

**MARY HALLOCK
FOOTE**



**THE CUP
OF TREMBLING,
AND OTHER
STORIES**

Mary Hallock Foote

The Cup of Trembling, and Other Stories

EAN 8596547316244

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

II

MAVERICK

ON A SIDE-TRACK

I

II

III

THE TRUMPETER

I

II

BOOKS OF FICTION.

Books by Mary Hallock Foote.

Clara Louise Burnham.

Edwin Lassetter Bynner.

Rose Terry Cooke.

Charles Egbert Craddock [Mary N. Murfree].

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Augustus Hoppin.

Henry James.

Sarah Orne Jewett.

Ellen Olney Kirk.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps [Mrs. Ward].

F. Hopkinson Smith.

Octave Thanet.

William Makepeace Thackeray.

Gen. Lew Wallace.

Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney.
Kate Douglas Wiggin.



Table of Contents

A miner of the Cœur d'Alêne was returning alone on foot, one winter evening, from the town in the gulch to his solitary claim far up on the timbered mountain-side.

His nearest way was by an unfrequented road that led to the Dreadnaught, a lofty and now abandoned mine that had struck the vein three thousand feet above the valley, but the ore, being low-grade, could never be made to pay the cost of transportation.

He had cached his snow-shoes, going down, at the Bruce boys' cabin, the only habitation on the Dreadnaught road, which from there was still open to town.

The snows that camp all summer on the highest peaks of the Cœur d'Alêne were steadily working downward, driving the game before them; but traffic had not ceased in the mountains. Supplies were still delivered by pack-train at outlying claims and distant cabins in the standing timber. The miner was therefore traveling light, encumbered with no heavier load than his personal requisition of tobacco and whisky and the latest newspapers, which he circulated in exchange for the wayside hospitalities of that thinly peopled but neighborly region.

His homeward halt at the cabin was well timed. The Bruce boys were just sitting down to supper; and the moon, that would light his lonelier way across the white slopes of the forest, would not be visible for an hour or more. The boys threw wood upon their low cooking-fire of coals, which flamed up gloriously, spreading its immemorial welcome

over that poor, chance suggestion of a home. The supper was served upon a board, or literally two boards, nailed shelf-wise across the lighted end of the cabin, beneath a small window where, crossed by the squares of a dusty sash, the austere winter twilight looked in: a sky of stained-glass colors above the clear heights of snow; an atmosphere as cold and pure as the air of a fireless church; a hushed multitude of trees disguised in vestments of snow, a mute recessional after the benediction has been said.

Each man dragged his seat to the table, and placed himself sidewise, that his legs might find room beneath the narrow board. Each dark face was illumined on one side by the fitful fire-glow, on the other by the constant though fading ray from the window; and, as they talked, the boisterous fire applauded, and the twilight, like a pale listener, laid its cold finger on the pane.

They talked of the price of silver, of the mines shutting down, of the bad times East and West, and the signs of a corrupt generation; and this brought them to the latest ill rumor from town—a sensation that had transpired only a few hours before the miner's departure, and which friends of the persons discussed were trying to keep as quiet as possible.

The name of a young woman was mentioned, hitherto a rather disdainful favorite with society in the Cœur d'Alêne—the wife of one of the richest mine-owners in the State.

The "Old Man," as the miners called him, had been absent for three months in London, detained from week to week on the tedious but paramount business of selling his mine. The mine, with its fatalistic millions (which, it was

surmised, had spoken for their owner in marriage more eloquently than the man could have spoken for himself), had been closed down pending negotiations for its sale, and left in charge of the engineer, who was also the superintendent. This young man, whose personal qualities were in somewhat formidable contrast to those of his employer, nevertheless, in business ways, enjoyed a high measure of his confidence, and had indeed deserved it. The present outlook was somewhat different. Persons who were fond of Waring were saying in town that "Jack must be off his head," as the most charitable way of accounting for his late eccentricity. The husband was reported to be on shipboard, expected in New York in a week or less; but the wife, without explanation, had suddenly left her home. Her disappearance was generally accounted a flight. On the same night of the young woman's evanishment, Superintendent Waring had relieved himself of his duties and responsibilities, and taken himself off, with the same irrevocable frankness, leaving upon his friends the burden of his excuses, his motives, his whereabouts, and his reputation.

Since news of the double desertion had got abroad, tongues had been busy, and a vigorous search was afoot for evidence of the generally assumed fact of an elopement, but with trifling results.

The fugitives, it was easily learned, had not gone out by the railroad; but Clarkson's best team, without bells, and a bob-sleigh with two seats in it had been driven into the stable yard before daylight on the morning of the discovery, the horses rough and jaded, and white with frozen steam;

and Clarkson himself had been the driver on this hard night trip. As he was not in the habit of serving his patrons in this capacity, and as he would give none but frivolous, evasive answers to the many questions that were asked him, he was supposed to be accessory to Waring in his crime against the morals of the camp.

While the visitor enlarged upon the evidence furnished by Clarkson's night ride, the condition of his horses, and his own frank lying, the Bruce boys glanced at each other significantly, and each man spat into the fire in silence.

The traveler's halt was over. He slipped his feet into the straps of his snow-shoes, and took his pole in hand; for now the moon had risen to light his path; faint boreal shadows began to appear on the glistening slopes. He shuffled away, and his shape was soon lost in the white depths of the forest.

The brothers sat and smoked by their sinking fire, before covering its embers for the night; and again the small window, whitening in the growing moonlight, was like the blanched face of a troubled listener.

"That must have been them last night, you recollect. I looked out about two o'clock, and it *was* a bob-sleigh, crawlin' up the grade, and the horses hadn't any bells on. The driver was a thick-set man like Clarkson, in a buffaler coat. There was two on the back seat, a man and woman plain enough, all muffled up, with their heads down. It was so still in the woods I could have heard if they'd been talkin' no louder than I be now; but not a word was spoke all the way up the hill. I says to myself, 'Them folks must be pretty well acquainted, 'less they 're all asleep, goin' along through

the woods the prettiest kind of a night, walkin' their horses, and not a word in the whole dumb outfit."

"I'm glad you didn't open your head about it," said the elder brother. "We don't know for certain it was them, and it's none of our funeral, anyhow. Where, think, could they have been going to, supposin' you was right? Would Jack be likely to harbor up there at the mine?"

"Where else could they get to, with a team, by this road? Where else could they be safer? Jack's inside of his own lines up there, and come another big snow the road'll be closed till spring; and who'd bother about them, anyway, exceptin' it might be the Old Man? And a man that leaves his wife around loose the way he done ain't likely to be huntin' her on snow-shoes up to another man's mine."

"I don't believe Jack's got the coin to be meanderin' very far just about now," said the practical elder brother. "He's staked out with a pretty short rope, unless he's realized on some of his claims. I heard he was tryin' to dig up a trade with a man who's got a mine over in the Slocan country. That would be convenient, over the line among the Kanucks. I wouldn't wonder if he's hidin' out for a spell till he gathers his senses, and gets a little more room to turn in. He can't fly far with a woman like her, unless his pockets are pretty well lined. Them easy-comers easy-goers ain't the kind that likes to rough it. I'll bet she don't bile his shirts or cook his dinners, not much."

"It's a wild old nest up there," said the younger and more imaginative as well as more sympathetic of the brothers—"a wild road to nowhere, only the dropping-off place."

"What gets me is that talk of Jack's last fall, when you was in the Kootenai, about his intentions to bach it up there this winter, if he could coax his brother out from Manitoba to bach with him. I wouldn't like to think it of Jack, that he'd lie that way, just to turn folks off the scent. But he did, sure, pack a lot of his books and stuff up to the mine; grub, too, a lot of it; and done some work on the cabin. Think he was fixin' up for a hide-out, in case he should need one? Or wa'n't it anything but a bluff?"

"Naw," the other drawled impatiently. "Jack's no such a deep schemer as all that comes to. More'n likely he seen he was workin' the wrong lead, and concluded 't was about time for him to be driftin' in another direction. 'T ain't likely he give in to such foolishness without one fight with himself. And about when he had made up his mind to fire himself out, and quit the whole business, the Old Man puts out for London, stuck on sellin' his mine, and can't leave unless Jack stays with it. And Jack says to himself, 'Well, damn it all, I done what I could! What is to be will be.' That's about the way I put it up."

"I wouldn't be surprised," the other assented; "but what's become of the brother, if there ever was a brother in it at all?"

"Why, Lord! a man can change his mind. But I guess he didn't tell his brother about this young madam he was lookin' after along with the rest of the Old Man's goods. I hain't got nothin' against Jack Waring; he's always been square with me, and he's an awful good minin' man. I'd trust him with my pile, if it was millions, but I wouldn't trust him, nor any other man, with my wife."

"Sho! she was poor stuff; she was light, I tell ye. Think of some of the women we've known! Did they need watchin'? No, sir; it ain't the man, it's the woman, when it's between a young man and a married woman. It's her foolishness that gits away with them both. Girls is different. I'd skin a man alive that set the town talkin' about my sister like *she's* bein' talked about, now."

The brothers stepped outside and stood awhile in silence, regarding the night and breathing the pure, frosty air of the forest. A commiserating thankfulness swelled in their breasts with each deep, clean inspiration. They were poor men, but they were free men—free, compared with Jack. There was no need to bar their door, or watch suspiciously, or skulk away and hide their direction, choosing the defense of winter and the deathlike silence of the snows to the observation of their kind.

They stared with awe up the white, blank road that led to the deserted mine, and they marveled in homely thinking: "Will it pay?" It was "the wrong lead this time, sure."

The brothers watched the road from day to day, and took note that not a fresh track had been seen upon it; not a team, or a traveler on snow-shoes, had gone up or down since the night when the bob-sleigh with its silent passengers had creaked up it in the moonlight. Since that night of the full moon of January not another footprint had broken the smoothness of that hidden track. The snow-tides of midwinter flowed over it. They filled the gulch and softly mounting, snow on snow, rose to the eaves of the little cabin by the buried road. The Bruce boys dug out their window; the hooded roof protected their door. They walked

about on top of the frozen tide, and entered their house, as if it were a cellar, by steps cut in a seven-foot wall of snow.

One gray day in February a black dog, with a long nose and bloodshot eyes, leaped down into the trench and pawed upon the cabin door. Opening to the sound, the Bruce boys gave him a boisterous welcome, calling their visitor by name. The dog was Tip, Jack Waring's clever shepherd spaniel, a character as well known in the mountains as his master. Indeed, he was too well known, and too social in his habits, for a safe member of a household cultivating strict seclusion; therefore, when Tip's master went away with his neighbor's wife, Tip had been left behind. His reappearance on this road was regarded by the Bruce boys as highly suggestive.

Tip was a dog that never forgave an injury or forgot a kindness. Many a good bone he had set down to the Bruce boys' credit in the days when his master's mine was supposed to be booming, and his own busy feet were better acquainted with the Dreadnaught road. He would not come in, but stood at the door, wagging his tail inquiringly. The boys were about to haul him into the cabin by the hair of his neck, or shut him out in the cold, when a shout was heard from the direction of the road above. Looking out, they saw a strange young man on snow-shoes, who hailed them a second time, and stood still, awaiting their response. Tip appeared to be satisfied now; he briskly led the way, the boys following, up the frozen steps cut in their moat-wall of snow, and stood close by, assisting, with all the eloquence his honest, ugly phiz was capable of, at the conference that ensued. He showed himself particularly anxious that his old

friends should take his word for the stranger whom he had introduced and appeared to have adopted.

Pointing up the mountain, the young man asked, "Is that the way to the Dreadnaught mine?"

"There ain't anybody workin' up there now," Jim Bruce replied indirectly, after a pause in which he had been studying the stranger's appearance. His countenance was exceedingly fresh and pleasing, his age about twenty years. He was buttoned to the chin in a reefing-jacket of iron-gray Irish frieze. His smooth, girlish face was all over one pure, deep blush from exertion in the cold. He wore Canadian snow-shoes strapped upon his feet, instead of the long Norwegian skier on which the men of the Cœur d'Alêne make their winter journeys in the mountains; and this difference alone would have marked him for a stranger from over the line. After he had spoken, he wiped away the icy moisture of his breath that frosted his upper lip, stuck a short pipe between his teeth, drew off one mitten and fumbled in his clothing for a match. The Bruce boys supplied him with a light, and as the fresh, pungent smoke ascended, he raised his head and smiled his thanks.

"Is this the road to the Waring mine—the Dreadnaught?" he asked again, deliberately, after a pull or two at his pipe.

And again came the evasive answer: "Mine's shut down. Ain't nobody workin' up there now."

The youngster laughed aloud. "Most uncommunicative population I ever struck," he remarked, in a sort of humorous despair. "That's the way they answered me in town. I say, is this a hoodoo? If my brother isn't up there,

where in the devil is he? All I ask is a straight answer to a straight question."

The Bruce boys grinned their embarrassment. "You'll have to ask us somethin' easier," they said.

"This is the road to the mine, ain't it?"

"Oh, that's the road all right enough," the boys admitted; "but you can see yourself how much it's been traveled lately."

The stranger declined to be put off with such casual evidence as this. "The wind would wipe out any snow-shoe track; and a snow-shoer would as soon take across the woods as keep the road, if he knew the way."

"Wal," said Jim Bruce, conclusively, "most of the boys, when they are humpin' themselves to town, stops in here for a spell to limber up their shins by our fire; but Jack Waring hain't fetched his bones this way for two months and better. Looks mighty queer that we hain't seen track nor trace of him if he's been livin' up there since winter set in. Are you the brother he was talkin' of sending for to come out and bach it with him?"

The boys were conscious of their own uneasy looks as the frank eyes of the stranger met theirs at the question.

"I'm the only brother he's got. He wrote me last August that he'd taken a fit of the sulks, and wanted me to come and help him work it off up here at his mine. I was coming, only a good job took me in tow; and after a month or so the work went back on me, and I wrote to Jack two weeks ago to look out for me; and here I am. And the people in town, where he's been doing business these six years, act as if they distantly remembered him. 'Oh, yes,' they say, 'Jack

Waring; but he's gone away, don't you know? Snowed under somewhere; don't know where.' I asked them if he'd left no address. Apparently not. Asked if he'd seemed to be clothed in his proper senses when last seen. They thought so. I went to the post-office, expecting to find his mail piled up there. Every scrap had been cleaned up since Friday last; but not the letter I wrote him, so he can't be looking for me. The P. M. squirmed, like everybody else, when I mentioned my brother; but he owned that a man's mail can't leave the box without hands, and that the hands belonged usually to some of the boys at the Mule Deer mine. Now, the Mule Deer is next neighbor to the Dreadnaught, across the divide. It's a friendly power, I know; and that confirms me that my brother has done just what he said he was going to do. The tone of his letter showed that he was feeling a bit seedy. He seemed to have soured on the town for some reason, which might mean that the town has soured on him. I don't ask what it is, and I don't care to know, but something has queered him with the whole crowd. I asked Clarkson to let me have a man to show me the way to the Dreadnaught. He calmly lied to me a blue streak, and he knew that I knew he was lying. And then Tip, here, looked me in the eye, with his head on one side, and I saw that he was on to the whole business."

"Smartest dog that ever lived!" Jim Bruce ejaculated. "I wouldn't wonder if he knew you was Jack's brother."

"I won't swear that he could name the connection; but he knows I'm looking for his master, and he's looking for him too; but he's afraid to trail after him without a good excuse. See? I don't know what Tip's been up to, that he should be

left with a man like Clarkson; but whatever he's done, he's a good dog now. Ain't you, Tip?"

"*He done!*" Jim Bruce interrupted sternly. "Tip never done nothing to be punished for. Got more sense of what's right than most humans, and lives up to it straight along. I'd quar'l with any man that looked cross at that dog. You old brute, you rascal! What you doin' up here? Ain't you 'shamed, totin' folks 'way up here on a wild-goose chase? What you doin' it fer, eh? Pertendin' you're so smart! You know Jack ain't up here; Jack ain't up here, I say. Go along with ye, tryin' to fool a stranger!"

Tip was not only unconvinced by these unblushing assertions on the part of a friend whose word he had never doubted: he was terribly abashed and troubled by their manifest disingenuousness. From a dog's point of view it was a poor thing for the Bruce boys to do, trying to pass upon him like this. He blinked apologetically, and licked his chaps, and wagged the end of his tail, which had sunk a trifle from distress and embarrassment at his position.

The three men stood and watched the workings of his mind, expressed in his humble, doggish countenance; and a final admission of the truth that he had been trying to conceal escaped Jim Bruce in a burst of admiration for his favorite's unswerving sagacity.

"Smartest dog that ever lived!" he repeated, triumphant in defeat; and the brothers wasted no more lies upon the stranger.

There was something uncanny, thought the young man, in this mystery about his brother, that grew upon him and waxed formidable, and pursued him even into the depths of

the snow-buried wilderness. The breath of gossip should have died on so clean an air, unless there had been more than gossip in it.

The Bruce boys ceased to argue with him on the question of his brother's occupancy of the mine. They urged other considerations by way of delaying him. They spoke of the weather; of the look of snow in the sky, the feeling of snow in the air, the yellow stillness of the forest, the creeping cold. They tried to keep him over night, on the offer of their company up the mountain in the morning, if the weather should prove fit. But he was confident, though graver in manner than at first, that he was going to a supper and a bed at his brother's camp, to say nothing of a brother's welcome.

"I'm positive he's up there. I froze on to it from the first," he persisted. "And why should I sleep at the foot of the hill when my brother sleeps at the top?"

The Bruce boys were forced to let him go on, with the promise, merely allowing for the chance of disappointment, that if he found nobody above he would not attempt to return after nightfall by the Dreadnaught road, which hugs the peak at a height above the valley where there is always a stiff gale blowing, and the combing drifts in midwinter are forty feet high.

"Trust Tip," they said; "he'll show you the trail across the mountain to the Mule Deer"—a longer but far safer way to shelter for the night.

"Tip is fly; he'll see me through," said Jack's brother. "I'd trust him with my life. I'll be back this way possibly in the morning; but if you don't see me, come up and pay us a

visit. We'll teach the Dreadnaught to be more neighborly. Here's hoping," he cried, and the three drank in turn out of the young fellow's flask, the Bruce boys almost solemnly as they thought of the meeting between the brothers, the sequel to that innocent hope. Unhappy brother, unhappy Jack!

He turned his face to the snows again, and toiled on up the mountain, with Tip's little figure trotting on ahead.

"Think of Jack's leavin' a dog like that, and takin' up with a woman!" said Jim Bruce, as he squared his shoulders to the fire, yawning and shuddering with the chill he had brought with him from outside. "And such a woman!" he added. "I'd want the straight thing, or else I'd manage to git along without. Anything decent would have taken the dog too."

"'Twas mortal cute, though, of the youngster to freeze on to Tip, and pay no attention to the talk. He knows a dog, that's sure. And Tip knowed him. But I wish we could 'a' blocked that little rascal's game. 'Twas too bad to let him go on."

"I never see anybody so stuck on goin' to a place," said the elder Bruce. "We'll see him back in the morning: but I'll bet he don't jaw much about brother Jack."

The manager's house at the Dreadnaught had been built in the time of the mine's supposititious prosperity, and was the ideal log cabin of the Cœur d'Alêne. A thick-waisted chimney of country rock buttressed the long side-wall of peeled logs chinked with mud. The front room was twenty feet across, and had a stone hearth and a floor of dressed

pine. Back of it were a small bedroom and a kitchen into which water was piped from a spring higher up on the mountain. The roof of cedar shakes projected over the gable, shading the low-browed entrance from the sun in summer, and protecting it in winter from the high-piled snows.

Like a swallow's nest it clung in the hollow of the peak, which slopes in vast, grand contours to the valley, as if it were the inside of a bowl, the rim half broken away. The valley is the bottom of the bowl, and the broken rim is the lower range of hills that completes its boundary. Great trees, growing beside its hidden streams far below, to the eye of a dweller in the cabin are dwarfed to the size of junipers, and the call of those unseen waters comes dreamily in a distant, inconstant murmur, except when the wind beats up the peak, which it seldom does, as may be seen by the warp of the pines and tamaracks, and the drifting of the snows in winter.

To secure level space for the passage of teams in front of the house, an embankment had been thrown up, faced with a heavy retaining-wall of stone. This bench, or terrace, was now all one with the mountain-side, heaped up and smoothed over with snow.

Jack, in his winter nest-building, had cleared a little space for air and light in front of each of the side windows, and with unceasing labor he shoveled out the snow which the wind as constantly sifted into these pits, and into the trench beneath the hooded roof that sheltered the gable entrance.

The snow walls of this sunken gallery rose to the height of the door-frame, cutting out all view from without or