



CHAPTER I.

HE WAS only a crippled boy, with soft, sorrowful eyes, and a mat of curling hair crowned with an old straw hat. He was standing on a beaver head, a jutting cliff that rises close upon the right of the little inlet bay of Redwood, on the northern coast of California. Back of him a great stairway of forest-covered ridges climbed into the coast range, with all their tumbled ocean of tree-tops turning a golden-olive in the sunset. On his left the earth sank sharply down to meet the waters of the bay, while just before him, with a broad hung over the deep with its granite chin brushed by the buffeting flood. Its whole face was solid rock; the forehead trenched and furrowed like a giant's muscle-knotted breast, the cheeks rent and eroded by uncounted storms, while a vast slab of stone hung pendant in the center like a nose, with others fallen endwise in the surf below, and leaning against the wind-worn lips like shattered monoliths.

From the crest the view was wide and beautiful, the sea spreading out its ever changing plain to the horizon; here, as the sky's moods came and went, a silver track, there a field of violet, and beyond it level emerald. In the far southwest a group of islands lay low in the sea, like blue monsters swimming outward, and beyond them a fleet of lumber schooners was fading in the offing. The boy drew a long breath of weariness as he watched them. He could not help feeling how sweet it would seem to be sailing away from all the heart-breaking trouble that tore his own and other bosoms there on Beaver head.

He was leaning against a tumble-down wall which crossed the crown of the cliff a few rods from where it dropped off to meet the sea. Near by there was a gap in the wall, evidently once a gate, and a little way back along the path an old stone house. A tall man could almost touch the eaves, but it was wide and long, being divided into two low but rather roomy halves, while its walls were thick, but cracked and matted with moss, through which two small, square windows peered out like sunken eyes. About the yard were a number of redwoods, massive and straight, with the sea winds purring among their branches and the sunshine yellowing on their tops.

The house had been built, so tradition said, years before by a weather-beaten old tar named Beaver, who, strangely enough, deserted the sea for an Indian wife and this queer shelter on the head, only to forsake them in turn to take to the sea again. Then the seasons had flown on, and presently a village had sprung up about the inlet bay, with great sawmills at its inner end, where a little river brought the logs down from the redwood forests. Here Trave Armor, the boy's father, drifting westward through the pinceries of Michigan and Wisconsin, and making now and then a futile stand against drink, ill-luck and poverty, had come to work in the mills, but failing, through rum, drifted at last, with his ragged flock, into the old stone hut upon the head.

Their progress had been pitiful enough, and Paul, the eldest of the five children, bearing its scars upon his body, and its infamy in his memory, had felt, with every season as he progressed toward manhood, a growing sense of blight and degradation. He knew whence his lameness came; that when he was a child his father once came home in a storm of drunkenness, and being pleaded with by the boy's mother, splintered his flask of liquor on the hearth in an ecstasy of rage, and that he, a baby crawling round the grate, had lapped at the liquid like a lion's cub licking greedily at blood, and that his father had caught him up in a drunken fury and dashed him into the fire, from which he had come limping thus far on the road of life.

Often he had felt something like mortal hatred of his father rise within him, and that day when he turned from watching the lumber schooners go down over the blue flood, and saw his mother, worn with toil and faded with bitter care, bending over her wash-tub that her children might have bread, an anger rose in his heart that was almost fit for taking human life. But when his mother spoke to him in tender cheerfulness as she always did, it vanished in a moment.

"I need some rinsing water, Paul," she said, straightening up with difficulty in the steam of the tub, and stripping the glistening bubbles from her thin, tired arms. "If Jimmy or Carl would only stay round I'd have them do it, but it seems like they'd be most always off when needed."

"Oh, I'll do it, mother; I'll do it!" said the boy with a half pathetic smile. "I'm stronger than they are, only my legs ain't so good!" And taking up a wooden yoke with a bucket attached to either end, he placed it across his neck and shoulders, and went limping down the

hillside, whistling a little that his weary mother might hear.

The woman stood a moment, leaning with her soap-eaten hands upon the tub's edge, and looked after him with tender eyes. Then she glanced at little Gabe, six years old, and three-year-old Lannie, who were playing under the trees, and began washing again. "He's the best of them all," she murmured as she rubbed. "His heart's as soft as a girl's; he'd help me more than he does if he could. Oh, if his father had only never done that awful thing to him!" And tears slipped down her cheeks and fell into the suds.

The boy stopped at a spring half way down the bluff, and, filling the pails, looked a moment at the mills back of the bay. Red-shirted logmen were working with their cant-hooks among the brown ricks, and their siffling cry of "He-o-he-e-e!" as they lifted, coming in mellow waves across the water with the long-drawn, never-ceasing whine of the feeding saws.

Presently he labored back up the hill with the water, and when the tubs were filled and his mother had thanked him gratefully, he sat down on a bench near by and watched her dreamily.

"Mother," he said at last, "do you suppose we will always live here?"

"I hope not, dear."

"Do you think I ken ever go to work in the mills, mother?"

"I hope so, Paul; or maybe at something better. The doctor said, you know, when he looked at your knees, that if some parts that were grown together could be parted you would not be bothered much. But you would have to go away to a big city where they do such things, and it would cost a good deal." She could not bear to look up, and kept on washing, feeling the cloud that always hung over them grow thicker with thought of all their helplessness.

"Yes," said the boy, after a little silence, "it would cost lots; but maybe something'll happen sometime, an' it ken be done."

"Yes, something may happen," said the mother, soothingly; "it don't cost much to live here in this old house that nobody owns, and as long as I have strength to wash we won't starve. May be sometime your father'll quit—will he himself again?"

Her voice broke, and the boy got up with an angry tumult in his breast and went down to watch Lannie and Gabe, who now were playing near the precipice. When he had sent them into the yard he stood looking gloomily out to sea. The sun had fallen into the water far on its western rim, with a flat mass of clouds lying over it like a dull red bed of coals. Above this vast cloud hung in greenish folds, slit here and there with sharp, bright blades of light, while half the great vault above him was covered with a troubled, purpleish sea.

But he took no note of the seeming prophecy of storm in the sky; he was revivifying in a blind kind of way the thought that if his father were not in the world his mother and they would go back to her people in the east, and all

might be bright and joyous again. But she would never go, he knew, as long as his father lived and was helpless in the chains of his galling habits. She clung too fondly to what was gentle in the man to set him adrift, or ever cease to hope that something at last might save him. And the boy himself, responsive to the ties of nature, felt a throb of pity fly to his heart when he thought of death for the one who had given him even so hurt and hateful a life.

After a time, when the day had come nearer its close, he roused himself from his brooding stupor and turned toward the house. The west was now a vast bank of dead and smoldering fire, and he noticed that a ship seemed sailing directly into it, looking strangely black and motionless against the dull, red glare. Then he suddenly bethought him of his mother, and limped quickly up the pathway to the door.

"Ken I help you any more, mother?" he asked.

"Yes, Paul; we'll empty the tubs now. I'll hang out the clothes in the morning, and try and get the millmen's shirts done. Did you notice which way your father went this morning, dear?"

"Up along the shore, I guess, mother."

"Up along the shore in the boat with him?"

"Did you notice—was he—had he—been drinking?"

(To be continued)

The Cause of Disease.

WHY A LARGE MAJORITY OF WOMEN ARE UNHEALTHY.

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From the Graphic, Nashville, Ind.

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These diseases occur because the blood has become impure, for no woman is seriously sick when the blood is pure. No one is better able to speak of this fact than Miss Hazel Snider, a charming young woman of Arlington, Ind. To-day she has rosy cheeks, a sparkle in her eyes, which, with her plump form, all prove that she is in good health. A year ago Miss Snider did not look this way. She was very thin, her cheeks were pale, her eyes sunken and dull. She was troubled with nervousness and general debility. "I had been sick some during my life," she says, "but not any more than the average girl, and was considered strong and healthy."

"I had prepared to teach school, but became so run down that I did not feel like teaching, and gave up my school before the term opened. I began to grow pale, weak, lost several pounds of flesh, was stupid, and had no ambition."

"My appetite began failing. New and dainty dishes were prepared for me, but these did not tempt me. Many times I was hungry, and would try to eat because I knew I was almost starving, but the food refused to remain in my stomach."

"My blood was in a bad condition, having become thin and watery. After several months' treatment from the family physician we were he could not do me any good."

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