

PATIENCE.

Before the long white ironing board she stands. Good little Patience in her old brown dress; with burning, crimson face and aching feet and hands she leans away from frets at weariness.

HIS LAST CHANCE.

The lieutenant arose with somewhat of a headache. In common with most of the officers of the fort he was given to tarrying rather longer at the wine than the good of the service really demanded, and last night, as was the custom, cards had formed part of the entertainment.

of his fingers. "Going to a wedding, is she?" he mused as he walked back to the porch. "Gad, I would like to go to a wedding with her, I think."

The Bentleys were the one family where ladies of the fort could visit on terms of equality. Judge Bentley, the father, had come there ten years before, almost as soon as the fort gave protection from the ravages of Indians, and had established a stock ranch, which was making him a very wealthy man.

"Going to a wedding," mused the lieutenant again, and he fell to thinking of the kind of a home she would keep. Was she not better, after all, for an army officer than that passive luxuriance in Coventry's mansion? Surely he felt for her a much stronger attraction.

It was a puzzle. He would go up in the redwoods. Maybe the balsam of their branches might prove a balm for him. So he took a fowling piece, donned the lightest hat military regulations would let him wear, and walked up the steep path back of the fort.

He found a giant redwood that had stood for centuries, perhaps, before it "yielded to the shoulder of the Titan blast," but which now lay prone upon the ground, half buried with the drifting needles of successive years.

He lay there looking at that dark shadow which crept from the farther foothills and traveled so steadily eastward across the valley, calculating how long it would take him to reach the foot, and reflecting that days were longer on the heights, when a distant tramping, the first sound that had broken his reverie, announced some unexpected approach.

"He'll be there," said one man in a tone that implied repetition. "Yes, but if he brings three or four fellows the money won't go far among us all."

"But I tell you he will only bring one," said the first speaker a little sharply. No need to be careful in these dense woods. They are better than the walls of the Bastille for hiding secrets.

"Then," fretted the other, "it will be just our luck to strike a dozen fellows on that stage and get the daylight shot through us."

His companion laughed coldly at his querulous comrade, and together they walked on toward the dip of the mountain.

The lieutenant sat bolt upright on the mossy redwood. "Why, they're going to jump the mail wagon," he said, almost staggered at what promised to be even more of a sensation than he wanted.

And here came Kate Bentley right at a time when she should stay away. No doubt the lieutenant would have come from his reverie just as he had from many a one before. These early morning reformations following a night of excess are ropes of sand, and few men are bound long by their folds.

She sat there in the saddle as he came down to the road and stood talking to her. The girl seemed a very bundle of electricity this morning. Her look, her words, her actions that caressed him through three yards of space and then her witching departure—all blent in an instant that cleared his brain and hurried along his nerves to the very tips

robbers. To avoid being seen he made a detour at the point where they had boldly crossed the bald ridge of mountains, and, keeping the shadow of the forest constantly about him, passed near the stage road and wondered if that vehicle with its precious freight would ever weather the ambush and climb this hill. Still descending, but more guardedly now, he watched for some sign from those who had preceded him.

Suddenly his eye caught the wide swaying of a small pine shrub. It bent far over to the left, then to the right, then forward—like a soldier with a signal code. Responsive to the message he saw a broad white hat far down the slope swing once around.

"Fandango, the Mexican stage robber," exclaimed the lieutenant under his breath, for he recognized the hat despite the distance as one that covered a head on which a price had long been set.

Passing down an open slope he saw a quick movement in front of him. A thick, low pine branch had been thrust aside and as hastily replaced. The lieutenant threw his gun to his face and sent a load of bird shot rattling into the pine. It took effect. The smothered curse of a man came first and then the crash of a Spencer rifle. The lieutenant knew he was hit, but his blood was up and he dashed at the pine tree, while dexterously throwing a new shell into the empty chamber of his gun.

The next moment he was astride the fellow, clutching the more dangerous carbine. But he did not need to struggle, for the writhing, tortured man beneath him was quite beyond the possibility of inflicting harm. Loosing the cartridge belt he strapped it about him, broke his own fowling piece so as to render it useless if his man should recover, and started on a run toward the pass. Just here he must have felt the effect of that first shot, for he forgot the pass, forgot that the government mails were in danger, and forgot that lives might have to be sacrificed before Fandango's thirst for gold.

A shout and a shot from the pass told him the battle was on; the violent whipling of horses, the cursing of men, the scream of a woman, and then the tearing, crushing sound which told of a capsize coach. Another lapse of consciousness followed, and at its end he found himself in the stage road, a hundred yards from the wreck, and saw a number of frightened men and a woman standing in a row, while Fandango, the Mexican stage robber, was rifling their pockets.

"Forward! Double time! March!" shouted the lieutenant bravely, as though his company was behind him. "You greaser," he cried, with sulphurous adjectives, as he sent a bullet whizzing through the bandit's hat; "you sagebrush heathen! You'll rob the mail wagon, will you?" and his second shot, with truer aim, struck one of the fellows who was guarding the prisoners.

Fandango's pistol replied in turn, but without effect, and the lieutenant fired again and again, excited beyond the bounds of accuracy and as void of fear as though at target practice. The robbers had at first been astounded. The tone of command with which the newcomer announced his arrival stunned them for a moment, but when they saw there was no one to obey they took fresh courage and showed vastly more fight than their fellows usually do.

The woman took advantage of the distraction, sprang to the driver's overturned box, grasped the two revolvers which lay beside it on the ground, tossed one to the man nearest her, and with the other herself assisted in the fusillade. That turned the tide. Fandango and his robbers, be they ever so bold, could not stand before the storm of fire from an equal number of guns. They threw down their weapons and started to run.

"Halt! hands up!" cried the lieutenant, firing again and with more careful aim. He wanted to gather in this whole batch. All the savage was roused in him. He wanted them, dead or alive. He saw the Mexican sink to his knees, and he turned to the next one—his last cartridge gone.

"Halt! hands up!" he commanded in still stronger tones, and the assassins obeyed him. "Bind 'em," commanded the young officer, and the coach and harness were despoiled of ropes, chains and straps to securely tie the prisoners.

Then the lieutenant gave his first attention to his wounds. He was growing dizzy with a victor, and tossed

against the overturned stage, too helpless to stand alone.

"You are a nobleman!" That was the first thing he heard above that rising roar in his ears. A thrill like electricity ran through him. It was the woman whose nerve and courage had turned defeat into triumph.

Aye! It was more than that! It was Kate Bentley. She laid a gentle hand upon his bleeding arm, and with the other tried to steady him to a seat. But the tonic of her touch banished the faintness, and, with a wave of feeling that may be pardoned in a young man, only a hero, he wrapped both his arms about this treasure, and for one blissful moment publicly hugged a most handsome young woman.

How the mist rolled away! How he hated himself for that decision on the fallen redwood. No wonder its dead scents clouded his mental vision. Why had he not stood upright like a man among the virile trunks of living trees? Surely their stronger bearing would have guided his judgment better. All his being told him this was the missing part of life. His mind flew to the future and he saw himself the proud husband of this heroine of the Sierras.

"But how did you come here?" he asked, releasing her. They had become the center of a group. "I was in the coach," she answered. She was not embarrassed. They all stood too close in the valley of the shadow of death to measure trifles.

"What on earth brought you there?" he pursued, regarding her only. She released herself gently and he reclined upon the cushions they had piled for him.

"Why, don't you know?" she asked, and there may have been somewhat of regret in the tone, "I was married this afternoon. I told you I was going to a wedding when I passed you at the fort this morning. This is my husband. We are going to the bay. Fandango knew it, and knew we had some money with us. That's why he chose this time!"

"This—is—your—husband?" questioned the lieutenant very weakly indeed, taking the hand of a rich young ranchman.

"My husband," and then as she stooped and moved the cushions slightly she gazed far down into these dimming eyes and added: "If he were not"—but she did not finish. She rose, her lashes a little wet, went over to the young man whose name she bore, put both hands in his, and together they caught step again for the march of life.

The coach was righted, the robbers were placed inside and taken to the fort, and two men lifted the wounded lieutenant on a rude litter and carried him home through the deepening shadows of redwoods, then out into the glorious flood of moonlight.

He had the best of care, and his wound healed rapidly enough, but the man himself did not seem to get well. For more than a year he suffered that sort of stupor in which he had seen his quick reared castle of light demolished, and then he confessed to himself that losing this one woman he had lost all.

There are two kinds of love—the love of the river, which through continents pushes its pathway forever.

To pour his fond heart in the sea. The difference in each case is this: The river is lost if the ocean is missing.

But the ruinous round of cynicism, revel and routine never captivated him again. He was above it, and yet not a man in the service kept such a hold on the hearts of his brother officers as he did.—Chicago Herald.

Keep Cool if You Want to Sleep.

A nervous individual recommends "keeping cool" as a sleep producer, and would have the weary night watcher find a cool place and sit for an hour calming himself. Cold is electrical, and whatever cools without taking cold produces a soothing quiet of the nerves. When the nerves are felt, the brain is hot and the spine is heated, and to abolish this condition the best prescription is to keep cool.—New York Sun.

Damp Cellars.

If a cellar has a damp smell and cannot be thoroughly ventilated a few trays of charcoal set around on the floor, shelves and ledges will make the air pure and sweet. If a large basketful of charcoal be placed in a damp cellar where milk is kept the milk will be in no danger of becoming tainted.—Medical Classics.

Very Soft.

"What do you think of that young fellow across the way?" whispered she to her escort in the street car.

"Pianissimo," replied he, true to a musical training.—Chicago Times.

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The Catholic Journal, ROCHESTER, N. Y.