

storatives. Finally, Mason came out to me, looking as though he himself had been close to death's portals.

"Help me to make a litter, Blake; he says we must get her down the mountain while the stupor lasts, for he thinks that—brain fever—" His voice broke, and he turned away.

I went and cut some fir boughs, and together we constructed a litter, which we piled full of blankets, and thus bore her slight, motionless form slowly and tenderly down the rough trail she had climbed so often, in her heart-broken devotion to the memory of other days.

* * * * *

Four miserable weeks—twenty-eight long, trying days—had dragged their slow length into the past before we knew, or could guess, whether Edith Mason would live or die. Another physician had been brought, as counsel, from Marionville, and all that human skill could do had been done for her; yet, as I scanned the faces of her attendants each day, I gathered less and less that could give hope or comfort.

At last, one morning, as I sat disconsolately on the back stoop of her cottage, waiting for the doctors to come out, the door opened and black Martha came and grasped my shoulder, with a clutch that seemed to almost crush the bones.

"Get up!" she ejaculated, in a voice that would have lifted me to my feet had I been unable to comprehend the words. I got up, and turned my shrinking gaze upon her. Then she suddenly loosed her grasp, and pointed, with a long, black finger, in through the open door: "Go in there and see what you have helped to do."

I went in, submissively, feeling that the words and actions of my dusky Nemesis could have but one dread meaning. On the threshold of the chamber, one of the doctors met me—

"Come in, if you wish," he murmured, "she is conscious now, and will not live more than an hour."

I sank down on a chair near the foot of the bed, with a miserable sensation of cold and weight about my heart. I was glad, very glad, when I saw that she had not perceived my entrance, for it seemed to me that one word of reproach or pardon from her poor, white lips, would utterly crush me.

She was lying quite still, with her eyes fixed upon the white ceiling above, and one thin little hand resting on the bowed head of her husband. Poor Roy! Strong sobs were shaking his frame, the first outward expression his grief had taken throughout all those weary weeks, though hollow eyes and attenuated features had attested to the work going on within. Suddenly, now, he lifted his head, clasped the frail little hand and pressed it to his lips, crying out, in a despairing desperation—

"Oh, Edith, darling, live! Forgiveness is not enough; live and let me do what I can toward atonement."

"Oh, heaven forbid!" was the solemn response from dying lips. After a moment's pause, she slowly turned her beautiful, heaven-blue eyes upon his face. "Roy, my husband, can you not understand that death is all that renders forgiveness possible? Do you think, if I lived, I could ever forgive? No, no, no! The little, dead hands of our baby would draw me forever from you, and life would be but a million deaths."

"Oh, Edith, don't! You kill me!" he cried, and I pray that I may never again hear such a cry of torture wrung from a human soul. "Darling, live! and in time I will win you to forgive and forget. Oh, I promise—"

She lifted her hand, with a tremulous motion, and laid it on his lips. Then her eyes wandered away, dreamily, to the open, vine-draped, little window. Presently she spoke again, but with an apparent effort, and I had to listen closely to catch the low-murmured words. Evidently her mind was wandering, for she spoke of her husband, instead of to him, as if addressing a third person, but never removing her eyes from the patch of blue sky that gleamed through the little casement.

"That word, that last word he uttered, carries me back—back into the dim past. He says he will promise. Oh, God! Promise!—"

"I builded my all on promises, once,
A castle that toppled and fell;
Each broken vow was a red-hot stone,
To pave my way—to hell."

I do not think the poor, dying creature knew that she was breathing her last words on earth; but she was. She never spoke again, and she could not have left a more awful legacy to Roy Mason than those words, which, as we afterwards knew, constituted a verse from an unpublished poem of her own.

The low murmur of her voice died away, and naught broke the silence of the little chamber, save ever and anon a gasping sob from the breast of the kneeling man. The dying eyes remained fixed upon the open casement, gradually taking on a far-away look, as though seeing into the widening portals of futurity—a look that settled, finally, into the fixity of death, and I was not surprised when the physician bent to me and said, softly—

"You are his friend, let him know, if you can, that all is over, and get him away."

May I never again see, in human eyes, such an expression as came into Roy Mason's when he lifted his head and was made to understand that his wife was dead. Before nightfall of the same day, he him-