

ACROSS the DIVIDE

By MARION BENTLEY

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They reached the edge of Fort Simpson one breathless July afternoon, seeing its crude but promising outlines as through a maze of alkali dust, darkly. Their well provisioned prairie schooner lumbered heavily on the heels of two fagged and panting horses. It had been a terrific trip on man and beast. The man lay, bright eyed, dry lipst and silent, on the shafts in the wagon bed.

As the horses stopped instinctively amid the willows beside the stream the girl turned to her father with an encouraging smile. But at sight of him the smile changed to tense lines of horror. On the man's chin trickled a vivid crimson stain.

An hour later Anita Murdock walked away from the hastily improvised camp with young Dr. Byrne. He glanced down at her pityingly. She was so delicate, so quiet and so pretty. What was her father thinking of? She was no more fit to take up a claim and manage a ranch on little or no capital than—

She looked at him in mute inquiry. "I thought best not to say this before your father, but you must not think of resuming your journey. He would never survive the rough roads, and the rare air on top of the Divide would certainly bring on another hemorrhage."

"Then you mean that we can never go into La Junta valley?" There was anguish in the question, and the doctor hesitated.

"I believe the disappointment would kill him," she continued. "Ever since we got that first railroad circular he has been counting on going there, getting well and strong and working again. We've taken the La Junta Banner for six months, and we know just where we want to live and how to file our claim. Oh, we must go on!"

"Well, for the present you had better stop here and let your father recuperate. Perhaps when it is cooler— At any rate, there is a tidy two room shack right back of my office. The rent is cheap, and I can keep an eye on him until he is in shape to travel. It won't do for him to sleep here on the river edge even one night. We must pull him together, you know." And the doctor nodded encouragingly to the girl, who stood watching him with wide open, frightened eyes.

So, all unwillingly, did the Murdocks take up their residence in Fort Simpson. The hot blasts of July merged into the sullen humidity of August, and one day in the freshening breath of September Henry Murdock tottered to the postoffice for the La Junta Banner. They read it together, he and Anita, read of the mountain locked valley where the sun never shone too fiercely nor yet the blasts blew cruelly; where crops rose like air castles in the night; where the sick were made well; where—and this was the best of all—starved, weak lungs were fed and strengthened. The Murdocks knew all the prominent La Junta citizens by name, rejoicing with them in success, sympathizing with them in adversity. They lived in Fort Simpson, but their hearts were in La Junta. And now only the Divide, with its pitiless altitude, stood between them and this promised land, to reach which they had sold their little Iowa home.

That night after her father had fallen into a troubled sleep she footed up their account book. They had lived so simply, yet little remained. If they sold the horses, they might reach the valley by rail, but mountain railroad fares are high, and without horses how could they farm?

She rose impulsively and hurried to Dr. Byrne's office. He received her with undisguised pleasure. Of late he had felt that his calls had been unwelcome. Very delicately they had hinted that professionally he was not needed, and he feared that they might view his obvious attempts to "drop in" socially as professional calls charitably paid.

"Father seems stronger today. Don't you think he can stand the journey very soon?"

Dr. Byrne shook his head. "The nights are cold. There is always frost in the mountains?"

"But you said when it was cooler," she persisted.

He led her to the window and pointed silently to the distant mountain, where even in the moonlight she could catch the glint of snow patches. She clasped her hands in despair.

"Why—why did you tell me he could go later? You knew all the time that he could not take the trip, and yet—"

She turned upon him fiercely and read that in his eyes which made her wrath burst into a flame. In her unreasoning love for her father she read in this other man's love for herself only selfishness. He had thought that if she stayed she might learn to love him. And now she hated him.

"Oh, if I had never listened to you! Now he will stay here to die."

Dr. Byrne tried to take her hot hands in his, but she drew away from him.

"My dear girl, you are well and strong. For you the overland journey has no horrors; for your father it means—death."

"Then," exclaimed Anita bitterly, "I must get something to do, so that we can go by rail. I thought it my duty to care for him, and now our money is nearly gone."

He gained possession of her hands this time.

"Anita, it is your duty to care for him until the end. Won't you let me

help you? Marry me tomorrow, and I will care for you both."

"No, no!" she exclaimed passionately. "It has been his dream to go there. Dr. Byrne, if you love me as you say you do help me to get work—anything that is honest."

The man sighed and turned away. He realized that he had no place in her heart or thoughts. When he faced her again, his voice was calm and even.

"I think it can be arranged. Mrs. Gallagher needs some one to help her with the girls. You know her husband holds an interest in the Ten Strike, and she wants to take the girls east, then abroad. They are wild as Indians, and she has the sense to know they need training down. Do you think?"

Jim Gallagher owned the largest saloon and dance hall in Fort Simpson. Anita's face flushed, then paled.

"Thank you. I will try it."

Two days later she was installed as governess in the noisy Gallagher household, with the privilege of going home at night. She was to teach the girls how to walk and talk and dress. Mrs. Gallagher considered the last accomplishment most important. She soon became extravagantly fond of Anita and would have loaded her with presents, but the girl proudly declined everything except her salary.

So the winter crept into the tender outstretched arms of spring, and Anita's bank account grew. She had leased the horses to a wood hauler, and she had sewed nights. She was too busy even to note the gradual change in her father. He seemed content and quiet each evening when she came home, and she little guessed whose hand ministered to him during the day.

The Gallaghers were departing for the east. Anita was at the depot to see them off. The girls no longer shuffled when they walked, and they understood the use of knives and forks. Mrs. Gallagher surveyed their neat travelling frocks with pardonable pride. Then she slipped an envelope into Anita's hand.

"Sure, you've done wonders by my girls, an' it's that I've been tryin' to tell you in the letter."

When the train pulled out, Anita opened the envelope. It contained no word of writing, just a crisp banknote that fairly took her breath. And her salary had been paid in full. Anita walked home on air. They would start for La Junta on the morrow.

In the doorway stood Dr. Byrne, shading his eyes with his hand and looking up at the everlasting hills. In her happiness she would have brushed by him, but he barred her passage.

"Is he sleeping?" she inquired. Then something in the doctor's face caught and held her attention.

"What is it? No—no, not that!" she cried. "Oh, God, and I have worked so hard!"

She swayed in the doorway, and Dr. Byrne, taking her in his arms, led her gently into the darkened room. His voice was low and comforting. "It came so suddenly, though I have seen its shadow for weeks, dear. There was no time to send for you, and he left this word: 'Tell 'Nita I have crossed the Great Divide, but I will wait for her on the other side. Be good to her.' Darling, will you let me be good to you? In your great sorrow don't try to stand alone."

Without replying she crossed the room, raised the sheet and looked long and steadily into her father's face. On it rested a smile of ineffable peace. The money fell noiselessly to the floor. It had been earned in vain. Then she turned and looked into the brown eyes bent pityingly upon her.

"Harry," she murmured, "he does not need it—or me, and—I—am so tired." Her head drooped wearily upon his shoulder, and his arms folded lovingly around her.

Refinement.

Refinement looks ever with disapproval upon heedless waste and needless extravagance. She carefully counts the cost and makes the most of all material brought to her hand. Consideration for others has made her watchful, and nothing in her charge is squandered or wantonly consumed.

To vulgar ostentation she firmly refuses the radiant light of her countenance, but seeks instead the quiet nooks, the retired haunts where dwell those who know her true worth. The spirit of refinement lives even with those whose tastes are simple and pure, who make no pretenses, whose faith in humanity is strong and real. To those endowed with kindly tact and genial wit, who employ all means of good within their command, whose hearts are touched by the grief and misery around them and who are quick to see and respond to others' wants—with these, too, the spirit lives. They who entertain this guest are clean in mind and person, and the motto hung upon the spiritual walls of home is "Cleanliness is Next to Godliness."

Ink as an Earache Cure.

An amusing story is told of a man who was suddenly attacked in the night by a violent fit of earache. His wife told him that there was on the window sill by the bed a bottle of chloroform and recommended him to rub some on his face.

Without striking a light he reached out for the bottle, pulled out the stopper and, pouring some of the contents into his hand, anointed his face from mouth to ear. Very soon he announced that the pain was better, lay down again and went to sleep. He was awakened in the morning by a cry of horror from his wife.

"What is the matter?" he inquired. "Look at your face!" was the reply. A glance in the glass showed him that his face on one side was black as a negro's. The bottle which he had grasped in the dark had contained not chloroform, but ink.—Milwaukee Wisconsin.

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