

THE COOK OF EURISCO SAWMILL.

A WAY up among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, about five miles from the town of T—, there stood, in the spring of '71, a large sawmill owned by the Carlyle Brothers. They had agreed to furnish a large amount of timber to a certain company who were to build an immense flume during the summer, and the mill was got in running order as soon as possible. The mill was five miles from any habitation, and stood in a lovely glen, with huge mountains rising on three sides of it; a lonely place, it must be admitted, but soon to be made lively by the buzzing of saws, shouting of teamsters and shrieking of the whistle.

The mill, with its surrounding buildings, formed quite a little village. There was the large barn, with its corral for the tired oxen to repose in on Sundays; two or three cabins scattered around, for the accommodation of the men, and the dwelling house, which stood near the mill, and consisted chiefly of a large dining room, where the hungry "boys" were wont to rush in to their meals immediately after the whistle blew. But this spring, just before the opening of our story, George Carlyle, the elder brother, had a wing containing parlor and bedrooms built on, and had moved his wife out there.

She was a delicate little woman, who thought the change would do her good. The brothers also determined that they would, if possible, get a white woman to do the cooking for the mill crew, as they had borne the infliction of Chinese cookery long enough. But where to get one was the question. A woman who would go to that lonely place and cook for ten or fifteen men was not to be easily found. However, the younger brother, Dan (who was the head sawyer), was obliged to go down to Sacramento to get some new machinery, and he volunteered to find one.

He reached Sacramento, ordered his machinery, and the day before he started back set out to find a cook. Passing the store of an old acquaintance on J street, he entered, thinking that perhaps his friend could aid him in the search.

A lady stood by the counter dressed in deep mourning. Her veil was down and he was unable to see her face. He greeted his friend warmly, and then said:

"Mr. Bronson, I am in trouble, and I want you to help me out of it if you can. You see, the boys have got tired of Chinese cooking up at the mill; and, as my brother has built on an addition to the house, and moved his wife out there for the benefit of her health, we thought we would try and get a woman to do the cooking this summer. I have rashly agreed to find one, and am perfectly at a loss where to look. Can you tell me where I would be likely to succeed?"

The lady standing by the counter threw up her veil and turned her face toward the speaker. It was the face of a woman of perhaps twenty-two, a very beautiful face, in spite of the shadow of sorrow in the brown eyes.

"I beg your pardon," she said, while a flush rose to her cheek, "how far is it to the mill of which you speak?"

"Five miles from T—," he responded.

"How many men to cook for?" she asked.

"From ten to fifteen," was the reply.

"My father owned a sawmill once, and I cooked for the men," she said. "I think I could satisfy you if you will let me try. I assure you I am quite a good cook. Will you take me?"

Dan tried to hide his surprise.

"Yes," he said; "when can you come?"

"When the mill starts. When will that be?"

"A week from Monday."

"I will be in T— on Saturday," she said.

"Very well," said he; "I shall meet you there and convey you and your baggage to the mill. What name shall I inquire for?"

"Mrs. Winchester," she replied, and passed quickly out of the store.

Mr. Bronson laughed. "Well, Dan, you don't seem to need a great deal of help from me in this matter."

"Who is she, anyway?" asked Dan.

"She is a widow who has been in here twice before looking for work; but I should certainly have hesitated before recommending a young and lovely woman like her to you, to go up there and cook for a sawmill crew. You must take good care of her."

"I'll try to," laughed Dan, and the subject was dropped.

When he reached the mill the first thing his sister-in-law asked him was if he had got a cook. He said yes, and told her of his success.

On Saturday he took the light express wagon and drove into town. He arrived there just as the stage drove up. A lady in deep mourning and closely veiled alighted. Dan knew her and approached.

"This is Mrs. Winchester, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Which is your trunk?"

When they reached their destination Mrs. Carlyle came out to welcome the new "cook," and show her to her room. She saw at once that she was a lady, and wondered not a little at her accepting such a situation when she was so manifestly well fitted to fill a much higher one. But she was still more surprised to see how naturally she took hold of things in the big kitchen, and went to cooking as if she had been used to it all her life; and Saturday evening found such a supper served up as only a thoroughly good cook can serve.

On Sunday the rest of the mill boys arrived with their blankets and baggage, prepared for their summer's campaign. The cook was, of course, talked about a great deal, and many were the curious and admiring glances at her as she quietly waited on the table; but they were gentlemanly in their manner toward her, and loud in their praises of her as a cook among themselves.

On Monday morning the whistle blew at six o'clock, and immediately after breakfast there was a loud noise of escaping steam to be heard, and the white clouds wreathed round the roof of the mill. A log was rolled on the "carrriage" and "dogged"; steam was let on; Dan grasped the lever; the saws buzzed; the carriage