

She stepped noisily about the room, after banging the door, and soon waked the baby, whose indignant cries roused Silas, who groaned inwardly. He had six daughters of his own, and he knew that women were whimsical and incomprehensible beings. Chalcy, never still, lounged before the one small window and drummed on the pane with ten lean fingers. Serena lifted her eyebrows, but with wonderful self-command for so thin a woman, said nothing.

"D'ye know Tom 'ad come?" asked Chalcy presently, of no one in particular.

"I wonder!" exclaimed Serena. "Clarissy mint look at 'im now."

"Tom's got a minty good house to take a woman to," observed Martha, with a ruminating air. "I 'low thet ole man Baker'll set a heap by Tom's wife, an' they do say Mis Baker left no end o' quilts an' dishes. Law, ef Clarissy was my girl—"

"They wouldn't be no trouble then," sneered Serena, with a wicked side glance at Chalcy, "any girl but Clarissy 'd jump at the chance o' marryin' Tom Baker."

"I kin tell ye one thing," flashed Chalcy, "ef I aint smart 'nuff to be a fust wife I won't go stickin' myself where nobuddy thinks uv me enny more'n ef I wuz the dirt under their feet."

Serena's cheek flushed. Silas looked from one to the other. "Shet up, Chalcy!" he said sternly.

"You'd best make Sereny quit a-tantin' uv 'er then," thus Martha entered the conflict.

"Oh, hev yer jaw out," he exclaimed, starting up and going out.

Experience had taught him the wisdom of flight at such times. Silas Dean's was one of those natures made up of opposing qualities, so often found among those sects whose peculiar principles set them apart from the majority of their countrymen. He was an American, from the south originally, and had drifted to the uncertain region which is neither north nor south, the great middle west, where he had married a woman who was his superior in every respect, save one—she loved him. Her love made her yield weakly to his whims, and at last follow him to Mormonism; but when it came to the question of plural marriage, she refused to accept it, defied the church, and died a broken-hearted woman. All this had but settled Silas more firmly in the wild and visionary fancies which had taken hold of his narrow, credulous mind. He fed his imagination with lofty hopes of what the Lord might yet call him to do. He read and re-read the marvelous record of the Israelites, with a strange feeling that he had been with them in their journeyings. He would like to have gone back to the nomadic, wandering life of that time. He saw with delight the steady growth of God's people.

"We're a-makin' a noble history right straight along," was his favorite saying, as he reviewed the founding of the desert city. At all times his righteous wrath was hot against the Gentiles, who heard and believed not. One ambition he cherished in secret—a hope so dear that he had never profaned it by utterance. If only the call would come to him to go out among the misguided heathen, he felt that the Lord would touch his lips with holy fire and make many a waste place blossom with the fruit of the true word. But this night his soul was in darkness. The hope which had come to be a part of him lay so chill and lifeless in his breast, that he almost wished he had never known it; yet he could not give it up. Like many a wiser man, he had made out of his longing a Nemesis which gave him no peace.

He thought of Clarissy half angrily, and of her mother, never a pleasant subject for him. "Possessed of the devil," that was what had been said when she stubbornly set herself against his marriage with Martha. He had done his duty then, and he would do it now. He would go to-morrow and see Bishop Yelkton about it; perhaps he would talk to her.

The light swish of a woman's dress made him turn, and this brought him in front of Clarissy as she came down from the hill.

"Ben takin' a walk?" he asked, not unkindly, his gnarled and suspicious heart yearning over his daughter, whom he trembled for as one in danger of wandering out of the one way to eternal life.

"Yes, sir," she replied civilly, standing dutifully, as she saw he had something to say.

"Clarissy, what makes ye so diffrent from the rest uv us?" he spoke, almost appealingly.

"Am I different?" There was a glad ring in her voice. "Mebbe I'm like mother."

"I 'lowed you'd most forgot her."

"I won't never forgit her. I try to remember everything 'bout her I kin," she said, earnestly.

"She wur a unregenerate woman," began Silas, gloomily.

"She wuz a Christian an' a saint," broke in his daughter, "an' she's an angel in heaven now, a heap nigher to Christ than we'll ever git, I'm afeerd."

She went on into the house, leaving her father in a state of dubious wonder as to whether her devil, if she really was possessed of one, was as dumb as he thought. Inside the house Serena's red eyes were evidence that her sharp tongue had not been a match for her heavier-witted, but coarser, antagonist. Clarissy's sore heart sank as she felt the jar of conflicting natures that would never be at peace.

"Come 'ere, Clarissy," called Chalcy, as she flattened her nose against the window. "I kin see a