

AN OCEAN WAIF.

BY VELMA CALDWELL MELVILLE.

PART II.

THE evening after the party Prof. Gettwood was detained from the Drapers' home by old-time friends calling on him at his hotel. "To-morrow night will do as well," he thought, when, at last alone, he noted the time. "Strange how the child interests me; it must be her likeness to Grace. I doubt if she of whom Heath writes is more like her; but I must see her. Let me see, what does he say?" and he drew a letter from his pocket and unfolded it.

The next day he received a message from Mr. Draper, regretting that they could not meet again, and explaining their sudden journey, concluding by saying that his niece wished to be remembered to him, and also extended an invitation for him to call on her if he ever visited the Pacific coast. The news was most unwelcome to Prof. Gettwood, and he chided himself for allowing anything to interfere with his call at the Drapers' the evening previous. And thus, in less than fifty-six hours after the two violinists were playing together in Benjamin Draper's parlor, one was speeding toward Oregon and the other toward Australia, unconscious of the meeting yet in store for them.

"How is Uncle Max., Lee?" were the first words that escaped Pet's lips as she met Lee Mason at Portland.

Lee's face told the story his lips refused to utter. "He calls for you continually, and I pray heaven you may reach him in time," he said.

Pet thought her heart was breaking. She little knew how much one can endure, and that

*Hearts faint, but seldom break,
Beneath a weight of woe.*

But she did not cry out or make a fuss. Aunt Celia, watching the white, pain-stricken face, wondered at her control. Lee watched her furtively, too, while he tried to divert her attention from this first great grief of her life. She was changed, he could see that, but whether "spoiled," as he had predicted, he could not tell. She certainly looked pathetic and innocent enough at the present to touch a less susceptible heart than her old lover's.

Max. Browning was too weak to talk, but with his wife on one side and his foster daughter on the other, he lay in smiling contentment for a few brief hours; and then, followed, as it were, to the very portal by these two ministering angels, he passed out into the unknown; unknown, yet not unknown to the simple, child-like believer.

*There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar.*

From that hour Mildred and Pet were as sisters, every tie strengthened by this mutual woe. Aunt Celia lingered until the first keen sense of loneliness was gone, enjoying the matchless climate, and having a very tolerable time despite the mourning about her. She invited Pet to return with her, but was not sorry when the girl refused on the ground that she could not leave Aunt Millie. It was as well, she thought, for she had not been blind to her son's infatuation; and by next year he would be married, and there was plenty of time yet for Pet to pursue her education. In answer to Arthur's queries when she reached home, she smiled significantly, and hinted that Pet was likely to settle down as a farmer's wife soon. She had noticed Lee's evident admiration for her, and made the most of it.

One afternoon late in the spring Mildred and Pet sat sewing out on the vine-clad porch. Pet had been speaking of that last party at Aunt Celia's, and of her enjoyment of the half-hour's music with Prof. Gettwood.

"Prof. Gettwood?" repeated Mildred. "And is it he of whom you are thinking when that dreamy, far-away look comes into your eyes?"

The young girl started guiltily. "No, auntie—that is—I am sure I did not know that my eyes ever wear a dreamy, far-off look; but if they do, it can scarcely be when thinking of the professor, as I never met him but the once. He was to call again before he left for Australia, where he told me he had to go on important business, but we came away the next day, you know. Uncle Draper sent our regrets to him, and I invited him to call if he ever came to the Pacific slope. How romantic if we chance to ever meet again."

Mildred listened, and only sighed in response.

That Pet had a secret from her was plain enough, and it hurt her that the time had come when her darling's heart was not open to her. True, she had never told the girl of her own buried romance, had never confided to her her own girlish affairs, but she hungered for Pet's confidence, longed to help bear the burden—whatever it was—that was evidently wearing on the young life. She had never spoken of Tom Veeder during her husband's life-time for fear that Pet should think her untrue to or dissatisfied with Max; and since the latter's death it seemed wrong to mention a love that antedated the one great love that had made life so bright. She had feared that she could not make the girl understand that the love a maiden gives her lover is but the bud in comparison to the rose to that of a true wife for her husband, and she might think that her heart was in the grave of her early love rather than with her buried husband.

Pet was so honest, so true and loyal, the story could only cause her pain because she would fail to understand. Mildred was thinking something of this sort when Pet spoke again: "Auntie, I think I ought to be