

out being observed myself. That white, set face did not tell me she was a happy wife. I could not restrain the feeling of exultation that swelled within me; and yet, had it been otherwise, I might perhaps have learned, in time, to forget. I fled to the wilds of the Northwest territories, and for seven years I lived a wandering, aimless life, always seeking danger, but never finding death or forgetfulness. At last, a longing came to me to see the old home again—my mother's face. No desire of seeing Ruth led me to this step. I had accepted our separation as final, and determined never to look upon her face again. I reached home only in time to receive my mother's dying blessing; then she left us. In our last interview, mother—dear, tender heart—told me that George Rathburn, two years after his marriage, had gone to California to seek gold. Ruth had received two letters with the California postmark, then nothing farther was ever heard from him, though five years had passed. His family and Ruth believed him dead, and had only a short time before gone out of mourning. On the morning of the funeral, I slipped in alone to take a last look of my dead. Absorbed in my own thoughts, I walked straight to the head of the coffin; then, for the first time, I observed that I was not the only occupant of the room. On the other side of the bier, not over three feet away, stood a lady with a shawl and bonnet on, arranging some flowers on a stand. She had her back to me. Hearing a step so near, she turned, and we stood face to face—Ruth and I. Our eyes met, and each read the other's soul. She put out her hands in the old, confiding way, with a little, glad cry—

“Reub! Reub!”

“I caught them, drew her toward me, and across my mother's coffin our hungry hearts met in a long, passionate kiss. Was she not my very own? Had I not

waited seven years for my Rachel? Over my mother's bier—our mother now—we swore our second betrothal, that nothing on earth should separate us again. A few days after, late in the afternoon, we met, by appointment, outside the village, and swiftly drove across the line, to a little Pennsylvania burg, and inquired for a squire. That official soon came bustling in, and in less than three minutes pronounced us husband and wife. We drove as rapidly back, fearing Ruth might be missed. She was now of age, and her own mistress; but to avoid any unpleasant scenes with her father, we decided that it was best for her to go back to her father's and keep our marriage strictly secret, until we had perfected our arrangements for going west. We would not even run the risk of driving into the village. Instead, I walked with her home in the deepening dusk. As we approached the house—it sat well back from the street—we noticed that the ‘best room’ was brilliantly lighted. In those days, such a thing betokened either some festive occasion or an unexpected arrival. I felt myself the happiest man on earth that moment, and whispered, gaily, ‘Perhaps they've found out, after all, and are going to give us a reception.’ Good God! How I remember every little detail! We had reached the porch now, with its fragrant honeysuckle, and had a full view of the room. ‘My bonnie, sweet wife!’ I was saying, caressing her cheek; and as she nestled against my breast, with her face toward the window, a figure emerged from the shadow, and stood, fully outlined, in the glowing firelight. It was George Rathburn.”

He dropped his face in his hands, and the strong frame shook with the torrent of emotion that swept over him. When he lifted his head, after the storm had passed, his face was pallid and his eyes