

It was past noon when he awoke. Quietly he lay there enjoying existence as one does who comes up weak, but painless, from death's door. So far as he could see he was alone, but a movement on the other side of that curtain attracted his attention and roused his curiosity, for, strangely enough, that sob had been the first thing that had come into his mind. He lay there very still, waiting and listening. Presently a small, white hand drew aside the curtain, and a pale, piquant face was turned anxiously toward him.

"Dora!"

He breathed rather than spoke the name, but in an instant she had forgotten all cautions and promises and was bending over him, her tears falling thick and fast.

"Dart, Oh, Dart!" she sobbed. "You are better; you will get well, won't you? Oh, you don't know what I suffered when I thought you must die; and I could not let them go on, or at least I would not, and now do get well. I am so sorry I ever grieved you, but I thought you ought to trust me. But there! they said if you awoke I must not speak a single word, only just give you this stuff in the glass."

Dart Wylie smiled a wonderfully bright smile for a man who had been so lately given up to die, and, after swallowing the draught, he insisted—feebly, to be sure—that the arm that supported his head remain there.

Several days passed before he asked for explanations, either in regard to the past or the present. In answer to his questions, however, she told him that she, in company with her sister and the dark man—the sister's husband—was traveling for the sister's health, and that either by chance or providentially they had decided to remain at the fort over Easter. The Indian who found Wylie brought him there on Easter evening. Her brother-in-law had undertaken the case in the absence of the post surgeon—the pompous gentleman.

"You went to sleep," she said, "and woke up raving with delirium, and, Oh, Dart, you just talked about me and the sad, sad Easter time until I thought I'd die, too. They let me come in the next morning, never guessing that I might know you; but the moment I saw you I just cried: 'Dart Wylie, Oh, Dart!'"

"Then there was a time, I tell you; and they made me go out and stay till I promised to be quiet. But I was not always quiet when you were mourning over my inconstancy, for, Dart, dear Dart, I never was untrue. I had seen Dick Crosswell a few times before he came to the university, and I had some business with him which I could have explained to you only it was to be a pleasant surprise for you, until I saw how jealous and unreasonable you were. It hurt me that you could not trust me, and then I thought I would

teach you a lesson, but things got worse and worse. I thought that last evening that I would explain, or something, but you were so cold that I just could not. Dick and Hetty had known each other at another school, and had corresponded some. He had even been to see her once. When school closed he went home with me to visit her again. Oh, Dart, I have been so miserable, for I never expected to see you again after I read that item about your going west to join the cowboys. I thought then it was because you were so unhappy and angry. Why, I felt like a murderer, or something, and I scarcely knew whom I hated more, Dick or myself, though he never realized his part in the affair till since you have been sick; then he was more anxious than ever to save your life."

All this, and much more to the same effect, passed between the now happy lovers, but it was a long time before Dart thought to ask why Crosswell called on her so often at her boarding place.

"Why, Dart, you see it was very foolish of me, but I wanted to have a present for you at commencement time, and as soon as Dick came I remembered that he painted portraits; so I immediately arranged with him to have mine done for you by the end of the term, and, of course, I had to sit for it out of school hours. He did not know whom it was for, though."

"Oh, Dora! And you were planning such a delightful surprise for me and I acting like a brute, or fool rather, all the time. Can you ever forgive me, my long-suffering darling?"

"But I was to blame, too," she answered, smiling through her tears.

"'All's well that ends well,' they say, but I have suffered terribly and so have you, I know, and all for my confounded jealousy," he said in disgust.

When Wylie was able to return to the ranch the little party at the fort bid him adieu and continued on their way.

The story somehow got to the men at the "settlement," else they would never have been able to account for the great change that had come over the "boss," and the rough, honest fellows genuinely rejoiced with him, almost bowing in veneration before the bit of paste board from which smiled out Dora Hastibg's pretty, piquant face. In the early summer one of the other men received the appointment of "Overseer at the Smithson Ranch," and Dart Wylie went east to claim his bride.

"If we value things at what they cost us, we ought to prize this picture more than any of our other household goods," Dora said laughingly, yet with tear-gemmed eyes, as they hung it in place in their pretty parlor.

"But for that portrait you would never have been the wife of a cowboy from the wild and woolly west," he answered banteringly; then, with sudden gravity, he drew her to him, and kissing her tenderly said—

"Do you know, dear, that Easter will always be to me the gladdest day in all the year?"

VELMA CALDWELL MELVILLE.