

to the living man at my side and gave expression, in a few words, to the thought that was uppermost in my mind.

"Do you know, Mr. Mason, as I stand here looking upon this poor tribute to Bacchus, I have an uncomfortable sense of responsibility—a consciousness that I, and you, and all men of our stamp, who know ourselves to be, in many ways, superior to such as he, are, in a great measure, responsible for tragedies of this kind, inasmuch as we not only fail to set a firm heel upon the curse, but contribute our mite to its sustenance every time we clink glasses over a bar. Does the thought strike you as far-fetched? I suppose it does; but, God! it rests heavily on my soul at this moment. Would—"

He suddenly lifted his bent head, and interrupted me with a wild, imperative gesture.

"Stop! in mercy's name!" he cried. "Every word you utter gives a wrench to the iron that entered my soul long before I ever saw this poor wretch. Responsibility! Great God! If this were all!"

He turned abruptly away, and going to the door, opened it, as if to plunge into the storm and darkness without. I followed him, striving to explain that I had spoken without dreaming that my words might bear any special significance for him, and laid my hand on his arm, restrainingly. But the storm itself presented a barrier he could not pass. The busy wind had piled the snow in a huge bank against the door, as high as the eaves of the cabin, and there it stood, a solid wall, barring egress. I drew him gently away and closed the door.

"My friend," I said, "if my words wounded you, I beg your forgiveness. Had I dreamed they would do so they would never have been spoken. Come, sit down by my hearth, and help me to bear the loneliness of this rather trying situation. We are prisoners, you see, until such time as we choose to tunnel our way out through the snow drift."

He turned, without a word, and sat down, sitting immovable and speechless until an hour had dragged by, and the broad light of day struggled in, here and there, through a crevice in the cabin wall.

Then, when I began to make preparations for performing the last offices for the dead, he suddenly rose to his feet, as if all at once recalled to a sense of his surroundings, and glanced toward the bed, where the body lay.

"He must be buried," he said, as if suddenly alive to the necessities of the situation, then paused and looked at me, blankly.

"Why, what will we do about a coffin?" he asked, helplessly. "Will it be possible to bring one from town?"

"No," I said, "the drifts are impassable. We

must try to make a coffin. I think I have boards enough, if I can find them in the snow. When we have prepared the body for burial, I will dig a passage out through the snow, and we will see what can be done."

"We will take turns at the shoveling," said he, and during the hours of hard work that followed, he did his share manfully, though his way of handling shovel and spade betrayed the fact that his acquaintance with these useful and time-honored implements had been hitherto of the formal and distant sort.

When the short, storm-darkened day drew to its close, a grave had been made in the stony hillside, close by the little streamlet, whose tinkling voice was now hushed to silence by the frost king's icy manacles. Here the lifeless form was laid to rest, and soon the night winds came and heaped his grave with a mound of spotless white.

"When the snow goes off, we will put a low wall of stone about the grave, and put up a board bearing his name and date of death," I said. "Henry Morris, I believe you said, was his name?"

"Yes, at least that is the name he gave me when I first met him, two months ago."

"It seems a pity that we do not know whence he comes, or whether he has any living relatives," I continued. "If there should be an old mother, or a wife, somewhere in the world, waiting for him, it would be some comfort to her to know his fate; life-long uncertainty, in such a case, must be a terrible thing to bear."

Roy Mason's beautiful lips curved in a bitter smile at my words.

"Yes," he answered, slowly, "it might be a relief to her to know that he is out of the world."

There was a tinge of bitterness and an undertone of misery in the words, to which I had not then the key, but which, later, I understood.

The storm continued, at intervals, for nearly three weeks, and the depth of the snow on the mountains became so great, that, looking up to the heights above, we trembled at the thought of possible snow slides later on.

"Think of being wiped away like a picture off a blackboard, and buried down yonder in the bed of the canyon," I suggested, ruefully.

"Should I remain here much longer, it will take a good, healthy avalanche to induce me to leave you," said Mason, with one of his rare smiles.

"Then I shall pray the spirits of storm and sunshine to stay the avalanche," I answered, with feeling, for I am not ashamed to own that in three short weeks of close companionship I had lost my heart to Roy Mason.

A perfectly congenial companion, of my own exs,