

convent garden, in which grew cactus and things without other beauty than their color. Even that was dimmed by the envious sand.

'I have heard that the Esquimaux love the icy North,' said Mrs. Graham, 'and will live nowhere else. But I have seen Italy and the mountains of Greece; and a desert is nothing more than a desert, after all.'

'Yet see what courage and faith and hope and love have made out of it,' replied the Sister. 'What must it have been before the town came, and the railroad, and this retreat! With their coming, the poor Indians of the district became farmers and gave up their wild life. Here the sick find health, a longer life, and many other blessings. The good work is going on all the time. You see only the sand and the big mountains, and turn your eyes from the jewels which they conceal.'

'I suppose so,' said the lady, indifferently. But she smiled as she lay back to sleep again; and Sister Thomassina went away with the satisfaction of having turned her thoughts into a healthier channel.

Mrs. Graham understood very well what was meant. She really must take some interest in the life around her, dull as it looked; and show herself a sociable being, in her own behalf. One needs the stimulus of human companionship. It would be dreadful to mingle with the patients, to see the work of caring for them, to encounter the human raffish of the vicinity; but, after all, one must really learn to find the sweet in the bitter. She had really been nursing a bad temper, spoiling her own sunny disposition, even delaying her recovery, her return to life and beauty and home and children. She must do better, and, become not merely courageous but cheerful.

The little world of the sanatorium was in a state of mild surprise the next few days by the frequent appearance of the lady and her amiability. She came and went simply, and chatted pleasantly with her nearest neighbor, as if the general conditions were the most natural in the world. Encountering the Rev. Mother in the skimpy garden, she complimented her on the beauty of the situation. Mother Fidelia was a tall, spare woman, whose years sat lightly on her, and who looked as if she might live forever in just this fashion.

'The old Bishop who chose the spot,' said she in answer to the comment, 'lived in this little palace. We use it now for a storehouse.'

Mrs. Graham looked at the adobe shack which had sheltered a Bishop for years, and became confused.

'It is difficult to connect a Bishop with such a little shed.'

'One would never have known him to be a Bishop,' the superior went on. 'He mended his own clothes and made his own shoes, besides doing his own carpentering, painting, and so on. He was a desert Bishop. He built the hospital here. We added the convent and the sanatorium, and we are very proud of them.'

'You have good reason to be, although I have seen finer institutions,' said Mrs. Graham. 'But a rose in the desert is more wonderful and beautiful than the rose in the king's garden.'

'Just so, my dear! Come inside and see how the place is managed.'

Although she shrank from intimacy with the hospital details, shuddering at the mere hint of what she might see, the lady followed the nun into the kitchen region and was properly guided through its intricacies. As it was partly underground, built in the old-fashioned way, the Sisters worked in semi-darkness; but no fault could be found with the cheerfulness of the workers, the neatness and order, the sweet odors of the place.

And I must introduce to you the good genius of the institution,' said Mother Fidelia, 'the Sister who arranges the meal trays for all our patients. Sister Antonia, Mrs. Graham. Without her skill and taste we should all be in a bad way indeed.'

'I have been in the business long enough to have learned something,' Sister Antonia said modestly. 'Twenty years every day have I worked here, and not even a headache in all that time, thank God!'

'And your work looks so pretty!' Mrs. Graham said. 'I laughed the first day at seeing so many pretty things on one tray, and nothing seemed crowded.'

'She knows by instinct every trick of appetite in every patient,' said Mother Fidelia. 'There is nothing like practice to develop good qualities.'

When they came into the open again, and were standing on the verandah, Mrs. Graham was still wondering over the daily task of Sister Antonia.

'Twenty years in this desert,' said she half to herself, 'and twenty years in that little cave, and twenty years of fitting out trays of food for the whimsical sick—'

'And not even a headache in all that time, thank God!' the superior interposed. 'Pardon me for interrupting you with Sister Antonia's phrase, but it means for her not only good health, but a love for her work and her place in life, which you can not understand.'

Mrs. Graham sat down to think of things rather foreign to her habit. Twenty years at one task, in one place, in this desert. And a nature as cheerful and active as a summer garden. No trace of grief, bitterness, or regret. While she herself, after a life of ease, luxury, elegance, pleasure, travel, and a thousand other things, grovelled in despair. Her past gave her no consolation; her present offered her only pain and despair; her possessions were a useless burden. This desert alone, which she had ridiculed and despised, had the power to help her. She looked at it steadily as one looks into the face of a homely friend and benefactor, whose kind heart has just revealed itself in the homely face. The sun was setting, and her moist eyes could see the amethystine mist which filled the air finer in tint than the misty green of an Eastern spring, inexpressibly touching and beautiful.

'Isn't it beautiful?' remarked a voice close by.

She nodded in silence to a young fellow, plump and handsome, who was standing there, smiling in sympathy with her own mood.

'It is the first time that I have seen it.'

'I must have been here a full month before I discovered the strange beauty of the desert,' he replied. 'Coming from old Virginia, the place looked like what some one called it—the land God forgot. But now that it has given me life, I find more beauty in it than in the green fields of the East.'

'Life is surely a great gift,' she said; 'and its giver should be deeply loved. You are going back to Virginia?'

'No; I shall remain here, where life is certain. I am young; but I know as well as an old man that life without health is unbearable, in Virginia or elsewhere. So I remain.'

He went off down the road to the town, whistling, his sombrero tilted gaily on his jaunty head, his step as gay as a dancer's. Truly the desert gives life, as Sister Thomassina had said; and even wisdom in addition, for this young man was wise.

Deep thoughts stirred in her bosom,—too deep, indeed, for her trifling nature, but full of benefit. Day by day her nature deepened into strength. Sweet it had always been, but trifling and pettish and thoughtless. Somehow, that far infinite of sand and the grim sentinel mountain provoked in her thoughts of the stern realities of life. She began to realise that people are laboring, suffering, dying throughout the great desert of the world; they had to be helped, nursed, consoled, strengthened; and Sister Thomassina and Mother Fidelia and Sister Clare and their companions were doing the work which she had always avoided even in thought. Like the pagan, she had insisted that there should be no pain, no shadow, no thorns in life, only the joy and the sunshine and the roses,—a fool's dream, which would not have mattered but that it had wrought injustice to others and misery to herself.

Resolutely she set out to see every part of the hospital, and to hear the details of its everyday life, the struggle of its foundation. Mother Fidelia had all these things in her heart and mind, and told them to the woman, about to awake in this pretty creature, without mincing matters. It was a hard story, but full of sweetness. This strong woman had not only wrung success from the desert (which was comparatively easy), but she had interested the unfeeling world, which leaves its foolish disciples to die alone when their health and money are gone. In that struggle she had acquired the

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