THE WOMAN WHO LOST HIM

and

TALES OF THE ARMY FRONTIER

BY

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WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

By Ambrose Bierce

To the few of us still living whose high privilege it is to have familiarly known the early work of the author of this book (the Josephine Clifford of Bret Harte's **Overland Monthly**) this later fruitage of her mind will address itself with a peculiarly tender salutation, as of a voice out of the twilight, saying: "Be of good cheer—the dark is not yet, and all is well."

It is a long interval, truly, but not a barren, for into it has been crowded much of living and of adventure—in other words, of thinking and doing, for thought is life and to do is to dare; the brave alone challenge attention of the gods.

Our author's life, of which this book is the evensong under the harvest moon, has been lived in the freaking gleams and brooding glooms that seem never to lie along the paths of the ungifted—children of the dread, wisely content in their encompassment of gray. A great writer has said that life is a farce to him who thinks, a tragedy to him who feels. But he who most deeply thinks most keenly feels; so his are the high lights and the black shadows; and however he move among them—with passive acceptance or dissenting activity—his life is more than a life: it is a career. Its every feature is "out of the common," and all its mutations are memorable.

The lady of whose life-story some hint seems to me, perhaps fancifully, to whisper in every passage of this book, has in foregoing volumes related less indirectly the

strange experiences which some may say have moulded her character, but which others may think, with a deeper philosophy, were shaped and determined by it. I am of those who attribute to character the larger share in bringing about events; and I think that this unique figure in life and letters could not, under any constraint of circumstances, have had a career greatly different from what has been. However this may be, let us be thankful that, in the slang of science, interaction of organism and environment did somehow, despite the friction known as suffering and sorrow, result in just that kind of woman living just that kind of life, for to the essential congruity between the two we owe just this kind of book.

I do not know that it is a great book. I do not know that it and its predecessors from the same pen have that incomprehensible distinction of character that more frequently merits than compels the transient attention that we are pleased to call fame. I know only that to me the books are the woman as I have known her, and that the woman is most interesting. In contemplation of that piquant personality, I disarm; "submissive to the deeper word" of its suasion, I throw down the critic's pen and yield myself to the charm of a delightful memory, "like an unresisting child."

Possibly I thereby abjure my many-times-confessed faith that personal character and literary work have hardly a speaking acquaintance with each other, and that "side-lights" of the one thrown upon the other are nothing but a darkening of counsel. So be it; I am not greatly concerned about consistency—not today—and God forbid that I retain always the power to see, in the cold light of literary perspicacity, the faults of my friend.