

'I'll see to everything, Ransom,' said the girl, 'but don't you give up for a moment. I can't have you give up. You see, I have set my heart on your going home.'

In her agitation she had gone to the window, and with tear-filled eyes was gazing down the shady street. At the wharf the gunboat had docked, and several uniformed pedestrians were coming toward the hospital. All this she noticed mechanically; then all at once her heart gave a convulsive leap. Turning in at the gate was a tall lieutenant, with a sun-browned face. Perched on his shoulder was a little girl. Her round hat had fallen back upon her neck, so that her face, with its frame of clustering curls, was distinctly visible. She was smiling down at her tall companion in a way that betokened an established comradeship. It was the dear, quaint little girl of Ransom's daguerreotype! Miss Eliot did not need a second glance in order to recognise the tall, slender woman who followed.

Without daring to look at Ransom, she slipped quietly from the room and hurried down the stairs.

The lieutenant had set the child down on the porch and now stood with cap in hand. 'Is this Miss Eliot?' he inquired courteously.

The nurse bowed; then she turned. 'This is Mrs. Ransom, isn't it?' She held out her hand.

Then Adelaide spoke: 'Am I—is John—' Her white lips refused to frame the question.

'He's weak, Mrs. Ransom, but there is a good chance, and now that you have come—' But Adelaide, overcome by the reaction, swayed suddenly, groping blindly before her. The lieutenant sprang forward, supporting her to a chair, while the nurse ran for a glass of water.

Adelaide drank the water obediently; then when she was recovered she looked up into Miss Eliot's face. 'I can see him?'

'Just as soon as I've prepared him a little. You will remember he's rather weak.'

The lieutenant held out his hand. 'I'm glad we found good news,' he said heartily. 'I'll be around again to see if I can be of any further service.' He stopped to pat Mary's curly head. 'Good-bye, honey,' and with a military salute he strode away.

Ransom had attributed Miss Eliot's abrupt departure to the emotion which had so strongly swayed her. Now he lay in the east corner room, quietly watching a whisp of white cloud, which was drifting slowly through the blue sky. He felt that he, too, was drifting out toward the wide unknown expanse of eternity.

Miss Eliot's voice aroused him.

'Ransom,' she said quietly, 'are you strong enough to bear some good news?'

Ransom turned toward her quickly, attracted by the joy in her tone. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes like stars.

'Good news!' he stammered. 'Have—have my papers come?'

'They came in a gunboat this morning, Ransom, by special messenger.'

Joy so intense as to be almost dazzling overspread the worn face.

'My—papers—have—come—and I can go home this afternoon?' It was astonishing to see how the vitality flamed up in the worn frame.

'Do you feel strong enough to see the messenger, Ransom?'

'Strong enough!' Ransom's tone was sufficient answer.

The nurse left the room. A moment later the door opened softly. On the threshold stood Adelaide and little Mary. The child had clasped in her chubby hand a long envelope with a red seal. Mindful of Miss Eliot's caution, Adelaide stood quiet. Only her eyes met her husband's with deep tenderness and passionate yearning.

'Adelaide!' whispered Ransom. 'Mary!' He stretched out his arms.

The child, breaking away from her mother's restraining grasp, ran forward. 'Daddy, daddy!' she cried, in her shrill, sweet voice. 'We've brought your papers!' and climbing on the bed, she threw her arms about her father's neck.

'Poor sick daddy!' she crooned.

Bowing his head above the child's curls, Ransom broke into deep, gasping sobs. A moment later Adelaide was on her knees by the bedside, her arms stretched across her husband, as if her love would hold him by force from that which threatened.

On the stairs outside the little nurse wept tears of joy. Here, a few moments later, the old doctor found her.

'Well, young woman,' he said jovially, 'what's your faith in humanity and providence up to date? Came about like a play, didn't it? Regular climax! At critical moment, enter wife and child.'

'Don't joke, doctor!' entreated the nurse.

'Joke! Bless your soul, child, nothing was farther from my thoughts.' The old doctor blew his nose vigorously.

When Miss Eliot opened the door of the east corner room, she found a happy group. Adelaide sat by the bedside, her husband's hand in hers. Ransom's other hand held the long envelope with the red seal. On the bed, Mary was stroking her father's thin cheeks affectionately. There were tears in Ransom's eyes as he turned toward the nurse.

'It doesn't seem possible, Miss Eliot,' he said huskily. 'I never knew any one could be so happy. I haven't any idea yet how it all come about. I guess Adelaide will have to untangle the mystery,' and his eyes rested tenderly on his wife's face.

'It's something of a story,' said Adelaide, 'so perhaps I'd better begin at the first.'

'Yes,' said Ransom, 'I want to hear it all,' and with her hand still in her husband's, Adelaide, in a simple, direct way, told her story:

'Letters have been pretty uncertain up in Maine. I hadn't heard from John in months, but I kept on hoping. I had to.' A little quiver ran over Adelaide's face, and Ransom's grasp of her hand tightened. Then one afternoon, along about four o'clock, Jim Fellows drove into the yard with Miss Eliot's letter.'

Ransom turned toward the nurse with a little start. His eyes met hers solemnly. 'So it was you,' he said. 'I had enough to thank you for before, but I guess I ain't ever going to be able to pay my debt.'

'Oh, I'm more than paid,' said the girl brightly. 'Go on with your story, Mrs. Ransom.'

'It was a long time before I tore open the envelope, and even when I did, the words just danced before my eyes. I handed the letter to pa, and he put on his spectacles kind of slow like. His hands trembled so he could hardly hold the paper. When he had finished, he looked at me.'

'I'm going to Washington,' I said.

'Pa never said a word, but went to the old secretary, unlocked it, and took out a big roll of bills. He handed it to me.'

'I'll go right out and hitch up,' he said. 'If we hurry, you can get the night train from Old Town.'

'He went out, and all of a sudden I felt a tug at my skirts. I looked down, and there was Mary. Quick as a flash the question came to me, what should I do with her? It seemed foolish to take her; and yet, somehow, I felt that I had to. I just couldn't leave her.'

Ransom raised Mary's dimpled hand to his lips. 'Father's little girl,' he said.

(To be concluded.)

"Royal Shampoo Powders"

A NECESSARY TOILET REQUISITE.

Splendid for the Hair and Scalp. Recommended by the Medical Profession. Sold for the benefit of J. W. McLAGHLAN, P.C.S., whose eyesight was permanently injured by the great San Francisco earthquake and fire. Your patronage will be gratefully appreciated. Highest endorsements. Sold only by Mail. Price for a packet of three, 9d; two packets, 1/-; one dozen, 6/-.

Can I make a livelihood by this useful line?
Yes, Christian reader, with your co-operation.

Kindly address—

J. W. McLAGHLAN
WANGANUI.