

'Whar ye runnin' to with that gun,' asked Paw sternly, 'when ye'd ought to be a-aimin' it?' and plucked it from him. The bear, just then surveying his field of conquest, turned, and singling out the old farmer's tall figure, bore down upon him in an appallingly rapid shuffle. Todson took deliberate aim, and the immense, fierce brute reared himself up to give battle.

'Lord God!' breathed Jim Pyot, 'ef the ole man misses his fust shot!'

Then from somewhere in the grove of canvas tents sped, on a trained pony, an athletic figure, a big cow-puncher from Oklahoma, and pulled up short, and hissed long and sibilantly, in close imitation of a snake at bay. The bear, cowed at the sound, dropped again on all-fours and began to run. Immediately the cowboy's lariat whirled and fell over the animal's head, and the wise little pony circled him again and again until he was bound helplessly captive. The big cow-puncher leaped to the ground, threw the bridle to a groom, pushed through the crowding people, and strode up to Washington Todson and Mandy, his wife, standing beside him, very pale, but perfectly quiet.

'You mought a-killed him, Pay,' he said, 'for I know yer aim. But, ye see, he was kinder valuable to the show, 'heven' cost them fifteen thousand—or, so they says—'

A twinkle akin to his own crossed the sun-burned face into which the father looked with startled intencess. Then it was replaced by something like the quiver of a moustached lip, as its owner lifted the spare little woman from the ground and held her tight. 'I ain't fitten' for ye to wipe yer shoes on, Maw,' he whispered, 'but I come back after all this time to let ye do it—if ye're a mind.' Still holding her to him, he clasped his father's hand. 'That thrashin' ye giv' me for play in' cards an' swearin' behind the barn made me quit ye, sir; but it's stayed with me, keepin' me out o' meaner scrapes, maybe. Anyhow, I've come back—an' jes' in time, I guess, for a grizzly's a mighty ugly cuss to tackle. But, look a-here, Maw's as white as chalk!'

He was off for a jug of pink lemonade into which, behind the tent, he surreptitiously emptied the contents of a small flask. 'They need it,' he muttered, 'after the bar—and me!' Then he put her into a surrey with horse comparatively swift. 'Don't talk to me about no miller's waggon. I'm drivin' now, an' I ain't used to mules lately. Ef ye say another word, I'll buy the rig, 'stid o' hirin' it. Don't you worry about expense, I've done well out on the plains, and got money invested. But I just had to come back—layin' awake nights a-dreamin' o' Glassy Creek tumblin' down the mountin', an' the chestnuts a-droppin' crack! crack! An' Maw on the porch soundin' the dinner-horn;' and he kissed his mother's cheek in the sight of the people.

So it happened that the equipage in which sat Maw, shame-faced and profoundly happy, led, this time, the train of promiscuous vehicles carrying back to their mountain solitudes the wearied, well-contented rustic folk. With them went memory of such wonders as would recreate them after many a long, laborious day. And at the tail-end of the procession, Jim Pyot, tooting on a tin horn by way of celebration, stopped long enough to remark thoughtfully: 'We've shore hed a mighty interestin' time, what with the Aggravation, the animiles, the bar breakin' loose, and Jeff Todson comin' home again to his Paw—an' specially to his Maw.'—Catholic World.

THE NOVELIST'S WIFE'S EFFORT

Jack was busy on his novel in his study. Elizabeth was inspecting the larder.

The result was not encouraging. She took up her pocket-book, looked into that, then sighed. Then she went and tapped at Jack's door.

'Oh, come in,' he called, rather impatiently. 'Well, dear, what do you want?'

'Jack, dear, funds are low; can't you write a pot-boiler?'

'No, I can't; it's out of the question. I'm just at fever heat in my book, and I can't stop for such trifles.'

Elizabeth left and shut the door, emphatically, I'm afraid.

Well, she could write a pot-boiler, and would. She wrote before she was married little stories that always sold, but since her marriage to the rising young author she had kept every annoyance from him so he could make the most of his talents.

She must not call it a pot-boiler, and must not let anyone suspect it as so sordid a thing.

Snatching little stray minutes through the day, her little story grew.

She called it 'Threads and Patches.' It was a story of a poor seamstress, who at night depicted her woes and pleasures, her little longings and sorrows in a little diary—told where she had worked and what she had seen and heard. Many glimpses into the home life of many families the little book contained.

Elizabeth put some of her own thoughts into it I dare say.

Frequently she thrust her pad and pencil into a drawer to run at Jack's bidding; still the story grew.

'Jack, dear, do leave your desk,' she said one afternoon, 'and take a walk; your ideas will come faster and your blood flow quicker for a good walk.'

'You are right, Elizabeth; I will.'

Jack safely out of the way, the conspirator took possession of typewriter.

Another night she drove him to a play and finished her type-writing. The manuscript was sent off under an assumed name.

A night or two after the popular young author and his wife were dining out. Editors do not often talk shop, but this one, a guest at the dinner also, was an old college chum of Jack, so he asked if he had ever heard of a writer named Kathryn Bancroft.

Jack answered, 'No—why?'

'Well, we have a little gem sent in by her. A pastel called "Threads and Patches." It is a diary of a poor seamstress, and for outpourings of her soul in her little book she has outdone Marie Bashkirtseff.'

Soon after this conversation a cheque for more than she ever dreamed could come from a short story came to Elizabeth.

Still she did not take Jack into her confidence. The money made him very comfortable, and as his dinners were good, he forgot all about the lack of funds. Elizabeth did not care as long as he loved her.

At last the magazine containing her story came out. Jack bought it to read 'Threads and Patches' to his wife.

He went into raptures over it, and tears trembled on Elizabeth's lashes; the story was pathetic, read in Jack's pleasing manner.

'Gracious, what a woman that must be,' he said. 'A woman with a soul wrote that!' emphatically.

He read on and on, carried away with the bits of longing expressed by the little seamstress.

'I never read a thing that moved me more,' he sighed, 'as he closed the magazine.' I wish I knew the woman who wrote it.

'Jack, dear, you do; you have lived with her a year.'

'Elizabeth, you?'

'Yes, dear, I. I just wrote a little pot-boiler, because you hadn't time.'

'Hadden't time! Why, if I could write like that it would be worth while.'

He went over to her chair. 'Elizabeth, dear,' he urged, 'let me boil the pots, and you take my place in the study. You can write.'—Exchange.

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