asked after awhile.

“I don't know,” he said slowly, “*I—don't—know!*”

He turned abruptly and picked up his coat and hat. He did not offer to shake hands in parting. Cary had used to help him on with his coat and shake hands, but Cary did not move to-night. He walked over to the door, turning to look back at her.

“Good night,” he said, in a matter of fact way, “Good-bye.”

Cary sat motionless and she looked up at him dumbly.

"Good-bye," he repeated.

"Good-bye," she said slowly.

Trevelyan took the night train home—to Scotland and to old Mactier. Perhaps up there, he would learn "what he was going to do now."

Cary sat motionless, in the shadows, by the big chair. After awhile she crept over to the dead fire and stared at the white ashes. It seemed to her that all her faith was dead.

III.

After Trevelyan had come and gone, each day seemed to Cary like the one before; and they all stretched out, crushed and dead and lifeless, as a string of pearls from which the luster has disappeared.

After awhile there were rumors that Stewart was coming home; that Stewart was making a desperate effort to come home—to England. London was agog—Stewart's part of London. Everyone by this time had gotten a pretty clear idea of affairs, and because Stewart had come up to what they had expected of him, and had faced danger and death like the soldier he was, and had generally conducted himself like a gentleman,—London was pleased. London, like a woman, derived satisfaction in saying, "I always knew it. I told you so."

Little by little the excitement penetrated Cary's inertia. After all, it was not quite fair that because one man had broken her faith and his honor, she should judge all men by him. John had not failed her. Perhaps John would pull things straight again for her, and make her see life as she ought.

The warm days of early spring came—the English spring and the sunshine, and there was no need any longer for a fire on the hearth, and every day brought the ship nearer, and every fair breeze helped to bring him into port quicker—John, coming back, sick and wounded for life, from battle.

After all, she had forgotten that part of it—his part; and his burden that was heavier than her own, and Trevelyan's burden, that was heavier than all.

After awhile she brought a pity, wholly womanly and half divine, out of the ashes that had seemed so dead, and on the awful truth of these men's lives, broken by the failure of one, she built the mercy that is stronger than justice, and the faith that is stronger than doubt.

Something, though, remained in the ashes, dead, never to be rekindled, and

woman-like she used to cry a little over the dead part of it; not because she could not relight it, but because it was so dead.

She grew into a woman in those weeks lapsing between Trevelyan's call and Stewart's return—gradually, as clay is moulded in the hands of a potter, who cuts it on his wheel, to give to it the finer tracings and the smoothness of completion.

And every day and every fair breeze brought Stewart nearer, and Cary turned from the ashes to the sunsets again. Fires would go out, even with careful tending, but the sunsets were God's, Cary told herself, and, therefore, eternal.

IV.

Malcolm Stewart went down to Southampton to meet the ship and bring John back to London.

"No excitement," the doctor had said, and so he had gone alone.

Now that young Stewart had really accomplished the task of getting back to England, his false strength deserted him and he became weaker than before. The two men, the sturdy father and the wasted son, made the journey to town, John being carried to and from the railway carriages.

For a moment, when he reached London, and the carriage was turning into Grosvenor Square, he rallied a little and insisted on getting out of the carriage himself, and walking up the steps, leaning heavily on his father's arm.

"We won't frighten the Little Madre," he had said.

The tall, womanly figure of the Little Madre, who had been standing by the window for the last hour, appeared at the door, silently holding out her arms.

After awhile they got him up to his own room and to bed, and all day the Little Madre sat by him, tending to his few wants. Once he fell asleep, and when he awoke the room was full of flowers.

"What is it?" he asked his mother feebly, "Where did they come from?"

"From friends," she said, rising and moving from one great bunch to another. "The white and pink roses are from Cousin Kenneth's wife," and so she went on. "The heather and the bracken came without a name. I think they must be from Rob—don't you?"

She paused, turning to him questioningly. Stewart swallowed.

"Probably," he said, in a low voice.

"The Camerons sent the lilies, and those red roses are from the old Major of the Department—you should read the card," she smiled proudly, coming back to his bed.

He smiled at her eagerness, and laid the card down.

"That's pretty nice, isn't it?" he asked.

And then he looked up at her.

"But the violets?" he asked slowly. "Who left the violets?"

"The violets are from Cary," she replied, meeting his look.

A slow flush mounted over his pale face.

"Please bring them here."

She did so, holding them close to his face that he might smell of them before she put the little vase on the table by him. He took them out of the water, feebly, and laid them on the bed.

"Everyone is awfully kind," he said, "and I don't deserve the fuss. Have—many inquired—to-day?"

"All my visiting list," she replied, laughingly, "and a good many more besides. Why the officers—" she paused, shaking her head.

"Has—Cary called?" he asked, looking hard at the foot board of the bed.

"Yes, and left the flowers herself. You are to see her—" she broke off, anxiously watching the haggard face that he turned quickly to her own.

"When?"

"In three or four days—if you are stronger. She shall be the first."

His mother leaned over him, stroking his hair from his forehead. He met her eyes gravely.

The late sunlight sifted through the drawn curtains and touched the flowers; their exquisite odor crept through the stillness of the room as the sweet memory of an old song steals through the silent chambers of the heart.

"I love her," he said simply. "I have loved her always," he said, still looking into her eyes.

She smiled.

"I have known it always," she answered.

But the four days lengthened into four weeks before he saw Cary. That night the half healed wound reopened, and he had a sinking spell.

The next morning before the news had had time to become generally known, Trevelyan mysteriously appeared at the house on Grosvenor Square, and went straight to Stewart's room.

"You go and lie down," he said briefly to his aunt, who had been up all night, "I guess I ought to know how to take care of him. I did it once before in India. I won't leave you until I've pulled him through."

And then Trevelyan and Death fought it out again, and Trevelyan beat back

the Shadowy Presence in the great still London house, as he had done weeks before in the government hospital in India. He hardly left the sick room, and he seemed scarcely ever to sleep. He would sit for hours at a time, his finger on Stewart's pulse; quieting his ravings and forcing back the fever by the might of his own will.

Except in the dim sick room where Stewart lived again in delirium the night of the perilous ride, over the great Grosvenor Square house rested the hush of grave sickness and impending death. The servant stationed at the door, guarded against the possible ringing of the muffled bell, and answered inquiries, and received the cards left, and the offerings of flowers. None ever reached Stewart's darkened room except the small bunch of violets that came daily, and which his mother would bring up and place on the table by his bed, hoping in woman-fashion that the perfume might attract and hold his wandering faculties, or arouse him from the stupor into which he would fall from time to time; but it never did. If she had ever dreamed of the exquisite torture the flowers and their scent were to Trevelyan, she would have placed them with the others down stairs, but Trevelyan never told, and she never knew the moments in which the perfume seemed to drive him mad.

Once she suggested getting a professional nurse to relieve him, but catching sight of Trevelyan's face she had stopped short.

"There! Forgive me," she said. "It is not that I don't trust you, or am ungrateful or believe that anyone else could do so well, but I am afraid for you."

"I'm all right," Trevelyan had answered shortly.

"You are unselfish; you are only thinking of us and of John. You are always thinking and doing for John."

"Don't!" he interrupted, and through the dimness of the room she could see that his face quivered, and she wondered.

"I could not get along without you," she went on. "None of us could, and it has been you who have pulled him through so far."

She looked toward the long, motionless figure on the bed.

"I shall pull him through to-night and to-morrow, and to-morrow again, and next week—until he is out of danger," said Trevelyan.

That was the day the two doctors had given Stewart up.

The crisis came and passed, and Stewart lived.

When the thralldom and the stupor of the fever had partly lifted, and before Stewart came to himself, Trevelyan left and went back to Scotland and to old Mactier, nor could anyone persuade him to remain.

Days later, when Stewart was sitting up, he saw Cary for the first time.

"There is some one waiting outside whom you will be glad to see," his mother had said.

"It is Cary? You are going to let me see Cary?" he cried.

"If you will be good and not talk," she answered, leaving the door ajar.

Stewart turned his face to the door, pressing his long, thin fingers resting on his knee, close together.

She came in carrying a bunch of violets, and stood by his chair, looking down at him. He looked up at her, and it seemed to him that she was beautiful, and her voice the sweetest he had ever heard.

"I have waited and wanted so to give you these myself," she said, "and you have frightened us all so."

She spoke with the simplicity of a little girl, but there was a quality in her voice that Stewart had not heard before, and he knew that Cary had become a woman.

He clung to her hand in parting with that pathetic bodily weakness that makes a man, in illness, like a child.

"Don't go yet," he pleaded, "You've been here such a little while. Oh, *please* don't go!"

She patted his hand.

"I will come again," she said, and on her way to the door, she kept looking back at him and smiling. He sat motionless until her light footstep was lost in the distance, and all day he sat quiet, scarcely speaking, dreaming of her.

The next day he waited, expecting her, but she did not come; nor the next.

"What's become of Cary?" he asked on the third day of his mother. "Why don't she come any more?"

"I suppose she thinks you're out of danger now, and she may have other things to do."

"If that isn't just the way of women! Coming all the time when a chap don't know anything or anybody, and then just when he needs cheering—" he broke off, pulling viciously at the shawl over his feet.

His mother smiled, knowing better "the way of women."

But two days later, when Cary called again, she spoke to her of his loneliness.

"He gets tired of the home faces," she said, "and he isn't strong enough yet to see the men or strangers. Perhaps if you could read aloud to him now and then—"

"Why, of course I could," said Cary, and after that she came oftener. They would carry Stewart down to his mother's cheerful little sitting room, and there one or more of the family would gather and Cary would talk or read aloud. At such times Stewart would lean back in his chair among his pillows and remain silent, content to look at her and to listen to her voice. One day they were left alone together. He remained quiet, his eyes fixed on her. Presently she finished

the chapter and turned the page.

"I think that was a pretty strong scene, don't you?" she asked, pausing for a moment before she went on, and peering at him gravely over the top of the book.

"Yes—it was," he answered absently.

"You weren't listening to a word of it," she exclaimed reproachfully.

He laughed.

"To tell you the truth—no. Put the wretched old thing down and talk to me."

She laid the book down as he had bidden, but she played nervously with the leaves.

"What shall I talk about?"

"Oh, anything—yourself."

"Upon my word, but you're polite. There isn't an earthly thing to tell about myself," she added, "And I don't know any topic that would interest you. There's that House of Commons speech, of course, but—"

"Then I'll talk to you."

"Oh, you *mustn't!*" She looked up startled, "Sir Archibald said you were not to exert yourself."

"Confound the old codger, anyway! Does he expect to keep me tongue-tied the rest of my life?"

Cary laughed.

"You're cross to-day," she said. "You're getting better. It's a sure sign."

Stewart leaned forward suddenly; then he leaned back and traced an outline of a sword on the leather arm of the chair.

"Did you know," he asked her slowly, "that as far as the Service is concerned, I'm done for—that I'll never be well enough for it again; that I've been injured beyond hope for the Service; that I've had to resign?"

"Yes," said Cary gently, looking hard at the book in her lap.

"Thirty and—done for," he said bitterly, "All the Woolwich years to count for nothing; all the study; all the ambition, all the—hope, to count for nothing!" His finger paused in tracing the outline of the sword.

"Oh, you *mustn't* say that," cried Cary, "you must remember what you've done already—more than many older officers do in their whole lives. And then—"

He interrupted her.

"That sounds well," he said. "But life isn't worth much to a man when he's laid on the shelf just when he's beginning to live— But the wasted years and the inactive life ahead!" He went on rapidly, beating the fist of one hand against the palm of the other. "Oh, think what inactivity will mean after the life I've been trained to, and worked for, and loved!"

She sat silent, her heart throbbing with a great pity.

"To have to think of myself—to look out for draughts like a sickly, nervous old man!" Something rose in Stewart's throat, and he coughed. "Can't ever command the men again! Can't lead them to battle, or ever feel the soft earth under me, or see the stars and the night through the flap of my tent! To have to give up trying to be something, or do something—at thirty!"

He stopped short.

The book fell from Cary's lap to the floor, and she stooped to pick it up with swimming eyes. He caught sight of her face and he leaned forward; all the anger and all the resentment gone from his voice—melted by her tears.

"Bah!" he said, "That's just about the fate I'm fit for if I haven't got any more grit than that! Of course I didn't mean it, and you must try and forget it. Of course the Service is out of the question, but I *will* make something of my life! And I'm awfully glad, too, for what I've had of it, and—been allowed to do. I'm glad for the Woolwich years and—and the training—and—all that! Of course it hasn't been lost. And I'm glad I've done something for the Service—even in a little way, and saved—" he caught himself up suddenly.

Cary rose, her tears dried by the burning fever in her eyes. She finished the sentence.

"Saved Robert from exposure!"

He looked up quickly.

"I—I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do too," said Cary, breathing hard. "You think I don't know all about it! I do, though!"

"How?"

"Robert told me himself."

Stewart drew a deep breath and looked away. There was a long silence in the room. After awhile she went up to the big leather chair and laid one hand on the back of it and bent her head, looking down at him.

"Johnny?"

He looked up, his firm mouth working.

"Johnny, you're the best man that ever lived!"

"Oh, Cary!" he said, and he tried to laugh.

She nodded decidedly.

"But I know. Robert told me what you'd been to him, and—he didn't spare himself."

Stewart stared straight ahead of him.

"Poor Rob," he said. "Poor boy!"

Cary moved off to the window and looked out, absent-mindedly, folding the edge of the curtain with her fingers.

"It's all like a terrible dream," she said slowly, "and I keep thinking I'll awake. It doesn't seem possible. I keep remembering the time he saved us in that awful storm, years ago at home, and—it—doesn't—seem—possible!"

"No, but it's all too true," said Stewart.

Cary wheeled around, facing the room.

"And I am responsible. It was through his love for me!" she cried.

Stewart shook his head.

"You tried to help him. I tried to help him—all the fellows did, but he just let himself go. When a man like that wants something, he sweeps everything out of his way and rushes on blindly."

"Oh, but it was the love for me!" said Cary; then suddenly: "How you shielded him!"

"Do you think I did right? After all, perhaps, I wasn't meant for the Service. If I had done all my duty—"

"I think you did right," said Cary, looking down with grave eyes at her locked fingers, and she came back into the room and sat down, "Shall I tell you why I think so?"

"Yes."

"No exposure could remedy the hurt he gave himself—to his own manhood and his own honor—" she broke off, and then went on hurriedly. "Oh, if he could only have realized what that meant—keeping his honor clean—" she broke off again, and Stewart looked away so that he might not see her face. She went on.

"The survey was made all right and so it was not the hurt to the Service it might have been, but only to himself; and your punishment in forcing him to resign was severe enough! His own remorse makes up the rest, and the two may bring him another chance." She paused.

Stewart leaned his head on his hand, his elbow on the arm of the chair, and looked fixedly off into space.

"Perhaps you're right—I guess you are," he said, slowly. "I thought something like that at the time. It may be the saving of him. I didn't do an officer's whole duty, but I tried to be just. I tried to spare him and—and—" he hesitated, "those at home. I suppose another man might have told. I just held my tongue. It was an accident—my seeing. I was worried over the boy and couldn't keep away—" he was speaking disjointedly. "I loved the Service. God! how I loved it, and I couldn't bear that he might really harm it some time, so I made him get out. But I couldn't disgrace him; have him court-marshaled and cashiered, or—or pay the penalty—" he broke off, and Cary rose to go.

"He is paying the penalty," she said. "He pays it with every breath he draws."

"Yes; and they tell me that twice he has nursed me and saved me, and I never knew!"

Cary looked down thoughtfully at Stewart's thin hand resting on the arm of the chair, and Stewart looked at her and the silence grew and grew. If only he knew whether—

She looked up quickly, as though divining his thoughts, and she flushed a little.

"We will keep the secret," she said, "you and I—won't we? And we will try and help him? Do you know, I believe he'll take his ambition and courage and—love," the flush mounted higher, "and remould his life?" She hesitated, "Even hopeless love—" and then she broke off, turning her face away. Stewart did not speak or move.

"Then it isn't Robert," he said to himself after she had gone, "Then—it—isn't—Robert!"

V.

Weeks later, when Stewart was able, he went around to see Cary.

"It's a dreadful pull—up those stairs," said Cary, rolling forward a chair and looking anxiously at Stewart as he stood wan and breathless, but smiling, in the doorway.

"It never used to be," he panted, sitting down.

His eyes wandered about the room.

"Jove, but it's good to get back here! And you haven't changed things a bit—even the Psyche in her old place! And the little tea kettle—Jove!"

He leaned back restfully.

She laughed and watched him in silence.

"I'll miss it all like the dickens!"

She looked up quickly from the flowers she was just beginning to arrange.

"You are not going away, are you?" she asked.

He nodded and sighed.

"Home—to Scotland. The lease on the place has run out, and they think country air will brace me up a bit—so we're going. It'll seem queer to get back there after all these years."

"You—you're going to give up the Grosvenor Square house?"

"Yes. I suppose, though, we'll come back every year for the season and take a suite at the Langham or the Buckingham Gate. Father has an idea that he'll put

me through a course of politics up there, when we're alone, and there's nothing going on." Stewart smiled mirthlessly.

"You are thinking of going into politics, when you get strong?" asked Cary for something to say. A sudden unutterable homesickness had swept over her.

"I'm not sure—it isn't unlikely though. I suppose that's as good a way to serve the country as half a man can—perhaps a little better—to try and help keep one detail of the government's work clean! Father has set his heart on the Diplomatic service for me."

"I should think you'd like that," said Cary. Talking to-day for some reason was an effort.

"I'm not sure. What are you and the Captain going to do with yourselves?"

Cary leaned against the back of a chair, tearing a stray rose leaf to pieces. She looked down at it as she spoke.

"Papa wants another tramp through the Alps. I'm not in the mood for tramping, but he's been so good I can't say a word. When we've climbed Mont Blanc again and come down, I think I'll get Daddy to take me home. I think I'm a little mite homesick."

She turned quickly and buried her face in the roses. An odd light sprang to Stewart's eyes.

"Haven't you been happy in England?" he asked.

Cary lifted her head, her face dyed with the deep red of the roses.

"Happy! There's no place like England—except America," she said. "I love every stone in England—in the United Kingdom! Months ago Daddy and I spent a July in Hertfordshire. I can see it all now; the glorious green of everything; the undulating country and the woods and the scattered old cottages, with the village in the distance and the church spire showing, and the little river and the corn-fields and the poppies!" She breathed quicker. "There is only one thing sweeter I know—the old fort at home and the long beach and the sea."

She stopped, and the red of the roses faded. She went on slowly.

"Yes, I guess I'm a little bit homesick, for the beach and the sea."

"Do you remember when we were crossing I asked you to let me take you to my home in Scotland when the homesickness came?" asked Stewart. "You might come to us when the Captain is re-climbing Mont Blanc."

He paused, waiting for an answer, but Cary was silent.

"Wouldn't you come?"

She threw the last bit of the torn leaf away and came toward him and stopped, her hands on the back of a chair, a smile creeping into her eyes.

"I might—if I was asked," she said demurely.

He laughed like a boy.

"Mother'll see to that."

"She'll have to," said Cary, tossing her head.

"But you'd still be homesick?"

She wrinkled up her forehead.

"Goodness, even Scotland isn't America," she answered. "Why, I suppose I would—some!"

Stewart closed the carriage door decidedly. Then he leaned back and stared into the mirror opposite, addressing the reflection there. The odd light had come back to his eyes.

"It's what I've been waiting for," he said, speaking aloud and slowly; "it's what I've been waiting for all these years. She's homesick, and she shall come home—to me."

VI.

To Trevelyan, up in Scotland, each day evolved itself into an eternity. There were the lonely breakfasts in the mornings; the lonely walks about the grounds, or out on the steep, bare crags; the lonely lunches; the lonely afternoons spent in wandering around the silent house; the lonelier evenings in which the unread book would drop from his hand to the floor, and he would stare absently into the shadows; the lonely wakeful nights—it was always loneliness.

Old Mactier would often pause in his morning work and look after the solitary figure and ponder and shake his head before he went back to his duties. Trevelyan sometimes used to stop by him and talk to him a little before he resumed his walk. Once he carried Mactier off to the moorlands for a week's shooting and Mactier was actually conscious that Trevelyan seemed happier with his gun under his arm again than he had been since the day of his mysterious return.

It was Trevelyan, not Mactier, who led the hunt in those days, and the old man would press after him, sometimes stumbling with the fatigue he was too proud to acknowledge, and glorying in the prowess of the great strong figure ahead, that he had carried as a child and in whose hands he had placed the first firearms—almost before the child was strong enough to hold the weapon or could pull the trigger by himself.

If Trevelyan exhausted the old retainer, he tired himself too, and at night he would drop, almost too weary to take off his hunting boots, and go to sleep, and sleep heavily, dreamlessly, as he had not done for weeks.

It was a relief, that, to get away from the haunting shadow in his dreams; and he blessed passionately the fatigue that brought even for so brief a time, forgetfulness.

At the end of the week he and Mactier went home, and the inactivity and the loneliness and the sleeplessness grew greater than before.

There was no face of his own kind to greet him here, in Scotland; the Camerons were his nearest neighbors, and the Camerons were away—Tom in Aberdeen. There was no one to help him, even if they could, to beat back the blind despair that threatened him with mental and with moral death.

One day he ordered out the hounds and rode across country until the fields and trees and fences became blurred together by the touch of twilight. He returned mud stained and mortally weary and stalked into the dining room and over to the sideboard, where he locked his table wines. He took out a decanter and hunted around for a glass, and carried both into the library, and sat down. Then he poured some of the wine and swallowed it at a mouthful. He filled the glass again and drank the liquor leisurely, lounging back in his chair with a sigh of content. After all, he declared, there was nothing like a bracer when a chap was fagged out.

By and by, he slipped down a little in his chair and stretched his legs, still encased in their mud-stained boots, straight out in front of him and went to sleep. When he awoke it was quite dark, and he sat still, staring through the uncurtained window into the night, and conscious of a delicious languor. Then as his faculties became more acute and the old spectre returned to haunt him, he instinctively stretched forth his hand in the blackness and fumbled for the decanter and the glass. He drunk deeply once, twice, three times—and when he raised the glass for the fourth time his hand shook and there was an odd rushing sound in his head.

Suddenly he sat forward in his chair, pushed the glass and decanter from him roughly and flung out his arms across the table. The odd rushing sound subsided, and he became aware that the wine was dripping from the table to the floor, where he had overturned the decanter.

He did not refill it, and the sideboard remained unlocked—and empty.

So the days passed. He would climb up into the eyrie, as he had done as a child and listen to the beating sea below. Once the sea had sung to him of undiscovered lands, whose shores it touched, bearing the message back to him; it had sung of wealth and fame gained by the sword—it was by the sword always—and it had beaten and beaten, and sung of all that he would one day like to be; and of what some day he would be and achieve. Once it had sung of love—of its mystery and the essence of its life—

Now—

He would crawl to the edge of the crag and peer over into the white foam, holding on to the edge until the old boyish dizziness came back; but unlike in the old days, there was never a woman's face in the foam now. What right had he to look for a woman's face in the foam!

And the song of the sea was the song of death and dishonor. He might climb the crag to-day, and to-morrow, and every to-morrow of his life, and the song would not change. The sea was a vast organ; he could not change its tunes back to the old ones; he could not control it, and it went on, rolling out its fierce, deep music of dishonor.

And then he would leave the sea and the crags and go back into the empty house. The house was only a shade less bad; with its deserted rooms and its long gallery of dead and gone Campbells and Trevelyans.

He had wandered into the gallery once or twice. The faces on the canvases, grown indistinct with the years, seemed to look back at him without recognition that he was of their race and line. What claim had they on him or he on them? The men had been brave and the women fair—so the history and traditions of the house had said, even if the stiff painted figures and the severe painted faces often said otherwise—the men had always been in the front wherever they were needed for the defense of Scotland and her rights, and later they had defended England too. If they had not fought for her with the sword, they had with tongue or pen—if they had not been soldiers, they had been powers in the government or in the pulpit. Even the solemn-faced preacher near the big window at the furthest end of the gallery, when eloquence had failed, had left the old kirk to strike a blow for King Charlie. The women, too, had been brave—brave in the sacrifice of beauty and wealth for the upholding of Scottish rights, and the renouncing of husbands and lovers and sons for Scotland.

At the other side of the gallery hung his father's race—the Trevelyans; and opposite the solemn-faced preacher, near to the window where the sun struck it in the morning, was the picture of his mother. It had been taken of her in the first years of her marriage, soon after he had been born. People had said that, as a child, he had held his head proudly, like hers.

The grave, smiling eyes seemed to follow him as he turned hastily from the portrait. She had gloried in the traditions of her race; she had been proud—justly—of her line. He thanked God she was dead—that he might remember her as the portrait had painted her to be—on the flood tide of her love and her beauty and her strength.

There was the picture of his father, in his full regimentals. He had been years older than his wife, but how they had loved each other; how proud they had been of each other's race, and how proud they had been of him. He was glad that his father was traveling in the Far East and had not seen him or de-



*"What right had he to look for a woman's
face in the foam?"*

*"What right had he to look for a woman's face in the
foam?"*

manded explanations since his return. He would have been obliged to meet the questionings with silence. It was better so.

Between the two portraits hung one of himself as a child. How his father and mother had watched the growing of the portrait under the master's brush, waiting for its completion, that it might be hung in the gallery. It had been painted the year his mother had died—a year before he went to America. The artist had taken something of the grace and alertness of the great hound that had rested at the boy's feet and put it into the supple limbs of the boy himself. He had painted into the boy's eyes the reflection of the gray stormy sea, and had lent them something of the gray sea's strength.

And he had been like that as a child, with all the promise of a ripe manhood! And now that he had grown to be a man—

There was a long stretch of empty wall space next to the portrait of his father, and his father had once laughingly told him that his portrait should hang there, painted in uniform, when he had left Woolwich and won his spurs and returned after seeing service.

And he had returned from service without the uniform!

He had used to come and dream here after the Woolwich years, whenever he could get off from duty or was not with Cary. He had come here often in that winter when Cary was away in France. And he had planned his portrait hanging so, in uniform, with hers near his—even as his mother's was near his father's. And sometimes when the sun had gone and the darkness had crept in, the shadows had taken other forms—the forms of children—who would troop up and take their places on the empty spaces waiting for them on the wall.

He had dreamed of her—of Cary—as a strong passionate nature dreams of its best beloved. He had fancied her in a hundred different guises—at the head of his table, moving around the house, as its mistress, talking to old Mactier and his tenantry, as the master's wife; he had dreamed of her, after he and she had lived together alone for a period of ineffable bliss, as the mother of his children; strong sons and fair daughters, that would reflect her sweetness and his strength—the completion of their love. He had dreamed of the time when the house would ring with their voices, and then of the days when the house had lapsed into silence again, when learning love's mystery they had gone to homes of their own; when he and she would live on in a love that time could not change, nor age wither; how later she would lay him in the tomb of his ancestors, and later still they would put her close beside him and his people. He had never dreamed of her dying first, or of his life without her.

And now, she had gone from his life, and the dreams had gone; and he had shattered the hopes with his own hand. He would never feel her in his arms, or lean down and rest the hollow of his cheek against her hair; he would never see

her moving around the house, or watch her shadow as she passed. She would never rest beside him in the vault.

The house would remain silent in the years that stretched ahead, as it had remained silent in the years that lay behind. There would never be again even the dream echoes of the children's voices. His portrait—in uniform—would never hang upon the wall; the space where he had dreamed her pictured face would look down into his living one, would be left empty; and the shadows would never take the forms of little children, and only the grim shadow-curtain of darkness would stretch across the barren wall.

And he would leave the gallery and go into the desolate library, where he and she had stood that day of the storm, and he would sit down and bow his face on the big, carved table, wondering what was the answer to the twisted riddle of his life.

He had told himself he would pick up the broken pieces and remould them for England and the Service, and he had thought to learn the answer here—at home, in Scotland, by the crags and sea.

But Scotland had not answered him.

VII.

Trevelyan let the hand that held Mackenzie's letter fall between his sprawling legs.

He had been sitting on the front steps of the house when Mactier had brought him his mail and he had opened it there.

There were the papers, and a half dozen bills, a wedding invitation, two sets of reception cards, the announcement of a club meeting, and a letter from his aunt in eastern Scotland, begging him to come to them, if only for a week, and telling him that Cary was with them, and—Mackenzie's letter.

He had laid it aside to open last. It might have been he wanted to take his time reading it; or a dread of hearing from any of the old mess. At any rate, he hesitated before opening it, even when he had disposed of the rest of the mail.

He read it after awhile, and then he raised his head and looked hard at the group of trees near the house.

And so Mackenzie had been transferred to a distant regiment soon after he, Trevelyan, had resigned. There were a good many pages given to the description

of the new Station and the new set of officers and men, that Trevelyan skipped over hastily. It was only the last part that had struck him suddenly, like a heavy blow in the face, and that made him, after awhile, pick up the letter and re-read the part.

"We had a cholera scare this season, but we managed to strangle it, so that it never became more than local, but it kept Clarke—he's my assistant, and a good chap he is—and me, on the jump for a time. The natives won't look out for the water, and I don't believe the entire medical and military force of the United Kingdom combined would be able to make them do so! And of course it's damnation in this special spot where there is more or less cholera every year. I sometimes feel inclined to say if they're such fools let them drink and bathe and drown themselves in the water, for they're not worth saving. But you see, unless the scourge is stamped out among them it goes on spreading and threatens the barracks. We can't spare one of our dandy men. We need 'em all in the Service—every last mother's son of 'em, bless their stout old British hearts!

"You saw a case or two at the old Station, and you know something of what it means. But you haven't any idea of an army surgeon's dread of an epidemic—that is a surgeon who has been through the cholera mill. I know, for I've spent most of my term in India, and years ago I was in the midst of a howling time of it—men dropping off by the score! I never want to go through such a thing again. The horror of it is enough to last a man a good deal longer than his natural life—and the chaps who helped me! Well, most of the men who could—and they were brave men, too—took to heels, and the handful that buckled to, to nurse, kept getting sick from fatigue and the vile water—and then when the men died—the fires—

"There, you know it, I suppose, or you've heard of it before. No one *knows* it, until one's been through it.

"The natives were pretty good on the whole a few months ago and so we stamped it out then. Jove! some of them were sick, though—sicker than the sickest dog you ever saw—. There was one fellow—he was worth saving—and I never worked so hard over a man in my life, except Stewart when he was hurt at the old Station. He died, though. All the while I kept thinking of that time with Stewart, and how you brought him back from death. I've never understood that, and I never learned anything like it in my *Materia Médica*. It was kind of uncanny, but it did the work. I wondered if you could have done something for that fellow. I couldn't. He was a Scotchman, by the way, of the rank and file."

Here the letter stopped. On a fresh sheet was a postscript.

"Just came across this in my desk—two months old. I must have thought I had sent it and didn't. Guess I'll let it go though. Now that the immediate cholera scare is over the natives are playing the dickens again with the water—as they

always do. It begins to look like trouble. When the spring rains come it'll play the devil with the Service this time. Well!"

Trevelyan put down the letter. There was an odd fullness in his throat.

He got up and began to walk to and fro. Once he stopped and kicked at the gravel of the drive with his heel. The odd fullness in his throat grew, and it seemed to him as though an invisible force was impelling him to India.

Then he gripped at his self-control, and quieted his throbbing brain by his will. There should be no impetuous passion to lead him wrongly here. He would weigh the risks; he would force himself to think of all it meant—of all the horror of the details—the horrors that were unspeakable, almost unthinkable. He had seen something of them when he was at the Station. Whatever his decision there should be no regrets.

All day he wandered around the place—preoccupied. He did not touch his lunch, and he scarcely touched his dinner.

In the evening he went into the great library and thought it out—alone.

Had the dreams come to this? Was this the answer?

Was it the answer?

He sat rigid and mute questioning the silence, but the silence gave back no answer.

Outside the stars appeared one by one, only to hide themselves behind the mist that slowly had arisen, and the cold chill of midnight crept in through the closed windows. The fire on the hearth faded from its steady glow of gold to the red of the dying embers, and the student lamp on the table flickered and went out. And still Trevelyan sat rigid and mute, with his wide eyes questioning the silence.

By and by the silence became alive, and was peopled with the visions of his thoughts. He remembered what those cholera cases were, he had seen in India—the unutterableness of it all—and there swept over him not so much the abhorrence of death as of its manifestation. After all, was it not wholly the close contact with the disease itself he shrank from? Death—

Why, death was not so bad.

And Trevelyan's tense features relaxed a little.

After all, he would not go to court death. He had lived through that desire and conquered it the night he had lain wounded by his own hand in the military hospital. Foolhardiness was not courage, so he had told himself then, and so he believed now.

Then, it was not likely that he would catch the plague and die. He had always laughed at disease; he who had never been ill; and had not Mackenzie lived through one of the worst epidemics on record—this promised to be mild, as compared to it. It was not so much the fear of death and disease, but was he

willing to accept both if they came?

The old passionate love of life he had felt years ago when a boy, fighting the storm and the sea and death, shot through him and thrilled him from his throbbing head to his feet. He rose and flung out his arms and bent them backwards and forwards. He could feel the flow of the blood and the *life* that was there.

Then he thought of Mackenzie's letter and he pictured the oncoming of the cholera, and Mackenzie and his little band fighting the scourge unaided. What was the strength of his life for if not to serve these; if not to serve the men who served England! Might he not so serve England, too, and help to save, perhaps, the lives of those who fought in her defense and for her honor?

It would be service, but it would not be the service he had dreamed of as a child, and striven for as a boy and a youth. He had thought to serve with the sword, and perhaps—so he had dreamed—meet death in a charge like the charge his father had made. His blood had thrilled at the thought of the rally, and the command he would send down the line!

Trevelyan fumbled in the dark for his chair, and sat down.

It would never be that. If he should die serving Mackenzie and England what he had done would die with him. He might be mentioned in the Reports, but Reports—

Well; why not? What had he done for England that England should remember him? He had only served England in dishonor.

"When the men died—the fires—"

It would not even mean that he could be brought back here—to Scotland, to his crags and sea—to rest in the old vault. That last dream would have to fade even as the other dreams had faded.

He might not serve England gloriously; he might help the Service only indirectly, but would not the service and the help be there? Might he not so pick up the broken pieces?

Still the silence gave back no answer.

The wan gray dawn stole in through the lifting mist and found him wide-eyed and sleepless still.

After awhile he rose again and stretched his stiff legs and went down the hall to the front door and opened it. The chill of the early dawn struck him and he shivered. He walked down to the sea and stood there, looking out over the gray, cold waste of waters, and then he climbed to the eyrie, and looked out over the waters again. They seemed colder and grayer than before, and from force of habit he crawled to the ledge and leaned over. The *swish*, *s-w-i-s-h*, of the breakers below reached him, and through the faint mist he could see the white foam. The toss of the spray touched his face in friendly greeting as it had done so often—so often before.

The faintest touch of shell-like pink crept into the gray sky and deepened, and was reflected on the sea, and still Trevelyan lingered. The old passionate strength of the boy-child came back to him then, as he hung, listening to the beat of the sea. The self-assurance had gone from the courage, and had been crushed beyond restoration when he had broken the clay; but the courage was there—born afresh—unyielding and enduring and deep as the sea.

He rose to his feet and he flung out his arms toward the sea as he had done when he had beaten it and the storm and death, in Cary's home, as a child; but he said nothing, for the odd fullness in his throat. Let death come so, his heart cried. Death, even when it strikes, does not always conquer, and Death was not all.

Then he climbed down and went back to the house, and up-stairs and flung himself on his bed.

The sea had answered his questionings.

Thus would he serve the Service.

VIII.

It was late in the forenoon when Trevelyan awoke. He lay still awhile listening to the beat of the sea on the crags. The music of the waters had been his reveille since a child, when he had used to get up with the break of the day. The old triumphant note that had been missing in the sea's song so long was in it to-day. He did not define it, but he was acutely conscious of its presence, and it haunted him while dressing and all during his lonely breakfast.

Then he went up-stairs and got his Gladstone and rummaged through his bureau drawers and closets, preparing for a short journey. Later, he sent for Mactier.

The old man came at once and stood in the doorway respectful and silent, watching his master pack.

"Is that you, Mactier? Well, I'm off again. I'm going to run over to Mr. John's. I'll be back day after to-morrow or the next—sure."

Mactier twirled his cap around and around with his hands, and looked down at it hard.

"Ay, sir."

"I'll come right back from there," Trevelyan went on, sorting collars, as he

spoke, "and then I'll go over the accounts with you and see what the tenants want. I'm going back to India as soon as I can get there."

Mactier's stoic Scotch features showed no surprise.

"Ay, sir," he said again, in a low voice, "'Tis what I've expected this lang time."

Trevelyan looked up from his packing, amused.

"You have—have you?"

"Is it the army, sir?" asked Mactier, doubtfully.

Trevelyan sat back on his heels.

"No," he said, briefly, not meeting Mactier's eyes, "it's the cholera."

The cap Mactier had been twirling dropped suddenly from his hand and he came a step forward. The long years in which Trevelyan had grown to be a man faded from Mactier's consciousness; the big retired officer of the Queen's service, was a boy again—the boy whom he had flung across his shoulder when he was wounded and brought home through the darkness of that long moorland night.

"Not the cholera, laddie! O, not the cholera!"

"That's just what it's going to be," said Trevelyan, wheeling around suddenly on his heel. "Where in thunder is that shirt?"

The old impetuous decision brought Mactier back to his surroundings at once. He was again the old retainer with the respectful manner and the stoic Scotch face. He stooped and picked from the floor the shirt that had fallen from the bed.

"Here it is, sir," he said.

"That's it. Thanks." Trevelyan gave the shirt a shake and laid it in the Gladstone. "I'm just going to look around out there—you know I never could stay long in one place at a time, Mactier—and perhaps help the soldiers a little. I'll be back before you know it!"

Mactier continued to hand him slowly one by one the articles on the bed, which Trevelyan put into the Gladstone. The old man was silent.

Trevelyan closed the Gladstone with a snap and looked up, a quizzical smile in his eyes.

"You're not afraid I'm going to get the cholera and die—are you?"

Mactier looked down at him adoringly.

"Ay, sir, I fear just that."

Trevelyan laughed.

"Nonsense! Nothing has ever killed me yet." He rose and pushed the Gladstone to one side with his foot. "When I get back from Aberdeen, we'll fix everything up for the year. If anything goes wrong or you want any advice, you can refer to Mr. Granger as usual. He'll come up from Edinburgh if necessary."

"Veera gude, sir."

"I guess that's about all for the present. You'd better tell James to have the trap around in plenty of time to get me to that afternoon train."

Trevelyan reached the Stewarts' the next morning. They were not expecting him, and the little country station was deserted. He hired a carriage and a man, and was driven the seven miles that lay between him and the house. He looked out over the long stretch of familiar road with indifferent eyes, and the liveryman who had known him ever since the year his aunt had brought him to Aberdeen county, when his mother had died, wondered at his silence. Trevelyan's heart throbs kept time to the revolving of the carriage wheels.

"We are taking you to her," they cried again and again—maddeningly. "You are to see her again," they cried, and his heart was in his throat as the carriage turned in at the big twisted iron gates.

He caught sight of her a long distance off, and before the noise of the approaching wheels had attracted attention. She was a little apart from the group that was gathered on the side piazza Malcolm Stewart had added years ago to the rambling old house. She was seated on a step, her big shade hat covered with wild flowers, lying at her feet, and adding a touch of color to the pale effect of her gray dress. Her hands were resting in her lap and she was looking off absent-mindedly toward the stretch of sunlit beach.

Mrs. Stewart was reading aloud, now and then putting out her hand to stroke John's, that rested on the arm of the big garden chair drawn close to hers. He was looking steadily up at the white clouds sailing overhead and smiling to himself—not listening to the reading. Tom Cameron was teasing Maggie's collie because he did not dare tease Maggie.

And all about the group the noonday sun of autumn lay as warm and bright as it might have done in summer.

It was Maggie who first heard the carriage and who caught sight of its approach around the curve in the long drive. She scrambled to her feet, and gathering up her skirts tore down the steps and drive to meet it, Tom Cameron at her heels and the collie bringing up the rear.

"It's Rob," she shouted, breathlessly, and tripped suddenly and lay sprawling on the ground, the collie barking frantically and whirling around her in the dust of the gravel.

Trevelyan flung the reins to the liveryman and jumped down.

"Hello, Maggie," he cried, picking her up before Cameron could reach her. "Hello, Tom! There, don't bark yourself mad, Bruce! Hello, everybody!"

They gathered around him, and his aunt kissed him affectionately.

"You're a good boy," she said, the charm of a rare smile lighting up her eyes. "But why did you not wire you were coming so that we could have met you? Your boxes are coming later?"

"Thought I'd surprise you all. Here's my box now." He motioned to the liveryman, who was lifting his Gladstone out of the trap.

"*That?*" said Maggie scornfully.

Trevelyan laughed, conscious the while that Cary was coming toward him.

"It's good to see you again," she said simply, putting her hand in his and looking straight into his eyes, "But I said you wouldn't come!"

"Did you?" he asked, forgetting the group around him as he looked at her. "Why?"

She smiled slowly.

"Oh, I hardly know. I suppose because I thought you wouldn't leave home and your old crags and your big thunder storms. We're so much quieter here."

Trevelyan turned sharply and beat his big hand softly against John's shoulder.

"How are you, old man?" he asked, not raising his eyes from his own hand.

"Fine. I'm getting on my feet again. I drive myself now, and ride a little and walk."

"Good. Hello, Maggie—going on breaking Tom's heart?" he pulled disrespectfully at one of Maggie's stray curls, while Cameron fumed inwardly.

Maggie nodded cheerfully and beckoned Cameron to come and wipe the dust from her dress with his handkerchief.

They bore Trevelyan back with them to the piazza, and Mrs. Stewart sent for some lunch, which he ate out there in the midst of them. Stewart flung himself back in his big garden chair a little distance away and shaded his eyes with his hand, studying Trevelyan's face. There was something in it he could not understand and it haunted him. He continued to watch it all the morning, and when Trevelyan was playing tennis with Cameron. And later his eyes would wander from Trevelyan to Cary, sitting over with his sister at the tea table. He noticed with a great pain at his heart that Cary was watching Trevelyan too, and that there rested over her face an expression that he, who had studied her every mood, had never seen before, and he wondered suddenly if he had been a fool—living in a fool's paradise of late. Perhaps it was Trevelyan after all—perhaps—

Perhaps, too, the light that had sometimes crept shyly into her eyes during these last days—as shyly as a sunbeam creeps into gray wells of beauty—had not dawned for him. And all their walks upon the beach; and all their drives together; and all their watching of the rising moon had been nothing to her after all. And they had been *his* life!

All night he lay awake, suffering dumbly, not knowing that Trevelyan in the adjoining room lay stretched across the bed, his face buried in the pillow, wondering passionately how he was to say "good-bye" to her to-morrow—

without her knowing! Without her knowing!

IX.

At dawn Trevelyan got up and waited at the window for the sunrise. By and by he could hear the servants moving below stairs. The long minutes passed. From a turn in the drive he could see Martin returning with the mail that had come in late the night before. He watched him curiously as he paused to speak with McGuire, the gardener, and he wondered in an indifferent sort of way what he was saying that caused the latter to suddenly grow so excited. He rose and went down stairs, meeting Martin at the door.

"Anything the matter?"

Martin jerked off his cap awkwardly, and handed him the mail and the papers.

"It's them Gordon 'Ighlanders, sir," he said. "If you'll look at the paper—"

Trevelyan opened the sheet.

Martin watched him from a respectful distance. He saw Trevelyan crush the paper suddenly in his hand and turn sharply on his heel, and go into the library and close the door. "I thought that there would stir Master Robert up," he muttered. "Law! that was awful fine, an' won't Betty stare an' hollow!"

An hour later the family assembled in the breakfast room.

"Where is Robert?" asked Mrs. Stewart, sitting down.

John shook his head.

"His room's empty. Must be taking a walk. What has become of the morning paper?"

Trevelyan appeared suddenly in the doorway. He held the paper in his hand, and his face was as white as the sheet. His uncle rose hastily.

"Great heavens, boy! What's the matter?"

"*Matter?*" Trevelyan's voice rang out excitedly. "Read that!"

Half a dozen hands reached out for the paper. Trevelyan snatched it hungrily back.

"Let me read it to you! It's the Gordon Highlanders." Trevelyan's words stumbled over each other. "They've assaulted the Dargai Hill! The Gurkhas, Dorsets and Derbys couldn't take it! Then General Kempster ordered the Gordon Highlanders and the Third Sikhs to reinforce the fighting line. The pipers played

the 'Cock of the North,' and then the mixed troops—the Highlanders and the Dorsets and Gurkhas and Derbys and Sikhs swept across! God! Look at the list of the dead!"

Trevelyan tossed the paper to John and turned away and leaned against the sideboard, his elbows on it, his head in his hands.

Young Stewart caught the paper and sat down at the table and spread it out in front of him with nervous fingers, and began to read, the rest gathering around him. The Highlanders of Aberdeen!

The breakfast stood untouched, growing colder every minute, but no one thought of it.

Young Stewart's voice got husky now and then, and when he was half way through the sheet, he pushed it over to Cameron and rose.

"I guess you'd better finish it," he said.

It was hard to forget that if it had not been for that India transfer, he would have been with the Highlanders!

Trevelyan came forward suddenly, and leaned over Cary's chair.

"Isn't it splendid," he said. "That's the way we Scotch fight—" he broke off abruptly, recoiling before the consciousness that he had not fought so.

"It's grand," cried the American girl, her breath coming quickly.

The elder Stewart looked up for a moment from the paper he was reading over Cameron's shoulder.

"You ought to have been there, Robert! That's just your kind of work!"

"I wish to God I had!"

Mrs. Stewart crossed the room and went over to where John was sitting at the furthest end of the table, his chin in his hand. She sat down by him and leaned forward to speak to him.

"I know it's hard," she said, "but think how I would have felt!"

Stewart drew outlines on the cloth with the breakfast knife he had picked up.

"We won't talk of it," he answered, and he turned his face away.

His mother said nothing, and by and by she rose and went back to the group. Something in her face as she came up to them attracted Trevelyan and he stopped short in his excited talk and looked toward the solitary figure at the end of the table. His grasp suddenly relaxed on Cary's chair and he went up to Stewart and sat down on the arm of his chair and gripped hard at his shoulder.

"I'm a brute," he said in a low voice, and he kept his grip on Stewart's arm, and it was he who by and by led the others to calm down and eat their breakfast after some sort of a fashion.

He was to leave at midnight, and he had come especially to see Cary, but he scarcely saw her throughout the length of the long day. After that he devoted

himself to Stewart, forcing him to think and speak of other things besides the great excitement of the hour. He laughed with him; he talked to him, and they went over their boyhood again. It was as it had once been between them, before they had grown to men. Once in the twilight Trevelyan spoke of Cary.

"Things are all going to pull straight between you," he said.

But Stewart, remembering the look on Cary's face, when she had been watching Trevelyan the day before, shook his head.

It was not until Trevelyan went to dress for dinner that he realized that the real hardness of the task lay undone. He would leave at midnight, and only God knew when he would come to Aberdeen again—and God was silent. To-night would mean "good-bye."

After dinner he went up to Cary as she was sitting at the piano in the music room.

"Won't you come for a walk on the beach?"

She looked up, flushed, and her hands fell back upon the keys discordantly.

"Why—I don't know. Isn't it too cold?"

"It isn't cold," he said, picking up a white cashmere shawl and flinging it across her bare shoulders. "Come."

A tone in his voice caught and held her wavering and turned it to decision. She rose.

They passed Stewart in the hall, on his way to the music room, his flute in his hand.

"We're going down to the shore for a little while," said Trevelyan, pausing before moving on.

Stewart nodded.

"Oh, all right. Don't get cold, Cary."

And he went on to the deserted music room.

Trevelyan led her down the little path to the beach. He talked in a matter of fact way on indifferent subjects, as though to set her at her ease. He smiled grimly to the darkness.

"She's afraid I'll forget myself," he kept thinking.

They came from out of the strip of woods and its shadows to the beach, stretching away on either hand in the distance, and sloping ahead of them into the sea that kissed it and then receded, holding it at arm's length before it embraced it again, as a lover does his sweetheart. The slow creeping up and retreating of the waters came faintly and soothingly to their ears. Far off a faint light appeared in the heavens, marking the rising moon. The burden of the day and the excitement of the battle crept off and were lost in the shadows.

"I haven't seen the moon rise on the beach since I was a youngster," said Trevelyan.

"It's beautiful," said Cary. "I always get near the moonlight when I can."

"Do you? Well, it pays one. It is beautiful. I don't believe I ever quite appreciated the moon and the beach here when I was a little chap."

"Your aunt once told me how unhappy you were when they brought you here—to Aberdeen county."

"I fancy that's pretty straight. I never took kindly to the level beach. I wanted my crags and my breakers and old Mactier. Mactier and the crags and the breakers were always associated together in my small mind."

He laughed.

"I suppose so; but it's so peaceful here—" Cary broke off.

"Yes; but do you know I've a notion that some day or other, you'll come often to the old place in Argyll and you'll love it as I love it now."

Cary looked up at him quickly. Could it be that he still hoped that some day—

She shook her head.

"It's beautiful," she said, "but it's terrible! The beat of the sea on the crags always seems to be chanting something that I can't understand. It's a foolish idea, isn't it?"

Trevelyan walked down to the water's edge.

"It's been chanting to me ever since I was born," he replied.

He looked out over the quiet waters.

"The sea here don't talk to me," he went on. "It never did. It isn't like my Scotland! Come, we'd better walk a little; you'll get cold standing."

She gathered the cashmere that had slipped from her shoulders around her, and brought it up, covering her head. Her face white as the white moonlight looked out from its folds. Once a wave bolder than its fellows, crept up and wet her feet and the edge of the long skirt she was holding with one hand. She scarcely noticed it. Once she turned her face away from Trevelyan's and looked out across the shining sea, to where it lay dark against the horizon. A great pity and a great awe, of something she could not define, lay heavy upon her and made her silent. It was as if this "good-bye" was to be the longest she had ever said. From the house, showing through the trees, came a stream of light. It was from the music room and it mingled with the white radiance that lay across the sea. And then through the quiet, there stole the first, faint notes of John's flute. The music began softly and caressingly, and rose and filled the spaces all around them. It sobbed and moaned and called entreatingly to her, and then it sank into a marvelous crescendo; only to throb again against the silence—still entreating her to return, before it faded slowly and died away altogether.

The sobbing and the moaning of it pulsed in Trevelyan's brain. This was good-bye. It was good-bye as he had never dreamed it. He could have fallen

down before that white moon-touched face and cried the good-bye out, clinging to her feet. He could have cried it out, his head upon her breast; he could have cried it out, with her resting in his arms, but silence laid its seal on him instead.

Out in India, with Mackenzie, in the awful shadow of the plague, he would remember her so, with her white moon-touched face.

What had he done to hope for such a good-bye? Only a man who has won a woman could cry out his heart's fullness so; and he had lost her! What right had he to tell her that he was going away, hoping so to wrest from her some word of approbation or of pity? Might she not say something that she would regret afterwards? He could go back home, and he could write her briefly. Then she would remember this night. Then, whatever he had said or left unsaid to-night or in the note, she would understand.

As for him—out in India with Mackenzie, in the awful shadow of the plague, he would remember her so, with her white moon-kissed face. He would hear again, louder than the moans of sufferings, the wondrous love music of Stewart's flute and the song of the sea. It seemed to him he would hear it and see her so, if he were dying. And yet, he told himself, he would have given up his life right there before she should think that he had done this thing because of her approbation or her pity.

If he could only have been with the Highlanders at the assault! If—well, death would never come to him so. He had fought that out in the hospital and again the other night at home.

The music sobbed itself into silence.

"The old beach is a good deal prettier by night than I ever used to fancy it could be, as a little chap," he said after awhile. "I'll remember it when I'm back in—Argyll."

"Why in the world are you in such a hurry to get back?" asked Cary.

"Oh, there are some things to be looked out for, and accounts to be gone over with Mactier. I couldn't do without him."

"No, indeed. You're going to stay there during the winter, I suppose. You'll go back to London for the season?"

"I guess not this year," he said. "I'm not much on the society act."

"You'll be lonely—won't you?"

Trevelyan stopped and beat his foot against the sand and looked down at it.

"Oh, I've been a lonely kind of a chap all my life," he said in a matter of fact tone.

Cary caught her breath quickly, turning away that he might not see her face.

"It's all my own doing," he went on. "I know it. I never was very sociable.

I fancy I was born cross and horrid and crooked.”

He laughed a little.

Cary turned to him and she put out her hand and for a moment it rested on his sleeve. He looked down at her upturned face, on which the moon was shining. A faint smile was folded around her mouth, hiding the pity beneath. She shook her head.

”Oh, no, you’re not!” she said. ”You’re brave and you’re strong, and some day—”

He looked into her eyes.

”Yes—and ‘some day’?”

”You’re going to do something fine!”

He shook his head in denial.

”I lost my chance,” he said slowly.

”You will have another,” she said, the hope of all the world in her voice. ”We all have our second chance.”

”Not like that—not like those Highlanders—” he broke off and his hands came up swiftly to either side of the lifted, moon-lit face. He could have crushed it, white and radiant as it was, between his hands; he could have kissed and kissed and kissed it!

And then his hands came up slowly, and he held her face as gently as the Captain would have done.

”I am going to take you back to the house,” he said, looking down at her. ”You are shivering. I might have known you would take cold.”

She shrank back, trembling from the dumb anguish in his eyes, and covered her own with her hands.

Why couldn’t he have been with the Highlanders?

He drew one of her hands slowly down.

”Don’t,” he said; ”Don’t act so. Did I hurt you?”

She shook her head.

He raised the hand he held to his lips and he kissed it passionately, holding it close against his mouth for a moment, as though to seal the kiss there.

”I’m awfully glad you believe in me,” he said, ”I’m awfully glad for that ‘some day’ you think of. Shall I tell you about a ‘some day,’ too?”

She nodded in silence.

”Well, then, ‘some day’ you’ll marry just like all the girls do, but you’ll marry some out of sight fellow—” he broke off, and retraced his steps to the house, adjusting his military walk to her slower one.

She pulled at the edge of her shawl. She was thinking if it had not been for Trevelyan, Stewart would have been at the Dargai Hill.

She bent her head as she entered the strip of wood, and the twigs felt out

caressingly and touched her dress as she passed. The breath of the one red rose on her bosom came up to her like the voice of love, and over her white face there stole the faintest color of the rose, and she breathed quicker, remembering the music of the flute.

Stewart turned from the long window. He could see them emerging from the darkness of the wood into the moon-lit open. Trevelyan had spoken to him of Cary but what if Cary cared for Trevelyan after all! And he laid the silent flute away.

X.

At midnight Trevelyan stumbled blindly into the railway carriage, without a backward glance at Stewart, who had insisted on taking the long, dark drive to the station to see him off. Once in the darkness Trevelyan had put his hand heavily on Stewart's knee, and leaned back and stared into the blackness ahead. All that Stewart had ever been to him—all that they had ever been to each other, swept across him.

Out there with the plague and Mackenzie, his eyes would ache for a sight of Stewart's strong, kind face, but Stewart would not know. Out there, in the shadow of death, he would remember Stewart, and his heart would cry out passionately for him, but Stewart would not know. And he would think of Cary—how he would think of her—of her and Stewart. He would think of them together.

If he might only tell Stewart what this parting meant—that it was longer than he dreamed—and that he was not merely seeing him off to Argyll.

But what right had he to speak? Stewart could not change his decision now; nor his uncle, nor his aunt, nor his father, were he home, nor all London, nor—Cary. They would grieve when the letters came to them, but they would be spared the pain of parting. It was better so.

It was toward the evening of the next day when he reached home, and after he had finished his dinner he went into the big library, walked over to his desk and unlocked it.

"Now for it," he said briefly, and he sat down and began sorting papers, preparatory to going over them the next day with Mactier and his barrister, Mr. Granger, whom he had wired to come from Edinburgh and meet him at home the next morning.

He worked far into the night, and the next day it was the same. Literally he set his house in order. Granger returned to Edinburgh on the evening train, and Mactier received his instructions—in silence, shifting his old cap between his fingers, but not looking up to meet Trevelyan's eyes.

Then Trevelyan had dinner. After the meal was over he tried to rest but he could not, and he went out into the hall and began to walk up and down—swiftly. There was no other sound in all the house but his rapid walking. Solitude enveloped him and the home of his people. Once he stopped and looked at the armor on the wall; once he opened the front door and stood on the steps staring into the night. The Pleiades were brighter and further off he remembered, thinking afterwards, than he had ever seen them; but the rest—the stretch of winding drive and lawn and trees lay wrapped in profound shadow and appeared unreal; only the Pleiades and the beating of the surf against the crags, seemed the things that existed.

The night air was cold and he went in and back to the library, and put another log upon the flickering blaze, and as the wood caught fire warmed his hands with the heat. After awhile he lighted his candle and went upstairs.

The next morning he said good-bye to the tenantry; in the afternoon he packed his grip and the few things needed for the coming journey. In the evening he wrote half a dozen letters—brief notes telling his father and his aunt and uncle of his intended return to India. They were all worded much the same. The old spirit of restlessness was on him. He wanted excitement. He was running out to India for a time to watch Mackenzie fight the cholera. They were not to worry. He expected to have a great time of it. His note to John was even briefer, but it was more serious in tone.

"DEAR OLD JOHNNY:—" it ran:

"Good-bye. I'm off for India again. You see I can't keep away from it. I suppose it's on the order of a man wanting to return to the scene of his murder.

"I'm a lucky dog, and of course I expect to return, but the plague isn't always considerate of persons, and there's the hundredth chance. I expect to come back and live at home myself. Still Granger has the will. If I don't you're to have the old place. You'll come to it sometimes—hey; and have an eye on Mactier?

"I guess you were about right about my quitting the Service. I wasn't fit.

"After all, if I hadn't turned coward and lost my grip on myself, you'd have been with the Highlanders at the Dargai Hill, and Cary—

"Well, that don't excuse me. I don't mean it as an excuse. I've never been worth a shilling or made anything of my life, but I've thought a lot of you—always.

"Good-bye,

"ROB."

And then Trevelyan drew forth a clean sheet of paper and stared hard at it. What was there to say to Cary!

He dipped his pen in the ink.

"My Love," he wrote, and then stopped short, and stared at the words. Then he crumpled the sheet fiercely in his fingers and flung it into the fire.

"My dear Cary," he wrote, trying again, and then he laid down his pen and laughed harshly. The black letters stared back at him like small demons, grinning derisively.

The third time he started without a heading.

"I've written to the rest," it began, "and they will tell you of my plans. To you, however, I want to say something more. Now, that I am writing, there seems little to say to you, and yet, I'm human enough—if you will, coward enough still—to have you, at least, know that I have not been altogether candid with the others. I understand the danger. It is because of the danger that I am going. There's no glory in it, and I don't want any fuss, but there are our men in want—it's something for the Service. You understand—don't you?

"I was afraid of making you sad that night on the beach if I told you, and I selfishly, too, wanted you to myself, as you always were, and untouched by worry. I shall think of that walk with you, and the moonlight on your face, and the music—! After all, Johnny's the only fellow fit for you. You don't mind my saying so—do you?

"The sea was quiet that night—as quiet as you were, and my heart was the only tempestuous thing on the beach; and your face, oh, Cary,—your face!

"There's no telling, of course, but I've a queer notion I'm not coming back—ever any more, as we used to say as children; but the sea will go on beating against the crags here—home on the Scottish coast, and perhaps by and by you'll be able to understand the song?

"I love you, but I don't love you as I did. It's the Service, first, somehow. Am I building up the broken pieces, do you suppose? It's a job—isn't it?

"But my heart is breaking over this letter!

"There! I don't want to make you sad. There's nothing to be sad over. The tangle is just getting unsnarled; and you know there's an end to every thread—

"There's a big empty space on the wall of the gallery here. If you would *let*

Johnny hang your picture there! If you'd give him the right! And the sword—would you mind keeping my sword?

"It's getting late. I make an early start to-morrow. I enclose Mackenzie's letter. I got it less than a week ago.

"I shall never forget you. I think that is all.

"ROBERT TREVELYAN."

XI.

After Trevelyan left, the household in Aberdeen settled back again into its usual state of placidity.

The second day after his departure was threatening, and Cameron and Maggie killed time by pretending to play billiards. Malcolm Stewart had driven into the village in the morning to be gone all day; his wife was busy writing to Kenneth, her youngest son, who was tramping it through Normandy with a couple of old classmates. Cary was curled up in the window seat in the library, absently watching McGuire, the gardener, rake the path.

"Is the book so absorbing?"

Cary turned suddenly and met Stewart's laughing eyes.

"Why, I didn't know you were there!"

"So it seems. I've been sitting here for the last quarter of an hour watching you—read!"

Cary flushed.

"It's a stupid old story, anyway," she complained, tossing the book to him.

"What have you been doing?"

"Offered to help Tom and Maggie with billiards, but they were so deuced ungrateful I left."

"You were a wise man," said Cary, and she laughed. Then she began to drum on the window. "If you could do anything you liked what would you do, just at this minute?"

Stewart twirled the book he held indifferently. "I'd kiss you," he thought, but aloud he said meekly, "I'll watch you, please ma'am."

"Nonsense!" answered Cary, turning her head uneasily and looking out of the window at McGuire again.

She stifled a yawn.

"It's a lazy day, isn't it?"

"You're sure it's the day?"

"Of course! What a suggestion. Is it near lunch time?"

Stewart nodded.

"How about a walk afterwards," he said. "It's clearing and the sun's coming out. We might go to the Point and watch it set," he added quickly, seeing her waver.

Cary clapped her hands.

"Truly? You really mean it; you'll take me to the Point at last?"

"You'll go then?"

"Of course I'll go! I'll get on a short skirt this minute. See me run!"

She jumped down from the window seat like a delighted child.

Stewart caught at her hand as she passed and detained her.

"I haven't the right to ask," he said quickly, looking up into her face with his grave Scotch eyes, "but were you thinking of Robert when I spoke to you?"

"Yes," said Cary, not looking at him. "I've been thinking of him all day."

Stewart let her hand drop suddenly, but Cary made no movement to be gone.

"I—I can't just tell you why," she said, pressing her hand tightly over the one Stewart had held, and keeping her eyes fixed on a bust of Burns, "but I feel—somehow, and I suppose it's foolish—we—we won't see him again for a long time."

Stewart leaned forward, looking up again at her.

"I haven't the right," he said, "and you needn't answer me, but—is it Robert, Cary?"

A long shaft of breaking sunlight came through the window and touched her shoulders and her hair. The quiet of the room was absolute. She still pressed the hand he had held with the other.

"It isn't Robert," she said, and her voice was lower than its wont, and she did not meet Stewart's eyes, "I—" and then she ran swiftly from the room.

She would not meet his eyes all during lunch, and she insisted on devoting herself to Cameron, much to Maggie's inward amusement.

"There's something in the air," Maggie confided to Cameron after lunch; "I just feel it pricking—like pins. It's something to do with John and Cary. Now what *do* you suppose it is?"

She laughed, meeting Cameron's eyes.

"What *do* you suppose it is!" he repeated banteringly. "I'm *sure* I don't know!"

"Johnny's taking her to the Point this afternoon!"

Cameron sighed heavily.

"Well, that means 'good-bye' to Johnny!"

Maggie wheeled around suddenly on him.

"What a way to talk!"

Cameron pulled her to him gently by the shoulders, until he could look down into her face.

"Perhaps—that is—will you go with me to the Point to-morrow, Maggie?" he asked.

"Is it not too late in the year to try the Point?" asked John's mother anxiously, as he and Cary started out. "The days are shorter now, and then there is the tide, and the danger of a mist, you know!"

Stewart studied the skies critically.

"It seems straight enough, but, of course, if you're going to worry, Little Madre—"

"Oh, of course not. I'm just foolish. Go along with you both," and she pushed them gently away from her with a laugh.

"We won't stay long on the Point," Stewart said when they were well on their way. "It would be a nasty thing to be caught in a mist out there."

Cary pushed a small stone along with the toe of her walking boot, and was silent. Indeed she scarcely spoke all during the walk to the Point.

If he *had* been at the Dargai Hill, she kept thinking, if—he—had!

She followed Stewart out to the extreme end of the peninsula, and she stood quietly listening as he pointed out to her, how in high tide the waters met across the narrow neck and isolated it from the mainland. Sometimes, he told her, the waters swept across the island so left, and he showed her where they had come up and left their mark upon the trunks of the trees.

And then the spell of her silence fell upon him and they stood quiet and motionless, looking out to sea.

They waited so, for the sun to sink slowly behind the distant line of the horizon, and they watched the big white clouds change and clothe themselves in the pink and purple of the coming sunset, like air nymphs getting ready for a ball. The quietness of the day's death was on them. Once or twice they spoke.

"It reminds me of the Point, at home," said Cary once.

He smiled.

"I knew it would," he answered.

She sat down on a big rock at the end of the Point and looked up at the changing clouds. He walked a little way down to the water's edge and then he came back slowly.

The vision of the Highlanders and the Dargai heights, that had haunted him

since Trevelyan had gone, faded. There seemed to be nothing in the world that mattered except her sitting there on the big gray stone, with the water lapping at her feet, and the glow of the sunset on her face.

He watched her as she looked toward the sinking sun, and after it had disappeared he stole up behind her and stooped over her, calling her by name, softly, as though afraid the sea and pines would hear.

She looked up, and then her eyes went back quickly to the afterglow.

The incoming tide lapped softly against the rocks on the shore, and drew nearer. The pink and purple of the clouds changed to a delicate gray, that deepened as the moments passed; and from the sea there stole landward a thin white vapor, as exquisite as a bride's veil, but growing thicker and thicker as it came nearer.

Stewart, following the direction of her eyes, straightened himself suddenly with the alertness that comes with the consciousness of danger.

"It's the mist," he said, briefly. "Come."

He took her hand and held it, and when she would have drawn it away, he tightened his hold.

"You need my help," he said sharply. "We've got to get out of this just as quick as we can!"

The white vapor, grown thicker, crept up behind them, and Stewart changed their rapid pace into a run, but the mist caught up with them, and by and by surrounded them and hid the sea behind them and on either side, and the narrow neck in front. He urged her on over the two miles that lay between them and the mainland.

After awhile he felt her hold on his arm relax.

"I—can't—go—so fast," she panted. "I—I—" and her voice trailed off and was lost in the heaviness of the mist.

He stopped and began to talk rapidly, and he rubbed her cold hands as he spoke.

"You must," he said sternly. "We can't stop here. Don't you know the sea may cover the peninsula, and that the tide is coming in, and is cutting off the neck?"

She nodded.

"I'll try again, oh, I will try!"

She staggered on—blindly, clinging to him. He could feel the cold, tense pressure of her fingers, and it thrilled him. She could feel the strong touch of his hand, and it reassured her. Neither could see the face of the other.

And still the tide crept in on either side of the narrow peninsula. It was the only thing he was conscious of—except her presence and her danger.

If he could lead her from out of this mist! If he could save her! If he could

reach the neck in time! His heart burnt within him, and cried out in passionate protest that he seemed so powerless—he who loved her so!

He drew her hand closer and he bent over her for a moment, his face near to her own. They could see each other's faces so,—faintly.

"Dear," he whispered, and his heart was in his voice.

She clung to his hands, trembling.

If he would only tell her that he loved her, the waters might sweep over the narrow neck before they two reached it! But he did not speak again.

The land tapered off, leading to the neck, and he felt the ground grow moist beneath his feet. He went forward, keeping her at arm's length, but afraid to let go her hand, lest he should lose her in the mist. He put down his foot and he could feel the water creeping up around his boot and filling it.

"The tide is covering the neck," he said briefly, stooping down and unfastening his boots, after which he stood upright, breathing deeply, to gather all his strength. Then he came closer to her and stooped and raised her in his arms and rose again, pressing forward.

She pressed her hands on his shoulders, and struggling, tried to push herself free.

"Are you afraid of me?" he asked.

"Afraid of you!" and she laughed, but the laugh was swallowed up in the mist.

"Then you must let me carry you across."

"What do you think I am?" she asked fiercely. "Let you carry me with that wound in your back! I am as strong as you!"

She struggled again to free herself.

"Oh, no, you're not," he cried gladly, "and you'll be safer so!"

"What do I care for safety when your life is in danger? We'll face it together. Let me down and you—you—I'll let you lead me through—" her voice broke in a sob.

The silence of the years was broken by her sob. He let her slip down, holding her closely still, and then he drew her face to his, and kissed her.

"I love you," he whispered, "I love you," and he laid his cheek against her own, cold with the damp of the mist, and then he drew her nearer to the waters. "Come on, dear," he said brokenly.

They could feel the tide creeping around their feet, and it came up almost to the woman's knees. Still she clung, struggling, panting, to his hand, as he led her into the deeper waters. Once she brought his hand that was leading her up to her face, and he felt her lips upon it.

"I love you," she said clearly, and the words pierced the mist, reaching him.

"Come on, dear," he said again, and still brokenly, leading her to where the

tide ran swiftest.

The waters were up to her waist, and she was chilled and benumbed, and her clothes dragged on her, and she was weary with the weariness of death, but she did not know it. She still clung to his hand. And then as the waters grew deeper:

"Will it hurt?" she asked, and when he did not answer her, "There! I am not afraid."

Her voice was stronger than he had ever heard it, and sweeter; but the strength and the sweetness of it, were like crushing weights upon his heart and brain. She could speak so—when the waters were growing deeper! Moisture not of the mist or the sea sprang to his face and bathed it. And then the agony her words had caused—lifted. She did love him then; loved him with a deathless courage. Let the waters cover them, and the mist draw the folds of its mantle over the level sea!

Suddenly he stopped and lifted his head, breathing quickly.

"The ground's higher," he cried. "We've reached it—the mainland!"

She did not call back to him, but she placed her free hand over his that held hers, and he could feel the added pressure of thanksgiving.

Little by little they could feel the waters receding. Now they were down to his knees again; now they were at his feet—conquered.

He drew her into his arms and he called her by name. She did not answer.

"Aren't you going to speak to me?" he asked, bending over her.

She stroked the shoulder of his coat slowly with her cold, wet hand.

"I—I—what must I say?"

"What I have been waiting all these years to hear—what you said a little while ago—that you love me," he answered, looking into her face.

She bent her head and laid her cheek against her hand on his shoulder.

"I do," she said. "I love you—" her voice broke.

He waited.

"I love you," she repeated, clinging to him. "I have loved you for months. I have been foolish for you! I have been frightened to have you out of my sight; to have you do anything when I was not along for fear you would get hurt in some way! I've imagined all kinds of things that could happen to you—I am so foolish—I love—"

The words came up to him, choked, and he had to lean closer over her to hear.

She faltered, lifting her face from her hands.

"Yes?"

"I dreamed last night you were at the Dargai Hill—that you were killed, and I awoke sobbing in the darkness. I am—so foolish. I knew it wasn't true—" she

turned her face away and wiped her eyes.

"And you love me—like that?" he asked slowly.

Behind them the tide crept in, covering portions of the peninsula and all of the narrow neck. Around them the mist lay heavy.

"But you were not frightened a little while ago and you were in danger then."

She shook her head.

"No; I was with you—we were together," she answered him simply.

He stroked her damp hair, unconscious alike of the tide and the mist, drinking in her words thirstily.

"Then it isn't Robert!" he said more to himself than to her.

"No," she said again. "I think it has been you always—and I didn't know it. I think I have been waiting for you always. Robert showed me that it was you!"

He was silent, waiting for her to go on.

"If it hadn't been for your danger when you were ill from the wound, I mightn't have ever known. And if you'd been at the Dargai Hill—" she stopped and stretched out her arms, and put them around his neck, and looked into his eyes. "Oh! I couldn't have borne that! I'm selfish, but I couldn't have spared you even for the Service!"

The vision of the desolate years he had planned and thought of—the years devoid of service—and the memory of the useless uniforms, hidden away, and the sabres, useless too, crossed on the wall at home, faded, and he laid the dead memories at her feet.

"This compensates—" he broke off, kissing her in silence.

After awhile he drew her arm through his and started to walk slowly.

"You must get home and get on dry clothes," he said.

And he helped her up the steep embankment and into the road that led home.

The tide reached its flood and turned. The sea's low song came to them muffled by distance, and was lost in the darkness behind them. The heavy mist lifted slowly, and through the rifts, one by one, the stars appeared, peeping down at them like little children peeping from the coverings of their cribs; and by and by the moon stole from behind a cloud and moved slowly between the twinkling stars, as a nurse steals from behind a shadowy curtain and moves softly from bed to bed, to see if the children sleep.

He led her in silence through the great wrought-iron gates and up the drive, toward the lighted house, looking down into her uplifted face with his grave eyes.

And he kept looking at her all during dinner. Once she looked across at him—and smiled.

Later she complained of being tired, and she rose to go to bed. Stewart

lighted her candle and waited for her at the foot of the stairs, after the fine old custom of his people. Not even Malcolm Stewart, as the elder host, ever thought of lighting Cary's candle.

Stewart handed it to her as she came up to the great stairway and stopped. To-night he did not offer to shake hands.

She took the candle and then slipped by him quickly. He called her back.

"Aren't you going to say 'good-night' to me?" he asked, a smile creeping around his mouth.

"Why—yes. Good-night."

He leaned over her and kissed her.

"Good-night," he said, and his voice was suddenly grave. "I hope your dreams will be sweet."

She sighed—a sigh of happiness, and she looked down at the burning taper in her hand.

"Then they will have to be of you."

She did not speak for a moment; afterwards she lifted her eyes from the burning taper and looked into his.

"I love you," she said again, and she repeated the words over and over as a master plays over and over a bar of sweetest music, and she put out her hand and pressed her fingers against his cheek. They rested there—closely—for a minute. "I love you so!"

Then she gathered up her long silk skirts and began slowly to mount the stairs, the taper lifted carefully before her. She did not look back, but he could see her face, even in the shadow of the grim armor, by its light. And on her white face there rested a perfect peace. Once a draught caught the flickering taper and nearly extinguished it. She stopped and, dropping her long skirts that fell back upon the oaken stairs with a silken rustle, she shielded the taper with her hand. So would she shield the light of her pure life and her wifehood from the world's breath, he thought.

He stood leaning against the bannister, watching her until she vanished, and he stood there after the soft silken rustle of her skirts and her faint footfall were lost, staring at the last turn in the stairs.

And in western Scotland, Trevelyan sat, his head bowed upon the letter he had just finished to Cary.

XII.

It was spring before Trevelyan could push forward into the lowland section, and on to the interior and Mackenzie. The reports of a threatened cholera scare had reached down as far as Patna. There were Britons coming every day from farther inland to Patna, grateful enough for the privilege of having passed the government line of precaution, and being allowed to stay there; but a British subject, who was neither ordered there by command of the War or Colonial Offices, was another matter, and Trevelyan was regarded with a blank curiosity by those who knew his proposed destination.

There were a good many technicalities and difficulties to be surmounted, too, in the question of getting inward as far as the precaution lines, that would have discouraged anyone less determined than Trevelyan. It had seemed simple enough—to get there—after the journey had once been begun, but the actual reaching Mackenzie was another matter.

The delay, under which he fretted inexpressibly, only brought more serious accounts of the spread of the disease. A score of natives had sickened and died—traced directly to the foulness of the water used—and later there were contradictory reports as to the appearance of the scourge within the barracks. The waiting days became a torture to Trevelyan, and it was not until he had scaled the wall of obstacles, and was well on the other side, pressing onward to Mackenzie, that the torture lifted. The fear—half formed and never acknowledged—of possibly not getting to Mackenzie, fell from him as mile after mile took him further from Patna and nearer to the garrison, and once or twice he laughed a little as he kept picturing to himself Mackenzie's surprise at this personal answering of his letter.

There were other pictures that would force themselves on him at this time, but he fought them from him with a strength grown with much usage. There were pictures of Cary's face—white with the whiteness of the moon upon it and sweeter than the fairest flower—there were pictures of home and old Mactier, mourning for him, and visions of the sea beating against the high, gray crags. It seemed to him he could hear and see it even then, inland as he was, until he would force himself back to present things and the desolate waste land through which he was journeying; the stricken section to which he was going; the cholera and Mackenzie. And he would hold his wandering thoughts sternly in check, as years ago he had held in check the stallion he had conquered and was wont to ride. And so the day would pass in a desperate struggle against self, or his desire to press onward to Mackenzie.

It had needed all his powers of eloquence; all his strategy; all the hard discipline of repression taught by the Woolwich years, to get him so far on his journey, and he had thought with a certain grim satisfaction that all the Woolwich years were paying back their debt to him, at last.

It was early in the morning when he reached the small inland Station. His presence caused a good deal of comment among the troopers he passed on his way to Mackenzie and the improvised hospital that had been erected a long distance from the barracks. The whole thing was strange; the new faces that he met; the awful sense of a growing horror that brooded like a bird of prey over the Station with its handful of men—placed out here by order of government officials far away and safe enough in London—struggling against the threatened devastation to the ranks.

He found Mackenzie in the small ill-constructed apothecary shop and he stood still a minute, studying his friend's haggard face and heavy eyes, before the surgeon was aware of his presence. Mackenzie was weighing morphia, and three times Trevelyan saw his hand shake and spill the white powder before he was able to divide it in correct proportions.

"Mackenzie," he said evenly, not wishing to startle him.

The surgeon turned sharply and looked at him. Then he leaned against the table, his back to it, his hands gripping its edge. He leaned forward a little, frowning. He had had a hard night of it, but—

"Mackenzie—it's I—Trevelyan. Don't you remember me?"

Trevelyan went forward.

Mackenzie's long, lean fingers suddenly relaxed their grip on the edge, and he sat back against the table.

"Good heavens!" he said, slowly.

Trevelyan went up and slapped him on the shoulder.

"I got your letter and it just stirred up my fighting blood. I packed my grip—and, presto! here I am."

Mackenzie was silent.

"Come; haven't you anything to say to a chap who has been traveling thousands of miles to get here? Aren't you glad to see me?"

"*Glad to see you?*" Mackenzie lifted his haggard eyes from the floor to Trevelyan's face, "*Glad to see you—in this pest house? You're the maddest fool God ever made!*"

Trevelyan drew down the corners of his mouth.

"Perhaps I am," he said, "but I've come; and I've come to stay."

Mackenzie laid a heavy hand on his shoulder and Trevelyan could feel the pressure of the long thin fingers through his coat.

"You are not going to stay one hour," he said, in a low voice, "not—one—hour; do you hear? There're new cases breaking out every day; it's going to play the devil! If you're thinking of suicide, go back to London and blow your brains out, or throw yourself into the Thames—that's more romantic, still. There's nothing romantic about dying of cholera. It isn't a pretty way to die!" Mackenzie

laughed, harshly.

Trevelyan put his hand up to his shoulder and forced away Mackenzie's grip.

"I'm not hunting suicide or death either," he said briefly, "and I'm not mad. I know perfectly why I'm here—and what I'm here for, and I'm going to stay." He paused a moment and then went on hurriedly, forcing back the tension in his voice. "Do you think I've been traveling and squandering money for weeks, and 'pulling strings' to get here, and being delayed at Patna, to be turned back now like a whipped boy turned out of school?"

"But you don't know what it's like—"

"I guess I'll find out quick enough. Look at you—ready to drop, and then refusing help!"

Mackenzie put his hand up wearily to his forehead and pressed it there tightly. The lines cut by lack of sleep on his haggard face relaxed a little.

"It's nothing. I'll be all right when I've gotten some sleep. You're not needed. There's Clarke, and the orderlies—" he broke off.

"Yes?"

Mackenzie bit his cheek and brought down his hand heavily on the table.

"I don't need you. Will you go?"

"No."

Mackenzie turned and went back to the morphia scales. Something in the work he was doing and the way he was doing it struck Trevelyan.

"Where's the apothecary?" he asked briefly.

Mackenzie balanced the scales carefully.

"Sick," he said.

"Where's Clarke?"

Mackenzie added a fraction of morphia to the scales.

"Sick," he said.

"And the helpers—the orderlies?"

Mackenzie put down the scales, suddenly, and stared at them.

"Half sick," he said.

XIII.

The long days crept slowly by at the Station and through the infected district. as

horses driven by Death, mercilessly, tired by their task, and yet urged on continually to break through the breastwork of care and precaution raised by Mackenzie and Trevelyan, so that the course of their charioteer might sweep onward to the outlying districts and turn the scourge, local as yet, into a devastating epidemic.

"Anything to keep the barracks clear of it," Trevelyan had thought and said, and Mackenzie, grown silent with the effort of the fight, nodded without speaking, forcing away from him the remembrance of the epidemic he himself had been through, and the stories once told him by his father, who had helped beat back the scourge on the Ganges in '63.

Each hour was freighted with unspeakable horrors, and Trevelyan learned to know the course of the disease almost as well as Mackenzie himself. He knew the first symptoms; he knew with an instinct that rarely failed, just the cases that were liable to pull through, and those that were liable not to; he could foretell the signs of the *collapse*, when the face would become cold and gray, the finger tips and lips and nose livid; the eyes deeply sunk and bloodshot with the dark rings beneath; the breath without any sensible warmth when caught on the hand; the scarcely audible beating of the heart;—the apathy that was itself a death.

The haunting shadow of his crime was driven back and back by the absorbing matter of the hour, and even Cary's face—moon-kissed—seemed indistinct and far away, as he went about his tasks. It seemed developed on a plate, hidden in the dark room—the innermost recesses of his soul—to be produced and worshipped now and then when courage weakened and the heart languished and grew sick.

He would recall it, at night sometimes, when he had flung himself down for a few hours of rest, and he would press his fingers over his eyes as though to hide from sight the memories of the day's horrors and the day's deaths, and the face would come to him then, and his soul would look upon it as on some dream of heaven.

And then the memory of her face would fade, and he would let it slip away from him, as though knowing it had no place here—midst the cholera scourge, and he would fall off to sleep and sleep exhaustedly.

The days held but one purpose, but one thought—his service to the men, and he sometimes wondered how even the service of the hour had a power to hold him, stronger than the memory of her face.

In those days, when each morning saw another man added to the inmates of the hospital, it was all reality—grim, terrible and as strong as the death he fought; and he and Death kept on the fight, and even when Death won, his triumph seemed petty and incomplete because of this man's courage, which he could neither break nor bend.

It was when Death had seemingly withdrawn his presence a little way that

Mackenzie, one morning motioned to Trevelyan to come outside to the entrance of the hospital. He spoke to the point—a necessity taught him long ago when he had first joined the army and helped fight the Asiatic scourge for the men.

"Five cases have broken out ten miles in-country. You know what that means—a general mowing down and spread of the disease unless it is strangled right away! I can't leave the men here, or go any distance from the barracks for fear—"

Trevelyan looked at him squarely and nodded.

"Of course not, and you want me to go?"

"Clarke isn't fit yet, and I couldn't let him go anyway. Could you go?"

"Sure."

"And take charge of things? I'll send you some helpers, and perhaps run over for an afternoon later to see how you're getting on."

"All right. When am I to start?"

"Could you go to-day—now?"

Trevelyan brought his hand up to his forehead suddenly in the old salute, a shadow of a smile in his eyes.

"Yes, sir."

Mackenzie looked away and stood silent a moment.

"It hardly seems as though I could spare you," and then quickly, "You understand about the calomel and how to use it?"

"Yes."

"And Trevelyan—"

Trevelyan stopped suddenly as he was walking away, and turned.

"Well?"

"And just when the morphia's needed, and when it's judicious to give the opium, calomel and white sugar—and about the salt injections in the veins?"

"Yes."

"And Trevelyan—"

Trevelyan wheeled around, stopping short again. Mackenzie was still looking away.

"Well?"

"And, for God's sake, be careful!"

XIV.

It was one thing to help fight the scourge with Mackenzie in the military hospital, crude as it was, where things were carried on with a certain nicety and regard to military discipline that was stronger than even the demoralizing dread of the hour; but it was another matter to fight it, and crush it, and stamp it out, alone, in the midst of half a hundred panic stricken natives, who knew neither military discipline nor paid proper attention to the precautionary measures of the disease.

Trevelyan had never possessed the quality of conciliation; it had been either one side of the line or the other. He had always reduced things to their smallest denomination at once, with no intermediate measures. And the quality became now a practical and living thing, as he forced the natives to bow before him in obedience, and brought order out of chaos.

It was not altogether the exact application of the military organization learned at Woolwich, or the inspiration of the rally he had dreamed of, that would fire his men, he told himself grimly, as he worked among these people, but it answered for it, and it brought them into subjection to his will.

He held them in control, as the pilot holds in control the ship he steers, guiding it through the madness of the gale, and they never dreamed of mutiny, because they feared him more than they feared the cholera.

And by and by when they saw that he held the scourge in check, his hand upon its throat, they fell down before him in all the pitifulness of ignorance and superstition, as before a being mightier than they had ever conceived of, worshipping him. But they were at his feet always.

Mackenzie, shrewd and silent-tongued, took in the situation at a glance, when he rode over for an afternoon, a fortnight later, to see how Trevelyan was getting on.

"He's the biggest man I ever knew," he said to himself as he followed the orderly who was leading him to Trevelyan.

He found Trevelyan stooping over the small rigid figure of a native baby, his hand still resting on the tiny wrist where the pulse had just stopped its slow beating.

Mackenzie came in and stood on the other side of the child, and Trevelyan raised his head. He showed no surprise at Mackenzie being there. In his face was all the unutterableness of the horror; in his voice was all the passionate protest, all the crushing dread, all the grief, that he had never shown before.

"It—is—awful!"

Mackenzie nodded.

"Yes," he said.

XV.

Three weeks later, when it seemed as though the battle had been won, Trevelyan got a hasty scrawl from Mackenzie.

It had been carried by a man of the regiment, who had ridden the ten miles on a dead run, and now stood exhausted before Trevelyan, his face twitching with the fright born of the tidings he had brought.

Trevelyan took the note in silence and he looked hard at the man's face before he opened the message. Then he bent his head and forced the paper open, still without comment.

"Eight cases broken out in barracks. If you can leave—come. Mackenzie."

He crushed the note in his hand.

"My respects to Dr. Mackenzie," he said quietly, raising his head and meeting the eyes of the trooper, "and I will be with him to-night."

He spent the morning in arranging matters and leaving orders with his chief helper, who was to remain for a time, more as a precautionary measure than for anything else, and then made his own scant preparations in haste to get to Mackenzie before nightfall.

He had thought first of slipping away, fearful of what the knowledge of his going might bring, but the more he thought of it the more he put the idea from him. After all the truth was the wisest.

He called all those of the half hundred natives together who had been spared of the scourge—most of whom he had fought death for, and he addressed them in Hindostanee. He spoke to them simply and briefly; he told them what they must do—not why they must do it, but simply because he ordered them to, and expected their obedience—relying on the worshipful fear with which they regarded him.

"If I hear of your disobeying me—and I shall hear it, for my ears are long and sharp—I shall come back and I will kill the dog who dared to disobey my

commands, and you are to obey and do just what the *Sahib* I leave here tells you to do—do you understand?”

A low murmuring of assent greeted him, and one or two of the women held their babies up that they might look upon the great *Sahib* who was leaving them for a time; who was wise enough to know ten miles off if anyone disobeyed him; who was strong enough to kill the dog who tried to disobey his great commands.

And the murmuring of their voices followed him as he rode away from them later, and the echo of their "*Sahib! Sahib! Sahib!*" haunted him, not knowing that in the years that lay ahead, the native mothers would tell their babies of the greatness of the *Sahib* who once had come to them.

The shadows, the children of the sunset, lay thick upon the road, over which he journeyed back to Mackenzie, and in the silence he began to think of England and of Scotland, and of Cary.

He thought of them all then, in the pause that came between the struggle he had just passed through and the struggle that lay ahead, as he had not had the time or peace to think of them since he had left Patna. Nor did he try to force the thoughts from him as he had done on leaving Patna, but he went in search of them as a father goes in search of little truant children hiding in the dark, and brings them back and holds them close with caresses.

He brought the vision of Mactier forth so, and he went over every familiar gesture, every tone of Mactier's voice he knew; he called up the mother-face of his aunt, the soft pressure of her hand; and he thought of his uncle and Maggie and Kenneth, and of Stewart—lingeringly—and of his father.

And then he brought forth the picture plate, buried in the dark room of his soul, and he thought of her; and he thought, and thought of her! He held the dream picture up between him and the light of the dying day, and once he put out his hand slowly and it rested lightly in the air, but in his dream it rested on Cary's head. Once he raised his head suddenly and sharply, and he breathed quicker than his wont. The night shadows crept up and peered into his thin, lined face with the dark-circled eyes; and though he was alone with only the air touching him, in his dream his face was close to hers.

And back of the dreams was the echo of the ocean on the crags. But the dreams and the echo faded as he came within sight of the military hospital, and the thoughts receded back and back into the darkness before the new necessity of the hour; but the truant children were not lost, only hiding from him, and peering at him from the shadows and waiting for him to come and look for them and take them home.

He dismounted, hardly conscious of the greetings the men gave him as they crowded around him, and he went at once to Mackenzie, as an officer reporting for duty.

Mackenzie looked at him sharply as he entered. The full beard he had grown had changed him, and would have hidden the loss of flesh and the haggard lines to any other than Mackenzie.

"You don't look fit to go on with the job, boy," he said concisely.

Trevelyan laughed.

"That's absurd, don't you know? I'm all right."

"It's more than you look—you're all pulled down!"

"You're dreaming! Tell me about the barracks!"

And Mackenzie told him—briefly.

All night he and Mackenzie and Clarke worked over the new cases, resting by turns, and in the morning two other men were brought in. One was the trooper who had borne the summons to Trevelyan.

The cases developed slowly, and with an effort that had in it something of the supernatural, they kept it from spreading into the mow down of an epidemic. But the men were sick—sicker than any had yet been, and out of the proportion stricken, the mortality was frightful, and Death's twin brother, Fear, laid his heavy hand upon the district.

The men were good, on the whole, as to precautionary measures, for they held Mackenzie and even Clarke in wholesome awe, but they regarded Trevelyan with something greater still. They were ashamed before him—ashamed to mention their fear, or even think it, as he came and went among them, silent, commanding, and unmoved by fear.

Mackenzie or Clarke could not have spoken so to them—silently. They were at their own business. They were supposed and expected to meet disease and death, daily, hourly if necessary, and not be afraid. But Trevelyan was not a surgeon; he had come out to them to serve them in their extremity—voluntarily—without military command, and they grew to think of the scourge after a while as they would have looked upon a hostile tribe to be conquered—as an enemy to be vanquished for the Queen.

And as though the lessening of their panic was the sign for the dying out of the scourge, the cholera cases decreased as the days wore themselves away.

It was toward the end of the desperate fight that they had made that Mackenzie came in one day at dawn, to relieve Trevelyan's watch over the half dozen cases in his wing of the hospital. He noticed that Trevelyan looked oddly white, and that there was a drawn expression about his mouth and face.

"What is it," he asked. "Aren't you feeling well?"

"Why, yes; what made you ask?"

"You look—"

"It's the daylight and the sickly candle," Trevelyan answered shortly as he rose to leave. "McHennessy, here, has put in a night of it. See you later."

Once outside in the narrow passage Trevelyan leaned up stupidly against the wall. His head was hurting him violently and was colder than the hand he pressed against it, and a sudden deadly nausea seized him. He stared hard at the wall opposite and made a movement as though to call Mackenzie. Then he drew back and waited. A numbness crept into his legs, and it seemed to him to deaden all his power. After awhile the seizure passed and he stumbled over to the apothecary's room, and he began to measure out the old prescription of the morphia and calomel and white sugar. What was the good of calling Mackenzie when Mackenzie could do nothing more for him than he could do for himself? Then he went into an empty room kept for emergency cases at the end of the building, and flung himself down.

After awhile the deadly nausea returned and he sat up and crawled to his feet, and went back to the apothecary's room and measured out the prescription again—three hours was the limit between doses, and his watch said that the three hours had passed. He believed the watch had lied, and that it was thirty hours instead.

Mackenzie opened the door and stood transfixed on the threshold. Trevelyan conscious of the movement turned and started violently.

"What are you doing?" Mackenzie's voice was terrible in its hardness.

Trevelyan held up the scales with a trembling hand, and he made an odd sound in his throat that was intended for a laugh.

"Measuring morphia! What do you suppose?"

Mackenzie came up close to him, and his horror-stricken eyes looked straight into Trevelyan's sunken ones.

"Who for?"

Trevelyan was silent.

"Answer me!"

Trevelyan shook his head piteously, and a ghastly pallor crept slowly up over his face and into the hollows of his temples and his cheeks.

"You're ill, and you didn't call me!"

"What was the good—"

Trevelyan swayed forward. When he spoke again there was an apology in his hoarse voice because he was ill.

"It's the nausea," he said simply.

XVI.

Mackenzie went in search of Clarke.

"Drop everything and come with me," he said. "It's Trevelyan—Trevelyan's got the cholera."

Clarke took a long breath. Then he called to two passing orderlies.

Mackenzie led the three of them back to the apothecary's shop, as a soldier would have led a squad of men forward to meet an enemy, his face hard with the control he had put upon it, but it changed suddenly as they reached Trevelyan and picked him up and bore him down the hall. He allowed them to do so unresistingly, falling back into their arms a dead weight. They staggered under it. He made no comment until they reached the door of the surgeons' room. Then he shook his head.

"Not there," he said. "Take me in with the men."

"But you'll be ever so much more comfortable here," said Clarke, still breathing quickly under the weight of his portion of the burden.

"You'd better let us take you in here, lad," said Mackenzie, bending over him. "You'll get well twice as quick and it's quieter, and the nausea will pass—"

"It's the cholera," said Trevelyan, in a clear calm voice. "Take me in with the men."

XVII.

All day Mackenzie sat by Trevelyan, scarcely leaving him, except to make his rounds; Clarke and the orderlies taking charge of the two small wards and the needs of those there. And all day Mackenzie sat stoically looking off into space or turning to feel Trevelyan's pulse or watch the change of his face. There was not a shadow of a change he did not watch and note. Trevelyan's great form lay motionless—deadened by morphia, the occasional twitching of the limbs and the heavy breathing, the only signs of life. Now and then, as the effect of the morphia lifted, he would turn his head restlessly and murmur incoherent things, or call for water, and Mackenzie would force a teaspoonful at a time of the cool liquid between the rigid lips.

Once Trevelyan's hand went up with a spasmodic motion to his throat, and the movement pulled and tore aside the covering across his chest, and exposed to view the white scar on his shoulder. Mackenzie leaning over him to replace the covering, was attracted by the sight of the old wound, and he hesitated and

leaned a little nearer, examining it.

A sudden death-like quiet brooded over the ward, and the minutes lengthened and still Mackenzie leaned over the unconscious figure, his eyes fixed on the scar. By and by he looked at Trevelyan's gray and sunken and unconscious face, and a swift change passed over his own impenetrable features, and he drew the covering quickly over the scar, as though he were ashamed.

Clarke came in and Mackenzie straightened himself and turned to meet him, his hand upon the covering that hid the scar. There was something defiant in the attitude.

Clarke came up and stood on the other side of the bed.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I don't want to think anything about it," Mackenzie answered shortly.

"But his chances?" asked Clarke after a little. "Has he got any show?"

"He's got a damned bad case," said Mackenzie, "and no strength to fight it with. I knew it would be just this way if he ever got it—he'd have it *bad!* There's nothing half way about him!"

Clarke tapped his foot against the floor and looked down at it..

"How he could have loved some woman," he said.

Mackenzie turned his head slowly and looked at Trevelyan. Once he had seen a look in Trevelyan's eyes— When he spoke it was as if he were thinking aloud. "How he loved some woman!"

Trevelyan moved restlessly and opened his eyes, and looked at Mackenzie and Clarke and then back to Mackenzie. There was nothing in his face that led them to suppose he had heard.

Mackenzie leaned over him.

"How are you?"

"Deuced bad," Trevelyan said slowly, and then the nausea returned.

The man in the next bed began to moan a little. Trevelyan turned to Mackenzie, a frown upon his face, as though he was trying to place the sound.

"What is it?" he asked. "What's that noise?"

"It's McHennessy—you'd better let us move you into our room."

Trevelyan shook his head.

"I suppose it's a blamed silly notion, but I'd rather be with the men." And then he stretched out his cold hands suddenly and grasped Mackenzie's convulsively, "The pain," he said.

Mackenzie looked up at Clarke and nodded to the question in the other's eyes.

Mackenzie took out his handkerchief and wiped the great beads off Trevelyan's forehead. When Clarke returned with the morphia, the nausea had come again.

Trevelyan waved Clarke aside.

"I don't want it," he whispered hoarsely. "I couldn't keep it down anyway, and—I—don't—want it!"

And when he was not to be persuaded Mackenzie let him back slowly on the pillow.

All night the nausea lasted, but in the early morning there came cessation for a time, and Mackenzie left Clarke with him, and went to snatch a bit of sleep.

Clarke watched by him in silence—dumb with the terribleness of it all; dumb with his own powerlessness to help—and Trevelyan was grateful for the cessation and the silence.

When the cessation came his thoughts went out to Cary, and they drew the memory of her face to him. It was in truth a dream of heaven—and real, untouched by the thralldom of the morphia.

He was growing weaker—he could feel the ebbing of his strength—and he did not care. In the morning he had fought against it, as he had fought everything all his life—passionately, but now with the cessation and the coming of the dream face, he did not care.

He clung to the vision of the dream though, fiercely, as though fearing it would escape him and be lost forever. He had loved her, and he loved her still!

His love for her had been as a mountain that has been stripped in a storm of its fairest foliage; that has been wrecked by a great fire which has swept it of all its rarest beauty, leaving only the bareness of the boulders, but withstanding the wreck of the storm and the fire. So his love had stood and endured as a sample of the Eternal Handiwork—a basis of his life, as is love the basis of the life of the Everlasting.

He was conscious of the clasp of Clarke's fingers on his wrist, and the sudden appearance of a frightened orderly with the intelligence that Burns, in the next ward, was worse, and would he come at once; and he was dimly conscious of Clarke's bending over him and of his telling him to go to Burns, but he still clung to the vision of the dream face. Desperately he clung to it, even when the blessed cessation suddenly ceased, and it seemed as though he was being engulfed in a great abyss of unspeakable agony, and he kept his thoughts upon it as a crusader would have kept his dying thoughts upon the unattainable quest.

And then he became dimly conscious of a low moaning sound and he lay still trying, to place it, because Mackenzie was not there to tell him what it was, and he had forgotten what Mackenzie had said it was, but he still tried to concentrate his thoughts on the dream face that was growing faint and fainter. The effort was a complete failure, and the low moaning increased. He fixed it slowly as coming from the next bed. He turned his head toward it weakly. The incoherent ravings became a piteous and conscious cry for water.

The gray dawn crept in slowly and up to the trooper's bed, and by its light Trevelyan could see him turning his head restlessly from side to side. Still the cry for water reached him.

It did not seem to affect him much at first, or pierce the consciousness of pity, but it annoyed him, and it kept coming between him and the dream face he was struggling so desperately to hold. And then it struck on him suddenly like a blow and he awoke to the man's anguish and the man's need—how often he had answered to that need and cry before! He looked toward the farthest corner of the room where an orderly lay sleeping from exhaustion. The man was half sick anyway, from a recent attack of the scourge. He did not want to call him; but if he would only awaken—if he only would.

He waited. There was no sound from the corner; there was no movement in the hall that would tell of Clarke's return, and the low cry went on. Since the day he had joined Mackenzie he had followed and responded to that cry as the soldier follows and responds to the first low notes of the bugle. He pushed himself over to the edge of the bed and tried to sit up but the motion increased his agony and he lay still. He wondered blindly if he could do it. Then he let himself roll over the side of the bed and his big frame fell with a dull thud on the rough boards of the floor. He lay there a second, but there was no movement from the corner. He pulled himself up, took half a dozen steps toward the water bucket in the near corner, and then the cramp came back again in his legs, and he fell forward, and began to creep toward it on his hands and knees. The dream face was fading and being swallowed up in a breaking crest of white sea foam, and there seemed to be nothing in the world but the man's cry and his own pain.

He reached the bucket and he dipped in the glass that stood near and filled it, and then began his slow journey to the man's bed. By the deepening light in the east the man could see the great creeping figure approaching, and he drew back, afraid.

"It's only I, McHennessy. I've got some water—" the voice trailed off, but the trooper caught the word "water" and he struggled to a reclining position and waited. The figure moved so slowly and his throat was a burning sheet of flame! Why didn't he come faster—what was the matter that he didn't come faster; and McHennessy's blood-shot eyes were riveted on the slowly moving figure.

Trevelyan reached him at length and pulled himself up with a supreme effort, with the glass balanced very carefully in his hand. He was striving—striving too—after that elusive dream face.

He leaned over McHennessy with the water, and McHennessy with a sigh of ecstasy struggled up in his bed and leaned forward to touch his parched lips to the glass.

Trevelyan brought it up nearer and his hand wavered. He controlled it with

a great effort of will for a moment, and then the glass trembled and its contents were spilt over McHennessy, and the glass crashed into shivers as it fell to the floor beside the bed. Trevelyan flung out his arms suddenly, groping for the dream face that had gone.

The orderly, awakened by the crash, started up and ran over to where Trevelyan lay on the floor by the side of McHennessy, who was swearing over the unexpected bath, and as he staggered beneath Trevelyan's weight, Mackenzie came quickly forward from the threshold of the door. Together they carried Trevelyan back to bed and Mackenzie silently drew the coverings over his rigid body and stood looking down at the livid lips and listening to the slow, feeble breathing. Once he picked up the hand that lay on the outside of the covering and examined it, and then laid it back in its resting place.

Clarke who had heard the glass break, hurried in from the adjoining ward. Mackenzie looked up as he entered.

"Collapse?" asked Clarke briefly.

Mackenzie did not seem to hear him.

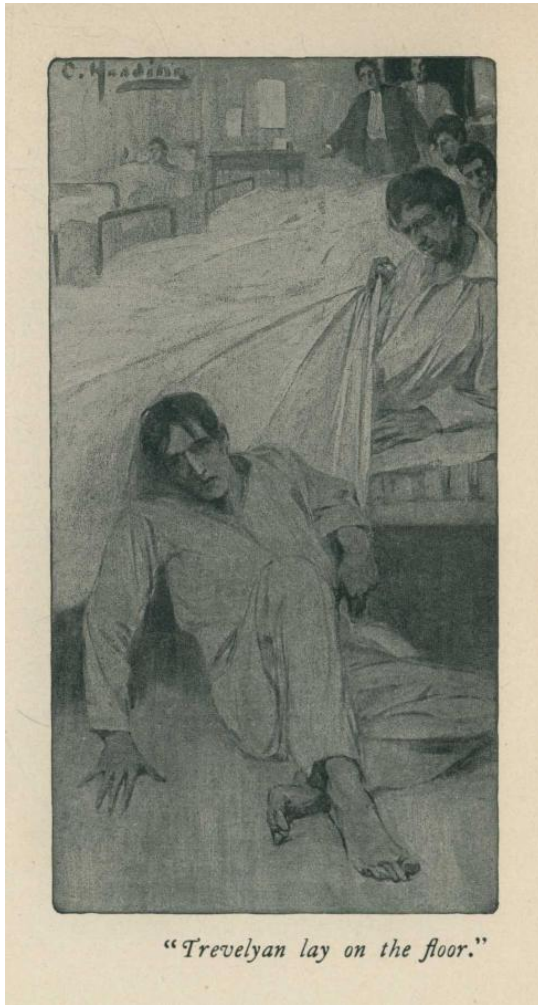
"Bring the salt—it's just a chance," he said.

XVIII.

The light deepened in the east and the sunrise crept into the ward of the hospital and turned its search light curiously on the group in the furthest corner of the ward, and on the still figure on the bed. All morning the sunlight lingered around there as though it wanted to help Mackenzie in his fight, and impart into the chill of the rigid figure, some of its own warmth, and when the afternoon shadows came and drew it off, it retreated lingeringly, loath to say "good-night."

The shadows deepened and the quietness of midnight fell over the weary Station and the outlying cholera hospital. Mackenzie continued to sit by the bed.

The quietness outside crept in to meet the silence of the ward, and the night lamp cast strange shadows on the wall, at which Mackenzie stared. Once or twice he got up and visited the other beds and leaned over the men. Most were pulling through and were sleeping. McHennessy was drowsy with the morphia. Then Mackenzie would go back and sit down again by Trevelyan's bed. At midnight, Clarke, with eyes heavy with sleep, came in. He did not speak but he looked down at Trevelyan and then up questionally to Mackenzie, and at the syringe



"Trevelyan lay on the floor."

and the salt lying near by.

"It didn't work," said Mackenzie. "If you'll listen to the lungs you'll know why—pneumonia."

"You'd better go and rest a bit. I'll stay—I won't leave him," said Clarke, blinking at the light and wondering at the quietness of his own voice.

Mackenzie looked hard at the flickering night lamp.

"No," he said slowly. "I guess not."

After Clarke had gone back to their room, the surgeon riveted his eyes on Trevelyan's sunken face, and once he put his hand out quickly and pressed it over the bloodshot eyes, but the lids opened again and would not remain closed. The slow labor of the feeble breathing went on. The almost imperceptible rise and fall of the great chest fascinated Mackenzie, and he found himself watching for it feverishly, hoping and yet dreading for it to cease.

While it was still dark he rose and went over to the window and looked out fixedly at the impenetrable pall of blackness that lay over the Station and the hospital. It seemed as though the heaviness of the blackness was over all the world.

By and by the night pall lifted a little, and a dull grayness crept into the heavens and rested on the station. He could dimly distinguish the outline of some of the military buildings. He turned away and went over to the lamp that was smoking and lowered it. From the trooper's bed came a low moaning.

He paused to speak to him and then he went back to Trevelyan, and looked down at him, his eyes fixed on the great chest, watching for its slow rise and fall. Somehow he could not see the rise and fall—they did not seem to be there. He bent over him quickly.

"Trevelyan!" he called sharply.

The trooper in the next bed ceased moaning and raised himself on his arm painfully, and looked over to where Mackenzie was standing.

Mackenzie knelt down suddenly on one knee, and his hand passed rapidly from Trevelyan's forehead to his pulse. The trooper in the next bed began to moan again.

Mackenzie laid his ear down quickly to the heart, an expectant look upon his face. Then he raised it slowly and bit his lip and stared hard through the window to where the barracks were defined against the paling grayness of the

sky.

XIX.

The sunshine of the early summer lay heavy like a cloth of gold across the rolling Scottish country, and Stewart turned away abruptly from its brightness and stared down at the floor of the railway carriage.

All night he had lain awake, grasping fiercely at the bit of paper that had summoned him to the office of the Secretary for India, while his brain with equal fierceness refused to accept the tidings which had met him there.

He was dumbly grateful, however, for the friendship and the kindly interest that had led the Secretary, for his father's sake, to send for him, and for the time that busy man had taken, and the consideration that had shielded him from seeing the latest cholera reports pasted up at the Office or in the columns of the press.

Some day he would thank the Secretary as he should. Just now it seemed to him his brain had become a burning blank, and that the fire was as unquenchable as it was mighty, forbidding thought. Once, twice, a dozen times he tried to picture Trevelyan as he had known him, but Trevelyan's face would not come. He could not recall one line of it—he could not recall his voice—his slightest gesture; and he vaguely wondered if he were going mad, and when the rumble of the iron wheels would cease.

He was conscious of being grateful for the stopping of the noise, when he descended from the carriage, in the early light of the new day, to make his last connection with the local.

The local was late some two hours—it seemed to him twenty—and a feverish impatience came upon him to reach home and have it over with. The new faces around him were strange and looked at him curiously. There was a lean Scotch collie that sniffed at his heels and tried to make friends with him, and a small Scotch laddie, rosy-cheeked and freckled, who regarded him wonderingly from a safe distance, his forefinger in his mouth. Stewart noticed it was clean; he supposed it was too early for it to be covered with the conventional coat of dirt. The boy looked a little sleepy too. He wondered why he felt so wide awake himself. The collie licked at his boot. He neither encouraged nor rejected the familiarity. He simply ignored it. The morning sun was growing warm, and a bright patch of it touched the dress of the child. * * *

The local came around the curve and he got into the carriage, mechanically picking out his usual seat near the window. Force of habit is strong. There was a bit of rolling hillside and an old kirk down by a little stream he always looked out for.

He was alone and he was glad. The train jerked and backed a little and then fairly started on its run. It passed the hillside and the old kirk at the foot of the slope, and the bit of water that for a moment flashed the brightness of its sunlit surface upon his vision, and was gone. For the first time the landscape failed to please. Beyond the old kirk was another slope—a slope of heather, just putting forth its early pink; and though he could not see it he knew that just where the old road curved up to the kirk, the bracken grew.

Then the reaction came and his inertia broke and the burning blank became a sheet of memory. Trevelyan had loved the bracken and the heather so. As a laddie he had played among them and hidden himself—short kilts and all—beneath their bloom. Once he had gotten lost, and they had vainly searched for him, but Stewart slipping away unnoticed, and led by unerring instinct, had found him fast asleep down there—his head pillowed on the bracken and a faded scrap of heather in his small moist hand. And now the bracken might bloom on, and the sun might shine upon it by day and the stars smile down upon the heather slope by night, and the mist rest upon it, turning it to a mystical sheet of grayness and of silver—but Trevelyan would never walk across the slope again, and Stewart leaned his head against the window and closed his eyes.

All night the train had moved so slowly and he had dumbly longed that the iron wheels would hasten that he might reach home soon; and now that the home station in Aberdeen was nearly in sight, a sudden sickness seized him and he prayed for a delay.

He had wired ahead for Sandy to meet him with the trap instead of the cart in which he usually came for the mail. He had sent the message to Sandy instead of the family, and had bidden the Scotchman be silent about his unexpected return from London.

It was a comfort, he reflected, that Sandy could be trusted to hold his tongue. He felt he could not bear to have them meet him at the station. He could not tell them there, neither could he play a part so long—until they should reach home. He was trusting to that seven mile drive to collect himself. He hoped Maggie would not come with Sandy—as she sometimes did—to get the mail, especially when Cameron was away. Well, he would trust to Cameron's being there, and to Sandy now—

He remembered the mail and the papers would arrive with him—he was glad for that in a dull way—if he could only reach home before the papers, he had thought before leaving Waterloo Station.

His father was in Glasgow with Kenneth. He could not spare them. There would be the Little Madre to be told, and Maggie and Tom Cameron, and Mactier—poor old Mactier—and Cary—he wiped the moisture from his mouth—and Trevelyan's father lately returned from the far East—God help him. God help them all!

The local stopped. Through the window he could see Sandy waiting for him with the trap on the other side of the track, quieting the restless horses; Maggie had not come.

He got out—how he never afterwards remembered—and he stored his Gladstone safely away beneath the back seat, waited for the mail bag to be put in, and then climbed up with a nod to the red headed Scotchman and a "how are they all?" mechanically asked.

The old Scotchman looked at him curiously, as the child and the collie had done, and he was distinctly annoyed at being stared at.

The blacks, with their heads turned homeward, made good progress over the road—too good, Stewart thought, and once he sharply bade Sandy draw them in. Then as if ashamed of his impatience he inquired as to Sandy's daughter, who had been ill. Sandy answered the question briefly, realizing that talking came amiss to-day, and then gave his attention to checking the rapid pace of the blacks, who were eager to get home.

The morning sun beat down upon them, but it seemed to Stewart that he was turned to ice and that he would never feel any warmth again. The station lay five miles or more beyond the point of home, and when he repassed the slope of heather and the old kirk road where the bracken grew, he turned his eyes away. It seemed to him he could never look upon or touch either the bracken or the heather again.

And the old road! Once they used to travel it together; they had traveled it in their earliest babyhood and again that dark night when Trevelyan had been brought from Argyll to make his home with them—a little, lonely, motherless lad of ten. They had crossed the old bridge so often; they had crossed it together that last time—*the last time*—and he had never known! He held on fast to the back of the seat in front, and moved his head a little—restlessly—as though it hurt. Henceforth there would be no more "togethers."

Sandy cleared his throat.

"There's naething wrong, I hope, sir?" he asked a little timidly, but unable to bear the silence longer.

There was no answer. They were passing the heather slope and speech was not. And then Sandy, with an instinct not unusual in his race turned half around and blurted out:

"'Tis bad news ye've had from India, sir?"

Stewart looked past Sandy to the big fir that marked the boundary line of home, and nodded; and then he suddenly dropped his eyes and ran his finger, shaking as though with palsy, along the patent leather strip that bound back the corduroy of the seat.

"Mr. Trevelyan's ill," asserted Sandy, unwilling to acknowledge the thought that came to him and which he knew was true. "You're going to bring him back to Aberdeen—" Sandy hesitated.

Stewart looked away.

"Mr. Trevelyan will not come back to Aberdeen, Sandy—" he broke off.

The blacks trotted briskly over the road and the warm sunshine rested on the meadows and brightened everything but the big dark fir ahead. Somewhere in the copse near by a bird was singing.

The long home avenue was deserted except for McGuire, who was carefully clipping in his precise way the border of the walks, and McGuire leaned upon his shears, wondering why the young master had passed him with no sign of greeting.

There was no one else around. The house stood big and still in the sunshine, and the deserted terraces sloped away—like a vast piece of greenest velvet. Some of the windows were open, and from one of the upstairs casements a white curtain was fluttering in the breeze. It was his mother's room. A restful quietness brooded over everything.

There was no one in the hall, flanked with its weapons and armor and paintings, and no sound from the breakfast room. Breakfast, he supposed, was long over. He had had none himself, but he was not conscious of the lack.

Someone was coming down the stairs. Stewart paused, a sudden heat replacing the chill that had possessed him until now. The sound came nearer and he recognized the halting step of Trevelyan's father—Trevelyan's father, who still bore that scar from Inkerman.

XX.

Trevelyan's father stopped when he reached the foot of the stairs.

"Why, hello, boy, when did you get back? Thought you were in London for a fortnight."

"I thought so, too, sir, but you see, I—"

"Ho-ho, that's it, is it?" His uncle laughed. "Well, I can't blame you. She isn't here, though—out with Maggie for a walk." He looked up quizzically into his nephew's face, and then he looked away abruptly. Robert, too, loved the girl.

"Is she?" asked Stewart absently, and he turned toward the library, conscious that in the morning it was deserted, and that he could tell him there without fear of interruption. "The fact is, sir—"

Trevelyan's father stopped short and looked his nephew over.

"What is it? What's the trouble?" he asked concisely.

"Who—with me, sir? Nonsense; I'm all right."

"Was it Sir Archibald or that bit of diplomatic work?" The old man smiled grimly.

"Sir Archibald! I'm dismissed from his books long ago, sir. The diplomatic work promises well. By the way, have you heard the latest from Essex—" He sat down easily on the arm of a big leather chair and lounged across it; his face in shadow—. "It's reported that Davidson is going to raise that dead and buried claim again."

"A fool and his money—" said the old officer, and sat down.

"Where's the Little Madre?"

"Out listening to Margie's woes. If her rheumatism don't carry her off soon I'll be inclined to do the job myself. Your mother is turning into her slave!" said his uncle testily.

"Margie's rheumatism isn't any worse than Ann Grafton's stiff knee or Sam's lame back," replied Stewart, swinging one foot against the side of the chair. "Mother always has been at the mercy of the tenants."

How was he to begin, he wondered.

He mechanically commenced to pull off his gloves.

"See here, John—" he glanced up quickly at Trevelyan's father sitting in a black walnut chair carved a hundred years ago, his face shining out weather-beaten and grim from the dark background, and his voice more decided than Stewart had ever heard it—"Why did Robert leave the army?"

A glove dropped and lay at Stewart's feet unnoticed. He moved restlessly.

"Why shouldn't he? He had served his sub-lieutenancy. He got his commission—"

"To resign it. Exactly! Why?"

"He never liked the Army, sir; it was always the Navy with him from the first—"

"Is he with the Navy now?" The old officer tapped the floor impatiently with his heavy stick. "Why is he in India doing an orderly's work instead of in the line?"

"Did you ever know Robert to stick to anything very long, sir?"

"Only one," said the old Briton shortly, and he thought of Cary. "You haven't answered me."

Stewart rose, and his tone was final.

"Indeed, sir, it is not for me to say."

Trevelyan's father clasped his hands over the knob of his stick, rested his chin on them and looked up at Stewart from under his shaggy brows—curiously.

"Well—well, since you won't, you won't, I suppose! I'll have to wait until Robert comes back—"

Stewart wheeled abruptly and went over to the east window.

"After all, the boy is his own master," Trevelyan's father said. "He's whimsical and headstrong, too—" he broke off—"Everything was all straight, though—his getting out, I mean?" The deep eyes peered anxiously from the old officer's weather-beaten face.

Stewart remained at the window, looking at the stretch of lawn. For the first time since his interview at the Secretary's, his voice was broken.

"You need not be ashamed of Rob."

The old Briton drew a deep breath and he laughed a little—"After all, nothing else matters! I was sure of it!" and then again, "I—was—sure—of—it!"

Stewart began mechanically to count the number of rose bushes at the end of the terrace, and he made a great effort to steady his voice.

"By the way, this last idea of Robert's—this cholera business—is a risky thing. Do you ever feel anxious, sir?"

"The boy's foolhardy, but he's got sense—" the Briton frowned.

"But even sense sometimes—"

The room was still. A bit of summer sunlight sifted through the oriel window. From the distance crept in the murmur of water breaking on the sand. McGuire was busy at the rose bushes near the terrace and the decided "click" of his shears and the soft music of the sea, were the only sounds that broke the quiet of the room.

"*John!*"

Trevelyan's father rose and stood rigid by the old carved chair. Young Stewart turned and leaned against the woodwork. He grew afraid and trembled. He could not look upon that face.

"*Robert!* That is why you have come back?"

He nodded.

The sunlight still sifted through the windows and played fitfully around the walnut carvings of the room and touched for a brief moment a bronze paper weight of the Dying Gaul. Someone standing in the open casement window at the south, stirred a little, and then Cary came swiftly down the length of the long room. A bit of heather from the armful she had gathered on the slope slipped

from the bunch. The rest she threw upon the table as she passed it, and it lay there—its first, faint pink shining out against the black walnut. She went and stood by Trevelyan's father, resting her hand upon his arm, and she looked up into his face.

"I left Maggie—I came ahead—I overheard—" she began disjointedly, "Robert—the cholera—Robert—?" and then as neither of the men spoke, she cried, "Oh, sir, indeed it may be a mistake—sometimes, you know the names—"

Trevelyan's father looked down at the girl, and into her eyes full of unshed tears, and on the small white hand on his arm he placed his own—the one that had held the sabre at Inkerman. It was an old hand, thin and vividly veined, and it trembled.

"The report was signed by Mackenzie," said Stewart at last.

"There is some mistake—there *must* be—the letters—" cried Cary.

"We will have to wait for the letters, child." Trevelyan's father turned away. Stewart came up to her.

"It was at the India Office yesterday—the Secretary—after all—" he broke off.

She looked from one to the other, but she still stood by Trevelyan's father. Suddenly she sat down in the high backed chair he had occupied, clinging to his hand, her eyes on his face. Stewart went back to the window.

"But think what he did—"

Trevelyan's father looked down at her again and his face twitched.

"He was always a brave laddie," he said, and his face was wet with tears.

Cary raised the hand she was holding and pressed it to her cheek, and she held it there—brown and thin and heavily veined—against the delicate texture, and caressed it in the way that women have.

"He was a great soul. I always knew it! I—always—knew—it—" she told them brokenly.

"He was a Briton," said the old officer of the Empire. "I didn't always understand him—I blamed him for doing an orderly's work. I'm proud of him—but if it had been anything but the cholera—I saw it once myself in Bombay; I ran away from it—" he raised his head, "anything but *that!* But—I'm proud of him!"

Stewart still stood by the oriel window leaning against his arm flung over his head, and he was crying—hardly and bitterly as a man cries. The stillness of the outside world increased. The sun crept into the corner of the room.

"I can't quite take it in—" said the old man slowly, looking past the girl to a far-off field of thistle and staring at the purplish bloom. "It's hard to think of Robert—gone!"

And then:

"I can't think of the rest—the details—" he clenched his hands fiercely, "the

pain—the thirst—” and his eyes came back to Cary. ”There! There! There’s something about it all that we can’t understand, I fancy, but there is the honor—that thing which does not perish with the using!”

He turned abruptly, and when Cary, half fearful for him, would have followed, he motioned her away, and went out alone on the back terrace.

Stewart had not moved from the window, and Cary went and stood beside him, gravely looking out at the sunlight shifting on the lawn. She did not say anything, but as though conscious that they were alone, he spoke, his face still hidden on his arm.

”I did it,” he said at last in a broken voice of confession. ”I *did* think to help him best by making him get away from the old crowd and the regiment—but it was because I thought of the Service, too—and I judged *him*—!”

She waited, and she did not speak, but she slipped one of her hands into the pocket of his tweed coat and held on to it.

”I broke his life—he loved *me* better than that—” he began.

”Do you call a life that ended so—broken?”

He raised his face from his arm and looked at her.

”No—no—I didn’t mean that—but think of my judging him! All last night it came back to me—I thought I was going stark mad.” And he brushed away the tears clumsily.

”It all hurts so! But, by and by—” she looked straight out of the oriel window, and she spoke disjointedly, and somehow she thought of western Scotland, and his sword. ”I knew when we got those letters from Argyll—when I got my letter—Rob wasn’t coming back to us.”

Stewart drew her to him.

”Oh! Cary, tell me that it doesn’t mean to you all—all that it might have done! Lassie—tell me—”

She smiled a little.

”You are foolish,” she told him. ”You know I love you,” and then looking into his eyes—”It is only you.”

He hid his mouth against the soft coil of her hair.

”Last night, I was almost jealous of the dead,” he whispered, ”and then when I passed the heather fields to-day—and the bracken—” his voice broke.

”I know,” she said simply. ”It is always the bracken and the heather—and Rob—isn’t it?”

From the south window the sun poured into the room and lighted up the heavy carvings of black walnut. The bit of heather still lay upon the floor and withered there. A silent linnet perched itself upon the window sill.

Somewhere from beyond the turn in the wooded drive, Maggie was coming home, singing:

”Some talk of Alexander,
And some of Hercules,
Of Hector and Lysander,
And such great names as these!”

A man’s heavy halting step came from the back terrace. In the stillness they could hear him mount the stairs.

”But of all the world’s great heroes—
There’s none that—”

Somewhere upstairs a door closed.

* * * * *

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