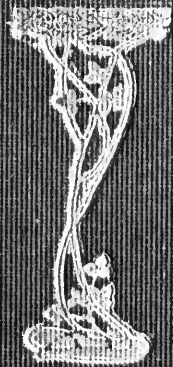
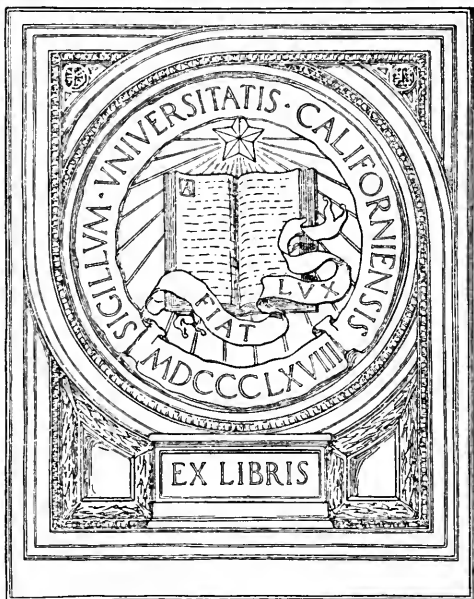


*The
Lost
Mine
of
the
Mono*



KLETTE

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THE LOST MINE OF THE MONO

A Tale of the Sierra Nevada

BY

C. H. B. KLETTE



Cochrane Publishing Company
New York
1909

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PART I

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The Mystery of the Mountain

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CHAPTER I.

I ARRIVE AT THE SHEEP RANCH.

WHAT frail, intangible threads sometimes serve in this world to convey impressions over the tides of time! As an instance, Sutcliff was down to-day, like a breath from the hills, in an attempt to interest me once more in the lost mine. But it was not his appearance—welcome as that always is,—that has brought to mind this beautiful October day all those half-remembered, half-forgotten details of that story of the Mono, and our incredible connection therewith, bridging as it were the past and the present, the seen and the unseen. For long hours before—since the earliest morn in fact,—had my memory been occupied in the turning of its pages, and brought about by what frail prompting do you think? A subtle, immaterial something in the mellow radiance of the sun in its play over our rifled vineyards, and in the subdued intonation in the murmur of the wind that springs so balmily from the north-west—the last of our trades,—and stirs into a dreamy and half-melancholy life the long collonades of russetting poplars that rise here and there upon the landscape, white-stemmed, high into the glory of our skies. Nothing more.

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Not that it was October in which the adventure connecting us for all time with the tale took place. It was much earlier in the year in fact,—June, I think. But in a general way October in the valley is but little different from June in the high Sierra. There is in both that same soft glamor to the sunshine,—that same caressing touch to the breeze. What is wanting to make a similitude already striking even more so is a dash of greater crispness to this October air, to make it more suggestive of the nearness of the frost imps which seem forever to hover about the mountain tops. For away up there among the peaks summer's sojourn is at best fleeting,—lost in fact in the contending embraces of the springtime and the autumn. Barely have the snows disappeared from among the granite boulders above the timber line,—barely have the crisp grasses of the glacial meadows, splashed with the lilac of the daisy and the scarlet of the Indian pink, had time to flourish and seed, when through a dark, crystal-clear, starlit night comes the nip of frost to tell of the approach again of winter and its encloaking down of snow.

This was years ago,—in the middle eighties, to be precise. Some years before Waring and myself had been classmates at college, where we took an engineering course together. A steady correspondence during the subsequent years had ripened the acquaintance thus begun into a regard much warmer than is usual. It was in response to an oft-reiterated invitation to visit him at the ranch that I came,—my desires a little quickened perhaps in that the invitation held promise of a trip into the back mountains; and having come, and met Naomi, to most keenly regret not having accepted his invitation earlier in our acquaintance.

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Shepherds Rest, as Waring's home was rather neatly named, was situated on the banks of a broad, shallow watercourse a short distance from where it debouched from the hills to trail a sinuous course over the plain far out into the mists of distance. Back of it arose the hills, where at almost any season of the year the Waring flocks were to be discerned in their slow trailings across their face;—hills that were brown and bare, yet unspeakably beautiful in their silence and loneliness; their winding gorges touched with a deepening purple. Before it spread the level pasture lands of the plains, —a lone butte or table alone breaking the monotony of view,—to where the wheat-fields of the middle valley spoke of another phase of our civilization that each succeeding year reached further into this voiceless haunt of nature. The white ranch-house itself, and its attendant stables and bunkhouse, were snugly ensconced in a clump of bluegums and peppertrees,—a dark blur upon the landscape visible for miles around;—the low, rambling, weatherworn shearing-sheds, and the malodorous dipping-pens, beneath some cottonwoods on the opposite bank, forming an effective picture in contrast. Such in a few words was Roger's sheepranch, where he had been born and raised, and had come to love nature with a depth of feeling that but few understood.

I remember he was alone when I arrived, the exact date of my coming, owing to business pressure, having been more or less a matter of doubt. His reception of me was cordial to a degree, and he seemed unable to do all that his heart would dictate for my comfort. He placed me to an appetizing lunch in a low-ceilinged room which opened on two of its sides upon a broad veranda, where the cool dusk made by the clambering

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vines and the overarching trees, and the somnolent calm of the noon of the summer day, were in pleasing contrast to the glare and heat upon the visible plain beyond.

"It is too bad," was his oft-repeated deprecation, "that mother and Naomi are not here to assist in receiving you. They are on a call at the Ferral ranch, you know. We must do the best we can under the circumstances and console ourselves with the thought that they will be back during the evening."

Later we withdrew into an adjoining room that was half parlor, half library, where several cases lined the walls, containing a number of books and many valuable Indian relics, the gatherings evidently of years. A number of unfinished sketches in oil were scattered about, together with scores of photographs,—for Roger was not only an artist of no small calibre, but a camera-fiend as well. The impressions were mostly of the mountains,—a particularly clever piece in oil being a view of the Deerhorn Meadows in evening glow, where the Butte in the background hung in a haze that was realistic to a degree.

Singularly enough my attention from the first was attracted to a piece of quartz profusely interlaced with free gold. It was quite a large specimen, rich beyond anything I had ever seen, very white and very pure, and placed with a boy's eye for effect upon a cushion of purple plush beneath a glass half-globe. Altogether it was a very conspicuous object. Yet I remember so well that it was none of these but an air of strange familiarity which drew me to it from the first. It was so like a piece I had seen but a short time before at my cousin Ida's home in a distant part of the state, whither I had made a flying visit in the vain hope of meeting my

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uncle on a business matter, that for a moment I wondered whether it was not by some unexplained chance one and the same.

“Where did you get this?” I asked.

“That,” he answered, “is from the famous lost mine of the Mono.”

“Indeed.” For I had heard of it. “How came you by it?”

“It was given my father years ago by an Indian herder as a mark of his especial esteem.”

Reading my interest he resumed a moment later:—

“The poor old fellow is dead now,—killed under rather peculiar circumstances, I thought. I see you would like to hear the story. I have not the least objection I assure you. It is short and I will furthermore go straight to the marrow.”

I assented.

“It was while we were in the mountains a few summers ago that he came one day to my father with the plea that he be permitted to visit his rancheria. This is by no means an unusual request from the Indian herdsmen; and as the distance was but a few miles, my father gave a ready consent enough,—possibly feeling that he might as well do so with grace, as had the request been denied the old fellow would have sulked, and the chances are eventually gone anyway. A week passed, and no Indian appearing another was sent out with instructions to hunt him up. This fellow, with an Indian’s idea of despatch, showed up two days later with the story that the chief had some days before gone on a hunt with a white friend,—a stranger who had appeared at the rancheria a day before. That same evening Sutcliff—who, by-the-way, is one of several I have invited to ac-

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company us on our trip,—reported the finding of the body of the old Indian among some rocks in a gorge in the near vicinity of Spirit Mountain. He had been stabbed to death.”

Interested I maintained my silence.

“We notified the tribe on the Fork and there was much wailing, for the old fellow was a chief or a high something among them and much respected, not to say revered. And I fear that with him has died the secret of the location of this famous lost mine.”

“Why so?”

“It seems the secret was never the common property of the tribe. Only the reigning chief and the next of kin to him knew of it. And I remember this one once told my father, when he was being rather closely questioned, that it had come to that pass that he alone of all his people knew just where the lead lay. He had a very great regard for my father, and I know he did not lie to him.”

“Could the old fellow not be made to divulge his secret?”

“You do not know the Indian nature, Paul, I see, and least of all this old fellow’s. Our races mingle, it is true, but an impassable chasm lies between us just the same. Only those who become one of them—the squaw-man in short,—stands the least chance. You understand, of course, that the ordinary inducements in the way of a bribe do not obtain here.”

“I can very well understand that. And who killed him?”

Waring shrugged his shoulders.

“That riddle has never been solved to my satisfaction. But if I may judge, not by one of his tribe. You see the

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whites as a rule do not interfere where any disagreements lie strictly among themselves, so that a show of diplomacy or secrecy is not necessary. In fact when one of their number becomes so rampantly bad that he comes to be generally feared, he is quite frequently hunted like a beast of the forest by his own people, and on his death the white man is told openly thereof. There is no attempt at secrecy. The only mourners are his nearest relatives, and the mourning is short. In this case, however, the mourning was protracted, and so affected the entire tribe that it left little room for such a construction here."

"And the white man?"

"Disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, as far at least as I am able to say. I remember once asking one of our Indian packers whether suspicion did not in some way rest upon him, but he only looked grave, and gave a negative shake of his head in answer. No; he stands above their suspicion, that is plain. There was unquestionably a third and secret figure in the deal."

"On what do you base that belief?"

"Simply on the facts as I have given them. Sutcliff and I did indeed in a spirit of investigation climb to the ridge above, searching for whatever evidence we could find. But it was mighty little we found, I must say; only a few confusing foot-prints, then already half-obiterated, and we gave up in despair."

I lit a cigar and, seated comfortably in a large wicker chair on the north veranda, where the breeze from across the stubble-field came to us tempered by a number of spreading fig-trees, recounted what I knew of the history of the other specimen.

"He too got it from an Indian," I said, explaining

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my uncle's connection, "—one whom in some way he had favored once."

It was not a long story, yet from the beginning, I noticed, it held a special interest for him. As I proceeded his face assumed a far-away expression as if in thought he was threading the past; all the while, however, as I soon found out, not losing a single detail, small or large, of my narration.

"Tell me," he interrupted suddenly, with the air of one who has arrived at a satisfactory explanation of what had been a somewhat puzzling problem, "is he a man of middle age, rather sturdily built, straight as a mountain pine, yet with a face giving the impression of premature ageing, hair and moustache almost white, and eyes, dark and liquid, that seem to read your very soul?"

I half rose from my seat in surprise.

"You could not possibly have described him better," I returned, reseating myself and giving another puff from my cigar, my interest in turn receiving additional impetus.

"Then I have met him," he continued simply.

"That is not surprising since there is not a district worth mentioning from Siskiyou to San Diego that he does not seem to know like a book. The question is only, where?"

"In the Flats."

"And when?"

"I think it was two years ago,—the year I left college to recuperate in the mountains."

I remained silent, for I felt that he would resume the thread of his narrative without my aid.

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“And the circumstances?” I asked at last, grown impatient.

“Were commonplace enough. Yet, I remember every circumstance of that meeting as if it was only yesterday. Perhaps it is because it was in the spring, for that is the season when I am most sensitive to impressions. Eye, ear, nostril,—every sense is most keenly alive, and not a flash of light, dash of color, or trill of nature’s music escapes me. But whatever the cause, that meeting is, I feel, rather unduly impressed upon my mind.”

CHAPTER II.

THE MEETING AT THE FLATS.

I REMEMBERED Waring as a good hand at telling a story,—given possibly just a trifle too much to the picturesque and dramatic—and as I listened now with my eyes half-closed I came to release my imagination from the leash of my will; to allow it to follow in the train of the story free and unfettered; with the result that I saw with an unwonted clearness every action and surrounding of what was to me a rather interesting episode.

“It was about this time of the year,” he began. “I was just down from the cool heights of the summits and remember only too well the merciless nature of that summer sun as it poured its light in a white, blinding mist into the broad mountain valley and the one tortuous thoroughfare of the place. For nearly a week, I was told, it had blazed with just such fervency, until the chaparraled slopes of the ridge to the west, tufted with an occasional clump of pines or a lone oak, had browned visibly, and all the unnumbered little streams which a fortnight before—while on our way up—had given life to every gulch, had stilled their murmur;

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chains of stagnating pools, about which the half-wild cattle of the hills stood congregated, alone marking their one-time courses.

“ But the witchery of the hills, the glare of the sun, nay, the growing heat itself, seemed matters of small importance to the inhabitants of the Flats that morning. For while it was still spring it was also harvest time, paradoxical as this may seem. You have never been there, have you? Well, you should know that the place is not altogether self-sustaining, and that since the late autumn of the previous year, half-hid in the snows of winter, it had hibernated, so to speak, and subsisted upon what the accidents of the past season had brought it. At the time which I am trying to describe for you it sought like a well-regulated ant-hill, and while the warm sun of circumstance shone, to granary as bountiful a harvest as came possible in the fresh era of prosperity which had just dawned with the birth of spring and the reopening of the mills and mountain pastures.

“ It was hot even for that early hour. The usual breeze of the day had not yet risen with any certitude, a tantalizing puff only breathing upon you now and then, and in the wake of the fitful traffic the dust that lay fetlock deep upon the road rose in stifling clouds, to fall where it rose. The heavy lumber wagons of the mountains passed up and down, powdered gray with the dust of the hills if from below, or red with that of the upper grades if from above. Indians of both sexes, and of every age and condition, the bright tints of whose garb gave color and a certain vivacity to the scene, haunted the trails and the marts of trade; while before the busy blacksmiths, Westfall's, and Downing's, the outfits of dogs and mules and packs of several

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dallying sheep-men stood in confusing little groups. I remember also seeing the stage and four with the mountain mail and its daily quota of Yosemite tourists swing down the red, dusty grade among the straight bull-pines, the horses on the jump in obedience to the sharp crack of the whip in the hands of the dustered driver, and draw up with a jerk before the big, white hotel for a fresh relay and an indifferent meal. It looked as if it was the unalterable circumstance of the distance which prescribed this last, few suspecting the proprietor of the stage line and the owners of the turn-pike to be potent while silent factors in the management of the hotel. But the meal once over, and philosophy following on the heels of a sated appetite, it was generally charged as one of the minor ills of life and soon lost in the contemplation of a quiet afternoon's drive through the deep-green forests that crowned—as could be seen from the broad, airy piazzas—the sweeping slopes to the east, the advance of the mountains proper, immovable as the very foundations of the earth, and eloquently silent in the tenuous, pearl-gray mists of summer.

“ I myself had ridden over early that morning by way of Heron Valley with my train of mules, having passed the night at Sharp's on the Fork, and these were now hitched to the bars, or nosing about the watering trough in front of the Laramore store. I had completed my purchases and was tightening the cinches of the animals preparatory to loading them when my attention was called to the gentleman I speak of. He had mounted his pack upon his burro in tolerably neat order, but somehow now, in a moment of abstraction,

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the mysteries of the diamond-hitch on the instant seemed to perplex him."

Roger allowed himself a moment for reverie before he resumed.

"I hesitated but a moment before I went to his assistance.

"'Allow me.'

"His was a face very strongly marked, bronzed as it was by the sun, furrowed by time, and aged—I can find no term more expressive of the action—by some deep-seated mental or psychical struggle. His cheek-bones were flushed with the hectic of a disease which after a prolonged aggressive war with the vitality of a generous nature had obtained the master-hand, and was now undermining with ever-increasing rapidity the foundations of an iron constitution. The lips, thin and dry, as if sapped by the heat of some inner fire, formed the mouth of a man of untiring good-nature, and a rather, I thought, vacillating disposition. Now, any one of these characteristics alone would have proven sufficient to have drawn attention to him, and left an impression. But it was the eyes that left with me that haunting sense, so intense in their placidity were they, so measureless their calm; a calm born of persistent thought centred upon the inner man, and of the assurance succeeding a subsiding doubt. I question in fact whether the first glance had not left with you, as it did with me, doubts as to the sanity of their light. They not only possessed the power of seeing that which obstructed the view, but seemingly also the power to see through and beyond. This placidity had become their habitual expression; for while they lighted up with a more comprehensible intelligence on being interrogated,

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and seemed to be fully alive to all their surroundings, this intelligence vanished the moment the source of interest was removed, and was replaced by the expression I have sought to describe. Such in short was the appearance of the man,—an outer appearance sure to attract attention anywhere, let alone in so insignificant a place as the Flats.

“I had but to re-arrange the blankets and the folded square of canvas that sheltered the pack, and to lash them as securely as the experience of years had taught me,—which seemed more than the little beast was ordinarily accustomed to, for he groaned dismally and switched his tail as if to assuage certain sufferings, whether real or feigned is not always to be determined with accuracy,—and my self-imposed task was completed.

“‘I see you are adept at the business,’ he said, his eyes lighting up with that more comprehensible light. ‘I admire proficiency.’

“Now, there was nothing in the words; but in their delivery and in the voice itself, there was a charm strangely attractive to me. It has often been a matter of wonder to me since, as I believe myself to be of too positive a nature to be lightly influenced. The few attachments of my life are, as you know, the outgrowths of years of intimacy. I can only attribute it to the sway of some occult power, or at least to the presence of some finer matter than usually surrounds us. Upon the mountain-top, as you will find, we are much more susceptible to heat and cold, and to every emotion of our nature, than in the valley below. May not the aura of a life etherealized by years of thought have been more palpable to even my grosser nature than those of lives less so?

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“ ‘Which way do you travel?’ I asked suddenly, my feelings for the moment getting the better of my breeding.

“He pointed to the south-east, where in the distance the dark form of Spirit Mountain loomed grandly with its flank of snow, as he answered:—

“ ‘By way of the Valley into the Basin.’

“ ‘I regret it,’ said I, ‘but my way takes me by the lumber-mills, and over the divide into the Summit Meadows, where I camp to-night. I could wish that our paths lay more together as I would, I know, much enjoy your company.’

“He smiled as he answered me:—

“ ‘You flatter me, my friend. Yet, I too, must express regret. However, since fortune is so unkind to-day, let us hope that at some future time she will be more propitious.’

“He had mounted into his saddle and now turned to me with an outstretched hand.

“ ‘Goodby, Mr.—’

“ ‘Waring,—Roger Waring.’

“ ‘Good-by then, Mr. Waring. We shall meet again.’

“ ‘I sincerely hope so. Good morning.’

“I watched him with interested eye ride down the road, followed by the burro at a cross-footed pace and with careening pack, ford the stream at the foot, and disappear in the green of the forest beyond.

“This was in June of 1880 or 1881. The middle of September had come, and with it the first fore-runners of a beautiful autumn, before we withdrew from the never-ending charm of the higher mountains. Of the interim I had passed by far the greater part in the saddle, riding for days at a time alone with my train of mules.

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Nor did I confine myself to any one trail. I wanted diversion, and sought it in a trial of nearly all. While my favorite one was the route by the Summit Meadows, on several occasions I came down by the Scarlett Mill back of Heron Valley. Once I came down by Wawona. I even tried the intricacies of the lesser Shuteye. Finally, on my last trip, I passed a night among the giants near the Soquel Mills. But in all my devious rides through the mountains that year I never again came upon my friend, the old gentleman."

CHAPTER III.

THE START FOR THE MOUNTAINS. THE STORM.

THE day was hot, but with sundown there came a breeze from the west and I passed the night in ideal repose. I had been led to a belief that I would be called early and in this I was surely not disappointed, for with the first peep of day, short as that June night was, I heard the male portion of the household up and around. In the sleeping quiet I heard also an occasional crow and an ever-increasing babel from the adjacent barnyard, and from far away in the direction of the quaint Table Mountain, the lugubrious hooting of a prairie owl. I sprang from my bed, to leisurely dress. Having descended, I for some time stood out upon the porch below where the soft light of the approaching day and that of the sinking moon were in a gentle conflict for supremacy, drinking in the beauty of the dawn, and with deep respirations enjoying the morning air. Then tempted forth by the quiet, and the delicate tint to hill and hollow, I took down the little "twenty-two" from its place in the hall, and with Jack the collie—already my fast friend—started out for a turn over the mint-strewn plain, promising Roger to return at the first toll of the breakfast bell.

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It was not long in coming, and I at once retraced my steps, to find Ling, the accommodating celestial, whose dual function it was to herd the little band of bucks and do the simpler cooking of the now much-diminished household, pouring the coffee, and Waring already seated at table.

I had barely taken place myself when a shout came from without.

"That's Sutcliff," explained Roger, rising and stepping to the door, where he waved a hand in greeting.

"Good for you, boy," I heard a boisterous but good-natured voice exclaim a moment later; "I see you are standing in for an early start. Well, that's right. We want to get through that suburb of Hades, Oro Fino, as early in the day as we can find possible."

"I reckon yer friend's come," I heard another drawl—a voice peculiar in that there was no inflection, either rising or falling, in what was said. "I heared someun apepperin' up the crick with the twenty-two."

I looked out curiously from my seat and saw a man, clad in a suit of freshly laundered blue-jeans, six feet two in height and of a corresponding thinness lean his gun against the white palings where a few late jacquemints filled the air with their fragrance, and then divest himself of a variety of articles no mortal but himself could possibly have found use for on a trip such as was proposed.

"Yes, he's here."

"Glad to hear it," put in he who I felt assured was Sutcliff, and who I shortly discovered desired nothing half so much as a good outing. "There is nothing now to interfere with our having the time of our lives."

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I was introduced to Sutcliff, who extended a hand in hearty amity.

"I want you two to be friends," said Roger simply.

"We are from this moment," Sutcliff exclaimed, clasping my hand firmly, the lines of his mouth set gravely, and his black, penetrating eyes upon mine.

Then turning in search of him of the blue jeans, he continued:—

"Allow me to introduce my friend, the handiest man in seven counties, Silas Stayton."

Silas, more an oddity than his friend, was less demonstrative in his hand-shake.

"Shoot anythin'?" he asked by way of greeting.

"I am sorry to say, no," I laughed. "I had a shot at a coyote I found near the corral, and which I suspected of harboring designs against Ling's flock, but that was all."

"I think it only fair to warn you against Si as a freak," Sutcliff continued a moment later. "My word for it, you will have ample evidence of the truth of what I say before you are many days older. Ten to one, Roger, our friend returns to the wiles of the metropolis with one or more of Silas's everlasting wooden spoon souvenirs. Take me up?"

"Gad, how long have you been running this sure-thing proposition?" asked another voice—this from the back porch, muffled in the folds of a towel which the owner of the voice was applying with vigor to his visage in completion of his morning's ablutions.

Sutcliff laughed. Even Silas was moved to smile gravely at this hit at one of his foibles.

"This is Ballard, Paul," Roger explained as the third party appeared in the room followed by a half-grown

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sheep-dog, "a friend recently from the city. And now that you are all here and have broken the ice of first acquaintance, let us sit down and breakfast."

The buttress which supported the crest of Table Mountain alone shone in the glory of sunrise as the wagon and four bearing our equipment, and followed by a couple of led mules, drew up before the open gate amid the playful barkings of the dogs, and we clambered in, with much bubbling good nature taking our seats. Then, with a considerable show of life on the part of our team in general, a decided intractability on the score of the off-leader, and as pronounced an inclination on the part of the mules in the rear to pull in an opposite direction, we bade farewell to the ranch and its hospitality and plunged for the hills over the rolling lands between. Upon a high point some distance on, where the road crossed one of the further ridges, and where we came to a halt to rehook a loosened tug, I turned for one last look to the rear, to see against the dark background of the clump of gums the white forms of the ladies with handkerchiefs a-fluttering their adieus, and a little to the right the form of old Ling, preceded by the collie, Jack, in his slow wend across the stubble-field for the corral on the low bank across the broad sandy creek-bed. Then a turn in the road hid all from view.

Shortly after, we entered the hills with their scattered oaks, where the senses found much to interest them. Copse after copse was vocal with the twitter of many linnets; every dell, still tinged with the green of the browning clover, rang with the song of the meadow lark. Here and there a red-winged woodpecker would fly past us with the certitude of an important errand, to a moment later vary the discordance of its chattering

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with the equally unmusical euphony of its tapping on some hollow limb.

On reaching the underbrush of buckeye and chaparral quail showed up plentifully, covey after covey crossing our path in flight or uneasily sentinelling the rocks on either side. Now and then, too, a cottontail bounded to cover; or a hare whisked through the tarweeds and rested not in its flight until the protection of an intervening ridge had been placed between it and the threatened danger.

Imagine, if you can, the ecstasy of that ride to me, fresh from the prison of city life and all its dwarfing conventions. Our vehicle had been selected with an eye primarily to the comfort it afforded. Its seats were deep and wide, and backed at an obliging angle, so that to sit in them and enjoy the sensation of rolling over the country was really a pleasure to be envied. As the sun topped the trees and peered in upon us with a growing ardor, the canvas curtains were let down and my cigar-case passed around. Then, too, Sutcliff proved, as I knew he would, a prime entertainer. Raised as he was in those hills he had their history at his tongue's end. Every ranch we passed; every mountain looming so grandly blue before us; nay, every mile of the road had it seemed some experience connected with it, which that morning we had copiously retailed out to us.

About ten o'clock we began to descend into the Oro Fino country. Here for the first time we felt the heat, and I concluded that Sutcliff's expression of the early morning, while picturesque, had more of fact than fancy in it. The breeze had died away or, if not, the high mountains on either side—at whose common base we traced the broad, sandy, alder-fringed bed of the creek,—

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most effectually stilled it. The dust of the narrow road-bed, whirled into the quivering air by the wheels of our conveyance, enveloped us in a stifling cloud, where for quite a period it kept an even pace with us, finally to subside in a long trail in our rear. Half-unconsciously all the gay life of the morning had withdrawn to the shade, from whence only at long intervals came the solitary chirp of some bird disturbed in its cover by our approach. All was dust, glare and heat.

At the further end of the gulch a little before noon we halted for dinner, and to feed, water and rest our animals. We had covered some fifteen miles of the road since starting, and had a good twelve more in prospect before reaching the camp of the evening. The first few of these we found were quite a drain upon the spirits of our animals as they led up and up, and ever up, to the backbone of the ridge dividing the waters of the Gulch from those of the Fork. To in some degree ease their burden, two or more of us usually followed or led afoot; which was agreeable enough as we were then reaching an altitude where the oak forest grew denser and the air was pleasantly cool.

About four o'clock we rounded the point on the shed from which is had the first glimpse of the dark, straight bull-pines which tuft the broad tumbled canyon of the Fork, in the softening effulgence of the afternoon circling in sweeping lines down from the north. Here the road turned sharply, to maintain as even an elevation as the topography of the country permitted. In the foreground to the left a cone-shaped mountain, black with its own shadow and a broken growth of arrowy conifer, rose to the view; while opposite the east was sealed to the eye of man by a long ridge clothed likewise, and

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broken only where the waters of the Black Laurel had worked a tortuous passage to the Fork. Far back of this gorge, miles in the distance, in hazy outlines arose our goal, the Mountain of the Spirit as the Indians in generations past had named it. Its broken crest just then was lost in strata of silvery storm-clouds, through which at times as they broke asunder the fields of snow upon its shadowed slopes gleamed ghastly white and cold. It was a scene notable for its magnitude of proportions and magnificent distances, and its effect upon us became apparent in the sudden silence that fell upon our party.

Silas was the first to break it.

"Reckon we're in for a sprinkle," he remarked, gravely eyeing the gray masses of vapor which we were fast approaching.

"I fear you're right, Si," Sutcliff returned, "or the experience of years counts for naught. These storms are an everyday occurrence at this time of the year."

"Around the mountain, yes; but it's rare they reach the Fork."

"Right again. I see you are a close observer. Cradled upon the summits they are borne westward upon the winds of the morning to be whirled capriciously about the mountain through the day, and at even retire to the places of their birth, the spires of the Minarets. Now that's poetry. But seriously, the genius of the country must be in a mood gloomier than usual to-day."

Ballard, to give his dog a run, here sprang to the ground, followed by Stayton with the guns, for the quail were again showing in the chaparral. At this point the road was paralleled on one side by a primitive "brush-fence," forming the finest possible harboring-place, which the two skirted, one on either side, to

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neatly drop the birds as they arose. The "pup," a gift of Sutcliff's, was a bright little fellow enough, but wholly without training. Nevertheless the instincts of the race were there, and many a bird was retrieved that afternoon only with its aid. With this instinct, however, as quite frequently happens, ran a characteristic that stamped it as an opinionated canine, with a firm belief apparently in a division of the spoils of the chase, for at times it failed to appear with its quarry; when it was amusing to the point of side-aching laughter to follow Ballard scurrying in chase among the brush, at the cost of much profanity, a considerable abrasion of the cuticle, and a gaping rent or two in his garments; Stayton all the while with a stoic's indifference winging the birds as they arose.

This Stayton was what Marryatt would have designated as an "original." If common report was to be believed, he had been born in the backwoods of Michigan; but Si was a man of very few words and left much to conjecture. Tall beyond the ordinary, he stood without an ounce of superfluous flesh. Yet, when it came to work, the trying kind of the mountains, he could discount anything I have ever seen in human form.

He gave character to our party. His long, pointed beard, which he fingered, twisted, and pulled in his perplexities, was his secret pride; his hair was thin and straight and showed a spot in the rear where the cuticle shone as brown as his visage. This one ceased to wonder at when once acquainted with his habit when beyond the pales of civilization of wandering in shade and shine without head-covering of any kind, and, what seemed stranger still, without the least injury to him-

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self. Not but that he possessed headgear, a dusty article usually, and much begrimed with perspiration, it must be confessed; but this he generally hung away or jammed into the depths of a packsack on first pitching camp, there to remain until we were ready to start for other fields. On this trip I remember it was hung on a low, broken limb of an immense fir, where over it later Sutcliff in a spirit of mischief fastened the backstay of the tent, thus securing it against any possibility of loss or misplacing. This was at the Cherry-Creek Meadows. He was slow and measured in all he did, but to offset this he was never idle; so that at the close of the day as a quite usual thing he had accomplished as much, if not more, than the average run of mortals.

“He’s a born genius.” Ballard had explained to me in a sweeping assertion earlier in the day. “He can lay it over anybody at most anything. He hauled Waring’s wool to the station this shearing, and to see him handle the ‘single-line’ was a caution. Then he’s eccentric to beat the devil. Why, here for a month past he’s been hoarding every blest old oyster-can, big and little, he could lay his hands on, and a week ago lay off a day to clean up and solder handles on the whole cheese.”

“How odd,” I interrupted, excusably possessed with the idea that Ballard was drawing upon his imagination for my edification; whereas, as I found later, he was confining himself strictly to the truth. “What on earth did he do with them?”

“Why, supplied the neighborhood with all the tin-cups it could possibly need in the next ten years.”

“And the profits?”

“Were as that,” returned Ballard sententiously,

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snapping his fingers, "for he never charged a red cent."

"How strange."

"Did you see any of his work at Shepherds Roost?—his soap-stone paper-weights, or some of the spoons Sutcliff gave him the dig about at breakfast?"

"I think not."

"Well, it don't matter; your wants will be supplied in this line in due course. He can no more withstand the sight of a piece of wood or a bit of stone without wishing to sock his knife into them than my sheep-dog here can a plunge into a handy puddle. And he's a dandy at basket-weaving, and—but the devil, take him all around he's a corker."

And Ballard, who was a smallish, dissipated-looking man of forty, with a red moustache, weak eyes, and sporty inclinations, gave a sigh of despair at his inability to do the inventive and imitative talent of his friend justice.

Meanwhile, as we passed over the road which wound among the tall, symmetrical pines well-planted in the tansied, boulder-strewn gulches, Sutcliff dilated upon the various points of interest as they appeared.

"Yonder lies Gray's," he observed, pointing with his whip to a dun-colored clearing halfway up a bluish-green ridge some miles to the north which appeared in an opening among the tufted tops of the conifers. "If nothing happens to interfere we shall pass there by sunrise to-morrow. Then here, more to the right, around that baldish ridge is where the Black Laurel comes in. That canyon is one of the roughest in these mountains. More to the south here, do you see that rocky scar on the face of that slope?—that's the Figure 7. You see the resemblance? Those slopes are dense

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with scrub-oak and manzanita, and are quite a haunt for bear. It was in there in fact, that the old Indian I was telling you about this morning had his tussle with the bear a year or so ago, and which came so near seeing his finish. Then that glint of silver way up on the rim of the ridge in that depression on the right is the Falls of the Slick Rock. Years ago, long before the appearance of any whites here, that neighborhood held a special significance for the Indians which it has lost since. You see, the rush of waters where they leave the brow for their wild leap and bounds down the gulch has glazed a concave half-circle in the granite as smooth and slippery as a mirror. It was a custom of the Indians to bring their witches here for trial, male and female. The ordeal consisted simply of the passage of the torrent. If made in safety, the accused stood innocent of the charge; where on the other hand, if swept over the brink to destruction he was as surely guilty. Thus, if you were strong-limbed and cool of head your chance of life was better than that of your weaker brother—which is, and has been since the days of Adam, the way of the world. Might is right to-day much as it was then in spite of many fictions to the contrary. There's a pretty stretch of country back of those falls."

It was while rounding the base of the cone upon our left that the skies became overcast. About the same time the air grew deliciously cool and still as if the spirit of the legend was abroad breathing in long and regular pulsations through the forest. Where there was the sound of dripping water among the gray, mossed boulders massed in the dusk of the ascending ravines, the overarching foliage of the ash and buttonwoods stood bright against the deeper green of the background of

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mountain, where the outlines each moment grew less and less distinct in the shadow of the brewing storm and the fast-declining day. To the far north above a low-lying, sun-showered ridge, a band of clear was visible piled high here and there with dun-edged cloud, whose fading radiance became the measure to us of the sun's declination. From thence, also, a little later came a murmur which I at first asserted was the softened roar of the Fork, but which the rest of the party, better schooled in the signs and sounds of the mountains, said was the long-drawn southing of the wind on its way down the canyon; and that they were right I was forced to concede when shortly after distant mutterings of thunder followed.

In less than fifteen minutes the storm broke upon us in all its fury, preceded by a cloud of dust and pollen, and twisted and tortured the bowing forest until it moaned in very protest. Cones and branches splintered and crashed among the trees, and travel beneath them assumed a fresh feature—that of actual danger. During the half-hour of the duration of this preliminary gale we made but little headway. Then followed a dead calm, through which we a moment later heard the patter of the approaching shower, accompanied by a louder, intermittent roll of thunder, in the wake of a zig-zag of lightning. Ballard and Stayton hastily clambered under cover as the great raindrops began to fall about us, snipping up little cloudlets of dust, and beating to earth in a pungent odor the mist of powdered balsam which had hung among the pines since the last cleansing rain.

In my life, short, and only half-run as lives go, yet crowded with experiences much above the ordinary, I

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have been through many storms. But for true sublimity I have never met with one to equal this. Darkness overtook us while yet a mile from our destination, a darkness that was opaque in its intensity. Here the first of Silas's little fore-thoughts came into play in the shape of a candle-lantern. Its gleam in the depths of that vast forest was faint and insignificant indeed; just as, I often feel, the individual life we all cherish so highly, must appear to God as he gazes out from his height into the depths of this world of his creating; but it served as a beacon to be followed slowly and carefully.

But it was the spectacular play of the lightning following the first downpour, and which lit up as with the light of day, and with a suddenness and recurrence that was blinding, the lofty aisles and the blended outlines of the surrounding heights, which enabled us to cross in safety the intervening gullies over the uncertain plank bridging, and to find and follow the blind road which led to the descending grade from which we had our first view of the swirling torrent of the Fork, the crumbling bridge that spanned it, and, in the dusk beyond, where the old squaw who was the guardian of the place had her abode, the flicker of a candle and the warm glow of a hearth through the open doorway of a cabin.

Fifteen minutes and all thoughts of the storm and its discomforts were almost completely banished from our minds. Our animals in the meantime had been comfortably stabled, and our wagon safely backed under the cover of an outhouse—two circumstances that added greatly to our enjoyment of the evening. In the vast fireplace of the old, deserted cook-house a roaring fire

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had been kindled, and by it Sutcliff and Ballard prepared a hasty supper. Later the quail shot that day were prepared and set to stewing for the next day's meals; and our blankets brought out and spread upon the floor preparatory to our retiring.

"I fear you will find your bed rather a hard one," deprecated Sutcliff, as squatted upon his own he drew off his boots in the dusk of the subsiding fire. "But to-morrow you shall have one worthy the envy of the President himself."

Before retiring I went to the door for a last look out. The storm had spent itself, and the moon peering over the eastern ridge poured its mellow light upon a scene that for calm and beauty I have never seen surpassed. A few light clouds still hung above, while below, in the uncertain shift of light, against the broken background of forest shone the bleached and ruined roofs of the old mill and its attendant outhouses. The skeleton-work of the bridge too, stood stark and ghost-like in the light. To the south the rear-guard of the storm was retiring back to the summits with a diminishing pyrotechnical display and muttering of heaven's artillery. All nature was assuming its ordinary aspect of peace and quiet. I glanced toward the cabin of the old squaw. There, too, all was silent. Its lights were out.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE SHAKE-MAKERS CLEARING.—THE HALF-BREED.

THE next morning our course led up the eastern bank of the Fork a little short of half a mile, where it struck up the mountain for Gray's over one of the most fatiguing trails in the Sierra. Knowing the arduous nature of the climb ahead, Sutcliff had arranged to make it in the early morning while our party was fresh from a night's repose, and while the mountain-side lay in shadow.

The stars were still discernible here and there as after a hasty breakfast we packed our animals—we had reached the limit of wagon-roads—and took up this trail. It was a broad and open one, a little-used sled-road, climbing, at angles that made one hesitate, up and over ridges, and along slopes clothed in manzanita and black-oak, and a tangled mat of a brown, resinous tansy, over which old Gray occasionally hauled shakes from the Lip. As we arose the scene below gradually unfolded; first the dark, cone-shaped mountain opposite, its apex aglow with the fire of day; then the still dusky canyon between, and as yet uncertain of outline, half shrouded in shreds of filmy mist; and lastly the far, faint levels of the plains bathed in the blending glories of sunrise. The deep

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diapason of the Fork too, which throughout the night had filled the throbbing air with its roar, became more and more defined, until as gradually it was lost in the distance and the absorbent music of the day.

We had barely gotten well upon our way when Si, who was in the lead, came to a stand to critically study the ground at his feet.

"Hey, there; what's the trouble now?" shouted Sutcliff from the rear, where with rifle across his shoulder he was prodding a dilatory pack-mule with a fallen bramble.

"Thar's someun on the trail ahead," returned Si, pointing to a foot-print in the softened soil.

"By gum, but he's an early bird," remarked Sutcliff admiringly.

"He's a she," corrected Si.

"No. Then is the circumstance only the more remarkable. Who can the nymph be?"

But Silas was again silently pushing on up the trail.

At the expiration of a little more than an hour we came to the bars of the lower pasture-gate, where we rested for a few moments to allow our animals to regain their wind. It was upon this bench of the mountain, sloping gently from above us to the point where we stood, where it pitched abruptly, as we have seen, to the Fork, that Gray's was situated, only more to the left in the heart of the clearing. A very few minutes now sufficed to bring us in full view.

The first golden beams of the rising sun slanted upon the scene, the rough, weather-beaten log-house out upon the open point where it overlooked Heron Valley far below; the steep-roofed barn, teeming with pigeon life, its massive, lichened eaves near-touching the

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ground; the railed upper-field, green with rippling timothy, where the points of the pines, walling its eastern bounds, fell in long, grey-blue shadows upon it. Seen from our point of view in the shadow of the forest, where the brown mold exhaled an inspiration at every step, and the cream-bloom of the deer-brush hung heavy with the weight of shimmering raindrops, it was as charming a picture of peace and beauty as my eyes had rested upon in years.

At the yard-gate, a rude contrivance hinged to a mammoth stump upon one side, we came to a halt. A thin column of smoke ascended leisurely from the throat of a capacious chimney, to mingle with the crystal-clear air of the mountains; while a square in neutral tint upon the shadowed front of the cabin told of an open doorway,—still further proof that the family was up and around.

In response to a shout from Sutcliff a savage dog charged us, bounding back and forth on the inner side of the enclosure and evidently eager to tear us limb from limb. We quite properly, I thought, hesitated, and Sutcliff even loosened his revolver in its holster. The brute's spiteful snarls apparently jarred unpleasantly also upon the nervous system of a thin, ridgy sow, which until then had lain at easy length in the warm sunshine beset by a half-score of pigs of conflicting ages, but which now arose with disquieted grunts and swung around the fence into the brush of the canyon, the litter at her heels following with high-pitched squeals of protest at the untimely interruption.

There came to us the murmur of voices in consultation, and the grating of stools upon the house-floor. Then through the rear door-opening the head of a man

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verging on four-score years protruded in reconnaissance. At the sight of us a small, driedup body followed; together taking up a position on the doorstep in the light of the sun.

Now right back of the house, or rather what was one side of it, a little stream of water, led in a miniature flume from the fir-dusk of the canyon back of the timothy-field, spread over the ground, moistening a rod of wild, panniced grasses interspersed with shoulder-high, blue-spiked lupins, and a scattering of flame-hued poppies. It was against this picturesque background, and a further one of wooded ridge, that the weazened figure of the old man stood, clothed in a greasy suit of brown jeans, his bare feet encased in slippers down at the heels, the snow-white of his beard and hair markedly contrasting a visage indescribably furrowed by a long life of hardship, and set with dim, bleared eyes, now turned upon us in a stare that was half-imbecile, I thought.

"How do ye do, sir?" accosted Ballard in the tones of ordinary speech.

Sutcliff laughed.

"You'll have to limber up, Craig," he explained. "The old fellow's grown as deaf as the logs of his hut within the year."

Ballard essayed again.

"Hello, there, old man," he now shouted in tones that made the clearing ring, "how are you?"

"Back there, you rascal," the old man returned with a startling irrelevancy, and paying, as was expected, no heed to our words. "Back, I tell you."

He stepped down among the unheeding fowls of the yard, seized a convenient fence-picket and started in a feeble pursuit of the brute; which hied him under the

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house in fear, later appearing on the other side to maintain a desultory show of hostility.

"Gentlemen," he said deprecatingly, "this dog which meets you with snarls and bites is none of mine. He is my son's. I have nothing but will meet you, like myself, with the heartiest good-fellowship. This is as it behooves a man to be who is at peace with all the world and its Creator. But, gentlemen, you are early. I was told to expect you, but you are early."

He held the gate open for us, scrutinizing each of us closely as we filed in.

"We'll trouble you for a drink of water, old man," said Sutcliff, accompanying his words with a gesture expressive of carrying a cup to his lips, a sign the old man seemed to understand, for he entered the cabin to a moment later reappear with a long-handled dipper.

Sutcliff laid a hand in gentle protest upon the breast of the old shake-maker as he insisted upon showing us the way to the spring.

"No, no; we know the way."

Nevertheless he followed.

At the spring he turned to me.

"You are early, my boy; and yet I fear you are too late," he whined in the high-keyed voice of old age, gazing into my face with a light in his eyes of such intense concentration that I stood transfixed for a moment, while a shiver of dread passed up and down my spine.

I glanced around, and noted Sutcliff touch his head significantly with his fingers.

None of us were athirst, Sutcliff's plea being a subterfuge only to afford us an opportunity of meeting the old man of the mountain, and so allay a growing curios-

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ity on the part of several of us. Nevertheless we made a pretense of assuaging one at the spring, where the water was not as undefiled as it might be; a host of water-spiders skimming its surface in their reckless, haphazard way, and the sedge upon its bank literally swarming with small, green-coated frogs just emerged from the short-clothes of the tadpole.

As we returned to the cabin, old Gray disappeared into the dusk of the interior, in whose uncertain light a middle-aged squaw in red stood gazing out upon us over the shoulder of a man of perhaps thirty years of age, whose lighter complexion spoke of an admixture of white blood.

Ballard was the first to note them.

"Hey, there's old Jule," he cried, "—and by gum, Si, it was her you've been following the blessed morning, you sly old fox. And that half-breed son of the old guy too. Hello, Joe."

Half-reluctantly the half-breed stepped to the door to return our greeting, rather surlily I thought.

Ballard approached for the purpose of surrendering the drinking-cup, and incidentally, as I surmised from his air of feigned indifference and his manner of whistling lowly to himself, of obtaining a closer view of the interior and its contents.

Now, I remember the circumstance with a smile always, in the shelter of the doorway a large, tawny house-cat lay sunning herself, comfortably crouched, and with her eyes closed in feline meditation. Disturbed suddenly from behind by a movement on the part of the squaw and seeing a stranger, followed by a half-grown and inquisitive sheep-dog, within an arm's length at the moment of such interruption, she arose

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with the agility of a lynx, swept the floor for a moment with her tail, and gave other tokens of her unfriendliness. But Ballard was too preoccupied to note, and my cry of warning came too late. The animal sprang upon him with outstretched claws. Utterly astounded by the suddenness of the attack, Ballard staggered back with an imprecation and a howl of pain. The squaw tittered audibly, and the ill-favored visage of the half-breed broadened with a grin. Even, as the truth must be told, among ourselves we found it quite impossible to restrain a smile. In an instant the spitting feline had sprung to cover, followed closely by a billet of wood hurled by the now thoroughly exasperated Ballard. Then followed an amusing rain of expletives as he gently rubbed the afflicted part, to the like of which it has never been my lot to listen. It rose and it fell; it ceased and it was resumed; until just as Sutcliff's convulsive peals ended in one irrepressible yell of delight he came to a pause with the same abruptness and cadence he might have displayed had he just rounded a prayer with a fervent amen. He then picked up the dipper and handed it to the now thoroughly sobered squaw.

"If the old fellow spoke the truth," he remarked, limping toward us, "this devil too must be the son's."

"Are you out hunting?" queried the half-breed a moment later, stepping out into the open, and in better humor evidently at the sight of our friend's discomfiture.

"Well, that's hard saying," returned Sutcliff, to whom the remark had been more particularly addressed. "Out for a good time at any rate. Any game about?"

The half-breed shook his head.

"At least not about here," he added.

"Where then?"

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“About the Jackass and the Squaw’s Teat, they say.”

“They? Who?”

“Old Chipo for one, who is down after a load of stock salt. He says Carpenter’s men killed several deer on the way up.”

“That’s news.”

“But you know the law—.”

“Oh, we’ve not a word to say against the law, Joe,” returned Sutcliff easily.

The Indian grinned.

“But tell me,” said Sutcliff suddenly, as if with the turn the conversation had taken the idea had just come to him, “how comes it in a region like this, abounding as it does with such ideal cover, that the game is so sparse?”

The other paused for just a moment before shrugging his shoulders in what seemed to me a feigned indifference as he returned:—

“Why do you ask me?”

“Would you care to hear what I think?”

The Indian again shrugged his shoulders, with the air of one bored by the turn the conversation was taking.

“That the game is simply hunted out of the country.”

“By whom?” was asked.

“The Indians, of course. Who else should?”

“For what purpose then?”

“To lessen the chance of discovery of the lost mine of the Mono which is said to lie about here somewhere.”

The half-breed sobered instantly, and his gaze hung long upon our features with an earnestness not to be mistaken.

“So you too,” he remarked a moment later resuming

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his affected indifference, "—so you too are being misled by this nonsense."

"What nonsense?"

"Why all this child's talk about a lost mine."

Sutcliff chuckled in a cynical way as he answered:—

"We have some solid basis on which we pin our faith."

The half-breed echoed the words.

I nodded in the affirmative.

"We have some of the rock, you see," I explained.

He now eyed me intently and in silence, as if with the words I had assumed a new interest to him.

"For all that," he said at last, turning away as if to close the conversation, "you are wrong. How about the herders and vaqueros?" he continued, suddenly turning about again with a renewed interest.

"Why should they be molested," returned Sutcliff, "when their presence relieves you of half of your work?"

"You are sharp," interrupted the other in high disdain.

"That in the first place," continued Sutcliff, ignoring the remark. "In the second the herder as a usual thing has eyes for nothing but his flock, and the buckero is narrowed down to the powers of his mount. But the hunter is to be feared. Lovers of nature they are almost without exception, and drink in all there is of beauty about them. He can tell you the particular species of a tree as far as his eye can reach; he knows every curve of ridge and ravine. He hears every forest sound, from the chirp of bird and squirrel to the deep boom of stream and fall. To him the fragrance of fir and flower are delights too little known to the world. He is the man to be

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feared at every step. Hey, there, Ballard, how does this peroration strike you?"

The half-breed turned and spoke a few hasty words in their native tongue to the scarlet-gowned female, she the while looking out upon us with a stolid interest. At the same moment old Gray re-appeared, to invite us in to breakfast,—an invitation we declined with mixed feelings as can very well be imagined. It took some little effort to impress him with the fact that we had already broken our fast,—how frugally we omitted to mention,—and that we intended to lunch as soon as we reached the Deerhorn Meadows. Seeing us inflexible he desisted; but it was with such a look of disappointment that we half repented of our decision.

While we were re-adjusting the packs preparatory to again taking the trail the old man grew garrulous and plied us with questions, relative and otherwise. In the short time of our visit he showed himself, beneath an exterior deceptive in the extreme, a man of very remarkable parts. He took an inordinate interest in our replies it struck me, and had the squaw bring out an old, cracked slate with a pencil attached by a string that he might the better understand them, our verbal ones proving an insufficient means.

As for the half-breed, he was an interested actor in the scene throughout. He said not a word but hung about like a bird of ill omen, and with an air of restlessness he could not hide, devouring every syllable that passed from one to the other of the group. Nothing escaped him. And when on the other hand we put a question or two relative to the lost mine, more out of an idle curiosity than in the hope of learning something of a definite or tangible nature, his unrest, I thought, assumed positive

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anxiety. He paced back and forth like a tiger caged and sought by every surreptitious means at his command to hasten our departure. I noted that his strange behavior had drawn upon him the observant eye of Sutcliff also.

But the mind of the old man was too much a wreck,—if in truth he ever had anything not purely the creation of his fantasy to offer. Not a grain was there of practical information for us to gather. In the medley of his talk there appeared only one ever-recurrent thought, which shaped itself into the oft-repeated “too late,—too late.”

There came a simple smile upon his features as we finally bade him good-by. With me he seemed to be particularly reluctant to part. He took my hand again and again with one of his, patting me in a fatherly way upon the shoulder with the other. With an effort I broke away to follow my companions who had already started, pursued, I felt rather than saw, by a look of the most intense longing, and the piping words which haunted me for months after, “too late,—too late.”

Turning some little distance up on the trail for one last view of the homestead resting so quietly below in the yellow sunlight, I saw him about to enter the cabin, the son in excited expostulation behind, and the squaw, but a speck of red, still observing us.

“There’s a character for you,” said Sutcliff parenthetically, as he opened the upper pasture-gate in the green dusk of the conifer woods.

“Do you figure the old guy knows anything of the lost mine?” asked Ballard, resting upon his rifle on the upper embankment and guiding the animals into the narrowing grade, which here took a sudden turn.

“Not unless old Wolupa saw fit to confide in him,—

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which, knowing the Indian nature as I do, I very much doubt."

"And yet it may be so," Roger remarked. "That half-breed to me has the air of one hanging about in the hope of hearing something to put him on the right scent."

"Or of putting you off," added Sutcliff thoughtfully.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEERHORN MEADOWS—THE SIGNAL FROM THE BUTTE.

We were now in the heart of those immense forests which are the pride of the Sierra,—a labyrinth of lofty, pillared aisles, silent as those of a vast cathedral, and heavy with the breath of the firs and the subtler incense of a thousand flowers. The beauty of it all as we passed beneath,—the magnificent proportions everywhere prevailing, whether in rock, tree or mountain; the infinite variety of coloring; the hushed, memory-waking music of the streams; and above all the peace and harmony pervading every feature, stirred me deeply, and somehow I gradually came to a more comprehensible and definite conception of the idea of an omnipresent God. It is only in the silent places of the world you will find that this becomes possible.

One point upon that trail will always hold a special interest for me,—the point to the right of the winding, ochrous road where I had my first view of a Lambert pine,—one of a particularly fine group rising straight to heaven, a mighty shaft, purple-scarred, in support of the tasselled canopy overhead. I stood, a pigmy, in silent veneration beneath it for many moments, my eye scaling its great height foot by foot, until it marked the penciled branches

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against the blue of the sunny sky, flecked here and there with a light cumulus born of the storm of the evening before. I was only recalled to earth by a shout from Ballard, followed by the request to come on by the members generally of our party. The road was here much more gradual in ascent, and we reached the Lip with no further serious inroads upon our stock of breath. Here we had our first view of the Basin proper.

It is a saucer-shaped depression on the broad northern flank of Spirit Mountain, and a spot replete with natural charm. A finer stretch of conifer forest than here rears itself in a beauty bordering on the divine, is certainly nowhere to be found. From its central depths it extends in every direction in dark unbroken sweeps to the Lip, which circles with a charming uniformity to the right, where through a narrow gorge the Black Laurel drains the region of its waters.

One feature of this ideal spot is sure to strike one. At a casual glance it will seem as if all the known world is comprised in its deep-green woods and the immensity of sky overhead. Only from one point, well up on the southern slope, do we have a glimpse of something more,—a vision far to the east, framed in the low depression of the Gap, of misty peaks washed in in the faintest of ochres and siennas, checkered with passing shadows of pale violet-grays. The ridge, however, which all around sweeps with such a charming regularity arises abruptly in the south in the crags of Spirit Mountain, and on the east in a striking Butte, both timbered to their summits, yet presenting bold, scarred fronts to the north and west which were then still white here and there with the enamel of winter snows.

Upon the borders of the Deerhorn Meadows we came

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upon the camp of the Ferrals, who were pasturing a band of a couple of thousand sheep in the Basin. We found it tenantless. Its fire had burnt down to a thin spiral of blue smoke, and set somewhat at random about the sodden ashes we found their various camp conveniences.

Sutcliff went straight and lifted the lid alternately of the dutch-oven and the bean-pot, to gaze approvingly upon the healthy dough—just reaching the point of baking,—in the one, and the simmering, savory contents of the other.

“Those Ferrals are boys after my own heart,” he remarked complacently, replacing the lid of the latter, and standing his rifle against the trunk of a tree, “for they profit by experience. They have not repeatedly climbed that trail without having learnt its lesson.”

“And that is?” I laughed.

“That you can not do it without working up an abnormal appetite. They are expecting us and have guarded against surprise.”

While we assisted in unpacking the animals, Sutcliff replenished the fire with an armful of wood of the proper size for immediate coaling, and made such other preparations as the baking of the loaf dictated. The wood was damp and smoked stubbornly, but by dint of an industrious use of his broad-brim he brought it to life and shortly to burn merrily. Then he foraged the camp for a plate, which he heaped with the steaming beans, and ate with such evident relish standing by the fire that we felt the pangs of hunger within us increase a hundredfold within a moment of time.

In fact the strife between duty and inclination as regarded Ballard was short-lived. He at once dropped the work he was completing to unearth the only other clean

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plate the camp contained at the moment, and was soon assisting Sutcliff at the feast, on the opposite side of the fire. I, less accustomed to the ways of the mountains, wavered longer between my sense of propriety and the cravings of nature. But the humor of the situation was irresistible. Seizing a skillet, the only available utensil, which stood handy, I ladled a generous share of the compound of bacon, onions and beans into it, and with it between my knees, seated upon a log which I first kicked to the fire, I, too, became a happy factor in the scene.

Roger proved himself more self-denying and persisted in helping Silas with the packs. There was no earthly reason for supposing that Stayton, was less hungry than the rest of us. But in the short day of our acquaintance I had already seen enough to have me conclude that many of his actions were deliberately calculated as schoolings to the flesh; that in fact much of his deliberation was due to no other cause. With an exasperating attention to the smallest detail he completed the unpacking. Unsaddling, he first solicitously rubbed down the perspiring back of each animal with a saddle-blanket before turning it out into the freedom of the meadow. The last, our leader, and a mare of independent nature, he staked out just beyond the entangling reach of a growth of willows. He was halfway back to camp when on a sudden he returned to reset the stake-pin, having decided that the spot was too boggy, and the grass too watery, to afford anything like the measure of comfort to the beast he was looking for.

With the same deliberation of manner he left for the creek a moment later, a tin cup in one hand and our sooty coffee-pot in the other, his intention being to fill the latter at the stream, and incidentally to rid himself of the dust which so plentifully begrimed his visage and

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clung to his beard. It must have been, as Ballard explained laughingly, a "dry-wash," or something near kin to one, as the only noticeable change in his appearance on his return, as he placed the coffee-pot upon the coals spread for the purpose, was a slightly clearer marking to the lines about his ears and the corrugations of his neck, showing the limit of encroachment of the elusive element. Giving his long, sandy beard one last twist with his fingers to wring the moisture from it in a scattering shower, he ran his hands through his hair,—as much I thought to dry them as to bring his thin, straggling wisps into some semblance of order.

We did not pitch our tent as we were as yet undecided as to a site for a permanent camp. Nevertheless things generally were unpacked and readjusted and put in as near shipshape as was possible in the face of this indecision. An ovenful of biscuits was set to baking by Sutcliff; and a potful of beans to boiling by Silas,—who desired a mess, he said, in which his individual right stood less in dispute than it did to the one he had just helped dispose of; whereat Ballard expressed surprise and desired to be informed of a claim that could possibly prove more valid than that he then enjoyed, inasmuch as possession was nine out of any hypothetical ten points of the law, and he had unquestionably passed the property beyond human intervention. Lastly a spoonful of "sour-dough" was pilfered from the Ferral stock for the "rising" of our own.

It was in the midst of these various preparations that the younger Ferral came into camp.

"Hello, there, Sut," he shouted effusively,—“hello, Roger,—hey, there, Craigie,—and, as I live, Stayton too,—well, who'd have thought of meeting such a bunch!

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—how are you all? And this,” espying me, “is our expected friend. Glad to know you, and hope you will have a jolly good time. How are all the folks, boys? I’ve been trying for an hour or more,” he explained, rinsing his hands in an inch of soapy water in a basin which stood in a levelled spot between two encircling roots, first having stood his gun against a tree, “to get away, but the sheep are uneasy this morning and won’t bunch worth a damn. Faggerty won’t have a dog about, you know, which does not improve matters any.”

“Where is Faggerty?” queried Sutcliff.

“Out with the band. He’ll be in shortly.”

“And Len?”

“Oh, he’ll be in shortly, too. He took his rifle early this morning for a run to the Gap to see how the feed stood,” Ferral continued, drying himself upon a towel much in need of a laundering. “But say, Si, how were the beans?”

Stayton complained dryly, and I fear not without some justice, that not enough had fallen to his share to base an opinion on that would stand.

Ferral laughed.

“Oh, I guess they were all right,” with a glance at the empty kettle. “We killed last night in spite of the storm,” referring to a carcass shrouded in a wool-sack swinging from a cross-arm between two trees. “And it was not a toothless old ewe either,” he kept on, laughing. “That was the proper thing under the administration of Carpenter & Co., under the shadow of the Pin-Cushion,” with a meaning wink at Roger and Sutcliff, “but under the reign of Ferral & Ferral it is different. What a gay old time we had that summer though. Faggerty tells me their camp alone used up

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over thirty mutton in the few months they were in the mountains. But Faggerty does not always confine himself to the truth. Either that or he and Stamford fed all the old squaws upon the Fork that summer.

Rattling on at this gait he uncovered the juicy wether, and with the heavy hunting-knife which he took from his belt severed a quarter from the body; hewing with the weapon where a bone interfered as efficaciously as if it had been a cleaver made for the purpose.

It must have been about eleven o'clock that we first noticed the fire. I remember I had wandered from camp with my sketch-book in hand, and seated at the foot of an immense cedar across the meadow was sketching in the forest-opening and the sun checkered arcades beyond: and beyond these, the over-topping Butte, still some miles in the distance yet overwhelmingly impressive in its softened grandeur. When I first looked up and saw that something of interest was taking the general attention, Len Ferral was standing by my side, rifle upon shoulder and a brace of gray-squirrels in his hand. Roger was making his way from camp, followed at a little distance by Sutcliff. Further back stood Ballard, and in camp the younger Ferral and Silas. All eyes were turned in one direction. Following that direction with my eye I saw upon the apparently inaccessible crest of the Butte a column of smoke arise at the moment, and slowly spread in a dense, white cloud toward the shimmering summits of Spirit Mountain.

Sutcliff was startled I could plainly see, but it was for a moment only. A life of years in the mountains had accustomed him to surprises of every kind, and it took him but a moment to regain his wonted control of himself.

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"After all what is there so remarkable in a fire in the mountains?" he asked.

"Nothing," Roger returned, "but its location,—and that is startling."

"I wonder who could have lit it," mused Len Ferral quietly.

"That is hard saying. Perhaps a sheepman, or some herder," said Roger.

But Len shook his head.

"I think not," he said in his composed way.

"And why not?"

Sutcliff turned his face as if in expectation of the answer.

"Because I have just returned from around the foot of the mountain. There is not the sign of a trail there made later than last fall."

"Well, that settles it as concerns the herder," conceded Sutcliff, resuming his survey. "But how about the sheepman?"

"Do not understand me to say that a sheepman did not start it," returned Len, a little piqued at the other's brusqueness. "What I mean is that the ordinary indications do not point that way. At least he did not climb from this side. After last night's rain I would surely have come upon his trail. As it is, the only sign of life I came upon was the hoof-print of a burro, which seems to have wandered in through the Gap."

Sutcliff was plainly puzzled.

"It must be a party of Indians signalling to others in the hills," he at last ventured to say.

But it was now Waring's turn to shake his head.

"Sutcliff," he began, with such unusual seriousness in his voice that Sutcliff eyed him from top to toe, to

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laugh straight in his face, "it means something more. A peculiar sensation I have at my heart tells me so."

"Your heart be d—d. It's your liver. A touch of dyspepsia, nothing more. Or else—but no, you do not indulge. Now, had it been Ballard here I should have had no trouble in explaining it away as the effect of that jug of forty rod he brought away with him yesterday from Oro Fino."

"But seriously—."

"What do you think?" Sutcliff asked, turning abruptly to me, still seated at the root of the tree.

Now, strange to say, wholly unfamiliar as I was with the life of the mountains, I too had a vague feeling possess me that the true interpretation of the scene before us lay not in any of the several explanations advanced. It was nothing I could hope to prove to the objective sense; it was more the conviction of a subtle subconsciousness.

"At the risk of being rated a dyspeptic also," I returned with a smile, "I must stake my opinion with that of Roger. It does mean something more I am sure."

Something in the quiet yet positive nature of my reply seemed to carry weight. Sutcliff fixed his eyes upon me for a moment in a profound contemplation of my visage, then turned away with a puzzled shake of the head.

"Come; there is but one way of solving this mystery," he said a moment later, returning to where we stood, "and that is by a climb of the mountain. Do you feel yourself able," he continued, addressing himself particularly to me, and with a vague shadow of doubt in his voice, "to undertake the climb to that point to-morrow?"

"Why, sure; I am in perfect health."

Then turning to Waring:—

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"We have figured on an ascent of Spirit Mountain all along," he said, with a wave of his hand toward the rugged peak. "Let's include a climb of the Butte; or even, as the scheme finds favor with Carrington, wholly drop our original plan?"

"There is no deprecation necessary," returned Waring; "the idea pleases me quite."

"Then I make the further suggestion that from here we move this afternoon to the Cherry-Creek Meadows. They are nearer the mountain, higher, and in the morning will give us a better start."

To this Waring also acquiesced.

But Len demurred. He had, he said, looked forward to an evening spent in camp with us, and he would not now be disappointed. We should not go.

Sutcliff hesitated. But the advantage of the two miles in the morning which the contemplated move would bring us was not to be lightly lost. He was quick at suggestions.

"Why not let Faggerty run his band up there this afternoon? and you spend the night with us? How did you find the feed at the Gap?"

Ferral shook his head.

"Short. It should have at least another week's start."

"Then let it be as I suggest. Otherwise I should have advised packing up and moving with us."

It was so arranged and the two returned to camp a few moments later, leaving me to work out my sketch, with Waring to bear me company.

When we, too, an hour later returned in response to the younger Ferral's halloo and announcement that dinner was ready, we found that Faggerty had put in an appear-

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ance, and was at the moment crouching over the coals puffing assiduously at his briar-root, which he had just lit with a fire-brand, still held in indecision awaiting the outcome of his efforts at a smoke. We found also that extensive preparations had been made for an after-dinner target-shoot. Such an array of ammunition, of calibre large and small, I had never seen short of a dealer's emporium.

"What do *you* think of a man," asked the younger Ferral, squatted at his meal, a daintily-browned chop between his fingers, in answer to a comment of mine prompted by the display, "who comes up here for a ten-day's hunt with only four cartridges to his name?"

"Who of this crowd can possibly be guilty of such shortsightedness?" I laughed as I took my place at the board.

"Why, Si. He brought his everlasting old Sharp all right, but, just think, only four cartridges."

"That is not surprising, coming from Si," remarked Waring. "From any other source we might have had grounds for anxiety."

About three of the afternoon, just as Faggerty left to intercept his band as it broke from its uncertain nooning, we resaddled, packed our animals, and started for the meadow which lay a mile and a half further up in the direction of the low saddle between the two mountains. It was a favorite pasture-ground of the sheepmen as the surrounding ridges abounded in extensive thickets of cherry-brush, interspersed with vetches, peavines and thimble-berry. Owing to its high altitude and the consequent earliness of the season there, we found it in all its vernal beauty. Not a hoof had been there that year previous to our coming.

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Upon our arrival there the time passed agreeably enough in preparations for the morrow,—more particularly in the cleaning of our arms, which had grown dusty upon the hill-roads; in reloading emptied cartridge-shells; and by Ballard, Sutcliff and myself in stripping a copse of young fir of its tender, fan-like boughs, and spreading them with method, and a knack born only of experience I found out, beneath our blankets; the same when completed forming a bed, the virtues of which are not to be too highly lauded. Then after an early supper an hour was spent in curious inquiry about the forest. The sun, low in the heavens, shone with that softened glory which is peculiarly our own upon the brushclad slopes and their sentinel pines as we returned. The broad, green meadow with its boulder-strewn confines was losing outline in the falling shadows of evening. The breeze which throughout the day had vibrated the woods into pæans of soul-stirring song had sometime before faded away in a long-sustained morendo. One by one the songs of the birds too became hushed, and the mountain day was done.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR UNWELCOME VISITOR.—A STRANGE DISCUSSION.
THE SEANCE AND ITS OUTCOME.

The crowning event of that evening I will not soon forget.

A shade of ennui had become apparent in the manner of our leisurely lounging about camp. Waring, stretched at ease upon his blankets, was poring over the pages of a book; yet his interest in it was not such but that both eye and ear were open to the attractions of his surroundings. Silas and Len were out on the meadow looking after the horses for the night; and to the rhythm of the driving of the stake-pins as they were reset, my pencil came to move in unison in the finishing of my sketch of the morning. Ballard, the younger Ferral, and Sutcliff, squatted upon some saddle-blankets, were deep in a game of cards. But Ferral alone showed interest in the game—perhaps it stood in his favor,—an occasional word only coming from the lips of the other two. Sutcliff in fact was more than usually abstracted of mood, and I caught him several times, while the cards were being shuffled, make a half-turn and glance over his shoulder toward the Butte, where the mysterious fire of the day twinkled redly in the gathering gray of the night. His thoughts to all ap-

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pearance were centred there rather than upon his playing. As the dusk deepened I desisted in my work and fell to admiring the massiveness of several sugar-pines some distance away, whose tops still glowed in the evening light against the gray of the eastern sky where the silver disc of the full moon shone in the low depression of the Gap.

Then suddenly I became aware of a sound alien to any of those to which my ear had become attuned, the approach of stealthy footsteps. At the same moment Sutcliff looked up, a surprised exclamation, half imprecation, breaking from him. I turned, and against the glow of the west saw silhouetted the form of a man approaching through the brush. Sutcliff had already recognized him; for me it required a closer approach into the open to know in him the half-breed we had met in the morning.

“Where, under the shining sun, do you come from?” asked Sutcliff, too surprised to wholly hide the, to him, unwelcome nature of the visit.

The Indian gave some explanation about night having overtaken him on his return from a jaunt to the Chiquita, and how, in his haste to reach the Gray clearing he had somehow drifted from the trail, until utterly at sea he had accidentally come upon our camp. Unable to understand the reason of his coming myself, I watched the lines of Sutcliff’s countenance for some ray of light it might afford me, and I saw at once that the narration found no credence with him.

“Lost be damned,” he muttered in an aside to me a moment later. “It’s a plagued sight easier to lose old Ling in his kitchen than one of these fellows in the mountains. Have you had your supper?” he asked, turning to the Indian.

“I’m not hungry,” the half-breed answered simply. “I always carry some bread and jerky with me.”

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Nevertheless Sutcliff placed before him the remains of our supper, and upon these the wanderer fell without ceremony.

A few moments later Faggerty too appeared, having hovered unseen upon the flanks of his charge until, with an air of contented repose, it had settled itself for the night upon a ridge about a mile below camp. With pipe in mouth and the half-blanket of brown vicuna held snugly about his shoulders, his gray, grizzled beard so completely covering his face as barely to afford space for two gray and very bright eyes, and a red and somewhat bulbous nose, he came out of the gloom of the forest like a spectre of the Sierra and took up a position by the fire in silence.

There now was an air of animation about camp wholly wanting a few moments before. We settled ourselves for the fuller enjoyment of the evening. Logs of generous proportions were heaped in great quantities upon the fire; which soon flared up and illumined the trunks of the surrounding pines, and deepened into inkiness the shadows playing among and above them. Then Sutcliff passed a small flask of some choice spirits around, and I my refilled cigar-case.

For an hour or more the conversation was of a light, bantering nature, in which the younger Ferral, Ballard and Sutcliff, again his normal self, particularly excelled, though we all dipped an oar occasionally. Gradually, however, the various threads focused themselves almost as if guided by some unseen hand, and, of all subjects for discussion in a mountain camp, it settled upon psychology. Psychology? Well, no. Psychology is a science, to be discussed in a scientific way. Our discussion bordered more on a medley as very few of us

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had given the subject even the most cursory attention, and would have found no mention here but for the fact that it led up to the one event of the evening which had relation to our tale.

For a few moments it was without order or sequence, each relating his ideas, beliefs, and experiences as suited him best. Then by a direct question Sutcliff unconsciously restored a semblance of order.

“What do you know of the soul, Roger?” he asked during a pause in the conversation, and with a smile of skepticism upon his lips.

For some reason Waring was looked upon by all present as an authority on the subject, possibly because of the fervor with which he had championed the cause.

For a moment it looked as if the gathering was doomed to disappointment.

“But very little, to be frank,” he replied rather curtly, a little offended I thought at our friend’s brusquerie and evident unbelief.

“Nevertheless,” interrupted Len Ferral with a quiet diplomacy, “you are not so soulless but that you feel you have a soul.”

“That’s just it,” Waring was moved to answer with a smile. “And feeling that way I have given the matter some thought and hold certain theories in consequence.”

“Come, then, let’s hear them,” again suggested Len, settling himself more comfortably for the better enjoyment of the impending discourse.

“Well, I don’t mind, I’m sure.”

Then after a moment’s thought:—

“You all believe in the Atomic Theory of course?”

We all did, judging from the general affirmation expressed.

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“In that admission, and irrespective of whether the atom be divisible or not, you are conceding the first premise of my stand, namely, the existence of matter in a form, or series of forms rather, other than that to which we are ordinarily accustomed to. For my firm belief is that soul is but an emanation of matter,—matter of a nature so fine as to be invisible to the human eye. Now, let us not forget that the moment we admit of this belief we are leaving the purely abstract behind and have entered the realm of the concrete. For matter is matter in whatever form we find it, and concrete.

“I will go a step further. Not only do I believe the soul, coupled, remember, always to spirit of course, the incomprehensible, God-given spark, the highest quality of the triune man, to be etherealized matter, but that that matter is ceaselessly etherealizing further; that it retains the human form, and—.”

“Why that?” here interrupted Sutcliff.

“Because throughout the realm of nature I recognize a continuity of purpose. Man’s form is not the result of chance but the result of law. Nor does the purpose of his creating end with death.”

“What makes you think that?”

“An appeal to my common sense. Step out into the open of that meadow yonder and let the stars answer you. Standing there and looking upward, can you for a moment doubt but that their grand mystery will some day stand revealed to you and me and all the world; and more particularly to the ardent soul panting for its wisdom? I for one have a greater faith in God.”

“But matter has weight,” suggested Sutcliff, giving the argument a slight turn.

“And so has the soul, so has of necessity everything

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that is created. Did I not just say that we have entered the field of the concrete? Those very atoms if they exist at all are as subject to weight as any of these mountains by which we are surrounded."

"Do you mean us to understand that the soul can be weighed?" asked the younger Ferral in open wonder.

"I do,—the means once provided. And let the wonder be not that it weighs so little but that it weighs so much. Do not forget that it is not so very long ago that the idea of weighing the elements was scoffed at. Yet not only is this done to-day but an even more imponderable fluid is being meted and curbed, namely electricity."

"The thing sounds absurd just the same," remarked Ballard.

"Only in view of our present means and knowledge. Once the existence of the soul is more universally, and I may add more intelligently, acknowledged, and the attention of mankind becomes more centred upon the subject, I have every faith in the world that the thing will not only be found possible but that it will be done. The great trouble is, we let our senses too often play us false. We forget that they are limited in their capacities. We forget that everything mundane is comparative, no matter what it is. That is an unchangeable characteristic of the finite. We forget—if we think at all,—that there is but one absolute point in all the world, one superlative in all the Universe, God himself. Stop to reason. What means an inch, a foot, a mile, in distance that has no end? What an hour, a day, a year, in an eternity? These are all arbitrary terms born of man and his needs. And what possible conception of size and weight can we have in the face of the fact that as

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small a thing as a flea stands intermediate between the largest and the smallest known of animal life? Absolutely nothing. Just so in this matter. The animalculæ brought to light by the use of the microscope, and of which it takes, Heaven only knows, how many to make a point discernible to the naked eye, have weight just the same as has yonder Butte, though both are beyond our present means of intelligent weighing."

"Do you know," I interrupted, carried away by the plausibility of Waring's argument, and for the moment obtaining a fleeting glimpse of even greater possibilities, "that this may mean that the future could to some extent be foretold?"

"The Universe is as God made it, not as it may seem to us. As I have said, He is the one superlative point, and views all existence at a glance. He is all-permeating, all-embracing. For Him there is no future, as there is no past; there is only, as Lytton has said, "an ever-present *now*." I leave it to your good sense to say whose is the truer view; man's, lost in the shadows of earth, or His, from the pinnacle overlooking all life?—whose the more comprehensive estimate, ours, lying, we feel, so much nearer the great Fountain-head of Wisdom, or the barbarian's, on the lowest round of the human ladder?"

There was profound silence.

"What then are we to understand by the term future?" at last asked Ferral the elder.

"I do not go far astray, I think, in saying that the popular idea and acceptance of the word is the unformed in nature. My conception is somewhat different. The future to me is simply that portion of Creation,—and in the use of this word I include the entire Universe, the

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ordained field of man,—not yet within the pales of the knowledge of the individual. The moment any portion of this unknown world comes within the range of our understanding, it becomes what is known to us as the present, the past, and a fact. Now, the future, that is *our* future, is as much a fact to God and, in proportion, to the higher intelligences as the present is to us. For as we grow up in the various spheres of life, we become more and more Godlike; and as we become more and more Godlike we find that we have somehow absorbed more and more of the attributes of the Most High; among others these of all-permeation and the all-encompassing. And the fact remains that while we are sojourning here, all the spirits who have for ages past gone before are, each according to his understanding, enjoying the light of His presence at this very moment; proving, I hold, that, while not a part of *our* present, there is a general present of which this life is part, and, which is because of this connection if for no other reason, a fact. You understand? And it is, let me add, in every way as natural a life, and lies as much within the domain of natural law as any part of that life now within our grasp. The rugged peak that for ages raised its height in an unknown land existed none the less to the world at large because for a time it lay beyond the human ken.”

“Why then are the lines so absolutely drawn?” queried Sutcliff after another pause.

“Are they? That is a mooted question with me. I believe it rather a matter dependent upon the individual choice. If the light shines for you, and you persist in turning your back upon it, whether from ignorance or willfulness, whose fault is it that you see not the splendor

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of the sun. God courts investigation; he does not pro-trude his secrets upon us. It is our spirit of skepticism that proves the obstruction always. We look too much to the past and too little to the future."

"We are to infer, I take it, that the line of demarcation you allude to is that between the seen and the unseen—at death, in short?" asked Faggerty with a judicial air, turning to Sutcliff.

"Assuredly."

"That is but the limit of your senses, the line of those who have eyes yet see not, and have ears and yet hear not," resumed Waring. "Believe me, to the spiritually inclined the line is much more elastic, varying each day in fact with the wisdom gained. Intelligence and love mark the boundary. Faith buoys us up and on; and to the beauty, to the content of heart and serenity of mind born to them there is nothing on earth to compare."

"What are we to understand by the expression you have just used, the higher intelligences?"

"The souls of those who have gone before. Understand my conception of heaven is not orthodox. My idea is one of ceaseless development through an eternity of time, an endless perfecting with no hope of ultimate perfection. And strange, this thought is the great solace of my life. For the thought that the time will come, however remote at the present moment, when we will have absorbed all of wisdom there is about us, is abhorrent to me, and is only to be measured in its hopelessness by the one of annihilation. I enjoy the thought as I enjoy naught else, that there is always something to learn ahead."

"But if human, why do you emphasize by calling them 'higher?'"

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“Because of this. The one thing patent to all on earth is growth, first material, then mental and moral, and lastly spiritual. The theory of evolution is based upon it. We see it in the plant and animal life about us. But in the body, the material that is, there is a point where the development ceases and disintegration begins. Not so with the mind and soul. The old adage says that we are never too old to learn. Even death puts no bar. Here again we have the law of continuity. Mind is the kernel within the soul and is imperishable. And why? Because it is the home of the spirit, that spark of living fire breathed into us at birth by a loving God, the ego, which as it expands requires a cloak less and less material.”

“The thought is certainly elevating. Then you must think communion with the dead possible?”

“To some, yes; depending upon the stage of their mental, and their moral and spiritual activities, particularly the last. This has been proven beyond cavil. Why not? Thought is a repulsive force set into motion by the will, which, like sound, starts the lighter waters of the ether into waves, to leave an impress upon natures attuned in unison, and intelligent enough to interpret its meaning. I believe in affinity of mind as well as of matter. I believe, that from the moment mind first worked through the gross material to the point of self-consciousness in man, it forms an unbroken chain throughout the Universe with the present. I believe that along this channel comes all of wisdom that is vouchsafed us. The two points—the extremes,—are seemingly irreconcilable owing to a great disparity; but there is one point upon that chain where the difference is not so marked. That point is *death*. There the af-

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finitude is closest. And that has always been the point in dispute."

"What reason have you for your claim that at this point the change is slightest?" asked 'Len Ferral, poking a burning log absent-mindedly with his heel, and starting a glorious shower of sparks far up among the interlacing branches.

"Is the change greatest in you between the hours of retiring at night and your awakening in the morning, or between the days of your childhood and old age? I repeat, I have faith in the Law of Continuity. I can not believe that the change wrought by a moment of time—even though that moment marks the transition we call death,—is so radical as to rob us of all means of communicating with those we love on the opposite bank of the Styx. Growth is comparatively slow, as is apparent everywhere. We find no radical deviation anywhere in nature. I maintain, that our *means* of communication only have been changed; that instead of the organs of speech and hearing, and our sense of touch, we are forced to the use of other and higher means, less understood and, therefore, more liable to misapprehension. The means are there, however, and the gulf is to be bridged."

"And the means are—?"

"The use of the higher senses. Man, you know, is here endowed with the physical or objective senses, supposed to be five in number. I say 'supposed,' because it is a matter of dispute whether man is not possessed of more. Personally I believe, he is, but they are not purely objective. We may well call them the Transitional. The function of the physical sense is to receive and convey to the mind the suggestions and im-

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pressions of the outer world. Now, I have endeavored to make plain that the absorption of the wisdom stored throughout the Universe is progressive, just as it is here on earth; and for the absorption of these higher truths, which is wisdom, and for the intelligent understanding of this higher life, the soul is equipped with senses peculiarly its own. We have them here with us in the so-called subconscious faculties. We are aware of their existence in a way, but hardly as actualities. Nevertheless, they are. The faculty of perception which permits you to see the truth or fallacy of a proposition is as much a fact as is the sense which permits you to distinguish form and color. It is the corresponding sense of the soul. In its highest development it is but a step removed from what is known in common parlance as "second sight" or clairvoyance. Then there is that supersensitive sense of hearing known as clairaudience. And who of us at some time or other has not heard of or met with the high-strung nature that feels the approach of friend or foe some time before the actual appearance? These are simply so many words sent along the wires I speak of as possible of establishment. Life is complex. We do not weigh gold as we do iron, nor diamonds as we do clay. We change our method to accord with what we have to do. Just so must we do throughout life. The finer the truth to be received, the finer must be the instrument to receive it."

"But how are we to go to work? That is the next question."

"We must first of all learn to acquire a faith in man's higher destiny. We must turn toward the light. We must rid ourselves of that hardness that marks the man of little faith. We must go commune with nature so

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that her magic influence may work its charm. We must at times at least turn away from the things of earth to those on higher planes, to things spiritual. We must seek out the beauty which everywhere prevails. We must do everything which we feel will conduce to our moral elevation. We must do God's bidding in all things, be they large or small, and at all times; which simply means, as Christ taught, do your duty. Let us not go to church but two hours a week, but let us bask in His presence and that of higher things twenty-four in the day."

"But, man, are we to become hermits out and out?" laughed the younger Ferral.

"Not at all. Nor does anything I have said imply this. I say, enjoy yourselves here upon earth by every legitimate means at your command. That is God's wish or else he had not put you here and filled the earth with beauty. But let it be legitimate, by which I mean in accordance with the Higher Law. And believe me that in following out this course you are only preparing yourselves for a fuller appreciation of this earth life. Virtue is its own reward always. Any apparent incongruity lies simply in the trouble with so many of us, a want of balance. We are always at the one extreme or the other. The man of business has no time but for the chase of the almighty dollar; the man of leisure none but for the realization of his dreams of pleasure. There is no sphericity. If we would but preface the day with a thought to consequences, we and the world would be much better. Less of wrong would prevail, and less of remorse. And our lives would round out in the process."

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“And what is your idea of the nature of this life?” asked Len after a short pause.

“That it is one of sensation just as much as is this, a strict continuance of it in fact, but with all of blatant evil and wrong eliminated. Recall to mind each of you the moment of your keenest pleasure—I am sadly mistaking if you do not find it to have been one of mental or moral elation,—and let that mark for you the ebb of the possibilities of the life beyond death. You have but to desire it for you to follow there any trend toward the light of your moral or mental nature. Our every aspiration toward the ideal remains the same. If you find pleasure here in the pursuance of a branch of art, it will remain with you to continue that pleasure indefinitely and only intensified unnumbered times, in the world to come. If you admire the grace pictured in the human form, that appreciation will not be denied you either. With the lust of earth cut out, the emotion with which you will approach the subject will be chastened into one bordering on reverence; the emotion Heine can be conceived to have felt when he rested a reverent hand on budding womanhood and was inspired to write, ‘Thou art like a flower.’ Perversion there is impossible. That is due to the double polarity of life on earth.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“This. Who of us at some moment or other has not felt that two natures possess him?—the one, the evil, tying him to earth and its grovelling; the other, the good, prompting him on to better things, and whispering of the limitless possibilities within him? That is what I mean. I hold that the body is a battery charged in some way, and attracted and influenced by the other

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and greater batteries about him in things material, and that the soul is another and finer instrument, attracting through the sentiments to the higher order of things. Between these contending forces we vacillate; what we know as duty calling us upon the one side; that more attractive siren, inclination, beckoning on the other. Perversion is the consequence. And in this dual nature of our lives I plainly see the dove-tailing which connects our life upon earth with that beyond our present sphere,—really, I believe, one and the same. At death we sever the earthly circuit; its bonds no longer attract us excepting in so far as the soul wills, and our thoughts and desires forever turn upward and heavenward.

“Now, understand me when I speak of the severance of the ties of earth I mean the ties material. The bond of love binding soul to soul, whether inhabiting the body or out of it, still holds, for that is a tie supernal. You have heard about true marriages being made in heaven? Well, here is where they come in. But such bonds are not necessarily those existing between sweethearts, or man and wife. The love of a parent for a child, or the child for its parent; or the love of a brother for his sister, or a sister for a brother,—all are as cogent. These are simply so many variations, eddies you might liken them to, upon the bosom of that great current, *Love*, which makes the Universe one grand whole, and along which kindred minds may hold intercourse, no matter what distance lies between.

“In conclusion let me say that this is but a mere outline I am giving you. There are many little incidental byplays which go to modify the conditions I am essaying to describe for you, just as in our daily life much happens to disturb the even tenor of the ordained course.

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But they prove a bar to the novice only; the adept brushes them aside and bares the string, so that the melody he would play rings out to the world pure and clear."

He paused.

"It certainly is a wonderful life, this of ours," commented Len with a sigh, settling himself to greater comfort against the bole of the pine against which he reclined.

"There is another mode of communication open to those less sensitively organized," Waring continued a moment later. "I mean that of the trance. The medium enters at will into a trance state during which the soul withdraws, and the spirit or 'control' from beyond the borderland desirous of communicating with earth takes possession of the thus temporarily-vacated body, and through the use of the everyday organ of speech makes his or her wishes known. It is quite a common means."

"So I understand. But tied down to the ranch as I am, opportunity has never been offered me to investigate upon my own account," said Len, who seemed greatly interested in the discussion.

"It is an unsatisfactory means, I should say," I interrupted, "since the medium, as I am told, carries away no impressions of the after life."

"True. Or they are, at least, very dreamlike. But, by way of analogy, what impression of life as we see it can a babe be supposed to carry with it after a sojourn here of an hour or less? It takes time for impressions to grow to the point of retention."

"Impressions are instantaneous."

"They are comprehensible only where order exists. And order exists only in the mind capable of understanding the principles underlying the life of which those impressions are a part."

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“But you seem to forget that there is still a difference,” laughed the younger Ferral. “We are not babes.”

Waring laughed.

“What did I attempt to impress upon you earlier in my argument? That things mundane are comparative only. The mentally matured stage upon earth is the infantile in the world to come.”

“Have you had experience along these lines?” asked the half-breed, interested.

“I have,” returned Waring simply. “Several times I have been more than ordinarily successful in results while acting the role of a medium.”

“And here I’ve been chumming with you for years without the least intimation that your inclinations ran toward this outlandish channel, Roger,” said Sutcliff, with serious mien, eyeing our friend comprehensively.

“It is a phase of my life I say but very little about, knowing the popular prejudice. That nearest the heart of man is generally more or less in the nature of a religion, and is not to be bared to the jeering eyes of the crowd.”

“I understand,” I returned. “You might then have scruples against a semi-public display of your powers. I was about to suggest a seance in camp. The conditions are certainly all you could wish.”

Waring hesitated, and for a moment it appeared that a refusal was in order. But all were in favor of the project, one half for the diversion it would bring, the more serious-minded hoping for a successful issue of the experiment. Waring succumbed.

By a motion he requested the hand of his nearest neighbor on both his right and left, by a further signal signing the others to complete the chain thus begun.

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So we formed a ring about the fire, which had considerably abated from its first fiery fury. Even the half-breed was persuaded to join, though somewhat against his will.

As I have said, one half had entered into the game for the fun that was to ensue, and with the spirit of mischief uppermost, and this spirit manifested itself quite freely in the earlier stages of the experiment. But soon the serious portion of us affected it, and a hush of expectancy fell upon all. For a few moments no result followed, and we were nerving ourselves for the disappointment to come when a slight, involuntary twitching passed from the one to the other of us. It was very like a light battery shock. Others in quick succession followed. Turning my eyes curiously upon Waring I found his closed, and the muscles of his face working convulsively.

Suddenly he cast the hands he was holding from him with an unintentional violence, rose quickly to his feet, and, with head erect and hand moving in imposing gesture,—two traits wholly foreign to him,—he poured forth in stentorian tones, and in a language unknown to me, a volume of excoriating invective upon the half-breed. For several minutes this continued, each moment growing in dramatic power, the entire party of us firing with the terrible strength manifested in tone and movement. Then he suddenly ceased, trembled spasmodically, and then slowly opened his eyes like one just awakening from sleep.

“If you can make sense of that,” he remarked quietly, pressing his eyelids with his finger-tips as he settled back to the normal man, “you can do more than I can.”

There was a surprised silence for several minutes;

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for with whatever thought we had each approached the incident which had just closed so strangely and unexpectedly, there now prevailed but one feeling, and that was an unshaken faith in the genuineness of it all.

As usual it was Sutcliff who was the first to speak.

"It is a lingo beyond me," he remarked with a shrug of the shoulder.

"And me," assented the younger Ferral.

"What did you make of it, Faggerty?" asked Waring, turning to the frowzled herder of the Ferrals.

Squatted by the fire, his knees in close proximity to his bearded chin, his fingers tightly interlocked about his ankles, and his eyes in thought upon the fire, Faggerty was smoking with more than his usual assiduity. His ideas of life had just been disturbed by the related incident to their very foundations. For forty years he had laughed to scorn all thoughts of a life beyond this; had worshipped with much parade at the shrine of the material, and more particularly at the shrines of two gods of his own erecting, Burns and Ingersoll. For like so many of the thoughtless he had caught but the superficial, and had failed to discern the deep spirituality breathing in the works of at least the former; it being a restriction of nature that a man can grasp but so much of another's nature as he himself possesses and can respond to. For the first time since their installation they trembled upon their pedestals. He smoked on oblivious of the question that had been put to him.

But a repetition of the appeal awoke him to his surroundings.

"Indian," he answered laconically.

I learnt on later inquiry that Faggerty had spent many years in the mountains, and mingling much with the

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Indians on the Fork as well as elsewhere, he had come to be master of their language to quite an extent.

“Indian?” we echoed incredulously.

“Mono,” he affirmed with a shake of the head.

“I just caught enough, boys, of the pesky palaver to satisfy me that I am right,” he explained a moment later.

“It was something about a murder committed in these mountains years ago. But, here; where is the half-breed? Ask him; he should know.”

We turned in a body to the point in the circle where a moment before our unwelcome guest had stood.

But to our amazement Joe was gone.

CHAPTER VII.

WE CLIMB TO THE BUTTE.

WHEN I awoke the next morning it was to find my ears assailed by a fearful volley of oaths, punctuated at intervals by another sound, the nature of which in my then half-stupefied state of mind I failed to recognize. Raising my head I found the day just breaking and a hush upon the dusky forest that is simply indescribable. Excepting the profaning ones mentioned not a sound broke in upon the silence but the faint, distant roar of the Black Laurel, which filled all the Basin and yet seemed in no wise to impinge upon the stillness. I found, too, a bright fire burning where only the red embers of our campfire had lain on retiring the night before, and that the younger Ferral was up and around. More; I found that the string of expletives came from him, and that he was most oddly occupied in kicking the only coffee-pot the camp boasted of possessing about its precincts.

“Hello, there, Sam Ferral,” I heard Sutcliff shout from his blankets, intuitively recognizing the danger threatening his camp-conveniences, and assuming an excited sitting posture, “are you gone demented?”

The interruption was most timely. With one last swing of the foot—which happily missed its mark,—

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Ferral paused, picked up the object of his assaults, held it up on a level with his eye, and burst into a laugh.

"What a fool man is at best," was his philosophic comment.

"What on earth was the matter, Sam?" asked Sutcliff, as he now leisurely drew on his boots.

"Matter?" with a slight return of his ire. "Why the cussed thing toppled over just as the water was at the point of boiling. Matter enough that, eh?"

"But say, Sam," spoke up Waring with an exasperating sangfroid from another part of camp, where he lay snuggled cosily in his bed-clothes, "I'm surprised at you, to say the least. A man with your experience ought to have known better than to set a pot on the apex of a pyramid of burning sticks."

"Too true," retorted the other. "But do we always profit by experience? Do we not in fact tempt fate at every turn? Does the singed moth forever shun the candle? Nay, are you not a living example to the contrary yourself? But a short year ago I remember Miss Rivers giving you the go-by, when you were heart-broken, and lost flesh; and here on your return from your last term at college we find you as deeply enmeshed as ever."

There was a hearty laugh at Waring's expense at this. For where ordinarily reticent about matters affecting his heart, in an unguarded moment he had let slip enough of a strange infatuation that possessed him for a pretty face and form he had had a passing glimpse of on a crowded street of the City for the boys to build surmises on that came perilously near the truth.

"That was a great idea of Waring's though," interrupted Len Ferral composedly from the warmth of his

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blankets some moments later, his fingers interlocked beneath his head. "I mean that of returning for another course. He'll be a civil engineer of note some of these days, mark my word."

"He'll never be a civil engineer in God's green world," affirmed Sutcliff, placing the refilled coffee-pot by the fire. "He's too uncivil by half. You've never had him lay it out to you like a Dutch uncle as I have time and again or you had not erred so profoundly."

"But it was always with good and sufficient reason, you will have to allow," laughed Waring.

"Allow hell!"

"The thing is," I now interrupted, straining my eyes to descry if possible the bird across the meadow which had a moment before suddenly thrilled the morning quiet with a strain of liquid music,—“the thing was in the carrying out of your idea, Roger. We all have our moments of inspiration, but how few of us ever put into practice or execution the brilliant suggestions which sometimes attend such moments.”

"I've an idea," broke in Sutcliff as he deftly turned a flap-jack over the fire, "that it is time to rise and get ready for breakfast—an idea, while not brilliant, I hope to see you put into execution."

With a laugh we arose and lounged over the fire to warm ourselves, watching with pleased eyes the preparations for breakfast.

"Come, you'll find soap and towel down by the creek. Off."

"This," I remarked a moment later, again hanging over the fire, for the air was sharp at that early hour, and rubbing my hands up and down my trousers' legs in my enjoyment, "this is living. Somehow we folks of

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the City hug an idea that the country simply vegetates, where the truth is that you get the very cream of life. Now, yonder tints of the rising sun upon the mountain,—are they not enough to please the eye of the most exacting? It is simply grand, with that dark stretch of slumbering forest at its foot.”

“And is there not a charm unspeakable,” interrupted the irrepressible Sutcliff, buttering his pan for another cake, “even in Ballard’s snoring, which one can well imagine would be lost under other surroundings, say a room ten by twelve? Hey there, Craigie, arise in your might and glory and come to grub.”

Ballard now appeared yawning cavernously, with hair unkempt and eyes half closed. The temptation to dally over the fire was not to be withstood, and for some moments, with palms open to the blaze and legs outstretched, he dodged the rising smoke, now wafted to every point of the compass in turn by a rising breeze from the Gap. Being persuaded to perform his morning’s ablutions too, he soon returned, when we all sat down to breakfast.

The sun was just coming into view as we finished. Then Waring and myself went out into the meadow to re-stake the horses, leaving Ballard to the tender mercies of Sutcliff and the younger Ferral, who remained behind to “clean up camp.” On our return we found all in readiness for the start. A lunch of bread and canned meats had been prepared by the thoughtful Silas, and the question now up for decision was that of the distribution of arms. This, however, was a matter quickly settled.

“I will take my Winchester,” said Sutcliff as he strapped his cartridge-belt about him and sheathed the bowie he was never found without; “a deer might show up, or, who knows, a bear. By-the-way, Ballard, have

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you ever seen a grizzly or cinnamon in all his forest glory, feeding, say, in a manzanita-thicket, or demoralizing an ant-nest? No? Well, dog on me, if we don't give you the chance before you return to the stultifying influences of that cesspool of iniquity, the City. You just follow us some day; eh, Waring? We will very likely have the opportunity of showing you some of the footprints he leaves on the sands of time, if not a sight of old bruin himself, before the day is over. I once came upon one that measured fourteen inches across, and the big toe was off too. Say, talk about sport! If a good bear-hunt don't take the cake I give it up. Of all the boys about, I think Morrow the coolest thing at the business. Here one morning three years ago he fell in unexpectedly with a whole family in a tamarack-grown gulch under the Pin-Cushion. Instead of taking to his heels as any ordinary man would have done, and I for one would not have blamed him were it not for the suicide of the move, Jack gave a whistle of surprise and then began to pump his Winchester like the very Nick, until the old she-bear and the two yearlings were done for, and the old he-one had taken to the brush. That was a morning's sport for you. Carpenter just delights in telling the story."

Ballard and I took the rifles we had brought with us; Silas, the old Sharp, and I have no doubt the full complement of ammunition which the evening before had been the subject of so much ironical remark. In addition to the large Colt's revolver he always carried, Waring contented himself with the little twenty-two, as it was light and he hoped to fall in with a covey or two of mountain quail or possibly a grouse up on the mountain.

Faggerty had some time before departed into the forest to intercept his band, which he knew would break camp

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early and work up in our direction,—we could in fact at the moment hear the distant tinkling of the leaders' bells,—and we had but to bid adieu to our friends, the Ferrals, when we stood ready for the start.

The choice of route we left to Sutcliff, and he now led straight for the mountain. This necessitated a descent of perhaps half-a-mile into a shadowy canyon, in whose depths we crossed a stream, the banks of which were dense with a vegetation almost tropical in its luxuriance. Then our ascent began. It was gradual enough at first, lying through an open forest scattered with low-lying thickets of snow-brush, above which the trunks of the pines arose in innumerable columns in support of the sun-kissed canopy overhead.

We moved slowly, Ballard and myself a little in the lead, yet taking our pace from Sutcliff and Waring, who were better acquainted with the arduous nature of the work ahead and were guiding us accordingly.

We had barely travelled a mile when Ballard came to a sudden halt.

“See there,” he whispered hoarsely, turning and pointing up the mountain-side.

A fine buck was browsing amongst the brush barely a hundred paces from where we stood. He was as yet unaware of our advent upon the scene for our approach had been quiet, and what little air was astir came more from our right and wafted all scent of our presence away.

Sutcliff's eyes sparkled at the sight and his fingers twitched nervously about the guard of his rifle. But he was too much the sportsman not to consider the shot as individually Ballard's and he now whispered him:—

“Here's the chance of your life, Craig. Take a good aim, not too long, mind you, fire, and he is yours. Dog

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on me if there isn't the finest antlers I've seen in years."

Ballard turned and raised his rifle. But what was it that so suddenly possessed him? His frame began to tremble as in a fit of ague, and the muzzle of his weapon vacillated in a manner that was remarkable if nothing more. Try as he would he seemed unable to regain control of himself. Finally in sheer despair he grounded his rifle and turned to Sutcliff with features ashy pale, and with the perspiration exuding from every pore.

"For Heaven's sake," he cried in desperation, "you shoot, Sutcliff."

But Sutcliff was in the midst of a spasm of uncontrollable laughter, and before he could recover himself sufficiently to follow the request the buck had taken the alarm and was bounding away over the brush and through the woods at his best speed, so that the parting shot he gave him, while a good one, had no other effect than that of accelerating his departure.

Sutcliff now seated himself upon a rock and, with rifle across his knees, indulged in another fit of laughing, a fit so prolonged and hearty that from ashen-pale Ballard's face turned a shame-faced red.

"What the devil was the matter," inquired the poor fellow. "I swear I never felt that way before."

"No, no; I guess not," laughed Sutcliff, stamping his foot in his glee, "—no, I guess not. Why? Because you never met a buck before among his natural surroundings, boy. Dog on me if I've had as much fun in a year! No, no, Craigie. If ever you return to that centre of fraud and machination, the City, tell the inquiring public that among the ailments of your younger days you once had a touch of buck-ague."

We resumed our way. At the distance of about three

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miles from our point of starting the trail grew steep and rugged. The straight reddish-purple trunks of the sugar-pines and the brownish-grey of the firs, between which we had many charming foregrounds presented us in the sappy greens of the low deciduous growth, still retained their magnificent proportions, but the ground was more broken, the streams sang in sharper keys, and tumbled boulders began to strew the slopes at frequent intervals. Wild cherry intertwined the snow-brush, and here and there a phlox or lupin gave a dash of color to the green tangle of fern and wild thyme growing among the rocks, or carpeting the dim trail which we were pursuing.

A change in vegetation due to altitude is much more quickly to be observed than when that change is due to difference of latitude only. In other words, we might pass over several degrees of latitude without noting the differences in the flora of a country that a thousand feet of altitude might bring. So, when after half-an-hour more of climbing we came to another bench, an even more marked change became apparent. The forest scattered, and the trees lost in size. Boulders, gray, rounded, and streaked a thousand shades of tawny browns and yellows by the percolation of the waters of early spring, strewed our path on every side. Scrub-oak and chinkapin, graced with an occasional clump of blue-brush—another of that extensive family the so-called California lilacs—choked out the more valuable underbrush of the lower levels.

Here I noticed for the first time that our little party had been deserted by Silas, how far back on the trail I had no way of telling. It proved, however, as I made the desertion known, a matter of unconcern to both Waring and Sutcliff, who were better acquainted with the ways of this human oddity.

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“Don't waste a thought upon him,” was Waring's lone comment, as he was about to resume the trail. “He is no tenderfoot.”

Here, too, a moment later Sutcliff came upon the signs of a doe, and while he and Ballard went reconnoitering, Waring and myself continued slowly on our way.

As we skirted the side of a wooded canyon that lay a thousand feet below us and re-echoed to the subdued roaring of a hidden torrent, and while clambering over some brush which opposed our way, Waring's mountain-trained ear caught the note of alarm of a mountain-quail just ahead. Signing me to silence and immobility we awaited its appearance. In a moment we were greeted by the sight of the mother-bird in the lead of her callow brood, clucking and making as much ado as could well be, the male bringing up the rear. The ground upon which we stood was the disintegrated granite, very yielding beneath the feet, and I found it necessary to cling with one hand to the scrub-oak in the clefts of some rocks in order to maintain my balance, holding my rifle with the other. In the attempt to secure a better footing beneath him prior to picking off the male bird, the stones beneath Waring's feet gave way; the mother-quail gave one quick note of alarm, and while the parent-birds took swift flight, the chicks on the instant, and as if by magic, disappeared in the low-lying brush.

“It is just as well so,” said Waring with a sigh of relief. “It was really too interesting a sight to disturb.”

Then turning and pointing down the canyon he said:—

“It was in here that we came upon the body of old Wolupa, the Indian; that is, a little higher up, just under

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that rock you see projecting there, and over which he seemed to have been hurled."

We now clambered through an opening upon our right, and having regained the crest once more fell in with Sutcliff and Ballard, whose reconnoitering likewise had been in vain.

Rock formations now became the dominant feature of the landscape. Our path lay over the comparatively open surface of a ridge or rib of the mountain which led clean to the summit. Where the sterile soil lay in sufficient depth to sustain life at all, it generally comprised the oak-brush so often referred to, chinkapin, and a dwarfed manzanita, thickets of which we met acres in extent. Here and there a bunch-grass would sparsely dot the white, blinding surface of the open stretches, varied occasionally by the addition of a mariposa lily, a yellow lupin, or a rose-colored fox-glove. The timber scattered more and more, and its now gnarled appearance spoke eloquently of the battle for a bare existence that was being waged here through the centuries with the frost geni that hover about the mountain throughout the year. The wind grew cold and penetrating, and chilled me to the bone. And as for the silence, ever growing deeper as we advanced, it here reached the point of savage brooding, and its effect upon the general spirits was plainly in evidence, for not even Ballard had a word to say.

It was now about ten o'clock, with still a thousand feet and more of an ascent ahead before we could reach the crest and the burning pine, then being fanned into living flame and plainly visible from our point of observation. Neither Ballard nor myself had partaken as heartily of breakfast as had the others of the party be-

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cause of ignorance of what lay before us, and of the necessity that exists of laying in very often in anticipation of an appetite as of appeasing any existing one. This fact, coupled with the bracing atmosphere we were inhaling and the strenuous exercise we were undergoing, had developed in us a ravenous hunger, whose incipency we had felt already some miles in the rear. We now made our wants known.

We withdrew to a copse of young fir in a depression on our right where a little meadow disclosed itself, and here, seated upon the brown carpet of needles, we opened the lunches and fell to with the heartiest gusto. A very few minutes sufficed for their disappearance, when, first quaffing of an icy stream that gurgled near, and where I gathered a few scarlet columbines among the whitened rocks, we once more stood in readiness, this time for the final spurt.

As I have said, the greater portion of our way so far had been up a sinuous rib which led clear to the summit of the mountain. But our further progress up it at this point was debarred by a sudden increase in pitch bordering on the perpendicular, and the interposition of a rocky surface, hard and polished as a mirror. The only feasible route visible from our point of view was up the moraine in which we found ourselves. And that, to say the least, was far from promising. It seemed about equally to consist of brown brush-oak and loose fragments of white granite, both of which were lost in the upper reaches in drifts of glistening snow. To add to the danger this debris was not made up of the rounded boulders which hitherto had strewn our path, but was sharply pointed and edged, just as it had slid from the walls on either side when it became de-

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tached through the action of the frost or some other elemental agency. The prospect was enough to dampen the ardor of the best of us.

Yet strange to say such was not the effect upon us. On the contrary we felt ourselves buoyed by a hope we could not understand, in such utter disproportion was it to the task we had in hand.

“Courage,” cried Waring, springing forward, rifle in hand, his voice ringing with an unwonted excitement and his eyes aglow with a strange light, “—courage, boys. We do not return until our feet have touched yonder summit. Follow me: I will show you a way.”

It is said that distance lends enchantment to the view. How then when distance fails in its office of robing the scene in gorgeous hues, as in this case, and you come face to face? We found the way even worse beset than we had anticipated. Every step of Waring's forward I expected to be his last and a retour inevitable. But strangely enough every step forward, whether to the right or to the left, was ever the right one. Was he being led by an unerring instinct, or by some unseen hand? A thousand feet thus of the most stupendous climbing, over obstacles enough to discourage the boldest, and we gained the lower edge of the field of snow. Here our progress again became comparatively easy as it sustained our weight with ease. A few moments more and, worn but triumphant, we stood upon the highest pinnacle of the Butte.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENCHANTED NOOK AND ITS TENANT.

UPON the summit we dropped our arms and sank exhausted upon the ground. For fully five minutes, too occupied in our momentary discomfort of body, not a word passed between us.

But it was not in the nature of Sutcliff to remain silent long.

“Well?” he questioned as he sat silhouetted against the blue of the sky, the broad brim of his hat hugging his temple, and his crimson neckerchief flying in the wind. “What do you think of it? Vegetating? Well, I reckon not. There’s no denying one thing, however, whatever other thoughts may come, and that is that it is blamed hot work. But no matter. If a search of health, mountain air, and scenery has brought you here, my friends, behold them in exhaustless supply before you.”

It was indeed so. Charms the most varied, and, therefore, the more indescribable, lay around us in a superb panorama. Far below to the west stretched the dark sea of bristling pine which that morning and the day before we had traversed. Beyond, according as they were near or far, the broken ridges of the foothills arose

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in shades of smoky blue; and yet further away, the smiling, straw-tinted plains—veins of the palest blue marking their wooded streams,—stretching far to the north and south; and to the west, a hundred miles as the crow flies, to where a dash of the faintest gray marked the hills of the Pose, the Cantua, and the two Panoches.

To the east the scene was of another type and even more imposing. The broad, deep canyon of the Chiquita there swept down in a dark, majestic curve to where the titanic walls of the Kaiser directed it into the gorge of the San Joaquin. In the haze of the further distance rose the serrated peaks of the Jackass, and the sublimer Minarets. But I fail most signally to describe.

The spot upon which we stood was a very wilderness of granite cut into many fantastic shapes by wind and weather. But little timber stood around and that little was much gnarled and distorted. One of these monarchs, dishevelled, and blasted years before by a lightning stroke, stood in the last stages of decay. The largest there, and black and grim, it was fast being consumed by fire. As I watched it I saw Sutcliff beneath its flaming branches reconnoitering, but I felt myself too fatigued at the moment to bear him immediate company.

But a hail from him brought us instantly to our feet.

“There is something peculiar about this,” he explained on our approach. “This tree has been fired intentionally and with the express view of attracting attention. Whether ours or not I can not, of course, say; but someone’s.”

“What makes you conclude this?” asked Ballard.

“A process of simple reasoning. For instance here are impressions made by feet other than our own. And

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note, they come from a certain point on the brow of the mountain, and return as directly to it. There has been no hesitation. Now, what are we to conclude from this simple fact but that the party came for a fixed purpose, that purpose to fire the tree, and why fire the tree if not to attract attention?"

"Your reasoning is good," returned Waring, seriousness in his voice.

"The question remains, whose attention was it he wished to attract?"

"I can not say, of course. But the fact as indubitably remains that he has attracted ours."

Sutcliff stood in deep thought for a moment.

"Come," he said with a sudden arousing, "there is but one way out of the puzzle. Let us follow the footprints."

He shouldered his rifle and slowly followed the impressions to the eastern brow. Here he paused.

"They are quite fresh," he remarked; "made since the storm."

Then he began the descent. It was by no means as arduous as had been the ascent up the western slope. Though nearly as steep, there seemed here more of a natural pathway; often, it is true, leading over rocky faces and spurs on the mountain, where the trail became labyrinthine and we lost the guiding impressions for the time, always, however, to come upon them again on the softer ground that invariably opened up beyond.

Halfway down Sutcliff came to a sudden stop.

"Say, am I mistaking, or is there the slightest possible film of smoke rising from that timbered bench below us?"

We gazed intently.

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"You are not," spoke up Waring. "There certainly is a smoke rising."

"And that glimmer of blue among the pines? Dog on me, it's a lake. There must be someone camped there. Come on, boys," he now shouted, wildly bounding down the declivity at the imminent risk of a broken limb, followed by Ballard. Waring and myself, while quite as excited, followed with greater care. In a very few minutes we were at the base of the incline, and once there we looked around.

It was one of the most beautiful nooks my eyes have ever rested upon, comprising a flat of some six or seven acres in the shape of a perfect horseshoe and overshadowed by as fine a forest as ever stood, in the cool of whose overhanging branches a breeze stirred into a gentle and seductive life a luxuriant tangle of ferns and thimbleberry. On three of its sides arose great granite domes whose clefts, and the miniature canyons between, also, were densely wooded with the pine, the fir and the aromatic cedar. On the fourth—the straight side,—it lost itself in an abrupt drop into the canyon of the Chiquita, affording there a vista beyond of distant peaks in gray and white that was sublime.

But what surprised us most was to find a little lake gemming its bosom.

"I always suspected the existence of such a body in here though from the lay of the country," said Sutcliff, lost in admiration.

It was but shortly past the hour of noon, yet the shadow of the mountain above us already fell across the glade in slowly-lengthening points. In another half-hour the entire place would lay beyond the reach of the sunlight.

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“Jove, but it’s a pretty spot,” ejaculated Sutcliff. “But, say, where did that smoke come from we saw from above?”

An interested search was instituted, and our surprise was complete when after a short quest we came upon a small log-cabin with a shake roof, an open doorway, and with a pale smoke issuing from a chimney rudely built of sticks and stones, at the foot of the western dome, where a little stream of crystal clearness sang its way over a pebbly bed.

“Is the place haunted do you think,” exclaimed Sutcliff lightly as he led the way to the open door, where he knocked upon the sill of the threshold.

No answer came from within, but a chipmunk scurried by us with a chirp of affright and a spasmodic flip of his tail.

“May we enter then? Silence gives consent.”

Without more ado he entered and we followed. All was dark within. But a sunbeam entering through a chink in the wall showed where an opening had been cut for the double purpose of letting in the light and air. This Sutcliff, the sense of mystery growing upon his nerves, hurriedly opened, and by the aid of the flood of sunlight that entered we looked around us. It was a chamber that was not larger than ten by twelve, and a fireplace, in which a cedar log lay smoldering, took up one entire end. A table stood at the other, and beneath it a rough bench. By the side opposite the window a cot had been constructed and upon it lay a man,—dead, as the pallor and rigidity of his features denoted. Yes, dead; and our surprise was the greater when in him I recognized my uncle, and Waring the stranger he had met two years before in the Flats.

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER STRANGE EPISODE. WE RETURN TO CAMP.

“FOR God’s sake let me out of here,” exclaimed Sutcliff springing for the door.

As you can very well imagine it was a moment of general mental paralysis, when to receive a suggestion was to follow it. Mechanically, therefore, it was that we followed Sutcliff, to stand for some moments in irresolution without. And various the emotions that seized upon us there. Shaken in every fibre of his being, yet holding a steady control over himself through sheer exercise of will, Sutcliff moved about uneasily, punctuating every few steps with a perturbed shake of the head, followed uncertainly in the rear by Ballard, who trembled like a mountain aspen. Waring, while silent and pale was at the same time cool and composed; and myself felt a vague sense of uneasiness which had several times that morning, and in varying degrees of intensity, possessed me, depart and a calm, mild and warming like a breath of early summer, permeate my whole being.

I looked around with a sense of elation I had never felt before. I seemed to see with a preternatural clearness. The shadow of the mountain enfolded the floor of the glade, the crests of the domes and the pines alone

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bathing in the sunlight. The stream by the side of the cabin rippled softly and unendingly; the breeze of the afternoon dallied with the tall ferns and the luxuriant mat of thimbleberry beneath the oaks and buttonwoods on its broken banks, among whose branches a lone robin appeared and made the solitude of the place only the profounder by the contrast its occasional song afforded. The supreme beauty of it all touched me as I had never been touched before.

Sutcliff went to the brook, and stretched at length drank of its waters, followed by Ballard.

“This has become the mountain of mystery, Waring,” he remarked on his reapproach, proffering me the goblet which he had then taken from his pocket, opened and filled, and which I drained to the last drop. “Old Wolupa first, and now—but it’s no use talking; it simply beats my time.”

“And mine, too, if the truth is to be told,” returned Waring, passing his hand over his brows as if to restore a little order to the riot of thought then reigning within.

“And what do you make of this?” Sutcliff continued a moment later with a sudden accession of interest, pointing to a heap of mold which had the appearance of having just been turned.

We drew nearer. I believe that for a moment Sutcliff did not quite take in the full significance of the object, possessed as he was with the thought that it was the mouth of a shaft. But its careful regularity, and the thoughtful care with which the walls had been cut and smoothed, impressed me at once. It was a newly-dug grave. The pick and the shovel that had been employed in its making stood up against the nearest corner of the cabin.

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Sutcliff, with another shake of the head, turned away, while Ballard mumbled a few words which I interpreted to mean our immediate departure.

But Waring by this time was again master of himself.

“No,” he said firmly; “not until we have given him burial. That he wanted such is plain enough, even if common decency did not demand it. Now, courage and follow me.”

The few moments of respite had done their work of at least partially restoring the general equilibrium, and we now entered with an air of conviction to give the room a closer scrutiny than we had found possible in that first moment of bewilderment. Several cooking utensils stood upon the hearth-stone and in the ashes of one corner of the fireplace, while the rough, mud-chinked walls were hung with various articles of wearing apparel, a rifle, and several cheap prints in colors. Carpeting the earth-floor by the cot's side lay the pelt of a great mountain-lion. Upon the table stood a cup and saucer just as when pushed back after their use, a candlestick with the candle burnt down to the socket, a flute, some music, paper and writing materials, a diary and several books. These last took Waring's immediate attention. Burke's "On the Sublime and Beautiful," Locke's "On the Working of the Human Understanding," "The Unity of Truth," and Drummond's "Natural Law" were the titles of a few, and would have given some insight into the character of the man stretched there upon his cot had other evidence been wanting. But intuitively we—that is Waring and myself,—seemed to read the whole story. Death to him had been a welcome and expected guest, for no sign of a struggle showed upon his countenance or in distortion of body.

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Stretched his length, with the blanket turned down at the waist, he looked but for the pallor of his features and the iciness of his touch as if steeped in profound slumber only. His hands lay loosely interlocked upon his breast as if at the last moment they had been extended in an embrace until, nerveless, they had fallen there, never to move again. His countenance wore a look of unspeakable calm, an air of joy one might almost say, and which, strangely enough, seemed a reflex of the emotions which at the moment possessed me, standing there in his dead presence. In a few words, the final dissolution had been a release to a soul wearying of its sojourn in its house of clay.

It took the united efforts of our party to wrap him in his blanket and lower him into the grave which he had prepared for himself. Then, with heads bared to the heavens, and with truly none of that depression of spirits which so ordinarily accompanies such ceremonies, we covered him with the cool, moist earth. What a strange, life-giving sensation was this of ours which gave us as never before to understand that our friend, and my uncle, had not died but simply gone before.

And now we come to an occurrence stranger than any so far recorded. While Sutcliff and Ballard were completing the filling in of the grave, Waring and myself again re-entered the cabin, this time to inventory its contents. I had taken down the rifle and had lain it upon the table with several other articles, intending to take them with us upon our return, and, with my thoughts far removed on the strange occurrences of the day, was fumbling with the diary I have mentioned when a letter dropped out from between its pages. There was nothing unusual of course in this, but imagine my surprise and

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stupefaction when, on the point of returning it to its place of keeping, I found it superscribed to Roger Waring.

Yes, Roger Waring; and—surprises it appeared were not to cease,—dated but two days before; the morning in short on which we had driven forth from Shepherd's Rest and not one of us could have told with certainty just where the evening of that or any of the succeeding days might have found us. For, as you know, we had mapped out no itinerary beforehand. We had departed from the ranch with no particular goal in view, and most certainly with no intention of climbing this Butte, yet here was a letter in a secluded nook of a mountain comparatively little known addressed to one of our party, and with a certain air of assurance awaiting his coming. And he had come; that was the strangest part of it. And, tracing backward, by what a flimsy chain of circumstances had he come? It can easily be realized that the incident threw us into a chaos of thought from which at the moment there seemed no extricating.

Nor was our bewilderment lessened in any degree by its text, for it read as follows:

" My young friend :

" Rose, my angel wife, tells me that you and your friends start this morning on a trip of pleasure for the mountains. You have no fixed point in view, but she will guide you to the Basin. To-morrow you will enter it, and I must climb to the crest of the mountain and fire the dead pine by which I am to obtain your attention. When you find me I will have been dead but a few hours; yet bury me; it is her wish as well as mine to see the poor clay

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she so loved on earth decently laid away beneath the surface.

“The last duties to the dead completed, you will take with you my rifle and flute, my books, my diary and papers. My rifle send to my son, Walter Carrington, Pleasanton, Yolo Co.; my books to Mrs. Eve Early, Alameda; and my diary and papers to Ida.—Rose breathed to me that your thoughts are centered in each other, and we are content. My flute you will retain as a souvenir from one who sought to do his duty to the world, how imperfectly, the pages of my diary will tell. Read them, and may you profit from the lessons they may contain.

“And now adieu. With death between, Rose and I will still guide, as in life here, the hearts, the minds and the fortunes of our children.

THOMAS CARRINGTON.”

Were these the ravings of a mind gone mad, we asked ourselves again and again. So much, on the face, appeared the purest hallucination. Yet it might not well be, in the face of all the testimony we had had at every step of that day's strange progress. True, there was much we did not understand; but is there not much on the other hand, in this world we do not understand, or can ever hope to understand? A perusal of the diary and papers no doubt would afford us light to much that was enigmatical to us now. But for that we must bide our time; the present was all too short. With an effort we gathered the various articles mentioned in the strange missive to lay them together upon the table.

We had barely finished when Sutcliff entered, followed by Ballard.

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“Come,” he said hurriedly, “we must be off. The sun is sinking fast and we have a long trail ahead.”

Just then he caught sight of our strange array.

“What are you going to do with these?” he asked.

“Take them with us in compliance with his wishes,” returned Waring soberly.

“Wishes,” echoed Sutcliff; “whose wishes?”

“The dead,—Carrington’s uncle—the man you have just buried. But here, read for yourself.”

Roger handed him the note,—I will always maintain for the moment’s quiet amusement the study of our friend’s countenance during its perusal would afford him. But if so his pleasure was short-lived, for Sutcliff almost immediately began to shake his head as was his way when sorely perplexed, and returned the writing but half-read, I thought, or at least but imperfectly understood.

“Here we are, Waring,” he remarked in a shame-faced way; “dog on me if I can make head or tail to it. I repeat, it beats my time. But we can argue that out on the trail; we have no time to waste now.”

We distributed the various articles amongst us with the view of not overburdening any one individual. The books I divided between Ballard and myself. The flute Waring unjointed and thrust into the bosom of his shirt. The diary he, too, retained. Sutcliff was asked to take the music—which Waring desired to preserve also,—and to relieve Waring at times of the rifle, the conveying of which in connection with our own over the rough trail was in truth no small matter. Thus equipped we stood ready for the return.

Loitering for a few moments, bareheaded, over the grave I took one last look around. The lake lay smooth

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as a mirror reflecting with a miraculous clearness the environing pines, and the blue, cloudless ether overhead. The spot lay by this time in complete shadow, the domes alone being tipped with the gold of day. To the east where the sudden shelving into the canyon of the Chiquita afforded that sublime prospect, through the hushed atmosphere of the afternoon, the many peaks beyond arose in pale violet-grays and ochres, half hid in high, imposing cloudbanks of immaculate white. It was a scene to fill one with wonder and a veneration of God, and I fell to conjecturing by what possible chance it was the hermit had been led to choose a site surrounded by such incomparable scenic beauty.

Then we started.

The ascent of course we found more fatiguing than the descent of noon, and the sun was but an hour high, as Sutcliff asserted, with palm open at arm's length measuring between the orb and the horizon, when we gained the summit.

"All's well so far, boys," he said cheerily, for a moment pausing to regain his breath. "If by sundown we reach the meadow where we lunched to-day, why, the rest of the way is easy enough. Now then."

He led the way over the snow, following the footprints of the morning, and our descent began in earnest. It is unnecessary to go into details. Suffice it to say that after a struggle of nearly an hour we gained the bench below just as the sun, a glowing ball of fire, set in a violet mist over the far Panoche hills. Around us, like sentinels in glowing bronze, the scattered fir-groups stood in the white waste of granite; while above, in the sunset fires reflected from the west, the field of snow and the broken walls of the summit burnt rosily. The wind

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of the day had died away, and the air was hushed and still, and full it seemed to me of secret life and promise, fresh as I was from the peace and the beauty and the hope of that death beyond the mountain. Again it was beautiful beyond words.

A little further on, in the dimming light of encroaching night, I had the good fortune to drop a couple of mountain quail, and Sutcliff made a remarkably fine shot at a tree-squirrel. With these additions to our already wearisome loads we continued on. It was dusk when we came to the spot where we had seen the deer in the morning, and thoughts of old Silas and his delinquency reverted to my mind; and the moon had risen and was silvering the woods as we crossed the stream at the foot of the ridge upon which our camp lay and we took up the final ascent. Ten minutes more and completely worn after a day of the most astounding character, as you can well imagine, we reached the meadow, checkered with a delicate tracery of light and shadow, where our animals grazed.

CHAPTER X.

SUTCLIFF GIVES US EVIDENCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE LOST MINE.

WE had hoped to find old Silas in possession and a smoking meal awaiting us. But instead all was dark; he had not yet returned. But Sutcliff, always a man of decisive action, hastily divesting himself of his burden, gathered a handful of pine-needles and a half-dozen of the long, resinous cones of the sugar-pine, and in less time than it takes here to relate it had a fire blazing to cheer our wearied souls.

Ballard and myself, too fatigued to stand, sank helplessly upon our blankets, while Waring assisted Sutcliff in the silent preparation of our simple meal. The bean-pot was placed by the fire to simmer; some bacon was sliced very thin and grilled to a delectable crisp in the skillet, and a full pot of tea set to steep. Then a fresh supply of fuel was heaped upon the fire, and, with the dutch-oven containing our bread within easy reach, we sat down to satisfy the cravings of the inner man—Sutcliff, Waring and myself, for Ballard was already in the arms of Morpheus.

For what seemed to me an unusual period silence held between us, each confined to his own thoughts. And

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what wonderful food they were that evening can well be imagined. But before very long, his appetite sated to some extent, Sutcliff interrupted.

“Say, Carrington, when you and Ballard return to the City you can without fear of being called prevaricators, report having passed through the most astonishing experience that ever befell mortal in these mountains. Or perhaps it would be just as well if neither of you uttered a word. For no one would believe you, you know, not even that most credulous creature beneath the sun, your grandmother. Nor is it to be wondered at if you will but stop to consider a bit. What would you think,” with an amusing, cynical smile upon his lips, “of the man who started to fill you with a story of how he and a party of friends had started forth upon a certain day for the mountains on a trip of pleasure; how the next day they had entered the Basin; how barely had they entered than their attention was called to a mysterious fire upon the brow of the Butte; and how quite as a matter of course they resolved to climb the mountain? They do so; and here led by an incident natural as life itself they follow the footprints of a human being and come to one of the swellest little nooks in all America. A lake; trees; a brook of pellucid clearness; a view of distant peaks; a little cabin; an open doorway; smoke issuing from the chimney in a thin flim of blue. Inside a man upon his cot,—dead but two or three hours; books and papers upon a table, and among them a letter,—a letter addressed to one of the party and awaiting his coming. He has come; he opens it, to find what has come to pass foreshadowed days before. It speaks to him of guardian-angels—plural number, Waring,—one in this world and one in

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the world to come. It makes requests; it bequeathes; it—no,—no, Carrington, if you value your liberty at all, keep mum or they'll corral you in some asylum for the feeble-minded."

This somewhat lengthy comment was delivered with such an unusual air of seriousness by our companion that both Waring and myself, knowing his volatile nature, laughed outright.

"That was not so bad," I remarked admiringly, remembering how little credit for discernment I had given him.

"This guardian-angel business," said Waring thoughtfully, after a few moments of silent reflection, "is the one thing I can not understand of all this day's unusual occurrences. I could understand one well enough, but two—"

And he shook his head in perplexity.

"And that allusion to thoughts kindly reciprocated. Who is Ida, pray?"

"One of the sweetest of girls, Roger; my cousin, to know whom is to love her."

"But you forget that I do not know her."

To this, of course, I could but shrug my shoulders.

"And say," continued Sutcliff after still another pause, and with the air of one who has had an incident suddenly recalled to mind, "what do you think of this?"

He placed his metal plate upon the ground beside him to more readily take from his shirt pocket an article which he handed to Waring. My pulses stopped their beating. It was a bit of quartz, white and sparkling in the moonlight with free gold in lacings of generous proportions,—the very counterpart of the specimen I had seen in Waring's collection.

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“Where on earth did you get this?” asked Roger, rising precipitately and stepping to the fire for a closer scrutiny.

“Over the mountain. It is the lost Mine of the Mono. My blamed head has been so full of that overshadowing incident of the grave that I quite forgot to tell you. But while you were in the cabin the last time I came upon this lying by the cabin door.”

“Was there more of it?” I inquired, as Waring resumed his seat and handed over the rock for my inspection.

“Yes, quite a heap; enough at least to make plain to me that the old man was on to the lead.”

Yet strangely enough the news brought no elation with it. In the face of the lesson we had just been taught in the life of one who so tranquilly could face death as had my uncle, what were material advantages?

“No doubt,” said Waring, referring back to the point in Sutcliff’s first interruption, “his papers will explain much that is dark and a riddle to us now.”

He arose as we echoed the belief and stood over the fire in profound meditation for a time. Then, still in reverie, he took up the flute, jointed it, and blew a few rippling arpeggios. It was soft and mellifluous in tone, and its music carried dreamily among the fir woods. The horses for the moment ceased their grazing to prick up their ears, as was evident from the sudden cessation of the regular pulsation of the leader’s bell; and an owl which had at uncertain intervals disturbed the quiet of the night with its weird hootings, paused to listen. He then played a few old and well-known melodies mostly in the slower movements, and just suited to the moods we were in.

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Whether owing to extraordinary qualities in the instrument or that Waring found himself particularly inspired, hours passed unheeded, and the mid of the short summer night drew near. I remember I dozed over the coals. When I awoke to my surroundings it was to find Silas standing over me, a hand upon my shoulder. At easy length on the opposite side of the fire lay Sutcliff in profound slumber, with Waring squatted upon the ground beside him still playing, the arm supporting the flute resting upon his knee, and his eyes cast dreamily upon the flickering embers. My awakening appeared to break the spell that was upon him, for he rose to slowly put the instrument away; a moment later returning and arousing Sutcliff before the dews which were falling about the meadow should chill him. I crept to my own blankets, and without waiting to disrobe stretched myself in luxurious ease beneath them. And so, with a strange comingling of visions of Naomi, the nook in the mountain, and the placid face of my dead uncle, the few remaining night-hours passed away.

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PART II.

The Mystery Solved

CHAPTER XI.

WE RETURN TO THE BASIN.

WITH the morning came a change in our program. I returned to the plains, and Waring, as my host and entertainer, accompanied me; first promising the three we left behind that he would return the moment he had seen me safe to the station and aboard the train that was to bear me north to break the news of my uncle's death to his family. But at Oro Fino, acting no doubt upon a suggestion from somewhere,—for flower, bird and breeze held missions for him always,—he decided to accompany me further; even to my cousin's home; feeling, and quite rightly too, that his position in the matter was rather that of principal, and that that fact should rob of intrusion whatever of this characteristic his decision might under other circumstances have been attended with. So at the point named he wrote a hasty note apprising Sutcliff and his companions of his sudden change of mind, and entrusted it to the care of a passing teamster, with instructions to forward it by Indian messenger from the Fork.

From the ladies at the ranch our story met with much astonishment, not to say open incredulity. With Ida it was different. Hers is the temperament of a mystic,

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and it became apparent at once that there had been no secrets between father and daughter. At her home quite a little surprise lay in store for us when it developed that my cousin was no other than the cherished idol my friend Waring had been worshipping in secret for a year and more: the chance passerby upon one of the streets of the City, the fleeting glimpse of whose bright eyes and attractive person had made such a lasting impression upon his susceptible nature.

I remember on our arrival at the house being shown into the music room, the servant then disappearing in search of her mistress. We presented no cards and had mentioned no names, it being my wish, for reasons of my own, to hide our identity for the moment; so that she had no knowledge, unless intuitive, of our proximity.

Ida was my favorite cousin and a girl to be proud of. She had all the beauty and the certain elegance of her mother; the same unfathomable blue eyes; the light hair over a brow, high, and as smooth and pure as marble; the same clear-cut profile; the same lithe form, whose slightest movement somehow always suggested to me something that was higher than earth. To be frank, it was rather a proud moment for me to be able to introduce so much grace as kin of mine; to say nothing of the satisfaction I felt on the other hand of blazoning Waring's many commendable qualities to my cousin.

I recognized her light footstep in the hall, and the next moment she stood in the doorway. At the sight of me she began to tremble from head to foot, and clutched wildly at the door-frame for support. For a moment I could not understand her distress, and the next my

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attention was taken to other things. For at the sound of her approach Waring had turned, a movement that became a start of surprise, and which recalled Ida to herself, and to the fact that we were not alone.

That she on her part recognized Waring, and with pleasure, she acknowledged by a heightening color, and the smile of welcome which lit up her blue eyes as he bowed over her extended hand. As if by a miracle all the fears of that first moment had disappeared. But it was for a moment only.

"You have come," she said an instant later, with a slight return of her pallor, her eyes reading mine, "—you have come to tell me that my father—"

"Is at peace," I ended for her, feeling that she expected the worst.

She gave a quick cry of despair and was about to fall. I made a move to support her but Waring anticipated me, caught the fainting form and bore it gently to a couch. I went out of the room in search of a restorative. When I returned he was down on one knee by her side pushing back with a lingering touch the straying films of hair, and watching with concern for the return of the rose-flush to cheek and brow which was to tell of her return to consciousness as well. In the look which he turned upon me there was something which told me that he was on the eve of a better understanding of Sutcliff's allusion to guardian-angels in the plural number.

For reasons made plain by the foregoing, his visit North was prolonged much beyond his first intention; so that when at last he did return it was to find that the mountain party had beaten him in by several days. Of that party, I found out later, none had in the interim

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returned to the nook in the mountain. Horses, I knew, could not have drawn Ballard there (gold might have, but Sutcliff had kept the secret of his find from him); and Silas had met with a knowing smile and shake of the head every detail of that day's adventure, until Sutcliff had given up in disgust and pique. As for making the attempt alone, the thought of the danger of that trail, and the solitude of the glen with its deserted cabin and rounded mound, somehow did not seem to place the idea in a particularly pleasing light to him. Upon his return Waring at once hunted up his friend and arranged for a return at the earliest possible moment.

For a time it looked as if fate was to intervene a finger to prevent the contemplated move. Duties that were not to be cast lightly aside demanded their attention from the first. There was first of all the annual re-arranging of the camps for the better occupancy of the various flocks, the period of whose return from the mountains was now fast approaching;—broken panels to repair; corrals to erect; wooden tanks and long lines of leaky watering-troughs to caulk; horse-powers to oil and otherwise put in order, and the thousand and one other duties which go to make up the day of a busy stockman. Then came the fall shearing with its fortnight of pandemonium and confusion, followed by the half-yearly dipping; and then an unexpected group of visitors which had to be taken back into the hills for a week's quail shoot. In short, October found the spot still unvisited, and the site of the mine as much a mystery as ever. Then came the autumn rains.

In fact it was not until the spring of the following year that we found the opportunity so long and ardently looked for, Waring in the meantime paying another

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visit to the home of my cousin. That was the year 1884. If you are an old timer you should easily recall how very wet and late was that spring of 1884. I remember I arrived the first week in June in response to an urgent request from Waring to join him, and for three weeks was rain-bound at Shepherd's Rest. Not that the fact annoyed me. Up to that time those were the happiest three weeks of my life. For Naomi was there and the intervals between showers were passed in spirited rides over the plains, and in visits to the Table Mountain, where we studied the flowers together, and watched the piles of white cloud and the great spaces of limpid blue between, chase in waves of sunshine and shadow across the broad, open valley at our feet, taking in on their way the dark clump of gums of the ranch, and the towering windmill, finally to loose themselves over the rounding tops of the more distant hills. And when the rain fell we hung in sweet tete-a-tete over the piano at the dusky end of the low-ceilinged room, where a fire smouldered on the hearth,—more to cheer by its presence than to rob the air of any sharpness,—paying heed to neither time nor tide. It was the last of June, and the mullion by which Roger had his easel and sat at his work, wholly oblivious of our presence, was wide open in welcome to the season. It was all settled in those few weeks. Mrs. Waring was most kind and motherly; Roger,—himself in the heaven of his new-found love,—most considerate. If ever the course of love was made to run smooth it was ours.

When at last the weather cleared for the summer and the last of the ewes and lambs had departed for the mountains, Waring made his final arrangements for the oft-postponed visit to the scenes of the past summer's

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adventure. On this occasion, unlike the other, we started from the ranch, the three of us, with pack and saddle-animals; and instead of the wagon-roads we took the trails which everywhere seemed to cut through the hills, and all of which were equally familiar to the instinctive intelligence of Sutcliff. As before, the first night out we camped on the Fork, the next day entering the Basin. On the Lip we paused for a view of the Butte, the cynosure, of course, of all eyes. From top to base it was cloaked in snow.

"It is quite evident that we can not make the riffle there," said Sutcliff quietly, guiding his horse to the trail and beginning the easy descent into the gently-declining, saucer-shaped depression. "We must go by way of the Gap. You say there is a trail entering from there, do you not, Waring?"

"Yes."

And instead of stopping to encamp upon the verge of the Cherry-Creek Meadows we passed on beyond some distance to where a small side-hill or "hanging" meadow offered the sought-for horse-feed, and there unpacked, in the near vicinity of the Gap.

"It must have been in here that Silas killed the buck last summer which Ballard, you remember, roused from his feeding," said Waring, pausing for a moment in the work of unpacking to look about him.

I laughed quietly at the recollection.

"Yes," returned Sutcliff with a show of severity. "And not content with killing the only buck we met upon the trip added insult to injury by returning to civilization with three cartridges to his name."

"He only had four to begin with I remember."

Sutcliff shook his head affirmatively.

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“And you?” I asked, curious for a reply.

“Love noise and bluster too much to have fared as well.”

We pitched our tent, and about sunset went up into the Gap for a view of the far mountains. Strewn with the needles and the pollen of the pines, much snow still lay piled in the shadow of the fir-copses and in the brush-entanglements, from which little rills of water crossed our path at every few steps, softening the ground to that unpleasant consistency that we sought the higher and more sterile slopes to pass over.

“We’ll never get through here to-morrow with the horses,” said Sutcliff, pausing in the climb to survey the conditions. “We’ll have to skirt the ridge still higher up where the stony nature of the soil will prevent our miring.”

“We’ll do better than that,” returned Waring; “we’ll simply leave the horses behind and go it afoot.”

From the Gap the view beyond was the one I so well remembered seeing from the Butte’s top, only here it was more on a level with the eye;—against a matchless sky of turquoise the serrated ridges of the Minarets, very white and very pure in the snow-ropes of winter, and

“Bathed in the glories of the glowing west.”

Below, the feathered ridges leading to and down between the two forks of the Chiquita stood out dark and clear in the translucent blue of mountain shadow; their beauty a little higher up and nearer at hand heightened by the deeper tones of a picturesque group of dishevelled firs on a jutting crag. The air everywhere was reverberant with the rush of waters, the only sound it seemed to break in upon the silence. Not a breath was there

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to pulse into the soul-stirring music of the mountains their great æolian harps, the pines; not the chirp of a bird, the first fore-runner of its kind, nor the buzz of an insect. The quiet of death itself hung about. But as we stood the sharp yelp of a coyote came to us with a startling clearness from some aspens just below, to be repeated at intervals and at growing distances until lost to the sense.

Returned to camp we felt ourselves rather fortunate in coming upon a pitchy log,—fortunate I say where all the fallen timber reeked with wet,—by the aid of which we started a rousing fire. For while there was something of the promise of spring in the air to buoy the soul, there was also the nip of frost which made the material man seek the shelter and warmth of an overcoat and the cheer of a fire. Besides there was no moon. The night grew dark, thin films of vapor hiding the stars; and dancing shadows, which in the overwhelming silence of the place grew uncanny as the night wore on and our story progressed, filled the timber just beyond the circle of light, forming a blurry blackness momentarily penetrated by an occasional flicker of our fire to the point even of at times outlining in lurid colors the forms of our horses on the mountain side above us.

And seated by that fire Waring gave us for the first time the story of the lost mine in its relation to the life of its latest discoverer.

CHAPTER XII.

BEGINS THE TALE OF THE LOST MINE.

“ I NEVER heard of a like case in all my days,” Sutcliff remarked, with the relieved sigh of one who returns to earth after a flight in fancy to unwonted heights.

Clad in his corduroys, and pipe in mouth, he crouched at one end of the burning logs to escape the smoke, which as it rose clung close in indecision for a moment, to be swept the next in a dissipating cloud into the engulfing blur of the woods below by the air-current from the Gap.

“ Ah, yes;” said Waring, “ such love is indeed rare. It was one of heaven’s marriages. You have heard of such? ”

Sutcliff nodded.

“ But then he was always of, I will not say a melancholy, but of a spiritual frame of mind,” continued Waring, “ and inclined to idealize every relationship of life. That may, perhaps, account for some of its vehemence.”

He paused as if expecting a reply. But none came.

“ No matter,” he resumed once more. “ The fact remains that his life was wrapped up in hers, so that when death came to claim its own, only the shell of him, so to speak, was left behind.”

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I made a motion as if to interrupt him; but he continued quietly, his eyes in abstraction upon the fire, not noting my gesture.

“Not that he was wanting in faith,—men of his turn of mind seldom are. To put the matter simply, the ties of earth were the stronger for the moment. To use a term of the sea, he dragged his anchor. Like a derelict he roamed the country with burro and pack aimlessly, indifferently, hopelessly. It was five or six years ago that he appeared in this neighborhood for the first time, and quite by accident fell in with old Gray at the Flats. Now, old Gray, though he cohabits with a squaw, is a man it seems of superior education. He is well-read, and what is more to the point has done much thinking along independent lines. The philosophies are his particular hobby. At any rate the quaint character of the deaf old mountaineer pleased the fancy of your uncle, and at Gray’s urgent solicitations the homestead on the mountain-side was made the centre of his peregrinations here.

“For reasons at once obvious—its position on one of the most frequented trails of the Sierra for one—the little clearing is more or less an Indian rendezvous. And from there it is but an hour’s ride to the Fork and its rancherias. Curious, he fell in with the Indians there, and shortly became more or less a nomad himself. For in his then state of mind the true relationship of things had lost some of its proportions. Where in the past he had given thought to only the more important, now the trivial excited his interest quite as much. Among other things he fell to studying his aboriginal friends,—their manner of thought, their aims, their language, and their lore.

“And here for the first time he came upon the story

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of the lost mine. The romance of it all, wound up as it was in the gossamer of a thousand details, had possession of him from the first. In his trailings through the mountains his eyes grew to live only for the prospect that in the end was to lead him to its discovery. Upon the back stoop of the little hut in the grey of the mountain twilight, and as the moon topped the ridge above, all the philosophic discussions in the end reverted to the one subject always uppermost in his mind. Even his hours of sleep were not free from thoughts of it, for it was in his dreams that all the vain hopes and yearnings of the day found realization, and he exulted in the possession of the mine's untold wealth. The search became a pitiful, while altogether harmless, mania with him. He became the inseparable friend of the old chief, the herder once in my father's employ, and as time passed on won upon the friendship and esteem of others of the tribe,—man, woman and child.

But all to no purpose. All were bound to secrecy; at least so it seemed to him, for no one could be found to divulge a word that would afford him a clue to the location of this fabled mine. Then accident gave him the key. Seated one morning—it was the day after his annual return late one spring,—gun in hand upon a big, rounded rock overlooking the brush thickets under the Figure 7 upon the one side, and the tumbled course of the Black Laurel upon the other,—a dark, insignificant speck in that vast expanse of sky and mountain mapped out in the heat and haze of a mid-summer day,—he was recalled to himself by the sudden report of a rifle close at hand, followed by others in quick succession, and by half-stifled cries for help. Springing from the rock he hastened in the direction indicated, and came

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just in time to put a bullet into the heart of a great cinnamon engaged in deadly combat with a man. That man was the old chief. This incident turned the tide in his favor. It bore down the last vestige of racial restraint between them. Carrington felt he had the red man at his mercy, and that he might command anything he possessed.

“And white-man-like he chose the secret of the lost mine. Great as was the call put upon him there was no hesitation on the part of the Indian. The mystery of the location was to be given him. And to this end one morning while the stars were paling in the east, and an ebbing moon cradled in a few fleecy clouds hung low in the flushing sky, they quietly stole forth from the rancheria on the Fork, followed by the bayings of the startled dogs of the tribe. On the way, in the light of the early morning, they stopped at Gray’s, where Carrington told in triumph of their mission. Harmless enough, but unhappily for all concerned the old man’s son, Joe the half-breed,—a fellow with an unreasoning hatred of everything white, coupled to an avarice that knew no bounds,—overheard. You know the man.”

We nodded, not wishing to interrupt with a word the thread of a narrative so graphically told.

“This man resolved if possible to frustrate their plans. But how? To harm a hair of Carrington’s head was but to invite trouble upon himself at the hands of the whites, and was of course a thing to be avoided. Besides, Carrington was his father’s one intimate friend, and read his—Joe’s,—very soul whenever they met; which fact bore heavily upon the superstitious streak in him. The plan the least resultant of danger to himself was to kill the old chief—traitor he called him to nerve

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himself to the deed,—before the purpose of their visit was accomplished; for he knew of the indifference of the whites usually to the shedding of blood where that blood was that of a so-called inferior people. So when they started again he followed in secret upon their trail with murder in his heart. And well up on the mountain, while Carrington had gone somewhat ahead, he stole upon the full-blood, buried his knife in his back, and hurled him over the rocks.

“From the trail above Carrington saw all that transpired; and Joe the half-breed saw he saw and fled into the woods. Carrington followed him the many miles back to the ranch, sought him out like a nemesis, and in substance said to him: “You have nothing to fear at my hands; your secret is safe. Murderer that you are, you have a worthy father. And that father is my friend. But for that fact the law should have you.” And so the secret of the deed rested between them; Carrington immune because of the dread sway he held over the man of crossed blood; the Indian secure in the promise of immunity given.

“In his writings Carrington gives two reasons for his course. The first is that he wished to protect from sorrow the few remaining years of his aged friend, which was laudable enough. The other is of a much more complex nature, and was characteristic of the man. It had not yet been proven to him that two wrongs made a right. If murder was wrong, he argued, then murder in atonement was murder still, even if done in the guise of law, and in the name of justice. And then after all, what was the material life? Did we not, perhaps, sweet as it is, give it undue importance? Did not God, the Center from which springs all light and all the good

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of the Universe, require it at the hands of all? Millions answered each year in obedience to His call. Not but that murder was wrong; but with him the wrong lay more in the violation of that abstract law that marks the boundary of what we call the right, and the perversion of that right. He was a man of peculiar mental turn, you see. With him the murdered had not been sinned against half so much as had the murderer sinned against himself, strange as this may sound. For he believed that the purposes of life, expressed here in the material existence, are beyond permanent human intervention; that they lie strictly within the control of some higher power, and continue on in an after-life irrespective of what occurred on earth. But to the murderer, as to all wrongdoers, comes a day of reckoning as inevitable as death itself, bringing with it the fires of remorse to waste, and possibly even to destroy, the soul for whose home-coming we are told the Most High is continually on the watch.

“The discovery of the body by yourself, Sutcliff, relieved him of the necessity of exposing his knowledge of the affair. And that he stood high in the estimation of the Indians on the Fork is evident in the fact that throughout not a shadow of suspicion rested upon him. He was the last man known to have been with him; and certain covert tales, emanating, of course, from the wily half-breed, sought at one time to unduly color that fact and so raise a sense of distrust against him. But they were in vain.

“A few days later Carrington returned to the mountain alone. For while the secret in its focus had died with the old chief, enough had been disclosed to very materially circumscribe the field of search. The vast

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drift of snow at the upper end of the ravine had been pointed out to him as being directly in the path; and once on the summit it was well nigh impossible to go wrong where but one passable depression led down the declivity to the east. At the foot, he had been told, they would find a beautiful flat with the horse-feed belly-high upon it, overtopped with trees of wonderful growth; and a lake, set like a gem in the brow of the hoary mountain. Once the ice of his natural reserve all melted the poor fellow had grown garrulous on the short trail.

“But once in the alcove it became apparent at once that there ended all certainty. The finding of the mine itself was again as much a matter of uncertainty and chance as it had ever been in its checkered history. He returned at once over the mountain for a burro loaded with provisions and tools. These he cached in the ravine, again toiling to the enchanted flat with pick and shovel, and axe, to hew for himself a trail over the rocks and through the brush on the almost perpendicular walls to the right, in the direction of the Gap, so that he might have easier egress from the place. It was a blind trail at best, and a pile of fallen limbs thrown across two boulders upon it most effectually balked any tendency of the burro to roam. Then began a thorough and systematic search for the hidden treasure. But vain was his work. For weeks it continued, morning, noon, and afternoon. The tranquil summer passed away and the golden autumn came, to find him still at his task. Then came the first rains; and later the snows of winter, forcing him very much against his will to seek the more clement weather of the plains.

“With the early spring he came again,—I think it was

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the year I met him in the Flats. But in the meantime a peculiar change had begun to come over him. The groundwork of his nature had come to slowly reassert itself. The simple life he was leading away from the grossness of the crowd, and amid the entrancing beauty which encompassed him on every hand,—the vivid high lights, the cool shadow-tones, the magnitude of mountain, valley, and air-line; and most potent of all, the soul-reaching silence,—were all working their secret charm, and revivifying the spiritual side of his nature far beyond its old-time limits. The long days of introspective thought, into a train of which he had been thrown by the death of his wife, and which of late had been much intensified by the solitude of the position he had chosen, were slowly revolutionizing the man. Not that he took a lesser interest in the things of this world than in the days of old; the truth was he took more. But his horizons were enlarging. He began to see things from a higher and broader plane. He generalized more. Unconsciously he approached the fountain-head of wisdom. He still took an active interest in his search, but the ardor of old was beginning to pale.

“In the pauses that now came between he built himself the little cabin and the broad fire-place. From his home in the north he brought with him books and periodicals; and music; and I have no doubt that many a night-prowler—and particularly the lion whose pelt we found upon the floor, and which had resented his appearance upon the mountain from the first,—has paused in the uncertain light of the forest to listen to the unwonted sound of his flute.”

CHAPTER XIII.

HE OPENS TELEPATHIC COMMUNICATION WITH THE WORLD.

"AND where," continued Waring, "in the other summer he had courted the strictest solitude, occasionally now the call of his kind grew upon him to a strength not to be denied, when he paid willing, and what oft became protracted, visits to the Gray clearing.

"That this world is one full of surprises you no doubt have discovered long before this. We come upon them in the most unlikely places. Here we have one in the old shake-maker whose cabin stands beyond the Lip. If we judge from appearances, I admit, the assertion carries with it an air of doubt, but I have the word of your uncle that this white-haired old man has a knowledge of things that would put to shame the learning of many a college professor. His favorite study and theme of discourse is the human mind and its workings, a subject that received a new direction now at the hands of the two friends; for it seems that Carrington, too, was well fitted by early education, but more particularly by nature for the proper understanding and manipulating of this little-understood subject.

"Both had given thought to the matter in the years

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before their meeting; and the discussions now brought with them a revival and a certain hitherto unattainable familiarity, owing to the want of maturity due to experience and age, that but very few enjoy or can even be brought to realize as possible. They held theories which they sought to organize into a science as it were. That they succeeded in their work much beyond the ordinary is plain enough, for some very remarkable results followed upon their experiments.

“They first convinced themselves—what they had argued all along,—that thought is a dynamic force capable of being projected from mind to mind without the intermediary of speech. Speech it was claimed is but the mode of the clumsy. This in a measure is no doubt true. As we age in experience we find the eye in many cases to serve as well, or more subtly still, a touch. Carrington cites instance after instance—and I have met cases myself,—where he had read question in the eyes of his wife, and he had answered them quite as intelligently through the use of the same channel; at least so he had judged from their changed expression. And many times, too, later in life, when the souls of the two had become more transfused, on a comparison of notes after days of absence, he was rather surprised to find that there had been an unconscious communion of thought, though miles lay between them at the time. The idea is simply to be able to recognize an impression or suggestion from without as a message from afar; or, in other words, to be able to winnow the grain from the chaff. The universe is full of them,—many breathed unconsciously, therefore, negatively; a few projected with precision, force and purpose, to be accepted by the wise at their true value. Nature seems to repeat her processes in all the

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rising steps of her seeming progress, showing, it appears to me, the existence of one universal law. We cast a stone into a pool and rippling waves circle to the banks. We speak, and start similar circles in the atmosphere about us, to be received here and there by an organ made for the purpose,—the ear. The human will gives rise to a thought, and we start a delicate but far-reaching propulsive force in just this same way, which beats through the finer atoms of the ether,—to be received by the nature sensitive enough to respond. Touch a string on a harp and it is not the wood of the place that replies but the sister-harp in the corner, attuned in unison. I ask you to recall if you can my argument of a year ago on the comparative nature of all life. Try to thoroughly assimilate this idea. It will surprise you to find how much of a step it is to the fuller conception of the ideas of the omnipresent, the illimitable, and the eternal:—expressions much used but little understood.

“The work of the two at first in this field of thought-transference was, of course, unsatisfactory. But having met with partial success, they wrought on diligently and understandingly, until, just think! an avenue of communication had been opened up that no earthly distance could fetter.

“This success here opened up to Carrington a hitherto undreamed-of field of possibilities. With the key now in his possession he doubted not for a moment but that intercourse with the beyond was possible. The key? The same that makes for success in all the other walks of life,—*Concentration*. The air is full of yellow sunbeams,—comparatively powerless as distributed by nature; yet focus them and you can set the world afire. So with the mind. Focus your thought and you can

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accomplish wonders,—even such as these. The mind and the will,—that is all there is to it.

“Carrington sought to establish this line with all the ardor of an enthusiastic nature. For many weeks in vain. But from the grace which sustained him throughout he felt that he was not alone in the work: that on the other side of that inscrutable veil we call death a higher intelligence than his own was working for the same end. And one afternoon—the air was strangely still, and himself so concentrated that for the moment he was totally oblivious of the beauty on every hand,—he received a communication; a single impression,—the one word “Thomas,” yet given with all the sweet cadence he remembered so well in the days before death parted them. So realistic was it all that involuntarily he looked about him, while his heart ceased its beating for the moment. But he saw nothing, and the movement recalled him to earth. He sought further, despairingly; but no more messages came that day. The next he tried again; but, too expectant, he tried in vain. The next again; and humbled by the disappointment of the previous day, there came to him that same message “Thomas,” but more vividly than before, and dissipating his last shadow of doubt. He was already growing more responsive. For weeks this continued, through less and less of disappointment; he at each success coming more and more to understand just what condition of mind was essential to that success. Having mastered so to say the elements, the single impressions in the course of time gave way to simple phrases, and later to more complex sentences. One of the first—one she had often used in their earth-life,—gave him a particular pleasure,—the simple words of endearment, “Thomas, my husband.”

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“And then came the regret that he could not see. But no sooner had the thought found life in his brain than with a swiftness and unerringness that was a revelation to him it stood answered. “Mind is king. Patience poor mortal.” And true enough, before long there came a glimmer of light to him,—a dawn such as the physically blind whose vision is about to be restored might be supposed to experience,—and through the dissipating mists, his heart the while increasing its beating, he more than once felt sure that he had had a passing glimpse of the airy outlines of the form of his beloved wife. Here again opened up an era of alternate failure and success; for here, too, a special preparation covering many weeks had to be gone through. For to see clearly required a special control.

“One day—it was the first of his full awakening into the soul-life,—she burst upon him without warning in the full splendor of her angelic loveliness; her queenly form clad in clinging garments that only half-hid and half disclosed its grace of outline; her brown tresses piled with a graceful care above the smooth brow; her red lips smiling, her blue eyes sparkling their welcome. The old Rose indeed, but a thousand times more beautiful;—with a grace accentuated in unnumbered elusive ways which it puzzled him for the moment to locate until it dawned upon him that it was not the old beauty as he remembered it that he looked upon, but a soul-vision with the cloy and awkwardness of earth gone. As the mists due to imperfect control of self cleared away, he noted that she had come to him with outstretched hands over green fields, shaded afar with bordering copses and blue hills,—a spot very like their favorite haunt in the first years of their married life. She

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glided rather than walked toward him, and as she touched him—he awoke to find himself upon the mountain alone with the tops of the pines droning in the afternoon breeze. He was faint, and a cold perspiration was upon him. For a moment he believed the beautiful vision to have been a dream; but with the return of his equanimity came conviction, and the conclusion which had had part possession of him for some time definitely fixed that the true life begins only at death's door. For life on earth after all is but a span, while an eternity awaits us beyond.

“Thus was opened an intercourse which grew broader as time wore on. Nor did it cease, though it was interrupted, by the change of environment that came with his return home that winter. In the privacy of his own chamber he could always summon the beloved presence. But it was in the quiet and charm of the mountains that results were ever the best, and with the earliest signs of spring he was there again.

“By this time the line of communication had been brought to that perfection that converse was held as fluently as though they sat side by side in the flesh. Under these circumstances, after the first novelty of his position had worn off, many questions arose to his mind; to be answered by replies that impinged with a simple directness in contrast with the uncertain ones we usually receive here. Why, you ask? I believe, because of our self-sufficiency,—we are not prayerful enough. But as few of these have direct bearing upon the story I am relating we will pass them over, unless you feel that some of them might be of interest to you.

“I do not know whether the same feeling strikes either of you, but to me there is a beauty in this com-

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panionship of the two that somehow strangely appeals to me. I have read in tales where the hero or heroine have been haunted or pursued by phantoms, but never one where a spirit sought to correct and sustain the waywardness and the inherent weakness of man through words of cheer and the highest wisdom. And the beauty of it all lies in the fact that it is all true,—that they are conditions possible to you and me every day of our life here if we possess but a prayerful heart and the required amount and quality of faith.

“Day after day, in the earlier periods of this communion, they wandered about the forest in silent converse, or sat by the open doorway where the buttonwood in the springtime spread its array of magnificent blossoms, and in the fall its red seed attracted the dark-plumaged woodcock. An aimless and useless life, you think; but let us pause to remember that this is due to the particular nature we have to deal with; and that the possibilities under the somewhat ideal conditions which I am trying to paint for you are by no means confined to the case in hand. Supposing we were given a man of superior energy, what good might not be accomplished. And then we might be premature in our verdict even here. Who knows? The seed has only been sown, and results are only to be judged at harvest time.

“This earth-life, it would seem, is never without its hour of repining, nor do I believe the soul-life to be wholly so either. Yet it is well for us and the general good that this is so, that there is ever something to keep us on the verge of expectancy, and in the moil of the sequent states of discontent. The trouble lay in the extremes of emotion to which he was subject be-

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tween the hours of soulful elation on the one side, and, on the other, the utter desolation of his position on his return to earth. For such violent revulsions the body is in no wise prepared, and their effect upon our friend became somewhat slowly, but too surely apparent. They affected his health in a general undermining; their ravages being greater or less just as in proportion his interest was stamped with less of earth and more of heaven. His clairvoyant periods became more and more protracted,—periods of half-stupefaction and complete absence of mind to those immersed in the material who occasionally came upon him on the trail.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HYPNOTIC INTROMISSION.

WARING paused for a moment, his eyes upon the fire. His thoughts had outstripped the thread of his narrative and were wandering far afield, and without hindrance. With an effort he drew himself together, looked up at us with an odd smile, and resumed.

“At times came reaction when the ties of earth returned and for a time held him in a grip that reminded him of the strength of old. At such moments came thoughts of children, home and friends. And one day the lost mine.

“When next they met this thought was uppermost.

“Without a word, and somewhat gravely, Rose beckoned him to take her hand. He arose obediently, and at her touch felt a thrill, keen yet pleasurable, possess his whole being, and his inner vision clarify preternaturally.

“Through the trembling mist he saw slowly appear a stretch of mountain forest where below the sombre tones of the pines, the foliage of the deciduous growth had dyed itself in all the brilliant color of fall. It was apparently late in the season—October, he judged,—for the haze of Indian summer hung

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about the woods and the openings beyond. As he gazed, spellbound, the lone figure of a man appeared, a dark speck in that sylvan grandeur, gun in hand. His approach was made carefully, warily in fact, as if he feared an ambush at every step. Suddenly he stood erect as a lithe body glided noiselessly through the parting brush upon his right. It was the form of a mountain lion. With the swiftness of thought he now turned, raised his rifle and fired. At that same moment Carington recognized in the hunter—whom? Strangely enough, himself. Imagine if you can what this discovery brought him in the way of a sensation. Instinctively he sought—much the same as in this life we seek to grasp two or more ideas at one and the same time,—and while very much alive to the episode enacting before him, to take in something of the further beyond. But he found that mind was still mind, and incapable of accepting more than one impression at a time, and that if he would lose nothing of the little drama unfolding before him and yet wished to behold some of the scenes in the background, he must take them in their connected sequence. It took him but an instant to realize this; the next his attention was again upon the animal, which had bounded to cover down a defile to the right where the dogwood and alder formed an almost impenetrable shelter. Very carefully he followed, guided by the blood-trail, until he came to where another gulch came down from the right to meet the first, the two forming an acute angle of some sharpness. It was a wilderness of brush and boulders which an occasional pine overtopped, a natural cover which only the most intrepid dared penetrate in the face of the danger known to lurk there. For a moment he even wondered

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at his own hardihood and fell to analyzing his emotions. It surprised him rather to find that fear was not a part of them.

“ At this point the brute had made a sudden turn upward toward a wall of rock which apparently barred all progress in that direction. It seemed sorely stricken, and had rested many times to nurse its wound, as the condition of the trail freely attested; so sorely indeed that it seemed often to have moved only as the sound of crackling brush came to it and told of the threatening nearness of the hunter following. This fact made the task a doubly perilous one, and he, Carrington, who was now following not with eyes only, but with all his senses on a keen alert, and with all the emotions of a principal, wondered at the remarkable cowardice of the animal. Common report gave it the reputation of being more than ordinarily dangerous when wounded, and yet, very strangely, here under the most favoring of circumstances, not the faintest attempt at a stand was being made.

“ Foot by foot he scanned the brush; foot by foot he climbed upward toward the base of the wall, where, he now felt convinced, he would find the lair of this queen of the mountains. And sure enough before long he had a glimpse of the tawny form in the dusk of an alcove formed by an overhanging rock, her bloody flanks palpitating tumultuously, and covered with the coarse granite particles, the dry leaves and twigs of the trail.

“As he drew near she made the one stand of the entire chase. Sweeping the ground in majestic curves with her tail she came forward, defiance in her attitude, to give him with a bloodcurdling cry a terrifying display of her teeth. But this display of courage was mo-

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mentary only, for she almost immediately withdrew—and then deeper than before,—into the natural recess, and trembling with a fear that was unaccountable. Slowly and unerringly this time, he again raised the rifle, and fired the shot that brought the trembling form to the ground.

“Then the riddle was explained. For by his side stood Rose, whom the clear instincts of the animal—or possibly some sense of which we know not,—had undoubtedly recognized as something out of the ordinary. Natural history abounds with just such cases.

“He flayed the brute,—her’s was a most magnificent pelt,—and this done rested himself for a moment on a rock before returning. Below him narrowed the gulch he was in; beyond arose, he thought, the Jackass. It was all evidently a part of the mountain upon which he was housed. He sought more fully to locate himself, but in vain. Above him arose the loose wall of rock,—a wall that had evidently at some early period of the earth’s history been projected intact, and only creviced by the convulsion, from somewhere far up the mountain. A little stream oozed from above to water a few late flowers blooming there. He looked again to more closely study the formation. It was of quartz, and—his heart almost stopped its beating,—it seemed literally alive with pure gold. He moved feverishly forward: he raised his hand and broke—.

“Ah, another dream! With a tremor that shook his entire frame he reluctantly shook himself free of the influence that bound him. Like one aroused from a deep sleep he looked about him. The early morning sun shone brightly in upon him, touching with its gold the blue of giant lupins whose fingerlike foliage shadowed the

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bare logs of the hut in the vicinity of the doorstep. Through the trees beyond arose the mountains of the Jackass—almost, it seemed to him, as he had seen them but a moment before,—and in the further distance the Minarets, very still and clear in the crisp of the June morning.

The vision left an indelible impression, and gave new vigor to the search which was again resumed. The mine was undoubtedly a reality; he had seen it. And it was as undubitably ordained that he was to find it. The question was simply, was it to be effected through chance or a concentration of effort on his part? To a man like him of prearranged action always there was but one reply, and that was, through system of course.

“He sought early and late again, and once more to no purpose. Then one day came a thought. With arms folded upon his breast, and dejected of spirit, he was reclining against a rock on the trail, that winds from the Gap to the Chiquita. It was the end of June and all nature stood in the luscious ripeness of midsummer. Suddenly the wonderful truth dawned upon him. He remembered that in that one glimmer into the future which had been vouchsafed him the black-oaks upon the mountain's slope; the wild cherry of the thickets; all the alders and buttonwoods on the creek-banks; nay the very sumac in the canyon below, where the lioness had come to her death, had stood arrayed in the vari-colored glories of autumn. With mind awakened to the new wisdom he slowly returned to his cabin. In that one moment he had become a fatalist. Chance—and I may add that then already the significance of the term was undergoing a change for him,—was after all to be the arbiter of his fortune.

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“ His policy was now one of waiting. Through the long summer days he read much; pondered; performed upon his flute; studied the forest, the mountain and the stream. He made friends with the birds, the squirrels, the chipmunks; and with such success that all entered fearlessly as he sat at his meals, to be fed by his hands, or to nibble daintily at the proffered food upon the table. Once he caught sight of a half-grown grizzly surveying with uplifted muzzle the human habitation from the upper end of the forest opening; a moment later resuming his leisurely way as Carrington hallooed at him. At times again he would drop to the Chiquita with fly and rod to beat the stream for trout; generally to return, tired and worn, but with a generous string, in the dusk of the evening. He was at peace with all the world.

“ Nay. There was one exception. The lion whose haunt he had disturbed with his presence would give him no peace. Each summer it migrated, each fall to return. It was plainly to be war to the end. And the poor burro stood in mortal dread, and came each evening to the cabin to tremble under its eaves. It made the heart stand still to hear its cry—almost human in its cadence,—in the distant depths of the forest when night had fallen, and to note its gradual approach. How well he remembered mistaking it one night for a human being astray in the woods, and had answered from the brink of the precipice beyond the lake, where the moonlight fell over the silent, depthless canyon of the Chiquita. At times it became so malevolent that he had been forced to build a fire in self-protection. It was away now—the summer, but would be sure to return with the first turning leaf.

“And again came a thought. Was this animal in any

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way to be instrumental in the locating of the lost mine? Was it in some inexplicable way the same which he had followed in his vision? It seemed indeed unlikely, and yet strange things happen. At any rate the brute held a new interest for him from that hour forth."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE AFTER-LIFE.

“AND from here, with your permission,” continued Waring, “I will quote you from the writings direct. We are down to the more personal part of our story, and my so doing will avoid much useless repetition. I have selected, you will find, only such parts as are relevant, and which hold an interest because of that relevancy, if for no other reason.

“At this point I find an entry which purports to throw some light upon the conditions prevailing in the after-life. It may sound wild and chimerical to you, but I found it interesting reading enough, and so will you, I am sure. Shall I read it?”

We silently acquiesced, and Waring read:

Throughout this period Rose is my almost constant companion and never a day passes but I find that I have absorbed something of wisdom from the companionship. Many and varied are the themes that come up for discussion between us!—children, home, friends; our own happy past; more often, however, the future, —now no longer the uncertain for me. The future.

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Wonderful word! Language holds nothing more pregnant with meaning.

As to where we meet I am somewhat in doubt. Does Rose come to earth,—or do I flee to spirit-land? My position is most unique. Our environs at times are such an intermingling of the one and the other that I do not often know whether I am in the celestial sphere or still within the earth's attraction. Possibly we vacillate between.

For instance, I find trees and flowers,—beautiful flowers,—great gardens of them;—and trees, tall and idyllic,—such as we come upon occasionally on the canvasses of some imaginative master of the brush. And lawns,—broad, sweeping ones, without hedge or break, that fade away into the blue of distance, or that of some shimmering sea dotted with sails of idling craft. These are all of earth,—and yet so unlike. For there is here a greater perfection; everything is more ideal; there is less of the stiffness, of the imperfection, the dwarfing and distortion of earth, where there is always some obstacle to an unrestricted growth. Birds of sweet song and gay plumage, delighting at once both the eye and the ear, hover above among the boughs; while beneath deer sport and rabbits gambol, and all the nobler animals that have, because of some kindly trait in their natures, endeared themselves to mankind, are much in evidence. Children I find at play at every point, and the sound of their laughter and merrymaking fills the air.

And such homes,—such magnificent temples of learning,—such wonderful cities as I have seen! In the by-gone years I have had visions of such, little dreaming then that the true poet is ever a prophet, and that there

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is not a single picture of his imagining that is an advance upon existing conditions but will some day find its realization in the life beyond death. Cities with broad, and seemingly interminable boulevards, and open squares where matchless marbles dot the sward, and fountains play in a sparkle to confuse the mind;—cities of marble and alabaster, dreamlike in the massiveness of their edifices, and scintillating as in the light of day in the soft self-effluence of the place;—cities gay with life and color, and music,—the life of the crowd, composed of men who are men not in form only but in character as well, and of women who are all heart and womanliness and not mere puppets of paint and powder and hollow sham, finding a common love in an intercourse with less and less of friction in it. It is all beyond rendering in words.

There are no marts of trade, only beautiful homes where souls dwell in a certain content;—not the cold, stary, repellent mansions of our large cities that speak of greed, pomp and selfishness in every stone, but buildings cheery and inviting in appearance,—the reflex in short of the character that prompted their up-building. Note that I am describing but a small section of the land, the section wherein Rose and her companions have their abode, and that every conceivable condition necessary to the happiness—comparative always as you will plainly see,—of any and every individual can, and eventually will, be found by the individual affected: that is to say, oceans are there for roamers of the sea; great mountain-chains to meet the loves of the Tyrolese, the Himalayans, the Andeans; sandy deserts, brown, bare, and vague in their interpretation of their mission to man, for the Nubian and the Saharan;

winding water-ways, rock-bluffed, for the Patagonian and the Aleut; and so on through the long category, each according to his desires.

All of which seemed strange to me, brought up in the orthodox faith, and for some time I sought in vain for the reason. But as usual in these matters of doubt, Rose came to my rescue with the explanation that all visible life was the result of mental effort, and that the consciousness of it in man was wholly a matter of sensation. Rob man of the function of a single of the organs of the objective senses and you curtail his consciousness of life just so much. Rob him of all and he is dead to the outer world, or what we call the unconscious state. But an inner consciousness lives perennial,—the consciousness of the soul.

This consciousness, whether outer or inner, is an effect due to causes eternal in their nature. When a tree grows up, matures, dies; when a flower springs from the sod, blooms, seeds, and fades away, an effect rises and disappears within the limits of the objective sense, but the cause remains, to extend into an after-world, there to work upon material ever growing finer, yet which, strange to say, acts upon our equally refining organs in impressions that rise in the old familiar forms we know.

This, however, does not mean that a tree is forever a tree, except in name perhaps, or the true and tried house-dog forever a dog. Nature in the law of evolution has provided for the contrary. The graceful elm, the silver birch of to-day are not the stalky fern or palm of the carboniferous period. Nor is the tree—nameless to me,—which I see arise upon the other side, near like the birch or the elm I speak of. They are things of a grace and beauty beyond words. What the ultimate may be lies hidden in the far, far future.

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Nor does it mean, again, that the environs there are composed entirely of types of life that have their origin or parallels on earth, for the after-world teems with a life characteristically its own. For me to attempt to describe it would, of course, prove useless. For as I have said the consciousness of life lies in impressions, these impressions, again being the result of sensations borne to the brain through the function of one or more of the media for the purpose,—the organs of sense. Now, if this life lies—as in this case it does,—beyond the capacity of the organic sense, and the inner sense has not yet found development to the point of clairvoyance—in which case you would be able to see with the soul's organ,—it of necessity lies for the time beyond your comprehension.

And then the spiritual light which so noticeably irradiates the countenances of all—Rose; my darling mother; the coterie of friends,—to each member of which—strange coincidence,—or is it coincidence? I remember now having felt myself particularly attached during their sojourn here. I commented upon it this very morning. Rose smiled as she assured me of their happiness—a happiness beyond words—a happiness, she said infinitely beyond anything possible on earth, where there are restrictions at no time to be completely shaken off. There they were free.

But happy as they were, she continued, their beatitude was still comparative only,—a very beginning, as it were. I echoed her words in surprise. But Rose only repeated her assurances. Nothing was perfect but God. Strange as it may sound, there was a very eternity of planes above, each in their order as superior to the one next below as their's was superior to ours. Through all these gradations were we compelled to pass in the gradual un-

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folding of the human character, which made up the sum of the work of redemption. For God lay within.

I have said every gradation: it would have been more correct to have said, every gradation above the one to which you will find yourself translated upon your release from the body. "For man," she said, "is like the thistle-down of the fields, that ripened and released by the sun and winds, floats here and there, some near the meadow-surface, some high in air. Only where they are the sports of the elements, the soul is more under the immediate surveillance and tutelage of Law."

"Then we do not all reach the same goal?" I asked.

"By no means."

"Why?"

"Men are not all alike,—not even born alike,—and neither are their souls. Some are of better mold than others; so with their souls. Some are blessed with parents with common-sense, who start them well upon their pilgrimage while still on earth. Others, to the third and fourth generation, have the sins of their fathers visited upon them. These are doomed to a period of mortal turpitude—an agony worse than any any orthodox hell was ever conceived to hold. For God punishes even more refinedly than man would. It is hell in truth,—the only hell. Imagine a worse punishment than to be left with only your viler thoughts, and the memories of actions now or soon to be regretted, and breathing the atmosphere common to a myriad of others, not one of whom is better than yourself."

"That breathes of injustice to me," I said.

"It is on its face only, my friend. Man is, to a certain measure, or in a certain way at least, a free agent.

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If, in a life spent at the cost of the best there is in him, his conscience speaks and he heeds it not, it is but a just retribution that overtakes him. Suffering is the price of all retrogression."

"But is it always retrogression?" I asked.

"Invariably where suffering follows. It may not have been a step of yours, but somewhere in the long chain of past generations a falling away from the right—and that is God,—has taken place, the moral law broken."

A moment's silence came between us.

"I noted," I said then, "that in your first reply there was something of a qualifying character."

"Yes. For, what may seem strange, there is another section which does not suffer, immersed as it is in this same hell, so resourceful of poignancy to others. It is made up of the souls of those who have not yet attained to wisdom or felt of higher things. So far has this section developed and no further: in it the spiritual is still latent. It breathes but its normal atmosphere. You find its exemplification on earth, where one finds light and happiness and another darkness and discontent."

"Have you anything in the way of a remedy to offer?" I asked, sadness at my heart.

"Only a return to the right,—to God," came the unhesitating reply.

"And as this depends upon the individual, and an unqualified concert of action in man is at no time possible, the return of the race as a race, can never be more than partial. In other words, a condition wholly purged of sin is not possible to earth as long as man is the creature he is."

"The race as a whole does not need redemption. It is the individual. And as regards the partial return you

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“speak of,—the success of every such effort lies as much with you as with every other being on earth.”

“How do you mean?—of what does it consist,” I asked.

“Of the simple performance of your duty to God and man.”

“But the injustice still remains. Perhaps it is because I do not understand. Why should one be made to suffer and the other not? Why do we not all start alike?”

“We do.”

“But you have just led me to infer to the contrary.”

“You are right; you do not understand. As contemporaries it may be said we do not start alike. Take yourself and a savage from the wilds of Africa for instance. You are both men; yet beyond this you are no more alike than are a bit of charcoal and a diamond the same. *You* are men in different stages of development, physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and every other way. *They* are both carbon; the one crude, the other refined.

“But for all this difference there was a time somewhere in the far past when mankind, as so many units, started from one common point, though ages apart; hence in one sense it may be said that all started alike. But let me explain more fully, for I see that you are sorely puzzled.

“To begin with, the conditions essential to the appearance of man upon earth were not the work of a moment as we are asked to believe. Many long ages were consumed in the attainment of that point, where from something lower man mounted to that stage of perfection where God in reviewing his work pronounced it good and crowned it with immortality. And having reached

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it, it was the work of other ages to bring about the disappearance of that period of mystery.

“Between its dawn and close man appeared upon earth, not in the single pair of the Eden story, but in many pairs, and in various parts of the earth,—the conditions becoming universal,—and not in a day, but many centuries, possibly even ages, apart,—for the mills of the gods grind slowly,—and lastly with all the physical peculiarities which to-day distinguish the various races.

“For man is not an after-thought, not the mere whim of an hour, but the product for which all the earthly forces—never blind,—have been working through the long cycles of the past. Nor was he the comparatively finished product of to-day. Far from it. The very lowest strata of society at the present time, probably, marks the flood of that era of half-spontaneity.

“At this point then, you see, we all started alike. There was no royal road then, nor is there before God any now. Justice pure and simple was then and is now being meted out to all alike. But the first product, borne unconsciously upon the tide of natural progress, was ages ahead in the general development before the last of that natural growth appeared. Nature’s processes, marked by human standards, as I have said, work slowly, and it is very probable that the last to appear was but little if any in advance in point of development to the first man to tread the earth. However this might be, there was a difference, be it large or small; and to this start—the start of the first-born,—is due the greater difference we find in men to-day.

“I might add that should man ever, through some totally inconceivable and wholly improbable catastrophe, disappear from the face of the earth and not a seed of

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him remain, your globe would forever remain man-free. For the conditions that made his evolution possible no longer exist, and can under no circumstances be repeated or revived. Leaving all minor conditions out of the question, the earth as an earth and a unit would prevent it. For the earth of to-day is by no means the earth of cycles past. It has lost much—while yet inappreciable to human sense and calculation,— in volume, and in axial and orbital velocity; adding belt upon belt to itself in the process of matter of an ever-increasing fineness, and lengthening your day and year. Life would of course follow any readjustment of forces, but it would be a life of a higher type than any now existent with you, and would border more upon our own. But then all this is pure theory and can never be realized in fact, for the unforeseen never happens to God. He, of course, has complete control.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EXTENDED SENSE.

(AGAIN Waring came to a pause, for a few moments fumbling among the leaves of the book he held as if in search of a page of special interest. Having found it, and without looking up, he continued the reading.)

“You have memories of earth?” I remarked tentatively this morning.

“We have, such as you have of your childhood; pictures losing themselves in the mists of time. Why not? But,” reading my thought, “there is for us no more reason for desiring to remember the earth-life than there is for you to remember your boyhood days. Many are glad enough to forget them. The man or woman who makes life a success in the broader sense of the word is usually not one to regret the past, though he may look upon it with fondness. So with us. He alone who would recall, if possible, a course pursued does that. The eyes of the successful are always to the front, feeling that life’s solution lies there,—that the future, in other words, is the vital part of existence.”

“Then you do not know?”

“Yes,—and yet again, no,” Rose answered. “Hav-

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ing passed Death's portal we are at least assured of an after-life. But the great *why* of it all still lies enshrouded in mystery."

"For evermore, do you think?"

"No, but, as upon earth, to be gradually penetrated as human understanding and individual character develops. That secret is an absolute point in the Master Mind, only to be solved ages hence for you and me, when we have attained to that perfection which will permit us to stand in His presence with impunity."

"With impunity?" I echoed, surprised at her words. "Have all our lessons then been in vain? Is God not the source of all that is kindly and good?"

"He is. God is love. Whatever betides remember that. Should question arise, never doubt Him, but, for the answer, probe deeper within yourself. It is his thoughtful care that provides for every relationship of life;—carbon for the plant; oxygen for man; and yet a subtler fluid for our own existence. For we breathe. Yet reverse the order of Law,—give oxygen to the plant and ether to the man and you turn what is good under one set—the natural,—of conditions into the rankest of evils. So with His environments. They are of an order so high and rare that no spirit can breathe them until fitted therefor by a probation covering ages."

"Then are those environments material?"

"In the broader sense of the future, yes. For it is matter,—spirit matter, which is after all but a qualifying term. It is the essence of matter; matter in its sublimest forms, the quintessence of all that here appeals to you as color, music, perfume, contact, taste."

"What are we to understand by this?" I asked.

She laughed, the sweetest of music to me.

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“I fear little or nothing where so few really understand the properties of spirit matter even in its closest relationship to matter as you of earth understand it. We only know that the flight of matter is toward the spiritual, the unseen; that the earth, and at a certain stage of their formation all the stars of the Universe, owing to central forces within, is constantly throwing off fine particles of matter, which immediately above its face constitutes the atmosphere of man, and at various heights above the planes and atmospheres of many higher orders of beings; that in short matter has the power of assuming as many varied forms without as it has within the limits of the physical senses, the simplest and rarest of which is the highest. And as intuitively we know that He is the Unit from whence all departs and to whom all returns, you should, with very little effort, be able to grasp my meaning.”

“It is wonderful,” I acquiesced in admiration.

“You will wonder even more once you have crossed into this borderland of ours. And your first subject of wonder will be, I know, the striking similarity in many ways of the life we lead to the one on earth. We breathe; we clothe; we walk,—where distances are short; we laugh; we sing; we do many things—very many in fact,—that you do.”

“So I have perceived from time to time. But are our senses, being objective, dropped at death?”

“Not so. The organs are, but their functions are at once taken up by another set much more comprehensive in every way, and which are carried in embryo as it were through the physical life. There is no stoppage at any moment. In fact the senses with which we are here endowed are but extensions of those you enjoy, made to cover a new and broader field.”

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I was silent, doubtful.

"Would you have evidence of what I say—of its truth?" she asked with a smile, noting my emotion.

I gave a silent assent. Rose held out her hand to me. I took it with a sentiment of awe.

At the contact I felt that keen thrill surge through me once more which I so well remembered experiencing on the occasion of my first intromission some time previous. For a few brief moments nothing of an unusual nature transpired, and I was beginning to wonder what the outcome would be when a gentle but decided increase of pressure of the hand on the part of Rose seemed to bring about the desired condition. For a few seconds my mind stood in a state of bewilderment. Then clearness came.

"Now note," she half-commanded, yet kindly, just as a mother would craving her child's attention.

I looked.

"I see nothing unusual," I said.

"Good. Your sense then is what you would call normal?"

"In every way. But that is no proof."

Again came that delighted laugh.

"No. But now."

There came another slight pressure in the contact of hands. With her other she pointed below us.

Then I started. For the ground beneath seemed slowly to fade away; not entirely, but leaving it of a transparency and apparent fragility which made me shrink involuntarily within myself. In that moment my sense had assumed a strange accession of power.

"Do not fear," I was assured; "you stand on firm ground. You can prove it by stamping your foot."

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I did so, still with trepidation.

Assured by the act more than her words I gave my attention now completely over to the enjoyment of the thus suddenly acquired faculty. The loose, fibrous earth, I noticed, offered little or no impediment to its exercise, but I saw at once that solids were not all alike; that, in other words, while all were transparent, they were all more or less so according, I opined, to their density and specific gravity:—showing that the sense there follows the same general law which here restricts the physical one.

For a moment I misinterpreted the demonstration.

“No, *they* have not changed,” I was told as surprise arose to my mind once more. “The change is wholly within yourself.”

By a slight direction of the will on the part of Rose my attention was once more rivetted to the ground.

I now saw that it, beneath my feet, was honeycombed with the passages of many underground streams, which then, greatly shrunken, still scurried from a thousand and one directions to mingle in one central current, which in the freshet season must assume large proportions indeed, if one may judge from the size of the channel it has worn for itself. Originally, I decided as the result of a more general survey, immense boulders had filled in this granite concave, worn smooth by glacial attrition, half a mountainside having first blocked the narrowing outlet of the defile. Upon this smaller rocks had been deposited, filling in the interstices; an accretion of yet smaller forming a third layer and a kind of soil, upon which in the course of time shrubs and trees had grown to heaven,—the entire process probably consuming thousands of years in the formation.

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I followed with a curious and interested eye the long, snakelike roots of the pines and oaks which supported in a network of snarls and intertwinings the mat of the forest floor and all its beauty; and admired, while I marvelled at the intelligence shown, the adroit manner in which every vantage point had been seized upon for the purpose of building for the greatest resisting strength. It is God's way, in the carrying out of his inscrutable purpose, to thus build, and then destroy, in a rebuilding. As I looked I saw a boulder, depressed by the weight put upon it, splinter with a crash, and a readjustment of the upper crust take place,—a by no means reassuring experience. I remember now having heard just such muffled detonations before and wondering at the cause.

Sudden fear rose to my mind, and thoughts of the danger that threatened my cabin and myself. I shuddered once more, and sought,—with ludicrous result, I know,—to tread buoyantly.

“Do not despair,” I was assured; “you at least are safe.”

A new enigma.

“I do not understand. Why I?” I asked, preparing for another revelation.

For a moment Rose hesitated.

“Do not ask me now: that will be explained later. The time of disclosure is not quite ripe.”

She released my hand, and slowly my surroundings assumed their natural conditions, or rather, to be more exact, my unaided sense reasserted itself.

“Now tell me,” Rose asked, “was there throughout aught unnatural in the experience you underwent?”

“In no sense that I could ascertain. Apart from an

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attendant feeling of surprise all was as natural as could be."

"That is to say then that the impressions received reached the sensorium through exactly the same channels, as far at least as you are able to say, through which pass the impressions of your everyday life?"

"Yes."

"And since you recognized it as such even that feeling of surprise can not have been out of the ordinary. Now let me add that this is but one of many, or at least one of several, directions in which you will find this one sense enlarged."

I remained silent, unable to follow her meaning.

"Telescopically and microscopically for instance," she continued.

"I do not understand you."

"How dull you are," she laughed lightly. "I mean that the soul's, or the spirit-eye is so organized that by a slight volitional effort it can be made to, in a greatly enlarged scope while still within certain elastic bounds, penetrate interstellar space; or by another adjustment delve into that other world, equally incomprehensible, the microscopic. *There* lies a world undreamed of by the many. In his pride and ignorance man has asserted since the days of Adam that the visible to the naked eye marked the boundary of the material life, where the truth is, proven in this later day, that we have failed so far to find the point where the visible ends, just as we have on the other hand failed to mark the limit of the created heavens. Everywhere life teems. The microscopic world is in fact as limitless as the other."

It was a new direction. I was lost in wonder and remained silent.

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“In fact the Universe is one grand whole,” she continued, “and what makes it appear made up of parts is only the finite nature of our senses.”

“Then there is a limit to the spiritual sense? I thought the line of demarcation I noted a moment ago was due to the fact that I was not wholly freed from earth and its ties.”

“That fact certainly had its bearings. But as you say there is a certain limit. As an instance I cite the fact that to us the plane of matter,—spirit-matter remember to you—upon which we have our existence or being is almost as opaque as is your plane to your sense.”

“And yet I can not see it?”

“If the will was all that was necessary you would. But an organ is essential to the conveying of an impression whatever its nature, and that organ is wisely restricted in its powers. Our plane lies simply just without the boundary of the physical organ. That is what I am trying to make plain. And now mark you what I say. Just as the invention of the telescope and the microscope has made plain its shortcomings in at least two directions, so some day, when human effort is directed spiritward, an instrument will be devised which will prove to you of earth the truth of what I say in this, a third direction.

“But the microscope has to do with material life,” I corrected.

“Oh, the perversity of man. *There is no other.* It was spirit-matter, or the spiritual, so long as it had no existence for man,—that is, you might say, until the appearance of the microscope. Then it became material. When that prospective instrument I speak of becomes a fact it will demonstrate to you our sphere to be as much a natural and material a one. ‘Material—and I

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cannot impress this upon you too often,—is but a comparative term. It includes all substances in some way palpable to the senses, and without regard to their density or any other property but those of a certain opacity or power of resistance. When I say senses, I speak advisedly, for I would include my own. And they being the more far-reaching, I think that they should mark the truth or untruth of what I say.”

This was said with a smile and a triumphant arching of the brows.

“But as it is,” she continued a moment later, “neither are more than temporary. With new fields come new sensations, to understand which will require organs more sensitive and more expansive than those either you or I possess at the present moment. Wonderful as they are they may be compared as mere makeshifts with the organs of the future.”

“That should mean another death, or a series of deaths.”

“No. In the uses for which they were intended the physical organs show themselves capable of adjustment to any demand put upon them; which is great when we figure from the dull beginning of infancy, to experienced old age. So with ours. They are even more elastic, as I have just shown you in one direction, and some time ago in another. Our future has nothing to do with expansion of body, or, beyond a certain degree, of soul, but solely with growth of intellect and the unfoldment of moral character. In that development, it is true, there is a slight throwing off continually of the coarser parts of us,—an unconscious process, the analogy of which you find on earth in the unconscious expansion of the boy into the man, but it is a change involving no change

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of organism. No; there is but one death, the death of earth. We simply pass, as we are successively fitted, consciously from one grade to another with *character* as our password."

"You are at perfect liberty then?" I asked.

"We are. The choice of all that goes to make up our existence certainly lies with us."

"Then why do you not pass on?" I asked, surprised.

"For many reasons. Can you remember the joy we felt when we were children together and life was young, roaming the fields flooded with the varying beauty of the spring, the summer and the fall? That experience we repeat here on another and nobler scale. I am in the midst of that enjoyment now. I am like a traveller in a new country where much is novel and interesting. Then my loves hold me here; and a sense of duty I have."

"Loves?—duty? Duty to whom?"

"My kind."

"Ah, I understand. I see you engaged often in missionary work."

"Yes."

"But I find you always at work among your own countrymen and women. How is that? On earth we go among the heathen."

She laughed lightly.

"That is where you of earth err. Charity should always begin at home. It is a work assigned us, you know," she continued more seriously, "from higher planes in the work of the general redemption."

"I begin to understand. And your allusion to your loves?"

"Means that love with us is the attracting and co-

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alescing force as it is with you. I remain here because the attractions bid me. I love the flowers here, the trees, the brooks, the people."

"But where the choice to higher things—the solution of the mysteries which here enshroud us,—are yours, I marvel that you loiter on the way."

"Man upon earth loiters three score years. Why should *we* haste. We have an eternity before us. It is not even asked of us. Besides there are other reasons. I have already made plain that sudden and inadvisable transmissions from a lower to a higher level are not possible. Then I repeat love rules. You must first learn to love, to long for something in some higher section before you can feel the desire to pass on. Until that desire comes we are powerless. That is why progress with us is as much a matter of time as with you. But do not think us unprogressive, for that would be far from the truth. Little by little we feel the attraction to higher things seizing upon our natures and calling us to the front, away from the gods of our younger days. You know that the loves of our youth are not those of our maturer years."

"Except my love for you, my Rose."

"And that is because our loves have kept apace."

* * * * *

And so time passes.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHASE OF THE MOUNTAIN LION.

DREAMS. Mere vaporings? Or have they relation to our past or future? Have they relation to our life at all, or are they of a world entirely apart? That, however, can not be. The Universe is one. And, while phantasmic, dreams are still effects, and as effects live only through causes. To concede the existence then of causes extraneous to those upon which our universe is based is to concede the existence of a power in rivalry to our God's,—a contingency we can not conceive to be, hence eschew the idea in toto.

What relationship then with our life? That some—the more beautiful and ideal,—may have connection with our future may well be imagined. But how about those bordering on the phantasmagoric—those where the elemental life—life without the controlling factors of reason and conscience,—has its being and finds the time to carry out its diabolical scheming. They can only have to do with the past,—the world's past, since the earth to-day brings forth no life in the least resembling that in them depicted. Has the spirit indeed the faculty of recalling all the vast, interminable past?—even to

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that point where the first thought of creation finds birth in the Master Brain?

Is there in truth a past?—is there a future?—or is there but a *now*? I begin to doubt. In the round of the eternal we must concede the existence still of that primary law that presides over the birth of worlds; for to do otherwise would be to admit the beginning of an end, and the enthronement of the finite. And that the law which on the other hand oversees the extinction of worlds also prevails we too must admit, as our astronomy abounds in instances where suns have disappeared from our ken wrapped in a mystery that can only be explained in the surmise that they have returned to the elemental form. No,—no. The laws of the Most High are eternal. There is naught but a present. Beyond the gates of Death the mystery of life, we will find, lies revealed from the beginning,—lies mapped out to the end,—and what we know as change lies really in the individual in his contact with those laws, and to that unaccounted property we call *growth*.

Usually there is a chain of intelligent action running like a golden thread through every dream that is normal, whatever may be said of the sanity or reverse of its setting. And mine was normal,—that is to say it was not brought about or influenced so far as I am able to say by any indisposition of body. I had been out all morning upon the mountain in a search for deer, and fatigued in body but perfectly clear and bright of mind, was napping the late afternoon away seated in the doorway, my head pillowed against the rude frame. The dream that came to me I can not describe: nor does it matter. I will not even say that this time it bore any intelligent relevancy,—such as, for instance, where the

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spiritual thread, broken in the awakening, is taken up by the material life in a strange continuance. And yet again it must have, for it was this very thing that took place. I only remember—and happily it is all we require,—that, as it progressed, in the turmoil of an action I can not interpret, there came to me a faint and distant cry,—a cry not as a thing apart, but as a part of the filmy tissue of my dream,—a cry that repeated itself with such swelling insistence that gradually it drew apart and became a thing distinct, and so full of a vindictiveness, and a horror to ice the blood, that I awoke.

Life, taken in all its ramifications, is certainly a curious thing. In that first moment of awakening I thought I had dozed but a moment. Then I realized that I must have soundly slept for more than two hours. The sun had set, and even across the canyon the reflected flush of sunset had cooled into the gray of the coming night. It was in fact twilight, and the shadows of evening were fast filling the depths of the woods. Not a sound disturbed the quiet; the tall pines stood spectral-like in the uncertain blend of light and dusk. Yet it seemed to me that the crags had not yet ended the re-echoing of that last thrilling cry of my dream. The very silence was palpitant with its burden. The cold shiver of an unnameable fear seized upon me.

My ass had drawn near, and now, with a harshness that grated upon my high strung nerves, filled the forest with a prolonged bray. To me it seemed an answer, and to be vibrant with a terror which for the moment I could not understand. Then again came the cry of my dreaming, shrill, blood-curdling, filling the canyon with its horror. In a moment I had recognized it, and I laughed quietly to myself. It was the lion returned.

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It was still some distance away,—down the canyon below the shelving rock. I took up my rifle and went to the brink to reconnoiter. For half an hour its weird cries were repeated at intervals of a few minutes, and ever at gradually approaching distances. Then they worked away to the left, where as gradually they were lost in the distance there. With a sigh of relief I returned slowly to the cabin in the blur of the woods.

I built a little fire by the corner nearest the doorway to cheer me, for I was not completely over that first spasm of fear. Then for an hour I hung over it in a profound reverie, adding a stick every now and then in an absent-minded way as the fire burned down and the encroaching darkness suggested to me the need. Then I rose, stretched myself with a lazy feeling of pleasure, and was about to enter my cabin for the night, when startlingly near this time, and from the upper end of the glade, the cry was repeated.

The unexpected sound made my hair stand on end. For a moment I stood rooted to the ground, unable to move hand or foot. Then I hastily replenished the fire once more, seized a burning brand and started another on the corner diagonally back of the first. When these flared up, and the sparks fled in showers among the branches overhead, they filled the flat with an unbroken circle of lurid light wherein the trunks of the pines cast dancing shadows and the granite boulders stood impressive in their massiveness. For a time the glare was disconcerting, and the shrieks of the animal ceased. But it was for a short time only. Gaining courage with the passing of time and my seeming impotence, it again approached, and its shadowy form was ever and anon to be seen circling in the murk of the further forest.

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Never has it shown such venom. It appeared as if its one purpose was to arouse in me a feeling of rancor in the hope that at some time of its greatest fury I would be led into an indiscretion. But reason held unruffled sway in my brain throughout, and every indiscreet display of the slinking body only ended in its becoming the mark of my rifle. And in my mind, too, I was resolving all the while on the morrow to put an end for all time to the animal's threatened depredations.

My marksmanship also had its deterrent effect. I noted with satisfaction that after each shot the circles described were always enlarging ones, and that all its movements were of a more guarded nature; and when one shot better than the rest brought a sharp growl, part of pain, but more of surprise and sullenness at the unlooked-for nature of the attack, I saw it no more. Fifteen minutes later its cry came to me once more from far up the gulch, where it was repeated a number of times, when all was still. I now labored to bring in some of the larger wood so that my fires should not die down while I slept. Then for another brief period I hung about, half-dreading the beast's return. But all remained quiet and I entered the cabin, carefully fastened the door, and sought my night's repose.

* * * * *

Early this morning—it is the mellow autumn,—rifle in hand I took up the chase. I had no difficulty in finding the trail of the brute. Its last fading cries had come to me from afar up the wooded gulch between the two domes to the north and west. It is a bit of my immediate surroundings which has never had my attention until today as its general appearance had proclaimed it as im-

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passable. Nor is this impression much belied by actual fact, for boulder and shrub hem easy progress on every side. But it evidently was the natural channel of ingress into the nook of the brute for a wellworn trail worms itself through the brush from over the saddle and the country beyond.

This I followed very carefully, on all fours most of the time, and always on the alert for a sudden appearance of the animal. Arrived on the other side I dropped relieved to the open, wooded bench some distance below. It was upon a part of the mountain altogether new to me. A chain of dry meadows fringed with hazel swung down from the left and intercepted my path. Across this chain I passed. Here I lost the trail, the open nature of the country making it unnecessary for the animal to continue upon a fixed path. I paused for a moment in indecision to look about me. The forest was grand, sombre, silent in the early morning light,—the dark pine trunks rising straight to heaven, the green immobile canopy overhead. But below, the underbrush—the few gnarled, beechen-stemmed aspens on the meadow, the hazel, the vast oaks here and there interspersed, were gay with color. A jay broke the silence which reigned like the spirit of prayer about, and a squirrel nibbled audibly at a cone far up among the branches of a pine. Then like a flash an idea came to me. It was in the nature of revelation. I looked about me with a peculiar searching. Had the hour come? Yea, surely; for the scene was growing strangely familiar. It seemed to me as if I had been over all that ground before. Half-instinctively I turned to my right. Yes; it was by yon group of sugarpines—. As if in corroboration a lithe, tawny body moved among the underbrush, then sprang crouch-

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ingly upon the trunk of a fallen pine, which lay its length a short distance before me. Without the least hesitation I raised my rifle and fired, giving no thought whatever to the possible consequence. My aim was good; with a snarl the animal half-turned and with a bound disappeared. With every sense now preternaturally awake I followed. Yes; there was the defile down which it had disappeared in my dream, with its covert of dogwood and alder in autumn garb. With a sudden and unflinching faith in the result I sprang in excited pursuit.

As I fully expected, some distance down came in that side ravine to form the acute angle which I remembered, and up which the lioness had turned—if my dream was to come true. A moment,—then a turn,—and there stood the overhanging wall of rock with its shadowy alcove, tenanted a moment later by the treacherous beast; the wilderness of brush and boulder,—the overtopping pines; to my left beyond, the Jackass, just as I remembered seeing it.

In my bewilderment my heart almost ceased its beating, and I might have been pardoned if at that moment I had forgotten all else in my eagerness to reach that spot,—the focal point of all my thoughts and labors for the past four or five years. But the truth—which is often stranger than fiction,—is that all thought of the mine for the moment was strangely absent from my mind. The ardor with which my object has been pursued has paled much of late. A change has come over me in many ways, but chiefly in mind and spirit. Much thought have I given to the discourses I have had with Rose,—to the wonderful conditions obtaining in the afterworld; and the thought now uppermost, together with a dazed feeling of wonder, was the unerring manner in which

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the scenes of my intromission of months back were being realized. I have never heard its parallel. For one moment only was I brought sharply to myself, and to a sense of the danger I was incurring. That was when the animal made its stand, and turned upon me with that formidable display of its ivories, giving vent to a blood-curling cry that echoed and re-echoed along the mountain-side. With a little more care given my aim I again raised my rifle and fired,—this time the shot that brought the noble feline to the ground. Without a sound it dropped, quivered for a moment and then was still.

Then I relapsed into my previous state of mental torpor . . . I flayed the lioness with the feelings of a man doing a duty perfunctorily,—the task of another which somehow had been imposed upon me. It was not until I was resting from my labor upon a rock near by that a semblance of clearness came to me. Then, half-mechanically, and in an effort to locate myself, I ran my thoughts, link by link, over the odd chain of events as I remembered them in that clairvoyant hour months ago, to the moment of my flaying the animal and my later reclining on the rock. It was a necessary step to the complete restoration of myself to my wonted composure. What had followed? Ah, yes; I remembered. I turned, still half-bewildered, rose, and stepped to the cliff, my last shadow of doubt and mystification dissipating.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE MINE.

ALL has come true. There stood the long-lost mine, a wall of dessicated quartz, half hid in a tangle of shrubbery. I have not been played false in a single particular. To me it seems rich beyond reckoning. Its full extent I can but conjecture owing to a maze of tumbled boulders, and the rank growth of brushwood which covers the steep slopes which here shelve sharply from both sides to the gully which drains the place, and in which a trickle of water keeps the grasses green, and nourishes a few late flowers. As the swirl of secret excitement following upon my discovery subsided, and I gradually came once more to control myself, I grew observant. I noticed then—what had struck me months before—that it was a loose wall which somehow in some far geologic age has become transfixed in the narrow gateway of the gulch, and that it formed—what toys we are in the hands of the higher powers,—the coping so to speak, of the nook, over the rim of which is had that entrancing view of the distant mountains.

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I actually laughed aloud at this irony of fate. For four long years had I searched so faithfully,—so without complaint; for four long years had I lived within a bow's shot of my goal. Are our paths indeed ordained?

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And now that I have found it what is it to me? I feel no jubilation of spirit such as I had pictured to myself many times in the days when the fever of search was strong upon me, nay, not even the most ordinary satisfaction. Is it that the half-conscious growth which is the result of my subconscious communions has raised me to a plane above the reach of that common love which is the root of all evil? I have even come to wonder by what a fatality I have come to spend so many years upon a project of so fleeting a nature.

Such were my thoughts as slowly and somewhat dejectedly, with pelt slung across my shoulder, and rifle in hand, I returned in the high glory of noon to the seclusion of my cabin.

* * * * *

With to-day has come a change of mood, and with the change another train of thought. It is one of those periodic changes or reactions of which I have made mention earlier in these pages. For the nonce the visionary has disappeared in the man of the world. I am giving the matter saner thought, more leisurely consideration, am weighing all the pros and cons of the situation. To-day I can not but see the powerful advantage the possession of all this vast wealth, now within my grasp, will give me. After all wealth in itself is no serious objection,—in

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itself holds no harm. It is only when the loves of man appear in connection that the propensity for good or evil comes to the surface. It all depends upon the individual and the use to which it is put. But there shall be no doubt in the world as concerns me; and in the event of my speedy demise—and I feel it within me that I am not here for long,—and the passing of my fortune to my children, I will still vouch for its use in a good purpose. Some grand project for the general uplift of humanity—its exact nature I leave for future decision,—shall be the result of its expenditure.

* * * * *

But I am growing old and unfit for this world. My health is being generally undermined; I know—a knowledge that has been mine now for some time,—that I have become subject to a weak heart and may at any moment be called away to that other world. What if it should be before I can share the knowledge of my discovery with my children, and through them with the world? I am assured to the contrary by Rose and her companions, but a nervous fear possesses me nevertheless. The task of the moment is plainly evident to ensure to the future as far as is possible the location of this fabled mine. It seems woefully insufficient in view of the sequestered nature of my abode and the tenuous chance of some stranger falling upon it, but it is the best at my command.

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In the cool of my cabin, where the stray sunbeams through the chinks of the roof form a twilight of se-

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ductive beauty, and the tranquility is invaded at times by the buzzing of a yellow-jacket, or the softer fluttering of a butterfly in its passage in through the door and out through the chimney, I am drawing up an elaborate map of the vicinity. I am taking no chances. Every point of any prominence at all,—all the little streams and half-blind trails,—find a place upon it. At the same time I am writing up data in confirmation. When these are completed I will roll them together, tie them with a ribbon which somewhere I found among my possessions, and place them beyond the reach of any damp or marauding vermin in a metal tube I have secured. Should the worst come I still have faith in the powers and love of my Rose.

* * * * *

Home again. A month has passed since the date of my last entry. A week or ten days after the date of that entry came the first storms of winter and I returned to the plains. On the way out I stopped overnight at the clearing to share with my old shake-making friend the knowledge of the good fortune which has overtaken me, first pledging him to absolute secrecy. Arrived here I have confided the documents recently completed to the safe-keeping of Ida, particularly impressing upon her their value and importance.

* * * * *

The spring once more is here, and as the time for my periodic return to the mountain draws near it is with the growing feeling that it is to be for the last time;—a feeling that finds its origin more in the nature

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of a premonition than in any knowledge I have of a more stable character. The long winter nights I have passed in relating to Ida all the wonderful story of my life in the nook;—a story which she, being younger in experience, and therefore more skeptical, has accepted with some mental reservations. But the tale has grown upon her; a greater faith has come; and when I shared with her to-day also this emotion presaging our last good-bye, there came to her too, as in a flash, this dread which ere the year is out is to culminate in certainty. With the warm tears of love in her eyes, and her young heart torn with an anguish that a father alone can fathom, she beseeches me to remain with her. Useless pleading:—with the appearance of the first snowflower upon that eastern slope I must,—I will be there.

* * * * *

Once more the mountains,—the eternal mountains! How I love them! Nature is just awakening,—at times seems uncertain of the hour,—relapses for days at a time back to winter sleep,—then to awake with a greater certitude and life. The days are gray and chill; but fuel is plentiful; the chimney broad; the fire cheery, and life again full of interest. Great fields of snow still encloak the mountain above; but about me the grasses are up, the brush is throwing out fresh shoots, and my burro finds good pasture.

* * * * *

I feel somehow that the threads of my life are focusing themselves for an important event. Have they to do

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with those preparations I see being made upon the other side of that veil, the passing of which we call death, and which rather mystify me?

* * * * *

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH THE HERMIT'S END IS ANNOUNCED.

FOR there beneath the trees that rise about the abode of Rose and its fronting parterres of flowers has appeared a mysterious and unoccupied couch, pillowed, and soft with downy coverings. Just when it first appeared I have no recollection, but probably some little time before I became impressed by the strange insistence of its presence. It is a shaded spot, and a breeze warms and yet cools it pleasantly. Birds sing above, and there is the soft splash of fountains. Cordials rest upon a table close by, and fruits and viands, such as have, since my earliest schooldays, always been associated in my mind with thoughts of the revelries of the gods of the ancients. Occasionally in my clairvoyant flights I come upon Rose seated by it with a smile of expectancy upon her face; sometimes with a few friends in attendance but more often alone. For there privacy is sought, and held sacred, just as here.

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This morning the mystery was made light.

I found Rose as usual seated by the couch with that far-away look in her eyes that I have seen there so much of late, two young sprites sporting a short distance away.

“You are expecting a friend?” I asked.

“I am expecting a spirit from earth,” she answered me simply.

I can not understand the unseen connections of this life,—what something it was that prompted me to the next question.

“Might it be possible that we are acquainted? But of course, since your friends were always my friends.”

Rose smiled.

“You do.”

She regarded me with the tenderest love and pity in her eyes.

I paled, for suddenly it flashed upon me that it was myself for whom she was waiting.

“With all you have seen and all you have heard of the conditions prevailing in our world do you still fear death?” she asked, noting the perturbation upon my countenance.

I hesitated a moment before replying,—a moment given up to a searching self-scrutiny. Its result I confess proved far from flattering.

“Can man ever wholly shake it off?” I answered her. “I fear,” I continued in great humility, “that I am at best but human and have in me still that feeling of uncertainty which everywhere seems to attend thoughts of death.”

“Because of convictions half formed,—because of the want of the true faith.”

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“ Yet I feel,” I continued with a sublimer air, “ that I can be brave when my hour comes.”

“ Nobly spoken. My friend, your hour has come.”

“ I do not understand,” I fenced vaguely.

“ I mean that your days on earth are numbered. We have the knowledge from the higher powers.”

Doubtful I remained silent.

“ Powers,” she continued with a gentle insistence, “ whose penetration of the future is deeper, and whose wisdom, because of a broader experience, is profounder than our own.”

It seemed incredible, and further doubt rose in my mind.

“ When, then, do I die? ”

“ I can not say.”

I breathed relieved in spite of myself.

“ You will die suddenly.”

“ And know of it days, weeks, possibly months ahead? ”
I asked amazed.

“ Without this fore-knowledge it would be sudden,— sudden because unexpected.”

“ But how can anything unlooked-for be foretold?— an accident? ”

“ There are no accidents. Everything is the result of law, and therefore, in a manner foreordained.”

I shook my head, still in doubt.

“ Listen,” said Rose. “ Note this ant here upon your table in its everyday pursuit of food. Does it know, do you think, of the death which impends as you raise your hand to crush it? No. To its fellows, however,—granting for a moment that they have the intelligence to appreciate the fact,—its death would appear sudden. It was unnatural,—out of the ordinary. Yet you, being of

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a higher type of intelligence, and with a greater hold on life because of that intelligence, know of it minutes, hours, if you will, beforehand."

I shrugged my shoulders in silent perplexity.

"That is what you call fate."

"And foreordination? Are we then thus the play of the higher powers?"

"God in his infinite wisdom has ordained that they be beneficent ones."

"And yet they crush?"

"Nay, you mistake; not the higher. The desire to inflict pain or suffering is altogether foreign to them. They would elevate. The impulse to crush bespeaks the lower orders,—the purely animal."

"If that then is fate, what is providence?"

"Fate and providence," she smiled, "are a mere interchange of words with their meaning dependent upon the individual affected. An act is both fateful and providential always at one and the same time. In other words, there is a silver lining to every cloud. To illustrate we will again take up this colony from which we just now drew our analogy. Here, you see, is a member tussling with a seed far too large for it to handle with comfort. And here comes another not so fortunate foraging for something it might bear away to the general store. We rob the first to place our booty in the path of the other. Now note the bearing of the act upon the individual. It was an act of providence to one, a disaster to the other."

"It was robbery."

"It was, from man's point of view. And as such it might even have been regarded among them had one of their own kind, or some agency within the scope of their comprehension, seized upon the prize."

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“ But, you argue, where a power of which they know naught, and in a manner the operation of which they do not understand, intervenes, it is either Fate or Providence.

“ Just so.”

“ Does it matter? ”

“ Not in the least, for God controls the situation and works His will in either case; and—however doubtful we may be at times,—always for the general good. God is above all things impersonal, and in this impersonality lies His power to see clearly and justly. He loves you—.”

“ But He loves my enemy as well.”

“ Yes. And the fact that he may be a saint and you a sinner makes no difference. He loves all things;—not for the perfection to which they have been brought, but for what lies in them, the power of being moulded into something higher and better,—in other words, their perfectibility.”

“ I can imagine,” I said in a sort of rapture, “an artist whose ardor is such that he finds an almost equal pleasure in the contemplation of his pigments, and the power for beauty latent within them, as in the finished work itself.”

“ Man’s perception, on the other hand,” she continued after a moment’s pause, “is never wholly free of bias, however, he may pride himself to the contrary. The ego *will* manifest itself consciously or unconsciously, and however much repressed. Man is too inherently self-conscious to ever rid himself enough of the thought of self to get a true perspective on life. Therein, lies the root of all earthly evil. When the first of the human race, in those far days before history began, voiced the realization that it, the race, was the highest pinnacle to

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which, in point of perfection, the materially organized on earth had been brought, man was the creature absolutely of the natural senses. Of the higher—the spiritual life,—he had no inkling. For him such a life had no existence. So far had his powers of perception reached and no further. It required a further development before it could hope to enter into a comprehensible communion with God. For, understand, every phase of development, whether general or individual, carries with it its limitations,—its own sphere of consciousness and peculiar range of thought; and the suggestion that came to him that he was the centre—the object of all the lavish care we find displayed on every hand,—the one for whom all this splendor of earth and sky was created, but marked the arc of flight to which man's fancy at the time was capable of soaring. Viewed from the changed and changing view-point of to-day that thought appears the soul of selfishness, and the effect of its centuries-long repeating is still deep-seated in man. It has taken a thousand wars to loosen its hold upon him. Still, it was God's way,—a way the tortuousness of which we do not understand.

“ But to-day nobler and broader aspirations control us. You of earth are gradually coming to shed the callousness that results from continued self-centered thought,—coming more and more, in the spirit of altruism, to think,—more and more to act for your fellowman. And with this broadening of the view of your relationship with the greater life of the Universe is slowly dawning, in the nature of a conclusion, the truth that, while the education, the growth, and the elevation of the soul may be, nay, no doubt is, the object of this earth-life, it is after all but a fragment—and a very small fragment, of the grand, the whole truth.

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“For the key that is to open to him the secret of existence in its entirety man must leave earth and self to soar among the stars. There will he find it and not here. The constant viewing and reviewing of a drop of water or a grain of sand can never furnish him with an adequate idea of the overpowering magnitude and beauty of mountain or sea. Man is that drop of ocean,—earth is that grain of sand, in the measureless scheme of the Universe. The will must teach the soul to fly. Man, in spirit must hie to the cloudless ether of some height of fancy far from the blinding influences of his petty strifes, and there, in the serenity of the primal life, give free scope to every heaven-born faculty within him, if he would obtain some idea bordering on the truth. For while the way to Him lies within, God still lives without, and you must learn to seek for him afar as well as near at hand. Not necessarily in some star, unless it be the pivotal one about which the inconceivably great mechanism of the Universe may be conceived to revolve. The mighty darks of space may prove quite as potent. And when you have found Him, as never question you will if you but seek aright, the riddle of the ages will stand revealed to you. For you will have found the sensorium of the world; the one absolute point in all the Universe; the generating point of all energy; the abiding place of truth and love; the heaven, in short, of all your desires.”

“And yet with all your wisdom,” I resumed a few moments later, “you can not say just when I am to die?”

“I can not,” was Rose’s simple answer.

“Why not? Can you tell me that?”

“I can. Life in the body, you know, is sustained by a nervous energy often taken for the life itself, which in the perfect subject reaches into every atom of his being.

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Where it does not, ailment is the consequence, and if not quickly overcome and the machinery set to rights death in its first approaches has been heralded. It may be years to the culmination, nevertheless that moment where the nervous force is on the wane marks the turning point of the tide and the approach of the inevitable.

“The problem then simply resolves itself into this. How long can a piece of mechanism such as the human frame, a portion of it now comprising faulty parts, bear up before those faulty parts transmit their difficulties to every other part and the whole come to a standstill. It is a nice calculation, you must concede,—one too complex for human comprehension as at present developed, involving fields of experience not known to you or us except as possible of existence. But it so happens that this very point is a subject for elucidation in a sphere a few points removed from ours and it is from there comes all our certain knowledge in the matter. As the time approaches, of course, and the indications of the final dissolution come more within the range of its special knowledge, each of the intervening grades, in the order of their perfection, will know of it, just as you in your broader experience may know of an impending event long before an inexperienced child may. When the light enters my own sphere, I too shall know, hours, possibly even days, before you in the ordinary run of things could know.”

“And when that time arrives you will apprise me?”

“I will.”

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CHAPTER XX.

ROSE TAKES A HAND IN THE WORLD'S AFFAIRS.

FAITHFUL to the promise she made me a few days ago Rose this morning approached me on the subject then under discussion, saying:—

“Your time has come.”

“I know it,” I answered briefly, and with something of the air of a martyr. “My heart has protested in the exercise of its functions for some days past.”

“It may cease in its duty at any moment, my dear, and we have preparations to make.”

I echoed her words.

“Preparations? For what, Rose? Tell me quickly, sweetheart, for a panic of fear is overmastering me.”

As strangely enough was the fact. For in a moment, and altogether without warning, I was seized with an uncontrollable trembling akin to the palsy, attended by a perspiration that broke from every pore of my body in cold exudations.

“Nay, why should it?” She laid a finger gently upon me. “Compose yourself to think, my friend. Death is not a thing to be shunned, but on the contrary a thing to be courted. It is not a thing of horror, but a

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thing of beauty,—the birth into a new life,—the eternal life, which in its further reaches and higher states holds for you and me and all mankind an era wherein we are blessed with creative energy,—the peer of God himself. The earth-life is but the embryonic period of the soul and nothing more.”

She was sublime; and I?—how petty we are at times.

“But, am I to lie here and rot?” I asked with a discontent that was half-forced, “the prey of marauding animals?”

She looked at me in silence for a moment, pain, surprise, and a great pity in the depths of her eyes as she came to know my irresolution.

“I said that we must prepare,” she returned then even more gently if that were possible than before. “I have read your thoughts for weeks past—a noble fight between the earthly and the divine in you. I beg to assure you you will not.”

“But how? I am alone. I have every faith in you, dear heart;—but how?”

Rose smiled,—a smile so sweet and compassionate, and withal so reassuring, that gradually I came to lose my fear and grew composed.

“Listen,” she began. “On the edge of the hills, where the last brown ridge slopes into the level immensity of the plain, with his mother and only sister, lives a young man who is well-favored in many ways. His aims, while only general at present, are above the ordinary. A good executive, he is still a youth more purely intellectual, with desires standing for betterment in all things.”

“His name?” I asked, curious at the strange turn the conversation was taking.

“Roger Waring.”

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Somewhere I had heard the name.

“Waring,” I repeated. “The name is familiar; I have come upon it before. But where?”

“In the Flats. Do you not remember, my dear, one morning some years back a young man assisting you in the readjustment of your pack?”

“I do,—I remember the incident well. But why this portentous interest in him?”

“He loves Ida.”

“I had not even heard that they had met,” I said in surprise.

“They have,—only casually, it is true, but none the less definitely. They met in the City where, you know, she is completing her studies. There was only a glance of eyes meeting, a mingling of the personalities passing, but his heart kindled and love sprang aflame, and to that love he lives true to this moment.”

“And Ida? What does our daughter say?”

“Poor girl,” Rose smiled; “she suspects nothing. But in her secret thoughts I am joyed to find his image rises with a fateful persistency.”

“Have they met since? This is news to me and interests most keenly.”

“They have not. They are strangers to each other and do not know how to bring about another meeting. Blind to the possible he indeed lives in the hope that Providence will interfere, with the result that they meet again. It is a frail thing to build on; and but for the proverbial fact that the young heart bounds high in hope always, he must have given up in despair long ago.”

“And you propose to bring about this meeting?” I asked after a moment’s pause.

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“ I do.”

“ But how? ”

“ Listen once more. This young man has a friend in the City of whom he thinks particularly much. They were classmates once.”

A brief pause ensued.

“ This friend of our friend is—Paul Carrington.”

“ Paul Carrington? ” I asked in utter surprise; “—my nephew?—my brother’s boy? ”

“ Yes. And Paul in his rather cold way reciprocates the thought so showered upon him.”

“ Go on,—go on; I am still mortal,—and impatient.”

“ In his heart of hearts Roger is seeking to perpetuate this brotherly regard in a love-match between Paul and his only sister, Naomi.”

“ Ah, I perceive.”

“ He has invited Paul to the ranch with much persistence. But Paul is a much-occupied man, and to the present time has been unable to accede to his wishes.”

There was another pause,—of bated interest to me.

“ Roger loves these mountains as few mortals do. It is the one shrine before which he bows his knee to pour forth all the ardor of his young soul in an adoration of the Most High. And when extending his friendly invitations to Paul an excursion into them was always a conspicuous feature in the entertainment he held in prospect. And, of even more vital importance to our ends, the Basin has always been the goal of goals to him. It is the site of his earliest peregrinations here, hence its subtle attraction for him apart from its natural charm. So that, once his wish with regard to Paul’s visit to the ranch is realized, I feel that they will hie

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them thither as surely as turns the needle to the pole."

"The question then remains only how to bring them to this little, secret nook in the mountain," I said, anticipating the thread of her story.

"Yes; and having read your thoughts in this matter for some time past I have laid out a plan of action."

"How good of you. And your plan?"

"Has at least the merit of simplicity. I have but, through the utilization of that universal language, suggestion, to impress upon Paul the expediency of accepting at this time Waring's invitation, and all is done."

"So easily?" I laughed. "I am afraid you will have to explain to me more fully."

"Circumstances, it so happens, are most favorable to my plan. With Paul once upon the ranch I fear nothing. Naomi is beautiful,—good as beautiful, and with just enough of intellect to make her charming. She is just the woman Paul most admires. So with this retaining force in play at the ranch Roger will experience no trouble in persuading him to the trip into the mountains,—if, indeed, he finds persuasion necessary at all; which I very much doubt as Paul has had visions of rest in green fields and shady woods for some time. He has been very diligent in his work of late,—too diligent in fact. And then Waring has a most admirable coadjutor in the person of his friend Sutcliff. Once in the Basin I have but to suggest the climb of the mountain—."

"Which I fear will be no easy task," I interrupted.

"Fear nothing. Another suggestion and it is done. To ensure our success, however, we will have to appeal strongly upon the sensational. Anything short may pass unnoticed. The unusual, you know, holds piquancy

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and charm for the human mind always. Now, upon the mountain-top facing the Basin stands a monster pine, now dead for many years. It is part of my plan that on the morning of their arrival in the Basin you fire this tree."

"I follow you readily. My mind is unusually clear this morning."

"I will apprise you of their coming. They will noon on the flats of the Deerhorn,—the Ferrals are even now projecting the pitching of their camp there."

"The Ferrals?" I repeated in surprise. "What can they possibly have to do with us?"

Rose smiled.

"You will begin to see shortly that intelligence rules this world,—that nothing is really the outcome of chance. We follow Law in every action of our lives, be it what we call voluntary or otherwise. They will prove the retaining force at the meadows, from whence only is had that imposing view of the Butte. Otherwise Waring's friend in his eagerness will pass on through to the Cherry-Creek Meadows."

"I see."

"At the Meadows there will be a short strife of opinion. When our signal first rises to heaven, every member will give expression to an interpretation of its purpose; but it will remain for Waring—the most susceptible to my influence,—to carry the day."

"And man prides himself on being a free agent," I ejaculated, breathless at this new version of life.

"Man is one with God,—the head. He directs in all things."

"But," said I, aghast, "do you not realize that in thus depriving man of the belief that he is a free agent,

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responsible for his every action to God and man, you are depriving him of that responsibility?"

"I do; and more. It is a responsibility that lies lightly. And can I help what is? But after all it is immaterial. The man or woman doing right follows an inborn principle, or at least a very pronounced belief, and an expression of belief, if wrong, will in no wise influence either. God has guarded every byway, you see. On the other hand unsupported theory, even if it prove right, never made a true Christian. Before good can come God must stand within. A man may join the church, but unless the vital point, the fundamental principle of his character has evolved from the purely physical and intellectual—which are but a step from the animal,—to that higher plane, the spiritual, which is the true human plane, he is as far from the Absolute as he was while he stood without. That change must come; it is natural, and there will be no mistaking it when it does,—that inner realization that there breathes a world beyond. So you see any opinion I may entertain—or you,—upon the subject has really no vital bearing.

"But, for the sake of the discussion, I believe that upon this subject man is in general mistaken. What does he really know of the nature of evil?—its constitution, or the purpose of its existence? I hold that God never errs,—can not in the very nature of things, being the All-in-all. Even abortions, dropping for the moment to the material, or what pass as such, wherever found, must have their purpose. Evil is not a chance or irresponsible product, but exists as much for a fixed end, and that end the higher exaltation of good, as the very principle of good itself.

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“But unlike the principle of good, which is fixed and absolute in God, that of evil is not. As we near the good we are conscious of an approach, we can feel the distance lessening, the chasm between filling in as it were; but when we look back, even from our highest point of rectitude, we find that evil has kept apace, that we are still immersed in an atmosphere of it, an atmosphere we now begin to realize we can never hope to fully escape from. It extends, comparative always, remember, beyond the earth state; it prevails amongst us in the border-land; it pervades the sections higher up. It is, in short, a necessary concomitant quality to the scheme of our moral growth.

“Then so many content themselves with applying the lotion to the scrofula, forgetting that the seat of disease lies far down in the impurities of the blood. Sin is an effect whose cause lies not in nature without but in man’s nature within;—is an emanation of self in other words, we each inhaling and—what is far worse.—exhaling an atmosphere of it peculiar to ourselves. For evil is a moral obliquity due to a dwarfed and undeveloped soul.

“And, you know, it is the root of disease that the surgeon worthy the name seeks at all times to remove. What is the root in this case? It is plainly evident: selfishness, hatred, suspicion, falsehood, dishonesty, envy, —everything demeaning and worthy our profoundest contempt; an array of negatives it should pain a thinking man to survey; a host of parasites that enslave the soul and vitiate its life.

“Now, let us for a moment imagine them supplanted by their opposites, the qualities upon which the soul may feed, and grow and wax to that perfection which is akin

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to God. Those opposites are, benevolence, love, faith, truth, honesty, loyalty, charity,—certainly a shining host. And mark the result. Sin vanishes as darkness does before the dawn.

“The road of escape is plain enough. It is up to man, through the medium of his duty to God and man, to get out upon it. In so far are we at least free agents. That path lies not in a change of physical environment, nor in a social readjustment, but in a moral regeneration. We must cultivate in ourselves and our children these all-powerful positives. No permanent banishment of evil can result in any other way. Legal or social prohibition only serve to dam the tide that later floods the land in a moral reaction. Not but that regulation may be necessary: the mistake is in considering it all-sufficient.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST DAY.

MY last day. I note that I write the words with my usual tranquility of mind. There is no transfiguration; only an elation a little more acute than any I have ever felt. Is it that I do not realize what the expression means to me?—that I must write the words again and again before I can hope to realize it? The thought of it all seems so unreal, so like some fantastic dream, that I can never seem to quite grasp it. And then again it is all so ingrained in the web of my being, is so real, that it seems to have been part of my life since time first began.

My last day. The feeling is not one of resignation with which I view the future. It is not resignation we feel at the close of one bright day, and with the certainty before us that the morrow will bring another even more fair. It is hope. The culprit about to meet his doom may feel resignation as his hour draws near; it is all he is capable of, moral paralytic that he is. I question even whether the simple faith of the martyrs brought to them more than resignation in that last hour at the stake or within the sanded oval of the arena. Faith, if only blind

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faith and not a wisdom that is half intuitive, must fail it seems to me at the last moment. Knowledge alone can have the power to bring more.

My last day. I know we all have one, some early in life, computing in our puny, artificial way from comparative standards, some late. But was there ever man situated as I am? with the fact of his end known to him, and the hour of that end approaching,—approaching,—approaching?—slowly, it is true, but with an inevitableness under no circumstances to be evaded? To most—to most, I say?—to all that last day comes unheralded,—comes when least expected. It may be to-day,—it may be one or a score of years hence. We never know. And well it is that we do not.

And yet God's wisdom in this has been questioned,—as his wisdom is being questioned at every turn of our lives. How much easier, they say, would it be to do our duty with the certainty of a reward in an after-life. Why this darkness?—why this blindness? True. But how for the soul? What do we know of the future?—what it may hold for the need of the strength to repress, the strength to control, the strength to persevere?

And with all our philosophy it is but a half-truth after all. For God does not hide. "Seek and ye shall find," it is said. To the pure and spiritually clean—the only cleanliness that is next to godliness,—there comes a condition possible to them alone. It is the divine light breaking through the clear crystal, to illumine and beautify with its iridescence. It brings with it a broader relationship with the powers that be. They see further,—they see deeper; they hear the whispers of things dead before; they feel a presence of whose existence they once stood in doubt; they taste of joys of

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which, before they reached this plane of development, they knew not of.

Ah, the beauty of this life,—ah, the error of our ways! With the waters of life on every hand we yet perish of thirst. Awake, oh man! Awake to what is possible to you on earth!

* * * * *

Last night was sublime. I walked in an atmosphere that was half divine. There was a storm;—the rain poured,—the lightning flashed above as never before. And when the storm was over and above the tumbled clouds marshalled over the dark Minarets the moon shone across the void beyond the shelving rock upon which I stood, my soul rose in a very uplift of thanksgiving to God for the blessedness of life. There was a calm—the calm of a mysterious life it was to me,—about the woods, silent in the light,—silent in the darks of passing clouds, such as I have never felt before. The secret of the Future is about to be bared to me. I seemed strangely full of life. I drowsed not. Not because of a dread of what the future may hold: that is a settled question. I was surcharged with the element of life. The pulses of earth are dying within, baring the field to the higher and finer instincts that come from above. It was long after the middle of the night before I slept.

* * * * *

And this morning! What mortal dares attempt to describe it? It broke bright and clear, and without a cloud. As the dawn advanced, however, little wisps of

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fog appeared in the canyons for a time, half-enshrouding the dusky pinegrown bases of the mountains. And then came the glorious sun, to play upon the fresh, fragrant forests in a million scintillating points, and in all the colors of the spectrum. It was like a page from fairy-land.

With the sun appeared my feathered friends to fill the warm air about my door with their melody. What songs are theirs! Joy and hope,—hope and joy, always and forever. Man alone mourns. And my four-footed visitants,—dainty and span, afraid of the rumple and disorder in the damp of the earlier morn. Lightly balanced on the rim of my sugar-bowl, attended by a stranger as yet shy and a little fearful, little Chip views me askance as he nibbles at the sweet of its contents questioning the why of my unusual quiet. Good-bye, little one. Your companionship has helped while away many an hour that might otherwise have proved most dreary to me. Tomorrow we part. Will it be for ever? Nay,—nay; but for a time. Never fear. Somewhere, somehow, sometime, and in some shape, in the vast seeming void of the Universe, we shall meet again. The orbits of our lives have simply run side by side so far,—have crossed, and are about to part. Somewhere and sometime in the future, just as the planets repeat theirs, yet never wholly the same, will ours recross. Shall we know each other then? Yes, surely. Does God know? Then shall we also, for we are one with him.

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Outside all is charm this morning. Overtopping the cupping shakes of the cabin the buttonwood spreads its

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long boughs in a shower of white bloom against the dusk of the forest wall. From the creek comes the fragrance of the bed of wood-violets that reposes there in such shy modesty, and which has more than once added strength to the conviction I entertain of the exalted purposes of this life. In the sunlit, needle-strewn open near the lake a scattering of lilies nod in the wind. To all I went visiting, to each bade a tender farewell, my heart thankful, my soul appreciating a purpose in their existence in the greater fullness their life on earth has brought my own.

* * * * *

Yesterday already I removed the brush from the trail—for I had a moment of doubt seize me, not of the outcome of the prophecy, but as to the hour of its consummation. My dumb companion was loth to leave, and in the end I had to drive him before me over the zig-zag of sunlit trail well into the Basin, where, I feel he will fall in with some packtrain on its way to or from the summits. My heart was deeply stirred, I confess, and my eyes moistened as I bade my faithful friend of years adieu; he following me with his eyes in a stupid, slow-comprehending way, and voicing his remonstrance of my desertion of him till I dropped to this side of the mountain, and eye and ear knew him no more.

* * * * *

I feel myself growing weaker. My heart fails in its full duty at times,—almost coming to a complete stop now and then,—at others beating with a tumultuousness that I know is not provocative of either peace of mind or welfare of body. Otherwise the functions of both are

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normal. I read for an hour this morning; following it with the inscribing of a note to the party for whose coming I am now waiting,—writing with an indifference at first until it came to me what wonder theirs would be when they came to read, and smiling at the thought that they might even come to think me light of head. Then I played upon my flute,—with more than my usual power it must be, for, beautiful as the morning is, with every inducement to song in light and air, the birds seemed to cease in theirs in order to listen to mine. I am resting quietly now,—reserving all my energies for the climb to the mountain's top and the great pine upon its brow. I greatly fear that at the last moment my strength will forsake me, and that I may sink exhausted by the way. But Rose says nay, and lays a hand upon me, when, lo!—a new life surges through me and urges me onward.

* * * * *

Last night in the calm succeeding the tumult of the early evening I sought and found communication with the clearing. It is strange that at times I am taken with that groundless fear that all our calculations may yet go awry; but so used is human nature to consider chance as a factor in a scheme that knows only Law. Such a moment was it that prompted me then,—such a moment was it that prompted me earlier in the day. My faith is not yet fully established,—or say rather the weak points of my early training have not been fully strengthened and restored. From my friend I have at no time withheld anything of importance, and my plea now was, that should the ends for which both Rose and myself have worked so faithfully miscarry,—and not before,—that he use every endeavor in his power to deliver to Ida, my

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daughter, the mine of the Mono,— an appeal, I was assured, that was not to be made in vain.

* * * * *

I have now but to await the hour. I have done all,—fulfilled Rose's every wish. My grave—cool, moist, restful, even inviting,—stands ready to receive me. And I have fired the tree. The climb to the point on the brow where it stands alone, the hoary, unassuming hero of a thousand storms, I made with little effort enough,—much less than I had thought for,—sustained as I was by Rose's presence. But now, returned, and left to my own unaided and enfeebled resources, reaction has come; my strength is quickly forsaking me, leaving me very weak indeed. Yet what matters it, heart, where a few more hours will end this earthly life.

Imagine my thoughts,—imagine the emotions that surged through me as I stood beneath the gnarled monarch and watched the dense, resinous smoke roll above me in a large white cloud against the blue of the sky; the woodland scape a thousand feet below reposing dark in the calm of the June morning. It was my last day on earth; it was to be my last view of that wondrous scene, tranquil with that great tranquility that has ever held me in its thrall and named me willing kin in that greater kinship that includes all nature. There was but one curl of smoke visible above the points of the pines in that expanse of forest and mountain,—blue, small, insignificant, and speaking of human effort in its weakness to accomplish. There could be no mistaking it,—it was on the verge of the open that marks the meadows of the Deerhorn. With the glass I had taken with me to descry if

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possible one last vestige of human life before departing from earth and its ties forever, I made out the forms of my friends,—dark mites upon the green. For friends they are, though strangers to me,—not excepting Paul, though the same blood courses through both our veins. I even thought I could note a certain excitement show up among them,—like that occasioned in the colony by an untoward footfall upon an ant-heap,—created no doubt by the appearance of my mysterious signal. If so, it was shortlived, for shortly they disappeared beneath the trees, and I saw but the moving forms of their grazing animals. As a human entity I have seen the last of my kind. For to-morrow I am more than human.

And so here I am face to face with the inevitable. Yet am I tranquil,—more so than I ever pictured to myself was possible. It is night, and I write in the quiet of my cabin. The moon shines in at the door, and down the chimney, flecking the ash-covered west wall with the patches of its light; and the flickering of the burning logs upon the hearth brings into fantastic play every lurking shadow of the place. A cricket chirps shrilly and insistently beneath the bunk, and outside I hear the occasional lament of a bird disturbed in its nest. What a life is this! What an absorbing, eluding mystery! What a blending of the real with the unreal! With our feeble ray of understanding we seek to pierce the unknown: we strike upon a glimmer of the Truth, only to have it engulfed the next moment in the shades of an ever-enlarging mystery.

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I must have dozed. It is long past midnight, for the play of the moonbeams has shifted to the opposite wall

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of the chimney, and through the cracks of the window, falls in bars of silver upon the table, where my candle burns mistily. My cricket friend has ceased his song; the bird without settled to a peaceful slumber. Not a sound is there to disturb the hallowed quiet. Yes, hark, there is one other. Like the faint breath of the wind it comes to my ear,—the rustle as of silken garments, and through the earth-gloom appears Rose,—her face radiant with the light of a wish fulfilled, her hair an aureole, her blue eyes lakes of a depth that is wonderful. Friends of every age, male and female, attend her, and stand vaguely about, pleasure—nay, a welcome, simple and direct, upon every countenance. The scene grows clearer,—blends into the well-known one of Rose's abode with its idyllic groves and beautiful flowers, its silver-throated birds, its play of crystal fountains, its happy children—their laughter for the moment stilled,—its waiting couch. Rose beckons me,—but a strange moment of hesitation seizes me. She bids me laughingly desist in my writing,—and still I hesitate. She approaches with a smile, and with arms extended. Those arms,—a sudden weakness is upon me—I must lay me down for a—moment; Rose!—Almighty God! I co—.

* * * * *

Waring closed the book and for many moments not a word was spoken between us, so affected were we.

“His life was one long prayer,” was his gentle comment then. “We can easily imagine the rest,—the single step to the cot—the half-unconscious drawing of the coverlet,—the half-return to consciousness,—the spirit's embrace,—the final dissolution, when the extended arms

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fell powerless upon his bosom, there to lay till we found him. A modern miracle.”

Sutcliff thrust a twig into the coals in silence, a moment later lighting his pipe with the flaming end.

“A modern miracle indeed.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SURPRISE.

How long I slept I do not know, but I remember awakening with a start and the sense strong upon me that something stupendous had, or was about to happen. I sat up in my blankets with every faculty keenly alive.

Outside our fire had not been allowed to die down. Before retiring for the night we had heaped great quantities of fuel upon the coals, and this was now burning brightly and cheerily. By its flickering light as, subdued, it penetrated the white canvas slopes of our tent, I saw Sutcliff's bed had been vacated, and that Waring was slumbering easily in his. I heard footsteps without that I recognized as Sutcliff's. I heard also the uneasy trampling of our horses, and the steady roar of many waters.

Suddenly I started to my feet. For the mountain had trembled as if shaken by a mighty hand, and a distant roar was swelling and fading away over all other sounds. I rushed from the tent.

I found Sutcliff by the fire standing expectant. Above us the trampling of the horses grew chaotic. I heard

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also from yet further up the slope a boulder set free by the unusual vibration come clattering down the mountain, loosening a miniature avalanche of stones in its descent, and continuing its career down an adjacent ravine.

A change at once decided and agreeable had taken place in the weather. It was one of those sudden changes for which there is no apparent cause. It had grown noticeably milder since the hour of our retiring, a warm air breathing over the mountain that was very pleasant to our sense of comfort. The clouds above were breaking asunder, and a moon in its last quarter stood high in the east.

"An earthquake?" I questioned of my companion.

But Sutcliff only shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not know," he returned after a while; "it is an experience entirely new to me."

For an hour we hung over the fire, kicking in the butts and heaping fresh logs upon it as bit by bit it died down and needed replenishing. Twice there came a renewal of the trembling, but it was in a much more subdued form, and accompanied by no sound.

Then, assured by the silence, we re-entered the tent and crawled beneath our blankets to try for an hour more of fitful sleep. I do not know what success waited upon Sutcliff. I only know that the first streak of that early dawn had appeared in the east before I succeeded in snatching a period of needed repose.

* * * * *

That next morning, so both Waring and Sutcliff affirmed, was one of the most perfect they had met with in all their extensive experience in the mountains. The clouds had entirely disappeared, disclosing an expanse of

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blue above the sharp, dark points of the pines, smiling, and of a translucency and depth that were inspiring. In the crystal clear atmosphere every detail of the landscape stood out with cameo-like distinctness;—the fringe of ice-corroded granite above the steep, brush-bound declivity to the south, irradiating with the light of the rising sun; the dark bowl of the Basin back of, and below us, resting in the shadow of the mountain; and nearer at hand all the many and varied objects of our more immediate surroundings.

A white frost lay upon the meadow, where upon its verge our horses stood shivering in the gray of the morning. Nevertheless there was a warmth in the air that made the blood course quick in hope, and made plain to man and beast that the dilatory summer had at last arrived and was securing a foothold in the land. Perhaps the change of mood was mine, but it seemed to me that over night the waters had changed the burden of their song;—that instead of suggestions of discomfort, which had been theirs the day before, they had now intertwined in their music certain repentent notes,—a subtle dominant as it were that brought visions of breaking buds on the oaks and laurel about us; of the fuller fragrance of bush and flower, and the lush of the green meadows of the middle-reaches; and lastly, in the heat mists of the farthest distance, of yellow fields bending before the wind, and fruits hanging in purpling clusters in the long converging lines of the valley vineyards. And yet, again, I feel that the change was not wholly mine. In a way that was equine it is true, but none the less conclusive, our animals, too, seemed to have caught the infection. For as the sun broke through in long bars of light, and the air grew more and more

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springlike, there came an ever-increasing disturbance from among them; a challenging neigh for instance, followed by an acrimonious uplifting of hoofs in play or reprisal;—a condition of things in fact to which Sutcliff found it necessary to call a halt by putting in an appearance among them, disentangling where he could the wet, wirelike ropes, and giving a pat of cheer here and a word of gentle admonition there.

And when after breakfast we took up our rifles and passed over the saddle to drop into the open of the slide beyond, where the skunk cabbage stood luxuriously green, and the laurel bloomed in patches of rose and white, what a pleasure it was to bask in the warmth and radiance which there beat upon the slope. It is well for us, a nation of "dollar-dazzled success-worshippers," as a recent writer very aptly put it, that the "call of the wild" is so deeply rooted within us. God indeed works his ends in many mysterious ways. But for this "call," and a periodical return to first principles, we would in the course of time, Heaven knows, become but so much machinery,—sentiment-proof automatons, and nothing more. To me it was worth a fortune that morning to be able to enjoy myself as I did; and that not only, but to see the others—and more particularly the hearty manner of Sutcliff,—enjoy the varied beauty of mountain and canyon;—the lavish wealth of color; the hush of the immense silence; the—this last tacitly and half-unconsciously,—recognition of the spirit of God permeating unseen and yet so very palpably every object about us.

Arrived below we were unable to locate the exact spot where the trail to the deserted cabin of our one-time hermit friend branched from the main one to the Chiquita. But having reached as we thought the level of the glade,

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—which was a little below the general wall of rock which here supported the summit,—we plunged boldly northward into the entanglements of brush and talus, taking the general direction only for a guide. We had gone no considerable distance when Sutcliff's eagle eye found signs of where the brush had been cut and thrown aside upon our left. Working toward it we in a few minutes found ourselves upon a dim, sinuous path, marked at its acute turnings by little mounds of stones.

Upon this we trudged hopefully on for an hour, hoping at every turn to be brought face to face with our goal, and incidentally with our fortunes. We came upon the spot on the trail where the brush barrier had been placed that was to prevent, in the years that were, the straying of the hermit's little beast of burden, and which he had on that day so considerably removed to allow of the animal's egress and later wandering through the Gap into the Basin; its hoof-prints no doubt being those Len Ferrall had come upon in his jaunt on the morning we first saw the flaming signal from the mountain-top.

Then a sudden turn brought into view the granite domes which we so well remembered encompassed the nook in the mountain. Only a single ridge lay between, and upon its apex Waring, who was in the lead, came to a sudden halt. An exclamation of extreme surprise broke from him. Pausing for a moment before we too reached the spot where he alone stood, we turned upon him with questioning eyes. He had half turned toward us, his features white, and with trembling hand was directing over the ridge.

“My God, see!”

We scrambled in wild excitement to the top—to blanch and tremble in our turn.

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For, mark you, there was no enchanting nook; no cabin or lake; no strip of forest-land; none, in short, of the many beauteous details which the visit of the year before had so indelibly impressed upon our minds, and which we had expected to see with the same feeling of certainty with which we had expected the dawn to follow the night. All had disappeared. Instead there was gashed a long, ochrous wound in the mountain-side reaching from the over-lapping snowdrifts above to far down, where the mass had slid in a mighty avalanche in the direction of the Chiquita below.

The sight was at once terrific and wonderful. Such a chaotic intermingling of boulder and tree and general debris I have never seen. Where the little cabin with all its beauty of overtopping tree had stood this wound had scarred its broadest, and had scored to the very bone of the mountain,—a granite, overlaid with a clay, yellow, and of a puttylike consistency. But for the harsh, immovable domes, whose very roots had been bared, we should never have recognized this scene of ruin as the site of our visit of the year before.

The mystery of the disturbance of the night now stood revealed to us. Loosened by the frost action of many decades back, by secret, subterranean streams, and by the law of gravitation, the slope with all it held had in a moment been hurled into oblivion. The succeeding tremors which we had felt had without doubt been caused by the parting and dropping away of minor detachments due to the nature of the first slide. No question for a single moment arose in our minds. It was too conclusive. For upon the pines, lying crossed and re-crossed in inextricable confusion, the needles were as fresh and green as those upon the standing trees:

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Nay, as we stood upon the brink, silent, bewildered, I noted that the water, where it had become isolated in little pools, still stood yellowed and only partially clear; and that the spring torrent in its middle occasionally backed as some fresh impediment blocked its way; to a moment later, as the momentary dam broke asunder, race with an increased vehemence upon its changed course.

It would be undertaking a matter of no little difficulty were I to attempt to describe our feelings as, for the moment bereft of speech, we stood there. I can not remember that disappointment—to the degree of keenness at least to make it unduly felt,—was a factor at any time,—at least as regarded myself; for throughout an element of uncertainty had prevailed which had prevented an at best vacillating faith from crystallizing into something more positive, accustomed as I was in my vocation to the handling of facts and figures. As for Waring, his earlier reading of my uncle's papers should have—and in a measure did, I believe,—prepared him for what was to come. I believe of our trio Sutcliff perhaps took the matter most seriously to heart. His faith since seeing that little heap of ore by the cabin-door was unshaken; and by nature of a sanguine temperament, as we have come to know, I fear that he let his imagination run away with him. But as I have said, the impression of the moment was overwhelming, and in that one overmastering one every minor emotion was engulfed.

* * * * *

As I have said in the beginning of my little tale, all this occurred years ago. Since then many changes have taken place. Both Waring and myself, for one thing, have married and have about us a growing group of

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boys and girls. He is still at the ranch, where we visit him periodically,—always an occasion the family looks forward to with pleasure and delight. After supper at such times we usually group upon the broad veranda, where in the moonlight it is but a very natural step for us to revert to those wonderful days. To see the astonished eyes of our boys, and to read the interest in their voices, as they gather in the singular incidents that go to make up the story, greatly amuse both Waring and myself. I ask about our friends; Ballard,—the oddity; Stayton,—the Ferralls,—the herder, Faggerty,—the half-breed,—and lastly, Sutcliff.

And here a strange thing shows up. Sutcliff alone of all that party has faith in the story of the lost mine to-day. For as time passes and the glamor of that golden summer and its strange adventure wear away in the humdrum of our everyday life, both Waring and myself experience grave doubts as to whether it may not after all have been the vagaries of a brain diseased, and without foundation in fact. Not so with Sutcliff, poor fellow. Faith has become ingrained in the man. As the years elapse he grows more and more decided in his views. He is not the one to doubt the evidence of his senses at any time, and had he not seen the little dump with his own eyes and handled a part with his own hands? That a painstaking search in the vicinity of the site where the mine was alleged to have been discovered failed to produce anything in support, in no wise shook him in his beliefs. In his opinion that fact rather added weight to the tale since it accorded with what the hermit had several times dwelled upon, namely the impression that it was but a fragment from above, bearing upon the bed-rock but not coalescent with it. Then another search

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was made of all that ground lying toward the summit,—that too without result. Then we thought we had him. But, no; the virus of the gold fever had become too deepseated. He maintained that the face of nature changed continually, and in this, of course, he was right. He claimed that it must have been deposited from above in ages prehistoric, when the mountain stood much nearer heaven. The elements had worn down the mountain top till not a vestige of the original deposit had remained. This was a new point of view, and gave rise to yet another. He began to argue that if such was the case placer veins should be a consequence. He took up the idea with avidity. It has had possession of him ever since. He is a most worthy successor to my uncle, I must say. Every summer he camps upon the Chiquita to prospect. He has come to know every foot of that mountain. Down under the shadow of its brows, on the edge of the woods where a stretch of meadow sweeps to an open ford of the Chiquita, he has erected a little shake cabin where any time from June to October he may be found. If you meditate interviewing him on this matter of the mine there are several trails by which he can be reached. All are very interesting. You may for instance pass up Hooker's Cove,—a rather difficult feat over a rough trail,—and having reached its mouth, swing up the Chiquita to his abode. Another is the well-known one back of Heron Valley and the old Scarlett Mill. When you have reached the ruined hut among the tamarack of the Summit Meadows turn to your right down between the forks,—a comparatively easy though somewhat long trail. The first route has this advantage: you may anticipate your man an hour or two, as he is an ardent angler and puts in a goodly portion of his time on

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the stream between French Bar and his cabin with rod and line. The second has this: you can put in a day very pleasantly at the lake back of the dam fishing for black bass;—an agreeable interruption, let me say, to the tedium of travel over hill-roads at no time such as to cater to our sense of comfort. Then, again, on the highest point on that trail, where to the east you have mapped below you the long, green chain so frequently mentioned as the Summit Meadows, there is a dark stretch of fir woods upon the right which the sun only checkers in infrequent spots. Swing off the trail here and a short distance up the ridge you come to another point of interest,—another artificial lake; the site where once was sought the diversion of a portion of the waters of the Chiquita, to have them mingle with, and swell the volume of the Fork.

But by far the most interesting is the route we took upon our last visit. One here meets with all the points of interest,—the deserted mill on the Fork,—Gray's—the Deerhorn Meadows,—the Butte, and the imposing heights of Spirit Mountain, and lastly the Gap of the Shuteye and the trail to the Chiquita. By this route you will arrive at the cabin late in the afternoon,—a most opportune hour you will discover, as the chances are greatly in your favor, that you will find a pan of crisp trout, or a quarter of venison, nicely browning over the fire, awaiting you, together with an ovenful of white, wholesome bread, a pot of refreshing tea, a hospitable host, and over the campfire later an entertaining recital of the story of the Lost Mine of the Mono.

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