

Sometimes the longing for her warm comforting hands would come upon him—the aching for a sight of her face, or the touch of her soft brown hair where the lights wavered and flickered, and then his bitter cry would echo to the desolation—the cry that he might die, and be with her and see her always.

The slow weeks dragged on—on. He had climbed to the head of the gorge behind his hut one autumn evening. The sun's last rays shot over the rugged rock-cursed land and the ravine at his feet held mysterious, unfathomed depths save where the late sunshine filtered over its jagged granite rim, and wonderful shadows sprang into life on its grey sides, far down even to the distant opening where the yellow river ran. Strange, myriad voices of the waste were above and around him as he fell forward on his knees, straining his eyes into the deeps below where piles of beaten gold fluttered in the sunlight and died into the shade, thick as clouds of apple blossom, wind-scattered in a spring garden.

He saw not the sparrow hawk wheeling in slow curves below, nor the thousands of shrieking birds that swept from side to side of the gorge, visible only as they passed into the bands of light. Now he knew where the gold—his gold—had fallen at last! With a dry gasp, he sprang to his feet and began to descend into the wide cleft. He saw so clearly where the One Thing lay—must lie—for it was there the blinding showers had been thickest, heaviest.

Stumbling, grasping at every stray stick and tussock, sending stones and loose earth hurtling down the hillside before him, he made his way to the creek that tinkled, crystal, free, on its way to the muddy river. The river! That was what he sought.

In a few minutes he stood beside it. Beside the great smooth bend where never a ripple broke, or rock jutted, to mar the perfections of the glorious evening reflections. Here the flax bush quivered gently to its own inverted image; the toi-toi trembled doubly, equally perfect in either element.

The glowing, lichen-covered walls rose above, and sank below. But it was below—below not above, that the Peacegiver lay—lay and beckoned slowly, slowly, his golden garments flowing downstream, his hair a maze of shining, yellow floss, drifting, drifting, drifting . . .

The man stood with clasped hands on the high bank, rapt, his heart warm with unutterable comfort, the peace of the realization of a hope lost—dead—shining wildly in his luminous wide eyes.

"Husband!" called a soft voice. It was not less musical than the rippling of the water or the soft evening sounds, and it died and was lost among them.

The man's lips moved. "Dear," he whispered, "I am coming back to you at last, my darling, oh, my darling! I said I would never come unless—unless—I was rich. Yes, I remember. Unless I was rich, and could give you what you had so much of—so much of, already. Elsie, little one, I am rich now, more than we could both need. See—my arms—both full! And it is light. I thought it would be heavy."

He stretched out his arms laughingly, and took a step nearer the glowing water. As he did so, two strong arms were upon his shoulders from behind, he turned and from his dreamland impatient, wondering. Then the peace came back upon his face.

"Elsie," he whispered again. Then "Elsie!" It was a cry, glad, vibrating.

"Surely you have been calling so softly, and for so long—"

There was a moment's pause. His eyes were misty with the new puzzled thoughts that swept in on his waking mind. The woman behind slipped an arm round his neck, and drew down his head to her own.

At the touch of her warm lips, his haggard face grew ashen. "What has happened?" he said. "It is no dream—it is you, my very, very, own one! Let us come away. How I have cried for you in the loneliness of years! And now to have you! Let us thank God always—always!"