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Beyond the Mountains

By Frank M. Pittman

(Copyrighted, 1900, Daily Story Pub. Co.)

The birds were singing blithely in the valley and on the mountain, and there was a joyous echo in the girl's heart, as she tripped along the rough pathway. Barbara Graves was going away, and she was glad. All nature was awake early as if to bid her a fond farewell. The old Dame's children knew her step and loved her voice.

Her feet barely gave the caressing grasses time to kiss them, so quick and graceful were their spring; her pretty, brown hands were filled with flowers, for they seemed to leap into them, affectionately, as she passed. A gorgeous butterfly majestically floated before her, and a brown lizard winked good-humoredly as he glided along.

The white kitten, its leg tied loosely to the gate-post, pleadingly mewled, and Barbara's heart smote her, as its cries grew fainter. She could not take it with her. Alas! now that she was actually going, the kitten represented so many things. Yet after all the partings Barbara's heart was glad. She thought it was because she was going away; but it was the joy of the hour and the place.

She was really going beyond the mountains at last! Hitherto the village academy had been her ambition. Now, it was the city—the city, far away and beautiful!

Barbara walked rapidly, and was nearing the brow of the mountain, when a gun-shot hushed the melodies around her. In graceful circles an eagle wheeled slowly up the steep ascent, his mortal wound not lessening the majesty of his bearing; and the man below only knew he was wounded by the bird's slow progression.

Reaching the summit, the goal of his last struggle, the king of birds alighted on a wall of natural granite. Wearily, his great pinions drooped, and with an effort he turned about and gazed into the valley below. A place to die worth having struggled for and risen to! Far down the wheat fields gleamed in the light of a perfect day; the cloudless shadows fell o'er meadow and woodland, and, faintly borne on wandering bits of wind, the tinkle of distant pasture-bells arose like muffled music.

The eagle's piercing eyes saw far across the verdant fields the purple haze which wreathed the base of the opposite mountain, and away to the south the narrow passage through which had crept the parallel strips of steel of the iron highway, o'er which had come the man who took his life. Who but he possessed "the wings of the morning," and could go forth early, traverse the valley untiringly throughout the day, and at evening "mount up with wings as eagles?" He had ruled, but man's vigilance and thirst had o'ertaken him.

The exultance of a glorious flight came upon him; once more his pinions felt the impulse of their former strength, and he flew swiftly upward, and circled majestically about for awhile, then drooped, wearily, and a film came over his eyes.

"Isn't he a magnificent specimen?" "Oh, it was cruel of you," exclaimed the girl, reproachfully. "I have watched him ascend the heights, battling against wind and storm; and he has taught me courage and given me inspiration and ambition." There were tears in her eyes, and a sob in her voice.

"Gad! A nice greeting," he muttered; "and not one man in a hundred



Barbara gently performed the service. could have brought the old bird down.

Philip Drake was vexed. He had expected praise for his marksmanship. Yet he knew Barbara would naturally be excited that morning, and he meant to make no mistake. She had not stopped to shake his hands, and reached the summit slightly in advance.

"How could you?" she cried, bitterly. "Is it not enough that the living emblem of our country has grown so scarce that no man here, however ignorant, would have molested him?" she pointed to the dead eagle—"and yet, for mere wantonness and to test your skill you did this?"

A half-squall flashed into the man's face, but it vanished instantly. He had caught sight of a white object in the eagle's talons, as he advanced.

"No, Bab," he rejoined, apologetically, "it was to save your kitty. I could not bear to see it killed."

It was true that the lacerated kitten was struggling to release itself from the tightened claws. Barbara gently performed the service. Then she gazed

steadily into the eyes of the man from the city.

"I thank you," she said, the anger gone from her voice. "He is not much hurt. The string must have broken." She stroked the kitten's shivering fur. The flowers had fallen from her hands and lay scattered upon the gray feathers of the eagle.

"All he knew, God taught him," she went on. "He was but true to himself. Mr. Drake, you have not been that. When you were here before, you promised that although you would give much to secure this eagle, for my sake you would leave it in peace."

It was Barbara's nature to be frank. She did not believe Drake had seen the white kitten in the air. His face flushed at the imputation. A man may know he has been lying, but he likes not for others to possess such knowledge, much less tell him so.

"The buggy is waiting on the other side," he said. "Let us go, Bab." Distrust of Philip Drake had come upon Barbara Graves suddenly. She had not met him many times, but his promises of a happy life had been alluring. The thought of going away and seeing the world—outside of books—had been charming. His reasons for an elopement were so plausible as to overcome all her scruples. Her knowl-



Robert Clayton was sitting upon a log at the roadside.

edge of the real world was limited, and she had considered the end rather than the means; for one of Barbara's ambitions now was to travel.

Now, at the last moment she judged her companion accurately and realized that she did not respect him. If he could deceive her today, what of tomorrow, when she would belong to him.

She thought, longingly, of Robert Clayton—Bob, whose heart was an open book to her, and who had never deceived her. Bob, who had played with her in boyhood and who had loved her in manhood; who had always rode with her into the village Monday morning, and had come for her Friday afternoon; and who, though hard work and small leisure were his portion, had managed to keep pace with her in her studies. Grave, quiet, gentle, steady-going Bob! Now she wished for his comforting presence as she had never wished before.

Drake was smiling and waiting; and she had promised to go with him. "Mr. Drake," she said, clearly, "if we are married it must be at Layton, and this morning."

"But my dear Bab; I explained to you last month that it would be impossible. We must go first to the city. My aunt is—"

"My decision is final." His face darkened. "Then you may go to—"

"Please do not forget yourself," she said. "For my own sake I would like to retain as good an opinion of you as possible."

"Good heavens, Bab! I do love you. I made a mistake. I will marry you, here, now, as soon as we can find a preacher or a magistrate. You'll break my heart!"

She stooped and picked up the kitten and cuddled it in her arms.

"Down there, Mr. Drake," pointing toward the valley, "is a man who loves me; a brave man, one whom I have known all my life. He has never deceived me, as I find you have done. Had you loved me—I thought—"

Her lips trembled, but her voice was gentle, and she broke off suddenly. "Good-bye!" She did not look back.

Not till then did her full beauty and the grace of her heart, mind and self burst upon him; and, villain as he was, as he realized that she was lost to him forever, a paroxysm of grief came over him, and he flung himself upon the ground.

Robert Clayton was sitting on a log by the roadside. He had just finished reading a letter and had placed it in his pocket; and now his head was bent dependently upon his hands. The story of his heartache was written upon his face. It must have appealed strangely to the girl, for she stopped in front of him and flung an armful of flowers upon him, so that he, looking up and catching her expression, did that which his courage had never dared before. He kissed her twice, thrice, aye, until the kitten in her arms mewled repeatedly.

And even when they reached home, which was after they had ascended the mountain and buried the eagle, there was such a look of joy, love and happiness in her eyes that he really could not refrain from kissing her again and again, and, yes, she actually embraced him twice, so that the violets and daisies talked about it, the blue-jays nodded knowingly, and the brown lizard on the fence winked at the fat bumblebee, in the rose bush.

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Editor W. V. Barry of Lexington, Tenn., in exploring Mammoth Cave, contracted a severe case of Piles. His quick cure through using Bucklen's Arnica Salve convinced him it is another world's wonder. Cures Piles, Injuries, Inflammation, and all Bodily Eruptions. Only 25c. at P. C. Corrigan.

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Cleveland Outranks Cincinnati.
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