

HER FIRST CASE.

CLARA Willis stood in the door, and surveyed the charming scene before her, with unmixed pleasure. It was not new to her; in fact, she had seen it every day for the past ten years, but it never grew old nor monotonous. It seemed to vary with every change of weather and season, and it scarcely seemed the same more than an hour at a time. She had got supper ready, and was waiting for her father, brother and the hired man to come in. She slowly put down her sleeves, mechanically smoothing the ruffles at her prim, shapely wrists, as she gazed at the picture she knew and loved so well.

In front of the house, a green meadow lawn sloped gently to the river side, where the sunset rays lingered and reflected a rosy glow on the musical, dancing ripples, that chimed so readily with the twittering of the birds, as they said good-night to each other in the swaying willows on the bank. Across the river, stretched a grassy valley, which gradually rose to the foothills, and they, in turn, climbed to the mountains, with rocky, fir-lined gulches, where a line of snow caps towered, grandly, back of all, up to meet the sky, and seemed the limit of earth, as it was of vision. The sunset light was over all, glorifying it with the subdued splendor now slowly dying away.

Clara heard the men on the back porch, and turned from the door with a sigh of regret; as her father called—

“Ready, Callie!”

She stepped into the neat sitting room, which opened upon a piazza in front and at the back. The men were already

seated at the table, and Clara, quickly bringing in hot dishes of “warmed-up” potatoes and cream toast, with the tea, took her own seat, and bent her head reverently as her father asked the accustomed blessing—a custom too well learned in the East to be given up, even in the proverbially Godless West. The mother’s place was vacant, for she and the younger daughter had gone East to make a long-deferred visit, while Clara kept house, and tried her best to rival mother. Clara finished her meal first, and excusing herself, went to the door again.

“There’s a man coming across the railroad bridge,” she said.

“A tramp?” briefly responded her father.

“Probably,” replied Clara, as she watched the man advance. “He’s coming here,” she added, “as all the tramps do.”

“Well, it’s little enough we have a chance to do for our fellows here; we needn’t grudge ‘em a bite now and then.”

“I don’t, father,” said Clara, “and we shall have a chance to do a little for our fellow mortals at once,” as the little gate clicked and a man walked rapidly up the path.

“Don’t walk like a tramp,” murmured Tom.

The man paused at the foot of the piazza steps. “Could I get my supper here to-night?” he began, in a frank, straightforward manner, addressing Clara.

“We have plenty of bread and milk, if that will do,” replied Clara, as she usually answered such requests.