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# The Chalice of Courage

## A Romance of Colorado

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

### CHAPTER X.

On the Two Sides of the Door. The cabin contained a large and a small room. In the wall between them there was a doorway closed by an ordinary batten door with a wooden latch and no lock. Closed it served to hide the occupant of one room from the view of the other, otherwise it was but a feeble protection. Even had it possessed a lock, a vigorous man could have burst it through in a moment.

These thoughts did not come very clearly to Enid Maitland. Few thoughts of any kind came to her. Where she lay she could see plainly the dancing light of the glorious fire. She was warm, the deftly wrapped bandage, the healing lotion upon her foot, had greatly relieved the pain in that wounded member. The bed was hard but comfortable, much more so than the sleeping bags to which of late she had been accustomed.

Few women had gone through such experiences, mental and physical, as had befallen her within the last few hours and lived to tell the story. Had it not been for the exhaustive strains of body and spirit to which she had been subjected, her mental faculties would have been on the alert and the strangeness of her unique position would have made her so nervous that she could not have slept.

For the time being, however, the physical demands upon her entity were paramount; she was dry, she was warm, she was fed, she was free from anxiety and she was absolutely unutterably weary. Her thoughts were vague, inchoate, unconcentrated. The fire wavered before her eyes, she closed them in a few moments and did not open them.

Without a thought, without a care, she fell asleep. Her repose was complete, not a dream even disturbed the profound slumber into which she sank. Pretty picture she made; her head thrown backward, her golden hair roughly dried and quickly plaited in long braids, one of which fell along the pillow while the other curled lovingly around her neck. Her face in the natural light would have looked pallid from what she had gone through, but the fire cast red glows across her countenance and somewhat deep shadows unrelieved accentuated the paleness born of her sufferings.

There is no light that plays so many tricks with the imagination, or that so stimulates the fancy as the light of an open fire. In its sudden outbursts it sometimes seems to add life touches to the sleeping and the dead. Had there been any eye to see this girl, she would have made a delightful picture in the warm glow from the stone hearth. There were no eyes to look, however, save those which belonged to the man on the other side of the door.

On the hither side of that door in the room where the fire burned on the hearth, there was rest in the heart of the occupant; on the farther side where the fire only burned in the heart, there was tumult. Not outward and visible, but inward and spiritual, and yet there was no lack of apparent manifestation of the turmoil in the man's soul.

Albeit the room was smaller than the other, it was still of a good size. He walked nervously up and down from one end to the other as ceaselessly as a wild animal impatient of his contracted cage. The even tenor of his life had suddenly been diverted. The ordinary sequence of his days had been abruptly changed. The privacy of five years which he had hoped and dreamed might exist as long as he had been rudely broken in upon. From which he had fled, which he had cast away forever, had found him. Abit, excessit, evasit, erupit! And, lo, world with all its grandeur and its significance, with all its powers and its weaknesses, with all its opportunities and its obligations, with all its joys and its sorrows, had knocked at his door; and that the knocking hand was that of a woman, but added to his perplexity and to his dismay.

He had cherished a dream that he could live to himself alone with but a memory to bear him company, and from that dream he had been thunderously awakened. Everything was changed. What had once been earth had now become impossible. He might send her away, but though he swore her to secrecy she would have to tell her story and something of his; the world would learn some of it and seek him out with insatiable curiosity to know the rest.

Eyes as keen as his would presently search and scrutinize the mountains where he had roamed alone. They would see what he had seen

and what he had found. MANKING, gold-lusting, would swarm and hive upon the hills and fight and love and breed and die. Great God!

He could of course move on, but where? And went he whithersoever he might, he would now of necessity carry with him another memory which would not dwell within his mind in harmony with the memory which until that day had been paramount there alone.

Slowly, laboriously, painfully, he had built his house upon the sand, and the winds had blown and the floods had come, not only in a literal but in spiritual significance, and in one day that house had fallen. He stood amid the wrecked remains of it trying to recreate it, to endow once more with the fitted precision of the past the shapeless broken units of the fabric of his fond imagination.

While he resented the fierce, savage, passionate intensity the interruption of this woman into his life, still he throbbed with equal intensity and almost as much passion at the thought of her.

Have you ever climbed a mountain early in the morning while it was yet dark and having gained some dominant crest stood staring at the far horizon, the empurpled east, while the "dawn came up like thunder?" Or better still, have you ever stood with- in the cold, dark recesses of some deep valley of river or pass and watched the clear light spread its bars athwart the heavens like nebulous mighty pinions along the light- touched crest of a towering range, until all of a sudden, with a leap almost of joy, the great sun blazed in the high horizon?

You might be born a child of the dark, and light might sear and burn your eye halls accustomed to cooler deeper shades, yet you could no more turn away from this glory, though you might hate it, than by mere effort of will you could cease to breathe the air. The shock that you might feel, the sudden surprise, is only faintly suggestive of the emotions in the breast of this man.

Once long ago the gentlest and tenderest of voices called from the dark to the light, the blind. And it is given to modern science and to modern skill sometimes to emulate that godlike achievement. Perhaps the surprise, the amazement, the bewilderment, of him who having been blind doth now see, if we can imagine it not having been in the case ourselves, will be a better guide to the understanding of this man's emotion when this woman came suddenly into his lonely orbit. His eyes were opened although he would not know it. He fought down his new consciousness and would have none of it. Yet it was there. He loved her!

With what joy did Selkirk welcome the savage sharer of his solitude! Suppose she had been a woman of his own race; had she been old, withered, hideous, he must have loved her on the instant, much more if she were young and beautiful. The thing was inevitable. Such passions are born. God forbid that we should deny it. In the busy haunts of men where women are as plenty as blackberries, to use Falstaff's simile, and where a man may sometimes choose between a hundred, or a thousand, such loves are born, forever.

A voice in the night, a face in the street, a whispered word, the touch of a hand, the answering throb of another heart—and behold! two walk together where before each walked alone. Sometimes the man or the woman who is born again of love knows it not, refuses to admit it, refuses to recognize it. Some birth pain must awaken the consciousness of the new life.

If those things are true and possible under every day conditions and to ordinary men and women, how much more to this solitary. He had seen this woman, white breasted like the foam, rising as the ancient goddess from the Paphian sea. Over that recollection, as he was a gentleman and a Christian, he would fain draw a curtain, before it erect a wall. He would not dwell upon that fact, he would not linger over that moment. Yet he could not forget it.

Then he had seen her lying prone, yet unconsciously graceful in her pronouncement, on the sward; he had caught a glimpse of her white face desperate-ly upturned by the rolling water; he had looked into the unfathomable depth of her eyes at that moment when she had awakened in his arms after such a struggle as had taxed his manhood and almost broken his heart; he had carried her unconsciously, ghastly white with her pain-drawn face, stumbling desperately over the rocks in the beating rain to his home. There he had held that poor, bruised slender little foot in his hand, gently, skillfully treating it, when he longed to press his lips passionately upon it. Last of all he had looked into her face.

light of the fire, searched her weary eyes almost like blue pools, in whose depths there yet lurked life and light, while her golden hair tinged crimson by the blaze lay on the white pillow—and he loved her. God pity him, fighting against fact and admission of it, yet how could he help it?

He had loved once before in his life, with the fire of youth and spring, but it was not like this. He did not recognize this new passion in any light from the past; therefore he would not admit it. Hence, he did not understand it. But he saw and admitted and understood enough to know that the past was no longer the supreme subject in his life, that the present rose higher, bulked larger and hid more and more of his far-off horizon.

He felt like a knave and a traitor, as if he had been base, disloyal, false to his ideal, recreant to his remembrance. Was he indeed a true man? Did he have that rugged strength, that abiding faith, that eternal consciousness, that lasting affection, beside which the rocky paths he often trod were things transient, perishable, evanescent? Was he a weakling that he fell at the first sight of another woman?

He stopped his ceaseless pace forward and backward, and stopped near that frail and futile door. She was there and there was none to prevent. His hand sought the latch.

What was he about to do? God forbid that a thought he could not freely share with humanity should enter his brain then. He held all women sacred, and so he had ever done, and this woman in her loneliness, in her helplessness, in her weakness, trebly appealed to him. But he would look upon her, he would fain see if she were there, if it were all not a dream, the creation of his disordered imagination.

Men had gone mad in hermitages in the mountains, they had been driven insane in lonely oases in vast deserts; and they had peopled their solitude with men and women. Was this some working of a disordered brain, too much turned upon itself and with too tremendous a pressure upon it, producing an illusion? Was there in truth any woman there? He would raise the latch and open the door and look. Once more the hand went stealthily to the latch.

The woman slept quietly on. No thin barricade easily unlocked or easily broken protected her. Something intangible, yet stronger than the thickest, the most rigid bars of steel guarded her; something unseen, indescribable, but so unmistakable when it throbs in the breast of those who depend on it feel that their dependence is not in vain watched over her.

Cherishing no evil thought, the man had power to gratify his desire which might yet bear a sinister construction should it be observed. It was her privacy he was invading. She had trusted to him, she had said so, in his honor, and that stood her in his good stead. His honor! Not in five years had he heard the word or thought the thing, but he had not forgotten it. She had not appealed to an unreal thing; upon that her trust was based. His hand left the latch, it fell gently, he drew back and turned away trembling, a conqueror who mastered himself. He was awake to the truth again.

What had he been about to do? Profane, uninvited, the sanctity of her chamber, violate the hospitality of his own house? Even with a proper motive, imperil his self-respect, shatter her trust, endanger that honor which so suddenly became a part of him on know; she could never know unless she awoke. What of that? That ancient honor of his life and race rose like a mountain whose scarped face cannot be scaled.

He fell back with a swift turn, a feeling almost womanly; and more men, perhaps, if they lived in feminine isolation, as self-centered as women are so often by necessity, influenced him, overcame him. His hand went to his hunting shirt. Nerv-



He Stared From One to the Other.

ously he tore it open; he grasped a bright object that hung against his breast. As he did so, the thought came to him that not before in five years had he been for a moment unconscious of the pressure of that lock- et over his heart, but now that this other had come, he had to seek for it to find it.

The man dragged it out, held it in his hand and opened it. He held it so tightly that it almost gave beneath the strong grasp of his strong hand. From a nearby box he drew another object with his other hand. He took the two to the light, the soft light of the candle upon the table.

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### The Central Drug Store :: Durham

FOURTH LINE, A. & G. With the Christmas holidays, the young people have returned to visit at the parental homes. Messrs. Chris. Brady and Herb. Walker, of Cherry Grove, visited the former's sister, Mrs. Irwin, recently.

The people of this section were treated to a well prepared program on Friday afternoon last at the school house. The children enjoyed a visit from Santa Claus, Mr. Geo. Jones, of Bolton, is the guest of his sister, Mrs. James Lyness.

Miss Taylor is spending the holidays at Ottawa. Miss Ruby Stone visited with Port Law relatives recently. Persons troubled with

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