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# The Chalice of Courage

## A Romance of Colorado

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

### CHAPTER XIII.

The Castaways of the Mountains. The man was evidently seeking her, for so soon as he caught sight of her he broke into a run and came bounding up the steep ascent with the speed and agility of a chamois or a mountain sheep. As he approached the girl rose to her feet and supported herself upon the boulder against which she had been leaning, at the same time extending her hand to greet him. "Oh," she cried, her voice rising nervously as he drew near, "I am so glad you are back, another hour of loneliness and I believe I should have gone crazy."

Now whether that joy in his return was for him personally or for him abstractly, he could not tell; whether she was glad that he had come back simply because he was a human being who would relieve her loneliness or whether she rejoiced to see him individually, was a matter not yet to be determined. He hoped the latter, he believed the former. At any rate, he caught and held her outstretched hand in the warm clasp of both his own. Burning words of greeting rushed to his lips torrentially; what he said, however, was quite commonplace, as is often the case. Word thought and outward speech did not correspond.

"It's too cold for you out here, you must go into the house at once," he declared masterfully, and she obeyed with unwonted meekness. The sun had set and the night air had grown suddenly chill. Still holding her hand, she started toward the cabin a few rods away. Her wounded foot was of little support to her and the excitement had unnerved her, in spite of his hand she swayed; without a thought he caught her about the waist and half lifted, half led her to the door. It seemed as natural as it was inevitable for him to assist her in this way, and in her weakness and bewilderment she suffered it without comment or resistance. Indeed, there was such strength and power in his arm, he was so secure there, that she liked it. As for him, his pulses were bounding at the contact; but for that matter even to look at her quickened his heart beat.

Entering the main room, he led her gently to one of the chairs near the table and immediately thereafter lighted the fire which he had taken the precaution to lay before his departure. The question flashed across his own mind and into the woman's mind at the same time when she heard the incompleting sentence; but she, too, checked the question that rose to her lips.

"This is the way I figure it," continued the man hurriedly to cover up his confusion. "They fancy themselves alone in these mountains, which, save for me, they are; they believe you to have gone down the canon. Kirkby with Mrs. Maitland and the others waited on the ridge until Mr. Maitland and his party joined them. They couldn't have saved very much to eat or wear from the camp, they were miles from a settlement; they probably divided into two parties, the larger with the woman and children, started for home, the second went down the canon searching for your dead body."

"And had it not been for you," cried the girl, impulsively, "they had found it." "I permitted me to be of service to," answered the man, simply. "I can follow their speculations exactly; up or down, they believed you to have been in the canon when the cloud burst, therefore there was only one place and one direction to search for you."

"And that was?" "Down the canon?" "What did you do then?" "I went down the canon myself. I think I saw evidence that some one had preceded me, too." "Did you overtake them?" "Certainly not, they traveled as rapidly as I; they must have started early in the morning and they had several hours the advantage of me."

"But they must have stopped somewhere for the night and—"

"Yes," answered the man; "if I had only myself to consider, I should have pressed on through the night and overtaken them when they camped."

"I could not bear it." "But I have been here alone for five years," said the man grimly. "That's different. I don't know why you have chosen solitude, but I—" "You are a woman," returned the other gently, "and you have suffered, that accounts for everything."

"Thank you," said Enid, gratefully. "And I am so glad you came back to me." "Back to you," reiterated the man, and then he stopped. If he had allowed his heart to speak he would have said, "Back to you from the very ends of the world. But I want you to believe that I honestly did not leave the trail until the ultimate moment," he added.

"I do believe it," she extended her hand to him. "You have been very good to me, I trust you absolutely." And for the second time he took that graceful, dainty, aristocratic hand in his own larger, stronger, firmer grasp. His face flushed again; under other circumstances and in other days perhaps he might have kissed that hand. As it was he only held it for a moment and then gently released it.

"And you think they are searching for me?" she asked. "I know it. I am sure of what I myself would do for one I love—I loved, I mean, and they—" "And they will find me?" "The man shook his head. "I am afraid they will be convinced that you have gone down with the food. Didn't you have a cap or—" "Yes," said the woman, "and a sweater. The bear you shot covered the sweater with blood. I could not put it on again."

As she spoke she flushed a glorious crimson at the remembrance of that meeting, but the man was looking away with studied care. She thanked him in her heart for such generous and kindly consideration. "They will have gone down the stream with the rest, and it's just possible that the searchers may find them, the body of the bear, too. This river ends in a deep mountain lake and I think it is going to snow; it will be frozen hard tomorrow." "And they will think me—there?" "I am afraid so."

"And they won't come up here?" "It is scarcely possible." "Oh!" exclaimed the woman faintly at the dire possibility that she might not be found. "I took an empty bottle with me," said the man, breaking the silence, "in which I had enclosed a paper saying that you were here and safe, save for your wounded foot, and giving direction how to reach the place. I built a cairn of rocks in a sheltered nook in the valley where your camp had been pitched and left the tightly corked bottle wedged on top of it. If they return to the camp they could scarcely fail to see it."

"But if they don't go back there." "Well, it was just a chance." "And if they don't find me?" "You will have to stay here for a while; until your foot gets well enough to travel, anyway," returned the man, evasively.

"But winter is coming on; you said the lake would freeze tonight and if it snows?" "It will snow." "The woman stared at him appalled. "And in that case—" "I am afraid," was the slow reply, "that you will have to stay here." He hesitated in the face of her white, still face—"all winter," he added, desperately.

"My God," exclaimed the girl, "alone, with you?" "Miss Maitland," said the man, resolutely, "I might as well tell you the truth. I can make my way to the settlements now or later, but it will be a journey of perhaps a week. There will be no danger to me, but you will have to stay here. You could not go with me. If I am any judge you couldn't possibly use your foot for a mountain journey for at least three weeks, and by that time we shall be snowed in as effectually as if we were within the arctic circle. But if you will let me go alone to the settlement I can bring back your uncle, a woman to keep you company, before the trails are impassable. Or enough men to make it practicable to take you through the canons and down the trails to your home again. I could not do that alone even if you were well, in the depth of winter."

The girl shook her head stubbornly. "A week alone in these mountains and I should be mad," she said decisively. "It isn't to be thought of." "It must be thought of," urged the man. "You don't understand. It is either that or spend the winter here with me."

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### HE HAD A NAME.

Patrick, lately over, was working in the yards of a railroad. One day he happened to be in the yard office when the force was out. The telephone rang vigorously several times, and he at last decided it ought to be answered. He walked over to the instrument, took down the receiver and put his mouth to the transmitter, just as he had seen others do.

"Hello!" he called.

"Hello!" answered the voice at the other end of the line. "Is this eight-six-one-five-nine?"

"Aw g'wan! Phwat d' ye tink Oi am? A box-car?"

Continued on page 7.

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