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The Transplanted

By the Same Author

THE STORY OF THEIR DAYS
THE STAFF AT SIMSON'S
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
THE PAISLEY SHAWL
UNDER WHICH KING
BROTHERS IN ARMS
THE FLYING YEARS
MINE INHERITANCE
THE THREE MARY'S
THE S.S. GLORY
OLD SOLDIER
MRS. BARRY
TRIUMPH
etc.

The

Transplanted

Frederick Niven

COLLINS

70 BOND STREET, TORONTO

THE TRANSPLANTED

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PART I

Two Men from Glasgow

CHAPTER ONE

Robert Wallace was born in Glasgow in the year 1875, youngest son of Alexander Wallace, a civil engineer of that city, and of Margaret Renwick his wife.

In his late twenties Robert migrated to Canada. There he was often—and increasingly with the years and their events in which he participated—looked upon as a puzzling person, but a key to his character may be provided by some preliminary concise consideration of his early days at home, for the influences of home (as a famous Canadian prime minister once remarked) are generally the "most potent" in men's lives.

Robert was the third son. The eldest, named Alexander after the father, was first a lecturer and later a professor at one of the Scots universities. He was a lean, dry student whose usual remark when anyone propounded a view to him was, "That theory has been exploded," a remark additionally depressing to those who thought it was their own. Once when Robert quoted to him a passage of poetry in which he had found pleasure, Alec commented, "For every good piece of poetry you could discover I could find one better."

"But if I found your better piece, what then?" Robert inquired.

"In that case I would show you a better one still," Alec replied.

Robert was more amused than exasperated. Somebody, he recalled, had said that reading maketh a full man; but reading, it seemed to him, could make an acrid man, and he smiled over that consideration though he did not voice it and said no more.

The second brother, James, was musical, had ambitions towards the concert platform, but in the end was organist in one of the city churches and a teacher of music at a girls' school. Just as, early in life, Robert learnt to avoid reference to prose or poetry in Alec's hearing because of the unhappy dampening results of any such references, so did he, early in life, abstain from mention of music to James. Any composer he might care for was inferior in some way, he soon discovered, to another composer. The best plan was to like what one liked and to say nothing about it. He kept his own counsel, went his own way.

He told himself—not his brothers, for he shunned ructions with them—told himself that he would rather be centre-forward of the Queen's Park Rangers than Paderewski (at the peak of his fame then) or Professor Saintsbury, much lauded for his erudition. He joined the Third Lanark Rifle Volunteers and spent more time in the gymnasium than did Alec over his books or James at his piano; but he was a tolerant youth, bore no ill-will to his brothers despite their dreary enthusiasm for wet-blanketing the enthusiasms of others, spoke of Alec as "a mighty clever fellow," and of James as "a marvel at the piano," and "good fellows" he called them both.

With his sisters, Meg and Effie, he was on easy terms. What sororal criticism they felt moved to make within the family circle was not directed towards him but towards Alec. They disliked Alec's baggy trousers and a lock of hair that either persisted in drooping over his forehead or was deliberately trained by him to do so towards achieving some desired effect. They called it his decadent lock. Meg found a more or less appropriate condemnation of it in some pronouncements of Max Nordau in his *Degeneration* (a book of the period), but Alec remained blankly impervious to their objections. With Robert they were as well satisfied as he with them. "Jolly good sorts," he called them with a shade more of warmth than when he spoke of his brothers as good fellows. "Good fellows" was a phrase often on his lips and by reason of it some people thought him a humbug, but he was less humbugging than conciliatory—and in that he took after his father.

Wallace senior, a sturdy man, slow-moving, slow of speech, did not meddle in the affairs of his wife and family: the three sons, the two daughters. Whatever they did appeared to be satisfactory to him. This characteristic was so marked that there were those who declared that Wallace took no interest in his family and was content so long as he had his clubs: his social club and his golf club.

Mrs. Wallace was a handsome woman though a trifle angular, affectionate and designing, eager for the success of her young; financial success for the boys in their professions, financial success for the girls in marriage, and this desire made her critical of their doings. She was constantly pointing out to them how in their various efforts they might have done better. There were those who thought, if they did not say so, that she nagged. Some even shrewdly surmised that her husband's complacent attitude was deliberate, studied, in an attempt to atone for her insistent admonitions. These admonitions, instead of being a spur to Robert eventually afflicted him with a sense of incompetence, a loss of initiative.

Educated at Hutchesons' Grammar School and at the University of Glasgow, Robert followed his father's profession and, as a civil engineer in Scotland, employed by one of the railway companies, there was enough of the boy left in him after he was beyond the years of indenture to those of salary, to cause him to pretend to himself when surveying for a siding—let us say to a coal mine in Lanarkshire—that his chief there was really Palliser or Hector looking for a way through the Rocky Mountains, and that the cows in the smoke-smirched fields near by were buffaloes or bears. Such fancies were due to his boyhood's reading. One of his first books had been Butler's *Great Lone Land*. With the travels of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser, David Thompson he was well acquainted. The journals of Verendrye, of Lewis and Clark, Washington Irving's *Astoria*, Parkman's *Oregon Trail:* such were the books of his reading in boyhood and youth.

When he first spoke of emigration his father gave him a shrewd look.

"Help you to stand on your own feet, my boy, feel free," said Mr. Wallace, which was the nearest he ever came to suggesting that the mother's solicitude was extreme, oppressive.

To most of his friends and his family's friends Robert's departure to Canada was looked upon merely as evidence that he was one of the proverbial restless Scots. Certainly from him came no hint of other, less happy, incentive. He might admit to himself good reasons (though some of them were rather dismal) for going away but to all appearances, and by what he had to say of it, there was no more than that emotion of restlessness actuating him to the move.

On arrival in Montreal he found employment immediately in his own profession. At first he had moments of diffidence. A distressful tendency had been created in him to question the wisdom of every action immediately after it had been made—a residue from the maternal solicitude or nagging, but with only himself thus to tease him he soon began to recover from that malady. He wrote home of his initial success, his immediate employment.

A year later, on his own initiative and without any doubt in his action, he tendered his resignation and went to one of the eastern universities to take a course in geology and metallurgy. He had decided to be a mining engineer as well as civil engineer, spurred by all he read of mining development in the west. The newspapers were full of it. These post-graduate studies over, he went into the service of the Laurentian Mining Company and for that company he inspected, and reported on, various properties in the north, his travel all by canoe when it was not by portage between waterway and waterway.

And then in June of 1905 he was sent to British Columbia to report on a prospect at the headwaters of the west fork of the Elkhorn River.

Thus it was that he went west across the prairies—from which the buffaloes of his boyhood's reading had departed, leaving only, to be pointed out to him here and there by a friendly pullman-car conductor, the circular marks of their wallows, and most of these relics would soon be ploughed under for not only cattle corrals were by the track sides at the stopping places but often grain elevators too.

Even in his berth at night he was aware of these elevators. The rumble of the train's passage would be suddenly louder, compressed like a buffet against the coach. He happened to have his blind up a little way looking out at the moonlit expanse when one of these crashes came and he saw the cause of it—a grain elevator close to the line. It sent the ghosts of Mackenzie and Thompson, Fraser and Palliser hurrying away to join Verendrye, La Salle, Cabot and Columbus. To be sure among the mountains there were many glimpses of long forest-choked valleys and swift water flailing white in their depths that gave the impression of ancient wilderness; but there was the railway, there was the train rumbling through rock-cuts and passing, muted, along bridges. Only in the names of some of these shouting rivers, in the names of some of these quiet peaks that seemed to wheel above him—piling up on one side, drifting off to the other as the train twisted on its way—did his boyhood's heroes live.

"History," he told himself with the impression that he was making a notable epigram, "is of the past."

Many years were to elapse before he corrected that opinion.

II

A mere quarter of a century later Robert would hesitate to tell of his arrival at Camp Elkhorn to any save those known as "old-timers." Some of the newcomers then, were he to speak of that arrival, would think he was spinning them a story out of penny dreadfuls. They would look incredulity even though not voicing it.

From the railway to Camp Elkhorn he went by stagecoach—a horse-drawn stagecoach—on a road that was no more than two ruts through forest. He was in time for that: to ride in a horse-drawn coach into Camp Elkhorn.

Robert would have liked to sit up beside the driver but another traveller was ahead of him on that lofty perch, so he sat inside with three others. The last to enter was carrying a pound of cheese and, as the eyes of those already there rested on it, he explained, "Just getting over a drunk," fell into his place and began to gorge.

"Didn't know cheese was an aid," remarked the man beside Robert in a guarded voice, so low that he might have been talking to himself.

After that nobody spoke all the way, except a fellow in a blanket coat (that seemed too heavy for the season), heavy breeches, and high laced boots. Not that he had much to say. It was as if he felt something should be said but could think of nothing of consequence. Every now and then as they were swayed, jolted, bounced along he raised his head, beamed on them amicably, and ejaculated: "Yes, SIR!" booming the last word. The cheese-eater had enough when about three-quarters of the pound was eaten. He tossed the remainder out for the chipmunks, if for cheese they cared, and fell asleep. "Yes, SIR!" boomed the loquacious one as the fragment fell in a wayside bush.

Robert Wallace stared moodily into the woods. A wall of forest was on either side in which interrupted sun shafts picked out a branch here, another there, a section of ruddy, stately stem with yellow gouts or clots of resin in it or, piercing the green roof, rested on some shrub that clung close to the floor. In a low ground draught that ran in a dip the great palmate leaves of a clump of salmon-berry bushes waved and waved as they passed by.

The drive was to be a long one. Breakfast he had eaten on the train just before disembarking, responding to the first call of the stewards on the advice of the conductor with whom he had conferred on the remaining lap (or the penultimate lap, for he was going beyond Camp Elkhorn) of his journey. They would be in Camp Elkhorn, barring accidents the conductor had said, in time for lunch.

But they had not travelled far before it seemed to Robert that he had passed into another world. Lumbermen had not touched these woods. Primeval forest was round them. Hard to believe that back there, just a few miles, were those travelling villages: the trains with their plate glass and polished metal fittings, their upholstery, their plumbing, their dining cars, the crisp napkins in order, the gleaming cutlery.

It being early summer there was no glass in the stagecoach. The windows had been removed. Now and then, when they met wagons crunching along to the railway, their driver had to swing aside from the middle of the road, from the two ruts, and when he did so branches of cedar or fir or hemlock whipped the conveyance, filling it with attar of the forests. There and then, perhaps, was the beginning of Wallace's devotion to this western country. Something happened to him as he breathed these odours. There was a feeling of exaltation that gave him respite from certain thoughts that jolted and jostled in his mind as his body was jolted and jostled in the coach.

There was a girl in his thoughts as he was bounced along, and not of ecstasy but of brooding was his expression when thinking of her. His jaw was tight, he frowned. Thinking of her he was not, inwardly, just one young man, to wit Robert Wallace. He was a crowd. It was as if he listened to a jabber of conflicting voices and could come upon no consensus of opinion from the crowd regarding what agitated it.

The girl, Eleanor Laurence, was the daughter of his employer, the president of the Laurentian Mining Company. He had only seen her once, and after that seemed to be seeing her everywhere and then finding always it was not she but someone like her. It was in the home of her father they had met when an honour was done him before he came west and he had been invited to dine with "the chief" and his family. Before his other excursions on behalf of the Company there had been no such invitation; he had just made out his reports and awaited the next assignment. Mr. Laurence must have

been pleased with him to send him on this new errand, and to ask him to his house on the evening before departure.

The crowd within him discussed the incident: The effrontery of the fellow! The nerve of him! What a *gall* he had! Give him an inch and he would take an ell. Did he really think he could make love to the chief's daughter? Who was he? What was he? He was not even a shareholder in the Company—he was only a salaried employee who went out whither he was bidden to inspect properties, of which the Company had word, and report on them. That was all. If the prospects were leased or purchased and development of them was undertaken it was not for the like of him—the likes of him!—to be put in charge. Yet the chief himself must have been pleased with him to ask him to his home that night: No getting away from that. True enough. The young man was a climber, that's what he was. The girl had enraptured him—there was no doubt about that. True enough, plain enough.

There had been a moment when, looking away from her at the table to her father, he had noticed an expression on the chief's face that made him redden. Mr. Laurence had his head lowered and there was a faint smile on his lips, an equivocal smile. Did he realize that she had smitten his guest? It seemed so, at least at the moment, and he had been amused. Not even a shareholder; a salaried underling. The nerve of him!

The crowd within him jabbered on. Robert Wallace, they might say, was not the sort of man to allow himself to fall in love with a poor girl. Would they say that? Sure they would! He frowned heavily over more than the jolting of the coach. After all, he considered, a mineralogist for any company need not give all his thoughts to the company's work. He might come upon some opportunity. This was called the Land of Opportunity and he might see some opportunity—on the side, so to speak—to make a wad for himself. Not only in mines were there fortunes to be made, or lost. Look at these trees. There was the lumber business, with all its various branches. Still—the nerve of him!

Think of what she was accustomed to. In table conversation she had been able to talk of his own land. She had toured Scotland; she had seen Ellen's Isle and the Silver Strand. Apparently, along with her folks, she had been a guest in August of an American financier who owned grouse moors and deer forest in the Highlands, purchased out of steel. She had been on the continent of Europe, was at school in Lausanne.

They had talked of paintings. The Laurences had several of beauty and of price in their home, and Robert was glad when the chief asked him if he could guess by whom one had been painted that he had the right answer promptly. "It looks like a Cox," he had said, and Mr. Laurence, turning to his wife, exclaimed: "There you are! We bought it for a Cox and I have no doubt it is, signed or not."

Robert's father had no originals but many good prints of famous pictures, and with him Robert had often visited the Corporation Galleries. Mr. Wallace knew several of the Glasgow artists and he went regularly to their one-man shows and always visited the annual Institute Exhibition, taking his youngest son with him. Alec and James had other interests. It was usually only Robert and the girls who accompanied their father and mother to the picture galleries.

The evening at the Laurences' had been successful. Robert had even been able to tell them of a meeting with the Scots painter Pettie. That was at an Institute Exhibition to which he had gone alone with his father, and Mr. Pettie had a friend with him to whom they had been introduced. He could hear his own voice again:

"I remember it all very well. Mr. Pettie had a friend with him, Bret Harte, who was American Consul in Glasgow then. Mr. Pettie painted his portrait later, in London where he had a studio—in St. John's Wood, I think."

And then there was Eleanor Laurence's eager voice: "Oh, tell us about Bret Harte, what he looked like, what he said."

The coach took a bend in the road, and there to left, backed by the forest, elbowed by the forest on one side and with a roaring creek to the other, was a building newly painted in yellow and blue. Across the front of it a board announced: "HO SANG, GENERAL STORE."

"A Chink!" bellowed the man who sat beside Wallace, he who had been unaware of the sobering value of cheese. "Do they have Chinese here?"

"Yes, SIR!" said the loquacious one. "There are places where they get cold-shouldered even as washee-men, but not here. It's a dam' good store and Ho Sang and his young nephew Wong Li are good fellows. They don't soak you the way some white storekeepers do and they'll trust you too, and grubstake you if you look right to them."

The horses' hoofs rang on a wooden bridge, the creek billowing a welcome to them from below. Next moment Robert

saw two men lying by the side of the road in attitudes suggestive of an accident. But—

"They seem to be celebrating here," observed the passenger who so far had said not a word.

"Sure they are," replied the loquacious one. "Today is the anniversary of the discovery."

Camp Elkhorn showed itself suddenly. Its houses were built on both sides of the road. From the bridge you could look along the straight final two hundred yards of it and see no sign of a building for each stood back in the space of ground cleared for its erection, with tamarack and fir boughs poised close over the shingle and shake roofs. The driver cracked his long-lashed whip, snapped the team into its last spurt, and the camp was revealed. He drew up before a house that stood with its gable to the road though the gable did not show its peak, for across it was a false front of boards, a false second storey with windows painted on it, windows that would not delude even the most advanced celebrant of the camp's first anniversary into thinking they were of glass. On this false front the building announced itself simply as *Hotel Elkhorn*.

In another few years such a house would not be seen anywhere in these parts, would be seen only in the moving pictures of old days; and to go to a cinema then would bring it all back to Robert's mind so strongly that even his olfactory nerves would be tricked: It would seem he could whiff balsam and cedar, and a voice out of the past would boom, if one may put it so, in memory's ear, "Yes, SIR!"

III

Only those inhabitants of Camp Elkhorn who had succumbed to the celebrations, fallen by the wayside, had been visible as the coach came to the bridge, but on its arrival others appeared from the houses set back from the road. They came in garrulous groups, accompanying their chatter with the wide exaggerated gestures of inebriation. Garrulous, jocund, maudlin, argumentative, combative, or just glassy-eyed and stupefied, they balanced and staggered onto the road—the street. From the hotel came loud voices, thick laughter. Above the babel, up in the tree-tops (Wallace suddenly heard it and, hearing, was deeply moved) there went the long sigh of a temperate wind.

"This," thought he, "though up here in British Columbia in 1905, might be the scene for one of Bret Harte's Tales of the Sierras."

He wondered if, as well as writing to report to the Company his arrival at this "jumping-off place," he might—without seeming presumptuous—write to the president's daughter, she who had expressed interest in Bret Harte, to tell her that he had seen Harte's Roaring Camp, his Poker Flat, his Red Gulch. Such was the consideration in his mind as, with his fellow travellers, he went up the steps to the hotel veranda.

To one side of the entrance hall was a bar-room, a blue interior of tobacco smoke and rumpus. A prize fighter, by the look of his jaw and shoulders, in a white apron, his sleeves rolled up, presided behind the bar. To the other side was a dining-room and meals, Wallace noticed, were still being served there. They were in time—as the conductor on the train said they would be, barring accidents—for lunch though perhaps only, as it were, for a "last call." There were not many at the tables.

In the hall stood, obviously it seemed, the proprietor, a portly paunched man, gnawing a cigar butt and observing the newcomers. Meeting Robert's look of inquiry he confirmed Robert's guess that he was the proprietor by saying, "How do you do, sir? And what can I do for you?"

"I am anxious to find a man called Galbraith," replied Wallace, "John Galbraith. Do you know where I can find him?"

The proprietor looked at Wallace, his brows frowning, his mouth puckering round the cigar butt. It was less the question than the questioner he weighed. He looked at Wallace from head to toe: A young man of over medium height he saw, a sturdy man in his early thirties, broad-shouldered, his gaze direct, his manner polite, his attire a khaki suit, not new. Then the proprietor stared beyond him, out of the door.

"Galbraith?" he said. "John Galbraith? No, I can't say I know the name," and he tossed the cigar end into a convenient cuspidor. "No, never heard of him," he added definitely.

"Well, I'll go in and have lunch," said Wallace. "I see it is still being served."

"Sure. Go right ahead."

"Curious," Wallace pondered, sitting down at a table, "there can't be many people in Camp Elkhorn. And the letter that brings me here stated that a man named John Galbraith, well known in the camp, could conduct anybody to the claim I have to examine."

A Chinese waiter in wide-sleeved blue coat, a queue twined round his shining head, was at his side, chanting to him: "Bean soup, starteh salmon, steak smothehed in onions. No, steak off now, no more," and he gave a conciliatory giggle. "Livah and bacon only, flied potatoe, plums and licee pudding. What you drink—tea or coffee?"

Wallace gave his order and sat there perturbed. Was the whole thing a hoax? Had someone played a practical joke on the Laurentian Mining Company, and was there no such person as John Galbraith, no such person as Harold Sinclair who supposedly had written to them regarding his prospect and its rich showings? The letter had certainly been an odd one—there was no doubt about that. It was oddly worded, but the ore specimens that accompanied it were of a sort not to be ignored. No indeed! Jumped at! That was why he was here. But was it a hoax?

On receipt of the ore specimens and the letter, he had been summoned to the office and with members of the Company's Board had consulted a map of the Department of Mines, an excellent map on which, by a variety of markings explained in the margin, roads, trails, operating mines, tunnels, prospects, cabins were indicated. There were even additional words of information such as "Trail good," "Trail not in use," "Trail not in use but passable," "Trail passable," "Trail impassable." Up the west fork of Elkhorn River there was no trail marked but Sinclair, from his letter, had been at work there only two years it would appear, and the map was three years old. Camp Elkhorn itself was indicated by no more than one black dot signifying a cabin, for the big influx of miners thither had been only twelve months back. Wallace's journey to these parts was as an act of faith.

The Chinese waiter returned with the bean soup and Robert's thoughts turned to another subject: If he wrote to Eleanor Laurence about his discovery of Bret Harte's Roaring Camp he could tell her that he had been waited upon by Bret Harte's Ah Sin with shaven crown and queue, with wide-sleeved blue tunic in which many packs of cards could be hidden, moving noiselessly in blue slippers with a white line along their edges. No, better not write to her—yet. Why not? Lest it were considered presumptuous of him after no more than that one meeting with her? No, not that. What others might think did not weigh with him at this particular moment. Because she was the daughter of a rich man and he was but a salaried employee of that man and had no banking account worth mentioning? Partly because of that, but partly also out of a sense of freedom came the decision not to write to her.

Robert Wallace was one and indivisible no longer. He was again divided, again suddenly a young man of many parts. Freedom he had known up in the north on his other trips for the Company, but here in Camp Elkhorn, Roaring Camp as it were, he was suddenly filled with a sense of greater freedom. He recalled how at home he had been aware of his initiative ebbing before constant reprimand—kindly intended, oh yes, but too much, too much! And one part of him then counselled: "You are not long escaped from maternal solicitude. Have a spell of self-government before risking the loss of this sense of freedom. Free from apron strings, why invite what might bring petticoat government?" And then—"Good God!" said he to himself, "here's a nice way to be thinking of her." At that the canny Scot, Wallace, prorogued the assemblage with a "Bide a wee. Forget that for the nonce, anyhow."

If the whole thing was a hoax, he mused, returning to the reason for him being in Camp Elkhorn, if there was no Galbraith, no Sinclair, no mineral claim for him to examine a body of ore in place to match the tempting samples, his letter to the Company informing them of that would put him into the position of a bearer of bad news. He would not be to blame, of course. The Laurentian Mining Company would be more hoaxed than he, but it is unpleasant to be a bearer of bad news; one has to be truly civilized, perhaps, to feel no shade of annoyance with the bearer of it. Who were the people whose chiefs used to kill those who brought bad news? He could not remember.

He looked up from the prunes and rice set before him (thus far had his meal progressed) and saw in the doorway the proprietor looking at him and with a tilt of his head indicating him to another man out there: a tall man much bronzed and wearing the kind of hat that on the prairies was more usual than in British Columbia, high of crown, broad of brim—"a ten gallon" hat, Wallace believed it was called.

He realized that he was definitely under observation, being inspected, but the moment he became aware of it the inspection ended. The man moved slowly from sight, the proprietor with him. But, lunch over, as Robert came into the

vestibule there stood the man in the big hat, alone then, and——

"Pardon me," he said. "My name is Galbraith, John Galbraith. The proprietor of this house sent word to me that you were asking for me."

"How do you do?" said Wallace, holding out his hand and feeling intensely relieved to meet a veritable John Galbraith. "He told me he had never even heard of you."

"That would only be as a maitter of principle," explained Galbraith.

"Scots," thought Robert, hearing that accent, but did not comment on it. "Of principle?" he asked.

"You see, he would never give anybody away. There may be men here who don't want to be found by anyone from outside, even if they are still going around wi' their ain names. I micht be a wanted man by the police for all he knows. He sent a young fellow along to tell me there was somebody here asking for me. It's all none of his business. If I didn't want any to be asking for me I could take the message as advice to skip, to get off. If I had no reason for being feart I could come along and look into it. I have nae reason to be feart," he ended his explanation, "so here I am, sir, and might I ask what you was wanting to see me for?"

"First," said Wallace, "would you mind telling me where you come from?"

"Originally frae Glasgow," replied Galbraith.

"I thought so. Me too," said Wallace with a little bow, and by some impulse of the moment they shook hands again.

That was how these two men from Glasgow met.

CHAPTER TWO

As they stood there the revellers came from the bar-room and went with hammering heels down the steps into the road—the street.

"I have come from the Laurentian Mining Company," said Wallace, "to inspect a property of Mr. Harold Sinclair. He says in his letter that you know the way to the place."

"I do," Galbraith answered, with a nod, thus establishing the authenticity of Harold Sinclair. "I have packed stuff in for him twa-three times, right to the lake at the head of the west fork. From there on there is no way for horses to go. He packs it the rest of the way on his back. Sheer cliff to one side and to the other a cliff with rubble at its foot but with a kind of shoulder, as you might say, at one place, that you have to sliproun‌d like a fly on a wall."

As he spoke there was a revolver shot outside. The stage, to Wallace's mind, was set for manslaughter. Perhaps some tiff over cards—after the manner of the playing of "a right bower which the same Nye had dealt unto me!"—was settled by that shot. But no. Next moment he realized it was only the starting shot for a horse race. The track was the street, the rutted road, and looking out he saw the riders go by, bent in the saddles, their right arms rising and falling as they quirted their mounts.

A horse race is a horse race the world over and he and Galbraith dashed to the door to look out. They were in time to see the finish of it and the horses milling at the end of the bridge, their bellies heaving like bellows.

"Come into the bar," suggested Galbraith. "There's nobody there now. We'll get a sheet of paper from the barkeep and figure out what you'll need for the trip."

The barkeeper on their entrance demanded to know who won the race; then, with a sheet of paper with which he provided them, they sat down to their discussing. Wallace's instructions had been to do more than examine the Sinclair discovery; being in the neighbourhood he was advised to make other examinations he thought might be interesting. The tributary creeks on the way he could test for "colour." There might be placer possibilities on the higher waters, and he might find it of value to prospect on the range where Sinclair had staked. He would probably be "out," Galbraith

decided, for "twa-three" weeks.

"Or even more," said Wallace.

"Better have too much than too little grub," advised Galbraith, keenly intent on a subject after his heart, his elbows on the round table at which they sat, "and Ho Sang will take back anything we overstock and don't use."

He nodded with satisfaction at the inventory.

"Would you want to sleep in a tent?" he asked. "Or would a bed of fir feathers in the open under some tree be enough?"

"A tent would mean just so much more weight," Wallace pointed out.

Galbraith nodded assent.

"I'll hae twa-three tarps along for putting over the packs lest we get a shower," he said. "We could make a guid enough lean-to with them. We won't need a rifle but I'll take my revolver in case of meeting trouble. Well, I'll come along with you to the Chink store and introduce you, and then I'll get back to the stable for the hosses and get us a man I ken who can be both wrangler and cook for the trip."

Out in the vestibule he pointed to some dunnage that lay there.

"Is that yours?" he inquired.

"Yes. The stage driver left it there."

"I'll pick it up when I get the hosses."

Together they walked along the road towards the bridge. The odour there, Wallace noticed, was not all of forests. It was a combination of forest, cigars, horses, with wafts of what seemed like methylated spirits—the whisky that was being drunk. Just to the camp end of the bridge all the inhabitants appeared to be gathering. The blue haze of cigars went up into the sunshafts over the heads of the crowd, pale blue, dark blue, as it coiled through light or shadow. The fact that the people had gathered where no house was visible added to the strangeness of the scene. Here on a road cut through dense wilderness was a crowd like that before an alluring booth at a fair.

"What are they all clustered here for?" asked Wallace.

"Rock-drilling contest," said Galbraith. "Do you want to watch?"

"I think so."

"All right."

Atop four scaffoldings of lumber were huge chunks of granite, each of equal thickness, and on each stood a hammer man and a drill holder.

"Ready?" a voice called.

The drill holders crouched at the drills.

"Go!" the voice exploded.

The hammers rose and fell.

Suddenly Wallace was aware of a scent other than that of forests, tobacco smoke, fire water. It caught him in the midriff, filled his nostrils. He glanced round and realized at once whence it came. Two women like corpses had arrived behind him, two cadaverous ladies painted as for the stage, as for a macabre play. How many of these women might there be, he wondered, in Camp Carson? Surely there must be more than just two polyandrous ones to serve all these men!

They stepped closer to him as he looked round, and their scent was overpowering. Brothel won over balsam. The eyes of one of them, that had held an expression of blank boredom, became piercing as if she did not like the way he was observing her and her companion. There was challenge in her eyes. Then that ebbed and she gave him a wan smile.

"I guess no man don't ever work long at that clip in the mines," she remarked.

"No, indeed," said he, and touched the brim of his hat, gave her a small bow. "A man could not keep that up for long."

Her gaze sharpened at his salute. Her head went a little on one side and she considered him carefully, as though toward deciding whether derision or politeness was in his gesture.

A sudden shout from the crowd extricated him. One of the hammer men had driven the last drill, the long last drill, through the hole made in his granite block.

"Hell!" exclaimed the other lady. "I was hoping Bill there and his partner would come in first."

"Well?" said Galbraith. "Seen enough?"

"Yes, let's get on," replied Wallace.

Stepping free from the crowd's fringe, he noticed an Indian standing beside the road, definitely an Indian despite his coat and trousers which were such as white men wore, or discarded as worn long enough. He had on a flannel shirt with the ends hanging down outside, and the effect might have been ludicrous to one who did not realize, as Wallace did (remembering pictures he had seen of Indians of earlier years), that he was wearing it just as of old his people wore their deerskin tunics, pendant over deerskin leggings. He had moccasins on his feet, and on his head a Homburg hat from which he had removed the hatter's band and substituted a band of beads, blue and yellow, with a gopher's tail to one side for further decoration. His hair hung down in plaits. He was of stocky build, and there was that about his manner that gave the impression that he would fain be inconspicuous, observing unobserved. In his dark eyes there was—or Wallace read them wrongly—derision.

They looked one to another, and white man and Indian exchanged smiles. It was as if there was something that they shared. It was a smile not unfriendly but, even so, the Indian's expression was enigmatic for Wallace. He walked on, wondering what thoughts were in the head of that unobtrusive native who looked on there like an alien at Camp Elkhorn's anniversary proceedings.

"How-do, Chief?" said Galbraith as they passed.

"How-do," said Chief Eaglehead.

II

Across the bridge the forests were again victorious. On the current of air above the flow of the creek came, dominantly, the flow of that other scent, the attar of the forests: balsam and cedar and a smell like honeysuckle that Wallace would know later was from a patch of twin-flowers.

They came to the opposite bank. There a huge cottonwood tree had been sawn down, only its great stump remaining, about three feet in height. There was life in it, vigorous life, for out of it grew a veritable bush of slender branches. There was some parable here, thought Wallace, but he let inquiry for it go from his mind as they moved on to the Chinese store.

At the opening of its door he passed utterly away from all the Roaring Camps, from all the old wilderness of the explorers, passed into China on a whiff of spices. "A caravan from China comes, For miles it sweetens all the air," came into his mind. Who wrote that? He could not remember, nor where he had read it; and then, though he had been gone from home, as Galbraith would say, "twa-three" years by then, it struck him that Alec would no doubt say the lines were romantic nonsense and that China stinks! Potent, indeed, the influences of early years in the home.

At the nearer end of a long counter there was a high desk and there, making entries with a brush in a great limply bound ledger, was a portly Oriental who reminded Wallace of the God of Contentment, in porcelain, that he had once seen. On their entry he looked up and executed a stately bow, Wallace bowing courteously in return, Galbraith watching him aslant with interest. The hotel proprietor, sending word to him of the arrival of one inquiring for him, had described the stranger as "mighty politeful."

"Hello, Ho Sang," said Galbraith. "I've brought this gentleman along to buy some stuff. We're going out in the hills."

The God of Contentment smiled.

"Velly good," he replied, and bowed again.

Wallace looked round the place curiously, seeking for what should make it redolent of China. On the shelves were tinned goods in rows, all definitely, by their labels, of this continent; labels with the names of California and Oregon on them, and of Fraser River, British Columbia: fruit and salmon. There were, to be sure, tea chests along the wall to rear with Chinese characters on them but these did not contribute greatly to the olfactory impression of the Orient; and only by sight, not by smell, did mats of rice that a much younger Chinese was piling up to rear mean China, mats that slipped and tried to glissade and had to be humoured into place. From drawers along the wall behind the counter, perhaps, came this permeating fragrance—a fragrance no doubt, Wallace told himself, as if closing a foolish argument on the matter, as evocative of China as might less pleasing odours be. On a shelf above the desk, centred there, niched as though its decorative value was esthetically appreciated, he noticed a ginger jar.

There was much of poise in the bearing of Ho Sang, and Wallace felt that he should rather ask him of Confucius and of Lao-Tze than of flour and bacon. The place was very warm. He removed his hat and mopped his brow with a handkerchief. Noticing this, the God of Contentment turned to a window and opened it and in came the rumble and hiss of Elkhorn Creek, in came the sound of voices from further off, loudly celebrating the anniversary of Camp Elkhorn but muted by distance.

Ho Sang spoke to the young man who was piling up the rice mats. He spoke first in Chinese, then in English, translating, it would appear, what he had said in their own tongue.

"Wong," said he, "you please wait on these gentlemen at once."

That was where, and when, Robert Wallace first met Wong Li who in later years was to be his cook, his general servant, his major-domo and friend.

"I'll leave you," said Galbraith. "I'll go and get the hosses and pick up your things at the hotel on the way back. You paid for your lunch there?"

"Yes, I paid in the dining room."

"Good. I'll be back before long."

With the smack of his high-heeled horseman's shoes across the floor, and with the closing of the door, nothing of the new west remained, nothing of Roaring Camps and Poker Flats. The din of any further celebrating events that might be in progress in Camp Elkhorn no longer passed the rumble of the creek. The populace must have moved away from the end of the bridge.

"You likee sit down?" suggested Ho Sang, and brought a stool from behind the counter for Wallace. Then, the God of Contentment once more, he returned to his brush and his ledger.

When he was twenty-three, young Wallace, as we know, had played at being in the company of Palliser or Hector on prairies and among mountains of the west while aiding his chief in such work as the surveying for a railway siding in Scotland. At thirty he was much as he had been at twenty-three: At the back of his mind as he sat there, Galbraith's list in his hand, was a thought not again of Bret Harte but of Marco Polo and Cathay. He was enjoying himself with both facts and fancies.

"Now you tell me what you want," said Wong, and as Wallace read aloud from his list of supplies the young man set these in a growing pile near the door.

III

The account had just been settled when there was a sound of hoofs drumming on the bridge. They all looked out of the window and saw a string of horses, five horses, and Galbraith mounted on one of them. The change of sound of their hoofs moving from earth to wood seemed to fill them with trepidation for there was a sudden baulking and fuss, some of them divided in mind between wheeling back from the bridge and taking the length of it in a panic gallop.

"All right, all right," they heard Galbraith chant soothingly.

The stampede was arrested and the horses, contentedly back upon earth again, clustered at the door.

"Well, I got your things," said Galbraith when Wallace went out to him. "The man I wanted for cook and wrangler can't come so I've had to make do with someone else. He was a sailor originally, he told me once, apprenticed by his father to the sea. He ran away when his ship came into Burrard Inlet for a load of timber, and since then he's done some cow-punching in the Nicola Valley and some packing out of Ashcroft into the Cariboo. He'll do, only——"

He began to loosen a coiled rope that hung from a packsaddle.

"Only what?" asked Wallace.

"He's no' the man I wanted, not the kind of man I wanted, and he's been celebrating." Galbraith laughed drily. "He'll be coming aboard, so to speak, drunk. Well, there's the saddle hosses. You'd better take your pick of the three."

"Of the two," corrected Wallace. "You seem to have chosen one for yourself already."

Galbraith looked at his employer with astonishment. Truly he was "mighty politeful."

One of the horses, it would appear, chose Wallace at that moment; a horse of a golden colour. It raised its head, considered him, craned its neck and sniffed him, then rubbed its forehead (hammer forehead it had, and Roman nose with a splash of white down it) against his shoulder.

"It looks as if this one has decided that he wants me," said Wallace.

"Yes," Galbraith agreed, "either that or he was just using you to rub off a fly. He's a good hoss, full of spirit without being mean. I'll stick to the buckskin I rode over, then, and that pinto mare will help to sober Max Harker. She'll tak' some handling. If Max tries to get mean with her she will be mean with Max."

When the two pack horses were loaded the wrangler had not arrived. On their side of the bridge there was a slight bend to the road before it ran straight as a lance through the camp. Galbraith stepped to the bridge and looked along the road, then turned back.

"I see him coming," said he. "We'll get well out of this camp of drunkards to a good camp place of our own for tonight, in the first meadow past the timber there."

Along the bridge came their man with slightly divigating steps. Under an arm he carried a blanket roll; his hat—a "ten gallon" one like Galbraith's—was on the back of his head. A quiff of dark curly hair hung over an eye, and it seemed to trouble his vision for he raised a hand as though to brush it aside but without success, making aimless passes in air before his face. At sight of them he executed what was perhaps intended as the first step of a hornpipe, then he changed his walk so that it somehow suggested a sailor's roll.

He focussed his gaze on Wallace and gave him a sailor's salute.

"You the gentleman I'm going to work for?" he asked.

"Yes, he's the gentleman," replied Galbraith before Wallace could answer, "and that's your horse, that pinto. Treat her right. Give me your blanket roll, Max. I've kept a place for it on this pack here."

Harker handed him his blanket roll.

"There you are," said he. "You can pack it where you please. You're the navigating officer. My Colt .45 is inside it, and a cartridge belt. We might meet an argumentative bear away up there or fall over a cougar and be glad we had it. You fellows all say that cougars never attack a man, but I've had one follow me on a trail for miles and it looked as if it was trying to get up nerve to make a spring. Well, here we are—all a-blowing and a-growing!"

He lurched towards the little pinto mare. She showed the white of an eye to him and laid back her ears.

"There, there!" he crooned, clapping her on the neck, pulling her ears. He glanced round and began to giggle.

"I do dislike a giggling man," thought Wallace, in fact spoke Wallace though just as to himself.

Galbraith, however, heard.

"Yes," he said, "but better giggling than what we call 'greeting fou' in Glasgow. What's he giggling at?"

He looked in the direction of Harker's gaze. So did Wallace. There on the bridge was an Indian girl, a young slip of a thing in blue cotton dress and moccasins, a bandana round her head. She came slowly across and was suddenly smitten —her step, her posture, her face announced it—with a primitive shyness.

Max Harker looked at her and looked away, giggling again.

"What's keeping us?" he asked.

"Just waiting for you," replied Galbraith, and took up the reins of his buckskin.

Harker glanced back at the Indian girl and then turning to them, giggling still, he raised a hand to his mouth and spoke confidentially behind it.

"I was back in the bush with her," he informed them. "Promised her four dollars, gave her two, and told her I'd give her the balance later; didn't have it on me. But she saw me coming along here with my blanket roll and, I guess, knew that I was going to slip away out of the camp without giving her the rest of her wages of sin."

Wallace opened his mouth to speak and then remained silent because of the multiplicity of his thoughts and uncertain regarding which to utter. He was on the point of calling Harker, plump and plain, "a swine" and telling him to give the girl the remaining two dollars; on the point of saying they could do without him, would find another wrangler; on the point of taking two dollars from his own pocket and saying, "There you are. Give that to her and I'll dock it from your pay—you rat!" He did not know which to say, what to say. At that moment he was very much the moralist, but he had not wholly freed himself from a tendency to consider what others might think of him. What this man Harker might think was of no account to him but he would have Galbraith, clearly a man of a different sort, think well of him—and Galbraith, he considered, might look upon him as "soft" to be pained, enraged over the affair. He could not have spoken without showing that he was enraged.

While he remained silent Galbraith expressed an opinion.

"My boy," said he to Harker, "you'll play that kind of trick once too often, leaving a girl in the lurch. One of these days, Maxwell Harker, if you go on that way, you will get it."

His voice was so restrained, so level, so easy, however, that Wallace could not decide whether he spoke as a censor of immorality and dirty tricks or merely as one who, by observation or by philosophy, believed that the birds come home to roost. Without heat he swung to the saddle of his buckskin, and at once the two pack ponies that had been standing with necks bent, hip-shot—half asleep to all appearances under their loads, with only an occasional flick of tail or switch of ears against flies, like wrecks of horses—awoke fully, alert.

Galbraith started them on their way with a whirl of the long ends of his reins.

Wallace looked at the Indian girl. Her shyness became extreme. She turned sidewise to them, drooping her head, stared down into the river, then stole a glance at them round a shoulder. Her expression was but of innocent disappointment, and as Wallace watched her he mused that if Harker, instead of "going back in the bush" with her had gone to the house of those white women he had seen at the rock-drilling contest, the "trade" would not have been so unscrupulously conducted. These ladies of his own colour would not have been cheated thus, they being stringently professional—and dangerous too, he believed, they might be if such tricks were tried on them.

Harker rocked up to his saddle just as Wallace was on the point of telling him, after all, to go and give the girl what he had promised her or get off, get away, and leave them to find another wrangler. Again he remained silent.

The two Chinese, both at the door then, seeing the movement of horses, called, "So-long! So-long!" At all the movement Wallace's horse, Goldy, hoofed the ground, impatient. That settled it. Wallace mounted and there he was once more, as for his mental state, much as he used to be, too often for his peace of mind, in doubt about himself. Had he done right? Had he done wrong? Should he have spoken? Was it better to remain silent?

Suddenly Harker rode ahead, leading the way up a trail that ran aslant into the enveloping forest there, and the knowing pack horses followed immediately with a thewy plodding quickstep. Galbraith followed them. The trail there was amply broad enough for two to ride abreast. Goldy, of his own accord, stepped up level with the buckskin. They were off. The incident was apparently closed.

But as they mounted the little preliminary rise among the pine trees Wallace looked back. The Indian girl, full face toward them, watched them go. He saw the white of her eyes as she stood there, chin on chest, looking up at them, melancholy. Pity for her filled him.

"It's damnable!" he exclaimed.

Galbraith, observing the direction of his pitying gaze, and looking back also, realized the cause for that explosion.

"He's not the man I wanted. I told you that," he said, "but I couldna get anybody else. But that skin-game of his is his own affair. It's not our affair. It doesna affect us. Anyhow, I always say that a man who does the like of that, behaves that way, will get what's coming to him some day."

"I hope so!" replied Wallace grimly. "I hope you are right."

CHAPTER THREE

Wallace, sitting in Ho Sang's store, had decided not to write to the Company of his arrival at Camp Elkhorn. The Company had no desire to hear of that. What it wanted was a report on the Sinclair property, and on any other showings of possible value he might come upon; and when, sitting there, the thought of writing to Eleanor (despite his earlier decision not to do so) came again to his mind, he had given it definite final dismissal. The Roaring Camps and Poker Flats and Red Gulches—he having viewed Camp Elkhorn on a day of fête—had more of the sordid than the glamorous for him. His best memory of Camp Elkhorn would be of that unheeded sigh going past in the tree tops over the hubbub.

As they came to the top of the first crest and rode on (even with Max Harker ahead and the disgust for him still gnawing) there happened to Wallace again what had happened when branches of cedar and fir and hemlock whipped their odours into the stagecoach. He had a sense of exaltation, ecstasy; and here, he felt, was a land he could love as men are supposed to love the land of their birth.

It is eighty miles from Camp Elkhorn to the head of the valley at the confluence of the east and west forks of the river. The journey took close on two weeks, but not because of impeding difficulties on the way. There were no deadfalls of trees, no rockslides to detain them till after they had left the main valley and were mounting up in the gulch of the west fork; but at the tributary creeks, mindful of the order that he had to keep his eyes open for "opportunities" other than the main one of his journey, Wallace stopped to look for "colour"—and found it.

Elkhorn Valley it seemed to him as they travelled on—the month was July—was a demi-Paradise. Woods and parklands alternated all the way. Deer they frequently saw, both blacktail and whitetail, and one day, when they were nearing the valley's end, they spied a bull moose feeding in one of the riverside sloughs. Where the valley broadened (and sometimes it was all of twenty miles wide from foothills or benchlands on one side, to foothills or benchlands on the other) there were lush natural meadows with the river winding through. Where it narrowed there were rustling woods of deciduous trees: cottonwood and birch, elderberry and chokecherry, clumps of salmonberry and bearberry. An old beaver dam in one place made the river spread to the proportions of small lakes, but the beavers were gone, all trapped away, and their dams but records of a past, as also were the one or two trappers' cabins they came upon, the crumbling roofs leaking sunlight.

"I wish I'd lived in the days of the early explorers," Wallace remarked once to Galbraith.

"Why?"

"Just to have been able to do something for this country, something big, something permanent. They thought of our future. We think of their past."

The impression recurred in his mind that history was of the past, that he had come too late to have any connection with the story of the land. Even so, the land laid hold of him. Once, to evade a denser belt of woods between parkland and parkland, the trail left the lower levels and coasted the benches, the sandy benches that projected their bases downward from the forested slopes, making a series as of promontories and bays. Sagebrush, not yet in bloom, nourished there and as they rode along, with the trampling of the horses, its aromatic odour rose frequently—another magical scent for Wallace. He rode there in a controlled, quiet ecstasy. This land was taking hold of him.

A thought he had earlier, at Camp Elkhorn, when considering—and dismissing—the question of writing to Eleanor Laurence, persisted in his mind. There ought here in this valley to be Opportunity. In the train, coming across the prairies, he had talked a while with an old cattleman who lamented the coming of wheat and the barbed-wire fences, vigorously declaring that people—seeing the success of those who had been raising wheat in what he called good belts—were trying to grow it where it never grew and, by doing so, were only ruining the ground for cattlemen. They ploughed away, he asserted, the "prairie wool," that natural grass on which the buffalo had fed, then—failing to raise crops—they went away, leaving the country good for nothing. "Prairie wool" did not grow again, he said. He was on his way to a place in British Columbia—Chilcotin, if Wallace had the name rightly—to see if cattle could be raised there.

But what of this valley, this Elkhorn valley? Why had none of the cattlemen, when ousted from the prairies, come in here to graze their herds on these parklike pockets between woods and benches where grass turned to natural hay? He knew nothing of cattle himself but he could find some who did, and if they were of his opinion might he not be successful in enlisting capital to start ranching there?

On the train another day he had sat at a table for two with a big bronzed man in tweeds who, of his own accord, explained that he had been on a trip to the Old Country, a pleasure trip on the profits made during a year of "taking out poles and posts."

"What are poles and posts?" Wallace had asked. "Telephone poles and fence posts," it was explained to him.

All the way along the valley that contented man of "poles and posts" was in his mind beside the disgruntled cattleman. The further he rode, the more keenly he considered them. Here was surely feed for cattle; and here, along the mountain sides, were surely poles and posts by the million. The higher slopes to west were flounced with forest. Far ahead a long wedge, that Galbraith told him was of the east fork, was densely forested. He was here to examine a prospector's discovery for the Laurentian Mining Company; but there was no reason why he might not, on returning east again, enlist capital for turning these trees into poles and posts—and money, of which, if he handled the thing well, he would have his fair share.

II

The tributary creeks of any consequence all flow into the Elkhorn from west, those on the east being intermittent and seasonal, a swirl of spring drainage and then "dry washes." It was on the west bank that they travelled, and at the first tributary Wallace stopped to look for colour and floats.

It was while so occupied that he came to know something of Galbraith's past. Regarding Harker's he was less curious, and already in their camps on the way sufficient had been divulged, partly in direct reminiscential yarning, partly parenthetically, or in asides. In all these talks mention had been made of remittance men, and Harker, with great vigour, had always at such moments remarked that a remittance man he would never be.

"No, siree!" he exploded on one such occasion. "Not if I were destitute would I write to the old man for a cent. He apprenticed me to the sea to get rid of me instead of making a remittance man of me as many do with their black sheep—I was his baa-baa black sheep—and I deserted when my ship came into port on the west coast for lumber. But not if I was destitute would I sue him for a cent."

It was clear he had been a young scamp at home, and unrepentant. That streak of independence in him was, it seemed to Wallace, the noblest quality he possessed, and perhaps the best that could be said for him by any counsel for the defence. He had worked in the lumber camps of the west and then, moving into what at the coast was spoken of as "the upper country" (not to be confused with "high country") he had cow-punched in the Nicola Valley, driven freight wagons on the Cariboo road, and eventually drifted into Camp Elkhorn where he was hired as a wrangler by the same firm that employed Galbraith.

The saloon keepers and the ladies in the houses with red lights at the doors got, it could be gathered, most of his earnings. Apropos of red lights he told a funny story, a story (whether factual or fiction) born out of the significance of a red light at a door in England, where it announced a doctor within, and a red light in the west, a story regarding the droll adventure of a newcomer seeking medical attention who was unaware of that difference. Gay and dissolute he was, but he could never (no, siree!), never be a remittance man.

Galbraith was the one who interested Wallace. It was, then, at the first tributary that he had some of his curiosity regarding the man's past and antecedents satisfied. Harker had stayed in camp while Galbraith and Wallace moved up-creek, Wallace carrying his professional prospector's pan, and Galbraith the bowl in which he mixed flour for the flapjacks and bannocks. He had bought a big spoon with him and sat down to tie it to the end of a stick.

"Here's a place," said he, "where there should be colour sunk by its weight if there's colour anywhere in this creek—sunk between them two big boulders at the bend."

"You have prospected before this?" asked Wallace.

"No, but I have seen men panning a creek and listened to them talking back in Wyoming and Colorado."

"You have travelled a bit?"

"I hope to tell you," replied Galbraith in a tag of the land and with the accent of his home city in Scotland. "Aye, I've moved a long way from the Gorbals in Glasgow."

"It was in the Gorbals you lived?"

"It was in the Gorbals I was born and existed," said Galbraith.

"You have not happy memories of it?"

"No. A room and kitchen flat does not give you happy memories, not when five people live in it. My father and mother slept in a concealed bed in the kitchen, a hole in the wall; my sister slept in a concealed bed in the living-room, with a door to it like a cupboard; my brother and I slept on sofas we made into beds at nicht in the wee hall. Aye, the factor called it a hall. It was a dark den."

He paused as if gazing gloomily into the past, into that dark den. As he paused, a chipmunk came frisking close to them, round and under the bushes, and chirped to them. The creek glided in polished curves over the lips of falls, clutched, in spurts of spray, at projecting rocks in the shallower and spreading stretches. The sound of it was the sound of freedom to Galbraith's ears, of release, escape from the flat in the Gorbals of Glasgow.

"When did you leave there?" asked Wallace.

"When my father got his head turned looking at the pictures on the emigration pamphlets in a shipping agent's windows," said Galbraith. "It was a great day for us. What a place to live was yon! My main memory of it is of the stair to the flat. Damp. We boys used to put a finger to the wall and make a streak all the way up and that would start the damp trickling. It canna have been like that all the year round, surely, but that's how I remember it. And there was aye noise with the traffic in the street, and if you shut the windows to keep the noise out the air was stagnant; and there was a fish-curing place near by and the smell of it was in the flat, windows open or windows shut, till I got so I couldna look a kippered herring in the face—and yet I hae a notion that kippered herrings may be good eating," and he laughed.

"Where did your folks emigrate to?"

"You'd be surprised," Galbraith answered. "It wasn't to a Canadian city my father came. He chose an outlying part of Ontario. He went to Muskoka, got work in the woods there in lumber camps and saved his wages. He settled there, took up farming on a wee place of his ain at last. There I learnt to swim. There I learnt to handle canoes. It was lonesome where we lived, and my mother had to know how to stitch up ax cuts on our toes. They used to bring to her men who had put an ax in a foot for her to fix them up. She had the surgical needles and outfit and she would stitch them up as cool as cool and then, when she was finished, she would go off in a dead faint. But she was happier there than in the Gorbals."

The invidious comparison came in through the talk like a refrain.

"I suppose I inherited some of my father's restlessness," Galbraith went on. "I was ten when we left Glasgow, and when I was twenty I left Muskoka and headed west. I worked on cattle ranches in Saskatchewan—aye, and saw beasts frozen there in a bad winter. You'll hear folks say the prairies should have been left for cattle and not broken up for wheat, that the barbed wire and the wheat men were responsible for their troubles in winter. Certainly the cattle couldna drift before blizzards as far as the buffaloes did of old time without coming up against a fence, and whiles they froze. But forby that the steers had not the protective hides of the buffaloes. It can be wheat there instead of range cattle so far as I'm concerned. I've seen the beasts suffer. I drifted south myself, all the way to New Mexico."

He chirped to the chipmunk as it frisked closer.

"I used to see men at the placering there too," he continued. "I've met baith placer and hard-rock men, but aye I kept with hosses. I'm thirty now and I've been seven years with them. Hosses, as they say, is my second name. And everywhere I went was better than the Gorbals in Glasgow," he added. "Well, I'm going to try my luck here with my long spoon, if no' to sup wi' the Devil as the saying goes, to see what this creek has deposited deep down there between those boulders."

From a very different quarter of Glasgow had Wallace come but to him also, though for other reasons than those that influenced Galbraith, there was a sense of release in being there by that creek in the Elkhorn Valley.

III

They had progressed nearly a third of the way to the valley's end when they met a white man who was riding along with six pack horses, a trader with the Indians, Jackson by name—C. J. Jackson, called by everybody just "C. J.," said Galbraith on introducing him.

He was on his way to Camp Elkhorn for supplies, he told them, whereupon Harker asked if he had left anybody at his store to prevent the Indians entering and stealing while he was away.

Jackson raised his tufted brows in a long stare.

"The door isn't locked," said he. "I leave it open for them. They know the cash and fur value of everything on the shelves and if they want anything they go in and take it and leave the money, or the equivalent, on the shelf."

It was Harker's turn to stare. He thought at first that the trader was a dry jester.

"That's right," declared Jackson, seeing incredulity.

A little further on they passed his log-built store. A pair of blue jays shrieked vociferously at them as they rode by.

"I guess," remarked Galbraith, "that C. J. feeds them titbits and they want to know what's keeping him today."

They had not gone much further when the trail on which they had been travelling, broad enough all the way for a wagon to pass over it even where it went through belts of woods, swerved abruptly towards the river. On the opposite bank was a pattern of fields. There were log cabins there and a tepee beside one of them.

"That's the Indian reserve," explained Galbraith. "That's their rancheria," said he, having brought back with him from New Mexico many words of Spanish flavour in more common use in the southwest. "They cross the river at a ford. We go straight on. There don't seem to be many of them around. They're probably looking after their hosses on the range."

"Have they any cattle?" asked Wallace.

"No. They would need to put up hay for winter feed for cattle, but the hosses can fend for themselves through the winter. In bad years they'll be a bit skinny by the time spring comes, but that is all."

"Still, it would make good cattle country, wouldn't it?" Wallace persisted.

"It certainly would. The old days of ranching without putting up hay for the winter are over in most places, and not every cow-puncher would quit a job now if he was shown a hay fork."

"Uh-huh," said Wallace, meditatively.

They had not gone much further when Galbraith decided they "might as well call it a day." The saddle horses were unsaddled, the pack ponies were unpacked, the cooking fire was lit and the sweet odour of burning red-willow rose on the air. David Thompson, mused Wallace, must often have whiffed that odour among such scenes. But that was an old story. Bands of steel lay across the continent. Only in such places as this could one have an impression—a faint impression—of what the early explorers saw.

He was thinking of them, supper over, when Harker began to talk. There was always conversation round the fire after a meal. Galbraith's was chiefly of horses he had known and Harker's of women, and each listened to the other with a reciprocity of patience. Harker, by his nature, felt no shame over the episode of the Indian girl on leaving Camp Elkhorn, and Galbraith, by his, did not think it incumbent on him to be haughty to Max because of it.

That evening, however, it seemed to Wallace that Galbraith did definitely signify his boredom with Harker's constant talk of women. Supper had been eaten. A backlog was hauled near in readiness to put on the fire when night fell. Out in the meadow by which they camped the horses moved contentedly to and fro, tearing grass, "blowing through their noses," as Galbraith remarked, clearing their throats of husks.

It was the perfect hour for reverie or reminiscence. The sight of the Indian cabins that day across the river set the tune of his talk for Harker.

"I've known a lot of natives," he said, "in all parts of the world," and with that preliminary he was launched.

He gave a resumé of his experiences with "natives." He had sampled Chinese girls in Hong Kong. In Singapore he had sampled three different races—one of them, he said, the colour of a banana—at which Galbraith laughed, as if laughing at him.

"And had a ring in her nose," said Harker.

"Like a bull," interpolated Galbraith, and chortled.

As Harker maundered on, Wallace stretched back against the saddle that Galbraith had set in place behind him to be a back rest and privately asked himself if he was a moralizing Scot. He could not get out of his mind the Indian girl at the bridge as he had last seen her, cheated, disillusioned.

"Brown and yellow," said Max Harker, "I have known them both—and once a black wench on the Gold Coast; but the best I have ever known, I do believe, are the blonde ones in the Baltic ports."

"And what do the doctors say?" asked Galbraith.

To the significance of Wallace's silence over his talk, Harker was either insensitive or indifferent. Galbraith's dry question he resented.

"They say it's natural!" he snapped with a sudden jerk of head and stiffening of neck.

Galbraith's eyebrows narrowed at the tone of voice and that combative stiffening. Wallace had the impression that this man—though he had said that Harker's behaviour with the Indian girl at Camp Elkhorn was none of his affair—shared at least part of his contempt for their wrangler, and at that rasping tone found his tolerance strained. It was by reason of his tolerance that Harker was with them, and acerbity from one to whom he was consciously being lenient might well be, thereby, additionally galling. It might be Galbraith, thought Wallace, and not he who would be at definite "outs" with Harker.

Suddenly feeling the loneliness of the place, he wondered what would befall if these two fellows quarrelled. Altercation between them could end in violence for they had lethal weapons with them. It could end in bloodshed. There was a steely look in Galbraith's eyes and Harker met it without flinching.

"I'm lucky anyway," he ejaculated.

Galbraith gave a weary sigh. He looked round as if to see all was well with the horses. He fidgetted. Then he rose, picked up his fishing rod and moved away towards the river. As he went he emitted an antipodean sound, unrestrained, violent, as though in expression of contempt.

Harker raised his head.

"He's vulgar!" he said in the voice of one shocked, disgusted. "That's what he is, vulgar! Some fellows who work a lot with horses get in the way of behaving like that, I know, but he's vulgar."

One short bark of a laugh came from Wallace at that—a laugh that was not solely out of a sense of humour. He, too, rose and strolled away from the camp. A grasshopper or two jumped before him and flicked away in the grass. He walked across the meadow towards the river and stood on the bank watching it frilling over shallows, eddying into deeper pools. He could see Galbraith balanced on a midstream rock making casts over a stretch of water that was like burnished bronze in the late daylight.

The music of the river there reminded him of the Tweed as he had heard it at Peebles. It reminded him of many a Scottish burn or stream—but he was not yet homesick, for all that. He looked across at the yellow sandy benches, at the hills beyond and the soaring, bald, rocky ridges beyond again. As he looked, a shadow sped in the grass beside him, took the river at a leap and ran on, a shadow like the tide inexorably coming in on Solway sands. It spread over the grass benches, darkened the belts of forests and, less swift but as surely, moved on across the steep scarps, the precipices higher still, pursuing the retreating gold of sunshine up the slopes.

He turned about and gazed westward. The sun had gone down behind the ranges there, ranges more densely, more closely forested. Nearer ridges, shadowed, wore an additional appearance of steepness then, but still every tree along their crests was individually clean. He could see the twining gorge of the west fork from there. Through a notch at its summit ragged peaks peeped down, the fading glow of sunshine behind them. Sinclair was up there somewhere, thousands of feet up in that austerity. In contrast with the tranquillity of the valley there was something awesome, indeed almost dreadful, in that glimpse of the higher ranges. Their colour was of lilac and smoky blue, and on the edge of that blue was a cold white gleam that must be of a glacier.

He turned about and looked across the river again. Opposite was a bluff, a promontory of the bench lands, with a small stand of pines on its further side.

"What a site for a house," thought he, "a lodge in the wilderness looking out at that."

He turned back to look again at *that*: the western slopes, the prying peaks beyond. As he did so, there came a long sigh down these slopes to him. It increased in volume, drawing closer, and at the same moment there was a progressive trembling through the steep forest. Every evening, thought he, for ages it must have been so in this lonely place—the warm air ascended from the valley, a cool air swept down from the "high country" and the glaciers.

As he stood there, the spirit of the land definitely caught him. Here was an emotion he ought not to tell anybody. He was not abjuring the land of his birth; he still had a deep sentiment for it, but this land too had claimed him. He could not tell anybody of this. Alec, for one, would say that to express devotion for both countries was tantamount to acknowledging lack of true feeling for either and would brand him sentimentalist, in the disparaging sense of that word. But whatever might be said of it, fairly or unfairly, rightly or wrongly, for or against, that was how he felt at that moment: He was glad that he had known Scotland, glad that it was his background, and glad that he was here listening to Elkhorn River rippling through the quiet.

CHAPTER FOUR

Travelling through the valley, Wallace had at times been hardly aware of the forest scents, of which on his arrival among the mountains he had been certainly conscious. On reaching the west fork they were dominant again. It seemed that the creek, pouring down its gorge, drew them down with it, over it, into the draught of its passage. They filled his nostrils.

There it was not the placidity of Nature that he considered. It was Nature's violence. Over the rush of water from bank to bank was a tangle of old fallen trees that, felled by wind and storm or by avalanche above, had been washed so far in spring freshets. They lay higgledy-piggledy like broken rafts; he could have gone clambering on them from bank to bank, over the spray. Here was wilderness. Very far away was the train from which he had alighted so recently; very far away

seemed even Camp Elkhorn. If he had still been thinking of the past, of the explorers who made what to him was the history of the west, he might as well have considered that there he was almost as one of them.

But he was not so thinking. He was thinking of the possibility of making a road in that gorge in place of the trail, of how it would have to zigzag, and that it would be a costly undertaking. Down in the valley a road could be made at no great expense. The construction would entail little more than a further widening of the existant trail and there were gravel banks, he had noted, in various places, where ballasting for that road could be obtained.

There was an impression of profound silence in that tree-choked cleft, a silence accentuated rather than broken by the shouting of water in its deeps. Sometimes, when the trail twined away from the final steep bank, that sound would diminish to a mere whisper; sometimes, when the trail came close to the brink, it would rise to them insistent, shocking in the silence, and they had glimpses of foam between boles and branches when they looked down. The beauty there was very different from that of the valley meadows and the valley woods. As they mounted they looked down upon trees instead of merely looking out or up at them, saw the broad spreading branches of cedars like the tails of birds of paradise, fanning wide and tipped at end of their dark green with that year's new growth. When they halted to breathe the horses on one of the switchbacks beyond hearing of the falling water, in a quiet so profound that Wallace could hear the ticking of his watch, there came a single, trembling, sweet call of a bird, accentuating the loneliness. Everything accentuated the loneliness, the sense of solitude. Even the tassels of moss hanging plummet-like from the branches somehow added to that feeling of remoteness, loneliness, solitude.

To Wallace, new to such scenes, very different from those he had known in the north, there was here a feeling also of mystery. Were he to give fancy rein he could easily imagine the trees had entity, the forests a spirit of their own, and were watching them. The trail became so steep that repeatedly, for the sake of the horses, for their ease, they dismounted and walked.

They reached the west fork very early on the day following the one in which Wallace, down by the riverside, had his first glimpse of the gulch in which it ran and of the prying peaks in the notch at its summit, and there all that day they remained to rest the horses preparatory to making the steep ascent. Galbraith hoped to accomplish the climb in a day. Next morning they had been up with the sun and were off before the last of night had seeped out of the lower woods.

A third of the way up they came on a broad swathe of deadfall, uprooted trees canted one on another, and they had to clear the trail with their axes. A little further on they found another obstruction, débris not only of avalanche-felled trees but of boulders, a rock slide. By the time they had made a way through that havoc there was dusk not only under the eaves of the cedars (where dusk seemed to cling all day in that narrow gulch) but everywhere, brimming up to them. Owls were already hooting, attesting the warning of the shadows and of that evening wind that came, chilly, down the mountain side.

Night was near. There was nothing for it but to camp where they were, on the trail itself. There was no pocket of meadow anywhere in that region for the horses. They stood in the trail, submissive, philosophical, apparently. In the morning, loaded again, they faced the steep rise vigorously, briskly. Two of them, Galbraith remarked, had been up there before and no doubt remembered that there was grass ahead in the Alpine meadow.

"I often think of old Sinclair up there," he said, when they halted to breathe the horses in the midst of a series of switchbacks so sharp that the cavalcade was distributed on three different levels.

Galbraith was in the lead there, the pack horses following him, Harker following them, Wallace riding last. Looking up then, he had a view of the sole of Galbraith's boot in the stirrup and of the under-belly of his buckskin. The leader was elevated there like a figure in an equestrian monument.

"Yes, sir!" he ejaculated, reminding Wallace of a man in the stagecoach that had brought him to Elkhorn, "I think of him up there like the man in the moon."

"Is he very old? His letter reads as from an old man," said Wallace.

Galbraith hesitated before replying.

"It's hard to say what age he is," he said at last. "Come to think of it, I don't believe he's near as old as he looks. Guess I really shouldn't call him an old man, though he talks like one, kind of high and in a thin voice."

The letter Sinclair sent to the Company had a suggestion of that voice in it, a voice of one querulous, complaining of the duplicity of human beings. He wrote that he had come upon one of the richest bodies of ore in all the west, but that he had no faith in any of the assayers "from the Skeena to the Colorado. Crooks they be, all crooks. Bekayse of the richness of my discovery, they are liable to tell me it is worthless and then if I took their word and quit they would go in themselves and grab it. I have read of you folks Company in a mining journal and sure like what I read. Send out some man who sure knows mineral when he sees it to look at my property with a view to purchase it."

The letter might have been tossed in the trash basket, or filed away among the curiosities of correspondence of a mining development concern, had it not been for the chunk of ore that Sinclair called his "collateral to this here letter which I am sending you Express Collect." The tone of the letter, said the chief, was "just that of another crazy old prospector," but the ore specimens were remarkable.

On that mention of Sinclair by Galbraith, Wallace rebuked himself. Of the practical only he should be thinking as they went climbing on, not of the scenic. This was no mere idler's outing. He was not here as for a glorified picnic! Granting the existence of a body of ore in place to match the specimens Sinclair had sent, the cost of transport would have to be considered, whether of the ore or of ore concentrates from a mill that might be erected near the discovery. He should be studying the gulch entirely with the eye of a surveyor, a maker of roads. He should only be considering the lie of the land as it would relate to the building of an aerial gravity tramway.

That series of switchbacks was as a final assault towards the summit. At the bend of the last (they must have been there well on in the afternoon of their second day of climbing) they saw a blaze of light between the trees ahead, and a hundred yards or so further on came out, through a clump of rhododendron and mountain laurel, to an Alpine meadow. There they were at once set upon by bull-dog flies.

"They are the damndest things," growled Galbraith. "They don't just take a fellow's blood like the mosquitoes. They take a steak out of you and fly away with it and leave you bleeding, if you let them. All you can say to the good about them is that they are lazy, give you a chance to swat them before they start to work on you. What they eat when no human beings come up here I can't think. The deer are lower down. Up here there are only the goats and a stray grizzly maybe and the marmots, and you would not think they could get through the coats of any of these."

Wallace was hardly listening to him. Diverse parts of him were again active together: The doer and the dreamer, one might say. Sinclair had written that his claim was "a little ways" beyond the lake at the head of the west fork but the lake was wedged between cliffs. On the side to right there was a sheer precipice that Wallace estimated at five hundred feet. Through a notch in it a stream of water brimmed down, gauzy, fluttering, but too far along for the sound of its splashing to reach their ears. It came obviously from a glacier or glaciers lying above in a crease of the range. Nearer, poised up there, a hanging glacier glittered. To the other side was the cliff ribs of rock (such as Galbraith had described to him), and that would have to be blasted away before a road could be built round the lake.

"These prospectors," muttered Wallace, "do go prospecting through the damndest places!"

Preliminary costs might leave the first year or two of development profitless. Was there a body of ore up there "a little ways" to warrant the undertaking? The building of a road from this meadow to which they had climbed, a road winding to the cliff's top, on along the face of the mountain there and down, beyond, to the lake's further end, he decided, with one slow roving scrutiny of the terrain, would be vastly more expensive. The very thought of it was to be dismissed till he had examined Sinclair's workings.

The other part of him, greatly enjoying the trip, was soliloquizing, "Imagine being paid for this!" As a boy he had often looked enviously at pictures of people riding through wilderness with their strings of pack horses, and here he was with all this given to him free, like a present for a good boy! The cost had only to be entered on his expense sheet. Here he was, with a guide and a wrangler doing all the work for him, even to the saddling and unsaddling of his horse, chopping out the trail when deadfalls lay across it, making new trails through rock slides. What a place to see just in the course of one's avocation!

He stared at the lonely tarn that lay, jade green, beyond the meadow. He looked at the bulging cliff to left of it, gazed up the sheer precipice to right, and at the high-perched hanging glacier there. That was the cold white gleam he had seen from the valley when strolling by the riverside. It was no mere splinter of white viewed thus more closely. It was massive. The sun was on it, and even as he was looking at it the projecting end broke off with a loud detonation. Tons of

ice crashed into the lake. The echoes of that crash, that splintering, ricochetted round the lonely scene, a series of reports. Then all was quiet again save for the seeping of the lake, in a multitude of channels, across the meadow, to make the first definite runnel of the west fork of Elkhorn River.

The shadow of a high white cloud drifted across the range. A wind, and it was cold, ran in the grass with a sound like that of storm in a ship's cordage, a thin shriek. Suddenly Wallace was impressed not only by the grandeur of the view. There was an effect as of menace and of challenge.

II

It was decided that Max Harker should stay in the meadow with the horses while Galbraith went on with Wallace in the early afternoon of the following day. It was possible they might be away for some time as there was no knowing what prospecting Wallace would wish to do himself.

The pack sack that Galbraith filled for the journey must have weighed well over a hundred pounds. On his earlier trips in the north, which had all been by canoe, Wallace had never carried a load at the portages. His Cree paddlers did that for him while he strolled along carrying no more than a leafy twig to switch away mosquitoes. But he did not like the thought of strolling along up here unhampered beside Galbraith heavy laden.

"Split that in two," he said. "I'll take my share."

Galbraith hesitated. Then—

"All right," he agreed, reluctantly. "After all it was hosses you came to me for, and my guidance. I knew all the time, and I told you, that hosses could not go beyond here."

Wallace nodded.

"Split it in two," he said again.

"Not but what I'm accustomed to packing on my back," replied Galbraith, "and I guess you are not."

"In Sinclair's letter," said Wallace, "his exact words were that his place is 'just a little ways' beyond the source of the west fork."

"He told me once it's about ten miles," said Galbraith, and complacently, if doubtfully, did as requested and made two loads of their burden.

The moment Wallace lifted his pack he regretted the offer. Though possibly not fifty pounds in weight, it felt like a ton.

"Could we do without the tarpaulin?" he suggested.

"We might get a blizzard on us," replied Galbraith.

"A blizzard! At this time of year?"

"Sure. Look at them storm clouds ahead. Early in the summer and late in the summer you never know what you'll get at this altitude. I once started out on a sunny day in the valleys to go up to a bit of high country like this, and a blizzard came along and froze me so that when I got to the cabin where I was heading I could not split wood for the fire. Somebody had been in and burnt all the wood and kindling and forgot to leave any cut, so I had to break up the table to thaw out."

Wallace looked at the glacier front, looked along the slopes round the lake. For a moment it seemed to him as if the range frowned on them. It had, then, the aspect of waiting for them, just waiting for them to come nearer to let them know its power. The black storm clouds were ominous.

"Well!" said Galbraith, shouldering his load, and led off.

"So long and good luck!" Harker called after them. "So long," they called back.

They had to cross the meadow's end among tufts of tall grass that grew between strewn boulders and, bending over, hid

the hollows between. In these hollows drainage from the lake seeped and trickled. They went aslant across it to gain, as quickly as possible, the base of the cliffs to left where there was rubble to walk on. The quality of the air up there made distances deceptive. What seemed to be a few hundred yards away proved to be half a mile off.

Wallace floundered and balanced after Galbraith, finding his load heavy from the very beginning of the climb. As he struggled along he recalled from his reading that Hudson's Bay Company *voyageurs* frequently carried three hundred pounds on their backs along portages. Wolseley's packers, when that General led a force to Red River from Lake Superior by the Rainy Lakes, often carried all that from waterway to waterway according to accounts of the expedition. But how long, he considered, how far, would these portages be? In his own trips in the north he had seen Crees bearing loads as heavy to save going back and forth, but not on very long portages. His fifty pounds he had to take a long way—ten miles.

It was a relief to be beyond the meadow with its uncertain footing; relief to be able to see the ground on which he stepped instead of fumbling over slippery boulders half hidden by swaying grass, even though that better footing was but of broken rock. Sinclair had evidently tried to make the way easier by laying flat stones atop the rubble. At best it was a rough, irregular pavement. It must have been lonesome work, Wallace considered.

They came to the first promontory round which no horse could go, as Galbraith had told him. There they paused and looked back. The meadow to which they had climbed might have been far away. Where was Harker? Where were the horses? They were mere dots in distance. Yes, there was a horse grazing, and another. Round that promontory to which they had come there was only a narrow ledge made by an inequality in its face, and below the ledge the cliff went abruptly down into sullen, still water that reminded Wallace of flooded, deserted quarries in Scotland, sinister places.

Galbraith turned toward the cliff, laid the flat of his palms to it and trod on carefully. He had almost gone from sight, only the fingers of his left hand showing clutching the roughness of the wall, when he glanced back.

"All right," said he. "It is only a step or two on this further side to more rubble."

Having said that, he disappeared and Wallace cannily followed him. As he crept round that protrusion of cliff he found his companion balanced at the beginning of the next base of loose rock, a hand held to aid him.

"I can make it," he said.

"Good!" replied Galbraith, and after a short pause to make sure that Wallace could "make it" he set off smartly again.

A little further on another bastion had to be similarly negotiated, but from there to the lake's end they had no difficulties. All the way, as far as to the cliff's end and the beginning of another meadow, there was a rim of small stones among which Sinclair had made some sort of footpath with larger stones. As they stepped onto grass again a shrill whistle sounded. Sinclair ahead, somewhere on that range, must have been watching for them, seen them. So thought Wallace and peered up at the slope from which the sound came.

"Somebody whistled," said he.

"Only a marmot," Galbraith told him, "a whistler. They have sentinels in their villages in the rock slides and give warning when they smell or see danger."

The pack seemed for a moment less heavy on Wallace's back. A whistler! So he had heard it! He had heard the *siffleur* of the Frenchmen's travels of old. When it sounded again he wondered how he could have mistaken it for the whistle of a human being. Again our Wallace was divided. One part of him was already weary under the load; one part of him, with heart pounding in the rare air, sweat in the eyes, sweat salt on his lips, was wishing the trip was over. Another part was in youthful ecstasy. There was something in that whistle, far-carrying across these upper leagues of gray precipice, that moved him deeply—as did the forest scents and the sagebrush scent. The old frontiers might be going, he thought. Railways spanned the continent. One no longer went out to the frontiers—but one could go up to them. The frontiers were aloft now, not ahead—and what a frontier was this!

Crests to north, rocky summits on either side, appeared to be observing them. This meadow to which they had come was much like the one to the other end of the lake: a tract of seeping water among boulders and inequalities, hollows hidden by drooping tresses of long, sun-dried grass. Up and down they went across it, gained at last a rise atop of which was a little pile of rocks.

"He's made a monument trail here," remarked Galbraith. "See, there's another on the next height ahead." He gave Wallace a searching look. "Feeling all right?" he asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"It's kind of tough going, that's all, for one who is not used to it."

Wallace, feeling exceedingly tired, wondered if he was showing it. They trudged on across a dry stretch with a low growth of bushes whipping their ankles.

"Heather!" exclaimed Wallace.

"Or something like it," said Galbraith. "The flowerologists say it is not true heather but I guess it is near enough to make you think of home. Don't you wish to God you was there?"

"I can't say that I do," said Wallace truthfully. "I'm enjoying this."

"Then you hae a peculiar notion of enjoyment," answered Galbraith, very broad of utterance, and tramped on.

But after a few paces he looked over his shoulder and added: "All the same I'd a damn sicht raither be here than in the Gorbals in Glasgow."

Hollow after hollow, roll after roll they passed. The load on Wallace's back began to weigh heavier at every uncertain step, at every jarring drop between hidden rock and hidden rock in the moist grassy stretches. They came on a small pond—it could hardly be dignified by the name of a lake—and a small black cloud rose from it towards them; a cloud of mosquitoes. They made bangles of themselves round Wallace's wrists. They settled on the back of his neck where his shirt was drawn down by the weight of his pack.

Sweat poured on his face, was salt on his lips. Several times he stumbled. He crushed the mosquitoes on his wrists. He ran his hand over his neck and slayed them there by the score. A bull-dog fly settled on his hand but bull-dog flies, he decided, were not such pests as mosquitoes. They were sluggish, slow of action, and before they had set to work one could smack them and flick off their dead bodies.

Beyond that pool they could see another small cairn on a ridge and as they mounted towards it they felt a breeze, a cold breeze running. At once the mosquitoes left them. Wallace was aware that his hands were moist and clammy. There was a mistiness before his eyes.

Galbraith halted.

"Well, that's the last of the skeeters anyhow," said he. "They don't follow us into the wind. Look at those storm-clouds! I hope we reach Sinclair's cabin before they break—wherever the hell it is," he added looking up at the range and along the range. "'A little ways! A little ways!' Well, we'll see."

It was a sop to Wallace's chagrin over his weariness to hear Galbraith's tone. He too, apparently, was not enamoured of being as a beast of burden, but he set off again energetically. Wallace followed, trying to keep in step with him. Galbraith's strides were longer than his. He attempted to lengthen his but was too weary, too dizzy. The air was rare up there. After a while Galbraith stopped again and looked round. He frowned.

"You feeling a bit tired?" he inquired.

"A bit. But we must get on."

Galbraith considered the sky, gloomed at the clouds.

"We should," he agreed. "Maybe you would like to rest, even though it's chilly in this wind. We might have a bite to eat."

"Perhaps we better keep on," said Wallace.

"How about me taking your pack as well as my own? I'm used to it."

"No—no—no!" Wallace replied, his voice as one angered rather than grateful—angered by his own weariness. "I

wouldn't dream of it."

"I'm used to packing," Galbraith reminded him, but did not repeat the offer, wheeled and strode on.

There came once more the high whistle of a *siffleur*. This time it seemed melancholy in Wallace's ears, carried a sense of desolation. It made him feel, even with Galbraith so close to him, only a few feet ahead, as if he was utterly alone. One could drop here, exhausted, drop here and die here, and no one would know. These awful ranges with their saw-tooth edges would not care. Through the sweat in his eyes he looked at them and it was as if they gesticulated at him, as if the ridges danced, rose and fell. Blood was pounding in the veins of his temples. There was a persistent buzzing in his nose. Suddenly he was cold and clammy.

He had never known such weariness. He stumbled and almost fell as if his limbs were without vitality, as though the strength was drained out of his legs. By a desperate effort he followed Galbraith, more shuffling along than walking.

Then Galbraith stopped, waiting for him to come level.

"Storm drawing closer," he observed.

In the haze before Wallace's eyes the mountains continued to quake.

"Sinclair said in his letter 'a little ways on' and 'about five hundred feet above timber,'" he muttered.

"Well, we're nearly all that above timber on this plateau now," returned Galbraith. "God, we've been travelling slow! There's another of his stone monuments ahead. We should see his cabin soon, or at least his prospect dump."

Wallace, through a mist, could only see the long shoulder of the range before them and the whole range was throbbing in time with the throbbing in his head. They were well above timber, as Galbraith had pointed out, but that was only in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Among boulders—boulders big as cottages—were still a few trees here and there, trees that spread long roots out to great lengths, roots that gripped the rock like claws and took small hold on dust in the crannies. The lower branches of these lonely scattered trees were silvered and brittle. A shred of low cloud drifted along the austere slope, its passage making one of these trees, solitary on an eminence, wave to them in an illusion like that when the moon seems to be sliding swiftly across an open space between the clouds.

Wallace, however, could not tell if a darkening of the scene was due to sweat in his eyes, to clouds hiding the sun, or to night approaching. He had no idea of how long it might have taken them to come thus far. A sudden memory of home came to him: He was at a window in Glasgow looking down on gardens and lawns and a twist of water where white swans sailed. So weary did he feel that he wondered if here was but a memory, part blessed, part taunting, of a dying man.

He was already light-headed with exhaustion. These gaunt trees, standing there alone in the jumble of ancient rock slides, he saw as if beckoning to him—but whether urging him on or in derision he could not decide. There was sorcery here. They signalled to him—or was it only to each other, from lonely station to lonely station across the expanse, that they signalled? They waved their arms, to his vision, even when they stood under some great sheltering bluff out of the wind. The mountain crests also seemed to him to move. The skyline wavered. There was fascination here in the baleful sense of the word.

"Better let me take your pack," said Galbraith looking over his shoulder with expression of deep concern on his face.

Wallace could hardly speak but——

"No, thank you," he answered, firmly.

"Then drop it," suggested Galbraith, "and I'll come back for it after we get to the cabin; after we find the cabin," he finished tartly.

"No, I'll carry mine," Wallace insisted.

Galbraith puckered his eyes, examining the ridge toward which the trail led.

"I can see a kind of A-shaped patch up there," he said, "and another above it. Wonder if that's the dumps from his tunnels

or just two small natural slides? He may have only one tunnel for all I know. Those two slides look kind of fresher than most but the damn range is all rock slides, big and little, old and not so old."

He pointed and Wallace peered, but he could not help toward a decision. He shook his head.

"I can't make out," he whispered.

With resumed energy Galbraith swung onto the next cairn. Wallace, following, stumbled a third time and fell. He had difficulty in rising for he found he was as weak as water and was enraged at himself for that weakness.

At sound of that fall Galbraith turned and, dropping his own pack, hurried to help him rise.

"It's you not being accustomed," he said. "A fellow should rest a day at this elevation before starting out with a pack. We ought to have waited in that meadow with Max and started out early tomorrow."

Being down, Wallace remained down.

"Perhaps we could have a little rest now," he said.

Sunlight forsook the peaks. Colour was gone. All was gray of various tones. Galbraith took the pack from Wallace's shoulders.

"All right," he answered. "A little rest."

Wallace leant against the pack and his eyelids drooped.

"I could take a little nap," he murmured.

"No, sir!" snapped Galbraith. "You would take a little pneumonia if you took a little nap after sweating hot and, by the look of you, sweating cold now as they say. No, sir!" He raised his head and sniffed. "I smell woodsmoke. See here, you sit against that pack, close as you can to the lee of it, but don't go to sleep. I'll jog on a bit to see what I can find."

Wallace succumbed. He fell asleep and was wakened by Galbraith's hand on him; Galbraith's hand under his jacket over his heart.

"Theres' a little stand of trees ahead," said Galbraith. "It's a bit of shelter. If you get up we'll move on there. That would be a better place for you to rest."

Wallace rose with difficulty and stooped to take up his pack.

"Oh, hell!" exclaimed Galbraith. "Leave it. I'm leaving mine too for the time being. Come on to this bit of shelter."

They went on to where stood a wedge of close-set firs like a plantation in Scotland, the apex of a valiant forest that climbed from the further side of the range. It was almost like going into a warm room to stand there by contrast with the cutting wind that shrilled across the plateau.

"We must be near Sinclair's cabin now," declared Galbraith. "I can just see another monument on the edge of that rise. You wait here," and he went off again.

The sound of his steps receded. Dusk was in the wedge of trees. Wallace sat down and heard the wind in their tops melancholy as a requiem. He rose with a spurt of vigour out of determination to prove that he was no weakling. With dragging steps that could not live up to the demand of his rage he went in the direction that Galbraith had taken—and there was Galbraith coming back.

"It's you!" he ejaculated. "I wondered what the sound was when I heard you moving. Well there's a light just a bit ahead across the shank of the mountain here. I'll get you there before the storm breaks."

Wallace stumbled on beside him.

"Where's the light?" he whispered a few yards further on.

"There," and Galbraith pointed.

"I can't see it," said Wallace.

The dusk turned to night suddenly, it seemed; turned to darkness, and as he fell into that darkness the last he knew was Galbraith breaking the force of his fall.

III

It was another fall that brought him back to consciousness, or perhaps it might be said that brought him back to life. That was Sinclair's opinion.

Galbraith had hurried on to the cabin and called to Sinclair to come to help him, then together they carried Wallace, exhausted and unconscious, up the knoll on which the cabin stood. Sinclair's hold was round his body, Galbraith's round his legs, and Sinclair was shocked that he could feel no heartbeats.

"Drop him!" he said when they struggled indoors to the bunk, and as he spoke he loosened his hold. "It was like starting a clock going again with a shake," he solemnly explained later. "There was no tick left in your heart but when you dropped to the bunk it ticked again with the jolt!"

Be that as it may, it was then that Robert Wallace was again aware of life.

He looked up and saw, though dimly, a man of medium height standing beside Galbraith. His hair was long, almost to his shoulders and there unevenly cut though he was shaven on the face, a face weather-tanned and lined. His gray eyes, with a glitter in them, were regarding Wallace with a piercing anxiety.

Although the hour was not late the cabin, murky within, was lit by two candles in home-made sconces forged out of files, the sharp points left for thrusting into tunnel props and walls. The flames burned clear and steady. From outside there was a sound of wind, of storm, a moaning whistle.

"Well, there you are, mister," spoke Sinclair in a shrill voice, "alive again," and then he turned to Galbraith and demanded, "Where did you leave your packs?"

Galbraith sat down on a stool and heaved a sigh of blent weariness and relief.

"Back a bit," said he, "round this shank of the slope. After a rest I'll go down for them."

"The hell you will!" said Sinclair. "I'll fetch 'em. There's the water boiling, there's the tea in the caddy on that shelf, there's two cups. Make a strong brew for him and yourself. I'll be back."

He tramped determinedly to the door, opening it, let in a wind that made the candles flutter, slammed it shut, and the place was a quiet sanctuary again.

Galbraith rose and taking a fistful of tea from the caddy dropped it into the water that boiled in a billy can, ferreted along the shelves and found sugar, ladelled two generous spoonfuls into two cups, sat down on the stool again.

"We'll steep it five minutes," said he, "*mask* it as my auld folks say," and for five minutes or so neither spoke.

Slowly, as he lay there, Wallace was aware of clarity of vision returning to him. Stove and shelves, pack sacks hanging empty from nails, the table—with camp dishes to one end and chunks of ore to the other—were more sharply defined. When Galbraith filled a cup with tea he was able to sit up to take it from him.

"You saved my life, Galbraith," he said. "If I can ever anything to show——"

"Shucks!" interrupted Galbraith. "Better say I near lost it for you. It was my fault. We ought to have rested today back there in the meadow till you got accustomed to the altitude. Even a man like old Sinclair doesn't start right in with heavy work first day he comes up. If it is any relief to you I'll tell you—and I don't mean maybe—that I'm not feeling exactly top-hole myself."

"Well, if ever I can do anything to show my appreciation of——" Wallace began.

"Sure, I'll let you know," said Galbraith, lightly, as one humouring a child or an invalid. "I'll come arunning to you.

There, you're looking better already. It's wonderful how quick a man can pick up." He smacked his lips over his mug of tea. "I'm feeling some better myself, drinking this nectar, but I won't need rocking to sleep tonight. I guess soon I'll be fit to go down and get one of the packs—but I'll have another shot of this first," and he refilled his cup.

There was a pounding of feet at the door. At its opening there came in a roar of wind and the flames of the two candles that lit the place were blown flat. Sinclair was carrying both packs, one on his back held in place by the shoulder straps and the other atop of it, an arm raised high to keep it in place. In an acrobatic movement he dropped them to the floor and kicked the door shut. Then they all raised their heads, listening. There was a sudden deafening tattoo on the roof, a tattoo that rapidly increased in vigour.

"Hail!" shouted Sinclair through the din. "You got in just in time and I got your packs in just in time."

They listened to that volley.

"In your condition, mister," said Sinclair—shouted Sinclair—to be heard above the drumming, "a night out in that would have given you pee-numony for sure."

IV

At first Wallace could not have eaten anything, then he was suddenly hungry as if he suffered from pantophagy. He could have eaten anything set before him even if it was some dish usually distasteful to his palate.

Sinclair cooked a meal for all and would not accept any of the provisions they had brought. He had a dish of beans soaking on a shelf, and he gave them beans and bacon and flapjacks, and it seemed to Wallace the best meal he had ever known. Then neither he nor Galbraith could keep awake.

Sinclair philosophically resigned himself, observing their drooping lids, their sagging heads, to deferring talk of his great discovery. His bunk was only what he called a single-decker but it was broad and in it both Wallace and Galbraith slept, Sinclair making up a bed for himself on the floor despite their protestations.

"It is wonderful how a man can pick up," Galbraith had said, and Wallace's condition in the morning was perhaps less remarkable to him than to Wallace himself. Revived he felt no remnant of exhaustion, only chagrin, remembering it, and attempted to apologize for the trouble he had given. Sinclair did his best to ease him of that chagrin, that vexation over his breakdown on the way.

"These high altitudes," he said, "tries a man at first. Always when I come up from below I just don't feel fit for work. I got to sit around and rest a spell."

Breakfast over they set out to Sinclair's workings. The night's storm had passed. They stepped into a day of sunshine and blue sky. Ranges that had been grimly menacing looked friendly in the morning light. As they crossed the little knoll on which the cabin stood Sinclair explained why he had chosen that site for it.

"I built her here," said he, "so's to be safe from the spring slides down that moun'in. This knob of a hill sticking up at the base of the slope splits them pretty good. They don't pile up over it, just bank a bit against its upper side, but mostly slip round it. You got to watch them almighty hills and moun'ins. They are liable to get you if you don't kind of humour them. It ain't exactly that they are trying to get you all the time. This high country just does not care one way or another: It gives you a chance and leaves it to you. We go this way."

He led down, squelched across a wet dip and then began to trudge up the steep slope beyond. On its crest was a glittering cap of ice with one forefoot pointed down towards them. Wallace surmised that to the other side must be the hanging glacier above the lake.

"Talking of having to know these moun'ins," Sinclair went on, "I mind once I went out with a man to look at a prospect . . ."

On and on he talked and walked without losing breath, a sturdy figure with a stoop somewhat like that of a scholar's. His was caused by much back-packing in the mountains. The trail to his workings was definite enough, having been trodden many times. Across screes and patches of sun-dried grass, through heather-like bush—the "false heath"—it went to a rib

of the range from which they could see the long meadow of Wallace's weariness and had a lofty view of range after range marching away under the empty sky with pinnacles and knobs, lonely corries, slashes of indigo and slashes of white of snow and glaciers.

"By gosh, it was his prospect dump we spied that time," said Galbraith to Wallace.

"What's that, Jock?" asked Sinclair, and halted sharply.

"I was saying it was your dump we saw when we were coming through the meadow down there, this side of the lake."

"Guess you're right. That's my lowest tunnel ahead. I built the cabin where I did, round the bend instead of up here, because it would have been pushed off in spring slides. You got to humour Nature. She don't give a damn for you but she gives you a chance. Back there, too, I didn't have to haul my logs so far to build her." He paused. "That was work," he said. "That was sure work. That was hard and lonesome work."

"How are you feeling, Mr. Wallace?" asked Galbraith.

"Fine, fine," Wallace replied. He was still tired but not tired enough to delay the visit to the prospect.

"I tell you this, mister," said Sinclair solemnly. "If you want this prospect you got to pay for her. I have sweated here and I am retiring at last. Yet I don't know," he questioned himself. "Guess I might have to come back. Them almighty hills get a man all ways—get him up and get him down, tell him to get out and call him back. Or anyhow, remembering them, he comes back for more than the fortune that maybe—I say maybe—awaits him. Some men hate 'em all ways and wouldn't come up among them for anything but a fortune. I'm not like that, but I've found my fortune. I know it. You'll see."

He trudged on again and Galbraith and Wallace exchanged a glance, an unspoken comment that here indeed was a character, a queer character. At that moment Sinclair turned suddenly and surprised their exchange of glances.

"I guess you're both thinking I could do with a hair cut," he said, accusingly.

They laughed, and let him believe that was what they had been thinking. Assuredly he had worked. That was clear when they came to his first tunnel above its dump; and he had worked with great knowledge of what he was about.

"We'll go in this one first," he said. "I got another hole above."

"So I notice," remarked Wallace, glancing up at a second A of rubble that fanned down from the black dot of a higher tunnel's mouth.

Sinclair took a miner's candlestick from a box inside the tunnel, lit the candle and passed in. The flame fluttered in a draught but he shielded it with his other hand. A small rivulet—it would have been a precious flow in a dry belt—ran out of the workings and had gouged a channel there.

"Stoop your heads," he cautioned when they had progressed a few yards. "I didn't trouble to make her high."

They stooped their heads and followed him, Wallace aware in passing of glimpses of shining wedges of ore in the rock walls on either side. They excited him.

"Here's where the water comes from," Sinclair added, and taking off his hat he held it over the candle, then humping his shoulders still more he hurried on, bent. There was a sound as of rain, interior rain. Wallace and Galbraith ducked after him under the shower from the roof.

Sinclair was waiting for them beyond, under dry roof.

"There's a crack that lets the water through there from the melting glacier setting up aloft," he explained. "See, she's dry here. You've been noticing the rock walls on the way?" he asked eagerly.

"I have," said Wallace.

"Well, they're just hints of it, just hints."

He went on a little further, then halted beside a seam that shone as if incandescent.

"Take a look at this," he said.

". . . a look at this," said a sepulchral echo ahead.

The tunnel veered slightly. Wallace moved on beside him and looked. There it was. There, in place, was the lode from which the rich specimens had gone to the Laurentian Mining Company.

Wallace did not speak. He just stood staring at the ore that glittered pin-points of brilliance to the candlelight.

"I got her figured out," said Sinclair, his voice high with excitement. "This country has been terribly knocked about millions of years ago, I guess, and I admit that at times it is a case of 'Now you see it, now you don't' when you come to a lead in these parts. I mind when I was working in a mine for wages and we had a wall like that ahead of us and the boss's wife came up and looked at it. He says to her, 'I guess we'll be having a long vacation soon if this holds up.' Well, they didn't have their long vacation. The blast we put in next day showed us the lead tapering down to not so broad as that," and he held up a hand, thumb and first finger an inch apart. "And that ran into an iron cap. It wasn't till another year we found where she had went. But I got this sized up—this is different, I tell you. We'll go above next and you'll see her there. I tell you, mister, this here moun'in is one big bonanza. We'll go back out and up to the higher tunnel and I'll show you where she goes from here. I got her figured out."

They turned, passed back, and saw daylight again beyond that inner shower, ducked through it and came out once more on the slope to that view of the ranges marching away under the sky, range after range with pinnacles and knobs, lonely corries, slashes of indigo and slashes of white, of snow and of glaciers. But the sky was empty no longer. A mote up in the blue made wide circles, each drawing nearer, changed from mote to bird—an eagle—flapped, circled away and was just a mote again over the high country that "does not care one way or another."

Climbing slowly to the upper tunnel, Wallace paused often and looked round at the scene, awed.

After investigating there, out on the open slope again, they sat down. Sinclair took out his pipe and filled it, loquacious no longer, silent, awaiting speech from Wallace who also produced a pipe and smoked. Galbraith took out a sack of tobacco and cigarette papers. Sinclair glanced at them scornfully.

"Fellows that have been in the cattle business, cow-punching, smoke cigreets," he remarked. "First time I seen you in Camp Elkhorn, Jock, I knowed you was a cow-puncher by your high heels *and* the cigreets. It's all right somehow for cowboys to smoke them things—cigreets—but us mining men don't hold with it. I've seen a man run out of a mining camp for smoking a cigreet. Pipes and cigars for mining men. Cigreets are only for pimps and whores, barring cowboys. Pardon me," he added hastily. "No offence."

"That's all right," replied Galbraith, giving a glance of amusement at Wallace, and he inhaled deeply, blew a long streamer of smoke.

Wallace was looking down at the scene of their miserable, laden trudge. The land was less eerie to his eyes. There was an appeal in its grandeur and desolation. It had nigh killed him but he forgave it in that forenoon's brilliance. When a marmot's whistle came to them there it signified to him loneliness only, not a desolate end.

Sinclair looked at them gravely.

"The old Book," said he, "tells us it is not good for man to be alone. I think I have been alone too much up here. I feel queer in the head sometimes. Sometimes the glacier up there bumps and groans in the night and I find myself thinking of it as a living thing, not just ice. Do I look as if I was queer in the head to you?" he asked.

"Not at all."

"Not at all."

They answered in duet.

Sinclair smiled, reassured.

"You could have an aerial tramway right from here to the lake," he suggested.

"I was thinking of that," said Wallace, "and as for me—I'd always ride up in one of the buckets to save my legs as much as possible and dodge the mosquitoes in that swampy stretch down there. The bits of cliff that stick out around the lake," he went, his thoughts on the future, "could be blasted away."

"I'd have done it by myself if it wouldn't have cost enough powder for a company," said Sinclair.

"A switchback road could be made from the first meadow down to where the west fork joins the main Elkhorn," Wallace continued. "That would cost something to survey and grade but there would be no trick to making a wagon road from there to Camp Elkhorn."

It was almost as if he had a vision at that moment, thinking of the ore he had just seen and of the transport question, and also feeling the spell, compact of invitation and challenge, of that expanse of high country, the frontier to which one goes up instead of out: Roads, industries, a railway . . . .

Galbraith spoke again, but not of the possibilities of exploiting the Bird's Eye claim.

"That Elkhorn valley," he remarked, "would make good ranching country. Now that the prairies are getting all ruined with barbed wire they need to put up hay for winter feed there anyhow, and such places as Elkhorn would be better. It's queer that none of the old cattlemen have come in here."

Wallace, puffing on his pipe, thinking his own thoughts, smiled—and Galbraith wondered what the smile meant. He had the impression of this man from the east being somewhat of "a dark horse."

"Yes," said Wallace, and rose.

The others rose also and down they went to the lower tunnel again where Sinclair put his old candlestick back in the tool box. Down to the cabin they walked, Wallace in the lead and nobody speaking. They passed inside. The billy can was boiling on the stove and Sinclair, still silent, prepared coffee and poured it into three cups.

"Have a cup of coffee," he invited. "It tastes good after a little morning trudge on them almighty hills."

"I like a cup of coffee with a cigarette," said Galbraith, "even if cigarettes are but for pimps and whores."

"Oh, no offence, no offence!" pled Sinclair, very high and shrill. "I said I knew it were all right and manly with a fellow who had been in the cattle business—cow-punching."

But Jock Galbraith revealed then another side of himself from the tolerant or the complaisant. He had, it would appear, been piqued by Sinclair's remark and had been brooding on it.

"I'd rather," he declared, "live my life in the open air, above ground, and get no more than forty-five dollars a month than earn ninety a month grubbing in the bowels of the earth like a mole!"

Sinclair gave him a malevolent glare, then glanced at Wallace who was sipping his coffee, silent, withdrawn from them. He did not want to disturb this visiting mining engineer in his meditations that would surely be about that ore in place to match the samples and so left Galbraith unanswered.

"Well," said Wallace at last, "I'll go back and make a good report. I can assure you of that, Mr. Sinclair. We've already assayed the specimens you sent."

"Cut out the *mister*. *Harold* will serve."

"Well, Harold," he said, somewhat self-consciously, "I'll go back and make out my report advising the sending of an offer to you."

"You don't need to trouble about an offer," replied Sinclair instantly, displeasure in his voice and manner.

Wallace stared, wondering what caused the seeming hitch. But there was no hitch.

"I'll make the offer," said Sinclair, "and you can take it or leave it. Your company that you represent can take it or leave it. I have worked, as Jock here—this cow-puncher—says, in the bowels of the earth long enough and for little profit. I have laboured in other men's mines for wages, little enough though more than a cow-puncher's, to grub-stake me so that I

could go out looking for my own property that would put me on Easy Street. I've got it here, in the Bird's Eye as I call this prospect—the Bird's Eye. I know, and you know, and I'll give you my figure. Take it or leave it. I want five thousand dollars." He spoke the words as if he had said five million. "Five thousand dollars. Not a nickel less will I take."

Five thousand dollars!

Wallace poised the coffee cup halfway to his mouth. He had heard of "crazy prospectors" wanting thousands for properties that could only be worked at a loss, but here was something otherwise shocking. He could not believe his ears. Here surely was a "crazy prospector" of another sort. He had an inclination to say that his firm would surely offer more than that.

Then came the thought that if he jumped at Sinclair's price, closed with him without any haggling, said he would take it upon himself on behalf of the Company to accept, it might look as if the sum demanded was too small to his mind and Sinclair might suddenly raise the price despite his manner of finality over what he saw as a large figure. The next thought was that perhaps Sinclair, despite his definite manner, expected some haggling. A faint smile came to Wallace's lips as he considered whether or no he should suggest a lower figure.

Galbraith thought he was smiling at Sinclair's simplicity. He did not know much of mining affairs but, though he had never had even a thousand dollars to call his own at any time—moving on restlessly from ranch to ranch when he had earned only a hundred or two—he knew that five thousand was no fortune, not a sum to speak of in such weighty accents.

"I'll take you," said Wallace. "On behalf of my Company I'll agree to that. Five thousand."

Sinclair raised his head and gave a crackling laugh.

"Put it in writing for me," he said. "Put it in writing that you agree to paying outright purchase of the Bird's Eye for a cool five thousand dollars, subject to your Company's—what's the word?—ratification. You can put that in. I don't want to get you in wrong with your employers, or make you feel responsible if they won't rise to it."

That remark—that consideration on his behalf—made Wallace feel guilty. He was taking advantage of a man who had asked if he looked queer in the head to them. He was taking advantage of a man touched by the loneliness up here with glaciers and marmots. But business is business, he told himself.

"Yes, Mr. Sinclair, I'll do that willingly," he said.

"Don't call me *mister*. Call me *Harold*!" blazed Sinclair. "Here, I'll get you a pencil and paper and you can write it for me." His voice was very shrill, his hands were shaking. "Easy Street, Easy Street," he chanted.

Hurrying to a shelf he rummaged in a box for pencil and paper, Wallace sitting humped on the bunk's end watching him with an expression of incredulity, and Galbraith on a stool by the stove staring at Wallace. Jock had always thought that Sinclair was "a bit odd" but his last solitary sojourn up here, he decided at this moment, had made him more than that. He looked with firm, probing, measuring gaze at Wallace, partly censorious—thinking that unfair advantage was being taken of Sinclair's simplicity, Sinclair's daftness—partly aloof, considering that the transaction was none of his business.

PART II

CHAPTER FIVE

It is essential to know something of Marion Masters before she came to Elkhorn City.

She arrived there five years after Robert Wallace, on behalf of the Laurentian Mining Company, had purchased the Bird's Eye claim from Harold Sinclair; came in on a branch line of railway that, chiefly because of Wallace's representations, had been built so far. With the extension of the railway to Camp Elkhorn its name was changed to Elkhorn City.

The Bird's Eye mine was soon a lucrative going concern and at two creeks in the valley there were also placer workings in operation by the Company. Wallace himself was no longer in the field examining offered properties, or prospecting. He was superintending the development of the ore mine and the two hydraulic workings, with his western headquarters in Elkhorn City.

He had other personal affairs to attend to. With a gift for interesting capital he had floated the Elkhorn Lumber Company and was its president and chairman. It was operating on both headwaters—the east and the west—and where the west fork came down out of the mountains there was a rapidly growing hamlet called West Fork where lived the wives and families of men employed at the Bird's Eye mine and in the lumber camps. The land had taken hold of Wallace, only once terrifying him, always attracting him—and he had taken hold of the land.

During his many return visits to the east to discuss further operations with the Company's board, his friendship with Eleanor Laurence had developed. Those who said that Robert Wallace was not the sort of man to permit himself to fall in love with a beggar-maid, no Cophetua, smiled to each other when his engagement to Eleanor was announced; but the man who had dismissed thoughts of her from his mind when he was in the field was still the same. He wanted to feel independent of the Company (her father's company) that paid him salary.

"Bide a wee," he had advised himself, you will remember, at a dual jog, partly,—as he had to admit—because of a sense of newly won freedom, the loss of which he dreaded, partly because of his small means. Against the view of those who opined that he would not allow himself to fall in love with a poor girl it would be but fair to him to say that he would not seek matrimony with a rich one until he too was rich—or at least on the way to being rich. The thought of loss of freedom he had dismissed as an unworthy one. The more he saw of Eleanor the more he felt it so; and when he found himself thus advancing, with his own personal "irons in the fire," he zealously decided that to be on the way to independent wealth was enough.

At the back of his mind was another plan for adding to his banking account, with the lumbering venture accomplished: He was planning a cattle ranch in the valley. Its markets would be close. Cattle ranch would sell to lumber company beef for its camps. Cattle ranch would sell to Laurentian Mining Company beef for its crews at the Bird's Eye and the hydraulic workings. There would also be domestic markets in Elkhorn City. The developments of the Company demanded a resident superintendent in the west and he was the man appointed for that. The Company was also planning largely, even if its directors did not think, as did Harold Sinclair of his mountain, that all the west was a bonanza. At one of the meetings Wallace's ambition to have a smelter someday at Elkhorn City had even been mooted.

It was clear that Wallace's visits would be decreasingly from east to west, that they would be from west to east and only for conferences more effectual than those conducted by mail. His centre would be Elkhorn City. His dream was that his home would be his own, and the land for it would be bought, and the house would be built, with money not earned from the Laurentian Mining Company. He planned a ranch house in the Elkhorn Valley and he knew where the site would be—on a knoll of the benches to east of the river with a stand of pines on its flank. He had seen it that day when, bored by Harker, he had followed Galbraith to the riverside and there had his first view of the high country at the head of the west fork, with a glacier peeping down through a notch of the ranges, and heard the long tranquil sigh over another day at end pass across the land. After he had enough capital to found that ranch he would invite Galbraith to take over its management.

Harold Sinclair had not gone off to the west to live on Easy Street. He had hidden the money away somewhere (distrustful of banks) and remained in the valley, in a cabin a mile or two out in the woods from the growing hamlet of West Fork, and had been working for wages on the construction of the road down the gulch. He was an expert in building log cabins. Wallace would give Sinclair the job of building a house, a log house for himself and Eleanor, and quarters for the men; and he would pay him well for the work. A secret part of him had always felt a twinge over the amount paid to the old man for his bonanza, even though the price was the one he asked.

II

Marion Masters (who, because of Wallace's growing friendship for Galbraith was, in the turn of events, to play a dominant part in his life) was one of a family of six girls and five boys. Her father ran (if the word can be used in connection with one so lethargic in business, though active otherwise) a general store in one of the many small prairie towns. He was a man of meagre spirit; to aid him, and frequently he called for aid from his acquaintances, was to win his hate instead of his gratitude. One had to do him kind turns by stealth to evade that hatred. Mrs. Masters, though highly productive, had no gift for the raising of a family. She was a woman of vacillation and uncertainties, certain of one thing only: that she was an admirable mother.

Marion was always the odd one of the family. Even in appearance she differed from her sisters. Not over five feet, three inches in height, slim and extraordinarily lithe, she was attractive without being pretty. The contrast between her hair, naturally the colour of ripe corn, and her deep black eyes was surprising, causing a stranger seeing her for the first time to experience something akin to physical shock, like a sudden blow. She was the favourite outside the circle, but the most "picked upon," as observers noted, within it. The boys, as they came to years when they could decide affairs for themselves, left home, all save the eldest who helped in the store. The girls were forever squabbling over anything and everything. They would bicker all day about whose turn it was to lay the table, or to wash the dishes, and these bickerings were not as simple as they might seem for sometimes one of them, going out with friends, would arrange with another to attend to her duties for the day on condition of repayment in kind when that other one wanted to be free on one of her duty days. These accounts would often become involved through deferring of payment, as it were, with a verbal I.O.U. that would be dishonoured. When driven to distraction by the turmoil of her brood's bickerings, Mrs. Masters would go to her bedroom and lock the door.

Just what was to be done with the girls they decided for themselves. Two would be nurses, two would take a commercial course in Calgary or Winnipeg. One did not know what she wanted to do. But Marion (tenth of the family), had larger ideas of escape. To begin with, when all her sisters set upon her—"ganged up" on her, as she phrased it—she would, instead of snarling in response, put on her hat and with peals of laughter go out to a field where her father grazed two or three horses, expertly catch, bridle, and saddle one for herself, and ride off alone. The girls said she did not co-operate and her mother agreed: Marion did not co-operate. The sisters resented her heterodoxy to the family ways. She should have stayed and fought it out, they considered, whether the battle was over whose turn it was to make the beds, or to arrive at a decision as to who had cut the loaf crookedly, or who had hung the towels up "any old way" on the rail in the back kitchen.

She was "odd girl out" but did not sulk. Marion never sulked. Instead, she flew to the other extreme for the salvation of her spirit. She kept note of the days of her obligations, fulfilled them beyond argument, and when the others quarrelled would shout, "At it again!" and flee from them. One day, when a little girl, she shouted, "O dear God, at it again!"

That sent all the others running to mother to report her profanity and mother, distracted but listening, did not punish them for telling tales but said she would punish Marion. They felt their power over her then, and when later the sinner was led away to the bedroom they listened gleefully at the door. Yes—she was being spanked. They thought they heard her crying; but when she came out, her mother miserably following, she put out her tongue deliberately at each in turn.

There was more to report of her as time went on and she was beyond spanking age. There were reports of her "carrying on" with boys of the district, and when she was but eighteen she suddenly became drawn and wan. Mrs. Masters, worried, wanted her to go to the doctor but Marion would not go to a doctor though something was obviously wrong with her. The expression of anxiety in her eyes alarmed her mother who finally, getting her alone one day—a difficult task in such a warren—demanded if she had allowed any of the boys of the neighbourhood to be too—she stuck at the word, peering at her daughter.

Marion burst into tears.

"I'll take you to the doctor," said Mrs. Masters.

"I don't want to go to a doctor!" exclaimed Marion. "The doctor in town is no good. He can't even tell scarlet fever when he sees it and when the skin peels off he says, 'By God, it was scarlet fever after all!'"

"Then I'll take you to Calgary," said Mrs. Masters.

Marion's willingness to accompany her to Calgary almost confirmed her fears.

"I wish you would be frank with mother," she said. She always spoke of herself so to the children. "I wish, if there has been anything that should not be, that you would confess to mother."

Marion tossed her head.

"You can wait till a doctor examines me," she replied. "That should satisfy you—one way or another," and she laughed, a wildish laugh that was surely sufficient and affirmative answer to Mrs. Masters' question so queasily, so nicely, phrased.

But how to get her to Calgary, how explain to her father why she was going there? Despite Mrs. Masters' constant intimacy with her husband she did not feel that he would be helpful in these circumstances. To tell him of what she dreaded might be to fail in her duty to Marion and, further, he might rouse himself out of his usual lethargy and begin an inquisitorial talk with the girl that would be terrifying. So she merely told him that Marion did not look well and that she would like to have better opinion than could be had from the local practitioner.

To Calgary they went.

Mrs. Masters saw the chosen doctor there in advance, told of her suspicions and then sent Marion into his consulting room and waited outside, twisting her fingers and lips and fidgetting. When the door opened and the nurse beckoned her she hurried in. There was the doctor, smiling.

"Not what you dreaded," said he.

Marion too was smiling. She had not looked so happy for weeks, for her brooding had indeed been due to the very fear that her mother had known. She was utterly relieved. In fact Mrs. Masters thought she looked very bold, but her own relief was so great that she gave her daughter a resounding, smacking kiss.

Marion might just as well have been pregnant so far as the little town by the railway out on the prairie was concerned. The general belief—born from a malicious hope with some, a friendly apprehensiveness, with others—was that she had been off to Calgary with her mother to have an illegal operation. Hardly even by the fact that they returned so soon could that surmise be dispelled in the minds of those who hoped for the worst. The others who had been hoping for the best had hard work to convince them that there had not been time for that. There was, however, a prescription for a tonic to satisfy, or almost satisfy, all.

A good tonic it seemed to be, speedily efficacious. From the day of their return Marion was her former buoyant self again.

III

Two months later, packing a small suitcase and with difficulty smuggling it out of the house, she ran away, took a ticket at the station (lest inquiries were to be made for her there) for the next big town east and at that town boarded the west-bound train. She was off to Vancouver with all the savings she had made in years from scant pin money. In a lower berth in the standard coach she was comfortably ensconced when the train stopped at her home town, and without any pang she heard the trucks trundle on the board walk and voices she knew there. At the chant of "All aboard!" and the renewed revolving of the wheels there was only a great sense of relief at being off and away from the everlasting complaint that she did not co-operate. She had no doubt at all in the wisdom of her flight.

Next day she fell into conversation with a young man who, when a steward came through the cars with his announcement

of "First call for lunch," invited her to lunch with him. Afterwards he told her a funny story about a sleeping-car attendant, nudging her with his elbow as it finished. She had the impression that he told it to her as a preliminary to greater intimacy.

A light flicked up in her dark eyes and her heart beats quickened. But what did he take her for? He was being too sure of her. Dignified of manner she commented coldly, "Very funny," but for the sake of her exchequer she accepted an invitation to dinner with him.

"Well," said he, when that meal was over and they returned to their car, "I get off at the next stop."

The porter ratified the statement, coming along to ask, "This the only baggage you have, sir?"

"That's all."

"Brush you down, sir?"

"Thanks."

The train slowed down. The young man turned to Marion.

"I'll say good-bye," said he. "Thanks for having lunch and dinner with me. I hate eating alone. It's lonesome, eating alone."

He squeezed her hand. The porter took up his suitcase and preceded him along the aisle.

Marion watched him depart, hoping he would look back at the end of the aisle but he did not and, from the window she saw him alight on the platform and move smartly away into his own world.

Very lonely she felt suddenly. The grandeur of the mountains, night creeping in the hollows, made her melancholy. In the dusk she looked out at a stopping place and read a sign: "Alight here for Camp Elkhorn," but, being no sibyl seeing into the future, and never having heard of Camp Elkhorn, it was only words she saw, read automatically, with an indifferent gaze while the train stood there. When it rolled on again, twisting on its way, the locomotive whistle sounding before curve after curve added to her melancholy. It seemed less a blast of adventuring than a wail of loneliness in the dusk. The train rolled on.

For a few moments she thought of home but the nostalgia that arose was very faint, easily dispelled by recalling bickerings, squabblings, the tale-bearing. Overhead the car lights blazed up brightly and the reflections in polished metal and wood cheered her.

Drawing near Vancouver next day, looking out on the gray expanse of the Inlet stippled with rain as far as she could see, the stipplings growing fainter in distance and lost under a further coiling mist, she realized to the full the daring of her escape. With her small funds she had been crazy, she told herself, to take a sleeping berth in the standard car. Even to have travelled tourist would have been crazy. She should have sat up all the way in the day coach. Then promptly she assured herself that had she done so she would have been exhausted at her journey's end. She dismissed the self-criticism, knowing she had acted wisely.

Her nature had not in it much of the tendency to question actions done—such as, for instance, was engendered in Wallace by the constant adverse maternal criticism of actions as soon as done. There was nothing (to use a word from the psycho-analysts, though they had not blossomed then) of the masochist about her. What was past was past.

It was a self-reliant Marion Masters who alighted from the train. Evading the hotel touts who in those days charged upon passengers, elbowing past them to the station house, she left her suitcase at the baggage room and walked out into Vancouver, feeling at once an increasing excitement as she strolled along the crowded streets, so different from the main streets of her home town.

Only for a moment had she regretted her easy travel on the train—the depletion of her small funds on comfortable travel —but in that moment she had a warning. She must select a hotel that seemed by its exterior not too expensive. Those in what appeared to be the two chief thoroughfares of the city would, she decided, be definitely so—too expensive.

She turned into a side street and saw another, with men sitting in rows of chairs within, blankly observing the passers-

by. She hesitated and was about to move on, for further appraisals before making a final selection, when she saw in the window of the restaurant attached to that hotel a card that read: "Waitress wanted."

IV

It did not take Marion Masters long to learn how to balance a tray on her finger tips or on the flat of her hand, the tray carried over her right shoulder and level with her head. It did not take her long to be at ease with the guests. She had a friendly manner that was natural to her. There were many kinds of people staying there, mostly men, but occasionally a married couple would come, newly arrived in town, and would stay till the husband found work and the wife a house.

The regular guests were all men, young bank clerks, clerks in stores, a dispenser at a drugstore round the corner, assistants in department stores. There was a benevolent-looking middle-aged man from Pasadena, California, who was always talking about Pasadena. His reason for having left it everybody knew for he confided it to all America: He had had an altercation with his wife. Always he had given way to her on every subject on which they were not harmonious, but he had had enough at last of concessions. A day come when he refused to renig, as he said, and he told her he would leave home till he had a letter from her saying that for once he was right. In the meantime he was managing a hardware store near-by—and telling his fellow-guests why he was there and of the beauty of Pasadena. It was the most beautiful city, he declared, on the whole continent.

He treated Marion in a fatherly manner, really fatherly—not with the "fatherly nonsense" of some of the elder men toward young waitresses, those who liked to chuck them under the chin or pinch their flanks. There was, however, one guest there who was like a character out of a certain kind of book—Leonard Keeplough by name, a remittance man of uncertain years, proud of his continuing vitality, virility. He looked, he saw, he seduced all in the first chapter and on every possible occasion. The young clerks had his measure, had found amusement in him, called him Lord Heah-and-Theah. He was from hat to shoes the perfect stage roué and with the stage roué's accent, all complete save for a monocle.

At sight of the new waitress he demanded of the proprietor an introduction and formal introduction was given, Mr. Leonard Keeplough standing at his table to ask friendly questions of Marion. When he heard she came from the prairies he informed her that once he had "rawnched" there—while at the other tables the young men winked at each other. Then he sat down and ordered his first course.

A week later those young men who had bedrooms on the top floor, the floor on which the waitresses slept, had to whisper the news to each other. Through the open transom of their rooms they had heard the old rake tapping on a door, tapping again, then Marion's voice within, "Who is it? What is it?" and Keeplough's voice replying as a handle turned quietly, "That will be all right, my deah child, 'pon my word." Then the door closed and there was no sound of Leonard going away rebuffed.

And that is perhaps the best way, concise, to the point, to tell of what happened, for surely no one past adolescence requires a descriptive page of it—old Keeplough and young Marion abed.

There was to be much talk of the new waitress soon. Clearly she had a way with her with the old reprobate, and it was well that his remittance was of considerable amount. When he asked her what she wanted especially, what he could get for her, she demanded horses.

"Horses!" he ejaculated.

"I told you I come from the prairie. I love horses, and you say you love me."

He hated her for a moment.

"You want me to buy you a horse?" he asked.

"No. I said horses."

"Horses! Buy horses! In Vancouver!"

"Well, I'd like to rent a horse sometimes. As I was coming from the station I saw a man driving tandem. I want to drive tandem round Stanley Park."

"Oh. Oh, all right." They were alone in her room and he embraced her. "You go to that livery stable along the street and get your tandem, and tell them to send the bill to me. But don't ask me to go with you."

She was a demanding miss, he discovered. He had to pay for loving her and if he protested against her financial demands, as he sometimes did, she had a way of making things unpleasant for him publicly, a way that amused her and exasperated him. It was achieved by her manner of taking his orders in the dining room. Anyone, looking on, might imagine that the old fellow had been attempting familiarities with her and that she would have him know she was not that sort of girl. "O what a plague is lewdness!" he might have amended the first line of an old song.

For the first time in her life Marion was happy. She liked Vancouver, liked the sense of freedom it gave her. She enjoyed being out in the crowded streets, and was stimulated by the brilliantly lit stores, the shows, the excitement of mingling with crowds from all parts of the world. Above all she liked driving tandem round Stanley Park, aware that she attracted much attention there. Smartly dressed, apparently indifferent to the stares of those she met or passed, she sat erect holding the reins, looking neither left nor right, intent upon the horses.

In those days a girl could not go driving tandem round Stanley Park—and smoking a cigarette as she drove, as did Marion—without being noticed. Men who had never lunched or dined at that restaurant before, discovered it was there she was to be found, came in for meals and tried their best to sit at the tables to which she attended, detaining her in conversation on general matters that they hoped would lead to more personal ones.

"See by the papers there has been a rich ore discovery up in the Elkhorn valley," a newcomer remarked to her one day. "The railway is putting in a spur-line. Ever been in that country?"

"No," said Marion.

"Why not take a look at it?" he suggested.

"Not interested," said she.

"I'm thinking of going up myself," he hinted, "only it's kind of dull travelling alone."

"Did you say soup *and* fish?" Her manner was frigid, and when she returned with his order the young man found her purely business-like.

Leonard, who had been wishing he had never had anything to do with her, instead of hoping she might forsake him for one of these others, became jealous of them and from wishing he could cast her off and save his pocket book he veered to wanting her to be "kind" to him alone.

Marion quickly grew tired of her work there. It was not that the other waitresses and the chambermaids (by no means blind to what was going on) gave her any sign of contempt. There were three waitresses in the dining room; one of these lived at home and came only to serve table at mealtimes; one of the resident ones, herself morally beyond reproach was, despite what she sensed or knew, on excellent terms with Marion. It was the other—who had her own little dubious affairs—who would sometimes look at the new girl with an air of disapproval, but that was only as part of her pose of moral rectitude. As for the chambermaids: they were entirely amiable. If they knew what terms she was on with the remittance man they must have looked upon it as her own affair, "none of their business."

Wearying of the work in the dining room, Marion decided to have a change. She told Leonard that she had seen a nice little suite in one of the new apartment blocks and thought she would like to rent it.

"Splendid!" said he, promptly enthusiastic, much more enthusiastic than she had expected he would be. "I'll pay the rental and look after your bills. Order what you want."

She rented the flat, had the rooms furnished expensively, and at first all seemed well. To her this apartment, compared with the crowded home behind her father's store in the little prairie town, was palatial. She bought elaborately upholstered chairs and carved tables, ornate mirrors and lamp shades, heavy curtains, gold-framed pictures of sentimental subjects dealing mostly with home life. Often she would touch these belongings in passing, run her hand caressingly over the plush sofa, the satin hangings.

Leonard appeared to be devoted, voicing no objections to any of her extravagances. He still lived at the hotel but she

saw him daily—indeed he spent most of his time with her and most of his money on her. Then one day he did not come. Day followed day and still he did not come until finally, after two weeks, into her mind spread an anxiety that demanded inquiry, a doubt that had to be proven or allayed.

Once again there was a drawn look on her face. Fingering a sheaf of accumulating accounts she decided to go to the hotel in search of him. Something of the shyness of the Indian girl at the bridge at Camp Elkhorn she felt as she came to the entrance but she exorcised it with a boldness beyond attainment of the Indian girl. There was something in the smile exchanged between two men who were sitting in the window space, and the look they gave on seeing her approach, that helped to sustain boldness and oust shyness.

The hotel door opened and the man of the marital deadlock in beautiful Pasadena came out carrying a suitcase.

"Ah, there you are!" he exclaimed. "I've been missing you here. I hope all goes well with you, my dear. Take care of yourself. I'm off home to Pasadena, beautiful Pasadena. That trouble I told you of with my wife is settled. I'm going home again with complete understanding on both sides of give and take. I must run to catch the boat. Yes, I've missed you, and thought of you now and then. I hope you are behaving yourself and not getting into mischief," and he hurried away.

Marion tossed her head. A brazen hussy she looked then as she opened the hotel door and went in. There was a flaunt in her walk as she tossed her head again, not caring what people thought. She did not care if she were making public her relations with Leonard.

The proprietor was behind the desk, sitting on a tall stool placidly smoking a cigar. He nodded to her through the smoke.

"Looking for somebody?" he asked, as if to help her.

"Is Mr. Keeplough in?"

He shook his head.

"No," said he. "He left here some days ago."

"Where has he gone to?"

"Search me!" replied the proprietor in off-hand tone. And then he added: "He was here for years and paid on the nail every month when he received his regular allowance from the Old Country."

"He didn't leave an address even for forwarding of letters?" she asked.

"No."

"You have no idea where he has gone?"

"That's what I said. And if you don't know, my girl, who should?" He gazed heavily at her. "He may have gone to the Klondyke for all I know."

Marion raised her head as one insulted and passed out into the street with a sense of having been cruelly deserted. That feeling was to increase and give her a manner of sincerity, later, when narrating this chapter in her life story.

He might have gone to the Klondyke. . . . There was still a boom on in the Klondyke and the boats for Skagway were crowded. On the other hand he might still be in Vancouver. Wherever he was, he had gone out of her life. She realized that.

The Klondyke? The adventuring part of her toyed with the thought of going up north to see the Yukon. She would have to work again and waitresses, she had heard, were paid well there. Then she dismissed that notion of going to the Klondyke. There was the other boom she had been reading of in the papers and hearing about, the boom in the interior, in what the people of Vancouver called the upper country: the rich "gold strike" in the Elkhorn valley. A railway, a spur-line, was nearing completion to Elkhorn City, which was until recently called Camp Elkhorn, she believed.

She packed that night—a larger suitcase than the one she had brought to the coast with her. As she sat resting on the plush sofa her eyes filled with tears, but——

"The woman," she told herself grimly, "will not pay."

The key of the suite she dropped in the letter box of the agent after his office was closed and, leaving the bills for the furniture unpaid—for to have paid them would have left her nearly penniless—she departed for Elkhorn City, seeing herself as one shamelessly forsaken, deserted, one bravely facing the future alone.

CHAPTER SIX

It was pay day at the Elkhorn Livery Stable where Jock Galbraith was employed: He had just returned, with Harker, from a trip into the hills. An additional jog had been given to prospecting in the neighbourhood because of the development of the Bird's Eye and new claims were being registered. Assessment work was being done in many outlying spots. The demand for packers was constant and new ones had been hired; but, because of their earlier association on the trails, it was as often Max Harker who was told to accompany Galbraith as any of the others with whom he might have preferred to associate.

Galbraith did not complain. In the work of packing, the work on the trails, Harker was able enough. Even the incident of defrauding the Indian girl on the far-off day of celebration of old Camp Elkhorn's anniversary, though truly it had disgusted Jock, did not cause him to tell the proprietor of the livery stable that he could not go out again with that man. He had been with him many times since then.

Here they were once more, back from a trip, and it was pay day. In the high-arched entrance to the stables Harker stood, fingering a roll of bills.

"I feel like Jack ashore," said he.

Galbraith was not listening. He was reading a letter. On the way back he had stopped at the post office of a Camp Elkhorn greatly changed from the days of its infancy, not hidden on either side of a rutted wagon road but with roadside trees felled, streets laid out, and sidewalks laid. Camp Elkhorn had become Elkhorn City.

There was a letter from his mother (the adaptable woman from the Gorbals in Glasgow, she of the surgical needles) back in Muskoka, and one from Robert Wallace. Galbraith had seen much of Wallace since he guided him to the Bird's Eye five years before, seen much of him during the subsequent extensive development—the building of the road up the west fork, the blasting of the impeding bulges of cliff and erection of an aerial gravity tramway from the mine that brought the ore to the road's end over that further meadow where Wallace had succumbed to unaccustomed back-packing in high altitude air.

Wallace, back in the east again, wrote from his Company's office that the firm was extending its sphere and had decided to build a smelter at Elkhorn City. Henceforward it was to be known as the Laurentian Mining and Smelting Company. He had not, however, forgotten the possibility of doing something with the grazing lands in the valley and he had, he wrote, completed arrangements for a considerable land purchase and for grazing leases. When the smelter was operating he would be spending practically all the year in the west.

"I have taken unto myself a wife," he went on, "a daughter of our chief, and she will be with me when I come west again. I have told her of the day you saved my life. She is enthusiastic over my idea to build a ranch home in the valley. We are planning it together. It will be of logs, to fit appropriately into the scene, and I have already written to Harold Sinclair to ask him if he could undertake the construction. With the smelter working in Elkhorn City, a home a bit away from the unavoidable commercial fumes will be good; but I want more than a home in the valley. I want to start cattle ranching. On two occasions, as we were going up to the Bird's Eye, you gave your backing to my secret notion that it would be good cattle-raising country, and I would like to know if you would accept a position as manager. Think it over. We shall be coming west before long and I hope that by the time we arrive you will have your answer, that it will be 'yea,' and that all that will remain will be to discuss the question of salary. From what I saw of you with one man on our first trip to the west fork I am of the opinion that you can handle men."

Galbraith smiled. That one man was at his elbow, fingering his pay. Of the contents of the letter Galbraith said nothing.

He never counted chickens before they were hatched and with Harker, in any case, he would not discuss Wallace's affairs. He put it away in a pocket.

"Yes, I feel like Jack ashore," Harker repeated.

Galbraith laughed.

"And tomorrow morning you'll be Jack broke and ready to go to sea again," he prophesied.

"Possibly, possibly," answered Harker, easily.

"We could both do with a bath after our trip," remarked Galbraith, looking along the street, truly a street by those days, to where a barber's striped pole projected over the sidewalk. Above the pole was a board with the word BATHS on it.

"It's a good idea," Harker agreed.

Together they walked along the street, their heels sounding loud on a stretch of wooden sidewalk and then dull on a stretch of cement nearer the centre of the "city." The clearing of the surrounding forest gave them a view of the hills nearby. They could see the winding road that led up a slope to the discovery that had created Camp Elkhorn, could see all the surrounding hog backs, some of them showing not trees but black twigless charcoal stalks, from a recent fire.

Where, Jock Galbraith wondered as they walked, would the smelter be built? Perhaps on the bluff to north. He had no fancy for mining from first to last, from the "grubbing in the bowels of the earth like a mole" to the haze and smell that hung over all smelter towns. When cow-punching in Montana he had seen a smelter town; when cow-punching in Arizona he had seen another. There were some nice homes being built in Elkhorn City already and more would no doubt go up after the smelter was working, but he shared Wallace's opinion regarding life in a smelter town.

They turned in at the barber's and went into the back quarters where were six small bathrooms, the barber following them with towels and soap and to turn on the taps for them. They came out from their baths to be groomed.

"Hair cut, shave, and all the trimmings," said Harker, sitting down with a smile in one of the revolving chairs, "and don't spin me round to look at the wall. I'm Jack ashore today and I like to watch the people going by."

"The skirts especially," said the barber.

"As you say," Harker replied.

Galbraith heard but his mind was elsewhere. A cattle ranch, manager of a cattle ranch—and in the Elkhorn Valley? Did Robert Wallace really believe he would take long to think it over? Was that just part of his politeness? Even when offering a job that some men would offer with a suggestion of "If you don't want it say so *pronto*," he had to offer it that way. Think it over? There was no need for him to think it over.

Harker was disposed of first but waited for Jock, taking up the magazines from a table and riffling through them, whistling gently to himself the while.

"Lots of people coming into town now," remarked the barber, "and more will be coming before long, I guess, for I hear it going round that there's to be a smelter here. That's what the mayor was telling me. I came in when it was Camp Elkhorn, now it's Elkhorn City, and I guess I'll see it plain Elkhorn before I'm much older. Robert Wallace is sure a live wire and a go-getter, quiet though he seems. It's chiefly due to him that we got the railway in here. It's chiefly due to the way he interested capital that we got the new power plant installed down the river. I hope he'll find pleasure in growing up with the place, as they say. Your change, thank you."

Galbraith nodded, holding out his hand for the change, and, in step with Harker, walked along to the hotel, a new one built on the site of the one to which Wallace had come five years earlier and that, the next year, had been burnt down when the forest fire showered red cinders on the roof.

Dinner was no sooner over than Harker rose.

"And now, Jock," he said, "I'll bid you a fond farewell—or *adios*, as they say down in that country where you once went cow-punching and learnt to say *pronto* and to talk of *siestas*."

"Where are you off to?" asked Galbraith.

"To a house of ill repute," said Harker, smiling blandly.

"You give me a pain!" exclaimed Galbraith. "But it has to be said you are frank."

"Frank yourself."

"See here," said Galbraith, "the fire water they have at these places is worse than you can get at a saloon. Tomorrow you'll be Jack ashore, broke, and with a headache. And look at your clothes. You need a new pair of pants, you need a new shirt or two. Come with me along the street and let me see you get a pair of pants anyhow."

"You're right, Jock. Good! You can dry nurse me to the haberdasher's."

Back along the street they went.

"I'm only doing this to humour you," murmured Harker as they walked.

Jock Galbraith looked at him side-long and he laughed.

"You're not a bad sort of a son-of-a-gun, Jock," he said. "You mean well. Was your father a missionary by any chance?"

"A man doesn't need to have the missionary spirit to see that you need to be looked after," replied Galbraith.

So these two men, very unlike, went into a men's store together seemingly as good friends.

"I want a pair of pants—a reach-me-down pair of pants," Harker sang out gaily as they entered.

"And what kind of pants?"

"Ask him," said Harker, indicating Galbraith. "It's his idea that I should have them."

The clothier took a tape measure that was hanging round his neck, measured Harker's waist and length of leg, and then laid a selection of trousers on the counter. Max chose a pair.

"And now a shirt or two," Galbraith suggested.

"I don't need shirts," Harker protested.

"You certainly do," Galbraith told him. "You look like hell in that shirt."

"My friend says I look like hell," said Harker. "So I'll have a shirt."

"He'll have two," said Galbraith.

"My friend says I'll have two," said Harker.

"And now," suggested the clothier, the shirts selected, "does your friend think you could do with some underwear?"

"No. Or if he does, forget it. He's gone as far as our uncertain friendship can stand," Harker answered.

The clothier put trousers and shirts together and handed them to an assistant to wrap up, took the payment and then—it was still the usage in Elkhorn City as it had been in Camp Elkhorn after such transactions—he said: "Come and have a little drink while the boy is making your parcel ready."

Out they went and into a saloon a few doors along the street. It was still the way of Elkhorn City, as it had been of Camp Elkhorn, when calling for a drink to have the bottle set on the counter with the tumbler and to measure out one's drink for oneself.

"Three," ordered the clothier, and to his customers, "help yourselves."

"Go ahead," said Harker to Galbraith.

Jock poured the recognized, the correct, three fingers.

"Abstemious," observed Harker, and poured a drink of double depth.

The clothier and Galbraith looked at it and at him with expressions very similar. The barman waited to see what the clothier would take. He merely wet the base of his glass—one finger curved to it would have hidden his portion—but Harker did not notice the amount, only Jock and the barman did; and the barman realized that the man who stood treat was thus keeping the cost to a three-drinks one.

"Well, here's looking at you!" said Harker.

"Here's health!" said the clothier.

"Here's to you!" said Galbraith.

The storekeeper, having thus honoured the old camp usage of liquidation over a purchase that amounted to more than just a dollar or two, stepped to the door. Galbraith and Harker followed. It was not in the code to offer him a drink in return.

The parcel was ready for them.

"Good day."

"Good day."

"Good day, gentlemen, and thank you."

They were out in the street again. Harker thrust the parcel at his companion. There was a merry glint in his eyes, a glint of banter and perversity.

"There you are," he said. "You can take it back to the hotel with you to complete your kindness and your blasted solicitude. Tell the clerk to put it up in my room. I'm off now."

"You're off!" said Galbraith, staring at him. "Where to?"

"To a house of ill repute," responded Harker. He said it gaily. Laughter bubbled in his dark eyes. "Am I not an ungrateful swine?" he inquired.

The first impulse with Galbraith was to give him a blow on the jaw, fell him, throw the parcel at his head. But he restrained himself.

"You certainly are," he said with a sigh, and he turned, parcel in hand, and walked slowly away.

"Don't be sore with me, Jock," Harker called after him pleadingly.

Galbraith walked on heedless.

"Harker wants that sent up to his room," he said to the clerk behind the hotel desk, and passed on along the corridor to the billiard room to rear.

II

He sat down on one of the forms on a raised edge to the long room and watched a game that was in progress, but with an interest that ebbed and flowed, thinking of other things. He took out Wallace's letter and reread it. Wallace was clearly "making good" and not only for the Company, but for himself also. His lumber camps were paying well—and now he was going in for cattle. That should pay well too, with markets close at hand.

Galbraith wondered what Mrs. Wallace was like. "I have told her of the day you saved my life," said the letter. His mind drifted off to that past day. In memory he lived it again, heard the sudden hail on the roof of Sinclair's cabin, heard again Wallace voicing his gratitude—"If ever I can do anything to show my appreciation . . ."—but this offer of a job as manager of the projected ranch was not part of that gratitude. There was no suggestion of that. This was a straight business offer, made because Wallace believed he was the man for the job.

He rolled and lit a cigarette and blew smoke, then frowned to himself, remembering something else—remembering the

purchase of the Bird's Eye claim from Sinclair for five thousand dollars. There were many who said that Sinclair had been "skinned," knowing what he had been paid for his property and seeing the rich ore that came down the valley. They said that Wallace had "put it over on" the old man.

"That was the price Sinclair asked," Galbraith always said to any who spoke so in his hearing; but a part of him still, as at the time, did not relish the transaction. It did seem like taking advantage of Sinclair's self-confessed "queerness." Privately he considered so; publicly he defended Wallace, when the deal was adversely criticized, with, "That was the price Sinclair asked."

There were many who disliked Wallace for the position he had got for himself with the Laurentian Mining Company. If a man was successful they rooted round—people like that—to find cause for defaming him, or disparaging him. He was already something of a public figure in Elkhorn City, admired by the well-wishers, and subject (behind his back) for fleering comments by the envious.

"He is certainly all right with me," thought Jock Galbraith. In fact he spoke it aloud.

"What did you say?" asked one of the billiard players, turning to him.

"Nothing," he answered, and went out to the little writing room off the rotunda to write a reply to Wallace, telling how he had no need to think over the offer of the position and was sure that the salary, whatever it might be, would suit him too. He would leave that to Wallace, who could only be called close when he was acting for the Company. When he was acting for himself he was generous.

The afternoon fled. They no longer rang a bell to announce a meal ready at the New Occidental as they had done at the Occidental, its predecessor; they would as soon have thought of having an iron triangle, such as hung at cook-house doors in camps, to smite with an iron bar. A card on the wall by the dining room door sufficed to tell the meal hours, and the doors were opened to the minute.

He heard them being opened and went in to supper. There were still Chinese cooks in the kitchen—they called them chefs—but the tables were waited upon by white waitresses, and they did not chant the bill of fare to guests. It was neatly typed on menu cards that fitted into leather frames.

He was aware of a waitress at his elbow and putting down the menu looked up to give his nod and smile of "Evening, Mary," or "Evening, Jess," as might be. But he looked up into a new face, into eyes so dark that they were almost black, into eyes that caught him, as it were, off guard. There was something startling about their blackness in contrast with the girl's corn-coloured hair. They did something to him, those eyes, though they were as formally impersonal in their regard as her face was devoid of any expression save of attention to his requirements.

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, good evening."

"Good evening," the new waitress replied, but with no smile.

"I'll have the soup and a starter of fish," he said, "and then roast lamb with all the trimmings."

"And you'll tell me the dessert later?" she asked.

"Sure. If I want any."

"And to drink?"

"Coffee."

"With the meat or later?"

"Later, I guess."

"Thank you."

Marion Masters went smartly away, leaving her voice lingering in Jock Galbraith's ears, disturbing as had been that first meeting of their eyes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

For some time Jock Galbraith had retained a bedroom at the New Occidental. There were other hotels in the city by then but, even so, because of the boom there, it was not always easy to find a place to sleep when he returned from his packing trips.

Hence the room; but he had not been a regular patron of the New Occidental for meals, eating sometimes at the Chinese restaurant on Pine Street, sometimes at the Greek Café on Galena Street, and so forth. Having seen the new waitress, however, engaged during his absence, he would eat nowhere else, maintaining that only at the New Occidental could a fellow get a decent meal in all the town.

In town and out of town thoughts of Marion Masters were always in his mind. He felt that she had a story, decided that she had not been treated by Life as might be desired by her or her friends. He longed to know her, to have conversation with her that was not limited to comestibles. When, in place of that impersonal regard with which she had at first attended to him, she gave a fleeting smile in response to his usual greeting he was, as they say, in the seventh heaven; but the day of days was the one on which, after a brief journey into the high country, he was back and she remarked: "You haven't been around recently."

Here was an advance beyond soup and fish, and would he have tea or coffee—now or later?

"I have been out with a pack string," he answered. "There were a lot of deadfalls to get through after a storm in the hills and that held us up."

"It is wonderful how the horses manage in the mountains," said she. "They go up and down places where one would hardly think a horse could go—I mean where anybody accustomed to horses on the prairies would think they could go."

"You come from the prairies?" he asked, snatching the opportunity to know more of her.

He saw, or imagined he saw, the shadow of some old sadness on her face.

"Yes, and I used to ride a lot there," she told him; then, with a slight stiffening of her pose she was all waitress again, inquiring, "Tea or coffee?"

"Coffee," said he, dashed.

"Now or later on?"

"Later on."

For the remainder of the meal she was impersonal to the point, it seemed to him, of frigidity.

The meal over, he went out into the rotunda and sat in one of the big chairs looking out at the street, thinking of her voice, thinking of how she had stood by the table that blissful few moments longer than necessary for her mere duties. She had stood close to the table and once, as she was speaking, had put her finger tips on the cloth, arms rigid at her side. He could still see her hands.

He sat back, tapping his teeth with a thumb, staring out at the street but unseeing so far as the street was concerned—seeing a cluster of ranch houses, the bunk houses for the men—and the home of the manager. And the manager in this day-dream had a wife who had come first to Elkhorn City as a waitress at the New Occidental Hotel, a girl from the prairies who used to ride a lot.

II

Two days later, at the next table to his, the editor of the *Elkhorn Miner* and an Anglican clergyman were talking. The editor had a clear, clipping voice and the clergyman a far-carrying and declamatory one, and they were discussing Shakespeare in a trial of intelligence. It was not a subject on which Galbraith could act as umpire or referee, but it seemed that these two—though they had certain differences of opinion—were at one in the view that in great plays the

characters had to be kings or queens, or if not of royal blood at least people of "independent means," as the clergyman said, so that they could devote all their time to grand passions, to their love affairs or their feuds.

Galbraith was not certain of that so far as the feuds were concerned. He had witnessed part of a feud between cattlemen and sheep men when he was in Wyoming: they had gone on with their work despite the feud, in which Colt revolvers had barked. As for love making, however, it seemed to him that these two men were right. An ordinary fellow had to make a living, had to attend to his job. If he did not he would go broke. He could only make love in his spare time, and even in his spare time Chance was not always with him.

Look, thought he, at today, for example: The dining room was crowded. He had been compelled to sit at a table that was not "serviced" by Marion. Had he waited till a place was free at one of her tables he might have gone dinnerless as the doors would soon be closing. Not being a king or a man of independent means he would have to make the opportunity for himself.

So, dinner over, he strolled upstairs. On the first landing there was a writing desk with blotting paper and ink well on it. He sat down there and began to roll cigarettes. Soon, he knew, the waitresses would be going up to their rooms, and if they came up singly he might have a word with Marion Masters. Sometimes they all came up together. One who was not a king, but a working man, could only hope for the best, a fortunate setting of the stage for him.

Here was one of the girls, her duties done.

"Hello," said she. "You're rolling a lot of cigarettes."

"Sure," he replied. "I roll several at a time when I'm going out on the trails. I've to go off again first thing in the morning."

"I thought," said she, "that you fellows could hold the reins in one hand and roll a smoke with the other, opening the tobacco sack with the string in your teeth."

There was a twinkle in her eyes, a twinkle of banter. He thought for a moment that she saw through him, that she guessed his present occupation was but subterfuge, that he was waiting there for a word with Marion—which was absurd; but he was absurdly in love, or in the absurd stage of love, it would appear.

Two more waitresses passed him. They were arm in arm and he was utterly glad that neither was Marion. The one he had been talking to moved on with them. A few minutes later Marion came slowly up the stairs. As she stepped to the landing he rose, slipping the cigarettes into a breast pocket.

"You are finished for the day," he said.

"Yes, just finished," she replied. "We have to leave our tables ready for the morning, for breakfast, and I had to stay later than the others because some people were sitting on a long while over their coffee after the doors were shut."

"You mentioned the prairies to me the other day," said Jock. "I was wondering what made you leave them for the mountains."

She laughed gaily.

"What made you leave wherever you come from for Elkhorn City?" she demanded.

"I guess what they call 'the itching foot,'" said he. If he could not get her to talk of herself at least he could talk of himself, so he continued: "I suppose my father had it—the itching foot—and decided to humour it at last. He came out from Scotland when I was just ten years old; came out to Muskoka."

"And an itching foot made you leave Muskoka," said Marion.

"Was that what made you leave the prairies?" he asked, in an endeavour to change the subject back from himself to her.

There was a shadow in her eyes again.

"Perhaps, perhaps," she answered, and then turned the talk to him once more. "You don't need to tell me you're Scots. You still show it in your voice. It's funny," she went on, "how even people who have never been in Scotland—different from you—keep the accent. There was an Ontario family came and settled near us on the prairie, and they used to say

feesh for fish. We thought they had just come out from Scotland and guessed Aberdeen, but it was their grandparents who came from Scotland. Aberdeen was right."

"Don't you ever want to go back to the prairie?" he said. "Some folks from the prairies feel dreadfully shut in among the mountains."

"Oh, I don't know," said she, and shrugged her shoulders.

Then he had his reward. She spoke of herself.

"I guess my folks are all right," said she, "but I got tired of—little pin pricks. Two brothers left home when they were very young, two others went off as soon as they could, one is still there. They never bothered me. They were live-and-let-live, my brothers. But my sisters——"

"What?"

"Well, they kind of 'picked on me,' always. I didn't co-operate, they used to say. I got tired of that word co-operate. They even influenced mother with it and got her to see I didn't co-operate. Co-operate, co-operate! I got tired of them always running to tell her I wasn't co-operating with them and tale-bearing about me." She shrugged again. "Oh, maybe I was wrong, and maybe they were all right."

He admired her tolerance.

"I can't abide people who want to shape others," he remarked.

She smiled on him and then came the look of sadness in her dark eyes that made him always think she had a story—a story of disappointment, disillusionment, bravely faced.

"I must be getting upstairs," she said.

With another smile and a nod she left him, left him to recall the talk he had overheard, apropos Shakespeare, and to consider again that though a feud may not interfere with wage earning—with the spring round-up or the sheep shearing—only kings and the idle rich can devote all their time to what these men to whom he had listened called the "grand passions." For next morning he had to be off again.

But by slow degrees his knowledge of Marion increased, and her knowledge of him. Soon people grew accustomed to seeing them together. When a touring company came to the Opera House, Galbraith would purchase tickets for himself and Marion; and the manager of the newly opened moving picture house also saw them there regularly. At the livery stable Galbraith arranged for one horse in particular to be reserved for her and, when she was off duty, they would take short rides out of town.

It was not a one-sided affair. Marion liked Jock Galbraith. Here was a man very different from Leonard Keeplough. It might be said that for the first time in her life she had met someone who interested her more than herself. Soon not only because of dallying diners was she so frequently the last waitress to leave after supper when Jock was in town. There seemed to be a blessed understanding that he would be sitting at the table at the head of the stairs when she came up. The blotting pad was decorated, in time, with brands that he remembered, brands of ranches from the Saskatchewan to the Rio Pecos, scrawled there while he awaited her step on the stairs.

He had heard, with deepest sympathy—sympathy of which she was aware and for which she was grateful—of her running away from home, and of how she had supported herself in Vancouver; and there came a day, an evening, when he was to hear much more.

III

It is known that on the stage the players may be greatly influenced by their audiences. To one sort of audience they heighten the effect of a line in response to the ardent emotional waves coming to them over the footlights; to another they subdue a line, or even eliminate it, in concession to flippancy or cynicism similarly felt, a dread of a guffaw where the intention may be rather to draw tears.

"I want to hear more about your life in Vancouver," said Galbraith on that particular evening. "Tell me more."

Her story had been as one read serially, always "to be continued." She held breath a moment at that request. In these meetings of theirs there had been progressive emotion. She hesitated, but she had to go on. She plunged in response to an impulse she did not analyze. She had a desire to be honest with this man, as honest as she possibly could be.

"I met a man there," said she.

She hesitated again and over the footlights, as it were, came the prompting, not from the wings. All her ambition was to please the audience, and to hold the audience.

"He seemed so kind," she went on, gazing beyond him, her eyes wide, "and I thought he blindly adored me."

"There was no need for it to have been blindly," said Galbraith.

Devotion was in his voice. Marion did not know how to continue.

"You married him?" he asked, desperately.

She did not reply at once. The story in her mind was nebulous. She perpended. She nodded; then she shook her head. She was not sure what was wanted on the other side of the footlights, and fain would she offer what would please. She did not want to lose this man.

Galbraith could not understand. She conveyed "Yes." She conveyed, "No." The story had gone too far for retraction.

"I was inexperienced. He was much older than I and I believed in him," she said. She knew nothing of Leonard Keeplough's life prior to her meeting with him, but she hurried on. "He was a married man."

"Oh!" said Galbraith.

"He was living away from his wife. They had quarrelled over something—I never knew what." Her heart was pounding. She could not look at him but looked beyond him, recalling, thought he, a sad time, and waited to hear from her all the truth.

"They were not legally divorced you see, and so he—I—I was fool enough to live with him," she said, bitterly. "And then——"

"He deserted you?" rasped Galbraith, helpfully.

"Yes. Yes, he disappeared. I was told by somebody that he had gone to the Klondyke, perhaps."

"He was no good!" ejaculated Galbraith.

"Why am I telling you this?" she asked, despair in her voice.

"I want to know," he replied.

"I guess that's why I'm telling you," she said, and added: "Somehow I want to tell you."

She felt a sense of satisfaction over the candour of that admission. That was candid, that was so, that was true: She wanted to be honest with this man, lest anything of her past should ever leak out.

"Well, this man wouldn't desert you, ever," said Galbraith. "This man will never desert you, Marion. You can always count on me."

She put up her head and laughed, but not as with a secret mockery. She laughed with relief, and happiness.

"Somebody coming upstairs," she whispered, holding out her hand.

He took it and held it in a grasp that hurt, and yet the pain was pleasure to her. Then as the ascending footsteps sounded very close he released her and she hurried up the next flight of stairs.

Galbraith took out his tobacco sack and cigarette papers. He was standing there trickling tobacco into a slip of paper

when a man came onto the landing.

"Hullo, Jock!"

It was Maxwell Harker who approached.

"Hullo, Max," responded Galbraith, coldly.

Flicking a match alight on his thumb nail he lit the cigarette and blowing smoke began to descend without further comment to the main hallway.

"I was just coming up to see if you were in town," said Harker, "to tell you that Robert Wallace has come in on the train. You may be grumpy with me but I thought you'd like to know."

"Oh, he has, has he?" said Galbraith. "Well, thanks for telling me. I'm glad to know. Is his wife with him?"

"Search me!" exclaimed Harker. "He has a woman with him—wife or concubine as may be. A fine-looking wench, I'll say that!"

"You make me tired," said Galbraith as he continued downstairs. "I think you're daft, especially daft where women are concerned, daft, crazy, bug-house! That helps to explain you."

"You're always too damned serious," said Harker with an explosion of laughter, and he slapped Galbraith on the back as they went downstairs together.

CHAPTER EIGHT

After that return of Robert Wallace the inhabitants of Elkhorn City, who recently had deleted the prefix of *Camp*, began to think that soon they would have to discard the suffix of *City*. A time was approaching for plain, unboastful Elkhorn.

Wallace bought a site for the smelter and there was a great influx of cement workers and brick layers. In the real estate agents' windows were notices regarding "Desirable Building Lots" and "Desirable Residences." The rub-a-dub of carpenters' hammers sounded all day. The fitting way to tell of both Wallace's activities and of those of others would no doubt be staccato—attuned to the busy hammers.

There was little even of Roaring Camp about Elkhorn City in these days, and of the west of the early explorers—the reading of whose journals had first awakened Wallace's interest in the mountains—still less. Halfway out to Jackson's store farmers had taken up land. Cow bells clanged in clearings, through the miles where, on his first trip, he had heard only woodpeckers in the forests. Motor trucks brought milk and fresh vegetables daily to Elkhorn. But another "opportunity" was still awaiting attention. Meat for the city and the various industries—the logging camps, the placer camps, the mines—still came from what they called "outside," and presently, as he had written to Galbraith, when his work for the Company allowed time he would see to the meat supply, at fair profit, with a home market.

Meanwhile his own lumber company blossomed anew. It was no longer only poles and posts that came down the valley for shipment. A sawmill was installed close to Elkhorn and the intermittent whine of the saws sounded through the tapping din of carpenters' hammers.

While awaiting an occasion to decide where to build their permanent home in the valley, Robert and Eleanor Wallace were living at the New Occidental Hotel. Galbraith, still employed at the livery stable, they saw when he was in town, but the discussion of the projected cattle ranch had to be deferred because of the press of Company affairs.

Eleanor was the first to notice that Jock and the blonde-haired, dark-eyed waitress had, as she said to her husband, either an understanding or a misunderstanding. When, on a Sunday afternoon, looking down from the sitting-room window, they saw her riding along the street with him they decided that it was an understanding.

"She rides well," remarked Eleanor. "I hope she's the right girl for him."

"Oh, a fine lass, no doubt," returned Wallace. "Nobody can pick a mate for anyone else. A fine lass. Do you think the colour of that hair is genuine?"

"Oh, yes, I'm sure of it."

"The first time she waited on us her black eyes made me jump. Somehow, with that hair, I expected them to be blue."

"An unusual combination. Very attractive."

Eleanor, knowing Robert, had the impression that her husband was not enthusiastic over Galbraith's choice (though he knew nothing about the girl) but looked upon it as none of his business.

A few days later there was at last opportunity to consider affairs other than those of the Laurentian Mining and Smelting Company, and in the sitting room of their suite Wallace, after lunch, was discussing with Galbraith the subject of the letter he had written to him.

As they talked a touch of diffidence Galbraith had felt regarding his ability to organize the ranch was dispelled by his friend's belief in him.

"Once we get it agoing," he said, "I can keep it agoing. I have the experience for that. In the starting up, though, I need your advice."

"That's where we are as perfect partners, Jock," said Wallace. "I can see the thing in the big but not in detail—how to get in the range stock and all that."

"I can go right out and hand pick the stock for you," replied Galbraith, "and hire the men to drive in the steers slow and easy—or, if you'd prefer it, ship them in by train to Elkhorn City and just drive them on into the valley from here."

"It's up to you, Jock. It's what you prefer and think the better way. And as for the building of the ranch houses, I'm going to see if old Sinclair would look after that. I wonder just how old, or how young, he is! They all tell me he's one of the best men around here at putting up a log cabin. I hear that he did not retire on Easy Street at the coast but has put his money in a cache somewhere and has been doing a bit of trapping in the winter."

"That's right, and working on the roads in summer. He says he'll wait around here a while yet, not old enough to go out with—with what he calls his fortune."

A faint frown showed on Wallace's face at the tone in which Galbraith said those last words.

"Well," he went on, "he could superintend the building of the houses. I want them all to be of logs. They'll fit into the scene better that way. I've even got plans ready for them. My lumber company could get out the logs that he needs and I should think the old fellow would relish the job. For our own house I want a two-storey affair, with attics."

"That will cost you more than you paid Sinclair for his prospect," said Galbraith, and then, as they say, could have bitten his tongue out.

"Than the Laurentian Mining Company paid him," corrected Wallace, for the first time acid of tone to his companion.

"I beg your pardon," said Galbraith. "I didn't mean that the way that maybe it sounded. And I know, by the offer you've made me for managing the place that he'll have no kick about what you give him for bossing the building of it."

"All right, all right," said Wallace, mollified. "I am perhaps touchy about that Bird's Eye deal myself. I've never been happy when remembering it. But I wasn't acting for myself and so I——"

"Agreed to the price he asked," interrupted Galbraith, just as, in loyalty to Wallace, he used to comment to those who adversely criticized the deal, despite his own private feeling of the inadequacy of the price and his remembrance of Sinclair's self-confessed "queerness" that made the swift closing with him smack of taking advantage of that queerness.

At that point Eleanor came into the room. Each time he saw her Galbraith was impressed afresh with her appearance. He admired this tall, slender girl, nearly as tall as her husband, with very dark hair and blue eyes, the direct opposite of Marion's golden hair and black eyes. She was wearing a riding costume, he noticed, and had a coat over her arm, and she entered as one prepared for a promised, an arranged, outing.

"Easy to look at," Galbraith had commented on her to himself at first sight of her, and thought so again that day.

He got to his feet. When reading the letter in which Wallace had told of his marriage to the daughter of Laurence he had wondered what manner of woman she might be. He was prepared—though why thus prepared he did not deeply inquire of himself—to find her patronizing, lacking the friendliness of manner that he received from Wallace. The unhappiness caused by that erroneous anticipation had added to his happiness on finding her as she was, unpretentious and direct.

"I did not know you were here, Mr. Galbraith," said Eleanor. "Am I interrupting a business talk?"

"No. It's all over," said Wallace, rising also. "Thanks to motor cars, Jock, we'll be able today to do what I've longed to do since coming west this time. We're going out for my wife to have a look at the chosen site—my chosen site for our house—to see if it is hers. If it is, good; if it isn't—good again! I've sent word to the second placer camp at Gold Creek for them to have horses ready for us there, for the fellows at the garage tell me that though one can go by car across the river on a new bridge to the Indian reserve side—our side," he explained with a nod to Eleanor, "there is only an old trail along the benches north from there to where we want to go, and it would be slow progress. It's up to her to decide if we're to live there. But once we get the smelter in full blast here there is going to be more than money out of it for the people of Elkhorn City. There is going to be the inevitable smoke. There will be the inevitable smell of a smelter town. And out there is just the smell of the sagebrush and the pines."

Galbraith picked up his hat.

"I'll be seeing you when you get back, then," said he.

"Yes," Wallace replied, "but whether we decide to build our home out there or not the ranch goes on. That's all settled."

II

They left Elkhorn City about an hour after lunch and were back an hour before dinner. It had taken Wallace, on his first visit to the valley, many days to go from Camp Elkhorn to where he could look across at the place that had seemed ideal to him for a home site, but on that first trip he had, of course, stopped, as we know, at both of the tributary creeks to look for colour. Even allowing for that, the difference in travel time impressed him.

"The motor car," he commented, "causes one to alter one's view of what is near and what is far. I wonder what David Thompson and Simon Fraser, and all those fellows who made history in the west, would say could they come back and see our 'devil wagons' rushing along these modern gravelled roads?"

On their return, as they went upstairs, they found Galbraith sitting by the writing table at the landing. It was for them that he was waiting that evening as he was anxious to know the result of the outing. "Whether we decide to build our home out there or not the ranch goes on," Wallace had said. Galbraith knew that his job was safe, but he hoped that the Wallaces would build for themselves there. Wallace himself, he felt, was a friend, and for the sake of his friend he wanted his friend's wife to look forward to living there.

He rose as they came to the landing and merely looked his question.

"What a beautiful valley!" exclaimed Eleanor. "And what an afternoon we have had. We stopped at Mr. Jackson's store for a chat and we stopped at Placer Creek and Gold Creek for a glimpse of the hydraulic work going on. They had horses ready for us and we rode the rest of the way to the chosen place."

Her eyes were bright, her face was aglow. She stopped as if suddenly she thought she had said enough. In her mind she was back again at "the chosen place," looking out over the valley, looking up at the peaks that glittered in a high wedge of the western slope. She was remembering the sound of small breezes passing in a stand of pines on the edge of the knoll. Somehow she would have felt embarrassed with herself had she tried to speak of her pleasure in hearing that. As soon would she have thought of quoting a line out of one of the old poets that had come to her there, as tried to express in her own words what it meant to her, did to her—a line about the wind in pines and how when it ceased no other sound succeeded.

"It's a perfect site for a house," she ended, for that she could say without a sense of self-inflicted embarrassment. It had no more of poetry in it than an estate agent's baldest blurb.

Galbraith considered her thoughtfully. Would it last? he wondered. Would her enthusiasm last, or was it a passing emotion, or had she said all that merely because she knew that her husband's mind was set on the place? He thought it would last, he thought she spoke sincerely, he thought that she was as greatly taken by that site for a house as Wallace had been.

"I hope," said he, "that Mrs. Galbraith to be will like the location as much as you do."

"Mrs. Galbraith to be!" exclaimed Eleanor. "Have you picked her out or is she just a not impossible she, somebody you have yet to meet?"

"Oh, no, I've picked her out. We're going to be married—we are going to be married just as soon as we have a roof over our heads out there."

"Somebody from your old home back in Muskoka?" inquired Wallace, slightly disingenuous. He was not going to say, "I know who she is." He was wily in such matters. One could never take it for granted from seeing a fellow constantly with a certain girl that she was the one he would wed. Surprises were often sprung. "No," said Galbraith. "She comes from the prairies."

"Do I know her? Have we seen her?" asked Wallace, with face so innocent that Eleanor could hardly restrain a laugh.

"She waited on you at lunch today," said Galbraith.

"Oh, the little girl with the fair hair and dark eyes. A fine lass, a fine lass," said Wallace. "Congratulations, Jock."

"I knew!" said Eleanor. "I've known ever since we came to Elkhorn."

Galbraith was astonished to hear this.

"How did you know?" he demanded.

"Not by what they call woman's intuition," she responded with a laugh, "only by woman's observation. I could tell merely by watching you order ham and eggs from her. Even from an order of ham and eggs it was clear." She held out her hand. "I hope you'll be very happy," she said.

"Aye, congratulations, Jock," said Wallace again. "A fine lass I'm sure, a fine lass."

Up in their room Eleanor turned to her husband and spoke her wish again, though in a different tone.

"I hope they'll be happy," said she.

"You doubt it?"

"I wouldn't say that, Bob, but I've always felt, from the first time I saw her, that that girl has a story. I trust, if she has, it is not one that will upset things should it come out—if he doesn't know it already."

III

Eighty miles off, in the valley, at a salary that astonished those who knew what he had received for his mineral claim, Harold Sinclair started to superintend the building of the ranch houses. By Wallace's instructions the manager's house and the bunk houses were being erected first, his own home left to the last—for that winter it was not to be occupied. Eleanor would be going east for Christmas and intended to remain there well into the new year, and it was decided they would not take up residence near West Fork till late in the spring.

The God of Contentment—you will remember him—had gone back to China and Wallace had arranged for his assistant to take care of the new house through the winter. On Eleanor's return Wong Li (who, it had transpired in talk with him at the old store shortly before Ho Sang's decision to retire, was something of a chef) would be retained as cook and general servant for them.

With Harold Sinclair overseeing the building of the houses, Wong Li installed as caretaker for the time being and future servant, and Jock Galbraith as ranch manager, Robert Wallace's mind inevitably went back to the day of his arrival at

Roaring Camp Elkhorn. The only other person closely associated with him on his first visit—Maxwell Harker—he saw occasionally in Elkhorn. Harker seemed as irresponsible as ever but improved in some ways, Wallace thought. He had left the livery stable and was running a freight and passenger truck of his own between Elkhorn and West Fork.

He stopped Wallace on the street one day to ask if he knew if there was any truth in the rumour that there was to be an extension of the railway from Elkhorn to West Fork.

"You can bank on it," Wallace replied.

"I knew if anyone could tell me it was more than a rumour you could," said Harker.

"It's coming eventually," Wallace assured him. "I have it on good authority that the line is to be surveyed soon—this fall, in fact—and construction work will begin next year."

"And when the trains run the year after," said Harker, "good-bye to my freight and passenger business. I've an offer of some farming land near West Fork and perhaps I'll take it while the offer is good. A settler! Fancy me a settler! But not married and settled yet. Well, we'll see," and he slapped Wallace on the shoulder.

"Why," thought Wallace to himself, "should I find a slap on the shoulder from one man pleasing and from another—well, annoying?"

IV

In October—and that was earlier than Eleanor had intended to go east—Wallace was called back to be present at conferences of the Company and his wife went with him.

To Galbraith there was disappointment in their sudden departure, for he had looked forward to them being in Elkhorn for his marriage. There was disappointment on that score for the Wallaces also, especially for Eleanor. For Marion, however, though she did not confess it to Jock, there was more of relief than regret. Always, at thought of them being at her wedding, she had felt a touch of something like stage fright though she could not have told why, both Robert and his wife very friendly of manner toward her ever since the day on which they had been told of the engagement.

The day before they left, Eleanor and Wallace motored out to the ranch. With Wong Li they took measurements for carpets and curtains that Eleanor would select while they were away, heard the little winds go trooping through the stand of pines on the knoll's edge, listened to an old Swede—who was putting the last touches to a septic tank—deliver a discourse on plumbing, saw the tall barns in the high lofts of which hay for winter feed was to be stored (next year they would grow their own), saw both the manager's home and the men's quarters. There was painting and inside finishing to be done, but the outside work was almost completed.

It was a clear day of Indian summer. New snow was on the peaks that peeped down through notches of the forested range and the trees on the ridges of these were like stalks of silver, each individually clear in the crystal air. The middle slopes still showed the constant green of the conifers, the snow line not yet come down so far. On the sandy benches the deciduous trees had not shed their leaves but night frosts had crisped them and turned them from green to gold. There was an ambient peace. It was a valley of tranquillity.

Going and coming they saw groups of men with theodolites and chains, surveying for the promised railway extension.

"I'm glad to have seen it before the change," said Eleanor.

"Progress, progress!" Robert responded. "I'm going to be selling the railway company ties for their steel to sit on, just as I sold the telephone company poles for their wires."

"You saw it first when there were not even telephone poles," said she.

"Yes. It was just like being one of the old explorers, coming in here, and that only five years ago. These adventurous fellows who made the history of this land—wouldn't they stare if they could see it now?"

She made no reply, deep in thought, thinking of the making of history, the makers of history, as the car carried them back to Elkhorn, its tires raising a brisk snapping sound on the gravel.

"Some day we'll have this road hard-surfaced," he remarked, still with his eyes on the future; but he was speaking as much to himself as to her and that she did not make any reply, deep in thought, was neither here nor there to him.

CHAPTER NINE

Out at the ranch that first winter Marion had the feeling of beginning a new life. The story of her past that Galbraith's sympathy had drawn from her became the authentic one in her mind. As a lawyer, listening at first skeptically to a client but anon, for the sake of the case and a hearty defence, with valiant credulity, she came to feel toward herself and that story: She had been driven from home, thrown on a cynical world when young and inexperienced; bravely she had accepted disillusion, disappointment, desertion, and now she had her reward in a man who loved her.

These were happy days for both, setting up house together in that bright October. Marion shared to the full, it seemed, her husband's pleasure in his surroundings. She watched, daily, the descent of winter, marvelled at how straight was the line along the mountains where the white of the upper country and the green of the forests met. It might have been drawn by a ruler, said she. She took delight in Jock's simple delights, in seeing one day, for instance, a great flight of geese rise from the sloughs by the river and in hearing their voluble honking as they set off southward; in seeing dragon flies, when the sun was warm, shuttling again, darts of blue, among the rushes and then, looking up from them to the peaks, the high ranges silvered with winter. When the first snow sprinkled the foothills and the benches on either side of the valley she saw only beauty in the scene.

There were callers, after a decent interval to allow of her getting her new house in order. They came not only from West Fork, five miles off, and from the farms between that small centre of a post office, a church, and a few stores, but from Gold Creek also. They came, some riding, but most in their cars, a few even in farm trucks. She returned these calls cheerfully, sometimes on horseback, sometimes driven by Jock. He had but recently learned to drive a car and he looked a little odd, as a horseman gone astray, sitting at the wheel with the ten-gallon hat of his calling on his head.

The motor car—that had come more into common use since she ran away from her dismal home in the prairie town—made life different everywhere, changed, as Wallace once remarked, one's notion of what is near and what is far.

When Marion was alone her thoughts at times, variously jogged—perhaps by some chance remark of a visitor after the manner of what had irked her at home—went back to her early years and there would be a rush of bitterness in her heart, old rancours reviving, remembering how she had always been the odd one, the one to be watched, criticized, "picked on" by her sisters. For all in her life at the coast that had not been quite as she had described it, presented it, to her husband she felt that they were responsible.

The majority of the women who called upon her, and upon whom she called in return, were amicable of mind but there were some who occasionally annoyed her by what she called their "slant," their attitude to things. There were "pin pricks" from them. A bridge had been built across the Elkhorn River to the ranch and one of these visitors asked her one day:

"Did Mr. Wallace have to pay for the building of that bridge or did he get the government to do it for him?"

"I don't know," Marion answered. "I really never thought of that. I have no idea."

"I expect he would pull wires and get the government to do it for him," said the caller. "Some people know how to get things done for them. We had a job even to get the snow plough to turn off the highway a hundred yards to make a road into our place."

There was a ferreting look in the lady's eyes. Marion disliked her, and there was that about her that took the girl's mind back to old days at home when she used to get up and explode: "At it again!" and flounce out of the house. The influence of the early home did indeed seem to be "most potent."

She reported this talk to Jock when he came in at suppertime, but it did not seem to have any importance for him.

"Oh, curious, just curious, I guess," said he, dismissing it as of no account.

Marion had hoped that he would say more than that, voice some strong caustic male comment that would be consoling to her. The lack of it made her feel almost as if he said that she was too touchy.

December was a busy month, preparing for Christmas. Marion was happy enough making her first Christmas puddings, a large fruit cake, many mince pies, for they had asked the boys from the bunk house over to dinner with them on Christmas Day and she wanted to show off her culinary gifts, especially to Shorty the cook. She ordered artificial mistletoe and red paper wreaths from one of the large departmental stores on the Prairie, but in places where the snow had melted she found patches of Oregon grape and this she used instead of holly. It all meant a great deal of extra work but Jock's pleasure in the finished result amply rewarded her.

To bring in the New Year the two of them went to West Fork. It was after that the first shadow came on them. Harker was there and several times he danced with Marion. Galbraith, knowing him as he did, was not happy over that. It was not that he feared for his wife's virtue; she could look after herself if necessary. It was only that, knowing Harker as he did, he felt it was all wrong that the fellow should be there dancing with "decent" girls, single or married.

Of that feeling not a word did he utter to Marion. She might as well enjoy herself, he considered. She did not know Harker's reputation with women: so mused Jock in the bright hall at West Fork, whether rightly or wrongly. It was by a remark of Marion's next day, at home again, that he allowed himself a word on the subject. She was still talking of how she had enjoyed the dance.

"And that Mr. Harker," she said, "dances divinely."

"That Mr. Harker," remarked Galbraith, "is no good."

Marion raised her head and laughter bubbled from her.

"Oh, jealousy!" she cried out. "Why, you're jealous, Jock!"

"Jealous nothing!" he replied. "I know him. He's no good."

"Well, I like him," said Marion.

Galbraith sighed, attempting tolerance.

"Perhaps he has mended," he said. "I know what we used to think of him in town."

"He was always quite polite to me at the hotel there," she insisted.

"He'd better have been," said Galbraith, "or I'd have wrung his neck."

That talk left the first shadow on them. It troubled him so greatly that he felt need of something to dispel it. Next day he suggested they should go down to Elkhorn to see the moving picture. The intention was to heal himself—and Marion too if she felt depressed over that slight difference of opinion—with a little change, but the effect was otherwise.

The mayor and aldermen of Elkhorn had had the city specially lighted for the festive season with strings of electric bulbs across the main street. The storekeepers left their windows lit after closing so that Elkhorn had the aspect of a metropolis—though a minor metropolis. As they drove in Marion suddenly discovered that she had not been as contented at the ranch as she had imagined. The changing lights of the day on the peaks had not been enough for her. That, she realized, was a lonesome place from which she had come. There was nothing there so lovely as these bright windows. As they walked along the street to the motion-picture house, dinner over at the New Occidental, there came a fresh soft fall of snow. They were passing a jeweller's window as it began and she stopped dead there.

"Isn't this lovely?" she said. "Look at the things all sparkling in the window, the rings in the open cases, the silver cups, and the snow out here."

"Yes," Jock agreed, "it's pretty. But the mountains to the east of the valley in the winter sunsets are grander."

"Too grand," she replied quickly, as they walked on, "and after the light has gone out on them it's awfully dead. And when the coyotes yelp in the dark—ooh!"

"I like to hear them. They tell a fellow the whole world is not clamped down under paving stones." In all weather, in all

seasons, to Galbraith the Elkhorn Valley was infinitely preferable to the Gorbals in Glasgow.

So one effect of the visit to town was not the one intended, not the one hoped for when he suggested it. The intention had been to ease his heart of a feeling of depression at a sense of rift (if but a small rift) in their happiness, their oneness, to ease her heart too if she felt as he did. And here they were, instead, voicing differences to each other.

But, Galbraith told himself, he had no desire to make anyone over to his pleasure. In the dark hall he put his hand on hers and, at her warm responsive pressure, he considered that he had been allowing small matters to affect him far beyond their worth.

II

Robert Wallace did not return to Elkhorn till late March and then again Company affairs had his first attention. In April the smelter—the building of which had commenced the previous April, soon after purchase of the site—was ready to operate and the population of Elkhorn, Elkhorn City no longer, was doubled, trebled. Not only Company ore from the Bird's Eye mine was treated there but ore from the mine that had been responsible for Camp Elkhorn, and from others more recently opened, but the richest of all was that of the Company's Bird's Eye—bought for a mere five thousand dollars.

The smelter was immediately busy, its employees working in day and night shifts. At all hours the streets were thronged. Electric signs over the cafés announced "Open Day and Night." Off duty, the workers strolled on the sidewalks, smoking cigars with an air of affluence. From the back of all the tobacconists' day and night could be heard the shuffling of cards and clack of poker chips.

Strings of pack horses, with no one in attendance, were often to be seen loping into town and turning in at the doors of their stables. They had been taken by a prospector to his camp or cabin, not so far out as to require a wrangler to bring them in, unloaded there and turned adrift with a smack on their croups to go home by themselves. To the old Opera House came regular touring companies to present their plays, mostly hilarious; and the more recently erected motion-picture house, superlatively ornate, was packed nightly.

Toward the end of the month Wallace phoned Galbraith to come in to town to see him to talk over the winter's accomplishments, of how the stock had fared under his care, and to present his log of work done and his account books.

"I doubt if I'll be able to get out for some time," said Wallace. "I'm going to be busy here at the smelter with a lot that has gathered while I've been away, and with plans for the future that the board discussed. I'm sending a man up to West Fork to see about an extension by the Power and Light Company for electricity to serve the mine. We've had our own little plant hitherto, as you know, but it's not enough. I remember the candlestick made out of a file that Harold Sinclair had, and him dodging under the leaks in the roof with it. File candlesticks, then carbide lamps, then electric light—all in no time! They were to wire the ranch houses. I had the estimate when I was away, and passed it."

"They did it. Telephone, electric light, and all modern conveniences," said Galbraith, "and yet from the windows you can still see the deer louping by."

Memory of an old talk came to Wallace.

"That's better than living in the Gorbals in Glasgow," said he.

"I hope to tell you!" exclaimed Galbraith, in the slang of the land and with the accent of the city from which he had come.

"My little logging venture on the side I was able to help along further while I was away," said Wallace, "by getting the supplying of ties for the railway."

"The ranch comes last."

"It will have to for the present, additionally so seeing that I am now a director of Laurentian Mining and Smelting Company," Wallace replied, "as well as in full charge of the Company's activities here."

"You remind me of a conversation I overheard one day at the New Occidental between a clergyman and the editor of the *Miner*. They were discussing Shakespeare's drama and they agreed that only kings and queens and people of independent

means could attend to what they called the Grand Passions all the time without interruption."

Wallace laughed.

"Meaning that the ranch has to be a hobby with me instead of a grand passion?" he asked. "But with you in charge, Jock, I can feel content for the time being. It will be a paying hobby, especially if we get the supplying of beef to the railway construction camps in addition to all our other markets. I want you to think over what we should ask when they call for tenders."

"There's just one thing worrying me about the ranch," said Galbraith.

"And what's that?"

"Too many people may get the idea, or imitate yours, of running cattle on the range there, with the way Elkhorn has gone ahead, and they'll overstock for sure. That has happened in other valleys."

"Then," said Wallace, "if that happens we'll sell out while the selling will be good and take to breeding horses. Your middle name is Horses and you could handle that."

"I could. After all, it's a fitter place for hosses. The Indians' hosses rustle for themselves through the winter and cattle can't do that. And there are wild hosses back in the hills. They get through the winters pretty well; a bit lean in the spring, but they get through. Not that we'd allow special hosses just to fend for themselves."

"Well," said Wallace, "we'll keep an eye on this expected cattle competition and if it looks like harming us we'll quit before it's poor game for everybody. I see by your record of work done you've prepared for raising feed next winter. We'll see in the spring whether the range is to be crowded or not. My wife," he went on, letting that subject go, "won't be out for a wee while yet. Her mother has not been well and she'll be staying with her until she's at least convalescent. If I can get to the ranch before she comes back I'll do so."

The snow had gone from the lower levels when, early in May, Eleanor sent a telegram to say she was on her way west. Wallace phoned the good news to Galbraith, asking him to run into town in the car to take them out.

The train from the junction was not due till afternoon and Galbraith expected that Mrs. Wallace would not wish to go up the valley till next morning, but he went in early on the day of her arrival so as to make some purchases for Marion and be "all set," as he told her on leaving home, for an early start back the following day.

Eleanor, however, expressed the wish to go out at once, that very evening. Thus near to her new home she could not bear to stay a night in Elkhorn. So they set off. It had been Indian summer when she went east. Gold of another sort was in the valley on her return, not of a season's end—the leaves of cottonwood and birch like discs and sequins—but of a season's beginning; the silver stems of the birches holding up frail jets of yellow and gummy buds peeping on the cottonwoods. The tamaracks were just dusted with gold.

"I think all the seasons here must be lovely," she said, as the car chirred on its way. "Did Marion find the winter long?"

"No. No, I don't think so," said Galbraith. "We had quite a crowd over for dinner at Christmas—the boys from the bunk house—and we were at West Fork for several dances, and came down to Elkhorn also once or twice to the movies and stayed for a night."

"Talking of West Fork," said Wallace, "has that fellow Harker done what he intended—taken up land?"

"Him! Not that I've heard of. He's still running a freight business between Elkhorn and West Fork. Will we stop at Jackson's?"

"Yes, let's stop and say 'Hullo' to the old fellow."

They alighted for a few moments at Jackson's store. The old trading post of logs had been whitewashed. Jackson came out to welcome them.

"Well, you had to come back to God's country," he said to Eleanor.

"Yes, and I'm glad to be back," said she.

"What's the news?" asked Wallace.

Jackson laughed.

"Progress has indeed come to us here," he replied. "Only five years back I could go into Camp Elkhorn and leave the store open, and if the Indians wanted anything they went in and took it and left the price in money or in trade—some pelt or another—on the shelf. I can't do that now. If I left it open some of the white trash that's coming around would think it a good chance to get away with a sack of flour or beans or, if I stayed away long enough, with the whole works! And the Indians are learning of them. I wouldn't trust all of them now."

"We have brought them down to our level," said Wallace, with a laugh.

"That's no josh!" said Jackson.

Passing on from the old store they did not stop at Placer Creek or Gold Creek because of Eleanor's eagerness to be home. They came to where the side road to the Indian reserve swerved towards the river and could see the bridge. They were on the point of going straight on, had in fact passed the side road by a few yards, when they saw a column of smoke rising across the river.

"That smoke is from a house!" exclaimed Wallace.

"It's the chief's place," said Galbraith. "He built himself a house last year to be upsides with the white folks coming in. It's afire too. That isn't just a chimney. It's coming out everywhere, coming out the windows."

"There doesn't seem to be anyone around there today," said Wallace. "It reminds me of the first time we saw the village from here."

"Perhaps they are all away on different jobs. Some of them are doing teaming work at your logging camps. The new tie camps have given employment to a lot of them. The others may be looking after their hosses back in the foothills and have taken the squaws and kids with them."

"We'd better get across, Jock."

Galbraith backed the car to the forks of the road and they crossed the bridge to the reserve.

There were no flames so far but an increasing volume of smoke eddied up from the house. It was a gaunt building of two storeys, and having no veranda at its base, it looked additionally gaunt.

"I hope the old chief isn't in there with his squaw. He don't often go out now," said Galbraith. "I hope they're not taking their siesta in the place."

"Indeed it's to be hoped not."

Galbraith had no sooner stopped the car than Wallace was out and off, running, to the house. Jock, running also, followed him, Eleanor, alighting, remained there but as an onlooker. There was nothing she could do. She saw her husband at the door, saw it give before him as, through a volley of smoke, he rushed inside, Galbraith close on his heels.

"They'll be suffocated!" she thought, seeing how dense the smoke was. "Anybody who might be in there must have been asphyxiated already."

The door having been left open the smoke coiled out voluminously under the lintel.

"They'll be suffocated, both of them," she thought again, anguished.

Then there was Robert coming out bent under a burden. He stooped and deposited it on the ground. A bundle of clothing it seemed to be, and he had no sooner laid it down than he wheeled and dashed back into the house.

Desperately Eleanor waited. There was a sudden crash, the glass of a window having been shattered by internal heat. She could see a red glow within the smoking shell. Next moment she saw Robert and Galbraith take shape in the doorway, carrying a man between them. They bore him well away from the house and deposited him beside the bundle of clothing just in time, it seemed, for flames leapt through the roof, blazed, fluttered, roared. The whole building was

ignited. Then the roof fell in as a great volley of sparks shot high.

The man they had carried out rose to his feet spluttering and spitting and bent over the bundle beside him. As he did so it moved—and Eleanor realized that the seeming heap of clothing was an Indian woman who sat up gasping, rubbing her eyes with the back of a hand.

Eleanor hurried to Robert's side. His face was blackened; he was gasping for breath.

"I'm all right," he spluttered to her.

Then the Indian spoke.

"All right," he said also. "House go. Him and me"—*Him* was evidently his squaw; the one pronoun served them both for men and women—"him and me take a little sleep. God-damn. Too bad house go," he added in a level voice.

With a lurch the woman rose and stood there rubbing her face again with the back of a hand, moisture trickling from her eyes making streaks down her grimed face. They stood side by side, the chief and his squaw, looking at the blaze resignedly, resignedly or stolidly: Eleanor could not tell which. The walls fell in atop the fallen roof and another volley of sparks went up in air. They all moved back a little way because of the heat from the burning wreckage.

"Where is everybody?" asked Wallace.

The woman pointed to the foothills.

"Some go to camp there," said she. She turned and pointed north. "Some in Indian camp near white man tie-camp."

"It's a good thing we came by right now," he observed, beginning to cough again.

"Yes," said she.

"Yes," said her husband.

That was all.

"Not a word of thanks!" thought Eleanor, indignantly.

Robert Wallace and Jock Galbraith were smoke-blackened as badly as these two. Wallace was coughing violently, Galbraith also.

"Well, you are all right now?" Wallace at last found voice to inquire.

"Yes, all right now. Too bad house go," said the Indian again.

That was all: Too bad house go.

Wallace went down to the river to wash his hands and face, Galbraith following him. Eleanor waited for them beside the silent chief and his wife. They stood there so expressionless that, looking aslant at them again, she could not make up her mind if their attitude was of stolidity or stoicism. At least, she decided, they seemed as little agitated over the loss of their home as grateful for having been saved from incineration.

The two white men came back, Wallace drying hands and face with a pocket handkerchief and Galbraith using his scarf for a towel.

"We'll be moving on," said Wallace, and turned away.

Galbraith and Eleanor walked after him.

"And not a word of thanks!" exclaimed Eleanor as they got into the car again.

"They won't forget," Galbraith assured her. "That old chief is a fine man. I've seen a lot of him since we came out here. You made good with them both today, Bob," he added, addressing Wallace.

Eleanor's brows lifted in astonishment. She had never heard Galbraith call her husband by his first name before, and it

seemed to her hardly in order for him to do so, hardly right from employed to employer. She did not deeply object to it, did not resent it, but was definitely astonished.

It was, actually, the first time Jock had done so. That sharing of danger together, which Eleanor had witnessed, was cause of it. It was, still formally, Mr. Wallace with whom he went into the burning house; it was with Bob Wallace that he came out. Spontaneously he had spoken at that moment. They were not only employer and employed. They were friends, additionally so after that experience; and they came from the same city.

III

They met two great trucks laden with poles—part of Wallace's business; and a little further on two huge trucks laden with concentrates—part of the Company's business. They hummed on past a cluster of shacks, board shacks, newly erected but not built as if for permanence.

"To house the railway construction gangs," explained Galbraith to Eleanor.

"Oh," she said, and that was all, with a nod of the head to signify that she had heard.

She recalled a remark made by her husband some time earlier, a remark to the effect that there was no more history in the land, that its history was of the past. To him it had ended when Sir Alexander Mackenzie, passing through the Rockies, came to an inlet where there was salt water and the tides rose and fell. To him it had ended when David Thompson came to the headwaters of Columbia and Lewis and Clark to Columbia's estuary.

There was what is called a romantic streak in Robert, she thought, and she tried to recall a line of Kipling about how Romance brought in the nine-fifteen train, and a poem of Masefield's that began with galleons and ended with a tramp steamer with salt-caked smokestack "butting up the Channel in the mad March days." It was truly all history. She wished, nevertheless, that she had seen Elkhorn before it was even Elkhorn City, when it was Camp Elkhorn, reminiscent of Mark Twain's *Roughing It* and Bret Harte's Sierra stories. Being no sentimentalist she realized that she might not have been as comfortable in Camp Elkhorn as in Elkhorn; but past and present—that was the core of her meditation—were both history.

"I hear," said Wallace, "that the Elkhorn and West Fork Boards of Trade are going to do their best to get the Provincial Government to tar this road. Progress! Well, here's where we turn off."

They swung aside from the highway into the road that led to the ranch. It was Wallace, there, who sat markedly silent, meditative, as they drove across the last meadow. That was the place where Harker had talked and Galbraith had listened at first with laughter and derisive comment and then with a remark that had made Max stiffen, combative. It all came back to Wallace's mind. He remembered the steely look in Galbraith's eyes in response to the other man's flash of resentment, remembered how Galbraith had taken up a fishing rod and gone off riverwards with a departing sound of contempt, and seemed to hear Harker's voice again: "He's vulgar, that what he is." He smiled, remembering that. He recalled how, following Jock to the river, he had stood there in a day-dream looking at the knoll on the opposite bank, across the murmuring water, and hearing the evening wind come down from the heights like a sigh—a daydream of which he had not spoken when asked what he was thinking about. Had he known Jock as well then as he knew him now he might have been more self-revealing. This land, he was aware, had a great hold on both of them.

"You get a peep of the flats from here," said Galbraith, breaking into his memories, "where I plan ploughing up and sowing for next winter's feed. You can see the south end of the piece of land you bought for the home ranch. I can just pick out the fence at the end of it. Beyond is range land."

But neither Wallace nor his wife seemed to be interested in that. They were watching for the glimpse of their home—and there was the bridge before them. The river was running full because of melting snows high among the mountains. It would not be easy to get across it without a bridge, he considered, even down at the old Indian fording place. Progress, progress. There was progress even with the Indians who lived much in the past. They too had a bridge now. He looked down at the flashing of the water and for a moment had a sharp memory of a Scottish river that he knew; yet, he was content where he was.

Feeling so, he asked himself if he was sentimental, sentimental in the disparaging sense of the word, in an emotion of

affection he had for a land in which he had no wish to live? Its place names were still music for him, from Appin to Galloway. He found deep satisfaction even in the thought that he came from that land, knew that land; but the place names here were as magical to him: Cariboo, Kootenay, Okanagan. The music of Elkhorn River flowing under that bridge, his bridge, was as good to his ears as the celebrated music of Tweed. He was content where he was.

There was the knoll, the perfect site for a home, and there was the home perched on it—as he had dreamt. The windows reflected the afternoon's light. Along the bench were the manager's house, the men's quarters, the tall barns, all built of logs, and the corrals with the shadow of their bars stretching out from them, somehow very pleasing to the eye. Back of the rolling benches he could see the dots of cattle moving with their shadows.

"It is the perfect site," said Eleanor, and his content was complete.

The road took a bend in going up the rise and there Eleanor asked Galbraith to stop.

"Drop me here," said she, "and I'll just run over to see Marion—say 'Hullo' to her. I'll be after you before you get the things out of the car. I just want to say 'Hullo' to her."

"That's nice of you, Mrs. Wallace," answered Galbraith. "She will appreciate it."

She gave neither of them any opportunity for any courtesies of alighting, opened the door for herself and leapt out the moment the car stopped, and went running along the level stretch to the manager's house. Up the veranda steps she hurried and knocked at the door. There was no answer so she opened it and, with a sense of being out in the west again, hailed in the manner she had learnt while living there.

"Anybody around?" she called.

There was no answer. Marion, she knew, must be "around" for she had seen smoke coming from the kitchen chimney. She ran down the steps and walked round to the back of the house, passing, as she went, a freight truck that stood by the gable. At the kitchen porch she called again: "Anybody around?"

There was a sudden scurrying within, a sound as of a chair turned over. Then Marion Galbraith appeared at the door, patting her hair, her cheeks very bright, her dark eyes aglow.

"Oh, Mrs. Wallace!" she exclaimed, "it's you. I did not expect you today. I thought you would stop a night at Elkhorn, but you must have come straight on as soon as you arrived. My, but it's nice to see you!" She paused there and then: "Won't you come in?" she suggested.

"Not now, I just ran over to say 'Hullo.' We'll be seeing you later."

"Well, that was very nice of you," said Marion. There was a sound in the kitchen and, with a little pucker of her brows, she looked round. "You must stop for a minute," she persisted. "Mr. Harker is here. You know him. He just came—a few minutes ago—to see Jock about something."

Max Harker appeared at that. Eleanor was never attracted to him. She had, of course, been introduced to him and seen him frequently while living at the New Occidental. On the streets there they had exchanged bows; that was all.

"How do you do, Mrs. Wallace?" said he. "Back to God's country again, I see."

"How do you do, Mr. Harker. Yes, back again. Well, we'll see you later," she said again to Marion, and she was off.

As she walked across to her house she frowned at the ground.

"Funny!" she said to herself. "Funny!"

She walked on with Marion's face still before her, saw her patting her corn-coloured hair, saw the brightness of her black eyes. She passed round to the front where Galbraith was taking out the last of the suitcases they had brought with them. Wong Li, helping him, greeted her with his Oriental smile and a phrase of welcome of the country:

"Ah, Mrs. Wallace, you come back God's country."

"You saw Marion?" asked Galbraith. "I guess she was surprised. She wasn't expecting us till tomorrow."

"Yes, oh, yes, I saw her," answered Eleanor, and that was all.

"How do you think she's looking?"

"Just fine," said Eleanor. "I've never seen her looking better."

PART III

CHAPTER TEN

Robert Wallace was much talked of that year in Elkhorn, West Fork, at Placer Creek and Gold Creek, in the logging camps, and by dairy farmers and truck farmers at both ends of the valley.

The view was general that with the whole district so rapidly forging ahead, its representative in parliament should be a local man—one who would see that when appropriations were made for roads and the like a fair share would come his way, their way. Wallace was suggested by several as one who could be relied upon to boost for Elkhorn, but what were his politics? Nobody knew.

The accountant in the smelter offices could not understand why anyone should feel uncertainty over the question of Robert's politics.

"The man is a gentleman," said he, "and in any country, all the world over, a gentleman always votes conservative."

That rigid opinion, told from one to another, gave considerable merriment to the operatives at the smelter as revelation of a quaint mind. They were, besides, by no means sure that Wallace would be, by those standards, a gentlemanly voter.

"Wally may easily be a liberal," they said.

"He may be nothing at all," said one. "He's done a lot for Elkhorn as well as for himself but I doubt if he's a party man."

"I don't give a damn," said the Mayor of Elkhorn, "what he is. I always vote for a man, not the party he represents. If Wallace could be got to stand for election I'd vote for him even if he started up a new party and called it The Anarchists." (The Mayor was apt to be extreme in his pronouncements.) "I'll sound him the next time I see him."

He had opportunity to do so a few days later when Robert came to town to see the Divisional Superintendent of the railway who was staying at the Occidental Hotel. Several good hotels were in Elkhorn by this time, but the Occidental remained the one favoured by visitors and also by those who had known the place when it was Camp Elkhorn. Even in the short life of the town the New Occidental had taken to itself, or been granted by general consent, a quality as of an old historic inn—all in six years instead of six centuries. That one of the new hotels had an elevator, and that in the Occidental guests had still to climb the stairs to their rooms was not enough to oust it from the lead in their minds.

Mr. Hudson, the Mayor, was standing in the entrance hall with a group of citizens when Robert Wallace entered.

"The very man I want to see," said Hudson.

"Can it wait?" asked Wallace. "I have an appointment with a man upstairs and——"

"It won't take a minute," answered the Mayor. "I just want to ask you what are your politics?"

"You would not," replied Wallace, with a twinkle in his eyes, "expect me to belong to the illiberal party, would you?"

Having thus parried the inquiry he passed on, leaving his hearers uncertain. There was no proof in his words that he was a conservative. There might only be evidence that he had a turn for the sport called "leg-pulling."

"Well," said Mr. Hudson, when Wallace had disappeared beyond the landing on the stairs, "I tell you what I think of him. I think he'd make a damn good lieutenant-governor for the Province. He'd walk into Buckingham Palace like a man to kiss the royal hand or get the acolyte"—the editor of the *Elkhorn Miner*, sitting in one of the window seats, smiled benignly at that—"or whatever it is a lieutenant-governor gets when he goes over to the Old Country to call on the King. He would do well for us in the Dominion Government, let alone the Provincial, but if he ain't interested even in a seat in Victoria it's O.K. by me. He's a good man right here, even out of politics. Everything he touches turns to gold for himself and the Company and for us. He's like Mundus."

"Midas," said the editor.

(In a recent issue of his paper, among *Pithy Sayings*, there had been one to the effect that only the ill-mannered offer advice unasked or correct the errors of others, but *Mundus*, following so soon upon *acolyte*, was too much for him.)

"Yes, that's the guy I mean," said the Mayor.

It was clear that year that Galbraith's prophecy regarding the overstocking of the range was going to be fulfilled. Wallace acted promptly just as, on hearing the prophecy, he said he would. He sold out while the market was definitely remunerative. Others could have the last of the grass. He could sell them feed for the winter, but in place of cattle he would go in for horses. People were apt to use the word "cayuse" with a tone of contempt, but he had been reading of what was being done in South America with the criollo—and what was a cayuse but a criollo, a native-born descendant of imported sires, often showing, from muzzle to hoof, its excellent ancestry?

Galbraith welcomed the change. He had always, even when cow-punching for a living, had a hankering for horse-breeding. "Horse" was his middle name, his friends said; "horse" was where he lived.

"One thing the motor car will never put an end to," said Wallace, "and that is polo ponies. These horses that you herded the cattle on, Jock, these cow ponies that you trained so that they could turn on a dollar, as you used to say, have a lot of the best points of polo ponies in them."

They rode out together into the little remote, secluded side valleys where wild horses watchfully and nervously roamed and managed successfully to weather through winter after winter. They saw several bunches of them and among these were runaways, strays, bearing brands. On the edge of a small belt of meadows, where the grass in summer sun had turned to natural hay, they sat in their saddles watching a band of wild horses grazing.

"It seems a shame," remarked Galbraith, "to think that these hosses may end in cans for sale in Belgium and France. From some of the back valleys like this one I've known of them being rounded up and driven in to be sold to representatives of meat-packing firms. They always have a policeman up here in British Columbia, or a sheriff down there in the States, on duty at the shipping corrals to see that no privately branded hoss is sold, and if anybody looking on at the loading of them wants to buy one from the boys who brought the remuda in he can shout before it is driven into the chute for the cars and get it for as little as five dollars. I got me a dandy cow pony like that down in Nevada. They have to be broken-in, though."

Those they had been quietly observing suddenly became alert. All the heads rose; the necks were arched. There was a blowing from distended nostrils, a snorting that they could hear across the belt of grass. A stallion with long sweeping tail began to gallop along the edge of the bunch as if rounding it up; then the whole band went circling away, their hooves thudding, and crashed from sight through a stand of willows.

Wallace's horse and Galbraith's raised their heads and emitted a duetted whinny, as if calling "So-long!" to their independent relatives.

"Some of these wild ones," said Galbraith, "would be worth the catching."

"Yes, Jock. We're going ahead with our horse-breeding venture," Wallace responded.

Something that he had read earlier in a newspaper caused him to write to Cunninghame Graham, asking him for information regarding the breeding of the criollos in South America, and a long correspondence ensued. Letters came to him, written in a scrawly hand, from that famous horseman and writer, all about horses. And from South America by request of Cunninghame Graham, as was stated on an accompanying slip of paper, came a magazine full of photographs of criollos. Wallace had no Spanish and Galbraith's was but a smattering, inadequate. *Pronto*, *mañana*, *poco tiempo*, *siesta*, *rodeo* and *remuda*, and an occasional *Caramba!* at need, were about all the words he had in that tongue. But the illustrations were to him as challenges and inspirations.

II

There was uncertainty regarding Robert Wallace's political views but none regarding the wisdom of soliciting his advice when civic projects were being discussed, and when petitions for governmental or any other aid for local

projects were being prepared, to have his approval, testified by his signature in the lead, was considered most certainly important.

When Mr. Hudson and the aldermen of Elkhorn were conferring on the erection of a court house so that the assizes could be held there, they asked Robert for any suggestions he might care to give as to what it should include besides the court rooms. They decided, on his advice, to have under its roof quarters for the Provincial assessor and collector and his staff, the public works engineer, the water engineer and their staffs; accommodation for the forestry and game services and the resident mining engineer.

The new city's fathers discovered that Wallace could be blunt at times.

"I would also suggest a good big spacious chamber for a library," he said.

"We have a library in the City Hall," the Mayor pointed out.

"You have a room in the City Hall," said Wallace, "with a label on the door that reads *Library*, but it is only a place for any drifting hobo to have a nap in. You have files of the *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* and the *Canada Year Book*, and little else. Get books. Get books on the history of the land, journals of the old explorers, for instance. I will present some to the city if you can't get them. Get books of history and travel. Get fiction too, if you like. I've no objection to fiction. Some of it is readable, reading like truth. The Minister of Mines' *Annual Report* and the *Canada Year Book* is not enough to make a library. You have what you call a magazine table there, but what is lying on it? A lot of booklets left by representatives of various firms when visiting town in place of advertising on hoardings, booklets on pills, calendar almanacs of back-ache cures, saddlery and hardware catalogues. I don't call that a library!"

When there was unexplained procrastination on the part of the railway company over the extension of service from Elkhorn to West Fork his aid was sought by Henry Stubbs, Reeve of West Fork, to gain early fulfilment of the project. For the better part of that summer the dust had been rising from the scrapers of the construction gangs making the railway grades. On pay days in the camps along the valley Wallace, coming and going, was reminded of his first arrival at Camp Elkhorn on the day of celebration of its birthday anniversary. Among the workers were men of many nations from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In one of these camps there was a melée, during which a Hungarian was shot at and wounded. The police who had the case to look after experienced heart-breaking difficulties in obtaining any evidence. Whisky, with a little wood alcohol added to give zest to it, left no one with any clear impression of who had fired the shot.

Wong Li in a very serious voice, hearing Eleanor and Robert discussing the affair one night, had to express his opinion.

"Trouble here just now," said he, "while railway being built is too many goddam foreigners come."

It was an amusing comment from one so Oriental of countenance, and it seemed to Wallace—recalling Roaring Camp Elkhorn where there had been no diversity of tongues worth mentioning—hardly a just, or rightly explanatory, summing-up.

It was, notwithstanding such alarming accompaniments to railway construction work, a happy summer for Eleanor. On her, as well as on her husband, the land had placed a spell. Not only the valley she loved, but also the high country. Despite his experience of exhaustion up there on his first visit, Robert had to return. The call to return was a dual one, part beneficent invitation, part callous challenge. He had to see its grandeur again and had to prove to himself that he could cope with its dangers.

To the long meadow beyond the lake at the head of the west fork of Elkhorn River they went riding up on the new road through the forests. To the high country above the east fork they also went, stopping for a night at the highest camp of his lumber company and in the morning passing on through the last timbers to the frontiers of peaks and sky. Wallace remembered up there a speech by Harold Sinclair: "Them almighty hills get a man all ways—get him up and get him down, tell him to get out and call him back."

To Eleanor's mind at the same moment came a line from one of her most-prized poets: "The strange-scrawled rocks, the lonely sky." For her, as for Robert, there was magic in these regions. There were times when she dreaded a return to cities lest, on crowded pavements, there might come sudden remembrance of a sentinel marmot whistling across the immensity a warning to his fellows of their proximity that was as a welcome to them. She loved it all, from the clumps of penstemons by the sides of little rivulets among rocks to a cloud caught on the pinnacle of a crest and trailing out like

flimsy cobweb, from the burnished leaves of mountain laurel—tinted yellow among their green as the year wore on—to the moving shadow of a searching eagle drifting over the gray-blue slides.

But to return to the railway, the railway extension along the valley, much discussed by the people of the valley: After the permanent way was completed, the steel laid, and Wong Li's "goddam foreigners" had departed, it seemed as though the company lost interest in the line. In response to inquiries by Reeve Stubbs of little West Fork, the divisional superintendent said he was unable to say when traffic would begin. So Stubbs asked Wallace to aid him, to see what he could do to expedite service over the extension.

Robert told Stubbs that he was going east soon and would do what he could there, which would be better than making pleas by way of the local divisional superintendent or by writing letters to the directors. A talk face to face, he declared, was better than all the letters.

"I'll have a crack with the President," he promised, "and see if at least we can get a definite date fixed so that we all may know where we are."

In November he and Eleanor departed.

"I wish," said Marion, when saying good-bye to her, "that you would stay through one winter here. You only know it in summer so far."

"I wish I could," Eleanor replied, "but my husband has to go east and I don't want to remain here alone. He may be there all winter, seeing that he is now a director of the Company."

"You might not like it so much in winter," said Marion.

"I think I'd love it just as much," said Eleanor. "I was talking to your husband about that only the other day when we got a flurry of snow on the benches, and he told me he wasn't like the man who said that in winter he preferred summer and in summer preferred winter. He says that when each season comes he thinks it is the best. And so far as cold goes we get it much colder in the east than you do here."

"Yes, but you've got shows," Marion pointed out.

"Shows?"

"Yes. You have more than just one movie-house and a poky opera house that hardly any touring company visits now since the people started going to pictures."

"Oh, I see," said Eleanor.

At the word "shows" she had thought of exhibitions and had been momentarily surprised, not having thought of Marion as one who would be interested in paintings.

"But it must be beautiful in winter too," she said.

"Oh, yes. Yes, I guess it is. I just wondered how you would like it—if you wouldn't feel shut in. I suppose you would think even an icicle beautiful."

"Don't you like it here in winter?" asked Eleanor.

"Yes, I like it fine," replied Marion, but so markedly without enthusiasm that Eleanor definitely doubted if she did.

They were back again in the spring sufficiently early for Eleanor to see something of winter. It had gone only from the valley by the time they returned. One day she accompanied Robert up the west fork road on a visit to the compressor and, as the road had been kept open all winter by caterpillar tractors coming and going, they went up in a car. Sap was running in the lower woods. The scent of cedar was rich in the air. There were resinous odours, too, as they mounted. In bends of the road, bends where the sun looked in only briefly each day, snow lay.

They came to where the road was a broad sunken track between banks of snow, packed and hardened by the passage of the tractors hauling concentrates down. The air struck chill but invigorating, exhilarating. They approached open, exposed stretches where the sun had melted the snow and there, close to the deep and shadowed drifts, were ribbons of

yellow dog-toothed violets.

"Beautiful, beautiful," said Eleanor to herself, and suddenly recalled her talk with Marion on a valley winter.

They reached the lake and found it still frozen. An undulation of snow swept over it from side to side. As Robert had to go up to the mine Eleanor decided to accompany him. In the Italian Alps she had once ridden in a teleferica over dreadful chasms and, she said to herself in a moment of diffidence regarding the trip, what was the aerial gravity-tram of a mine but a less luxurious teleferica? The buckets were deep enough to stand in with elbows on their edges, large enough to hold two people. So, together, up they soared to the mine.

At first, looking down, Eleanor felt vertigo. Had the bucket not been so deep she would have been forced to close her eyes and take tight hold of the sides. Even as it was, she did indeed close her eyes for a few moments. When she opened them and looked up the wire on which the bucket travelled gave her a shock. It seemed perilously frail for its task. She drew a deep breath, dismissed as foolish her trepidation and on the instant had, in place of it, a feeling of ecstasy. She seemed to be disembodied—ecstatic.

Harold Sinclair had not dared to build his cabin on the slope of the mountain beside his tunnels because of spring avalanches, but the mine buildings were there, partly built into the mountainside and with great baulks of timber over them for snow sheds. The temperature that day was well below zero but the sun shone so brightly that the reflections from the white ranges were blinding. Eleanor did not go into the workings with Robert. While he was away she sat in one of the bunk houses with men who were off duty until, invited by the cook, she went into the kitchen.

The whole place was like a great eagle's eyrie, she thought. And how clean! She looked at the scrubbed dresser; she looked at the racks for the crockery. How neat it all was. She looked out of the window at the pinnacles of mountain opposite.

Suddenly there was a hissing outside, a hissing that increased in volume. Something happened to her eyes; for a moment she was frightened as the light went out. Had the elevation affected her? Had the quick change from valley to summits been too much for her? Then she realized that nothing grievous had befallen her. An avalanche, a snowslide, was pouring down the mountain, over the covering snowshed, and rushing in front of the windows. The experience was like being on the rocky path under the falls of Niagara, the falls roaring a watery veil before one. But here there was no drenching of spray. Eleanor stood in the warm kitchen looking at the underside of the avalanche as it swept by. It diminished in volume. Light came again into the room.

"Jump to the window and look out, missus," said the cook.

She jumped close to the window and peered down, he at her side, and saw the end of it far below, a haze of white in air, snow dust, and on that whiteness a sudden arc of rainbow colours in the sunshine. Then all was over. She had to pucker her eyes again to the glare of the sun on the peaks. Winter here, she considered, was assuredly beautiful, awesome, grand.

Nowhere can one have everything, she mused. Everywhere something has to be sacrificed for something else. What mattered the loss of a "show" or two? What would matter, living here, the loss of a concert or two, even to one who loved music as she did? So went her thoughts that day.

Soon, however, she was to reconsider that point of view.

III

Only her books she had missed during her first summer in the valley, and on this return she had brought them back with her in several crates. Wallace—such carpentering being one of his hobbies—built shelves along two walls of their living room, and the crates were unpacked and the books put in place.

A few days later Reeve Stubbs of West Fork called with his wife. The Reeve was a big, genial man who prided himself on his courtesy. It was "up to him," he considered, to go and see Wallace to thank him for what he had done to get a date definitely fixed for the beginning of railway traffic on the new line to West Fork, of which he had been informed. His wife came along with him to make the visit a social one.

Wong Li ushered them into the living room and left them there, saying he would go catch the boss and Missy Wallace who were over at the corrals looking at horses, he explained.

When Robert and Eleanor entered they found the Reeve standing as one transfixed, staring at the shelves and his wife, staring at them also, in an easy chair as though she had collapsed there. The expression on their faces was of incredulity. They could hardly trust their eyes.

Henry Stubbs pulled himself together, bethought him of his manners, made his best bow to Eleanor.

"Back again, home again," said he.

He shook hands with Wallace. Then he looked back at the shelves.

"Books," he said. "Books!" he repeated with emphasis. "What a slough of them, what a raft of them! Tell me, do you expect ever to read them all—either of you—both of you?"

"I have read them all," Eleanor lamely replied.

"Come now, come now!" said Stubbs. "Though I'll take your word for it, if you say so. But if you have read them, why do you keep them? You ain't going to read them again, are you?" and amazement was in his eyes as he surveyed the shelves again.

Eleanor had no answer to that. She was delving for one when Mrs. Stubbs spoke. Mrs. Stubbs had been sitting there to all appearances stunned, unable to pull herself together for any preliminary greeting.

"What gets me," she said slowly, "is the money you must have tied up along these two walls. Money! All tied up in books, books on the shelves. What a mint of money you must have tied up there!"

"And on the tables too," said her husband.

He bent over a large volume that lay on a table in the window recess.

"Pictures!" he exclaimed. "This is a book of pictures. Look at this, Ethel, just pictures! You have no kids, have you? No, of course you haven't yet. Pictures! But pictures are only for kids to look at. How come the book of pictures?"

It was Eleanor's turn to feel stunned.

"Those are prints of paintings in various galleries," she explained, feeling very much lost.

Reeve Stubbs bethought him again of his manners. A fleeting glance that Eleanor gave Robert, like a call for help, had that effect on him: It struck him that he was being rude. He could further express his amazement to his wife on the way home for relief. Here he had said too much.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Wallace," he said. "Pardon me." He turned to Wallace. "I really came to thank you for what you did when you got a definite date for the opening of traffic on our railway extension. I guess you were instrumental. I had a letter from the divisional superintendent, and he told me he had word from the head office that we're to have a twice weekly service of passenger and freight train combined, starting on June fifteenth."

"That was the earliest date I could get," said Wallace. "The Company suggested a formal opening on that day. They are going to send the western superintendent along and I'm going to ask our M.P. to be with us. We'll make a *Do* of it."

"I wonder you don't go in for politics yourself, Wally," remarked the Reeve. "You certainly can get things done for the Laurentian Mining and Smelting Company, for yourself, and for others. I wondered if you were going to quit out here when I heard you had sold off your steers, your range cattle, but Jock Galbraith tells me you're going in for horse-breeding instead."

"Yes. We're going in for crossing with Percherons and cayuses to start. But you'll see, you'll see later. And by the way, being on the subject of the chances and changes here—I'm planning a creamery for the valley, for the farmers. While railway construction was going on they did well with their green vegetables and potatoes. They'll feel the drop now. They'll want to break out in a new way. How do you like the sound of Elkhorn Valley butter?"

"Elkhorn Valley butter? Elkhorn Valley butter? It sounds all right to me. We might go in on that together, you and I."

"I'll run up to West Fork and talk it over with you some day soon," replied Wallace.

Wong Li was at the door with a look of inquiry, and on a nod from Eleanor he came in with tea. At once Mrs. Stubbs definitely felt and looked revived.

After their guests had gone, Robert—he had walked out to their car with them to see them off—came into the room very pensive of manner.

"Fine people!" he ejaculated. "Fine people! Not what might be called cultured, but that isn't all one wants. I have met, Eleanor, I have known encyclopaedic scholars, bookworms, gloating bookworms, not half as bonhomous as these people are at base. He's a straight shooter, as they say out here. Good man. Good man for Reeve is Henry Stubbs. And she's a good sort too. Very kind to anybody who is sick, they tell me. Fine people!"

Eleanor was looking out of the window, expressionless, overcome by a sense of loneliness. Her husband's eulogy, achieved by comparison, did not ease her of the woe she felt. She had never, since coming to the valley, been so lonely before. She looked down at the river. Yes, it was beautiful. She could see it rippling on its way. From where she stood she could also see the nearest of the pine trees on the edge of the knoll. The glow of sun was on the protruding needle tufts, the peace of the day in the dusky caverns between the boughs. She stared across at the mountain opposite, the green flounce of trees, the high crest of silver, the white cone, tinted with red and gold, that peeped through the notch. It was grand—and very lonesome. Through the open window she heard a breeze sigh steadily through the pines and it sighed to her, then, of years, centuries, of loneliness.

"What are you thinking, dear?" asked Robert.

"Thinking of what a beautiful place it is," said she. She did not add, "and wondering if its beauty is enough."

She realized that Marion Galbraith, hearing these remarks of the Reeve and his wife at sight of the books—"the slough, the raft of books"—would not have felt as she did. Eleanor's books meant little to Marion who, though she did not look upon them as money tied up, hardly regarded them as reading matter. She did not doubt that all had been read, and it had not occurred to her, seeing them on the shelves one afternoon when she came over for tea, to consider that having been read there was no reason to treasure them. She felt, as easily as did Eleanor, that they held nothing for her.

Yet, despite all that, Robert's wife had never felt in talks with Galbraith's wife such a sense of being lost, marooned, cast away. And it was the feeling of desolation with which these visitors left her—"Fine people, fine people!"—that helped Eleanor, later on, to sympathize with Marion, or at least to understand her.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Marion was as one suffering from a malady of which she told none. An old unrest tormented her. It had not pounced on her suddenly; it had increased insidiously and marriage had not cured her of it. Its potency remained.

In occasional introspective moments—introspection was not frequent with her—she told herself that if she could, like Robert's wife, have change away from the valley she would be completely happy. Easy it was for Mrs. Wallace to be content there, to talk of loving the place: at any time that she wished she could leave it, get out, get away. So went Marion's thoughts at these introspective moments and then, finding herself on the verge of jealousy toward Eleanor, she would bring abrupt end to the meditation, disliking it because she liked Eleanor. The boss's wife had come to be as a friend to her.

Yet what did she lack, what was it that she longed for? She had heard it said that for a woman to have a family to look after made life perfect; but it was not a baby she wanted. This irking, this constantly irking urge of discontent, she told herself, could not be eased by changing diapers—would be made worse more likely! One aware of her early life might hazard that what irked her was the absence of excitement. "Study to be quiet" was a counsel that would but have made her toss her head in annoyance.

In the old home on the prairie, because of the watchfulness over her of her co-operating sisters, there had been the excitement always of doing this or the other that she knew they would consider censurable in the minds of her parents. From riding a horse forbidden to the family to ride, to going into one of the prohibited cafés for a soda sundae whether with male or female companion, there had been excitement, the excitement of avoiding discovery, the excitement of probable discovery. Later there had been an extension to the range of excitement; there had been sexual excitement that had its climax in the anxious visit to Calgary with her mother.

There had been further excitement in her flight from home, and an added froth of daring in depleting her slender savings by travelling comfortably to Vancouver instead of wearisomely. The story of her past, of her life in Vancouver, as coaxed out of her by Galbraith began to seem, instead of much more satisfactory than what she might have told uncoached, a colourless story. There came times when to recall the true one gave her pleasure. Life in the valley was too dull for her.

She had to pretend an interest in the interests of those whom she called to herself "the old biddies"—they who seemed to have the direction, the ordering, of activities so far as women were concerned. She astonished herself one day, realized how tired she was of at least part of the life she led in the valley—was expected, as a married woman, to lead.

There was, for instance, Mrs. Prosser, a great busybody of the region, who organized and arranged from West Fork to Gold Creek. One day she called on Marion (and it happened to be Marion's washing day) to request her aid in the decorating of the community hall at West Fork for a function she was planning. Marion stopped work to give her tea and listen to her, but pled that she had too much to do at home.

"Don't you want to co-operate?" asked Mrs. Prosser, fixing her with a glittering and condemnatory gaze.

Co-operate!

At that word Marion felt deep rage within her. However, she controlled herself.

"I am too busy," she repeated. "Really too busy just now. I have too much to attend to here at home."

"Of course if everybody said that——" began Mrs. Prosser heavily, and then, leaving that sentence unfinished, remarked resignedly, "But you no doubt know best."

After her caller had departed Marion came near, suddenly, to understanding herself.

"Co-operate! Co-operate!" she ejaculated, and lifting the teacup from which Mrs. Prosser had drunk she hurled it through the open door. As she saw it shatter against a rock she burst into laughter.

That winter it seemed to her that there was nobody in the neighbourhood who would really understand her discontent unless it was that man, Max Harker. Why did Jock dislike him so much? she wondered. For herself, she always enjoyed his company. When they met she found him amusing, entertaining, and to dance with him made her feel as if freed from her restricting surroundings. Even to chat with him for a few minutes outside the post office in West Fork made her feel better. She began to look forward to calling for mail, sometimes riding in on horseback, sometimes walking. It was surprising how often they encountered one another on these occasions, and very pleasant it was to accept his offer of a lift back to the ranch on the days when it had been too cold for riding.

II

It was not till Eleanor's departure for the east in 1911 that she had realization that Marion did not share her love for the Elkhorn Valley. Their talk on the eve of her departure had given her the first hint of that. At the end of it Marion had said, "Oh, yes, I like it fine," but with a lack of sincerity in her voice. There had been a ring almost of bitterness in it when she added that Eleanor might find beauty even in an icicle.

Back again in the following spring, Eleanor had been glad to find the girl very buoyant of manner.

"She is settling down at last," she thought. "She is really very happy here."

The lack of "shows" was evidently not too greatly depressing after all. The complaint of only one motion-picture house—and it so far off—and a "poky" opera house, to which touring companies seldom came in these days, had been

apparently only out of a passing mood. Marion looked radiant. Often, seeing them together, Eleanor would observe a strange gleam in her eyes when she looked at Jock. In her life with him she did indeed seem happy. And yet there was sometimes something in these glances that made Eleanor wonder what might be all the thoughts passing in Marion's mind. What sort of an early life, she pondered, had the girl known? There seemed to be poignancy in the way she looked at her husband; there was devotion—but something else, hard to put a name on.

The year wore on. The birches and cottonwoods were towers of rustling leaves. The trilling of meadow larks sounded; olive-backed swallows were in residence under the gable peaks of the ranch buildings; from the belts of woods beyond the benches came, through the quiet days, the brisk tapping of woodpeckers.

Towards the end of May, Wallace was away in Elkhorn for several days at the smelter. During that absence he phoned out to Galbraith, asking him to come to town for a consultation being held by the Elkhorn Board of Trade regarding the forthcoming formal opening of the railway extension. They were talking of having a stampede at West Fork, a rodeo, as part of what Wallace called the "Do," and Jock's suggestions would be welcome.

On the forenoon of the day that Galbraith went in, Eleanor took a ride along the benches, returning in time for lunch. Her husband had been gone for close on a week and the house felt empty. As much for her own sake as for the sake of Marion—who was having but the one day husbandless—she decided to go along to the Galbraith house and either have tea there or bring Marion back to tea. But shortly after lunch a visitor arrived, the energetic Mrs. Prosser from West Fork. Mr. Prosser was going to Elkhorn, she explained, and she had taken this opportunity to make her call. He had dropped her at the crossroads on the other side of the meadow and would pick her up there again on his homeward way, about five o'clock.

All this she explained with much needless waving of arms and rising inflection of voice. She liked to call on Eleanor. She felt herself in fitting society there. She disliked, she often said, Common People. Down she sat, letting herself go on her favourite topics, her bowels and her confinements. Six miscarriages she had suffered, then a stillborn child, then three successful issues—successful so far as she was concerned. Her family had not been entirely a credit to her, for there had been little lapses, subdued scandals in their lives, reference to which she carefully avoided though perhaps it was these that made her quick to scent scandal in the lives of others and eager to publish them—subtly.

With tale of obstetrics before tea and of laxatives over tea the time flew for her. Out in the hall a tall grandfather's clock struck and she listened to it, then glanced at her wrist watch to verify its accuracy.

"Your clock is right," said she, leaping to her feet. "Come to the crossroads with me, won't you?"

They went along to the bridge and across the meadow, and there saw Mr. Prosser's car waiting. From the opposite direction came a small truck and, as it halted at the crossroads, Marion Galbraith got out.

"That's Mr. Harker's truck," said Mrs. Prosser. "Um! He is not going on. He's turning."

Halfway through the meadow the three women met.

"How do you do, Mrs. Prosser?" said Marion. "I won't keep you talking. I see your husband sitting in the car there, waiting for you. What a lovely day it has been! I just had to go out for a walk. I don't get enough exercise—I mean walking exercise. I ride a great deal, of course, but I don't walk enough. I walked to West Fork this afternoon to see if there was any mail. Five miles there and five miles back I thought would be good for me, but do you think I could get it? No. Three cars made up on me when I was going and the people in all of them asked if they could give me a lift. I started to walk back but I just couldn't keep on saying I preferred to walk. When Mr. Harker overtook me, it was no use—he practically forced me to take a lift home."

All this she spoke at great speed. Mrs. Prosser listened with a twisted smile on her face, a glitter in her eyes.

"Well!" she said, when Marion had done.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Prosser, good-bye."

Marion walked on, and hardly was she out of hearing when Mrs. Prosser turned to Eleanor.

"She had to explain," she remarked.

The car at the crossroads honked.

"Oh, aren't men impatient!" she ejaculated. "Good-bye, Mrs. Wallace. I've had such a happy afternoon with you. I must run. Five o'clock he said he would be here and it can't be more than five-twenty now. I didn't leave your house till five!"

"Delighted to have you here," said Eleanor, as out of a text-book, and with a wave to a waving hand at the car she turned back to the house.

She was just able to see Marion at the bend of the road. "She had to explain!" was still in her ears. "She had to explain . . ." She had to explain such an innocent matter as having a lift on the road from Maxwell Harker.

Eleanor's mind went back to the fleeting visit she had paid to the Galbraith house on her return after her winter away from the valley, when she had found Harker in the kitchen and Marion flushed, excited and—apparently—as one surprised. She had forgotten that incident, or dismissed it, long ago. It came back then to her mind because of these words: "She had to explain."

Back to her mind came also, from not so far away, that look in Marion's eyes, that look—how could she describe it?—of devotion, yes, but of sadness, poignant. Slowly she walked home, pensively. How much that Prosser woman could convey in one little sentence! "She had to explain . . ."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Intimacy between Marion and Harker, however, had not gone as far as malice might cause some to hope and a well-wishing nature cause others to dread that it might go.

Aware that Jock, for reasons he did not state, or merely by unreasoned whim, did not care for Max, Marion made no mention to her husband of these chance meetings when she went to West Fork. A spice of secrecy thus came into their encounters even when they were by no means arranged. There was something insidious in the affair. There came to be a tacit understanding regarding the time at which Marion would run up to West Fork for mail. Often they were seen there together in Stubbs' general store to rear of which was the post office. Of these meetings Galbraith knew nothing, and Mrs. Prosser's "She had to explain . . ." was the first hint that Eleanor had of the growing friendship between the ranch foreman's wife and Max Harker—of something, as she would say, "funny."

There had been no clandestine meetings so far, only these for all to see and, if they cared, comment archly upon. "I saw Marion Galbraith and Max Harker having a chat in the post office today," spoken with a laugh would evoke, from those alert to innuendo, a laugh of the same quality in response. Others in the valley, perhaps, found life dull and welcomed what excitement there might be in the possibility of scandal brewing. It was not that they disliked Marion. It was only that they loved the titillation of scandal.

The suggestion to have a rural mail delivery from West Fork to Gold Creek was much discussed, and in the midst of one of these discussions somebody remarked—with that pseudo-genial air that often accompanies venomous innuendos, as in an attempt to save the face of the speaker: "If we have a rural mail delivery, Mrs. Galbraith won't need to come into West Fork for letters any more." That, spoken in Eleanor's hearing one day, was the second hint that there was something "funny" going on between the two.

For what Wallace called the "Big Do," the opening of the railway from Elkhorn to West Fork, Marion showed every desire to co-operate. She was looking forward to it eagerly. She was gregarious by nature despite that recurrent charge in her early years of lack of co-operation. Refreshments were to be provided by the Ladies' Auxiliary Society of one of the churches, Mrs. Prosser in the chair. That was an affair as of Church and State—Church and Valley.

Cheerfully Marion baked bread and cakes and agreed to assist at the tea and coffee urns in the huge marquee donated by Robert Wallace. There was for her the excitement of anticipation. The *Elkhorn Miner* had printed, free, the leaflets announcing events, its contribution to the festivities. One of these was pinned to a wall in the Galbraith kitchen. There was to be a parade of draught horses; there was to be horse racing, all white, all Indian, Indian and white. Bucking contests were to follow, and then refreshments would be served in the marquee. Indian dances were to conclude the

events in the field, after which there was to be a dinner for the official guests—the representative of the railway company and his wife, the Member of Parliament and his wife—in the hotel. Later there was to be dancing in the West Fork community hall, music by the Wallace Lumber Company band (some of "the boys" in the camps were not indifferent musicians) and by the Bird's Eye Quartette. Up at the famous mine "talent" had been discovered: The timekeeper played the piano; there were two violinists, and there was a drummer who, in preparation for the evening, had been waking the echoes among high cliffs, agitating the marmots in the rock slides, limbering his wrists with what he called "mammy-daddy" rehearsal exercises.

Marion made herself a new dress to wear on the day of fête and on the evening before washed her hair and put it in curlers. Here was a change from the humdrum, from domestic chores, jam-making and fruit-processing, washing day and cooking, cooking, cooking.

II

West Fork had never been called Camp West Fork and had had no roaring period. It was a little shopping and postal centre for the settlers in the northern end of the valley and a place of residence for the wives and families of men working at the Bird's Eye Mine, the Bird's Eye Concentrator, and in the lumber camps—a hamlet, a village, though its buildings were scattered, many of the town lots having only a house at each corner. There was a lawn before the hotel, and over the lawn a row of buxom old cottonwoods spread a pattern of leaf shadows in summer and in winter drew a pale blue tracery of branch and twig on the snow that covered it then. There was a hardware store much used as an informal club, especially in winter when a circle of chairs stood round the stove. There was a niche of a shop devoted to needs of the women, with the word *Fashions* over the doorway and in the window examples of the, presumably, latest styles in hats, a dress or two spread to show its design, a necklace, perhaps some shoes. There was a bakery. There was a livery stable with corrals at the back, also a brilliantly painted garage bearing the signs: *Gas* and *Free Air*. There was an Anglican church. There was a Presbyterian church. There was a schoolhouse. Most of the houses had tended gardens, and round the gardens hedges of caragana or lilac grew. Even from the beginning it was not at all like Camp Elkhorn. The new station, vividly painted, stood at the rails' ending, beflagged for the occasion.

On the flagged terrace before his home five miles away, Wallace had glimpses across the river and beyond the meadow of the fête-augmented traffic on the road and had brought out his binoculars for a better view. There went a family of golden-haired Swedes in their milk delivery wagon; there, in a horse-drawn wagon, went a family of Indians from the reserve, husband in broad-brimmed high-crowned hat, wife in bright blanket, magenta bandana on her head, the children in assorted colours in the box behind. In a variety of conveyances from Gold Creek, Placer Creek, and Elkhorn, people went on their way to West Fork.

While he stood there, at the manager's house Jock and Marion Galbraith were preparing to set off. The ranch hands—wranglers, horse breakers and "Shorty," the cook—had gone to West Fork the day before with some horses to be entered for the races, saddle-broken but by no means broken in spirit. Included were also some unbroken ones to be used in the bucking contests. Everybody there was going to the rodeo, the celebrating stampede, the Big Do.

It had seemed to Jock of late that Marion looked tired, but her preparations for the fête had not made her still more tired. That day she was radiant.

"Gosh, you look pretty in that frock!" he exclaimed as they prepared to leave the house.

"Do you think so? Do you really think so?" she asked eagerly.

"Indeed I do," he replied.

Then he wondered if he had been so happy in his married state that he had been taking her too much for granted, if he had been too much, towards her, as a man married and settled—settled.

"I don't believe I tell you often enough all that I think of you," he said.

She did not answer. A shadow passed over her face. There was a look of trouble in her dark eyes.

"I think you are just fine, Jock," she said at last. "Too good for me," she added.

"That's damned nonsense," he replied. "It's time you had a change, a diversion. I'm glad there's going to be this Big Do, as the boss calls it."

The honk of a motor horn withdrew the boss's attention from the distant highway. Down the twist of ranch road beside the knoll went Jock and Marion in their car, Jock at the wheel but wearing his ten-gallon hat. When Wallace looked round Marion gaily waved and Galbraith gave his hat a great sweep from his head, a caballero sweep.

Hearing the sound of the horn Eleanor came onto the terrace.

"They look happy," said she, and waved to them, and "Good luck," she called specially for Galbraith who was to be in the bucking-horse contest.

Wallace watched the car on its way over the bridge, across the meadow, onto the main road. He pondered on Jock's avowed—frequently avowed—lack of any desire to return to his early home. As for himself, he had to admit that he was contented where he was—but he would like to go back to Scotland some day, some day.

"What's that line of Kipling's about going easy, or softly, by the riverside, lest when we would depart—something or other?" he asked, turning to Eleanor.

She quoted it to him.

"That's it," he said. "Well, I find its every winding tied and knotted round my heart. Aye, it surely gets hold of one, this land. I've got so that I love even the place names. Elkhorn sounds good to me, as good as Appin, Kootenay sounds as good as Galloway. Funny thing, I'm glad I came from there because of things Scotland has given me." (He could reveal his heart to her.) "But I doubt if I could ever settle down there again. Life is different here. What Scotland gave me that is worth having I can take with me anywhere. Oh, but enough of myself. It was really thinking of Jock Galbraith's early life set me off on these lines. I suppose we'll have to be going soon."

"I'll get ready."

When Eleanor had gone, Wallace's thoughts were again of himself and Jock—of Jock and himself—two Glasgow men. His Glasgow was not like Galbraith's. His home had not been a damp cave, a two-room-and-kitchen flat in a narrow, grimy street. The crescents, the terraces of the west end he knew. Why had he left home? he asked himself again. To stand on his own feet, he promptly answered his own question, because his every action was criticized as soon as done until he had come to doubt his every action. But all that was of the past; why delve into it? He had surely stood upon his own feet for years now.

In public and in private life he was a Scot still. On Burns Nicht the Scotsmen of the Valley always had him in the chair—and among his bedside books were the poems of Dunbar. When people talked to him of Sir Walter Scott he responded in kind, cudgelling his memory for scenes and incidents they mentioned—and among his bedside books was John Galt's *Annals of the Parish*. He had had early training in keeping his own counsel when books were talked of.

Back went his thoughts again to the division of his allegiance. What did it matter anyhow? He searched his mind for some words appropriate to his thoughts. How did they go? "'Tis all one to lie in St. Innocent's Church as in the sands of Egypt."

There was a sound behind him and he turned his head to ask Eleanor for the rest. She would remember, and where it came from. She could usually supply accurately what he fragmentarily recalled from the world of books. But it was not she who came out. Wong Li stood there.

"Time we go," said he firmly.

"Oh, is it time for us to go?" said Wallace.

"Yes, time we go. You tell me yesterday I go too. And sure time you go. You know what Indians call you?"

"No."

"They call you white chief."

Wallace laughed.

"Well, I never heard that," he said.

"Everybody know but you, then," said Wong. "White chief must be there in time. Time we go."

"I'm ready," said Eleanor, coming out.

"Then we'll start," said Robert Wallace.

III

A hum of voices rose round that part of the meadow at West Fork named City Park on the blueprints of the surveyors. On its eastern and western sides all manner of vehicles, horse drawn and gasoline driven, were parked. At the southern end were corrals that had been erected for the day, and beside these was a cluster of tepees of the Indians who had been invited to take part in the pageant. At its northern end was the huge marquee, donated by Robert Wallace, with flags flying at its peaks, and behind the marquee was a camp-cooking tent lent by the Wallace Lumber Company.

There was a sudden cessation of talk when there came the sound of an approaching locomotive's whistle, two long and two short blasts. A renewed babble of voices followed and the crowd began to scurry towards the station buildings so as to be there when the train arrived.

There it came, streamers of bunting billowing along the sides of the coaches. As it slowed down with a final blast of its whistle, the bell clanging, two pipers stepped from the waiting room and commenced to play. Robert Wallace and Eleanor followed them, accompanied by Reeve and Mrs. Stubbs, and took their places under an arch of fir boughs. The engineer, leaning from his cab and looking backwards, brought the train to a perfect halt, with the steps of the observation car on a level with the arch.

Immediately Mr. Hudson, the Mayor of Elkhorn—who had accompanied the official guests from Elkhorn after a welcoming luncheon there—stepped down, very genial of aspect, making gracious motions of unnecessary assistance for the descent of the ladies: the Member of Parliament's wife, the wife of the railway company's western superintendent, Mrs. Hudson, all smiling. The Member, a lean man with shrewd eyes but unimpressive of manner, then alighted. The western superintendent came last, a man with a body and a bearing eminently suitable for ceremonials. At sight of him the crowd, that at first had cheered perfunctorily, cheered with great zest.

There came then a sudden exhaust of steam from the locomotive, and because of that and the skirling of the pipes it was impossible for the receptionists or the received to hear a word spoken. There was handshaking, bowing, moving of lips. That was all. Then, as abruptly as it had begun, the exhaust of steam ended and the pipes, realizing that their music prevented converse, speeded the last bars of their welcoming strains.

In the peace that followed a remarkable figure—two remarkable figures—appeared from the waiting room. No one who had seen the Indian chief and his squaw as they were dragged from their burning home by Wallace and Galbraith could have recognized them. Chief Eaglehead was in heavily beaded buckskin coat, wore a bonnet of eagle feathers on his head, beaded moccasins on his feet. The bundle of cast-off clothing rescued at the same time was very different from the newly scoured and gleaming copper-coloured woman who stood with him, wearing a buckskin tunic that had little white dots all over it—elk teeth—a skirt of buckskin, its slashed fringes drooping over buckskin leggings. They had been secreted in the waiting room to appear at the perfect moment and, with the histrionic gift of their race, required no coaching. Not only the white chief but the Indian chief (with a solatium of five dollars for all the bother of it) had fittingly met the first train to West Fork.

Even then it did not occur to Robert Wallace that he was playing a part in the history of the west. History to him was of the past. It belonged to the days when Mackenzie, passing through the Rockies, came to an inlet where the salt tides rose and fell, the days when Lewis and Clark came to the Columbia River mouth and David Thompson to its headwaters.

With a manner as noble and gracious, a bearing as perfect for ceremonial occasions as that of the railway company's western superintendent, Chief Eaglehead stepped deliberately forward and shook hands with everybody—ladies first. Then he began to speak, specially addressing the superintendent as one who looked most like a chief.

"Glad to see you," he said. He looked at his wife who stood stolidly a step or two behind him. "Him glad to see you too," he went on, with an elucidatory inclination of his head towards her, necessary because of his use, in common with many of his race, of *him* for both male and female. He nodded to Wallace. "Him good man. I am Indian chief, him white chief. We bad time one day in house. We sleep, house on fire. Him come along in devil wagon with another good man and pack us out. Too damn bad house go but us all right. Good mans."

The superintendent listened, giving occasional small bows, signifying attention, though he could not understand the speech. When it was obviously over he shook hands with Eaglehead again and—

"I'm very pleased to meet you," he said impressively.

Eaglehead stepped back level with his squaw who had the manner throughout of taking refuge behind her native finery, within her finery, a public figure for the moment but secure in silence.

The Superintendent turned to Wallace.

"You'll have to explain all this to me," he murmured, and then, "Well, here we are," he said cheerily, "and where do we go from here?"

"Into the cars waiting for you," replied Wallace.

"Come this way, please," said Reeve Stubbs.

Round the gable of the station house they proceeded to where three cars stood, the Wallaces', the Reeves', and another, a dilapidated car ingeniously held together by haywire. Into the first the superintendent and his wife were ushered; into the second the M.P. and his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Hudson; into the last stepped Eaglehead and his squaw. At the wheel sat the chief's son, John. Though, like Galbraith, a horseman he had learnt to drive a car. "If white chief have devil wagon, Indian chief must have devil wagon," Eaglehead had decided some time back, and his son had got him one somewhere, learnt to drive it, and acted as chauffeur on occasions when his father, anxious for importance, was not content to ride a horse or climb into a democrat wagon and drive for himself.

Slowly, to the sound of cheers and some following laughter, the receptionists and the received drove along to the places reserved for them by the edge of the old meadow, the meadow that was then named on the blueprints City Park.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

All went well: the parade of draught horses, the horse racing, all white, all Indian, Indian versus white, as announced on the distributed leaflets. The wife of the Member became so excited over the races that she had to leap out of the Stubbs' car and dance up and down, emitting shrill screams. All went well.

Then came Mr. Stubbs again, riding along the arena's centre, megaphone in hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Bucking Horse Contest. First up will be Art Jackson. Keep your eyes on the corrals at the end of the ah-rena and watch him come. Art Jackson. Give the young fellow a hand. Oh," his voice soared up, pleading, "give the young fellow a hand, ladies and gentlemen!"

There was a response of clapping and huzzahs.

"That," explained Wallace to his guests, "is the son of one of our old-timers who runs a store down the valley a bit. Began trading with the Indians."

"That will be the Jackson I noticed of a halt on the way up," said the superintendent. "I saw the name on a board."

"That's the man. Yes. Art's a great rider, goes to the rodeos from Calgary to Pendleton, Cheyenne, Denver, all over the west. Breaks horses for me sometimes."

There came a struggling group of horses and men from the corral.

"There he goes, the long lean fellow in the blue jeans." The struggling group scattered. "There! He's up!"

The horse dashed into plain view, wriggling, writhing, stiffening its legs and making a series of stilted jumps in an endeavour to unseat the rider. The crowd roared applause as Jackson kept his seat in a series of bucking leaps, wild contortions. He rode the horse to a standstill then slipped off and the beast bolted, set free. The "pick-ups" went galloping along the meadow after it, wheeling this way, that way, to deflect it back to the corrals.

Eleanor looked along the field and saw Marion running from the cooking tent towards the corrals. As the girl passed before the car, hurrying on, Eleanor thought she had never seen her looking gayer, happier.

"Hullo, Marion!" she called.

"Oh, hullo, Mrs. Wallace! Grand day, isn't it?"

Marion ran from sight.

"That girl's husband," said Eleanor to the Superintendent's wife, "is soon going to ride one of the horses."

Marion was in good time to see Jock up as before his turn came two more horses were ridden, horses of vicious aspect, one successfully (John Eaglehead up) and one unsuccessfully, unseating its rider as soon as he mounted.

The next was led without protest into the arena. So peaceful did it look that some, who did not know it, laughed aloud.

"That looks a gentle horse," remarked the superintendent's wife.

"Looks so," said her husband, "but you never know."

"That is so," Wallace agreed. "You wait! I know that horse. It goes between shafts as happy as can be, hauls a democrat or a sulky, hauls anything quite placidly, but wait till you see what a deep objection it has to having a man on its back."

There was renewed laughter from those who did not know the horse at sight of John Galbraith stepping to it. It stood stock-still, did not dart away either humped or stiff-legged. It stood still. But it laid back its ears.

Galbraith put foot to the stirrup and was up in one swift movement. At once the beast leapt in air and when it came down it had turned clear round, "swopped ends." Up it went again, repeating the motion, and again and again, but still Jock was in the saddle. The Member's wife had again to get out of the car in her excitement and dance up and down, emitting shrill little cries.

"He must be getting dizzy!" exclaimed Eleanor.

Suddenly the horse stood rigid as if in stubborn consideration of what to do next towards unseating its rider, or in stubborn determination to remain there, fixed, till the rider would decide to dismount. Nobody laughed. There was an impression that more was to come.

Then, in slow motion, it rose on its hind legs like a ramping unicorn. There was a quivering undulation of those legs, a quivering that continued up into its body and seemed to pass into the rider's.

"A caterpillar buck!" moaned the western superintendent.

"A what? A what?" asked his wife, very excited.

"Caterpillar buck, my dear," said he.

Suddenly Galbraith soared over its head and before he could roll aside the horse's fore-hoofs came down. There was a long, agonized groan from the spectators.

Wallace cried out.

"No," said Eleanor. "Missed by a hair's breadth. He's getting up, Bob."

Galbraith put a hand to the side of his head, looked at it, looked back at the horse—which paid no further attention to him but bent its neck and began to graze. One of the "pick-ups," dismounting, stepped easily to it, without need for any finesse

of approach, and lifting the reins led it away. Galbraith, with lurching steps, disappeared beyond the corrals.

"I've got to go and see if he's all right," said Wallace. "Excuse me, please. He's my ranch foreman," and he slipped out of the car and went at once hurriedly along the field.

It was clear to all in the car that instead of saying "my ranch foreman" he might well have said "a friend of mine."

"By the way," said the superintendent when Wallace had left them, "what was the old Indian chief trying to tell us when we arrived about a fire?"

"That man my husband has gone to look after is mixed up in it," Eleanor answered. "He is the other 'good mans' of the story," and she told of the rescue of Eaglehead and his squaw from their burning house, telling of it not only with a feeling of pride in the courage of Robert and admiration for Galbraith, but with pleasure in the discovery that the Indians had, despite their stolidity at the time, and lack of any word of gratitude, evidently not forgotten.

II

As Wallace drew near to the corrals he met Marion returning from them.

"How is he?" he demanded urgently.

"He's all right," she replied. "He only got a bit of a tear in his ear and the doctor has attended to that already. Dr. Davis was in the last car here."

"I'll go and speak to Jock," said Wallace, and passed on.

He found Galbraith sitting on a saddle that was set on the ground beside one of the Indian tepees, and the doctor close by washing his hands in a bucket.

"Well, Jock," said Wallace, "too bad."

"It's no' the ear bothers me," said Jock glumly, and very broad of accent. "It's the ignominy. It's the ignominy. It's the ignominy o' getting unseated by that damned cart horse."

"But we all know what that beast is like," said Wallace.

"It was the caterpillar buck that did it," Galbraith explained. "His muscles just go in a wave, a wiggle, frae his pasterns up to his hocks and over his croup and into the saddle and into the rider—and there you are. But me, supposed to be one of the best riders in the Valley! Oh, man, will I ever live this doon?"

"Yes, easily, with those who know that horse," Wallace assured him, "and that you were not killed is all that matters to me."

Galbraith remained seated, elbow on knee, head in hand. It was not physical pain that kept him there in that attitude but his thoughts, his chagrin.

"Nobody thinks less of you," said Wallace. "I just ran along to see how you were. I'll get back to my party," and he turned away.

As he walked back along the meadow's edge he saw Max Harker in his freight truck that was parked head-on to the field. He had not observed him on his way to the corrals, all his anxious thoughts on his errand, but on returning he noticed whose cars were by the track. Marion had got into the truck and was on the seat beside Harker.

She seemed to be more satisfied over her husband's condition than Wallace felt. But perhaps he was fussy, and he must not be censorious: he reminded himself that she must have hurried to see Jock at once after the accident. What more could be wanted of her? Did he wish to see her sitting there tearful? He moved along the field's edge, then paused and looked round because of Stubbs' voice calling the name of the next contestant.

Wallace did not want to be in the way of another plunging, divagating horse that might fight with its rider all over the arena. As he looked round so he saw, in a side glance, Max Harker slip an arm round Marion's waist and give her a

hearty hug.

Funny, Robert Wallace said to himself, walking on, as Eleanor had said to herself on a previous occasion. Funny! But perhaps he was too prim, old-fashioned. Perhaps Harker was only trying to console her over her regret at Jock's failure to remain in the saddle. A roar from the onlookers announced that the next horse—the final one it was to be, according to the program leaflets—was out and the rider up, but Wallace was well away from the field's end by then and trudged on without looking round again.

He had lost interest in bucking broncos. That fellow, Max Harker, he was thinking, should not do that sort of thing—in public anyhow! You know what gossip is, Wallace mused, walking on, you know how people cackle: "I saw Max Harker comforting Mrs. Galbraith today with a hug." That was the sort of thing some would say with a mean glitter in their eyes and a mean laugh, damn them! Certainly Marion appeared to be more friendly with Harker than Jock was, or ever was, as he recalled.

A sequence of cheers and shouts came from the crowd and then a final applause. The bucking exhibition and contest was over.

Wallace arrived back at the car to report that Galbraith was all right. As he stood there Marion ran blithely along the side of the Park.

"Time for me to get back to the tea and coffee urns," she called to Eleanor. "The folks will be thinking of refreshments."

There was indeed a movement in the crowds. People were strolling along towards the marquee. Some of the cars that had been parked by the meadow's sides were being backed away. Short blasts of motor horns sounded through the hum of voices.

"Well, there you are, Mr. Wallace."

Robert turned at the voice and there was Harker.

"Great day," said Harker. "Great day. Different place this now from the old meadow as it was when I had the pleasure and honour of wrangling and packing for you this way."

"The fellow has been drinking," thought Wallace.

"Progress! Progress! But the railway extension will bust my little transport business. Passengers and freight won't need me any more. So off I go."

"You don't intend to take up land, then? I remember you told me once you thought of doing that."

"Me? No! Can you picture me a small rancher, raising hens and vegetables, early to bed and early to rise, hoeing the spuds and pumping the cow?"

He lifted a hand as though to give Wallace a slap on the shoulder but merely waved it in air. Then he saw Eleanor in the car and bowed but without such derision in the salute as there had been in his voice when talking of the old meadow and the honour of wrangling and packing for Robert.

"I'm a bit tight," he muttered, and abruptly moved off.

"Ice cream! Ice cream! Ice cream cones! Anybody here want ice cream cones?" shouted a voice nearby.

Wallace looked round. A man was trundling a little homemade cart with an ice cream container on it and a sheaf of cones on each side of it.

"Good God!" said Wallace to himself, and pictured that place as he had seen it first when camping there with Galbraith and Harker. Aye, there was progress for the land. Here was progress—ice cream cones! Gone were the days of the old explorers, the pioneers. He felt utterly depressed.

One cause of his depression was the unseating of Galbraith. He would like to tell everybody, lest it was not sufficiently realized, that that horse, in its own practised way, was harder to ride than some of the obviously vicious ones. Another cause of his depression was in the glimpse he had had of Max Harker hugging Jock's wife. At the moment, however, he

had the impression that the ice cream cones, somehow unexplained, depressed him.

Then something happened to ease him. Down from the glaciers, down from the high country, down over the forests of the mountainside, came that breeze of late afternoon, early evening, more definite to his ears than the babble of voices of the celebrants of Progress. There was a scent on the breeze, a scent of the mountains—"the mount'ins, the almighty hills," in Harold Sinclair's words.

The cry of "ice cream cones!" went away, diminuendo. He stood there by the car as one utterly alone for a few seconds, listening to that sigh of passing time, that sigh of time and eternity. Down through the conifers it came and into the valley. The deciduous trees there fussed on a little while with a tattling of leaves, then their world was quiet. He had a sense of ease: These were things that remained unchanged, perdurable.

A muted tum-tum, tum-tum, tum-tum sounded from the farther end of the meadow, the City Park. The Indians were getting ready for their dances, rehearsing with fingertips on the drums, not with drumsticks. *Tum-tum, tum-tum:* It came faint, as out of a distant past, faint but stirring, inexplicably stirring and haunting. History was in it, he thought. But he must not forget his guests. Eleanor had arranged that tea was to be brought to the visitors in the cars by Wong Li, instead of having them go to the crowded marquee for it.

"Well, we'll have a wee cup of tea coming along presently," Wallace said, "and after that the Indian dances, and after the dances dinner at the hotel, and then white man dancing in the community hall. Aye, aye, the community hall."

"You must have seen some changes in this valley even in the short time you have known it," remarked the western superintendent of the railway that had sent a spur line so far.

"I'll say I have," replied Wallace in a phrase of the land that had adopted him, and with a faint lingering hint of the accent of his home land in his voice. "I'll say I have!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

After the public entertainment of the official guests there was private entertainment at the Wallace home.

There was fishing, there was riding, there were a few calls on inhabitants of the valley—a diversity of creatures. There was a visit by the Member of Parliament and the superintendent to Harold Sinclair in a cabin the old prospector had built for himself a mile or two up the west fork gulch. He talked to them of "them almighty hills," and explained that he did not yet feel himself old enough to go out and end his days on Easy Street. For the time being, he said, a couple of months of work for wages with the road maintenance gangs gave him all the money he needed for a year's sustenance—flour and bacon, sugar and salt, tea, coffee, tobacco, and a mat of rice, and in the permitted seasons he got his grouse and his deer and fished a bit.

"Robert Wallace is the best host, and his wife the most gracious hostess, I have ever known," said the Member later, telling of his visit to the ranch.

Yet despite that view he departed uncertain where Wallace would put his cross on a voting card. It puzzled him that a man who had a gift for getting things done, advancing his company's range of interests and successful in personal enterprises, should be so much of what he called a dark horse when politics were mentioned, courteously, skilfully, evasive of becoming implicated. Mrs. Wallace, he opined, might understand her husband through and through. As for himself, he could not—"but a dandy host, the best ever!" There was a side of Robert of which he knew nothing for he was not a man to whom it could be revealed. He found him a paradoxical person, a very good "mixer"—there had been ample evidence of that on the day of fête and during these subsequent calls—and yet, somehow, aloof. This man, the Member realized, whose activities put him into the category of Public Man—"the white chief of Elkhorn Valley"—had a private life, and evidently protected it.

Their sojourn over, Wallace accompanied the visitors to Elkhorn, and on the afternoon of the day following his departure with them Eleanor went over to see Marion. Jock Galbraith was also away, she knew, off to the draws of the range to west, inspecting pockets of meadows there in search of wild horses worth rounding up, or strayed horses

bearing the ranch brand.

Marion had seemed to her very happy on the day of fête, very happy during the days that followed when their guests were pottering about the ranch, curiously contemplating Shorty making biscuits for the boys, solemnly listening to his accompanying erudite disquisition on baking soda and cream of tartar, examining varieties of bits and bridles, watching the skilful gentling of a spirited mare—very happy with "people around." It occurred to Eleanor that the girl might be feeling lonely in Jock's absence, additionally so because of the departure of these guests.

So, on the afternoon of the day after they left, she went along to see Marion.

As for herself, much though she had enjoyed the celebration, and happy though she had been entertaining the visitors, they did not leave her as one lost. As she walked across the bench that sunny afternoon of June, there came up to her from a tangle of brush in a crease by the river the slurred, repeated trill of a willow thrush. There was always for her, as for her husband, the land—the land and the people. One or two poisoners, of course, there were as everywhere, those who had perhaps had something in their lives to embitter them and instead of living it down had to comfort themselves—or further embitter themselves, as might be—by dropping biting remarks in the midst of pleasant converse. But they were in the minority. There were times, after visits paid to her by those she called "the good sorts," when she would stand on the terrace looking out in a quiet ecstasy of content. Violet-green swallows would careen round the house, a waft of sagebrush would come to her, or her gaze would fall on the mariposa lilies among the sand, one here, another yonder, far apart; or, walking a little way on the steep slope of the bench, she would grasp a branch of juniper for support and in the action its robust odour would be spilt on the air. The sounds, the scents, thoughts of the well-wishers she had just seen, would make it one more day on which to be glad in life and wish that one might never grow old and die. It seemed at such moments that all the happiness a mortal might know she knew.

II

Jock had taken all the hands with him, Shorty the cook included. When they went away on such forays as they were employed on then he usually arranged for one of the Indians to ride up from the reserve and attend to the horses that were not out at graze, the feeding and watering of those he called his boarders and patients. John Eaglehead was the one who usually came up, unless he was fully occupied at home or chauffering his father and mother in the miraculous motor car. Even of him one might have no more than a glimpse at the stable door or at the corrals, Eleanor thought, wondering if Marion was lonely.

Marion was indeed lonely, she discovered on arrival, lonely and low of spirit. She welcomed Eleanor as a sick person might welcome a specialist.

"Oh, it's you! Come in," she said, and led the way into the living room.

She did not invite her caller to sit down. Instead she turned squarely to her and, straightway, in a voice that had a touch of hysteria in it, announced that here she was back to the old grind again—"pots and pans, washing tub and cooking," though she had only to cook for herself that day, she added, and so would not bother much; some scraps would do. Eleanor, feeling her own happiness in the day clouded over, listened with folded hands to these outpourings of tedium.

Back to the daily duties again, Marion had been brooding, letting her mind miserably drag up for her further discomfort all manner of things that were best forgotten. Little jibes, little slights she had been recalling. She went on volubly, with that note of hysteria in her voice, to proclaim herself sick of the place, sick of the people. She tossed out bitter words about them.

"Those who pretend to be my friends here would like to hear of anything unfortunate happening to me," she said. "They are always prying, looking for the low-down to talk about. I would like to get to an end with some of them, give them a real good juicy bit of low-down to gloat over."

Eleanor remembered Mrs. Prosser with her comment, "She had to explain." She considered Marion with a frown of anxiety and concern. What was at the back of all this?

"I loathe the place and despise the people," Marion declared.

With that crescendo she stopped and Eleanor gave a long sigh as if it were she who had been speaking and had lost

breath.

"My dear," she said, "what you need is a change."

Marion gave her a wide, unblinking stare.

"Perhaps I do," she answered at last. "What is there for me here? What is there here for anybody? Now and then a dance in West Fork, and that's all, and what's that? Always the same old set. And there's so much work to do in connection with the dances. Take the Farmer's Association dance: We women have to make the cakes and the sandwiches, put up the decorations, serve the tea and coffee, wash up the cups and saucers afterwards, and go back next day and clean out the hall. And what kind of music do we have? A piano, two violins, and a drum, that's all. Or a scratch orchestra made up of fellows from the lumber camps who can tootle a flute and scrape a fiddle," and she looked fiercely into Eleanor's eyes as though challenging her to make any defence for the place and the people.

Eleanor felt herself in a quandary. Tootle a flute and scrape a fiddle! That was unfair. There was a young Russian in one of the camps who played the flute well enough, to her mind, to be in any orchestra. After a talk with him in the West Fork hall she had invited him to come along one evening for music and he had brought his chief treasures with him to show her—program souvenirs of operas he had attended in Moscow and Vienna. A Serbian miner at the Bird's Eye—who had played first violin for the dances on the evening of celebration of the opening of the spur line—was no mere "fiddle scraper." But it would not help Marion to tell her she was being unfair.

So far they had not sat down. All this tirade of tedium had been delivered as soon as Eleanor entered; but at that point, feeling as if strength had been drawn out of her, Eleanor sat down uninvited. Down sat Marion also and went on.

"Oh, Mrs. Wallace," she said, "it is dreadful here sometimes. I go out and look at the road as well as I can see it from our veranda and it does me good just to watch a sleigh going past in winter or a car, if there's anybody running a car. I'll even wave to them, though nobody could see me at that distance. I don't think I can stand another winter here. I want to step out, to step out. I have nobody to understand me, Mrs. Wallace. I can't tell Jock how I feel because it would hurt him, and I don't want to hurt him. I don't want ever to hurt him. He loves me blindly. I don't want to hurt him, but the house is so quiet, only the clock ticking, and I feel I—I can't stand it much longer," and suddenly she broke down and sobbed.

What was the remedy? Eleanor wondered. There came to her mind from somewhere a remark to the effect of "We are all slaves of our temperaments." A dangerous pronouncement, she considered, at least for some who might not have power to end a bitter bondage. Should she give Marion a rating, a vigorous lecture? She was older by a year or two. Should she tell her not to behave like a spoilt child? No, she could not do that. Marion had poured all out to her as if for relief. She had herself, she remembered, felt utterly desolated that year on coming back to the valley, utterly desolated by the comments of Mr. and Mrs. Stubbs over her "raft" of books, her "slough" of books.

"I think I understand, Marion," she said.

"You do? You feel like that, too, sometimes? You only pretend to like living here?"

"Well—no. I mean I can understand how you feel, or I think I can. I'm trying to put myself in your place, my dear. Why don't you tell Jock? I'm sure he would arrange for you to have a trip out. I don't mean just to Elkhorn. You could go to the coast for a while, to Vancouver."

Marion stared at her strangely.

"To Vancouver," she said.

"Or," Eleanor continued, "if I go back east again this winter—though we were hoping we could at last spent Christmas here—would you like to come and visit me there for a while?"

Marion's tears had ceased to flow. She shook her head. "No," she said. "Oh, no, I couldn't do that." Then, "Thank you all the same," she added.

"Well, we won't discuss the future," said Eleanor. "How about going for a gallop along the benches now?"

Marion shook her head again.

"I used to like riding," she replied. "I used to like riding but I've lost taste for it." She paused. "I used to drive tandem sometimes round Stanley Park when I was living in Vancouver," and there was a distant gaze in her dark eyes.

She used to drive tandem when she was in Vancouver! Mrs. Wallace's eyebrows rose in astonishment. It was not, she surmised, usual for women to drive tandem round Stanley Park. Marion must have created a sensation by doing so. Was she a waitress in Vancouver? And did waitresses earn enough to go driving tandem? She recalled that on her first sight of Marion at the New Occidental in Elkhorn she had felt, as she had later remarked to Robert, that the girl had "a story." She knew little, next to nothing, of her early life. That she had been born in a small prairie town she gathered from chance remarks. That Marion had gone from the prairies to the west coast Eleanor also knew, but whether on removal thither by her family or alone she was uncertain. The girl's father might have had a livery stable in Vancouver and allowed his young people to have horses with which to drive tandem.

Eleanor did not probe, did not pry. She was interested in others but not curious; if they were moved to be autobiographical she could listen, but the launching of personal questions seemed to her rank bad manners, and although those prone to do so might say they were actuated by interest in their fellows she had, from observation, come to the conclusion that "interest in their fellows" was too good a name for their intentions. They were apt to show less interest when their inquiries did not produce confession of skeletons in cupboards, or blots on family escutcheons.

But here was an occasion when it seemed that perhaps she should inquire and would help by inquiry. Marion was in need of sympathy, craving sympathy. Not to question might seem like utter indifference.

"You have not told me all," she said. "You have something else, something more on your mind, that you would like to talk about."

Marion looked at her long and as if on the verge of tears again. She bit her lip. Eleanor wondered what she was thinking and a sudden rush of affection and pity for the girl filled her.

"I'm a little lonely myself today," she said impulsively. "I wish you would come along and have dinner and spend the evening with me."

"I would like that," said Marion. "Yes, I would like that very much. I like you. I like your house. There is something friendly in it, and it's not just the furniture does it. Perhaps you could play some music to me. I have only the same old gramophone records here and one gets tired of the same old records. Yes, I would like to come over with you—but don't please, I beg of you—I beg of you, Mrs. Wallace—don't ask again if I have anything on my mind. Forget, forget what I've said."

The tensity suddenly went out of her voice and manner. There was a moment's pause and then—

"I'm sorry I went on like that," she said quietly, restrainedly.

III

Marion felt acutely, suffered acutely: that was clear; and that she could as acutely, as intensely, be joyous and carefree Eleanor had seen but lately at the "Big Do." Yet her intensity of feeling was salved with inconstancy.

"How mercurial she is," Eleanor thought, unable to shake off the effect of those outpourings of dejection as speedily as Marion could dismiss the dejection.

For a while it would have seemed to any chance caller at the Wallace house that Mrs. Wallace was the one in the doldrums and Mrs. Galbraith the light-hearted, the buoyant one. But there was more than buoyancy in her as the evening progressed. There was excitement, a subdued excitement. She had something on her mind more than she had divulged to Eleanor and she was clearly determined not to divulge it.

On the next day Eleanor left Marion alone and spent most of it developing photographs she had taken of the recent celebrations at West Fork. In the afternoon she thought of going over to the Galbraiths'; to show the negatives would be excuse for another visit, so that it would not seem that she had come to see if she had once more to minister unto a mind, if not diseased at least tormented, brooding again. She looked out of an end window at the foreman's house. No smoke came from the chimney. Evidently Marion, still alone, was not troubling to cook anything that required a steady fire and

had let the kitchen range out after breakfast.

As Eleanor stood there she heard the thin, shrill, wavering whistles that suggested a pack string being set in motion and then the "Yip-yip-yip!" that the men made when cattle or horses were being rounded up. She went to the front window and saw a semicircle of riders on the far side of the river urging a bunch of horses towards the bridge. Ahead of them, almost on the bridge—obviously in an attempt to lead them onto it—was Galbraith; but the horses, though urged closely from behind by the wranglers with those shrill whistles and their "Yip-yip-yip!" refused to go onto the bridge. They milled and wheeled on the opposite bank; they tried to dash back across the meadow but the wranglers prevented that, intercepting them. Suddenly the whole bunch dashed down into the water.

The river was still full from melting snows on the heights up the east and west forks, and there was no good fording place there even in midsummer, save in an unusually dry year following upon a winter of little snow. The horses dashed down into it to get away from the riders who were encircling them. There was a great splashing as they tried to cross. It was all very exciting. Eleanor saw them fumbling for footing, saw them lose footing and begin to swim, the wranglers after them. Though they headed straight for the bank on her side their crossing was not straight. The current carried them downstream so that they swam over obliquely. They found footing again, and there up the bank below the house they came with an appearance as of clawing their way, bowing and straining to the slope, gleaming wet, the light-hued ones like horses of silver, the darker ones like horses of bronze and gold.

There was a picture for her—and no film left in the camera! She ran out to the terrace to have a better view. Galbraith, failing to head the obstinate herd in to the bridge, had not turned back. On seeing them dash into the river, he had galloped across to be ready to hold them on the nearer bank. As he rode up to the ranch he saw her.

"That cream-coloured gelding with the long yellow tail," he shouted to her, "I'm going to train for you. He's a stray, one of our own. He'll make you a dandy saddle horse."

He shouted something more that only partially she caught, something about how long it had been running free with the wild herds, she gathered. He was turning his horse aside at the bend of the road to get on the flank of the bunch coming up the bank.

"When they get them corralled I'll run over and see it," she thought, and then heard the sound of a car on the bridge.

Robert had returned. The cream-coloured runaway could be seen some other time.

What had she been doing? Wallace demanded. Was there any news while he had been away? And what had he been doing? she asked. What had he been seeing? All this, though on each day of his absence they had had their usual phone talks. Face to face he told her everything again. He had seen off the visitors after conducting them round the smelter; then he had been compelled to stay in Elkhorn on company business. There was more than a hint of discontent spreading among the men, labour agitators from outside attempting to stir up trouble, at present without much success. Still, there was undoubtedly increasing restlessness at the smelter, and it was good to be back again, away from all rumours for a time.

And she had been developing photographs, she said, some good, some fizzles. While they talked, they stood there watching the obstreperous milling of the horses before a corral where a section of the bars had been taken out days before in preparation for just such a return. The bunch, many of its members acquainted with corrals, was averse to going in. The riders wheeled, "turned on a dollar," loped left and right to force them on.

"Yip-yip-yip!" went the shrill cry.

"Ha-ha! They're in," said Wallace. "No, there's one making a break back. No! In! There are the bars being put up. That's not sweat they're shining with—they must have swum the river."

"Yes. They baulked at the bridge and tried to turn back, then dashed down the bank and plunged in."

"Well, that was a bonny bit of horsemanship," declared Wallace, and they went indoors together. As they entered he remarked: "You didn't tell me when we had our phone talk yesterday that Marion was going out for a change."

"Marion going out?"

"Yes. This afternoon I went down to the station with Hudson to see off the architect who is to build the court house. He had come in to have a look at the site and so forth. I suppose Jock thinks she should have a change of scene, but how didn't you know? Didn't she come over to give you a 'So-long'?"

"No," said Eleanor, a look of dread in her eyes.

"I saw her but she didn't see me. She went aboard the train for the Junction and into the coach before I had a chance to attract her attention. Surely I didn't make a mistake. What's on your mind?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No, nothing. Really. Nothing."

"Funny! You look as if you had something on your mind. Oh, it will leak out in time and you'll say, 'That was what was on my mind when I told you there was nothing on my mind.' I know you, my dear. Well, I must go and wash. I had a puncture on the way and got all grimy putting on the spare."

The blaze of light from the westering sun went out of the living room as Eleanor entered it slowly, perturbed, thinking of that smokeless chimney at the foreman's house. The shades that had been down to temper its glare she raised, thinking still of that smokeless chimney. Had Marion run away? No, no, it could not have been Marion that Robert saw. He must have made a mistake.

She could hear the occasional chink of cutlery in the dining room, the subdued sounds of Wong laying the table for dinner. The routine of her life went on as usual—and perhaps Marion had run away, run away while Jock was in the foothills looking for strayed horses. No, surely not! Robert must have been mistaken. Then she recalled the smokeless chimney at the Galbraith home and the dread remained with her.

Robert came down cheerily and Wong appeared to announce that dinner was ready. During the meal she had to exert herself to talk. Why had there been no smoke from the chimney? Each time that Wong came in to wait on them she looked at him anxiously, prepared for him to say that Mr. Galbraith had come over to ask if she had seen his wife during his absence. She told Robert of the cream-coloured horse and, not only to see it more closely but to allay her dread that Marion had run away, suggested that they might go across to the corrals later to inspect it.

But, dinner over, Wallace began to whistle, whistle over and over again a bar of music.

"What's that?" he asked. "I think I must have heard it on the barber's gramophone when I was in town. It's been sticking in my head all day!"

"I don't know," she began, and then, "Yes, I do. I've got it."

They returned together to the living room and Eleanor, sitting down at the piano, began to play. Her back was to the door so that she did not see, did not hear, Wong Li come in.

"Mr. Galbraith want to see you." Wong spoke to Robert quietly, not to interrupt the playing. "I ask him come in but he say he want to see you alone."

"To see me alone?" replied Wallace, frowning, perplexed, and followed the servant into the hall.

"At the back," said Wong. "He come to the back door to see you alone he say."

Wallace passed through to the rear of the house, the music that had haunted him all day following him. At sight of Jock's face he knew something was wrong. It was drawn. Jock looked haggard; the muscles of his cheeks twitched.

"What is it?"

Actually Wallace did not say that aloud. His eyes asked it, worried.

"Walked out on me," said Galbraith in a hollow voice.

Robert thought that his foreman had gone mad. Had the sun touched him? Not in June surely, a sunny June though it was.

"I don't understand," he said, "but come in. Don't stand there, Jock."

Galbraith stepped in. His lower lip was twitching; his jaw twitched.

"She has walked out on me," he said.

"My dear Jock, calm yourself and tell me just what is wrong?" Wallace implored.

"God almighty! Am I not telling you? Marion has walked out on me."

"Marion has—Marion has—"

"Aye."

So it was truly Marion Galbraith that he had seen getting on the train at Elkhorn.

"I told you once," said Galbraith in a monotone, "that if ever you could do anything for me I would come a-running to you. I was joshing you at the time but here I am all the same. You can do something for me. I don't want to talk about it before you both—I guess that would be too much for me—but could I come in and visit with you both a while till I can sort of take hold of myself to think it out? Before other folks I could hold myself better than alone."

"Good God! Surely. Have you had supper?"

"I don't fancy any supper, Bob. I went indoors after we got that remuda safe into the corral and saw a note she left. It's dated today. It just says," he cleared his throat, "'You have'"—he cleared his throat again—"'you have certainly been good to me but I can stand no more of the life here. I am leaving the valley'."

"She'll come back," said Wallace, in an attempt to aid. "She was perhaps hysterical. Sometimes women get all worked up. Change of life maybe."

"Change of life—hell! She's only twenty-five." He stared before him. "I can't think what it is she can stand no more of. We got on fine." Then his jaws closed grimly. "But I don't want to talk tonight. A fellow has to control himself over a thing like this so as to get into the right mood for thinking what's best to do. That's why I came over. Before others—before your wife—I'll have to pretend all's well and that will help me to get hold of myself, and then I can think out what to do. Just tell Mrs. Wallace I came over because Marion has had to go to Elkhorn suddenly to—oh, say to meet a friend. That will do for the time being. I don't want to sit alone over there thinking about it tonight, not just yet. I canna think straight yet."

"Come in," said Wallace, leading the way along the corridor where Jock, on entering, had halted to talk.

Eleanor had stopped playing. Looking round she had found that her husband had left the room, and could not understand why he should slip away after asking her for the tune that had been haunting him. True, he could hear it all through the house, but——

Then she saw him and Jock Galbraith in the doorway.

"Here's Jock come over," said Wallace, attempting a cheerful voice. "Marion had to go to Elkhorn to meet a friend and he feels the house lonesome without her."

The explanation was no explanation. It was absurd. Wallace knew, as he proffered it, that it was absurd. Eleanor knew that it was absurd. Only Galbraith, nearly demented, could think of it as plausible—and his face told her all. That lame explanation to her for him being there was but as ratification of the truth: Marion had run away, had probably left a note to tell him she had gone. The smile that he gave, bowing as he entered, was a failure. It merely added certainty to certainty: Marion had run away.

Eleanor recalled the comment of Mrs. Prosser: "She had to explain." She remembered the day on which, paying a brief surprise call on her return from the east, she had seen Max Harker in the kitchen with Marion.

"She has run off with Max Harker!" she thought.

In that same fleeting moment Wallace recalled seeing Marion in Harker's truck at the rodeo.

"She has not run off alone," he thought. "She has run off with Max Harker!"

It struck Eleanor that Jock might wish to talk to her husband alone, and she was on the point of finding an excuse to leave them together, but following on that came the consideration that Robert had been called out to meet him. Wong must have beckoned him out while she was playing. Galbraith had not just been ushered in. There had been opportunity for private talk between them; there had, it struck her then, definitely been private talk between them. This nonsense about being lonely because Marion had gone to meet a friend at Elkhorn had been devised, perhaps, not only by Galbraith but between them as explanation to her for the call.

She felt sure that Jock knew Marion had left him. Perhaps he had told Robert so, perhaps he had not, perhaps he had come over just to keep from going mad alone with the shock of discovery that his wife had deserted him. She was in a quandary, undecided, uncertain, merely guessing.

"I think I ought to leave you," she risked. "You may have business to discuss."

"No, no, not at all," said Wallace.

He gave her a swift, pleading glance as he spoke, then turned to Jock.

"Sit ye doon," said he. "Would you care for a wee dram?"

"No, no thank you; and don't let me stop you playing, Mrs. Wallace."

Eleanor turned back to the piano eagerly, feeling as she did so, by the prompt response to his request, as a fleeing coward. Much as Marion's outburst had affected her, Galbraith's silent agony affected her. She shared his obvious suffering.

What to play? She could think of nothing, her mind empty of music. It would be like saying the wrong thing, whatever she chose. She could only think of snatches, disconnected airs, but she made an attempt and halted, made another, bungled through to an end and then, because of the utter silence behind, glanced over her shoulder.

Galbraith's eyes were full of tears.

"I'm sorry," said he, knowing his tears were observed.

He felt he had to make another explanation, another plausible explanation. All he could think of, all he could invent, all he could think of as possibly acceptable, was sentimental.

"I'm sorry," he said again. "You see, my mother used to play that."

Wallace stared rigidly at the ceiling.

"Give us something else, dear," he suggested, "give us something stirring."

But horses, it came to Eleanor, might be better than music. Galbraith's middle name, it had been remarked to her once, was Horses.

"I don't seem to be able to play tonight," she said. "It's not too dark to go and have a look at that cream-coloured gelding. Couldn't we do that?"

Galbraith leapt up.

"No, it's not too dark," he agreed. "It's not twilight yet. We could step over for you to see him. I forked in some hay for them all before I came over, and put in a slab of rock salt, too, to make them happy."

The horses, as Wallace said to his wife later, were "a God-send."

After the bunch had been viewed, with special attention for the cream-coloured gelding that had run away two years before, a leggy foal then, they returned to the house and talked—talked of horses. They talked of the wild horses of the sequestered little backward valleys; they talked of the runaways that joined them there. They talked of the criollos and

the photographs of criollos in a magazine that had come to Wallace from South America. They talked of the way the Cheyenne Indians in the old days used to begin the breaking of horses by getting them under control and then letting the beasts whiff their breaths to convey that no grievous harm was intended to them. They talked of the intelligence and the lapses from intelligence of horses.

Eleanor groped in her mind for a contribution to the conversation and found it as empty of horses as it had been suddenly empty of music. Much as she had been aware of excitement blent with Marion's recovered buoyancy on the evening when she tried to lift the girl out of her misery over the place and the people, so was she aware that Jock, through all that chatter, was in private agony. They were only deferring, deferring the inevitable. Sometime they would, controlled, have to talk of what was in their hearts and minds that night. It required no woman's celebrated intuition to be aware of what had happened. Marion had, undoubtedly, run away.

Yet how could she? She had said she did not want to hurt Jock. Eleanor could hear again the tone of her voice as she said it, the tone of distress. What exactly ailed Marion, she wondered. Was it instability? She looked towards Robert in the midst of these thoughts. He was making a movement of his lips characteristically his own, at the same time shifting slightly in his chair from one side to the other. The little movement of his lips, the way he shifted in his chair, were his own. As she watched him she had suddenly to force back tears that almost came to her eyes over the thought of ever being parted from him. Marion could not have loved Jock as she loved Robert.

The night was well advanced when Galbraith said he guessed he had better be going.

"You told me you hadn't had anything to eat after getting back with that bunch of horses," said Wallace. "How about some sandwiches before you leave?"

"No, no thank you."

"How about a wee snifter of the Auld Kirk now?" Wallace suggested.

"No, no thank you," said Galbraith, and rose.

"Well, I'll walk over with you and have a breath of air before I go to bed," said Wallace, also rising.

Eleanor was again at a loss. What part should she play in this tragic farce, or how play the part that seemed to be assigned to her? Should she say she was glad he had come along for the evening, Marion being away? Should she shake hands with him in an attempt to convey sympathy for what she was certain—indeed knew—was the reason for his coming? Her manner was nervous. Galbraith, however, had full control of himself.

"Good night, Mrs. Wallace," said he. "And thank you."

He turned abruptly to the door.

Out on the bench the two men walked slowly along to Galbraith's house. It was a clear night. The silence was profound. An owl called in distance.

"It's a braw nicht," said Wallace at last.

"Yes, it's a fine night," said Jock Galbraith. "Thank you for letting me bide with you a while, when I had the first stound of it."

"You'll be all right?" asked Wallace.

"Aye, I'll be all right. I wanted just to break away from myself for a wee while till I could think about it kind of calm, ye ken."

"Quite, quite. I understand. Well, you won't do anything daft, Jock?" said Wallace, coming to a halt at the veranda steps before the lightless house.

The blackness of the windows under the eaves was party to the night's misery.

"I ken what you mean. No, I'll do nothing daft," replied Jock Galbraith and, turning away, he went slowly up the steps.

IV

When Wallace returned, Eleanor made a simple statement.

"So it was indeed Marion you saw go aboard the train at Elkhorn," she said.

"Yes. Oh, yes. As soon as he got here tonight he told me."

"Wong called you out while I was playing?"

"Yes. Jock wanted to see me outside. He told me there. He just wanted to be here with us till he could get over the first shock of it. He didn't want to talk of it more than that. She had left him a note."

"I know," said Eleanor, and then amended, "or at least I guessed. What did it say? Did he tell you?"

"Yes. It let him know she was sick and tired of living here. 'You have certainly been good to me but I can stand no more of the life here.' That's what it said."

"She poured it all out to me when you were away, poured it all out only yesterday. She hated it here—the place and the people. She said she didn't want to hurt Jock but felt she could stand it no more." And then, thinking of an incident of the harrowing evening, she remarked, "I doubt if his mother ever played the piano."

"I doubt if his mother ever had a piano to play," replied Wallace promptly. "He had to give you what he thought was a reasonable explanation for his condition."

Her eyes were wide open, staring into distance.

"I believe she has gone off with Harker," she said.

"So do I," agreed Wallace. "At the rodeo at West Fork the other day when he stopped to talk beside the car he told me he was getting out, said the railway would bust his freight and passenger business and he wasn't going to take up land. I believe, from one thing and another, the little fool is off with him."

"I wonder what will happen next."

"He's all right for tonight," said Wallace. "We're not going to have a suicide here. He promised me that."

"You got him to promise that?"

"Well, I said to him, 'You'll do nothing daft.' He understood what I meant. He said, 'No, I'll do nothing daft'."

"He'll keep his word to you, strained though he is. He thinks the world of you."

"I think quite a lot of him," said Robert Wallace.

PART IV

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Could Marion have heard all the talk in the valley regarding her flight, she would surely no longer have felt that malice and uncharitableness were the dominant characteristics of its inhabitants. They did not all, by any means, rejoice when others wept and weep when others rejoiced. Among many there was genuine regret over the end of what had seemed to be a happy union.

Mrs. Prosser, of course, had to be Mrs. Prosser, a lady prone to vacillate at need of her disposition. No one ever could prophesy what she would say in given circumstances. On this occasion she remarked that if all were known of the domestic life of the Galbraiths it might be found that the poor thing had a hard time with her husband; and, having thus spoken, she added with vigorous nod and shrill accentuation that she objected to scandal-mongering and unfounded suspicions.

Everybody knew, even those who looked upon the affair as none of their business and did not probe for details yet could not avoid hearing talk of it, that Marion had walked to the new station at West Fork and gone off on the train for Elkhorn. The station agent, pumped by the curious, blankly answered that he had no notion of her intended destination, could not remember whether she had taken a single or a return ticket, could not in fact—with a stony stare—remember anything about her ticket.

Actually Marion had taken a return ticket for Elkhorn because there were people standing in the booking hall and she wanted to give the impression of being off only for a day's shopping there. She was "covering her tracks" in this flight, much as in her former one. During the brief halt of the train at Elkhorn—while the locomotive, uncoupled, puffed to and fro picking up an additional passenger coach and two freight cars—she fluttered out into the main street to do some hurried shopping and, with another ticket to the Junction, had gone aboard again carrying a new suitcase.

At the Junction she had been observed leaving the train and getting into a waiting car, a car that Max Harker had purchased from the Elkhorn Motor Company, "trading in" his truck.

Of that, the most important, the chief detail regarding Marion's desertion of him (the most distressing and most humiliating to him), Jock was the last to be made aware, and the news came to him in an anonymous letter signed "A friend."

Wallace, going along to the ranch to see him, found him very glum of aspect, sitting on the top bar of the corral watching two of the men at work, one of them seated on a half-broken horse and the other on a well-trained and knowing one beside it. The lessons—of the "little and often" sort that Galbraith believed in for best results—had progressed so far.

The two went pacing together a few yards until the half-broken one had a stubborn fit and fought its rider for a minute or two while the accompanying horseman halted nearby; then the show of rebellion suddenly ended and away they went dusting along the bench. A hundred yards or so off there was another baulky interlude over the attempt at instruction in wheeling, either through failure to understand or objection to obeying, but back came the two again, their pennants of dust behind, with occasional rebellious pauses, half bucks and neck weavings, of the novice.

From his perch Galbraith watched the proceedings.

"That will do for him for today," he called. "Put him back in the corral and get out the pinto and let her have the same for a spell."

Having given that order he turned his head slowly and looked down at his boss.

"Good morning," he said in a level voice.

He put hand in breast pocket, took out a letter, and held it down to Wallace.

"Read that," he said. "I got it today; when Shorty rode up to West Fork after breakfast to see if there was any mail for us he brought that back for me."

Wallace read it, expressionless:

> *"Dear Mr. Jock Galbraith, I think you should know that your wife was seen by a lady I know well getting out of the train at the Junction and getting into a motor car in which Mr. Max Harker was sitting. They drove away at once to west. A friend."*

Wallace handed it back to Galbraith, still expressionless.

"I was just coming over to tell you, Jock," he said. "Eleanor heard yesterday. We thought we should let you know."

"That's good of you," said Galbraith, still speaking in that level voice. "I'm the last to get the story," he added. "I guess that's the natural order in which the news would go. At first everybody would know except Mrs. Wallace, you, and me. Then you two would be told by somebody and you would put your heads together and fret about how to tell me. Yes, I'd be the last to know. I've to be told by an anonymous letter."

He thrust it back in his pocket, staring at the ground.

"There's nothing in the way it's writ," he commented, "to show whether the writer took pleasure or grief in feeling I had to be told. But that's how it goes. I would naturally be the last to know. Well, I can take it."

He turned to watch the two men saddling the pinto mare.

"That's fine," he said. "Lead her out before you mount. You know what happened yesterday—her trying to crack your knee-cap when you rode her out. That's fine."

"Well," said Wallace, "I'll leave you, Jock. I've to go down to Elkhorn today and I'm ready to start but I had to see you first."

"Thank you for coming," replied Galbraith, still talking in that monotone.

The pinto was led out; the men moved away from the corral. Jock watched them go and then spoke again to Wallace. There was a look on his face that reminded Robert of the day of the rodeo, of how he had appeared when it was not the tear in his ear but the ignominy of being unseated by a cart horse that depressed him.

"She preferred that swine to me," he said.

Wallace could only give a sigh of sympathy, a murmur of "Aye-aye-aye."

"She couldn't stand it. She tired of life here, couldn't stand it any more. I've heard people say that Max Harker is good company. Good company! I wish I could figure out how it ever came to this. I guess he tried to get round about her. A funny story to him was always a story of some young fellow getting into bed with a married woman. I guess the best I can say of it is that she wouldn't have that. No sir, I don't believe Marion would have that. She wouldn't go on living with me and let him have that fun. That's how I figure it out, and the only way he could get her was to coax her to go right off with him. But if I'm any judge of him he's diseased. And he's liable to have what he wants and then—*skidoo!* You know him. He hasn't changed. You heard him—right in that meadow over there," and Galbraith spat as if he would spit clear over the bench, across the river, and into the meadow on the other side, "you heard him telling of all the women he had sampled—'sampled,' he said that day—the world round. You saw him when we left Camp Elkhorn, first time you came up this valley, you saw that Indian girl at the bridge beside old Ho Sang's store, that Indian girl he had gypped out of two dollars and thought it funny."

He turned again to look at the two men. The mare had been mounted and was having her day's lesson, the same as the other had been having when Wallace approached.

"I can't trust myself today," said Jock, "to do any riding. I'm scared of thinking of it all when I get in the saddle and taking it out on the hoss. That would be a hell of a thing to do. The hosses are not to blame."

Wallace nodded, understanding.

"You've got something there, Jock," he agreed, "got something there, as the saying goes. You know the right way to 'take it'."

"Yes, I guess I can 'take it.' Thank you for coming to tell me."

They nodded to each other and Robert left him.

II

Jock had said that he could "take it" but soon there were signs indicating that he could not. He began to drink heavily till the time came when he was seldom sober.

There were days on end when little was done at the ranch, Galbraith loafing and drunk. Robert Wallace did not look upon himself as a temperance reformer but he regretted that, seemingly, "whisky had got" his foreman. He knew the cause of it, and he hoped that Jock would become enraged at whisky's mastery and take hold of himself. He remembered that night when Galbraith, demented after reading Marion's note of farewell, had come to see them, and how he had offered him a dram, and the tone in which it had been refused, and the way a second offer had also been refused on leaving. He wondered, recalling those two refusals, if Jock was afraid of himself with alcoholic liquor, afraid that he could not "take it or leave it," with a secret weakness in him where whisky was concerned despite his usual air of self-control and restraint. But Wallace could not, nevertheless, bring himself to deliver a temperance lecture.

The neglecting of work was another matter. He might go more easily to his foreman and say, "If you want to be a drunkard it's all right with me but only so long as you run my ranch properly. That's what you're paid for." He planned various approaches but made none, hopeful that Jock would amend, sober up, without admonition.

The fact was that John Galbraith could not stand the quiet of his own house. The ticking of the clock was torture to him—that clock, the ticking of which had accentuated to Marion her feeling of monotony in life. Soon he went along to live in the bunk house. Not a man to drink alone when others were close at hand, he soon had all drinking too much—no hard task.

That was the grimmest sort of conviviality. Knowing the cause of his drunkenness they were at first sedate over the bottles, subduing the desire of their kind to let off excess of spirits—accentuated by those from the bottles—by raising their "Yip-yip-yip!" call or imitating the howls of coyotes in the dusk. But one of them, a half-breed, came back one evening from the Indian reserve with a hand drum and the *tum-tum*, *tum-tum* sounded. In the bunk house they went dancing round with a tattoo of their high heels.

Jock was no spoil-sport. He did not seek to restrain them. Though taking no part, he looked on with a drunken and tolerant smile, but when the half-breed suddenly let loose a shrill howl he bethought him of "the boss" and the boss's wife so close along the bench.

"Cut it out!" he growled. "We don't want to disturb the boss. If you want to cut up, get on your hosses and go off for a ride. If you want to whoop, whoop somewheres where the boss won't hear you."

They took him at his word. They rushed out to the corrals, saddled their horses. Then one of them bethought him of the firearms in the place. There were one or two rifles that were used when deer hunting and bear hunting in the seasons; there was a revolver of heavy calibre belonging to Shorty who had once worked on a sheep range and carried it there to shoot coyotes, they being a menace at lambing time. He went back for that six-shooter.

Jock knew nothing of that. He had flung himself down on his bunk when they went out and did not look up to discover what brought one of them back to tramp across the floor, fumble in a pack sack that hung from a nail, and go tramping out again.

But that night's fun was to be heard of and cause criticism, not only of Galbraith and the men, but of Wallace also.

III

Of late there had been additional settlers in the valley of a new type, retired civil servants, army people, a naval man

whose dream had been to run contrary to the old advice of "Who would not sell a farm and go to sea?"

When inquiries for information about the Elkhorn Valley came from these people to the Board of Trade, Robert Wallace, being told of them, suggested that the city park at West Fork could be called, with equal fitness, the polo field—and thus it had been mentioned in the secretary's replies. Misrepresentations about a farm would have annoyed the newcomers less, perhaps, than what they conceived as misrepresentations about a polo field. Wallace was innocent of any wish to mislead, considering that what was suitable for a race course was surely suitable for polo. They did not, however, see eye to eye with him on that. When they told the secretary what they thought of the polo field he informed them that Mr. Wallace had so called it, saying so in no desire to shift the responsibility but because he thought that Mr. Wallace was a man who would know when a city park was a polo field and that Mr. Wallace's view was as good as theirs—with that climax implied in his voice and manner.

If there were moments when a few of the new settlers—especially a few among those from overseas—regarded Wallace with aloof suspicion, there were moments when he considered all of them, no matter where they came from, with regret. They brought customs into the valley with them that he did not always appreciate. When the last night of October came, for instance, and Hallowe'en pranks were played by children (who were allowed on that evening, unaccompanied by adults, to do just as they pleased) Wallace wished he had never come to Camp Elkhorn, never climbed to the Birdseye mine, never fulfilled his vision of that day to develop and open up the valley. And next morning when he wakened to find that the gates had been removed from his garden and spirited away he felt still less sympathetic. Standing on his lawn was a strange wagon that must have been dragged thither from a place several miles distant. There it would have to remain, he decided, until its owner found and claimed it.

Moodily he started to search for the gates, discovering one down by the river, another over by the corrals. Galbraith was similarly employed, the corral bars having been removed and hidden.

"Ain't the pioneering spirit grand?" muttered Galbraith when he met Wallace with a heavy gate hoisted across his shoulders. "Don't you like to see the signs of civilization?"

Wallace glowered at him.

They were not alone. All up and down the valley—indeed it might be said all over Canada—grown-ups, in various moods, spent hours looking for lost properties. All day starry-eyed children, full of secret ecstasy, passed demurely to and from school enjoying the effects of their one night of freedom. It being an unwritten law that parents should neither interfere with the activities of their young people, nor censure them on the results, mothers and fathers went grimly about the business of putting their places in order again, some thoroughly exasperated, some resigned, some amused, with guilty recollections of their own Hallowe'en pranks.

"Perfectly ridiculous!" stormed Wallace. "Putting us to all this inconvenience and trouble. Look at the time wasted! Sir Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson never had to put up with such damned nonsense."

The ex-army men could not forget the "polo field" of the secretary's letters and that Wallace was an accessory. They were on the look-out for chicanery, false statement, double-dealing, rendered suspicious of everybody in the neighbourhood thereby. Because of Wallace being the white chief of the valley they were affable to him, but the affability had a frosty quality. At the back of their minds was always the embittering "polo field."

Their womenfolk had also a tendency to turn the talk—especially when Eleanor was present—to the questionable ways of real estate agents, of company promoters, exploiters, and all such people. Mrs. Stubbs, the Reeve's wife, greatly disliked most of these recent arrivals. She thought them pretentious. She thought them affected. She didn't like their voices. (They, incidentally, didn't like hers.) She didn't like their manners. "They have all kinds of deportment," she once said, "but no manners. I'd rather have good manners without deportment than deportment and bad manners!"

All sorts of people were by then living between Elkhorn and West Fork, people with natural good manners and no deportment, people with both, people with bad manners and a veneer of deportment, and a very small surplus—to be fair—with bad manners and no deportment. What Mrs. Stubbs disliked above all in these newcomers was a gift they seemed to her to have in common of acid innuendo, of oblique insolence.

At one of the women's gatherings in the West Fork hall, shortly after the Galbraith affair, a group was talking of the Bird's Eye mine and of how great an asset it was to the valley and to Elkhorn. The social gathering was near an end. One

or two had already left. Eleanor rose to go and just as she was stepping to the door the wife of one of the new ranchers, Mrs. Rand, spoke.

"They tell me," said she, "that the original discoverer was cheated in the price he received for it."

As she spoke she made what she would have called "a little moue" at Mrs. Wallace's back. Eleanor did not, of course, observe that; but she knew that it was intended that she should hear the remark. It was a parting shot at her back. For a moment she had a revived sympathy with Marion in her rage over poisoners. These new people, she thought, would have irked Galbraith's wife exceedingly. Robert spoke of them as "fine people, fine people, a worthy addition to the community," but at the moment she could not find it in her to agree with him.

"He got the price he asked," came a harsh voice.

It was Mrs. Stubbs who spoke then, and her voice was like the sharpening of a saw.

Eleanor at that moment loved her. What Robert had once said of the Stubbs was true: They were good sorts, straight shooters, fine people, fine people, even though they thought that books on the shelves were but as money tied up. She continued on her way out of the hall and, thanks to Mrs. Stubbs, was suddenly much lighter of heart as she got into the car. As she drove out of West Fork she received cheery waves, cheery hails of "How-do!" and a form of passing salutation that somehow particularly pleased her, a mere murmuring of her name—"Mrs. Wallace . . ."—with a bow or a wave of the hand.

She would have loved Mrs. Stubbs still more deeply had she known what took place after her departure.

Mrs. Stubbs' blood was up.

"He got the price he asked," she repeated as the door closed behind Eleanor, "and I can tell you that when Mr. Wallace built what some of you think it's funny to refer to as the baronial hall or the log cabin mansion or the log cabin white house, he gave that man—Harold Sinclair—the job of overseeing the construction and paid him handsomely. When the white chief, as the Indians call him, is acting for himself there's nobody can call him close."

Then, as the naval man's wife said later, reporting the duel to her husband, the decks were cleared for action.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Rand, "seeing that you have mentioned Mr. Wallace—I hope you notice *I* didn't mention him—that he does not discharge the men working for him at the ranch. What a drunken crew they are! When my husband wrote to the Elkhorn Board of Trade for information regarding the neighbourhood, the secretary stated in his reply that a fine class of people lived here. I wonder if he would consider these men as in that category? A group of them went riding past our place the other night all yelling like savages and shooting a revolver into the air. I can't understand why the police didn't do something about it. This is assuredly wild west—from polo fields to drunken cowboys. Lawless I call it. If I were in Mr. Wallace's place I would certainly discharge them all. He must have heard about it."

"No doubt," said Mrs. Stubbs. "No doubt he will certainly hear of it. But there is nothing small about *him*. He'll give them a chance. We all know what is going on there, and he knows the reason for it. You can leave it to him, Mrs. Rand. He'll see to it in his own way—and after all it is his own business."

There the duel ended, and that Mrs. Stubbs had won was the opinion of all, the naval man's wife included. Though one of the newcomers (of all of whom, because of the ways of some, the Reeve's wife was doubtful), she had enjoyed Mrs. Stubb's broadsides. Possibly they would all—old-timers and newcomers—in course of time, with jagged corners rubbed off, get along with each other none too badly.

All that, as it happened, was on the very day on which Robert Wallace decided to have a serious talk with his foreman. He had spent the morning at the smelter office discussing the rising labour problems with executives and operatives, and on the way to lunch at the hotel he heard from several people whom he met of the wild west exhibition on the valley road. Most of them found it amusing, but Captain Rand, a great polo enthusiast, in a debonair fashion touched on the affair, meeting him in the New Occidental.

"Those lads of yours at your ranch seem to be a pretty wild bunch, hein? They need to be disciplined, hein? Quite a little wild west show they gave us along the road the other night. I don't suppose the police will do anything unless somebody lays a charge. Very lenient the police here, hein?"

"Oh, yes," said Wallace, on edge, "we're lenient here—all ways round. Just in town for the day?"

"Just in town for the day."

With exchange of courteous bows they parted.

Trader Jackson—Wallace stopped on the way home for a chat with him—was full of it.

"Old days are back again," he said gleefully. "We ain't all tame here yet. I hear your boys had a whoop-up the other night on the road."

The beginning of that much-discussed "whoop-up" Wallace had heard. He had heard the drumming of the tom-toms. To that he had no objection. It was not the merriment of the boys that troubled him, but in the accompanying coyote calls of the half-breeds, suddenly stopped, there had been definitely an abandoned note, a quality of something that was not expressive of natural exuberance. Tolerance over his foreman's declension was near an ebb.

Back from town, he walked over to the ranch buildings.

The men had just finished supper and were sitting before the cook house in restful attitudes. Their working *chaparajos* (chaps), discarded for the day, hung over the veranda rail. One was darning a sock, another was sewing a patch on the worn sleeve of his jacket, another was plaiting a quirt thong. It was a peaceful picture.

Wallace saw Galbraith come out of the bunk house and hang a wet towel on the rail.

"Could I have a word with you, Jock?" he called.

The boys looked one to another with the manner of those who know when "a show-down" has come.

Jock slowly descended, walked slowly towards his boss, for the first time in their acquaintanceship very unfriendly of aspect.

Wallace came straight to his point, aided by the strong odour of neat whisky on his foreman's breath. Galbraith was obviously newly shaved, and Robert wondered if to steady his hand he had found it necessary to have "a hair of the dog that bit him." All the boys, he knew, used the old straight razors, the "cut-throat razor," looking upon safety razors as designed for "sissies."

"Jock," said Wallace, "things have got to mend here. You are neglecting your work too often and letting the men neglect theirs."

Galbraith stood before him, sullen.

"When I wrote to you about taking the job of ranch foreman I told you that I knew you were one who could handle not only horses but men."

"Well?" said Jock.

"It seems I was wrong. It seems you can't even master yourself. You know as well as I do," Wallace went on, "that when a boss of a ranch or a logging camp or a mining camp, or any kind of outfit, drinks with his men his authority is lost. He is done. For God's sake, Jock, can't you 'take it' like a man?"

"So it has come to this," said Galbraith, and then, "Am I fired?" he asked truculently.

"No. You are not even warned of the possibility of being fired. I look on you as too close a friend. I'm talking for your own sake as well as for mine. I may tell you I'm getting a bit of a side-swipe myself because of the way things are going here. I was asked today if it is a wild west show I'm running up here on the bench. There are people who are looking for opportunities to belittle me and you are giving them a damned good one. It is not only the boys who have done it, helling along the road the other night with a jag on, trying to scare people. You ride into West Fork for mail so cockeyed that you try to push the side of the door off with your shoulder going in and out. You told me one day you could 'take it.' Jock Galbraith, you can't 'take it'."

Galbraith's eyes blazed with fury. Wallace met their gaze calmly. Then Galbraith wheeled, walked away, and Wallace,

disappointed, turned and went homeward.

He had hoped that there would be appreciation of his attitude and that Jock, contrite, would give a promise to amend. Then it struck him that perhaps it was all to the good that Galbraith had been dour, ungrateful for a lenient approach. Going away, glum, to ponder over the lecture, he might make a resolve to reform, and such a resolve might be more effectual than a sudden emotional promise to do so, less likely to be marred by lapses.

"Well, we'll see what we'll see," Wallace said to himself.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Of how matters had been at the ranch Eleanor knew. Robert's face when he returned from visits along the bench caused questions and he told her all.

During that period he was not his usual self—was, in a word, cranky. As a rule he had a capacity for taking annoyances lightly. That quality that the visiting Member of Parliament had called aloofness, and considered odd in one of so many activities and "a mixer," was really due to the fact that he had a private life, a place of retirement within himself. He would sit at a Company directors' meeting (smelter executive meeting, Board of Trade meeting, any sort of meeting), should it seem to him that prolixity was having play, with only half an ear for the current discussion, his mind far off, thinking, it might be, of early trips into the north, the paddlings, the portages, the reviving draughts of tea at the day's end while coughing in the smoke of a smudge fire smouldering against the mosquitoes; but more frequently he thought of places in this west that had claimed him on arrival, and held him, of such places as the gorge of Elkhorn River's west fork, for instance. While verbosity droned on he would recall his first ascent of that gorge, picture the balsam-beaded boles beside the trail, the fanning branches of cedars down the slope as seen from above tipped with new green, and the flash of turbulent water in the deeps. "What is Wallace thinking?" someone would inquire, and he would at once give his view on the subject under discussion as though he had been profoundly considering all the prolixity; and usually what he had to say clarified the discussion. There was nothing of the super or person in that aloofness, only an indication of one who could, in a sense, lead a double life, a double life that was not malign but clement.

During Galbraith's delinquency other irking affairs had not been so easily relegated to their fitting place. Robert Wallace had lost poise. "Fine fellows, fine fellows," seemed to come his way less frequently. Instead, apparently, he met chiefly those who roused invective in him. One was reported "a flatulent ass," another "an important nonentity." When he was requested by the secretary of the polo club, at request of its members, to make a donation towards the cost of putting a fence round the field (a new piece of land had been purchased, for polo only) he responded with his usual liberality, but remarked to his wife afterwards that they had the damndest nerve to ask him for aid considering how they had derided the city park as a pitch. The normal Robert Wallace would merely have laughed over the appeal for alms by the club as a happy end to a fiddling grudge.

Truth was that Galbraith's behaviour, together with the brewing dissatisfaction at the smelter, was making him impatient over much that ordinarily would not have so much as ruffled him. He liked Jock too well to accept the thought of him becoming a waster. Earlier, Eleanor, realizing the causes of the change in him had advised, "You'll have to speak firmly to Galbraith some day—for his own good," and Robert had replied, "I'll speak to him—if he doesn't mend of his own accord. Perhaps he'll improve and make it unnecessary." The sullen manner in which the postponed lecture had been taken had left Robert prepared for anything, even for his foreman petulantly resigning, quitting, but eventually it looked as though the climax of his cogitations over the interview as he walked home again had been sound: Better perhaps had been the sullen attitude to his remonstrance than an immediate emotional promise to amend.

For soon it appeared that the interregnum of delinquency was over. John Galbraith was himself again—or nearly, for something had been lost in him since he lost Marion. Certainly the delinquency was over and as day followed day and the summer progressed there were no lapses. He continued to eat his meals at the bunk house but returned to his own place to sleep. He was proving to himself—to himself—that he could *take it*.

It was a beautiful summer, smirched only (at its beginning) by Galbraith's condition. The heat was intense around noon, keeping the birds quiet then—taking siesta, Jock might have said. Among the delphiniums on either side of the door humming-birds darted, prying into the pagodas of blossom storey by storey. The steep, forested slopes of the ranges had an appearance of somnolence, basking in the sun. On the evening wind down the gulches there was a warm odour, a whiff of sun-scorched wilderness.

Eleanor went up into that wilderness with Robert to the Bird's Eye, to another mine, the Mother Lode (discovered by one of the Company's young prospectors), recently opened at the head of Gold Creek, to one of the logging camps where she had dinner with the men who were at work there, drank tea from outsize enamel cups like bowls with handles, and unobtrusively observed the disappearance of pumpkin pie and raisin pie, and then went on along one of the logging roads through further forest within hearing of rhythmic rasp of saws and the clipping of axes that preceded a rending sound (accompanied by a chanted cry of "Tim-ber!") that was followed by a dull thud. Coming home she was haunted by some words written by Sir Walter Raleigh about the herbs, plants, fruits and flowers "adorning the face of the earth . . . not created to beautify the earth alone, and to cover and shadow her dusty face, but otherwise for the use of man and beast."

Robert was frequently absent then, both on Company business and his own affairs, and during one of these absences Eleanor went huckleberry picking and helped Wong in the kitchen at the bottling of the fruit while wasps, attracted by the odour, buzzed on the further side of the screens at door and windows.

There may have been no sign of contrition in Galbraith's manner when Wallace delivered his reprimand, but towards showing contrition Jock had been devoting himself to retraining the roan horse and one day he brought it along. Sitting on his own horse beside it he called to Wong to ask Mrs. Wallace if she would care to come out and try a ride.

Hearing his voice Eleanor looked from an upper window and called down to him:

"Let me get into riding breeches and I'll be with you."

It was the first time she had seen him to speak to since the days of his disorder. He had sedulously kept away. There was something of sheepishness in his aspect when she came out attired for the ride, but she acted as though she knew nothing of downfall, admonition, recovery. She mounted and they went off northward along the bench at a walk, a trot, a lope, a gallop, a lope. On the way she noticed a patch of saskatoon bushes, and turning aside she rode to the bush and gave the roan its head. It took hold of a branch at the base and with an upward swerve cleared it of the small purple berries.

The roan was perfectly neck-broken. At a flick of the reins it moved back from the bush and on they rode again, the two horses in step side by side at a trot, at a lope, at the gallop, at a lope again. A little further on it spied another saskatoon bush in another cleft of the slopes and made to swerve towards it, but Eleanor gave a neck direction away. Promptly it obeyed and they rode straight on.

"Good! Splendid!" she exclaimed. "You're obedient. I'll let you have some on the way home."

"You will tell Mr. Wallace how good it is broken, I hope," said Galbraith.

He seemed to her like a little boy pleading for acknowledgment that he was a good little boy.

"I'll tell him," she promised. "Shall we turn back now?"

On the way out there had been a brooding melancholy apparent in Galbraith's eyes, but as they were riding home he brightened and plunged into an account of meetings he had been having with one of the newcomers.

"Captain Rand and I are getting to be great tillicums," said he, using a word for *friends* from the Chinook trade jargon surviving in the province.

Eleanor smiled inwardly at that, for the tillicum of whom he spoke was none other than the Captain Rand who had suavely voiced animadversion to Robert (as Robert had reported to her) on the hands at the ranch after what he had styled the "wild west show" they had given one night along the road, calling them "a pretty wild bunch, hein?" and "undisciplined."

"It all began," said Galbraith, "when I was in West Fork for the mail recently. I was on a horse I used to ride when we had the cattle, a real cow pony, trained for that work. He was awful ta'en up with the way it answered either to a touch of

the knee or a tap of the lines and the way it could turn on a dollar, as they say. He asked about how it was trained, and when I told him and explained that one could ride these ponies into a herd and cut out any steer we wanted he was all worked up. 'It's the perfect pony for a polo,' said he. I told him that once when I took the boss out to see the wild herds, and we were talking of cow ponies, he had said much the same thing. Well, we've been going ahead since then with our cayuse improvement like the criollo improvement that Mr. Cunninghame Graham wrote to your husband about, but we mustn't forget that notion of specializing on polo ponies. I mean in a big way. Mr. Wallace being, as you might say, independent, he could put a high price on them, not needing the money urgently at all. In time he could get it for I'm sure we can produce polo ponies that would establish a record all over the world."

He paused a moment, casting back his head and gazing into distance as into an imagined future.

"I wouldn't," he said, "have them shipped away casual, like wild horses rounded up and driven into the cars on the way to make canned meat for France and Belgium. I never like that employ anyhow," he interjected. "Our polo ponies would have to be treated right, from the ranch to the buyer's stables. I'd go with them myself all the way to their destination, or have the maist reliable man in my outfit—I mean Mr. Wallace's outfit—go with them. I wouldn't risk having them ill-treated on the way by people either uninterested in horses or scared of them. I wouldn't like to think of them being flailed out of a car if they got baulky at the gangway. Yes, I must remind your husband of what he said that day and tell him what Captain Rand was saying. The captain knows what he's talking about. Yes, we are getting to be quite tillicums over horses, him and me, though at first I was not greatly ta'en with him."

"I'm sure my husband would be interested to hear all that," said Eleanor, and smiled, not covertly then.

The smile, however, was from more than pleasure in Galbraith's keen interest in Robert's ranch, the least lucrative, so far, of his undertakings, a hobby, one might almost say, that just supported itself. She smiled also thinking of how, in the turn of events, those who at first were antipathetic to each other might amicably meet. One couple among these "new people" (they were all speedily becoming less like new people) had a passion that must have amazed her dear friends the Stubbs if ever they heard of it, a passion not only for retaining books that had been read but—more flabbergasting still—for having them specially bound, and for collecting first edition copies of favourite authors and also autograph letters of these authors to insert in these. Visiting this house one day Eleanor had held in her hand, almost reverently, one of the beautifully bound volumes and, chancing to look out of the window, had seen a mother bear and two cubs gallumping across the edge of the tennis lawn. First editions, precious bindings, autograph letters—and bears: "Odd contiguity!" she had considered.

Thus, as Jock Galbraith talked of his new tillicum, went her thoughts. The smile lingered as she rode, a smile of diversity. Partly it was from a pleasure that always came to her when, riding in company, the horses kept step, the rub-a-dub on solid earth or the frou-frou over sandy stretches rising in rhythmic unison.

Home again when she dismounted and passed the fines to Jock he spoke once more to the same effect as he had spoken earlier.

"I hope," said he, "that Mr. Wallace will think I made a good job of it for you. I'm sorry," he added, "that I didn't attend to it sooner after I said I planned to have it rebroke for you to ride."

"I'll certainly tell him," Eleanor answered, and as she watched him loping over to the corrals, the roan alongside, she wondered how Marion could leave him for a man like Max Harker.

III

There were electrical discharges in the air, threats of storm that ended only in a crash like the rending of steel or one terrific blow of legendary Vulcan's hammer. There were frightened silverings of birches and cotton poplars in sultry winds, presaging storms that kept detonations and echoes rumbling hour-long and ended in deluges that filled the nostrils with the smell of wet, warm earth. Then came days of rain. Mists crept along the hillsides and wavered on currents of air into high ravines. A period followed when it could not be said the sky was cloudy. Wontedly their ceiling was high, blue space, but there was no sky for a while. The days were gray, neither shadow nor sunlight in the woods. There were just the trees—brooding, sombre.

To Eleanor there was pleasure in riding into the forests on these days. The child in her, as in a game of make-believe,

played with an apprehensive fancy that at any moment, in that monotone world, that comparative opaqueness, there would be an amazing Revelation.

The coming of the railway had brought a new sound to the valley—the hooting of locomotives before curves. She liked to hear them and could not tell why. They caused various emotions and thoughts according to the days, the weather. Sometimes they were like hails from all the world to this sequestered corner; sometimes they were like shouts of happiness. On these dun days there was melancholy in them, but a melancholy as easily accepted as minor notes in the sweet songs of birds or a touch of sorrow in many haunting old ballads. WHOO-WHOO came the call and whoo-whoo from far off, faint, it came again, then again nearer from across the valley where the track twined. Eleanor liked to hear it, listened for the approaching blasts, listened to the receding ones, receding, receding, faint again in distance. Regarding such rare, such curious pleasures as these she was reticent as was Robert over his gristless, uncommercial musings.

Indian summer came and lingered. Geese rose from the sloughs and departed for the south. There was an invigorating snap in the air at night. The Wallaces went up to the Bird's Eye for one more look at the grandeur there before winter came and found that the lake was showing traces of ice. Films of it were along the edges like thin glass. Stoves in the bunk houses at mine and concentrator were lit. The marmots had gone underground for the year.

They had just returned to the valley when the peaks were silvered with the first fall of snow but still at midday, in the sunshine, dragon flies showed again, shuttling to and fro among the rushes and an occasional bumblebee bumbled by. A pair of blue jays came down from the higher regions and screeched round the back door at Wong as if calling for a dole, then fluttered over to the cook house and screamed peremptorily to Shorty there.

Robert had to go east to attend a directors' meeting and Eleanor accompanied him. When they returned the last leaves on the trees along the valley were being stripped away by the wind in long pennants. Halting at Jackson's and at Gold Creek they heard the wind in the grass tufts going by with a shrill, thin scream. Indian summer was over.

Against the bedroom window that night there was a persistent sound not like the tapping of rain. In the morning they looked out on a white world. It was wet snow that had fallen, and on the branches of the pines by the northern gable it lay in billows, on the projecting tufts of needles, were pom-poms of it. Eleanor recalled Galbraith's story of the man who in summer preferred winter and in winter preferred summer and his statement that, as for himself, he felt, as each season came, that it was the best. So felt she.

That snow melted by noon but the next fall, trembling down, insistent, deliberate, stayed. It snowed on and off for a month and then the skies were emptied and the valley sparkled in the sunshine. The shadow of their house lay blue on the snow. Eleanor enjoyed it all from beginning to end. Robert knew by then, beyond any doubt, that she did not just pretend pleasure in the land for his sake.

When icicles formed along the eaves she recalled a remark that Marion had made to her, discussing winter in the valley: "I suppose you would think even an icicle beautiful." Icicles were nothing new to her. She had no need to spend a winter in Elkhorn Valley to see them. All Canada, east and west, knows icicles and how in the spring they drip. She wondered if they would ever hear of Marion again, wondered where Marion was and how she fared with the man for whom she had forsaken Jock Galbraith.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

All this while Harold Sinclair, whose discovery had been, as Wallace used to say, "the first link in the chain of events that made Elkhorn Valley," had remained in the vicinity.

The five thousand dollars he demanded for his prospect had been paid to him, by his special request, in cash. "I want it in cash for me to cache away," he had said with a twinkle in his eyes over the play upon words. He did not trust a bank with the care of it. Interest accrued from money lodged in a bank, he admitted, but banks had been known to fail. The money he had received for overseeing the building of the Wallace ranch houses he had hidden away also. His wages for two months' work on the road were enough for his provisioning for a year. In winter he trapped a little, just enough to

enable him to purchase a new pair of shoes, overalls, underwear, or a mackinaw coat when necessary.

He had not, so far, felt himself old enough to go down to the coast to live on Easy Street, but in the early summer of 1913, during the last week of June, he called on Wallace to say so-long.

"Well, Wally," he said, for that was how he always addressed him to show his friendliness, "I just came to say so-long. I'm beginning to feel old. It ain't just in myself but in the changes round me. This valley is all different. You've got in a lot of people now who brought their own world with them. They play this here tennis and they go whacking balls about over the benches. Good thing for them they got pensions, most of them, or they'd be liable to go broke playing games instead of attending to their ranches. When I see Indian boys carrying sacks with the tools for their game in them—Paddies, Taddies, or something like that they call the boys—I—well, I don't know what to think!" and he crackled laughter.

He looked round the room.

"Books," said he, staring at the shelves. "Books. I must get around to reading some day. I've done a bit of thinking in my time. Up in the high country a man thinks powerful, alone. Out in a cabin in the woods a man thinks powerful too. But I must get around to reading some day. Well," he continued, "I'm retiring, going down to the coast to retire on Easy Street at last. I figger I won't live longer now than my fortune will last—what I got for the sale of the Bird's Eye and what you paid me for seeing to the building of this here place. I'm going to Vancouver and first of all get me a soot of rooms at the best hotel and get me a swell soot of clothes and get me barbered and all that. I'll be down there by the first of July and celebrate it there, and then celebrate the fourth of July, too, Independence Day. I always like to celebrate both Canada's great day and the great day of the States. I've known many men from south of the line in my calling, good men. Yes, sir, I plan to have a good time among folks before the undertaker gets me. I aim at taking in all the shows that come to town and then maybe having a trip to the South Seas or China or somewheres before I die. I figger my span of life and my fortune will just about break even."

"You can always come back," said Wallace, "if—if your—your fortune doesn't last. You have friends here, you know. We won't see you—we wouldn't see you—well, up against it, as they say."

"I appreciate that, Wally, but I guess it will last all right," Sinclair replied. "I've just come to say so-long and get going."

"I'm sorry my wife isn't in," said Wallace.

"I met her on the road; saw her go past in her little gad-about car or what-you-call-it. I guess she was driving into West Fork to some sewing circle or something. I saw a flock of women heading that way. Tell her good-bye for me. I'll just step along now to see Jock Galbraith for the sake of the old days when he used to pack my stuff up into them almighty hills, and then I'll hike back to West Fork and take the train out tomorrow."

"Would you like me to run you back in my car?" Wallace asked.

"Hell, no! It's no distance. Folks are losing the use of their legs, sitting in the devil-wagons."

He rose abruptly and gave a handshake that seemed almost peremptory and wheeled away to the door just as Wallace was on the point of suggesting a *deoch-an-doruis* before departure. His heels rang loud on the hardwood floor in the hall. Taking a passing glance at the grandfather clock that stood by the stair foot he stepped on a bearskin rug, tobogganed a yard on it, recovered balance, and strode out. Wallace went with him to the porch, but he seemed hardly to realize he had been accompanied there, went on briskly and with a steady gait trudged off.

A feeling of guilt came to Robert, watching him. He thought of what the Bird's Eye had meant, and continued to mean, to the Laurentian Mining and Smelting Company and its shareholders. It was a big figure. He felt that he had taken advantage of the old man's simplicity over that purchase. He should have told him that the price asked was ridiculously small—and yet he had been acting not for himself, it must be remembered, but for the Company of which, at that time, he was only a salaried employee, and as such, and the Company's agent, not Sinclair's, had no right to be—well, quixotic.

Thus went his thoughts, seeing Sinclair go. He could not give full approval to himself of himself over that deal.

II

In September, Eleanor and Robert again left the valley, but not for the winter. They would be back before snow flew. They went to Scotland. The threatened disturbances at the smelter having been quelled by a compromise between masters and men, Robert felt he could safely go away for a month or two.

Two weddings demanded their presence there. Margaret and Effie were going to be married. (James had been married two or three years earlier, but a fraternal letter and a wedding gift had sufficed for that occasion.) This was different. Meg was Robert's favourite, and Effie came next in his affections. Meg had been engaged for four years to a man who was in South Africa for three of them, and she wrote that they were getting tired of marriage by correspondence: that he was coming home to marry her properly and carry her off. Effie also was going to leave Scotland. She did not believe in marriage by correspondence at all, she explained, and as her boy was going out to New Zealand and might not get a furlough for some years she was going with him.

For Robert it was good to see his mother and father again. It was good to see Meg and Effie. It was good to see James, who had learnt, it appeared, that there are various opinions on most things, music included, and that not all save one are absurd. He had come home for the weddings from London, whither he had gone after his marriage towards earning a bank balance as a pleasant change from receiving terse notifications of overdrafts. It was good too, if only in a blood-is-thicker-than-water fashion, to see Alec, who was living with his parents, a bachelor.

Robert had been away from home ten years and had hoped, as he was getting on towards forty, that he might seem less contemptible to his eldest brother than he had been up to his late twenties. That was how he put it to himself. At twenty-eight he had left home; at thirty-eight he returned. But after the first two or three days it was clear that Alec was still the same old Alec, and that Robert, to him, was still the same old Robert. Old times were back again with: "No, Robert, not so," or "That's nonsense, Robert, not so," or "No, Robert, that theory has been exploded."

"Why can't Scots people stay in Scotland?" Alec propounded to him one day.

Wallace, actually no longer the old Robert, did not remain mute at that.

"One reason," said he, "is because Scotland can't support them. That is to consider the question from the practical point of view alone, without touching on any other. James, as you know, had to go to London. Meg's man is a Scot abroad, and Effie's is going to be one—as much by necessity as by any other reason, I've gathered. Where would I have been had I remained in Scotland? Nowhere! Just one of the cogs, to remain so till the end of my days and achieve at last the insulting obituary of 'He was a faithful servant.'"

Alec's eyes opened wide. He stared at his brother with a new expression, an expression that suggested he suddenly realized that Robert was not the Robert of old. The look was of astonishment, but accompanying it there was a twinkle of not unfriendly amusement.

"He's not such a bad fellow," Robert thought at that moment.

Then Alec extinguished the genial light with a series of rapid blinks and was severe of aspect again.

"I have remained in Scotland," said he, "and I don't consider myself in servitude."

"Ah, but you are an exceptional sort of a bloke," replied Robert, giving him a slap on the shoulder. "It is not given to us all to have your sufficiency."

With that rejoinder, equivocal to his ears, conceivably intended sincerely, conceivably intended sarcastically, Alec allowed the subject to drop, with a gleam in his eyes equivocal to Robert, whether of friendliness or of lingering indignation over the emigration of Scots could not be decided. But they got along together much better after that little chat.

With his choice of a wife all were satisfied—more than satisfied.

"They have all fallen for you," he told Eleanor.

One evening he found himself, whether by chance or by matriarchal contrivance, alone with his father and mother and ——

"I want to tell you, Robert," said Mrs. Wallace, "that I had made up my mind, should I not approve of your wife, not to

pretend to you that I did. I want to take this opportunity when we are alone together to tell you that I think she is a very charming girl and one who will be a great help to you on the way through life, although so much your junior. From photographs of her you sent me I was hopeful that I could give my approval when the day came for me to see her. I am entirely satisfied with her."

Robert inclined his head again and again.

"That is very gratifying, very gratifying," he murmured.

His father looked from him to the mother, back and forth. At last he also spoke.

"Yes, a fine lass," he said, "a fine lass—and entirely satisfactory to you, Robert, I am sure, which is the main matter. But let's hear more about yourself, what you're about out there: more than your letters have told us."

When it came to talk of what he had been about, his achievements, Robert was taken by a fit of embarrassment. He urged himself to continue only because of their evident pleasure in hearing of his many activities.

"Well, it's all very interesting," said his mother; "but I hope that you won't get your head turned just because—as you've told us—there are people out there who call you 'the white Chief.' I hope you will retain a sense of proportion."

"Oh, he'll do that," said Mr. Wallace. "He's only letting us know what we both want to hear—that he's getting along fine. It's grand to see him again—and to see him more self-assured looking, standing on his own feet."

One day Robert and Eleanor went out from the city together to visit rural haunts of his boyhood, places where as a schoolboy he played at being David Thompson or Sir Alexander Mackenzie or Sir William Butler in the Great Lone Land. Sitting on a knoll of the moors it suddenly struck him that these early rambles had been made in a quest for freedom, for relief from shackles, and that his departure from Scotland had been at the same urge. Never before had he admitted it so frankly even to himself.

He recalled that only the other day to Alec he had offered, as reason for Scots leaving Scotland, the inability of Scotland to support all of them; but it was not only because Scotland could not support him as he wished to be supported that he had left home. That, indeed, was certainly not the predominant explanation for him going away. There had been other influences, potent influences, a variety of them.

Then he was back again at an old self-examination. Could he be dubbed sentimentalist in the belittling sense of the word for feeling a deep affection for this land at the same moment that he was looking forward to returning to Elkhorn Valley? He cheered himself by a thought of the smallness of the world, a tiny ball rolling in space. Perhaps too much was made, in all lands, of nationalism. Granting the existence of national characteristics, racial traits, surely racial traits—of any race—if worthy of retention, could survive corporeal transportation. It seemed to him that Alec in his bitterness over Scots who left Scotland was more chauvinistic than patriotic.

As for himself: He tried to sum up what was in his heart and mind on the subject, to sum it up in a sentence; and evolved one that, though it did not seem to him the best that could be formed, might serve: "A citizen of the world," he told himself, "was not a man without a country."

On his second departure from the homeland he had the feeling of leaving home for home. A duality of a different sort from the duality already noted in him at times took hold of him then. He was the unwilling exile looking back on a receding shore. He was the willing exile looking beyond the sea to the country that had adopted him, that he had adopted.

III

Another winter Robert and Eleanor spent in the valley, a short winter. The first snow was not round the ranch till Christmas week, and the last had gone from the benches by the first week of March. Sometimes it came to lie by November, and the drifts had not all gone by the end of March. That year if there was any complaint against Nature it was that the winter was too short for all the social activities of the season.

Late in January, Eleanor went to Elkhorn to see a doctor. He had his consulting rooms in a new block called the Medical Arts Building facing the recently completed Court House. On the glass panels of the doors in its quiet corridors were the

names of doctors, dentists, optometrists. An odour of ether was in them, consoling with suggestion of help at hand, agitating with suggestion of operations possibly impending, or affecting with a blend of trust and apprehension.

Eleanor wanted a medical opinion regarding her self-diagnosis. She was not mistaken. Her condition was not due, as Robert had feared, to an obscure disease that would cause the local general practitioner she consulted to pack her off to a distant clinic—perhaps as far off as Rochester, Minnesota. She was right in her own diagnosis: She was going to have a baby.

Home again in the evening she had a phone call from her friend, Mrs. Stubbs, who began by asking if she was quite well.

"Yes, very well. Very well indeed," replied Eleanor; "in the pink of condition and very happy."

"You're sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Oh, I'm glad," said Mrs. Stubbs. "I met Mrs. Prosser a few minutes ago in the post office. She was in Elkhorn today and told me she had seen you going into the Medical Arts Building and thought you might be ill. She was going past in a car and couldn't stop to ask. She wondered if there was anything seriously wrong with you."

"No, I'm very well. I'm not in the calamity condition, only in an interesting condition."

"Is that it? My dear! I'll phone Mrs. Prosser at once and let her know."

"And that will save me telling anybody else," said Eleanor.

"You've got something there," Mrs. Stubbs said. "But I guess you don't want it kept a secret."

"Soon it couldn't be even if I wanted it to be," Eleanor replied with a laugh. "There's nothing secretive about a pregnant woman's figure."

After that she had much amusement over the way in which, when she attended any of the women's meetings, the most comfortable chair was reserved for her and cushions were brought and placed at her back.

"'One touch of Nature,'" she told Robert, home from one of these gatherings, "'makes the whole world kin.'"

Then small parcels began to arrive, containing knitted pygmy coats, knitted pygmy bonnets and so forth. Her heart warmed to all the folks of Elkhorn Valley.

As time progressed Robert had increasing difficulty in concentrating on business. The delivery of more hand-knitted apparel for the baby was not necessary to keep his wife's condition constantly in his mind. It must be damned uncomfortable for her, like having eaten too much, he presumed; and he amused her—as she had been amused at meetings of the women's societies on the first publication of her state—by his eagerness to provide her with cushions. There was nothing of the hypochondriac about him in relation to himself, but he went about in constant anxiety over her.

Mrs. Stubbs, meeting him in West Fork one day and observing his air of trepidation, guessed the cause and shrilly informed him that he had nothing to worry about. Childbirth, she declared, was nothing at all nowadays, and she told him she had had three children and also cystitis and that—"honest, I'm telling you and no fooling"—she would rather any day have three all at once than cystitis. Despite that assurance, however, it was not easy for him to concentrate on business. Furthermore, always a man to look ahead, he began to make plans for the future that his child would share.

IV

The coming of another July reminded Robert of Harold Sinclair because of his remark that he would be celebrating both Dominion Day and Independence Day on Easy Street. He was thinking of the old man on the very day that he returned, insolvent—"dead broke."

Sinclair came on foot all the way from the Junction. When he decided to return he had not sufficient money left to buy a ticket to Elkhorn, to say nothing of West Fork. He slept a night at Jackson's in a bed and a second night in Eaglehead's cabin on the floor. At the Wallace ranch he turned aside to announce his arrival.

Robert was over at Galbraith's house, sitting on the veranda and discussing ranch affairs.

"See who comes!" exclaimed Jock. "He's on his way up to you."

As Sinclair took the bend of the road Wallace rose.

"I'm over here, Harold," he called to him.

Sinclair wheeled and came plodding towards them.

"Wonderful old man," observed Wallace. "He doesn't pause on the slope, just goes at the same steady gait uphill, downhill, and on the level. I wonder what age he is? He looked much the same when I first met him."

"Yes, much the same," Jock agreed.

At closer range they both had to revise that opinion. Sinclair did at last look old and though he had not stopped on the slope he ought to have done so, they thought, for his breathing when he came level was heavy, laboured.

"Come up here, Harold," said Jock.

"Yes, come and sit down and tell us what brings you back," said Wallace.

He told them, after a crushing hand clasp—very different from the perfunctory or unemotional or undemonstrative one of his departure—sitting down on the top step, ignoring Jock's proffer of a chair. He told them, with an amiable grin ever and again brightening the narrative, of extravagance and penury. There was no regret, no self-pity, over his squandering.

"I had a great time while it lasted," he said. "I got me a room with a bath and a sitting room off of it in a swell hotel, and strolling round in the streets I was always meeting men I had knowed in the past up here. They had been all over the place, some up in the Klondyke, some to the Cariboo, some to the excitements in Nevada, and one of them to West Australia. I had as good as a bar in my sitting room while it lasted. Eventually I had to move out to a cheap joint to eat my meals, just slept in that swell hotel. You should see the meals there, Wally, all served by men in their evening clothes. They begin with a long platter fixed up with different things and they serve you a little bit of each—just for an appetizer—and then you make a start and go right through the whole works. But you don't have toothpicks on the table. No, sir! You have to ask for one at the door when you are going out and the guy there fetches a quill toothpick in a little bit of an envelope. It was sure good while it lasted."

"And now you're broke?" said Jock.

"Dead broke," replied Sinclair.

"What are you going to do?" asked Wallace.

"I've always got my shack a mile or two up the west fork to set in, but I'm going to see if I can get one of the storekeepers in West Fork to grubstake me to go out into them almighty hills again and start afresh. I wouldn't mind having another cabin in the high country for a spell. I've been hearing a lot of talk for a long time now, sitting around with people, and when you come to my age you know all the conversations. You know what will be said on any subjects. It's all just repetition after you've turned eighty. Folks are——"

"You've not turned eighty yet, surely!" ejaculated Wallace.

"You can't be eighty," said Galbraith at the same moment.

"Me? I'll be eighty-one next birthday."

Wallace and Galbraith exchanged looks of amazement.

"As I was about to say," Sinclair continued, "folks are all right to drink with for a man like me that couldn't fancy drinking alone, but after a while you get tired of talk. I don't think I'm what you would call unsociable but I feel right now as if them rock slides and cliffs are closer to me than humans. Prospecting won't be as easy for me as it used to be. I don't get my breath so good now and I don't know what's come to my hand, this hand—it don't stop shaking. But I guess I'll make out. Look at it shaking," he said, and laughed as though it amused him.

Jock Galbraith looked at Wallace thoughtfully, wondering what his boss was thinking, studying the expression on his face.

"You don't need to think of starting afresh, Harold," said Wallace at last. "Look at what the Laurentian Company made out of your prospect. They got a good thing when they bought the Bird's Eye."

"And I got my price for it," said Sinclair. "There was no haggling."

"Yes. No. Quite. But it has been one of the wealthiest properties in the west, and even though you got your price that is no reason why the Company should not see you don't want."

"Me want! No, siree! I could still run a trap line in the winter. I could get work on the road with a maintenance gang if I didn't strike another lead like the Bird's Eye."

"Certainly you could," Wallace agreed. "No doubt about that. But this isn't charity the Company would offer you. It's due to you."

"I can't see it, Wally. I'm not begging! I got my price."

"Let me put it this way then," said Wallace. "Considering what my Company has made out of it that was a small, very small, price. I'd like for my own sake, because I feel badly sometimes over us making so much and you so little in comparison, to have a pension paid to you. For my sake I'd like you to accept that."

"Oh, well, that might be different. But I want you to know I am not begging."

"You go back to your cabin up the gulch, Harold, and get all you need at Stubbs' general store in West Fork. That will be settled for you. I'll phone Mr. Stubbs and tell him to give you all you need and charge it to me."

"To your Company, you mean," said Sinclair sharply.

"Yes, I'll see to that."

The old man produced his pipe with a shaking hand, fumbled for tobacco sack, brought it out empty and put his pipe away again. Wallace proffered his pouch but Sinclair refused it with a negative head shake. At the same moment Galbraith had put hand in pocket for his little sack with the cigarette papers in it, but remembering Sinclair's opinion of cigarettes did not bring it out.

"I don't need much," said Sinclair, his voice suddenly high, thin. "All I want is flour and beans, tea, coffee, sugar and a bit of rice. I like a change of rice too, sometimes polished, sometimes unpolished. I hear that Chinks in their own country eat so much of the unpolished kind they get some blame disease, but I only like it now and then for a side dish or for a pudding with raisins in it, or prunes."

"Well, you get all you need at the general store in West Fork and tell them to charge it to me."

"No, sir! To the Company."

"Er—it will be all right charged to me. They know me. Better put it down to me till I arrange it with the Company."

"Seeing you put it that way, all right," said Sinclair.

He rose and went down the steps slowly, then turned to Galbraith.

"Oh, man Jock," he said, "I nearly forgot to tell you, talking about myself and the good time I had while it lasted. In one of them places I went to eat when I found how my money was melting I saw your good lady."

"You saw——" began Galbraith, and stuck there.

"Sure. I saw her," said Sinclair.

"She was eating there?" asked Galbraith.

"No, she was slinging hash there. She was one of the waitresses."

"Oh!" said Jock Galbraith.

"She didn't recognize me but I knew her at once though she sure has changed a lot. She looks like a sick woman to me. The day I left Vancouver I went in for breakfast and I didn't see her around, and when I asked the proprietor where she was he told me he had advised her to take a day or two off and she was upstairs in her room, sick."

"It was not just an eating house, then?" said Galbraith.

"No, it was a kind of hotel. It was a hotel all right, but not like the one where I had my soot of rooms. You see sourdoughs from north setting in the window as winter comes along, fellows who kind of hibernate there—just set in the window twiddling their thumbs and biting on a toothpick three times a day after meals till spring comes again."

"Where—where was this—this place?"

Sinclair told him and then—"Well, I'll be getting on," he said.

"I'll run you over to West Fork in my car," said Wallace, but the offer was refused just as a similar offer had been refused a year before.

"No, I'll walk, I'll walk," said Sinclair. "Damn it, I've walked here all the way from the Junction. I ain't packing anything. All my belongings are just what I stand up in. It's no distance to my cabin. There's life in the old boy yet. I guess I'll be up in the high country again. My, them almighty hills, they do sure call a man back again. I hope to God when I come to die the last thing I hear is a whistler across them screes on the top of the world, 'way up there. There's something about it up there that gets a man."

He went away with his solid plod.

Wallace and Galbraith sat back again in their chairs, looking after him, saw him cross the bridge, both deep in thought, Galbraith lost in thought. Wallace gave him anxious glances several times, well aware of what he was pondering; but Galbraith seemed to be unconscious of his companion's anxiety. At last it was as if he realized he was not alone there.

"You heard what he said—about Marion, Bob?"

"Yes, Jock, I heard."

"I guess that swine must have deserted her too," said Galbraith.

"Deserted her too? What do you mean? You didn't desert her. You can't blame yourself."

"Eh? Oh, no, no. I was thinking of—of something else."

He sat silent for a few minutes then, evidently having definitely made up his mind on how to act, spoke again.

"I guess I'd better go down to the coast and see what I can do," he said. "We only live once. I lost something in me after losing Marion. I used to think all was for the best but I've put away that notion. I don't believe there's anything for us after dying. I think you do; I don't any more. No hereafter, nothing. All the more reason instead of less for a fellow to do the best he can and—and I guess I'll go down to Vancouver and see if I can help her. She is sick, it appears, and she's evidently alone. I don't mind being alone now any more than old Sinclair does but she's not that kind. I thought that out long ago, thinking it over. When I first knew her she used to talk about horseback riding and how she liked it, and she did too. It was true enough. But she'd rather be looking in the store windows than at the mountains and that's the real reason she left me. I realize that, looking back, realize she needed lots of people around. Sick, she must be very lonesome. I canna bear to think of her lying there sick, even though the proprietor of the place seems to be no hard man, by what Harold said. You heard what he said. The proprietor told her to take a day or two off. You would go if you were in my place, wouldn't you?"

"Yes. Yes, I would, Jock—if I were you."

"Sure you'd go! You don't need to put it that slow way adding an 'if I were you' like that. Sure you'd go. Is it all right with you if I go off right away? The men will know what to do till I get back."

"It's all right with me," replied Wallace, rising. "Come and see me as soon as you get back. I'll want to hear;" and with

an undemonstrative nod he went down the steps.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Though a passenger train ran daily between the Junction and Elkhorn there was not a daily service beyond to West Fork, the railway company having decided that traffic on the extension still warranted no more than the original thrice-weekly service of a combined freight and passenger train. The day on which Harold Sinclair brought the news of Marion was trainless for the valley, but with the decision made to go out Galbraith could not curb his impatience. There was that in him that resented a hitch to begin with. He would not have it. He had his own little car, the two-seater he had bought specially to please Marion for trips to Elkhorn when she had shopping to do beyond what could be done at West Fork, and so, half an hour after his talk with Sinclair he was off.

The car he left at a garage in Elkhorn. The main-line westbound being on time at the Junction he was spared a sense of hitch, of delay, there. He was dressed in his blue business suit, his best, and had on low walking shoes instead of the high-heeled boots of his calling; but he wore the cowboy's big, broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat. Mining men did not wear such hats; neither did lumber jacks, but mining men among the mountains and lumber jacks by lake sides on the way did not think him odd when he alighted to stretch his legs on station platforms. They knew him for what he was—a man who must either be a packer at some mountain town or in the cattle or horse business in a part of the upper country where cattle and horses were still raised: on both sides of the line, for a considerable distance, grass-country wedges were interspersed between the mountain ranges.

But when he reached Vancouver it might have been the only hat of its kind in the province. There, he told himself, he was certainly kenspeckle because of it. People, especially young people (perhaps hoping because of the hat that a wild west show had come to town), looked round after him when he went out from the station to find a hotel for himself. Booking a room and leaving his grip there, he set out to the hotel where Harold Sinclair had seen Marion.

The drabness of the streets, different from the bright thoroughfares near the station, was increasingly marked as he proceeded. Here and there at corners groups of men made remarks out of their mouth corners one to another as he drew near. They had, he mused, a coyote look about them.

"Some toughs around this district," he considered.

There was something in their eyes suggesting that they examined him to see if he was their prey approaching—and decided, as he came closer, that he was not. The hat, viewed from afar, misled them. A man with that jowl, that light in his eyes, was not a "hick" for any confidence trick.

He found the place for which he sought and noticed that it could do with a coat of paint. It was shabby, but the men who sat in its window chairs were not sinister like the corner hangers-on. They did not peer at him as if they thought him a lamb to fleece. The hotel was of a type he knew from his wanderings up and down the land, a bit of the old west surviving in this growing city, a reminder that Vancouver had once upon a time had all the appearance of a frontier town. Its important name, painted in gilt over the doorway, in course of time—even comparatively brief time—had begun to sound grandiose and would soon rouse levity in the unpitying. It belonged to the period of one or two sawmills by an inlet, and Indians trading toy canoes and moccasins to sailors to take home to their wives in Liverpool. It had escaped an historic fire to stand there in a backwash out of the modernity of buzzing streetcars.

Behind the desk in the entrance hall, under a wall clock, was a man backed by pigeon holes for letters and room keys. He was chewing a toothpick and, elbows on desk, reading a newspaper spread there before him.

"How do you do, sir?" said he.

"How-do, sir?" replied Jock. "You the proprietor?"

"Sure am. What can I do for you?"

"I'm looking for a young lady who's here—Mrs. Galbraith by name."

"We have only three married couples here right now," said the proprietor, "and none of them named Galbraith."

"She is alone," said Jock.

"We got no women living here alone—just these three," and his eyes went blank. He gazed beyond Galbraith at the traffic in the street.

"I mean working for you," said Jock. "I heard she was working for you in the dining room."

"I've no female help of that name."

"No Marion Galbraith?"

"Marion?" The eyes came back to him.

"Yes, Marion Galbraith."

The eyes studied him.

"I had a Marion Masters," said the proprietor, cautiously.

"That's her." Jock's voice shook. "You had her? Then she's gone?"

"What are you asking for?"

"She's my wife," said Galbraith.

The gaze on him probed deeper, distrustful.

"How come you said Galbraith when you meant Masters?" the proprietor demanded.

"Masters was her maiden name. Evidently she used that when she came to work for you. Where has she gone?"

"She ain't gone. I said she'd been working for me because she ain't working for me any more. She's still here but in bed. About a week ago I told her to take a day or two off thinking she had some little trouble in a woman's way, but once up in her bed she stayed there. It's all right with me. I ain't hard on folks—but I think she ought to be in hospital. I told one of the girls I'd get a doctor for her and she said Marion didn't want no doctor. But they tell me she sure looks sick so I was thinking of getting a doctor tonight."

"May I go up and see her?"

The proprietor gave him a long look.

"What just do you want to see her for?" he asked quietly.

"To see if I can help her, of course. A man who lives near where I do was in here and saw her and told me she was working in the dining room—and told me she looked sick, too. That's why I'm here."

"And she's your wife?"

"I told you."

"And she quit you?"

"Yes," said Galbraith, gruff of tone.

"You're not going to play the heavy husband, I hope, now that you've found her. I don't want any suchlike tragedy here." He ran a smoothing hand over the newspaper that lay on the desk before him. "I don't want anything like 'Husband Kills Runaway Wife in a Vancouver Hotel.' I'll step up with you, mister."

The stairs creaked and complained as they mounted. The past, the frontier past, the old seaport past, was in the stairs and in the corridor to which they came. The linoleum was worn, frayed. On the first landing Galbraith noticed a sink with roller towel beside it to one end and to the other, over a closed door, a projecting sign: "Bath." Marion, he thought, must

have been feeling pretty hard hit when she came here looking for work. Had she lost her old pep, had she lost her looks that she could not get employment in a smarter place? There would be no hot and cold water laid on in the rooms in this "joint," only tables covered with American cloth, a basin and ewer atop, a pail below.

Through an open doorway he had a glimpse of just such an interior as he had imagined. They reached the top flat, and here the floor was not even covered with worn linoleum. The boards were bare. A girl dressed as a waitress came from one of the rooms as they walked along the corridor.

"Been in to see Marion?" the proprietor asked her.

"Yes, Mr. Martin."

"How is she?"

"Pretty sick, I guess."

The girl looked at Galbraith, looked him up and down, looked at the big hat in the hand at his side.

The two men walked on. Martin, the proprietor, tapped at a door and Jock heard Marion's voice within. It was husky and weak, but easily recognized.

"Yes," she called. "Who is it?"

Martin stepped inside.

"Here's an old friend of yours to see you, Marion," said he.

"An old friend?" came her voice.

Galbraith stepped in.

The meagre appointments of the room did not affect him at the moment as they might have affected some. He had seen such bedrooms in many a hotel. His eyes were on Marion lying on the bed. He had been prepared to find her changed but not like this; had not been prepared for the hollow cheeks, the waxen pallor of her skin. Outside the coverlet, her hands were bony and almost paper-white. What shocked him most, perhaps, was the thin hair which lay spread on the pillow, all the rich colour gone from it. Only her black eyes were the same.

At sight of him it was fear, abject fear, that showed in them. So marked was it that the hotel man moved between them.

"Well, Marion," said Jock, taking a grip on himself. There was little but pity in his whole manner. Looking at him again, the proprietor realized that the woman on the bed had no need to fear her visitor.

"Old Harold Sinclair saw you here and told me, so I just came down to see you," Jock explained in a level voice.

The fear went slowly from her eyes and they filled with tears, but she did not avert her gaze from his. She lay there staring at him, her breath laboured, at the end of each inhalation a splutter that shook her. Jock frowned, hearing that. It was a frown of concern, only of concern as the watching hotel man knew. He had heard that sound before. It took him back in memory to a high mining camp at a wet mine where the men, crossing from tunnels to bunk houses, were sometimes chilled, complained of a pain in the back, and soon were breathing and spluttering so. He had packed more than one down to hospital in that condition. He turned to the proprietor.

"Sounds like pneumonia to me," he said.

"Sounds like it to me," was the reply. "I didn't know she was as bad as this."

Jock turned back to her. When she looked up at him it was as if she was looking from a great distance, or as if there was a veil between her and him. Tears came again to her eyes, tears of weakness, perhaps, tears of regret, perhaps. He could not tell, and it did not matter. She was sick and he was there to see what he could do for her. He bent over the bed.

"Where's Max?" he asked in harsh tones. He was wanting to find out for certain if he was right in thinking she was all alone.

She shook her head.

"You don't know?"

She shook her head again. Then she moved it this way, that way. Jock put his hand on her brow and found it hot to his palm. She still stared at him and then her lids drooped, pressed close, and she broke into sobs.

He took full control.

"We must get a doctor at once," he said. "Can you advise me?"

"I sure can. Better come downstairs with me. There's a phone at the desk. I'll put you on to him and you can do the talking."

Jock went out to the corridor and downstairs. On the way it struck him that Marion had said not one word—but what could she have to say? All the way down he was haunted by her eyes, the heartbreak in them. They reminded him, especially in their upward gaze when he put his hand on her forehead, of the eyes of a deserted pup he had once found and comforted.

It had never occurred to him that the story of her past that she told him in Elkhorn, a story dragged out of her by his credulous sympathy and by it glorified in the telling, was not the true one. It had been told in the manner of a confession, an intimate confession, something regarding which she wished to be frank, open, with him. Recalling it at that moment he suddenly doubted if the man who had won her affection in Vancouver had truly been a married man, unable to get a divorce. He saw it as highly probable that the fellow was a reprobate who lied to her, a libertine.

The thought that Max Harker could rob her away from himself brought a return of bitterness into his mind but he expelled it. At least she had finished with Max now, was not supporting him on her earnings as he had briefly dreaded. The sight of her head, as she looked up at him in that room, hurt him: It was more like a skull. Well, when listening to her story of being forsaken by that fellow in Vancouver he had said that he would never forsake her. Death, it seemed to him, was looking in on her up there.

II

The doctor, advised by the hotel man, arrived and went up alone to see her. He came down very grave to talk to Galbraith. She must go to hospital, he said; she must have experienced nurses in attendance.

"Just what you say, Doctor," agreed Galbraith. "The expenses I'll meet. I'll call a taxi and carry her down."

"No, no. We'll send an ambulance. You go to the hospital and wait for us there."

An hour later Marion was in a private room in a hospital and Jock was sitting in a small office on the same floor, listening to the doctor.

"Well, Mr. Galbraith," said he, "everything will be done that can be done. It is a pity I was not called in sooner but I gather, from what she told me, that you are not responsible for that. You have just come from the upper country? Were you there—er—were you there looking for work?"

"No. That's our home up there," said Galbraith.

The doctor looked sharply at him as if trying to discover what manner of man he was. He lifted a paper cutter that lay on the table and studied it.

"How long is it since you last saw her?" he inquired.

"About two years. A little over."

"I see. Have you kept in touch with each other?"

"No."

"You won't mind my asking, but did you know she has been living with another man?"

"I did. She ran away from me with him."

"So she told me. It seems he deserted her not so long ago and she had a premature birth, and being destitute had to get work—too soon. Otherwise—" he paused, lowered his head and looked under his brows long and direct and meaningfully at Galbraith—"otherwise she is in very poor condition."

Galbraith stared heavily at him. As if between them there passed a series of scenes as in a ghostly diorama. He saw Harker coming out of the clothiers at Camp Elkhorn—or was it Elkhorn City by then?—and handing him a parcel to take to the hotel. He saw an Indian girl at the old wooden bridge at Camp Elkhorn beside Ho Sang's store. He heard Harker in a camp in the valley talking of his experiences in various seaports. He shook his head, shook his head, lips puckered and twisting.

"I'm not astonished," said he.

"Well, Mr. Galbraith," said the doctor briskly, "we'll look after her, but you must understand that she is a very sick girl. I'll tell them to let you see her at any time. As you go out you might leave the name of your hotel and number of your room at the main office."

"Thank you," said Jock, and went out.

III

He could not rest. He must walk. He could not go into his hotel room and sit there thinking. He must be in the open. There would be no phone call for him at once; later he would "stay put," he told himself in his room.

He walked and walked, walked out by the Inlet where small boats lay in a bay, walked into Stanley Park. Beside the road he saw a fence and behind the fence was a lone buffalo, a solitary prisoned buffalo bull ceaselessly horning the wire, lifting strands of it in lonely misery. He walked on, all round the park, past big trees where was a little booth displaying picture post cards of the district, walked on and had a glimpse of white flashing beyond the stems of more trees, walked on thinking and thinking, along the same road on which Marion (he knew nothing of that) had driven tandem dashingly, attracting much attention as she drove but looking straight ahead, pretending she did not see those who watched her though excitingly aware of them.

"The blasted swine!" he broke out to the trees and the thrashing waves below. "He took her away from me and then threw her over."

As he spoke he recalled again that day in the Elkhorn hotel, the New Occidental, when she had told him her story—his story it was as much as hers, though he was unaware of that—of the man who had betrayed her.

"This city," he said, "is not a lucky city for her."

There he stood, staring down at the waves that thudded and splashed below. He stared at a log there (a log lost out of a boom of logs somewhere) that was lifted by each incoming wave and thrown on the shingle only to roll back into the water and be lifted again and cast back with a dull thud.

"She said nothing to me all the time. She said nothing to me, just looked at me. I wonder what she was thinking. Oh, God!" he sighed.

He appeared to have the park to himself at that hour. At the bases of the great trees all was still, as still as a mausoleum, but high up in the branches there was the sound of a wind running. Down the slopes to the beach, under the branches, between the trunks, he could see the waves come in with slow but sure insistence. They thrashed and receded, thrashed again, throwing up bits of bark and twigs.

He walked on, out of the park, and found his way back to the city's centre. Rain had started while he walked and he was soaked. The shoes he wore were soaked. He noticed that most people were wearing goloshes, rubbers, so he entered a store and bought a pair.

More odd than ever he must have looked as he went on, topped by the cowboy's "ten-gallon hat" and with these low fashionable shoes on his feet covered by natty new goloshes.

For several days he was in and out of the hospital at all hours to find no improvement and to be told always: "She is holding her own." He did not need experience of illness to realize that Marion might not recover, so weary was she and so weakened by the time he found her.

Early one morning, nearly two weeks after he arrived in Vancouver, he was wakened by an urgent message from the hospital telling him to come at once. As soon as he reached the building he was taken to his wife's room. As he went along the corridor he had a glimpse of a white-coated young man in a side room holding up a glass tube between thumb and finger, a uniformed girl watching him. He had the feeling of the world being full of trouble but not desolated: there were ministers of mercy.

His first impression on seeing Marion was that she was greatly improved, had taken a sudden, unexpected turn for the better, and he wondered why they had sent for him. There was no light of fever in her eyes. Then, as he moved closer to the bed, he saw there was also no light of fight either. Never before had he seen opaqueness in them. She was lying on her back and had recently been attended to, he considered, for the sheet was perfectly folded down a little way, making an exact line from one side of the cot to the other. Her head lay sidewise on the pillow as though her neck was completely relaxed, the dull, corn-coloured hair neatly plaited over each shoulder.

The nurse looked at him compassionately as he entered.

"Well, Marion," he said, speaking quietly, "I'm back again to see how you are getting on," and he tried to make his voice sound cheerful.

Marion peered before her but not at him. It was more as if she was looking for him without sense of direction, or was it that she could not lift her head, could not focus her eyes? He turned to the nurse, troubled, but she was expressionless.

"You seem to be getting on fine," he said. Marion's eyelids fluttered, as if she heard the voice and wondered whence it came. "Take it easy, old girl," he advised.

She spoke her first words to him then.

"I'm trying to," she said in a laboured tone that came as if from far away. That impression of distance persisted in the room. She spoke again. "You have certainly been good to me, Jock."

He had the same words on a piece of paper folded in his wallet, in his breast pocket.

"I don't deserve it," she whispered, and as she spoke her hand, her arm, moved forward on the counterpane an inch or two, moved again forward, inch by inch.

He realized that she was very weak and that this was all the movement of which she was capable. The hand crept forward again and it struck him that she was seeking for his. The touch of her fingers when he held them made him look up sharply at the nurse who had drawn closer but stood impassive.

"She seems to be slipping down in the bed," he said.

"They mostly all do that," she replied.

They mostly all do that! Her tone and manner perturbed him. Marion's eyes were dull, and when he pressed her hand there was but the slightest response. Her lips moved again and he wondered if she were praying. Then, with a triumphant effort, she spoke clearly.

". . . good to me," she said, and utterly relaxed.

The nurse put her hand on his shoulder. Looking up, he was astonished to find that she was quietly weeping. Somehow he had imagined that everyone associated with the nursing and medical profession was hardened by experience to death, but apparently it was not so.

"We did all we could," she assured him. "She was very weak when she came in here. She fought well at first and then

gave up. We did all we could."

"I'm sure of that," said Galbraith, and he added, "I'm glad I was with her. I'm glad I was with you, Marion," and gave her hand another pressure, but there was no pressure in return.

IV

He saw to everything that had to be seen to in the manner of an automaton. He was as a ghost himself, dealing with the living. Still he was in that condition when he took his seat in the train for Elkhorn but there, on the way home, or on the first miles of the way home, the level crossing passed and the train picking up speed, he began to feel again back in the world. He thought of Marion, of her last words, and put his hand inside his jacket to feel the wallet in which was the scrap of paper with the same words on it.

"I'm glad I was with her," he muttered to himself.

The valley, he realized afresh, had not been enough for her. There were people like that; they found it lonesome; they wanted to see the streets and walk along looking into plate-glass windows; they wanted to see the shows. He recalled the wife of a young engineer at the placer workings who came there to be near her husband and got into a nervous state, said the mountains on either side seemed like prison walls, and he had been told she had hysterics one night when the coyotes were making a great yelping. Marion was not like that but—well, she wasn't like Eleanor or Wallace either. She did not have all the interests that Mrs. Wallace had, and it was true enough—what he had heard his wife say once when they were talking of how the Wallaces loved the place—that if Mrs. Wallace tired of it temporarily she could go away, and perhaps that was why she was so happy there! And people did not patronize Mrs. Wallace. There were some, he knew, who did patronize Marion, condescended to her in their manner. He had not noticed it himself till she drew his attention to it, but it was not just her fancy.

"I'm glad I was with her," he told himself again.

The conductor was at his side.

"You going to Elkhorn, sir? You change at——"

"I know. I live up the valley, near West Fork."

"Your return ticket only takes you to Elkhorn," remarked the conductor, looking at it again to make sure.

"Yes. I came into town to get the train out."

"Riding a horse, I guess, from your hat, and left it in a livery there?"

Jock dragged himself into the real world.

"Not on a horse as it happens," he replied. "I have a little flivver. I left it at a garage."

It had been just a pleasant conversation between a friendly conductor and a man who looked somewhat lost, as if out of his latitude. With a nod he walked on down the car, and Jock returned to his thoughts of Marion and of the man who had robbed her from him and tossed her away.

"God help him if ever our trails cross," he said to himself.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

On the day following Galbraith's sudden departure for the Pacific coast Eleanor thought it advisable to move into Elkhorn so as to be near the hospital when her time came. Wallace went with her and they occupied their usual suite of rooms at the hotel, both in a state of suppressed excitement now that deliverance was near. And towards the end of the week, as he went to his office in the smelter buildings, he was stopped every few feet by citizens eager to congratulate

him on the birth of a son early that morning. It appeared that the news had spread through the little town like a fire.

"Hear you've got a son, Wally," said Mr. Hudson, still Mayor of Elkhorn. "Congratulations. How's the wife?"

"Fine, just fine. Both doing well. He's a great lad."

A few steps further on and . . .

"Good morning, Mr. Wallace."

"Oh, good morning, Captain Rand."

"I believe I've to congratulate you on the arrival of a son, hein? You'll both be glad it's over. Quite an ordeal for the proud father the first time, hein? When you've had a dozen you'll be used to it."

Wallace laughed.

"Just in for the day?" he asked affably.

"Just in for the day."

With friendly nods they passed on their different ways. One touch of nature . . . Difficulties over polo fields and exuberant cowboys were forgotten, at least for the time being.

When the child was a week old and everything was going as it should, Wallace took a run up to the ranch to see how affairs had been there during the absence of both himself and his foreman. He had received no word from Galbraith and found himself worrying about him.

On the way he noticed a touring car in a side road, a new road that was being built into one of the lateral draws, and beside it were two men on horseback who were making wild and foolish-looking gestures. Puzzled, Wallace recognized them as a fire warden and game warden, and it seemed to him they were hectoring the people in the car. By the number plate he saw it had come, as the valley people would say, from "outside."

He stopped his own car and stepped out. As he did so, he heard volleys of profanity and realized by the thickness of their voices that the two horsemen were loaded with liquor. The stranger at the wheel was obviously relieved at the arrival of a sober man. His two companions, wife and daughter presumably, Wallace decided, were almost in tears.

"What's wrong, boys?" he asked the two riders.

"It's none of your damned business," replied the fire warden.

"Oh, isn't it?" He turned to the driver of the car. "Can you, sir, tell me what is the matter?"

"I certainly can. I'm glad to see you. We are strangers here and we thought we'd run up this valley of yours for a look at it, but these two men won't let us go on. They say we have no campfire permit and no game licence. We haven't. We don't intend to light a fire or to shoot any game."

Wallace turned to the two men.

"You hear that?" he said. "You have no right to behave this way. Even if the gentleman was contravening a law, which he is not, your behaviour is preposterous."

"It's none of your damned business," they said in duet.

"This is a sad blow to our valley," Wallace remarked.

"Our valley!" ejaculated one of the men. "I'm glad you call it that. One would think you and your bloody capitalists owned it."

"You are both very drunk," said Wallace. "I'd advise you to go home and sober up. Leave these people alone. I am a taxpayer and you are government servants." He spoke to the stranger again. "I hope you will report this. I am deeply chagrined that you should have had such an experience in this valley."

The two horsemen poured profanity on him, telling him he was no boss of theirs. Then they muttered together. One seemed to be advising retirement, the other resenting the advice; but finally away they rode, both oscillating in the saddles. Formal introductions, most formal apology from Wallace were next in order; pleasant converse was exchanged for a few moments and then Wallace returned to his car and drove home.

No sooner had he entered the house when Wong announced Harold Sinclair to see him. The old man was just going down the road to call on old Jackson, he explained. There was a man who would understand his troubles and——

"You're another, Wally. You're an old-timer also in these days."

"What's the trouble you want to talk off your chest?" asked Wallace.

"Well, Wally, it's all right being retired perhaps, and having a pension from the Company, but I got to get into the hills again so I been prospecting up the north fork and I left me a cache of grub there, halfway up. I stayed up on top till I had et all I had and then I came down again. I was sure all tuckered up when I got to my cache. And what do you think?"

"I can't think. What was it?"

"Some son of a gun had rifled my cache. The old days are gone. They rifle a man's cache, eat his grub, and the new people, when you tell 'em about it, don't seem to understand why you should be mad."

They had a meal together and, after Sinclair left, Wallace sat down and wrote a letter to the *Elkhorn Miner*, a stinging letter on caches robbed and government employees, men given position of trust, insulting "strangers within our gates." (He would not have been Wallace had he avoided such a phrase throughout the letter.) He said nothing of these things to Eleanor when he motored back to town next day and looked in at the hospital before going on to the smelter. Both mother and child were progressing well but to hear of such things, he considered, might put her back. On the following day he received replies from the departments to which he had written, informing him that inquiries had been made and both men discharged, his complaint against them having been substantiated by the visitors to the valley and evidence of others who had seen the culprits.

But in the *Elkhorn Miner* of the following day was an anonymous letter in reply to his, a scurrilous letter, a diatribe against all men who got themselves into position in which they could use their influence to destroy the liberty of their fellow men. Furious, Wallace sat down and began an answer:

> "Dear Sir:
>
> In reply to a letter appearing in your issue today, the letter written by a person so yellow, so chicken-livered, that it is necessary to be anonymous, I have to say——"

but he did not say it. He tore up the sheet of paper. He'd be damned if he would "cross swords," as he put it to himself, with an anonymous attacker.

Somebody else, however, did it for him. Two days later there was a letter from another "old-timer," a letter from Jackson, a fine effusion in which he let himself go regarding both cache robbers and men who could not carry their liquor—and anonymous letter writers.

Afterwards, hearing of all that in the days of her convalescence, Eleanor contentedly remarked that perhaps it was all to the good that Robert had something else to think of while she was away so that he had no time to miss her, but that was not until two weeks had passed and she was home again.

II

The main-line train from west, the train going east, came into the Junction—where there was no longer a sign bearing the information *Alight here for Camp Elkhorn*, but a board announcing *Junction for Elkhorn, Placer, West Fork*. On a side track waited the train for the valley and some passengers, who had alighted from the westbound some hours earlier, were already sitting patiently in the Elkhorn coach. Others had taken advantage of the scheduled wait to go strolling along to a small lake that still brought fishermen there, after first inquiring from the station agent if the eastbound was on time.

Jock Galbraith moved across the platform and there was a short, quick bustling while baggage was transferred. "All aboard!" sounded behind him, and the train on which he had travelled from Vancouver passed on. A few minutes later the local was in motion, moving out slowly with clanging bell across the road that ran parallel to the track, a black-topped road gleaming to a passing shower.

Just at the end of the station yard there was a gasoline filling tank and a service man in overalls was filling the reservoir of a big touring car, looking up at his glass column. A group of children stood beside him, watching the proceedings. Then another man swung out from the driver's seat, put hand in pocket, and also looked up at the glass column.

Galbraith leapt in his seat. He leapt from his seat for the driver of that car was Max Harker. There was no doubt about it; the light of late afternoon was full upon him as he stood, hatless, watching the gasoline slip down the scale.

"The swine, the blasted swine!"

Galbraith spoke aloud as he dashed along the aisle. Outside the smoking room a group of men clustered. The train was picking up speed, settling down for its run to Elkhorn with an even, rhythmic clacking. Too late: Galbraith realized he could not leap down to the track. He scowled at the group before the smoking room, noticed his suitcase among a pile of others, lifted it, and returned, carrying it to his seat.

He was breathing heavily, but not with exertion. He wondered where Harker might be going in that car? It was pointed east by the roadside. Surely he was not headed for Elkhorn. True, he was a man to whom a sense of shame was unknown, but he would surely consider Elkhorn a little too near West Fork to be a suitable stopping-place for a night—and he would have to stop somewhere for the night for he did not look as if he were camping out. He was well dressed, had almost a well-to-do appearance.

Galbraith asked himself if it were possible that Harker was still in Vancouver while Marion lay ill and alone in that miserable hotel bedroom, and decided it was likely enough. Vancouver was a populous city and one might live there for fifty years and never see the same face go by. Where he had come from, however, did not matter; where he was going to was of more importance.

Dominant then in his mind was not pity for Marion. Dominant then was rage against this man, Max Harker, for having stolen her from him. He wanted revenge for that. The primitive desire to settle an old score surged through him. By the time the train was drawing near the outskirts of Elkhorn and was within sight of the smelter smokestacks he had made up his mind what he intended to do.

At Elkhorn he went at once to the garage where he had left his little car. Banter flourished there, always in evidence except when some total stranger arrived, and even with strangers, at the slightest sign of gaiety on their part, there was speedy response.

"What's happened to the cow-puncher?" he was hailed as he entered. "He's wearing cute little city rubbers over his Sunday-go-to-meeting shoes. They don't fit in with your headpiece, Jock."

Where had he been? they asked him, and he told them to Vancouver, but so serious of aspect that the initial levity was discarded. Was he going straight home? they inquired. He replied that he was.

"They don't serve meals on our Elkhorn special," one said, "but the dining room at the hotel isn't closed yet."

"I'll eat when I get home," said Galbraith.

"Need any gas?"

"Yes. Fill her up and see how the oil is."

"You'd think he'd been to a funeral at the coast," the manager remarked as Jock departed.

"Maybe he has," said another. "Or maybe he saw that gay little wife of his down there. She always looked to me like a high-stepper."

The car went off along the street and they stood watching it until it came to the bridge, saw it cross the bridge, and then they turned back into the garage, Galbraith's affairs dismissed.

On the other side of the bridge Jock slowed down, uncertainty coming to him momentarily, an ebbing desire for revenge. Then it blazed again and it was not of being robbed of Marion he brooded, not on his own sufferings and wounded pride. It was of Marion lying in that miserable, squalid, hotel bedroom he thought, of Marion lying pitiable in hospital, and it was realization of the full injustice of Harker's desertion of her that finally urged him to action. The comparison of Max's appearance of comfort and well-being, as he stood beside his car at the Junction, and Marion's desperate plight as he had found her passed quick as lightning through his mind.

He wheeled the car south on the byroad to the Junction (the old road on which Wallace had travelled once by stagecoach) and sped back to the main line and the main highway instead of going north to West Fork and the ranch. He went at high speed.

He thought of hurrying on to the gas station to describe Harker's car and ask which way it had gone, then decided not to. He would ask question of none: if he succeeded in finding his man it might be well to leave no traces of himself. He was all huntsman then. There was in him the same sort of excitement that he had known in the high country following the trail of a grizzly bear.

The main road was in better condition than the old road to Elkhorn and he made speed. He had not met Max coming toward Elkhorn, which meant that Harker would probably spend the night in another little town about twenty-five miles further on the main road. He would halt at the hotel there and look at the cars parked before it, and if the one he sought was not among them he would continue east to the next town in that direction.

And then, out into his headlights, a man stepped from the side of the road, holding up a hand.

"A cop!" thought Jock. "He's been lurking there for speeders, damn him!"

Next moment he saw a car atilt on the edge of the bank. He slowed down, his heart thumping in his chest. He could hardly believe in his good fortune: for the man who stopped him was Max Harker, clearly revealed in the blazing lights.

Galbraith stopped and Harker, blinking in the glare of the lamps, came to the car and spoke.

"Brother," he said, peering and still blinded, "do me a favour. I've got in the ditch here with a wheel off. When you get to the next town send me out a trouble car and I'll——"

He stopped. He had recognized his "brother" of the road.

"Christ! It's you, Galbraith," he said.

Galbraith swung to the road.

"You would like me to help you, wouldn't you?" he suggested, but his voice, the tone of his voice, was acid, the speech ironic.

Harker knew then that in the lights of the car Jock had recognized him from the first. Instinctively he stepped back a few paces.

"Let me see," said Jock, still in that acid voice, "I've got a jack and I've got a wrench," and he lifted the wrench out after having raised the cushion on the seat.

He turned and faced Harker.

"Marion," he said, "is dead."

In the light from the lamps of the two cars he saw Harker gulp and swallow. For once the man had nothing to say.

"Marion," repeated Galbraith, speaking in a monotone, "is dead. She died in Vancouver, where you left her penniless and pregnant—and you killed her as surely as if you'd murdered her."

Harker shrugged his shoulders.

"We just didn't get on, that was all, Jock," he said, blustering of manner. "We just didn't make a go of it. She should never have taken up with me; she should have stayed where she was."

"Meaning—with me?"

"I suppose so. How was I to blame? You know as well as I do that she wasn't meant for life in the country. If it had not been me it would have been somebody else."

Galbraith took a quick step forward, gripping the wrench, and Harker put hand to his pocket—why, Jock did not know. Whatever the gesture signified did not matter for before Max could move again Galbraith leapt at him and brought the wrench down heavily on his temple.

"There!" he said with grim satisfaction. "There! It's been coming to you, Mr. Harker, for a very long while."

Next moment it seemed that he was somebody else looking on at it all, looking on at himself. One part of him was in high exaltation, knowing no more than a cave man knew: He had slain his enemy; he had slain the man who took away his woman and he was thankful and satisfied; but the cave man was not all.

"Good God!" he exclaimed aloud. "Good God!" he said again, and going down on a knee he felt Harker's pulse as he might have felt the pulse of a stranger found lying by the roadside, fearing the man was dead.

There was no pulse. Galbraith found that he was moaning "Marion, Marion, Marion," over and over again. Then suddenly all he thought of was his own neck, his own safety. He rose, hurried back to the car, flung the wrench in its place, readjusted the cushion. He was about to turn there and start off for Elkhorn and the ranch at once but cunning came to him. He must not leave the marks of a turning on the road there. The thin fall of rain had stopped but prints of tires might remain some time.

This was a moment for daring. He drove on deliberately, drove on till he came to the first houses of the little town, ran the car into a lane used, by the signs in its mire, by many cars for this purpose, backed, turned. He glanced up at the mirror and was relieved to see there were no people in the streets. The few stores were closed. At the far end he could see a lighted café but no one showed up in its doorway.

He returned the way he had come, passed the car atilt in the ditch, glanced with a sickening clutch at his heart at the body lying beside it. He raced on.

"Pray God," he said, "I meet no car between here and the road to Elkhorn."

There followed annoyance at his childishness for the words. Here was no affair in which there could be prayers to God. Exultation, exultation over what he had done, had not lasted for he was not built that way; yet there was no regret. A grim sense of justice possessed him, coupled with relief at the thought that Harker could make no more women suffer as he had made Marion suffer.

As he drew near to the side road for Elkhorn, the old coach road, he met a car which was travelling east, and considered immediately that its driver would come on Harker's body. He passed it without slowing but just as he was about to swerve from the highway he noticed a rattling that required his attention. Against his inclination, for he was anxious to get away from that other car, he stopped, got out, and walking round to the rear found the hub cap on one wheel was loose. At the same moment the other driver slowed down as if to inquire if he needed assistance, then, when he returned to his seat after tightening the cap, started off again and he had the road to himself. From then on he felt himself no longer the hunter. Soon he might be the hunted.

Into the old Elkhorn road he went at top speed, meeting no one. He must get back as quickly as possible lest inquiries were made and he, as Marion's husband and therefore a man to bear Harker a grudge, was suspected. Everybody in the valley, everybody in the district, indeed, knew his story and would consider he had good cause to kill Max Harker.

In the headlights odd trees standing alone on the edge of the road took shape one after the other, created as of nothing in the darkness, leaping up like ghosts and passing behind him. He came to the bridge from Elkhorn and took the road for West Fork. Never had he travelled at so great speed. He scarcely slackened for bends, taking them in wide sweeps. There was less danger of collision at night, he knew, for one could see the lights of another car; but he met no car all the way.

By the time he reached the ranch he was beginning to wonder if this was all a nightmare. It seemed impossible that coincidence should have brought Max Harker back just when he most wanted to see him. He turned in at the ranch gate,

noticed there was no light in the men's bunk house, no light in Wong Li's little cabin behind the big house. The only light in the place shone out from Wallace's living room. He looked at his watch and saw that it read ten minutes to one o'clock.

"I wish to God I had never been born," he muttered.

Controlling himself he shut off the engine and walked onto the terrace of Wallace's house. He had not to knock for, hearing approaching steps, Wallace hurried to the door.

"Why, Jock!" he exclaimed.

"I've just got home," said Jock Galbraith, "and I want to tell you all about it."

Wallace stared at him, startled by his drawn appearance, his strange manner.

"Come in, come in," said he, "come in and tell me." He peered at him closely. "You had supper in Elkhorn, of course?"

"No."

"Sit down then. I'm glad to see you. I'll go into the kitchen and see what I can find in the ice box. I was just writing up my diary when I heard your footsteps so I may as well finish it." He sat down at his desk and bent over the book that lay open there. He wrote a few words. "See," he said, pointing to the page, "see: 'Jock Galbraith came back from Vancouver this evening'."

He put the diary in its place on a shelf and hurried out to the kitchen. As he crossed the hall the grandfather clock struck once. Glancing at it, he was surprised to see that it was not a half-hour it was announcing but the first hour of a new day.

"I should have put 'Jock Galbraith came back from Vancouver this morning'," he thought as he busied himself cutting bread and preparing a tray. He put sticks of wood into the stove and soon had a kettle singing. There was nothing like strong, black tea to revive these horsemen, he considered, as he carved the remains of a cold chicken and arranged the pieces on a plate.

When all was ready he carried the tray into the study. Jock had not moved. He looked like a man only partly aware of his surroundings.

"Well, what's your news?" Wallace asked.

"She's dead."

"Dead!"

"I was with her. That blasted swine—may he roast in hell—had deserted her as we guessed from what Sinclair told us. She was just down and out, none of her old spirit left at all, at all. She was a sick woman."

"I've made tea," said Wallace, "but would you like a drink of whisky first?" Galbraith's excited manner alarmed him. He could not explain it satisfactorily to himself.

"No, thanks."

"Well, have a bite to eat."

"I'm not hungry."

"Many a man has said that," Wallace remarked, "and eaten a damned big meal when it was put before him. Just you get outside that plate of chicken and you'll feel better. And don't try to talk until you're a little calmer."

Galbraith's eyes blazed.

"Calm?" he said. "I'm calm enough. What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing, Jock, nothing," Wallace assured him, soothingly. "You're upset, of course you're upset after all you've been through. I'll fill my glass and have a drink while you eat, and when you've cleaned everything up you can tell me what

happened in Vancouver."

CHAPTER TWENTY

In the *Elkhorn Miner* two days later Wallace read of the finding of Maxwell Harker's body beside his car on the main highway a little east of the Junction. It was the heading—"Harker Found Dead by Road"—that caused him to read the account, wondering if it was the Max Harker he had known or somebody else of the same name which was not altogether uncommon.

Yes, apparently it was the Maxwell Harker who had been with him on his first entry into this valley and who had caused such misery to them all through Marion Galbraith. *The Miner* stated that he had been some years in the employ of the Elkhorn Livery and Transfer Company, had later run a trucking and freight business between Elkhorn and West Fork, had subsequently sold out and gone to the coast, and had since resided first in Vancouver and later in New Westminster. At the time of his death, the paper stated, documents found on him had shown that he was working through the province as a door-to-door salesman for a coast firm.

The car in which he had been travelling had lost a wheel and skidded into the ditch, and at first the police had thought that Harker must have opened the door to right and leapt out, thus meeting his death. Later they decided that a blow on his head was of a kind that could hardly have been caused by such a fall. It was not a gravelled road; there were no stones on the road and, furthermore, the wound on his temple suggested rather a blow by some heavy instrument.

A motorist, going east, had come on the scene of the accident, or crime, and reported it. That was not all. He reported also meeting another car that was going west—and it was pointed out that the man at its wheel must either have met Maxwell Harker very shortly before the accident or noticed the tilted car and the body beside the road, where it lay in full view of passers-by. It was suggested that he might be a hit-and-run driver, and yet it did not seem so as the dead man's vehicle showed no dent such as would have been caused by a collision.

Wallace, no great reader of such "tragedies" as reported in the press, was not being amusing when he commented once that what he looked first at in the daily paper was "the funnies." There was a modicum of truth in what he said. Had it not been for the name of Harker in the headline he would have done no more than glance down the column.

He was very quiet all that day. In Elkhorn, as was to be expected, the finding of Harker's body was the one subject of conversation everywhere, in the smelter, in the hotels, in the stores, even in the hospital where he called in the afternoon for Eleanor, the baby, and the young nurse. At Jackson they stopped for a few moments while he purchased cigarettes, having smoked more than his usual allowance that day, and heard the discovery being discussed there.

"Do you think it was an accident, Wally?" Jackson asked him.

"Most likely," Wallace replied.

"I'm not so sure," interjected another customer who leant against the counter filling his pipe. "It was coming to him anyway."

During the next days, over the week-end, when he encountered Galbraith neither of them spoke of it. Galbraith looked grim and hard, he noticed.

Up and down the valley Marion's elopement with Harker was discussed all over again, and people would pause sometimes and look from one to another with suspicion in their minds. Had not Jock Galbraith been out of the valley recently? Where had he been? When had he returned? Was he at home, back at the ranch, before the "accident"? They said they hoped he had been because, if not, the police might wonder if it were worth their while to trace his movements on that night. A few remembered at that stage that Galbraith could not be suspected, if there had been murder committed, as it was well enough known that he had taken train from Elkhorn to Vancouver and returned to Elkhorn, so he could not have been on the highway on the night of the tragedy.

When Mr. Stubbs put this to Wallace in so many words, it seemed fitting that Galbraith should be warned of how the

inhabitants of the district were talking. Slowly, pondering what to say, Wallace walked over to the foreman's house that evening, only half aware of the background of gray-green benches on which the sunset glow still lay. As he approached the veranda a light showed in the front room so he ascended the steps quietly.

There he halted, staring in at Galbraith who, alone, was behaving strangely. He might have been rehearsing a scene in a play. With raised fist he stepped smartly forward a few paces, then brought his fist down violently as though hitting someone within close range. Next moment he stood still, shaking visibly, looking at the floor, his lips moving as he muttered to himself words that Wallace could not hear.

With a sense of increasing dread and menace Wallace went quietly down the steps, wondering again—as he had done constantly during the last days—where Galbraith had spent the time between leaving the train at seven o'clock in Elkhorn and reaching the ranch soon after midnight.

II

Two or three days later the district was startled and shocked by sensational news both local and international: Jock Galbraith was arrested for the murder of Maxwell Harker, and war broke out in Europe.

The war brought immediate changes. Many of the retired officers made arrangements at once to leave, and ranches were either closed or reliable caretakers put in charge. A few seemed glad of any excuse to get away, but the majority—among them some who had been severely critical of life in that little section of British Columbia—discovered suddenly that they hated going.

Captain and Mrs. Rand called on the Wallaces to say good-bye and to ask Wallace to let them know when the Galbraith case was over, about which they were greatly concerned.

"Jock knows a good horse if ever a man did," said Captain Rand. "Tell him we'll see him when we get this mess in Europe cleaned up and come back."

"I hope so," said Wallace grimly.

Galbraith was committed for trial at the assizes soon to be held in the newly finished court house, the first assizes in the town of Elkhorn. Detailed report of the proceedings can be found in the files of the *Elkhorn Miner*.

It was fortunate for all concerned that only a few weeks had to elapse before the hearing. Eleanor found her husband restless and irritable and night after night, unable to sleep herself, she heard him going quietly downstairs to the ice box in search of a snack. Often the old clock in the hall had struck five before he returned to bed.

They did not discuss the approaching trial, did not even between themselves divulge if they thought it possible that Galbraith had killed Max Harker. There was, in these days, a conspiracy of silence between them, a tacit realization that the less said of it the easier would it be for Robert when he was called—and called he would surely be—as a witness by Galbraith's counsel. And called he was, but not Eleanor—she having not been at home but in hospital at Elkhorn on the fateful Tuesday.

She was, however, determined to attend the trial. For her husband's sake she felt she should be there, and she already had a plan which she put before him at breakfast one morning.

"After you have given your evidence and have been dismissed," she said, "which will likely be on the last day, you could go out and wait in the car. If the verdict is Guilty I will leave the court room and join you at once. On the other hand you could arrange, should the verdict be Not Guilty, for Jock to be brought to the car in the alley to rear of the court house. There will be demonstrations for he is very popular," she went on. "He won't want to be chaired and cheered and shouted round and all that. You could smuggle him out that way, whisk him off, drive home alone with him."

"You seem to be arranging this," remarked Robert harshly.

She took no umbrage at his tone. Despite their mutual reticence regarding the matter she knew what he was passing through.

"He might want to be alone with you after the trial," she pointed out, "especially if your evidence is what is chiefly to

clear him."

He gave her a long look.

"I could get a taxi and follow," she added.

One thing she knew by this time, one thing he had let out before they tacitly agreed not to speak of the matter, was that Jock had arrived home very late on that Tuesday night. They again looked in each other's eyes a moment and then, turning away from her, he spoke.

"Well," said he slowly, and again, "well . . . yes. Perhaps, perhaps. We could leave it that way if it is Not Guilty. God bless you, Eleanor. It's a hell of a business."

Discussing procedure with Galbraith's lawyer and counsel, Wallace had said that as well as speaking on behalf of the accused's character, as he had known him through many years, he could produce his diary. The entry there, he stressed, read "Jock Galbraith came back from Vancouver this evening," and that surely would be valuable evidence. It said "this evening," he said, and was in the space for Tuesday's entries. But he was told the diary could not be used in evidence, could only be referred to by him for the purpose of refreshing his memory, in case the court thought that necessary.

"It is the time of Jock's arrival you will be asked to give," he was informed.

At that pronouncement Wallace had known what he might have to say to save his friend from the gallows.

"It will be alibi evidence," the counsel explained, "but, as you say, valuable—though more valuable will it be if you can recall that he reached home at an hour too early to allow of the possibility of his having gone back to the main road after leaving Elkhorn. Such evidence might well be the saving of him."

Thus was Wallace sleepless, irritable, not himself. Knowing what he did, he had a dread that if Galbraith was not sentenced to death he might have a life imprisonment, and a drear alternative that would be for a man who had known his freedom. Even the tiny flat in the Gorbals—dark, dank, miserable though evidently it was—would not be sufficient preparation for the restrictions, the constrictions of prison life. In Glasgow he had known the freedom of the streets, of the Glasgow Green, of the occasional trips "doon the watter." He would probably die if confined to the penitentiary for a term of years. It would be too much for him, for any man who had known these trails and mountains, who had ridden the ranges from Alberta to Mexico.

At the back of his mind Wallace also was haunted by a feeling that he had brought Galbraith to this pass. But for his own ambitions Camp Elkhorn—once the original deposits there had been worked out—would have gone the way of many such camps, first becoming a "ghost town," then not even that. Roofs would have fallen in under the weight of winter snows; red willow and willow herb would have flaunted within the parallelograms of toppling ant-riddled walls. He had seen such forsaken places given back to the porcupines, playgrounds again for the squirrels. Even the purchase and working of the Bird's Eye might not have saved it, for the ore from there could have been trucked to the Junction. No spur line might have been constructed to Elkhorn, and then on to West Fork, but for him.

It was his dream of opening up the valley that had held Galbraith to the neighbourhood. His opening up of the valley with its ranches, sawmills, logging camps, and so forth, had helped to establish Elkhorn and brought Marion Masters there—damn her! Wallace decided that he had always felt her to be unstable. As for Harker: his ending was no loss to the world. From the start he had never cared for the man. Some called him "good company" and no doubt the fellow could be amusing on occasion, but as well as "good company" he was a "bad lot."

On the day before the assizes were to open Wallace and Eleanor went into town and took their old suite at the New Occidental. Robert stood at the window looking down on the street, the busy, crowded street, different from what it had been when he first saw it or even when Eleanor first saw it, before the smelter was built.

"We'll do our best for him," said he.

III

The court room was crowded. Eleanor was aware of a strong smell of new paint and varnish, of leather and of

eucalyptus—for the sleety squalls without that whirled the last leaves from the trees were accompanied within by sneezes and coughs and their echoes up among the rafters.

Galbraith's appearance amazed her. She had expected to find him looking somewhat as did her husband, drawn and tired, worn out with anxiety and lack of sleep. Instead his manner was calm, aloof. He sat with folded arms, head tilted back, eyes fixed on the panelling behind the judge's chair. He might have been a visitor appraising the value of the building materials, some lumberman or timber merchant considering: "These panels were made out of west coast fir."

The Crown Prosecutor, whom she had known slightly during his student days, had developed a paunch and all that was left of a shock of auburn hair was a sandy fringe round the back of his neck. The top of his head was completely bald and gleamed as he moved.

Very early in the proceedings she discovered that somewhere within her was capacity for militant feminism. She had never thought that she would join the ranks of those she had once heard spoken of as members of an anti-man union, but as the case maundered on she found herself thinking that women might manage it better. Three policemen—one from Elkhorn, one from Vancouver, one from the Junction—gave details of their investigations, and by the time that motive for murder had been presented she was in a state of indignation at what seemed to her their obtuseness.

On the second day of the trial—after a night of dreams, no details of which she could recall but that had surely been miserable by the melancholy with which she awoke—she was still of the same mind. How commonplace they were, these ferreting, clue-following men! Revenge, actuated by jealousy, was the only motive they could bring forward for the crime whereas she saw Galbraith as a man who had advanced beyond the primitive stage and considered to herself that, if he had committed this murder, it was not only in a spirit of jealousy towards the man who had robbed him of his woman. Surely it was plain to all that after seeing his wife, whom he still loved, sick, deserted, cruelly diseased (the doctor who had attended Marion in Vancouver was another witness), the injustice of Harker going off scot-free would be sufficient motive to Galbraith for killing him. Then it occurred to her that perhaps she would not make a good lawyer! That argument, however sound, certainly would not save him from the noose.

Jock, she mused, was not possessive, perhaps not jealous enough to please a girl of Marion's temperament. She wondered if he had admitted to her husband that he killed Harker, but felt it was better for her never to know that. Robert believed he had—of that she was certain—which was the main reason, she decided, for his anxiety not to talk about it at all.

Witness after witness was called for the police had been following many clues. There was even a woman who had seen Marion get into Harker's car at the Junction on her way to Vancouver. The proprietress of a rooming house in Vancouver was called and deposed that a man and woman, calling themselves Mr. and Mrs. Harker, had lived in her house and that Harker had (in her word) "skipped," leaving his alleged wife alone, though pregnant, after which the girl had gone to work in a restaurant. The doctor who had been called to the hotel where Galbraith found Marion not only deposed that though pneumonia was what carried her off she had also been weakened by other disease and, in reply to questioning, further stated that he had made Galbraith aware of that. There was a man who had known Maxwell Harker in former days, talked to him at the Junction on the Tuesday afternoon while waiting for the branch-line train to start, seen him from the train at the filling station, and seen Galbraith—on sighting Harker—leap to his feet, heard him mutter "The swine, the blasted swine!", seen him hurry along the aisle as if to alight, then, as the train gathered speed, return to the coach and sit down obviously in a state of great agitation.

There was the evidence of a travelling salesman who stated he had met someone resembling Galbraith at the side road near the Junction, rushing away from the scene of the tragedy. When he came to it the man who lay there, he said, was cold. The driver of that car must certainly at least have seen the body for it was in full view of any on the road and death could not have taken place after he passed. The salesman was the first, indeed the only person, to report to the police; but when asked by the prosecution if he saw the man who was driving that car in court he did not identify accused in the dock, looked at him a long time while the court held breath, and even coughs were throttled, then shook his head.

"I could not say that," he replied. "I could not go that far for sure. After all it was dark."

In that there was a gleam of hope for Galbraith and annoyance for the Crown Prosecutor. His witness was failing him on an important point. Later the defence made havoc of that witness's evidence by a series of questions regarding his distance from the car that passed him. He drew from him the statement that the unidentified driver had alighted, examined

a wheel, then driven on again, within a few seconds, and thus his evidence came to no more than the height and build of this man and the fact that he wore a cowboy's hat. The witness even thought—this when counsel worked on him skilfully—that he was wearing a cowboy's high-heeled shoes, as well as the big hat, by the way he stepped round the car to examine the wheel. He had watched him in the mirror, slowing down, and the headlamps, when he got out, had shown him in clear silhouette.

There was the policeman who had been called by that same witness to the scene of the tragedy and identified the body as that of Maxwell Harker whom he had once known. There was the doctor who had examined the body and had no doubt that death was caused by a blow from a blunt instrument.

These were Crown witnesses.

There was, for the defence, the proprietor of the Elkhorn garage at which Galbraith had left his car. His preliminary evidence immediately weakened that of the travelling salesman regarding the possibility that the driver of the passing car was Galbraith. He stated that Galbraith got gasoline for his car just after the arrival of the branch-line train and had said he was going straight home. Counsel educed from him that Jock was wearing goloshes over low shoes, not cowboy's high-heeled shoes. But later, under cross-examination from the prosecutor, the garage man admitted that he had not watched Galbraith beyond the bridge, had not seen him turn either south for the Junction or north for West Fork. That he was under the impression, believed indeed, that the prisoner had gone straight home was neither here nor there, only an opinion formed from what Galbraith had remarked to him on starting out. Asked how long he considered it should have taken Galbraith to get to the ranch after leaving Elkhorn his reply "around two hours" seemed generous to Eleanor. It could be done in an hour and a half, she considered.

The court adjourned for lunch and at the hotel she again met her husband, but not a word did they speak of the trial, then in its second day. Instead they discussed the latest war news from Europe as reported in that morning's paper. Back they went after lunch, she to the spectators' gallery, he to the room in which he had to await his ordeal.

When at last Robert was called, Eleanor felt a tumult in her heart. Much, perhaps all, would depend upon his evidence. For her it was as if he were on trial for the murder, not Jock Galbraith. She had to control herself, force herself to sit still, not to fidget, to cultivate the poker face of the members of the jury. For suddenly, after he had taken the oath, she felt as if all eyes were on her. Then counsel for the defence began to speak and she was again just one of the many in the court room. He and Wallace took up the attention of all.

"I have a few questions to ask you regarding the events of Tuesday evening," said counsel for the defence. "Where were you then?"

"At my home in Elkhorn Valley, situated five miles this side of West Fork," replied Wallace in a firm voice.

"How far is that from Elkhorn?"

"Eighty miles."

"Was the accused in your employment?"

"Yes."

"In what capacity?"

"As foreman of my ranch."

"Were you interested in his personal affairs?"

"I was."

"Did you have any conversation with the accused on his return to the valley after his absence?"

"I did. He had a great deal to tell me about his wife, who had died while he was in Vancouver."

"Did you know why he had gone to the coast?"

"Yes, I knew."

"Why had he gone there?"

"Because he had heard that she was ill and evidently working to support herself."

"At what hour did the accused reach your house?" asked counsel.

There came Wallace's first hesitation, the lack of spontaneous, immediate reply. Then—

"After supper," he said. A part of him was loath to come to the point of perjury, delaying.

Eleanor thought that counsel for the defence was somewhat disturbed. His eyebrows lifted slightly. Evidently he had not expected that vague answer. All was not going there as planned, as hoped, it seemed; perhaps, indeed, thought she, as rehearsed.

"Long after supper?" he demanded.

Wallace realized that if he had the manner of evading exactitude he would weaken the force of what he must eventually say, as if driven into a corner. He cleared his throat. He had hoped that the diary would be enough with its entry of "this evening" but had been told several times it could not be admitted as evidence.

Well, he had a friend to save. Not only the distant day in the high country when he was carried unconscious by Galbraith through the hail storm to shelter passed through his mind: the spirit of many talks they had had together was in his mind, memory of the many experiences they had shared. He knew the man's character. He knew which was the better man, Harker or Galbraith.

He gave a quick look at Jock and thought of his life as he knew of it. The prisoner sat impassive, as if the verdict did not matter to him one way or the other. Wallace thought of the boy in the flat at the Gorbals where the stairs dripped on damp days. He thought of his own Glasgow. In those spare seconds it was as if he lived his own life over again—and Galbraith's. It was only seconds, but suddenly he felt he must have held silence for hours. He must speak, and at once.

Apparently accused's counsel thought so too.

"Was it long after supper?" he repeated, speaking as if he repeated a cue.

"At nine o'clock," said Wallace harshly.

A sigh went through the court.

"At nine o'clock. You are sure of that?"

"Positive."

"How can you be positive?" asked counsel.

Eleanor had the impression that her husband was again at ease, that there was a return, as it were, to the cues of a rehearsal.

Wallace raised his head and spoke definitely.

"As soon as he came in," he said, "I asked if he had had supper and he told me he had not, so I went to the pantry to get him a bite to eat, as I had told my Chinese servant he could go off for the night after clearing away supper things. And as I went through the hall the old grandfather clock that stands there struck the hour of nine."

He looked over at the jury. He looked all round the place, round the court room, up at the gallery where Eleanor sat. Their eyes met for a moment. She was glad that they had, by a mutual tacit agreement, not discussed the matter and she decided then that never, never, would she refer to the trial if he did not. She looked at Galbraith. Chin in hand, head lowered, he was staring at Wallace, expressionless; but to him Wallace gave not so much as a glance.

Cross-examined next by Crown prosecutor, Wallace's evidence was not broken down; but in his final address to the jury the prosecution remarked that he had observed, as he hoped they must have observed, an inexplicable hesitancy on the part of the chief alibi witness for the defence in stating a definite time for the arrival of the accused man at the ranch.

IV

When all the evidence was finished and both counsel had addressed the jury, the judge had summed up and the jury had left the court, Eleanor slipped away from the gallery, picked her way down the crowded stairs, and went along a corridor to rear to the janitor's room near the back door that gave exit to the alley behind the building.

One unshielded electric-light globe illumined the room, a bare place with a table and chair and a tall desk over which hung a list of some sort—a list of the janitor's duties, perhaps. On the wall facing her was a railway company's calendar with a vivid picture of a Blackfoot Indian. She did not sit down. She leant against the table, staring at the Indian and thinking of the last years and all that she had known of Marion and Jock.

She had come by an impression of Marion as one who, for some reason, was inclined to stolen fruits as an escape from what she considered humdrum. Perhaps her early life gave proof to this theory, this impression. No one seemed to know anything about it, and none of her family had been discovered and brought forward during the trial. She often had a great pity for the girl, seeing her as one craving excitement and with insufficient interests of her own to occupy her mind. She recalled hearing her remark once that Jock would rather sit "hogging in a book" than go to a dance at West Fork or Elkhorn, had to be reminded of the occasion; and the quick addition Eleanor also recalled: "Not that Jock doesn't love me. I don't mean that. But he doesn't seem to need what I need."

The door opened and the janitor was there.

"The jury is just going back in again," he said, "but you would never be able to slip up through the crowd into the gallery to hear the verdict. It was a good idea for you to wait here, ma'am. I'll be back with the best or the worst soon," and he was gone again.

She could hear her heart beating in the quiet room. It seemed she waited there for hours. The door opened again and for a moment she thought she would faint. Her lips were cold. She asked herself why she felt it all so deeply, and knew the answer: Because, without being told, she realized that Robert had perjured himself for Jock Galbraith's sake—and she would not have him perjure himself in vain for his friend, their friend.

"What? What?" she cried out.

"Not Guilty," said the janitor.

Eleanor looked over his shoulder. There was a sound in the corridor. Through the half-opened door she saw Galbraith go quickly past. There was a draft of cold air in the room that set the calendar on the wall waving like a flag. The back door into the alley had been opened.

"I wonder if I could have a drink of water," she said.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

In his car in the alley behind the court house, Wallace sat awaiting the verdict, and if ardent longing is prayer it may be said he was praying for that verdict. He had plenty of time for thought and his thoughts, sometimes with the links clear, sometimes uncertain, were on many themes. Yet, through all his thinking there, all his meditation, was that longing, that hope just short of prayer in the ordinary acceptance of the word.

This alley in which he waited was a place of trees when first he came this way. Here was the forest that had seemed to his fancy as if looking on mutely at the celebration of the camp's anniversary, the trees among which a temperate wind blew that day. He recalled Galbraith as he had been then, slow-moving, self-controlled, lean and agile. As if by a magician's wand he saw again the two cadaverous women who watched the rock-drilling contest, saw again the questioning look of the one who spoke to him, the uncertain peering as he raised his hat. Where were they buried? he wondered.

He looked up at the rear windows of the court house and hoped, hoped for the best. A whiff of smelter fumes came

pungently along the alley as on a draft of air, and he remembered the scents of the forest whipped into the old stage coach on the way from the railway, years ago. The forest had not, after all, triumphed. Camp Elkhorn had not been worked out, had not fallen into the state of a ghost town. Instead it had encroached on the forests, beaten them back, driven them back. Camp Elkhorn, Elkhorn City, Elkhorn: the lights of Elkhorn made a glow on the sifting of smoke that hung over it. How the place had gone ahead, a place of consequence where the assizes were being held. And sitting there he admitted to himself that it was the fulfilment of a dream—or the beginning of the fulfilment, for with his gift of looking into the future he saw that it yet had far to go. It was he who had been responsible for beating back the forests, beating them back.

Sleet began to fall. It started as a thin wind; it fell and melted. Evidently they were to have an early winter. Soon he would have to get out the curtains for the car and see to it that the chains were in good condition. He looked up at the court house windows. There was a row of lights three storeys up from the main court room. Chill outside, it must have been getting hot in there for as he looked the top section of one window tilted open and then of another. He looked at the lower windows. They were all dark, windows of the various city and provincial offices, the water-rights office, licenses office, income tax office.

In preparation for the best he waited there. If Jock was freed he was to leave by the back door so that he could slip into the car unobserved and quickly get out of town. If the verdict was against him—well, Eleanor would bring that black news to him.

The court house was packed and in front, in the main entrance, in the lobbies, on the wide staircase, people waited to hear the verdict. A cat came along the alley, stepping uncomfortably in the melting sleet. It went snaking past and he recalled a cougar he had seen once on his way down from the Bird's Eye, the beast following him for miles. At each bend of the trail he had looked over his shoulder and seen it at the last one, peering round. These forests up there would be all whitening on an evening like this, lonely and secretive; and away up above them the men in the compressor bunk house would be longing for a phone call to tell them the result of the trial, and beyond, at the mine too, the crews off-shift would be waiting, unable to settle to a magazine or to concentrate on the evening's game of poker. Heedless of everything the glacier would be taking on new white. Nature did not care whether men came or went—but how a man could care what happened to another man!

Then from the opened windows above came an official voice, an ordering voice, followed by confused sound. That would be of the public rising at the order for "silence in the court." He leant over the door, his heart pounding, straining his ears. There came another voice from up there, level, definite, followed by silence. The flakes of white snow filtered down, the whispering they made in the alley all he could hear.

Suddenly there was a roar of applause, a ringing cheer, shouts and loud cries. Wallace sat back in his seat. Perhaps ardent hope might not be prayer but hearing those deafening shouts, that pandemonium, he said aloud: "Thank God." From the street in front of the building rose the hoots of motor horns, not hooting for warning, not moving, but giving the great news to Elkhorn. They were hooting and honking as they hooted and honked on New Year mornings, the last midnight of the old year gone.

Still he sat there. Was he wrong, he wondered, were all these rejoicing crowds in the street wrong, in taking the cheers from inside for evidence of the good verdict? He broke into cold sweat at the thought of such possibility. Then there was a spray of light in the alley as a door opened and Galbraith stepped out into the night.

Wallace touched the starter and Galbraith got in beside him, giving him a long look. Next moment, without a word, they were off slowly along to the alley's end, out into a side street, on through the alley behind the next block. There they turned into the main street and headed towards the bridge for West Fork.

Not a word did Wallace speak. Galbraith sat beside him very still. As they entered the main street he looked into the mirror above him and noted a crowd milling before the court house portico. They crossed the bridge, the sound of the river changed from the first time he had crossed it with Galbraith, changed with Elkhorn. No longer did it seem to tom-tom, foaming over rocks, whirling in pot-holes, and there was no débris of old, fallen and freshet-borne trees either above or below the bridge. The creek had been cleared out with the expansion of the city, levelled, and a new bed made for it of cedar planks for a long distance. It flowed down the declivity, an even plane of water. There was a long, sibilant, rushing sound that came up to them as the car ran over the bridge. Far up it would still be brawling, whirling over rocks, foaming under fallen trees atilt across it; but here, tamed, or partially tamed, it went by with a long hiss under a bridge of concrete with electric lights on pedestals at either end.

A long while he had known this man Galbraith, Wallace considered. There, where the houses of River Street stood, there had once been a general store, a Chinese store. Wong Li had worked there; a God of Contentment had owned it. Then he remembered the Indian girl who had come to the end of the old wooden bridge, the trestle bridge, for a balance of payment due, payment earned. Out of the past came Jock's voice: "My boy, you'll play that kind of trick once too often, leaving a girl in the lurch. One of these days, Maxwell Harker, if you go on that way, you'll get it."

He glanced at his companion, wondering what his thoughts might be. Jock's face was drawn, his jaws clenched, pulling down the corners of his mouth. Neither of them spoke. Wallace drove smoothly over the blacktopped road where once he had ridden through forests, plucking at the drooping ends of cedars and firs, plucking off the green ends, the needle tips, and whiffing them in his hands. The lights of farmhouses twinkled and passed. A dog dashed out from a gate and accompanied them a hundred yards or so, growling and snapping at the wheel.

"Fool dog!" Wallace exclaimed, but still Galbraith said nothing.

He was deep in thought, thoughts darker than those of the man who was driving him. They came to Jackson's place. It was then Jock spoke.

"I wonder if you would do me one more favour, Bob," he said.

One more favour . . .

"What's that?" asked Wallace.

Jock looked directly at him, agony on his face.

"I can't go home," he said. "I can't go into that house again. I've been wondering if you would be so good as to run me on to West Fork and drop me at the hotel there."

"Surely," said Wallace.

There was silence between them for some distance. Then——

"It's no good, sir," said Galbraith suddenly, and in the tone of servant to employer, "I'll have to quit you. I can't ever go back there again."

Wallace was the silent one then, thinking, pondering.

"You must think me ungrateful," Jock went on, "but it's no' that, it's no' that. I just couldna thole it." He was very Scots then in accent and in speech. "I've got to get away."

"Where will you go?"

"Back home."

Wallace showed astonishment.

"To Glasgow?" he asked.

"No, to Muskoka. The old man is failing, I hear, and can't run the place. It all fits in as if—as if it was in a plan. My brother wants to join up—he's not too old—so it all fits in. Don't ask me to go back to that house again. I can't do it."

There was a profound silence between the two men. At last Wallace spoke.

"Don't let them think you can't take it, Jock," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. They'll be disappointed if you run away now."

There was a flash of the old Galbraith spirit as he answered resentfully: "I'm not running away—or not from what they might imagine I was running away. It's just that I couldn't bear to be in that house again all alone, with nothing but the clock ticking, night after night."

"All right, Jock, all right. I think I understand—and I also think you're making a mistake. You heard that cheering; you know that if we hadn't slipped away they'd have made a great fuss of you in that little town. You belong there; they like you. They'll feel let down if you go after this. Don't rush away at once. About a week ago we had a request to send some of our polo ponies to a club back East. I've been waiting till this—this business of yours—was over to attend to it. Why not stay until we send off that batch of ponies and go with them just for the change? You always said you hated the idea of the horses being abused after they left the range. Why not take them down to this place in Ontario, go and see your people if you like—and come back. Certainly come back. This is your home, Jock. Come back to this part of the world that you and I made together."

Somebody was in the road ahead, in the middle of the road, holding up an arm imperatively for him to stop. It was an Indian, the chief's son, who came to the side of the car and, slightly blinded by the lights, did not recognize them at first. In the level voice of his kind he inquired:

"You come from Elkhorn?"

"Yes," said Wallace.

"Can you tell me about the trial—" he paused. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Wallace; it's you, Jock. My father told me stop any car that comes along and ask."

"Well, here he is, you see," said Wallace. "A free man."

"Good! My father will be glad. I'm glad too, Jock. I was myself once in jail for breaking into a saloon after closing hours and there was not one man in the place who liked it. Hell of a place. Good, I tell my father."

As they drove on, Wallace was convulsed with laughter.

"'There was not one man in the place who liked it'," he repeated.

Galbraith, too, began to laugh. They had just come to where the road led off to the ranch. He was still laughing as the car passed on towards West Fork and he could not stop laughing, continued to laugh until Wallace, casting a glance at him became alarmed by his manner. The man was not only laughing, he saw; he was shaking with sobs, the tears running down his cheeks.

"O Jesus!" said Galbraith. "What a fool I am making of myself now!"

"It's all right with me, Jock. I understand. It has been a terrific strain."

"It's not only that, Bob—it's everything," said Jock. He pulled himself together, sat erect and set his jaw firmly again. "Perhaps I can talk about it better now," he went on.

That was the last thing Wallace wanted him to do yet, to talk about it. He thought that he was referring to the trial, to what had preceded it, to the whole affair, and it was not in his nature to go back over details when a satisfactory end had been accomplished. Wallace was still the man who looked forward. But he misunderstood his old friend for it was not of that Jock wanted to speak.

"I was thinking often back there in Elkhorn," he said, "of all the time I have known you, of the days when we first came up this valley together from old Camp Elkhorn. When you came in to see me I couldn't talk of it because Harker was with us then and I didn't want to mention him. But after tonight I might be able to mention the auld days because I don't feel somehow as if he had much part in them. He was always just a third person all the way in. I would think of you as I knew you then and of our talks about Glasgow. I wonder if you remember?"

"I remember. I remember you describing the flat in the Gorbals and the damp on the stair walls and the rooms that were like dark caves most days."

"That's what they were. Your Glasgow was different, out near the auld Botanical Gardens, the braw terraces and crescents and Kelvingrove Park. And I was wondering one day if you remember what you were like then. I thought you kind of romantic. It used to be like the owercome of a song: You were always saying the history of the west was past, that there were no frontiers any more apart from those a man must mount up to, the high country. I got to thinking about those old days and——"

"And what?" asked Wallace, for there was a long meditative pause.

"Something you said just before John Eaglehead stopped us made me feel I could talk about it now," said Galbraith. "You said I must come back to 'this part of the world you and I made together'."

"And we haven't finished our job," said Wallace, eagerly interrupting him. "You can't go, Jock; you must see it through. This war that has just begun is going to make history for all of us, for Canada, for Elkhorn, for all industrial centres across the Dominion. We must look ahead, not backwards."

"That must have been the slogan for all your pioneers and explorers," said Galbraith, speaking in a firmer voice, "from Leif Erikson to the men who built the transcontinental railway. What a part you have played in the making of this west—a small section of it, I grant, but a mighty important one. You opened up the valley—and I don't mean only for mining. You bought land with an eye to the future and sold it again to farmers; you brought in the railway, first to Elkhorn, later to West Fork. And there would have been no Elkhorn but for you. When the settlers began to complain they hadna enough markets, who started the creamery and boosted Elkhorn butter? Who was responsible for the erection of the smelter, the power plant, for all that has made this district what it is?"

"Well, it was fun," said Wallace.

"Why, man," said Jock Galbraith, "you—just as much as your David Thompson and your Simon Fraser, your Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Sir George Simpson—you are part of the history of this west. Can't you see it?"

The lights of West Fork began to show ahead of them. At that moment a locomotive whistle sounded, the night freight hauling ore cars from West Fork to the smelter. That sound seemed to drive home to Wallace what to Jock was obvious.

"By God, you're right," he said. "I never thought of it that way. I have been part of it. I am part of it. And so are you. We've worked together and we'll work together again. You must stay, Jock; you can't run away. What's past is prologue. Who said that? I'll ask Eleanor and she'll tell me—she has a wonderful memory. Take those horses east for me by all means, but come back. We're two men from the same town, don't forget that, and this is our chosen home."

They drew up before the hotel and both went in together. Behind the counter the proprietor sat intent on a game of patience. He looked up, rose, stared, extended his hand to Galbraith and shook it warmly. Some men sitting in a corner over a draught board glanced round, spoke one to another.

"He wants to stay here for tonight," said Wallace, as if Jock could not speak for himself. "He won't go back to the ranch till the morning."

Jock gave an enigmatic smile.

"Let me think it over," he said.

The proprietor swung the registration book round and, dipping a pen, handed it to Jock who signed and took the key of his room.

"You'll be all right, will you?" Wallace asked him. As he spoke, the words took him back to a night on which he asked a question with the same meaning, though differently expressed.

"Yes," said Galbraith. "I'm all right now, sir. I'm all right now, Bob. Thank you—thank you for everything," and he gave him a long, meaningful look.

"It was nothing," said Wallace, turning abruptly away. Then he turned back. "I'll hear from you in the morning."

"Yes. I'll phone early. Give me time to think it over."

II

Wallace spent another restless night, unable to sleep after all the strain of the last few weeks. And he was impatient for the morning, eager to hear what Galbraith had decided—whether to leave their valley for good or to leave with the polo ponies and return after delivering them at their eastern destination. Their talk in the car had made a deep impression that

nothing would erase. The revelation that the future of which he had dreamed had become part of the history of this country he loved so much was as an inspiration. He had more to do, and he had a son to share his achievements.

Eleanor, thinking his restlessness was due to the secret knowledge that he had committed perjury for Galbraith, looked anxiously at him at breakfast while he played with his food. She handed him the newspaper but he only glanced at it. She tried to chat about the usual things that make up daily life when there is a baby to attend to, but he was not greatly interested. She was about to retire to the nursery when the telephone bell rang and Wallace, rising hurriedly, passed out to the hall to answer it.

"Hello?" he said, "Robert Wallace speaking."

"Good morning, Bob," came Galbraith's voice. "I'm over at the corrals looking at this bunch of polo ponies. Can you come across and tell me just what you want to do about them?"

Wallace drew a deep breath.

"You're going to stay?" he said unnecessarily.

"I'm going to show them I can take it."

"All right. Then I'll be right over."

He replaced the receiver.

"Just going to the corrals to help Galbraith pick out the ponies he's to take east for us," he called to his wife.

"Is he leaving?" she asked, startled.

"No, no. He's coming back."

With a lighter heart she ran upstairs. At a landing window she paused to look out and saw Galbraith in distance, accompanied by two of the men, inspecting some horses in one of the corrals as if he had never been away from the ranch. Wallace, with eager steps, was striding over the benches towards them.

The first flurry of snow, or sleet, had gone overnight and the sun shone in a cloudless sky—Indian summer in the valley. High up in the cleft of the west fork one peak showed, a white cone, and all along the upper ranges was whiteness. Winter had come up there but only there. Lower down was still the ruddy green of pine and fir, here and there among them plumes of gold where small stands of tamaracks were touched by frost.

This was the beginning of a new day.

THE END

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Transcriber's Note:

Page 20: 'slipers' changed to 'slippers'
Page 64: 'tw' changed to 'two'
Page 88: 'esconced' changed to 'ensconced'
Page 147: 'wecome' changed to 'welcome'

Page 150: 'Cemp' changed to 'Camp'
Page 213: 'PART THREE' changed to 'PART IV'
Page 218: 'alcolohic' changed to 'alcoholic'
Page 247: 'hypochrondriac' changed to 'hypochondriac'
Page 297: duplicate section 'III' changed to 'IV'

In addition a number of minor punctuation and hyphenation errors in the original text have been corrected without comment.

Variations in spelling, and words in dialect have been retained as they appear in the original book.

[End of *The Transplanted* by Frederick Niven]