

ignation, that set me an example of patience and submission.

Meantime, Edith Mason was making manifest the earnestness of her avowed intention to remain in the little valley and create for herself a home. Within a week or two, she had, with my assistance in the business details, purchased a lot in the suburbs of Yum Yum, procured building materials, and set two men at work erecting a small cottage. It was a cozy little affair, and money was not spared in rendering it not only thoroughly comfortable, but beautiful within and without. It was situated on a little, sloping plateau, overlooking the town and commanding a view of the greater part of the undulating valley.

Yum Yum, as may be supposed, was somewhat exercised over the advent of this new and evidently well-to-do resident. There was the usual amount of indirect questioning and round-about attempts to get at the private history, past and present, of the newcomer. She herself made no secret of the fact that she was taking up her residence in their midst for the sake of being near the grave of her husband. She always added, however, that, even were there no such sacred ties to hold her there, the natural beauties of the mountain-bound valley would prove an almost irresistible inducement to remain. In this, she was sincere. To me, she said—

"I think that, amid such scenes as these, I shall be able to write as I have never written before. The very look of the mountains, rising grand and rugged in their misty blue robes, out of this valley of sunshine and verdure, sets my brain and heart throbbing in unison with thought that must find expression."

Weeks came and vanished, until two months had gone by, and June had come, warm, rosy, and fragrant with the breath of the wild flowers, without bringing me a word or sign from the wanderer. I began to be discouraged and downcast in spirit. There were reasons why things could not go on in this way much longer. Already I had been slightly chafed, on more than one occasion, by inhabitants of Yum Yum, for staying about town at a season when, as a miner, I should have been elsewhere. Covert allusions to the "little widow" became so frequent as to arouse my resentment. Had Edith Mason been, in reality, a widow, such innuendoes would have been distasteful to me; and knowing her to be the innocent, loyal wife of my friend, rendered them almost unbearable.

I had, however, the comfort of knowing that she was unconscious of the coarse by-play, and went on the even tenor of her way undisturbed. She made but few acquaintances among the people of Yum Yum, and those few were mostly confined to families of the poorer class, whom she loved to assist in the thousand

and one ways that ever lie within the scope of kindness and true sympathy.

Her visits to the grave were frequent—so frequent that I often marveled that so slight and delicate a frame could bear up under so much mountain climbing. As the warm days of summer drew on, I grew accustomed to looking from my door in the early morning, and seeing her coming slowly around the fir grove, with black Martha closely following, bearing the small writing desk, which never was left behind. She had a favorite nook, beneath a clump of young firs on the margin of the little stream, a few steps distant from the grave, where she would sit hour after hour, dreaming and writing, seemingly shut off from all mankind, living an ideal existence in an ideal world, all her own.

I soon learned to shape my own habits to suit hers, or rather, to baffle the tattling tongues of Yum Yum. Her appearance on the mountain was usually the signal for me to discover that I had business to attend to in town, and such business was rarely concluded until the blue smoke, curling up from the chimney of her cottage, told me that she had returned home to her 6:00 o'clock tea.

Things went on in this way till near the middle of July, when messages from the "diggings" began to come in thick and fast, announcing new discoveries and urging upon me the advisability of giving the work my personal attention. After mature deliberation, I decided that I would go. I was growing very tired of neglecting my own affairs while waiting in vain for a letter or sign from Roy Mason. It had been all very well, at first, to regard myself as the chosen instrument of fate, and I had experienced a certain pride in the thought; but the friction of time and pleadings of self interest were beginning to crowd that feeling into the background.

So, at last, I said to myself that I would risk an absence of a few weeks at least. I would return by the first of September, at the latest, and see how things were going with the little woman. In the meantime, I would leave strict orders with the postmaster, that any letters coming for me must be held by him until I should return and call for them in person.

When I announced to Mrs. Mason my intended departure, she was bending over the grave, training ivy vines over the stones and purple morning glories around the rustic cross. She lifted her face quickly, and looked at me in startled wonder.

"Going away! You? Why, Mr. Blake, how very strange it will seem here without you. I shall miss you."

How almost childlike she seemed to me, in her innocent frankness! She had risen, and was looking at