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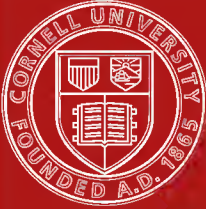
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Nat Hart

THE LUCK OF ROARING  
CAMP  
IN THE CARQUINEZ WOODS

AND OTHER STORIES AND SKETCHES

BY

Bret Harte



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THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP  
AND OTHER STORIES AND SKETCHES



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
GENERAL INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xi
THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP AND OTHER SKETCHES.	
THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP . . . . .	1
THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT . . . . .	14
MIGGLES . . . . .	27
TENNESSEE'S PARTNER . . . . .	41
THE IDYL OF RED GULCH . . . . .	53
BROWN OF CALAVERAS . . . . .	65
CONDENSED NOVELS.	
MUCK-A-MUCK : A MODERN INDIAN NOVEL . . . . .	78
SELINA SEDILIA . . . . .	86
THE NINETY-NINE GUARDSMEN . . . . .	95
MISS MIX . . . . .	103
MR. MIDSHIPMAN BREEZY : A NAVAL OFFICER . . . . .	113
GUY HEAVYSTONE ; OR, "ENTIRE." A MUSCULAR NOVEL . . . . .	122
JOHN JENKINS ; OR, THE SMOKER REFORMED . . . . .	130
FANTINE. AFTER THE FRENCH OF VICTOR HUGO . . . . .	136
"LA FEMME." AFTER THE FRENCH OF M. MICHELET . . . . .	142
THE DWELLER OF THE THRESHOLD . . . . .	147
N N. : BEING A NOVEL IN THE FRENCH PARAGRAPHIC STYLE . . . . .	153
NO TITLE . . . . .	158
HANDSOME IS AS HANDSOME DOES . . . . .	167
LOTHAW ; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GENTLEMAN . . . . .	178
SEARCH OF A RELIGION . . . . .	178
THE HAUNTED MAN : A CHRISTMAS STORY . . . . .	188
TERENCE DENVILLE . . . . .	197
MARY MCGILLUP . . . . .	204
THE HOODLUM BAND ; OR, THE BOY CHIEF, THE INFANT POLITICIAN, AND THE PIRATE PRODIGY . . . . .	213
EARLIER SKETCHES.	
M'LISS : AN IDYL OF RED MOUNTAIN.	
I. SMITH'S POCKET . . . . .	234
II. WHICH CONTAINS A DREAM OF THE JUST ARISTIDES . . . . .	243

III. UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE . . . . .	252
IV. WHICH HAS A GOOD MORAL TENDENCY . . . . .	260
V. "OPEN SESAME" . . . . .	270
VI. THE TRIALS OF MRS. MORPHER . . . . .	278
VII. THE PEOPLE <i>vs.</i> JOHN DOE WATERS . . . . .	287
VIII. THE AUTHOR TO THE READER—EXPLANATORY . . . . .	298
IX. CLEANING UP . . . . .	301
X. THE RED ROCK . . . . .	311
HIGH-WATER MARK . . . . .	322
A LONELY RIDE . . . . .	332
THE MAN OF NO ACCOUNT . . . . .	339
NOTES BY FLOOD AND FIELD . . . . .	345
WAITING FOR THE SHIP: A FORT POINT IDYL . . . . .	371
A NIGHT AT WINGDAM . . . . .	374
SPANISH AND AMERICAN LEGENDS.	
THE LEGEND OF MONTE DEL DIABLO . . . . .	382
THE RIGHT EYE OF THE COMMANDER . . . . .	398
THE LEGEND OF DEVIL'S POINT . . . . .	408
THE ADVENTURE OF PADRE VICENTIO: A LEGEND OF SAN FRANCISCO . . . . .	417
THE DEVIL AND THE BROKER: A MEDIÆVAL LEGEND . . . . .	425
THE OGRESS OF SILVER LAND; OR, THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF PRINCE BADFELLAH AND PRINCE BULLEBOYE . . . . .	430
THE CHRISTMAS GIFT THAT CAME TO RUPERT: A STORY FOR LITTLE SOLDIERS . . . . .	437



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE opportunity here offered<sup>1</sup> to give some account of the genesis of these Californian sketches, and the conditions under which they were conceived, is peculiarly tempting to an author who has been obliged to retain a decent professional reticence under a cloud of ingenious surmise, theory, and misinterpretation. He very gladly seizes this opportunity to establish the chronology of the sketches, and incidentally to show that what are considered the "happy accidents" of literature are very apt to be the results of quite logical and often prosaic processes.

The author's *first* volume was published in 1865 in a thin book of verse, containing, besides the titular poem, "The Lost Galleon," various patriotic contributions to the lyrics of the Civil War, then raging, and certain better known humorous pieces, which have been hitherto interspersed with his later poems in separate volumes, but are now restored to their former companionship. This was followed in 1867 by "The Condensed Novels," originally contributed to the "San Francisco Californian," a journal then edited by the author, and a number of local sketches entitled "Bohemian Papers," making a single not very plethoric volume, the author's first book of prose. But he deems it worthy of consideration that during this period, *i. e.* from 1862 to 1866, he produced "The Society upon the Stanislaus" and "The Story of M'liss," — the first a dialectical poem, the second a Californian romance, — his

<sup>1</sup> By the appearance in England several years ago of an edition of the author's writings as then collected.

first efforts toward indicating a peculiarly characteristic Western American literature. He would like to offer these facts as evidence of his very early, half-boyish but very enthusiastic belief in such a possibility, — a belief which never deserted him, and which, a few years later, from the better-known pages of "The Overland Monthly," he was able to demonstrate to a larger and more cosmopolitan audience in the story of "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and the poem of the "Heathen Chinees." But it was one of the anomalies of the very condition of life that he worked amidst, and endeavored to portray, that these first efforts were rewarded by very little success; and, as he will presently show, even "The Luck of Roaring Camp" depended for its recognition in California upon its success elsewhere. Hence the critical reader will observe that the bulk of these earlier efforts, as shown in the first two volumes, were marked by very little flavor of the soil, but were addressed to an audience half foreign in their sympathies, and still imbued with Eastern or New England habits and literary traditions. "Home" was still potent with these voluntary exiles in their moments of relaxation. Eastern magazines and current Eastern literature formed their literary recreation, and the sale of the better class of periodicals was singularly great. Nor was the taste confined to American literature. The illustrated and satirical English journals were as frequently seen in California as in Massachusetts; and the author records that he has experienced more difficulty in procuring a copy of "Punch" in an English provincial town than was his fortune at "Red Dog" or "One-Horse Gulch." An audience thus liberally equipped and familiar with the best modern writers was naturally critical and exacting, and no one appreciates more than he does the salutary effects of this severe discipline upon his earlier efforts.

When the first number of "The Overland Monthly"

appeared, the author, then its editor, called the publisher's attention to the lack of any distinctive Californian romance in its pages, and averred that, should no other contribution come in, he himself would supply the omission in the next number. No other contribution was offered, and the author, having the plot and general idea already in his mind, in a few days sent the manuscript of "The Luck of Roaring Camp" to the printer. He had not yet received the proof-sheets when he was suddenly summoned to the office of the publisher, whom he found standing the picture of dismay and anxiety with the proof before him. The indignation and stupefaction of the author can be well understood when he was told that the printer, instead of returning the proofs to him, submitted them to the publisher, with the emphatic declaration that the matter thereof was so indecent, irreligious, and improper that his proof-reader — a young lady — had with difficulty been induced to continue its perusal, and that he, as a friend of the publisher and a well-wisher of the magazine, was impelled to present to him personally this shameless evidence of the manner in which the editor was imperilling the future of that enterprise. It should be premised that the critic was a man of character and standing, the head of a large printing establishment, a church member, and, the author thinks, a deacon. In which circumstances the publisher frankly admitted to the author that, while he could not agree with all of the printer's criticisms, he thought the story open to grave objection, and its publication of doubtful expediency.

Believing only that he was the victim of some extraordinary typographical blunder, the author at once sat down and read the proof. In its new dress, with the metamorphosis of type, — that metamorphosis which every writer so well knows changes his relations to it and makes it no longer seem a part of himself, — he was able to read it with

something of the freshness of an untold tale. As he read on he found himself affected, even as he had been affected in the conception and writing of it — a feeling so incompatible with the charges against it, that he could only lay it down and declare emphatically, albeit hopelessly, that he could really see nothing objectionable in it. Other opinions were sought and given. To the author's surprise, he found himself in the minority. Finally, the story was submitted to three gentlemen of culture and experience, friends of publisher and author, — who were unable, however, to come to any clear decision. It was, however, suggested to the author that, assuming the natural hypothesis that his editorial reasoning might be warped by his literary predilections in a consideration of one of his own productions, a personal sacrifice would at this juncture be in the last degree heroic. This last suggestion had the effect of ending all further discussion, for he at once informed the publisher that the question of the propriety of the story was no longer at issue: the only question was of his capacity to exercise the proper editorial judgment; and that unless he was permitted to test that capacity by the publication of the story, and abide squarely by the result, he must resign his editorial position. The publisher, possibly struck with the author's confidence, possibly from kindness of disposition to a younger man, yielded, and "The Luck of Roaring Camp" was published in the current number of the magazine for which it was written, as it was written, without emendation, omission, alteration, or apology. A not inconsiderable part of the grotesqueness of the situation was the feeling, which the author retained throughout the whole affair, of the perfect sincerity, good faith, and seriousness of his friend's — the printer's — objection, and for many days thereafter he was haunted by a consideration of the sufferings of this conscientious man, obliged to assist materially in disseminating

the dangerous and subversive doctrines contained in this baleful fiction. What solemn protests must have been laid with the ink on the rollers and impressed upon those wicked sheets! what pious warnings must have been secretly folded and stitched in that number of "The Overland Monthly"! Across the chasm of years and distance the author stretches forth the hand of sympathy and forgiveness, not forgetting the gentle proof-reader, that chaste and unknown nymph, whose mantling cheeks and downcast eyes gave the first indications of warning.

But the troubles of the "Luck" were far from ended. It had secured an entrance into the world, but, like its own hero, it was born with an evil reputation, and to a community that had yet to learn to love it. The secular press, with one or two exceptions, received it coolly, and referred to its "singularity;" the religious press frantically excommunicated it, and anathematized it as the offspring of evil; the high promise of "The Overland Monthly" was said to have been ruined by its birth; Christians were cautioned against pollution by its contact; practical business men were gravely urged to condemn and frown upon this picture of Californian society that was not conducive to Eastern immigration; its hapless author was held up to obloquy as a man who had abused a sacred trust. If its life and reputation had depended on its reception in California, this edition and explanation would alike have been needless. But, fortunately, the young "Overland Monthly" had in its first number secured a hearing and position throughout the American Union, and the author waited the larger verdict. The publisher, albeit his worst fears were confirmed, was not a man to weakly regret a position he had once taken, and waited also. The return mail from the East brought a letter addressed to the "Editor of the 'Overland Monthly,'" enclosing a letter from Fields, Osgood & Co., the publishers of "The Atlantic Monthly,"

addressed to the — to them — unknown "Author of 'The Luck of Roaring Camp.'" This the author opened, and found to be a request, upon the most flattering terms, for a story for the "Atlantic" similar to the "Luck." The same mail brought newspapers and reviews welcoming the little foundling of Californian literature with an enthusiasm that half frightened its author; but with the placing of that letter in the hands of the publisher, who chanced to be standing by his side, and who during those dark days had, without the author's faith, sustained the author's position, he felt that his compensation was full and complete.

Thus encouraged, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" was followed by "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," "Miggles," "Tennessee's Partner," and those various other characters who had impressed the author when, a mere truant school-boy, he had lived among them. It is hardly necessary to say to any observer of human nature that at this time he was advised by kind and well-meaning friends to content himself with the success of the "Luck," and not tempt criticism again; or that from that moment ever after he was in receipt of that equally sincere contemporaneous criticism which assured him gravely that each successive story was a falling off from the last. Howbeit, by reinvigorated confidence in himself and some conscientious industry, he managed to get together in a year six or eight of these sketches, which, in a volume called "The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches," gave him that encouragement in America and England that has since seemed to justify him in swelling these records of a picturesque passing civilization into the compass of the present edition.

A few words regarding the peculiar conditions of life and society that are here rudely sketched, and often but barely outlined. The author is aware that, partly from

a habit of thought and expression, partly from the exigencies of brevity in his narratives, and partly from the habit of addressing an audience familiar with the local scenery, he often assumes, as premises already granted by the reader, the existence of a peculiar and romantic state of civilization, the like of which few English readers are inclined to accept without corroborative facts and figures. These he could only give by referring to the ephemeral records of Californian journals of that date, and the testimony of far-scattered witnesses, survivors of the exodus of 1849. He must beg the reader to bear in mind that this emigration was either across a continent almost unexplored, or by the way of a long and dangerous voyage around Cape Horn, and that the promised land itself presented the singular spectacle of a patriarchal Latin race who had been left to themselves, forgotten by the world, for nearly three hundred years. The faith, courage, vigor, youth, and capacity for adventure necessary to this emigration produced a body of men as strongly distinctive as the companions of Jason. Unlike most pioneers, the majority were men of profession and education; all were young, and all had staked their future in the enterprise. Critics who have taken large and exhaustive views of mankind and society from club windows in Pall Mall or the Fifth Avenue can only accept for granted the turbulent chivalry that thronged the streets of San Francisco in the gala days of her youth, and must read the blazon of their deeds like the doubtful quarterings of the shield of Amadis de Gaul. The author has been frequently asked if such and such incidents were real, — if he had ever met such and such characters. To this he must return the one answer, that in only a single instance was he conscious of drawing purely from his imagination and fancy for a character and a logical succession of incidents drawn therefrom. A few weeks after his story was published, he received a letter, authentically signed, *cor-*

*recting some of the minor details of his facts (!)*, and enclosing as corroborative evidence a slip from an old newspaper, wherein the main incident of his supposed fanciful creation was recorded with a largeness of statement that far transcended his powers of imagination.

He has been repeatedly cautioned, kindly and unkindly, intelligently and unintelligently, against his alleged tendency to confuse recognized standards of morality by extenuating lives of recklessness, and often criminality, with a single solitary virtue. He might easily show that he has never written a sermon, that he has never moralized or commented upon the actions of his heroes, that he has never voiced a creed or obtrusively demonstrated an ethical opinion. He might easily allege that this merciful effect of his art arose from the reader's weak human sympathies, and hold himself irresponsible. But he would be conscious of a more miserable weakness in thus divorcing himself from his fellow-men who in the domain of art must ever walk hand in hand with him. So he prefers to say that, of all the various forms in which Cant presents itself to suffering humanity, he knows of none so outrageous, so illogical, so undemonstrable, so marvelously absurd, as the Cant of "Too Much Mercy." When it shall be proven to him that communities are degraded and brought to guilt and crime, suffering or destitution, from a predominance of this quality; when he shall see pardoned ticket-of-leave men elbowing men of austere lives out of situation and position, and the repentant Magdalen supplanting the blameless virgin in society, — then he will lay aside his pen and extend his hand to the new Draconian discipline in fiction. But until then he will, without claiming to be a religious man or a moralist, but simply as an artist, reverently and humbly conform to the rules laid down by a Great Poet who created the parable of the "Prodigal Son" and the "Good Samaritan," whose works



have lasted eighteen hundred years, and will remain when the present writer and his generation are forgotten. And he is conscious of uttering no original doctrine in this, but of only voicing the beliefs of a few of his literary brethren happily living, and one gloriously dead, who never made proclamation of this "from the housetops."



## THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP, AND OTHER STORIES AND SKETCHES

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### THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP

THERE was commotion in Roaring Camp. It could not have been a fight, for in 1850 that was not novel enough to have called together the entire settlement. The ditches and claims were not only deserted, but "Tuttle's grocery" had contributed its gamblers, who, it will be remembered, calmly continued their game the day that French Pete and Kanaka Joe shot each other to death over the bar in the front room. The whole camp was collected before a rude cabin on the outer edge of the clearing. Conversation was carried on in a low tone, but the name of a woman was frequently repeated. It was a name familiar enough in the camp, — "Cherokee Sal."

Perhaps the less said of her the better. She was a coarse and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman. But at that time she was the only woman in Roaring Camp, and was just then lying in sore extremity, when she most needed the ministrations of her own sex. Dissolute, abandoned, and irreclaimable, she was yet suffering a martyrdom hard enough to bear even when veiled by sympathizing womanhood, but now terrible in her loneliness. The primal curse had come to her in that original isolation which must have made the punishment of the first transgression so dreadful. It was, perhaps, part of the expiation of her sin

that, at a moment when she most lacked her sex's intuitive tenderness and care, she met only the half-contemptuous faces of her masculine associates. Yet a few of the spectators were, I think, touched by her sufferings. Sandy Tipton thought it was "rough on Sal," and, in the contemplation of her condition, for a moment rose superior to the fact that he had an ace and two bowers in his sleeve.

It will be seen also that the situation was novel. Deaths were by no means uncommon in Roaring Camp, but a birth was a new thing. People had been dismissed the camp effectively, finally, and with no possibility of return; but this was the first time that anybody had been introduced *ab initio*. Hence the excitement.

"You go in there, Stumpy," said a prominent citizen known as "Kentuck," addressing one of the loungers. "Go in there, and see what you kin do. You've had experience in them things."

Perhaps there was a fitness in the selection. Stumpy, in other climes, had been the putative head of two families; in fact, it was owing to some legal informality in these proceedings that Roaring Camp — a city of refuge — was indebted to his company. The crowd approved the choice, and Stumpy was wise enough to bow to the majority. The door closed on the extempore surgeon and midwife, and Roaring Camp sat down outside, smoked its pipe, and awaited the issue.

The assemblage numbered about a hundred men. One or two of these were actual fugitives from justice, some were criminal; and all were reckless. Physically they exhibited no indication of their past lives and character. The greatest scamp had a Raphael face, with a profusion of blonde hair; Oakhurst, a gambler, had the melancholy air and intellectual abstraction of a Hamlet; the coolest and most courageous man was scarcely over five feet in height, with a soft voice and an embarrassed, timid manner. The

term "roughs" applied to them was a distinction rather than a definition. Perhaps in the minor details of fingers, toes, ears, etc., the camp may have been deficient, but these slight omissions did not detract from their aggregate force. The strongest man had but three fingers on his right hand; the best shot had but one eye.

Such was the physical aspect of the men that were dispersed around the cabin. The camp lay in a triangular valley between two hills and a river. The only outlet was a steep trail over the summit of a hill that faced the cabin, now illuminated by the rising moon. The suffering woman might have seen it from the rude bunk whereon she lay, — seen it winding like a silver thread until it was lost in the stars above.

A fire of withered pine boughs added sociability to the gathering. By degrees the natural levity of Roaring Camp returned. Bets were freely offered and taken regarding the result. Three to five that "Sal would get through with it;" even that the child would survive; side bets as to the sex and complexion of the coming stranger. In the midst of an excited discussion an exclamation came from those nearest the door, and the camp stopped to listen. Above the swaying and moaning of the pines, the swift rush of the river, and the crackling of the fire rose a sharp, querulous cry, — a cry unlike anything heard before in the camp. The pines stopped moaning, the river ceased to rush, and the fire to crackle. It seemed as if Nature had stopped to listen too.

The camp rose to its feet as one man! It was proposed to explode a barrel of gunpowder; but in consideration of the situation of the mother, better counsels prevailed, and only a few revolvers were discharged; for whether owing to the rude surgery of the camp, or some other reason, Cherokee Sal was sinking fast. Within an hour she had climbed, as it were, that rugged road that led to the stars,

and so passed out of Roaring Camp, its sin and shame, forever. I do not think that the announcement disturbed them much, except in speculation as to the fate of the child. "Can he live now?" was asked of Stumpy. The answer was doubtful. The only other being of Cherokee Sal's sex and maternal condition in the settlement was an ass. There was some conjecture as to fitness, but the experiment was tried. It was less problematical than the ancient treatment of Romulus and Remus, and apparently as successful.

When these details were completed, which exhausted another hour, the door was opened, and the anxious crowd of men, who had already formed themselves into a queue, entered in single file. Beside the low bunk or shelf, on which the figure of the mother was starkly outlined below the blankets, stood a pine table. On this a candle-box was placed, and within it, swathed in staring red flannel, lay the last arrival at Roaring Camp. Beside the candle-box was placed a hat. Its use was soon indicated. "Gentlemen," said Stumpy, with a singular mixture of authority and *ex officio* complacency, — "gentlemen will please pass in at the front door, round the table, and out at the back door. Them as wishes to contribute anything toward the orphan will find a hat handy." The first man entered with his hat on; he uncovered, however, as he looked about him, and so unconsciously set an example to the next. In such communities good and bad actions are catching. As the procession filed in comments were audible, — criticisms addressed perhaps rather to Stumpy in the character of showman: "Is that him?" "Mighty small specimen;" "Has n't more 'n got the color;" "Ain't bigger nor a deringer." The contributions were as characteristic: A silver tobacco box; a doubloon; a navy revolver, silver mounted; a gold specimen; a very beautifully embroidered lady's handkerchief (from Oakhurst the gambler); a dia-

mond breastpin; a diamond ring (suggested by the pin, with the remark from the giver that he "saw that pin and went two diamonds better"); a slung-shot; a Bible (contributor not detected); a golden spur; a silver teaspoon (the initials, I regret to say, were not the giver's); a pair of surgeon's shears; a lancet; a Bank of England note for £5; and about \$200 in loose gold and silver coin. During these proceedings Stumpy maintained a silence as impassive as the dead on his left, a gravity as inscrutable as that of the newly born on his right. Only one incident occurred to break the monotony of the curious procession. As Kentuck bent over the candle-box half curiously, the child turned, and, in a spasm of pain, caught at his groping finger, and held it fast for a moment. Kentuck looked foolish and embarrassed. Something like a blush tried to assert itself in his weather-beaten cheek. "The d—d little cuss!" he said, as he extricated his finger, with perhaps more tenderness and care than he might have been deemed capable of showing. He held that finger a little apart from its fellows as he went out, and examined it curiously. The examination provoked the same original remark in regard to the child. In fact, he seemed to enjoy repeating it. "He rastled with my finger," he remarked to Tipton, holding up the member, "the d—d little cuss!"

It was four o'clock before the camp sought repose. A light burnt in the cabin where the watchers sat, for Stumpy did not go to bed that night. Nor did Kentuck. He drank quite freely, and related with great gusto his experience, invariably ending with his characteristic condemnation of the newcomer. It seemed to relieve him of any unjust implication of sentiment, and Kentuck had the weaknesses of the nobler sex. When everybody else had gone to bed, he walked down to the river and whistled reflectingly. Then he walked up the gulch past the cabin, still whistling with demonstrative unconcern. At a large redwood-tree he

paused and retraced his steps, and again passed the cabin. Halfway down to the river's bank he again paused, and then returned and knocked at the door. It was opened by Stumpy. "How goes it?" said Kentuck, looking past Stumpy toward the candle-box. "All serene!" replied Stumpy. "Anything up?" "Nothing." There was a pause — an embarrassing one — Stumpy still holding the door. Then Kentuck had recourse to his finger, which he held up to Stumpy. "Rastled with it, — the d—d little cuss," he said, and retired.

The next day Cherokee Sal had such rude sepulture as Roaring Camp afforded. After her body had been committed to the hillside, there was a formal meeting of the camp to discuss what should be done with her infant. A resolution to adopt it was unanimous and enthusiastic. But an animated discussion in regard to the manner and feasibility of providing for its wants at once sprang up. It was remarkable that the argument partook of none of those fierce personalities with which discussions were usually conducted at Roaring Camp. Tipton proposed that they should send the child to Red Dog, — a distance of forty miles, — where female attention could be procured. But the unlucky suggestion met with fierce and unanimous opposition. It was evident that no plan which entailed parting from their new acquisition would for a moment be entertained. "Besides," said Tom Ryder, "them fellows at Red Dog would swap it, and ring in somebody else on us." A disbelief in the honesty of other camps prevailed at Roaring Camp, as in other places.

The introduction of a female nurse in the camp also met with objection. It was argued that no decent woman could be prevailed to accept Roaring Camp as her home, and the speaker urged that "they did n't want any more of the other kind." This unkind allusion to the defunct mother, harsh as it may seem, was the first spasm of propriety, — the first



symptom of the camp's regeneration. Stumpy advanced nothing. Perhaps he felt a certain delicacy in interfering with the selection of a possible successor in office. But when questioned, he averred stoutly that he and "Jinny" — the mammal before alluded to — could manage to rear the child. There was something original, independent, and heroic about the plan that pleased the camp. Stumpy was retained. Certain articles were sent for to Sacramento. "Mind," said the treasurer, as he pressed a bag of gold-dust into the expressman's hand, "the best that can be got, — lace, you know, and filigree-work and frills, — d—n the cost!"

Strange to say, the child thrived. Perhaps the invigorating climate of the mountain camp was compensation for material deficiencies. Nature took the foundling to her broader breast. In that rare atmosphere of the Sierra foothills, — that air pungent with balsamic odor, that ethereal cordial at once bracing and exhilarating, — he may have found food and nourishment, or a subtle chemistry that transmuted ass's milk to lime and phosphorus. Stumpy inclined to the belief that it was the latter and good nursing. "Me and that ass," he would say, "has been father and mother to him! Don't you," he would add, apostrophizing the helpless bundle before him, "never go back on us."

By the time he was a month old the necessity of giving him a name became apparent. He had generally been known as "The Kid," "Stumpy's Boy," "The Coyote" (an allusion to his vocal powers), and even by Kentuck's endearing diminutive of "The d—d little cuss." But these were felt to be vague and unsatisfactory, and were at last dismissed under another influence. Gamblers and adventurers are generally superstitious, and Oakhurst one day declared that the baby had brought "the luck" to Roaring Camp. It was certain that of late they had been succe

ful. "Luck" was the name agreed upon, with the prefix of Tommy for greater convenience. No allusion was made to the mother, and the father was unknown. "It's better," said the philosophical Oakhurst, "to take a fresh deal all round. Call him Luck, and start him fair." A day was accordingly set apart for the christening. What was meant by this ceremony the reader may imagine who has already gathered some idea of the reckless irreverence of Roaring Camp. The master of ceremonies was one "Boston," a noted wag, and the occasion seemed to promise the greatest facetiousness. This ingenious satirist had spent two days in preparing a burlesque of the Church service, with pointed local allusions. The choir was properly trained, and Sandy Tipton was to stand godfather. But after the procession had marched to the grove with music and banners, and the child had been deposited before a mock altar, Stumpy stepped before the expectant crowd. "It ain't my style to spoil fun, boys," said the little man, stoutly eying the faces around him, "but it strikes me that this thing ain't exactly on the squar. It's playing it pretty low down on this yer baby to ring in fun on him that he ain't goin' to understand. And ef there's goin' to be any godfathers round, I'd like to see who's got any better rights than me." A silence followed Stumpy's speech. To the credit of all humorists he it said that the first man to acknowledge its justice was the satirist thus stopped of his fun. "But," said Stumpy, quickly following up his advantage, "we're here for a christening, and we'll have it. I proclaim you Thomas Luck, according to the laws of the United States and the State of California, so help me God." It was the first time that the name of the Deity had been otherwise uttered than profanely in the camp. The form of christening was perhaps even more ludicrous than the satirist had conceived; but strangely enough, nobody saw it and nobody laughed. "Tommy" was christened as seriously as he would have

been under a Christian roof, and cried and was comforted in as orthodox fashion.

And so the work of regeneration began in Roaring Camp. Almost imperceptibly a change came over the settlement. The cabin assigned to "Tommy Luck" — or "The Luck," as he was more frequently called — first showed signs of improvement. It was kept scrupulously clean and whitewashed. Then it was boarded, clothed, and papered. The rosewood cradle, packed eighty miles by mule, had, in Stumpy's way of putting it, "sorter killed the rest of the furniture." So the rehabilitation of the cabin became a necessity. The men who were in the habit of lounging in at Stumpy's to see "how 'The Luck' got on" seemed to appreciate the change, and in self-defense the rival establishment of "Tuttle's grocery" bestirred itself and imported a carpet and mirrors. The reflections of the latter on the appearance of Roaring Camp tended to produce stricter habits of personal cleanliness. Again Stumpy imposed a kind of quarantine upon those who aspired to the honor and privilege of holding The Luck. It was a cruel mortification to Kentuck — who, in the carelessness of a large nature and the habits of frontier life, had begun to regard all garments as a second cuticle, which, like a snake's, only sloughed off through decay — to be debarred this privilege from certain prudential reasons. Yet such was the subtle influence of innovation that he thereafter appeared regularly every afternoon in a clean shirt and face still shining from his ablutions. Nor were moral and social sanitary laws neglected. "Tommy," who was supposed to spend his whole existence in a persistent attempt to repose, must not be disturbed by noise. The shouting and yelling, which had gained the camp its infelicitous title, were not permitted within hearing distance of Stumpy's. The men conversed in whispers or smoked with Indian gravity. Profanity was tacitly given up in these sacred præ

rimets, and throughout the camp a popular form of expletive, known as "D—n the luck!" and "Curse the luck!" was abandoned, as having a new personal bearing. Vocal music was not interdicted, being supposed to have a soothing, tranquilizing quality; and one song, sung by "Man-o'-War Jack," an English sailor from her Majesty's Australian colonies, was quite popular as a lullaby. It was a lugubrious recital of the exploits of "the Arethusa, Seventy-four," in a muffled minor, ending with a prolonged dying fall at the burden of each verse, "On b-oo-o-ard of the Arethusa." It was a fine sight to see Jack holding *The Luck*, rocking from side to side as if with the motion of a ship, and crooning forth this naval ditty. Either through the peculiar rocking of Jack or the length of his song, — it contained ninety stanzas, and was continued with conscientious deliberation to the bitter end, — the lullaby generally had the desired effect. At such times the men would lie at full length under the trees in the soft summer twilight, smoking their pipes and drinking in the melodious utterances. An indistinct idea that this was pastoral happiness pervaded the camp. "This 'ere kind o' think," said the Cockney Simmons, meditatively reclining on his elbow, "is 'ev'ingly." It reminded him of Greenwich.

On the long summer days *The Luck* was usually carried to the gulch from whence the golden store of Roaring Camp was taken. There, on a blanket spread over pine boughs, he would lie while the men were working in the ditches below. Latterly there was a rude attempt to decorate this bower with flowers and sweet-smelling shrubs, and generally some one would bring him a cluster of wild honeysuckles, azaleas, or the painted blossoms of *Las Mariposas*. The men had suddenly awakened to the fact that there were beauty and significance in these trifles, which they had so long trodden carelessly beneath their feet. A flake of glittering mica, a fragment of variegated quartz, a bright

pebble from the bed of the creek, became beautiful to eyes thus cleared and strengthened, and were invariably put aside for The Luck. It was wonderful how many treasures the woods and hillsides yielded that "would do for Tommy." Surrounded by playthings such as never child out of fairyland had before, it is to be hoped that Tommy was content. He appeared to be serenely happy, albeit there was an infantine gravity about him, a contemplative light in his round gray eyes, that sometimes worried Stumpy. He was always tractable and quiet, and it is recorded that once, having crept beyond his "corral," — a hedge of tessellated pine boughs, which surrounded his bed, — he dropped over the bank on his head in the soft earth, and remained with his mottled legs in the air in that position for at least five minutes with unflinching gravity. He was extricated without a murmur. I hesitate to record the many other instances of his sagacity, which rest, unfortunately, upon the statements of prejudiced friends. Some of them were not without a tinge of superstition. "I crep' up the bank just now," said Kentuck one day, in a breathless state of excitement, "and dern my skin if he was n't a-talking to a jaybird as was a-sittin' on his lap. There they was, just as free and sociable as anything you please, a-jawin' at each other just like two cherrybums." Howbeit, whether creeping over the pine boughs or lying lazily on his back blinking at the leaves above him, to him the birds sang, the squirrels chattered, and the flowers bloomed. Nature was his nurse and playfellow. For him she would let slip between the leaves golden shafts of sunlight that fell just within his grasp; she would send wandering breezes to visit him with the balm of bay and resinous gum; to him the tall redwoods nodded familiarly and sleepily, the bumblebees buzzed, and the rooks cawed a slumbrous accompaniment.

Such was the golden summer of Roaring Camp. They

were "flush times," and the luck was with them. The claims had yielded enormously. The camp was jealous of its privileges and looked suspiciously on strangers. No encouragement was given to immigration, and, to make their seclusion more perfect, the land on either side of the mountain wall that surrounded the camp they duly preempted. This, and a reputation for singular proficiency with the revolver, kept the reserve of Roaring Camp inviolate. The expressman — their only connecting link with the surrounding world — sometimes told wonderful stories of the camp. He would say, "They've a street up there in 'Roaring' that would lay over any street in Red Dog. They've got vines and flowers round their houses, and they wash themselves twice a day. But they're mighty rough on strangers, and they worship an Ingin baby."

With the prosperity of the camp came a desire for further improvement. It was proposed to build a hotel in the following spring, and to invite one or two decent families to reside there for the sake of The Luck, who might perhaps profit by female companionship. The sacrifice that this concession to the sex cost these men, who were fiercely skeptical in regard to its general virtue and usefulness, can only be accounted for by their affection for Tommy. A few still held out. But the resolve could not be carried into effect for three months, and the minority meekly yielded in the hope that something might turn up to prevent it. And it did.

The winter of 1851 will long be remembered in the foothills. The snow lay deep on the Sierras, and every mountain creek became a river, and every river a lake. Each gorge and gulch was transformed into a tumultuous water-course that descended the hillsides, tearing down giant trees and scattering its drift and débris along the plain. Red Dog had been twice under water, and Roaring Camp had been forewarned. "Water put the gold into them gulches,"

said Stumpy. "It 's been here once and will be here again!" And that night the North Fork suddenly leaped over its banks and swept up the triangular valley of Roaring Camp.

In the confusion of rushing water, crashing trees, and crackling timber, and the darkness which seemed to flow with the water and blot out the fair valley, but little could be done to collect the scattered camp. When the morning broke, the cabin of Stumpy, nearest the river-bank, was gone. Higher up the gulch they found the body of its unlucky owner; but the pride, the hope, the joy, The Luck, of Roaring Camp had disappeared. They were returning with sad hearts when a shout from the bank recalled them.

It was a relief-boat from down the river. They had picked up, they said, a man and an infant, nearly exhausted, about two miles below. Did anybody know them, and did they belong here?

It needed but a glance to show them Kentuck lying there, cruelly crushed and bruised, but still holding The Luck of Roaring Camp in his arms. As they bent over the strangely assorted pair, they saw that the child was cold and pulseless. "He is dead," said one. Kentuck opened his eyes. "Dead?" he repeated feebly. "Yes, my man, and you are dying too." A smile lit the eyes of the expiring Kentuck. "Dying!" he repeated; "he 's a-taking me with him. Tell the boys I've got The Luck with me now;" and the strong man, clinging to the frail babe as a drowning man is said to cling to a straw, drifted away into the shadowy river that flows forever to the unknown sea.

## THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the 23d of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause was another question. "I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional,



and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets of the suns he had won from them. "It 's agin justice," said Jim Wheeler, "to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp — an entire stranger — carry away our money." But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept fate. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman familiarly known as "The Duchess;" another who had won the title of "Mother Shipton;" and "Uncle Billy," a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst

alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good humor characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse, "Five-Spot," for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of "Five-Spot" with malevolence, and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar — a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants — lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day's severe travel. In that advanced season the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foothills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely had the journey to Sandy Bar been accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of "throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food,

fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "could n't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him, at the sky ominously clouded, at the valley below, already deepening into shadow; and, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the newcomer Mr. Oakhurst recognized Tom Simson, otherwise known as "The Innocent," of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a "little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune — amounting to some forty dollars — of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door and thus addressed him: "Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He

then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. "Alone?" No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected, and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp, and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree, where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognize in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavored to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log house near the trail. "Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, "and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it

was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire — for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast — in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive girlish fashion to the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. “Is this yer a d—d picnic?” said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it, — snow!

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening

the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain, and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered — they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humored, freckled face; the virgin Piney slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians; and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snowflakes that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words, "Snowed in!"

A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence they might last ten days longer. "That is," said Mr. Oakhurst *sotto voce* to the Innocent, "if you're willing to board us. If you ain't — and perhaps you 'd better not — you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions." For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate's defection. "They'll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything," he added significantly, "and there's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the

disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. "We'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow'll melt, and we'll all go back together." The cheerful gayety of the young man and Mr. Oakhurst's calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine boughs, extemporized a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheeks through their professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whiskey, which he had prudently cachéd. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whiskey," said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm, and the group around it, that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr. Oakhurst had cachéd his cards with the whiskey as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "did n't say 'cards' once" during that evening. Haply the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a

certain defiant tone and Covenanter's swing to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain: —

"I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,  
And I'm bound to die in His army."

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent by saying that he had "often been a week without sleep." "Doing what?" asked Tom. "Poker!" replied Oakhurst sententiously. "When a man gets a streak of luck, — nigger-luck, — he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler reflectively, "is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat, — you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance —

"I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,  
And I'm bound to die in His army.'"

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut, — a hope-



less, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvelously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess. "Just you go out there and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing "the child," as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she did n't swear and was n't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering campfire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney, — storytelling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope's ingenious translation of the Iliad. He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem — having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words — in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus. Mr. Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So, with small food and much of Homer and the accor-

dion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snowflakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr. Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney. Only Mother Shipton — once the strongest of the party — seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side. "I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head, and open it." Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched. "Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney. "You've starved yourself," said the gambler. "That's what they call it," said the woman querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snowshoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle. "There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days she's safe." "And you?" asked Tom Simson. "I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace. "You are not going, too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him. "As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke, but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting vines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?" "No, dear," said Piney simply. The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine boughs, flew like white winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken

when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told from the equal peace that dwelt upon them which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognized this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil in a firm hand:—

†  
 BENEATH THIS TREE  
 LIES THE BODY  
 OF  
 JOHN OAKHURST,  
 WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK  
 ON THE 23D OF NOVEMBER 1850,  
 AND  
 HANDED IN HIS CHECKS  
 ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850.

‡

And pulseless and cold, with a Derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

## MIGGLES

WE were eight including the driver. We had not spoken during the passage of the last six miles, since the jolting of the heavy vehicle over the roughening road had spoiled the Judge's last poetical quotation. The tall man beside the Judge was asleep, his arm passed through the swaying strap and his head resting upon it,—altogether a limp, helpless looking object, as if he had hanged himself and been cut down too late. The French lady on the back seat was asleep too, yet in a half-conscious propriety of attitude, shown even in the disposition of the handkerchief which she held to her forehead and which partially veiled her face. The lady from Virginia City, traveling with her husband, had long since lost all individuality in a wild confusion of ribbons, veils, furs, and shawls. There was no sound but the rattling of wheels and the dash of rain upon the roof. Suddenly the stage stopped and we became dimly aware of voices. The driver was evidently in the midst of an exciting colloquy with some one in the road,—a colloquy of which such fragments as “bridge gone,” “twenty feet of water,” “can't pass,” were occasionally distinguishable above the storm. Then came a lull, and a mysterious voice from the road shouted the parting adjuration —

“Try Miggles's.”

We caught a glimpse of our leaders as the vehicle slowly turned, of a horseman vanishing through the rain, and we were evidently on our way to Miggles's.

Who and where was Miggles? The Judge, our author-

ity, did not remember the name, and he knew the country thoroughly. The Washoe traveler thought Miggles must keep a hotel. We only knew that we were stopped by high water in front and rear, and that Miggles was our rock of refuge. A ten minutes' splashing through a tangled byroad, scarcely wide enough for the stage, and we drew up before a barred and boarded gate in a wide stone wall or fence about eight feet high. Evidently Miggles's, and evidently Miggles did not keep a hotel.

The driver got down and tried the gate. It was securely locked.

"Miggles! O Miggles!"

No answer.

"Migg-ells! You Miggles!" continued the driver, with rising wrath.

"Migglesy!" joined in the expressman persuasively. "O Miggy! Mig!"

But no reply came from the apparently insensate Miggles. The Judge, who had finally got the window down, put his head out and propounded a series of questions, which if answered categorically would have undoubtedly elucidated the whole mystery, but which the driver evaded by replying that "if we did n't want to sit in the coach all night we had better rise up and sing out for Miggles."

So we rose up and called on Miggles in chorus, then separately. And when we had finished, a Hibernian fellow passenger from the roof called for "Maygells!" whereat we all laughed. While we were laughing the driver cried, "Shoo!"

We listened. To our infinite amazement the chorus of "Miggles" was repeated from the other side of the wall, even to the final and supplemental "Maygells."

"Extraordinary echo!" said the Judge.

"Extraordinary d—d skunk!" roared the driver contemptuously. "Come out of that, Miggles, and show

yourself! Be a man, Miggles! Don't hide in the dark; I would n't if I were you, Miggles," continued Yuba Bill, now dancing about in an excess of fury.

"Miggles!" continued the voice, "O Miggles!"

"My good man! Mr. Myghail!" said the Judge, softening the asperities of the name as much as possible. "Consider the inhospitality of refusing shelter from the inclemency of the weather to helpless females. Really, my dear sir"— But a succession of "Miggles," ending in a burst of laughter, drowned his voice.

Yuba Bill hesitated no longer. Taking a heavy stone from the road, he battered down the gate, and with the expressman entered the inclosure. We followed. Nobody was to be seen. In the gathering darkness all that we could distinguish was that we were in a garden — from the rose bushes that scattered over us a minute spray from their dripping leaves — and before a long, rambling wooden building.

"Do you know this Miggles?" asked the Judge of Yuba Bill.

"No, nor don't want to," said Bill shortly, who felt the Pioneer Stage Company insulted in his person by the contumacious Miggles.

"But, my dear sir," expostulated the Judge, as he thought of the barred gate.

"Lookee here," said Yuba Bill, with fine irony, "had n't you better go back and sit in the coach till yer introduced? I'm going in," and he pushed open the door of the building.

A long room, lighted only by the embers of a fire that was dying on the large hearth at its farther extremity; the walls curiously papered, and the flickering firelight bringing out its grotesque pattern; somebody sitting in a large arm-chair by the fireplace. All this we saw as we crowded together into the room after the driver and expressman.

"Hello! be you Miggles?" said Yuba Bill to the solitary occupant.

The figure neither spoke nor stirred. Yuba Bill walked wrathfully toward it and turned the eye of his coach-lantern upon its face. It was a man's face, prematurely old and wrinkled, with very large eyes, in which there was that expression of perfectly gratuitous solemnity which I had sometimes seen in an owl's. The large eyes wandered from Bill's face to the lantern, and finally fixed their gaze on that luminous object without further recognition.

Bill restrained himself with an effort.

"Miggles! be you deaf? You ain't dumb anyhow, you know," and Yuba Bill shook the insensate figure by the shoulder.

To our great dismay, as Bill removed his hand, the venerable stranger apparently collapsed, sinking into half his size and an undistinguishable heap of clothing.

"Well, dern my skin," said Bill, looking appealingly at us, and hopelessly retiring from the contest.

The Judge now stepped forward, and we lifted the mysterious invertebrate back into his original position. Bill was dismissed with the lantern to reconnoitre outside, for it was evident that, from the helplessness of this solitary man, there must be attendants near at hand, and we all drew around the fire. The Judge, who had regained his authority, and had never lost his conversational amiability, — standing before us with his back to the hearth, — charged us, as an imaginary jury, as follows: —

"It is evident that either our distinguished friend here has reached that condition described by Shakespeare as 'the mere and yellow leaf,' or has suffered some premature abatement of his mental and physical faculties. Whether he is really the Miggles" —

Here he was interrupted by "Miggles! O Miggles! Migglesy! Mig!" and, in fact, the whole chorus of Mig-



gles in very much the same key as it had once before been delivered unto us.

We gazed at each other for a moment in some alarm. The Judge, in particular, vacated his position quickly, as the voice seemed to come directly over his shoulder. The cause, however, was soon discovered in a large magpie who was perched upon a shelf over the fireplace, and who immediately relapsed into a sepulchral silence, which contrasted singularly with his previous volubility. It was, undoubtedly, his voice which we had heard in the road, and our friend in the chair was not responsible for the discourtesy. Yuba Bill, who reëntered the room after an unsuccessful search, was loth to accept the explanation, and still eyed the helpless sitter with suspicion. He had found a shed in which he had put up his horses, but he came back dripping and skeptical. "Thar ain't nobody but him within ten mile of the shanty, and that ar d—d old skeesicks knows it."

But the faith of the majority proved to be securely based. Bill had scarcely ceased growling before we heard a quick step upon the porch, the trailing of a wet skirt, the door was flung open, and with a flash of white teeth, a sparkle of dark eyes, and an utter absence of ceremony or diffidence, a young woman entered, shut the door, and, panting, leaned back against it.

"Oh, if you please, I'm Miggles!"

And this was Miggles! this bright-eyed, full-throated young woman, whose wet gown of coarse blue stuff could not hide the beauty of the feminine curves to which it clung; from the chestnut crown of whose head, topped by a man's oil-skin sou'wester, to the little feet and ankles, hidden somewhere in the recesses of her boy's brogans, all was grace, — this was Miggles, laughing at us, too, in the most airy, frank, off-hand manner imaginable.

"You see, boys," said she, quite out of breath, and holding one little hand against her side, quite unheeding

the speechless discomfiture of our party or the complete demoralization of Yuba Bill, whose features had relaxed into an expression of gratuitous and imbecile cheerfulness, — “you see, boys, I was mor’n two miles away when you passed down the road. I thought you might pull up here, and so I ran the whole way, knowing nobody was home but Jim, — and — and — I’m out of breath — and — that lets me out.” And here Miggles caught her dripping oil-skin hat from her head, with a mischievous swirl that scattered a shower of raindrops over us; attempted to put back her hair; dropped two hairpins in the attempt; laughed, and sat down beside Yuba Bill, with her hands crossed lightly on her lap.

The Judge recovered himself first and essayed an extravagant compliment.

“I’ll trouble you for that ha’rpin,” said Miggles gravely. Half a dozen hands were eagerly stretched forward; the missing hairpin was restored to its fair owner; and Miggles, crossing the room, looked keenly in the face of the invalid. The solemn eyes looked back at hers with an expression we had never seen before. Life and intelligence seemed to struggle back into the rugged face. Miggles laughed again, — it was a singularly eloquent laugh, — and turned her black eyes and white teeth once more towards us.

“This afflicted person is” — hesitated the Judge.

“Jim!” said Miggles.

“Your father?”

“No!”

“Brother?”

“No!”

“Husband?”

Miggles darted a quick, half-defiant glance at the two lady passengers, who I had noticed did not participate in the general masculine admiration of Miggles, and said gravely, “No; it’s Jim!”

There was an awkward pause. The lady passengers moved closer to each other; the Washoe husband looked abstractedly at the fire, and the tall man apparently turned his eyes inward for self-support at this emergency. But Miggles's laugh, which was very infectious, broke the silence.

"Come," she said briskly, "you must be hungry. Who'll bear a hand to help me get tea?"

She had no lack of volunteers. In a few moments Yuba Bill was engaged like Caliban in bearing logs for this Miranda; the expressman was grinding coffee on the veranda; to myself the arduous duty of slicing bacon was assigned; and the Judge lent each man his good-humored and voluble counsel. And when Miggles, assisted by the Judge and our Hibernian "deck-passenger," set the table with all the available crockery, we had become quite joyous, in spite of the rain that beat against the windows, the wind that whirled down the chimney, the two ladies who whispered together in the corner, or the magpie, who uttered a satirical and croaking commentary on their conversation from his perch above. In the now bright, blazing fire we could see that the walls were papered with illustrated journals, arranged with feminine taste and discrimination. The furniture was extemporized and adapted from candle-boxes and packing-cases, and covered with gay calico or the skin of some animal. The armchair of the helpless Jim was an ingenious variation of a flour-barrel. There was neatness, and even a taste for the picturesque, to be seen in the few details of the long, low room.

The meal was a culinary success. But more, it was a social triumph, — chiefly, I think, owing to the rare tact of Miggles in guiding the conversation, asking all the questions herself, yet bearing throughout a frankness that rejected the idea of any concealment on her own part, so that we talked of ourselves, of our prospects, of the journey, of the weather, of each other, — of everything but our host and hostess.

It must be confessed that Miggles's conversation was never elegant, rarely grammatical, and that at times she employed expletives the use of which had generally been yielded to our sex. But they were delivered with such a lighting up of teeth and eyes, and were usually followed by a laugh — a laugh peculiar to Miggles — so frank and honest that it seemed to clear the moral atmosphere.

Once during the meal we heard a noise like the rubbing of a heavy body against the outer walls of the house. This was shortly followed by a scratching and sniffing at the door. "That's Joaquin," said Miggles, in reply to our questioning glances; "would you like to see him?" Before we could answer she had opened the door, and disclosed a half-grown grizzly, who instantly raised himself on his haunches, with his fore paws hanging down in the popular attitude of mendicancy, and looked admiringly at Miggles, with a very singular resemblance in his manner to Yuba Bill. "That's my watch-dog," said Miggles, in explanation. "Oh, he don't bite," she added, as the two lady passengers fluttered into a corner. "Does he, old Topsy?" (the latter remark being addressed directly to the sagacious Joaquin). "I tell you what, boys," continued Miggles, after she had fed and closed the door on Ursa Minor, "you were in big luck that Joaquin was n't hanging round when you dropped in to-night."

"Where was he?" asked the Judge.

"With me," said Miggles. "Lord love you! he trots round with me nights like as if he was a man."

We were silent for a few moments, and listened to the wind. Perhaps we all had the same picture before us, — of Miggles walking through the rainy woods with her savage guardian at her side. The Judge, I remember, said something about Una and her lion; but Miggles received it, as she did other compliments, with quiet gravity. Whether she was altogether unconscious of the admirator

she excited, — she could hardly have been oblivious of Yuba Bill's adoration, — I know not; but her very frankness suggested a perfect sexual equality that was cruelly humiliating to the younger members of our party.

The incident of the bear did not add anything in Miggles's favor to the opinions of those of her own sex who were present. In fact, the repast over, a chillness radiated from the two lady passengers that no pine boughs brought in by Yuba Bill and cast as a sacrifice upon the hearth could wholly overcome. Miggles felt it; and suddenly declaring that it was time to "turn in," offered to show the ladies to their bed in an adjoining room. "You, boys, will have to camp out here by the fire as well as you can," she added, "for thar ain't but the one room."

Our sex — by which, my dear sir, I allude of course to the stronger portion of humanity — has been generally relieved from the imputation of curiosity or a fondness for gossip. Yet I am constrained to say, that hardly had the door closed on Miggles than we crowded together, whispering, snickering, smiling, and exchanging suspicions, surmises, and a thousand speculations in regard to our pretty hostess and her singular companion. I fear that we even hustled that imbecile paralytic, who sat like a voiceless Memnon in our midst, gazing with the serene indifference of the Past in his passionless eyes upon our wordy counsels. In the midst of an exciting discussion the door opened again and Miggles reëntered.

But not, apparently, the same Miggles who a few hours before had flashed upon us. Her eyes were downcast, and as she hesitated for a moment on the threshold, with a blanket on her arm, she seemed to have left behind her the frank fearlessness which had charmed us a moment before. Coming into the room, she drew a low stool beside the paralytic's chair, sat down, drew the blanket over her shoulders, and saying, "If it's all the same to you, boys.

as we 're rather crowded, I'll stop here to-night," took the invalid's withered hand in her own, and turned her eyes upon the dying fire. An instinctive feeling that this was only premonitory to more confidential relations, and perhaps some shame at our previous curiosity, kept us silent. The rain still beat upon the roof, wandering gusts of wind stirred the embers into momentary brightness, until, in a lull of the elements, Miggles suddenly lifted up her head, and, throwing her hair over her shoulder, turned her face upon the group and asked, —

“Is there any of you that knows me?”

There was no reply.

“Think again! I lived at Marysville in '53. Everybody knew me there, and everybody had the right to know me. I kept the Polka Saloon until I came to live with Jim. That's six years ago. Perhaps I've changed some.”

The absence of recognition may have disconcerted her. She turned her head to the fire again, and it was some seconds before she again spoke, and then more rapidly —

“Well, you see I thought some of you must have known me. There's no great harm done anyway. What I was going to say was this: Jim here” — she took his hand in both of hers as she spoke — “used to know me, if you did n't, and spent a heap of money upon me. I reckon he spent all he had. And one day — it's six years ago this winter — Jim came into my back room, sat down on my sofy, like as you see him in that chair, and never moved again without help. He was struck all of a heap, and never seemed to know what ailed him. The doctors came and said as how it was caused all along of his way of life, — for Jim was mighty free and wild-like, — and that he would never get better, and could n't last long anyway. They advised me to send him to Frisco to the hospital, for he was no good to any one and would be a baby all his

life. Perhaps it was something in Jim's eye, perhaps it was that I never had a baby, but I said 'No.' I was rich then, for I was popular with everybody, — gentlemen like yourself, sir, came to see me, — and I sold out my business and bought this yer place, because it was sort of out of the way of travel, you see, and I brought my baby here."

With a woman's intuitive tact and poetry, she had, as she spoke, slowly shifted her position so as to bring the mute figure of the ruined man between her and her audience, hiding in the shadow behind it, as if she offered it as a tacit apology for her actions. Silent and expressionless, it yet spoke for her; helpless, crushed, and smitten with the Divine thunderbolt, it still stretched an invisible arm around her.

Hidden in the darkness, but still holding his hand, she went on: —

"It was a long time before I could get the hang of things about yer, for I was used to company and excitement. I could n't get any woman to help me, and a man I durs n't trust; but what with the Indians hereabout, who 'd do odd jobs for me, and having everything sent from the North Fork, Jim and I managed to worry through. The Doctor would run up from Sacramento once in a while. He 'd ask to see 'Miggles's baby,' as he called Jim, and when he 'd go away, he 'd say, 'Miggles, you're a trump, — God bless you,' and it did n't seem so lonely after that. But the last time he was here he said, as he opened the door to go, 'Do you know, Miggles, your baby will grow up to be a man yet and an honor to his mother; but not here, Miggles, not here!' And I thought he 'went away sad, — and — and" — and here Miggles's voice and head were somehow both lost completely in the shadow.

"The folks about here are very kind," said Miggles, after a pause, coming a little into the light again. "The men from the Fork used to hang around here, until they found

they was n't wanted, and the women are kind, and don't call. I was pretty lonely until I picked up Joaquin in the woods yonder one day, when he was n't so high, and taught him to beg for his dinner; and then thar's Polly — that's the magpie — she knows no end of tricks, and makes it quite sociable of evenings with her talk, and so I don't feel like as I was the only living being about the ranch. And Jim here," said Miggles, with her old laugh again, and coming out quite into the firelight, — "Jim — Why, boys, you would admire to see how much he knows for a man like him. Sometimes I bring him flowers, and he looks at 'em just as natural as if he knew 'em; and times, when we're sitting alone, I read him those things on the wall. Why, Lord!" said Miggles, with her frank laugh, "I've read him that whole side of the house this winter. There never was such a man for reading as Jim."

"Why," asked the Judge, "do you not marry this man to whom you have devoted your youthful life?"

"Well, you see," said Miggles, "it would be playing it rather low down on Jim to take advantage of his being so helpless. And then, too, if we were man and wife, now, we'd both know that I was *bound* to do what I do now of my own accord."

"But you are young yet and attractive" —

"It's getting late," said Miggles gravely, "and you'd better all turn in. Good-night, boys;" and throwing the blanket over her head, Miggles laid herself down beside Jim's chair, her head pillowed on the low stool that held his feet, and spoke no more. The fire slowly faded from the hearth; we each sought our blankets in silence; and presently there was no sound in the long room but the pattering of the rain upon the roof and the heavy breathing of the sleepers.

It was nearly morning when I awoke from a troubled dream. The storm had passed, the stars were shining, and



through the shutterless window the full moon, lifting itself over the solemn pines without, looked into the room. It touched the lonely figure in the chair with an infinite compassion, and seemed to baptize with a shining flood the lowly head of the woman whose hair, as in the sweet old story, bathed the feet of him she loved. It even lent a kindly poetry to the rugged outline of Yuba Bill, half reclining on his elbow between them and his passengers, with savagely patient eyes keeping watch and ward. And then I fell asleep and only woke at broad day, with Yuba Bill standing over me, and "All aboard" ringing in my ears.

Coffee was waiting for us on the table, but Miggles was gone. We wandered about the house and lingered long after the horses were harnessed, but she did not return. It was evident that she wished to avoid a formal leave-taking, and had so left us to depart as we had come. After we had helped the ladies into the coach, we returned to the house and solemnly shook hands with the paralytic Jim, as solemnly setting him back into position after each handshake. Then we looked for the last time around the long low room, at the stool where Miggles had sat, and slowly took our seats in the waiting coach. The whip cracked, and we were off!

But as we reached the highroad, Bill's dexterous hand laid the six horses back on their haunches, and the stage stopped with a jerk. For there, on a little eminence beside the road, stood Miggles, her hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her white handkerchief waving, and her white teeth flashing a last "good-by." We waved our hats in return. And then Yuba Bill, as if fearful of further fascination, madly lashed his horses forward, and we sank back in our seats.

We exchanged not a word until we reached the North Fork and the stage drew up at the Independence House. Then,

the Judge leading, we walked into the bar-room and took our places gravely at the bar.

“Are your glasses charged, gentlemen?” said the Judge, solemnly taking off his white hat.

They were.

“Well, then, here’s to *Miggles* — GOD BLESS HER!”

Perhaps He had. Who knows?

## TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

I do not think that we ever knew his real name. Our ignorance of it certainly never gave us any social inconvenience, for at Sandy Bar in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctiveness of dress, as in the case of "Dungaree Jack;" or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in "Saleratus Bill," so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in "The Iron Pirate," a mild, inoffensive man, who earned that baleful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term "iron pyrites." Perhaps this may have been the beginning of a rude heraldry; but I am constrained to think that it was because a man's real name in that day rested solely upon his own unsupported statement. "Call yourself Clifford, do you?" said Boston, addressing a timid newcomer with infinite scorn; "hell is full of such Cliffords!" He then introduced the unfortunate man, whose name happened to be really Clifford, as "Jaybird Charley," — an unhallowed inspiration of the moment that clung to him ever after.

But to return to Tennessee's Partner, whom we never knew by any other than this relative title. That he had ever existed as a separate and distinct individuality we only learned later. It seems that in 1853 he left Poker Flat to go to San Francisco, ostensibly to procure a wife. He never got any farther than Stockton. At that place he was attracted by a young person who waited upon the table at the hotel where he took his meals. One morning he said

something to her which caused her to smile not unkindly, to somewhat coquettishly break a plate of toast over his upturned, serious, simple face, and to retreat to the kitchen. He followed her, and emerged a few moments later, covered with more toast and victory. That day week they were married by a justice of the peace, and returned to Poker Flat. I am aware that something more might be made of this episode, but I prefer to tell it as it was current at Sandy Bar, — in the gulches and bar-rooms, — where all sentiment was modified by a strong sense of humor.

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and chastely retreated, — this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to house-keeping without the aid of a justice of the peace. Tennessee's Partner took the loss of his wife simply and seriously, as was his fashion. But to everybody's surprise, when Tennessee one day returned from Marysville, without his partner's wife, — she having smiled and retreated with somebody else, — Tennessee's Partner was the first man to shake his hand and greet him with affection. The boys who had gathered in the cañon to see the shooting were naturally indignant. Their indignation might have found vent in sarcasm but for a certain look in Tennessee's Partner's eye that indicated a lack of humorous appreciation. In fact, he was a grave man, with a steady application to practical detail which was unpleasant in a difficulty.

Meanwhile a popular feeling against Tennessee had grown up on the Bar. He was known to be a gambler; he was suspected to be a thief. In these suspicions Tennessee's Partner was equally compromised; his continued intimacy with Tennessee after the affair above quoted could only be accounted for on the hypothesis of a copartnership

of crime. At last Tennessee's guilt became flagrant. One day he overtook a stranger on his way to Red Dog. The stranger afterward related that Tennessee beguiled the time with interesting anecdote and reminiscence, but illogically concluded the interview in the following words: "And now, young man, I'll trouble you for your knife, your pistols, and your money. You see your weppings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money's a temptation to the evilly disposed. I think you said your address was San Francisco. I shall endeavor to call." It may be stated here that Tennessee had a fine flow of humor, which no business preoccupation could wholly subdue.

This exploit was his last. Red Dog and Sandy Bar made common cause against the highwayman. Tennessee was hunted in very much the same fashion as his prototype, the grizzly. As the toils closed around him, he made a desperate dash through the Bar, emptying his revolver at the crowd before the Arcade Saloon, and so on up Grizzly Cañon; but at its farther extremity he was stopped by a small man on a gray horse. The men looked at each other a moment in silence. Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent, and both types of a civilization that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but in the nineteenth simply "reckless."

"What have you got there? — I call," said Tennessee quietly.

"Two bowers and an ace," said the stranger as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowie-knife.

"That takes me," returned Tennessee; and, with this gambler's epigram, he threw away his useless pistol and rode back with his captor.

It was a warm night. The cool breeze which usually sprang up with the going down of the sun behind the chaparral-crested mountain was that evening withheld from

Sandy Bar. The little cañon was stifling with heated resinous odors, and the decaying driftwood on the Bar sent forth faint sickening exhalations. The feverishness of day and its fierce passions still filled the camp. Lights moved restlessly along the bank of the river, striking no answering reflection from its tawny current. Against the blackness of the pines the windows of the old loft above the express-office stood out staringly bright; and through their curtainless panes the loungers below could see the forms of those who were even then deciding the fate of Tennessee. And above all this, etched on the dark firmament, rose the Sierra, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter passionless stars.

The trial of Tennessee was conducted as fairly as was consistent with a judge and jury who felt themselves to some extent obliged to justify, in their verdict, the previous irregularities of arrest and indictment. The law of Sandy Bar was implacable, but not vengeful. The excitement and personal feeling of the chase were over; with Tennessee safe in their hands, they were ready to listen patiently to any defense, which they were already satisfied was insufficient. There being no doubt in their own minds, they were willing to give the prisoner the benefit of any that might exist. Secure in the hypothesis that he ought to be hanged on general principles, they indulged him with more latitude of defense than his reckless hardihood seemed to ask. The Judge appeared to be more anxious than the prisoner, who, otherwise unconcerned, evidently took a grim pleasure in the responsibility he had created. "I don't take any hand in this yer game," had been his invariable but good-humored reply to all questions. The Judge — who was also his captor — for a moment vaguely regretted that he had not shot him "on sight" that morning, but presently dismissed this human weakness as unworthy of the judicial mind. Nevertheless, when there was a tap at

the door, and it was said that Tennessee's Partner was there on behalf of the prisoner, he was admitted at once without question. Perhaps the younger members of the jury, to whom the proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful, hailed him as a relief.

For he was not, certainly, an imposing figure. Short and stout, with a square face, sunburned into a preternatural redness, clad in a loose duck "jumper" and trousers streaked and splashed with red soil, his aspect under any circumstances would have been quaint, and was now even ridiculous. As he stooped to deposit at his feet a heavy carpetbag he was carrying, it became obvious, from partially developed legends and inscriptions, that the material with which his trousers had been patched had been originally intended for a less ambitious covering. Yet he advanced with great gravity, and after shaking the hand of each person in the room with labored cordiality, he wiped his serious perplexed face on a red bandana handkerchief, a shade lighter than his complexion, laid his powerful hand upon the table to steady himself, and thus addressed the Judge: —

"I was passin' by," he began, by way of apology, "and I thought I'd just step in and see how things was gittin' on with Tennessee thar, — my pardner. It's a hot night. I disremember any sich weather before on the Bar."

He paused a moment, but nobody volunteering any other meteorological recollection, he again had recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, and for some moments mopped his face diligently.

"Have you anything to say on behalf of the prisoner?" said the Judge finally.

"Thet's it," said Tennessee's Partner, in a tone of relief. "I come yar as Tennessee's pardner, — knowing him nigh on four year, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o' luck. His ways ain't aller my ways, but thar ain't any p'int in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he's

been up to, as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you, — confidential-like, and between man and man, — sez you, 'Do you know anything in his behalf?' and I sez to you, sez I, — confidential-like, as between man and man, — 'What should a man know of his pardner?'"

"Is this all you have to say?" asked the Judge impatiently, feeling, perhaps, that a dangerous sympathy of humor was beginning to humanize the court.

"That's so," continued Tennessee's Partner. "It ain't for me to say anything agin' him. And now, what's the case? Here's Tennessee wants money, wants it bad, and does n't like to ask it of his old pardner. Well, what does Tennessee do? He lays for a stranger, and he fetches that stranger; and you lays for *him*, and you fetches *him*; and the honors is easy. And I put it to you, hein' a fa'r-minded man, and to you, gentlemen all, as fa'r-minded men, ef this is n't so."

"Prisoner," said the Judge, interrupting, "have you any questions to ask this man?"

"No! no!" continued Tennessee's Partner hastily. "I play this yer hand alone. To come down to the bed-rock, it's just this: Tennessee, thar, has played it pretty rough and expensive-like on a stranger, and on this yer camp. And now, what's the fair thing? Some would say more, some would say less. Here's seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold and a watch, — it's about all my pile, — and call it square!" And before a hand could be raised to prevent him, he had emptied the contents of the carpetbag upon the table.

For a moment his life was in jeopardy. One or two men sprang to their feet, several hands groped for hidden weapons, and a suggestion to "throw him from the window" was only overridden by a gesture from the Judge. Tennessee laughed. And apparently oblivious of the excitement, Tennessee's Partner improved the opportunity to mop his face again with his handkerchief.



When order was restored, and the man was made to understand, by the use of forcible figures and rhetoric, that Tennessee's offense could not be condoned by money, his face took a more serious and sanguinary hue, and those who were nearest to him noticed that his rough hand trembled slightly on the table. He hesitated a moment as he slowly returned the gold to the carpetbag, as if he had not yet entirely caught the elevated sense of justice which swayed the tribunal, and was perplexed with the belief that he had not offered enough. Then he turned to the Judge, and saying, "This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner," he bowed to the jury and was about to withdraw, when the Judge called him back:—

"If you have anything to say to Tennessee, you had better say it now."

For the first time that evening the eyes of the prisoner and his strange advocate met. Tennessee smiled, showed his white teeth, and saying, "Euchred, old man!" held out his hand. Tennessee's Partner took it in his own, and saying, "I just dropped in as I was passin' to see how things was gettin' on," let the hand passively fall, and adding that "it was a warm night," again mopped his face with his handkerchief, and without another word withdrew.

The two men never again met each other alive. For the unparalleled insult of a bribe offered to Judge Lynch—who, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible—firmly fixed in the mind of that mythical personage any wavering determination of Tennessee's fate; and at the break of day he was marched, closely guarded, to meet it at the top of Marley's Hill.

How he met it, how cool he was, how he refused to say anything, how perfect were the arrangements of the committee, were all duly reported, with the addition of a warning moral and example to all future evil-doers, in the "Red Dog Clarion," by its editor, who was present, and to whose vigorous English I cheerfully refer the reader. But the

beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and above all, the infinite serenity that thrilled through each, was not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. And yet, when the weak and foolish deed was done, and a life, with its possibilities and responsibilities, had passed out of the misshapen thing that dangled between earth and sky, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the sun shone, as cheerily as before; and possibly the "Red Dog Clarion" was right.

Tennessee's Partner was not in the group that surrounded the ominous tree. But as they turned to disperse, attention was drawn to the singular appearance of a motionless donkey-cart halted at the side of the road. As they approached, they at once recognized the venerable "Jenny" and the two-wheeled cart as the property of Tennessee's Partner, used by him in carrying dirt from his claim; and a few paces distant the owner of the equipage himself, sitting under a buckeye-tree, wiping the perspiration from his glowing face. In answer to an inquiry, he said he had come for the body of the "diseased," "if it was all the same to the committee." He did n't wish to "hurry anything;" he could "wait." He was not working that day; and when the gentlemen were done with the "diseased," he would take him. "Ef thar is any present," he added, in his simple, serious way, "as would care to jine in the fun'l, they kin come." Perhaps it was from a sense of humor, which I have already intimated was a feature of Sandy Bar, — perhaps it was from something even better than that, but two thirds of the loungers accepted the invitation at once.

It was noon when the body of Tennessee was delivered into the hands of his partner. As the cart drew up to the fatal tree, we noticed that it contained a rough oblong box,

— apparently made from a section of sluicing, — and half filled with bark and the tassels of pine. The cart was further decorated with slips of willow and made fragrant with buckeye-blossoms. When the body was deposited in the box, Tennessee's Partner drew over it a piece of tarred canvas, and gravely mounting the narrow seat in front, with his feet upon the shafts, urged the little donkey forward. The equipage moved slowly on, at that decorous pace which was habitual with Jenny even under less solemn circumstances. The men — half curiously, half jestingly, but all good-humoredly — strolled along beside the cart, some in advance, some a little in the rear of the homely catafalque. But whether from the narrowing of the road or some present sense of decorum, as the cart passed on, the company fell to the rear in couples, keeping step, and otherwise assuming the external show of a formal procession. Jack Folinsbee, who had at the outset played a funeral march in dumb show upon an imaginary trombone, desisted from a lack of sympathy and appreciation, — not having, perhaps, your true humorist's capacity to be content with the enjoyment of his own fun.

The way led through Grizzly Cañon, by this time clothed in funereal drapery and shadows. The redwoods, burying their moccasined feet in the red soil, stood in Indian file along the track, trailing an uncouth benediction from their bending boughs upon the passing bier. A hare, surprised into helpless inactivity, sat upright and pulsating in the ferns by the roadside as the cortége went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs; and the blue-jays, spreading their wings, fluttered before them like outriders, until the outskirts of Sandy Bar were reached, and the solitary cabin of Tennessee's Partner.

Viewed under more favorable circumstances, it would not have been a cheerful place. The unpicturesque site, the rude and unlovely outlines, the unsavory details, which

distinguish the nest-building of the California miner, were all here with the dreariness of decay superadded. A few paces from the cabin there was a rough inclosure, which, in the brief days of Tennessee's Partner's matrimonial felicity, had been used as a garden, but was now overgrown with fern. As we approached it, we were surprised to find that what we had taken for a recent attempt at cultivation was the broken soil about an open grave.

The cart was halted before the inclosure, and rejecting the offers of assistance with the same air of simple self-reliance he had displayed throughout, Tennessee's Partner lifted the rough coffin on his back, and deposited it unaided within the shallow grave. He then nailed down the board which served as a lid, and mounting the little mound of earth beside it, took off his hat and slowly mopped his face with his handkerchief. This the crowd felt was a preliminary to speech, and they disposed themselves variously on stumps and boulders, and sat expectant.

"When a man," began Tennessee's Partner slowly, "has been running free all day, what's the natural thing for him to do? Why, to come home. And if he ain't in a condition to go home, what can his best friend do? Why, bring him home. And here 's Tennessee has been running free, and we brings him home from his wandering." He paused and picked up a fragment of quartz, rubbed it thoughtfully on his sleeve, and went on: "It ain't the first time that I've packed him on my back, as you see'd me now. It ain't the first time that I brought him to this yer cabin when he could n't help himself; it ain't the first time that I and Jinny have waited for him on yon hill, and picked him up and so fetched him home, when he could n't speak and did n't know me. And now that it's the last time, why" — he paused and rubbed the quartz gently on his sleeve — "you see it 's sort of rough on his pardner. And

now, gentlemen," he added abruptly, picking up his long-handled shovel, "the fun'l's over; and my thanks, and Tennessee's thanks, to you for your trouble."

Resisting any proffers of assistance, he began to fill in the grave, turning his back upon the crowd, that after a few moments' hesitation gradually withdrew. As they crossed the little ridge that hid Sandy Bar from view, some, looking back, thought they could see Tennessee's Partner, his work done, sitting upon the grave, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in his red bandana handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you could n't tell his face from his handkerchief at that distance, and this point remained undecided.

In the reaction that followed the feverish excitement of that day, Tennessee's Partner was not forgotten. A secret investigation had cleared him of any complicity in Tennessee's guilt, and left only a suspicion of his general sanity. Sandy Bar made a point of calling on him, and proffering various uncouth but well-meant kindnesses. But from that day his rude health and great strength seemed visibly to decline; and when the rainy season fairly set in, and the tiny grass-blades were beginning to peep from the rocky mound above Tennessee's grave, he took to his bed.

One night, when the pines beside the cabin were swaying in the storm and trailing their slender fingers over the roof, and the roar and rush of the swollen river were heard below, Tennessee's Partner lifted his head from the pillow, saying, "It is time to go for Tennessee; I must put Jinny in the cart;" and would have risen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy: "There, now, steady, Jinny, — steady, old girl. How dark it is! Look out for the ruts, — and look out for him, too, old gal. Sometimes, you know, when he's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on

straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar! I told you so! — thar he is, — coming this way, too, — all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee! Pardner!”

And so they met.

## THE IDYL OF RED GULCH

SANDY was very drunk. He was lying under an azalea-bush, in pretty much the same attitude in which he had fallen some hours before. How long he had been lying there he could not tell, and did n't care; how long he should lie there was a matter equally indefinite and unconsidered. A tranquil philosophy, born of his physical condition, suffused and saturated his moral being.

The spectacle of a drunken man, and of this drunken man in particular, was not, I grieve to say, of sufficient novelty in Red Gulch to attract attention. Earlier in the day some local satirist had erected a temporary tombstone at Sandy's head, bearing the inscription, "Effects of McCorkle's whiskey — kills at forty rods," with a hand pointing to McCorkle's saloon. But this, I imagine, was, like most local satire, personal; and was a reflection upon the unfairness of the process rather than a commentary upon the impropriety of the result. With this facetious exception, Sandy had been undisturbed. A wandering mule, released from his pack, had cropped the scant herbage beside him, and sniffed curiously at the prostrate man; a vagabond dog, with that deep sympathy which the species have for drunken men, had licked his dusty boots and curled himself up at his feet, and lay there, blinking one eye in the sunlight, with a simulation of dissipation that was ingenious and dog-like in its implied flattery of the unconscious man beside him.

Meanwhile the shadows of the pine-trees had slowly swung around until they crossed the road, and their trunks

barred the open meadow with gigantic parallels of black and yellow. Little puffs of red dust, lifted by the plunging hoofs of passing teams, dispersed in a grimy shower upon the recumbent man. The sun sank lower and lower, and still Sandy stirred not. And then the repose of this philosopher was disturbed, as other philosophers have been, by the intrusion of an unphilosophical sex.

“Miss Mary,” as she was known to the little flock that she had just dismissed from the log schoolhouse beyond the pines, was taking her afternoon walk. Observing an unusually fine cluster of blossoms on the azalea-bush opposite, she crossed the road to pluck it, picking her way through the red dust, not without certain fierce little shivers of disgust and some feline circumlocution. And then she came suddenly upon Sandy!

Of course she uttered the little staccato cry of her sex. But when she had paid that tribute to her physical weakness she became overbold and halted for a moment, — at least six feet from this prostrate monster, — with her white skirts gathered in her hand, ready for flight. But neither sound nor motion came from the bush. With one little foot she then overturned the satirical headboard, and muttered “Beasts!” — an epithet which probably, at that moment, conveniently classified in her mind the entire male population of Red Gulch. For Miss Mary, being possessed of certain rigid notions of her own, had not, perhaps, properly appreciated the demonstrative gallantry for which the Californian has been so justly celebrated by his brother Californians, and had, as a newcomer, perhaps fairly earned the reputation of being “stuck up.”

As she stood there she noticed, also, that the slant sunbeams were heating Sandy’s head to what she judged to be an unhealthy temperature, and that his hat was lying uselessly at his side. To pick it up and to place it over his face was a work requiring some courage, particularly as



his eyes were open. Yet she did it and made good her retreat. But she was somewhat concerned, on looking back, to see that the hat was removed, and that Sandy was sitting up and saying something.

The truth was, that in the calm depths of Sandy's mind he was satisfied that the rays of the sun were beneficial and healthful; that from childhood he had objected to lying down in a hat; that no people but condemned fools, past redemption, ever wore hats; and that his right to dispense with them when he pleased was inalienable. This was the statement of his inner consciousness. Unfortunately, its outward expression was vague, being limited to a repetition of the following formula: "Su'shine all ri'! Wasser maär, eh? Wass up, su'shine?"

Miss Mary stopped, and, taking fresh courage from her vantage of distance, asked him if there was anything that he wanted.

"Wass up? Wasser maär?" continued Sandy, in a very high key.

"Get up, you horrid man!" said Miss Mary, now thoroughly incensed; "get up and go home."

Sandy staggered to his feet. He was six feet high, and Miss Mary trembled. He started forward a few paces and then stopped.

"Wass I go home for?" he suddenly asked, with great gravity.

"Go and take a bath," replied Miss Mary, eying his grimy person with great disfavor.

To her infinite dismay, Sandy suddenly pulled off his coat and vest, threw them on the ground, kicked off his boots, and, plunging wildly forward, darted headlong over the hill in the direction of the river.

"Goodness heavens! the man will be drowned!" said Miss Mary; and then, with feminine inconsistency, she ran back to the schoolhouse and locked herself in.

That night, while seated at supper with her hostess, the blacksmith's wife, it came to Miss Mary to ask, demurely, if her husband ever got drunk. "Abner," responded Mrs. Stidger reflectively, — "let 's see! Abner has n't been tight since last 'lection." Miss Mary would have liked to ask if he preferred lying in the sun on these occasions, and if a cold bath would have hurt him; but this would have involved an explanation, which she did not then care to give. So she contented herself with opening her gray eyes widely at the red-cheeked Mrs. Stidger, — a fine specimen of South-western efflorescence, — and then dismissed the subject altogether. The next day she wrote to her dearest friend in Boston: "I think I find the intoxicated portion of this community the least objectionable. I refer, my dear, to the men, of course. I do not know anything that could make the women tolerable."

In less than a week Miss Mary had forgotten this episode, except that her afternoon walks took thereafter, almost unconsciously, another direction. She noticed, however, that every morning a fresh cluster of azalea blossoms appeared among the flowers on her desk. This was not strange, as her little flock were aware of her fondness for flowers, and invariably kept her desk bright with anemones, syringas, and lupines; but, on questioning them, they one and all professed ignorance of the azaleas. A few days later, Master Johnny Stidger, whose desk was nearest to the window, was suddenly taken with spasms of apparently gratuitous laughter, that threatened the discipline of the school. All that Miss Mary could get from him was, that some one had been "looking in the winder." Irate and indignant, she sallied from her hive to do battle with the intruder. As she turned the corner of the schoolhouse she came plump upon the quondam drunkard, now perfectly sober, and inexpressibly sheepish and guilty-looking.

These facts Miss Mary was not slow to take a feminine

advantage of, in her present humor. But it was somewhat confusing to observe, also, that the beast, despite some faint signs of past dissipation, was amiable-looking, — in fact, a kind of blond Samson, whose corn-colored silken beard apparently had never yet known the touch of barber's razor or Delilah's shears. So that the cutting speech which quivered on her ready tongue died upon her lips, and she contented herself with receiving his stammering apology with supercilious eyelids and the gathered skirts of uncontamination. When she reëntered the schoolroom, her eyes fell upon the azaleas with a new sense of revelation ; and then she laughed, and the little people all laughed, and they were all unconsciously very happy.

It was a hot day, and not long after this, that two short-legged boys came to grief on the threshold of the school with a pail of water, which they had laboriously brought from the spring, and that Miss Mary compassionately seized the pail and started for the spring herself. At the foot of the hill a shadow crossed her path, and a blue-shirted arm dexterously but gently relieved her of her burden. Miss Mary was both embarrassed and angry. "If you carried more of that for yourself," she said spitefully to the blue arm, without deigning to raise her lashes to its owner, "you'd do better." In the submissive silence that followed she regretted the speech, and thanked him so sweetly at the door that he stumbled. Which caused the children to laugh again, — a laugh in which Miss Mary joined, until the color came faintly into her pale cheek. The next day a barrel was mysteriously placed beside the door, and as mysteriously filled with fresh spring-water every morning.

Nor was this superior young person without other quiet attentions. "Profane Bill," driver of the Slumgullion Stage, widely known in the newspapers for his "gallantry" in invariably offering the box-seat to the fair sex, had

excepted Miss Mary from this attention, on the ground that he had a habit of "cussin' on up grades," and gave her half the coach to herself. Jack Hamlin, a gambler, having once silently ridden with her in the same coach, afterward threw a decanter at the head of a confederate for mentioning her name in a bar-room. The over-dressed mother of a pupil whose paternity was doubtful had often lingered near this astute Vestal's temple, never daring to enter its sacred precincts, but content to worship the priestess from afar.

With such unconscious intervals the monotonous procession of blue skies, glittering sunshine, brief twilights, and starlit nights passed over Red Gulch. Miss Mary grew fond of walking in the sedate and proper woods. Perhaps she believed, with Mrs. Stidger, that the balsamic odors of the firs "did her chest good," for certainly her slight cough was less frequent and her step was firmer; perhaps she had learned the unending lesson which the patient pines are never weary of repeating to heedful or listless ears. And so one day she planned a picnic on Buckeye Hill, and took the children with her. Away from the dusty road, the straggling shanties, the yellow ditches, the clamor of restless engines, the cheap finery of shop-windows, the deeper glitter of paint and colored glass, and the thin veneering which barbarism takes upon itself in such localities, what infinite relief was theirs! The last heap of ragged rock and clay passed, the last unsightly chasm crossed, — how the waiting woods opened their long files to receive them! How the children — perhaps because they had not yet grown quite away from the breast of the bounteous Mother — threw themselves face downward on her brown bosom with uncouth caresses, filling the air with their laughter; and how Miss Mary herself — felinely fastidious and entrenched as she was in the purity of spotless skirts, collar, and cuffs — forgot all, and ran like a crested quail at the

head of her brood, until, romping, laughing, and panting, with a loosened braid of brown hair, a hat hanging by a knotted ribbon from her throat, she came suddenly and violently, in the heart of the forest, upon the luckless Sandy!

The explanations, apologies, and not otherwise conversation that ensued need not be indicated here. It would seem, however, that Miss Mary had already established some acquaintance with this ex-drunkard. Enough that he was soon accepted as one of the party; that the children, with that quick intelligence which Providence gives the helpless, recognized a friend, and played with his blond beard and long silken mustache, and took other liberties, — as the helpless are apt to do. And when he had built a fire against a tree, and had shown them other mysteries of woodcraft, their admiration knew no bounds. At the close of two such foolish, idle, happy hours he found himself lying at the feet of the schoolmistress, gazing dreamily in her face as she sat upon the sloping hillside weaving wreaths of laurel and syringa, in very much the same attitude as he had lain when first they met. Nor was the similitude greatly forced. The weakness of an easy, sensuous nature, that had found a dreamy exaltation in liquor, it is to be feared was now finding an equal intoxication in love.

I think that Sandy was dimly conscious of this himself. I know that he longed to be doing something, — slaying a grizzly, scalping a savage, or sacrificing himself in some way for the sake of this sallow-faced, gray-eyed schoolmistress. As I should like to present him in an heroic attitude, I stay my hand with great difficulty at this moment, being only withheld from introducing such an episode by a strong conviction that it does not usually occur at such times. And I trust that my fairest reader, who remembers that, in a real crisis, it is always some uninteresting stranger or

unromantic policeman, and not Adolphus, who rescues, will forgive the omission.

So they sat there undisturbed, — the woodpeckers chattering overhead and the voices of the children coming pleasantly from the hollow below. What they said matters little. What they thought — which might have been interesting — did not transpire. The woodpeckers only learned how Miss Mary was an orphan; how she left her uncle's house to come to California for the sake of health and independence; how Sandy was an orphan too; how he came to California for excitement; how he had lived a wild life, and how he was trying to reform; and other details, which, from a woodpecker's view-point, undoubtedly must have seemed stupid and a waste of time. But even in such trifles was the afternoon spent; and when the children were again gathered, and Sandy, with a delicacy which the schoolmistress well understood, took leave of them quietly at the outskirts of the settlement, it had seemed the shortest day of her weary life.

As the long, dry summer withered to its roots, the school term of Red Gulch — to use a local euphuism — “dried up” also. In another day Miss Mary would be free, and for a season, at least, Red Gulch would know her no more. She was seated alone in the schoolhouse, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes half closed in one of those day-dreams in which Miss Mary, I fear, to the danger of school discipline, was lately in the habit of indulging. Her lap was full of mosses, ferns, and other woodland memories. She was so preoccupied with these and her own thoughts that a gentle tapping at the door passed unheard, or translated itself into the remembrance of far-off woodpeckers. When at last it asserted itself more distinctly, she started up with a flushed cheek and opened the door. On the threshold stood a woman, the self-assertion and audacity of whose dress were in singular contrast to her timid, irresolute bearing.

Miss Mary recognized at a glance the dubious mother of her anonymous pupil. Perhaps she was disappointed, perhaps she was only fastidious; but as she coldly invited her to enter, she half unconsciously settled her white cuffs and collar, and gathered closer her own chaste skirts. It was, perhaps, for this reason that the embarrassed stranger, after a moment's hesitation, left her gorgeous parasol open and sticking in the dust beside the door, and then sat down at the farther end of a long bench. Her voice was husky as she began,—

“I heerd tell that you were goin' down to the Bay to-morrow, and I could n't let you go until I came to thank you for your kindness to my Tommy.”

Tommy, Miss Mary said, was a good boy, and deserved more than the poor attention she could give him.

“Thank you, miss; thank ye!” cried the stranger, brightening even through the color which Red Gulch knew facetiously as her “war paint,” and striving, in her embarrassment, to drag the long bench nearer the schoolmistress. “I thank you, miss, for that; and if I am his mother, there ain't a sweeter, dearer, better boy lives than him. And if I ain't much as says it, thar ain't a sweeter, dearer, angeler teacher lives than he 's got.”

Miss Mary, sitting primly behind her desk, with a ruler over her shoulder, opened her gray eyes widely at this, but said nothing.

“It ain't for you to be complimented by the like of me, I know,” she went on hurriedly. “It ain't for me to be comin' here, in broad day, to do it, either; but I come to ask a favor,—not for me, miss,—not for me, but for the darling boy.”

Encouraged by a look in the young schoolmistress's eye, and putting her lilac-gloved hands together, the fingers downward, between her knees, she went on, in a low voice:—

"You see, miss, there's no one the boy has any claim on but me, and I ain't the proper person to bring him up. I thought some, last year, of sending him away to Frisco to school, but when they talked of bringing a schoolma'am here, I waited till I saw you, and then I knew it was all right, and I could keep my boy a little longer. And, oh! miss, he loves you so much; and if you could hear him talk about you in his pretty way, and if he could ask you what I ask you now, you could n't refuse him.

"It is natural," she went on rapidly, in a voice that trembled strangely between pride and humility, — "it's natural that he should take to you, miss, for his father, when I first knew him, was a gentleman, — and the boy must forget me, sooner or later, — and so I ain't a-goin' to cry about that. For I come to ask you to take my Tommy, — God bless him for the bestest, sweetest boy that lives, — to — to — take him with you."

She had risen and caught the young girl's hand in her own, and had fallen on her knees beside her.

"I've money plenty, and it's all yours and his. Put him in some good school, where you can go and see him, and help him to — to — to forget his mother. Do with him what you like. The worst you can do will be kindness to what he will learn with me. Only take him out of this wicked life, this cruel place, this home of shame and sorrow. You will! I know you will, — won't you? You will, — you must not, you cannot say no! You will make him as pure, as gentle as yourself; and when he has grown up, you will tell him his father's name, — the name that has n't passed my lips for years, — the name of Alexander Morton, whom they call here Sandy! Miss Mary! — do not take your hand away! Miss Mary, speak to me! You will take my boy? Do not put your face from me. I know it ought not to look on such as me. Miss Mary! — my G-d. be merciful! — she is leaving me!"



Miss Mary had risen, and, in the gathering twilight, had felt her way to the open window. She stood there, leaning against the casement, her eyes fixed on the last rosy tints that were fading from the western sky. There was still some of its light on her pure young forehead, on her white collar, on her clasped white hands, but all fading slowly away. The suppliant had dragged herself, still on her knees, beside her.

“I know it takes time to consider. I will wait here all night; but I cannot go until you speak. Do not deny me now. You will! — I see it in your sweet face, — such a face as I have seen in my dreams. I see it in your eyes, Miss Mary! — you will take my boy!”

The last red beam crept higher, suffused Miss Mary’s eyes with something of its glory, flickered, and faded, and went out. The sun had set on Red Gulch. In the twilight and silence Miss Mary’s voice sounded pleasantly.

“I will take the boy. Send him to me to-night.”

The happy mother raised the hem of Miss Mary’s skirts to her lips. She would have buried her hot face in its virgin folds, but she dared not. She rose to her feet.

“Does — this man — know of your intention?” asked Miss Mary suddenly.

“No, nor cares. He has never even seen the child to know it.”

“Go to him at once — to-night — now! Tell him what you have done. Tell him I have taken his child, and tell him — he must never see — see — the child again. Wherever it may be, he must not come; wherever I may take it, he must not follow! There, go now, please, — I’m weary, and — have much yet to do!”

They walked together to the door. On the threshold the woman turned.

“Good-night!”

She would have fallen at Miss Mary’s feet. But at the

same moment the young girl reached out her arms, caught the sinful woman to her own pure breast for one brief moment, and then closed and locked the door.

It was with a sudden sense of great responsibility that Profane Bill took the reins of the Slungullion stage the next morning, for the schoolmistress was one of his passengers. As he entered the highroad, in obedience to a pleasant voice from the "inside," he suddenly reined up his horses and respectfully waited, as Tommy hopped out at the command of Miss Mary.

"Not that bush, Tommy, — the next."

Tommy whipped out his new pocket-knife, and cutting a branch from a tall azalea-bush, returned with it to Miss Mary.

"All right now?"

"All right!"

And the stage-door closed on the Idyl of Red Gulch.

## BROWN OF CALAVERAS

A SUBDUED tone of conversation, and the absence of cigar-smoke and boot-heels at the windows of the Wingdan stagecoach, made it evident that one of the inside passengers was a woman. A disposition on the part of loungers at the stations to congregate before the window, and some concern in regard to the appearance of coats, hats, and collars, further indicated that she was lovely. All of which Mr. Jack Hamlin, on the box-seat, noted with the smile of cynical philosophy. Not that he depreciated the sex, but that he recognized therein a deceitful element, the pursuit of which sometimes drew mankind away from the equally uncertain blandishments of poker, — of which it may be remarked that Mr. Hamlin was a professional exponent.

So that, when he placed his narrow boot on the wheel and leaped down, he did not even glance at the window from which a green veil was fluttering, but lounged up and down with that listless and grave indifference of his class, which was, perhaps, the next thing to good-breeding. With his closely buttoned figure and self-contained air he was a marked contrast to the other passengers, with their feverish restlessness and boisterous emotion; and even Bill Masters, a graduate of Harvard, with his slovenly dress, his overflowing vitality, his intense appreciation of lawlessness and barbarism, and his mouth filled with crackers and cheese, I fear cut but an unromantic figure beside this lonely calculator of chances, with his pale Greek face and Homeric gravity.

The driver called "All aboard!" and Mr. Hamlin

returned to the coach. His foot was upon the wheel, and his face raised to the level of the open window, when, at the same moment, what appeared to him to be the finest eyes in the world suddenly met his. He quietly dropped down again, addressed a few words to one of the inside passengers, effected an exchange of seats, and as quietly took his place inside. Mr. Hamlin never allowed his philosophy to interfere with decisive and prompt action.

I fear that this irruption of Jack cast some restraint upon the other passengers, particularly those who were making themselves most agreeable to the lady. One of them leaned forward, and apparently conveyed to her information regarding Mr. Hamlin's profession in a single epithet. Whether Mr. Hamlin heard it, or whether he recognized in the informant a distinguished jurist, from whom, but a few evenings before, he had won several thousand dollars, I cannot say. His colorless face betrayed no sign; his black eyes, quietly observant, glanced indifferently past the legal gentleman, and rested on the much more pleasing features of his neighbor. An Indian stoicism — said to be an inheritance from his maternal ancestor — stood him in good service, until the rolling wheels rattled upon the river gravel at Scott's Ferry, and the stage drew up at the International Hotel for dinner. The legal gentleman and a member of Congress leaped out, and stood ready to assist the descending goddess, while Colonel Starbottle of Siskiyou took charge of her parasol and shawl. In this multiplicity of attention there was a momentary confusion and delay. Jack Hamlin quietly opened the *opposite* door of the coach, took the lady's hand, with that decision and positiveness which a hesitating and undecided sex know how to admire, and in an instant had dexterously and gracefully swung her to the ground and again lifted her to the platform. An audible chuckle on the box, I fear, came from that other cynic, Yuba Bill, the driver. "Look keerfully

arter that baggage, Kernel," said the expressman, with affected concern, as he looked after Colonel Starbottle, gloomily bringing up the rear of the triumphant procession to the waiting-room.

Mr. Hamlin did not stay for dinner. His horse was already saddled and awaiting him. He dashed over the ford, up the gravelly hill, and out into the dusty perspective of the Wingdam road, like one leaving an unpleasant fancy behind him. The inmates of dusty cabins by the roadside shaded their eyes with their hands and looked after him, recognizing the man by his horse, and speculating what "was up with Comanche Jack." Yet much of this interest centred in the horse, in a community where the time made by "French Pete's" mare, in his run from the Sheriff of Calaveras, eclipsed all concern in the ultimate fate of that worthy.

The sweating flanks of his gray at length recalled him to himself. He checked his speed, and turning into a byroad, sometimes used as a cut-off, trotted leisurely along, the reins hanging listlessly from his fingers. As he rode on, the character of the landscape changed and became more pastoral. Openings in groves of pine and sycamore disclosed some rude attempts at cultivation, — a flowering vine trailed over the porch of one cabin, and a woman rocked her cradled babe under the roses of another. A little farther on, Mr. Hamlin came upon some bare-legged children wading in the willowy creek, and so wrought upon them with a badinage peculiar to himself, that they were emboldened to climb up his horse's legs and over his saddle, until he was fain to develop an exaggerated ferocity of demeanor, and to escape, leaving behind some kisses and coin. And then, advancing deeper into the woods, where all signs of habitation failed, he began to sing, uplifting a tenor so singularly sweet, and shaded by a pathos so subdued and tender, that [wot the robins and linnets stopped to listen. Mr. Ham-

lin's voice was not cultivated; the subject of his song was some sentimental lunacy, borrowed from the negro minstrels; but there thrilled through all some occult quality of tone and expression that was unspeakably touching. Indeed, it was a wonderful sight to see this sentimental blackleg, with a pack of cards in his pocket and a revolver at his back, sending his voice before him through the dim woods with a plaint about his "Nelly's grave," in a way that overflowed the eyes of the listener. A sparrow-hawk, fresh from his sixth victim, possibly recognizing in Mr. Hamlin a kindred spirit, stared at him in surprise, and was fain to confess the superiority of man. With a superior predatory capacity *he* could n't sing.

But Mr. Hamlin presently found himself again on the highroad and at his former pace. Ditches and banks of gravel, denuded hillsides, stumps, and decayed trunks of trees, took the place of woodland and ravine, and indicated his approach to civilization. Then a church-steeple came in sight, and he knew that he had reached home. In a few moments he was clattering down the single narrow street that lost itself in a chaotic ruin of races, ditches, and tailings at the foot of the hill, and dismounted before the gilded windows of the Magnolia saloon. Passing through the long bar-room, he pushed open a green-baize door, entered a dark passage, opened another door with a pass-key, and found himself in a dimly lighted room, whose furniture, though elegant and costly for the locality, showed signs of abuse. The inlaid centre-table was overlaid with stained disks that were not contemplated in the original design, the embroidered armchairs were discolored, and the green velvet lounge, on which Mr. Hamlin threw himself, was soiled at the foot with the red soil of Wingdam.

Mr. Hamlin did not sing in his cage. He lay still, looking at a highly colored painting above him, representing a young creature of opulent charms. It occurred to him

then, for the first time, that he had never seen exactly that kind of a woman, and that, if he should, he would not, probably, fall in love with her. Perhaps he was thinking of another style of beauty. But just then some one knocked at the door. Without rising, he pulled a cord that apparently shot back a bolt, for the door swung open, and a man entered.

The new-comer was broad-shouldered and robust, — a vigor not borne out in the face, which, though handsome, was singularly weak and disfigured by dissipation. He appeared to be, also, under the influence of liquor, for he started on seeing Mr. Hamlin, and said, "I thought Kate was here;" stammered, and seemed confused and embarrassed.

Mr. Hamlin smiled the smile which he had before worn on the Wingdam coach, and sat up, quite refreshed and ready for business.

"You did n't come up on the stage," continued the new-comer, "did you?"

"No," replied Hamlin; "I left it at Scott's Ferry. It is n't due for half an hour yet. But how 's luck, Brown?"

"D—d bad," said Brown, his face suddenly assuming an expression of weak despair. "I 'm cleaned out again, Jack," he continued, in a whining tone, that formed a pitiable contrast to his bulky figure; "can't you help me with a hundred till to-morrow's clean-up? You see I've got to send money home to the old woman, and — you've won twenty times that amount from me."

The conclusion was, perhaps, not entirely logical, but Jack overlooked it, and handed the sum to his visitor. "The old-woman business is about played out, Brown," he added, by way of commentary; "why don't you say you want to buck ag'in' faro? You know you ain't married!"

"Fact, sir," said Brown, with a sudden gravity, as if the mere contact of the gold with the palm of the hand had

imparted some dignity to his frame. "I've got a wife — a d—d good one, too, if I do say it — in the States. It's three years since I've seen her, and a year since I've writ to her. When things is about straight, and we get down to the lead, I'm going to send for her."

"And Kate?" queried Mr. Hamlin, with his previous smile.

Mr. Brown of Calaveras essayed an archness of glance to cover his confusion, which his weak face and whiskey-muddled intellect but poorly carried out, and said, —

"D—n it, Jack, a man must have a little liberty, you know. But come, what do you say to a little game? Give us a show to double this hundred."

Jack Hamlin looked curiously at his fatuous friend. Perhaps he knew that the man was predestined to lose the money, and preferred that it should flow back into his own coffers rather than any other. He nodded his head, and drew his chair toward the table. At the same moment there came a rap upon the door.

"It's Kate," said Mr. Brown.

Mr. Hamlin shot back the bolt and the door opened. But, for the first time in his life, he staggered to his feet utterly unnerved and abashed, and for the first time in his life the hot blood crimsoned his colorless cheeks to his forehead. For before him stood the lady he had lifted from the Wingdam coach, whom Brown, dropping his cards with a hysterical laugh, greeted as, —

"My old woman, by thunder!"

They say that Mrs. Brown burst into tears and reproaches of her husband. I saw her in 1857 at Marysville, and disbelieve the story. And the "Wingdam Chronicle" of the next week, under the head of "Touching Reunion," said: "One of those beautiful and touching incidents, peculiar to California life, occurred last week in our city. The wife of one of Wingdam's eminent pioneers, tired of



the effete civilization of the East and its inhospitable climate, resolved to join her noble husband upon these golden shores. Without informing him of her intention, she undertook the long journey, and arrived last week. The joy of the husband may be easier imagined than described. The meeting is said to have been indescribably affecting. We trust her example may be followed."

Whether owing to Mrs. Brown's influence, or to some more successful speculations, Mr. Brown's financial fortune from that day steadily improved. He bought out his partners in the "Nip and Tuck" lead, with money which was said to have been won at poker a week or two after his wife's arrival, but which rumor, adopting Mrs. Brown's theory that Brown had forsworn the gaming-table, declared to have been furnished by Mr. Jack Hamlin. He built and furnished the Wingdam House, which pretty Mrs. Brown's great popularity kept overflowing with guests. He was elected to the Assembly, and gave largesse to churches. A street in Wingdam was named in his honor.

Yet it was noted that in proportion as he waxed wealthy and fortunate, he grew pale, thin, and anxious. As his wife's popularity increased, he became fretful and impatient. The most uxorious of husbands, he was absurdly jealous. If he did not interfere with his wife's social liberty, it was because it was maliciously whispered that his first and only attempt was met by an outburst from Mrs. Brown that terrified him into silence. Much of this kind of gossip came from those of her own sex whom she had supplanted in the chivalrous attentions of Wingdam, which, like most popular chivalry, was devoted to an admiration of power, whether of masculine force or feminine beauty. It should be remembered, too, in her extenuation, that, since her arrival, she had been the unconscious priestess of a mythological worship, perhaps not more ennobling to her womanhood

than that which distinguished an older Greek democracy. I think that Brown was dimly conscious of this. But his only confidant was Jack Hamlin, whose infelix reputation naturally precluded any open intimacy with the family, and whose visits were infrequent.

It was midsummer and a moonlit night, and Mrs. Brown, very rosy, large-eyed, and pretty, sat upon the piazza, enjoying the fresh incense of the mountain breeze, and, it is to be feared, another incense which was not so fresh nor quite as innocent. Beside her sat Colonel Starbottle and Judge Boompointer, and a later addition to her court in the shape of a foreign tourist. She was in good spirits.

“What do you see down the road?” inquired the gallant Colonel, who had been conscious, for the last few minutes, that Mrs. Brown’s attention was diverted.

“Dust,” said Mrs. Brown, with a sigh. “Only Sister Anne’s ‘flock of sheep.’”

The Colonel, whose literary recollections did not extend farther back than last week’s paper, took a more practical view. “It ain’t sheep,” he continued; “it’s a horseman. Judge, ain’t that Jack Hamlin’s gray?”

But the Judge did n’t know; and, as Mrs. Brown suggested the air was growing too cold for further investigations, they retired to the parlor.

Mr. Brown was in the stable, where he generally retired after dinner. Perhaps it was to show his contempt for his wife’s companions; perhaps, like other weak natures, he found pleasure in the exercise of absolute power over inferior animals. He had a certain gratification in the training of a chestnut mare, whom he could beat or caress as pleased him, which he could n’t do with Mrs. Brown. It was here that he recognized a certain gray horse which had just come in, and, looking a little farther on, found his rider. Brown’s greeting was cordial and hearty; Mr. Hamlin’s somewhat restrained. But, at Brown’s urgent request, he followed

him up the back stairs to a narrow corridor, and thence to a small room looking out upon the stable-yard. It was plainly furnished with a bed, a table, a few chairs, and a rack for guns and whips.

"This yer's my home, Jack," said Brown with a sigh, as he threw himself upon the bed and motioned his companion to a chair. "Her room's t' other end of the hall. It's more 'n six months since we've lived together, or met, except at meals. It's mighty rough papers on the head of the house, ain't it?" he said with a forced laugh. "But I'm glad to see you, Jack, d—d glad," and he reached from the bed, and again shook the unresponsive hand of Jack Hamlin.

"I brought ye up here, for I did n't want to talk in the stable; though, for the matter of that, it's all round town. Don't strike a light. We can talk here in the moonshine. Put up your feet on that winder and sit here beside me. Thar's whiskey in that jug."

Mr. Hamlin did not avail himself of the information. Brown of Calaveras turned his face to the wall, and continued, —

"If I did n't love the woman, Jack, I would n't mind. But it's loving her, and seeing her day arter day goin' on at this rate, and no one to put down the brake; that's what gits me! But I'm glad to see ye, Jack, d—d glad."

In the darkness he groped about until he had found and wrung his companion's hand again. He would have detained it, but Jack slipped it into the buttoned breast of his coat, and asked listlessly, "How long has this been going on?"

"Ever since she came here; ever since the day she walked into the Magnolia. I was a fool then; Jack, I'm a fool now; but I did n't know how much I loved her till then. And she has n't been the same woman since.

"But that ain't all, Jack; and it's what I wanted to see you about, and I'm glad you've come. It ain't that she

does n't love me any more; it ain't that she fools with every chap that comes along; for perhaps I staked her love and lost it, as I did everything else at the Magnolia; and perhaps foolin' is nateral to some women, and thar ain't no great harm done, 'cept to the fools. But, Jack, I think, — I think she loves somebody else. Don't move, Jack! don't move; if your pistol hurts ye, take it off.

“It's been more'n six months now that she's seemed unhappy and lonesome, and kinder nervous and scared-like. And sometimes I've ketched her lookin' at me sort of timid and pitying. And she writes to somebody. And for the last week she's been gathering her own things, — trinkets, and furbelows, and jew'lry, — and, Jack, I think she's goin' off. I could stand all but that. To have her steal away like a thief!” He put his face downward to the pillow, and for a few moments there was no sound but the ticking of a clock on the mantel. Mr. Hamlin lit a cigar, and moved to the open window. The moon no longer shone into the room, and the bed and its occupant were in shadow. “What shall I do, Jack?” said the voice from the darkness.

The answer came promptly and clearly from the window-side, “Spot the man, and kill him on sight.”

“But, Jack” —

“He's took the risk!”

“But will that bring *her* back?”

Jack did not reply, but moved from the window towards the door.

“Don't go yet, Jack; light the candle and sit by the table. It's a comfort to see ye, if nothin' else.”

Jack hesitated and then complied. He drew a pack of cards from his pocket and shuffled them, glancing at the bed. But Brown's face was turned to the wall. When Mr. Hamlin had shuffled the cards, he cut them, and dealt one card on the opposite side of the table towards the bed,

and another on his side of the table for himself. The first was a deuce ; his own card a king. He then shuffled and cut again. This time "dummy" had a queen and himself a four-spot. Jack brightened up for the third deal. It brought his adversary a deuce and himself a king again. "Two out of three," said Jack audibly.

"What 's that, Jack ?" said Brown.

"Nothing."

Then Jack tried his hand with dice ; but he always threw sixes and his imaginary opponent aces. The force of habit is sometimes confusing.

Meanwhile some magnetic influence in Mr. Hamlin's presence, or the anodyne of liquor, or both, brought surcease of sorrow, and Brown slept. Mr. Hamlin moved his chair to the window and looked out on the town of Wingdam, now sleeping peacefully, its harsh outlines softened and subdued, its glaring colors mellowed and sobered in the moonlight that flowed over all. In the hush he could hear the gurgling of water in the ditches and the sighing of the pines beyond the hill. Then he looked up at the firmament, and as he did so a star shot across the twinkling field. Presently another, and then another. The phenomenon suggested to Mr. Hamlin a fresh augury. If in another fifteen minutes another star should fall — He sat there, watch in hand, for twice that time, but the phenomenon was not repeated.

The clock struck two, and Brown still slept. Mr. Hamlin approached the table and took from his pocket a letter, which he read by the flickering candlelight. It contained only a single line, written in pencil, in a woman's hand, —

"Be at the corral with the buggy at three."

The sleeper moved uneasily and then awoke. "Are you there, Jack ?"

"Yes."

"Don't go yet. I dreamed just now, Jack, — dreamed

of old times. I thought that Sue and me was being married agin, and that the parson, Jack, was — who do you think? — you!”

The gambler laughed, and seated himself on the bed, the paper still in his hand.

“It’s a good sign, ain’t it?” queried Brown.

“I reckon! Say, old man, had n’t you better get up?”

The “old man,” thus affectionately appealed to, rose, with the assistance of Hamlin’s outstretched hand.

“Smoke?”

Brown mechanically took the proffered cigar.

“Light?”

Jack had twisted the letter into a spiral, lit it, and held it for his companion. He continued to hold it until it was consumed, and dropped the fragment — a fiery star — from the open window. He watched it as it fell, and then returned to his friend.

“Old man,” he said, placing his hands upon Brown’s shoulders, “in ten minutes I’ll be on the road, and gone like that spark. We won’t see each other agin; but, before I go, take a fool’s advice: sell out all you’ve got, take your wife with you, and quit the country. It ain’t no place for you nor her. Tell her she must go; make her go if she won’t. Don’t whine because you can’t be a saint and she ain’t an angel. Be a man, and treat her like a woman. Don’t be a d—d fool. Good-by.”

He tore himself from Brown’s grasp and leaped down the stairs like a deer. At the stable-door he collared the half-sleeping hostler, and backed him against the wall. “Saddle my horse in two minutes, or I’ll” — The ellipsis was frightfully suggestive.

“The missis said you was to have the buggy,” stammered the man.

“D—n the buggy!”

The horse was saddled as fast as the nervous hands of the astounded hostler could manipulate buckle and strap.

"Is anything up, Mr. Hamlin?" said the man, who, like all his class, admired the élan of his fiery patron, and was really concerned in his welfare.

"Stand aside!"

The man fell back. With an oath, a bound, and clatter, Jack was into the road. In another moment, to the man's half-awakened eyes, he was but a moving cloud of dust in the distance, towards which a star just loosed from its brethren was trailing a stream of fire.

But early that morning the dwellers by the Wingdam turnpike, miles away, heard a voice, pure as a sky-lark's, singing afield. They who were asleep turned over on their rude couches to dream of youth, and love, and olden days. Hard-faced men and anxious gold-seekers, already at work, ceased their labors and leaned upon their picks to listen to a romantic vagabond ambling away against the rosy sunrise.

# CONDENSED NOVELS

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## MUCK-A-MUCK

A MODERN INDIAN NOVEL

AFTER COOPER

### CHAPTER I

It was toward the close of a bright October day. The last rays of the setting sun were reflected from one of those sylvan lakes peculiar to the Sierras of California. On the right the curling smoke of an Indian village rose between the columns of the lofty pines, while to the left the log cottage of Judge Tompkins, embowered in buckeyes, completed the enchanting picture.

Although the exterior of the cottage was humble and unpretentious, and in keeping with the wildness of the landscape, its interior gave evidence of the cultivation and refinement of its inmates. An aquarium, containing goldfishes, stood on a marble centre-table at one end of the apartment, while a magnificent grand piano occupied the other. The floor was covered with a yielding tapestry carpet, and the walls were adorned with paintings from the pencils of Van Dyke, Rubens, Tintoretto, Michael Angelo, and the productions of the more modern Turner, Kensett, Church, and Bierstadt. Although Judge Tompkins had chosen the frontier of civilization as his home, it was



impossible for him to entirely forego the habits and tastes of his former life. He was seated in a luxurious armchair, writing at a mahogany escritoire, while his daughter, a lovely young girl of seventeen summers, plied her crotchet-needle on an ottoman beside him. A bright fire of pine logs flickered and flamed on the ample hearth.

Genevra Octavia Tompkins was Judge Tompkins's only child. Her mother had long since died on the Plains. Reared in affluence, no pains had been spared with the daughter's education. She was a graduate of one of the principal seminaries, and spoke French with a perfect Benicia accent. Peerlessly beautiful, she was dressed in a white *noiré* antique robe trimmed with tulle. That simple rosebud, with which most heroines exclusively decorate their hair, was all she wore in her raven locks.

The Judge was the first to break the silence.

"Genevra, the logs which compose yonder fire seem to have been incautiously chosen. The sibilation produced by the sap, which exudes copiously therefrom, is not conducive to composition."

"True, father, but I thought it would be preferable to the constant crepitation which is apt to attend the combustion of more seasoned ligneous fragments."

The Judge looked admiringly at the intellectual features of the graceful girl, and half forgot the slight annoyances of the green wood in the musical accents of his daughter. He was smoothing her hair tenderly, when the shadow of a tall figure, which suddenly darkened the doorway, caused him to look up.

## CHAPTER II

It needed but a glance at the new-comer to detect at once the form and features of the haughty aborigine,—the untaught and untrammelled son of the forest. Over one

shoulder a blanket, negligently but gracefully thrown, disclosed a bare and powerful breast, decorated with a quantity of three-cent postage-stamps which he had despoiled from an Overland Mail stage a few weeks previous. A cast-off beaver of Judge Tompkins's, adorned by a simple feather, covered his erect head, from beneath which his straight locks descended. His right hand hung lightly by his side, while his left was engaged in holding on a pair of pantaloons, which the lawless grace and freedom of his lower limbs evidently could not brook.

"Why," said the Indian, in a low sweet tone, — "why does the Pale Face still follow the track of the Red Man? Why does he pursue him, even as O-kee chow, the wild cat, chases Ka-ka, the skunk? Why are the feet of Sorrel-top, the white chief, among the acorns of Muck-a-Muck, the mountain forest? Why," he repeated, quietly but firmly abstracting a silver spoon from the table, — "why do you seek to drive him from the wigwams of his fathers? His brothers are already gone to the happy hunting-grounds. Will the Pale Face seek him there?" And, averting his face from the Judge, he hastily slipped a silver cake-basket beneath his blanket, to conceal his emotion.

"Muck-a-Muck has spoken," said Genevra softly. "Let him now listen. Are the acorns of the mountain sweeter than the esculent and nutritious bean of the Pale Face miner? Does my brother prize the edible qualities of the snail above that of the crisp and oleaginous bacon? Delicious are the grasshoppers that sport on the hillside, — are they better than the dried apples of the Pale Faces? Pleasant is the gurgle of the torrent, Kish-Kish, but is it better than the cluck-cluck of old Bourbon from the old stone bottle?"

"Ugh!" said the Indian, — "ugh! good. The Whit Rabbit is wise. Her words fall as the snow on Tootoonolo, and the rocky heart of Muck-a-Muck is hidden. What says my brother the Gray Gopher of Dutch Flat?"

“She has spoken, Muck-a-Muck,” said the Judge, gazing fondly on his daughter. “It is well. Our treaty is concluded. No, thank you, — you need *not* dance the Dance of Snow-shoes, or the Moccasin Dance, the Dance of Green Corn, or the Treaty Dance. I would be alone. A strange sadness overpowers me.”

“I go,” said the Indian. “Tell your great chief in Washington, the Sachem Andy, that the Red Man is retiring before the footsteps of the adventurous pioneer. Inform him, if you please, that westward the star of empire takes its way, that the chiefs of the Pi-Ute nation are for Reconstruction to a man, and that Klamath will poll a heavy Republican vote in the fall.”

And folding his blanket more tightly around him, Muck-a-Muck withdrew.

### CHAPTER III

Genevra Tompkins stood at the door of the log-cabin, looking after the retreating Overland Mail stage which conveyed her father to Virginia City. “He may never return again,” sighed the young girl, as she glanced at the frightfully rolling vehicle and wildly careering horses, — “at least, with unbroken bones. Should he meet with an accident! I mind me now a fearful legend, familiar to my childhood. Can it be that the drivers on this line are privately instructed to dispatch all passengers maimed by accident, to prevent tedious litigation? No, no. But why this weight upon my heart?”

She seated herself at the piano and lightly passed her hand over the keys. Then, in a clear mezzo-soprano voice, she sang the first verse of one of the most popular Irish ballads: —

“*O Arrah ma dheelish, the distant dudheen*  
Lies soft in the moonlight, *na bouchal vourneen* :

The springing *gossoons* on the heather are still,  
And the *caubeens* and *colleens* are heard on the hill "

But as the ravishing notes of her sweet voice died upon the air, her hands sank listlessly to her side. Music could not chase away the mysterious shadow from her heart. Again she rose. Putting on a white crape bonnet, and carefully drawing a pair of lemon-colored gloves over her taper fingers, she seized her parasol and plunged into the depths of the pine forest.

#### CHAPTER IV

Genevra had not proceeded many miles before a weariness seized upon her fragile limbs, and she would fain seat herself upon the trunk of a prostrate pine, which she previously dusted with her handkerchief. The sun was just sinking below the horizon, and the scene was one of gorgeous and sylvan beauty. "How beautiful is nature!" murmured the innocent girl, as, reclining gracefully against the root of the tree, she gathered up her skirts and tied a handkerchief around her throat. But a low growl interrupted her meditation. Starting to her feet, her eyes met a sight which froze her blood with terror.

The only outlet to the forest was the narrow path, barely wide enough for a single person, hemmed in by trees and rocks, which she had just traversed. Down this path, in Indian file, came a monstrous grizzly, closely followed by a California lion, a wild cat, and a buffalo, the rear being brought up by a wild Spanish bull. The mouths of the three first animals were distended with frightful significance, the horns of the last were lowered as ominously. As Genevra was preparing to faint, she heard a low voice behind her.

"Eternally dog-gone my skin ef this ain't the puttiest chance yet!"

At the same moment, a long, shining barrel dropped lightly from behind her, and rested over her shoulder.

Genevra shuddered.

“Dern ye — don’t move!”

Genevra became motionless.

The crack of a rifle rang through the woods. Three frightful yells were heard, and two sullen roars. Five animals bounded into the air and five lifeless bodies lay upon the plain. The well-aimed bullet had done its work. Entering the open throat of the grizzly it had traversed his body only to enter the throat of the California lion, and in like manner the catamount, until it passed through into the respective foreheads of the bull and the buffalo, and finally fell flattened from the rocky hillside.

Genevra turned quickly. “My preserver!” she shrieked, and fell into the arms of Natty Bumpo, the celebrated Pike Ranger of Donner Lake.

## CHAPTER V

The moon rose cheerfully above Donner Lake. On its placid bosom a dug-out canoe glided rapidly, containing Natty Bumpo and Genevra Tompkins.

Both were silent. The same thought possessed each, and perhaps there was sweet companionship even in the unbroken quiet. Genevra bit the handle of her parasol, and blushed. Natty Bumpo took a fresh chew of tobacco. At length Genevra said, as if in half-spoken reverie: —

“The soft shining of the moon and the peaceful ripple of the waves seem to say to us various things of an instructive and moral tendency.”

“You may bet yer pile on that, miss,” said her companion gravely. “It’s all the preachin’ and psalm-singin’ I’ve heern since I was a boy.”

“Noble being!” said Miss Tompkins to herself, glancing

at the stately Pike as he bent over his paddle to conceal his emotion. "Reared in this wild seclusion, yet he has become penetrated with visible consciousness of a Great First Cause." Then, collecting herself, she said aloud: "Methinks 't were pleasant to glide ever thus down the stream of life, hand in hand with the one being whom the soul claims as its affinity. But what am I saying?" — and the delicate-minded girl hid her face in her hands.

A long silence ensued, which was at length broken by her companion.

"Ef you mean you 're on the marry," he said thoughtfully, "I ain't in no wise partikler."

"My husband!" faltered the blushing girl; and she fell into his arms.

In ten minutes more the loving couple had landed at Judge Tompkins's.

## CHAPTER VI

A year has passed away. Natty Bumpo was returning from Gold Hill, where he had been to purchase provisions. On his way to Donner Lake, rumors of an Indian uprising met his ears. "Dern their pesky skins, ef they dare to touch my Jenny," he muttered between his clenched teeth.

It was dark when he reached the borders of the lake. Around a glittering fire he dimly discerned dusky figures dancing. They were in war paint. Conspicuous among them was the renowned Muck-a-Muck. But why did the fingers of Natty Bumpo tighten convulsively around his rifle?

The chief held in his hand long tufts of raven hair. The heart of the pioneer sickened as he recognized the clustering curls of Genevra. In a moment his rifle was at his shoulder, and with a sharp "ping" Muck-a-Muck leaped into the air a corpse. To knock out the brains of the remaining

savages, tear the tresses from the stiffening hand of Muck-a-Muck, and dash rapidly forward to the cottage of Judge Tompkins, was the work of a moment.

He burst open the door. Why did he stand transfixed with open mouth and distended eyeballs? Was the sight too horrible to be borne? On the contrary, before him, in her peerless beauty, stood Genevra Tompkins, leaning on her father's arm.

"Ye'r not scalped, then!" gasped her lover.

"No. I have no hesitation in saying that I am not; but why this abruptness?" responded Genevra.

Bumpo could not speak, but frantically produced the silken tresses. Genevra turned her face aside.

"Why, that's her waterfall!" said the Judge.

Bumpo sank fainting to the floor.

The famous Pike chieftain never recovered from the deceit, and refused to marry Genevra, who died, twenty years afterwards, of a broken heart. Judge Tompkins lost his fortune in Wild Cat. The stage passes twice a week the deserted cottage at Donner Lake. Thus was the death of Muck-a-Muck avenged.

## SELINA SEDILIA

BY MISS M. E. B-DD-N AND MRS. H-N-Y W-D.

### CHAPTER I

THE sun was setting over Sloperton Grange, and reddened the window of the lonely chamber in the western tower, supposed to be haunted by Sir Edward Sedilia, the founder of the Grange. In the dreamy distance arose the gilded mausoleum of Lady Felicia Sedilia, who haunted that portion of Sedilia Manor known as "Stiff-uns Acre." A little to the left of the Grange might have been seen a mouldering ruin, known as "Guy's Keep," haunted by the spirit of Sir Guy Sedilia, who was found, one morning, crushed by one of the fallen battlements. Yet, as the setting sun gilded these objects, a beautiful and almost holy calm seemed diffused about the Grange.

The Lady Selina sat by an oriel window overlooking the park. The sun sank gently in the bosom of the German Ocean, and yet the lady did not lift her beautiful head from the finely curved arm and diminutive hand which supported it. When darkness finally shrouded the landscape she started, for the sound of horse-hoofs clattered over the stones of the avenue. She had scarcely risen, before an aristocratic young man fell on his knees before her.

"My Selina!"

"Edgardo! You here?"

"Yes, dearest."

"And — you — you — have — seen nothing?" said the



lady in an agitated voice and nervous manner, turning her face aside to conceal her emotion.

“Nothing — that is, nothing of any account,” said Edgardo. “I passed the ghost of your aunt in the park, noticed the spectre of your uncle in the ruined keep, and observed the familiar features of the spirit of your great-grandfather at his usual post. But nothing beyond these trifles, my Selina. Nothing more, love, absolutely nothing.”

The young man turned his dark, liquid orbs fondly upon the ingenuous face of his betrothed.

“My own Edgardo! — and you still love me? You still would marry me in spite of this dark mystery which surrounds me? In spite of the fatal history of my race? In spite of the ominous predictions of my aged nurse?”

“I would, Selina;” and the young man passed his arm around her yielding waist. The two lovers gazed at each other’s faces in unspeakable bliss. Suddenly Selina started.

“Leave me, Edgardo! leave me! A mysterious something — a fatal misgiving — a dark ambiguity — an equivocal mistrust oppresses me. I would be alone!”

The young man arose, and cast a loving glance on the lady. “Then we will be married on the seventeenth.”

“The seventeenth,” repeated Selina, with a mysterious shudder.

They embraced and parted. As the clatter of hoofs in the courtyard died away, the Lady Selina sank into the chair she had just quitted.

“The seventeenth,” she repeated slowly, with the same fateful shudder. “Ah! — what if he should know that I have another husband living? Dare I reveal to him that I have two legitimate and three natural children? Dare I repeat to him the history of my youth? Dare I confess that at the age of seven I poisoned my sister, by putting verdigris in her cream-tarts, — that I threw my cousin from a swing at the age of twelve? That the lady’s maid who

incurred the displeasure of my girlhood now lies at the bottom of the horse-pond? No! no! he is too pure, — too good, — too innocent, — to hear such improper conversation!” and her whole body writhed as she rocked to and fro in a paroxysm of grief.

But she was soon calm. Rising to her feet, she opened a secret panel in the wall, and revealed a slow-match ready for lighting.

“This match,” said the Lady Selina, “is connected with a mine beneath the western tower, where my three children are confined; another branch of it lies under the parish church, where the record of my first marriage is kept. I have only to light this match and the whole of my past life is swept away!” She approached the match with a lighted candle.

But a hand was laid upon her arm, and with a shriek the Lady Selina fell on her knees before the spectre of Sir Guy.

## CHAPTER II

“Forbear, Selina,” said the phantom in a hollow voice.

“Why should I forbear?” responded Selina haughtily, as she recovered her courage. “You know the secret of our race?”

“I do. Understand me, — I do not object to the eccentricities of your youth. I know the fearful destiny which, pursuing you, led you to poison your sister and drown your lady’s maid. I know the awful doom which I have brought upon this house. But if you make away with these children” —

“Well,” said the Lady Selina hastily.

“They will haunt you!”

“Well, I fear them not,” said Selina, drawing her superb figure to its full height.

“Yes, but, my dear child, what place are they to haunt? The ruin is sacred to your uncle’s spirit. Your aunt monopolizes the park, and, I must be allowed to state, not unfrequently trespasses upon the grounds of others. The horse-pond is frequented by the spirit of your maid, and your murdered sister walks these corridors. To be plain, there is no room at Sloperton Grange for another ghost. I cannot have them in my room, — for you know I don’t like children. Think of this, rash girl, and forbear! Would you, Selina,” said the phantom mournfully, — “would you force your great-grandfather’s spirit to take lodgings elsewhere?”

Lady Selina’s hand trembled; the lighted candle fell from her nerveless fingers.

“No,” she cried passionately; “never!” and fell fainting to the floor.

### CHAPTER III

Edgardo galloped rapidly towards Sloperton. When the outline of the Grange had faded away in the darkness, he reined his magnificent steed beside the ruins of Guy’s Keep.

“It wants but a few minutes of the hour,” he said, consulting his watch by the light of the moon. “He dare not break his word. He will come.” He paused, and peered anxiously into the darkness. “But come what may, she is mine,” he continued, as his thoughts reverted fondly to the fair lady he had quitted. “Yet if she knew all. If she knew that I am a disgraced and ruined man, — a felon and an outcast. If she knew that at the age of fourteen I murdered my Latin tutor and forged my uncle’s will. If she knew that I had three wives already, and that the fourth victim of misplaced confidence and my unfortunate peculiarity is expected to be at Sloperton by to-night’s train with her baby. But no; she must not know it. Constance must not arrive; Burke the Slogger must attend to that.

“Ha! here he is! Well?”

These words were addressed to a ruffian in a slouched hat, who suddenly appeared from Guy’s Keep.

“I be’s here, measter,” said the villain, with a disgracefully low accent and complete disregard of grammatical rules.

“It is well. Listen: I’m in possession of facts that will send you to the gallows. I know of the murder of Bill Smithers, the robbery of the tollgate-keeper, and the making away of the youngest daughter of Sir Reginald de Walton. A word from me, and the officers of justice are on your track.”

Burke the Slogger trembled.

“Hark ye! serve my purpose, and I may yet save you. The 5.30 train from Clapham will be due at Sloperton at 9.25. *It must not arrive!*”

The villain’s eyes sparkled as he nodded at Edgardo.

“Enough, — you understand; leave me!”

#### CHAPTER IV

About half a mile from Sloperton Station the South Clapham and Medway line crossed a bridge over Sloperton-on-Trent. As the shades of evening were closing, a man in a slouched hat might have been seen, carrying a saw and axe under his arm, hanging about the bridge. From time to time he disappeared in the shadow of its abutments, but the sound of a saw and axe still betrayed his vicinity. At exactly nine o’clock he reappeared, and crossing to the Sloperton side, rested his shoulder against the abutment and gave a shove. The bridge swayed a moment, and then fell with a splash into the water, leaving a space of one hundred feet between the two banks. This done, Burke the Slogger, — for it was he, — with a fiendish chuckle

seated himself on the divided railway track and awaited the coming of the train.

A shriek from the woods announced its approach. For an instant Burke the Slogger saw the glaring of a red lamp. The ground trembled. The train was going with fearful rapidity. Another second and it had reached the bank. Burke the Slogger uttered a fiendish laugh. But the next moment the train leaped across the chasm, striking the rails exactly even, and dashing out the life of Burke the Slogger, sped away to Sloperton.

The first object that greeted Edgardo, as he rode up to the station on the arrival of the train, was the body of Burke the Slogger hanging on the cowcatcher; the second was the face of his deserted wife looking from the window of a second-class carriage.

## CHAPTER V

A nameless terror seemed to have taken possession of Clarissa, Lady Selina's maid, as she rushed into the presence of her mistress.

"Oh, my lady, such news!"

"Explain yourself," said her mistress, rising.

"An accident has happened on the railway, and a man has been killed."

"What — not Edgardo!" almost screamed Selina.

"No, Burke the Slogger, your ladyship!"

"My first husband!" said Lady Selina, sinking on her knees. "Just Heaven, I thank thee!"

## CHAPTER VI

The morning of the seventeenth dawned brightly over Sloperton. "A fine day for the wedding," said the sexton to Swipes, the butler of Sloperton Grange. The aged retainer shook his head sadly. "Alas! there's no trusting in signs!" he continued. "Seventy-five years ago, on a day like this, my young mistress" — but he was cut short by the appearance of a stranger.

"I would see Sir Edgardo," said the new-comer impatiently.

The bridegroom, who, with the rest of the wedding-train, was about stepping into the carriage to proceed to the parish church, drew the stranger aside.

"It's done!" said the stranger, in a hoarse whisper.

"Ah! and you buried her?"

"With the others!"

"Enough. No more at present. Meet me after the ceremony, and you shall have your reward."

The stranger shuffled away, and Edgardo returned to his bride. "A trifling matter of business I had forgotten, my dear Selina; let us proceed." And the young man pressed the timid hand of his blushing bride as he handed her into the carriage. The cavalcade rode out of the courtyard. At the same moment, the deep bell on Guy's Keep tolled ominously.

## CHAPTER VII

Scarcely had the wedding-train left the Grange, than Alice Sedilia, youngest daughter of Lady Selina, made her escape from the western tower, owing to a lack of watchfulness on the part of Clarissa. The innocent child, freed from restraint, rambled through the lonely corridors, and

finally, opening a door, found herself in her mother's boudoir. For some time she amused herself by examining the various ornaments and elegant trifles with which it was filled. Then, in pursuance of a childish freak, she dressed herself in her mother's laces and ribbons. In this occupation she chanced to touch a peg which proved to be a spring that opened a secret panel in the wall. Alice uttered a cry of delight as she noticed what, to her childish fancy, appeared to be the slow-match of a firework. Taking a lucifer match in her hand she approached the fuse. She hesitated a moment. What would her mother and her nurse say?

Suddenly the ringing of the chimes of Sloperton parish church met her ear. Alice knew that the sound signified that the marriage-party had entered the church, and that she was secure from interruption. With a childish smile upon her lips, Alice Sedilia touched off the slow-match.

## CHAPTER VIII

At exactly two o'clock on the seventeenth, Rupert Sedilia, who had just returned from India, was thoughtfully descending the hill toward Sloperton manor. "If I can prove that my aunt, Lady Selina, was married before my father died, I can establish my claim to Sloperton Grange," he uttered, half aloud. He paused, for a sudden trembling of the earth beneath his feet, and a terrific explosion, as of a park of artillery, arrested his progress. At the same moment he beheld a dense cloud of smoke envelop the churchyard of Sloperton, and the western tower of the Grange seemed to be lifted bodily from its foundation. The air seemed filled with falling fragments, and two dark objects struck the earth close at his feet. Rupert picked them up. One seemed to be a heavy volume bound in brass.

A cry burst from his lips.

“The Parish Records.” He opened the volume hastily. It contained the marriage of Lady Selina to “Burke the Slogger.”

The second object proved to be a piece of parchment. He tore it open with trembling fingers. It was the missing will of Sir James Sedilia!

## CHAPTER IX

When the bells again rang on the new parish church of Sloperton it was for the marriage of Sir Rupert Sedilia and his cousin, the only remaining members of the family.

Five more ghosts were added to the supernatural population of Sloperton Grange. Perhaps this was the reason why Sir Rupert sold the property shortly afterward, and that for many years a dark shadow seemed to hang over the ruins of Sloperton Grange.



# THE NINETY-NINE GUARDSMEN

BY AL-X-D-R D-M-S

## CHAPTER I

SHOWING THE QUALITY OF THE CUSTOMERS OF THE  
INNKEEPER OF PROVINS

TWENTY years after, the gigantic innkeeper of Provins stood looking at a cloud of dust on the highway.

This cloud of dust betokened the approach of a traveler. Travelers had been rare that season on the highway between Paris and Provins.

The heart of the innkeeper rejoiced. Turning to Dame Périgord, his wife, he said, stroking his white apron, —

“St. Denis! make haste and spread the cloth. Add a bottle of Charlevoix to the table. This traveler, who rides so fast, by his pace must be a monseigneur.”

Truly the traveler, clad in the uniform of a musketeer, as he drew up to the door of the hostelry, did not seem to have spared his horse. Throwing his reins to the landlord, he leaped lightly to the ground. He was a young man of four and twenty, and spoke with a slight Gascon accent.

“I am hungry, morbleu! I wish to dine!”

The gigantic innkeeper bowed and led the way to a neat apartment, where a table stood covered with tempting viands. The musketeer at once set to work. Fowls, fish, and pâtés disappeared before him. Périgord sighed as he witnessed the devastations. Only once the stranger paused.

"Wine!" Périgord brought wine. The stranger drank a dozen bottles. Finally he rose to depart. Turning to the expectant landlord, he said, —

"Charge it."

"To whom, your highness?" said Périgord anxiously.

"To his Eminence!"

"Mazarin?" ejaculated the innkeeper.

"The same. Bring me my horse," and the musketeer, remounting his favorite animal, rode away.

The innkeeper slowly turned back into the inn. Scarcely had he reached the courtyard before the clatter of hoofs again called him to the doorway. A young musketeer of a light and graceful figure rode up.

"Parbleu, my dear Périgord, I am famishing. What have you got for dinner?"

"Venison, capons, larks, and pigeons, your excellency," replied the obsequious landlord, bowing to the ground.

"Enough!" The young musketeer dismounted, and entered the inn. Seating himself at the table replenished by the careful Périgord, he speedily swept it as clean as the first comer.

"Some wine, my brave Périgord," said the graceful young musketeer, as soon as he could find utterance.

Périgord brought three dozen of Charlevoix. The young man emptied them almost at a draught.

"By-by, Périgord," he said lightly, waving his hand, as, preceding the astonished landlord, he slowly withdrew.

"But, your highness, — the bill," said the astounded Périgord.

"Ah, the bill. Charge it!"

"To whom?"

"The Queen!"

"What, Madame?"

"The same. Adieu, my good Périgord." And the graceful stranger rode away. An interval of quiet succeeded,

in which the innkeeper gazed woefully at his wife. Suddenly he was startled by a clatter of hoofs, and an aristocratic figure stood in the doorway.

"Ah," said the courtier good-naturedly. "What, do my eyes deceive me? No, it is the festive and luxurious Périgord. Périgord, listen. I famish. I languish. I would dine."

The innkeeper again covered the table with viands. Again it was swept clean as the fields of Egypt before the miraculous swarm of locusts. The stranger looked up.

"Bring me another fowl, my Périgord."

"Impossible, your excellency; the larder is stripped clean."

"Another fitch of bacon, then."

"Impossible, your highness; there is no more."

"Well, then, wine!"

The landlord brought one hundred and forty-four bottles. The courtier drank them all.

"One may drink if one cannot eat," said the aristocratic stranger good-humoredly.

The innkeeper shuddered.

The guest rose to depart. The innkeeper came slowly forward with his bill, to which he had covertly added the losses which he had suffered from the previous strangers.

"Ah, the bill. Charge it."

"Charge it! to whom?"

"To the King," said the guest.

"What! his Majesty?"

"Certainly. Farewell, Périgord."

The innkeeper groaned. Then he went out and took down his sign. Then remarked to his wife, —

"I am a plain man, and don't understand politics. It seems, however, that the country is in a troubled state. Between his Eminence the Cardinal, his Majesty the King, and her Majesty the Queen, I am a ruined man."

“Stay,” said Dame Périgord, “I have an idea.”

“And that is” —

“Become yourself a musketeer.”

## CHAPTER II

### THE COMBAT

On leaving Provins the first musketeer proceeded to Nangis, where he was reinforced by thirty-three followers. The second musketeer, arriving at Nangis at the same moment, placed himself at the head of thirty-three more. The third guest of the landlord of Provins arrived at Nangis in time to assemble together thirty-three other musketeers.

The first stranger led the troops of his Eminence.

The second led the troops of the Queen.

The third led the troops of the King.

The fight commenced. It raged terribly for seven hours. The first musketeer killed thirty of the Queen's troops. The second musketeer killed thirty of the King's troops. The third musketeer killed thirty of his Eminence's troops.

By this time it will be perceived the number of musketeers had been narrowed down to four on each side.

Naturally the three principal warriors approached each other.

They simultaneously uttered a cry.

“Aramis!”

“Athos!”

“D'Artagnan!”

They fell into each other's arms.

“And it seems that we are fighting against each other, my children,” said the Count de la Fère mournfully.

“How singular!” exclaimed Aramis and D'Artagnan.

“Let us stop this fratricidal warfare,” said Athos.

“We will!” they exclaimed together.

“But how to disband our followers?” queried D’Artagnan.

Aramis winked. They understood each other. “Let us cut ’em down!”

They cut ’em down. Aramis killed three. D’Artagnan three. Athos three.

The friends again embraced. “How like old times!” said Aramis. “How touching!” exclaimed the serious and philosophic Count de la Fère.

The galloping of hoofs caused them to withdraw from each other’s embraces. A gigantic figure rapidly approached.

“The innkeeper of Provins!” they cried, drawing their swords.

“Périgord! down with him!” shouted D’Artagnan.

“Stay,” said Athos.

The gigantic figure was beside them. He uttered a cry.

“Athos, Aramis, D’Artagnan!”

“Porthos!” exclaimed the astonished trio.

“The same.” They all fell in each other’s arms.

The Count de la Fère slowly raised his hands to heaven. “Bless you! Bless us, my children! However different our opinion may be in regard to politics, we have but one opinion in regard to our own merits. Where can you find a better man than Aramis?”

“Than Porthos?” said Aramis.

“Than D’Artagnan?” said Porthos.

“Than Athos?” said D’Artagnan.

## CHAPTER III

## SHOWING HOW THE KING OF FRANCE WENT UP A LADDER

The King descended into the garden. Proceeding cautiously along the terraced walk, he came to the wall immediately below the windows of Madame. To the left were two windows, concealed by vines. They opened into the apartments of La Vallière.

The King sighed.

"It is about nineteen feet to that window," said the King. "If I had a ladder about nineteen feet long, it would reach to that window. This is logic."

Suddenly the King stumbled over something. "St. Denis!" he exclaimed, looking down. It was a ladder, just nineteen feet long.

The King placed it against the wall. In so doing, he fixed the lower end upon the abdomen of a man who lay concealed by the wall. The man did not utter a cry or wince. The King suspected nothing. He ascended the ladder.

The ladder was too short. Louis the Grand was not a tall man. He was still two feet below the window.

"Dear me!" said the King.

Suddenly the ladder was lifted two feet from below. This enabled the King to leap in the window. At the farther end of the apartment stood a young girl, with red hair and a lame leg. She was trembling with emotion.

"Louise!"

"The King!"

"Ah, my God, mademoiselle."

"Ah, my God, sire."

But a low knock at the door interrupted the lovers. The King uttered a cry of rage; Louise one of despair.

The door opened and D'Artagnan entered.

"Good-evening, sire," said the musketeer.

The King touched a bell. Porthos appeared in the doorway.

"Good-evening, sire."

"Arrest M. D'Artagnan."

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan, and did not move.

The King almost turned purple with rage. He again touched the bell. Athos entered.

"Count, arrest Porthos and D'Artagnan."

The Count de la Fère glanced at Porthos and D'Artagnan, and smiled sweetly.

"Sacré! Where is Aramis?" said the King violently.

"Here, sire," and Aramis entered.

"Arrest Athos, Porthos, and D'Artagnan."

Aramis bowed and folded his arms.

"Arrest yourself!"

Aramis did not move.

The King shuddered and turned pale. "Am I not King of France?"

"Assuredly, sire, but we are also, severally, Porthos, Aramis, D'Artagnan, and Athos."

"Ah!" said the King.

"Yes, sire."

"What does this mean?"

"It means, your Majesty," said Aramis, stepping forward, "that your conduct as a married man is highly improper. I am an abbé, and I object to these improprieties. My friends here, D'Artagnan, Athos, and Porthos, pure-minded young men, are also terribly shocked. Observe, sire, how they blush!"

Athos, Porthos, and D'Artagnan blushed.

"Ah," said the King thoughtfully. "You teach me a lesson. You are devoted and noble young gentlemen, but your only weakness is your excessive modesty. From this

moment I make you all marshals and dukes, with the exception of Aramis."

"And me, sire?" said Aramis.

"You shall be an archbishop!"

The four friends looked up and then rushed into each other's arms. The King embraced Louise de la Vallière, by way of keeping them company. A pause ensued. At last Athos spoke, —

"Swear, my children, that, next to yourselves, you will respect — the King of France; and remember that 'Forty years after' we will meet again."



# MISS MIX

BY CH-L-TTE BR-NTE

## CHAPTER I

My earliest impressions are of a huge, misshapen rock, against which the hoarse waves beat unceasingly. On this rock three pelicans are standing in a defiant attitude. A dark sky lowers in the background, while two sea-gulls and a gigantic cormorant eye with extreme disfavor the floating corpse of a drowned woman in the foreground. A few bracelets, coral necklaces, and other articles of jewelry scattered around loosely, complete this remarkable picture.

It is one which, in some vague, unconscious way, symbolizes, to my fancy, the character of a man. I have never been able to explain exactly why. I think I must have seen the picture in some illustrated volume when baby, or my mother may have dreamed it before I was born.

As a child I was not handsome. When I consulted the triangular bit of looking-glass which I always carried with me, it showed a pale, sandy, and freckled face, shaded by locks like the color of seaweed when the sun strikes it in deep water. My eyes were said to be indistinctive; they were a faint, ashen gray; but above them rose — my only beauty — a high, massive, domelike forehead, with polished temples, like door-knobs of the purest porcelain.

Our family was a family of governesses. My mother had been one, and my sisters had the same occupation. Consequently, when, at the age of thirteen, my eldest sister

handed me the advertisement of Mr. Rawjester, clipped from that day's "Times," I accepted it as my destiny. Nevertheless, a mysterious presentiment of an indefinite future haunted me in my dreams that night, as I lay upon my little snow-white bed. The next morning, with two band-boxes tied up in silk handkerchiefs, and a hair trunk, I turned my back upon Minerva Cottage forever.

## CHAPTER II

Blunderbore Hall, the seat of James Rawjester, Esq., was encompassed by dark pines and funereal hemlocks on all sides. The wind sang weirdly in the turrets and moaned through the long-drawn avenues of the park. As I approached the house I saw several mysterious figures flit before the windows, and a yell of demoniac laughter answered my summons at the bell. While I strove to repress my gloomy forebodings, the housekeeper, a timid, scared-looking old woman, shoved me into the library.

I entered, overcome with conflicting emotions. I was dressed in a narrow gown of dark serge, trimmed with black bugles. A thick green shawl was pinned across my breast. My hands were encased with black half-mittens worked with steel beads; on my feet were large pattens, originally the property of my deceased grandmother. I carried a blue cotton umbrella. As I passed before a mirror I could not help glancing at it, nor could I disguise from myself the fact that I was not handsome.

Drawing a chair into a recess, I sat down with folded hands, calmly awaiting the arrival of my master. Once or twice a fearful yell rang through the house, or the rattling of chains, and curses uttered in a deep, manly voice, broke upon the oppressive stillness. I began to feel my soul rising with the emergency of the moment.

“ You look alarmed, miss. You don't hear anything, my dear, do you ? ” asked the housekeeper nervously.

“ Nothing whatever,” I remarked calmly, as a terrific scream, followed by the dragging of chairs and tables in the room above, drowned for a moment my reply. “ It is the silence, on the contrary, which has made me foolishly nervous.”

The housekeeper looked at me approvingly, and instantly made some tea for me.

I drank seven cups ; as I was beginning the eighth, I heard a crash, and the next moment a man leaped into the room through the broken window.

### CHAPTER III

The crash startled me from my self-control. The housekeeper bent toward me and whispered,—

“ Don't be excited. It's Mr. Rawjester,— he prefers to come in sometimes in this way. It's his playfulness, ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

“ I perceive,” I said calmly. “ It's the unfettered impulse of a lofty soul breaking the tyrannizing bonds of custom.” And I turned toward him.

He had never once looked at me. He stood with his back to the fire, which set off the herculean breadth of his shoulders. His face was dark and expressive ; his under jaw squarely formed, and remarkably heavy. I was struck with his remarkable likeness to a gorilla.

As he absently tied the poker into hard knots with his nervous fingers, I watched him with some interest. Suddenly he turned toward me : —

“ Do you think I 'm handsome, young woman ? ”

“ Not classically beautiful,” I returned calmly ; “ but you have, if I may so express myself, an abstract manliness, —

a sincere and wholesome barbarity which, involving as it does the naturalness"— But I stopped, for he yawned at that moment,—an action which singularly developed the immense breadth of his lower jaw,—and I saw he had forgotten me. Presently he turned to the housekeeper,—

“Leave us.”

The old woman withdrew with a curtsy.

Mr. Rawjester deliberately turned his back upon me and remained silent for twenty minutes. I drew my shawl the more closely around my shoulders and closed my eyes.

“You are the governess?” at length he said.

“I am, sir.”

“A creature who teaches geography, arithmetic, and the use of the globes—ha!—a wretched remnant of femininity,—a skimp pattern of girlhood with a premature flavor of tea-leaves and morality. Ugh!”

I bowed my head silently.

“Listen to me, girl!” he said sternly; “this child you have come to teach—my ward—is not legitimate. She is the offspring of my mistress,—a common harlot. Ah! Miss Mix, what do you think of me now?”

“I admire,” I replied calmly, “your sincerity. A mawkish regard for delicacy might have kept this disclosure to yourself. I only recognize in your frankness that perfect community of thought and sentiment which should exist between original natures.”

I looked up; he had already forgotten my presence, and was engaged in pulling off his boots and coat. This done, he sank down in an armchair before the fire, and ran the poker wearily through his hair. I could not help pitying him.

The wind howled dismally without, and the rain beat furiously against the windows. I crept toward him and seated myself on a low stool beside his chair.

Presently he turned, without seeing me, and placed his

foot absently in my lap. I affected not to notice it. But he started and looked down.

“ You here yet — Carrothead ? Ah, I forgot. Do you speak French ? ”

“ Oui, Monsier.”

“ Taisez-vous ! ” he said sharply, with singular purity of accent. I complied. The wind moaned fearfully in the chimney, and the light burned dimly. I shuddered in spite of myself. “ Ah, you tremble, girl ! ”

“ It is a fearful night.”

“ Fearful ! Call you this fearful ? Ha ! ha ! ha ! Look ! you wretched little atom, look ! ” and he dashed forward, and, leaping out of the window, stood like a statue in the pelting storm, with folded arms. He did not stay long, but in a few minutes returned by way of the hall chimney. I saw from the way that he wiped his feet on my dress that he had again forgotten my presence.

“ You are a governess. What can you teach ? ” he asked, suddenly and fiercely thrusting his face in mine.

“ Manners ! ” I replied calmly.

“ Ha ! teach *me* ! ”

“ You mistake yourself,” I said, adjusting my mittens. “ Your manners require not the artificial restraint of society. You are radically polite ; this impetuosity and ferociousness is simply the sincerity which is the basis of a proper deportment. Your instincts are moral ; your better nature, I see, is religious. As St. Paul justly remarks — see chap. 6, 8, 9, and 10 ” —

He seized a heavy candlestick, and threw it at me. I dodged it submissively but firmly.

“ Excuse me,” he remarked, as his under jaw slowly relaxed. “ Excuse me, Miss Mix — but I can’t stand St. Paul ! Enough — you are engaged.”

## CHAPTER IV

I followed the housekeeper as she led the way timidly to my room. As we passed into a dark hall in the wing, I noticed that it was closed by an iron gate with a grating. Three of the doors on the corridor were likewise grated. A strange noise, as of shuffling feet and the howling of infuriated animals, rang through the hall. Bidding the housekeeper good-night, and taking the candle, I entered my bedchamber.

I took off my dress, and putting on a yellow flannel nightgown, which I could not help feeling did not agree with my complexion, I composed myself to rest by reading Blair's "Rhetoric" and Paley's "Moral Philosophy." I had just put out the light, when I heard voices in the corridor. I listened attentively. I recognized Mr. Rawjester's stern tones.

"Have you fed No. One?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said a gruff voice, apparently belonging to a domestic.

"How 's No. Two?"

"She's a little off her feed, just now, but will pick up in a day or two."

"And No. Three?"

"Perfectly furious, sir. Her tantrums are ungovernable."

"Hush!"

The voices died away, and I sank into a fitful slumber.

I dreamed that I was wandering through a tropical forest. Suddenly I saw the figure of a gorilla approaching me. As it neared me, I recognized the features of Mr. Rawjester. He held his hand to his side as if in pain. I saw that he had been wounded. He recognized me and called me by name, but at the same moment the vision changed to an

Ashantee village, where, around the fire, a group of negroes were dancing and participating in some wild Obi festival. I awoke with the strain still ringing in my ears.

“Hokee-pokee wokee fum!”

Good Heavens! could I be dreaming? I heard the voice distinctly on the floor below, and smelt something burning. I arose, with an indistinct presentiment of evil, and hastily putting some cotton in my ears and tying a towel about my head, I wrapped myself in a shawl and rushed downstairs. The door of Mr. Rawjester’s room was open. I entered.

Mr. Rawjester lay apparently in a deep slumber, from which even the clouds of smoke that came from the burning curtains of his bed could not rouse him. Around the room a large and powerful negress, scantily attired, with her head adorned with feathers, was dancing wildly, accompanying herself with bone castanets. It looked like some terrible fetich.

I did not lose my calmness. After firmly emptying the pitcher, basin, and slop-jar on the burning bed, I proceeded cautiously to the garden, and returning with the garden engine, I directed a small stream at Mr. Rawjester.

At my entrance the gigantic negress fled. Mr. Rawjester yawned and woke. I explained to him, as he rose dripping from the bed, the reason of my presence. He did not seem to be excited, alarmed, or discomposed. He gazed at me curiously.

“So you risked your life to save mine, eh? you canary-colored teacher of infants.”

I blushed modestly, and drew my shawl tightly over my yellow flannel nightgown.

“You love me, Mary Jane,—don’t deny it! This tremoling shows it!” He drew me closely toward him, and said, with his deep voice tenderly modulated,—

“How’s her pooty tootens,—did she get her ’ittle tootens wet,—b’ess her?”

I understood his allusion to my feet. I glanced down and saw that in my hurry I had put on a pair of his old india-rubbers. My feet were not small or pretty, and the addition did not add to their beauty.

"Let me go, sir," I remarked quietly. "This is entirely improper; it sets a bad example for your child." And I firmly but gently extricated myself from his grasp. I approached the door. He seemed for a moment buried in deep thought.

"You say this was a negress?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph, Number One, I suppose."

"Who is Number One, sir?"

"My *first*," he remarked, with a significant and sarcastic smile. Then, relapsing into his old manner, he threw his boots at my head, and bade me begone. I withdrew calmly.

## CHAPTER V

My pupil was a bright little girl, who spoke French with a perfect accent. Her mother had been a French ballet-dancer, which probably accounted for it. Although she was only six years old, it was easy to perceive that she had been several times in love. She once said to me, —

"Miss Mix, did you ever have the grande passion? Did you ever feel a fluttering here?" and she placed her hand upon her small chest, and sighed quaintly; "a kind of distaste for bonbons and caramels, when the world seemed as tasteless and hollow as a broken cordial drop?"

"Then you have felt it, Nina?" I said quietly.

"Oh, dear, yes. There was Buttons, — that was our page, you know, — I loved him dearly, but papa sent him away. Then there was Dick, the groom; but he laughed at me, and I suffered misery!" and she struck a tragic



French attitude. "There is to be company here to-morrow," she added, rattling on with childish naïveté, "and papa's sweetheart — Blanche Marabout — is to be here. You know they say she is to be my mamma."

What thrill was this shot through me? But I rose calmly, and administering a slight correction to the child, left the apartment.

Blunderbore House, for the next week, was the scene of gayety and merriment. That portion of the mansion closed with a grating was walled up, and the midnight shrieks no longer troubled me.

But I felt more keenly the degradation of my situation. I was obliged to help Lady Blanche at her toilet and help her to look beautiful. For what? To captivate him? Oh — no, no, — but why this sudden thrill and faintness? Did he really love her? I had seen him pinch and swear at her. But I reflected that he had thrown a candlestick at my head, and my foolish heart was reassured.

It was a night of festivity, when a sudden message obliged Mr. Rawjester to leave his guests for a few hours. "Make yourselves merry, idiots," he added, under his breath, as he passed me. The door closed and he was gone.

A half-hour passed. In the midst of the dancing a shriek was heard, and out of the swaying crowd of fainting women and excited men a wild figure strode into the room. One glance showed it to be a highwayman, heavily armed, holding a pistol in each hand.

"Let no one pass out of this room!" he said, in a voice of thunder. "The house is surrounded and you cannot escape. The first one who crosses yonder threshold will be shot like a dog. Gentlemen, I'll trouble you to approach in single file, and hand me your purses and watches."

Finding resistance useless, the order was ungraciously obeyed.

“Now, ladies, please to pass up your jewelry and trinkets.”

This order was still more ungraciously complied with. As Blanche handed to the bandit captain her bracelet, she endeavored to conceal a diamond necklace, the gift of Mr. Rawjester, in her bosom. But, with a demoniac grin, the powerful brute tore it from its concealment, and administering a hearty box on the ear of the young girl, flung her aside.

It was now my turn. With a beating heart I made my way to the robber chieftain, and sank at his feet. “Oh, sir, I am nothing but a poor governess, pray let me go.”

“Oho! A governess? Give me your last month’s wages, then. Give me what you have stolen from your master!” and he laughed fiendishly.

I gazed at him quietly, and said, in a low voice: “I have stolen nothing from you, Mr. Rawjester!”

“Ah, discovered! Hush! listen, girl!” he hissed, in a fierce whisper; “utter a syllable to frustrate my plans, and you die; aid me, and” — But he was gone.

In a few moments the party, with the exception of myself, were gagged and locked in the cellar. The next moment torches were applied to the rich hangings, and the house was in flames. I felt a strong hand seize me, and bear me out in the open air and place me up on the hillside, where I could overlook the burning mansion. It was Mr. Rawjester.

“Burn!” he said, as he shook his fist at the flames. Then sinking on his knees before me, he said hurriedly, —

“Mary Jane, I love you; the obstacles to our union are or will be soon removed. In yonder mansion were confined my three crazy wives. One of them, as you know, attempted to kill me! Ha! this is vengeance! But will you be mine?”

I fell, without a word, upon his neck.

# MR. MIDSHIPMAN BREEZY

A NAVAL OFFICER

BY CAPTAIN M-RRY-T, R. N.

## CHAPTER I

My father was a north-country surgeon. He had retired, a widower, from her Majesty's navy many years before, and had a small practice in his native village. When I was seven years old he employed me to carry medicines to his patients. Being of a lively disposition, I sometimes amused myself, during my daily rounds, by mixing the contents of the different phials. Although I had no reason to doubt that the general result of this practice was beneficial, yet, as the death of a consumptive curate followed the addition of a strong mercurial lotion to his expectorant, my father concluded to withdraw me from the profession and send me to school.

Grubbins, the schoolmaster, was a tyrant, and it was not long before my impetuous and self-willed nature rebelled against his authority. I soon began to form plans of revenge. In this I was assisted by Tom Snaffle, — a schoolfellow. One day Tom suggested, —

“Suppose we blow him up. I've got two pounds of powder!”

“No, that's too noisy,” I replied.

Tom was silent for a minute, and again spoke: —

“You remember how you flattened out the curate, Pills? Could n't you give Grubbins something — something to make him leathery sick — eh?”

A flash of inspiration crossed my mind. I went to the shop of the village apothecary. He knew me; I had often purchased vitriol, which I poured into Grubbins's inkstand to corrode his pens and burn up his coat-tail, on which he was in the habit of wiping them. I boldly asked for an ounce of chloroform. The young apothecary winked and handed me the bottle.

It was Grubbins's custom to throw his handkerchief over his head, recline in his chair, and take a short nap during recess. Watching my opportunity, as he dozed, I managed to slip his handkerchief from his face and substitute my own, moistened with chloroform. In a few minutes he was insensible. Tom and I then quickly shaved his head, beard, and eyebrows, blackened his face with a mixture of vitriol and burnt cork, and fled. There was a row and scandal the next day. My father always excused me by asserting that Grubbins had got drunk, — but somehow found it convenient to procure me an appointment in her Majesty's navy at an early day.

## CHAPTER II

An official letter, with the Admiralty seal, informed me that I was expected to join H. M. ship *Belcher*, Captain Boltrope, at Portsmouth, without delay. In a few days I presented myself to a tall, stern-visaged man, who was slowly pacing the leeward side of the quarter-deck. As I touched my hat he eyed me sternly:—

“So ho! Another young suckling. The service is going to the devil. Nothing but babes in the cockpit and grannies in the board. Boatswain's mate, pass the word for Mr. Cheek!”

Mr. Cheek, the steward, appeared and touched his hat.

“Introduce Mr. Breezy to the young gentlemen. Stop! Where 's Mr. Swizzle?”

“At the masthead, sir.”

“Where’s Mr. Lankey?”

“At the masthead, sir.”

“Mr. Briggs?”

“Masthead, too, sir.”

“And the rest of the young gentlemen?” roared the enraged officer.

“All masthead, sir.”

“Ah!” said Captain Boltrope, as he smiled grimly, “under the circumstances, Mr. Breezy, you had better go to the masthead too.”

### CHAPTER III

At the masthead I made the acquaintance of two youngsters of about my own age, one of whom informed me that he had been there three hundred and thirty-two days out of the year.

“In rough weather, when the old cock is out of sorts, you know, we never come down,” added a young gentleman of nine years, with a dirk nearly as long as himself, who had been introduced to me as Mr. Briggs. “By the way, Pills,” he continued, “how did you come to omit giving the captain a naval salute?”

“Why, I touched my hat,” I said innocently.

“Yes, but that is n’t enough, you know. That will do very well at other times. He expects the naval salute when you first come on board — greeny!”

I began to feel alarmed, and begged him to explain.

“Why, you see, after touching your hat, you should have touched him lightly with your forefinger in his waistcoat, so, and asked, ‘How’s his nibs?’ — you see?”

“How’s his nibs?” I repeated.

“Exactly. He would have drawn back a little, and

then you should have repeated the salute, remarking, 'How's his royal nibs?' asking cautiously after his wife and family, and requesting to be introduced to the gunner's daughter."

"The gunner's daughter?"

"The same; you know she takes care of us young gentlemen; now don't forget, Pillsy!"

When we were called down to the deck I thought it a good chance to profit by this instruction. I approached Captain Boltrope and repeated the salute without conscientiously omitting a single detail. He remained for a moment livid and speechless. At length he gasped out, —

"Boatswain's mate!"

"If you please, sir," I asked tremulously, "I should like to be introduced to the gunner's daughter!"

"Oh, very good, sir!" screamed Captain Boltrope, rubbing his hands and absolutely capering about the deck with rage. "Oh, d—n you! Of course you shall! Oh, ho! the gunner's daughter! Oh, h—ll! this is too much! Boatswain's mate!" Before I well knew where I was, I was seized, borne to an eight-pounder, tied upon it, and flogged!

#### CHAPTER IV

As we sat together in the cockpit, picking the weevils out of our biscuit, Briggs consoled me for my late mishap, adding that the "naval salute," as a custom, seemed just then to be honored more in the *breach* than the observance. I joined in the hilarity occasioned by the witticism, and in a few moments we were all friends. Presently Swizzle turned to me: —

"We have just been planning how to confiscate a keg of claret, which Nips, the purser, keeps under his bunk. The old nipcheese lies there drunk half the day, and there's no getting at it."

"Let 's get beneath the stateroom and bore through the deck, and so tap it," said Lankey.

The proposition was received with a shout of applause. A long half-inch auger and bit was procured from Chips, the carpenter's mate, and Swizzle, after a careful examination of the timbers beneath the wardroom, commenced operations. The auger at last disappeared, when suddenly there was a slight disturbance on the deck above. Swizzle withdrew the auger hurriedly; from its point a few bright red drops trickled.

"Huzza! send her up again!" cried Lankey.

The auger was again applied. This time a shriek was heard from the purser's cabin. Instantly the light was doused, and the party retreated hurriedly to the cockpit. A sound of snoring was heard as the sentry stuck his head into the door. "All right, sir," he replied in answer to the voice of the officer of the deck.

The next morning we heard that Nips was in the surgeon's hands, with a bad wound in the fleshy part of his leg, and that the auger had *not* struck claret.

## CHAPTER V

"Now, Pills, you'll have a chance to smell powder," said Briggs as he entered the cockpit and buckled around his waist an enormous cutlass. "We have just sighted a French ship."

We went on deck. Captain Boltrope grinned as we touched our hats. He hated the purser. "Come, young gentlemen, if you're boring for French claret, yonder's a good quality. Mind your con, sir," he added, turning to the quartermaster, who was grinning.

The ship was already cleared for action. The men, in their eagerness, had started the coffee from the tubs and

filled them with shot. Presently the Frenchman yawed, and a shot from a long thirty-two came skipping over the water. It killed the quartermaster and took off both of Lankey's legs. "Tell the purser our account is squared," said the dying boy, with a feeble smile.

The fight raged fiercely for two hours. I remember killing the French admiral, as we boarded, but on looking around for Briggs, after the smoke had cleared away, I was intensely amused at witnessing the following novel sight:

Briggs had pinned the French captain against the mast with his cutlass, and was now engaged, with all the hilarity of youth, in pulling the Captain's coat-tails between his legs, in imitation of a dancing-jack. As the Frenchman lifted his legs and arms, at each jerk of Briggs's, I could not help participating in the general mirth.

"You young devil, what are you doing?" said a stifled voice behind me. I looked up and beheld Captain Boltrope, endeavoring to calm his stern features, but the twitching around his mouth betrayed his intense enjoyment of the scene. "Go to the masthead—up with you, sir!" he repeated sternly to Briggs.

"Very good, sir," said the boy, coolly preparing to mount the shrouds. "Good-by, Johnny Crapaud. Humph!" he added, in a tone intended for my ear, "a pretty way to treat a hero. The service is going to the devil!"

I thought so too.

## CHAPTER VI

We were ordered to the West Indies. Although Captain Boltrope's manner toward me was still severe, and even harsh, I understood that my name had been favorably mentioned in the dispatches.

Reader, were you ever at Jamaica? If so, you remem-



ber the negresses, the oranges, Port Royal Tom—the yellow fever. After being two weeks at the station, I was taken sick of the fever. In a month I was delirious. During my paroxysms, I had a wild distempered dream of a stern face bending anxiously over my pillow, a rough hand smoothing my hair, and a kind voice saying:—

“B’ess his ’ittle heart! Did he have the naughty fever?” This face seemed again changed to the well known stern features of Captain Boltrope.

When I was convalescent, a packet edged in black was put in my hand. It contained the news of my father’s death, and a sealed letter which he had requested to be given to me on his decease. I opened it tremblingly. It read thus:—

MY DEAR BOY,—I regret to inform you that in all probability you are not my son. Your mother, I am grieved to say, was a highly improper person. Who your father may be, I really cannot say, but perhaps the Honorable Henry Boltrope, Captain R. N., may be able to inform you. Circumstances over which I have no control have deferred this important disclosure.

YOUR STRICKEN PARENT.

And so Captain Boltrope was my father. Heavens! Was it a dream? I recalled his stern manner, his observant eye, his ill-concealed uneasiness when in my presence. I longed to embrace him. Staggering to my feet, I rushed in my scanty apparel to the deck, where Captain Boltrope was just then engaged in receiving the Governor’s wife and daughter. The ladies shrieked; the youngest, a beautiful girl, blushed deeply. Heeding them not, I sank at his feet, and, embracing them, cried, —

“My father!”

“Chuck him overboard!” roared Captain Boltrope.

"Stay," pleaded the soft voice of Clara Maitland, the Governor's daughter.

"Shave his head! he 's a wretched lunatic!" continued Captain Boltrope, while his voice trembled with excitement.

"No, let me nurse and take care of him," said the lovely girl, blushing as she spoke. "Mamma, can't we take him home?"

The daughter's pleading was not without effect. In the meantime I had fainted. When I recovered my senses I found myself in Governor Maitland's mansion.

## CHAPTER VII

The reader will guess what followed. I fell deeply in love with Clara Maitland, to whom I confided the secret of my birth. The generous girl asserted that she had detected the superiority of my manner at once. We plighted our troth, and resolved to wait upon events.

Briggs called to see me a few days afterward. He said that the purser had insulted the whole cockpit, and all the midshipmen had called him out. But he added thoughtfully: "I don't see how we can arrange the duel. You see there are six of us to fight him."

"Very easily," I replied. "Let your fellows all stand in a row, and take his fire; that, you see, gives him six chances to one, and he must be a bad shot if he can't hit one of you; while, on the other hand, you see, he gets a volley from you six, and one of you 'll be certain to fetch him."

"Exactly;" and away Briggs went, but soon returned to say that the purser had declined, — "like a d—d coward," he added.

But the news of the sudden and serious illness of Cap-

tain Boltrope put off the duel. I hastened to his bedside, but too late, — an hour previous he had given up the ghost.

I resolved to return to England. I made known the secret of my birth, and exhibited my adopted father's letter to Lady Maitland, who at once suggested my marriage with her daughter, before I returned to claim the property. We were married, and took our departure next day.

I made no delay in posting at once, in company with my wife and my friend Briggs, to my native village. Judge of my horror and surprise when my late adopted father came out of his shop to welcome me.

"Then you are not dead!" I gasped.

"No, my dear boy."

"And this letter?"

My father — as I must still call him — glanced on the paper, and pronounced it a forgery. Briggs roared with laughter. I turned to him and demanded an explanation.

"Why, don't you see, Greeny, it's all a joke, — a midshipman's joke!"

"But" — I asked.

"Don't be a fool. You've got a good wife, — be satisfied."

I turned to Clara, and was satisfied. Although Mrs. Maitland never forgave me, the jolly old Governor laughed heartily over the joke, and so well used his influence that I soon became, dear reader, Admiral Breezy, K. C. B.

# GUY HEAVYSTONE; OR, "ENTIRE"

A MUSCULAR NOVEL

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SWORD AND GUN"

## CHAPTER I

"NEREI REPANDIROSTRUM INCURVICERVICUM PECUS."

A DINGY, swashy, splashy afternoon in October; a school-yard filled with a mob of riotous boys. A lot of us standing outside.

Suddenly came a dull, crashing sound from the school-room. At the ominous interruption I shuddered involuntarily, and called to Smithsye, —

"What 's up, Smithums?"

"Guy 's cleaning out the fourth form," he replied.

At the same moment George de Coverly passed me, holding his nose, from whence the bright Norman blood streamed redly. To him the plebeian Smithsye laughingly, —

"Cully! how 's his nibs?"

I pushed the door of the schoolroom open. There are some spectacles which a man never forgets. The burning of Troy probably seemed a large-sized conflagration to the pious Æneas, and made an impression on him which he carried away with the feeble Anchises.

In the centre of the room, lightly brandishing the piston-rod of a steam-engine, stood Guy Heavystone alone I say alone, for the pile of small boys on the floor in the corner could hardly be called company.

I will try and sketch him for the reader. Guy Heavystone was then only fifteen. His broad, deep chest, his sinewy and quivering flank, his straight pastern, showed him to be a thoroughbred. Perhaps he was a trifle heavy in the fetlock, but he held his head haughtily erect. His eyes were glittering but pitiless. There was a sternness about the lower part of his face, — the old Heavystone look, — a sternness heightened, perhaps, by the snaffle-bit which, in one of his strange freaks, he wore in his mouth to curb his occasional ferocity. His dress was well adapted to his square-set and herculean frame. A striped knit undershirt, close-fitting striped tights, and a few spangles set off his figure; a neat Glengarry cap adorned his head. On it was displayed the Heavystone crest, a cock *regardant* on a dunhill *or*, and the motto, "Devil a better!"

I thought of Horatius on the bridge, of Hector before the walls. I always make it a point to think of something classical at such times.

He saw me, and his sternness partly relaxed. Something like a smile struggled through his grim lineaments. It was like looking on the Jungfrau after having seen Mont Blanc, — a trifle, only a trifle less sublime and awful. Resting his hand lightly on the shoulder of the headmaster, who shuddered and collapsed under his touch, he strode toward me.

His walk was peculiar. You could not call it a stride. It was like the "crest-tossing Bellerophon," — a kind of prancing gait. Guy Heavystone pranced toward me.

## CHAPTER II

“Lord Lovel he stood at the garden gate,  
A-combing his milk-white steed.”

It was the winter of 186— when I next met Guy Heavystone. He had left the university and had entered the 79th “Heavies.” “I have exchanged the gown for the sword, you see,” he said, grasping my hand, and fracturing the bones of my little finger, as he shook it.

I gazed at him with unmixed admiration. He was squarer, sterner, and in every way smarter and more remarkable than ever. I began to feel toward this man as Phalaster felt towards Phyrmino, as somebody must have felt toward Archididasculus, as Boswell felt toward Johnson.

“Come into my den,” he said ; and lifting me gently by the seat of my pantaloons he carried me upstairs and deposited me, before I could apologize, on the sofa. I looked around the room. It was a bachelor’s apartment, characteristically furnished in the taste of the proprietor. A few claymores and battleaxes were ranged against the wall, and a culverin, captured by Sir Ralph Heavystone, occupied the corner, the other end of the room being taken up by a light battery. Foils, boxing-gloves, saddles, and fishing-poles lay around carelessly. A small pile of billets-doux lay upon a silver salver. The man was not an anchorite, nor yet a Sir Galahad.

I never could tell what Guy thought of women. “Poor little beasts,” he would often say when the conversation turned on any of his fresh conquests. Then, passing his hand over his marble brow, the old look of stern fixedness of purpose and unflinching severity would straighten the lines of his mouth, and he would mutter, half to himself, “S’death!”

"Come with me to Heavystone Grange. The Exmoor hounds throw off to-morrow. I'll give you a mount," he said, as he amused himself by rolling up a silver candlestick between his fingers. "You shall have Cleopatra. But stay," he added thoughtfully; "now I remember, I ordered Cleopatra to be shot this morning."

"And why?" I queried.

"She threw her rider yesterday and fell on him" —

"And killed him?"

"No. That's the reason why I have ordered her to be shot. I keep no animals that are not dangerous — I should add — *deadly!*" He hissed the last sentence between his teeth, and a gloomy frown descended over his calm brow.

I affected to turn over the tradesmen's bills that lay on the table, for, like all of the Heavystone race, Guy seldom paid cash, and said, —

"You remind me of the time when Leonidas" —

"Oh, bother Leonidas and your classical allusions. Come!"

We descended to dinner.

### CHAPTER III

"He carries weight, he rides a race,  
'Tis for a thousand pound."

"There is Flora Billingsgate, the greatest coquette and hardest rider in the country," said my companion, Ralph Mortmain, as we stood upon Dingleby Common before the meet.

I looked up and beheld Guy Heavystone bending haughtily over the saddle, as he addressed a beautiful brunette. She was indeed a splendidly groomed and high-spirited woman. We were near enough to overhear the following

conversation, which any high-toned reader will recognize as the common and natural expression of the higher classes.

"When Diana takes the field the chase is not wholly confined to objects *feræ naturæ*," said Guy, darting a significant glance at his companion. Flora did not shrink either from the glance or the meaning implied in the sarcasm.

"If I were looking for an Endymion, now," — she said archly, as she playfully cantered over a few hounds and leaped a five-barred gate.

Guy whispered a few words, inaudible to the rest of the party, and curveting slightly, cleverly cleared two of the huntsmen in a flying leap, galloped up the front steps of the mansion, and, dashing at full speed through the hall, leaped through the drawing-room window and rejoined me, languidly, on the lawn.

"Be careful of Flora Billingsgate," he said to me, in low stern tones, while his pitiless eye shot a baleful fire. "Gardez-vous!"

"Gnothi seauton," I replied calmly, not wishing to appear to be behind him in perception or verbal felicity.

Guy started off in high spirits. He was well carried. He and the first whip, a ten-stone man, were head and head at the last fence, while the hounds were rolling over their fox a hundred yards farther in the open.

But an unexpected circumstance occurred. Coming back, his chestnut mare refused a ten-foot wall. She reared and fell backward. Again he led her up to it lightly; again she refused, falling heavily from the coping. Guy started to his feet. The old pitiless fire shone in his eyes; the old stern look settled around his mouth. Seizing the mare by the tail and mane he threw her over the wall. She landed twenty feet on the other side, erect and trembling. Lightly leaping the same obstacle himself, he remounted her. She did not refuse the wall the next time.



## CHAPTER IV

"He holds him by his glittering eye."

Guy was in the north of Ireland, cock-shooting. So Ralph Mortmain told me, and also that the match between Mary Brandagee and Guy had been broken off by Flora Billingsgate. "I don't like those Billingsgates," said Ralph, "they're a bad stock. Her father, Smithfield de Billingsgate, had an unpleasant way of turning up the knave from the bottom of the pack. But nous verrons; let us go and see Guy."

The next morning we started for Fin-ma-Coul's Crossing. When I reached the shooting-box, where Guy was entertaining a select company of friends, Flora Billingsgate greeted me with a saucy smile.

Guy was even squarer and sterner than ever. His gusts of passion were more frequent, and it was with difficulty that he could keep an able-bodied servant in his family. His present retainers were more or less maimed from exposure to the fury of their master. There was a strange cynicism, a cutting sarcasm in his address, piercing through his polished manner. I thought of Timon, etc., etc.

One evening, we were sitting over our Chambertin, after a hard day's work, and Guy was listlessly turning over some letters, when suddenly he uttered a cry. Did you ever hear the trumpeting of a wounded elephant? It was like that.

I looked at him with consternation. He was glancing at a letter which he held at arm's length, and snorting, as it were, at it as he gazed. The lower part of his face was stern, but not as rigid as usual. He was slowly grinding between his teeth the fragments of the glass he had just been drinking from.

Suddenly he seized one of his servants, and forcing

the wretch upon his knees, exclaimed, with the roar of a tiger, —

“Dog! why was this kept from me?”

“Why, please sir, Miss Flora said as how it was a reconciliation from Miss Brandagee, and it was to be kept from you where you would not be likely to see it, — and — and” —

“Speak, dog! and you” —

“I put it among your bills, sir!”

With a groan, like distant thunder, Guy fell swooning to the floor.

He soon recovered, for the next moment a servant came rushing into the room with the information that a number of the ingenuous peasantry of the neighborhood were about to indulge that evening in the national pastime of burning a farmhouse and shooting a landlord. Guy smiled a fearful smile, without, however, altering his stern and pitiless expression.

“Let them come,” he said calmly; “I feel like entertaining company.”

We barricaded the doors and windows, and then chose our arms from the armory. Guy’s choice was a singular one: it was a landing-net with a long handle, and a sharp cavalry sabre.

We were not destined to remain long in ignorance of its use. A howl was heard from without, and a party of fifty or sixty armed men precipitated themselves against the door.

Suddenly the window opened. With the rapidity of lightning, Guy Heavystone cast the net over the head of the ringleader, ejaculated “Habet!” and with a back-stroke of his cavalry sabre severed the member from its trunk, and drawing the net back again, cast the gory head upon the floor, saying quietly, —

“One.”

Again the net was cast, the steel flashed, the net was withdrawn, and an ominous "Two!" accompanied the head as it rolled on the floor.

"Do you remember what Pliny says of the gladiator?" said Guy, calmly wiping his sabre. "How graphic is that passage commencing 'Inter nos,' etc." The sport continued until the heads of twenty desperadoes had been gathered in. The rest seemed inclined to disperse. Guy incautiously showed himself at the door; a ringing shot was heard, and he staggered back, pierced through the heart. Grasping the doorpost in the last unconscious throes of his mighty frame, the whole side of the house yielded to that earthquake tremor, and we had barely time to escape before the whole building fell in ruins. I thought of Samson, the giant judge, etc., etc.; but all was over.

Guy Heavystone had died as he had lived, — *hard*.

# JOHN JENKINS

OR

## THE SMOKER REFORMED

BY T. S. A-TH-R

### CHAPTER I

“ONE cigar a day!” said Judge Boompointer.

“One cigar a day!” repeated John Jenkins, as with trepidation he dropped his half-consumed cigar under his work-bench.

“One cigar a day is three cents a day,” remarked Judge Boompointer gravely; “and do you know, sir, what one cigar a day, or three cents a day, amounts to in the course of four years?”

John Jenkins, in his boyhood, had attended the village school, and possessed considerable arithmetical ability. Taking up a shingle which lay upon his work-bench, and producing a piece of chalk, with a feeling of conscious pride he made an exhaustive calculation.

“Exactly forty-three dollars and eighty cents,” he replied, wiping the perspiration from his heated brow, while his face flushed with honest enthusiasm.

“Well, sir, if you saved three cents a day, instead of wasting it, you would now be the possessor of a new suit of clothes, an illustrated Family Bible, a pew in the church, a complete set of Patent Office Reports, a hymn-book, and a paid subscription to ‘Arthur’s Home Maga-

zine,' which could be purchased for exactly forty-three dollars and eighty cents; and," added the Judge, with increasing sternness, "if you calculate leap-year, which you seem to have strangely omitted, you have three cents more, sir — *three cents more!* What would that buy you, sir?"

"A cigar," suggested John Jenkins; but, coloring again deeply, he hid his face.

"No, sir," said the Judge, with a sweet smile of benevolence stealing over his stern features; "properly invested, it would buy you that which passeth all price. Dropped into the missionary-box, who can tell what heathen, now idly and joyously wantoning in nakedness and sin, might be brought to a sense of his miserable condition, and made, through that three cents, to feel the torments of the wicked?"

With these words the Judge retired, leaving John Jenkins buried in profound thought. "Three cents a day," he muttered. "In forty years I might be worth four hundred and thirty-eight dollars and ten cents, — and then I might marry Mary. Ah, Mary!" The young carpenter sighed, and drawing a twenty-five cent daguerreotype from his vest-pocket, gazed long and fervidly upon the features of a young girl in book muslin and a coral necklace. Then, with a resolute expression, he carefully locked the door of his work-shop, and departed.

Alas! his good resolutions were too late. We trifle with the tide of fortune, which too often nips us in the bud and casts the dark shadow of misfortune over the bright lexicon of youth! That night the half-consumed fragment of John Jenkins's cigar set fire to his work-shop and burned it up, together with all his tools and materials. There was no insurance.

## CHAPTER II

## THE DOWNWARD PATH

"Then you still persist in marrying John Jenkins?" queried Judge Boompointer, as he playfully, with paternal familiarity, lifted the golden curls of the village belle, Mary Jones.

"I do," replied the fair young girl, in a low voice that resembled rock candy in its saccharine firmness, — "I do. He has promised to reform. Since he lost all his property by fire" —

"The result of his pernicious habit, though he illogically persists in charging it to me," interrupted the Judge.

"Since then," continued the young girl, "he has endeavored to break himself of the habit. He tells me that he has substituted the stalks of the Indian rattan, the outer part of a leguminous plant called the smoking-bean, and the fragmentary and unconsumed remainder of cigars, which occur at rare and uncertain intervals along the road, which, as he informs me, though deficient in quality and strength, are comparatively inexpensive." And blushing at her own eloquence, the young girl hid her curls on the Judge's arm.

"Poor thing!" muttered Judge Boompointer. "Dare I tell her all? Yet I must."

"I shall cling to him," continued the young girl, rising with her theme, "as the young vine clings to some hoary ruin. Nay, nay, chide me not, Judge Boompointer. I will marry John Jenkins!"

The Judge was evidently affected. Seating himself at the table, he wrote a few lines hurriedly upon a piece of paper, which he folded and placed in the fingers of the destined bride of John Jenkins.

“Mary Jones,” said the Judge, with impressive earnestness, “take this trifle as a wedding gift from one who respects your fidelity and truthfulness. At the altar let it be a reminder of me.” And covering his face hastily with a handkerchief, the stern and iron-willed man left the room. As the door closed, Mary unfolded the paper. It was an order on the corner grocery for three yards of flannel, a paper of needles, four pounds of soap, one pound of starch, and two boxes of matches!

“Noble and thoughtful man!” was all Mary Jones could exclaim, as she hid her face in her hands and burst into a flood of tears.

. . . . .  
The bells of Cloverdale are ringing merrily. It is a wedding. “How beautiful they look!” is the exclamation that passes from lip to lip, as Mary Jones, leaning timidly on the arm of John Jenkins, enters the church. But the bride is agitated, and the bridegroom betrays a feverish nervousness. As they stand in the vestibule, John Jenkins fumbles earnestly in his vest-pocket. Can it be the ring he is anxious about? No. He draws a small brown substance from his pocket, and biting off a piece, hastily replaces the fragment and gazes furtively around. Surely no one saw him? Alas! the eyes of two of that wedding party saw the fatal act. Judge Boom-pointer shook his head sternly. Mary Jones sighed and breathed a silent prayer. Her husband chewed!

### CHAPTER III AND LAST

“What! more bread?” said John Jenkins gruffly. “You’re always asking for money for bread. D—nation! Do you want to ruin me by your extravagance?” and as he uttered these words he drew from his pocket a bottle of

whiskey, a pipe, and a paper of tobacco. Emptying the first at a draught, he threw the empty bottle at the head of his eldest boy, a youth of twelve summers. The missile struck the child full in the temple, and stretched him a lifeless corpse. Mrs. Jenkins, whom the reader will hardly recognize as the once gay and beautiful Mary Jones, raised the dead body of her son in her arms, and carefully placing the unfortunate youth beside the pump in the back yard, returned with saddened step to the house. At another time, and in brighter days, she might have wept at the occurrence. She was past tears now.

“Father, your conduct is reprehensible!” said little Harrison Jenkins, the youngest boy. “Where do you expect to go when you die?”

“Ah!” said John Jenkins fiercely; “this comes of giving children a liberal education; this is the result of Sabbath-schools. Down, viper!”

A tumbler thrown from the same parental fist laid out the youthful Harrison cold. The four other children had, in the mean time, gathered around the table with anxious expectancy. With a chuckle, the now changed and brutal John Jenkins produced four pipes, and filling them with tobacco, handed one to each of his offspring and bade them smoke. “It’s better than bread!” laughed the wretch hoarsely.

Mary Jenkins, though of a patient nature, felt it her duty now to speak. “I have borne much, John Jenkins,” she said. “But I prefer that the children should not smoke. It is an unclean habit, and soils their clothes. I ask this as a special favor!”

John Jenkins hesitated, — the pangs of remorse began to seize him.

“Promise me this, John!” urged Mary upon her knees.

“I promise!” reluctantly answered John.

“And you will put the money in a savings-bank?”



"I will," repeated her husband; "and *I*'ll give up smoking, too."

"'T is well, John Jenkins!" said Judge Boompointer, appearing suddenly from behind the door, where he had been concealed during this interview. "Nobly said! my man. Cheer up! I will see that the children are decently buried." The husband and wife fell into each other's arms. And Judge Boompointer, gazing upon the affecting spectacle, burst into tears.

From that day John Jenkins was an altered man.

## FANTINE

AFTER THE FRENCH OF VICTOR HUGO

### PROLOGUE

As long as there shall exist three paradoxes, a moral Frenchman, a religious atheist, and a believing skeptic; so long, in fact, as booksellers shall wait — say twenty-five years — for a new gospel; so long as paper shall remain cheap and ink three sous a bottle, I have no hesitation in saying that such books as these are not utterly profitless.

VICTOR HUGO.

#### I

To be good is to be queer. What is a good man? Bishop Myriel.

My friend, you will possibly object to this. You will say you know what a good man is. Perhaps you will say your clergyman is a good man, for instance.

Bah! you are mistaken; you are an Englishman, and an Englishman is a beast.

Englishmen think they are moral when they are only serious. These Englishmen also wear ill-shaped hats, and dress horribly!

Bah! they are canaille.

Still, Bishop Myriel was a good man, — quite as good as you. Better than you, in fact.

One day M. Myriel was in Paris. This angel used to walk about the streets like any other man. He was not proud, though fine-looking. Well, three gamins de Paris called him bad names. Says one, —

“Ah, mon Dieu! there goes a priest; look out for your eggs and chickens!”

What did this good man do? He called to them kindly.

"My children," said he, "this is clearly not your fault. I recognize in this insult and irreverence only the fault of your immediate progenitors. Let us pray for your immediate progenitors."

They knelt down and prayed for their immediate progenitors.

The effect was touching.

The Bishop looked calmly around.

"On reflection," said he gravely, "I was mistaken; this is clearly the fault of Society. Let us pray for Society."

They knelt down and prayed for Society.

The effect was sublimer yet. What do you think of that? You, I mean.

Everybody remembers the story of the Bishop and Mother Nez Retroussé. Old Mother Nez Retroussé sold asparagus. She was poor; there's a great deal of meaning in that word, my friend. Some people say "poor but honest." I say, Bah!

Bishop Myriel bought six bunches of asparagus. This good man had one charming failing: he was fond of asparagus. He gave her a franc, and received three sous change.

The sous were bad, — counterfeit. What did this good Bishop do? He said: "I should not have taken change from a poor woman."

Then afterwards, to his housekeeper: "Never take change from a poor woman."

Then he added to himself: "For the sous will probably be bad."

## II

When a man commits a crime, Society claps him in prison. A prison is one of the worst hotels imaginable.

The people there are low and vulgar. The butter is bad, the coffee is green. Ah, it is horrible!

In prison, as in a bad hotel, a man soon loses, not only his morals, but what is much worse to a Frenchman, his sense of refinement and delicacy.

Jean Valjean came from prison with confused notions of Society. He forgot the modern peculiarities of hospitality. So he walked off with the Bishop's candlesticks.

Let us consider. Candlesticks were stolen; that was evident. Society put Jean Valjean in prison; that was evident, too. In prison, Society took away his refinement; that is evident, likewise.

Who is Society?

You and I are Society.

My friend, you and I stole those candlesticks!

### III

The Bishop thought so, too. He meditated profoundly for six days. On the morning of the seventh he went to the Prefecture of Police.

He said: "Monsieur, have me arrested. I have stolen candlesticks."

The official was governed by the law of Society, and refused.

What did this Bishop do?

He had a charming ball and chain made, affixed to his leg, and wore it the rest of his life. This is a fact!

### IV

Love is a mystery.

A little friend of mine down in the country, at Auvergne, said to me one day: "Victor, Love is the world, — it contains everything."

She was only sixteen, this sharp-witted little girl, and a beautiful blonde. She thought everything of me.

Fantine was one of those women who do wrong in the most virtuous and touching manner. This is a peculiarity of French grisettes.

You are an Englishman, and you don't understand. Learn, my friend, learn. Come to Paris and improve your morals.

Fantine was the soul of modesty. She always wore high-neck dresses. High-neck dresses are a sign of modesty.

Fantine loved Tholmoyes. Why? My God! What are you to do? It was the fault of her parents, and she had n't any. How shall you teach her? You must teach the parent if you wish to educate the child. How would you become virtuous?

Teach your grandmother!

## V

When Tholmoyes ran away from Fantine, — which was done in a charming, gentlemanly manner, — Fantine became convinced that a rigid sense of propriety might look upon her conduct as immoral. She was a creature of sensitiveness, — and her eyes were opened.

She was virtuous still, and resolved to break off the liaison at once.

So she put up her wardrobe and baby in a bundle, child as she was, she loved them both, — then left Paris.

## VI

Fantine's native place had changed.

M. Madeline — an angel, and inventor of jet-work —

had been teaching the villagers how to make spurious jet.

This is a progressive age. Those Americans — children of the West, — they make nutmegs out of wood.

I, myself, have seen hams made of pine, in the wigwams of those children of the forest.

But civilization has acquired deception too. Society is made up of deception. Even the best French society.

Still there was one sincere episode.

Eh?

The French Revolution!

## VII

M. Madeline was, if anything, better than Myriel.

M. Myriel was a saint. M. Madeline a good man.

M. Myriel was dead. M. Madeline was living.

That made all the difference.

M. Madeline made virtue profitable. I have seen it written, —

“Be virtuous and you will be happy.”

Where did I see this written? In the modern Bible?

No. In the Koran? No. In Rousseau? No. Diderot?

No. Where then?

In a copy-book.

## VIII

M. Madeline was M. le Maire.

This is how it came about.

For a long time he refused the honor. One day an old woman, standing on the steps, said, —

“Bah, a good mayor is a good thing.

“You are a good thing.

“Be a good mayor.”

This woman was a rhetorician. She understood inductive ratiocination.

## IX

When this good M. Madeline, who, the reader will perceive, must have been a former convict, and a very bad man, gave himself up to justice as the real Jean Valjean, about this same time, Fantine was turned away from the manufactory, and met with a number of losses from Society. Society attacked her, and this is what she lost: —

First her lover.

Then her child.

Then her place.

Then her hair.

Then her teeth.

Then her liberty.

Then her life.

What do you think of Society after that? I tell you the present social system is a humbug.

## X

This is necessarily the end of Fantine.

There are other things that will be stated in other volumes to follow. Don't be alarmed; there are plenty of miserable people left.

Au revoir — my friend.

## “LA FEMME”

AFTER THE FRENCH OF M. MICHELET

### I

#### WOMEN AS AN INSTITUTION

“If it were not for women, few of us would at present be in existence.” This is the remark of a cautious and discreet writer. He was also sagacious and intelligent.

Woman! Look upon her and admire her. Gaze upon her and love her. If she wishes to embrace you, permit her. Remember she is weak and you are strong.

But don't treat her unkindly. Don't make love to another woman before her face, even if she be your wife. Don't do it. Always be polite, even should she fancy somebody better than you.

If your mother, my dear Amadis, had not fancied your father better than somebody, you might have been that somebody's son. Consider this. Always be a philosopher, even about women.

Few men understand women. Frenchmen, perhaps better than any one else. I am a Frenchman.

### II

#### THE INFANT

She is a child — a little thing — an infant.

She has a mother and father. Let us suppose, for example, they are married. Let us be moral if we cannot be



happy and free — they are married — perhaps — they love one another — who knows?

But she knows nothing of this; she is an infant — a small thing — a trifle!

She is not lovely at first. It is cruel, perhaps, but she is red, and positively ugly. She feels this keenly, and cries. She weeps. Ah, my God, how she weeps! Her cries and lamentations now are really distressing.

Tears stream from her in floods. She feels deeply and copiously, like M. Alphonse de Lamartine in his “Confessions.”

If you are her mother, Madame, you will fancy worms; you will examine her linen for pins, and what not. Ah, hypocrite! you, even *you*, misunderstand her.

Yet she has charming natural impulses. See how she tosses her dimpled arms. She looks longingly at her mother. She has a language of her own. She says, “goo, goo,” and “ga, ga.”

She demands something — this infant!

She is faint, poor thing. She famishes. She wishes to be restored. Restore her, Mother!

*It is the first duty of a mother to restore her child!*

### III

#### THE DOLL

She is hardly able to walk; she already totters under the weight of a doll.

It is a charming and elegant affair. It has pink cheeks and purple-black hair. She prefers brunettes, for she has already, with the quick knowledge of a French infant, perceived she is a blonde, and that her doll cannot rival her. Mon Dieu, how touching! Happy child! She spends hours in preparing its toilet. She begins to show her taste

in the exquisite details of its dress. She loves it madly, devotedly. She will prefer it to bonbons. She already anticipates the wealth of love she will hereafter pour out on her lover, her mother, her father, and finally, perhaps, her husband.

This is the time the anxious parent will guide these first outpourings. She will read her extracts from Michellet's "L'Amour," Rousseau's "Héloïse," and the "Revue des deux Mondes."

#### IV

##### THE MUD PIE

She was in tears to-day.

She had stolen away from her *bonne* and was with some rustic infants. They had noses in the air, and large, coarse hands and feet.

They had seated themselves around a pool in the road, and were fashioning fantastic shapes in the clayey soil with their hands. Her throat swelled and her eyes sparkled with delight as, for the first time, her soft palms touched the plastic mud. She made a graceful and lovely pie. She stuffed it with stones for almonds and plums. She forgot everything. It was being baked in the solar rays, when madame came and took her away.

She weeps. It is night, and she is weeping still.

#### V

##### THE FIRST LOVE

She no longer doubts her beauty. She is loved.

She saw him secretly. He is vivacious and sprightly. He is famous. He has already had an affair with Finfin,

the fille de chambre, and poor Finfin is desolate. He is noble. She knows he is the son of Madame la Baronne Couturière. She adores him.

She affects not to notice him. Poor little thing! Hippolyte is distracted — annihilated — inconsolable and charming.

She admires his boots, his cravat, his little gloves — his exquisite pantaloons — his coat, and cane.

She offers to run away with him. He is transported, but magnanimous. He is wearied, perhaps. She sees him the next day offering flowers to the daughter of Madame la Comtesse Blanchisseuse.

She is again in tears.

She reads “Paul et Virginie.” She is secretly transported. When she reads how the exemplary young woman laid down her life rather than appear en déshabillé to her lover, she weeps again. Tasteful and virtuous Bernardin de Saint-Pierre! — the daughters of France admire you!

All this time her doll is headless in the cabinet. The mud pie is broken on the road.

## VI

### THE WIFE

She is tired of loving, and she marries.

Her mother thinks it, on the whole, the best thing. As the day approaches, she is found frequently in tears. Her mother will not permit the affianced one to see her, and he makes several attempts to commit suicide.

But something happens. Perhaps it is winter, and the water is cold. Perhaps there are not enough people present to witness his heroism.

In this way her future husband is spared to her. The ways of Providence are indeed mysterious. At this time

her mother will talk with her. She will offer philosophy. She will tell her she was married herself.

But what is this new and ravishing light that breaks upon her? The toilet and wedding clothes! She is in a new sphere.

She makes out her list in her own charming writing. Here it is. Let every mother heed it.<sup>1</sup>

She is married. On the day after, she meets her old lover, Hippolyte. He is again transported.

## VII

### HER OLD AGE

A Frenchwoman never grows old.

<sup>1</sup> The delicate reader will appreciate the omission of certain articles for which English synonyms are forbidden.

# THE DWELLER OF THE THRESHOLD

BY SIR ED-D L-TT-N B-LW-R

## BOOK I

### THE PROMPTINGS OF THE IDEAL

It was noon. Sir Edward had stepped from his brougham, and was proceeding on foot down the Strand. He was dressed with his usual faultless taste, but in alighting from his vehicle his foot had slipped, and a small round disk of conglomerated soil, which instantly appeared on his high arched instep, marred the harmonious glitter of his boots. Sir Edward was fastidious. Casting his eyes around, at a little distance he perceived the stand of a youthful bootblack. Thither he sauntered, and carelessly placing his foot on the low stool, he waited the application of the polisher's art. "T is true," said Sir Edward to himself, yet half aloud, "the contact of the Foul and the Disgusting mars the general effect of the Shiny and the Beautiful — and, yet, why am I here? I repeat it, calmly and deliberately — why am I here? Ha! Boy!"

The Boy looked up — his dark Italian eyes glanced intelligently at the Philosopher, and as with one hand he tossed back his glossy curls from his marble brow, and with the other he spread the equally glossy Day & Martin over the Baronet's boot, he answered in deep, rich tones: "The Ideal is subjective to the Real. The exercise of apperception gives a distinctiveness to idiocracy, which is, however, subject to the limits of ME. You are an admirer of the

Beautiful, sir. You wish your boots blacked. The Beautiful is attainable by means of the Coin."

"Ah," said Sir Edward thoughtfully, gazing upon the almost supernal beauty of the Child before him; "you speak well. You have read Kant."

The Boy blushed deeply. He drew a copy of Kant from his blouse, but in his confusion several other volumes dropped from his bosom on the ground. The Baronet picked them up.

"Ah!" said the Philosopher, "what's this? Cicero's 'De Senectute,' — at your age, too? Martial's 'Epigrams,' Cæsar's 'Commentaries.' What! a classical scholar?"

"E pluribus Unum. Nux vomica. Nil desperandum. Nihil fit!" said the Boy enthusiastically. The Philosopher gazed at the Child. A strange presence seemed to transfuse and possess him. Over the brow of the Boy glittered the pale nimbus of the Student.

"Ah, and Schiller's 'Robbers,' too?" queried the Philosopher.

"Das ist ausgespielt," said the Boy modestly.

"Then you have read my translation of Schiller's 'Ballads'?" continued the Baronet, with some show of interest.

"I have, and infinitely prefer them to the original," said the Boy, with intellectual warmth. "You have shown how in Actual life we strive for a Goal we cannot reach; how in the Ideal the Goal is attainable, and there effort is victory. You have given us the Antithesis which is a key to the Remainder, and constantly balances before us the conditions of the Actual and the privileges of the Ideal."

"My very words," said the Baronet; "wonderful, wonderful!" and he gazed fondly at the Italian boy, who again resumed his menial employment. Alas! the wings of the Ideal were folded. The Student had been absorbed in the Boy.

But Sir Edward's boots were blacked, and he turned to

depart. Placing his hand upon the clustering tendrils that surrounded the classic nob of the infant Italian, he said softly, like a strain of distant music, —

“Boy, you have done well. Love the Good. Protect the Innocent. Provide for the Indigent. Respect the Philosopher. . . . Stay! Can you tell me what *is* The True, The Beautiful, The Innocent, The Virtuous?”

“They are things that commence with a capital letter,” said the Boy promptly.

“Enough! Respect everything that commences with a capital letter! Respect ME!” and dropping a halfpenny in the hand of the boy, he departed.

The Boy gazed fixedly at the coin. A frightful and instantaneous change overspread his features. His noble brow was corrugated with baser lines of calculation. His black eye, serpent-like, glittered with suppressed passion. Dropping upon his hands and feet, he crawled to the curbstone, and hissed after the retreating form of the Baronet the single word —

“Bilk!”

## BOOK II

### IN THE WORLD

“Eleven years ago,” said Sir Edward to himself, as his brougham slowly rolled him toward the Committee Room, “just eleven years ago my natural son disappeared mysteriously. I have no doubt in the world but that this little bootblack is he. His mother died in Italy. He resembles his mother very much. Perhaps I ought to provide for him. Shall I disclose myself? No! no! Better he should taste the sweets of Labor. Penury ennobles the mind and kindles the Love of the Beautiful. I will act to him, not like a Father, not like a Guardian, not like a Friend — but like a Philosopher!”

With these words, Sir Edward entered the Committee Room. His Secretary approached him. "Sir Edward, there are fears of a division in the House, and the Prime Minister has sent for you."

"I will be there," said Sir Edward, as he placed his hand on his chest and uttered a hollow cough!

No one who heard the Baronet that night, in his sarcastic and withering speech on the Drainage and Sewerage Bill, would have recognized the Lover of the Ideal and the Philosopher of the Beautiful. No one who listened to his eloquence would have dreamed of the Spartan resolution this iron man had taken in regard to the Lost Boy — his own beloved Lionel. None!

"A fine speech from Sir Edward to-night," said Lord Billingsgate, as, arm and arm with the Premier, he entered his carriage.

"Yes! but how dreadfully he coughs!"

"Exactly. Dr. Bolus says his lungs are entirely gone; he breathes entirely by an effort of will, and altogether independent of pulmonary assistance."

"How strange!" And the carriage rolled away.

### BOOK III

#### THE DWELLER OF THE THRESHOLD

"Adon Ai, appear! appear!"

And as the Seer spoke, the awful Presence glided out of Nothingness, and sat, sphinx-like, at the feet of the Alchemist.

"I am come!" said the Thing.

"You should say, 'I have come,' — it's better grammar," said the Boy-Neophyte, thoughtfully accenting the substituted expression.

"Hush, rash Boy," said the Seer sternly. "Would you



oppose your feeble knowledge to the infinite intelligence of the Unmistakable? A word, and you are lost forever."

The Boy breathed a silent prayer, and handing a sealed package to the Seer, begged him to hand it to his father in case of his premature decease.

"You have sent for me," hissed the Presence. "Behold me, Apokatharticon, — the Unpronounceable. In me all things exist that are not already coexistent. I am the Unattainable, the Intangible, the Cause, and the Effect. In me observe the Brahma of Mr. Emerson; not only Brahma himself, but also the sacred musical composition rehearsed by the faithful Hindoo. I am the real Gyges. None others are genuine."

And the veiled Son of the Starbeam laid himself loosely about the room, and permeated Space generally.

"Unfathomable Mystery," said the Rosicrucian in a low, sweet voice. "Brave Child with the Vitreous Optic! Thou who pervadest all things and rubbest against us without abrasion of the cuticle. I command thee, speak!"

And the misty, intangible, indefinite Presence spoke.

## BOOK IV

### MYSELF

After the events related in the last chapter, the reader will perceive that nothing was easier than to reconcile Sir Edward to his son Lionel, nor to resuscitate the beautiful Italian girl, who, it appears, was not dead, and to cause Sir Edward to marry his first and boyish love, whom he had deserted. They were married in St. George's, Hanover Square. As the bridal party stood before the altar, Sir Edward, with a sweet, sad smile, said in quite his old manner, —

"The Sublime and Beautiful are the Real; the only Ideal

is the Ridiculous and Homely. Let us always remember this. Let us through life endeavor to personify the virtues, and always begin 'em with a capital letter. Let us, whenever we can find an opportunity, deliver our sentiments in the form of roundhand copies. Respect the Aged. Eschew Vulgarity. Admire Ourselves. Regard the Novelist."

## N N.

### BEING A NOVEL IN THE FRENCH PARAGRAPHIC STYLE

— MADemoisELLE, I swear to you that I love you.

— You who read these pages. You who turn your burning eyes upon these words — words that I trace — ah, heaven! the thought maddens me.

— I will be calm. I will imitate the reserve of the festive Englishman, who wears a spotted handkerchief which he calls a Belchio, who eats biftek, and caresses a bulldog. I will subdue myself like him.

— Ha! Poto-beer! All right — Goddam!

— Or, I will conduct myself as the free-born American — the gay Brother Jonathan. I will whittle me a stick. I will whistle to myself “Yankee Doodle,” and forget my passion in excessive expectoration.

— Ho! ho! — wake snakes and walk chalks.

The world is divided into two great divisions, — Paris and the provinces. There is but one Paris. There are several provinces, among which may be numbered England, America, Russia, and Italy.

N N. was a Parisian.

But N N. did not live in Paris. Drop a Parisian in the provinces, and you drop a part of Paris with him. Drop him in Senegambia, and in three days he will give you an omelette soufflée, or a pâté de foie gras, served by the neatest of Senegambian filles, whom he will call mademoiselle. In three weeks he will give you an opera.

N N. was not dropped in Senegambia, but in San Francisco, — quite as awkward.

They find gold in San Francisco, but they don't understand gilding.

N N. existed three years in this place. He became bald on the top of his head, as all Parisians do. Look down from your box at the Opéra Comique, mademoiselle, and count the bald crowns of the fast young men in the pit. Ah — you tremble! They show where the arrows of love have struck and glanced off.

N N. was almost near-sighted, as all Parisians finally become. This is a gallant provision of nature to spare them the mortification of observing that their lady friends grow old. After a certain age every woman is nandsome to a Parisian.

One day, N N. was walking down Washington Street. Suddenly he stopped.

He was standing before the door of a mantua-maker. Beside the counter, at the farther extremity of the shop, stood a young and elegantly formed woman. Her face was turned from N N. He entered. With a plausible excuse and seeming indifference, he gracefully opened conversation with the mantua-maker as only a Parisian can. But he had to deal with a Parisian. His attempts to view the features of the fair stranger by the counter were deftly combated by the shopwoman. He was obliged to retire.

N N. went home and lost his appetite. He was haunted by the elegant basque and graceful shoulders of the fair unknown, during the whole night.

The next day he sauntered by the mantua-maker. Ah! Heavens! A thrill ran through his frame, and his fingers tingled with a delicious electricity. The fair inconnue was there! He raised his hat gracefully. He was not certain, but he thought that a slight motion of her faultless bonnet betrayed recognition. He would have wildly darted into

the shop, but just then the figure of the mantua-maker appeared in the doorway.

— Did monsieur wish anything?

— Misfortune! Desperation. N N. purchased a bottle of Prussic acid, a sack of charcoal, and a quire of pink note-paper, and returned home. He wrote a letter of farewell to the closely fitting basque, and opened the bottle of Prussic acid.

Some one knocked at his door. It was a Chinaman, with his weekly linen.

These Chinese are docile, but not intelligent. They are ingenious, but not creative. They are cunning in expedients, but deficient in tact. In love they are simply barbarous. They purchase their wives openly, and not constructively by attorney. By offering small sums for their sweethearts, they degrade the value of the sex.

Nevertheless, N N. felt he was saved. He explained all to the faithful Mongolian, and exhibited the letter he had written. He implored him to deliver it.

The Mongolian assented. The race are not cleanly or sweet-savored, but N N. fell upon his neck. He embraced him with one hand, and closed his nostrils with the other. Through him, he felt he clasped the close-fitting basque.

The next day was one of agony and suspense. Evening came, but no mercy. N N. lit the charcoal. But, to compose his nerves, he closed his door and first walked mildly up and down Montgomery Street. When he returned, he found the faithful Mongolian on the steps.

— All lity!

These Chinese are not accurate in their pronunciation. They avoid the *r*, like the English nobleman.

N N. gasped for breath. He leaned heavily against the Chinaman.

— Then you have seen her, Ching Long?

— Yes. All lity. She cum. Top side of house.

The docile barbarian pointed up the stairs, and chuckled.

— She here — impossible! Ah, Heaven! do I dream?

— Yes. All lity, — top side of house. Good-by, John.

This is the familiar parting epithet of the Mongolian. It is equivalent to our *au revoir*.

N N. gazed with a stupefied air on the departing servant.

He placed his hand on his throbbing heart. She here, — alone beneath this roof? Oh, heavens, — what happiness!

But how? Torn from her home. Ruthlessly dragged, perhaps, from her evening devotions, by the hands of a relentless barbarian. Could she forgive him?

He dashed frantically up the stairs. He opened the door.

She was standing beside his couch with averted face.

A strange giddiness overtook him. He sank upon his knees at the threshold.

— Pardon, pardon. My angel, can you forgive me?

A terrible nausea now seemed added to the fearful giddiness. His utterance grew thick and sluggish.

— Speak, speak, enchantress. Forgiveness is all I ask. My Love, my Life!

She did not answer. He staggered to his feet. As he rose, his eyes fell on the pan of burning charcoal. A terrible suspicion flashed across his mind. This giddiness — this nausea. The ignorance of the barbarian. This silence. Oh, merciful heavens! she was dying!

He crawled toward her. He touched her. She fell forward with a lifeless sound upon the floor. He uttered a piercing shriek, and threw himself beside her.

. . . . .  
A file of gendarmes, accompanied by the Chef Burke, found him the next morning lying lifeless upon the floor. They laughed brutally — these cruel minions of the law — and disengaged his arm from the waist of the wooden

dummy which they had come to reclaim, from the mantua-maker.

Emptying a few bucketfuls of water over his form, they finally succeeded in robbing him, not only of his ~~mistress~~, but of that Death he had coveted without her.

Ah! we live in a strange world, messieurs.

## NO TITLE

BY W-LK-E C-LL-NS

### PROLOGUE

THE following advertisement appeared in the "Times" of the 17th of June, 1845:—

WANTED. — A few young men for a light, genteel employment. Address J. W., P. O.

In the same paper, of same date, in another column:—

TO LET. — That commodious and elegant family mansion, No. 27 Limehouse Road, Pultneyville, will be rented low to a respectable tenant if applied for immediately, the family being about to remove to the Continent.

Under the local intelligence, in another column:—

MISSING. — An unknown elderly gentleman a week ago left his lodgings in the Kent Road, since which nothing has been heard of him. He left no trace of his identity except a portmanteau containing a couple of shirts marked "209, Ward."

To find the connection between the mysterious disappearance of the elderly gentleman and the anonymous communication, the relevancy of both these incidents to the letting of a commodious family mansion, and the dead secret



involved in the three occurrences, is the task of the writer of this history.

A slim young man with spectacles, a large hat, drab gaiters, and a notebook, sat late that night with a copy of the "Times" before him, and a pencil which he rattled nervously between his teeth in the coffee-room of the Blue Dragon.

## CHAPTER I

### MARY JONES'S NARRATIVE

I am upper housemaid to the family that live at No. 27 Limehouse Road, Pultneyville. I have been requested by Mr. Wilkey Collings, which I takes the liberty of here stating is a gentleman born and bred, and has some consideration for the feelings of servants, and is not above rewarding them for their trouble, which is more than you can say for some who ask questions and gets short answers enough, gracious knows, to tell what I know about them. I have been requested to tell my story in my own langwidge, though, being no schollard, mind cannot conceive. I think my master is a brute. Do not know that he has ever attempted to poison my missus, — which is too good for him, and how she ever came to marry him, heart only can tell, — but believe him to be capable of any such hatrosity. Have heard him swear dreadful because of not having his shaving-water at nine o'clock precisely. Do not know whether he ever forged a will or tried to get my missus's property, although, not having confidence in the man, should not be surprised if he had done so. Believe that there was always something mysterious in his conduct. Remember distinctly how the family left home to go abroad. Was putting up my back hair, last Saturday morning, when I heard a ring. Says cook, "That's missus's bell, and mind you hurry or the master 'ill know why." Says

I, "Humbly thanking you, mem, but taking advice of them as is competent to give it, I'll take my time." Found missus dressing herself and master growling as usual. Says missus, quite calm and easy-like, "Mary, we begin to pack to-day." "What for, mem?" says I, taken aback. "What's that hussy asking?" says master from the bed-clothes quite savage-like. "For the Continent — Italy," says missus. "Can you go, Mary?" Her voice was quite gentle and saintlike, but I knew the struggle it cost, and says I, "With *you*, mem, to India's torrid clime, if required, but with African Gorillas," says I, looking toward the bed, "never." "Leave the room," says master, starting up and catching of his bootjack. "Why, Charles!" says missus, "how you talk!" affecting surprise. "Do go, Mary," says she, slipping a half-crown into my hand. I left the room, scorning to take notice of the odious wretch's conduct.

Cannot say whether my master and missus were ever legally married. What with the dreadful state of morals nowadays and them stories in the circulating libraries, innocent girls don't know into what society they might be obliged to take situations. Never saw missus's marriage certificate, though I have quite accidental-like looked in her desk when open, and would have seen it. Do not know of any lovers missus might have had. Believe she had a liking for John Thomas, footman, for she was always spiteful-like — poor lady — when we were together — though there was nothing between us, as cook well knows, and dare not deny, and missus need n't have been jealous. Have never seen arsenic or Prussian acid in any of the private drawers — but have seen paregoric and camphor. One of my master's friends was a Count Moscow, a Russian papist — which I detested.

## CHAPTER II

## THE SLIM YOUNG MAN'S STORY

I am by profession a reporter, and writer for the press. I live at Pultneyville. I have always had a passion for the marvelous, and have been distinguished for my facility in tracing out mysteries, and solving enigmatical occurrences. On the night of the 17th June, 1845, I left my office and walked homeward. The night was bright and starlight. I was revolving in my mind the words of a singular item I had just read in the "Times." I had reached the darkest portion of the road, and found myself mechanically repeating: "An elderly gentleman a week ago left his lodgings on the Kent Road," when suddenly I heard a step behind me.

I turned quickly, with an expression of horror in my face, and by the light of the newly risen moon beheld an elderly gentleman, with green cotton umbrella, approaching me. His hair, which was snow white, was parted over a broad, open forehead. The expression of his face, which was slightly flushed, was that of amiability verging almost upon imbecility. There was a strange, inquiring look about the widely opened mild blue eye, — a look that might have been intensified to insanity or modified to idiocy. As he passed me, he paused and partly turned his face, with a gesture of inquiry. I see him still, his white locks blowing in the evening breeze, his hat a little on the back of his head, and his figure painted in relief against the dark blue sky.

Suddenly he turned his mild eye full upon me. A weak smile played about his thin lips. In a voice which had something of the tremulousness of age and the self-

satisfied chuckle of imbecility in it, he asked, pointing to the rising moon, "Why? — Hush!"

He had dodged behind me, and appeared to be looking anxiously down the road. I could feel his aged frame shaking with terror as he laid his thin hands upon my shoulders and faced me in the direction of the supposed danger.

"Hush! did you not hear them coming?"

I listened; there was no sound but the sighing of the roadside trees in the evening wind. I endeavored to reassure him, with such success that in a few moments the old weak smile appeared on his benevolent face.

"Why?" — But the look of interrogation was succeeded by a hopeless blankness.

"Why?" I repeated with assuring accents.

"Why," he said, a gleam of intelligence flickering over his face, "is yonder moon, as she sails in the blue empyrean, casting a flood of light o'er hill and dale, like — Why," he repeated, with a feeble smile, "is yonder moon, as she sails in the blue empyrean" — He hesitated, — stammered, — and gazed at me hopelessly, with the tears dripping from his moist and widely opened eyes.

I took his hand kindly in my own. "Casting a shadow o'er hill and dale," I repeated quietly, leading him up to the subject, "like — Come, now."

"Ah!" he said, pressing my hand tremulously, "you know it?"

"I do. Why is it like — the — eh — the commodious mansion on the Limehouse Road?"

A blank stare only followed. He shook his head sadly.

"Like the young men wanted for a light, genteel employment?"

He wagged his feeble old head cunningly.

"Or, Mr. Ward," I said, with bold confidence, "like the mysterious disappearance from the Kent Road?"

The moment was full of suspense. He did not seem to hear me. Suddenly he turned.

“Ha!”

I darted forward. But he had vanished in the darkness.

### CHAPTER III

#### NO. 27 LIMEHOUSE ROAD

It was a hot midsummer evening. Limehouse Road was deserted save by dust and a few rattling butchers' carts, and the bell of the muffin and crumpet man. A commodious mansion, which stood on the right of the road as you enter Pultneyville, surrounded by stately poplars and a high fence surmounted by a cheval de frise of broken glass, looked to the passing and footsore pedestrian like the genius of seclusion and solitude. A bill announcing in the usual terms that the house was to let hung from the bell at the servants' entrance.

As the shades of evening closed, and the long shadows of the poplars stretched across the road, a man carrying a small kettle stopped and gazed, first at the bill and then at the house. When he had reached the corner of the fence, he again stopped and looked cautiously up and down the road. Apparently satisfied with the result of his scrutiny, he deliberately sat himself down in the dark shadow of the fence, and at once busied himself in some employment, so well concealed as to be invisible to the gaze of passers-by. At the end of an hour he retired cautiously.

But not altogether unseen. A slim young man, with spectacles and notebook, stepped from behind a tree as the retreating figure of the intruder was lost in the twilight, and transferred from the fence to his notebook the freshly stenciled inscription, “S—T—1860 —X.”

## CHAPTER IV

## COUNT MOSCOW'S NARRATIVE

I am a foreigner. Observe! To be a foreigner in England is to be mysterious, suspicious, intriguing. M. Collins has requested the history of my complicity with certain occurrences. It is nothing, bah! absolutely nothing.

I write with ease and fluency. Why should I not write? Tra-la-la! I am what you English call corpulent. Ha, ha! I am a pupil of Macchiavelli. I find it much better to disbelieve everything, and to approach my subject and wishes circuitously than in a direct manner. You have observed that playful animal, the cat. Call it, and it does not come to you directly, but rubs itself against all the furniture in the room, and reaches you finally — and scratches. Ah, ha, scratches! I am of the feline species. People call me a villain — bah!

I know the family living No. 27 Limehouse Road. I respect the gentleman, — a fine, burly specimen of your Englishman, — and madame, charming, ravishing, delightful. When it became known to me that they designed to let their delightful residence, and visit foreign shores, I at once called upon them. I kissed the hand of madame. I embraced the great Englishman. Madame blushed slightly. The great Englishman shook my hand like a mastiff.

I began in that dexterous, insinuating manner of which I am truly proud. I thought madame was ill. Ah, no. A change, then, was all that was required. I sat down at the piano and sang. In a few minutes madame retired. I was alone with my friend.

Seizing his hand, I began with every demonstration of courteous sympathy. I do not repeat my words, for my

intention was conveyed more in accent, emphasis, and manner, than speech. I hinted to him that he had another wife living. I suggested that this was balanced — ha! — by his wife's lover. That, possibly, he wished to fly; hence the letting of his delightful mansion. That he regularly and systematically beat his wife in the English manner, and that she repeatedly deceived him. I talked of hope, of consolation, of remedy. I carelessly produced a bottle of strychnine and a small vial of stramonium from my pocket, and enlarged on the efficiency of drugs. His face, which had gradually become convulsed, suddenly became fixed with a frightful expression. He started to his feet, and roared, "You d—d Frenchman!"

I instantly changed my tactics, and endeavored to embrace him. He kicked me twice, violently. I begged permission to kiss madame's hand. He replied by throwing me downstairs.

I am in bed with my head bound up, and beefsteaks upon my eyes, but still confident and buoyant. I have not lost faith in Macchiavelli. Tra-la-la! as they sing in the opera. I kiss everybody's hands.

## CHAPTER V

### DR. DIGGS'S STATEMENT

My name is David Diggs. I am a surgeon, living at No. 9 Tottenham Court. On the 15th of June, 1854, I was called to see an elderly gentleman lodging on the Kent Road. Found him highly excited, with strong febrile symptoms, pulse 120, increasing. Repeated incoherently what I judged to be the popular form of a conundrum. On closer examination found acute hydrocephalus, and both lobes of the brain rapidly filling with water. In consultation with an eminent phrenologist, it was further discovered

that all the organs were more or less obliterated, except that of Comparison. Hence the patient was enabled to only distinguish the most common points of resemblance between objects, without drawing upon other faculties, such as Ideality or Language, for assistance. Later in the day found him sinking, — being evidently unable to carry the most ordinary conundrum to a successful issue. Exhibited Tinct. Val., Ext. Opii, and Camphor, and prescribed quiet and emollients. On the 17th the patient was missing.

## CHAPTER LAST

### STATEMENT OF THE PUBLISHER

On the 18th of June, Mr. Wilkie Collins left a roll of manuscript with us for publication, without title or direction, since which time he has not been heard from. In spite of the care of the proof-readers, and valuable literary assistance, it is feared that the continuity of the story has been destroyed by some accidental misplacing of chapters during its progress. How and what chapters are so misplaced, the publisher leaves to an indulgent public to discover.



# HANDSOME IS AS HANDSOME DOES

BY CH-S R-DE

## CHAPTER I

THE Dodds were dead. For twenty years they had slept under the green graves of Kittery churchyard. The town-folk still spoke of them kindly. The keeper of the ale-house, where David had smoked his pipe, regretted him regularly, and Mistress Kitty, Mrs. Dodd's maid, whose trim figure always looked well in her mistress's gowns, was inconsolable. The Hardins were in America. Raby was aristocratically gouty; Mrs. Raby, religious. Briefly, then, we have disposed of —

1. Mr. and Mrs. Dodd (dead).
2. Mr. and Mrs. Hardin (translated).
3. Raby, baron et femme. (Yet I don't know about the former; he came of a long-lived family, and the gout is an uncertain-disease.)

We have active at the present writing (place aux dames) —

1. Lady Caroline Coventry, niece of Sir Frederick.
2. Faraday Huxley Little, son of Henry and Grace Little deceased.

*Sequitur* to the above, A HERO AND HEROINE.

## CHAPTER II

On the death of his parents, Faraday Little was taken to Raby Hall. In accepting his guardianship, Mr. Raby

struggled stoutly against two prejudices: Faraday was plain-looking and skeptical.

“Handsome is as handsome does, sweetheart,” pleaded Jael, interceding for the orphan with arms that were still beautiful. “Dear knows, it is not his fault if he does not look like — his father,” she added with a great gulp. Jael was a woman, and vindicated her womanhood by never entirely forgiving a former rival.

“It’s not that alone, madam,” screamed Raby, “but, d—m it, the little rascal’s a scientist, — an atheist, a radical, a scoffer! Disbelieves in the Bible, ma’am; is full of this Darwinian stuff about natural selection and descent. Descent, forsooth! In my day, madam, gentlemen were content to trace their ancestors back to gentlemen, and not to — monkeys!”

“Dear heart, the boy is clever,” urged Jael.

“Clever!” roared Raby; “what does a gentleman want with cleverness?”

### CHAPTER III

Young Little *was* clever. At seven he had constructed a telescope; at nine, a flying-machine. At ten he saved a valuable life.

Norwood Park was the adjacent estate, — a lordly domain dotted with red deer and black trunks, but scrupulously kept with graveled roads as hard and blue as steel. There Little was strolling one summer morning, meditating on a new top with concealed springs. At a little distance before him he saw the flutter of lace and ribbons. A young lady, a very young lady, — say of seven summers, — tricked out in the crying abominations of the present fashion, stood beside a low bush. Her nursery-maid was not present, possibly owing to the fact that John the footman was also absent.

Suddenly Little came towards her. "Excuse me, but do you know what those berries are?" He was pointing to the low bush filled with dark clusters of shining — suspiciously shining — fruit.

"Certainly; they are blueberries."

"Pardon me; you are mistaken. They belong to quite another family."

Miss Impudence drew herself up to her full height (exactly three feet nine and a half inches), and, curling an eighth of an inch of scarlet lip, said scornfully, "*Your* family, perhaps."

Faraday Little smiled in the superiority of boyhood over girlhood.

"I allude to the classification. That plant is the belladonna, or deadly nightshade. Its alkaloid is a narcotic poison."

Sauciness turned pale. "I — have — just — eaten — some!" And began to whimper. "Oh dear, what shall I do?" Then did it, i. e., wrung her small fingers, and cried.

"Pardon me one moment." Little passed his arm around her neck, and with his thumb opened widely the patrician-veined lids of her sweet blue eyes. "Thank Heaven, there is yet no dilation of the pupil; it is not too late!" He cast a rapid glance around. The nozzle and about three feet of garden hose lay near him.

"Open your mouth, quick!"

It was a pretty, kissable mouth. But young Little meant business. He put the nozzle down her pink throat as far as it would go.

"Now, don't move."

He wrapped his handkerchief around a hoop-stick. Then he inserted both in the other end of the stiff hose. It fitted snugly. He shoved it in and then drew it back.

Nature abhors a vacuum. The young patrician was as amenable to this law as the child of the lowest peasant.

She succumbed. It was all over in a minute. Then she burst into a small fury.

“You nasty, bad — *ugly* boy.”

Young Little winced, but smiled.

“Stimulants,” he whispered to the frightened nursery-maid, who approached; “good-evening.” He was gone.

#### CHAPTER IV

The breach between young Little and Mr. Raby was slowly widening. Little found objectionable features in the Hall. “This black oak ceiling and wainscoting is not as healthful as plaster; besides, it absorbs the light. The bedroom ceiling is too low; the Elizabethan architects knew nothing of ventilation. The color of that oak paneling which you admire is due to an excess of carbon and the exuvia from the pores of your skin” —

“Leave the house,” bellowed Raby, “before the roof falls on your sacrilegious head!”

As Little left the house, Lady Caroline and a handsome boy of about Little’s age entered. Lady Caroline recoiled, and then — blushed. Little glared; he instinctively felt the presence of a rival.

#### CHAPTER V

Little worked hard. He studied night and day. In five years he became a lecturer, then a professor.

He soared as high as the clouds, he dipped as low as the cellars of the London poor. He analyzed the London fog, and found it two parts smoke, one disease, one unmentionable abominations. He published a pamphlet, which was violently attacked. Then he knew he had done something.

But he had not forgotten Caroline. He was walking one day in the Zoölogical Gardens, and he came upon a pretty picture, — flesh and blood, too.

Lady Caroline feeding buns to the bears! An exquisite thrill passed through his veins. She turned her sweet face and their eyes met. They recollected their first meeting seven years before, but it was his turn to be shy and timid. Wonderful power of age and sex! She met him with perfect self-possession.

“Well meant, but indigestible, I fear” (he alluded to the buns).

“A clever person like yourself can easily correct that” (she, the slyboots, was thinking of something else).

In a few moments they were chatting gayly. Little eagerly descanted upon the different animals; she listened with delicious interest. An hour glided delightfully away.

After this sunshine, clouds.

To them suddenly entered Mr. Raby and a handsome young man. The gentlemen bowed stiffly and looked vicious — as they felt. The lady of this quartette smiled amiably — as she did not feel.

“Looking at your ancestors, I suppose,” said Mr. Raby, pointing to the monkeys; “we will not disturb you. Come.” And he led Caroline away.

Little was heart-sick. He dared not follow them. But an hour later he saw something which filled his heart with bliss unspeakable.

Lady Caroline, with a divine smile on her face, feeding the monkeys!

## CHAPTER VI

Encouraged by love, Little worked hard upon his new flying-machine. His labors were lightened by talking of the beloved one with her French maid Thérèse, whom he

had discreetly bribed. Mademoiselle Thérèse was venal, like all her class, but in this instance I fear she was not bribed by British gold. Strange as it may seem to the British mind, it was British genius, British eloquence, British thought, that brought her to the feet of this young savan.

"I believe," said Lady Caroline, one day, interrupting her maid in a glowing eulogium upon the skill of "M. Leetell," — "I believe you are in love with this professor." A quick flush crossed the olive cheek of Thérèse, which Lady Caroline afterward remembered.

The eventful day of trial came. The public were gathered, impatient and scornful as the pig-headed public are apt to be. In the open area a long cylindrical balloon, in shape like a Bologna sausage, swayed above the machine, from which, like some enormous bird caught in a net, it tried to free itself. A heavy rope held it fast to the ground.

Little was waiting for the ballast, when his eye caught Lady Caroline's among the spectators. The glance was appealing. In a moment he was at her side.

"I should like so much to get into the machine," said the arch-hypocrite demurely.

"Are you engaged to marry young Raby?" said Little bluntly.

"As you please," she said with a curtsy; "do I take this as a refusal?"

Little was a gentleman. He lifted her and her lap-dog into the car.

"How nice! it won't go off?"

"No, the rope is strong, and the ballast is not yet in."

A report like a pistol, a cry from the spectators, a thousand hands stretched to grasp the parted rope, and the balloon darted upward.

Only one hand of that thousand caught the rope, —

Little's! But in the same instant the horror-stricken spectators saw him whirled from his feet and borne upward, still clinging to the rope, into space.

## CHAPTER VII<sup>1</sup>

Lady Caroline fainted. The cold, watery nose of her dog on her cheek brought her to herself. She dared not look over the edge of the car; she dared not look up to the bellowing monster above her, bearing her to death. She threw herself on the bottom of the car, and embraced the only living thing spared her,— the poodle. Then she cried. Then a clear voice came apparently out of the circumambient air, —

“May I trouble you to look at the barometer?”

She put her head over the car. Little was hanging at the end of a long rope. She put her head back again.

In another moment he saw her perplexed, blushing face over the edge, — blissful sight.

“Oh, please don't think of coming up! Stay there, do!”

Little stayed. Of course she could make nothing out of the barometer, and said so. Little smiled.

“Will you kindly send it down to me?”

But she had no string or cord. Finally she said, “Wait a moment.”

Little waited. This time her face did not appear. The barometer came slowly down at the end of — a stay-lace.

The barometer showed a frightful elevation. Little looked up at the valve and said nothing. Presently he heard a sigh. Then a sob. Then, rather sharply, —

“Why don't you do something?”

<sup>1</sup> The right of dramatization of this and succeeding chapters is reserved to the writer.

## CHAPTER VIII

Little came up the rope hand over hand. Lady Caroline crouched in the farther side of the car. Fido, the poodle, whined.

"Poor thing," said Lady Caroline, "it's hungry."

"Do you wish to save the dog?" said Little.

"Yes."

"Give me your parasol."

She handed Little a good-sized affair of lace and silk and whalebone. (None of your "sunshades.") Little examined its ribs carefully.

"Give me the dog."

Lady Caroline hurriedly slipped a note under the dog's collar, and passed over her pet.

Little tied the dog to the handle of the parasol and launched them both into space. The next moment they were slowly, but tranquilly, sailing to the earth.

"A parasol and a parachute are distinct, but not different. Be not alarmed, he will get his dinner at some farmhouse."

"Where are we now?"

"That opaque spot you see is London fog. Those twin clouds are North and South America. Jerusalem and Madagascar are those specks to the right."

Lady Caroline moved nearer; she was becoming interested. Then she recalled herself, and said freezingly, "How are we going to descend?"

"By opening the valve."

"Why don't you open it then?"

"BECAUSE THE VALVE-STRING IS BROKEN!"



## CHAPTER IX

Lady Caroline fainted. When she revived it was dark. They were apparently cleaving their way through a solid block of black marble. She moaned and shuddered.

"I wish we had a light."

"I have no lucifers," said Little. "I observe, however, that you wear a necklace of amber. Amber under certain conditions becomes highly electrical. Permit me."

He took the amber necklace and rubbed it briskly. Then he asked her to present her knuckle to the gem. A bright spark was the result. This was repeated for some hours. The light was not brilliant, but it was enough for the purposes of propriety, and satisfied the delicately minded girl.

Suddenly there was a tearing, hissing noise and a smell of gas. Little looked up and turned pale. The balloon, at what I shall call the pointed end of the Bologna sausage, was evidently bursting from increased pressure. The gas was escaping, and already they were beginning to descend. Little was resigned but firm.

"If the silk gives way, then we are lost. Unfortunately I have no rope nor material for binding it."

The woman's instinct had arrived at the same conclusion sooner than the man's reason. But she was hesitating over a detail.

"Will you go down the rope for a moment?" she said, with a sweet smile.

Little went down. Presently she called to him. She held something in her hand, — a wonderful invention of the seventeenth century, improved and perfected in this: a pyramid of sixteen circular hoops of light yet strong steel, attached to each other by cloth bands.

With a cry of joy Little seized them, climbed to the

balloon, and fitted the elastic hoops over its conical end. Then he returned to the car.

"We are saved." Lady Caroline, blushing, gathered her slim but antique drapery against the other end of the car.

## CHAPTER X

They were slowly descending. Presently Lady Caroline distinguished the outlines of Raby Hall.

"I think I will get out here," she said.

Little anchored the balloon, and prepared to follow her.

"Not so, my friend," she said, with an arch smile.

"We must not be seen together. People might talk. Farewell."

Little sprang again into the balloon and sped away to America. He came down in California, oddly enough in front of Hardin's door, at Dutch Flat. Hardin was just examining a specimen of ore.

"You are a scientist; can you tell me if that is worth anything?" he said, handing it to Little.

Little held it to the light. "It contains ninety per cent. of silver."

Hardin embraced him. "Can I do anything for you, and why are you here?"

Little told his story. Hardin asked to see the rope. Then he examined it carefully.

"Ah, this was cut, not broken!"

"With a knife?" asked Little.

"No. Observe both sides are equally indented. It was done with a *scissors*!"

"Just Heaven!" gasped Little. "Thérèse!"

## CHAPTER XI

Little returned to London. Passing through London one day he met a dog-fancier.

“Buy a nice poodle, sir?”

Something in the animal attracted his attention.

“Fido!” he gasped.

The dog yelped.

Little bought him. On taking off his collar a piece of paper rustled to the floor. He knew the handwriting and kissed it. It ran: —

TO THE HONORABLE AUGUSTUS RABY — I cannot marry you. If I marry any one [sly puss] it will be the man who has twice saved my life, Professor Little.

CAROLINE COVENTRY.

And she did.

# LOTHAW

OR

THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GENTLEMAN IN SEARCH OF  
A RELIGION

BY MR. BENJAMINS

## CHAPTER I

“I REMEMBER him a little boy,” said the Duchess. “His mother was a dear friend of mine; you know she was one of my bridesmaids.”

“And you have never seen him since, mamma?” asked the oldest married daughter, who did not look a day older than her mother.

“Never; he was an orphan shortly after. I have often reproached myself, but it is so difficult to see boys.”

This simple yet first-class conversation existed in the morning-room of Plusham, where the mistress of the palatial mansion sat involved in the sacred privacy of a circle of her married daughters. One dexterously applied golden knitting-needles to the fabrication of a purse of floss silk of the rarest texture, which none who knew the almost fabulous wealth of the Duke would believe was ever destined to hold in its silken meshes a less sum than £1,000,000; another adorned a slipper exclusively with seed pearls; a third emblazoned a page with rare pigments and the finest quality of gold leaf. Beautiful forms leaned over frames glowing with embroidery, and beautiful frames leaned over forms inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Others, more remote, occasionally burst into melody as they tried the passages of

a new and exclusive air given to them in MS. by some titled and devoted friend, for the private use of the aristocracy alone, and absolutely prohibited for publication.

The Duchess, herself the superlative of beauty, wealth, and position, was married to the highest noble in the Three Kingdoms. Those who talked about such matters said that their progeny were exactly like their parents, — a peculiarity of the aristocratic and wealthy. They all looked like brothers and sisters, except their parents, who, such was their purity of blood, the perfection of their manners, and the opulence of their condition, might have been taken for their own children's elder son and daughter. The daughters, with one exception, were all married to the highest nobles in the land. That exception was the Lady Coriander, who, there being no vacancy above a marquis and a rental of £1,000,000, waited. Gathered around the refined and sacred circle of their breakfast-table, with their glittering coronets, which, in filial respect to their father's Tory instincts and their mother's Ritualistic tastes, they always wore on their regal brows, the effect was dazzling as it was refined. It was this peculiarity and their strong family resemblance which led their brother-in-law, the good-humored St. Addlegourd, to say that, "'Pon my soul, you know, the whole precious mob looked like a ghastly pack of court cards, you know." St. Addlegourd was a radical. Having a rent-roll of £15,000,000, and belonging to one of the oldest families in Britain, he could afford to be.

"Mamma, I've just dropped a pearl," said the Lady Coriander, bending over the Persian hearth-rug.

"From your lips, sweet friend?" said Lothaw, who came of age and entered the room at the same moment.

"No, from my work. It was a very valuable pearl, mamma; papa gave Isaacs Sons £50,000 for the two."

"Ah, indeed," said the Duchess, languidly rising; "let us go to luncheon."

“But, your Grace,” interposed Lothaw, who was still quite young, and had dropped on all fours on the carpet in search of the missing gem, “consider the value” —

“Dear friend,” interposed the Duchess with infinite tact, gently lifting him by the tails of his dress coat, “I am waiting for your arm.”

## CHAPTER II

Lothaw was immensely rich. The possessor of seventeen castles, fifteen villas, nine shooting-boxes, and seven town houses, he had other estates of which he had not even heard.

Everybody at Plusham played croquet, and none badly. Next to their purity of blood and great wealth, the family were famous for this accomplishment. Yet Lothaw soon tired of the game, and after seriously damaging his aristocratically large foot in an attempt to “tight croquet” the Lady Aniseed’s ball, he limped away to join the Duchess.

“I ’m going to the hennery,” she said.

“Let me go with you; I dearly love fowls — broiled,” he added thoughtfully.

“The Duke gave Lady Montairy some large Cochins the other day,” continued the Duchess, changing the subject with delicate tact.

“Lady Montairy  
Quite contrary,  
How do your Cochins grow?”

sang Lothaw gayly.

The Duchess looked shocked. After a prolonged silence Lothaw abruptly and gravely said: —

“If you please, ma’am, when I come into my property I should like to build some improved dwellings for the poor, and marry Lady Coriander.”

“You amaze me, dear friend; and yet both your aspirations are noble and eminently proper,” said the Duchess.

“Coriander is but a child, — and yet,” she added, looking graciously upon her companion, “for the matter of that, so are you.”

### CHAPTER III

Mr. Putney Giles’s was Lothaw’s first grand dinner-party. Yet, by carefully watching the others, he managed to acquit himself creditably, and avoided drinking out of the finger-bowl by first secretly testing its contents with a spoon. The conversation was peculiar and singularly interesting.

“Then you think that monogamy is simply a question of the thermometer?” said Mrs. Putney Giles to her companion.

“I certainly think that polygamy should be limited by isothermal lines,” replied Lothaw.

“I should say it was a matter of latitude,” observed a loud, talkative man opposite. He was an Oxford professor with a taste for satire, and had made himself very obnoxious to the company, during dinner, by speaking disparagingly of a former well-known chancellor of the exchequer, — a great statesman and brilliant novelist, — whom he feared and hated.

Suddenly there was a sensation in the room ; among the females it absolutely amounted to a nervous thrill. His Eminence, the Cardinal, was announced. He entered with great suavity of manner, and after shaking hands with everybody, asking after their relatives, and chucking the more delicate females under the chin with a high-bred grace peculiar to his profession, he sat down, saying, “And how do we all find ourselves this evening, my dears ?” in several different languages, which he spoke fluently.

Lothaw’s heart was touched. His deeply religious convictions were impressed. He instantly went up to this gifted being, confessed, and received absolution. “To-

morrow," he said to himself, "I will partake of the communion, and endow the Church with my vast estates. For the present I'll let the improved cottages go."

#### CHAPTER IV

As Lothaw turned to leave the Cardinal, he was struck by a beautiful face. It was that of a matron, slim but shapely as an Ionic column. Her face was Grecian, with Corinthian temples; Hellenic eyes that looked from jutting eyebrows, like dormer-windows in an Attic forehead, completed her perfect Athenian outline. She wore a black frock-coat tightly buttoned over her bloomer trousers, and a standing collar.

"Your lordship is struck by that face?" said a social parasite.

"I am; who is she?"

"Her name is Mary Ann. She is married to an American, and has lately invented a new religion."

"Ah!" said Lothaw eagerly, with difficulty restraining himself from rushing toward her.

"Yes; shall I introduce you?"

Lothaw thought of Lady Coriander's High Church proclivities, of the Cardinal, and hesitated: "No, I thank you, not now."

#### CHAPTER V

Lothaw was maturing. He had attended two womens' rights conventions, three Fenian meetings, had dined at White's, and had danced *vis-à-vis* to a prince of the blood, and eaten off gold plates at Crecy House.

His stables were near Oxford, and occupied more ground than the University. He was driving over there one day, when he perceived some rustics and menials endeavoring



to stop a pair of runaway horses attached to a carriage in which a lady and gentleman were seated. Calmly awaiting the termination of the accident, with high-bred courtesy Lothaw forbore to interfere until the carriage was overturned, the occupants thrown out, and the runaways secured by the servants, when he advanced and offered the lady the exclusive use of his Oxford stables.

Turning upon him a face whose perfect Hellenic details he remembered, she slowly dragged a gentleman from under the wheels into the light, and presented him with ladylike dignity as her husband, Major-General Camperdown, an American.

"Ah," said Lothaw carelessly, "I believe I have some land there. If I mistake not, my agent, Mr. Putney Giles, lately purchased the State of—Illinois—I think you call it."

"Exactly. As a former resident of the city of Chicago, let me introduce myself as your tenant."

Lothaw bowed graciously to the gentleman, who, except that he seemed better dressed than most Englishmen, showed no other signs of inferiority and plebeian extraction.

"We have met before," said Lothaw to the lady as she leaned on his arm, while they visited his stables, the University, and other places of interest in Oxford. "Pray tell me, what is this new religion of yours?"

"It is Woman Suffrage, Free Love, Mutual Affinity, and Communism. Embrace it and me."

Lothaw did not know exactly what to do. She, however, soothed and sustained his agitated frame, and sealed with an embrace his speechless form. The General approached and coughed slightly with gentlemanly tact.

"My husband will be too happy to talk with you further on this subject," she said with quiet dignity, as she regained the General's side. "Come with us to Oneida. Brook Farm is a thing of the past."

## CHAPTER VI

As Lothaw drove toward his country-seat, The Mural Inclosure, he observed a crowd, apparently of the working-class, gathered around a singular-looking man in the picturesque garb of an Ethiopian serenader. "What does he say?" inquired Lothaw of his driver.

The man touched his hat respectfully, and said, "My Mary Ann."

"'My Mary Ann!'" Lothaw's heart beat rapidly. Who was this mysterious foreigner? He had heard from Lady Coriander of a certain Popish plot; but could he connect Mr. Camperdown with it?

The spectacle of two hundred men at arms, who advanced to meet him at the gates of The Mural Inclosure, drove all else from the still youthful and impressible mind of Lothaw. Immediately behind them, on the steps of the baronial halls, were ranged his retainers, led by the chief cook and bottle-washer and head crumb-remover. On either side were two companies of laundry-maids, preceded by the chief crimper and fluter, supporting a long Ancestral Line, on which depended the family linen, and under which the youthful lord of the manor passed into the halls of his fathers. Twenty-four scullions carried the massive gold and silver plate of the family on their shoulders, and deposited it at the feet of their master. The spoons were then solemnly counted by the steward, and the perfect ceremony ended.

Lothaw sighed. He sought out the gorgeously gilded "Taj," or sacred mausoleum erected to his grandfather in the second-story front room, and wept over the man he did not know.

He wandered alone in his magnificent park, and then, throwing himself on a grassy bank, pondered on the Great

First Cause and the necessity of religion. "I will send Mary Ann a handsome present," said Lothaw thoughtfully.

## CHAPTER VII

"Each of these pearls, my lord, is worth fifty thousand guineas," said Mr. Amethyst, the fashionable jeweler, as he lightly lifted a large shovelful from a convenient bin behind his counter.

"Indeed," said Lothaw carelessly, "I should prefer to see some expensive ones."

"Some number sixes, I suppose," said Mr. Amethyst, taking a couple from the apex of a small pyramid that lay piled on the shelf. "These are about the size of the Duchess of Billingsgate's, but they are in finer condition. The fact is, her Grace permits her two children, the Marquis of Smithfield and the Duke of St. Giles, — two sweet pretty boys, my lord, — to use them as marbles in their games. Pearls require some attention, and I go down there regularly twice a week to clean them. Perhaps your lordship would like some ropes of pearls?"

"About half a cable's length," said Lothaw shortly, "and send them to my lodgings."

Mr. Amethyst became thoughtful. "I am afraid I have not the exact number — that is — excuse me one moment. I will run over to the Tower and borrow a few from the crown jewels." And before Lothaw could prevent him, he seized his hat and left Lothaw alone.

His position certainly was embarrassing. He could not move without stepping on costly gems which had rolled from the counter; the rarest diamonds lay scattered on the shelves; untold fortunes in priceless emeralds lay within his grasp. Although such was the aristocratic purity of his blood and the strength of his religious convictions that he

probably would not have pocketed a single diamond, still he could not help thinking that he might be accused of taking some. "You can search me, if you like," he said when Mr. Amethyst returned; "but I assure you, upon the honor of a gentleman, that I have taken nothing."

"Enough, my lord," said Mr. Amethyst, with a low bow; "we never search the aristocracy."

## CHAPTER VIII

As Lothaw left Mr. Amethyst's, he ran against General Camperdown. "How is Mary Ann?" he asked hurriedly.

"I regret to state that she is dying," said the General, with a grave voice, as he removed his cigar from his lips, and lifted his hat to Lothaw.

"Dying!" said Lothaw incredulously.

"Alas, too true!" replied the General. "The engagements of a long lecturing season, exposure in traveling by railway during the winter, and the imperfect nourishment afforded by the refreshments along the road, have told on her delicate frame. But she wants to see you before she dies. Here is the key of my lodging. I will finish my cigar out here."

Lothaw hardly recognized those wasted Hellenic outlines as he entered the dimly lighted room of the dying woman. She was already a classic ruin, — as wrecked and yet as perfect as the Parthenon. He grasped her hand silently.

"Open-air speaking twice a week, and saleratus bread in the rural districts, have brought me to this," she said feebly; "but it is well. The cause progresses. The tyrant man succumbs."

Lothaw could only press her hand.

"Promise me one thing. Don't — whatever you do — become a Catholic."

“Why?”

“The Church does not recognize divorce. And now embrace me. I would prefer at this supreme moment to introduce myself to the next world through the medium of the best society in this. Good-by. When I am dead, be good enough to inform my husband of the fact.”

## CHAPTER IX

Lothaw spent the next six months on an Aryan island, in an Aryan climate, and with an Aryan race.

“This is an Aryan landscape,” said his host, “and that is a Mary Ann statue.” It was, in fact, a full-length figure in marble of Mrs. General Camperdown.

“If you please, I should like to become a Pagan,” said Lothaw, one day, after listening to an impassioned discourse on Greek art from the lips of his host.

But that night, on consulting a well-known spiritual medium, Lothaw received a message from the late Mrs. General Camperdown, advising him to return to England. Two days later he presented himself at Plusham.

“The young ladies are in the garden,” said the Duchess. “Don’t you want to go and pick a rose?” she added with a gracious smile, and the nearest approach to a wink that was consistent with her patrician bearing and aquiline nose.

Lothaw went and presently returned with the blushing Coriander upon his arm.

“Bless you, my children,” said the Duchess. Then turning to Lothaw, she said: “You have simply fulfilled and accepted your inevitable destiny. It was morally impossible for you to marry out of this family. For the present, the Church of England is safe.”

# THE HAUNTED MAN

BY CH-R-S D-CK-N-S.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

PART I

THE FIRST PHANTOM

DON'T tell me that it was n't a knocker. I had seen it often enough, and I ought to know. So ought the three-o'clock beer, in dirty high-lows, swinging himself over the railing, or executing a demoniacal jig upon the doorstep; so ought the butcher, although butchers as a general thing are scornful of such trifles; so ought the postman, to whom knockers of the most extravagant description were merely human weaknesses, that were to be pitied and used. And so ought for the matter of that, etc., etc., etc.

But then it was *such* a knocker. A wild, extravagant, and utterly incomprehensible knocker. A knocker so mysterious and suspicious that policeman X 37, first coming upon it, felt inclined to take it instantly in custody, but compromised with his professional instincts by sharply and sternly noting it with an eye that admitted of no nonsense, but confidently expected to detect its secret yet. An ugly knocker; a knocker with a hard human face, that was a type of the harder human face within. A human face that held between its teeth a brazen rod. So hereafter, in the mysterious future should be held, etc., etc.

But if the knocker had a fierce human aspect in the glare of day, you should have seen it at night, when it

peered out of the gathering shadows and suggested an ambushed figure; when the light of the street lamps fell upon it, and wrought a play of sinister expression in its hard outlines; when it seemed to wink meaningly at a shrouded figure who, as the night fell darkly, crept up the steps and passed into the mysterious house; when the swinging door disclosed a black passage into which the figure seemed to lose itself and become a part of the mysterious gloom; when the night grew boisterous and the fierce wind made furious charges at the knocker, as if to wrench it off and carry it away in triumph. Such a night as this.

It was a wild and pitiless wind. A wind that had commenced life as a gentle country zephyr, but, wandering through manufacturing towns, had become demoralized, and, reaching the city, had plunged into extravagant dissipation and wild excesses. A roistering wind that indulged in Bacchanalian shouts on the street corners, that knocked off the hats from the heads of helpless passengers, and then fulfilled its duties by speeding away, like all young prodigals, — to sea.

He sat alone in a gloomy library listening to the wind that roared in the chimney. Around him novels and story-books were strewn thickly; in his lap he held one with its pages freshly cut, and turned the leaves wearily until his eyes rested upon a portrait in its frontispiece. And as the wind howled the more fiercely, and the darkness without fell blacker, a strange and fateful likeness to that portrait appeared above his chair and leaned upon his shoulder. The Haunted Man gazed at the portrait and sighed. The figure gazed at the portrait and sighed too.

“Here again?” said the Haunted Man.

“Here again,” it repeated in a low voice.

“Another novel?”

“Another novel.”

“The old story?”

“The old story.”

“I see a child,” said the Haunted Man, gazing from the pages of the book into the fire, — “a most unnatural child, a model infant. It is prematurely old and philosophic. It dies in poverty to slow music. It dies surrounded by luxury to slow music. It dies with an accompaniment of golden water and rattling carts to slow music. Previous to its decease it makes a will; it repeats the Lord’s Prayer, it kisses the ‘boofer lady.’ That child” —

“Is mine,” said the phantom.

“I see a good woman, undersized. I see several charming women, but they are all undersized. They are more or less imbecile and idiotic, but always fascinating and undersized. They wear coquettish caps and aprons. I observe that feminine virtue is invariably below the medium height, and that it is always simple and infantine. These women” —

“Are mine.”

“I see a haughty, proud, and wicked lady. She is tall and queenly. I remark that all proud and wicked women are tall and queenly. That woman” —

“Is mine,” said the phantom, wringing his hands.

“I see several things continually impending. I observe that whenever an accident, a murder, or death is about to happen, there is something in the furniture, in the locality, in the atmosphere, that foreshadows and suggests it years in advance. I cannot say that in real life I have noticed it, — the perception of this surprising fact belongs” —

“To me!” said the phantom. The Haunted Man continued, in a despairing tone, —

“I see the influence of this in the magazines and daily papers; I see weak imitators rise up and enfeeble the world with senseless formula. I am getting tired of it. It won’t do, Charles! it won’t do!” and the Haunted Man buried



his head in his hands and groaned. The figure looked down upon him sternly; the portrait in the frontispiece frowned as he gazed.

“Wretched man,” said the phantom, “and how have these things affected you?”

“Once I laughed and cried, but then I was younger. Now, I would forget them if I could.”

“Have then your wish. And take this with you, man whom I renounce. From this day henceforth you shall live with those whom I displace. Without forgetting me, ’t will be your lot to walk through life as if we had not met. But first you shall survey these scenes that henceforth must be yours. At one to-night, prepare to meet the phantom I have raised. Farewell!”

The sound of its voice seemed to fade away with the dying wind, and the Haunted Man was alone. But the firelight flickered gayly, and the light danced on the walls, making grotesque figures of the furniture.

“Ha, ha!” said the Haunted Man, rubbing his hands gleefully; “now for a whiskey punch and a cigar.”

## PART II

### THE SECOND PHANTOM

One! The stroke of the far-off bell had hardly died before the front door closed with a reverberating clang. Steps were heard along the passage; the library door swung open of itself, and the Knocker—yes, the Knocker—slowly strode into the room. The Haunted Man rubbed his eyes,—no! there could be no mistake about it,—it was the Knocker’s face, mounted on a misty, almost imperceptible body. The brazen rod was transferred from its mouth to its right hand, where it was held like a ghostly truncheon.

“It’s a cold evening,” said the Haunted Man.

“It is,” said the Goblin, in a hard, metallic voice.

“It must be pretty cold out there,” said the Haunted Man, with vague politeness. “Do you ever — will you — take some hot water and brandy?”

“No,” said the Goblin.

“Perhaps you’d like it cold, by way of change?” continued the Haunted Man, correcting himself, as he remembered the peculiar temperature with which the Goblin was probably familiar.

“Time flies,” said the Goblin coldly. “We have no leisure for idle talk. Come!” He moved his ghostly truncheon toward the window, and laid his hand upon the other’s arm. At his touch the body of the Haunted Man seemed to become as thin and incorporeal as that of the Goblin himself, and together they glided out of the window into the black and blowy night.

In the rapidity of their flight the senses of the Haunted Man seemed to leave him. At length they stopped suddenly.

“What do you see?” asked the Goblin.

“I see a battlemented mediæval castle. Gallant men in mail ride over the drawbridge, and kiss their gauntleted fingers to fair ladies, who wave their lily hands in return. I see fight and fray and tournament. I hear roaring heralds bawling the charms of delicate women, and shamelessly proclaiming their lovers. Stay. I see a Jewess about to leap from a battlement. I see knightly deeds, violence, rapine, and a good deal of blood. I’ve seen pretty much the same at Astley’s.”

“Look again.”

“I see purple moors, glens, masculine women, bare-legged men, priggish book-worms, more violence, physical excellence, and blood. Always blood, — and the superiority of physical attainments.”

“And how do you feel now?” said the Goblin.

The Haunted Man shrugged his shoulders. “None the better for being carried back and asked to sympathize with a barbarous age.”

The Goblin smiled and clutched his arm; they again sped rapidly away through the black night, and again halted.

“What do you see?” said the Goblin.

“I see a barrack-room, with a mess-table, and a group of intoxicated Celtic officers telling funny stories, and giving challenges to duel. I see a young Irish gentleman capable of performing prodigies of valor. I learn incidentally that the acme of all heroism is the cornetcy of a dragoon regiment. I hear a good deal of French! No, thank you,” said the Haunted Man hurriedly, as he stayed the waving hand of the Goblin; “I would rather *not* go to the Peninsula, and don’t care to have a private interview with Napoleon.”

Again the Goblin flew away with the unfortunate man, and from a strange roaring below them he judged they were above the ocean. A ship hove in sight, and the Goblin stayed its flight. “Look,” he said, squeezing his companion’s arm.

The Haunted Man yawned. “Don’t you think, Charles, you’re rather running this thing into the ground? Of course it’s very moral and instructive, and all that. But ain’t there a little too much pantomime about it? Come now!”

“Look!” repeated the Goblin, pinching his arm malevolently. The Haunted Man groaned.

“Oh, of course, I see her Majesty’s ship *Arethusa*. O’ course I am familiar with her stern First Lieutenant, her eccentric Captain, her one fascinating and several mischievous midshipmen. Of course I know it’s a splendid thing to see all this, and not to be seasick. Oh, there, the young gentlemen are going to play a trick on the purser. For

God's sake, let us go," and the unhappy man absolutely dragged the Goblin away with him.

When they next halted, it was at the edge of a broad and boundless prairie, in the middle of an oak opening.

"I see," said the Haunted Man, without waiting for his cue, but mechanically, and as if he were repeating a lesson which the Goblin had taught him, — "I see the Noble Savage. He is very fine to look at! But I observe, under his war-paint, feathers, and picturesque blanket, dirt, disease, and an unsymmetrical contour. I observe beneath his inflated rhetoric deceit and hypocrisy; beneath his physical hardihood cruelty, malice, and revenge. The Noble Savage is a humbug. I remarked the same to Mr. Catlin."

"Come," said the phantom.

The Haunted Man sighed, and took out his watch. "Could n't we do the rest of this another time?"

"My hour is almost spent, irreverent being, but there is yet a chance for your reformation. Come!"

Again they sped through the night, and again halted. The sound of delicious but melancholy music fell upon their ears.

"I see," said the Haunted Man, with something of interest in his manner, — "I see an old moss-covered manse beside a sluggish, flowing river. I see weird shapes: witches, Puritans, clergymen, little children, judges, mesmerized maidens, moving to the sound of melody that thrills me with its sweetness and purity. But, although carried along its calm and evenly flowing current, the shapes are strange and frightful: an eating lichen gnaws at the heart of each. Not only the clergymen, but witch, maiden, judge, and Puritan, all wear Scarlet Letters of some kind burned upon their hearts. I am fascinated and thrilled, but I feel a morbid sensitiveness creeping over me. I — I beg your pardon." The Goblin was yawning frightfully. "Well, perhaps we had better go."

“One more, and the last,” said the Goblin.

They were moving home. Streaks of red were beginning to appear in the eastern sky. Along the banks of the blackly flowing river by moorland and stagnant fens, by low houses, clustering close to the water’s edge, like strange mollusks crawled upon the beach to dry; by misty black barges, the more misty and indistinct seen through its mysterious veil, the river fog was slowly rising. So rolled away and rose from the heart of the Haunted Man, etc., etc.

They stopped before a quaint mansion of red brick. The Goblin waved his hand without speaking.

“I see,” said the Haunted Man, “a gay drawing-room. I see my old friends of the club, of the college, of society, even as they lived and moved. I see the gallant and unselfish men whom I have loved, and the snobs whom I have hated. I see strangely mingling with them, and now and then blending with their forms, our old friends Dick Steele, Addison, and Congreve. I observe, though, that these gentlemen have a habit of getting too much in the way. The royal standard of Queen Anne, not in itself a beautiful ornament, is rather too prominent in the picture. The long galleries of black oak, the formal furniture, the old portraits, are picturesque, but depressing. The house is damp. I enjoy myself better here on the lawn, where they are getting up a Vanity Fair. See, the bell rings, the curtain is rising, the puppets are brought out for a new play. Let me see.”

The Haunted Man was pressing forward in his eagerness, but the hand of the Goblin stayed him, and pointing to his feet he saw, between him and the rising curtain, a new made grave. And bending above the grave in passionate grief, the Haunted Man beheld the phantom of the previous night.

. . . . .

The Haunted Man started, and — woke. The bright sunshine streamed into the room. The air was sparkling with frost. He ran joyously to the window and opened it. A small boy saluted him with “Merry Christmas.” The Haunted Man instantly gave him a Bank of England note. “How much like Tiny Tim, Tom, and Bobby that boy looked, — bless my soul, what a genius this Dickens has!”

A knock at the door, and Boots entered.

“Consider your salary doubled instantly. Have you read ‘David Copperfield’?”

“Yezzur.”

“Your salary is quadrupled. What do you think of the ‘Old Curiosity Shop’?”

The man instantly burst into a torrent of tears, and then into a roar of laughter.

“Enough! Here are five thousand pounds. Open a porter-house, and call it ‘Our Mutual Friend.’ Huzza! I feel so happy!” And the Haunted Man danced about the room.

And so, bathed in the light of that blessed sun, and yet glowing with the warmth of a good action, the Haunted Man, haunted no longer, save by those shapes which make the dreams of children beautiful, reseated himself in his chair, and finished “Our Mutual Friend.”

# TERENCE DENVILLE

BY CH-L-S L-V-R

## CHAPTER I

### MY HOME

THE little village of Pilwiddle is one of the smallest and obscurest hamlets on the western coast of Ireland. On a lofty crag, overlooking the hoarse Atlantic, stands "Denville's Shot Tower," a corruption by the peasantry of "D'enville's Château," so called from my great-grandfather, Phelim St. Remy d'enville, who assumed the name and title of a French heiress with whom he ran away. To this fact my familiar knowledge and excellent pronunciation of the French language may be attributed, as well as many of the events which covered my after life.

The Denvilles were always passionately fond of field sports. At the age of four, I was already the boldest rider and the best shot in the country. When only eight, I won the St. Remy Cup at the Pilwiddle races, — riding my favorite blood-mare Hellfire. As I approached the stand amidst the plaudits of the assembled multitude, and cries of, "Thru for ye, Mashter Terence," and "oh, but it's a Dinville!" there was a slight stir among the gentry, who surrounded the Lord Lieutenant and other titled personages whom the race had attracted thither. "How young he is, — a mere child, and yet how noble-looking," said a sweet low voice, which thrilled my soul.

I looked up and met the full liquid orbs of the Hon.

Blanche Fitzroy Sackville, youngest daughter of the Lord Lieutenant. She blushed deeply. I turned pale and almost fainted. But the cold, sneering tones of a masculine voice sent the blood back again into my youthful cheek.

“Very likely the ragged scion of one of these banditti Irish gentry, who has taken naturally to ‘the road.’ He should be at school — though I warrant me his knowledge of Terence will not extend beyond his own name,” said Lord Henry Somerset, aid-de-camp to the Lord Lieutenant.

A moment and I was perfectly calm, though cold as ice. Dismounting, and stepping to the side of the speaker, I said in a low firm voice: —

“Had your lordship read Terence more carefully, you would have learned that banditti are sometimes proficient in other arts beside horsemanship,” and I touched his holster significantly with my hand. I had not read Terence myself, but with the skillful audacity of my race I calculated that a vague allusion, coupled with a threat, would embarrass him. It did.

“Ah — what mean you?” he said, white with rage.

“Enough, we are observed,” I replied; “Father Tom will wait on you this evening; and to-morrow morning, my lord, in the glen below Pilwiddle, we will meet again.”

“Father Tom — glen!” ejaculated the Englishman, with genuine surprise. “What? do priests carry challenges and act as seconds in your infernal country?”

“Yes,” I answered scornfully; “why should they not? Their services are more often necessary than those of a surgeon,” I added significantly, turning away.

The party slowly rode off, with the exception of the Hon. Blanche Sackville, who lingered for a moment behind. In an instant I was at her side. Bending her blushing face over the neck of her white filly, she said hurriedly: —

“Words have passed between Lord Somerset and your-



self. You are about to fight. Don't deny it — but hear me. You will meet him — I know your skill of weapons. He will be at your mercy. I entreat you to spare his life !”

I hesitated. “Never !” I cried passionately ; “ he has insulted a Denville !”

“Terence,” she whispered, “Terence — *for my sake?*”

The blood rushed to my cheeks, and her eyes sought the ground in bashful confusion.

“You love him then ?” I cried bitterly.

“No, no,” she said agitatedly, — “no, you do me wrong. I — I — cannot explain myself. My father ! — the Lady Dowager Sackville — the estate of Sackville — the borough — my uncle, Fitzroy Somerset. Ah ! what am I saying ? Forgive me. Oh, Terence,” she said, as her beautiful head sank on my shoulder, “you know not what I suffer !”

I seized her hand and covered it with passionate kisses. But the high-bred English girl, recovering something of her former hauteur, said hastily, “Leave me, leave me, but promise !”

“I promise,” I replied enthusiastically ; “I *will* spare his life !”

“Thanks, Terence, — thanks !” and disengaging her hand from my lips she rode rapidly away.

The next morning, the Hon. Captain Henry Somerset and myself exchanged nineteen shots in the glen, and at each fire I shot away a button from his uniform. As my last bullet shot off the last button from his sleeve, I remarked quietly, “You seem now, my lord, to be almost as ragged as the gentry you sneered at,” and rode haughtily away.

## CHAPTER II

## THE FIGHTING FIFTY-SIXTH

When I was nineteen years old my father sold the Château d'Enville, and purchased my commission in the "Fifty-sixth" with the proceeds. "I say, Denville," said young McSpadden, a boy-faced ensign, who had just joined, "you'll represent the estate in the Army, if you won't in the House." Poor fellow, he paid for his meaningless joke with his life, for I shot him through the heart the next morning. "You're a good fellow, Denville," said the poor boy faintly, as I knelt beside him; "good-by!" For the first time since my grandfather's death I wept. I could not help thinking that I would have been a better man if Blanche — But why proceed? Was she not now in Florence — the belle of the English embassy?

But Napoleon had returned from Elba. Europe was in a blaze of excitement. The Allies were preparing to resist the Man of Destiny. We were ordered from Gibraltar home, and were soon again en route for Brussels. I did not regret that I was to be placed in active service. I was ambitious, and longed for an opportunity to distinguish myself. My garrison life in Gibraltar had been monotonous and dull. I had killed five men in duel, and had an affair with the colonel of my regiment, who handsomely apologized before the matter assumed a serious aspect. I had been twice in love. Yet these were but boyish freaks and follies. I wished to be a man.

The time soon came, — the morning of Waterloo. But why describe that momentous battle, on which the fate of the entire world was hanging? Twice were the Fifty-sixth surrounded by French cuirassiers, and twice did we mow them down by our fire. I had seven horses shot under me,

and was mounting the eighth, when an orderly rode up hastily, touched his cap, and, handing me a dispatch, galloped rapidly away.

I opened it hurriedly and read : —

“LET PICTON ADVANCE IMMEDIATELY ON THE RIGHT.”

I saw it all at a glance. I had been mistaken for a general officer. But what was to be done? Picton's division was two miles away, only accessible through a heavy cross-fire of artillery and musketry. But my mind was made up.

In an instant I was engaged with an entire squadron of cavalry, who endeavored to surround me. Cutting my way through them, I advanced boldly upon a battery and sabred the gunners before they could bring their pieces to bear. Looking around, I saw that I had in fact penetrated the French centre. Before I was well aware of the locality, I was hailed by a sharp voice in French, —

“Come here, sir!”

I obeyed, and advanced to the side of a little man in a cocked hat.

“Has Grouchy come?”

“Not yet, sire,” I replied, — for it was the Emperor.

“Ha!” he said suddenly, bending his piercing eyes on my uniform; “a prisoner?”

“No, sire,” I said proudly.

“A spy?”

I placed my hand upon my sword, but a gesture from the Emperor bade me forbear.

“You are a brave man,” he said.

I took my snuff-box from my pocket, and, taking a pinch, replied by handing it, with a bow, to the Emperor.

His quick eye caught the cipher on the lid.

“What! a D'Enville? Ha! this accounts for the purity of your accent. Any relation to Roderick d'Enville?”

“My father, sire.”

“He was my schoolfellow at the Ecole Polytechnique. Embrace me!” And the Emperor fell upon my neck in the presence of his entire staff. Then, recovering himself, he gently placed in my hand his own magnificent snuff-box, in exchange for mine, and hanging upon my breast the cross of the Legion of Honor which he took from his own, he bade one of his marshals conduct me back to my regiment.

I was so intoxicated with the honor of which I had been the recipient, that on reaching our lines I uttered a shout of joy and put spurs to my horse. The intelligent animal seemed to sympathize with my feelings, and fairly flew over the ground. On a rising eminence a few yards before me stood a gray-haired officer, surrounded by his staff. I don't know what possessed me, but putting spurs to my horse, I rode at him boldly, and with one bound cleared him, horse and all. A shout of indignation arose from the assembled staff. I wheeled suddenly, with the intention of apologizing, but my mare misunderstood me, and, again dashing forward, once more vaulted over the head of the officer, this time unfortunately uncovering him by a vicious kick of her hoof. “Seize him!” roared the entire army. I was seized. As the soldiers led me away, I asked the name of the gray-haired officer. “That — why, that's the DUKE OF WELLINGTON!”

I fainted.

. . . . .  
For six months I had brain fever. During my illness ten grapeshot were extracted from my body which I had unconsciously received during the battle. When I opened my eyes I met the sweet glance of a Sister of Charity.

“Blanche!” I stammered feebly.

“The same,” she replied.

“You here?”

“Yes, dear; but hush! It's a long story. You see,

dear Terence, your grandfather married my great-aunt's sister, and your father again married my grandmother's niece, who, dying without a will, was, according to the French law" —

"But I do not comprehend," I said.

"Of course not," said Blanche, with her old sweet smile; "you've had brain fever; so go to sleep."

I understood, however, that Blanche loved me; and I am now, dear reader, Sir Terence Sackville, K. C. B., and Lady Blanche is Lady Sackville.

# MARY MCGILLUP

A SOUTHERN NOVEL

AFTER BELLE BOYD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY G. A. S-LÁ

## INTRODUCTION

“WILL you write me up?”

The scene was near Temple Bar. The speaker was the famous rebel Mary McGillup, — a young girl of fragile frame, and long, lustrous black hair. I must confess that the question was a peculiar one, and, under the circumstances, somewhat puzzling. It was true I had been kindly treated by the Northerners, and, though prejudiced against them, was to some extent under obligations to them. It was true that I knew little or nothing of American politics, history, or geography. But when did an English writer ever weigh such trifles? Turning to the speaker, I inquired with some caution the amount of pecuniary compensation offered for the work.

“Sir!” she said, drawing her fragile form to its full height, “you insult me, — you insult the South.”

“But look ye here, d’ye see — the tin — the blunt — the ready — the stiff, you know. Don’t ye see, we can’t do without that, you know!”

“It shall be contingent on the success of the story,” she answered haughtily. “In the mean time take this precious gem.” And drawing a diamond ring from her finger, she placed it with a roll of MSS. in my hands, and vanished.

Although unable to procure more than £1 2s. 6d. from an intelligent pawnbroker to whom I stated the circumstances and with whom I pledged the ring, my sympathies with the cause of a downtrodden and chivalrous people were at once enlisted. I could not help wondering that in rich England, the home of the oppressed and the free, a young and lovely woman like the fair author of those pages should be obliged to thus pawn her jewels — her marriage gift — for the means to procure her bread! With the exception of the English aristocracy, — who much resemble them, — I do not know of a class of people that I so much admire as the Southern planters. May I become better acquainted with both!

Since writing the above, the news of Mr. Lincoln's assassination has reached me. It is enough for me to say that I am dissatisfied with the result. I do not attempt to excuse the assassin. Yet there will be men who will charge this act upon the chivalrous South. This leads me to repeat a remark once before made by me in this connection, which has become justly celebrated. It is this: —

“It is usual, in cases of murder, to look for the criminal among those who expect to be benefited by the crime. In the death of Lincoln, his immediate successor in office alone receives the benefit of his dying.”

If her Majesty Queen Victoria were assassinated, which Heaven forbid, the one most benefited by her decease would, of course, be his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, her immediate successor. It would be unnecessary to state that suspicion would at once point to the real culprit, which would of course be his Royal Highness. This is logic.

But I have done. After having thus stated my opinion in favor of the South, I would merely remark that there is One who judgeth all things, — who weigheth the cause between brother and brother, — and awardeth the perfect

retribution; and whose ultimate decision I, as a British subject, have only anticipated.

G. A. S.

## CHAPTER I

Every reader of Belle Boyd's narrative will remember an allusion to a "lovely, fragile-looking girl of nineteen," who rivaled Belle Boyd in devotion to the Southern cause, and who, like her, earned the enviable distinction of being a "rebel spy."

I am that "fragile" young creature. Although on friendly terms with the late Miss Boyd, now Mrs. Hardinge, candor compels me to state that nothing but our common politics prevents me from exposing the ungenerous spirit she has displayed in this allusion. To be dismissed in a single paragraph after years of — But I anticipate. To put up with this feeble and forced acknowledgment of services rendered would be a confession of a craven spirit, which, thank God, though "fragile" and only "nineteen," I do not possess. I may not have the "blood of a Howard" in my veins, as some people, whom I shall not disgrace myself by naming, claim to have, but I have yet to learn that the race of McGillup ever yet brooked slight or insult. I shall not say that attention in certain quarters seems to have turned *some people's* heads; nor that it would have been more delicate if certain folks had kept quiet on the subject of their courtship, and the rejection of certain offers, when it is known that their forward conduct was all that procured them a husband! Thank Heaven, the South has some daughters who are above such base considerations! While nothing shall tempt me to reveal the promises to share equally the fame of certain enterprises, which were made by one who shall now be nameless, I have deemed it only just to myself to put my own adventures upon record. If



they are not equal to those of another individual, it is because, though "fragile," my education has taught me to have some consideration for the truth. I am done.

## CHAPTER II

I was born in Missouri. My dislike for the Northern scum was inherent. This was shown, at an early age, in the extreme distaste I exhibited for Webster's spelling-book, — the work of a well-known Eastern Abolitionist. I cannot be too grateful for the consideration shown by my chivalrous father, — a gentleman of the old school, — who resisted to the last an attempt to introduce Mitchell's Astronomy and Geography into the public school of our district. When I state that this same Mitchell became afterward a hircling helot in the Yankee Army, every intelligent reader will appreciate the prophetic discrimination of this true son of the South.

I was eight years old when I struck the first blow for Southern freedom against the Northern Tyrant. It is hardly necessary to state that in this instance the oppressor was a pale, overworked New England "schoolmarm." The principle for which I was contending, I felt, however, to be the same. Resenting an affront put upon me, I one day heaved a rock<sup>1</sup> at the head of the Vandal schoolmistress. I was seized and overpowered. My pen falters as I reach the climax. English readers will not give credit to this sickening story, — the civilized world will avert its head, — but I, Mary McGillup, was publicly SPANKED!

<sup>1</sup> NOTE, BY G. A. S.—In the Southwest, any stone larger than a pea is termed "a rock."

## CHAPTER III

But the chaotic vortex of civil war approached, and fell destruction, often procrastinated, brooded in storm.<sup>1</sup> As the English people may like to know what was really the origin of the Rebellion, I have no hesitation in giving them the true and only cause. Slavery had nothing to do with it, although the violation of the Declaration of Independence, in the disregard by the North of the Fugitive Slave Law,<sup>2</sup> might have provoked a less fiery people than the Southrons. At the inception of the struggle a large amount of Southern indebtedness was held by the people of the North. To force payment from the generous but insolvent debtor — to obtain liquidation from the Southern planter — was really the soulless and mercenary object of the craven Northerners. Let the common people of England look to this. Let the improvident literary hack, the starved impecunious Grub Street debtor, the newspaper frequenter of sponging-houses, remember this in their criticisms of the vile and slavish Yankee.

## CHAPTER IV

The roasting of an Abolitionist, by a greatly infuriated community, was my first taste of the horrors of civil war. Heavens! Why will the North persist in this fratricidal warfare? The expulsion of several Union refugees, which soon followed, now fairly plunged my beloved State into the seething vortex.

<sup>1</sup> I make no pretension to fine writing, but perhaps Mrs. Hardinge can lay over that. Oh, of course! M. McG.

<sup>2</sup> The Declaration of Independence grants to each subject "the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness." A fugitive slave may be said to personify "life, liberty, and happiness." Hence his pursuit is really legal. This is logic. G. A. S.

I was sitting at the piano one afternoon, singing that stirring refrain, so justly celebrated, but which a craven spirit, unworthy of England, has excluded from some of her principal restaurants, and was dwelling with some enthusiasm on the following line : —

“Huzza! she spurns the Northern scum!”

when a fragment of that scum, clothed in that detestable blue uniform which is the symbol of oppression, entered the apartment.

“I have the honor of addressing the celebrated rebel spy, Miss McGillup?” said the Vandal officer.

In a moment I was perfectly calm. With the exception of slightly expectorating twice in the face of the minion, I did not betray my agitation. Haughtily, yet firmly, I replied, —

“I am.”

“You looked as if you might be,” the brute replied, as he turned on his heel to leave the apartment.

In an instant I threw myself before him. “You shall not leave here thus,” I shrieked, grappling him with an energy which no one, seeing my frail figure, would have believed. “I know the reputation of your hireling crew. I read your dreadful purpose in your eye. Tell me not that your designs are not sinister. You came here to insult me, — to kiss me, perhaps. You shan’t, — you naughty man. Go away!”

The blush of conscious degradation rose to the cheek of the Lincoln hireling as he turned his face away from mine.

In an instant I drew my pistol from my belt, which, in anticipation of some such outrage, I always carried, and shot him.

## CHAPTER V

"Thy forte was less to act than speak,  
Maryland !  
Thy politics were changed each week,  
Maryland !  
With Northern Vandals thou wast meek,  
With sympathizers thou wouldst shriek,  
I know thee — oh, 't was like thy cheek !  
Maryland ! my Maryland !"

After committing the act described in the preceding chapter, which every English reader will pardon, I went upstairs, put on a clean pair of stockings, and, placing a rose in my lustrous black hair, proceeded at once to the camp of Generals Price and Mosby to put them in possession of information which would lead to the destruction of a portion of the Federal Army. During a great part of my flight I was exposed to a running fire from the Federal pickets of such coarse expressions as, "Go it, Sally Reb," "Dust it, my Confederate Beauty," but I succeeded in reaching the glorious Southern camp uninjured.

In a week afterwards I was arrested, by a lettre de cachet of Mr. Stanton, and placed in the Bastile. British readers of my story will express surprise at these terms, but I assure them that not only these articles but tumbrils, guillotines, and conciergeries were in active use among the Federals. If substantiation be required, I refer to the Charleston "Mercury," the only reliable organ, next to the New York "Daily News," published in the country. At the Bastile I made the acquaintance of the accomplished and elegant author of "Guy Livingstone,"<sup>1</sup> to whom I presented a curiously carved thigh-bone of a Union officer, and

<sup>1</sup> The recent conduct of Mr. Livingstone renders him unworthy of my notice. His disgusting praise of Belle Boyd, and complete ignoring of my claims, show the artfulness of some females and puppyism of some men.

from whom I received the following beautiful acknowledgment: —

DEMOISELLE: — Should I ever win hame to my ain countrie, I make mine avow to enshrine in my reliquaire this elegant bijouterie and offering of La belle Rebelle. Nay, methinks this fraction of man's anatomy were some compensation for the rib lost by the "grand old gardener," Adam.

## CHAPTER VI

Released at last from durance vile, and placed on board of an Erie canal-boat, on my way to Canada, I for a moment breathed the sweets of liberty. Perhaps the interval gave me opportunity to indulge in certain reveries which I had hitherto sternly dismissed. Henry Breckinridge Folair, a consistent Copperhead, captain of the canal-boat, again and again pressed that suit I had so often rejected.

It was a lovely moonlight night. We sat on the deck of the gliding craft. The moonbeam and the lash of the driver fell softly on the flanks of the off horse, and only the surging of the tow-rope broke the silence. Folair's arm clasped my waist. I suffered it to remain. Placing in my lap a small but not ungrateful roll of checkerberry lozenges, he took the occasion to repeat softly in my ear the words of a motto he had just unwrapped — with its graceful covering of the tissue paper — from a sugar almond. The heart of the wicked little rebel, Mary McGillup, was won!

The story of Mary McGillup is done. I might have added the journal of my husband, Henry Breckinridge Folair, but as it refers chiefly to his freights and a schedule of his passengers, I have been obliged, reluctantly, to suppress it.

It is due to my friends to say that I have been requested not to write this book. Expressions have reached my ears, the reverse of complimentary. I have been told that its publication will probably insure my banishment for life. Be it so. If the cause for which I labored have been subserved, I am content.

# THE HOODLUM BAND

OR

THE BOY CHIEF, THE INFANT POLITICIAN, AND THE PIRATE  
PRODIGY

## CHAPTER I

It was a quiet New England village. Nowhere in the valley of the Connecticut the autumn sun shone upon a more peaceful, pastoral, manufacturing community. The wooden nutmegs were slowly ripening on the trees, and the white-pine hams for Western consumption were gradually rounding into form under the deft manipulation of the hardy American artisan. The honest Connecticut farmer was quietly gathering from his threshing-floor the shoe-pegs, which, when intermixed with a fair proportion of oats, offered a pleasing substitute for fodder to the effete civilizations of Europe. An almost Sabbath-like stillness prevailed. Doemville was only seven miles from Hartford, and the surrounding landscape smiled with the conviction of being fully insured.

Few would have thought that this peaceful village was the home of the three young heroes whose exploits would hereafter — But we anticipate.

Doemville Academy was the principal seat of learning in the county. Under the grave and gentle administration of the venerable Doctor Context, it had attained just popularity. Yet the increasing infirmities of age obliged the doctor to relinquish much of his trust to his assistants, who,

it is needless to say, abused his confidence. Before long their brutal tyranny and deep-laid malevolence became apparent. Boys were absolutely forced to study their lessons. The sickening fact will hardly be believed, but during school-hours they were obliged to remain in their seats with the appearance, at least, of discipline. It is stated by good authority that the rolling of croquet-balls across the floor during recitation was objected to, under the fiendish excuse of its interfering with their studies. The breaking of windows by baseballs, and the beating of small scholars with bats, was declared against. At last, bloated and arrogant with success, the under-teachers threw aside all disguise, and revealed themselves in their true colors. A cigar was actually taken out of a day-scholar's mouth during prayers! A flask of whiskey was dragged from another's desk, and then thrown out of the window. And finally, Profanity, Hazing, Theft, and Lying were almost discouraged.

Could the youth of America, conscious of their power, and a literature of their own, tamely submit to this tyranny? Never! We repeat it firmly. Never! We repeat it to parents and guardians. Never! But the fiendish tutors, chuckling in their glee, little knew what was passing through the cold, haughty intellect of Charles Francis Adams Golightly, aged ten; what curled the lip of Benjamin Franklin Jenkins, aged seven; or what shone in the bold, blue eyes of Bromley Chitterlings, aged six and a half, as they sat in the corner of the playground at recess. Their only other companion and confidant was the negro porter and janitor of the school, known as "Pirate Jim."

Fitly, indeed, was he named, as the secrets of his early wild career — confessed freely to his noble young friends — plainly showed. A slaver at the age of seventeen, the ringleader of a mutiny on the African coast at the age of twenty, a privateersman during the last war with England,



the commander of a fire-ship and its sole survivor at twenty-five, with a wild, intermediate career of unmixed piracy until the Rebellion called him to civil service again as a blockade runner, and peace and a desire for rural repose led him to seek the janitorship of the Doemville Academy, where no questions were asked and references not exchanged — he was, indeed, a fit mentor for our daring youth. Although a man whose days had exceeded the usual space allotted to humanity, the various episodes of his career footing his age up to nearly one hundred and fifty-nine years, he scarcely looked it, and was still hale and vigorous.

“Yes,” continued Pirate Jim critically; “I don’t think he was any bigger nor you, Master Clitterlings, if as big, when he stood on the fork’stle of my ship and shot the captain o’ that East Injyman dead. We used to call him little Weevils, he was so young-like. But, bless your hearts, boys! he wa ’n’t anything to Little Sammy Barlow. ez once crep’ up inter the captain’s stateroom on a Rooshin frigate, stabbed him to the heart with a jack-knife, then put on the captain’s uniform and his cocked hat, took command of the ship, and fout her hisself.”

“Was n’t the captain’s clothes big for him?” asked B. Franklin Jenkins anxiously.

The janitor eyed young Jenkins with pained dignity.

“Did n’t I say the Rooshin captain was a small, a very small, man? Rooshins is small, likewise Greeks.”

A noble enthusiasm beamed in the faces of the youthful heroes.

“Was Barlow as large as me?” asked C. F. Adams Golightly, lifting his curls from his Jove-like brow.

“Yes; but, then, he hed hed, so to speak, experiences. It was allowed that he had pizened his schoolmaster afore he went to sea. But it’s dry talking, boys.”

Golightly drew a flask from his jacket and handed it to the janitor. It was his father’s best brandy. The heart of the honest old seaman was touched.

“ Bless ye, my own pirate boy ! ” he said in a voice suffocating with emotion.

“ I ’ve got some tobacco, ” said the youthful Jenkins, “ but it ’s fine cut ; I use only that now. ”

“ I kin buy some plug at the corner grocery, ” said Pirate Jim, “ only I left my portmoney at home. ”

“ Take this watch, ” said young Golightly ; “ ’t is my father’s. Since he became a tyrant and usurper, and forced me to join a corsair’s band, I ’ve begun by dividing the property. ”

“ This is idle trifling, ” said young Chitterlings wildly. “ Every moment is precious. Is this an hour to give to wine and wassail ? Ha, we want action — action ! We must strike the blow for freedom to-night — ay, this very night. The scow is already anchored in the mill-dam, freighted with provisions for a three months’ voyage. I have a black flag in my pocket. Why, then, this cowardly delay ? ”

The two elder youths turned with a slight feeling of awe and shame to gaze on the glowing cheeks and high, haughty crest of their youngest comrade — the bright, the beautiful Bromley Chitterlings. Alas ! that very moment of forgetfulness and mutual admiration was fraught with danger. A thin, dyspeptic, half-starved tutor approached.

“ It is time to resume your studies, young gentlemen, ” he said, with fiendish politeness.

They were his last words on earth.

“ Down, Tyrant ! ” screamed Chitterlings.

“ Sic him — I mean, sic semper tyrannis ! ” said the classical Golightly.

A heavy blow on the head from a baseball bat, and the rapid projection of a baseball against his empty stomach, brought the tutor a limp and lifeless mass to the ground. Golightly shuddered. Let not my young readers blame him too rashly. It was his first homicide.

“Search his pockets,” said the practical Jenkins.

They did so, and found nothing but a Harvard Triennial Catalogue.

“Let us fly,” said Jenkins.

“Forward to the boats!” cried the enthusiastic Chitterlings.

But C. F. Adams Golightly stood gazing thoughtfully at the prostrate tutor.

“This,” he said calmly, “is the result of a too free government and the common-school system. What the country needs is reform. I cannot go with you, boys.”

“Traitor!” screamed the others.

C. F. A. Golightly smiled sadly.

“You know me not. I shall not become a pirate — but a Congressman!”

Jenkins and Chitterlings turned pale.

“I have already organized two caucuses in a baseball club, and bribed the delegates of another. Nay, turn not away. Let us be friends, pursuing through various ways one common end. Farewell!” They shook hands.

“But where is Pirate Jim?” asked Jenkins.

“He left us but for a moment to raise money on the watch to purchase armament for the scow. Farewell!”

And so the gallant, youthful spirits parted, bright with the sunrise of hope.

That night a conflagration raged in Doemville. The Doemville Academy, mysteriously fired, first fell a victim to the devouring element. The candy-shop and cigar-store, both holding heavy liabilities against the academy, quickly followed. By the lurid gleams of the flames, a long, low, sloop-rigged scow, with every mast gone except one, slowly worked her way out of the mill-dam towards the Sound. The next day three boys were missing — C. F. Adam Golightly, B. F. Jenkins, and Bromley Chitterlings. Had they perished in the flames? Who shall say? Enough

that never more under these names did they again appear in the homes of their ancestors.

Happy, indeed, would it have been for Doemville had the mystery ended here. But a darker interest and scandal rested upon the peaceful village. During that awful night the boarding-school of Madame Brimborion was visited stealthily, and two of the fairest heiresses of Connecticut — daughters of the president of a savings bank and insurance director — were the next morning found to have eloped. With them also disappeared the entire contents of the savings bank, and on the following day the Flamingo Fire Insurance Company failed.

## CHAPTER II

Let my young readers now sail with me to warmer and more hospitable climes. Off the coast of Patagonia a long, low, black schooner proudly rides the seas, that break softly upon the vine-clad shores of that luxuriant land. Who is this that, wrapped in Persian rugs, and dressed in the most expensive manner, calmly reclines on the quarter-deck of the schooner, toying lightly ever and anon with the luscious fruits of the vicinity, held in baskets of solid gold by Nubian slaves? or at intervals, with daring grace, guides an ebony velocipede over the polished black walnut decks, and in and out the intricacies of the rigging? Who is it? well may be asked. What name is it that blanches with terror the cheeks of the Patagonian navy? Who but the Pirate Prodigy — the relentless Boy Scourer of Patagonian seas? Voyagers slowly drifting by the Silurian beach, coasters along the Devonian shore, still shudder at the name of Bromley Chitterlings — the Boy Avenger, late of Hartford, Connecticut.

It has been often asked by the idly curious, Why Avenger, and of what? Let us not seek to disclose the

awful secret hidden under that youthful jacket. Enough that there may have been that of bitterness in his past life that they

“Whose soul would sicken o’er the heaving wave,”

or “whose soul would heave above the sickening wave,” did not understand. Only one knew him, perhaps too well — a queen of the Amazons taken prisoner off Terra del Fuego a week previous. She loved the Boy Avenger. But in vain; his youthful heart seemed obdurate.

“Hear me,” at last he said, when she had for the seventh time wildly proffered her hand and her kingdom in marriage, “and know once and forever why I must decline your flattering proposal. I love another.”

With a wild, despairing cry she leaped into the sea, but was instantly rescued by the Pirate Prodigy. Yet, even in that supreme moment, such was his coolness, that on his way to the surface he captured a mermaid, and placing her in charge of his steward, with directions to give her a state-room, with hot and cold water, calmly resumed his place by the Amazon’s side. When the cabin door closed on his faithful servant, bringing champagne and ices to the interesting stranger, Chitterlings resumed his narrative with a choking voice —

“When I first fled from the roof of a tyrannical parent I loved the beautiful and accomplished Eliza J. Sniffen. Her father was president of the Workingmen’s Savings Bank, and it was perfectly understood that in the course of time the entire deposits would be his. But, like a vain fool, I wished to anticipate the future, and in a wild moment persuaded Miss Sniffen to elope with me; and with the entire cash assets of the bank, we fled together.” He paused, overcome with emotion. “But fate decreed it otherwise. In my feverish haste, I had forgotten to place among the stores of my pirate craft that peculiar kind of chocolate

caramel to which Eliza Jane was most partial. We were obliged to put into New Rochelle on the second day out, to enable Miss Sniffen to procure that delicacy at the nearest confectioner's, and match some zephyr worsteds at the first fancy shop. Fatal mistake. She went—she never returned!" In a moment he resumed, in a choking voice, "After a week's weary waiting, I was obliged to put to sea again, bearing a broken heart and the broken bank of her father. I have never seen her since."

"And you still love her?" asked the Amazon queen excitedly.

"Ay, forever!"

"Noble youth. Here, take the reward of thy fidelity; for know, Bromley Chitterlings, that I am Eliza Jane. Wearied with waiting, I embarked on a Peruvian guano ship—it's a long story, dear."

"And altogether too thin," said the Boy Avenger, fiercely releasing himself from her encircling arms. "Eliza Jane's age, a year ago, was only thirteen, and you are forty, if a day."

"True," she returned sadly, "but I have suffered much, and time passes rapidly, and I've grown. You would scarcely believe that this is my own hair."

"I know not," he replied, in gloomy abstraction.

"Forgive my deceit," she returned. "If you are affianced to another, let me at least be—a mother to you."

The Pirate Prodigy started, and tears came to his eyes. The scene was affecting in the extreme. Several of the oldest seamen—men who had gone through scenes of suffering with tearless eyes and unblanched cheeks—now retired to the spirit room to conceal their emotion. A few went into caucus in the forecabin, and returned with the request that the Amazonian queen should hereafter be known as the "Queen of the Pirates' Isle."

"Mother!" gasped the Pirate Prodigy.

"My son!" screamed the Amazonian queen.

They embraced. At the same moment a loud flop was heard on the quarter-deck. It was the forgotten mermaid, who, emerging from her stateroom, and ascending the companion-way at that moment, had fainted at the spectacle. The Pirate Prodigy rushed to her side with a bottle of smelling-salts.

She recovered slowly. "Permit me," she said, rising with dignity, "to leave the ship. I am unaccustomed to such conduct."

"Hear me — she is my mother!"

"She certainly is old enough to be," replied the mermaid. "And to speak of that being her own hair!" she said, as she rearranged with characteristic grace, a comb, and a small hand-mirror, her own luxuriant tresses.

"If I couldn't afford any other clothes, I might wear a switch, too!" hissed the Amazonian queen. "I suppose you don't dye it on account of the salt water? But perhaps you prefer green, dear?"

"A little salt water might improve your own complexion love."

"Fishwoman!" screamed the Amazonian queen.

"Bloomerite!" shrieked the mermaid.

In another instant they had seized each other.

"Mutiny! Overboard with them!" cried the Pirate Prodigy, rising to the occasion, and casting aside all human affection in the peril of the moment.

A plank was brought and the two women placed upon it.

"After you, dear," said the mermaid significantly to the Amazonian queen; "you're the oldest."

"Thank you!" said the Amazonian queen, stepping back. "Fish is always served first."

Stung by the insult, with a wild scream of rage the mermaid grappled her in her arms and leaped into the sea.

As the waters closed over them forever, the Pirate Prod-

igy sprung to his feet. "Up with the black flag, and bear away for New London," he shouted in trumpet-like tones.

"Ha! ha! Once more the Rover is free!"

Indeed it was too true. In that fatal moment he had again loosed himself from the trammels of human feeling and was once more the Boy Avenger.

### CHAPTER III

Again I must ask my young readers to mount my hippogriff and hie with me to the almost inaccessible heights of the Rocky Mountains. There, for years, a band of wild and untamable savages, known as the Pigeon Feet, had resisted the blankets and Bibles of civilization. For years the trails leading to their camp were marked by the bones of teamsters and broken wagons, and the trees were decked with the dying scalp-locks of women and children. The boldest of military leaders hesitated to attack them in their fortresses, and prudently left the scalping-knives, rifles, powder, and shot provided by a paternal government for their welfare lying on the ground a few miles from their encampment, with the request that they were not to be used until the military had safely retired. Hitherto, save an occasional incursion into the territory of the Knock-knees, a rival tribe, they had limited their depredations to the vicinity.

But lately a baleful change had come over them. Acting under some evil influence, they now pushed their warfare into the white settlements, carrying fire and destruction with them. Again and again had the Government offered them a free pass to Washington and the privilege of being photographed, but under the same evil guidance they refused. There was a singular mystery in their mode of aggression. Schoolhouses were always burned, the schoolmasters taken into captivity, and never again heard from.



A palace car on the Union Pacific Railway, containing an excursion party of teachers en route to San Francisco, was surrounded, its inmates captured, and — their vacancies in the school catalogue never again filled. Even a board of educational examiners, proceeding to Cheyenne, were taken prisoners, and obliged to answer questions they themselves had proposed, amidst horrible tortures. By degrees these atrocities were traced to the malign influence of a new chief of the tribe. As yet little was known of him but through his baleful appellations, "Young Man who Goes for His Teacher," and "He Lifts the Hair of the School-Marm." He was said to be small and exceedingly youthful in appearance. Indeed, his earlier appellative, "He Wipes His Nose on His Sleeve," was said to have been given to him to indicate his still boy-like habits.

It was night in the encampment and among the lodges of the Pigeon Toes. Dusky maidens flitted in and out among the campfires like brown moths, cooking the toothsome buffalo-hump, frying the fragrant bear's-meat, and stewing the esculent bean for the braves. For a few favored ones sput grasshoppers were reserved as a rare delicacy, although the proud Spartan soul of their chief scorned all such luxuries.

He was seated alone in his wigwam, attended only by the gentle Mushymush, fairest of the Pigeon Feet maidens. Nowhere were the characteristics of her great tribe more plainly shown than in the little feet that lapped over each other in walking. A single glance at the chief was sufficient to show the truth of the wild rumors respecting his youth. He was scarcely twelve, of proud and lofty bearing, and clad completely in wrappings of various-colored scalloped cloths, which gave him the appearance of a somewhat extra-sized penwiper. An enormous eagle's feather, torn from the wing of a bald eagle who once attempted to carry him away, completed his attire. It was also the

memento of one of his most superhuman feats of courage. He would undoubtedly have scalped the eagle but that nature had anticipated him.

"Why is the Great Chief sad?" said Mushymush softly. "Does his soul still yearn for the blood of the palefaced teachers? Did not the scalping of two professors of geology in the Yale exploring party satisfy his warrior's heart yesterday? Has he forgotten that Gardener and King are still to follow? Shall his own Mushymush bring him a botanist to-morrow? Speak, for the silence of my brother lies on my heart like the snow on the mountain, and checks the flow of my speech."

Still the proud Boy Chief sat silent. Suddenly he said, "Hiss!" and rose to his feet. Taking a long rifle from the ground he adjusted its sight. Exactly seven miles away on the slope of the mountain the figure of a man was seen walking. The Boy Chief raised the rifle to his unerring eye and fired. The man fell.

A scout was dispatched to scalp and search the body. He presently returned.

"Who was the paleface?" eagerly asked the chief.

"A life insurance agent."

A dark scowl settled on the face of the chief.

"I thought it was a book peddler."

"Why is my brother's heart sore against the book peddler?" asked Mushymush.

"Because," said the Boy Chief fiercely, "I am again without my regular dime novel — and I thought he might have one in his pack. Hear me, Mushymush. The United States mails no longer bring me my 'Young America' or my 'Boys' and Girls' Weekly.' I find it impossible, even with my fastest scouts, to keep up with the rear of General Howard, and replenish my literature from the sutler's wagon. Without a dime novel or a 'Young America,' how am I to keep up this Injin business?"

Mushymush remained in meditation a single moment. Then she looked up proudly.

"My brother has spoken. It is well. He shall have his dime novel. He shall know the kind of hairpin his sister Mushymush is."

And she arose and gamboled lightly as the fawn out of his presence.

In two hours she returned. In one hand she held three small flaxen scalps, in the other "The Boy Marauder," complete in one volume, price ten cents.

"Three palefaced children," she gasped, "were reading it in the tail-end of an emigrant wagon. I crept up to them softly. Their parents are still unaware of the accident," and she sank helpless at his feet.

"Noble girl!" said the Boy Chief, gazing proudly on her prostrate form; "and these are the people that a military despotism expects to subdue!"

#### CHAPTER IV

But the capture of several wagon-loads of commissary whiskey, and the destruction of two tons of stationery intended for the general commanding, which interfered with his regular correspondence with the War Department, at last awakened the United States military authorities to active exertion. A quantity of troops were massed before the Pigeon Feet encampment, and an attack was hourly imminent.

"Shine your boots, sir?"

It was the voice of a youth in humble attire, standing before the flap of the commanding general's tent.

The general raised his head from his correspondence.

"Ah," he said, looking down on the humble boy, "I see; I shall write that the appliances of civilization move steadily forward with the army. Yes," he added, "you

may shine my military boots. You understand, however, that to get your pay you must first" —

"Make a requisition on the commissary-general, have it certified to by the quartermaster, countersigned by the post-adjutant, and submitted by you to the War Department" —

"And charged as stationery," added the general gently. "You are, I see, an intelligent and thoughtful boy. I trust you neither use whiskey, tobacco, nor are ever profane?"

"I promised my sainted mother" —

"Enough! Go on with your blacking; I have to lead the attack on the Pigeon Feet at eight precisely. It is now half past seven," said the general, consulting a large kitchen clock that stood in the corner of his tent.

The little bootblack looked up — the general was absorbed in his correspondence. The bootblack drew a tin putty-blower from his pocket, took unerring aim, and nailed in a single shot the minute hand to the dial. Going on with his blacking, yet stopping ever and anon to glance over the general's plan of campaign, spread on the table before him, he was at last interrupted by the entrance of an officer.

"Everything is ready for the attack, general. It is now eight o'clock."

"Impossible! It is only half past seven."

"But my watch, and the watches of the staff" —

"Are regulated by my kitchen clock, that has been in my family for years. Enough! it is only half past seven."

The officer retired; the bootblack had finished one boot. Another officer appeared.

"Instead of attacking the enemy, general, we are attacked ourselves. Our pickets are already driven in."

"Military pickets should not differ from other pickets," said the bootblack modestly. "To stand firmly they should be well driven in."

“Ha! there is something in that,” said the general thoughtfully. “But who are you, who speak thus?”

Piping to his full height, the bootblack threw off his outer rags, and revealed the figure of the Boy Chief of the Pigeon Feet.

“Treason!” shrieked the general. “Order an advance along the whole line.”

But in vain. The next moment he fell beneath the tomahawk of the Boy Chief, and within the next quarter of an hour the United States army was dispersed. Thus ended the battle of Bootblack Creek.

## CHAPTER V

And yet the Boy Chief was not entirely happy. Indeed, at times he seriously thought of accepting the invitation extended by the Great Chief at Washington immediately after the massacre of his soldiers, and once more revisiting the haunts of civilization. His soul sickened in feverish inactivity; schoolmasters palled on his taste; he had introduced baseball, blind hooky, marbles, and peg-top among his Indian subjects, but only with indifferent success. The squaws persisted in boring holes through the china alleys and wearing them as necklaces; his warriors stuck pipes in their baseball bats, and made war-clubs of them. He could not but feel, too, that the gentle Mushymush, although devoted to her paleface brother, was deficient in culinary education. Her mince-pies were abominable; her jam far inferior to that made by his Aunt Sally of Doemville. Only an unexpected incident kept him equally from the extreme of listless sybaritic indulgence or of morbid cynicism. Indeed, at the age of twelve, he already had become disgusted with existence.

He had returned to his wigwam after an exhausting buffalo hunt, in which he had slain two hundred and sev-

enty-five buffaloes with his own hand, not counting the individual buffalo on which he had leaped, so as to join the herd, and which he afterward led into the camp a captive and a present to the lovely Mushymush. He had scalped two express riders, and a correspondent of the "New York Herald;" had despoiled the Overland Mail stage of a quantity of vouchers which enabled him to draw double rations from the Government, and was reclining on a bearskin, smoking and thinking of the vanity of human endeavor, when a scout entered, saying that a paleface youth had demanded access to his person.

"Is he a commissioner? If so, say that the red man is rapidly passing to the happy hunting-grounds of his fathers, and now desires only peace, blankets, and ammunition; obtain the latter, and then scalp the commissioner."

"But it is only a youth who asks an interview."

"Does he look like an insurance agent? If so, say that I have already policies in three Hartford companies. Meanwhile prepare the stake, and see that the squaws are ready with their implements of torture."

The youth was admitted; he was evidently only half the age of the Boy Chief. As he entered the wigwam, and stood revealed to his host, they both started. In another moment they were locked in each other's arms.

"Jenky, old boy!"

"Bromley, old fel!"

B. F. Jenkins, for such was the name of the Boy Chief, was the first to recover his calmness. Turning to his warriors he said proudly, —

"Let my children retire while I speak to the agent of our Great Father in Washington. Hereafter no latch-keys will be provided for the wigwams of the warriors. The practice of late hours must be discouraged."

"How!" said the warriors, and instantly retired.

"Whisper!" said Jenkins, drawing his friend aside.

"I am known here only as the Boy Chief of the Pigeon Toes."

"And I," said Bromley Chitterlings proudly, "am known everywhere as the Pirate Prodigy — the Boy Avenger of the Patagonian coast."

"But how came you here?"

"Listen! My pirate brig, the Lively Mermaid, now lies at Meiggs's wharf in San Francisco, disguised as a Mendocino lumber vessel. My pirate crew accompanied me here in a palace car from San Francisco."

"It must have been expensive," said the prudent Jenkins.

"It was, but they defrayed it by a collection from the other passengers, you understand. The papers will be full of it to-morrow. Do you take in the 'New York Sun'?"

"No; I dislike their Indian policy. But why are you here?"

"Hear me, Jenk! 'T is a long and a sad story. The lovely Eliza J. Sniffen, who fled with me from Doemville, was seized by her parents and torn from my arms at New Rochelle. Reduced to poverty by the breaking of the savings bank of which he was president — a failure to which I largely contributed, and the profits of which I enjoyed — I have since ascertained that Eliza Jane Sniffen was forced to become a schoolmistress, departed to take charge of a seminary in Colorado, and since then has never been heard from."

Why did the Boy Chief turn pale, and clutch at the tent-pole for support? Why, indeed?

"Eliza Jane Sniffen," gasped Jenkins, — "aged fourteen, red-haired, with a slight tendency to strabismus?"

"The same."

"Heaven help me! She died by my mandate!"

"Traitor!" shrieked Chitterlings, rushing at Jenkins with a drawn poniard.

But a figure interposed. The slight girlish form of Mushymush with outstretched hands stood between the exasperated Pirate Prodigy and the Boy Chief.

"Forbear," she said sternly to Chitterlings; "you know not what you do."

The two youths paused.

"Hear me," she said rapidly. "When captured in a confectioner's shop at New Rochelle, E. J. Sniffen was taken back to poverty. She resolved to become a school-mistress. Hearing of an opening in the West, she proceeded to Colorado to take exclusive charge of the pension-nat of Mdme. Chofie, late of Paris. On the way thither she was captured by the emissaries of the Boy Chief" —

"In consummation of a fatal vow I made, never to spare educational instructors," interrupted Jenkins.

"But in her captivity," continued Mushymush, "she managed to stain her face with poke-berry juice, and mingling with the Indian maidens was enabled to pass for one of the tribe. Once undetected, she boldly ingratiated herself with the Boy Chief, — how honestly and devotedly he best can tell, — for I, Mushymush, the little sister of the Boy Chief, am Eliza Jane Sniffen."

The Pirate Prodigy clasped her in his arms. The Boy Chief, raising his hand, ejaculated, —

"Bless you, my children!"

"There is but one thing wanting to complete this reunion," said Chitterlings, after a pause, but the hurried entrance of a scout stopped his utterance.

"A commissioner from the Great Father in Washington."

"Scalp him!" shrieked the Boy Chief; "this is no time for diplomatic trifling."

"We have; but he still insists upon seeing you, and has sent in his card."

The Boy Chief took it, and read aloud, in agonized accents, —



“ Charles Francis Adams Golightly, late page in United States Senate, and acting commissioner of United States.”

In another moment, Golightly, pale, bleeding, and, as it were, prematurely bald, but still cold and intellectual, entered the wigwam. They fell upon his neck and begged his forgiveness.

“ Don’t mention it,” he said quietly ; “ these things must and will happen under our present system of government. My story is brief. Obtaining political influence through caucuses, I became at last page in the Senate. Through the exertions of political friends, I was appointed clerk to the commissioner whose functions I now represent. Knowing through political spies in your own camp who you were, I acted upon the physical fears of the commissioner, who was an ex-clergyman, and easily induced him to deputize me to consult with you. In doing so, I have lost my scalp, but as the hirsute signs of juvenility have worked against my political progress, I do not regret it. As a partially bald young man I shall have more power. The terms that I have to offer are simply this: you can do everything you want, go anywhere you choose, if you will only leave this place. I have a hundred-thousand-dollar draft on the United States Treasury in my pocket at your immediate disposal.”

“ But what’s to become of me ?” asked Chitterlings.

“ Your case has already been under advisement. The Secretary of State, who is an intelligent man, has determined to recognize you as *de jure* and *de facto* the only loyal representative of the Patagonian Government. You may safely proceed to Washington as its envoy extraordinary. I dine with the secretary next week.”

“ And yourself, old fellow ?”

“ I only wish that twenty years from now you will recognize by your influence and votes the rights of C. F. A. Golightly to the presidency.”

And here ends our story. Trusting that my dear young friends may take whatever example or moral their respective parents and guardians may deem fittest from these pages, I hope in future years to portray further the career of those three young heroes I have already introduced in the springtime of life to their charitable consideration.

## EARLIER SKETCHES

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M'LISS

AN IDYL OF RED MOUNTAIN

THERE are two forms of this tale. The earlier one is that printed originally in *The Golden Era* and afterward and until this time included in Mr. Harte's collected writings. It is comprised in four chapters and occupies about thirty pages. When the present edition was under consideration, Mr. Harte called his publishers' attention to the fact that the editor of the same paper proposed to him some time later to continue it as a serial. In order to do this, he found himself obliged to make some changes in the earlier incidents. Accordingly he republished the story in its first form, but with some interpolations and alterations, and then proceeded with other chapters, making ten in all, "concluding it," he says, "rather abruptly when I found it was inartistically prolonged." This was in 1863. But even thus the story was not to be let alone. Ten years later, in 1873, another writer took the tale up at the end of the tenth chapter, added fifty more, and issued the whole in *The Golden Era*. When the continuation had been running some time, Mr. Harte discovered the fraud, and inserted a card in the same paper, advising the public that he had nothing whatever to do with this further amplification of his story. Afterward, when the whole was published in book form, he instituted legal proceedings and suppressed the sale.

The present form is Mr. Harte's revision and extension of his first, and is reprinted from *The Golden Era* with his consent.

EDITOR.

## CHAPTER I

## SMITH'S POCKET

JUST where the Sierra Nevada begins to subside in gentle undulations, and the rivers grow less rapid and yellow, on the side of a great red mountain stands Smith's Pocket. Seen from the red road at sunset, in the red light and the red dust, its white houses look like the outcroppings of quartz on the mountain side. The red stage, topped with red-shirted passengers, is lost to view half a dozen times in the tortuous descent, turning up unexpectedly in out-of-the-way places, and vanishing altogether within a hundred yards of the town. It is probably owing to this sudden twist in the road that the advent of a stranger at Smith's Pocket is usually attended with a peculiar circumstance. Dismounting from the vehicle at the stage office the too-confident traveler is apt to walk straight out of town under the impression that it lies in quite another direction. It is related that one of the tunnel men, two miles from town, met one of these self-reliant passengers with a carpetbag, umbrella, "Harper's Magazine," and other evidences of "civilization and refinement," plodding along over the road he had just ridden, vainly endeavoring to find the settlement of Smith's Pocket.

Had he been an observant traveler he might have found some compensation for his disappointment in the weird aspect of that vicinity. There were huge fissures on the hillside, and displacements of the red soil, resembling more the chaos of some primary elementary upheaval than the work of man; while, halfway down, a long flume straddled its narrow body and disproportionate legs over the chasm, like an enormous fossil of some forgotten antediluvian. At every step smaller ditches crossed the road, hiding in

their shallow depths unlovely streams that crept away to a clandestine union with the great yellow torrent below. Here and there the ruins of some cabin, with the chimney alone left intact and the hearthstone open to the skies, gave such a flat contradiction to the poetic delusion of Lares and Penates that the heart of the traveler must have collapsed as he gazed, and even the bar-room of the National Hotel have afterward seemed festive, and invested with preternatural comfort and domesticity.

The settlement of Smith's Pocket owed its origin to the finding of a "pocket" on its site by a veritable Smith. Five thousand dollars were taken out of it in one half-hour by Smith. Three thousand dollars were expended by Smith and others in erecting a flume and in tunneling. And then Smith's Pocket was found to be only a pocket, and subject like other pockets to depletion. Although Smith pierced the bowels of the great red mountain, that five thousand dollars was the first and the last return of his labor. The mountain grew reticent of its golden secrets, and the flume steadily ebbed away the remainder of Smith's fortune. Then Smith went into quartz mining. Then into quartz milling. Then into hydraulics and ditching, and then by easy degrees into saloon keeping. Presently it was whispered that Smith was drinking a good deal; then it was known that Smith was an habitual drunkard; and then people began to think, as they are apt to, that he had never been anything else. But the settlement of Smith's Pocket, like that of most discoveries, was happily not dependent on the fortune of its pioneer, and other parties projected tunnels and found pockets. So Smith's Pocket became a settlement with its two fancy stores, its two hotels, its one express office, and its two first families. Occasionally its one long straggling street was overawed by the assumption of the latest San Francisco fashions, imported per express, exclusively to the first families; making out-

raged nature, in the ragged outline of her furrowed surface, look still more homely, and putting personal insult on that greater portion of the population to whom the Sabbath, with a change of linen, brought merely the necessity of cleanliness without the luxury of adornment. Then there was a Methodist church, and hard by a monte bank, and a little beyond, on the mountain side, a graveyard; and then a little schoolhouse.

“The master,” as he was known to his little flock, sat alone one night in the schoolhouse, with some open copy-books before him, carefully making those bold and full characters which are supposed to combine the extremes of chirographical and moral excellence, and had got as far as “Riches are deceitful,” and was elaborating the noun with an insincerity of flourish that was quite in the spirit of his text, when he heard a gentle tapping. The woodpeckers had been busy about the roof, during the day, and the noise did not disturb his work. But the opening of the door, and the tapping continuing from the inside, caused him to look up. He was slightly startled by the figure of a young girl, dirty, and shabbily clad. Still her great black eyes, her coarse uncombed lusterless black hair falling over her sun-burned face, her red arms and feet streaked with the red soil, were all familiar to him. It was Melissa Smith—Smith’s motherless child.

“What can she want here?” thought the master. Everybody knew “M’liss,” as she was called, throughout the length and height of Red Mountain. Everybody knew her as an incorrigible girl. Her fierce, ungovernable disposition, her mad freaks and lawless character, were in their way as proverbial as the story of her father’s weakness, and as philosophically accepted by the townsfolk. She wrangled with and fought the schoolboys with keener invective and quite as powerful arm. She followed the trails with woodman’s craft, and the master had met her before, miles away,

shoeless, stockingless, and bareheaded on the mountain road. The miners' camps along the stream supplied her with subsistence during these voluntary pilgrimages, in freely offered alms. Not but that a larger protection had been previously extended to M'liss. The Rev. Joshua McSnagley, "stated" preacher, had placed her in the hotel as servant, by way of preliminary refinement, and had introduced her to his scholars at Sunday-school. But she threw plates occasionally at the landlord, and quickly retorted to the cheap witticisms of the guests, and created in the Sabbath-school a sensation that was so inimical to the orthodox dullness and placidity of that institution, that, with a decent regard for the starched frocks and unblemished morals of the two pink-and-white-faced children of the first families, the reverend gentleman had her ignominiously expelled. Such were the antecedents and such the character of M'liss, as she stood before the master. It was shown in the ragged dress, the unkempt hair and bleeding feet, and asked his pity. It flashed from her black fearless eyes, and commanded his respect.

"I come here to-night," she said rapidly and boldly, keeping her hard glance on his, "because I knew you was alone. I would n't come here when them gals was here. I hate 'em and they hates me. That's why. You keep school, — don't you? I want to be taught!"

If to the shabbiness of her apparel and uncomeliness of her tangled hair and dirty face she had added the humility of tears the master would have extended to her the usual moiety of pity, and nothing more. But with the natural though illogical instincts of his species, her boldness awakened in him something of that respect which all original natures pay unconsciously to one another in any grade. And he gazed at her the more fixedly as she went on still rapidly, her hand on the door-latch and her eyes on his.

"My name is M'liss — M'liss Smith! You can bet your

life on that. My father's Old Smith—Old Bummer Smith—that's what's the matter with him. M'liss Smith—and I'm comin' to school!"

"Well?" said the master.

Accustomed to be thwarted and opposed, often wantonly and cruelly, for no other purpose than to excite the violent impulses of her nature, the master's phlegm evidently took her by surprise. She stopped. She began to twist a lock of her hair between her fingers; and the rigid line of upper lip, drawn over the wicked little teeth, relaxed and quivered slightly. Then her eyes dropped, and something like a blush struggled up to her cheek, and tried to assert itself through the splashes of redder soil and the sunburn of years. Suddenly she threw herself forward, calling on God to strike her dead, and fell quite weak and helpless, with her face on the master's desk, crying and sobbing as if her heart would break.

The master lifted her gently, and waited for the paroxysm' to pass. When, with face still averted, she was repeating between her sobs the *mea culpa* of childish penitence—that "she'd be good, she did n't mean to," etc., it came to him to ask her why she had left Sabbath-school.

Why had she left Sabbath-school? Why? Oh, yes. What did he (McSnagley) want to tell her she was wicked for? What did he tell her that God hated her for? If God hated her, what did she want to go to Sabbath school for? *She* did n't want to be beholden to anybody who hated her.

Had she told McSnagley this?

Yes, she had.

The master laughed. It was a hearty laugh, and echoed so oddly in the little schoolhouse, and seemed so inconsistent and discordant with the sighing of the pines without, that he shortly corrected himself with a sigh. The sigh was quite as sincere in its way, however, and after a moment of serious silence he asked about her father.



Her father. What father? Whose father? What had he ever done for her? Why did the girls hate her? Come, now! What made the folks say, "Old Bummer Smith's M'liss" when she passed? Yes; oh, yes. She wished he was dead — she was dead — everybody was dead; and her sobs broke forth anew.

The master then, leaning over her, told her, as well as he could, what you or I might have said after hearing such unnatural theories from childish lips; only bearing in mind perhaps better than you or I the unnatural facts of her ragged dress, her bleeding feet, and the omnipresent shadow of her drunken father. Then raising her to her feet, he wrapped his shawl around her, and bidding her come early in the morning he walked with her down the road. Then he bade her "good-night." The moon shone brightly on the narrow path before them. He stood and watched the bent little figure as it staggered down the road, and waited until it had passed the little graveyard and reached the curve of the hill, where it turned and stood for a moment, a mere atom of suffering outlined against the far-off patient stars. Then he went back to his work. But the lines of the copybook thereafter faded into long parallels of never-ending road, over which childish figures seemed to pass sobbing and crying to the night. Then, the little school-house seeming lonelier than before, he shut the door and went home.

The next morning M'liss came to school. Her face had been washed, and her coarse black hair bore evidence of recent struggles with the comb, in which both had evidently suffered. The old defiant look shone occasionally in her eyes, but her manner was tamer and more subdued. Then began a series of little trials and self-sacrifices in which master and pupil bore an equal part, and which increased the confidence and sympathy between them. Although obedient under the master's eye, at times during recess, if

thwarted or stung by a fancied slight, M'liss would rage in ungovernable fury, and many a palpitating young savage, finding himself matched with his own weapons of torment, would seek the master with torn jacket and scratched face, and complaints of the dreadful M'liss. There was a serious division among the townspeople on the subject ; some threatening to withdraw their children from such evil companionship, and others as warmly upholding the course of the master in his work of reclamation. Meanwhile, with a steady persistence that seemed quite astonishing to him on looking back afterward, the Master drew M'liss gradually out of the shadow of her past life, as though it were but her natural progress down the narrow path on which he had set her feet the moonlight night of their first meeting. Remembering the experience of the evangelical McSnagley, he carefully avoided that Rock of Ages on which that unskillful pilot had shipwrecked her young faith. But if, in the course of her reading, she chanced to stumble upon those few words which have lifted such as she above the level of the older, the wiser, and the more prudent, — if she learned something of a faith that is symbolized by suffering, and the old light softened in her eyes, it did not take the shape of a lesson. A few of the plainer people had made up a little sum by which the ragged M'liss was enabled to assume the garments of respect and civilization, and often a rough shake of the hand and words of commendation from a red-shirted and burly figure, sent a glow to the cheek of the young master and set him to thinking if it was altogether deserved.

Three months had passed, from the time of their first meeting, and the master was sitting late one evening over the moral and sententious copies, when there came a tap at the door, and again M'liss stood before him. She was neatly clad and clean-faced, and there was nothing perhaps but the long black hair and bright black eyes to remind him

of his former apparition. "Are you busy?" she asked; "can you come with me?" and on his signifying his readiness, in her old willful way she said, "Come, then, quick!"

They passed out of the door together and into the dark road. As they entered the town, the master asked her whither she was going. She replied, "to see her father."

It was the first time he had heard her use that filial expression, or, indeed, allude to him in any other way than "Old Smith" or the "Old Man." It was the first time in many weeks that she had spoken of him at all. He had been missed from the settlement for the past fortnight, and the master had credited the rumors of the townfolk that Smith had "struck something rich" on the "North Fork," about ten miles from the village. As they neared the settlement, the master gathered from M'liss that the rumor was untrue, and that she had seen her father that day. As she grew reticent to further questioning, and as the master was satisfied from her manner that she had some definite purpose beyond her usual willfulness, he passively resigned himself and followed her.

Through remote grogeries, restaurants, and saloons; in gambling-hells and dance-houses, the master, preceded by M'liss, passed and repassed. In the reeking smoke and blasphemous outcries of noisome dens, the child, holding the master's hand, pursued her search with a strange familiarity, perfect self-possession, and implied protection of himself, that even in his anxiety seemed ludicrous. Some of the revelers, recognizing M'liss, called to her to sing and dance for them, and would have forced liquor upon her but for the master's interference. Others mutely made way for them. So an hour slipped by, and as yet their search was fruitless. The master had yawned once or twice and whistled, — two fatal signs of failing interest, — and finally came to a full stop.

"It's half past eleven, Melissa," said he, consulting his

watch by a broad pencil of light from an open shutter, — “half past eleven; and it strikes me that our old friends, the woodpeckers, must have gone to bed some hours ago, unless they are waiting up for us. I’m much obliged to you for the evening’s entertainment, but I’m afraid that even the pretext of looking for a parent won’t excuse further dissipation. We’d better put this off till to-morrow. What do you say, Melissa? Why! what ails the child? What’s that noise? Why, a pistol! — You’re not afraid of that?”

Few children brought up in the primeval seclusion of Smith’s Pocket were unfamiliar with those quick and sharp notes which usually rendered the evening zephyrs of that locality vocal; certainly not M’liss, to have started when that report rang on the clear night air. The echoes caught it as usual, and carried it round and round Red Mountain, and set the dogs to barking all along the streams. The lights seemed to dance and move quickly on the outskirts of the town for a few moments afterward, the stream suddenly rippled quite audibly behind them, a few stones loosened themselves from the hillside and splashed into the stream, a heavy wind seemed to suage the branches of the funereal pines, and then the silence fell again, heavier, deadlier than ever.

When the last echo had died away, the master felt his companion’s hand relax its grasp. Taking advantage of this outward expression of tractability, he drew her gently with him until they reached the hotel, which — in her newer aspect of a guest whose beard was secured by responsible parties — had forgivingly opened its hospitable doors to the vagrant child. Here the master lingered a moment to assure her that she might count upon his assistance to-morrow; and having satisfied his conscience by this anticipated duty, bade her good-night. In the darkness of the road — going astray several times on his way home, and narrowly escaping the yawning ditches in the trail — he had

reason to commend his foresight in dissuading M'liss from a further search that night, and in this pleasant reflection went to bed and slept soundly.

For some hours after a darkness thick and heavy brooded over the settlement. The sombre pines encompassing the village seemed to close threateningly about it as if to reclaim the wilderness that had been wrested from them. A low rustling as of dead leaves, and the damp breath of forest odors filled the lonely street. Emboldened by the darkness other shadows slipped by, leaving strange footprints in the moist ditches for people to point at next day, until the moon, round and full, was lifted above the crest of the opposite hill, and all was magically changed.

The shadows shrank away, leaving the straggling street sleeping in a beauty it never knew by day. All that was unlovely, harsh, and repulsive in its jagged outlines was subdued and softened by that uncertain light. It smoothed the rough furrows and unsightly chasms of the mountain with an ineffable love and tenderness. It fell upon the face of the sleeping M'liss, and left a tear glittering on her black lashes and a smile on her lip, which would have been rare to her at any other time; and fell also on the white upturned face of "Old Smith," with a pistol in his hand and a bullet in his heart, lying dead beside his empty pocket.

## CHAPTER II

### WHICH CONTAINS A DREAM OF THE JUST ARISTIDES

The opinion which McSnagley expressed in reference to a "change of heart," as experienced by M'liss, was more forcibly described in the gulches and tunnels. It was thought there that M'liss had struck a "good lead." And when there was a new grave added to the little inclos

ure, and — at the expense of the master — a little board and inscription put above it, the “Red Mountain Banner” came out quite handsomely and did the correct thing for the memory of one of “our oldest pioneers,” alluding gracefully to that “bane of noble intellects,” touching slightly on the “vicissitudes of fortune,” and otherwise assisting our dear brother into genteel obscurity. “He leaves an only child to mourn his loss,” said the “Banner,” “who is now an exemplary scholar, thanks to the efforts of the Rev. J. McSnagley.” That reverend gentleman, in fact, made a strong point of M’liss’s conversion, and, indirectly attributing to her former bad conduct the suicide of her father, made affecting allusions in Sunday-school to the beneficial effects of the “silent tomb,” and in that cheerful contemplation froze most of the children into speechless horror, and caused the fair-complexioned scions of the first families to howl dismally and refuse to be comforted.

Of the homes that were offered to M’liss when her conversion became known, the master had preferred that of Mrs. Morpher, a womanly and kind-hearted specimen of Southwestern efflorescence, known in her maidenhood as the “Per-ra-rie Rose.” By a steady system of struggle and self-sacrifice, she had at last subjugated her naturally careless disposition to principles of “order,” which as a pious woman she considered, with Pope, as “Heaven’s first law.” But she could not entirely govern the orbits of her satellites, however regular her own movements, and her old nature asserted itself in her children. Lycurgus dipped in the cupboard “between meals,” and Aristides came home from school without shoes, leaving those important articles at the threshold, for the delights of a bare-footed walk down the ditches. Octavia and Cassandra were “keerless” of their clothes. So that with but one exception, however the “Prairie Rose” might have trimmed, pruned, and trained her own natural luxuriance,

the little shoots came up defiantly wild and straggling. That one exception was Clytemnestra Morpher, aged fifteen. She was the realization of her mother's most extravagant dream. I stay my hand with difficulty at this moment, for I long to describe this model of deportment; but the progress of my story just at present supplants Clytemnestra in the larger prominence it gives to another member of the family, — the just Aristides.

The long dry summer had come. As each fierce day seemed to burn itself out in little whiffs of pearl gray smoke on the mountain summits, and as the upspringing breeze scattered what might have been its red embers over the landscape, the green wave which, in early spring, had upheaved above Smith's grave grew sere and dry and hard. In those days, the master, strolling in the little churchyard of a Sabbath afternoon, was sometimes surprised to find a few wild flowers, plucked from the damp pine forest, scattered there, and oftener rude wreaths hung upon the little pine cross. Most of these wreaths were formed of a sweet-scented grass which the children loved to keep in their desks, entwined with the pompon-like plumes of the buck-eye and syringa, the wood anemone, and here and there the master noticed the dark blue cowl of the monk's-hood or deadly aconite. One day, during a walk, in crossing a wooded ridge, he came upon M'liss in the heart of the forest, perched upon a prostrate pine, on a fantastic throne, formed by the hanging plumes of lifeless branches, her lap full of grasses and pine burrs, and crooning to the just Aristides, who sat humbly at her feet, one of the negro melodies of her younger life. It was perhaps the influence of the season, or the memory of this sylvan enjoyment, which caused Aristides, one midsummer day, to have a singular vision.

The just Aristides had begun that morning with a serious error. Loitering on his way to school, occasionally

stopping to inspect the footprints of probable bears, or indulging in cheerful badinage with the tunnel men, — to whom the apparition of a short-legged boy weighed down by a preternaturally large satchel was an object of boisterous solicitude, — Aristides suddenly found that he was an hour and a half too late for school. Whether this circumstance was purely accidental or not is a question of some uncertainty, for Aristides, on finding himself occupying this criminal position, at once resolved to play truant. I shall not stop to inquire by what system of logic this result presented itself to that just youth as a consistent deduction, or whether some indistinct apprehension of another and a better world beyond the settlement, where there were no schools and blackberries were plenty, had not influenced him in taking this fatal step. Enough that he entered on his rash career by instantly eating the dinner which he carried with him, and having propitiated that terrible god whose seat is every small boy's stomach, with a feeling of inexpressible guiltiness creeping over him, he turned his back upon the schoolhouse and ran into the woods.

Away from the glare of the red road, how deliciously cool was the damp breath and twilight dimness of the stately pines. How they seemed to welcome him in their deepest recesses, ranging themselves silently around him as he ran, shutting out the world and its schoolhouses, and the pursuit of indignant parents and vindictive teachers. How in the forest depths the blue jay called to him mockingly, and the kingbird, spreading his tail like a crimson pennant, beckoned him onward. How there was recognition and greeting even in the squirrel that scampered past him, mischievously whisking his ridiculous tail within an inch of his outstretched fingers. And how Aristides, at last flinging away hat, shoes, and satchel, uttered a shrill whoop and dashed forward like a youthful savage. But are not these



things written in the dog's-eared pages of every boy's memory, even though they seemed afterward to the just Aristides a part and parcel of his own strange vision?

Yet even such delights had their hour of culmination, and Aristides found himself at high noon back on the road again in a state of feverish excitement, carrying a ravished jay's nest, two pine cones, a dead hare, and a plume of the white syringa. Somewhat overpowered by the weight of these trophies, which he had collected in the vague belief that they would be of future service to him, he began to look about for some convenient place to bestow his booty. It was nearly time for the great Wingdam stage to go by, and when it came at last with a sharp rattle of wheels and prancing of horses, and a red pillar of dust hanging over it that partook of both the fiery and cloudy attributes of the Israelitish sign, Aristides exchanged epithets with the driver, and, although standing knee-deep in red dust, felt a thrill of joy in the recognition which no future honor or dignity might ever give him.

Retracing his steps, the truant presently came to a semi-circular opening in the side of Red Mountain, which inclosed, like the walls of some vast amphitheatre, what had been the arena of the early struggles of the gladiators of fortune. There were terrible traces of that struggle still — in the rock blasted by fire — in the bank furrowed by water — and in the débris of Red Mountain scattered along the gulch two miles in extent. Their forgotten engines were lying half buried in the ditches — the primeval structure which had served them for a banking-house was roofless, and held the hoards of field-mice and squirrels. The unshapely stumps of ancient pines dotted the ground, and Aristides remembered that under the solitary redwood, which of all its brothers remained still standing, one of those early pioneers lay buried. No wonder that, as the gentle breeze of that summer day swept through its

branches, the just Aristides might have heard, as part of his wonderful dream, some echo of its far off brothers of Lebanon, saying, "Since thou art fallen, no feller has risen up against us!"

But the short legs of Aristides were aching, and he was getting thirsty. There was a rough cavern close at hand; and as most of these openings condensed their general dampness somewhere in quiet pools, Aristides turned into the first one. When he had slaked his thirst, he looked around him and recognized Smith's Pocket.

It had undergone little change in the last two years. The winter rains had detached those portions of the wall which were not upheld by decaying timbers. It was certainly a dirty pocket—a pocket filled with rubbish—a shabby pocket—a worn-out and ragged pocket. It was so unpromising in its present exterior, so graphic in its story of misfortune, and so terrible in its recent memories, that the most sanguine prospector would have passed it by, as though the hopeless sentence of Dante had been written over its ragged portal.

The active mind of Aristides, however, saw in the lurking shadows of its arches much promise as a future play-room, to which he intended to induct hereafter his classical brother Lyeurgus. In this reflection he threw himself on the ground, and luxuriously burying his bare feet in the cool, loose soil, gave himself up to serene meditation. But the heat and exertion were beginning to exert a certain influence over him, and once or twice his eyes closed. The water rippled beside him with a sleepy sound. The sunlight on the hill without made him wink. The long-drawn cawing of a crow on the opposite hillside, and the buzzing of a bluebottle fly who had sought retreat in the cavern, had a like effect, and he felt himself falling asleep. How long he slept, or if he slept at all, he could not remember, for he started suddenly, and, listening a moment, sprang to his feet.

The low, heavy blows of a pick came deadened and muffled from the extremity of the cavern.

At first a terrible fear took possession of him; for an instant the white, rigid face of Smith, as he had seen it on the day of the inquest, when an irresistible curiosity led him to creep into the room where the dead man was lying — for an instant only, this fearful remembrance seemed to rise before him out of the gloom of the pit. The terror passed away.

Ghosts were historically unknown to Aristides, and even had his imaginative faculty been more prominent, the education of Smith's Pocket was not of a kind to foster such weaknesses. Except a twinge of conscience, a momentary recollection of the evil that comes to bad boys through the severe pages of Sunday-school books — with this exception, Aristides was not long in recovering his self-possession. He did not run away, for his curiosity was excited. The same instinct which prompted an examination of bear-tracks gave a fascination to the situation, and a nervous energy to his frame.

The regular blows of the pick still resounded through the cavern. He crept cautiously to the deepest recesses of the pocket, and held his breath and listened. The sound seemed to come from the bowels of the mountain. There was no sign of opening or ingress; an impenetrable veil of quartz was between him and the mysterious laborer. He was creeping back, between the displaced rafters, when a light glanced suddenly in his face, and flashed on the wet roof above him. Looking fearfully down, Aristides beheld between the interstices of the rafters, which formed a temporary flooring, that there was another opening below, and in that opening a man was working. In the queer fantasy of Aristides's dream, it took the aspect of a second pocket and a duplicate Smith!

He had no time to utter his astonishment, for at that

moment an ominous rattling of loose soil upon his back made him look up, and he had barely time to spring away before a greater portion of the roof of Smith's Pocket, loosened by the displacement of its supports in his search, fell heavily to the ground. But in the fall a long-handled shovel which had been hidden somewhere in the crevices of the rock above came rattling down with it, and, seizing this as a trophy, Aristides emerged from Smith's Pocket, at a rate of speed which seemed singularly disproportionate with his short legs and round stomach.

When he reached the road the sun was setting. Inspecting his prize by that poetic light, he found that the shovel was a new one, and bore neither mark of use nor exposure. Shouldering it again, with the intention of presenting it as a peace-offering to propitiate the just wrath of his parents, Aristides had gone but a few rods when an unexpected circumstance occurred which dashed his fond hope, and to the conscientious child seemed the shadow of an inevitable Nemesis. At the curve of the road, as the settlement of Smith's Pocket came into view, with its straggling street, and its church spire that seemed a tongue of flame in the setting sun, a broad-shouldered figure sprang, apparently, from out of the bank, and stood in the path of that infelix infant.

"Where are you going with that shovel, you young devil?"

Aristides looked up and saw that his interlocutor was a man of powerful figure, whose face, though partially concealed by a red handkerchief, even in that uncertain light was not prepossessing. Children are quick physiognomists, and Aristides, feeling the presence of evil, from the depths of his mighty little soul then and there took issue with the giant.

"Where are you going with that shovel; d—n you, do you hear?" said he of the red handkerchief impatiently.

"Home," said Aristides stoutly.

"Home, eh!" said the stranger sneeringly. "And where did you steal it, you young thief?"

The Morpher stock not being of a kind to receive opprobrious epithets meekly, Aristides slowly, and with an evident effort, lifted the shovel in a menacing attitude.

A single step was all that separated six feet of Strength from three feet of Valor. The stranger eyed Aristides with an expression of surly amazement, and hesitated. The elephant quailed before the gad-fly. As that precocious infant waved the threatening shovel, his youthful lips slowly fashioned this tremendous sentence:—

*"You let me pass and I won't hit you!"*

And here I must pause. I would that for the sake of poetry I could leave my hero, bathed in that heroic light, erect and menacing. But alas, in this practical world of ours, the battle is too often to the strong. And I hasten over the humiliating spectacle of Aristides, spanked, cuffed, and kicked, and pick him from the ditch into which he was at last ignominiously tossed, a defeated but still struggling warrior, and so bring him, as the night closes charitably around him, in contrite tears and muddy garments to his father's door.

When the master stopped at Mrs. Morpher's to inquire after his errant pupil that night, he found Aristides in bed, smelling strongly of soap and water, and sinking into a feverish sleep. As he muttered from time to time some incoherent sentence, tossing restlessly in his cot, the master turned to those about him and asked what it was he said.

It was nothing. Aristides had been dreaming, and that was his dream.

That was all. Yet a dream that foreshadowed a slow-coming but unerring justice, that should give the little dreamer in after years some credit to the title of Aristides the Just.

## CHAPTER III

## UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

It was an amiable weakness of Mrs. Morpher to imagine that, of all her classical progeny, Clytemnestra was particularly the model for M'liss. Following this fallacy she threw "Clytie" at the head of M'liss when she was "bad," and set her up before the child for adoration in her penitential moments. It was not therefore surprising to the master to hear that Clytie was coming to school, obviously as a favor to the master and as an example for M'liss and others. For Clytie was quite a young lady. Inheriting her mother's physical peculiarities, and in obedience to the climatic laws of the Red Mountain region, she was an early bloomer. The youth of Smith's Pocket, to whom this kind of flower was rare, sighed for her in April and languished in May. Enamored swains haunted the schoolhouse at the hour of dismissal. A few were jealous of the master.

Perhaps it was this latter circumstance that opened the master's eyes to another. He could not help noticing that Clytie was romantic; that in school she required a great deal of attention; that her pens were uniformly bad and wanted fixing; that she usually accompanied the request with a certain expectation in her eye that was somewhat disproportionate to the quality of service she verbally required; that she sometimes allowed the curves of a round plump white arm to rest on his when he was writing her copies; that she always blushed and flung back her blond curls when she did so. I don't remember whether I have stated that the master was a young man — it's of little consequence, however. He had been severely educated in the school in which Clytie was taking her first lesson, and on the whole withstood the flexible curves and facetious

glance like the fine young Spartan that he was. Perhaps an insufficient quality of food may have tended to this asceticism. He generally avoided Clytie; but one evening when she returned to the schoolhouse after something she had forgotten, — and did not find it until the master walked home with her, — I hear that he endeavored to make himself particularly agreeable, partly from the fact, I imagine, that his conduct was adding gall and bitterness to the already overcharged hearts of Clytemnestra's admirers.

The morning after this affecting episode, M'liss did not come to school. Noon came, but not M'liss. Questioning Clytie on the subject, it appeared that they had left for school together, but the willful M'liss had taken another road. The afternoon brought her not. In the evening he called on Mrs. Morpher, whose motherly heart was really alarmed. Mr. Morpher had spent all day in search of her, without discovering a trace that might lead to her discovery. Aristides was summoned as a probable accomplice, but that equitable infant succeeding in impressing the household with his innocence, Mrs. Morpher entertained a vivid impression that the child would yet be found drowned in a ditch, or — what was almost as terrible — mud-dyed and soiled beyond the redemption of soap and water. Sick at heart, the master returned to the schoolhouse. As he lit his lamp and seated himself at his desk, he found a note lying before him, addressed to himself in M'liss's handwriting. It seemed to be written on a leaf torn from some old memorandum-book, and, to prevent sacrilegious trifling, had been sealed with six broken wafers. Opening it almost tenderly, the master read as follows: —

RESPECTED SIR: When you read this, I am run away. Never to come back. *Never NEVER NEVER.* You can give my beads to Mary Jennings, and my Amerika's Pride [a highly colored lithograph from a tobacco box] to Sally

Flanders. But don't you give anything to Clytie Morper. Don't you dair to. Do you know what my opinnion is of her, it is this, she is perfekly disgustin. That is all and no more at present from

MELISSA SMITH.

The master mused for some time over this characteristic epistle. As he was mechanically refolding it his eye caught a sentence written on the back in pencil, in another handwriting, somewhat blurred and indistinct from the heavy incisive strokes of M'liss's pen on the other side. It seemed to be a memorandum belonging to the book from which the leaf was originally torn: —

July 17th. 5 hours in drift — dipping west — took out 20 oz. ; cleaned up 40 oz. Mem. — saw M. S.

“July 17th,” said the master, opening his desk and taking out a file of the “Red Mountain Banner.” “July 17th,” he repeated, running over the pages till he came to a paragraph headed “DISTRESSING SUICIDE.” “July 17th — why, that's the day Smith killed himself. That's funny!”

In a strict etymological sense there was nothing so very ludicrous in this coincidence, nor did the master's face betray any expression of the kind. Perhaps the epithet was chosen to conceal the vague uneasiness which it produced in his mind. We are all of us more affected by these coincidences than we care to confess to one another. If the most matter-of-fact reader of these pages were to find a hearse standing in front of his door for three consecutive mornings, although the circumstance might be satisfactorily explained, — shall I go further and say, *because* the circumstance might be satisfactorily explained, — he would vaguely wish *it* had n't happened. Philosophize as we may, the simple



fact of two remote lines crossing each other always seems to us of tremendous significance, and quite overshadows the more important truth that the real parallels of life's journey are the lines that never meet. It will do us good to remember these things, and look more kindly on our brothers of Borrioboola-Gha and their fetich superstitions, when we drop our silver in the missionary box next Sabbath.

"I wonder where that memorandum came from," said the master, as he rose at last and buttoned up his coat. Who is 'M. S.'? M. S. stands for manuscript and Melissa Smith. Why don't" — But checking an impulsive query as to why people don't make their private memoranda generally intelligible, the master put the letter in his pocket and went home.

At sunrise the next morning he was picking his way through the palm-like fern and thick underbrush of the pine forest, starting the hare from its form, and awakening a querulous protest from a few dissipated crows, who had evidently been making a night of it, and so came to the wooded ridge where he had once found M'liss. There he found the prostrate pine and tessellated branches, but the throne was vacant. As he drew nearer, what might have been some frightened animal started through the crackling limbs. It ran up the tossed arms of the fallen monarch, and sheltered itself in some friendly foliage. The master, reaching the old seat, found the nest still warm; looking up in the intertwining branches, he met the black eyes of the errant M'liss. They gazed at each other without speaking. She was first to break the silence.

"What do you want?" she asked curtly.

The master had decided on a course of action. "I want some crab apples," he said humbly.

"Shan't have 'em! go away! Why don't you get 'em of Clytemnerestera?" It seemed to be a relief to M'liss to express her contempt in additional syllables to that classi-

cal young woman's already long-drawn title. "Oh, you wicked thing!"

"I am hungry, Lissy. I have eaten nothing since dinner yesterday. I am famished!" and the young man, in a state of remarkable exhaustion, leaned against the tree.

Melissa's heart was touched. In the bitter days of her gypsy life she had known the sensation he so artfully simulated. Overcome by his heartbroken tone, but not entirely divested of suspicion, she said:—

"Dig under the tree near the roots, and you'll find lots: but mind you don't tell," for M'liss had *her* hoards as well as the rats and squirrels.

But the master of course was unable to find them, the effects of hunger probably blinding his senses. M'liss grew uneasy. At length she peered at him through the leaves in an elfish way, and questioned:—

"If I come down and give you some, you'll promise you won't touch me?"

The master promised.

"Hope you'll die if you do?"

The master accepted instant dissolution as a forfeit. M'liss slid down the tree. The duties of hospitality fulfilled, she seated herself at a little distance and eyed the master with extreme caution.

"Why did n't you eat your breakfast, you bad man?"

"Because I've run away."

"Where to?" said M'liss, her eyes twinkling.

"Anywhere—anywhere, away from here!" responded that deceitful wretch with tragic wildness of demeanor.

"What made you?—bad boy!" said M'liss, with a sudden respect of conventionalities, and a rare touch of tenderness in her tones. "You'd better go back where your vittals are."

"What are victuals to a wounded spirit?" asked the young man dramatically. He had reached the side of

M'liss during this dialogue, and had taken her unresisting hand. He was too wise to notice his victory, however; and drawing Melissa's note from his pocket, opened it before her.

"Could n't you find any paper in the schoolhouse without tearing a leaf out of my memorandum book, Melissa?" he asked.

"It ain't out of your memorandum book," responded M'liss fiercely.

"Indeed," said the master, turning to the lines in pencil; "I thought it was my handwriting."

M'liss, who had been looking over his shoulder, suddenly seized the paper and snatched it out of his hand.

"It's father's writing!" she said, after a pause, in a softer tone.

"Where did you get it, M'liss?"

"Aristides gave it to me."

"Where did he get it?"

"Don't know. He had the book in his pocket when I told him I was going to write to you, and he tore the leaf out. There now — don't bother me any more." M'liss had turned her face away, and the black hair had hid her downcast eyes.

Something in her gesture and expression reminded him of her father. Something, and more that was characteristic to her at such moments, made him fancy another resemblance, and caused him to ask impulsively, and less cautiously than was his wont: —

"Do you remember your mother, M'liss?"

"No."

"Did you never see her?"

"No — did n't I tell you not to bother, and you're a-goin' and doin' it," said M'liss savagely.

The master was silent a moment. "Did you ever think you would like to have a mother, M'liss?" he asked again.

“No-o-o-o!”

The master rose; M'liss looked up.

“Does Aristides come to school to-day?”

“I don't know.”

“Are you going back? You'd better,” she said.

“Well! — perhaps I may. Good-by!”

He had proceeded a few steps when, as he expected, she called him back. He turned. She was standing by the tree, with tears glistening in her eyes. The master felt the right moment had come. Going up to her, he took both her hands in his, and looking in her tearful eyes, said gravely: —

“M'liss, do you remember the first evening you came to see me?”

M'liss remembered.

“You asked me if you might come to school, and I said —”

“Come!” responded the child softly.

“If I told you I was lonely without my little scholar, and that I wanted her to come, what would you say?”

The child hung her head in silence. The master waited patiently. Tempted by the quiet, a hare ran close to the couple, and raising her bright eyes and velvet fore paws, gazed at them fearlessly. A squirrel ran halfway down the furrowed bark of the fallen tree, and there stopped.

“*We* are waiting, Lissy,” said the master in a whisper, and the child smiled. Stirred by a passing breeze, the tree-tops rocked, and a slanting sunbeam stole through their interlaced boughs and fell on the doubting face and irresolute little figure. But a step in the dry branches and a rustling in the underbrush broke the spell.

A man dressed as a miner, carrying a long-handled shovel, came slowly through the woods. A red handkerchief tied around his head under his hat, with the loose ends hanging from beneath, did not add much favor to his

unprepossessing face. He did not perceive the master and M'liss until he was close upon them. When he did, he stopped suddenly and gazed at them with an expression of lowering distrust. M'liss drew nearer to the master.

"Good-mornin' — pickniekin', eh?" he asked, with an attempt at geniality that was more repulsive than his natural manner.

"How are you — prospecting, eh?" said the master quietly, after the established colloquial formula of Red Mountain.

"Yes — a little in that way."

The stranger still hesitated, apparently waiting for them to go first, a matter which M'liss decided by suddenly taking the master's hand in her quick way. What she said was scarcely audible, but the master, parting her hair over her forehead, kissed her, and so, hand in hand, they passed out of the damp aisles and forest odors into the open sunlit road. But M'liss, looking back, saw that her old seat was occupied by the hopeful prospector, and fancied that in the shadows of her former throne something of a gratified leer overspread his face. "He'll have to dig deep to find the crab apples," said the child to the master, as they came to the Red Mountain road.

When Aristides came to school that day he was confronted by M'liss. But neither threats nor entreaties could extract from that reticent youth the whereabouts of the memorandum book nor where he got it. Two or three days afterward, during recess, he approached M'liss, and beckoned her one side.

"Well," said M'liss impatiently.

"Did you ever read the story of 'Ali Baba'?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe it?"

"No."

"Well," said that sage infant, wheeling around on his stout legs, "*it 's true!*"

## CHAPTER IV

## WHICH HAS A GOOD MORAL TENDENCY

Somewhat less spiteful in her intercourse with the other scholars, M'liss still retained an offensive attitude toward Clytemnestra. Perhaps the jealous element was not entirely stilled in her passionate little breast. Perhaps it was that Clytemnestra's round curves and plump outlines afforded an extensive pinching surface. But while these ebullitions were under the master's control, her enmity occasionally took a new and irresponsible form.

In his first estimate of the child's character he could not conceive that she had ever possessed a doll. But the master, like many other professed readers of character, was safer in *a posteriori* than *a priori* reasoning, for M'liss had a doll. But then it was a peculiar doll, — a frightful perversion of wax and sawdust, — a doll fearfully and wonderfully made, — a smaller edition of M'liss. Its unhappy existence had been a secret discovered accidentally by Mrs. Morpher. It had been the oldtime companion of M'liss's wanderings, and bore evident marks of suffering. Its original complexion was long since washed away by the weather, and anointed by the slime of ditches. It looked very much as M'liss had in days past. Its one gown of faded stuff was dirty and ragged as hers had been. M'liss had never been known to apply to it any childish term of endearment. She never exhibited it in the presence of other children. It was put severely to bed in a hollow tree near the schoolhouse, and only allowed exercise during M'liss's rambles. Fulfilling a stern duty to her doll — as she would to herself — it knew no luxuries.

Now, Mrs. Morpher, obeying a commendable impulse, bought another doll and gave it to M'liss. The child re-

ceived it gravely and curiously. The master, on looking at it one day, fancied he saw a slight resemblance in its round red cheeks and mild blue eyes to Clytemnestra. It became evident before long that M'liss had also noticed the same resemblance. Accordingly she hammered its waxen head on the rocks when she was alone, and sometimes dragged it with a string round its neck to and from school. At other times, setting it up on her desk, she made a pincushion of its patient and inoffensive body. Whether this was done in revenge of what she considered a second figurative obtrusion of Clytie's excellencies upon her; or whether she had an intuitive appreciation of the rites of certain other heathens, and indulging in that "fetich" ceremony imagined that the original of her wax model would pine away and finally die, is a metaphysical question I shall not now consider.

In spite of these moral vagaries, the master could not help noticing in her different tasks the workings of a quick, restless, and vigorous perception. She knew neither the hesitancy nor the doubts of childhood. Her answers in class were always slightly dashed with audacity. Of course she was not infallible. But her courage and daring in venturing beyond her own depth and that of the floundering little swimmers around her, in their minds outweighed all errors of judgment. Children are no better than grown people in this respect, I fancy; and whenever the little red hand flashed above her desk, there was a wondering silence, and even the master was sometimes oppressed with a doubt of his own experience and judgment.

Nevertheless, certain attributes which at first amused and entertained his fancy began to affect him with grave doubts. He could not but see that M'liss was revengeful, irreverent, and willful. But there was one better quality which pertained to her semi-savage disposition — the faculty of physical fortitude and self-sacrifice, and

another — though not always an attribute of the noble savage — truth. M'liss was both fearless and sincere — perhaps in such a character the adjectives were synonymous.

The master had been doing some hard thinking on this subject, and had arrived at that conclusion quite common to all who think sincerely, that he was generally the slave of his own prejudices, when he determined to call on the Rev. Mr. McSnagley for advice. This decision was somewhat humiliating to his pride, as he and McSnagley were not friends. But he thought of M'liss, and the evening of their first meeting; and perhaps with a pardonable superstition that it was not chance alone that had guided her willful feet to the schoolhouse, and perhaps with a complacent consciousness of the rare magnanimity of the act, he choked back his dislike and went to McSnagley.

The reverend gentleman was glad to see him. Moreover, he observed that the master was looking "peartish" and hoped he had got over the "neuralgy" and "rheumatiz." He himself had been troubled with a dumb "ager" since last conference. But he had learned to "rastle and pray."

Pausing a moment to enable the master to write this certain method of curing the dumb "ager" upon the book and volume of his brain, Mr. McSnagley proceeded to inquire after Sister Morpher. "She is an adornment to Christewanity, and has a likely, growin' young family," added Mr. McSnagley; "and there's that mannerly young gal — so well behaved — Miss Clytie." In fact, Clytie's perfections seemed to affect him to such an extent that he dwelt for several minutes upon them. The master was doubly embarrassed. In the first place, there was an enforced contrast with poor M'liss in all this praise of Clytie. Secondly, there was something unpleasantly confidential in his tone of speaking of Morpher's earliest born. So that



the master, after a few futile efforts to say something natural, found it convenient to recall another engagement and left without asking the information required, but in his after reflections somewhat unjustly giving the Rev. Mr. McSnagley the full benefit of having refused it.

But the master obtained the advice in another and unexpected direction.

The resident physician of Smith's Pocket was a Dr. Duchesne, or as he was better known to the locality, "Dr. Doochesny." Of a naturally refined nature and liberal education, he had steadily resisted the aggressions and temptations of Smith's Pocket, and represented to the master a kind of connecting link between his present life and the past. So that an intimacy sprang up between the two men, involving prolonged interviews in the doctor's little back shop, often to the exclusion of other suffering humanity and their physical ailments. It was in one of these interviews that the master mentioned the coincidence of the date of the memoranda on the back of M'liss's letter and the day of Smith's suicide.

"If it were Smith's own handwriting, as the child says it is," said the master, "it shows a queer state of mind that could contemplate suicide and indite private memoranda within the same twenty-four hours."

Dr. Duchesne removed his cigar from his lips and looked attentively at his friend.

"The only hypothesis," continued the master, "is that Smith was either drunk or crazy, and the fatal act was in a measure unpremeditated."

"Every man who commits suicide," returned the doctor gravely, "is in my opinion insane, or, what is nearly the same thing, becomes through suffering an irresponsible agent. In my professional experience I have seen most of the forms of mental and physical agony, and know what sacrifices men will make to preserve even an existence that

to me seemed little better than death, so long as their intellect remained unclouded. When you come to reflect on the state of mind that chooses death as a preferable alternative, you generally find an exaltation and enthusiasm that differs very little from the ordinary diagnosis of delirium. Smith was not drunk," added the doctor in his usual careless tone ; " I saw his body."

The master remained buried in reflection. Presently the doctor removed his cigar.

" Perhaps I might help you to explain the coincidence you speak of."

" How ? "

" Very easily. But this is a professional secret, you understand."

" Yes, I understand," said the master hastily, with an ill-defined uneasiness creeping over him.

" Do you know anything of the phenomena of death by gunshot wounds ? "

" No ! "

" Then you must take certain facts as granted. Smith, you remember, was killed *instantly* ! The nature of his wound and the manner of his death were such as would have caused an instantaneous and complete relaxation of *all* the muscles. Rigidity and contraction would have supervened of course, but only after life was extinct and consciousness fled. Now Smith was found with his hand tightly grasping a pistol."

" Well ? "

" Well, my dear boy, he must have grasped it after he was dead, or have prevailed on some friend to stiffen his fingers round it."

" Do you mean that he was murdered ? "

Dr. Duchesne rose and closed the door. " We have different names for these things in Smith's Pocket. I mean to say that he did n't kill himself — that's all."

"But, doctor," said the master earnestly; "do you think you have done right in concealing this fact? Do you think it just — do you think it consistent with your duty to his orphan child?"

"That's why I have said nothing about it," replied the doctor coolly, — "because of my consideration for his orphan child."

The master breathed quickly, and stared at the doctor.

"Doctor! you don't think that M'liss" —

"Hush! — don't get excited, my young friend. Remember I am not a lawyer — only a doctor."

"But M'liss was with me the very night he must have been killed. We were walking together when we heard the report — that is — a report — which must have been the one" — stammered the master.

"When was that?"

"At half past eleven. I remember looking at my watch."

"Humph! — when did you meet her first?"

"At half past eight. Come, doctor, you have made a mistake here at least," said the young man with an assumption of ease he was far from feeling. "Give M'liss the benefit of the doubt."

Dr. Duchesne replied by opening a drawer of his desk. After rummaging among the powders and mysterious looking instruments with which it was stored, he finally brought forth a longitudinal slip of folded white paper. It was appropriately labeled "*Poison.*"

"Look here," said the doctor, opening the paper. It contained two or three black coarse hairs. "Do you know them?"

"No."

"Look again!"

"It looks something like Melissa's hair," said the master, with a fathomless sinking of the heart.

"When I was called to look at the body," continued the

doctor with the deliberate cautiousness of a professional diagnosis, "my suspicions were aroused by the circumstance I told you of. I managed to get possession of the pistol, and found these hairs twisted around the lock as though they had been accidentally caught and violently disentangled. I don't think that any one else saw them. I removed them without observation, and — they are at your service."

The master sank back in his seat and pressed his hand to his forehead. The image of M'liss rose before him with flashing eye and long black hair, and seemed to beat down and resist defiantly the suspicion that crept slowly over his heart.

"I forbore to tell you this, my friend," continued the doctor slowly and gravely, "because when I learned that you had taken this strange child under your protection I did not wish to tell you that which — though I contend does not alter her claims to man's sympathy and kindness — still might have prejudiced her in your eyes. Her improvement under your care has proven my position correct. I have, as you know, peculiar ideas of the extent to which humanity is responsible. I find in my heart — looking back over that child's career — no sentiment but pity. I am mistaken in you if I thought this circumstance aroused any other feeling in yours."

Still the figure of M'liss stood before the master as he bent before the doctor's words, in the same defiant attitude, with something of scorn in the great dark eyes, that made the blood tingle in his cheeks, and seemed to make the reasoning of the speaker but meaningless and empty words. At length he rose. As he stood with his hand on the latch he turned to Dr. Duchesne, who was watching him with careful solicitude.

"I don't know but that you have done well to keep this from me. At all events it has not — cannot, and should not alter my opinion toward M'liss. You will of course keep it

secret. In the mean time you must not blame me if I cling to my instincts in preference to your judgment. I still believe that you are mistaken in regard to her."

"Stay, one moment," said the doctor; "promise me you will not say anything of this, nor attempt to prosecute the matter further till you have consulted with me."

"I promise. Good-night."

"Good-night;" and so they parted.

True to that promise and his own instinctive promptings the master endeavored to atone for his momentary disloyalty by greater solicitude for M'liss. But the child had noticed some change in the master's thoughtful manner, and in one of their long post-prandial walks she stopped suddenly, and mounting a stump, looked full in his face with big searching eyes.

"You ain't mad?" said she, with an interrogative shake of the black braids.

"No."

"Nor bothered?"

"No."

"Nor hungry?" (Hunger was to M'liss a sickness that might attack a person at any moment.)

"No."

"Nor thinking of her?"

"Of whom, Lissy?"

"That white girl." (This was the latest epithet invented by M'liss, who was a very dark brunette, to express Clytemnestra.)

"No."

"Upon your word?" (A substitute for "Hope you'll die!" proposed by the master.)

"Yes."

"And sacred honor?"

"Yes."

Then M'liss gave him a fierce little kiss, and hopping

down, fluttered off. For two or three days after that she condescended to appear like other children and be, as she expressed it, "good."

When the summer was about spent, and the last harvest had been gathered in the valleys, the master bethought him of gathering in a few ripened shoots of the young idea, and of having his Harvest Home, or Examination. So the savans and professionals of Smith's Pocket were gathered to witness that time-honored custom of placing timid children in a constrained position, and bullying them as in a witness-box. As usual in such cases, the most audacious and self-possessed were the lucky recipients of the honors. The reader will imagine that in the present instance M'liss and Clytie were preëminent and divided public attention: M'liss with her clearness of material perception and self-reliance, and Clytie with her placid self-esteem and saint-like correctness of deportment. The other little ones were timid and blundering. M'liss's readiness and brilliancy, of course, captivated the greatest number, and provoked the greatest applause, and M'liss's antecedents had unconsciously awakened the strongest sympathies of the miners, whose athletic forms were ranged against the walls, or whose handsome bearded faces looked in at the window. But M'liss's popularity was overthrown by an unexpected circumstance.

McSnagley had invited himself, and had been going through the pleasing entertainment of frightening the more timid pupils by the vaguest and most ambiguous questions, delivered in an impressive, funereal tone; and M'liss had soared into astronomy, and was tracking the course of our "spotted ball" through space, and defining the "tethered orbits" of the planets, when McSnagley deliberately arose.

"Meelissy, ye were speaking of the revolutions of this yer yearth, and its movements with regard to the sun, and I think you said it had been a-doin' of it since the creation, eh?"

M'liss nodded a scornful affirmative.

"Well, was that the truth?" said McSnagley, folding his arms.

"Yes," said M'liss, shutting up her little red lips tightly.

The handsome outlines at the windows peered further into the schoolroom, and a saintly, Raphael-like face, with blond beard and soft blue eyes, belonging to the biggest scamp in the diggings, turned toward the child and whispered: —

"Stick to it, M'liss! It's only a big bluff of the parson."

The reverend gentleman heaved a deep sigh, and cast a compassionate glance at the master, then at the children, and then rested his eye on Clytemncstra. That young woman softly elevated her round, white arm. Its seductive curves were enhanced by a gorgeous and massive specimen bracelet, the gift of one of her humblest worshipers, worn in honor of the occasion. There was a momentary pause. Clytie's round cheeks were very pink and soft. Clytie's big eyes were very bright and blue. Clytie's low-necked white book-muslin rested softly on Clytie's white, plump shoulders. Clytie looked at the master, and the master nodded. Then Clytie spoke softly:

"Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him."

There was a low hum of applause in the schoolroom, a triumphant expression on McSnagley's face, a grave shadow on the master's, and a comical look of disappointment reflected from the windows. M'liss skimmed rapidly over her astronomy, and then shut the book with a loud snap. A groan burst from McSnagley, an expression of astonishment from the schoolroom, and a yell from the windows, as M'liss brought her red fist down on the desk, with the emphatic declaration: —

"It's a d—n lie. I don't believe it!"

## CHAPTER V

## "OPEN SESAME"

The long wet season had drawn near its close. Signs of spring were visible in the swelling buds and rushing torrents. The pine forests exhaled a fresher spicery. The azaleas were already budding; the ceanothus getting ready its lilac livery for spring. On the green upland which climbed the Red Mountain at its southern aspect, the long spike of the monk's-hood shot up from its broad-leaved stool and once more shook its dark blue bells. Again the billow above Smith's grave was soft and green, its crest just tossed with the foam of daisies and buttercups. The little graveyard had gathered a few new dwellers in the past year, and the mounds were placed two by two by the little paling until they reached Smith's grave, and there, there was but one. General superstition had shunned the enforced companionship. The plot beside Smith was vacant.

It was the custom of the driver of the great Wingdam stage to whip up his horses at the foot of the hill, and so enter Smith's Pocket at that remarkable pace which the woodcuts in the hotel bar-room represented to credulous humanity as the usual rate of speed of that conveyance. At least, Aristides Morpher thought so as he stood one Sunday afternoon, uneasily conscious of his best jacket and collar, waiting its approach. Nor could anything shake his belief that regularly on that occasion the horses ran away with the driver, and that that individual from motives of deep policy pretended not to notice it until they were stopped.

"Anybody up from below, Bill?" said the landlord as the driver slowly descended from his perch.

"Nobody for you," responded Bill shortly. "Dusen-



berry kem up as usual, and got off at the old place. You can't make a livin' off him, I reckon."

"Have you found out what his name is yet?" continued the landlord, implying that "Dusenberry" was simply a playful epithet of the driver.

"He says his name is Waters," returned Bill. "Jake said he saw him at the North Fork in '50 — called himself Moore then. Guess he ain't no good, nowhow. What's he doin' round here?"

"Says he's prospectin'," replied the landlord. "He has a claim somewhere in the woods. Gambles a little too, I reckon. He don't travel on his beauty anyhow."

"If you had seen him makin' up to a piece of calico inside, last trip, and she a-makin' up to him quite confidential-like, I guess you'd think he was a lady-killer. My eye, but was n't she a stunner! Clytie Morpher was n't nowhere to begin with her."

"Who was she, Bill?" asked half a dozen masculine voices.

"Don't know. We picked her up this side of 'Coyote.' Fancy? I tell you! — pretty little hat and pink ribbings — eyes that ud bore you through at a hundred yards — white teeth — brown gaiters, and such an ankle! She did n't want to show it, — oh, no!" added the sarcastic Bill with deep significance.

"Where did you leave her, Bill?" asked a gentle village swain who had been fired by the glowing picture of the fair unknown.

"That's what's the matter. You see after we picked her up, she said she was goin' through to Wingdam. Of course there was n't anything in the stage or on the road too good to offer her. Old Major Spaffler wanted to treat her to lemonade at every station. Judge Plunkett kep' a-pullin' down the blinds and a-h'istin' of them up to keep out the sun and let in the air. Blest if old McSnagley did n't want

to carry her travelin'-bag. There was n't any attention, boys, she did n't get — but it was n't no use — bless you! She never so much as passed the time of day with them."

"But where did she go?" inquired another anxious auditor.

"Keep your foot off the drag, and I'll tell you. Arter we left Ring Tail Cañon, Dusenberry, as usual, got on. Presently one of the outsides turned round to me, and says he, 'D—d if Ugly Mug ain't got the inside track of all of you this time!' I looked down, and dern my skin if there was n't Dusenberry a-sittin' up alongside of the lady, quite comfortable, as if they had ben children together. At the next station Dusenberry gets off. So does the lady. 'Ain't you goin' on to Wingdam,' says I. 'No,' says she. 'May n't we have the pleasure of your kempany further?' says the judge, taking off his hat. 'No, I've changed my mind,' says she, and off she got, and off she walked arm in arm with him as cool as you please."

"Wonder if that wa'n't the party that passed through here last July?" asked the blacksmith, joining the loungers in front of the stage-office. "Waters brought up a buggy to get the axle bolted. There was a woman setting in the buggy, but the hood was drawn down, and I did n't get to see her face."

During this conversation Aristides, after a long, lingering glance at the stage, had at last torn himself away from its fascinations, and was now lounging down the long straggling street in a peculiarly dissipated manner, with his hat pushed on the back part of his head, his right hand and a greater portion of his right arm buried in his trousers pocket. This might have been partly owing to the shortness of his legs and the comparative amplitude of his trousers, which to the casual observer seemed to obviate the necessity of any other garment. But when he reached the bottom of the street, and further enlivened his progress by

whistling shrilly between his fingers, and finally drew a fragment of a cigar from his pocket and placed it between his teeth, it was evident that there was a moral as well as a physical laxity in his conduct. The near fact was that Aristides had that afternoon evaded the Sunday-school, and was open to any kind of infant iniquity.

The main street of Smith's Pocket gradually lost its civilized character, and after one or two futile attempts at improvement at its lower extremity, terminated impotently in a chaos of ditches, races, and trailings. Out of this again a narrow trail started along the mountain side, and communicated with that vast amphitheatre which still exhibited the pioneer efforts of the early settlers. It was this trail that Aristides took that Sunday afternoon, and which he followed until he reached the hillside a few rods below the yawning fissure of Smith's Pocket. After a careful examination of the vicinity, he cleared away the underbrush beside a fallen pine that lay near, and sat down in the attitude of patient and deliberate expectancy.

Five minutes passed — ten, twenty — and finally a half-hour was gone. Aristides threw away his cigar, which he had lacked determination to light, and peeled small slips from the inner bark of the pine-tree, and munched them gravely. Another five, ten, and twenty minutes passed, and the sun began to drop below the opposite hillside. Another ten minutes, and the whole of the amphitheatre above was in heavy shadow. Ten minutes more, and the distant windows in the settlement flamed redly. Five minutes, and the spire of the Methodist church caught the glow — and then the underbrush crackled.

Aristides, looking up, saw the trunk of the prostrate pine slowly lifting itself before him.

A second glance showed the fearless and self-possessed boy that the apparent phenomenon was simply and easily explained. The tree had fallen midway and at right angles

across the trunk of another prostrate monarch. So accurately and evenly was it balanced that the child was satisfied, from a liberal experience of the application of these principles to the game of "seesaw," that a very slight impulse to either end was sufficient to destroy the equilibrium. That impulse proceeded from his end of the tree, as he saw when the uplifted trunk disclosed an opening in the ground beneath it, and the head and shoulders of a man emerging therefrom.

Aristides threw himself noiselessly on his stomach. The thick clump of an azalea hid him from view, though it did not obstruct his survey of the stranger, whom he at once recognized as his former enemy, — the man with the red handkerchief, — the hopeful prospector of Red Mountain, and the hypothetical "Dusenberry" of the stage-driver.

The stranger looked cautiously round, and Aristides shrank close behind the friendly azalea.

Satisfied that he was unobserved, the subterranean proprietor returned to the opening and descended, reappearing with a worn black enameled traveling-bag which he carried with difficulty. This he again enveloped in a blanket and strapped tightly on his back, and a long-handled shovel, brought up from the same mysterious storehouse, completed his outfit. As he stood for a moment leaning on the shovel, it was the figure of the hopeful prospector in the heart of the forest. A very slight effort was sufficient to replace the fallen tree in its former position. Raising the shovel to his shoulder, he moved away, brushing against the azalea bush which hid the breathless Aristides. The sound of his footsteps retreating through the crackling brush presently died out, and a drowsy Sabbath stillness succeeded.

Aristides rose. There was a wonderful brightness in his gray eyes, and a flush on his sunburned cheek. Seizing a root of the fallen pine he essayed to move it. But it defied his endeavors. Aristides looked round.

"There's some trick about it, but I'll find it yet," said that astute child.

Breaking off the limb of a buckeye, he extemporized a lever. The first attempt failed. The second succeeded, and the long roots of the tree again ascended. But as it required prolonged effort to keep the tree up, before the impetus was lost Aristides seized the opportunity to jump into the opening. At the same moment the tree slowly returned to its former position.

In the sudden change from the waning light to complete darkness, Aristides was for a moment confounded. Recovering himself, he drew a match from his capacious pocket, and striking it against the sole of his shoe, by the upspringing flash perceived a candle stuck in the crevices of the rock beside him. Lighting it, he glanced curiously around him. He was at the entrance of a long gallery at the further extremity of which he could faintly see the glimmering of the outer daylight. Following this gallery cautiously he presently came to an antechamber, and by the glimmering of the light above him at once saw that it was the same he had seen in his wonderful dream.

The antechamber was about fourteen feet square, with walls of decomposed quartz, mingling with flaky mica that reflected here and there the gleam of Aristides's candle with a singular brilliancy. It did not need much observation on his part to determine the reason of the stranger's lonely labors. On a rough rocker beside him were two fragments of ore taken from the adjacent wall, the smallest of which the two arms of Aristides could barely clasp. To his dazzled eyes they seemed to be almost entirely of pure gold. The great strike of '56 at Ring Tail Cañon had brought to the wonderful vision of Smith's Pocket no such nuggets as were here.

Aristides turned to the wall again, which had been apparently the last scene of the stranger's labors, and from

which the two masses of ore were taken. Even to his inexperienced eye it represented a wealth almost incalculable. Through the loose, red soil everywhere glittering star points of the precious metal threw back the rays of his candle. Aristides turned pale and trembled.

Here was the realization of his most extravagant fancy. Ever since his strange dream and encounter with the stranger, he had felt an irresistible desire to follow up his adventure, and discover the secrets of the second cavern. But when he had returned to Smith's Pocket, a few days after, the wreck of the fallen roof had blocked up that part of the opening from which he had caught sight of the hidden workman below. During his visit he had picked up from among the rubbish the memorandum book which had supplied M'liss with letter paper. Still haunting the locality after school hours, he had noticed that regularly at sunset the man with the red handkerchief appeared in some mysterious way from the hillside below Smith's Pocket, and went away in the direction of the settlement. By careful watching, Aristides had fixed the location of his mysterious appearance to a point a few rods below the opening of Smith's Pocket. Flushed by this discovery, he had been betrayed from his usual discretion so far as to intimate a hinting of the suspicion that possessed him in the few mysterious words he had whispered to M'liss at school. The accident we have described above determined the complete discovery of the secret.

Who was the stranger, and why did he keep the fact of this immense wealth hidden from the world? Suppose he, Aristides, were to tell? Would n't the schoolboys look up at him with interest as the hero and discoverer of this wonderful cavern, and would n't the stage-driver feel proud of his acquaintance and offer him rides for nothing? Why had n't Smith discovered it — who was poor and wanted money, whom Aristides had liked, who was the father of

M'liss, for whom Aristides confessed a secret passion, who belonged to the settlement and helped to build it up—instead of the stranger? Had Smith never a suspicion that gold was so near him, and if so, why had he killed himself? But did Smith kill himself? And at this thought and its correlative fancy, again the cheek of Aristides blanched, and the candle shook in his nerveless fingers.

Apart and distinct from these passing conjectures one idea remained firm and dominant in his mind: the man with the red handkerchief had no right to this treasure! The mysterious instinct which directed this judicial ruling of Aristides had settled this fact as indubitably as though proven by the weight of the strongest testimony. For an instant a wild thought sprang up in his heart, and he seized the nearest mass of ore with the half-formed intention of bearing it directly to the feet of M'liss as her just and due inheritance. But Aristides could not lift it, and the idea passed out of his mind with the frustrated action.

At the further end of the gallery a few blankets were lying, and with some mining implements, a kettle of water, a few worn flannel shirts, were the only articles which this subterranean habitation possessed. In turning over one of the blankets Aristides picked up a woman's comb. It was a tortoise-shell, and bright with some fanciful ornamentation. Without a moment's hesitation Aristides pocketed it as the natural property of M'liss. A pocketbook containing a few old letters in the breast pocket of one of the blue shirts was transferred to that of Aristides with the same coolness and sentiment of instinctive justice.

Aristides wisely reflected that these unimportant articles would excite no suspicion if found in his possession. A fragment of the rock, which, if he had taken it as he felt impelled, would have precipitated the discovery that Aristides had decided to put off until he had perfected a certain plan.

The light from the opening above had gradually faded, and Aristides knew that night had fallen. To prevent suspicion he must return home. He reentered the gallery and reached the opening of the egress. One of the roots of the tree projected into the opening.

He seized it and endeavored to lift it, but in vain. Panting with exertion, he again and again exerted the fullest power of his active sinews, but the tree remained immovable — the opening remained sealed as firmly as with Solomon's signet. Raising his candle towards it, Aristides saw the reason of its resistance. In his hurried ingress he had allowed the tree to revolve sufficiently to permit one of its roots to project into the opening, which held it firmly down. In the shock of the discovery the excitement which had sustained him gave way, and with a hopeless cry the just Aristides fell senseless on the floor of the gallery.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TRIALS OF MRS. MORPHER

"Now, where on earth can that child be?" said Mrs. Morpher, shading her eyes with her hand, as she stood at the door of the "Mountain Ranch," looking down the Wingdam road at sunset. "With his best things on, too. Goodness! — what *were* boys made for?"

Mr. Morpher, without replying to this question, apparently addressed to himself as an adult representative of the wayward species, appeared at the door, and endeavored to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Oh, *he's* all right, Sue! Don't fuss about *him*," said Mr. Morpher with an imbecile sense of conveying comfort in the emphasized pronoun. "He's down the gulch, or in the tunnel, or over to the claim. He'll turn up by bedtime. Don't you worry about *him*. I'll look him up in



a minit," and Mr. Morpher, taking his hat, sauntered down the road in the direction of the National Hotel.

Mrs. Mopher gazed doubtfully after her liege. "Looking up" Aristides, in her domestic experience, implied a prolonged absence in the bar-room of the hotel, the tedium whereof was beguiled by seven-up or euchre. But she only said: "Don't be long, James," and sighed hopelessly as she turned back into the house.

Once again within her own castle walls Mrs. Morpher dropped her look of patient suffering and glanced defiantly around for a fresh grievance.

The decorous little parlor offered nothing to provoke the hostility of her peculiar instincts. Spotless were the white curtains; the bright carpet guiltless of stain or dust. The chairs were placed arithmetically in twos, and added up evenly on the four sides with nothing to carry over. Two bunches of lavender and fennel breathed an odor of sanctified cleanliness through the room. Five daguerreotypes on the mantelpiece represented the Morpher family in the progressive stages of petrification, and had the Medusa-like effect of freezing visitors into similar attitudes in their chairs. The walls were further enlivened with two colored engravings of scenes in the domestic history of George Washington, in which the Father of his Country seemed to look blandly from his own correct family circle into Morpher's, and to breathe quite audibly from his gilt frame a dignified blessing.

Lingering a moment in this sacred inclosure to readjust the tablecloth, Mrs. Morpher passed into the dining-room, where the correct Clytie presided at the supper-table, at which the rest of the family were seated. Mrs. Morpher's quick eyes caught the spectacle of M'liss with her chin resting on her hands, and her elbows on the table, sardonically surveying the model of deportment opposite to her.

"M'liss!"

“ Well ? ”

“ Where ’s your elbows ? ”

“ Here ’s one and there ’s the other,” said M’liss quietly, indicating their respective localities by smartly tapping them with the palm of her hand.

“ Take them off the table, instantly, you bold, forward girl — and you, sir, quit that giggling and eat your supper, if you don’t want to be put to bed without it ! ” added Mrs. Morpher to Lycurgus, to whom M’liss’s answer had afforded boundless satisfaction. “ You ’re getting to be just as bad as her, and mercy knows you never were a seraphim ! ”

“ What ’s a seraphim, mother, and what do they do ? ” asked Lycurgus, with growing interest.

“ They don’t ask questions when they should be eating their supper, and thankful for it,” interposed Clytie, authoritatively, as one to whom the genteel attributes and social habits of the seraphim had been a privileged revelation.

“ But, mother ” —

“ Hush — and don’t be a heathen — run and see who is coming in,” said Mrs. Morpher, as the sound of footsteps was heard in the passage.

The door opened and McSnagley entered.

“ Why, bless my soul — how do you do ? ” said Mrs. Morpher, with genteel astonishment. “ Quite a stranger, I declare.”

This was a polite fiction. M’liss knew the fact to be that Mrs. Morpher was reputed to “ set the best table ” in Smith’s Pocket, and McSnagley always called in on Sunday evenings at supper to discuss the current gossip, and “ nag ” M’liss with selected texts.

The verbal McSnagley as usual could n’t stop a moment — and just dropped in “ in passin’.” The actual McSnagley deposited his hat in the corner, and placed himself, in the flesh, on a chair by the table.

“And how 's Brother James, and the fammerly?”

“They 're all well — except ‘Risty;’ he 's off again, — as if my life were n't already pestered out with one child,” and Mrs. Morpher glanced significantly at M'liss.

“Ah, well, we all of us have our trials,” said McSnagley. “I've been ailin' again. That ager must be in my bones still. I've been rather onsettled myself to-day.”

There was the appearance of truth in this statement; Mr. McSnagley's voice had a hollow resonant sound, and his eyes were nervous and fidgety. He had an odd trick, too, of occasionally stopping in the middle of a sentence, and listening as though he heard some distant sound. These things, which Mrs. Morpher recalled afterwards, did not, in the undercurrent of uneasiness about Aristides which she felt the whole of that evening, so particularly attract her notice.

“I know something,” said Lycurgus, during one of these pauses, from the retirement of his corner.

“If you dare to — Kerg!” said M'liss.

“M'liss says she knows where Risty is, but she won't tell,” said the lawgiver, not heeding the warning. The words were scarcely uttered before M'liss's red hand flashed in the air and descended with a sounding box on the traitor's ear. Lycurgus howled, Mrs. Morpher darted into the corner, and M'liss was dragged defiant and struggling to the light.

“Oh, you wicked, wicked child — why don't you say where, if you know?” said Mrs. Morpher, shaking her, as if the information were to be dislodged from some concealed part of her clothing.

“I did n't say I knew for sure,” at last responded M'liss. “I said I thought I knew.”

“Well, where do you think he is?”

But M'liss was firm. Even the gloomy picture of the future state devised by McSnagley could not alter her

determination. Mrs. Morpher, who had a wholesome awe for this strange child, at last had recourse to entreaty. Finally M'liss offered a compromise.

"I'll tell the master, but I won't tell you — partikerly him," said M'liss, indicating the parson with a bodkin-like dart of her forefinger.

Mrs. Morpher hesitated. Her maternal anxiety at length overcame her sense of dignity and discipline.

"Who knows where the master is, or where he is to be found to-night?" she asked hastily.

"He's over to Dr. Duchesne's," said Clytie eagerly; "that is," she stammered, a rich color suddenly flushing from her temples to her round shoulders, "he's usually there in the evenings, I mean."

"Run over, there's a dear, and ask him to come here," said Mrs. Morpher, without noticing a sudden irregularity of conduct in her firstborn. "Run quick!"

Clytie did not wait for a second command. Without availing herself of the proffered company of McSnagley she hastily tied the strings of her school hat under her plump chin, and slipped out of the house. It was not far to the doctor's office, and Clytie walked quickly, overlooking in her haste and preoccupation the admiring glances which several of the swains of Smith's Pocket cast after her as she passed. But on arriving at the doctor's door, so out of breath and excited was this usual model of deportment that, on finding herself in the presence of the master and his friend, she only stood in embarrassed silence, and made up for her lack of verbal expression by a succession of eloquent blushes.

Let us look at her for a moment as she stands there. Her little straw hat, trimmed with cherry-colored ribbons, rests on the waves of her blonde hair. There are other gay ribbons on her light summer dress, clasping her round waist, girdling her wrist, and fastening her collar about her

white throat. Her large blue eyes are very dark and moist — it may be with excitement or a tearful thought of the lost Aristides — or the tobacco smoke, with which I regret to say the room is highly charged. But certainly as she stands leaning against the doorway, biting her moist scarlet lip, and trying to pull down the broad brim of her hat over the surging waves of color that *will* beat rhythmically up to her cheeks and temples, she is so dangerously pretty that I am glad for the master's sake he is the philosopher he has just described himself to his friend the doctor, and that he prefers to study human physiology from the inner surfaces.

When Clytie had recovered herself sufficiently to state her message, the master offered to accompany her back. As Clytie took his arm with some slight trepidation Dr. Duchesne, who had taken sharp notes of these "febrile" symptoms, uttered a prolonged whistle and returned thoughtfully to his office.

Although Clytie found the distance returning no further than the distance going, with the exhaustion of her first journey it was natural that her homeward steps should be slower, and that the master should regulate his pace to accommodate her. It was natural, too, that her voice should be quite low and indistinct, so that the master was obliged to bring his hat nearer the cherry-colored ribbons in the course of conversation. It was also natural that he should offer the sensitive young girl such comfort as lay in tenderly modulated tones and playful epithets. And if in the irregularities of the main street it was necessary to take Clytie's hand or to put his arm around her waist in helping her up declivities, that the master saw no impropriety in the act was evident from the fact that he did not remove his arm when the difficulty was surmounted. In this way Clytie's return occupied some moments more than her going, and Mrs. Morpher was waiting anxiously at the door when the young people arrived.

As the master entered the room, M'liss called him to her. "Bend down your head," she said, "and I'll whisper. But mind, now, I don't say I know for truth where Risty is, I only reckon."

The master bent down his head. As usual in such cases, everybody else felt constrained to listen, and McSnagley's curiosity was awakened to its fullest extent. When the master had received the required information, he said quietly:—

"I think I'll go myself to this place which M'liss wishes to make a secret of and see if the boy is there. It will save trouble to any one else, if she should be mistaken."

"Had n't you better take some one with you?" said Mrs. Morpher.

"By all means. I'll go!" said Mr. McSnagley, with feverish alacrity.

The master looked inquiringly at M'liss.

"He can go if he wants to, but he'd better not," said M'liss, looking directly into McSnagley's eyes.

"What do you mean by that, you little savage?" said McSnagley quickly.

M'liss turned scornfully away. "Go," she said,—"go if you want to," and resumed her seat in the corner.

The master hesitated. But he could not withstand the appeal in the eyes of the mother and daughter, and after a short inward struggle he turned to McSnagley and bade him briefly "Come."

When they had left the house and stood in the road together, McSnagley stopped.

"Where are you goin'?"

"To Smith's Pocket."

McSnagley still lingered. "Do you ever carry any wep-pings?" he at length asked.

"Weapons? No. What do you want with weapons to

go a mile on a starlit road to a deserted claim. Nonsense, man, what are you thinking of? We're hunting a lost child, not a runaway felon. Come along," and the master dragged him away.

Mrs. Morpher watched them from the door until their figures were lost in the darkness. When she returned to the dining-room, Clytie had already retired to her room, and Mrs. Morpher, overruling M'liss's desire to sit up until the master returned, bade her follow that correct example. 'There's Clytie, now, gone to bed like a young lady, and do you do like her," and Mrs. Morpher, with this one drop of balm in the midst of her trials, trimmed the light and sat down in patience to wait for Aristides, and console herself with the reflection of Clytie's excellence. "Poor Clytie!" mused that motherly woman; "how excited and worried she looks about her brother. I hope she'll be able to get to sleep."

It did not occur to Mrs. Morpher that there were seasons in the life of young girls when younger brothers ceased to become objects of extreme solicitude. It did not occur to her to go upstairs and see how her wish was likely to be gratified. It was well in her anxiety that she did not, and that the crowning trial of the day's troubles was spared her then. For at that moment Clytie was lying on the bed where she had flung herself without undressing, the heavy masses of her blond hair tumbled about her neck, and her hot face buried in her hands.

Of what was the correct Clytie thinking?

She was thinking, lying there with her burning cheeks pressed against the pillow, that she loved the master! She was recalling step by step every incident that had occurred in their lonely walk. She was repeating to herself his facile sentences, wringing and twisting them to extract one drop to assuage the strange thirst that was growing up in her soul. She was thinking — silly Clytie! — that he had

never appeared so kind before, and she was thinking — sillier Clytie! — that no one had ever before felt as she did then.

How soft and white his hands were! How sweet and gentle were the tones of his voice! How easily he spoke — so unlike her father, McSnagley, or the young men whom she met at church or on picnics! How tall and handsome he looked as he pressed her hand at the door! Did he press her hand, or was it a mistake? Yes, he must have pressed her hand, for she remembers now to have pressed his in return. And he put his arm around her waist once, and she feels it yet, and the strange perfume as he drew her closer to him. (Mem. — The master had been smoking. Poor Clytie!)

When she had reached this point she raised herself and sat up, and began the process of undressing, mechanically putting each article away in the precise, methodical habit of her former life. But she found herself soon sitting again on the bed, twisting her hair, which fell over her plump white shoulders, idly between her fingers, and patting the carpet with her small white foot. She had been sitting thus some minutes when she heard the sound of voices without, the trampling of many feet, and a loud rapping at the door below. She sprang to the door and looked out in the passage. Something white passed by her like a flash and crouched down at the head of the stairs. It was M'liss.

Mrs. Morpher opened the door.

“Is Mr. Morpher in?” said a half dozen strange, hoarse voices.

“No!”

“Where is he?”

“He’s at some of the saloons. Oh, tell me, has anything happened? Is it about Aristides? Where is he — is he safe?” said Mrs. Morpher, wringing her hands in agony.



"He's all right," said one of the men, with Mr. Morpher's old emphasis; "but" —

"But what?"

M'LISS moved slowly down the staircase, and Clytie from her passage above held her breath.

"There's been a row down to Smith's old Pocket — a fight — a man killed."

"Who?" shouted M'LISS from the stairs.

"McSnagley — shot dead."

## CHAPTER VII

THE PEOPLE

*vs.*

JOHN DOE WATERS.

} Before Chief Justice LYNCH.

The hurried statement of the messenger was corroborated in the streets that night. It was certain that McSnagley was killed. Smith's Pocket, excited but skeptical, had seen the body, had put its fingers in the bullethole, and was satisfied. Smith's Pocket, albeit hoarse with shouting and excitement, still discussed details with infinite relish in bar-rooms and saloons, and in the main street in clamorous knots that in front of the jail where the prisoner was confined seemed to swell into a mob. Smith's Pocket, bearded, blue-shirted, and belligerent, crowding about this locality, from time to time uttered appeals to justice that swelled on the night wind, not infrequently coupling these invocations with the name of that eminent jurist — Lynch.

Let not the simple reader suppose that the mere taking off of a fellow mortal had created this uproar. The tenure of life in Smith's Pocket was vain and uncertain at the best, and as such philosophically accepted, and the blowing out of a brief candle here and there seldom left a permanent shadow with the survivors. In such instances, too,

the victims had received their quietus from the hands of brother townsmen, socially, as it were, in broad day, in the open streets, and under other mitigating circumstances. Thus, when Judge Starbottle of Virginia and "French Pete" exchanged shots with each other across the plaza until their revolvers were exhausted, and the luckless Pete received a bullet through the lungs, half the town witnessed it, and were struck with the gallant and chivalrous bearing of these gentlemen, and to this day point with feelings of pride and admiration to the bulletholes in the door of the National Hotel, as they explain how narrow was the escape of the women in the parlor. But here was a man murdered at night, in a lonely place, and by a stranger—a man unknown to the saloons of Smith's Pocket—a wretch who could not plead the excitement of monte or the delirium of whiskey as an excuse. No wonder that Smith's Pocket surged with virtuous indignation beneath the windows of his prison, and clamored for his blood.

And as the crowd thickened and swayed to and fro, the story of his crime grew exaggerated by hurried and frequent repetition. Half a dozen speakers volunteered to give the details with an added horror to every sentence. How one of Morpher's children had been missing for a week or more. How the schoolmaster and the parson were taking a walk that evening, and coming to Smith's Pocket heard a faint voice from its depths which they recognized as belonging to the missing child. How they had succeeded in dragging him out and gathered from his infant lips the story of his incarceration by the murderer, Waters, and his enforced labors in the mine. How they were interrupted by the appearance of Waters, followed by a highly colored and epithet-illustrated account of the interview and quarrel. How Waters struck the schoolmaster, who returned the blow with a pick. How Waters thereupon drew a derringer and fired, missing the schoolmaster, but killing McSnagley

behind him. How it was believed that Waters was one of Joaquin's gang, that he had killed Smith, etc., etc. At each pause the crowd pushed and panted, stealthily creeping around the doors and windows of the jail like some strange beast of prey, until the climax was reached, and a hush fell, and two men were silently dispatched for a rope, and a critical examination was made of the limbs of a pine-tree in the vicinity.

The man to whom these incidents had the most terrible significance might have seemed the least concerned as he sat that night but a few feet removed from the eager crowd without, his hands lightly clasped together between his knees, and the expression on his face of one whose thoughts were far away. A candle stuck in a tin sconce on the wall flickered as the night wind blew freshly through a broken pane of the window. Its uncertain light revealed a low room whose cloth ceiling was stained and ragged, and from whose boarded walls the torn paper hung in strips; a lumber-room partitioned from the front office, which was occupied by a justice of the peace. If this temporary dungeon had an appearance of insecurity, there was some compensation in the spectacle of an armed sentinel who sat upon a straw mattress in the doorway, and another who patrolled the narrow hall which led to the street. That the prisoner was not placed in one of the cells in the floor below may have been owing to the fact that the law recognized his detention as only temporary, and while providing the two guards as a preventive against the egress of crime within, discreetly removed all unnecessary and provoking obstacles to the ingress of justice from without.

Since the prisoner's arrest he had refused to answer any interrogatories. Since he had been placed in confinement he had not moved from his present attitude. The guard, finding all attempts at conversation fruitless, had fallen into a reverie, and regaled himself with pieces of straw plucked

from the mattress. A mouse ran across the floor. The silence contrasted strangely with the hum of voices in the street.

The candle-light, falling across the prisoner's forehead, showed the features which Smith's Pocket knew and recognized as Waters, the strange prospector. Had M'liss or Aristides seen him then they would have missed that sinister expression which was part of their fearful remembrance. The hard, grim outlines of his mouth were relaxed, the broad shoulders were bent and contracted, the quick, searching eyes were fixed on vacancy. The strong man — physically strong only — was breaking up. The fist that might have felled an ox could do nothing more than separate its idle fingers with childishness of power and purpose. An hour longer in this condition, and the gallows would have claimed a figure scarcely less limp and impotent than that it was destined to ultimately reject.

He had been trying to collect his thoughts. Would they hang him? No, they must try him first, legally, and he could prove — he could prove — But what could he prove? For whenever he attempted to consider the uncertain chances of his escape, he found his thoughts straying wide of the question. It was of no use for him to clasp his fingers or knit his brows. Why did the recollection of a school-fellow, long since forgotten, blot out all the fierce and feverish memories of the night and the terrible certainty of the future? Why did the strips of paper hanging from the wall recall to him the pattern of a kite he had flown forty years ago. In a moment like this, when all his energies were required and all his cunning and tact would be called into service, could he think of nothing better than trying to match the torn paper on the wall, or to count the cracks in the floor? And an oath rose to his lips, but from very feebleness died away without expression.

Why had he ever come to Smith's Pocket? If he had

not been guided by that hell-cat, this would not have happened. What if he were to tell *all* he knew? What if he should accuse *her*? But would they be willing to give up the bird they had already caught? Yet he again found himself cursing his own treachery and cowardice, and this time an exclamation burst from his lips and attracted the attention of the guard.

"Hello, there! easy, old fellow; thar ain't any good in that," said the sentinel, looking up. "It's a bad fix you're in, *sure*, but rarin' and pitchin' won't help things. 'Tain't no use cussin' — leastways, 't ain't that kind o' swearing that gets a chap out o' here," he added, with a conscientious reservation. "Now, ef I was in your place, I'd kinder reflect on my sins, and make my peace with God Almighty, for I tell you the looks o' them people outside ain't pleasant. You're in the hands of the law, and the law will protect you as far as it can, — as far as two men can stand agin a hundred; sabe? That's what's the matter; and it's as well that you knowed that now as any time."

But the prisoner had relapsed into his old attitude, and was surveying the jailor with the same abstracted air as before. That individual resumed his seat on the mattress, and now lent his ear to a colloquy which seemed to be progressing at the foot of the stairs. Presently he was hailed by his brother turnkey from below.

"Oh, Bill," said fidus Achates from the passage, with the usual Californian prefatory ejaculation.

"Well?"

"Here's M'liss! Says she wants to come up. Shall I let her in?"

The subject of inquiry, however, settled the question of admission by darting past the guard below in this moment of preoccupation, and bounded up the stairs like a young fawn. The guards laughed.

"Now, then, my infant phenomenon," said the one

called Bill, as M'liss stood panting before him, "wot 's up? and nextly, wot 's in that bottle?"

M'liss whisked the bottle which she held in her hand smartly under her apron, and said curtly, "Where 's him that killed the parson?"

"Yonder," replied the man, indicating the abstracted figure with his hand. "Wot do *you* want with him? None o' your tricks here, now," he added threateningly.

"I want to see him!"

"Well, look! make the most of your time, and *his* too, for the matter of that; but mind, now, no nonsense, M'liss, he won't stand it!" repeated the guard with an emphasis in the caution.

M'liss crossed the room, until opposite the prisoner. "Are you the chap that killed the parson?" she said, addressing the motionless figure.

Something in the tone of her voice startled the prisoner from the reverie. He raised his head and glanced quickly, and with his old sinister expression, at the child.

"What 's that to you?" he asked, with the grim lines setting about his mouth again, and the old harshness of his voice.

"Did n't I tell you he would n't stand any of your nonsense, M'liss?" said the guard testily.

M'liss only repeated her question.

"And what if I did kill him?" said the prisoner savagely; "what 's that to you, you young hell-cat? Guard! — damnation! — what do you let her come here for? Do you hear? Guard!" he screamed, rising in a transport of passion, "take her away! fling her downstairs! What the h—ll is she doing here?"

"If you was the man that killed McSnagley," said M'liss, without heeding the interruption, "I've brought you something;" and she drew the bottle from under her apron and extended it to Waters, adding, "It 's brandy — Cognac — A1."

"Take it away, and take yourself with it," returned Waters, without abating his angry accents. "Take it away! do you hear?"

"Well, that 's what I call ongrateful, dog-gone my skin if it ain't," said the guard, who had been evidently struck with M'liss's generosity. "Pass the licker this way, my beauty, and I'll keep it till he changes his mind. He 's naturally a little flustered just now, but he'll come round after you go."

But M'liss did n't accede to this change in the disposition of the gift, and was evidently taken aback by her reception and the refusal of the proffered comfort.

"Come, hand the bottle here!" repeated the guard. "It 's agin rules to bring the pris'ner anything, anyway, and it 's confiscated to the law. It 's agin the rules, too, to ask a pris'ner any question that 'll crimiuinate him, and on the whole you 'd better go, M'liss," added the guard, to whom the appearance of the bottle had been the means of provoking a spasm of discipline.

But M'liss refused to make over the coveted treasure. Bill arose half jestingly and endeavored to get possession of the bottle. A struggle ensued, good-naturedly on the part of the guard, but characterized on the part of M'liss by that half-savage passion which any thwarted whim or instinct was sure to provoke in her nature. At last with a curse she freed herself from his grasp, and seizing the bottle by the neck aimed it with the full strength of her little arm fairly at his head. But he was quick enough to avert that important object, if not quick enough to save his shoulder from receiving the strength of the blow, which shattered the thin glass and poured the fiery contents of the bottle over his shirt and breast, saturating his clothes, and diffusing a sharp alcoholic odor through the room.

A forced laugh broke from his lips, as he sank back on the mattress, not without an underlying sense of awe at

this savage girl who stood panting before him, and from whom he had just escaped a blow which might have been fatal. "It's a pity to waste so much good licker," he added, with affected carelessness, narrowly watching each movement of the young pythoness, whose rage was not yet abated.

"Come, M'liss," he said at last, "we'll say quits. You've lost your brandy, and I've got some of the pieces of yonder bottle sticking in my shoulder yet. I suppose brandy is good for bruises, though. Hand me the light!"

M'liss reached the candle from the sconce and held it by the guard as he turned back the collar of his shirt to lay bare his shoulder. "So," he muttered, "black and blue; no bones broken, though no fault of yours, eh? my young cherub, if it was n't. There — why, what are you looking at in that way, M'liss, are you crazy? — Hell's furies, don't hold the light so near! What are you doing; Hell — ho, there! Help!"

Too late, for in an instant he was a sheet of living flame. When or how the candle had touched his garments, saturated with the inflammable fluid, Waters, the only inactive spectator in the room, could never afterward tell. He only knew that the combustion was instantaneous and complete, and before the cry had died from his lips, not only the guard, but the straw mattress on which he had been sitting, and the loose strips of paper hanging from the walls, and the torn cloth ceiling above were in flames.

"Help! Help! Fire! Fire!"

With a superhuman effort, M'liss dragged the prisoner past the blazing mattress, through the doorway into the passage, and drew the door, which opened outwardly, against him. The unhappy guard, still blazing like a funeral pyre, after wildly beating the air with his arms for a few seconds, dashed at the broken window, which gave way with his



weight, and precipitated him, still flaming, into the yard below. A column of smoke and a licking tongue of flame leaped from the open window at the same moment, and the cry of fire was reëchoed from a hundred voices in the street. But scarcely had M'liss closed the open door against Waters, when the guard from the doorway mounted the stairs in time to see a flaming figure leap from the window. The room was filled with smoke and fire. With an instinct of genius, M'liss, pointing to the open window, shouted hoarsely in his ear: —

“Waters has escaped!”

A cry of fury from the guard was echoed from the stairs, even now crowded by the excited mob, who feared the devastating element might still cheat them of their intended victim. In another moment the house was emptied, and the front street deserted, as the people rushed to the rear of the jail — climbing fences and stumbling over ditches in pursuit of the imagined runaway. M'liss seized the hat and coat of the luckless “Bill,” and dragging the prisoner from his place of concealment hurriedly equipped him, and hastened through the blinding smoke of the staircase boldly on the heels of the retiring crowd. Once in the friendly darkness of the street, it was easy to mingle with the pushing throng until an alley crossing at right angles enabled them to leave the main thoroughfare. A few moments' rapid flight, and the outskirts of the town were reached, the tall pines opened their abysmal aisles to the fugitives, and M'liss paused with her companion. Until daybreak, at least, here they were safe!

From the time they had quitted the burning room to that moment, Waters had passed into his listless, abstracted condition, so helpless and feeble that he retained the grasp of M'liss's hand more through some instinctive prompting rather than the dictates of reason. M'liss had found it necessary to almost drag him from the main street and the hurrying

crowd, which seemed to exercise a strange fascination over his bewildered senses. And now he sat down passively beside her, and seemed to submit to the guidance of her superior nature.

“You’re safe enough now till daylight,” said M’liss, when she had recovered her breath, “but you must make the best time you can through these woods to-night, keeping the wind to your back, until you come to the Wingdam road. There! do you hear?” said M’liss, a little vexed at her companion’s apathy.

Waters released the hand of M’liss, and commenced mechanically to button his coat around his chest with fumbling, purposeless fingers. He then passed his hand across his forehead as if to clear his confused and bewildered brain; all this, however, to no better result than to apparently root his feet to the soil and to intensify the stupefaction which seemed to be creeping over him.

“Be quick, now! You’ve no time to lose! Keep straight on through the woods until you see the stars again before you, and you’re on the other side of the ridge. What are you waiting for?” And M’liss stamped her little foot impatiently.

An idea which had been struggling for expression at last seemed to dawn in his eyes. Something like a simpering blush crept over his face as he fumbled in his pocket. At last, drawing forth a twenty-dollar piece, he bashfully offered it to M’liss. In a twinkling the extended arm was stricken up, and the bright coin flew high in the air, and disappeared in the darkness.

“Keep your money! I don’t want it. Don’t do that again!” said M’liss, highly excited, “or I’ll — I’ll — bite you!”

Her wicked little white teeth flashed ominously as she said it.

“Get off while you can. Look!” she added, pointing to

a column of flame shooting up above the straggling mass of buildings in the village, "the jail is burning; and if that goes, the block will go with it. Before morning these woods will be filled with people. Save yourself while you can!"

Waters turned and moved away in the darkness. "Keep straight on, and don't waste a moment," urged the child, as the man seemed still disposed to linger. "Trot now!" and in another moment he seemed to melt into the forest depths.

M'liss threw her apron around her head, and coiled herself up at the root of a tree in something of her old fashion. She had prophesied truly of the probable extent of the fire. The fresh wind, whirling the sparks over the little settlement, had already fanned the single flame into the broad sheet which now glowed fiercely, defining the main street along its entire length. The breeze which fanned her cheek bore the crash of falling timbers and the shouts of terrified and anxious men. There were no engines in Smith's Pocket, and the contest was unequal. Nothing but a change of wind could save the doomed settlement.

The red glow lit up the dark cheek of M'liss and kindled a savage light in her black eyes. Relieved by the background of the sombre woods, she might have been a red-handed Nemesis looking over the city of Vengeance. As the long tongues of flame licked the broad colonnade of the National Hotel, and shot a wreathing pillar of fire and smoke high into the air, M'liss extended her tiny fist and shook it at the burning building with an inspiration that at the moment seemed to transfigure her.

So the night wore away until the first red bars of morning light gleamed beyond the hill, and seemed to emulate the dying embers of the devastated settlement. M'liss for the first time began to think of the home she had quitted the night before, and looked with some anxiety in the direction of "Mountain Ranch." Its white walls and little

orchard were untouched, and looked peacefully over the blackened and deserted village. M'liss rose, and, stretching her cramped limbs, walked briskly toward the town. She had proceeded but a short distance when she heard the sound of cautious and hesitating footsteps behind her, and, facing quickly about, encountered the figure of Waters.

"Are you drunk?" said M'liss passionately, "or what do you mean by this nonsense?"

The man approached her with a strange smile on his face, rubbing his hands together, and shivering as with cold. When he had reached her side he attempted to take her hand. M'liss shrank away from him with an expression of disgust.

"What are you doing here again?" she demanded.

"I want to go with you. It's dark in there," he said, motioning to the wood he had just quitted, "and I don't like to be alone. You'll let me be with you, won't you? I won't be any trouble;" and a feeble smile flickered on his lips.

M'liss darted a quick look into his face. The grim outlines of his mouth were relaxed, and his lips moved again impotently. But his eyes were bright and open, — bright with a look that was new to M'liss — that imparted a strange softness and melancholy to his features, — the incipient gleam of insanity!

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE AUTHOR TO THE READER—EXPLANATORY

If I remember rightly, in one of the admirable tragedies of Tsien Tsiang at a certain culminating point of interest an innocent person is about to be sacrificed. The knife is raised and the victim meekly awaits the stroke. At this moment the author of the play appears on the stage, and,

delivering an excellent philosophical dissertation on the merits of the "situation," shows that by the purest principles of art the sacrifice is necessary, but at the same time offers to the audience the privilege of changing the dénouement. Such, however, is the nice æsthetic sense of a Chinese auditory, and so universal the desire of bloodshed in the heathen breast, that invariably at each representation of this remarkable tragedy the cause of humanity gives way to the principles of art.

I offer this precedent as an excuse for digressing at a moment when I have burned down a small settlement, dispatched a fellow being, and left my heroine alone in the company of an escaped convict who has just developed insanity as a new social quality. My object in thus digressing is to confer with the reader in regard to the evolution of this story, — a familiarity not without precedent, as I might prove from most of the old Greek comedies, whose *parabasis* permits the poet to mingle freely with the *dramatis personæ*, to address the audience and descant at length in regard to himself, his play, and his own merits.

The fact is that, during the progress of this story, I have received many suggestions from intimate friends in regard to its incidents and construction. I have also been in the receipt of correspondence from distant readers, one letter of which I recall signed by an "Honest Miner," who advises me to "do the right thing by M'liss," or intimates somewhat obscurely that he will "bust my crust for me," which, though complimentary in its abstract expression of interest, and implying a taste for euphonism, evinces an innate coarseness which I fear may blunt his perceptions of delicate shades and Greek outlines.

Again, the practical nature of Californians and their familiarity with scenes and incidents which would be novel to other people have occasioned me great uneasiness. In the course of the last three chapters of M'liss I have re-

ceived some twenty or thirty communications from different parts of the State corroborating incidents of my story, which I solemnly assure the reader is purely fictitious. Some one has lately sent me a copy of an interior paper containing an old obituary of Smith of Smith's Pocket. Another correspondent writes to me that he was acquainted with the schoolmaster in the fall of '49, and that they "grubbed together." The editors of the serial in which this story appears assure me that they have received an advertisement from the landlord of the "National Hotel" contingent upon an editorial notice of its having been at one time the abode of M'liss; while an aunt of the heroine, alluding in excellent terms to the reformed character of her niece M'liss, clenches her sincerity by requesting the loan of twenty dollars to buy clothes for the desolate orphan.

Under these circumstances I have hesitated to go on. What were the bodiless creatures of my fancy — the pale phantoms of thought, evoked in the solitude of my chamber, and sometimes even midst the hum of busy streets — have suddenly grown into flesh and blood, living people, protected by the laws of society, and having their legal right to actions for slander in any court. Worse than that, I have sometimes thought with terror of the new responsibility which might attach to my development of their characters. What if I were obliged to support and protect these Frankenstein monsters? What if the original of the principal villain of my story should feel impelled through æsthetic principles of art to work out in real life the supposititious dénouement I have sketched for him?

I have therefore concluded to lay aside my pen for this week, leaving the catastrophe impending, and await the suggestion of my correspondents. I do so the more cheerfully as it enables the editors of this weekly to publish twenty-seven more columns of Miss Braddon's "Outcasts of So-

ciety" and the remainder of the "Duke's Motto," — two works which in the quiet simplicity of their home-like pictures and household incidents are attended with none of the difficulties which beset my unhappy story.

## CHAPTER IX

### CLEANING UP

As the master, wan-eyed and unrefreshed by slumber, awoke the next morning among the blackened ruins of the fire, he was conscious of having undergone some strange revulsion of sentiment. What he remembered of the last evening's events, though feverish and indistinct as a dream, and though, like a dream, without coherency or connected outline, had nevertheless seriously impressed him. How frivolous and trifling his past life and its pursuits looked through the lightning vista opened to his eyes by the flash of Waters's pistol! "Suppose I had been killed," ruminated the master, "what then? A paragraph in the 'Banner,' headed 'Fatal Affray,' and my name added to the already swollen list of victims to lawless violence and crime! Humph! A pretty scrape, truly!" And the master ground his teeth with vexation.

Let not the reader judge him too hastily. In the best regulated mind, thankfulness for deliverance from danger is apt to be mingled with some doubts as to the necessity of the trial.

In this frame of mind the last person he would have cared to meet was Clytie. That young woman's evil genius, however, led her to pass the burnt district that morning. Perhaps she had anticipated the meeting. At all events, he had proceeded but a few steps before he was confronted by the identical round hat and cherry colored ribbons. But in his present humor the cheerful color

somehow reminded him of the fire and of a ruddy stain over McSnagley's heart, and invested the innocent Clytie with a figurative significance. Now Clytie's reveries at that moment were pleasant, if the brightness of her eyes and the freshened color on her cheeks were any sign, and, as she had not seen the master since then, she naturally expected to take up the thread of romance where it had been dropped. But it required all her feminine tact to conceal her embarrassment at his formal greeting and constrained manner.

"He is bashful," reasoned Clytie to herself.

"This girl is a tremendous fool," growled the master inwardly.

An awkward pause ensued. Finally, Clytie *loquitur* :—

"M'liss has been missing since the fire!"

"Missing?" echoed the master in his natural tone.

Clytie bit her lip with vexation. "Yes, she's always running away. She'll be back again. But you look interested. Do you know," she continued with exceeding archness, "I sometimes think, Mr. Gray, if M'liss were a little older" —

"Well?"

"Well, putting this and that together, you know!"

"Well?"

"People will talk, you know," continued Clytie, with that excessive fondness weak people exhibit in enveloping in mystery the commonest affairs of life.

"People are d—d fools!" roared the master.

The correct Clytie was a little shocked. Perhaps underneath it was a secret admiration of the transgressor. Force even of this cheap quality goes a good way with some natures.

"That is," continued the master, with an increase of dignity in inverse proportion to the lapse he had made, "people are apt to be mistaken, Miss Morpher, and without



meaning it, to do infinite injustice to their fellow mortals. But I see I am detaining you. I will try and find Melissa. I wish you good-morning." And Don Whiskerandos stalked solemnly away.

Clytie turned red and white by turns, and her eyes filled with tears. This dénouement to her dreams was utterly unexpected. While a girl of stronger character and active intelligence would have employed the time in digesting plans of future retaliation and revenge, Clytie's dull brain and placid nature were utterly perplexed and shaken.

"Dear me!" said Clytie to herself, as she started home, "if he don't love me, why don't he say so?"

The master, or Mr. Gray, as we may now call him as he draws near the close of his professional career, took the old trail through the forest, which led to M'liss's former hiding-place. He walked on briskly, revolving in his mind the feasibility of leaving Smith's Pocket. The late disaster, which would affect the prosperity of the settlement for some time to come, offered an excuse to him to give up his situation. On searching his pockets he found his present capital to amount to ten dollars. This increased by forty dollars, due him from the trustees, would make fifty dollars; deduct thirty dollars for liabilities, and he would have twenty dollars left to begin the world anew. Youth and hope added an indefinite number of ciphers to the right hand of these figures, and in this sanguine mood our young Alnaschar walked on until he had reached the old pine throne in the bank of the forest. M'liss was not there. He sat down on the trunk of the tree, and for a few moments gave himself up to the associations it suggested. What would become of M'liss after he was gone? But he quickly dropped the subject as one too visionary and sentimental for his then fiercely practical consideration, and, to prevent the recurrence of such distracting fancies, began to retrace his steps toward the settlement. At the edge of the woods,

at a point where the trail forked toward the old site of Smith's Pocket, he saw M'liss coming toward him. Her ordinary pace on such occasions was a kind of Indian trot; to his surprise she was walking slowly, with her apron thrown over her head, — an indication of meditation with M'liss and the usual way in which she excluded the outer world in studying her lessons. When she was within a few feet of him he called her by name. She started as she recognized him. There was a shade of seriousness in her dark eyes, and the hand that took his was listless and totally unlike her old frank, energetic grasp.

"You look worried, M'liss," said Mr. Gray soothingly, as the old sentimental feeling crept over his heart. "What's the matter now?"

M'liss replied by seating herself on the bank beside the road, and pointed to a place by her side. Mr. Gray took the proffered seat. M'liss then, fixing her eyes on some distant part of the view, remained for some moments in silence. Then, without turning her head or moving her eyes, she asked: —

"What's that they call a girl that has money left her?"

"An heiress, M'liss?"

"Yes, an heiress."

"Well?" said Mr. Gray.

"Well," said M'liss, without moving her eyes, "I'm one, — I'm a heiress!"

"What's that, M'liss?" said Mr. Gray laughingly.

M'liss was silent again. Suddenly turning her eyes full upon him, she said: —

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gray, beginning to be impressed by the child's manner.

"Listen, then."

In short quick sentences, M'liss began. How Aristides

had several times hinted of the concealed riches of Smith's Pocket. How he had last night repeated the story to her of a strange discovery he had made. How she remembered to have heard her father often swear that there was money "in that hole," if he only had means to work it. How, partly impressed by this statement and partly from curiosity and pity for the prisoner, she had visited him in confinement. An account of her interview, the origin of the fire, her flight with Waters. (*Questions* by Mr. Gray: What was your object in assisting this man to escape? *Ans.* They were going to kill him. *Ques.* Had n't he killed McSnagley. *Ans.* Yes, but McSnagley ought to have been killed long ago.) How she had taken leave of him that morning. How he had come back again "silly." How she had dragged him on toward the Wingdam road, and how he had told her that all the hidden wealth of Smith's Pocket had belonged to her father. How she had found out, from some questions, that he had known her father. But how all his other answers were "silly."

"And where is he now?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Gone," said M'liss. "I left him at the edge of the wood to go back and get some provisions, and when I returned he was gone. If he had any senses left, he's miles away by this time. When he was off I went back to Smith's Pocket. I found the hidden opening and saw the gold."

Mr. Gray looked at her curiously. He had, in his more intimate knowledge of her character, noticed the unconcern with which she spoke of the circumstances of her father's death and the total lack of any sentiment of filial regard. The idea that this man whom she had aided in escaping had ever done her injury had not apparently entered her mind, nor did Mr. Gray think it necessary to hint the deeper suspicion he had gathered from Dr. Duchesne that Waters had murdered her father. If the story of the concealed treasures of Smith's Pocket were exaggerated he

could easily satisfy himself on that point. M'liss met his suggestion to return to the Pocket with alacrity, and the two started away in that direction.

It was late in the afternoon when Mr. Gray returned. His heightened color and eager inquiry for Dr. Duchesne provoked the usual hope from the people that he met "that it was nothing serious." No, nothing was the matter, the master answered with a slight laugh, but would they send the doctor to his schoolhouse when he returned? "That young chap's worse than he thinks," was one sympathizing suggestion; "this kind of life's too rough for his sort."

To while away the interim, Mr. Gray stopped on his way to the schoolhouse at the stage office as the Wingdam stage drew up and disgorged its passengers. He was listlessly watching the passengers as they descended when a soft voice from the window addressed him, "May I trouble you for your arm as I get down?" Mr. Gray looked up. It was a singular request, as the driver was at that moment standing by the door, apparently for that purpose. But the request came from a handsome woman, and with a bow the young man stepped to the door. The lady laid her hand lightly on his arm, sprang from the stage with a dexterity that showed the service to have been merely ceremonious, thanked him with an elaboration of acknowledgment which seemed equally gratuitous, and disappeared in the office.

"That's what I call a dead set," said the driver, drawing a long breath, as he turned to Mr. Gray, who stood in some embarrassment. "Do you know her?"

"No," said Mr. Gray laughingly, "do you?"

"Nary time! But take care of yourself, young man; she's after you, sure!"

But Mr. Gray was continuing his walk to the schoolhouse, unmindful of the caution. For the momentary glimpse he had caught of this woman's face, she appeared

to be about thirty. Her dress, though tasteful and elegant, in the present condition of California society afforded no criterion of her social status. But the figure of Dr. Duchesne waiting for him at the schoolhouse door just then usurped the place of all others, and she dropped out of his mind.

"Now then," said the doctor, as the young man grasped his hand, "you want me to tell you why your eyes are bloodshot, why your cheeks burn, and your hand is dry and hot?"

"Not exactly! Perhaps you'll understand the symptoms better when you've heard my story. Sit down here and listen."

The doctor took the proffered seat on top of a desk, and Mr. Gray, after assuring himself that they were entirely alone, related the circumstances he had gathered from M'liss that morning.

"You see, doctor, how unjust were your surmises in regard to this girl," continued Mr. Gray. "But let that pass now. At the conclusion of her story, I offered to go with her to this Ali Baba cave. It was no easy job finding the concealed entrance, but I found it at last, and ample corroboration of every item of this wild story. The pocket is rich with the most valuable ore. It has evidently been worked for some time since the discovery was made, but there is still a fortune in its walls, and several thousand dollars of ore sacked up in its galleries. Look at that!" continued Mr. Gray, as he drew an oblong mass of quartz and metal from his pocket. "Think of a secret of this kind having been intrusted for three weeks to a penniless orphan girl of twelve and an eccentric schoolboy of ten, and undivulged except when a proper occasion offered."

Dr. Duchesne smiled. "And Waters is really clear?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gray.

“ And M'liss assisted him to escape ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, you are an innocent one ! And you see nothing in this but an act of thoughtless generosity ? No assisting of an old accomplice to escape ? ”

“ I see nothing but truth in her statement,” returned Mr. Gray stoutly. “ If there has been any wrong committed, I believe her to be innocent of its knowledge.”

“ Well, I'm glad at least the money goes to her and not to him. But how are you to establish her right to this property ? ”

“ That was my object in conferring with you. At present the claim is abandoned. I have taken up the ground in my own name (for her), and this afternoon I posted up the usual notice.”

“ Go on. You are not so much of a fool, after all.”

“ Thank you ! This will hold until a better claim is established. Now, if Smith had discovered this lead, and was, as the lawyers say, ‘ seized and possessed ’ of it at the time of his death, M'liss, of course, as next of kin, inherits it.”

“ But how can this be proved ? It is the general belief that Smith committed suicide through extreme poverty and destitution.”

Mr. Gray drew a letter from his pocket.

“ You remember the memorandum I showed you, which came into my possession. Here it is ; it is dated the day of his death.”

Dr. Duchesne took it and read : —

“ July 17th. Five hours in drift — dipping west. Took out 20 oz. — cleaned up 40 oz. — Mem. Saw M. S.”

“ This evidently refers to actual labor in the mine at the time,” said Dr. Duchesne. “ But is it legally sufficient to support a claim of this magnitude ? That is the only question now. You say this paper was the leaf of an old mem-

orandum, torn off and used for a letter by M'liss; do you know where the original book can be found?"

"Aristides has it, or knows where it is," answered Mr. Gray.

"Find it by all means. And get legal advice before you do anything. Go this very evening to Judge Plunkett and state your case to him. The promise of a handsome contingent fee won't hurt M'liss's prospects any. Remember, our ideas of abstract justice and the letter of the law in this case may be entirely different. Take Judge Plunkett your proofs; that is," said the Doctor, stopping and eyeing his friend keenly, "if you have no fears for M'liss if this matter should be thoroughly ventilated."

Mr. Gray did not falter.

"I go at once," said he gayly, "if only to prove the child's claim to a good name if we fail in getting her property."

The two men left the schoolhouse together. As they reached the main street, the doctor paused:—

"You are still determined?"

"I am," responded the young man.

"Good-night, and God speed you, then," and the doctor left him.

The fire had been particularly severe on the legal fraternity in the settlement, and Judge Plunkett's office, together with those of his learned brethren, had been consumed with the courthouse on the previous night. The judge's house was on the outskirts of the village, and thither Mr. Gray proceeded. The judge was at home, but engaged at that moment. Mr. Gray would wait, and was ushered into a small room evidently used as a kitchen, but just then littered with law books, bundles of papers, and blanks that had been hastily rescued from the burning building. The sideboard groaned with the weight of several volumes of New York Reports, that seemed to impart a dusty flavor

to the adjoining victual. Mr. Gray picked up a volume of supreme court decisions from the coal-scuttle, and was deep in an interesting case, when the door of the adjoining room opened and Judge Plunkett appeared.

He was an oily man of about fifty, with spectacles. He was glad to see the schoolmaster. He hoped he was not suffering from the excitement of the previous evening. For his part, the spectacle of sober citizens rising in a body to vindicate the insulted majesty of the laws of society, and of man, had always something sublime in it. And the murderer had really got away after all. And it was a narrow escape the schoolmaster had, too, at Smith's Pocket.

Mr. Gray took advantage of the digression to state his business. He briefly recounted the circumstances of the discovery of the hidden wealth of Smith's Pocket, and exhibited the memorandum he had shown the doctor. When he had concluded, Judge Plunkett looked at him over his spectacles, and rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"You apprehend," said the judge eagerly, "that you will have no difficulty in procuring this book from which the leaf was originally torn?"

"None," replied Mr. Gray.

"Then, sir, I should give as my professional opinion that the case was already won."

Mr. Gray shook the hand of the little man with great fervor, and thanked him for his belief. "And so this property will go entirely to M'liss?" he asked again.

"Well — ah — no — not exactly," said Judge Plunkett, with some caution. "She will benefit by it undoubtedly — undoubtedly," and he rubbed his hands again.

"Why not M'liss alone? There are no other claimants!" said Mr. Gray.

"I beg your pardon — you mistake," said Judge Plunkett, with a smile. "You surely would not leave out the widow and mother?"



“Why, M'liss is an orphan,” said Mr. Gray in utter bewilderment.

“A sad mistake, sir,—a painful though natural mistake. Mr. Smith, though separated from his wife, was never divorced. A very affecting history—the old story, you know—an injured and loving woman deserted by her natural protector, but disdaining to avail herself of our legal aid. By a singular coincidence that I should have told you, I am anticipating you in this very case. Your services, however, I feel will be invaluable. Your concern for her amiable and interesting daughter Narcissa—ah, no, Melissa—will, of course, make you with us. You have never seen Mrs. Smith? A fine-looking, noble woman, sir,—though still disconsolate,—still thinking of the departed one. By another singular coincidence that I should have told you, she is here now. You shall see her, sir. Pray, let me introduce you;” and still rubbing his hands, Judge Plunkett led the way to the adjoining room.

Mr. Gray followed him mechanically. A handsome woman rose from the sofa as they entered. It was the woman he assisted to alight from the Wingdam stage.

## CHAPTER X

### THE RED ROCK

In the strong light that fell upon her face, Mr. Gray had an opportunity to examine her features more closely. Her eyes, which were dark and singularly brilliant, were half closed, either from some peculiar conformation of the lids, or an habitual effort to conceal expression. Her skin was colorless with that satin-like lustre that belongs to some brunettes, relieved by one or two freckles that were scarcely blemishes. Her face was squared a little at the lower angles, but the chin was round and soft, and the

curves about the mouth were full and tender enough to destroy the impression left by contemplation of those rigid outlines. The effect of its general contour was that of a handsome woman of thirty. In detail, as the eye dwelt upon any particular feature, you could have added a margin of ten years either way.

“Mrs. Smith — Mr. Gray,” said the lawyer briskly. “Mr. Gray is the gentleman who, since the decease of your husband, has taken such a benevolent interest in our playful Narcissa — Melissa, I should say. He is the preceptor of our district school, and beside his relation as teacher to your daughter has, I may say in our legal fashion, stood *in loco parentis* — in other words, has been a parent, a — a — father to her.”

At the conclusion of this speech Mrs. Smith darted a quick glance at Mr. Gray, which was unintelligible to any but a woman. As there were none of her own keen-witted sex present to make an ungracious interpretation of it, it passed unnoticed, except the slight embarrassment and confusion it caused the young man from its apparent gratuity.

“We have met before, I believe,” said Mrs. Smith, with her bright eyes half hid and her white teeth half disclosed. “I can easily imagine Mr. Gray’s devotion to a friend from his courtesy to a stranger. Let me thank you again for both my daughter and myself.”

In the desperate hope of saying something natural, Mr. Gray asked if she had seen Melissa yet.

“Oh, dear, no! Think how provoking! Judge Plunkett says it is absolutely impossible till some tiresome formalities are over. There are so many stupid forms to go through with first. But how is she? You have seen her, have you not? you will see her again to-night, perhaps? How I long to embrace her again! She was a mere baby when she left me. Tell her how I long to fly to her.”

Her impassioned utterance and the dramatic gestures

that accompanied these words afforded a singular contrast to the cool way with which she rearranged the folds of her dress when she had finished, folding her hands over her lap and settling herself unmistakably back again on the sofa. Perhaps it was this that made Mr. Gray think she had, at some time, been an actress. But the next moment he caught her eye again and felt pleased, — and again vexed with himself for being so, — and in this mental condition began to speak in favor of his old pupil. His embarrassment passed away as he warmed with his subject, dwelling at length on M'liss's better qualities, and did not return until in a breathless pause he became aware that this woman's bright eyes were bent upon him. The color rose in his cheek, and with a half-muttered apology for his prolixity he offered his excuses to retire.

“Stay a moment, Mr. Gray,” said the lawyer. “You are going to town, and will not think it a trouble to see Mrs. Smith safely back to her hotel. You can talk these things over with our fair friend on the way. To-morrow, at ten, I trust to see you both again.”

“Perhaps I am taxing Mr. Gray's gallantry too much,” interposed the lady with a very vivid disclosure of eyes and teeth. “Mr. Gray would be only too happy.” After he had uttered this civility, there was a slight consciousness of truth about it that embarrassed him again. But Mrs. Smith took his proffered arm, and they bade the lawyer good-night and passed out in the starlit night together.

. . . . .  
Four weeks have elapsed since the advent of Mrs. Smith to the settlement, — four weeks that might have been years in any other but a California mining camp, for the wonderful change that has been wrought in its physical aspect. Each stage has brought its load of fresh adventurers; another hotel, which sprang up on the site of the National, has its new landlord, and a new set of faces about its hos-

pitiable board, where the conventional bean appears daily as a modest vegetable or in the insincerer form of coffee. The sawmills have been hard at work for the last month, and huge gaps appear in the circling files of redwood where the fallen trees are transmuted to a new style of existence in the damp sappy tenements that have risen over the burnt district. The "great strike" at Smith's Pocket has been heralded abroad, and above and below, and on either side of the crumbling tunnel that bears that name, as other tunnels are piercing the bowels of the mountain, shafts are being sunk, and claims are taken up even to the crest of Red Mountain, in the hope of striking the great Smith lead. Already an animated discussion has sprung up in the columns of the "Red Mountain Banner" in regard to the direction of the famous lead, — a discussion assisted by correspondents who have assumed all the letters of the alphabet in their anonymous arguments, and have formed the opposing "angle" and "dip" factions of Smith's Pocket. But whatever be the direction of the lead, the progress of the settlement has been steadily onward, with an impetus gained by the late disaster. That classical but much abused bird, the Phoenix, has been invoked from its ashes in several editorials in the "Banner," to sit as a type of resuscitated Smith's Pocket, while in the homelier phrase of an honest miner "it seemed as if the fire kem to kinder clean out things for a fresh start."

Meanwhile the quasi-legal administration of the estate of Smith is drawing near a termination that seems to credit the prophetic assertion of Judge Plunkett. One fact has been evolved in the process of examination, viz., that Smith had discovered the new lead before he was murdered. It was a fair hypothesis that the man who assumed the benefit of his discovery was the murderer, but as this did not immediately involve the settlement of the estate it excited little comment or opposition. The probable murderer had es-

caped. Judicial investigations even in the hands of the people had been attended with disastrous public results, and there was no desire on the part of justice to open the case and deal with an abstract principle when there was no opportunity of making an individual example. The circumstances were being speedily forgotten in the new excitement; even the presence of Mrs. Smith lost its novelty. The "Banner," when alluding to her husband, spoke of him as the "late J. Smith, Esq.," attributing the present activity of business as the result of his lifelong example of untiring energy, and generally laid the foundation of a belief, which thereafter obtained, that he died comfortably in the bosom of his family, surrounded by disconsolate friends. The history of all pioneer settlements has this legendary basis, and M'liss may live to see the day when her father's connection with the origin of the settlement shall become apocryphal, and contested like that of Romulus and Remus and their wolfish wet-nurse.

It is to the everlasting credit and honor of Smith's Pocket that the orphan and widow meet no opposition from the speculative community, and that the claim's utmost boundaries are liberally rendered. How far this circumstance may be owing to the rare personal attractions of the charming widow or to M'liss's personal popularity, I shall not pretend to say. It is enough that when the brief of Judge Plunkett's case is ready there are clouds of willing witnesses to substantiate and corroborate doubtful points to an extent that is more creditable to their generosity than their veracity.

M'liss has seen her mother. Mr. Gray, with his knowledge of his pupil's impulsiveness, has been surprised to notice that the new relationship seems to awaken none of those emotions in the child's nature that he confidently looked for. On the occasion of their first meeting, to which Mr. Gray was admitted, M'liss maintained a guarded shy-

ness totally different from her usual frank boldness,— a shyness that was the more remarkable from its contrast with the unrepressed and somewhat dramatic emotions of Mrs. Smith. Now, under her mother's protection and care, he observes another radical change in M'liss's appearance. She is dressed more tastefully and neatly — not entirely the result of a mother's influence, but apparently the result of some natural instinct now for the first time indulged, and exhibited in a ribbon or a piece of jewelry, worn with a certain air of consciousness. There is a more strict attention to the conventionalities of life; her speech is more careful and guarded; her walk, literally, more womanly and graceful. Those things Mr. Gray naturally attributes to the influence of the new relation, though he cannot help recalling his meeting with M'liss in the woods, on the morning of the fire, and of dating many of these changes from thence.

It is a pleasant morning, and Mr. Gray is stirring early. He has been busied in preparation the night previous, for this is his last day in Smith's Pocket. He lingers for some time about the schoolhouse, gathering up those little trifles which lie about his desk, which have each a separate history in his experience of Smith's Pocket, and are a part of the incrustations of his life. Lastly, a file of the "Red Mountain Banner," is taken from the same receptacle and packed away in his bag. He walks to the door and turns to look back. Has he forgotten anything? No, nothing. But still he lingers. He wonders who will take his place at the desk, and for the first time in his pedagogue experience, perhaps, feels something of an awful responsibility as he thinks of his past influence over the wretched little beings who used to tremble at his nod, and whose future, ill or good, he may have helped to fashion. At last he closes the door, almost tenderly, and walks thoughtfully down the road. He has to pass the cabin of an Irish miner,

whose little boy is toddling in the ditch, with a pinafore, hands, and face in a chronic state of untidiness. Mr. Gray seizes him with an hilarious impulse, and after a number of rapid journeys to Banbury Cross, in search of an old woman who mounted a mythical white horse, he kisses the cleanest place on his broad expanse of cheek, presses some silver into his chubby fist, tells him to be a good boy, and deposits him in the ditch again. Having in this youthful way atoned for certain sins of omission a little further back, he proceeds, with a sense of perfect absolution, on his way to the settlement.

A few hours lie between him and his departure, to be employed in friendly visits to Mrs. Morpher, Dr. Duchesne, M'liss, and her mother. The Mountain Ranch is nearest, and thither Mr. Gray goes first. Mrs. Morpher, over a kneading-trough, with her bare arm whitened with flour, is genuinely grieved at parting with the master, and, in spite of Mr. Gray's earnest remonstrances, insists upon conducting him into the chill parlor, leaving him there until she shall have attired herself in a manner becoming to "company." "I don't want you to go at all — no more I don't," says Mrs. Morpher, with all sincerity, as she seats herself finally on the shining horsehair sofa. "The children will miss you. I don't believe that any one will do for Risty, Kerg, and Clytie what you have done. But I suppose you know best what's best. Young men like to see the world, and it ain't expected one so young as you should settle down yet. That's what I was telling Clytie this morning. That was just the way with my John afore he was married. I suppose you'll see M'liss and *her* before you go. They say that she is going to San Francisco soon. Is it so?"

Mr. Gray understands the personal pronoun to refer to Mrs. Smith, a title Mrs. Morpher has never granted M'liss's mother, for whom she entertains an instinctive dislike. He answers in the affirmative, however, with the conscious-

ness of uneasiness under the inquiry; and as the answer does not seem to please Mrs. Morpher, he is constrained to commend M'liss's manifest improvement under her mother's care.

"Well," says Mrs. Morpher; with a significant sigh, "I hope it's so; but bless us, where's Clytie? You must n't go without saying 'good-by' to her," and Mrs. Morpher starts away in search of her daughter.

The dining-room door scarcely closes before the bedroom door opens, and Clytie crosses the parlor softly with something in her hands. "You are going now?" she says hurriedly.

"Yes."

"Will you take this?" putting a sealed package into his hand, "and keep it without opening it until" —

"Until when, Clytie?"

"Until you are married."

Mr. Gray laughs.

"Promise me," repeats Clytie.

"But I may expire in the mean time, through sheer curiosity."

"Promise!" says Clytie gravely.

"I promise, then."

Mr. Gray receives the package. "Good-by," says Clytie softly.

Clytie's rosy cheek is very near Mr. Gray. There is nobody by. He is going away. It is the last time. He kisses her just before the door opens again to Mrs. Morpher.

Another shake of hands all around, and Mr. Gray passes out of the Mountain Ranch forever.

Dr. Duchesne's office is near at hand; but for some reason, that Mr. Gray cannot entirely explain to himself, he prefers to go to Mrs. Smith's first. The little cottage which they have taken temporarily is soon reached, and as the young man stands at the door he re-knots the bow of



his cravat, and passes his fingers through his curls, — trifles that to Dr. Duchesne or any other critical, middle-aged person might look bad.

M'liss and Mrs. Smith are both at home. They have been waiting for him so long. Was it that pretty daughter of Mrs. Morpher — the fair young lady with blond curls, — who caused the detention? Is not Mr. Gray a sly young fellow for all his seeming frankness? So he must go to-day? He cannot possibly wait a few days, and go with them? Thus Mrs. Smith, between her red lips and white teeth, and under her half-closed eyes; for M'liss stands quietly apart without speaking. Her reserve during the interview contrasts with the vivacity of her mother as though they had changed respective places in relationship. Mr. Gray is troubled by this, and as he rises to go, he takes M'liss's hand in his.

“Have you nothing to say to me before I go?” he asks.

“Good-by,” answers M'liss.

“Nothing more?”

“That's enough,” rejoins the child simply.

Mr. Gray bites his lips. “I may never see you again, you know, Melissa,” he continues.

“You will see us again,” says M'liss quietly, raising her great dark eyes to his.

The blood mounted to his cheek and crimsoned his forehead. He was conscious, too, that the mother's face had taken fire at his own, as she walked away toward the window.

“Good-by, then,” said Mr. Gray pettishly, as he stooped to kiss her.

M'liss accepted the salute stoically. Mr. Gray took Mrs. Smith's hand; her face had resumed its colorless, satin-like sheen.

“M'liss knows the strength of your good will, and makes her calculations accordingly. I hope she may not be mis-

taken," she said, with a languid tenderness of voice and eye. The young man bent over her outstretched hand, and withdrew as the Wingdam stage noisily rattled up before the National Hotel.

There was but little time left to spend with Dr. Duchesne, so the physician walked with him to the stage office. There were a few of the old settlers lounging by the stage, who had discerned, just as the master was going away, how much they liked him. Mr. Gray had gone through the customary bibulous formula of leave-taking; with a hearty shake of the doctor's hand, and a promise to write, he climbed to the box of the stage. "All aboard!" cried the driver, and with a preliminary bound, the stage rolled down Main Street.

Mr. Gray remained buried in thought as they rolled through the town, each object in passing recalling some incident of his past experience. The stage had reached the outskirts of the settlement when he detected a well-known little figure running down a by-trail to intersect the road before the stage had passed. He called the driver's attention to it, and as they drew up at the crossing Aristides's short legs and well-known features were plainly discernible through the dust. He was holding in his hand a letter.

"Well, my little man, what is it?" said the driver impatiently.

"A letter for the master," gasped the exhausted child.

"Give it here! — Any answer?"

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Gray.

"Look sharp, then, and get your billet duxis before you go next time."

Mr. Gray hurriedly broke the seal and read these words:

Judge Plunkett has just returned from the county seat.  
Our case is won. We leave here next week. J. S.

P. S. Have you got my address in San Francisco?

“ Any answer ? ” said the driver.

“ None.”

“ Get up ! ”

And the stage rolled away from Smith's Pocket, leaving the just Aristides standing in the dust of its triumphal wheels.

## HIGH-WATER MARK

WHEN the tide was out on the Dedlow Marsh, its extended dreariness was patent. Its spongy, low-lying surface, sluggish, inky pools, and tortuous sloughs, twisting their slimy way, eel-like, toward the open bay, were all hard facts. So were the few green tussocks, with their scant blades, their amphibious flavor, and unpleasant dampness. And if you chose to indulge your fancy, — although the flat monotony of the Dedlow Marsh was not inspiring, — the wavy line of scattered drift gave an unpleasant consciousness of the spent waters, and made the dead certainty of the returning tide a gloomy reflection, which no present sunshine could dissipate. The greener meadow-land seemed oppressed with this idea, and made no positive attempt at vegetation until the work of reclamation should be complete. In the bitter fruit of the low cranberry bushes one might fancy he detected a naturally sweet disposition curdled and soured by an injudicious course of too much regular cold water.

The vocal expression of the Dedlow Marsh was also melancholy and depressing. The sepulchral boom of the bittern, the shriek of the curlew, the scream of passing brant, the wrangling of quarrelsome teal, the sharp querulous protest of the startled crane, and syllabled complaint of the "killdeer" plover were beyond the power of written expression. Nor was the aspect of these mournful fowls at all cheerful and inspiring. Certainly not the blue heron, standing midleg deep in the water, obviously catching cold in a reckless disregard of wet feet and consequences; nor

the mournful curlew, the dejected plover, or the low-spirited snipe, who saw fit to join him in his suicidal contemplation; nor the impassive kingfisher — an ornithological Marius — reviewing the desolate expanse; nor the black raven that went to and fro over the face of the marsh continually, but evidently could n't make up his mind whether the waters had subsided, and felt low-spirited in the reflection that after all this trouble he would n't be able to give a definite answer. On the contrary, it was evident at a glance that the dreary expanse of Dedlow Marsh told unpleasantly on the birds, and that the season of migration was looked forward to with a feeling of relief and satisfaction by the full grown, and of extravagant anticipation by the callow brood. But if Dedlow Marsh was cheerless at the slack of the low tide, you should have seen it when the tide was strong and full. When the damp air blew chilly over the cold glittering expanse, and came to the faces of those who looked seaward like another tide; when a steel-like glint marked the low hollows and the sinuous line of slough; when the great shell-incrusted trunks of fallen trees arose again, and went forth on their dreary purposeless wanderings, drifting hither and thither, but getting no farther toward any goal at the falling tide or the day's decline than the cursed Hebrew in the legend; when the glossy ducks swung silently, making neither ripple nor furrow on the shimmering surface; when the fog came in with the tide and shut out the blue above, even as the green below had been obliterated; when boatmen, lost in that fog, paddling about in a hopeless way, started at what seemed the brushing of mermen's fingers on the boat's keel, or shrank from the tufts of grass spreading around like the floating hair of a corpse, and knew by these signs that they were lost upon Dedlow Marsh, and must make a night of it, and a gloomy one at that, — then you might know something of Dedlow Marsh at high water.

Let me recall a story connected with this latter view which never failed to recur to my mind in my long gunning excursions upon Dedlow Marsh. Although the event was briefly recorded in the county paper, I had the story, in all its eloquent detail, from the lips of the principal actor. I cannot hope to catch the varying emphasis and peculiar coloring of feminine delineation, for my narrator was a woman; but I'll try to give at least its substance.

She lived midway of the great slough of Dedlow Marsh and a good-sized river, which debouched four miles beyond into an estuary formed by the Pacific Ocean, on the long sandy peninsula which constituted the southwestern boundary of a noble bay. The house in which she lived was a small frame cabin raised from the marsh a few feet by stout piles, and was three miles distant from the settlements upon the river. Her husband was a logger, — a profitable business in a county where the principal occupation was the manufacture of lumber.

It was the season of early spring, when her husband left on the ebb of a high tide with a raft of logs for the usual transportation to the lower end of the bay. As she stood by the door of the little cabin when the voyagers departed, she noticed a cold look in the southeastern sky, and she remembered hearing her husband say to his companions that they must endeavor to complete their voyage before the coming of the south-westerly gale which he saw brewing. And that night it began to storm and blow harder than she had ever before experienced, and some great trees fell in the forest by the river, and the house rocked like her baby's cradle.

But however the storm might roar about the little cabin, she knew that one she trusted had driven bolt and bar with his own strong hand, and that had he feared for her he would not have left her. This, and her domestic duties, and the care of her little sickly baby, helped to

keep her mind from dwelling on the weather, except, of course, to hope that he was safely harbored with the logs at Utopia in the dreary distance. But she noticed that day, when she went out to feed the chickens and look after the cow, that the tide was up to the little fence of their garden patch, and the roar of the surf on the south beach, though miles away, she could hear distinctly. And she began to think that she would like to have some one to talk with about matters, and she believed that if it had not been so far and so stormy, and the trail so impassable, she would have taken the baby and have gone over to Ryckman's, her nearest neighbor. But then, you see, he might have returned in the storm, all wet, with no one to see to him; and it was a long exposure for baby, who was croupy and ailing.

But that night, she never could tell why, she did n't feel like sleeping or even lying down. The storm had somewhat abated, but she still "sat and sat," and even tried to read. I don't know whether it was a Bible or some profane magazine that this poor woman read, but most probably the latter, for the words all ran together and made such sad nonsense that she was forced at last to put the book down and turn to that dearer volume which lay before her in the cradle, with its white initial leaf as yet unsoiled, and try to look forward to its mysterious future. And, rocking the cradle, she thought of everything and everybody, but still was wide awake as ever.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when she at last lay down in her clothes. How long she slept she could not remember, but she awoke with a dreadful choking in her throat, and found herself standing, trembling all over, in the middle of the room, with her baby clasped to her breast, and she was "saying something." The baby cried and sobbed, and she walked up and down trying to hush it, when she heard a scratching at the door. She opened it

fearfully, and was glad to see it was only old Pete, their dog, who crawled, dripping with water, into the room. She would have liked to look out, not in the faint hope of her husband's coming, but to see how things looked; but the wind shook the door so savagely that she could hardly hold it. Then she sat down a little while, and then walked up and down a little while, and then she lay down again a little while. Lying close by the wall of the little cabin, she thought she heard once or twice something scrape slowly against the clapboards, like the scraping of branches. Then there was a little gurgling sound, "like the baby made when it was swallowing;" then something went "click-click" and "cluck-cluck," so that she sat up in bed. When she did so she was attracted by something else that seemed creeping from the back door toward the centre of the room. It was n't much wider than her little finger, but soon it swelled to the width of her hand, and began spreading all over the floor. It was water!

She ran to the front door and threw it wide open, and saw nothing but water. She ran to the back door and threw it open, and saw nothing but water. She ran to the side window, and throwing that open, she saw nothing but water. Then she remembered hearing her husband once say that there was no danger in the tide, for that fell regularly, and people could calculate on it, and that he would rather live near the bay than the river, whose banks might overflow at any time. But was it the tide? So she ran again to the back door, and threw out a stick of wood. It drifted away towards the bay. She scooped up some of the water and put it eagerly to her lips. It was fresh and sweet. It was the river, and not the tide!

It was then — oh, God be praised for his goodness! she did neither faint nor fall; it was then — blessed be the Saviour, for it was his merciful hand that touched and strengthened her in this awful moment — that fear dropped



from her like a garment, and her trembling ceased. It was then and thereafter that she never lost her self-command, through all the trials of that gloomy night.

She drew the bedstead toward the middle of the room, and placed a table upon it, and on that she put the cradle. The water on the floor was already over her ankles, and the house once or twice moved so perceptibly, and seemed to be racked so, that the closet doors all flew open. Then she heard the same rasping and thumping against the wall, and, looking out, saw that a large uprooted tree, which had lain near the road at the upper end of the pasture, had floated down to the house. Luckily its long roots dragged in the soil and kept it from moving as rapidly as the current, for had it struck the house in its full career, even the strong nails and bolts in the piles could not have withstood the shock. The hound had leaped upon its knotty surface, and crouched near the roots, shivering and whining. A ray of hope flashed across her mind. She drew a heavy blanket from the bed, and, wrapping it about the babe, waded in the deepening waters to the door. As the tree swung again, broadside on, making the little cabin creak and tremble, she leaped on to its trunk. By God's mercy she succeeded in obtaining a footing on its slippery surface, and, twining an arm about its roots, she held in the other her moaning child. Then something cracked near the front porch, and the whole front of the house she had just quitted fell forward, — just as cattle fall on their knees before they lie down, — and at the same moment the great redwood tree swung round and drifted away with its living cargo into the black night.

For all the excitement and danger, for all her soothing of her crying babe, for all the whistling of the wind, for all the uncertainty of her situation, she still turned to look at the deserted and water-swept cabin. She remembered even then, and she wondered how foolish she was to think of it at

that time, that she wished she had put on another dress and the baby's best clothes; and she kept praying that the house would be spared so that he, when he returned, would have something to come to, and it would n't be quite so desolate, and — how could he ever know what had become of her and baby? And at the thought she grew sick and faint. But she had something else to do besides worrying, for whenever the long roots of her ark struck an obstacle the whole trunk made half a revolution, and twice dipped her in the black water. The hound, who kept distracting her by running up and down the tree and howling, at last fell off at one of these collisions. He swam for some time beside her, and she tried to get the poor beast upon the tree, but he "acted silly" and wild, and at last she lost sight of him forever. Then she and her baby were left alone. The light which had burned for a few minutes in the deserted cabin was quenched suddenly. She could not then tell whither she was drifting. The outline of the white dunes on the peninsula showed dimly ahead, and she judged the tree was moving in a line with the river. It must be about slack water, and she had probably reached the eddy formed by the confluence of the tide and the overflowing waters of the river. Unless the tide fell soon, there was present danger of her drifting to its channel, and being carried out to sea or crushed in the floating drift. That peril averted, if she were carried out on the ebb toward the bay, she might hope to strike one of the wooded promontories of the peninsula, and rest till daylight. Sometimes she thought she heard voices and shouts from the river, and the bellowing of cattle and bleating of sheep. Then again it was only the ringing in her ears and throbbing of her heart. She found at about this time that she was so chilled and stiffened in her cramped position that she could scarcely move, and the baby cried so when she put it to her breast that she noticed the milk refused to flow; and she was so

frightened at that that she put her head under her shawl, and for the first time cried bitterly.

When she raised her head again the boom of the surf was behind her, and she knew that her ark had again swung round. She dipped up the water to cool her parched throat, and found that it was salt as her tears. There was a relief, though, for by this sign she knew that she was drifting with the tide. It was then the wind went down, and the great and awful silence oppressed her. There was scarcely a ripple against the furrowed sides of the great trunk on which she rested, and around her all was black gloom and quiet. She spoke to the baby just to hear herself speak, and to know that she had not lost her voice. She thought then — it was queer, but she could not help thinking it — how awful must have been the night when the great ship swung over the Asiatic peak, and the sounds of creation were blotted out from the world. She thought, too, of mariners clinging to spars, and of poor women who were lashed to rafts and beaten to death by the cruel sea. She tried to thank God that she was thus spared, and lifted her eyes from the baby who had fallen into a fretful sleep. Suddenly, away to the southward, a great light lifted itself out of the gloom, and flashed and flickered, and flickered and flashed again. Her heart fluttered quickly against the baby's cold cheek. It was the lighthouse at the entrance of the bay. As she was yet wondering the tree suddenly rolled a little, dragged a little, and then seemed to lie quiet and still. She put out her hand and the current gurgled against it. The tree was aground, and, by the position of the light and the noise of the surf, aground upon the Dedlow Marsh.

Had it not been for her baby, who was ailing and croupy, had it not been for the sudden drying up of that sensitive fountain, she would have felt safe and relieved. Perhaps it was this which tended to make all her impressions mournful

and gloomy. As the tide rapidly fell, a great flock of black brant fluttered by her, screaming and crying. Then the plover flew up and piped mournfully as they wheeled around the trunk, and at last fearlessly lit upon it like a gray cloud. Then the heron flew over and around her, shrieking and protesting, and at last dropped its gaunt legs only a few yards from her. But, strangest of all, a pretty white bird, larger than a dove, — like a pelican, but not a pelican, — circled around and around her. At last it lit upon a rootlet of the tree quite over her shoulder. She put out her hand and stroked its beautiful white neck, and it never appeared to move. It stayed there so long that she thought she would lift up the baby to see it and try to attract her attention. But when she did so, the child was so chilled and cold, and had such a blue look under the little lashes, which it did n't raise at all, that she screamed aloud, and the bird flew away, and she fainted.

Well, that was the worst of it, and perhaps it was not so much, after all, to any but herself. For when she recovered her senses it was bright sunlight and dead low water. There was a confused noise of guttural voices about her, and an old squaw, singing an Indian "hushaby," and rocking herself from side to side before a fire built on the marsh, before which she, the recovered wife and mother, lay weak and weary. Her first thought was for her baby, and she was about to speak when a young squaw, who must have been a mother herself, fathomed her thought and brought her the "mowitch," pale but living, in such a queer little willow cradle, all bound up, just like the squaw's own young one, that she laughed and cried together, and the young squaw and the old squaw showed their big white teeth and glinted their black eyes, and said, "Plenty get well, skeena mowitch," "Wagee man come plenty soon," and she could have kissed their brown faces in her joy. And then she found that they had been gathering berries on the marsh in

heir queer comical baskets, and saw the skirt of her gown fluttering on the tree from afar, and the old squaw could n't resist the temptation of procuring a new garment, and came down and discovered the "wagee" woman and child. And of course she gave the garment to the old squaw, as you may imagine, and when *he* came at last and rushed up to her, looking about ten years older in his anxiety, she felt so faint again that they had to carry her to the canoe. For, you see, he knew nothing about the flood until he met the Indians at Utopia, and knew by the signs that the poor woman was his wife. And at the next high tide he towed the tree away back home, although it was n't worth the trouble, and built another house, using the old tree for the foundation and props, and called it after her, "Mary's Ark!" But you may guess the next house was built above high-water mark. And that's all.

Not much, perhaps, considering the malevolent capacity of the Dedlow Marsh. But you must tramp over it at low water, or paddle over it at high tide, or get lost upon it once or twice in the fog, as I have, to understand properly Mary's adventure, or to appreciate duly the blessings of living beyond high-water mark.

## A LONELY RIDE

As I stepped into the Slumgullion stage I saw that it was a dark night, a lonely road, and that I was the only passenger. Let me assure the reader that I have no ulterior design in making this assertion. A long course of light reading has forewarned me what every experienced intelligence must confidently look for from such a statement. The story-teller who willfully tempts fate by such obvious beginnings, who is to the expectant reader in danger of being robbed or half-murdered, or frightened by an escaped lunatic, or introduced to his lady-love for the first time, deserves to be detected. I am relieved to say that none of these things occurred to me. The road from Wingdam to Slumgullion knew no other banditti than the regularly licensed hotel-keepers; lunatics had not yet reached such depth of imbecility as to ride of their own free will in Californian stages; and my Laura, amiable and long-suffering as she always is, could not, I fear, have borne up against these depressing circumstances long enough to have made the slightest impression on me.

I stood with my shawl and carpetbag in hand, gazing doubtfully on the vehicle. Even in the darkness the red dust of Wingdam was visible on its roof and sides, and the red slime of Slumgullion clung tenaciously to its wheels. I opened the door; the stage creaked uneasily, and in the gloomy abyss the swaying straps beckoned me, like ghostly hands, to come in now, and have my sufferings out at once.

I must not omit to mention the occurrence of a circum-

stance which struck me as appalling and mysterious. A lounge on the steps of the hotel, who I had reason to suppose was not in any way connected with the stage company, gravely descended, and, walking toward the conveyance, tried the handle of the door, opened it, expectorated in the carriage, and returned to the hotel with a serious demeanor. Hardly had he resumed his position, when another individual, equally disinterested, impassively walked down the steps, proceeded to the back of the stage, lifted it, expectorated carefully on the axle, and returned slowly and pensively to the hotel. A third spectator wearily disengaged himself from one of the Ionic columns of the portico and walked to the box, remained for a moment in serious and expectorative contemplation of the boot, and then returned to his column. There was something so weird in this baptism that I grew quite nervous.

Perhaps I was out of spirits. A number of infinitesimal annoyances, winding up with the resolute persistency of the clerk at the stage office to enter my name misspelt on the way-bill, had not predisposed me to cheerfulness. The inmates of the Eureka House, from a social view-point, were not attractive. There was the prevailing opinion — so common to many honest people — that a serious style of deportment and conduct toward a stranger indicates high gentility and elevated station. Obeying this principle, all hilarity ceased on my entrance to supper, and general remark merged into the safer and uncompromising chronicle of several bad cases of diphtheria, then epidemic at Wingdam. When I left the dining-room, with an odd feeling that I had been supping exclusively on mustard and tea leaves, I stopped a moment at the parlor door. A piano, harmoniously related to the dinner-bell, tinkled responsive to a diffident and uncertain touch. On the white wall the shadow of an old and sharp profile was bending over several symmetrical and shadowy curls. "I sez to

Mariar, 'Mariar,' sez I, 'praise to the face is open disgrace.'" I heard no more. Dreading some susceptibility to sincere expression on the subject of female loveliness, I walked away, checking the compliment that otherwise might have risen unbidden to my lips, and have brought shame and sorrow to the household.

It was with the memory of these experiences resting heavily upon me that I stood hesitatingly before the stage door. The driver, about to mount, was for a moment illuminated by the open door of the hotel. He had the wearied look which was the distinguishing expression of Wingdam. Satisfied that I was properly way-billed and receipted for, he took no further notice of me. I looked longingly at the box-seat, but he did not respond to the appeal. I flung my carpetbag into the chasm, dived recklessly after it, and — before I was fairly seated — with a great sigh, a creaking of unwilling springs, complaining bolts, and harshly expostulating axle, we moved away. Rather the hotel door slipped behind, the sound of the piano sank to rest, and the night and its shadows moved solemnly upon us.

To say it was dark expressed but faintly the pitchy obscurity that encompassed the vehicle. The roadside trees were scarcely distinguishable as deeper masses of shadow; I knew them only by the peculiar sodden odor that from time to time sluggishly flowed in at the open window as we rolled by. We proceeded slowly; so leisurely that, leaning from the carriage, I more than once detected the fragrant sigh of some astonished cow, whose ruminating repose upon the highway we had ruthlessly disturbed. But in the darkness our progress, more the guidance of some mysterious instinct than any apparent volition of our own, gave an indefinable charm of security to our journey, that a moment's hesitation or indecision on the part of the driver would have destroyed.



I had indulged a hope that in the empty vehicle I might obtain that rest so often denied me in its crowded condition. It was a weak delusion. When I stretched out my limbs it was only to find that the ordinary conveniences for making several people distinctly uncomfortable were distributed throughout my individual frame. At last, resting my arms on the straps, by dint of much gymnastic effort I became sufficiently composed to be aware of a more refined species of torture. The springs of the stage, rising and falling regularly, produced a rhythmical beat, which began to painfully absorb my attention. Slowly this thumping merged into a senseless echo of the mysterious female of the hotel parlor, and shaped itself into this awful and benumbing axiom: "Praise-to-the-face-is-open-disgrace. Praise-to-the-face-is-open-disgrace." Inequalities of the road only quickened its utterance or drawled it to an exasperating length.

It was of no use to seriously consider the statement. It was of no use to except to it indignantly. It was of no use to recall the many instances where praise to the face had redounded to the everlasting honor of praiser and bepraised; of no use to dwell sentimentally on modest genius and courage lifted up and strengthened by open commendation; of no use to except to the mysterious female, — to picture her as rearing a thin-blooded generation on selfish and mechanically repeated axioms, — all this failed to counteract the monotonous repetition of this sentence. There was nothing to do but to give in, and I was about to accept it weakly, as we too often treat other illusions of darkness and necessity, for the time being, when I became aware of some other annoyance that had been forcing itself upon me for the last few moments. How quiet the driver was!

Was there any driver? Had I any reason to suppose that he was not lying gagged and bound on the roadside, and the highwayman, with blackened face, who did the

thing so quietly, driving me — whither? The thing is perfectly feasible. And what is this fancy now being jolted out of me? A story? It's of no use to keep it back, particularly in this abysmal vehicle, and here it comes: I am a marquis — a French marquis; French, because the peerage is not so well known, and the country is better adapted to romantic incident — a marquis, because the democratic reader delights in the nobility. My name is something ligny. I am coming from Paris to my country-seat at St. Germain. It is a dark night, and I fall asleep and tell my honest coachman, André, not to disturb me, and dream of an angel. The carriage at last stops at the château. It is so dark that, when I alight, I do not recognize the face of the footman who holds the carriage-door. But what of that? — peste! I am heavy with sleep. The same obscurity also hides the old familiar indecencies of the statues on the terrace; but there is a door, and it opens and shuts behind me smartly. Then I find myself in a trap, in the presence of the brigand who has quietly gagged poor André and conducted the carriage thither. There is nothing for me to do, as a gallant French marquis, but to say, "Parbleu!" draw my rapier, and die valorously! I am found, a week or two after, outside a deserted cabaret near the barrier, with a hole through my ruffled linen, and my pockets stripped. No; on second thoughts, I am rescued, — rescued by the angel I have been dreaming of, who is the assumed daughter of the brigand, but the real daughter of an intimate friend.

Looking from the window again, in the vain hope of distinguishing the driver, I found my eyes were growing accustomed to the darkness. I could see the distant horizon, defined by India-inky woods relieving a lighter sky. A few stars, widely spaced in this picture, glimmering sadly. I noticed again the infinite depth of patient sorrow in their serene faces; and I hope that the Vandal who first

applied the flippant "twinkle" to them may not be driven melancholy mad by their reproachful eyes. I noticed again the mystic charm of space, that imparts a sense of individual solitude to each integer of the densest constellation, involving the smallest star with immeasurable loneliness. Something of this calm and solitude crept over me, and I dozed in my gloomy cavern. When I awoke the full moon was rising. Seen from my window, it had an indescribably unreal and theatrical effect. It was the full moon of Norma — that remarkable celestial phenomenon which rises so palpably to a hushed audience and a sublime andante chorus, until the *Casta Diva* is sung — the "inconstant moon" that then and thereafter remains fixed in the heavens as though it were a part of the solar system inaugurated by Joshua. Again the white-robed Druids filed past me, again I saw that improbable mistletoe cut from that impossible oak, and again cold chills ran down my back with the first strain of the recitative. The thumping springs essayed to beat time, and the private box-like obscurity of the vehicle lent a cheap enchantment to the view. But it was a vast improvement upon my past experience, and I hugged the fond delusion.

My fears for the driver were dissipated with the rising moon. A familiar sound had assured me of his presence in the full possession of at least one of his most important functions. Frequent and full expectoration convinced me that his lips were as yet not sealed by the gag of highwaymen, and soothed my anxious ear. With this load lifted from my mind, and assisted by the mild presence of Diana, who left, as when she visited Endymion, much of her splendor outside my cavern, — I looked around the empty vehicle. On the forward seat lay a woman's hairpin. I picked it up with an interest that, however, soon abated. There was no scent of the roses to cling to it still, not even of hair-oil. No bent or twist in its rigid angles betrayed

any trait of its wearer's character. I tried to think that it might have been "Mariar's." I tried to imagine that, confining the symmetrical curls of that girl, it might have heard the soft compliments whispered in her ears which provoked the wrath of the aged female. But in vain. It was reticent and unswerving in its upright fidelity, and at last slipped listlessly through my fingers.

I had dozed repeatedly, — waked on the threshold of oblivion by contact with some of the angles of the coach, and feeling that I was unconsciously assuming, in imitation of a humble insect of my childish recollection, that spherical shape which could best resist those impressions, when I perceived that the moon, riding high in the heavens, had begun to separate the formless masses of the shadowy landscape. Trees isolated, in clumps, and assemblages, changed places before my window. The sharp outlines of the distant hills came back as in daylight, but little softened in the dry, cold, dewless air of a California summer night. I was wondering how late it was, and thinking that if the horses of the night traveled as slowly as the team before us, Faustus might have been spared his agonizing prayer, when a sudden spasm of activity attacked my driver. A succession of whip-snappings, like a pack of Chinese crackers, broke from the box before me. The stage leaped forward, and when I could pick myself from under the seat, a long white building had in some mysterious way rolled before my window. It must be Slumgullion! As I descended from the stage I addressed the driver: —

"I thought you changed horses on the road?"

"So we did. Two hours ago."

"That 's odd. I did n't notice it."

"Must have been asleep, sir. Hope you had a pleasant nap. Bully place for a nice quiet snooze, empty stage, sir!"

## THE MAN OF NO ACCOUNT

HIS name was Fagg, — David Fagg. He came to California in '52 with us, in the Skyscraper. I don't think he did it in an adventurous way. He probably had no other place to go to. When a knot of us young fellows would recite what splendid opportunities we resigned to go, and how sorry our friends were to have us leave, and show daguerreotypes and locks of hair, and talk of Mary and Susan, the man of no account used to sit by and listen with a pained, mortified expression on his plain face, and say nothing. I think he had nothing to say. He had no associates, except when we patronized him; and, in point of fact, he was a good deal of sport to us. He was always seasick whenever we had a capful of wind. He never got his sea-legs on either. And I never shall forget how we all laughed when Rattler took him the piece of pork on a string, and — But you know that time-honored joke. And then we had such a splendid lark with him. Miss Fanny Twinkler could n't bear the sight of him, and we used to make Fagg think that she had taken a fancy to him, and sent him little delicacies and books from the cabin. You ought to have witnessed the rich scene that took place when he came up, stammering and very sick, to thank her! Did n't she flash up grandly, and beautifully, and scornfully? So like "Medora," Rattler said, — Rattler knew Byron by heart, — and was n't Old Fagg awfully cut up? But he got over it, and when Rattler fell sick at Valparaiso, Old Fagg used to nurse him. You see he was a good sort of fellow, but he lacked manliness and spirit.

He had absolutely no idea of poetry. I've seen him sit stolidly by, mending his old clothes, when Rattler delivered that stirring apostrophe of Byron's to the ocean. He asked Rattler once, quite seriously, if he thought Byron was ever seasick. I don't remember Rattler's reply, but I know we all laughed very much, and I have no doubt it was something good, for Rattler was smart.

When the Skyscraper arrived at San Francisco we had a grand "feed." We agreed to meet every year and perpetuate the occasion. Of course we did n't invite Fagg. Fagg was a steerage passenger, and it was necessary, you see, now we were ashore, to exercise a little discretion. But Old Fagg, as we called him, — he was only about twenty-five years old, by the way, — was the source of immense amusement to us that day. It appeared that he had conceived the idea that he could walk to Sacramento, and actually started off afoot. We had a good time, and shook hands with one another all around, and so parted. Ah, me! only eight years ago, and yet some of those hands, then clasped in amity, have been clenched at each other, or have dipped furtively in one another's pockets. I know that we did n't dine together the next year, because young Barker swore he would n't put his feet under the same mahogany with such a very contemptible scoundrel as that Mixer; and Nibbles, who borrowed money at Valparaiso of young Stubbs, who was then a waiter in a restaurant, did n't like to meet such people.

When I bought a number of shares in the Coyote Tunnel at Mugginsville, in '54, I thought I'd take a run up there and see it. I stopped at the Empire Hotel, and after dinner I got a horse and rode round the town and out to the claim. One of those individuals whom newspaper correspondents call "our intelligent informant," and to whom in all small communities the right of answering questions is tacitly yielded, was quietly pointed out to me. Habit had

enabled him to work and talk at the same time, and he never pretermitted either. He gave me a history of the claim, and added: "You see, stranger (he addressed the bank before him), gold is sure to come outer that theer claim (he put in a comma with his pick), but the old propri-e-tor (he wriggled out the word and the point of his pick) warn't of much account (a long stroke of the pick for a period). He was green, and let the boys about here jump him," — and the rest of his sentence was confided to his hat, which he had removed to wipe his manly brow with his red bandana.

I asked him who was the original proprietor.

"His name war Fagg."

I went to see him. He looked a little older and plainer. He had worked hard, he said, and was getting on "so-so." I took quite a liking to him and patronized him to some extent. Whether I did so because I was beginning to have a distrust for such fellows as Rattler and Mixer is not necessary for me to state.

You remember how the Coyote Tunnel went in, and how awfully we shareholders were done! Well, the next thing I heard was that Rattler, who was one of the heaviest shareholders, was up at Mugginsville keeping bar for the proprietor of the Mugginsville Hotel, and that Old Fagg had struck it rich, and did n't know what to do with his money. All this was told me by Mixer, who had been there settling up matters, and likewise that Fagg was sweet upon the daughter of the proprietor of the aforesaid hotel. And so by hearsay and letter I eventually gathered that old Robins, the hotel man, was trying to get up a match between Nellie Robins and Fagg. Nellie was a pretty, plump, and foolish little thing, and would do just as her father wished. I thought it would be a good thing for Fagg if he should marry and settle down; that as a married man he might be of some account. So I ran up to Mugginsville one day to look after things.

It did me an immense deal of good to make Rattler mix my drinks for me, — Rattler! the gay, brilliant, and unconquerable Rattler, who had tried to snub me two years ago! I talked to him about Old Fagg and Nellie, particularly as I thought the subject was distasteful. He never liked Fagg, and he was sure, he said, that Nellie did n't. Did Nellie like anybody else? He turned round to the mirror behind the bar and brushed up his hair. I understood the conceited wretch. I thought I'd put Fagg on his guard, and get him to hurry up matters. I had a long talk with him. You could see by the way the poor fellow acted that he was badly stuck. He sighed, and promised to pluck up courage to hurry matters to a crisis. Nellie was a good girl, and I think had a sort of quiet respect for Old Fagg's unobtrusiveness. But her fancy was already taken captive by Rattler's superficial qualities, which were obvious and pleasing. I don't think Nellie was any worse than you or I. We are more apt to take acquaintances at their apparent value than their intrinsic worth. It's less trouble, and except when we want to trust them, quite as convenient. The difficulty with women is that their feelings are apt to get interested sooner than ours, and then, you know, reasoning is out of the question. This is what Old Fagg would have known had he been of any account. But he was n't. So much the worse for him.

It was a few months afterward, and I was sitting in my office when I walked Old Fagg. I was surprised to see him down, but we talked over the current topics in that mechanical manner of people who know that they have something else to say, but are obliged to get at it in that formal way. After an interval, Fagg in his natural manner said, —

“I 'm going home!”

“Going home?”

“Yes, — that is, I think I'll take a trip to the Atlantic



States. I came to see you, as you know I have some little property, and I have executed a power of attorney for you to manage my affairs. I have some papers I'd like to leave with you. Will you take charge of them?"

"Yes," I said. "But what of Nellie?"

His face fell. He tried to smile, and the combination resulted in one of the most startling and grotesque effects I ever beheld. At length he said, —

"I shall not marry Nellie, — that is," — he seemed to apologize internally for the positive form of expression, — "I think that I had better not."

"David Fagg," I said with sudden severity, "you're of no account!"

To my astonishment, his face brightened.

"Yes," said he, "that's it! — I'm of no account! But I always knew it. You see, I thought Rattler loved that girl as well as I did, and I knew she liked him better than she did me, and would be happier, I dare say, with him. But then I knew that old Robins would have preferred me to him, as I was better off, — and the girl would do as he said, — and, you see, I thought I was kinder in the way, — and so I left. But," he continued, as I was about to interrupt him, "for fear the old man might object to Rattler, I've lent him enough to set him up in business for himself in Dogtown. A pushing, active, brilliant fellow, you know, like Rattler can get along, and will soon be in his old position again, — and you need n't be hard on him, you know if he does n't. Good-by."

I was too much disgusted with his treatment of that Rattler to be at all amiable, but as his business was profitable, I promised to attend to it, and he left. A few weeks passed. The return steamer arrived, and a terrible incident occupied the papers for days afterwards. People in all parts of the State conned eagerly the details of an awful shipwreck, and those who had friends aboard went away by

themselves, and read the long list of the lost under their breath. I read of the gifted, the gallant, the noble, and loved ones who had perished, and among them I think I was the first to read the name of David Fagg. For the "man of no account" had "gone home!"

## NOTES BY FLOOD AND FIELD

### PART I

#### IN THE FIELD

It was near the close of an October day that I began to be disagreeably conscious of the Sacramento Valley. I had been riding since sunrise, and my course through the depressing monotony of the long level landscape affected me more like a dull, dyspeptic dream than a business journey, performed under that sincerest of natural phenomena, — a California sky. The recurring stretches of brown and baked fields, the gaping fissures in the dusty trail, the hard outline of the distant hills, and the herds of slowly moving cattle, seemed like features of some glittering stereoscopic picture that never changed. Active exercise might have removed this feeling, but my horse by some subtle instinct had long since given up all ambitious effort, and had lapsed into a dogged trot.

It was autumn, but not the season suggested to the Atlantic reader under that title. The sharply defined boundaries of the wet and dry seasons were prefigured in the clear outlines of the distant hills. In the dry atmosphere the decay of vegetation was too rapid for the slow hectic which overtakes an Eastern landscape, or else Nature was too practical for such thin disguises. She merely turned the Hippocratic face to the spectator, with the old diagnosis of death in her sharp, contracted features.

In the contemplation of such a prospect there was little to excite any but a morbid fancy. There were no clouds

in the flinty blue heavens, and the setting of the sun was accompanied with as little ostentation as was consistent with the dryly practical atmosphere. Darkness soon followed, with a rising wind, which increased as the shadows deepened on the plain. The fringe of alder by the water-course began to loom up as I urged my horse forward. A half-hour's active spurring brought me to a corral, and a little beyond a house, so low and broad, it seemed at first sight to be half buried in the earth.

My second impression was that it had grown out of the soil like some monstrous vegetable, its dreary proportions were so in keeping with the vast prospect. There were no recesses along its roughly boarded walls for vagrant and unprofitable shadows to lurk in the daily sunshine. No projection for the wind by night to grow musical over, to wail, whistle, or whisper to; only a long wooden shelf containing a chilly-looking tin basin and a bar of soap. Its uncurtained windows were red with the sinking sun, as though bloodshot and inflamed from a too long unlidged existence. The tracks of cattle led to its front door, firmly closed against the rattling wind.

To avoid being confounded with this familiar element, I walked to the rear of the house, which was connected with a smaller building by a slight platform. A grizzled, hard-faced old man was standing there, and met my salutation with a look of inquiry, and, without speaking, led the way to the principal room. As I entered, four young men who were reclining by the fire slightly altered their attitudes of perfect repose, but beyond that betrayed neither curiosity nor interest. A hound started from a dark corner with a growl, but was immediately kicked by the old man into obscurity and silenced again. I can't tell why, but I instantly received the impression that for a long time the group by the fire had not uttered a word or moved a muscle. Taking a seat, I briefly stated my business.

Was a United States surveyor. Had come on account of the Espiritu Santo rancho. Wanted to correct the exterior boundaries of township lines, so as to connect with the near exteriors of private grants. There had been some intervention to the old survey by a Mr. Tryan, who had pre-empted adjacent — “Settled land warrants,” interrupted the old man. “Ah, yes! land warrants,— and then this was Mr. Tryan?”

I had spoken mechanically, for I was preoccupied in connecting other public lines with private surveys, as I looked in his face. It was certainly a hard face, and reminded me of the singular effect of that mining operation known as “ground sluicing;” the harder lines of underlying character were exposed, and what were once plastic curves and soft outlines were obliterated by some powerful agency.

There was a dryness in his voice not unlike the prevailing atmosphere of the valley, as he launched into an *ex parte* statement of the contest, with a fluency which, like the wind without, showed frequent and unrestrained expression. He told me — what I had already learned — that the boundary line of the old Spanish grant was a creek, described in the loose phraseology of the *deseño* as beginning in the *valda* or skirt of the hill, its precise location long the subject of litigation. I listened and answered with little interest, for my mind was still distracted by the wind which swept violently by the house, as well as by his odd face, which was again reflected in the resemblance that the silent group by the fire bore toward him. He was still talking, and the wind was yet blowing, when my confused attention was aroused by a remark addressed to the recumbent figures.

“Now, then, which on ye’ll see the stranger up the creek to Altascar’s to-morrow?”

There was a general movement of opposition in the group, but no decided answer.

“Kin you go, Kerg?”

“Who’s to look up stock in Strarberry per-ar-ie?”

This seemed to imply a negative, and the old man turned to another hopeful, who was pulling the fur from a mangy bearskin on which he was lying, with an expression as though it were somebody’s hair.

“Well, Tom, wot’s to hinder you from goin’?”

“Mam’s goin’ to Brown’s store at sun-up, and I s’pose I’ve got to pack her and the baby again.”

I think the expression of scorn this unfortunate youth exhibited for the filial duty into which he had been evidently beguiled was one of the finest things I had ever seen.

“Wise?”

Wise deigned no verbal reply, but figuratively thrust a worn and patched boot into the discourse. The old man flushed quickly.

“I told ye to get Brown to give you a pair the last time you war down the river.”

“Said he would n’t without an order. Said it was like pulling gum-teeth to get the money from you even then.”

There was a grim smile at this local hit at the old man’s parsimony, and Wise, who was clearly the privileged wit of the family, sank back in honorable retirement.

“Well, Joe, ef your boots are new, and you are n’t pestered with wimmin and children, p’r’aps you’ll go,” said Tryan, with a nervous twitching, intended for a smile, about a mouth not remarkably mirthful.

Tom lifted a pair of bushy eyebrows and said shortly, —

“Got no saddle.”

“Wot’s gone of your saddle?”

“Kerg, there!” indicating his brother with a look such as Cain might have worn at the sacrifice.

“You lie!” returned Kerg cheerfully.

Tryan sprang to his feet, seizing the chair, flourishing it

around his head and gazing furiously in the hard young faces which fearlessly met his own. But it was only for a moment; his arm soon dropped by his side, and a look of hopeless fatality crossed his face. He allowed me to take the chair from his hand, and I was trying to pacify him by the assurance that I required no guide, when the irrepressible Wise again lifted his voice —

“Theer’s George comin’! Why don’t ye ask him? He’ll go and introduce you to Don Fernandy’s darter, too, ef you ain’t pertickler.”

The laugh which followed this joke, which evidently had some domestic allusion (the general tendency of rural pleasantry), was followed by a light step on the platform, and the young man entered. Seeing a stranger present, he stopped and colored, made a shy salute and colored again, and then, drawing a box from the corner, sat down, his hands clasped tightly together and his very handsome bright blue eyes turned frankly on mine.

Perhaps I was in a condition to receive the romantic impression he made upon me, and I took it upon myself to ask his company as guide, and he cheerfully assented. But some domestic duty called him presently away.

The fire gleamed brightly on the hearth, and, no longer resisting the prevailing influence, I silently watched the spiriting flame, listening to the wind which continually shook the tenement. Besides the one chair, which had acquired a new importance in my eyes, I presently discovered a crazy table in one corner, with an inkbottle and pen, the latter in that greasy state of decomposition peculiar to country taverns and farmhouses. A goodly array of rifles and double-barreled guns stocked the corner; half a dozen saddles and blankets lay near, with a mild flavor of the horse about them. Some deer and bear skins completed the inventory. As I sat there, with the silent group around me, the shadowy gloom within and the dominant wind

without, I found it difficult to believe I had ever known a different existence. My profession had often led me to wilder scenes, but rarely among those whose unrestrained habits and easy unconsciousness made me feel so lonely and uncomfortable. I shrank closer to myself, not without grave doubts — which I think occur naturally to people in likesituations — that this was the general rule of humanity, and I was a solitary and somewhat gratuitous exception.

It was a relief when a laconic announcement of supper by a weak-eyed girl caused a general movcment in the family. We walked across the dark platform, which led to another low-ceiled room. Its entire length was occupied by a table, at the further end of which a weak-eyed woman was already taking her repast as she at the same time gave nourishment to a weak-eyed baby. As the formalities of introduction had been dispensed with, and as she took no notice of me, I was enabled to slip into a seat without discomposing or interrupting her. Tryan extemporized a grace, and the attention of the family became absorbed in bacon, potatoes, and dried apples.

The meal was a sincere one. Gentle gurglings at the upper end of the table often betrayed the presence of the “wellspring of pleasure.” The conversation generally referred to the labors of the day, and comparing notes as to the whereabouts of missing stock. Yet the supper was such a vast improvement upon the previous intellectual feast, that when a chance allusion of mine to the business of my visit brought out the elder Tryan, the interest grew quite exciting. I remember he inveighed bitterly against the system of ranch-holding by the “Greasers,” as he was pleased to term the native Californians. As the same ideas have been sometimes advanced under more pretentious circumstances, they may be worthy of record.

“Look at 'em holdin' the finest grazin' land that ever lay outer doors? Whar 's the papers for it? Was it grants?



Mighty fine grants, — most of 'em made arter the 'Merrikans got possession. More fools the 'Merrikans for lettin' 'em hold 'em. Wat paid for 'em? 'Merrikan blood and money.

“Did n't they oughter have suthin' out of their native country? Wot for? Did they ever improve? Got a lot of yaller-skinned diggers, not so sensible as niggers, to look arter stock, and they a-sittin' home and smokin'. With their gold and silver candlesticks, and missions, and crucifixens, priests and graven idols, and sich? Them sort things wuren't allowed in Mizzoori.”

At the mention of improvements I involuntarily lifted my eyes, and met the half-laughing, half-embarrassed look of George. The act did not escape detection, and I had at once the satisfaction of seeing that the rest of the family had formed an offensive alliance against us.

“It was agin nater and agin God,” added Tryan. “God never intended gold in the rocks to be made into heathen candlesticks and crucifixens. That's why he sent 'Merrikans here. Nater never intended such a climate for lazy lopers. She never gi'n six months' sunshine to be slept and smoked away.”

How long he continued, and with what further illustration, I could not say, for I took an early opportunity to escape to the sitting-room. I was soon followed by George, who called me to an open door leading to a smaller room, and pointed to a bed.

“You 'd better sleep there to-night,” he said; “you 'll be more comfortable, and I 'll call you early.”

I thanked him, and would have asked him several questions which were then troubling me, but he shyly slipped to the door and vanished.

A shadow seemed to fall on the room when he had gone. The “boys” returned, one by one, and shuffled to their old places. A larger log was thrown on the fire, and the huge

chimney glowed like a furnace, but it **did** not seem to melt or subdue a single line of the hard faces that it lit. Half an hour later, the furs which had served as chairs by day undertook the nightly office of mattresses, and each received its owner's full-length figure. Mr. Tryan had not returned, and I missed George. I sat there until, wakeful and nervous, I saw the fire fall and shadows mount the wall. There was no sound but the rushing of the wind and the snoring of the sleepers. At last, feeling the place insupportable, I seized my hat, and, opening the door, ran out briskly into the night.

The acceleration of my torpid pulse in the keen fight with the wind, whose violence was almost equal to that of a tornado, and the familiar faces of the bright stars above me, I felt as a blessed relief. I ran, not knowing whither, and when I halted, the square outline of the house was lost in the alder-bushes. An uninterrupted plain stretched before me, like a vast sea beaten flat by the force of the gale: As I kept on I noticed a slight elevation toward the horizon, and presently my progress was impeded by the ascent of an Indian mound. It struck me forcibly as resembling an island in the sea. Its height gave me a better view of the expanding plain. But even here I found no rest. The ridiculous interpretation Tryan had given the climate was somehow sung in my ears and echoed in my throbbing pulse as, guided by the stars, I sought the house again.

But I felt fresher and more natural as I stepped upon the platform. The door of the lower building was open, and the old man was sitting beside the table, thumbing the leaves of a Bible with a look in his face as though he were hunting up prophecies against the "Greaser." I turned to enter, but my attention was attracted by a blanketed figure lying beside the house on the platform. The broad chest heaving with healthy slumber, and the open, honest face were familiar. It was George, who had given up his bed to

the stranger among his people. I was about to wake him, but he lay so peaceful and quiet, I felt awed and hushed. And I went to bed with a pleasant impression of his handsome face and tranquil figure soothing me to sleep.

I was awakened the next morning from a sense of lulled repose and grateful silence by the cheery voice of George, who stood beside my bed ostentatiously twirling a riata, as if to recall the duties of the day to my sleep-bewildered eyes. I looked around me. The wind had been magically laid, and the sun shone warmly through the windows. A dash of cold water, with an extra chill on, from the tin basin, helped to brighten me. It was still early, but the family had already breakfasted and dispersed, and a wagon winding far in the distance showed that the unfortunate Tom had already "packed" his relatives away. I felt more cheerful, — there are few troubles Youth cannot distance with the start of a good night's rest. After a substantial breakfast, prepared by George, in a few moments we were mounted and dashing down the plain.

We followed the line of alder that defined the creek, now dry and baked with summer's heat, but which in winter, George told me, overflowed its banks. I still retain a vivid impression of that morning's ride; the far-off mountains, like silhouettes, against the steel-blue sky; the crisp, dry air, and the expanding track before me, animated often by the well-knit figure of George Tryan, musical with jingling spurs and picturesque with flying riata. He rode a powerful native roan, wild-eyed, untiring in stride, and unbroken in nature. Alas! the curves of beauty were concealed by the cumbrous machillas of the Spanish saddle, which levels all equine distinctions. The single rein lay loosely on the cruel bit that can gripe and, if need be, crush the jaw it controls.

Again the illimitable freedom of the valley rises before

me as we again bear down into sunlit space. Can this be Chu-Chu, staid and respectable filly of American pedigree, — Chu-Chu, forgetful of plank-roads and cobble stones, wild with excitement, twinkling her small white feet beneath me? George laughs out of a cloud of dust, "Give her her head; don't you see she likes it?" and Chu-Chu seems to like it, and, whether bitten by native tarantula into native barbarism or emulous of the roan, "blood" asserts itself, and in a moment the peaceful servitude of years is beaten out in the music of her clattering hoofs. The creek widens to a deep gully. We dive into it and up on the opposite side, carrying a moving cloud of impalpable powder with us. Cattle are scattered over the plain, grazing quietly or banded together in vast restless herds. George makes a wide, indefinite sweep with the riata, as if to include them all in his vaquero's loop, and says, "Ours!"

"About how many, George?"

"Don't know."

"How many?"

"Well, p'r'aps three thousand head," says George, reflecting. "We don't know; takes five men to look 'em up and keep run."

"What are they worth?"

"About thirty dollars a head."

I make a rapid calculation, and look my astonishment at the laughing George. Perhaps a recollection of the domestic economy of the Tryan household is expressed in that look, for George averts his eye and says apologetically, —

"I've tried to get the old man to sell and build, but you know he says it ain't no use to settle down just yet. We must keep movin'. In fact, he built the shanty for that purpose, lest titles should fall through, and we'd have to get up and move stakes farther down."

Suddenly his quick eye detects some unusual sight in a herd we are passing, and with an exclamation he puts his roan into the centre of the mass. I follow, or rather Cha-Chu darts after the roan, and in a few moments we are in the midst of apparently inextricable horns and hoofs. "Toro!" shouts George, with vaquero enthusiasm, and the band opens a way for the swinging riata. I can feel their steaming breaths, and their spume is cast on Chu-Chu's quivering flank.

Wild, devilish-looking beasts are they; not such shapes as Jove might have chosen to woo a goddess, nor such as peacefully range the downs of Devon, but lean and hungry Cassius-like bovines, economically got up to meet the exigencies of a six-months' rainless climate, and accustomed to wrestle with the distracting wind and the blinding dust.

"That's not our brand," says George; "they're strange stock," and he points to what my scientific eye recognizes as the astrological sign of Venus deeply seared in the brown flanks of the bull he is chasing. But the herd are closing round us with low mutterings, and George has again recourse to the authoritative "Toro," and with swinging riata divides the "bossy bucklers" on either side. When we are free, and breathing somewhat more easily, I venture to ask George if they ever attack any one.

"Never horsemen, — sometimes footmen. Not through rage, you know, but curiosity. They think a man and his horse are one, and if they meet a chap afoot, they run him down and trample him under hoof, in the pursuit of knowledge. But," adds George, "here's the lower bench of the foothills, and here's Altascar's corral, and that white building you see yonder is the casa."

A whitewashed wall inclosed a court containing another adobe building, baked with the solar beams of many summers. Leaving our horses in the charge of a few peons

in the courtyard, who were basking lazily in the sun, we entered a low doorway, where a deep shadow and an agreeable coolness fell upon us, as sudden and grateful as a plunge in cool water, from its contrast with the external glare and heat. In the centre of a low-ceiled apartment sat an old man with a black silk handkerchief tied about his head, the few gray hairs that escaped from its folds relieving his gamboge-colored face. The odor of cigarritos was as incense added to the cathedral gloom of the building.

As Señor Altascar rose with well-bred gravity to receive us, George advanced with such a heightened color, and such a blending of tenderness and respect in his manner, that I was touched to the heart by so much devotion in the careless youth. In fact, my eyes were still dazzled by the effect of the outer sunshine, and at first I did not see the white teeth and black eyes of Pepita, who slipped into the corridor as we entered.

It was no pleasant matter to disclose particulars of business which would deprive the old señor of the greater part of that land we had just ridden over, and I did it with great embarrassment. But he listened calmly,—not a muscle of his dark face stirring,—and the smoke curling placidly from his lips showed his regular respiration. When I had finished, he offered quietly to accompany us to the line of demarcation. George had meanwhile disappeared, but a suspicious conversation in broken Spanish and English in the corridor betrayed his vicinity. When he returned again, a little absent-minded, the old man, by far the coolest and most self-possessed of the party, extinguished his black silk cap beneath that stiff, uncomely sombrero which all native Californians affect. A serapa thrown over his shoulders hinted that he was waiting. Horses are always ready saddled in Spanish ranchos, and in half an hour from the time of our arrival we were again loping in the staring sunlight.

But not as cheerfully as before. George and myself were weighed down by restraint, and Altascar was gravely quiet. To break the silence, and by way of a consolatory essay, I hinted to him that there might be further intervention or appeal, but the proffered oil and wine were returned with a careless shrug of the shoulders and a sententious "Que bueno? Your courts are always just."

The Indian mound of the previous night's discovery was a bearing monument of the new line, and there we halted. We were surprised to find the old man Tryan waiting us. For the first time during our interview the old Spaniard seemed moved, and the blood rose in his yellow cheek. I was anxious to close the scene, and pointed out the corner boundaries as clearly as my recollection served.

"The deputies will be here to-morrow to run the lines from this initial point, and there will be no further trouble, I believe, gentlemen."

Señor Altascar had dismounted and was gathering a few tufts of dried grass in his hands. George and I exchanged glances. He presently arose from his stooping posture, and advancing to within a few paces of Joseph Tryan, said in a voice broken with passion, —

"And I, Fernando Jesus Maria Altascar, put you in possession of my land in the fashion of my country."

He threw a sod to each of the cardinal points.

"I don't know your courts, your judges, or your corregidores. Take the llano! — and take this with it. May the drought seize your cattle till their tongues hang down as long as those of your lying lawyers! May it be the curse and torment of your old age, as you and yours have made it of mine!"

We stepped between the principal actors in this scene, which only the passion of Altascar made tragical, but Tryan, with a humility but ill concealing his triumph, interrupted, —

“ Let him curse on. He'll find 'em coming home to him sooner than the cattle he has lost through his sloth and pride. The Lord is on the side of the just, as well as agin all slanderers and revilers.”

Altascar but half guessed the meaning of the Missourian, yet sufficiently to drive from his mind all but the extravagant power of his native invective.

“ Stealer of the sacrament! Open not! — open not, I say, your lying Judas lips to me! Ah! half-breed, with the soul of a coyote! — Car-r-r-ramba!”

With his passion reverberating among the consonants like distant thunder, he laid his hand upon the mane of his horse as though it had been the gray locks of his adversary, swung himself into the saddle, and galloped away.

George turned to me.

“ Will you go back with us to-night?”

I thought of the cheerless walls, the silent figures by the fire, and the roaring wind, and hesitated.

“ Well, then, good-by.”

“ Good-hy, George.”

Another wring of the hands, and we parted. I had not ridden far, when I turned and looked back. The wind had risen early that afternoon, and was already sweeping across the plain. A cloud of dust traveled before it, and a picturesque figure occasionally emerging therefrom was my last indistinct impression of George Tryan.

## PART II

### IN THE FLOOD

Three months after the survey of the Espiritu Santo rancho I was again in the valley of the Sacramento. But a general and terrible visitation had erased the memory of that event as completely as I supposed it had obliterated



the boundary monuments I had planted. The great flood of 1861-62 was at its height when, obeying some indefinite yearning, I took my carpetbag and embarked for the inundated valley.

There was nothing to be seen from the bright cabin windows of the Golden City but night deepening over the water. The only sound was the pattering rain, and that had grown monotonous for the past two weeks, and did not disturb the national gravity of my countrymen as they silently sat around the cabin stove. Some on errands of relief to friends and relatives wore anxious faces, and conversed soberly on the one absorbing topic. Others like myself, attracted by curiosity, listened eagerly to newer details. But, with that human disposition to seize upon any circumstance that might give chance event the exaggerated importance of instinct, I was half conscious of something more than curiosity as an impelling motive.

The dripping of rain, the low gurgle of water, and a leaden sky greeted us the next morning as we lay beside the half-submerged levee of Sacramento. Here, however, the novelty of boats to convey us to the hotels was an appeal that was irresistible. I resigned myself to a dripping rubber-cased mariner called Joe, and wrapping myself in a shining cloak of the like material, about as suggestive of warmth as court-plaster might have been, took my seat in the stern sheets of his boat. It was no slight inward struggle to part from the steamer, that to most of the passengers was the only visible connecting link between us and the dry and habitable earth, but we pulled away and entered the city, stemming a rapid current as we shot the levee.

We glided up the long level of K Street, — once a cheerful busy thoroughfare, now distressing in its silent desolation. The turbid water, which seemed to meet the horizon edge before us, flowed at right angles in sluggish rivers

through the streets. Nature had revenged herself on the local taste by disarraying the regular rectangles by huddling houses on street corners, where they presented abrupt gables to the current, or by capsizing them in compact ruin. Crafts of all kinds were gliding in and out of low-arched doorways. The water was over the top of the fences surrounding well-kept gardens, in the first stories of hotels and private dwellings, trailing its slime on velvet carpets as well as roughly boarded floors. And a silence quite as suggestive as the visible desolation was in the voiceless streets that no longer echoed to carriage-wheel or footfall. The low ripple of water, the occasional splash of oars, or the warning cry of boatmen were the few signs of life and habitation.

With such scenes before my eyes and such sounds in my ears, as I lie lazily in the boat, is mingled the song of my gondolier, who sings to the music of his oars. It is not quite as romantic as his brother of the Lido might improvise, but my Yankee Giuseppe has the advantage of earnestness and energy, and gives a graphic description of the terrors of the past week and of noble deeds of self-sacrifice and devotion, occasionally pointing out a balcony from which some California Bianca or Laura had been snatched, half-clothed and famished. Giuseppe is otherwise peculiar, and refuses the proffered fare, for — am I not a citizen of San Francisco, which was first to respond to the suffering cry of Sacramento? and is not he, Giuseppe, a member of the Howard Society? No, Giuseppe is poor, but cannot take my money. Still, if I must spend it, there is the Howard Society, and the women and children without food and clothing at the Agricultural Hall.

I thank the generous gondolier, and we go to the Hall, — a dismal, bleak place, ghastly with the memories of last year's opulence and plenty, — and here Giuseppe's fare is swelled by the stranger's mite. But here Giuseppe tells

me of the "Relief Boat" which leaves for the flooded district in the interior, and here, profiting by the lesson he has taught me, I make the resolve to turn my curiosity to the account of others, and am accepted of those who go forth to succor and help the afflicted. Giuseppe takes charge of my carpetbag, and does not part from me until I stand on the slippery deck of Relief Boat No. 3.

An hour later I am in the pilot-house, looking down upon what was once the channel of a peaceful river. But its banks are only defined by tossing tufts of willow washed by the long swell that breaks over a vast inland sea. Stretches of tule land fertilized by its once regular channel, and dotted by flourishing ranchos, are now cleanly erased. The cultivated profile of the old landscape had faded. Dotted lines in symmetrical perspective mark orchards that are buried and chilled in the turbid flood. The roofs of a few farmhouses are visible, and here and there the smoke curling from chimneys of half-submerged tenements shows an undaunted life within. Cattle and sheep are gathered on Indian mounds, waiting the fate of their companions, whose carcasses drift by us or swing in eddies with the wrecks of barns and outhouses. Wagons are stranded everywhere where the tide could carry them. As I wipe the moistened glass, I see nothing but water, pattering on the deck from the lowering clouds, dashing against the window, dripping from the willows, hissing by the wheels, everywhere washing, coiling, sapping, hurrying in rapids, or swelling at last into deeper and vaster lakes, awful in their suggestive quiet and concealment.

As day fades into night the monotony of this strange prospect grows oppressive. I seek the engine-room, and in the company of some of the few half-drowned sufferers we have already picked up from temporary rafts, I forget the general aspect of desolation in their individual misery. Later we meet the San Francisco packet, and transfer a

number of our passengers. From them we learn how inward-bound vessels report to having struck the well-defined channel of the Sacramento fifty miles beyond the bar. There is a voluntary contribution taken among the generous travelers for the use of our afflicted, and we part company with a hearty "God speed" on either side. But our signal lights are not far distant before a familiar sound comes back to us, — an indomitable Yankee cheer, — which scatters the gloom.

Our course is altered, and we are steaming over the obliterated banks far in the interior. Once or twice black objects loom up near us, — the wrecks of houses floating by. There is a slight rift in the sky towards the north, and a few bearing stars to guide us over the waste. As we penetrate into shallower water, it is deemed advisable to divide our party into smaller boats, and diverge over the submerged prairie. I borrow a pea-coat of one of the crew, and in that practical disguise am doubtfully permitted to pass into one of the boats. We give way northerly. It is quite dark yet, although the rift of cloud has widened.

It must have been about three o'clock, and we were lying upon our oars in an eddy formed by a clump of cottonwood, and the light of the steamer is a solitary bright star in the distance, when the silence is broken by the "bow oar" : —

"Light ahead."

All eyes are turned in that direction. In a few seconds a twinkling light appears, shines steadily, and again disappears, as if by the shifting position of some black object apparently drifting close upon us.

"Stern, all! — a steamer!"

"Hold hard, there! Steamer be d—d!" is the reply of the coxswain. "It's a house, and a big one too."

It is a big one, looming in the starlight like a huge fragment of the darkness. The light comes from a single

candle which shines through a window as the great shape swings by. Some recollection is drifting back to me with it, as I listen with beating heart.

“There’s some one in it, by heavens! Give way, boys, — lay her alongside. Handsomely, now! The door’s fastened; try the window; no! here’s another!”

In another moment we are trampling in the water, which washes the floor to the depth of several inches. It is a large room, at the farther end of which an old man is sitting, wrapped in a blanket, holding a candle in one hand, and apparently absorbed in the book he holds with the other. I spring toward him with an exclamation: —

“Joseph Tryan!”

He does not move. We gather closer to him, and I lay my hand gently on his shoulder, and say, —

“Look up, old man, look up! Your wife and children, where are they? The boys, — George! Are they here? are they safe?”

He raises his head slowly, and turns his eyes to mine, and we involuntarily recoil before his look. It is a calm and quiet glance, free from fear, anger, or pain; but it somehow sends the blood curdling through our veins. He bowed his head over his book again, taking no further notice of us. The men look at me compassionately and hold their peace. I make one more effort: —

“Joseph Tryan, don’t you know me — the surveyor who surveyed your ranch, — the Espíritu Santo? Look up, old man!”

He shuddered and wrapped himself closer in his blanket. Presently he repeated to himself, “The surveyor who surveyed your ranch, Espíritu Santo,” over and over again, as though it were a lesson he was trying to fix in his memory.

I was turning sadly to the boatmen, when he suddenly caught me fearfully by the hand, and said: —

“Hush!”

We were silent.

“Listen!” He puts his arm around my neck, and whispers in my ear, “I’m *a-moving off!*”

“Moving off?”

“Hush! Don’t speak so loud. Moving off! Ah! wot’s that? Don’t you hear? — there! — listen!”

We listen, and hear the water gurgle and click beneath the floor.

“It’s them wot he sent! — old Altascar sent. They’ve been here all night. I heard ’em first in the creek, when they came to tell the old man to move farther off. They came nearer and nearer. They whispered under the door, and I saw their eyes on the step, — their cruel, hard eyes. Ah! why don’t they quit?”

I tell the men to search the room and see if they can find any farther traces of the family, while Tryan resumes his old attitude. It is so much like the figure I remember on the breezy night, that a superstitious feeling is fast overcoming me. When they have returned, I tell them briefly what I know of him, and the old man murmurs again, —

“Why don’t they quit, then? They have the stock, — all gone — gone, — gone for the hides and hoofs,” and he groans bitterly.

“There are other boats below us. The shanty cannot have drifted far, and perhaps the family are safe by this time,” says the coxswain hopefully.

We lift the old man up, for he is quite helpless, and carry him to the boat. He is still grasping the Bible in his right hand, though its strengthening grace is blank to his vacant eye, and he cowers in the stern as we pull slowly to the steamer, while a pale gleam in the sky shows the coming day.

I was weary with excitement, and when we reached the steamer, and I had seen Joseph Tryan comfortably be-

stowed, I wrapped myself in a blanket near the boiler and presently fell asleep. But even then the figure of the old man often started before me, and a sense of uneasiness about George made a strong undercurrent to my drifting dreams. I was awakened at about eight o'clock in the morning by the engineer, who told me one of the old man's sons had been picked up and was now on board.

"Is it George Tryan?" I ask quickly.

"Don't know; but he's a sweet one, whoever he is," adds the engineer, with a smile at some luscious remembrance. "You'll find him for'ard."

I hurry to the bow of the boat, and find not George, but the irrepressible Wise, sitting on a coil of rope, a little dirtier and rather more dilapidated than I can remember having seen him.

He is examining, with apparent admiration, some rough, dry clothes that have been put out for his disposal. I cannot help thinking that circumstances have somewhat exalted his usual cheerfulness. He puts me at ease by at once addressing me:—

"These are high old times, ain't they? I say, what do you reckon 's become o' them thar bound'ry moniments you stuck? Ah!"

The pause which succeeds this outburst is the effect of a spasm of admiration at a pair of high boots, which, by great exertion, he has at last pulled on his feet.

"So you've picked up the ole man in the shanty, clean crazy? He must have been soft to have stuck there instead o' leavin' with the old woman. Did n't know me from Adam; took me for George!"

At this affecting instance of paternal forgetfulness, Wise was evidently divided between amusement and chagrin. I took advantage of the contending emotions to ask about George.

"Don't know whar he is! If he'd tended stock instead

of running about the prairie, packin' off wimmin and children, he might have saved suthin'. He lost every hoof and hide, I'll bet a cooky! Say, you," to a passing boatman, "when are you goin' to give us some grub? I'm hungry 'nough to skin and eat a hoss. Reckon I'll turn butcher when things is dried up, and save hides, horns, and taller."

I could not but admire this indomitable energy, which under softer climatic influences might have borne such goodly fruit.

"Have you any idea what you'll do, Wise?" I ask.

"Thar ain't much to do now," says the practical young man. "I'll have to lay over a spell, I reckon, till things comes straight. The land ain't worth much now, and won't be, I dessay, for some time. Wonder whar the ole man'll drive stakes next."

"I meant as to your father and George, Wise."

"Oh, the ole man and I'll go on to Miles's, whar Tom packed the old woman and babies last week. George'll turn up somewhar atween this and Altascar's, ef he ain't thar now."

I ask how the Altascars have suffered.

"Well, I reckon he ain't lost much in stock. I should n't wonder if George helped him drive 'em up the foothills. And his casa's built too high. Oh, thar ain't any water thar, you bet. Ah!" says Wise, with reflective admiration, "those Greasers ain't the darned fools people thinks 'em. I'll bet thar ain't one swamped out in all 'er Californy." But the appearance of "grub" cut this rhapsody short.

"I shall keep on a little farther," I say, "and try to find George."

Wise stared a moment at this eccentricity until a new light dawned upon him.

"I don't think you'll save much. What's the percentage, — workin' on shares, eh?"

I answer that I am only curious, which I feel lessens his



opinion of me, and with a sadder feeling than his assurance of George's safety might warrant, I walked away.

From others whom we picked up from time to time we heard of George's self-sacrificing devotion, with the praises of the many he had helped and rescued. But I did not feel disposed to return until I had seen him, and soon prepared myself to take a boat to the lower valda of the foothills, and visit Altascar. I soon perfected my arrangements, bade farewell to Wise, and took a last look at the old man, who was sitting by the furnace fires quite passive and composed. Then our boat-head swung round, pulled by sturdy and willing hands.

It was again raining, and a disagreeable wind had risen. Our course lay nearly west, and we soon knew by the strong current that we were in the creek of the Espiritu Santo. From time to time the wrecks of barns were seen, and we passed many half-submerged willows hung with farming implements.

We emerge at last into a broad silent sea. It is the llano de Espiritu Santo. As the wind whistles by me, piling the shallower fresh water into mimic waves, I go back, in fancy, to the long ride of October over that boundless plain, and recall the sharp outlines of the distant hills which are now lost in the lowering clouds. The men are rowing silently, and I find my mind, released from its tension, growing benumbed and depressed as then. The water, too, is getting more shallow as we leave the banks of the creek, and with my hand dipped listlessly over the thwarts, I detect the tops of chimisal, which shows the tide to have somewhat fallen. There is a black mound, bearing to the north of the line of alder, making an adverse current, which, as we sweep to the right to avoid it, I recognize. We pull close alongside, and I call to the men to stop.

There was a stake driven near its summit with the initials, "L. E. S. I." Tied halfway down was a curi-

ously worked riata. It was George's. It had been cut with some sharp instrument, and the loose gravelly soil of the mound was deeply dented with horse's hoofs. The stake was covered with horsehairs. It was a record, but no clue.

The wind had grown more violent, as we still fought our way forward, resting and rowing by turns, and oftener "poling" the shallower surface, but the old valda, or bench, is still distant. My recollection of the old survey enables me to guess the relative position of the meanderings of the creek, and an occasional simple professional experiment to determine the distance gives my crew the fullest faith in my ability. Night overtakes us in our impeded progress. Our condition looks more dangerous than it really is, but I urge the men, many of whom are still new in this mode of navigation, to greater exertion by assurance of perfect safety and speedy relief ahead. We go on in this way until about eight o'clock, and ground by the willows. We have a muddy walk for a few hundred yards before we strike a dry trail, and simultaneously the white walls of Altascar's appear like a snow-bank before us. Lights are moving in the courtyard; but otherwise the old tomb-like repose characterizes the building.

One of the peons recognized me as I entered the court, and Altascar met me on the corridor.

I was too weak to do more than beg his hospitality for the men who had dragged wearily with me. He looked at my hand, which still unconsciously held the broken riata. I began, wearily, to tell him about George and my fears, but with a gentler courtesy than was even his wont, he gravely laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Poco a poco, señor, — not now. You are tired, you have hunger, you have cold. Necessary it is you should have peace."

He took us into a small room and poured out some French

cognac, which he gave to the men that had accompanied me. They drank, and threw themselves before the fire in the larger room. The repose of the building was intensified that night, and I even fancied that the footsteps on the corridor were lighter and softer. The old Spaniard's habitual gravity was deeper; we might have been shut out from the world as well as the whistling storm, behind those ancient walls with their time-worn inheritor.

Before I could repeat my inquiry he retired. In a few minutes two smoking dishes of chupa with coffee were placed before us, and my men ate ravenously. I drank the coffee, but my excitement and weariness kept down the instincts of hunger.

I was sitting sadly by the fire when he reëntered.

"You have eat?"

I said, "Yes," to please him.

"Bueno, eat when you can, — food and appetite are not always."

He said this with that Sancho-like simplicity with which most of his countrymen utter a proverb, as though it were an experience rather than a legend, and, taking the riata from the floor, held it almost tenderly before him.

"It was made by me, señor."

"I kept it as a clue to him, Don Altascar," I said. "If I could find him" —

"He is here."

"Here! and" — but I could not say, "well!" I understood the gravity of the old man's face, the hushed footfalls, the tomb-like repose of the building, in an electric flash of consciousness: I held the clue to the broken riata at last. Altascar took my hand, and we crossed the corridor to a sombre apartment. A few tall candles were burning in sconces before the window.

In an alcove there was a deep bed with its counterpane, pillows, and sheets heavily edged with lace, in all that

splendid luxury which the humblest of these strange people lavish upon this single item of their household. I stepped beside it and saw George lying, as I had seen him once before, peacefully at rest. But a greater sacrifice than that he had known was here, and his generous heart was stilled forever.

“He was honest and brave,” said the old man, and turned away.

There was another figure in the room; a heavy shawl drawn over her graceful outline, and her long black hair hiding the hands that buried her downcast face. I did not seem to notice her, and, retiring presently, left the loving and loved together.

When we were again beside the crackling fire, in the shifting shadows of the great chamber, Altascar told me how he had that morning met the horse of George Tryan swimming on the prairie; how that, farther on, he found him lying, quite cold and dead, with no marks or bruises on his person; that he had probably become exhausted in fording the creek, and that he had as probably reached the mound only to die for want of that help he had so freely given to others; that, as a last act, he had freed his horse. These incidents were corroborated by many who collected in the great chamber that evening, — women and children, — most of them succored through the devoted energies of him who lay cold and lifeless above.

He was buried in the Indian mound, — the single spot of strange perennial greenness, which the poor aborigines had raised above the dusty plain. A little slab of sandstone with the initials “G. T.” is his monument, and one of the bearings of the initial corner of the new survey of the Espiritu Santo rancho.

## WAITING FOR THE SHIP

### A FORT POINT IDYL

ABOUT an hour's ride from the Plaza there is a high bluff with the ocean breaking uninterruptedly along its rocky beach. There are several cottages on the sands, which look as if they had recently been cast up by a heavy sea. The cultivated patch behind each tenement is fenced in by bamboos, broken spars, and driftwood. With its few green cabbages and turnip-tops, each garden looks something like an aquarium with the water turned off. In fact you would not be surprised to meet a merman digging among the potatoes, or a mermaid milking a sea-cow hard by.

Near this place formerly arose a great semaphoric telegraph, with its gaunt arms tossed up against the horizon. It has been replaced by an observatory, connected with an electric nerve to the heart of the great commercial city. From this point the incoming ships are signaled, and again checked off at the City Exchange. And while we are here, looking for the expected steamer, let me tell you a story.

Not long ago, a simple, hard-working mechanic had amassed sufficient by diligent labor in the mines to send home for his wife and two children. He arrived in San Francisco a month before the time the ship was due, for he was a Western man, and had made the overland journey, and knew little of ships or seas or gales. He procured work in the city, but as the time approached he would go to the shipping office regularly every day. The month passed, but the ship came not; then a month and a week, two weeks, three weeks, two months, and then a year.

The rough, patient face, with soft lines overlying its hard features, which had become a daily apparition at the shipping-agent's, then disappeared. It turned up one afternoon at the observatory as the setting sun relieved the operator from his duties. There was something so childlike and simple in the few questions asked by this stranger, touching his business, that the operator spent some time to explain. When the mystery of signals and telegraphs was unfolded, the stranger had one more question to ask. "How long might a vessel be absent before they would give up expecting her?" The operator could n't tell; it would depend on circumstances. Would it be a year? Yes, it might be a year, and vessels had been given up for lost after two years and had come home. The stranger put his rough hand on the operator's, and thanked him for his "troubil," and went away.

Still the ship came not. Stately clippers swept into the Gate, and merchantmen went by with colors flying, and the welcoming gun of the steamer often reverberated among the hills. Then the patient face, with the old resigned expression, but a brighter, wistful look in the eye, was regularly met on the crowded decks of the steamer as she disembarked her living freight. He may have had a dimly defined hope that the missing ones might yet come this way, as only another road over that strange unknown expanse. But he talked with ship captains and sailors, and even this last hope seemed to fail. When the careworn face and bright eyes were presented again at the observatory, the operator, busily engaged, could not spare time to answer foolish interrogatories, so he went away. But as night fell, he was seen sitting on the rocks with his face turned seaward, and was seated there all that night.

When he became hopelessly insane, for that was what the physicians said made his eyes so bright and wistful, he was cared for by a fellow craftsman who had known his troubles.

He was allowed to indulge his fancy of going out to watch for the ship, in which she "and the children" were, at night, when no one else was watching. He had made up his mind that the ship would come in at night. This, and the idea that he would relieve the operator, who would be tired with watching all day, seemed to please him. So he went out and relieved the operator every night!

For two years the ships came and went. He was there to see the outward-bound clipper, and greet her on her return. He was known only by a few who frequented the place. When he was missed at last from his accustomed spot, a day or two elapsed before any alarm was felt. One Sunday, a party of pleasure-seekers clambering over the rocks were attracted by the barking of a dog that had run on before them. When they came up they found a plainly dressed man lying there dead. There were a few papers in his pocket, — chiefly slips cut from different journals of old marine memoranda, — and his face was turned towards the distant sea.

## A NIGHT AT WINGDAM

I HAD been stage-ridden and bewildered all day, and when we swept down with the darkness into the Arcadian hamlet of Wingdam I resolved to go no farther, and rolled out in a gloomy and dyspeptic state. The effects of a mysterious pie, and some sweetened carbonic acid known to the proprietor of the Half-way House as "lemming sody," still oppressed me. Even the facetiæ of the gallant expressman, who knew everybody's Christian name along the route, who rained letters, newspapers, and bundles from the top of the stage, whose legs frequently appeared in frightful proximity to the wheels, who got on and off while we were going at full speed, whose gallantry, energy, and superior knowledge of travel crushed all us other passengers to envious silence, and who just then was talking with several persons and manifestly doing something else at the same time, — even this had failed to interest me. So I stood gloomily, clutching my shawl and carpetbag, and watched the stage roll away, taking a parting look at the gallant expressman as he hung on the top rail with one leg, and lit his cigar from the pipe of a running footman. I then turned toward the Wingdam Temperance Hotel.

It may have been the weather, or it may have been the pie, but I was not impressed favorably with the house. Perhaps it was the name extending the whole length of the building, with a letter under each window, making the people who looked out dreadfully conspicuous. Perhaps it was that "Temperance" always suggested to my mind rusks and weak tea. It was uninviting. It might have



been called the "Total Abstinence" Hotel, from the lack of anything to intoxicate or inthrall the senses. It was designed with an eye to artistic dreariness. It was so much too large for the settlement that it appeared to be a very slight improvement on outdoors. It was unpleasantly new. There was the forest flavor of dampness about it, and a slight spicing of pine. Nature outraged, but not entirely subdued, sometimes broke out afresh in little round, sticky resinous tears on the doors and windows. It seemed to me that boarding there must seem like a perpetual picnic. As I entered the door, a number of the regular boarders rushed out of a long room, and set about trying to get the taste of something out of their mouths, by the application of tobacco in various forms. A few immediately ranged themselves around the fireplace, with their legs over each other's chairs, and in that position silently resigned themselves to indigestion. Remembering the pie, I waived the invitation of the landlord to supper, but suffered myself to be conducted into the sitting-room. "Mine host" was a magnificent-looking, heavily bearded specimen of the animal man. He reminded me of somebody or something connected with the drama. I was sitting beside the fire, mutely wondering what it could be, and trying to follow the particular chord of memory thus touched into the intricate past, when a little delicate-looking woman appeared at the door, and, leaning heavily against the casing, said in an exhausted tone, "Husband!" As the landlord turned toward her, that particular remembrance flashed before me in a single line of blank verse. It was this: "Two souls with but one single thought, two hearts that beat as one."

It was Ingomar and Parthenia his wife. I imagined a different dénouement from the play. Ingomar had taken Parthenia back to the mountains, and kept a hotel for the benefit of the Alemanni, who resorted there in large numbers. Poor Parthenia was pretty well fagged out, and did

all the work without "help." She had two "young barbarians," a boy and a girl. She was faded, but still good-looking.

I sat and talked with Ingomar, who seemed perfectly at home, and told me several stories of the Alemanni, all bearing a strong flavor of the wilderness, and being perfectly in keeping with the house. How he, Ingomar, had killed a certain dreadful "b'ar," whose skin was just up "yar," over his bed. How he, Ingomar, had killed several "bucks," whose skins had been prettily fringed and embroidered by Parthenia, and even now clothed him. How he, Ingomar, had killed several "Injins," and was once nearly scalped himself. All this with that ingenious candor which is perfectly justifiable in a barbarian, but which a Greek might feel inclined to look upon as "blowing." Thinking of the wearied Parthenia, I began to consider for the first time that perhaps she had better married the old Greek. Then she would at least have always looked neat. Then she would not have worn a woolen dress flavored with all the dinners of the past year. Then she would not have been obliged to wait on the table with her hair half down. Then the two children would not have hung about her skirts with dirty fingers, palpably dragging her down day by day. I suppose it was the pie which put such heartless and improper ideas in my head, and so I rose up and told Ingomar I believed I'd go to bed. Preceded by that redoubtable barbarian and a flaring tallow candle, I followed him upstairs to my room. It was the only single room he had, he told me; he had built it for the convenience of married parties who might stop here, but, that event not happening yet, he had left it half furnished. It had cloth on one side, and large cracks on the other. The wind, which always swept over Wingdam at night-time, puffed through the apartment from different apertures. The window was too small for the hole in the side of the house where it

hang, and rattled noisily. Everything looked cheerless and dispiriting. Before Ingomar left me, he brought that "b'arskin," and throwing it over the solemn bier which stood in one corner, told me he reckoned that would keep me warm, and then bade me good-night. I undressed myself, the light blowing out in the middle of that ceremony, crawled under the "b'arskin," and tried to compose myself to sleep.

But I was staringly wide awake. I heard the wind sweep down the mountain-side, and toss the branches of the melancholy pine, and then enter the house, and try all the doors along the passage. Sometimes strong currents of air blew my hair all over the pillow, as with strange whispering breaths. The green timber along the walls seemed to be sprouting, and sent a dampness even through the "b'arskin." I felt like Robinson Crusoe in his tree, with the ladder pulled up, — or like the rocked baby of the nursery song. After lying awake half an hour, I regretted having stopped at Wingdam; at the end of the third quarter, I wished I had not gone to bed; and when a restless hour passed, I got up and dressed myself. There had been a fire down in the big room. Perhaps it was still burning. I opened the door and groped my way along the passage, vocal with the snores of the Alemanni and the whistling of the night wind; I partly fell downstairs, and at last entering the big room, saw the fire still burning. I drew a chair toward it, poked it with my foot, and was astonished to see, by the upspringing flash, that Parthenia was sitting there also, holding a faded-looking baby.

I asked her why she was sitting up.

"She did not go to bed on Wednesday night before the mail arrived, and then she awoke her husband, and there were passengers to 'tend to."

"Did she not get tired sometimes?"

"A little, but Abner" (the barbarian's Christian name)

“had promised to get her more help next spring, if business was good.”

“How many boarders had she?”

“She believed about forty came to regular meals, and there was transient custom, which was as much as she and her husband could ’tend to. But *he* did a great deal of work.”

“What work?”

“Oh, bringing in the wood, and looking after the traders’ things.”

“How long had she been married?”

“About nine years. She had lost a little girl and boy. Three children living. *He* was from Illinois. She from Boston. Had an education (Boston Female High School, — Geometry, Algebra, a little Latin and Greek). Mother and father died. Came to Illinois alone, to teach school. Saw *him* — yes — a love match.” (“Two souls,” etc., etc.) “Married and emigrated to Kansas. Thence across the Plains to California. Always on the outskirts of civilization. *He* liked it.

“She might sometimes have wished to go home. Would like to on account of her children. Would like to give them an education. Had taught them a little herself, but could n’t do much on account of other work. Hoped that the boy would be like his father, strong and hearty. Was fearful the girl would be more like her. Had often thought she was not fit for a pioneer’s wife.”

“Why?”

“Oh, she was not strong enough, and had seen some of his friends’ wives in Kansas who could do more work. But he never complained, — he was so kind.” (“Two souls,” etc.)

Sitting there with her head leaning pensively on one hand, holding the poor, wearied, and limp-looking baby wearily on the other arm, dirty, drabbled, and forlorn, with the firelight playing upon her features no longer fresh or

young, but still refined and delicate, and even in her grotesque slovenliness still bearing a faint reminiscence of birth and breeding, it was not to be wondered that I did not fall into excessive raptures over the barbarian's kindness. Emboldened by my sympathy, she told me how she had given up, little by little, what she imagined to be the weakness of her early education, until she found that she acquired but little strength in her new experience. How, translated to a backwoods society, she was hated by the women, and called proud and "fine," and how her dear husband lost popularity on that account with his fellows. How, led partly by his roving instincts, and partly from other circumstances, he started with her to California. An account of that tedious journey. How it was a dreary, dreary waste in her memory, only a blank plain marked by a little cairn of stones, — a child's grave. How she had noticed that little Willie failed. How she had called Abner's attention to it, but, man-like, he knew nothing about children, and pooh-poohed it, and was worried by the stock. How it happened that after they had passed Sweetwater she was walking beside the wagon one night, and looking at the western sky, and she heard a little voice say "Mother." How she looked into the wagon and saw that little Willie was sleeping comfortably and did not wish to wake him. How that in a few moments more she heard the same voice saying "Mother." How she came back to the wagon and leaned down over him, and felt his breath upon her face, and again covered him up tenderly, and once more resumed her weary journey beside him, praying to God for his recovery. How with her face turned to the sky she heard the same voice saying "Mother," and directly a great bright star shot away from its brethren and expired. And how she knew what had happened, and ran to the wagon again only to pillow a little pinched and cold white face upon her weary bosom. The thin red hands went up to her eyes here, and for a few

moments she sat still. The wind tore round the house and made a frantic rush at the front door, and from his couch of skins in the inner room Ingomar, the barbarian, snored peacefully.

“Of course she always found a protector from insult and outrage in the great courage and strength of her husband?”

“Oh, yes; when Ingomar was with her she feared nothing. But she was nervous and had been frightened once!”

“How?”

“They had just arrived in California. They kept house then, and had to sell liquor to traders. Ingomar was hospitable, and drank with everybody, for the sake of popularity and business, and Ingomar got to like liquor, and was easily affected by it. And how one night there was a boisterous crowd in the bar-room; she went in and tried to get him away, but only succeeded in awakening the coarse gallantry of the half-crazed revelers. And how, when she had at last got him in the room with her frightened children, he sank down on the bed in a stupor, which made her think the liquor was drugged. And how she sat beside him all night, and near morning heard a step in the passage, and, looking toward the door, saw the latch slowly moving up and down, as if somebody were trying it. And how she shook her husband, and tried to waken him, but without effect. And how at last the door yielded slowly at the top (it was bolted below), as if by a gradual pressure without; and how a hand protruded through the opening. And how as quick as lightning she nailed that hand to the wall with her scissors (her only weapon), but the point broke, and somebody got away with a fearful oath. How she never told her husband of it, for fear he would kill that somebody; but how on one day a stranger called here, and as she was handing him his coffee, she saw a queer triangular scar on the back of his hand.”

She was still talking, and the wind was still blowing, and Ingomar was still snoring from his couch of skins, when there was a shout high up the stragglng street, and a clattering of hoofs and rattling of wheels. The mail had arrived. Parthenia ran with the faded baby to awaken Ingomar, and almost simultaneously the gallant expressman stood again before me, addressing me by my Christian name, and invited me to drink out of a mysterious black bottle. The horses were speedily watered, and the business of the gallant expressman concluded, and, bidding Parthenia good by, I got on the stage, and immediately fell asleep, and dreamt of calling on Parthenia and Ingomar, and being treated with pie to an unlimited extent, until I woke up the next morning in Sacramento. I have some doubts as to whether all this was not a dyspeptic dream, but I never witness the drama, and hear that noble sentiment concerning "Two souls," etc., without thinking of Wingdam and poor Parthenia.

## SPANISH AND AMERICAN LEGENDS

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### THE LEGEND OF MONTE DEL DIABLO

THE cautious reader will detect a lack of authenticity in the following pages. I am not a cautious reader myself, yet I confess with some concern to the absence of much documentary evidence in support of the singular incident I am about to relate. Disjointed memoranda, the proceedings of ayuntamientos and early departmental juntas, with other records of a primitive and superstitious people, have been my inadequate authorities. It is but just to state, however, that though this particular story lacks corroboration, in ransacking the Spanish archives of Upper California I have met with many more surprising and incredible stories, attested and supported to a degree that would have placed this legend beyond a cavil or doubt. I have, also, never lost faith in the legend myself, and in so doing have profited much from the examples of divers grant-claimants, who have often jostled me in their more practical researches, and who have my sincere sympathy at the skepticism of a modern hard-headed and practical world.

For many years after Father Junipero Serro first rang his bell in the wilderness of Upper California, the spirit which animated that adventurous priest did not wane. The conversion of the heathen went on rapidly in the establishment of missions throughout the land. So sedulously did the good Fathers set about their work, that around their iso-



lated chapels there presently arose adobe huts, whose mud-plastered and savage tenants partook regularly of the provisions, and occasionally of the Sacrament, of their pious hosts. Nay, so great was their progress, that one zealous Padre is reported to have administered the Lord's Supper one Sabbath morning to "over three hundred heathen salvages." It was not to be wondered that the Enemy of Souls, being greatly incensed thereat, and alarmed at his decreasing popularity, should have grievously tempted and embarrassed these holy Fathers, as we shall presently see.

Yet they were happy, peaceful days for California. The vagrant keels of prying Commerce had not as yet ruffled the lordly gravity of her bays. No torn and ragged guleh betrayed the suspicion of golden treasure. The wild oats drooped idly in the morning heat or wrestled with the afternoon breezes. Deer and antelope dotted the plain. The watercourses brawled in their familiar channels, nor dreamed of ever shifting their regular tide. The wonders of the Yosemite and Calaveras were as yet unrecorded. The holy Fathers noted little of the landscape beyond the barbaric prodigality with which the quick soil repaid the sowing. A new conversion, the advent of a saint's day, or the baptism of an Indian baby, was at once the chronicle and marvel of their day.

At this blissful epoch there lived at the Mission of San Pablo Father José Antonio Haro, a worthy brother of the Society of Jesus. He was of tall and cadaverous aspect. A somewhat romantic history had given a poetic interest to his lugubrious visage. While a youth, pursuing his studies at famous Salamanca, he had become enamored of the charms of Doña Carmen de Torrencevara, as that lady passed to her matutinal devotions. Untoward circumstances, hastened, perhaps, by a wealthier suitor, brought this amour to a disastrous issue, and Father José entered

a monastery, taking upon himself the vows of celibacy. It was here that his natural fervor and poetic enthusiasm conceived expression as a missionary. A longing to convert the uncivilized heathen succeeded his frivolous earthly passion, and a desire to explore and develop unknown fastnesses continually possessed him. In his flashing eye and sombre exterior was detected a singular commingling of the discreet Las Casas and the impetuous Balboa.

Fired by this pious zeal, Father José went forward in the van of Christian pioneers. On reaching Mexico he obtained authority to establish the Mission of San Pablo. Like the good Junipero, accompanied only by an acolyte and muleteer, he unsaddled his mules in a dusky cañon, and rang his bell in the wilderness. The savages—a peaceful, inoffensive, and inferior race—presently flocked around him. The nearest military post was far away, which contributed much to the security of these pious pilgrims, who found their open trustfulness and amiability better fitted to repress hostility than the presence of an armed, suspicious, and brawling soldiery. So the good Father José said matins and prime, mass and vespers, in the heart of sin and heathenism, taking no heed to himself, but looking only to the welfare of the Holy Church. Conversions soon followed, and on the 7th of July, 1760, the first Indian baby was baptized,—an event which, as Father José piously records, “exceeds the richness of gold or precious jewels or the chancing upon the Ophir of Solomon.” I quote this incident as best suited to show the ingenious blending of poetry and piety which distinguished Father José’s record.

The Mission of San Pablo progressed and prospered, until the pious founder thereof, like the infidel Alexander, might have wept that there were no more heathen worlds to conquer. But his ardent and enthusiastic spirit could not long brook an idleness that seemed begotten of sin; and one pleasant August morning in the year of grace 1770

Father José issued from the outer court of the mission building, equipped to explore the field for new missionary labors.

Nothing could exceed the quiet gravity and unpretentiousness of the little cavalcade. First rode a stout muleteer, leading a pack-mule laden with the provisions of the party, together with a few cheap crucifixes and hawks' bells. After him came the devout Padre José, bearing his breviary and cross, with a black serapa thrown around his shoulders; while on either side trotted a dusky convert, anxious to show a proper sense of his regeneration by acting as guide into the wilds of his heathen brethren. Their new condition was agreeably shown by the absence of the usual mud-plaster, which in their unconverted state they assumed to keep away vermin and cold. The morning was bright and propitious. Before their departure, mass had been said in the chapel, and the protection of St. Ignatius invoked against all contingent evils, but especially against bears, which, like the fiery dragons of old, seemed to cherish unconquerable hostility to the Holy Church.

As they wound through the cañon, charming birds disported upon boughs and sprays, and sober quails piped from the alders; the willowy watercourses gave a musical utterance, and the long grass whispered on the hillside. On entering the deeper defiles, above them towered dark green masses of pine, and occasionally the madroño shook its bright scarlet berries. As they toiled up many a steep ascent, Father José sometimes picked up fragments of scoria, which spake to his imagination of direful volcanoes and impending earthquakes. To the less scientific mind of the muleteer Ignacio they had even a more terrifying significance; and he once or twice snuffed the air suspiciously, and declared that it smelt of sulphur. So the first day of their journey wore away, and at night they encamped without having met a single heathen face.

It was on this night that the Enemy of Souls appeared to Ignacio in an appalling form. He had retired to a secluded part of the camp and had sunk upon his knees in prayerful meditation, when he looked up and perceived the Arch-Fiend in the likeness of a monstrous bear. The Evil One was seated on his hind legs immediately before him, with his fore paws joined together just below his black muzzle. Wisely conceiving this remarkable attitude to be in mockery and derision of his devotions, the worthy muleteer was transported with fury. Seizing an arquebus, he instantly closed his eyes and fired. When he had recovered from the effects of the terrific discharge, the apparition had disappeared. Father José, awakened by the report, reached the spot only in time to chide the muleteer for wasting powder and ball in a contest with one whom a single ave would have been sufficient to utterly discomfit. What further reliance he placed on Ignacio's story is not known; but, in commemoration of a worthy Californian custom, the place was called "La Cañada de la Tentacion del Pio Muletero," or "The Glen of the Temptation of the Pious Muleteer," a name which it retains to this day.

The next morning the party, issuing from a narrow gorge, came upon a long valley, sear and burnt with the shadeless heat. Its lower extremity was lost in a fading line of low hills, which, gathering might and volume toward the upper end of the valley, upheaved a stupendous bulwark against the breezy north. The peak of this awful spur was just touched by a fleecy cloud that shifted to and fro like a banneret. Father José gazed at it with mingled awe and admiration. By a singular coincidence, the muleteer Ignacio uttered the simple ejaculation "Diablo!"

As they penetrated the valley, they soon began to miss the agreeable life and companionable echoes of the cañon they had quitted. Huge fissures in the parched soil seemed to gape as with thirsty mouths. A few squirrels darted

from the earth and disappeared as mysteriously before the jingly mules. A gray wolf trotted leisurely along just ahead. But whichever way Father José turned, the mountain always asserted itself and arrested his wandering eye. Out of the dry and arid valley it seemed to spring into cooler and bracing life. Deep cavernous shadows dwelt along its base; rocky fastnesses appeared midway of its elevation; and on either side huge black hills diverged like massy roots from a central trunk. His lively fancy pictured these hills peopled with a majestic and intelligent race of savages; and looking into futurity, he already saw a monstrous cross crowning the dome-like summit. Far different were the sensations of the muleteer, who saw in those awful solitudes only fiery dragons, colossal bears, and breakneck trails. The converts, Concepcion and Incarnation, trotting modestly beside the Padre, recognized, perhaps, some manifestation of their former weird mythology.

At nightfall they reached the base of the mountain. Here Father José unpacked his mules, said vespers, and, formally ringing his bell, called upon the Gentiles within hearing to come and accept the holy faith. The echoes of the black frowning hills around him caught up the pious invitation and repeated it at intervals; but no Gentiles appeared that night. Nor were the devotions of the muleteer again disturbed, although he afterward asserted that, when the Father's exhortation was ended, a mocking peal of laughter came from the mountain. Nothing daunted by these intimations of the near hostility of the Evil One, Father José declared his intention to ascend the mountain at early dawn, and before the sun rose the next morning he was leading the way.

The ascent was in many places difficult and dangerous. Huge fragments of rock often lay across the trail, and after a few hours' climbing they were forced to leave their mules in a little gully and continue the ascent afoot. Unaccus-

tomed to such exertion, Father José often stopped to wipe the perspiration from his thin cheeks. As the day wore on a strange silence oppressed them. Except the occasional pattering of a squirrel, or a rustling in the chimisal bushes, there were no signs of life. The half-human print of a bear's foot sometimes appeared before them, at which Ignacio always crossed himself piously. The eye was sometimes cheated by a dripping from the rocks, which on closer inspection proved to be a resinous oily liquid with an abominable sulphurous smell. When they were within a short distance of the summit, the discreet Ignacio, selecting a sheltered nook for the camp, slipped aside and busied himself in preparations for the evening, leaving the holy Father to continue the ascent alone. Never was there a more thoughtless act of prudence, never a more imprudent piece of caution. Without noticing the desertion, buried in pious reflection, Father José pushed mechanically on, and, reaching the summit, cast himself down and gazed upon the prospect.

Below him lay a succession of valleys opening into each other like gentle lakes, until they were lost to the southward. Westerly the distant range hid the bosky cañada which sheltered the Mission of San Pablo. In the farther distance the Pacific Ocean stretched away, bearing a cloud of fog upon its bosom, which crept through the entrance of the bay, and rolled thickly between him and the northeastward; the same fog hid the base of the mountain and the view beyond. Still from time to time the fleecy veil parted, and timidly disclosed charming glimpses of mighty rivers, mountain defiles, and rolling plains, sear with ripened oats and bathed in the glow of the setting sun. As father José gazed, he was penetrated with a pious longing. Already his imagination, filled with enthusiastic conceptions, beheld all that vast expanse gathered under the mild sway of the holy faith and peopled with zealous converts. Each little

knoll in fancy became crowned with a chapel ; from each dark cañon gleamed the white walls of a mission building. Growing bolder in his enthusiasm and looking farther into futurity, he beheld a new Spain rising on these savage shores. He already saw the spires of stately cathedrals, the domes of palaces, vineyards, gardens, and groves. Convents, half hid among the hills, peeping from plantations of branching limes, and long processions of chanting nuns wound through the defiles. So completely was the good Father's conception of the future confounded with the past, that even in their choral strain the well-remembered accents of Carmen struck his ear. He was busied in these fanciful imaginings, when suddenly over that extended prospect the faint distant tolling of a bell rang sadly out and died. It was the Angelus. Father José listened with superstitious exaltation. The Mission of San Pablo was far away, and the sound must have been some miraculous omen. But never before, to his enthusiastic sense, did the sweet seriousness of this angelic symbol come with such strange significance. With the last faint peal his glowing fancy seemed to cool ; the fog closed in below him, and the good Father remembered he had not had his supper. He had risen and was wrapping his serapa around him, when he perceived for the first time that he was not alone.

Nearly opposite, and where should have been the faithless Ignacio, a grave and decorous figure was seated. His appearance was that of an elderly hidalgo, dressed in mourning, with mustaches of iron-gray carefully waxed and twisted round a pair of lantern-jaws. The monstrous hat and prodigious feather, the enormous ruff and exaggerated trunk-hose, contrasted with a frame shriveled and wizened, all belonged to a century previous. Yet Father José was not astonished. His adventurous life and poetic imagination, continually on the look-out for the marvelous, gave him a certain advantage over the practical and material-minded.

He instantly detected the diabolical quality of his visitant, and was prepared. With equal coolness and courtesy he met the cavalier's obeisance.

"I ask your pardon, Sir Priest," said the stranger, "for disturbing your meditations. Pleasant they must have been, and right fanciful, I imagine, when occasioned by so fair a prospect."

"Worldly, perhaps, Sir Devil, — for such I take you to be," said the holy Father, as the stranger bowed his black plumes to the ground; "worldly, perhaps; for it hath pleased Heaven to retain even in our regenerated state much that pertaineth to the flesh, yet still, I trust, not without some speculation for the welfare of the Holy Church. In dwelling upon yon fair expanse, mine eyes have been graciously opened with prophetic inspiration, and the promise of the heathen as an inheritance hath marvelously recurred to me. For there can be none lack such diligence in the true faith but may see that even the conversion of these pitiful salvages hath a meaning. As the blessed St. Ignatius discreetly observes," continued Father José, clearing his throat and slightly elevating his voice, "'the heathen is given to the warriors of Christ, even as the pearls of rare discovery which gladden the hearts of shipmen.' Nay, I might say" —

But here the stranger, who had been wrinkling his brows and twisting his mustaches with well-bred patience, took advantage of an oratorical pause.

"It grieves me, Sir Priest, to interrupt the current of your eloquence as discourteously as I have already broken your meditations; but the day already waneth to night. I have a matter of serious import to make with you, could I entreat your cautious consideration a few moments."

Father José hesitated. The temptation was great, and the prospect of acquiring some knowledge of the Great Enemy's plans not the least trifling object. And, if the



truth must be told, there was a certain decorum about the stranger that interested the Padre. Though well aware of the Protean shapes the Arch-Fiend could assume, and though free from the weaknesses of the flesh, Father José was not above the temptations of the spirit. Had the Devil appeared, as in the case of the pious St. Anthony, in the likeness of a comely damsel, the good Father, with his certain experience of the deceitful sex, would have whisked her away in the saying of a paternoster. But there was, added to the security of age, a grave sadness about the stranger, — a thoughtful consciousness, as of being at a great moral disadvantage, which at once decided him on a magnanimous course of conduct.

The stranger then proceeded to inform him that he had been diligently observing the holy Father's triumphs in the valley. That, far from being greatly exercised thereat, he had been only grieved to see so enthusiastic and chivalrous an antagonist wasting his zeal in a hopeless work. For, he observed, the issue of the great battle of Good and Evil had been otherwise settled, as he would presently show him. "It wants but a few moments of night," he continued, "and over this interval of twilight, as you know, I have been given complete control. Look to the west."

As the Padre turned, the stranger took his enormous hat from his head and waved it three times before him. At each sweep of the prodigious feather the fog grew thinner, until it melted impalpably away, and the former landscape returned, yet warm with the glowing sun. As Father José gazed a strain of martial music arose from the valley, and issuing from a deep cañon the good Father beheld a long cavalcade of gallant cavaliers, habited like his companion. As they swept down the plain, they were joined by like processions, that slowly defiled from every ravine and cañon of the mysterious mountain. From time to time the peal of a trumpet swelled fitfully upon the breeze; the cross of

Santiago glittered, and the royal banners of Castile and Aragon waved over the moving column. So they moved on solemnly toward the sea, where, in the distance, Father José saw stately caravels, bearing the same familiar banner, waiting them. The good Padre gazed with conflicting emotions, and the serious voice of the stranger broke the silence.

“Thou hast beheld, Sir Priest, the fading footprints of adventurous Castile. Thou hast seen the declining glory of old Spain, — declining as yonder brilliant sun. The sceptre she hath wrested from the heathen is fast dropping from her decrepit and fleshless grasp. The children she hath fostered shall know her no longer. The soil she hath acquired shall be lost to her as irrevocably as she herself hath thrust the Moor from her own Granada.”

The stranger paused, and his voice seemed broken by emotion; at the same time, Father José, whose sympathizing heart yearned toward the departing banners, cried in poignant accents, —

“Farewell, ye gallant cavaliers and Christian soldiers! Farewell, thou, Nuñez de Balboa! thou, Alonzo de Ojeda! and thou, most venerable Las Casas! farewell, and may Heaven prosper still the seed ye left behind!”

Then turning to the stranger, Father José beheld him gravely draw his pocket-handkerchief from the basket-hilt of his rapier and apply it decorously to his eyes.

“Pardon this weakness, Sir Priest,” said the cavalier apologetically; “but these worthy gentlemen were ancient friends of mine, and have done me many a delicate service, — much more, perchance, than these poor sables may signify,” he added, with a grim gesture toward the mourning suit he wore.

Father José was too much preoccupied in reflection to notice the equivocal nature of this tribute, and, after a few moments' silence, said, as if continuing his thought, —

“But the seed they have planted shall thrive and prosper on this fruitful soil.”

As if answering the interrogatory, the stranger turned to the opposite direction, and, again waving his hat, said, in the same serious tone, “Look to the east!”

The Father turned, and, as the fog broke away before the waving plume, he saw that the sun was rising. Issuing with its bright beams through the passes of the snowy mountains beyond appeared a strange and motley crew. Instead of the dark and romantic visages of his last phantom train, the Father beheld with strange concern the blue eyes and flaxen hair of a Saxon race. In place of martial airs and musical utterance, there rose upon the ear a strange din of harsh gutturals and singular sibilation. Instead of the decorous tread and stately mien of the cavaliers of the former vision, they came pushing, bustling, panting, and swaggering. And as they passed, the good Father noticed that giant trees were prostrated as with the breath of a tornado, and the bowels of the earth were torn and rent as with a convulsion. And Father José looked in vain for holy cross or Christian symbol; there was but one that seemed an ensign, and he crossed himself with holy horror as he perceived it bore the effigy of a bear.

“Who are these swaggering Ishmaelites?” he asked, with something of asperity in his tone.

The stranger was gravely silent.

“What do they here, with neither cross nor holy symbol?” he again demanded.

“Have you the courage to see, Sir Priest?” responded the stranger quietly.

Father José felt his crucifix, as a lonely traveler might his rapier, and assented.

“Step under the shadow of my plume,” said the stranger.

Father José stepped beside him and they instantly sank through the earth.

When he opened his eyes, which had remained closed in prayerful meditation during his rapid descent, he found himself in a vast vault, bespangled overhead with luminous points like the starred firmament. It was also lighted by a yellow glow that seemed to proceed from a mighty sea or lake that occupied the centre of the chamber. Around this subterranean sea dusky figures flitted, bearing ladles filled with the yellow fluid, which they had replenished from its depths. From this lake diverging streams of the same mysterious flood penetrated like mighty rivers the cavernous distance. As they walked by the banks of this glittering Styx, Father José perceived how the liquid stream at certain places became solid. The ground was strewn with glittering flakes. One of these the Padre picked up and curiously examined. It was virgin gold.

An expression of discomfiture overcast the good Father's face at this discovery; but there was trace neither of malice nor satisfaction in the stranger's air, which was still of serious and fateful contemplation. When Father José recovered his equanimity, he said bitterly, —

“This, then, Sir Devil, is your work! This is your deceitful lure for the weak souls of sinful nations! So would you replace the Christian grace of Holy Spain!”

“This is what must be,” returned the stranger gloomily. “But listen, Sir Priest. It lies with you to avert the issue for a time. Leave me here in peace. Go back to Castile, and take with you your bells, your images, and your missions. Continue here, and you only precipitate results. Stay! promise me you will do this, and you shall not lack that which will render your old age an ornament and a blessing;” and the stranger motioned significantly to the lake.

It was here, the legend discreetly relates, that the Devil showed — as he always shows sooner or later — his cloven hoof. The worthy Padre, sorely perplexed by this threefold

vision, and, if the truth must be told, a little nettled at this wresting away of the glory of holy Spanish discovery, had shown some hesitation. But the unlucky bribe of the Enemy of Souls touched his Castilian spirit. Starting back in deep disgust, he brandished his crucifix in the face of the unmasked Fiend, and in a voice that made the dusky vault resound cried, —

“Avaunt thee, Sathanas! Diabolus, I defy thee! What! wouldst thou bribe me, — me, a brother of the Sacred Society of the Holy Jesus, Licentiate of Cordova and Inquisitor of Guadalaxara? Thinkest thou to buy me with thy sordid treasure? Avaunt!”

What might have been the issue of this rupture, and how complete might have been the triumph of the holy Father over the Arch-Fiend, who was recoiling aghast at these sacred titles and the flourishing symbol, we can never know, for at that moment the crucifix slipped through his fingers.

Scarcely had it touched the ground before Devil and holy Father simultaneously cast themselves toward it. In the struggle they clinched, and the pious José, who was as much the superior of his antagonist in bodily as in spiritual strength, was about to treat the Great Adversary to a back somersault, when he suddenly felt the long nails of the stranger piercing his flesh. A new fear seized his heart, a numbing chillness crept through his body, and he struggled to free himself, but in vain. A strange roaring was in his ears; the lake and cavern danced before his eyes and vanished, and with a loud cry he sank senseless to the ground.

When he recovered his consciousness, he was aware of a gentle swaying motion of his body. He opened his eyes, and saw it was high noon, and that he was being carried in a litter through the valley. He felt stiff, and looking down, perceived that his arm was tightly bandaged to his side.

He closed his eyes, and, after a few words of thankful prayer, thought how miraculously he had been preserved.

and made a vow of candlesticks to the blessed Saint José. He then called in a faint voice, and presently the penitent Ignacio stood beside him.

The joy the poor fellow felt at his patron's returning consciousness for some time choked his utterance. He could only ejaculate, "A miracle! Blessed Saint José, he lives!" and kiss the Padre's bandaged hand. Father José, more intent on his last night's experience, waited for his emotion to subside, and asked where he had been found.

"On the mountain, your Reverence, but a few varas from where he attacked you."

"How? — you saw him then?" asked the Padre in unfeigned astonishment.

"Saw him, your Reverence! Mother of God! I should think I did! And your Reverence shall see him too, if he ever comes again within range of Ignacio's arquebus."

"What mean you, Ignacio?" said the Padre, sitting bolt-upright in his litter.

"Why, the bear, your Reverence,—the bear, holy Father, who attacked your worshipful person while you were meditating on the top of yonder mountain."

"Ah!" said the holy Father, lying down again. "Chut, child! I would be at peace."

When he reached the mission he was tenderly cared for, and in a few weeks was enabled to resume those duties from which, as will be seen, not even the machinations of the Evil One could divert him. The news of his physical disaster spread over the country, and a letter to the Bishop of Guadalaxara contained a confidential and detailed account of the good Father's spiritual temptation. But in some way the story leaked out; and long after José was gathered to his fathers, his mysterious encounter formed the theme of thrilling and whispered narrative. The mountain was generally shunned. It is true that Señor Joaquin Pedrillo afterward located a grant near the base of the

mountain ; but as Señora Pedrillo was known to be a termagant half-breed, the señor was not supposed to be over-fastidious.

Such is the legend of Monte del Diablo. As I said before, it may seem to lack essential corroboration. The discrepancy between the Father's narrative and the actual climax has given rise to some skepticism on the part of ingenious quibblers. All such I would simply refer to that part of the report of Señor Julio Serro, Sub-Prefect of San Pablo, before whom attest of the above was made. Touching this matter, the worthy Prefect observes, "That although the body of Father José doth show evidence of grievous conflict in the flesh, yet that is no proof that the Enemy of Souls, who could assume the figure of a decorous elderly caballero, could not at the same time transform himself into a bear for his own vile purposes."

## THE RIGHT EYE OF THE COMMANDER

THE year of grace 1797 passed away on the coast of California in a southwesterly gale. The little bay of San Carlos, albeit sheltered by the headlands of the Blessed Trinity, was rough and turbulent; its foam clung quivering to the seaward wall of the mission garden; the air was filled with flying sand and spume, and as the Señor Comandante, Hermenegildo Salvatierra, looked from the deep embrasured window of the presidio guardroom, he felt the salt breath of the distant sea buffet a color into his smoke-dried cheeks.

The commander, I have said, was gazing thoughtfully from the window of the guardroom. He may have been reviewing the events of the year now about to pass away. But, like the garrison at the Presidio, there was little to review. The year, like its predecessors, had been uneventful, — the days had slipped by in a delicious monotony of simple duties, unbroken by incident or interruption. The regularly recurring feasts and saints' days, the half-yearly courier from San Diego, the rare transport-ship and rarer foreign vessel, were the mere details of his patriarchal life. If there was no achievement, there was certainly no failure. Abundant harvests and patient industry amply supplied the wants of presidio and mission. Isolated from the family of nations, the wars which shook the world concerned them not so much as the last earthquake; the struggle that emancipated their sister colonies on the other side of the continent to them had no suggestiveness. In short, it was that glorious Indian summer of Californian history around



which so much poetical haze still lingers, — that bland, indolent autumn of Spanish rule, so soon to be followed by the wintry storms of Mexican independence and the reviving spring of American conquest.

The commander turned from the window and walked toward the fire that burned brightly on the deep oven-like hearth. A pile of copy-books, the work of the presidio school, lay on the table. As he turned over the leaves with a paternal interest, and surveyed the fair round Scripture text, — the first pious pothooks of the pupils of San Carlos, an audible commentary fell from his lips: “ ‘Abimelech took her from Abraham’ — ah, little one, excellent! — ‘Jacob sent to see his brother’ — body of Christ! that upstroke of thine, Paquita, is marvelous; the governor shall see it!” A film of honest pride dimmed the commander’s left eye, — the right, alas! twenty years before had been sealed by an Indian arrow. He rubbed it softly with the sleeve of his leather jacket, and continued: “ ‘The Ishmaelites having arrived’ ” —

He stopped, for there was a step in the courtyard, a foot upon the threshold, and a stranger entered. With the instinct of an old soldier, the commander, after one glance at the intruder, turned quickly toward the wall, where his trusty Toledo hung, or should have been hanging. But it was not there, and as he recalled that the last time he had seen that weapon it was being ridden up and down the gallery by Pepito, the infant son of Bautista, the tortillio-maker, he blushed, and then contented himself with frowning upon the intruder.

But the stranger’s air, though irreverent, was decidedly peaceful. He was unarmed, and wore the ordinary cape of tarpaulin and sea-boots of a mariner. Except a villainous smell of codfish, there was little about him that was peculiar.

His name, as he informed the commander in Spanish

that was more fluent than elegant or precise, — his name was Peleg Scudder. He was master of the schooner General Court, of the port of Salem, in Massachusetts, on a trading voyage to the South Seas, but now driven by stress of weather into the bay of San Carlos. He begged permission to ride out the gale under the headlands of the Blessed Trinity, and no more. Water he did not need, having taken in a supply at Bodega. He knew the strict surveillance of the Spanish port regulations in regard to foreign vessels, and would do nothing against the severe discipline and good order of the settlement. There was a slight tinge of sarcasm in his tone as he glanced toward the desolate parade ground of the presidio and the open unguarded gate. The fact was that the sentry, Felipe Gomez, had discreetly retired to shelter at the beginning of the storm, and was then sound asleep in the corridor.

The commander hesitated. The port regulations were severe, but he was accustomed to exercise individual authority, and beyond an old order issued ten years before, regarding the American ship Columbia, there was no precedent to guide him. The storm was severe, and a sentiment of humanity urged him to grant the stranger's request. It is but just to the commander to say that his inability to enforce a refusal did not weigh with his decision. He would have denied with equal disregard of consequences that right to a seventy-four-gun ship which he now yielded so gracefully to this Yankee trading schooner. He stipulated only that there should be no communication between the ship and shore. "For yourself, Señor Captain," he continued, "accept my hospitality. The fort is yours as long as you shall grace it with your distinguished presence," and with old-fashioned courtesy he made the semblance of withdrawing from the guardroom.

Master Peleg Scudder smiled as he thought of the half-dismantled fort, the two mouldy brass cannon, cast in Ma

nila a century previous, and the shiftless garrison. A wild thought of accepting the commander's offer literally, conceived in the reckless spirit of a man who never let slip an offer for trade, for a moment filled his brain, but a timely reflection of the commercial unimportance of the transaction checked him. He only took a capacious quid of tobacco, as the commander gravely drew a settle before the fire, and in honor of his guest untied the black silk handkerchief that bound his grizzled brows.

What passed between Salvatierra and his guest that night it becomes me not, as a grave chronicler of the salient points of history, to relate. I have said that Master Peleg Scudder was a fluent talker, and under the influence of divers strong waters, furnished by his host, he became still more loquacious. And think of a man with a twenty years' budget of gossip! The commander learned, for the first time, how Great Britain lost her colonies; of the French Revolution; of the great Napoleon, whose achievements, perhaps, Peleg colored more highly than the commander's superiors would have liked. And when Peleg turned questioner, the commander was at his mercy. He gradually made himself master of the gossip of the mission and presidio, the "small beer" chronicles of that pastoral age, the conversion of the heathen, the presidio schools, and even asked the commander how he had lost his eye. It is said that at this point of the conversation Master Peleg produced from about his person divers small trinkets, kickshaws and new-fangled trifles, and even forced some of them upon his host. It is further alleged that under the malign influence of Peleg and several glasses of aguardiente the commander lost somewhat of his decorum, and behaved in a manner unseemly for one in his position, reciting high-flown Spanish poetry, and even piping in a thin high voice divers madrigals and heathen canzonets of an amorous complexion, chiefly in regard to a "little one" who was his,

the commander's, "soul." These allegations, perhaps unworthy the notice of a serious chronicler, should be received with great caution, and are introduced here as simple hearsay. That the commander, however, took a handkerchief and attempted to show his guest the mysteries of the sembi cuacua, capering in an agile but indecorous manner about the apartment, has been denied. Enough for the purposes of this narrative, that at midnight Peleg assisted his host to bed with many protestations of undying friendship, and then, as the gale had abated, took his leave of the presidio, and hurried aboard the General Court. When the day broke the ship was gone.

I know not if Peleg kept his word with his host. It is said that the holy Fathers at the mission that night heard a loud chanting in the plaza, as of the heathens singing psalms through their noses; that for many days after an odor of salt codfish prevailed in the settlement; that a dozen hard nutmegs, which were unfit for spice or seed, were found in the possession of the wife of the baker, and that several bushels of shoe-pegs, which bore a pleasing resemblance to oats, but were quite inadequate to the purposes of provender, were discovered in the stable of the blacksmith. But when the reader reflects upon the sacredness of a Yankee trader's word, the stringent discipline of the Spanish port regulations, and the proverbial indisposition of my countrymen to impose upon the confidence of a simple people, he will at once reject this part of the story.

A roll of drums, ushering in the year 1798, awoke the commander. The sun was shining brightly, and the storm had ceased. He sat up in bed, and through the force of habit rubbed his left eye. As the remembrance of the previous night came back to him, he jumped from his couch and ran to the window. There was no ship in the bay. A sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he rubbed both of his eyes. Not content with this, he consulted the metallic

mirror which hung beside his crucifix. There was no mistake ; the commander had a visible second eye, — a right one, — as good, save for the purposes of vision, as the left.

Whatever might have been the true secret of this transformation, but one opinion prevailed at San Carlos. It was one of those rare miracles vouchsafed a pious Catholic community as an evidence to the heathen, through the intercession of the blessed San Carlos himself. That their beloved commander, the temporal defender of the Faith, should be the recipient of this miraculous manifestation was most fit and seemly. The commander himself was reticent ; he could not tell a falsehood, — he dared not tell the truth. After all, if the good folk of San Carlos believed that the powers of his right eye were actually restored, was it wise and discreet for him to undeceive them ? For the first time in his life the commander thought of policy, — for the first time he quoted that text which has been the lure of so many well-meaning but easy Christians, of being “all things to all men.” *Infeliz Hermenegildo Salvatierra !*

For by degrees an ominous whisper crept through the little settlement. The right eye of the commander, although miraculous, seemed to exercise a baleful effect upon the beholder. No one could look at it without winking. It was cold, hard, relentless, and unflinching. More than that, it seemed to be endowed with a dreadful prescience, — a faculty of seeing through and into the inarticulate thoughts of those it looked upon. The soldiers of the garrison obeyed the eye rather than the voice of their commander, and answered his glance rather than his lips in questioning. The servants could not evade the ever-watchful but cold attention that seemed to pursue them. The children of the presidio school smirched their copy-books under the awful supervision, and poor Paquita, the prize pupil, failed utterly in that marvelous up-stroke when her patron stood beside

her. Gradually distrust, suspicion, self-accusation, and timidity took the place of trust, confidence, and security throughout San Carlos. Wherever the right eye of the commander fell, a shadow fell with it.

Nor was Salvatierra entirely free from the baleful influence of his miraculous acquisition. Unconscious of its effect upon others, he only saw in their actions evidence of certain things that the crafty Peleg had hinted on that eventful New Year's eve. His most trusty retainers stammered, blushed, and faltered before him. Self-accusations, confessions of minor faults and delinquencies, or extravagant excuses and apologies met his mildest inquiries. The very children that he loved—his pet pupil, Paquita—seemed to be conscious of some hidden sin. The result of this constant irritation showed itself more plainly. For the first half-year the commander's voice and eye were at variance. He was still kind, tender, and thoughtful in speech. Gradually, however, his voice took upon itself the hardness of his glance and its skeptical, impassive quality, and as the year again neared its close it was plain that the commander had fitted himself to the eye, and not the eye to the commander.

It may be surmised that these changes did not escape the watchful solicitude of the Fathers. Indeed, the few who were first to ascribe the right eye of Salvatierra to miraculous origin and the special grace of the blessed San Carlos, now talked openly of witchcraft and the agency of Luzbel, the evil one. It would have fared ill with Hermenegildo Salvatierra had he been aught but commander or amenable to local authority. But the reverend Father, Friar Manuel de Cortes, had no power over the political executive, and all attempts at spiritual advice failed signally. He retired baffled and confused from his first interview with the commander, who seemed now to take a grim satisfaction in the fateful power of his glance. The holy

Father contradicted himself, exposed the fallacies of his own arguments, and even, it is asserted, committed himself to several undoubted heresies. When the commander stood up at mass, if the officiating priest caught that skeptical and searching eye, the service was inevitably ruined. Even the power of the Holy Church seemed to be lost, and the last hold upon the affections of the people and the good order of the settlement departed from San Carlos.

As the long dry summer passed, the low hills that surrounded the white walls of the presidio grew more and more to resemble in hue the leathern jacket of the commander, and Nature herself seemed to have borrowed his dry, hard glare. The earth was cracked and seamed with drought; a blight had fallen upon the orchards and vineyards, and the rain, long delayed and ardently prayed for, came not. The sky was as tearless as the right eye of the commander. Murmurs of discontent, insubordination, and plotting among the Indians reached his ear; he only set his teeth the more firmly, tightened the knot of his black silk handkerchief, and looked up his Toledo.

The last day of the year 1798 found the commander sitting, at the hour of evening prayers, alone in the guard-room. He no longer attended the services of the Holy Church, but crept away at such times to some solitary spot, where he spent the interval in silent meditation. The fire-light played upon the low beams and rafters, but left the bowed figure of Salvatierra in darkness. Sitting thus, he felt a small hand touch his arm, and, looking down, saw the figure of Paquita, his little Indian pupil, at his knee. "Ah! littlest of all," said the commander, with something of his old tenderness, lingering over the endearing diminutives of his native speech, — "sweet one, what doest thou here? Art thou not afraid of him whom every one shuns and fears?"

"No," said the little Indian readily, "not in the dark

I hear your voice, — the old voice ; I feel your touch, — the old touch ; but I see not your eye, Señor Comandante. That only I fear, — and that, O señor, O my father," said the child, lifting her little arms towards his, — " that I know is not thine own ! "

The commander shuddered and turned away. Then, recovering himself, he kissed Paquita gravely on the forehead and bade her retire. A few hours later, when silence had fallen upon the presidio, he sought his own couch and slept peacefully.

At about the middle watch of the night a dusky figure crept through the low embrasure of the commander's apartment. Other figures were flitting through the parade-ground, which the commander might have seen had he not slept so quietly. The intruder stepped noiselessly to the couch and listened to the sleeper's deep-drawn respiration. Something glittered in the firelight as the savage lifted his arm ; another moment and the sore perplexities of Hermenegildo Salvatierra would have been over, when suddenly the savage started and fell back in a paroxysm of terror. The commander slept peacefully, but his right eye, widely opened, fixed and unaltered, glared coldly on the would-be assassin. The man fell to the earth in a fit, and the noise awoke the sleeper.

To rise to his feet, grasp his sword, and deal blows thick and fast upon the mutinous savages who now thronged the room, was the work of a moment. Help opportunely arrived, and the undisciplined Indians were speedily driven beyond the walls ; but in the scuffle the commander received a blow upon his right eye, and, lifting his hand to that mysterious organ, it was gone. Never again was it found, and never again, for bale or bliss, did it adorn the right orbit of the commander.

With it passed away the spell that had fallen upon San Carlos. The rain returned to invigorate the languid soil,



harmony was restored between priest and soldier, the green grass presently waved over the sere hillsides, the children flocked again to the side of their martial preceptor, a *Te Deum* was sung in the mission church, and pastoral content once more smiled upon the gentle valleys of San Carlos. And far southward crept the General Court with its master, Peleg Scudder, trafficking in beads and peltries with the Indians, and offering glass eyes, wooden legs, and other Boston notions to the chiefs.

## THE LEGEND OF DEVIL'S POINT

ON the northerly shore of San Francisco Bay, at a point where the Golden Gate broadens into the Pacific, stands a bluff promontory. It affords shelter from the prevailing winds to a semicircular bay on the east. Around this bay the hillside is bleak and barren, but there are traces of former habitation in a weather-beaten cabin and deserted corral. It is said that these were originally built by an enterprising squatter, who for some unaccountable reason abandoned them shortly after. The "jumper" who succeeded him disappeared one day quite as mysteriously. The third tenant, who seemed to be a man of sanguine, hopeful temperament, divided the property into building lots, staked off the hillside, and projected the map of a new metropolis. Failing, however, to convince the citizens of San Francisco that they had mistaken the site of their city, he presently fell into dissipation and despondency. He was frequently observed haunting the narrow strip of beach at low tide or perched upon the cliff at high water. In the latter position a sheep-tender one day found him, cold and pulseless, with a map of his property in his hand, and his face turned toward the distant sea.

Perhaps these circumstances gave the locality its infelicitous reputation. Vague rumors were bruited of a supernatural influence that had been exercised on the tenants. Strange stories were circulated of the origin of the diabolical title by which the promontory was known. By some it was believed to be haunted by the spirit of one of Sir Francis Drake's sailors, who had deserted his ship in conse-

quence of stories told by the Indians of gold discoveries, but who had perished by starvation on the rocks. A vaquero who had once passed a night in the ruined cabin related how a strangely dressed and emaciated figure had knocked at the door at midnight and demanded food. Other story-tellers, of more historical accuracy, roundly asserted that Sir Francis himself had been little better than a pirate, and had chosen this spot to conceal quantities of ill-gotten booty taken from neutral bottoms, and had protected his hiding-place by the orthodox means of hellish incantation and diabolic agencies. On moonlight nights a shadowy ship was sometimes seen standing off and on, or when fogs encompassed sea and shore, the noise of oars rising and falling in their rowlocks could be heard muffled and indistinctly during the night. Whatever foundation there might have been for these stories, it was certain that a more weird and desolate-looking spot could not have been selected for their theatre. High hills, verdureless and enfiladed with dark cañadas, cast their gaunt shadows on the tide. During a greater portion of the day the wind, which blew furiously and incessantly, seemed possessed with a spirit of fierce disquiet and unrest. Toward nightfall the sea-fog crept with soft step through the portals of the Golden Gate, or stole in noiseless marches down the hillside, tenderly soothing the wind-buffed face of the cliff, until sea and sky were hid together. At such times the populous city beyond and the nearer settlement seemed removed to an infinite distance. An immeasurable loneliness settled upon the cliff. The creaking of a windlass, or the monotonous chant of sailors on some unseen, outlying ship, came faint and far, and full of mystic suggestion.

About a year ago a well-to-do middle-aged broker of San Francisco found himself at nightfall the sole occupant of a plunger, encompassed in a dense fog, and drifting toward the Golden Gate. This unexpected termination of an after-

noon's sail was partly attributable to his want of nautical skill, and partly to the effect of his usually sanguine nature. Having given up the guidance of his boat to the wind and tide, he had trusted too implicitly for that reaction which his business experience assured him was certain to occur in all affairs, aquatic as well as terrestrial. "The tide will turn soon," said the broker confidently, "or something will happen." He had scarcely settled himself back again in the stern-sheets, before the bow of the plunger, obeying some mysterious impulse, veered slowly around and a dark object loomed up before him. A gentle eddy carried the boat farther in shore, until at last it was completely embayed under the lee of a rocky point now faintly discernible through the fog. He looked around him in the vain hope of recognizing some familiar headland. The tops of the high hills which rose on either side were hidden in the fog. As the boat swung around, he succeeded in fastening a line to the rocks, and sat down again with a feeling of renewed confidence and security.

It was very cold. The insidious fog penetrated his tightly buttoned coat, and set his teeth to chattering in spite of the aid he sometimes drew from a pocket-flask. His clothes were wet, and the stern-sheets were covered with spray. The comforts of fire and shelter continually rose before his fancy as he gazed wistfully on the rocks. In sheer despair he finally drew the boat toward the most accessible part of the cliff and essayed to ascend. This was less difficult than it appeared, and in a few moments he had gained the hill above. A dark object at a little distance attracted his attention, and on approaching it proved to be a deserted cabin. The story goes on to say that, having built a roaring fire of stakes pulled from the adjoining corral, with the aid of a flask of excellent brandy, he managed to pass the early part of the evening with comparative comfort.

There was no door in the cabin, and the windows were simply square openings, which freely admitted the searching fog. But in spite of these discomforts, — being a man of cheerful, sanguine temperament, — he amused himself by poking the fire and watching the ruddy glow which the flames threw on the fog from the open door. In this innocent occupation a great weariness overcame him, and he fell asleep.

He was awakened at midnight by a loud "halloo," which seemed to proceed directly from the sea. Thinking it might be the cry of some boatman lost in the fog, he walked to the edge of the cliff, but the thick veil that covered sea and land rendered all objects at the distance of a few feet indistinguishable. He heard, however, the regular strokes of oars rising and falling on the water. The halloo was repeated. He was clearing his throat to reply, when to his surprise an answer came apparently from the very cabin he had quitted. Hastily retracing his steps, he was the more amazed, on reaching the open door, to find a stranger warming himself by the fire. Stepping back far enough to conceal his own person, he took a good look at the intruder.

He was a man of about forty, with a cadaverous face. But the oddity of his dress attracted the broker's attention more than his lugubrious physiognomy. His legs were hid in enormously wide trousers descending to his knee, where they met long boots of sealskin. A pea-jacket with exaggerated cuffs, almost as large as the breeches, covered his chest, and around his waist a monstrous belt, with a buckle like a dentist's sign, supported two trumpet-mouthed pistols and a curved hanger. He wore a long queue, which depended halfway down his back. As the firelight fell on his ingenuous countenance the broker observed with some concern that this queue was formed entirely of a kind of tobacco known as pigtail or twist. Its effect, the broker

remarked, was much heightened when in a moment of thoughtful abstraction the apparition bit off a portion of it and rolled it as a quid into the cavernous recesses of his jaws.

Meanwhile the nearer splash of oars indicated the approach of the unseen boat. The broker had barely time to conceal himself behind the cabin before a number of uncouth-looking figures clambered up the hill toward the ruined rendezvous. They were dressed like the previous comer, who, as they passed through the open door, exchanged greetings with each in antique phraseology, bestowing at the same time some familiar nickname. Flash-in-the-Pan, Spitter-of-Frogs, Malmsey Butt, Latheyard Will, and Mark-the-Pinker, were the few sobriquets the broker remembered. Whether these titles were given to express some peculiarity of their owner he could not tell, for a silence followed as they slowly ranged themselves upon the floor of the cabin in a semicircle around their cadaverous host.

At length Malmsey Butt, a spherical-bodied man-of-war's-man, with a rubicund nose, got on his legs somewhat unsteadily, and addressed himself to the company. They had met that evening, said the speaker, in accordance with a time-honored custom. This was simply to relieve that one of their number who for fifty years had kept watch and ward over the locality where certain treasures had been buried. At this point the broker pricked up his ears. "If so be, camarados and brothers all," he continued, "ye are ready to receive the report of our excellent and well-beloved brother, Master Slit-the-Weazand, touching his search for this treasure, why, marry, to 't and begin."

A murmur of assent went around the circle as the speaker resumed his seat. Master Slit-the-Weazand slowly opened his lantern jaws and began. He had spent much of his time in determining the exact location of the treasure. He believed — nay, he could state positively — that its posi-

tion was now settled. It was true he had done some trifling little business outside. Modesty forbade his mentioning the particulars, but he would simply state that of the three tenants who had occupied the cabin during the past ten years, none were now alive. [Applause, and cries of "Go to! thou wast always a tall fellow!" and the like.]

Mark-the-Pinker next arose. Before proceeding to business he had a duty to perform in the sacred name of friendship. It ill became him to pass a eulogy upon the qualities of the speaker who had preceded him, for he had known him from "boyhood's hour." Side by side they had wrought together in the Spanish war. For a neat hand with a Toledo he challenged his equal, while how nobly and beautifully he had won his present title of Slit-the-Weazand all could testify. The speaker, with some show of emotion, asked to be pardoned if he dwelt too freely on passages of their early companionship; he then detailed, with a fine touch of humor, his comrade's peculiar manner of slitting the ears and lips of a refractory Jew who had been captured in one of their previous voyages. He would not weary the patience of his hearers, but would briefly propose that the report of Slit-the-Weazand be accepted, and that the thanks of the company be tendered him.

A breaker of strong spirits was then rolled into the hut, and cans of grog were circulated freely from hand to hand. The health of Slit-the-Weazand was proposed in a neat speech by Mark-the-Pinker, and responded to by the former gentleman in a manner that drew tears to the eyes of all present. To the broker, in his concealment, this momentary diversion from the real business of the meeting occasioned much anxiety. As yet nothing had been said to indicate the exact locality of the treasure to which they had mysteriously alluded. Fear restrained him from open inquiry, and curiosity kept him from making good his escape during the orgy which followed.

But his situation was beginning to become critical. Flash-in-the-Pan, who seemed to have been a man of choleric humor, taking fire during some hotly contested argument, discharged both his pistols at the breast of his opponent. The balls passed through on each side immediately below his armpits, making a clean hole, through which the horrified broker could see the firelight behind him. The wounded man, without betraying any concern, excited the laughter of the company by jocosely putting his arms akimbo, and inserting his thumbs into the orifices of the wounds as if they had been armholes. This having in a measure restored good humor, the party joined hands and formed a circle preparatory to dancing. The dance was commenced by some monotonous stanzas hummed in a very high key by one of the party, the rest joining in the following chorus, which seemed to present a familiar sound to the broker's ear:—

“ Her Majesty is very sicke,  
 Lord Essex hath the measles,  
 Our Admiral hath licked ye French —  
 Poppe ! saith ye weasel ! ”

At the regular recurrence of the last line, the party discharged their loaded pistols in all directions, rendering the position of the unhappy broker one of extreme peril and perplexity.

When the tumult had partially subsided, Flash-in-the-Pan called the meeting to order, and most of the revelers returned to their places, Malmsey Butt, however, insisting upon another chorus, and singing at the top of his voice:—

“ I am ycleped J. Keyser — I was born at Spring, hys Garden,  
 My fater toe make me ane clerke erst did essaye,  
 But a fico for ye offis — I spurn ye losels offeire ;  
 For I fain would be ane butcher by'r ladykin alwaye.”

Flash-in-the-Pan drew a pistol from his belt, and bidding some one gag Malmsey Butt with the stock of it, proceeded to read from a portentous roll of parchment that he held



in his hand. It was a semi-legal document, clothed in the quaint phraseology of a bygone period. After a long preamble, asserting their loyalty as lieges of her most bountiful Majesty and Sovereign Lady the Queen, the document declared that they then and there took possession of the promontory, and all the treasure-trove therein contained, formerly buried by Her Majesty's most faithful and devoted Admiral Sir Francis Drake, with the right to search, discover, and appropriate the same; and for the purpose thereof they did then and there form a guild or corporation to so discover, search for, and disclose said treasures, and by virtue thereof they solemnly subscribed their names. But at this moment the reading of the parchment was arrested by an exclamation from the assembly, and the broker was seen frantically struggling at the door in the strong arms of Mark-the-Pinker.

"Let me go!" he cried, as he made a desperate attempt to reach the side of Master Flash-in-the-Pan. "Let me go! I tell you, gentlemen, that document is not worth the parchment it is written on. The laws of the State, the customs of the country, the mining ordinances, are all against it. Don't, by all that's sacred, throw away such a capital investment through ignorance and informality. Let me go! I assure you, gentlemen, professionally, that you have a big thing, — a remarkably big thing, and even if I ain't in it, I'm not going to see it fall through. Don't, for God's sake, gentlemen, I implore you, put your names to such a ridiculous paper. There is n't a notary" —

He ceased. The figures around him, which were beginning to grow fainter and more indistinct as he went on, swam before his eyes, flickered, reappeared again, and finally went out. He rubbed his eyes and gazed around him. The cabin was deserted. On the hearth the red embers of his fire were fading away in the bright beams of the morning sun, that looked aslant through the open window. He

ran out to the cliff. The sturdy sea-breeze fanned his feverish cheeks and tossed the white caps of waves that beat in pleasant music on the beach below. A stately merchantman with snowy canvas was entering the Gate. The voices of sailors came cheerfully from a bark at anchor below the point. The muskets of the sentries gleamed brightly on Alcatraz, and the rolling of drums swelled on the breeze. Farther on, the hills of San Francisco, cottage-crowned and bordered with wharves and warehouses, met his longing eye.

Such is the legend of Devil's Point. Any objections to its reliability may be met with the statement that the broker who tells the story has since incorporated a company under the title of "Flash-in-the-Pan Gold and Silver Treasure Mining Company," and that its shares are already held at a stiff figure. A copy of the original document is said to be on record in the office of the company, and on any clear day the locality of the claim may be distinctly seen from the hills of San Francisco.

## THE ADVENTURE OF PADRE VICENTIO

### A LEGEND OF SAN FRANCISCO

ONE pleasant New Year's eve, about forty years ago, Padre Vicentio was slowly picking his way across the sand-hills from the Mission Dolores. As he climbed the crest of the ridge beside Mission Creek, his broad, shining face might have been easily mistaken for the beneficent image of the rising moon, so bland was its smile and so indefinite its features. For the Padre was a man of notable reputation and character; his ministrations at the Mission of San José had been marked with cordiality and unction; he was adored by the simple-minded savages, and had succeeded in impressing his individuality so strongly upon them, that the very children were said to have miraculously resembled him in feature.

As the holy man reached the loneliest portion of the road, he naturally put spurs to his mule as if to quicken that decorous pace which the obedient animal had acquired through long experience of its master's habits. The locality had an unfavorable reputation. Sailors — deserters from whale-ships — had been seen lurking about the outskirts of the town, and low scrub oaks which everywhere beset the trail might have easily concealed some desperate runaway. Besides these material obstructions, the Devil, whose hostility to the Church was well known, was said to sometimes haunt the vicinity in the likeness of a spectral whaler, who had met his death in a drunken bout from a harpoon in the hands of a companion. The ghost of this unfortunate mariner was frequently observed sitting on the hill toward

the dusk of evening, armed with his favorite weapon and a tub containing a coil of line, looking out for some belated traveler on whom to exercise his professional skill. It is related that the good Father José Maria of the Mission Dolores had been twice attacked by this phantom sportsman; that once, on returning from San Francisco, and panting with exertion from climbing the hill, he was startled by a stentorian cry of "There she blows!" quickly followed by a hurtling harpoon, which buried itself in the sand beside him; that on another occasion he narrowly escaped destruction, his serapa having been transfixed by the diabolical harpoon and dragged away in triumph. Popular opinion seems to have been divided as to the reason for the Devil's particular attention to Father José, some asserting that the extreme piety of the Padre excited the Evil One's animosity, and others that his adipose tendency simply rendered him, from a professional view-point, a profitable capture.

Had Father Vicentio been inclined to scoff at this apparition as a heretical innovation, there was still the story of Concepcion, the Demon Vaquero, whose terrible riata was fully as potent as the whaler's harpoon. Concepcion, when in the flesh, had been a celebrated herder of cattle and wild horses, and was reported to have chased the Devil in the shape of a fleet pinto colt all the way from San Luis Obispo to San Francisco, vowing not to give up the chase until he had overtaken the disguised Arch-Enemy. This the Devil prevented by resuming his own shape, but kept the unfortunate vaquero to the fulfillment of his rash vow; and Concepcion still scoured the coast on a phantom steed, beguiling the monotony of his eternal pursuit by lassoing travelers, dragging them at the heels of his unbroken mustang until they were eventually picked up, half strangled, by the roadside. The Padre listened attentively for the tramp of this terrible rider. But no footfall broke the stillness of the night; even the hoofs of his own mule sank noiselessly in

the shifting sand. Now and then a rabbit bounded lightly by him, or a quail ran into the bushes. The melancholy call of plover from the adjoining marshes of Mission Creek came to him so faintly and fitfully that it seemed almost a recollection of the past rather than a reality of the present.

To add to his discomposure, one of those heavy sea-fogs peculiar to the locality began to drift across the hills and presently encompassed him. While endeavoring to evade its cold embraces, Padre Vicentio incautiously drove his heavy spurs into the flanks of his mule as that puzzled animal was hesitating on the brink of a steep declivity. Whether the poor beast was indignant at this novel outrage, or had been for some time reflecting on the evils of being priest-ridden, has not transpired; enough that he suddenly threw up his heels, pitching the reverend man over his head, and, having accomplished this feat, coolly dropped on his knees and tumbled after his rider.

Over and over went the Padre, closely followed by his faithless mule. Luckily the little hollow which received the pair was of sand, that yielded to the superincumbent weight, half burying them without further injury. For some moments the poor man lay motionless, vainly endeavoring to collect his scattered senses. A hand irreverently laid upon his collar and a rough shake assisted to recall his consciousness. As the Padre staggered to his feet he found himself confronted by a stranger.

Seen dimly through the fog, and under circumstances that to say the least were not prepossessing, the new-comer had an inexpressibly mysterious and brigand-like aspect. A long boat-cloak concealed his figure, and a slouched hat hid his features, permitting only his eyes to glisten in the depths. With a deep groan the Padre slipped from the stranger's grasp and subsided into the soft sand again.

"Gad's life!" said the stranger, pettishly, "hast no more bones in thy fat carcass than a jellyfish? Lend a

hand, here! Yo, heave ho!" and he dragged the Padre into an upright position. "Now, then, who and what art thou?"

The Padre could not help thinking that the question might have more properly been asked by himself; but with an odd mixture of dignity and trepidation he began enumerating his different titles, which were by no means brief, and would have been alone sufficient to strike awe in the bosom of an ordinary adversary. The stranger irreverently broke in upon his formal phrases, and assuring him that a priest was the very person he was looking for, coolly replaced the old man's hat, which had tumbled off, and bade him accompany him at once on an errand of spiritual counsel to one who was even then lying in extremity. "To think," said the stranger, "that I should stumble upon the very man I was seeking! Body of Bacchus! but this is lucky! Follow me quickly, for there is no time to lose."

Like most easy natures, the positive assertion of the stranger, and withal a certain authoritative air of command, overcame what slight objections the Padre might have feebly nurtured during this remarkable interview. The spiritual invitation was one, also, that he dared not refuse; not only that, but it tended somewhat to remove the superstitious dread with which he had begun to regard the mysterious stranger. But, following at a respectful distance, the Padre could not help observing with a thrill of horror that the stranger's footsteps made no impression on the sand, and his figure seemed at times to blend and incorporate itself with the fog, until the holy man was obliged to wait for its reappearance. In one of these intervals of embarrassment he heard the ringing of the far-off mission bell proclaiming the hour of midnight. Scarcely had the last stroke died away before the announcement was taken up and repeated by a multitude of bells of all sizes, and the air was filled with the sound of striking clocks and the

pealing of steeple chimes. The old man uttered a cry of alarm. The stranger sharply demanded the cause. "The bells! did you not hear them?" gasped Padre Vicentio. "Tush! tush!" answered the stranger, "thy fall hath set triple bob-majors ringing in thine ears. Come on!"

The Padre was only too glad to accept the explanation conveyed in this discourteous answer. But he was destined for another singular experience. When they had reached the summit of the eminence now known as Russian Hill, an exclamation again burst from the Padre. The stranger turned to his companion with an impatient gesture, but the Padre heeded him not. The view that burst upon his sight was such as might well have engrossed the attention of a more enthusiastic temperament. The fog had not yet reached the hill, and the long valleys and hillsides of the embarcadero below were glittering with the light of a populous city. "Look!" said the Padre, stretching his hand over the spreading landscape. "Look! dost thou not see the stately squares and brilliantly lighted avenues of a mighty metropolis? Dost thou not see, as it were, another firmament below?"

"Avast heaving, reverend man, and quit this folly," said the stranger, dragging the bewildered Padre after him. "Behold rather the stars knocked out of thy hollow noddle by the fall thou hast had. Prithee, get over thy visions and rhapsodies, for the time is wearing apace."

The Padre humbly followed without another word. Descending the hill toward the north, the stranger leading the way, in a few moments the Padre detected the wash of waves, and presently his feet struck the firmer sand of the beach. Here the stranger paused, and the Padre perceived a boat lying in readiness lard by. As he stepped into the stern-sheets, in obedience to the command of his companion, he noticed that the rowers seemed to partake of the misty incorporeal texture of his companion, a similarity that

became the more distressing when he perceived also that their oars in pulling together made no noise. The stranger, assuming the helm, guided the boat on quietly, while the fog, settling over the face of the water and closing around them, seemed to interpose a muffled wall between themselves and the rude jarring of the outer world. As they pushed further into this penetralia, the Padre listened anxiously for the sound of creaking blocks and the rattling of cordage, but no vibration broke the veiled stillness or disturbed the warm breath of the fleecy fog. Only one incident occurred to break the monotony of their mysterious journey. A one-eyed rower, who sat in front of the Padre, catching the devout Father's eye, immediately grinned such a ghastly smile, and winked his remaining eye with such diabolical intensity of meaning, that the Padre was constrained to utter a pious ejaculation, which had the disastrous effect of causing the marine Cocles to "catch a crab," throwing his heels in the air and his head into the bottom of the boat. But even this accident did not disturb the gravity of the rest of the ghastly boat's crew.

When, as it seemed to the Padre, ten minutes had elapsed, the outline of a large ship loomed up directly across their bow. Before he could utter the cry of warning that rose to his lips, or brace himself against the expected shock, the boat passed gently and noiselessly through the sides of the vessel, and the holy man found himself standing on the berth-deck of what seemed to be an ancient caravel. The boat and boat's crew had vanished. Only his mysterious friend, the stranger, remained. By the light of a swinging-lamp the Padre beheld him standing beside a hammock, whereon, apparently, lay the dying man to whom he had been so mysteriously summoned. As the Padre, in obedience to a sign from his companion, stepped to the side of the sufferer, he feebly opened his eyes and thus addressed him : —



“Thou seest before thee, reverend Father, a helpless mortal, struggling not only with the last agonies of the flesh, but beaten down and tossed with sore anguish of the spirit. It matters little when or how I became what thou now seest me. Enough that my life has been ungodly and sinful, and that my only hope of absolution lies in my imparting to thee a secret which is of vast importance to the Holy Church, and affects greatly her power, wealth, and dominion on these shores. But the terms of this secret and the conditions of my absolution are peculiar. I have but five minutes to live. In that time I must receive the extreme unction of the Church.”

“And thy secret?” said the holy Father.

“Shall be told afterwards,” answered the dying man.

“Come, my time is short. Shrive me quickly.”

The Padre hesitated. “Couldst thou not tell this secret first?”

“Impossible!” said the dying man, with what seemed to the Padre a momentary gleam of triumph. Then, as his breath grew feebler, he called impatiently, “Shrive me! shrive me!”

“Let me know at least what this secret concerns?” suggested the Padre insinuatingly.

“Shrive me first,” said the dying man.

But the priest still hesitated, parleying with the sufferer until the ship’s bell struck, when, with a triumphant mocking laugh from the stranger, the vessel suddenly fell to pieces, amid the rushing of waters which at once involved the dying man, the priest, and the mysterious stranger.

The Padre did not recover his consciousness until high noon the next day, when he found himself lying in a little hollow between the Mission Hills, and his faithful mule a few paces from him, cropping the sparse herbage. The Padre made the best of his way home, but wisely abstained from narrating the facts mentioned above until after the

discovery of gold, when the whole of this veracious incident was related, with the assertion of the Padre that the secret which was thus mysteriously snatched from his possession was nothing more than the discovery of gold, years since, by the runaway sailors from the expedition of Sir Francis Drake.

## THE DEVIL AND THE BROKER

### A MEDIÆVAL LEGEND

THE church clocks in San Francisco were striking ten. The Devil, who had been flying over the city that evening, just then alighted on the roof of a church near the corner of Bush and Montgomery streets. It will be perceived that the popular belief that the Devil avoids holy edifices, and vanishes at the sound of a credo or paternoster, is long since exploded. Indeed, modern skepticism asserts that he is not averse to these orthodox discourses, which particularly bear reference to himself, and in a measure recognize his power and importance.

I am inclined to think, however, that his choice of a resting-place was a good deal influenced by its contiguity to a populous thoroughfare. When he was comfortably seated, he began pulling out the joints of a small rod which he held in his hand, and which presently proved to be an extraordinary fishing-pole, with a telescopic adjustment that permitted its protraction to a marvelous extent. Affixing a line thereto, he selected a fly of a particular pattern from a small box which he carried with him, and, making a skillful cast, threw his line into the very centre of that living stream which ebbed and flowed through Montgomery Street.

Either the people were very virtuous that evening, or the bait was not a taking one. In vain the Devil whipped the stream at an eddy in front of the Occidental, or trolled his line into the shadows of the Cosmopolitan; five minutes passed without even a nibble. "Dear me!" quoth the

Devil, "that's very singular; one of my most popular flies, too! Why, they'd have risen by shoals in Broadway or Beacon Street for that. Well, here goes another." And fitting a new fly from his well-filled box, he gracefully recast his line

For a few moments there was every prospect of sport. The line was continually bobbing and the nibbles were distinct and gratifying. Once or twice the bait was apparently gorged and carried off to the upper stories of the hotels, to be digested at leisure. At such times the professional manner in which the Devil played out his line would have thrilled the heart of Izaak Walton. But his efforts were unsuccessful; the bait was invariably carried off without hooking the victim, and the Devil finally lost his temper. "I've heard of these San Franciscans before," he muttered. "Wait till I get hold of one, that's all!" he added malevolently, as he rebaited his hook. A sharp tug and a wriggle followed his next trial, and finally, with considerable effort, he landed a portly two-hundred-pound broker upon the church roof.

As the victim lay there gasping, it was evident that the Devil was in no hurry to remove the hook from his gills; nor did he exhibit in this delicate operation that courtesy of manner and graceful manipulation which usually distinguished him.

"Come," he said gruffly, as he grasped the broker by the waistband, "quit that whining and grunting. Don't flatter yourself that you're a prize, either. I was certain to have had you. It was only a question of time."

"It is not that, my lord, which troubles me," whined the unfortunate wretch, as he painfully wriggled his head, "but that I should have been fooled by such a paltry bait. What will they say of me down there? To have let 'bigger things' go by, and to be taken in by this cheap trick," he added, as he groaned and glanced at the fly which the

Devil was carefully rearranging, "is what, — pardon me, my lord, — is what gets me!"

"Yes," said the Devil philosophically, "I never caught anybody yet who did n't say that; but tell me, ain't you getting somewhat fastidious down there? Here is one of my most popular flies, the greenback," he continued, exhibiting an emerald-looking insect, which he drew from his box. "This, so generally considered excellent in election season, has not even been nibbled at. Perhaps your sagacity, which, in spite of this unfortunate contretemps, no one can doubt," added the Devil, with a graceful return to his usual courtesy, "may explain the reason or suggest a substitute."

The broker glanced at the contents of the box with a supereilious smile. "Too old-fashioned, my lord, — long ago played out. Yet," he added, with a gleam of interest, "for a consideration I might offer something — ahem! — that would make a taking substitute for these trifles. Give me," he continued, in a brisk, business-like way, "a slight percentage and a bonus down, and I'm your man."

"Name your terms," said the Devil earnestly.

"My liberty and a percentage on all you take, and the thing's done."

The Devil caressed his tail thoughtfully for a few moments. He was certain of the broker anyway, and the risk was slight. "Done!" he said.

"Stay a moment," said the artful broker. "There are certain contingencies. Give me your fishing-rod and let me apply the bait myself. It requires a skillful hand, my lord: even your well-known experience might fail. Leave me alone for half an hour, and if you have reason to complain of my success I will forfeit my deposit, — I mean my liberty."

The Devil acceded to his request, howed, and withdrew. Alighting gracefully in Montgomery Street, he dropped into

Meade & Co.'s clothing store, where, having completely equipped himself à la mode, he sallied forth intent on his personal enjoyment. Determining to sink his professional character, he mingled with the current of human life, and enjoyed, with that immense capacity for excitement peculiar to his nature, the whirl, bustle, and feverishness of the people, as a purely æsthetic gratification unalloyed by the cares of business. What he did that evening does not belong to our story. We return to the broker, whom we left on the roof.

When he made sure that the Devil had retired, he carefully drew from his pocketbook a slip of paper and affixed it on the hook. The line had scarcely reached the current before he felt a bite. The hook was swallowed. To bring up his victim rapidly, disengage him from the hook, and reset his line, was the work of a moment. Another bite and the same result. Another, and another. In a very few minutes the roof was covered with his panting spoil. The broker could himself distinguish that many of them were personal friends; nay, some of them were familiar frequenters of the building on which they were now miserably stranded. That the broker felt a certain satisfaction in being instrumental in thus misleading his fellow-brokers no one acquainted with human nature will for a moment doubt. But a stronger pull on his line caused him to put forth all his strength and skill. The magic pole bent like a coach-whip. The broker held firm, assisted by the battlements of the church. Again and again it was almost wrested from his hand, and again and again he slowly reeled in a portion of the tightening line. At last, with one mighty effort, he lifted to the level of the roof a struggling object. A howl like Pandemonium rang through the air as the broker successfully landed at his feet — the Devil himself!

The two glared fiercely at each other. The broker, per-

haps mindful of his former treatment, evinced no haste to remove the hook from his antagonist's jaw. When it was finally accomplished, he asked quietly if the Devil was satisfied. That gentleman seemed absorbed in the contemplation of the bait which he had just taken from his mouth. "I am," he said finally, "and forgive you; but what do you call this?"

"Bend low," replied the broker, as he buttoned up his coat ready to depart. The Devil inclined his ear. "I call it **WILD CAT!**"

## THE OGRESS OF SILVER LAND

OR

### THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF PRINCE BADFELLAH AND PRINCE BULLEBOYE

IN the second year of the reign of the renowned Caliph Lo there dwelt in Silver Land, adjoining his territory, a certain terrible Ogress. She lived in the bowels of a dismal mountain, where she was in the habit of confining such unfortunate travelers as ventured within her domain. The country for miles around was sterile and barren. In some places it was covered with a white powder, which was called in the language of the country Al Ka Li, and was supposed to be the pulverized bones of those who had perished miserably in her service.

In spite of this, every year great numbers of young men devoted themselves to the service of the Ogress, hoping to become her godsons, and to enjoy the good fortune which belonged to that privileged class. For these godsons had no work to perform, neither at the mountain nor elsewhere, but roamed about the world with credentials of their relationship in their pockets, which they called stokh, which was stamped with the stamp and sealed with the seal of the Ogress, and which enabled them at the end of each moon to draw large quantities of gold and silver from her treasury. And the wisest and most favored of those godsons were the Princes Badfella and Bulleboye. They knew all the secrets of the Ogress, and how to wheedle and coax her. They were also the favorites of Soopah Inten-



dent, who was her Lord High Chamberlain and Prime Minister, and who dwelt in Silver Land.

One day, Soopah Intendent said to his servants, "What is that which travels the most surely, the most secretly, and the most swiftly?"

And they all answered as one man, "Lightning, my lord, travels the most surely, the most swiftly, and the most secretly!"

Then said Soopah Intendent, "Let Lightning carry this message secretly, swiftly, and surely to my beloved friends the Princes Badfella and Bulleboye, and tell them that their godmother is dying, and bid them seek some other godmother or sell their stokh ere it becomes *badjee*, — worthless."

"Bekhesm! On our heads be it!" answered the servants; and they ran to Lightning with the message, who flew with it to the City by the Sea, and delivered it, even at that moment, into the hands of the Princes Badfella and Bulleboye.

Now the Prince Badfella was a wicked young man; and when he had received this message he tore his beard and rent his garment and reviled his godmother and his friend Soopah Intendent. But presently he arose, and dressed himself in his finest stuffs, and went forth into the bazaars and among the merchants, capering and dancing as he walked, and crying in a loud voice, "Oh, happy day! Oh, day worthy to be marked with a white stone!"

This he said cunningly, thinking the merchants and men of the bazaars would gather about him, which they presently did, and began to question him: "What news, O most worthy and serene Highness? Tell us, that we may make merry too!"

Then replied the cunning prince, "Good news, O my brothers, for I have heard this day that my godmother in Silver Land is well." The merchants, who were not aware

of the substance of the real message, envied him greatly, and said one to another, "Surely our brother the Prince Badfella is favored by Allah above all men ;" and they were about to retire, when the prince checked them, saying, "Tarry for a moment. Here are my credentials or stokh. The same I will sell you for fifty thousand sequins, for I have to give a feast to-day, and need much gold. Who will give fifty thousand ?" And he again fell to capering and dancing. But this time the merchants drew a little apart, and some of the oldest and wisest said, "What dirt is this which the prince would have us swallow ? If his godmother were well, why should he sell his stokh ? Bismillah ! The olives are old and the jar is broken !" When Prince Badfella perceived them whispering, his countenance fell, and his knees smote against each other through fear ; but, dissembling again, he said, "Well, so be it ! Lo ! I have much more than shall abide with me, for my days are many and my wants are few. Say forty thousand sequins for my stokh and let me depart, in Allah's name. Who will give forty thousand sequins to become the godson of such a healthy mother ?" And he again fell to capering and dancing, but not as gayly as before, for his heart was troubled. The merchants, however, only moved farther away. "Thirty thousand sequins," cried Prince Badfella ; but even as he spoke they fled before his face, crying, "His godmother is dead. Lo ! the jackals are defiling her grave. Mashallah ! he has no godmother." And they sought out Panik, the swift-footed messenger, and bade him shout through the bazaars that the godmother of Prince Badfella was dead. When he heard this, the prince fell upon his face, and rent his garments, and covered himself with the dust of the marketplace. As he was sitting thus, a porter passed him with jars of wine on his shoulders, and the prince begged him to give him a jar, for he was exceeding thirsty and faint

But the porter said, "What will my lord give me first?" And the prince, in very bitterness of spirit, said, "Take this," and handed him his stokh, and so exchanged it for a jar of wine.

Now the Prince Bulleboye was of a different disposition. When he received the message of Soopah Intendent he bowed his head, and said, "It is the will of God." Then he rose, and without speaking a word entered the gates of his palace. But his wife, the peerless Maree Jahann, perceiving the gravity of his countenance, said, "Why is my lord cast down and silent? Why are those rare and priceless pearls, his words, shut up so tightly between those gorgeous oyster-shells, his lips?" But to this he made no reply. Thinking further to divert him, she brought her lute into the chamber and stood before him, and sang the song and danced the dance of Ben Kotton, which is called Ibrahim's Daughter, but she could not lift the veil of sadness from his brow.

When she had ceased, the Prince Bulleboye arose and said, "Allah is great, and what am I, his servant, but the dust of the earth! Lo! this day has my godmother sickened unto death, and my stokh become as a withered palm-leaf. Call hither my servants and camel drivers, and the merchants that have furnished me with stuffs, and the beggars who have feasted at my table, and bid them take all that is here, for it is mine no longer!" With these words he buried his face in his mantle and wept aloud.

But Maree Jahann, his wife, plucked him by the sleeve. "Prithee, my lord," said she, "bethink thee of the Brokah or scrivener who besought thee but yesterday to share thy stokh with him and gave thee his bond for fifty thousand sequins." But the noble Prince Bulleboye, raising his head, said, "Shall I sell to him for fifty thousand sequins that which I know is not worth a Soo Markee? For is not all the Brokah's wealth, even his wife and children,

pledged on that bond? Shall I ruin him to save myself? Allah forbid! Rather let me eat the salt fish of honest penury than the kabobs of dishonorable affluence; rather let me wallow in the mire of virtuous oblivion than repose on the divan of luxurious wickedness!"

When the prince had given utterance to this beautiful and edifying sentiment, a strain of gentle music was heard, and the rear wall of the apartment, which had been ingeniously constructed like a flat, opened and discovered the Ogress of Silver Land in the glare of blue fire, seated on a triumphal car attached to two ropes which were connected with the flies, in the very act of blessing the unconscious prince. When the walls closed again without attracting his attention, Prince Bulleboye arose, dressed himself in his coarsest and cheapest stuffs, and sprinkled ashes on his head, and in this guise, having embraced his wife, went forth into the bazaars. In this it will be perceived how differently the good Prince Bulleboye acted from the wicked Prince Badfella, who put on his gayest garments, to simulate and deceive.

Now when Prince Bulleboye entered the chief bazaar, where the merchants of the city were gathered in council, he stood up in his accustomed place, and all that were there held their breath, for the noble Prince Bulleboye was much respected. "Let the Brokah whose bond I hold for fifty thousand sequins stand forth!" said the prince. And the Brokah stood forth from among the merchants. Then said the prince, "Here is thy bond for fifty thousand sequins, for which I was to deliver unto thee one half of my stokh. Know, then, O my brother, — and thou, too, O Aga of the Brokahs, — that this my stokh which I pledged to thee is worthless. For my godmother, the Ogress of Silver Land, is dying. Thus do I release thee from thy bond, and from the poverty which might overtake thee, as it has even me, thy brother, the Prince Bulleboye." And with that the

noble Prince Bulleboye tore the bond of the Brokah into pieces and scattered it to the four winds.

Now when the Prince tore up the bond there was a great commotion, and some said, "Surely the Prince Bulleboye is drunken with wine;" and others, "He is possessed of an evil spirit;" and his friends expostulated with him, saying, "What thou hast done is not the custom of the bazaars, — behold, it is not Biz!" But to all the prince answered gravely, "It is right; on my own head be it!"

But the oldest and wisest of the merchants, they who had talked with Prince Badfella the same morning, whispered together, and gathered round the Brokah whose bond the Prince Bulleboye had torn up. "Hark ye," said they, "our brother the Prince Bulleboye is cunning as a jackal. What bosh is this about ruining himself to save thee? Such a thing was never heard before in the bazaars. It is a trick, O thou mooncalf of a Brokah! Dost thou not see that he has heard good news from his godmother, the same that was even now told us by the Prince Badfella, his confederate, and that he would destroy thy bond for fifty thousand sequins because his stokh is worth a hundred thousand! Be not deceived, O too credulous Brokah! for this that our brother the prince doeth is not in the name of Allah, but of Biz, the only god known in the bazaars of the city."

When the foolish Brokah heard these things he cried, "Justice, O Aga of the Brokahs, — justice and the fulfillment of my bond! Let the prince deliver unto me the stokh. Here are my fifty thousand sequins." But the prince said, "Have I not told thee that my godmother is dying, and that my stokh is valueless?" At this the Brokah only clamored the more for justice and the fulfillment of his bond. Then the Aga of the Brokahs said, "Since the bond is destroyed, behold thou hast no claim. Go thy ways!" But the Brokah again cried, "Justice, my lord

Aga! Behold, I offer the prince seventy thousand sequins for his stokh!" But the prince said, "It is not worth one sequin!" Then the Aga said, "Bismillah! I cannot understand this. Whether thy godmother be dead, or dying, or immortal, does not seem to signify. Therefore, O prince, by the laws of Biz and of Allah, thou art released. Give the Brokah thy stokh for seventy thousand sequins, and bid him depart in peace. On his own head be it!" When the prince heard this command, he handed the stokh to the Brokah, who counted out to him seventy thousand sequins. But the heart of the virtuous prince did not rejoice, nor did the Brokah when he found his stokh was valueless; but the merchants lifted their hands in wonder at the sagacity and wisdom of the famous Prince Bulleboye. For none would believe that it was the law of Allah that the prince followed, and not the rules of Biz.

## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT THAT CAME TO RUPERT

A STORY FOR LITTLE SOLDIERS

It was the Christmas season in California, — a season of falling rain and springing grasses. There were intervals when, through driving clouds and flying scud, the sun visited the haggard hills with a miracle, and death and resurrection were as one, and out of the very throes of decay a joyous life struggled outward and upward. Even the storms that swept down the dead leaves nurtured the tender buds that took their places. There were no episodes of snowy silence; over the quickening fields the farmer's ploughshare hard followed the furrows left by the latest rains. Perhaps it was for this reason that the Christmas evergreens which decorated the drawing-room took upon themselves a foreign aspect, and offered a weird contrast to the roses, seen dimly through the windows, as the south-west wind beat their soft faces against the panes.

"Now," said the doctor, drawing his chair closer to the fire, and looking mildly but firmly at the semicircle of flaxen heads around him, "I want it distinctly understood before I begin my story, that I am not to be interrupted by any ridiculous questions. At the first one I shall stop. At the second, I shall feel it my duty to administer a dose of castor-oil all round. The boy that moves his legs or arms will be understood to invite amputation. I have brought my instruments with me, and never allow pleasure to interfere with my business. Do you promise?"

"Yes, sir," said six small voices simultaneously. The

volley was, however, followed by half a dozen dropping questions.

“Silence! Bob, put your feet down, and stop rattling that sword. Flora shall sit by my side, like a little lady, and be an example to the rest. Fung Tang shall stay, too, if he likes. Now, turn down the gas a little; there, that will do — just enough to make the fire look brighter, and to show off the Christmas candles. Silence, everybody! The boy who cracks an almond, or breathes too loud over his raisins, will be put out of the room.”

There was a profound silence. Bob laid his sword tenderly aside and nursed his leg thoughtfully. Flora, after coquettishly adjusting the pockets of her little apron, put her arm upon the doctor's shoulder, and permitted herself to be drawn beside him. Fung Tang, the little heathen page, who was permitted, on this rare occasion, to share the Christmas revels in the drawing-room, surveyed the group with a smile that was at once sweet and philosophical. The light ticking of a French clock on the mantel, supported by a young shepherdess of bronze complexion and great symmetry of limb, was the only sound that disturbed the Christmas-like peace of the apartment, — a peace which held the odors of evergreens, new toys, cedar boxes, glue, and varnish in a harmonious combination that passed all understanding.

“About four years ago at this time,” began the doctor, “I attended a course of lectures in a certain city. One of the professors, who was a sociable, kindly man — though somewhat practical and hard-headed — invited me to his house on Christmas night. I was very glad to go, as I was anxious to see one of his sons, who, though only twelve years old, was said to be very clever. I dare not tell you how many Latin verses this little fellow could recite, or how many English ones he had composed. In the first place, you'd want me to repeat them; secondly, I'm not a



judge of poetry — Latin or English. But there were judges who said they were wonderful for a boy, and everybody predicted a splendid future for him. Everybody but his father. He shook his head doubtfully whenever it was mentioned, for, as I have told you, he was a practical, matter-of-fact man.

“There was a pleasant party at the professor's that night. All the children of the neighborhood were there, and among them the professor's clever son, Rupert, as they called him — a thin little chap, about as tall as Bobby there, and fair and delicate as Flora by my side. His health was feeble, his father said; he seldom ran about and played with other boys — preferring to stay at home and brood over his books, and compose what he called his verses.

“Well, we had a Christmas-tree just like this, and we had been laughing and talking, calling the names of the children who had presents on the tree, and everybody was very happy and joyous, when one of the children suddenly uttered a cry of mingled surprise and hilarity, and said, ‘Here's something for Rupert — and what do you think it is?’

“We all guessed. ‘A desk;’ ‘A copy of Milton;’ ‘A gold pen;’ ‘A rhyming dictionary.’ ‘No? what then?’

“‘A drum!’

“‘A what?’ asked everybody.

“‘A drum! with Rupert's name on it.’

“Sure enough, there it was. A good-sized, bright, new, brass-bound drum, with a slip of paper on it, with the inscription, ‘For RUPERT.’

“Of course we all laughed, and thought it a good joke. ‘You see you're to make a noise in the world, Rupert!’ said one. ‘Here's parchment for the poet,’ said another. ‘Rupert's last work in sheepskin covers,’ said a third. ‘Give us a classical tune, Rupert,’ said a fourth, and so on. But Rupert seemed too mortified to speak; he changed

color, bit his lips, and finally burst into a passionate fit of crying and left the room. Then those who had joked him felt ashamed, and everybody began to ask who had put the drum there. But no one knew, or, if they did, the unexpected sympathy awakened for the sensitive boy kept them silent. Even the servants were called up and questioned, but no one could give any idea where it came from. And what was still more singular, everybody declared that up to the moment it was produced, no one had seen it hanging on the tree. What do I think? Well, I have my own opinion. But no questions! Enough for you to know that Rupert did not come downstairs again that night, and the party soon after broke up.

“I had almost forgotten those things, for the war of the Rebellion broke out the next spring, and I was appointed surgeon in one of the new regiments, and was on my way to the seat of war. But I had to pass through the city where the professor lived, and there I met him. My first question was about Rupert. The professor shook his head sadly. ‘He’s not so well,’ he said; ‘he has been declining since last Christmas, when you saw him. A very strange case,’ he added, giving it a long Latin name, ‘a very singular case. But go and see him yourself,’ he urged; ‘it may distract his mind and do him good.’

“I went accordingly to the professor’s house, and found Rupert lying on a sofa propped up with pillows. Around him were scattered his books, and, what seemed in singular contrast, that drum I told you about was hanging on a nail just above his head. His face was thin and wasted; there was a red spot on either cheek, and his eyes were very bright and widely opened. He was glad to see me, and when I told him where I was going, he asked a thousand questions about the war. I thought I had thoroughly diverted his mind from its sick and languid fancies, when he suddenly grasped my hand and drew me towards him.

“ ‘ Doctor,’ said he, in a low whisper, ‘ you won’t laugh at me if I tell you something ? ’

“ ‘ No, certainly not,’ I said.

“ ‘ You remember that drum ? ’ he said, pointing to the glittering toy that hung against the wall. ‘ You know, too, how it came to me. A few weeks after Christmas I was lying half asleep here, and the drum was hanging on the wall, when suddenly I heard it beaten ; at first low and slowly, then faster and louder, until its rolling filled the house. In the middle of the night I heard it again. I did not dare to tell anybody about it, but I have heard it every night ever since.’

“ He paused and looked anxiously in my face. ‘ Sometimes,’ he continued, ‘ it is played softly, sometimes loudly, but always quickening to a long roll, so loud and alarming that I have looked to see people coming into my room to ask what was the matter. But I think, doctor — I think,’ he repeated slowly, looking up with painful interest into my face, ‘ that no one hears it but myself.’

“ I thought so, too, but I asked him if he had heard it at any other time.

“ ‘ Once or twice in the daytime,’ he replied, ‘ when I have been reading or writing ; then very loudly, as though it were angry, and tried in that way to attract my attention away from my books.’

“ I looked into his face and placed my hand upon his pulse. His eyes were very bright and his pulse a little flurried and quick. I then tried to explain to him that he was very weak, and that his senses were very acute, as most weak people’s are ; and how that when he read, or grew interested and excited, or when he was tired at night, the throbbing of a big artery made the beating sound he heard. He listened to me with a sad smile of unbelief, but thanked me, and in a little while I went away. But as I was going downstairs I met the professor. I gave him my opinion of the case — Well, no matter what it was.

“‘He wants fresh air and exercise,’ said the professor, ‘and some practical experience of life, sir.’ The professor was not a bad man, but he was a little worried and impatient, and thought — as clever people are apt to think — that things which he didn’t understand were either silly or improper.

“I left the city that very day, and in the excitement of battlefields and hospitals I forgot all about little Rupert, nor did I hear of him again, until one day, meeting an old classmate in the army, who had known the professor, he told me that Rupert had become quite insane, and that in one of his paroxysms he had escaped from the house, and as he had never been found, it was feared that he had fallen into the river and was drowned. I was terribly shocked for the moment, as you may imagine; but, dear me, I was living just then among scenes as terrible and shocking, and I had little time to spare to mourn over poor Rupert.

“It was not long after receiving this intelligence that we had a terrible battle, in which a portion of our army was slaughtered. I was detached from my brigade to ride over to the battlefield and assist the surgeons of the beaten division, who had more on their hands than they could attend to. When I reached the barn that served for a temporary hospital, I went at once to work. Ah! Bob,” said the doctor thoughtfully, taking the bright sword from the hands of the half-frightened Bob, and holding it gravely before him, “these pretty playthings are symbols of cruel, ugly realities.”

“I turned to a tall, stout Vermonter,” he continued, very slowly, tracing a pattern on the rug with the point of the scabbard, “who was badly wounded in both thighs, but he held up his hands and begged me to help others first who needed it more than he. I did not at first heed his request, for this kind of unselfishness was very common in the army; but he went on, ‘For God’s sake, doctor, leave me here;

there is a drummer boy of our regiment — a mere child — dying, if he is n't dead now. Go and see him first. He lies over there. He saved more than one life. He was at his post in the panic of this morning, and saved the honor of the regiment.' I was so much more impressed by the man's manner than by the substance of his speech, which was, however, corroborated by the other poor fellows stretched around me, that I passed over to where the drummer lay, with his drum beside him. I gave one glance at his face — and — yes, Bob — yes, my children — it *was* Rupert.

“Well! well! it needed not the chalked cross which my brother surgeons had left upon the rough board whereon he lay to show how urgent was the relief he sought; it needed not the prophetic words of the Vermonter, nor the damp that mingled with the brown curls that clung to his pale forehead, to show how hopeless it was now. I called him by name. He opened his eyes — larger, I thought, in the new vision that was beginning to dawn upon him — and recognized me. He whispered, ‘I'm glad you are come, but I don't think you can do me any good.’

“I could not tell him a lie. I could not say anything. I only pressed his hand in mine as he went on.

“‘But you will see father, and ask him to forgive me. Nobody is to blame but myself. It was a long time before I understood why the drum came to me that Christmas night, and why it kept calling to me every night, and what it said. I know it now. The work is done, and I am content. Tell father it is better as it is. I should have lived only to worry and perplex him, and something in me tells me this is right.’

“He lay still for a moment, and then grasping my hand, said, —

“‘Hark!’

“I listened, but heard nothing but the suppressed moans

of the wounded men around me. 'The drum,' he said faintly; 'don't you hear it? — the drum is calling me.'

"He reached out his arm to where it lay, as though he would embrace it.

"'Listen' — he went on — 'it's the reveille. There are the ranks drawn up in review. Don't you see the sunlight flash down the long line of bayonets? Their faces are shining — they present arms — there comes the General — but his face I cannot look at for the glory round his head. He sees me; he smiles, it is' — and with a name upon his lips that he had learned long ago, he stretched himself wearily upon the planks and lay quite still.

"That's all.

"No questions now — never mind what became of the drum.

"Who's that sniveling?

"Bless my soul! where's my pill-box?"

IN THE CARQUINEZ WOODS  
AND OTHER TALES!





## CONTENTS

	PAGE
IN THE CARQUINEZ WOODS . . . . .	1
A BLUE GRASS PENELOPE . . . . .	126
LEFT OUT ON LONE STAR MOUNTAIN . . . . .	192
A SHIP OF '49 . . . . .	223
AN APOSTLE OF THE TULE . . . . .	306
DEVIL'S FORD . . . . .	335
A SECRET OF TELEGRAPH HILL . . . . .	417



# IN THE CARQUINEZ WOODS AND OTHER TALES

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## IN THE CARQUINEZ WOODS

### CHAPTER I

THE sun was going down on the Carquinez Woods. The few shafts of sunlight that had pierced their pillared gloom were lost in unfathomable depths, or splintered their ineffectual lances on the enormous trunks of the redwoods. For a time the dull red of their vast columns, and the dull red of their cast-off bark which matted the echoless aisles, still seemed to hold a faint glow of the dying day. But even this soon passed. Light and color fled upwards. The dark, interlaced treetops, that had all day made an impenetrable shade, broke into fire here and there; their lost spires glittered, faded, and went utterly out. A weird twilight that did not come from an outer world, but seemed born of the wood itself, slowly filled and possessed the aisles. The straight, tall, colossal trunks rose dimly like columns of upward smoke. The few fallen trees stretched their huge length into obscurity, and seemed to lie on shadowy trestles. The strange breath that filled these mysterious vaults had neither coldness nor moisture; a dry, fragrant dust arose from the noiseless foot that trod their bark-strewn floor: the aisles might have been tombs; the fallen trees, enormous mummies; the silence, the solitude of the forgotten past.

And yet this silence was presently broken by a recurring

sound like breathing, interrupted occasionally by inarticulate and stertorous gasps. It was not the quick, panting, listening breath of some stealthy feline or canine animal, but indicated a larger, slower, and more powerful organization, whose progress was less watchful and guarded, or as if a fragment of one of the fallen monsters had become animate. At times this life seemed to take visible form, but as vaguely, as misshapenly, as the phantom of a nightmare. Now it was a square object moving sideways, endways, with neither head nor tail and scarcely visible feet; then an arched bulk rolling against the trunks of the trees and recoiling again, or an upright cylindrical mass, but always oscillating and unsteady, and striking the trees on either hand. The frequent occurrence of the movement suggested the figures of some weird rhythmic dance to music heard by the shape alone. Suddenly it either became motionless or faded away. There was the frightened neighing of a horse, the sudden jingling of spurs, a shout and outcry, and the swift apparition of three dancing torches in one of the dark aisles; but so intense was the obscurity that they shed no light on surrounding objects, and seemed to advance at their own volition without human guidance, until they disappeared suddenly behind the interposing bulk of one of the largest trees. Beyond its eighty feet of circumference the light could not reach, and the gloom remained inscrutable. But the voices and jingling spurs were heard distinctly.

“Blast the mare! She’s shied off that cursed trail again.”

“Ye ain’t lost it agin, hev ye?” growled a second voice.

“That’s jist what I hev. And these blasted pine knots don’t give light an inch beyond ’em. D—d if I don’t think they make this cursed hole blacker.”

There was a laugh — a woman’s laugh — hysterical, bitter, sarcastic, exasperating. The second speaker, without heeding it, went on: —

“What in thunder skeert the hosses? Did you see or hear anything?”

“Nothin’. The wood is like a graveyard.”

The woman’s voice again broke into a hoarse, contemptuous laugh. The man resumed angrily:—

“If you know anything, why in h—ll don’t you say so, instead of cackling like a d—d squaw there? P’r’aps you reckon you ken find the trail too.”

“Take this rope off my wrist,” said the woman’s voice, “untie my hands, let me down, and I’ll find it.” She spoke quickly and with a Spanish accent.

It was the men’s turn to laugh. “And give you a show to snatch that six-shooter and blow a hole through me, as you did to the Sheriff of Calaveras, eh? Not if this court understands itself,” said the first speaker dryly.

“Go to the devil, then,” she said curtly.

“Not before a lady,” responded the other. There was another laugh from the men, the spurs jingled again, the three torches reappeared from behind the tree, and then passed away in the darkness.

For a time silence and immutability possessed the woods; the great trunks loomed upwards, their fallen brothers stretched their slow length into obscurity. The sound of breathing again became audible; the shape reappeared in the aisle, and recommenced its mystic dance. Presently it was lost in the shadow of the largest tree, and to the sound of breathing succeeded a grating and scratching of bark. Suddenly, as if riven by lightning, a flash broke from the centre of the tree-trunk, lit up the woods, and a sharp report rang through it. After a pause the jingling of spurs and the dancing of torches were revived from the distance.

“Hallo?”

No answer.

“Who fired that shot?”

But there was no reply. A slight veil of smoke passed

away to the right, there was the spice of gunpowder in the air, but nothing more.

The torches came forward again, but this time it could be seen they were held in the hands of two men and a woman. The woman's hands were tied at the wrist to the horse-hair reins of her mule, while a riata, passed around her waist and under the mule's girth, was held by one of the men, who were both armed with rifles and revolvers. Their frightened horses curveted, and it was with difficulty they could be made to advance.

"Ho! stranger, what are you shooting at?"

The woman laughed, and shrugged her shoulders. "Look yonder at the roots of the tree. You're a d—d smart man for a sheriff, ain't you?"

The man uttered an exclamation and spurred his horse forward, but the animal reared in terror. He then sprang to the ground and approached the tree. The shape lay there, a scarcely distinguishable bulk.

"A grizzly, by the living Jingo! Shot through the heart."

It was true. The strange shape lit up by the flaring torches seemed more vague, unearthly, and awkward in its dying throes, yet the small shut eyes, the feeble nose, the ponderous shoulders, and half-human foot armed with powerful claws were unmistakable. The men turned by a common impulse and peered into the remote recesses of the wood again.

"Hi, mister! come and pick up your game. Hallo there!" The challenge fell unheeded on the empty woods.

"And yet," said he whom the woman had called the sheriff, "he can't be far off. It was a close shot, and the bear hez dropped in his tracks. Why, wot's this sticking in his claws?"

The two men bent over the animal. "Why, it's sugar, brown sugar — look!" There was no mistake. The huge

beast's fore paws and muzzle were streaked with the unromantic household provision, and heightened the absurd contrast of its incongruous members. The woman, apparently indifferent, had taken that opportunity to partly free one of her wrists.

"If we had n't been cavorting round this yer spot for the last half-hour, I'd swear there was a shanty not a hundred yards away," said the sheriff. The other man, without replying, remounted his horse instantly.

"If there is, and it's inhabited by a gentleman that kin make centre shots like that in the dark, and don't care to explain how, I reckon I won't disturb him."

The sheriff was apparently of the same opinion, for he followed his companion's example, and once more led the way. The spurs tinkled, the torches danced, and the cavalcade slowly reëntered the gloom. In another moment it had disappeared.

The wood sank again into repose, this time disturbed by neither shape nor sound. What lower forms of life might have crept close to its roots were hidden in the ferns, or passed with deadened tread over the bark-strewn floor. Towards morning a coolness like dew fell from above, with here and there a dropping twig or nut, or the crepitant awakening and stretching-out of cramped and weary branches. Later a dull, lurid dawn, not unlike the last evening's sunset, filled the aisles. This faded again, and a clear gray light, in which every object stood out in sharp distinctness, took its place. Morning was waiting outside in all its brilliant, youthful coloring, but only entered as the matured and sobered day.

Seen in that stronger light, the monstrous tree near which the dead bear lay revealed its age in its denuded and scarred trunk, and showed in its base a deep cavity, a foot or two from the ground, partly hidden by hanging strips of bark which had fallen across it. Suddenly one

of these strips was pushed aside, and a young man leaped lightly down.

But for the rifle he carried and some modern peculiarities of dress, he was of a grace so unusual and unconventional that he might have passed for a faun who was quitting his ancestral home. He stepped to the side of the bear with a light elastic movement that was as unlike customary progression as his face and figure were unlike the ordinary types of humanity. Even as he leaned upon his rifle, looking down at the prostrate animal, he unconsciously fell into an attitude that in any other mortal would have been a pose, but with him was the picturesque and unstudied relaxation of perfect symmetry.

“Hallo, mister!”

He raised his head so carelessly and listlessly that he did not otherwise change his attitude. Stepping from behind the tree, the woman of the preceding night stood before him. Her hands were free except for a thong of the riata, which was still knotted around one wrist, the end of the thong having been torn or burnt away. Her eyes were bloodshot, and her hair hung over her shoulders in one long black braid.

“I reckoned all along it was *you* who shot the bear,” she said; “at least some one hidin’ yer,” and she indicated the hollow tree with her hand. “It was n’t no chance shot.” Observing that the young man, either from misconception or indifference, did not seem to comprehend her, she added, “We came by here last night, a minute after you fired.”

“Oh, that was *you* kicked up such a row, was it?” said the young man, with a shade of interest.

“I reckon,” said the woman, nodding her head, “and them that was with me.”

“And who are they?”

“Sheriff Dunn, of Yolo, and his deputy.”



“And where are they now?”

“The deputy — in h—ll, I reckon. I don’t know about the sheriff.”

“I see,” said the young man quietly; “and you?”

“I — got away,” she said savagely. But she was taken with a sudden nervous shiver, which she at once repressed by tightly dragging her shawl over her shoulders and elbows, and folding her arms defiantly.

“And you ’re going?”

“To follow the deputy, maybe,” she said gloomily. “But come, I say, ain’t you going to treat? It’s cursed cold here.”

“Wait a moment.” The young man was looking at her, with his arched brows slightly knit and a half smile of curiosity. “Ain’t you Teresa?”

She was prepared for the question, but evidently was not certain whether she would reply defiantly or confidently. After an exhaustive scrutiny of his face she chose the latter, and said, “You can bet your life on it, Johnny.”

“I don’t bet, and my name is n’t Johnny. Then you’re the woman who stabbed Dick Curson over at Lagrange’s?”

She became defiant again. “That’s me, all the time. What are you going to do about it?”

“Nothing. And you used to dance at the Alhambra?”

She whisked the shawl from her shoulders, held it up like a scarf, and made one or two steps of the *sembi-cuacua*. There was not the least gayety, recklessness, or spontaneity in the action; it was simply mechanical bravado. It was so ineffective, even upon her own feelings, that her arms presently dropped to her side, and she coughed embarrassedly. “Where’s that whiskey, pardner?” she asked.

The young man turned toward the tree he had just

quitted, and without further words assisted her to mount to the cavity. It was an irregular-shaped vaulted chamber, pierced fifty feet above by a shaft or cylindrical opening in the decayed trunk, which was blackened by smoke as if it had served the purpose of a chimney. In one corner lay a bearskin and blanket; at the side were two alcoves or indentations, one of which was evidently used as a table, and the other as a cupboard. In another hollow, near the entrance, lay a few small sacks of flour, coffee, and sugar, the sticky contents of the latter still strewing the floor. From this storehouse the young man drew a wicker flask of whiskey, and handed it, with a tin cup of water, to the woman. She waved the cup aside, placed the flask to her lips, and drank the undiluted spirit. Yet even this was evidently bravado, for the water started to her eyes, and she could not restrain the paroxysm of coughing that followed.

“I reckon that’s the kind that kills at forty rods,” she said, with an hysterical laugh. “But I say, pardner, you look as if you were fixed here to stay,” and she stared ostentatiously around the chamber. But she had already taken in its minutest details, even to observing that the hanging strips of bark could be disposed so as to completely hide the entrance.

“Well, yes,” he replied; “it would n’t be very easy to pull up the stakes and move the shanty further on.”

Seeing that either from indifference or caution he had not accepted her meaning, she looked at him fixedly, and said,—

“What is your little game?”

“Eh?”

“What are you hiding for — here in this tree?”

“But I’m not hiding.”

“Then why did n’t you come out when they hailed you last night?”

“Because I did n’t care to.”

Teresa whistled incredulously. "All right — then if you're not hiding, I'm going to." As he did not reply, she went on: "If I can keep out of sight for a couple of weeks, this thing will blow over here, and I can get across into Yolo. I could get a fair show there, where the boys know me. Just now the trails are all watched, but no one would think of lookin' here."

"Then how did you come to think of it?" he asked carelessly.

"Because I knew that bear had n't gone far for that sugar; because I knew he had n't stole it from a cache — it was too fresh, and we'd have seen the torn-up earth; because we had passed no camp; and because I knew there was no shanty here. And, besides," she added in a low voice, "maybe I was huntin' a hole myself to die in — and spotted it by instinct."

There was something in this suggestion of a hunted animal that, unlike anything she had previously said or suggested, was not exaggerated, and caused the young man to look at her again. She was standing under the chimney-like opening, and the light from above illuminated her head and shoulders. The pupils of her eyes had lost their feverish prominence, and were slightly suffused and softened as she gazed abstractedly before her. The only vestige of her previous excitement was in her left-hand fingers, which were incessantly twisting and turning a diamond ring upon her right hand, but without imparting the least animation to her rigid attitude. Suddenly, as if conscious of his scrutiny, she stepped aside out of the revealing light, and by a swift feminine instinct raised her hand to her head as if to adjust her straggling hair. It was only for a moment, however, for, as if aware of the weakness, she struggled to resume her aggressive pose.

"Well," she said, "speak up. Am I goin' to stop here, or have I got to get up and get?"

"You can stay," said the young man quietly; "but as I've got my provisions and ammunition here, and haven't any other place to go to just now, I suppose we'll have to share it together."

She glanced at him under her eyelids, and a half-bitter, half-contemptuous smile passed across her face. "All right, old man," she said, holding out her hand, "it's a go. We'll start in housekeeping at once, if you like."

"I'll have to come here once or twice a day," he said, quite composedly, "to look after my things, and get something to eat; but I'll be away most of the time, and what with camping out under the trees every night I reckon my share won't incommode you."

She opened her black eyes upon him, at this original proposition. Then she looked down at her torn dress. "I suppose this style of thing ain't very fancy, is it?" she said, with a forced laugh.

"I think I know where to beg or borrow a change for you, if you can't get any," he replied simply.

She stared at him again. "Are you a family man?"

"No."

She was silent for a moment. "Well," she said, "you can tell your girl I'm not particular about its being in the latest fashion."

There was a slight flush on his forehead as he turned toward the little cupboard, but no tremor in his voice as he went on: "You'll find tea and coffee here, and, if you're bored, there's a book or two. You read, don't you—I mean English?"

She nodded, but cast a look of undisguised contempt upon the two worn, coverless novels he held out to her. "You haven't got last week's 'Sacramento Union,' have you? I hear they have my case all in; only them lying reporters made it out against me all the time."

"I don't see the papers," he replied curtly.

"They say there's a picture of me in the 'Police Gazette,' taken in the act," and she laughed.

He looked a little abstracted, and turned as if to go. "I think you'll do well to rest a while just now, and keep as close hid as possible until afternoon. The trail is a mile away at the nearest point, but some one might miss it and stray over here. You're quite safe if you're careful, and stand by the tree. You can build a fire here," he stepped under the chimney-like opening, "without its being noticed. Even the smoke is lost and cannot be seen so high."

The light from above was falling on his head and shoulders, as it had on hers. She looked at him intently.

"You travel a good deal on your figure, pardner, don't you?" she said, with a certain admiration that was quite sexless in its quality; "but I don't see how you pick up a living by it in the Carquinez Woods. So you're going, are you? You might be more sociable. Good-by."

"Good-by!" He leaped from the opening.

"I say, pardner!"

He turned, a little impatiently. She had knelt down at the entrance, so as to be nearer his level, and was holding out her hand. But he did not notice it, and she quietly withdrew it.

"If anybody dropped in and asked for you, what name will they say?"

He smiled. "Don't wait to hear."

"But suppose *I* wanted to sing out for you, what will I call you?"

He hesitated. "Call me — Lo."

"Lo, the poor Indian?"<sup>1</sup>

"Exactly."

It suddenly occurred to the woman, Teresa, that in the young man's height, supple yet erect carriage, color, and

<sup>1</sup> The first word of Pope's familiar apostrophe is humorously used in the far West as a distinguishing title for the Indian.

singular gravity of demeanor there was a refined aboriginal suggestion. He did not look like any Indian she had ever seen, but rather as a youthful chief might have looked. There was a further suggestion in his fringed buckskin shirt and moccasins; but before she could utter the half-sarcastic comment that rose to her lips he had glided noiselessly away, even as an Indian might have done.

She readjusted the slips of hanging bark with feminine ingenuity, dispersing them so as to completely hide the entrance. Yet this did not darken the chamber, which seemed to draw a purer and more vigorous light through the soaring shaft that pierced the room than that which came from the dim woodland aisles below. Nevertheless, she shivered, and drawing her shawl closely around her began to collect some half-burnt fragments of wood in the chimney to make a fire. But the preoccupation of her thoughts rendered this a tedious process, as she would from time to time stop in the middle of an action and fall into an attitude of rapt abstraction, with far-off eyes and rigid mouth. When she had at last succeeded in kindling a fire and raising a film of pale blue smoke, that seemed to fade and dissipate entirely before it reached the top of the chimney shaft, she crouched beside it, fixed her eyes on the darkest corner of the cavern, and became motionless.

What did she see through that shadow?

Nothing at first but a confused medley of figures and incidents of the preceding night; things to be put away and forgotten; things that would not have happened but for another thing—the thing before which everything faded! A ball-room; the sounds of music; the one man she had cared for insulting her with the flaunting ostentation of his unfaithfulness; herself despised, put aside, laughed at, or worse, jilted. And then the moment of delirium, when the light danced; the one wild act that lifted her, the despised one, above them all—made her

the supreme figure, to be glanced at by frightened women, stared at by half-startled, half-admiring men! "Yes," she laughed; but struck by the sound of her own voice, moved twice round the cavern nervously, and then dropped again into her old position.

As they carried him away he had laughed at her — like a hound that he was; he who had praised her for her spirit, and incited her revenge against others; he who had taught her to strike when she was insulted; and it was only fit he should reap what he had sown. She was what he, what other men, had made her. And what was she now? What had she been once?

She tried to recall her childhood: the man and woman who might have been her father and mother; who fought and wrangled over her precocious little life; abused or caressed her as she sided with either; and then left her with a circus troupe, where she first tasted the power of her courage, her beauty, and her recklessness. She remembered those flashes of triumph that left a fever in her veins — a fever that when it failed must be stimulated by dissipation, by anything, by everything that would keep her name a wonder in men's mouths, an envious fear to women. She recalled her transfer to the strolling players; her cheap pleasures, and cheaper rivalries and hatred — but always Teresa! the daring Teresa! the reckless Teresa! audacious as a woman, invincible as a boy; dancing, flirting, fencing, shooting, swearing, drinking, smoking, fighting Teresa! "Oh, yes; she had been loved, perhaps — who knows? — but always feared. Why should she change now? Ha! he should see."

She had lashed herself in a frenzy, as was her wont, with gestures, ejaculations, oaths, adjurations, and passionate apostrophes, but with this strange and unexpected result. Heretofore she had always been sustained and kept up by an audience of some kind or quality, if only

perhaps a humble companion; there had always been some one she could fascinate or horrify, and she could read her power mirrored in their eyes. Even the half-abstracted indifference of her strange host had been something. But she was alone now. Her words fell on apathetic solitude; she was acting to viewless space. She rushed to the opening, dashed the hanging bark aside, and leaped to the ground.

She ran forward wildly a few steps, and stopped.

"Hallo!" she cried. "Look, 't is I, Teresa!"

The profound silence remained unbroken. Her shrillest tones were lost in an echoless space, even as the smoke of her fire had faded into pure ether. She stretched out her clenched fists as if to defy the pillared austerities of the vaults around her.

"Come and take me if you dare!"

The challenge was unheeded. If she had thrown herself violently against the nearest tree-trunk, she could not have been stricken more breathless than she was by the compact, embattled solitude that encompassed her. The hopelessness of impressing these cold and passive vaults with her selfish passion filled her with a vague fear. In her rage of the previous night she had not seen the wood in its profound immobility. Left alone with the majesty of those enormous columns, she trembled and turned faint. The silence of the hollow tree she had just quitted seemed to her less awful than the crushing presence of these mute and monstrous witnesses of her weakness. Like a wounded quail, with lowered crest and trailing wing, she crept back to her hiding-place.

Even then the influence of the wood was still upon her. She picked up the novel she had contemptuously thrown aside, only to let it fall again in utter weariness. For a moment her feminine curiosity was excited by the discovery of an old book, in whose blank leaves were pressed a



variety of flowers and woodland grasses. As she could not conceive that these had been kept for any but a sentimental purpose, she was disappointed to find that underneath each was a sentence in an unknown tongue, that even to her untutored eye did not appear to be the language of passion. Finally she rearranged the couch of skins and blankets, and, imparting to it in three clever shakes an entirely different character, lay down to pursue her reveries. But nature asserted herself, and ere she knew it she was fast asleep.

So intense and prolonged had been her previous excitement that, the tension once relieved, she passed into a slumber of exhaustion so deep that she seemed scarce to breathe. High noon succeeded morning, the central shaft received a single ray of upper sunlight, the afternoon came and went, the shadows gathered below, the sunset fires began to eat their way through the groined roof, and she still slept. She slept even when the bark hangings of the chamber were put aside, and the young man reëntered.

He laid down a bundle he was carrying, and softly approached the sleeper. For a moment he was startled from his indifference — she lay so still and motionless. But this was not all that struck him: the face before him was no longer the passionate, haggard visage that confronted him that morning; the feverish air, the burning color, the strained muscles of mouth and brow, and the staring eyes were gone; wiped away, perhaps, by the tears that still left their traces on cheek and dark eyelash. It was a face of a handsome woman of thirty, with even a suggestion of softness in the contour of the cheek and arching of her upper lip, no longer rigidly drawn down in anger, but relaxed by sleep on her white teeth.

With the lithe, soft tread that was habitual to him, the young man moved about, examining the condition of the little chamber and its stock of provisions and necessaries,

and withdrew presently, to reappear as noiselessly with a tin bucket of water. This done he replenished the little pile of fuel with an armful of bark and pine cones, cast an approving glance about him, which included the sleeper, and silently departed.

It was night when she awoke. She was surrounded by a profound darkness, except where the shaft-like opening made a nebulous mist in the corner in her wooden cavern. Providentially she struggled back to consciousness slowly, so that the solitude and silence came upon her gradually, with a growing realization of the events of the past twenty-four hours, but without a shock. She was alone here, but safe still, and every hour added to her chances of ultimate escape. She remembered to have seen a candle among the articles on the shelf, and she began to grope her way toward the matches. Suddenly she stopped. What was that panting?

Was it her own breathing, quickened with a sudden nameless terror? or was there something outside? Her heart seemed to stop beating while she listened. Yes! it was a panting outside — a panting now increased, multiplied, redoubled, mixed with the sounds of rustling, tearing, crouching, and occasionally a quick, impatient snarl. She crept on her hands and knees to the opening and looked out. At first the ground seemed to be undulating between her and the opposite tree. But a second glance showed her the black and gray, bristling, tossing backs of tumbling beasts of prey, charging the carcass of the bear that lay at its roots, or contesting for the prize with gluttonous choked breath, sidelong snarls, arched spines, and recurved tails. One of the boldest had leaped upon a buttressing root of her tree within a foot of the opening. The excitement, awe, and terror she had undergone culminated in one wild, maddened scream, that seemed to pierce even the cold depths of the forest, as she dropped on her face, with her hands clasped over her eyes in an agony of fear.

Her scream was answered, after a pause, by a sudden volley of firebrands and sparks into the midst of the panting, crowding pack; a few smothered howls and snaps, and a sudden dispersion of the concourse. In another moment the young man, with a blazing brand in either hand, leaped upon the body of the bear.

Teresa raised her head, uttered a hysterical cry, slid down the tree, flew wildly to his side, caught convulsively at his sleeve, and fell on her knees beside him.

“Save me! save me!” she gasped, in a voice broken by terror. “Save me from those hideous creatures. No, no!” she implored, as he endeavored to lift her to her feet. “No—let me stay here close beside you. So,” clutching the fringe of his leather hunting-shirt, and dragging herself on her knees nearer him—“so—don’t leave me, for God’s sake!”

“They are gone,” he replied, gazing down curiously at her, as she wound the fringe around her hand to strengthen her hold; “they’re only a lot of cowardly coyotes and wolves, that dare not attack anything that lives and can move.”

The young woman responded with a nervous shudder. “Yes, that’s it,” she whispered, in a broken voice; “it’s only the dead they want. Promise me—swear to me, if I’m caught, or hung, or shot, you won’t let me be left here to be torn and—ah! my God! what’s that?”

She had thrown her arms around his knees, completely pinioning him to her frantic breast. Something like a smile of disdain passed across his face as he answered, “It’s nothing. They will not return. Get up!”

Even in her terror she saw the change in his face. “I know, I know!” she cried. “I’m frightened—but I cannot bear it any longer. Hear me! Listen! Listen—but don’t move! I did n’t mean to kill Curson—no! I swear to God, no! I did n’t mean to kill the sheriff—

and I did n't. I was only bragging — do you hear? I lied! I lied — don't move, I swear to God I lied. I've made myself out worse than I was. I have. Only don't leave me now — and if I die — and it's not far off, maybe — get me away from here — and from *them*. Swear it!"

"All right," said the young man, with a scarcely concealed movement of irritation. "But get up now, and go back to the cabin."

"No; not *there* alone." Nevertheless, he quietly but firmly released himself.

"I will stay here," he replied. "I would have been nearer to you, but I thought it better for your safety that my camp-fire should be further off. But I can build it here, and that will keep the coyotes off."

"Let me stay with you — beside you," she said imploringly.

She looked so broken, crushed, and spiritless, so unlike the woman of the morning that, albeit with an ill grace, he tacitly consented, and turned away to bring his blankets. But in the next moment she was at his side, following him like a dog, silent and wistful, and even offering to carry his burden. When he had built the fire, for which she had collected the pine cones and broken branches near them, he sat down, folded his arms, and leaned back against the tree in reserved and deliberate silence. Humble and submissive, she did not attempt to break in upon a reverie she could not help but feel had little kindness to herself. As the fire snapped and sparkled, she pillowed her head upon a root, and lay still to watch it.

It rose and fell, and dying away at times to a mere lurid glow; and again, agitated by some breath scarcely perceptible to them, quickening into a roaring flame. When only the embers remained, a dead silence filled the wood. Then the first breath of morning moved the tangled canopy above,

and a dozen tiny sprays and needles detached from the interlocked boughs winged their soft way noiselessly to the earth. A few fell upon the prostrate woman like a gentle benediction, and she slept. But even then, the young man, looking down, saw that the slender fingers were still aimlessly but rigidly twisted in the leather fringe of his hunting-shirt.

## CHAPTER II

It was a peculiarity of the Carquinez Woods that it stood apart and distinct in its gigantic individuality. Even where the integrity of its own singular species was not entirely preserved, it admitted no inferior trees. Nor was there any diminishing fringe on its outskirts; the sentinels that guarded the few gateways of the dim trails were as monstrous as the serried ranks drawn up in the heart of the forest. Consequently, the red highway that skirted the eastern angle was bare and shadeless, until it slipped a league off into a watered valley and refreshed itself under lesser sycamores and willows. It was here the newly born city of Excelsior, still in its cradle, had, like an infant Hercules, strangled the serpentine North Fork of the American river, and turned its life-current into the ditches and flumes of the Excelsior miners.

Newest of the new houses that seemed to have accidentally formed its single, straggling street was the residence of the Rev. Winslow Wynn, not unfrequently known as "Father Wynn," pastor of the first Baptist church. The "pastorage," as it was cheerfully called, had the glaring distinction of being built of brick, and was, as had been wickedly pointed out by idle scoffers, the only "fire-proof" structure in town. This sarcasm was not, however, supposed to be particularly distasteful to "Father Wynn," who enjoyed the reputation of being "hail fellow, well met" with the rough mining element, who called them by their Christian names, had been known to drink at the bar of the Polka Saloon while engaged in the conversion of a

prominent citizen, and was popularly said to have no "gospel starch" about him. Certain conscious outcasts and transgressors were touched at this apparent unbending of the spiritual authority. The rigid tenets of Father Wynn's faith were lost in the supposed catholicity of his humanity. "A preacher that can jine a man when he 's histin' liquor into him, without jawin' about it, ought to be allowed to wrestle with sinners and splash about in as much cold water as he likes," was the criticism of one of his converts. Nevertheless, it was true that Father Wynn was somewhat loud and intolerant in his tolerance. It was true that he was a little more rough, a little more frank, a little more hearty, a little more impulsive, than his disciples. It was true that often the proclamation of his extreme liberality and brotherly equality partook somewhat of an apology. It is true that a few who might have been most benefited by this kind of gospel regarded him with a singular disdain. It is true that his liberality was of an ornamental, insinuating quality, accompanied with but little sacrifice; his acceptance of a collection taken up in a gambling-saloon for the rebuilding of his church, destroyed by fire, gave him a popularity large enough, it must be confessed, to cover the sins of the gamblers themselves, but it was not proven that *he* had ever organized any form of relief. But it was true that local history somehow accepted him as an exponent of mining Christianity, without the least reference to the opinions of the Christian miners themselves.

The Rev. Mr. Wynn's liberal habits and opinions were not, however, shared by his only daughter, a motherless young lady of eighteen. Nellie Wynn was in the eye of Excelsior an unapproachable divinity, as inaccessible and cold as her father was impulsive and familiar. An atmosphere of chaste and proud virginity made itself felt even in the starched integrity of her spotless skirts, in her neatly gloved finger-tips, in her clear amber eyes, in her

imperious red lips, in her sensitive nostrils. Need it be said that the youth and middle age of Excelsior were madly, because apparently hopelessly, in love with her? For the rest, she had been expensively educated, was profoundly ignorant in two languages, with a trained misunderstanding of music and painting, and a natural and faultless taste in dress.

The Rev. Mr. Wynn was engaged in a characteristic hearty parting with one of his latest converts upon his own doorstep, with admirable *al fresco* effect. He had just clapped him on the shoulder. "Good-by, good-by, Charley, my boy, and keep in the right path; not up, or down, or round the gulch, you know — ha, ha! — but straight across lots to the shining gate." He had raised his voice under the stimulus of a few admiring spectators, and backed his convert playfully against the wall. "You see! we're goin' in to win, you bet. Good-by! I'd ask you to step in and have a chat, but I've got my work to do, and so have you. The gospel must n't keep us from that, must it, Charley? Ha, ha!"

The convert (who elsewhere was a profane expressman, and had become quite imbecile under Mr. Wynn's active heartiness and brotherly horse-play before spectators) managed, however, to feebly stammer with a blush something about "Miss Nellie."

"Ah, Nellie. She, too, is at her tasks — trimming her lamp — you know, the parable of the wise virgins," continued Father Wynn hastily, fearing that the convert might take the illustration literally. "There, there — good-by. Keep in the right path." And with a parting shove he dismissed Charley, and entered his own house.

That "wise virgin," Nellie, had evidently finished with the lamp, and was now going out to meet the bridegroom, as she was fully dressed and gloved, and had a pink parasol in her hand, as her father entered the sitting-room.



His bluff heartiness seemed to fade away as he removed his soft, broad-brimmed hat and glanced across the too fresh-looking apartment. There was a smell of mortar still in the air, and a faint suggestion that at any moment green grass might appear between the interstices of the red-brick hearth. The room, yielding a little in the point of coldness, seemed to share Miss Nellie's fresh virginity, and, barring the pink parasol, set her off as in a vestal's cell.

"I supposed you would n't care to see Brace, the expressman, so I got rid of him at the door," said her father, drawing one of the new chairs towards him slowly, and sitting down carefully, as if it were a hitherto untried experiment.

Miss Nellie's face took a tint of interest. "Then he does n't go with the coach to Indian Spring to-day?"

"No; why?"

"I thought of going over myself to get the Burnham girls to come to choir-meeting," replied Miss Nellie carelessly, "and he might have been company."

"He'd go now if he knew you were going," said her father; "but it's just as well he should n't be needlessly encouraged. I rather think that Sheriff Dunn is a little jealous of him. By the way, the sheriff is much better. I called to cheer him up to-day" (Mr. Wynn had in fact tumultuously accelerated the sick man's pulse), "and he talked of you, as usual. In fact, he said he had only two things to get well for. One was to catch and hang that woman Teresa, who shot him; the other—can't you guess the other?" he added archly, with a faint suggestion of his other manner.

Miss Nellie coldly could not.

The Rev. Mr. Wynn's archness vanished. "Don't be a fool," he said dryly. "He wants to marry you, and you know it."

"Most of the men here do," responded Miss Nellie, with-

out the least trace of coquetry. "Is the wedding or the hanging to take place first, or together, so he can officiate at both?"

"His share in the Union Ditch is worth a hundred thousand dollars," continued her father; "and if he is n't nominated for district judge this fall, he's bound to go to the legislature, anyway. I don't think a girl with your advantages and education can afford to throw away the chance of shining in Sacramento, San Francisco, or, in good time, perhaps even Washington."

Miss Nellie's eyes did not reflect entire disapproval of this suggestion, although she replied with something of her father's practical quality.

"Mr. Dunn is not out of his bed yet, and they say Teresa's got away to Arizona, so there is n't any particular hurry."

"Perhaps not; but see here, Nellie, I've some important news for you. You know your young friend of the Carquinez Woods — Dorman, the botanist, eh? Well, Brace knows all about him. And what do you think he is?"

Miss Nellie took upon herself a few extra degrees of cold, and did n't know.

"An Injin! Yes, an out-and-out Cherokee. You see he calls himself Dorman — Low Dorman. That's only French for 'Sleeping Water,' his Injin name — 'Low Dorman.'"

"You mean 'L'Eau Dormante,'" said Nellie.

"That's what I said. The chief called him 'Sleeping Water' when he was a boy, and one of them French Canadian trappers translated it into French when he brought him to California to school. But he's an Injin, sure. No wonder he prefers to live in the woods."

"Well?" said Nellie.

"Well," echoed her father impatiently, "he's an Injin,

I tell you, and you can't of course have anything to do with him. He must n't come here again."

"But you forget," said Nellie imperturbably, "that it was you who invited him here, and were so much exercised over him. You remember you introduced him to the bishop and those Eastern clergymen as a magnificent specimen of a young Californian. You forget what an occasion you made of his coming to church on Sunday, and how you made him come in his buckskin shirt and walk down the street with you after service!"

"Yes, yes," said the Rev. Mr. Wynn hurriedly.

"And," continued Nellie carelessly, "how you made us sing out of the same book 'Children of our Father's Fold,' and how you preached at him until he actually got a color!"

"Yes," said her father; "but it was n't known then he was an Injin, and they are frightfully unpopular with those Southwestern men among whom we labor. Indeed, I am quite convinced that when Brace said 'the only good Indian was a dead one' his expression, though extravagant, perhaps, really voiced the sentiments of the majority. It would be only kindness to the unfortunate creature to warn him from exposing himself to their rude but conscientious antagonism."

"Perhaps you'd better tell him, then, in your own popular way, which they all seem to understand so well," responded the daughter. Mr. Wynn cast a quick glance at her, but there was no trace of irony in her face — nothing but a half-bored indifference as she walked toward the window.

"I will go with you to the coach-office," said her father, who generally gave these simple paternal duties the pronounced character of a public Christian example.

"It's hardly worth while," replied Miss Nellie. "I've to stop at the Watsons', at the foot of the hill, and ask

after the baby ; so I shall go on to the Crossing and pick up the coach as it passes. Good-by."

Nevertheless, as soon as Nellie had departed, the Rev. Mr. Wynn proceeded to the coach-office, and publicly grasping the hand of Yuba Bill, the driver, commended his daughter to his care in the name of the universal brotherhood of man and the Christian fraternity. Carried away by his heartiness, he forgot his previous caution, and confided to the expressman Miss Nellie's regrets that she was not to have that gentleman's company. The result was that Miss Nellie found the coach with its passengers awaiting her with uplifted hats and wreathed smiles at the Crossing, and the box-seat (from which an unfortunate stranger, who had expensively paid for it, had been summarily ejected) at her service, beside Yuba Bill, who had thrown away his cigar and donned a new pair of buckskin gloves to do her honor. But a more serious result to the young beauty was the effect of the Rev. Mr. Wynn's confidences upon the impulsive heart of Jack Brace, the expressman. It has been already intimated that it was his "day off." Unable to summarily reassume his usual functions beside the driver without some practical reason, and ashamed to go so palpably as a mere passenger, he was forced to let the coach proceed without him. Discomfited for the moment, he was not, however, beaten. He had lost the blissful journey by her side, which would have been his professional right, but — she was going to Indian Spring! could he not anticipate her there? Might they not meet in the most accidental manner? And what might not come from that meeting away from the prying eyes of their own town? Mr. Brace did not hesitate, but saddling his fleet Buckskin, by the time the stage-coach had passed the Crossing in the highroad he had mounted the hill and was dashing along the "cut-off" in the same direction, a full mile in advance. Arriving at Indian

Spring, he left his horse at a Mexican posada on the confines of the settlement, and from the piled débris of a tunnel excavation awaited the slow arrival of the coach. On mature reflection he could give no reason why he had not boldly awaited it at the express-office, except a certain bashful consciousness of his own folly, and a belief that it might be glaringly apparent to the bystanders. When the coach arrived and he had overcome this consciousness, it was too late. Yuba Bill had discharged his passengers for Indian Spring, and driven away. Miss Nellie was in the settlement, but where? As time passed he became more desperate and bolder. He walked recklessly up and down the main street, glancing in at the open doors of shops, and even in the windows of private dwellings. It might have seemed a poor compliment to Miss Nellie, but it was an evidence of his complete preoccupation, when the sight of a female face at a window, even though it was plain or perhaps painted, caused his heart to bound, or the glancing of a skirt in the distance quickened his feet and his pulses. Had Jack contented himself with remaining at Excelsior he might have vaguely regretted, but as soon become as vaguely accustomed to, Miss Nellie's absence. But it was not until his hitherto quiet and passive love took this first step of action that it fully declared itself. When he had made the tour of the town a dozen times unsuccessfully, he had perfectly made up his mind that marriage with Nellie or the speedy death of several people, including possibly himself, was the only alternative. He regretted he had not accompanied her; he regretted he had not demanded where she was going; he contemplated a course of future action that two hours ago would have filled him with bashful terror. There was clearly but one thing to do, — to declare his passion the instant he met her, and return with her to Excelsior an accepted suitor, or not to return at all.

Suddenly he was vexatiously conscious of hearing his name lazily called, and looking up found that he was on the outskirts of the town, and interrogated by two horsemen.

“Got down to walk, and the coach got away from you, Jack, eh?”

A little ashamed of his preoccupation, Brace stammered something about “collections.” He did not recognize the men, but his own face, name, and business were familiar to everybody for fifty miles along the stage-road.

“Well, you can settle a bet for us, I reckon. Bill Dacre thar bet me five dollars and the drinks that a young gal we met at the edge of the Carquinez Woods, dressed in a long brown duster and half-muffled up in a hood, was the daughter of Father Wynn of Excelsior. I did not get a fair look at her, but it stands to reason that a high-toned young lady like Nellie Wynn don’t go trap’sing along the wood like a Pike County tramp. I took the bet. May be you know if she’s here or in Excelsior?”

Mr. Brace felt himself turning pale with eagerness and excitement. But the near prospect of seeing her presently gave him back his caution, and he answered truthfully that he had left her in Excelsior, and that in his two hours’ sojourn in Indian Spring he had not once met her. “But,” he added, with a Californian’s reverence for the sanctity of a bet, “I reckon you’d better make it a stand-off for twenty-four hours, and I’ll find out and let you know;” which, it is only fair to say, he honestly intended to do.

With a hurried nod of parting, he continued in the direction of the woods. When he had satisfied himself that the strangers had entered the settlement and would not follow him for further explanation, he quickened his pace. In half an hour he passed between two of the gigantic sentinels that guarded the entrance to a trail.

Here he paused to collect his thoughts. The woods were vast in extent, the trail dim and uncertain — at times apparently breaking off, or intersecting another trail as faint as itself. Believing that Miss Nellie had diverged from the highway only as a momentary excursion into the shade, and that she would not dare to penetrate its more sombre and unknown recesses, he kept within sight of the skirting plain. By degrees the sedate influence of the silent vaults seemed to depress him. The ardor of the chase began to flag. Under the calm of their dim roof the fever of his veins began to subside; his pace slackened; he reasoned more deliberately. It was by no means probable that the young woman in a brown duster was Nellie; it was not her habitual traveling-dress; it was not like her to walk unattended in the road; there was nothing in her tastes and habits to take her into this gloomy forest, allowing that she had even entered it; and on this absolute question of her identity the two witnesses were divided. He stopped irresolutely, and cast a last, long, half-despairing look around him. Hitherto he had given that part of the wood nearest the plain his greatest attention. His glance now sought its darker recesses. Suddenly he became breathless. Was it a beam of sunlight that had pierced the groined roof above, and now rested against the trunk of one of the dimmer, more secluded giants? No, it was moving; even as he gazed it slipped away, glanced against another tree, passed across one of the vaulted aisles, and then was lost again. Brief as was the glimpse, he was not mistaken — it was the figure of a woman.

In another moment he was on her track, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her reappear at a lesser distance. But the continual intervention of the massive trunks made the chase by no means an easy one, and as he could not keep her always in sight he was unable to follow or under-

stand the one intelligent direction which she seemed to invariably keep. Nevertheless, he gained upon her breathlessly, and, thanks to the bark-strewn floor, noiselessly. He was near enough to distinguish and recognize the dress she wore, a pale yellow, that he had admired when he first saw her. It was Nellie, unmistakably; if it were she of the brown duster, she had discarded it, perhaps for greater freedom. He was near enough to call out now, but a sudden nervous timidity overcame him; his lips grew dry. What should he say to her? How account for his presence? "Miss Nellie, one moment!" he gasped. She darted forward and — vanished.

At this moment he was not more than a dozen yards from her. He rushed to where she had been standing, but her disappearance was perfect and complete. He made a circuit of the group of trees within whose radius she had last appeared, but there was neither trace of her, nor suggestion of her mode of escape. He called aloud to her; the vacant woods let his helpless voice die in their unresponsive depths. He gazed into the air and down at the bark-strewn carpet at his feet. Like most of his vocation, he was sparing of speech, and epigrammatic after his fashion. Comprehending in one swift but despairing flash of intelligence the existence of some fateful power beyond his own weak endeavor, he accepted its logical result with characteristic grimness, threw his hat upon the ground, put his hands in his pockets, and said, —

"Well, I'm d—d!"



### CHAPTER III

OUT of compliment to Miss Nellie Wynn, Yuba Bill, on reaching Indian Spring, had made a slight *détour* to enable him to ostentatiously set down his fair passenger before the door of the Burnhams. When it had closed on the admiring eyes of the passengers and the coach had rattled away, Miss Nellie, without any undue haste or apparent change in her usual quiet demeanor, managed, however, to dispatch her business promptly, and, leaving an impression that she would call again before her return to Excelsior, parted from her friends, and slipped away through a side street to the General Furnishing Store of Indian Spring. In passing this emporium, Miss Nellie's quick eye had discovered a cheap brown linen duster hanging in its window. To purchase it, and put it over her delicate cambric dress, albeit with a shivering sense that she looked like a badly folded brown paper parcel, did not take long. As she left the shop it was with mixed emotions of chagrin and security that she noticed that her passage through the settlement no longer turned the heads of its male inhabitants. She reached the outskirts of Indian Spring and the highroad at about the time Mr. Brace had begun his fruitless patrol of the main street. Far in the distance a faint olive-green table mountain seemed to rise abruptly from the plain. It was the Carquinez Woods. Gathering her spotless skirts beneath her extemporized brown domino, she set out briskly towards them.

But her progress was scarcely free or exhilarating. She was not accustomed to walking in a country where "buggy-

riding" was considered the only genteel young-lady-like mode of progression, and its regular provision the expected courtesy of mankind. Always fastidiously booted, her low-quartered shoes were charming to the eye, but hardly adapted to the dust and inequalities of the highroad. It was true that she had thought of buying a coarser pair at Indian Spring, but once face to face with their uncompromising ugliness, she had faltered and fled. The sun was unmistakably hot, but her parasol was too well known and offered too violent a contrast to the duster for practical use. Once she stopped with an exclamation of annoyance, hesitated, and looked back. In half an hour she had twice lost her shoe and her temper; a pink flush took possession of her cheeks, and her eyes were bright with suppressed rage. Dust began to form grimy circles around their orbits; with cat-like shivers she even felt it pervade the roots of her blonde hair. Gradually her breath grew more rapid and hysterical, her smarting eyes became humid, and at last, encountering two observant horsemen in the road, she turned and fled, until, reaching the wood, she began to cry.

Nevertheless she waited for the two horsemen to pass, to satisfy herself that she was not followed; then pushed on vaguely, until she reached a fallen tree, where, with a gesture of disgust, she tore off her hapless duster and flung it on the ground. She then sat down sobbing, but after a moment dried her eyes hurriedly and started to her feet. A few paces distant, erect, noiseless, with outstretched hand, the young solitary of the Carquinez Woods advanced towards her. His hand had almost touched hers, when he stopped.

"What has happened?" he asked gravely.

"Nothing," she said, turning half away, and searching the ground with her eyes as if she had lost something. "Only I must be going back now."

"You shall go back at once, if you wish it," he said, flushing slightly. "But you have been crying; why?"

Frank as Miss Nellie wished to be, she could not bring herself to say that her feet hurt her, and the dust and heat were ruining her complexion. It was therefore with a half-confident belief that her troubles were really of a moral quality that she answered, "Nothing — nothing, but — but — it's wrong to come here."

"But you did not think it was wrong when you agreed to come, at our last meeting," said the young man, with that persistent logic which exasperates the inconsequent feminine mind. "It cannot be any more wrong to-day."

"But it was not so far off," murmured the young girl, without looking up.

"Oh, the distance makes it more improper, then," he said abstractedly; but after a moment's contemplation of her half-averted face, he asked gravely, "Has any one talked to you about me?"

Ten minutes before, Nellie had been burning to unburden herself of her father's warning, but now she felt she would not. "I wish you would n't call yourself Low," she said at last.

"But it's my name," he replied quietly.

"Nonsense! It's only a stupid translation of a stupid nickname. They might as well call you 'Water' at once."

"But you said you liked it."

"Well, so I do. But don't you see — I — oh dear! you don't understand."

Low did not reply, but turned his head with resigned gravity towards the deeper woods. Grasping the barrel of his rifle with his left hand, he threw his right arm across his left wrist and leaned slightly upon it with the habitual ease of a Western hunter — doubly picturesque in his own lithe, youthful symmetry. Miss Nellie looked at him from under her eyelids, and then half defiantly raised her head and her dark lashes. Gradually an almost magical change came over her features; her eyes grew larger and more and

more yearning, until they seemed to draw and absorb in their liquid depths the figure of the young man before her; her cold face broke into an ecstasy of light and color; her humid lips parted in a bright, welcoming smile, until, with an irresistible impulse, she arose, and throwing back her head stretched towards him two hands full of vague and trembling passion.

In another moment he had seized them, kissed them, and, as he drew her closer to his embrace, felt them tighten around his neck. "But what name do you wish to call me?" he asked, looking down into her eyes.

Miss Nellie murmured something confidentially to the third button of his hunting-shirt. "But that," he replied, with a faint smile, "*that* would n't be any more practical, and you would n't want others to call me *dar*—" Her fingers loosened around his neck, she drew her head back, and a singular expression passed over her face, which to any calmer observer than a lover would have seemed, however, to indicate more curiosity than jealousy.

"Who else *does* call you so?" she added earnestly. "How many, for instance?"

Low's reply was addressed not to her ear, but her lips. She did not avoid it, but added, "And do you kiss them all like that?" Taking him by the shoulders, she held him a little way from her, and gazed at him from head to foot. Then drawing him again to her embrace, she said, "I don't care; at least no woman has kissed you like that." Happy, dazzled, and embarrassed, he was beginning to stammer the truthful protestation that rose to his lips, but she stopped him: "No, don't protest! say nothing! Let *me* love *you*—that is all. It is enough." He would have caught her in his arms again, but she drew back. "We are near the road," she said quietly. "Come! you promised to show me where you camped. Let us make the most of our holiday. In an hour I must leave the woods."

"But I shall accompany you, dearest."

"No, I must go as I came — alone."

"But Nellie" —

"I tell you no," she said, with an almost harsh practical decision, incompatible with her previous abandonment.

"We might be seen together."

"Well, suppose we are; we must be seen together eventually," he remonstrated.

The young girl made an involuntary gesture of impatient negation, but checked herself. "Don't let us talk of that now. Come, while I am here under your own roof" — she pointed to the high interlaced boughs above them — "you must be hospitable. Show me your home; tell me, is n't it a little gloomy sometimes?"

"It never has been; I never thought it *would* be until the moment you leave it to-day."

She pressed his hand briefly and in a half-perfunctory way, as if her vanity had accepted and dismissed the compliment. "Take me somewhere," she said inquisitively, "where you stay most; I do not seem to see you *here*," she added, looking around her with a slight shiver. "It is so big and so high. Have you no place where you eat and rest and sleep?"

"Except in the rainy season, I camp all over the place — at any spot where I may have been shooting or collecting."

"Collecting?" queried Nellie.

"Yes; with the herbarium, you know."

"Yes," said Nellie dubiously. "But you told me once — the first time we ever talked together," she added, looking in his eyes — "something about your keeping your things like a squirrel in a tree. Could we not go there? Is there not room for us to sit and talk without being brow-beaten and looked down upon by these supercilious trees?"

"It's too far away," said Low truthfully, but with a

somewhat pronounced emphasis, "much too far for you just now; and it lies on another trail that enters the wood beyond. But come, I will show you a spring known only to myself, the wood ducks, and the squirrels. I discovered it the first day I saw you, and gave it your name. But you shall christen it yourself. It will be all yours, and yours alone, for it is so hidden and secluded that I defy any feet but my own, or whoso shall keep step with mine, to find it. Shall that foot be yours, Nellie?"

Her face beamed with a bright assent. "It may be difficult to track it from here," he said, "but stand where you are a moment, and don't move, rustle, nor agitate the air in any way. The woods are still now." He turned at right angles with the trail, moved a few paces into the ferns and underbrush, and then stopped with his finger on his lips. For an instant both remained motionless; then, with his intent face bent forward and both arms extended, he began to sink slowly upon one knee and one side, inclining his body with a gentle, perfectly graduated movement until his ear almost touched the ground. Nellie watched his graceful figure breathlessly, until, like a bow unbent, he stood suddenly erect again, and beckoned to her without changing the direction of his face.

"What is it?" she asked eagerly.

"All right; I have found it," he continued, moving forward without turning his head.

"But how? What did you kneel for?" He did not reply, but taking her hand in his, continued to move slowly on through the underbrush, as if obeying some magnetic attraction. "How did you find it?" again asked the half-awed girl, her voice unconsciously falling to a whisper. Still silent, Low kept his rigid face and forward tread for twenty yards further; then he stopped and released the girl's half-impatient hand. "How did you find it?" she repeated sharply.

“With my ears and nose,” replied Low gravely.

“With your nose?”

“Yes; I smelt it.”

Still fresh with the memory of his picturesque attitude, the young man’s reply seemed to involve something more irritating to her feelings than even that absurd anti-climax. She looked at him coldly and critically, and appeared to hesitate whether to proceed. “Is it far?” she asked.

“Not more than ten minutes now, as I shall go.”

“And you won’t have to smell your way again?”

“No; it is quite plain now,” he answered seriously, the young girl’s sarcasm slipping harmlessly from his Indian stolidity. “Don’t you smell it yourself?”

But Miss Nellie’s thin, cold nostrils refused to take that vulgar interest.

“Nor hear it? Listen!”

“You forget I suffer the misfortune of having been brought up under a roof,” she replied coldly.

“That’s true,” repeated Low, in all seriousness; “it’s not your fault. But do you know, I sometimes think I am peculiarly sensitive to water; I feel it miles away. At night, though I may not see it or even know where it is, I am conscious of it. It is company to me when I am alone, and I seem to hear it in my dreams. There is no music as sweet to me as its song. When you sang with me that day in church, I seemed to hear it ripple in your voice. It says to me more than the birds do, more than the rarest plants I find. It seems to live with me and for me. It is my earliest recollection; I know it will be my last, for I shall die in its embrace. Do you think, Nellie,” he continued, stopping short and gazing earnestly in her face — “do you think that the chiefs knew this when they called me ‘Sleeping Water’?”

To Miss Nellie’s several gifts I fear the gods had not added poetry. A slight knowledge of English verse of a

select character, unfortunately, did not assist her in the interpretation of the young man's speech, nor relieve her from the momentary feeling that he was at times deficient in intellect. She preferred, however, to take a personal view of the question, and expressed her sarcastic regret that she had not known before that she had been indebted to the great flume and ditch at Excelsior for the pleasure of his acquaintance. This pert remark occasioned some explanation, which ended in the girl's accepting a kiss in lieu of more logical argument. Nevertheless, she was still conscious of an inward irritation — always distinct from her singular and perfectly material passion — which found vent as the difficulties of their undeviating progress through the underbrush increased. At last she lost her shoe again, and stopped short. "It's a pity your Indian friends did not christen you 'Wild Mustard' or 'Clover,'" she said satirically, "that you might have had some sympathies and longings for the open fields instead of these horrid jungles! I know we will not get back in time."

Unfortunately, Low accepted this speech literally and with his remorseless gravity. "If my name annoys you, I can get it changed by the legislature, you know, and I can find out what my father's name was, and take that. My mother, who died in giving me birth, was the daughter of a chief."

"Then your mother was really an Indian?" said Nellie, "and you are" — She stopped short.

"But I told you all this the day we first met," said Low, with grave astonishment. "Don't you remember our long talk coming from church?"

"No," said Nellie coldly, "you didn't tell me." But she was obliged to drop her eyes before the unwavering, undeniable truthfulness of his.

"You have forgotten," he said calmly; "but it is only right you should have your own way in disposing of a



name that I have cared little for; and as you're to have a share of it" —

"Yes, but it's getting late, and if we are not going forward" — interrupted the girl impatiently.

"We *are* going forward," said Low imperturbably; "but I wanted to tell you, as we were speaking on *that* subject" (Nellie looked at her watch), "I've been offered the place of botanist and naturalist in Professor Grant's survey of Mount Shasta, and if I take it — why, when I come back, darling — well" —

"But you're not going just yet," broke in Nellie, with a new expression in her face.

"No."

"Then we need not talk of it now," she said with animation.

Her sudden vivacity relieved him. "I see what's the matter," he said gently, looking down at her feet, "these little shoes were not made to keep step with a moccasin. We must try another way." He stooped as if to secure the erring buskin, but suddenly lifted her like a child to his shoulder. "There," he continued, placing her arm around his neck, "you are clear of the ferns and brambles now, and we can go on. Are you comfortable?" He looked up, read her answer in her burning eyes and the warm lips pressed to his forehead at the roots of his straight dark hair, and again moved onward as in a mesmeric dream. But he did not swerve from his direct course, and with a final dash through the undergrowth parted the leafy curtain before the spring.

At first the young girl was dazzled by the strong light that came from a rent in the interwoven arches of the wood. The breach had been caused by the huge bulk of one of the great giants that had half fallen, and was lying at a steep angle against one of its mightiest brethren, having borne down a lesser tree in the arc of its down-

ward path. Two of the roots, as large as younger trees, tossed their blackened and bare limbs high in the air. The spring — the insignificant cause of this vast disruption — gurgled, flashed, and sparkled at the base; the limpid baby fingers that had laid bare the foundations of that fallen column played with the still clinging rootlets, laved the fractured and twisted limbs, and, widening, filled with sleeping water the graves from which they had been torn.

“It had been going on for years, down there,” said Low, pointing to a cavity from which the fresh water now slowly welled, “but it had been quickened by the rising of the subterranean springs and rivers which always occurs at a certain stage of the dry season. I remember that on that very night — for it happened a little after midnight, when all sounds are more audible — I was troubled and oppressed in my sleep by what you would call a nightmare; a feeling as if I was kept down by bonds and pinions that I longed to break. And then I heard a crash in this direction, and the first streak of morning brought me the sound and scent of water. Six months afterwards I chanced to find my way here, as I told you, and gave it your name. I did not dream that I should ever stand beside it with you, and have you christen it yourself.”

He unloosed the cup from his flask, and filling it at the spring handed it to her. But the young girl leant over the pool, and pouring the water idly back said, “I’d rather put my feet in it. May n’t I?”

“I don’t understand you,” he said wonderingly.

“My feet are *so* hot and dusty. The water looks deliciously cool. May I?”

“Certainly.”

He turned away as Nellie, with apparent unconsciousness, seated herself on the bank, and removed her shoes

and stockings. When she had dabbled her feet a few moments in the pool, she said over her shoulder, —

“ We can talk just as well, can't we ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“ Well, then, why did n't you come to church more often, and why did n't you think of telling father that you were convicted of sin and wanted to be baptized ? ”

“ I don't know,” hesitated the young man.

“ Well, you lost the chance of having father convert you, baptize you, and take you into full church fellowship.”

“ I never thought ” — he began.

“ You never thought. Are n't you a Christian ? ”

“ I suppose so.”

“ He supposes so! Have you no convictions — no professions ? ”

“ But, Nellie, I never thought that you ” —

“ Never thought that I — what ? Do you think that I could ever be anything to a man who did not believe in justification by faith, or in the covenant of church fellowship ? Do you think father would let me ? ”

In his eagerness to defend himself he stepped to her side. But seeing her little feet shining through the dark water, like outcroppings of delicately veined quartz, he stopped embarrassed. Miss Nellie, however, leaped to one foot, and, shaking the other over the pool, put her hand on his shoulder to steady herself. “ You haven't got a towel — or,” she said dubiously, looking at her small handkerchief, “ anything to dry them on ? ”

But Low did not, as she perhaps expected, offer his own handkerchief.

“ If you take a bath after our fashion,” he said gravely, “ you must learn to dry yourself after our fashion.”

Lifting her again lightly in his arms, he carried her a few steps to the sunny opening, and bade her bury her

feet in the dried mosses and baked withered grasses that were bleaching in a hollow. The young girl uttered a cry of childish delight, as the soft ciliated fibres touched her sensitive skin.

"It is healing, too," continued Low; "a moccasin filled with it after a day on the trail makes you all right again."

But Miss Nellie seemed to be thinking of something else.

"Is that the way the squaws bathe and dry themselves?"

"I don't know; you forget I was a boy when I left them."

"And you're sure you never knew any?"

"None."

The young girl seemed to derive some satisfaction in moving her feet up and down for several minutes among the grasses in the hollow; then, after a pause, said, "You are quite certain I am the first woman that ever touched this spring?"

"Not only the first woman, but the first human being, except myself."

"How nice!"

They had taken each other's hands; seated side by side, they leaned against a curving elastic root that half supported, half encompassed them. The girl's capricious, fitful manner succumbed as before to the near contact of her companion. Looking into her eyes, Low fell into a sweet, selfish lover's monologue, descriptive of his past and present feelings toward her, which she accepted with a heightened color, a slight exchange of sentiment, and a strange curiosity. The sun had painted their half-embraced silhouettes against the slanting tree-trunk, and began to decline unnoticed; the ripple of the water mingling with their whispers came as one sound to the

listening ear ; even their eloquent silences were as deep, and, I wot, perhaps as dangerous as the darkened pool that filled so noiselessly a dozen yards away. So quiet were they that the tremor of invading wings once or twice shook the silence, or the quick scamper of frightened feet rustled the dead grass. But in the midst of a prolonged stillness the young man sprang up so suddenly that Nellie was still half clinging to his neck as he stood erect. "Hush!" he whispered; "some one is near!"

He disengaged her anxious hands gently, leaped upon the slanting tree-trunk, and running half way up its incline with the agility of a squirrel, stretched himself at full length upon it, and listened.

To the impatient, inexplicably startled girl, it seemed an age before he rejoined her.

"You are safe," he said; "he's going by the western trail toward Indian Spring."

"Who is *he*?" she asked, biting her lips with a poorly restrained gesture of mortification and disappointment.

"Some stranger," replied Low.

"As long as he was n't coming here, why did you give me such a fright?" she said pettishly. "Are you nervous because a single wayfarer happens to stray here?"

"It was no wayfarer, for he tried to keep near the trail," said Low. "He was a stranger to the wood, for he lost his way every now and then. He was seeking or expecting some one, for he stopped frequently and waited or listened. He had not walked far, for he wore spurs that tinkled and caught in the brush; and yet he had not ridden here, for no horse's hoofs passed the road since we have been here. He must have come from Indian Spring."

"And you heard all that when you listened just now?" asked Nellie half disdainfully.

Impervious to her incredulity, Low turned his calm eyes

on her face. "Certainly, I'll bet my life on what I say. Tell me; do you know anybody in Indian Spring who would likely spy upon you?"

The young girl was conscious of a certain ill-defined uneasiness, but answered, "No."

"Then it was not *you* he was seeking," said Low thoughtfully. Miss Nellie had not time to notice the emphasis, for he added, "You must go at once; and lest you have been followed I will show you another way back to Indian Spring. It is longer, and you must hasten. Take your shoes and stockings with you until we are out of the bush."

He raised her again in his arms and strode once more out through the covert into the dim aisles of the wood.

They spoke but little; she could not help feeling that some other discordant element, affecting him more strongly than it did her, had come between them, and was half perplexed and half frightened. At the end of ten minutes he seated her upon a fallen branch, and telling her he would return by the time she had resumed her shoes and stockings glided from her like a shadow. She would have uttered an indignant protest at being left alone, but he was gone ere she could detain him. For a moment she thought she hated him. But when she had mechanically shod herself once more, not without nervous shivers at every falling needle, he was at her side.

"Do you know any one who wears a frieze coat like that?" he asked, handing her a few torn shreds of wool affixed to a splinter of bark.

Miss Nellie instantly recognized the material of a certain sporting-coat worn by Mr. Jack Brace on festive occasions, but a strange yet infallible instinct that was part of her nature made her instantly disclaim all knowledge of it.

"No," she said.

"Not any one who scents himself with some doctor's

stuff like cologne?" continued Low, with the disgust of keen olfactory sensibilities.

Again Miss Nellie recognized the perfume with which the gallant expressman was wont to make redolent her little parlor, but again she avowed no knowledge of its possessor. "Well," returned Low, with some disappointment, "such a man has been here. Be on your guard. Let us go at once."

She required no urging to hasten her steps, but hurried breathlessly at his side. He had taken a new trail by which they left the wood at right angles with the highway, two miles away. Following an almost effaced mule track along a slight depression of the plain, deep enough, however, to hide them from view, he accompanied her, until, rising to the level again, she saw they were beginning to approach the highway and the distant roofs of Indian Spring. "Nobody meeting you now," he whispered, "would suspect where you had been. Good-night! until next week — remember."

They pressed each other's hands, and standing on the slight ridge outlined against the paling sky, in full view of the highway, parted carelessly, as if they had been chance-met travelers. But Nellie could not restrain a parting backward glance as she left the ridge. Low had descended to the deserted trail, and was running swiftly in the direction of the Carquinez Woods.

## CHAPTER IV

TERESA awoke with a start. It was day already, but how far advanced the even, unchanging, soft twilight of the woods gave no indication. Her companion had vanished, and to her bewildered senses so had the camp-fire, even to its embers and ashes. Was she awake, or had she wandered away unconsciously in the night? One glance at the tree above her dissipated the fancy. There was the opening of her quaint retreat and the hanging strips of bark, and at the foot of the opposite tree lay the carcass of the bear. It had been skinned, and, as Teresa thought with an inward shiver, already looked half its former size.

Not yet accustomed to the fact that a few steps in either direction around the circumference of those great trunks produced the sudden appearance or disappearance of any figure, Teresa uttered a slight scream as her young companion unexpectedly stepped to her side. "You see a change here," he said; "the stamped-out ashes of the camp-fire lie under the brush," and he pointed to some cleverly scattered boughs and strips of bark which completely effaced the traces of last night's bivouac. "We can't afford to call the attention of any packer or hunter who might straggle this way to this particular spot and this particular tree; the more naturally," he added, "as they always prefer to camp over an old fire." Accepting this explanation meekly, as partly a reproach for her caprice of the previous night, Teresa hung her head.

"I'm very sorry," she said, "but would n't that," pointing to the carcass of the bear, "have made them curious?"



But Low's logic was relentless.

"By this time there would have been little left to excite curiosity if you had been willing to leave those beasts to their work."

"I'm very sorry," repeated the woman, her lips quivering.

"They are the scavengers of the wood," he continued in a lighter tone; "if you stay here you must try to use them to keep your house clean."

Teresa smiled nervously.

"I mean that they shall finish their work to-night," he added, "and I shall build another camp-fire for us a mile from here until they do."

But Teresa caught his sleeve.

"No," she said hurriedly, "don't, please, for me. You must not take the trouble nor the risk. Hear me; do, please. I can bear it, I *will* bear it—to-night. I would have borne it last night, but it was so strange—and," she passed her hands over her forehead, "I think I must have been half mad. But I am not so foolish now."

She seemed so broken and despondent that he replied reassuringly: "Perhaps it would be better that I should find another hiding-place for you, until I can dispose of that carcass, so that it will not draw dogs after the wolves, and men after *them*. Besides, your friend the sheriff will probably remember the bear when he remembers anything, and try to get on its track again."

"He's a conceited fool," broke in Teresa in a high voice, with a slight return of her old fury, "or he'd have guessed where that shot came from; and," she added in a lower tone, looking down at her limp and nerveless fingers, "he would n't have let a poor, weak, nervous wretch like me get away."

"But his deputy may put two and two together, and connect your escape with it."

Teresa's eyes flashed. "It would be like the dog, just to save his pride, to swear it was an ambush of my friends, and that he was overpowered by numbers. Oh yes! I see it all!" she almost screamed, lashing herself into a rage at the bare contemplation of this diminution of her glory. "That 's the dirty lie he tells everywhere, and is telling now."

She stamped her feet and glanced savagely around, as if at any risk to proclaim the falsehood. Low turned his impassive, truthful face towards her.

"Sheriff Dunn," he began gravely, "is a politician, and a fool when he takes to the trail as a hunter of man or beast. But he is not a coward nor a liar. Your chances would be better if he were — if he laid your escape to an ambush of your friends, than if his pride held you alone responsible."

"If he 's such a good man, why do you hesitate?" she replied bitterly. "Why don't you give me up at once, and do a service to one of your friends?"

"I do not even know him," returned Low, opening his clear eyes upon her. "I 've promised to hide you here, and I shall hide you as well from him as from anybody."

Teresa did not reply, but suddenly dropping down upon the ground buried her face in her hands and began to sob convulsively. Low turned impassively away, and putting aside the bark curtain climbed into the hollow tree. In a few moments he reappeared, laden with provisions and a few simple cooking-utensils, and touched her lightly on the shoulder. She looked up timidly; the paroxysm had passed, but her lashes yet glittered.

"Come," he said, "come and get some breakfast. I find you have eaten nothing since you have been here — twenty-four hours."

"I did n't know it," she said, with a faint smile. Then seeing his burden, and possessed by a new and strange

desire for some menial employment, she said hurriedly, "Let me carry something — do, please," and even tried to disencumber him.

Half annoyed, Low at last yielded, and handing his rifle said, "There, then, take that; but be careful — it's loaded!"

A cruel blush burnt the woman's face to the roots of her hair as she took the weapon hesitatingly in her hand.

"No!" she stammered, hurriedly lifting her shame-suffused eyes to his; "no! no!"

He turned away with an impatience which showed her how completely gratuitous had been her agitation and its significance, and said, "Well, then give it back if you are afraid of it." But she as suddenly declined to return it; and shouldering it deftly, took her place by his side. Silently they moved from the hollow tree together.

During their walk she did not attempt to invade his taciturnity. Nevertheless she was as keenly alive and watchful of his every movement and gesture as if she had hung enchanted on his lips. The unerring way with which he pursued a viewless, undeviating path through those trackless woods, his quick reconnaissance of certain trees or openings, his mute inspection of some almost imperceptible footprint of bird or beast, his critical examination of certain plants which he plucked and deposited in his deerskin haversack, were not lost on the quick-witted woman. As they gradually changed the clear, unencumbered aisles of the central woods for a more tangled undergrowth, Teresa felt that subtle admiration which culminates in imitation, and simulating perfectly the step, tread, and easy swing of her companion, followed so accurately his lead that she won a gratified exclamation from him when their goal was reached — a broken, blackened shaft, splintered by long-forgotten lightning, in the centre of a tangled carpet of wood-clover.

“I don’t wonder you distanced the deputy,” he said cheerfully, throwing down his burden, “if you can take the hunting-path like that. In a few days, if you stay here, I can venture to trust you alone for a little pasear when you are tired of the tree.”

Teresa looked pleased, but busied herself with arrangements for the breakfast, while he gathered the fuel for the roaring fire which soon blazed beside the shattered tree.

Teresa’s breakfast was a success. It was a revelation to the young nomad, whose ascetic habits and simple tastes were usually content with the most primitive forms of frontier cookery. It was at least a surprise to him to know that without extra trouble kneaded flour, water, and saleratus need not be essentially heavy; that coffee need not be boiled with sugar to the consistency of syrup; that even that rarest delicacy, small shreds of venison covered with ashes and broiled upon the end of a ramrod boldly thrust into the flames, would be better and even more expeditiously cooked upon burning coals. Moved in his practical nature, he was surprised to find this curious creature of disorganized nerves and useless impulses informed with an intelligence that did not preclude the welfare of humanity or the existence of a soul. He respected her for some minutes, until in the midst of a culinary triumph a big tear dropped and spluttered in the saucepan. But he forgave the irrelevancy by taking no notice of it, and by doing full justice to that particular dish.

Nevertheless, he asked several questions based upon these recently discovered qualities. It appeared that in the old days of her wanderings with the circus troupe she had often been forced to undertake this nomadic housekeeping. But she “despised it,” had never done it since, and always had refused to do it for “him” — the personal pronoun referring, as Low understood, to her lover, Curson. Not caring to revive these memories further, Low briefly concluded: —

"I don't know what you were, or what you may be, but from what I see of you you've got all the sabe of a frontiersman's wife."

She stopped and looked at him, and then, with an impulse of impudence that only half concealed a more serious vanity, asked, "Do you think I might have made a good squaw?"

"I don't know," he replied quietly. "I never saw enough of them to know."

Teresa, confident from his clear eyes that he spoke the truth, but having nothing ready to follow this calm disposal of her curiosity, relapsed into silence.

The meal finished, Teresa washed their scant table equipage in a little spring near the camp-fire; where, catching sight of her disordered dress and collar, she rapidly threw her shawl, after the national fashion, over her shoulder and pinned it quickly. Low cached the remaining provisions and the few cooking-utensils under the dead embers and ashes, obliterating all superficial indication of their camp-fire as deftly and artistically as he had before.

"There is n't the ghost of a chance," he said in explanation, "that anybody but you or I will set foot here before we come back to supper, but it's well to be on guard. I'll take you back to the cabin now, though I bet you could find your way there as well as I can."

On their way back Teresa ran ahead of her companion, and plucking a few tiny leaves from a hidden oasis in the bark-strewn trail brought them to him.

"That's the kind you're looking for, is n't it?" she said half timidly.

"It is," responded Low, in gratified surprise; "but how did you know it? You're not a botanist, are you?"

"I reckon not," said Teresa; "but you picked some when we came, and I noticed what they were."

Here was indeed another revelation. Low stopped and gazed at her with such frank, open, utterly unabashed curiosity that her black eyes fell before him.

"And do you think," he asked with logical deliberation, "that you could find any plant from another I should give you?"

"Yes."

"Or from a drawing of it?"

"Yes; perhaps even if you described it to me."

A half-confidential, half-fraternal silence followed.

"I tell you what. I've got a book" —

"I know it," interrupted Teresa; "full of these things."

"Yes. Do you think you could" —

"Of course I could," broke in Teresa again.

"But you don't know what I mean," said the imperturbable Low.

"Certainly I do. Why, find 'em, and preserve all the different ones for you to write under — that's it, is n't it?"

Low nodded his head, gratified, but not entirely convinced that she had fully estimated the magnitude of the endeavor.

"I suppose," said Teresa, in the feminine proscription voice which it would seem entered even the philosophical calm of the aisles they were treading — "I suppose that *she* places great value on them?"

Low had indeed heard Science personified before, nor was it at all impossible that the singular woman walking by his side had also. He said, "Yes;" but added, in mental reference to the Linnæan Society of San Francisco, that "*they* were rather particular about the rarer kinds."

Content as Teresa had been to believe in Low's tender relations with some favored *one* of her sex, this frank confession of a plural devotion staggered her.

"They?" she repeated.

"Yes," he continued calmly. "The Botanical Society

I correspond with are more particular than the Government Survey."

"Then you are doing this for a society?" demanded Teresa, with a stare.

"Certainly. I'm making a collection and classification of specimens. I intend — but what are you looking at?"

Teresa had suddenly turned away. Putting his hand lightly on her shoulder, the young man brought her face to face with him again. She was laughing.

"I thought all the while it was for a girl," she said; "and" — But here the mere effort of speech sent her off into an audible and genuine outburst of laughter. It was the first time he had seen her even smile other than bitterly. Characteristically unconscious of any humor in her error, he remained unembarrassed. But he could not help noticing a change in the expression of her face, her voice, and even her intonation. It seemed as if that fit of laughter had loosed the last ties that bound her to a self-imposed character, had swept away the last barrier between her and her healthier nature, had dispossessed a painful unreality, and relieved the morbid tension of a purely nervous attitude. The change in her utterance and the resumption of her softer Spanish accent seemed to have come with her confidences, and Low took leave of her before their sylvan cabin with a comrade's heartiness, and a complete forgetfulness that her voice had ever irritated him.

When he returned that afternoon he was startled to find the cabin empty. But instead of bearing any appearance of disturbance or hurried flight, the rude interior seemed to have magically assumed a decorous order and cleanliness unknown before. Fresh bark hid the inequalities of the floor. The skins and blankets were folded in the corners, the rude shelves were carefully arranged; even a few tall

ferns and bright but quickly fading flowers were disposed around the blackened chimney. She had evidently availed herself of the change of clothing he had brought her, for her late garments were hanging from the hastily-devised wooden pegs driven in the wall. The young man gazed around him with mixed feelings of gratification and uneasiness. His presence had been dispossessed in a single hour; his ten years of lonely habitation had left no trace that this woman had not effaced with a deft move of her hand. More than that, it looked as if she had always occupied it; and it was with a singular conviction that even when she should occupy it no longer it would only revert to him as her dwelling, that he dropped the bark shutters athwart the opening, and left it to follow her.

To his quick ear, fine eye, and abnormal senses, this was easy enough. She had gone in the direction of this morning's camp. Once or twice he paused with a half-gesture of recognition and a characteristic "Good!" at the place where she had stopped, but was surprised to find that her main course had been as direct as his own. Deviating from this direct line with Indian precaution he first made a circuit of the camp, and approached the shattered trunk from the opposite direction. He consequently came upon Teresa unawares. But the momentary astonishment and embarrassment were his alone.

He scarcely recognized her. She was wearing the garments he had brought her the day before — a certain discarded gown of Miss Nellie Wynn, which he had hurriedly begged from her under the pretext of clothing the wife of a distressed overland emigrant then on the way to the mines. Although he had satisfied his conscience with the intention of confessing the pious fraud to her when Teresa was gone and safe from pursuit, it was not without a sense of remorse that he witnessed the sacreligious transformation. The two women were nearly the same height and size; and although



Teresa's maturer figure accented the outlines more strongly, it was still becoming enough to increase his irritation.

Of this becomingness she was doubtless unaware at the moment that he surprised her. She was conscious of having "a change," and this had emboldened her to "do her hair" and otherwise compose herself. After their greeting she was the first to allude to the dress, regretting that it was not more of a rough disguise, and that, as she must now discard the national habit of wearing her shawl "manta" fashion over her head, she wanted a hat. "But you must not," she said, "borrow any more dresses for me from your young woman. Buy them for me at some shop. They left me enough money for that." Low gently put aside the few pieces of gold she had drawn from her pocket, and briefly reminded her of the suspicion such a purchase by him would produce. "That's so," she said with a laugh. "Caramba! what a mule I'm becoming! Ah! wait a moment. I have it! Buy me a common felt hat — a man's hat — as if for yourself, as a change to that animal," pointing to the fox-tailed cap he wore summer and winter, "and I'll show you a trick. I have n't run a theatrical wardrobe for nothing." Nor had she, for the hat thus procured, a few days later, became, by the aid of a silk handkerchief and a bluejay's feather, a fascinating "pork pie."

Whatever cause of annoyance to Low still lingered in Teresa's dress, it was soon forgotten in a palpable evidence of Teresa's value as botanical assistant. It appeared that during the afternoon she had not only duplicated his specimens, but had discovered one or two rare plants as yet unclassified in the flora of the Carquinez Woods. He was delighted, and in turn, over the camp-fire, yielded up some details of his present life and some earlier recollections.

"You don't remember anything of your father?" she asked. "Did he ever try to seek you out?"

"No! Why should he?" replied the imperturbable Low; "he was not a Cherokee."

"No, he was a beast," responded Teresa promptly. "And your mother — do you remember her?"

"No, I think she died."

"You *think* she died? Don't you know?"

"No!"

"Then you're another!" said Teresa. Notwithstanding this frankness, they shook hands for the night; Teresa nestling like a rabbit in a hollow by the side of the camp-fire; Low with his feet towards it, Indian-wise, and his head and shoulders pillowed on his haversack, only half distinguishable in the darkness beyond.

With such trivial details three uneventful days slipped by. Their retreat was undisturbed, nor could Low detect, by the least evidence to his acute perceptive faculties, that any intruding feet had since crossed the belt of shade. The echoes of passing events at Indian Spring had recorded the escape of Teresa as occurring at a remote and purely imaginative distance, and her probable direction the county of Yolo.

"Can you remember," he one day asked her, "what time it was when you cut the riata and got away?"

Teresa pressed her hands upon her eyes and temples.

"About three, I reckon."

"And you were here at seven; you could have covered some ground in four hours?"

"Perhaps — I don't know," she said, her voice taking up its old quality again. "Don't ask me — I ran all the way."

Her face was quite pale as she removed her hands from her eyes, and her breath came as quickly as if she had just finished that race for life.

"Then you think I am safe here?" she added, after a pause.

“Perfectly — until they find you are *not* in Yolo. Then they ’ll look here. And *that* ’s the time for you to go *there*.”

Teresa smiled timidly. “It will take them some time to search Yolo — unless,” she added, “you ’re tired of me here.” The charming *non sequitur* did not, however, seem to strike the young man. “I ’ve got time yet to find a few more plants for you,” she suggested.

“Oh, certainly !”

“And give you a few more lessons in cooking.”

“Perhaps.”

The conscientious and literal Low was beginning to doubt if she were really practical. How otherwise could she trifle with such a situation ?

It must be confessed that that day and the next she did trifle with it. She gave herself up to a grave and delicious languor that seemed to flow from shadow and silence and permeate her entire being. She passed hours in a thoughtful repose of mind and spirit that seemed to fall like balm from those steadfast guardians, and distill their gentle ether in her soul ; or breathed into her listening ear immunity from the forgotten past and security for the present. If there was no dream of the future in this calm, even recurrence of placid existence, so much the better. The simple details of each succeeding day, the quaint housekeeping, the brief companionship and coming and going of her young host, — himself at best a crystallized personification of the sedate and hospitable woods, — satisfied her feeble cravings. She no longer regretted the inferior passion that her fears had obliged her to take the first night she came ; she began to look up to this young man — so much younger than herself — without knowing what it meant ; it was not until she found that this attitude did not detract from his picturesqueness that she discovered herself seeking for reasons to degrade him from this seductive eminence.

A week had elapsed with little change. On two days he had been absent all day, returning only in time to sup in the hollow tree, which, thanks to the final removal of the dead bear from its vicinity, was now considered a safer retreat than the exposed camp-fire. On the first of these occasions she received him with some preoccupation, paying but little heed to the scant gossip he brought from Indian Spring, and retiring early under the plea of fatigue, that he might seek his own distant camp-fire, which, thanks to her stronger nerves and regained courage, she no longer required so near. On the second occasion, he found her writing a letter more or less blotted with her tears. When it was finished, she begged him to post it at Indian Spring, where in two days an answer would be returned, under cover, to him.

"I hope you will be satisfied then," she added.

"Satisfied with what?" queried the young man.

"You'll see," she replied, giving him her cold hand. "Good-night."

"But can't you tell me now?" he remonstrated, retaining her hand.

"Wait two days longer—it is n't much," was all she vouchsafed to answer.

The two days passed. Their former confidence and good fellowship were fully restored when the morning came on which he was to bring the answer from the post-office at Indian Spring. He had talked again of his future, and had recorded his ambition to procure the appointment of naturalist to a Government Surveying Expedition. She had even jocularly proposed to dress herself in man's attire and "enlist" as his assistant.

"But you will be safe with your friends, I hope, by that time," responded Low.

"Safe with my friends," she repeated in a lower voice. "Safe with my friends—yes!" An awkward silence

followed. Teresa broke it gayly: "But your girl, your sweetheart, my benefactor — will *she* let you go?"

"I have n't told her yet," said Low gravely, "but I don't see why she should object."

"Object, indeed!" interrupted Teresa in a high voice and a sudden and utterly gratuitous indignation; "how should she? I'd like to see her do it!"

She accompanied him some distance to the intersection of the trail, where they parted in good spirits. On the dusty plain without a gale was blowing that rocked the high treetops above her, but, tempered and subdued, entered the low aisles with a fluttering breath of morning and a sound like the cooing of doves. Never had the wood before shown so sweet a sense of security from the turmoil and tempest of the world beyond; never before had an intrusion from the outer life — even in the shape of a letter — seemed so wicked a desecration. Tempted by the solicitation of air and shade, she lingered, with Low's herbarium slung on her shoulder.

A strange sensation, like a shiver, suddenly passed across her nerves, and left them in a state of rigid tension. With every sense morbidly acute, with every faculty strained to its utmost, the subtle instincts of Low's woodcraft transformed and possessed her. She knew it now! A new element was in the wood — a strange being — another life — another man approaching! She did not even raise her head to look about her, but darted with the precision and fleetness of an arrow in the direction of her tree. But her feet were arrested, her limbs paralyzed, her very existence suspended, by the sound of a voice: —

"Teresa!"

It was a voice that had rung in her ears for the last two years in all phases of intensity, passion, tenderness, and anger; a voice upon whose modulations, rude and unmusical though they were, her heart and soul had hung

in transport or anguish. But it was a chime that had rung its last peal to her senses as she entered the Carquinez Woods, and for the last week had been as dead to her as a voice from the grave. It was the voice of her lover — Dick Curson !

## CHAPTER V

THE wind was blowing towards the stranger, so that he was nearly upon her when Teresa first took the alarm. He was a man over six feet in height, strongly built, with a slight tendency to a roundness of bulk which suggested reserved rather than impeded energy. His thick beard and mustache were closely cropped around a small and handsome mouth that lisped except when he was excited, but always kept fellowship with his blue eyes in a perpetual smile of half-cynical good humor. His dress was superior to that of the locality; his general expression that of a man of the world, albeit a world of San Francisco, Sacramento, and Murderer's Bar. He advanced towards her with a laugh and an outstretched hand.

"*You here!*" she gasped, drawing back.

Apparently neither surprised nor mortified at this reception, he answered frankly, "Yeth. You did n't expect me, I know. But Doloreth showed me the letter you wrote her, and — well — here I am, ready to help you, with two men and a thpare horth waiting outside the woodth on the blind trail."

"You — *you* — here?" she only repeated.

Curson shrugged his shoulders. "Yeth. Of courth you never expected to thee me again, and leatht of all *here*. I'll admit that; I'll thay I would n't if I'd been in your plathe. I'll go further, and thay you did n't want to thee me again — anywhere. But it all cometh to the thame thing. Here I am; I read the letter you wrote Doloreth. I read how you were hiding here, under

Dunn'th very nothe, with his whole pothe out, cavorting round and barkin' up the wrong tree. I made up my mind to come down here with a few nathty friends of mine and cut you out under Dunn'th nothe, and run you over into Yuba — that 'th all."

"How dared she show you my letter — *you* of all men? How dared she ask *your* help?" continued Teresa fiercely.

"But she did n't athk my help," he responded coolly. "D—d if I don't think she jutht calculated I'd be glad to know you were being hunted down and thtarving, that I might put Dunn on your track."

"You lie!" said Teresa furiously; "she was my friend. A better friend than those who professed — *more*," she added, with a contemptuous drawing away of her skirt as if she feared Curson's contamination.

"All right. Thettle that with her when you go back," continued Curson philosophically. "We can talk of that on the way. The thing now ith to get up and get out of thethe woods. Come!"

Teresa's only reply was a gesture of scorn.

"I know all that," continued Curson half soothingly, "but they 're waiting."

"Let them wait. I shall not go."

"What will you do?"

"Stay here — till the wolves eat me."

"Teresa, listen. D— it all — Teresa! — Tita! see here," he said with sudden energy. "I swear to God it's all right. I'm willing to let bygones be bygones and take a new deal. You shall come back as if nothing had happened, and take your old place as before. I don't mind doing the square thing, all round. If that's what you mean, if that's all that stands in the way, why, look upon the thing as settled. There, Tita, old girl, come."

Careless or oblivious of her stony silence and staring eyes, he attempted to take her hand. But she disengaged



herself with a quick movement, drew back, and suddenly crouched like a wild animal about to spring. Curson folded his arms as she leaped to her feet; the little dagger she had drawn from her garter flashed menacingly in the air, but she stopped.

The man before her remained erect, impassive, and silent; the great trees around and beyond her remained erect, impassive, and silent; there was no sound in the dim aisles but the quick panting of her mad passion, no movement in the calm, motionless shadow but the trembling of her uplifted steel. Her arm bent and slowly sank, her fingers relaxed, the knife fell from her hand.

"That'th quite enough for a thow," he said, with a return to his former cynical ease and a perceptible tone of relief in his voice. "It'th the thame old Teretha. Well, then, if you won't go with me, go without me; take the led horthe and cut away. Dick Athley and Peterth will follow you over the county line. If you want thome money, there it ith." He took a buckskin purse from his pocket. "If you won't take it from me" — he hesitated as she made no reply — "Athley 'th flush and ready to lend you thome."

She had not seemed to hear him, but had stooped in some embarrassment, picked up the knife and hastily hid it, then with averted face and nervous fingers was beginning to tear strips of loose bark from the nearest trunk.

"Well, what do you thay?"

"I don't want any money, and I shall stay here." She hesitated, looked around her, and then added, with an effort, "I suppose you meant well. Be it so! Let by-gones be by-gones. You said just now, 'It's the same old Teresa.' So she is, and seeing she's the same she's better here than anywhere else."

There was enough bitterness in her tone to call for Curson's half-perfunctory sympathy.

"That be d—d," he responded quickly. "Jutht thay you'll come, Tita, and" —

She stopped his half-spoken sentence with a negative gesture. "You don't understand. I shall stay here."

"But even if they don't theek you here, you can't live here forever. The friend that you wrote about who wath the good to you, you know, can't keep you here alwayth; and are you thure you can alwayth trutht her?"

"It isn't a woman — it's a man." She stopped short, and colored to the line of her forehead. "Who said it was a woman?" she continued fiercely, as if to cover her confusion with a burst of gratuitous anger. "Is that another of your lies?"

Curson's lips, which for a moment had completely lost their smile, were now drawn together in a prolonged whistle. He gazed curiously at her gown, at her hat, at the bow of bright ribbon that tied her black hair, and said, "Ah!"

"A poor man who has kept my secret," she went on hurriedly; "a man as friendless and lonely as myself. Yes," disregarding Curson's cynical smile, "a man who has shared everything" —

"Naturally," suggested Curson.

"And turned himself out of his only shelter to give me a roof and covering," she continued mechanically, struggling with the new and horrible fancy that his words awakened.

"And thlept every night at Indian Thpring to save your reputation," said Curson. "Of courthe."

Teresa turned very white. Curson was prepared for an outburst of fury — perhaps even another attack. But the crushed and beaten woman only gazed at him with frightened and imploring eyes. "For God's sake, Dick, don't say that!"

The amiable cynic was staggered. His good humor

and a certain chivalrous instinct he could not repress got the better of him. He shrugged his shoulders. "What I thay and what you *do*, Teretha, need n't make us quarrel. I've no claim on you—I know it. Only"—a vivid sense of the ridiculous, powerful in men of his stamp, completed her victory—"only don't thay anything about my coming down here to cut you out from the—the—the *the sheriff*." He gave utterance to a short but unaffected laugh, made a slight grimace, and turned to go.

Teresa did not join in his mirth. Awkward as it would have been if he had taken a severer view of the subject, she was mortified even amidst her fears and embarrassment at his levity. Just as she had become convinced that his jealousy had made her over-conscious, his apparent good-humored indifference gave that over-consciousness a guilty significance. Yet this was lost in her sudden alarm as her companion, looking up, uttered an exclamation, and placed his hand upon his revolver. With a sinking conviction that the climax had come, Teresa turned her eyes. From the dim aisles beyond, Low was approaching. The catastrophe seemed complete.

She had barely time to utter an imploring whisper: "In the name of God, not a word to him." But a change had already come over her companion. It was no longer a parley with a foolish woman; he had to deal with a man like himself. As Low's dark face and picturesque figure came nearer, Mr. Curson's proposed method of dealing with him was made audible.

"Ith it a mulatto or a Thircuth, or both?" he asked, with affected anxiety.

Low's Indian phlegm was impervious to such assault. He turned to Teresa, without apparently noticing her companion. "I turned back," he said quietly, "as soon as I knew there were strangers here; I thought you might need

me." She noticed for the first time that, in addition to his rifle, he carried a revolver and hunting-knife in his belt.

"Yeth," returned Curson, with an ineffectual attempt to imitate Low's phlegm; "but ath I did n't happen to be a sthranger to thith lady, perhaps it wath n't nethethary, particularly ath I had two friends" —

"Waiting at the edge of the wood with a led horse," interrupted Low, without addressing him, but apparently continuing his explanation to Teresa. Bnt she turned to Low with feverish anxiety.

"That's so — he is an old friend" — she gave a quick, imploring glance at Curson — "an old friend who came to help me away — he is very kind," she stammered, turning alternately from the one to the other; "but I told him there was no hurry — at least to-day — that you — were — very good — too, and would hide me a little longer until your plan — you know *your* plan," she added, with a look of beseeching significance to Low — "could be tried." And then, with a helpless conviction that her excuses, motives, and emotions were equally and perfectly transparent to both men, she stopped in a tremble.

"Perhaph it 'th jutht ath well, then, that the gentleman came thraight here, and did n't tackle my two friendth when he pathed them," observed Curson half sarcastically.

"I have not passed your friends, uor have I been near them," said Low, looking at him for the first time, with the same exasperating calm; "or perhaps I should not be *here* or they *there*. I knew that one man entered the wood a few moments ago, and that two men and four horses remained outside."

"That's true," said Teresa to Curson excitedly — "that's true. He knows all. He can see without looking, hear without listening. He — he" — she stammered, colored, and stopped.

The two men had faced each other. Curson, after his

first good-natured impulse, had retained no wish to regain Teresa, whom he felt he no longer loved, and yet who, for that very reason perhaps, had awakened his chivalrous instincts. Low, equally on his side, was altogether unconscious of any feeling which might grow into a passion, and prevent him from letting her go with another if for her own safety. They were both men of a certain taste and refinement. Yet, in spite of all this, some vague instinct of the baser male animal remained with them, and they were moved to a mutually aggressive attitude in the presence of the female.

One word more, and the opening chapter of a sylvan Iliad might have begun. But this modern Helen saw it coming, and arrested it with an inspiration of feminine genius. Without being observed, she disengaged her knife from her bosom, and let it fall as if by accident. It struck the ground with the point of its keen blade, bounded, and rolled between them. The two men started, and looked at each other with a foolish air. Curson laughed.

"I reckon she can take care of herthelf," he said, extending his hand to Low. "I'm off. But if I'm wanted *she*'ll know where to find me." Low took the proffered hand, but neither of the two men looked at Teresa. The reserve of antagonism once broken, a few words of caution, advice, and encouragement passed between them, in apparent obliviousness of her presence or her personal responsibility. As Curson at last nodded a farewell to her, Low insisted upon accompanying him as far as the horses, and in another moment she was again alone.

She had saved a quarrel between them at the sacrifice of herself, for her vanity was still keen enough to feel that this exhibition of her old weakness had degraded her in their eyes, and, worse, had lost the respect her late restraint had won from Low. They had treated her like a child or a crazy woman, perhaps even now were exchanging criti-

cisms upon her — perhaps pitying her! Yet she had prevented a quarrel, a fight, possibly the death of either one or the other of these men who despised her, for none better knew than she the trivial beginning and desperate end of these encounters. Would they — would Low ever realize it, and forgive her? Her small, dark hands went up to her eyes, and she sank upon the ground. She looked through tear-veiled lashes upon the mute and giant witnesses of her deceit and passion, and tried to draw, from their immovable calm, strength and consolation as before. But even they seemed to stand apart, reserved and forbidding.

When Low returned she hoped to gather from his eyes and manner what had passed between him and her former lover. But beyond a mere gentle abstraction at times he retained his usual calm. She was at last forced to allude to it herself with simulated recklessness.

“I suppose I did n’t get a very good character from my last place?” she said, with a laugh.

“I don’t understand you,” he replied, in evident sincerity.

She bit her lip and was silent. But as they were returning home, she said gently, “I hope you were not angry with me for the lie I told when I spoke of ‘your plan.’ I could not give the real reason for not returning with — with — that man. But it’s not all a lie. I have a plan — if you have n’t. When you are ready to go to Sacramento to take your place, dress me as an Indian boy, paint my face, and let me go with you. You can leave me — there — you know.”

“It’s not a bad idea,” he responded gravely. “We will see.”

On the next day, and the next, the rencontre seemed to be forgotten. The herbarium was already filled with rare specimens. Teresa had even overcome her feminine re-

pugnance to "bugs" and creeping things so far as to assist in his entomological collection. He had drawn from a sacred cache in the hollow of a tree the few worn textbooks from which he had studied.

"They seem very precious," she said, with a smile.

"Very," he replied gravely. "There was one with plates that the ants ate up, and it will be six months before I can afford to buy another."

Teresa glanced hurriedly over his well-worn buckskin suit, at his calico shirt with its pattern almost obliterated by countless washings, and became thoughtful.

"I suppose you could n't buy one at Indian Spring?" she said innocently.

For once Low was startled out of his phlegm. "Indian Spring!" he ejaculated; "perhaps not even in San Francisco. These came from the States."

"How did you get them?" persisted Teresa.

"I bought them for skins I got over the ridge."

"I did n't mean that — but no matter. Then you mean to sell that bearskin, don't you?" she added.

Low had, in fact, already sold it, the proceeds having been invested in a gold ring for Miss Nellie, which she scrupulously did not wear except in his presence. In his singular truthfulness he would have frankly confessed it to Teresa, but the secret was not his own. He contented himself with saying that he had disposed of it at Indian Spring. Teresa started, and communicated unconsciously some of her nervousness to her companion. They gazed in each other's eyes with a troubled expression.

"Do you think it was wise to sell that particular skin, which might be identified?" she asked timidly.

Low knitted his arched brows, but felt a strange sense of relief. "Perhaps not," he said carelessly; "but it's too late now to mend matters."

That afternoon she wrote several letters, and tore them

up. One, however, she retained, and handed it to Low to post at Indian Spring, whither he was going. She called his attention to the superscription being the same as the previous letter, and added, with affected gayety, "But if the answer is n't as prompt, perhaps it will be pleasanter than the last." Her quick feminine eye noticed a little excitement in his manner and a more studious attention to his dress. Only a few days before she would not have allowed this to pass without some mischievous allusion to his mysterious sweetheart; it troubled her greatly now to find that she could not bring herself to this household pleantry, and that her lip trembled and her eye grew moist as he parted from her.

The afternoon passed slowly. He had said he might not return to supper until late; nevertheless a strange restlessness took possession of her as the day wore on. She put aside her work, — the darning of his stockings, — and rambled aimlessly through the woods. She had wandered she knew not how far, when she was suddenly seized with the same vague sense of a foreign presence which she had felt before. Could it be Curson again, with a word of warning? No! she knew it was not he; so subtle had her sense become that she even fancied that she detected in the invisible aura projected by the unknown no significance or relation to herself or Low, and felt no fear. Nevertheless she deemed it wisest to seek the protection of her sylvan bower, and hurried swiftly thither.

But not so quickly nor directly that she did not once or twice pause in her flight to examine the new-comer from behind a friendly trunk. He was a stranger — a young fellow with a brown mustache, wearing heavy Mexican spurs in his riding-boots, whose tinkling he apparently did not care to conceal. He had perceived her, and was evidently pursuing her, but so awkwardly and timidly that she eluded him with ease. When she had reached the security of the



hollow tree, and had pulled the curtain of bark before the narrow opening, with her eye to the interstices, she waited his coming. He arrived breathlessly in the open space before the tree where the bear once lay; the dazed, bewildered, and half-awed expression of his face, as he glanced around him and through the openings of the forest aisles, brought a faint smile to her saddened face. At last he called in a half-embarrassed voice, —

“Miss Nellie!”

The smile faded from Teresa's cheek. Who was “Miss Nellie”? She pressed her ear to the opening. “Miss Wynn!” the voice again called, but was lost in the echoless woods. Devoured with a new and gratuitous curiosity, in another moment Teresa felt she would have disclosed herself at any risk, but the stranger rose and began to retrace his steps. Long after his tinkling spurs were lost in the distance, Teresa remained like a statue, staring at the place where he had stood. Then she suddenly turned like a mad woman, glanced down at the gown she was wearing, tore it from her back as if it had been a polluted garment, and stamped upon it in a convulsion of rage. And then, with her beautiful bare arms clasped together over her head, she threw herself upon her couch in a tempest of tears.

## CHAPTER VI

WHEN Miss Nellie reached the first mining extension of Indian Spring, which surrounded it like a fosse, she descended for one instant into one of its trenches, opened her parasol, removed her duster, hid it under a boulder, and with a few shivers and cat-like strokes of her soft hands not only obliterated all material traces of the stolen cream of Carquinez Woods, but assumed a feline demureness quite inconsistent with any moral dereliction. Unfortunately, she forgot to remove at the same time a certain ring from her third finger, which she had put on with her duster and had worn at no other time. With this slight exception, the benignant fate which always protected that young person brought her in contact with the Burnham girls at one end of the main street as the returning coach to Excelsior entered the other, and enabled her to take leave of them before the coach-office with a certain ostentation of parting which struck Mr. Jack Brace, who was lingering at the doorway, into a state of utter bewilderment.

Here was Miss Nellie Wynn, the helle of Excelsior, calm, quiet, self-possessed, her chaste cambric skirts and dainty shoes as fresh as when she had left her father's house; but where was the woman of the brown duster, and where the yellow-dressed apparition of the woods? He was feebly repeating to himself his mental adjuration of a few hours before when he caught her eye, and was taken with a blush and a fit of coughing. Could he have been such an egregious fool, and was it not plainly written on his embarrassed face for her to read?

“Are we going down together?” asked Miss Nellie, with an exceptionally gracious smile.

There was neither affectation nor coquetry in this advance. The girl had no idea of Brace's suspicion of her, nor did any uneasy desire to placate or deceive a possible rival of Low's prompt her graciousness. She simply wished to shake off in this encounter the already stale excitement of the past two hours, as she had shaken the dust of the woods from her clothes. It was characteristic of her irresponsible nature and transient susceptibilities that she actually enjoyed the relief of change; more than that, I fear, she looked upon this infidelity to a past dubious pleasure as a moral principle. A mild, open flirtation with a recognized man like Brace, after her secret passionate tryst with a nameless nomad like Low, was an ethical equipoise that seemed proper to one of her religious education.

Brace was only too happy to profit by Miss Nellie's condescension; he at once secured the seat by her side, and spent the four hours and a half of their return journey to Excelsior in blissful but timid communion with her. If he did not dare to confess his past suspicions, he was equally afraid to venture upon the boldness he had premeditated a few hours before. He was therefore obliged to take a middle course of slightly egotistical narration of his own personal adventures, with which he beguiled the young girl's ear. This he only departed from once, to describe to her a valuable grizzly bearskin which he had seen that day for sale at Indian Spring, with a view to divining her possible acceptance of it for a “buggy robe;” and once to comment upon a ring which she had inadvertently disclosed in pulling off her glove.

“It's only an old family keepsake,” she added, with easy mendacity; and affecting to recognize in Mr. Brace's curiosity a not unnatural excuse for toying with her charm-

ing fingers, she hid them in chaste and virginal seclusion in her lap, until she could re-cover the ring and resume her glove.

A week passed — a week of peculiar and desiccating heat for even those dry Sierra table-lands. The long days were filled with impalpable dust and acrid haze suspended in the motionless air; the nights were breathless and dewless; the cold wind which usually swept down from the snow line was laid to sleep over a dark monotonous level, whose horizon was pricked with the eating fires of burning forest crests. The lagging coach of Indian Spring drove up at Excelsior, and precipitated its passengers with an accompanying cloud of dust before the Excelsior Hotel. As they emerged from the coach, Mr. Brace, standing in the doorway, closely scanned their begrimed and almost unrecognizable faces. They were the usual type of travelers: a single professional man in dusty black, a few traders in tweeds and flannels, a sprinkling of miners in red and gray shirts, a Chinaman, a negro, and a Mexican packer or muleteer. This latter for a moment mingled with the crowd in the bar-room, and even penetrated the corridor and dining-room of the hotel, as if impelled by a certain semi-civilized curiosity, and then strolled with a lazy, dragging step — half impeded by the enormous leather leggings, chains, and spurs, peculiar to his class — down the main street. The darkness was gathering, but the muleteer indulged in the same childish scrutiny of the dimly lighted shops, magazines, and saloons, and even of the occasional groups of citizens at the street corners. Apparently young, as far as the outlines of his figure could be seen, he seemed to show even more than the usual concern of masculine Excelsior in the charms of womankind. The few female figures about at that hour, or visible at window or veranda, received his marked attention; he respectfully followed the

two auburn-haired daughters of Deacon Johnson on their way to choir-meeting to the door of the church. Not content with that act of discreet gallantry, after they had entered he managed to slip in unperceived behind them.

The memorial of the Excelsior gamblers' generosity was a modern building, large and pretentious for even Mr. Wynn's popularity, and had been good-humoredly known, in the characteristic language of the generous donors, as one of the "biggest religious bluffs" on record. Its groined rafters, which were so new and spicy that they still suggested their native forest aisles, seldom covered more than a hundred devotees, and in the rambling choir, with its bare space for the future organ, the few choristers, gathered round a small harmonium, were lost in the deepening shadow of that summer evening. The muleteer remained hidden in the obscurity of the vestibule. After a few moments' desultory conversation, in which it appeared that the unexpected absence of Miss Nellie Wynn, their leader, would prevent their practicing, the choristers withdrew. The stranger, who had listened eagerly, drew back in the darkness as they passed out, and remained for a few moments a vague and motionless figure in the silent church. Then coming cautiously to the window, the flapping broad-brimmed hat was put aside, and the faint light of the dying day shone in the black eyes of Teresa! Despite her face, darkened with dye and disfigured with dust, the matted hair piled and twisted around her head, the strange dress and boyish figure, one swift glance from under her raised lashes betrayed her identity.

She turned aside mechanically into the first pew, picked up and opened a hymn-book. Her eyes became riveted on a name written on the title-page, "Nellie Wynn." *Her* name, and *her* book. The instinct that had guided her here was right; the slight gossip of her fellow passengers was right; this was the clergyman's daughter, whose praise

filled all mouths. This was the unknown girl the stranger was seeking, but who in her turn perhaps had been seeking Low — the girl who absorbed his fancy — the secret of his absences, his preoccupation, his coldness! This was the girl whom to see, perhaps in his arms, she was now periling her liberty and her life, unknown to him! A slight odor, some faint perfume of its owner, came from the book: it was the same she had noticed in the dress Low had given her. She flung the volume to the ground, and, throwing her arms over the back of the pew before her, buried her face in her hands.

In that light and attitude she might have seemed some rapt acolyte abandoned to self-communion. But whatever yearning her soul might have had for higher sympathy or deeper consolation, I fear that the spiritual tabernacle of Excelsior and the Rev. Mr. Wynn did not meet that requirement. She only felt the dry, oven-like heat of that vast shell, empty of sentiment and beauty, hollow in its pretense, and dreary in its desolation. She only saw in it a chief altar for the glorification of this girl who had absorbed even the pure worship of her companion, and converted and degraded his sublime paganism to her petty creed. With a woman's withering contempt for her own art displayed in another woman, she thought how she herself could have touched him with the peace that the majesty of their woodland aisles — so unlike this pillared sham — had taught her own passionate heart, had she but dared. Mingling with this imperfect theology, she felt she could have proved to him also that a brunette and a woman of her experience was better than an immature blonde. She began to loathe herself for coming hither, and dreaded to meet his face. Here a sudden thought struck her. What if he had not come here? What if she had been mistaken? What if her rash interpretation of his absence from the woods that night was simple madness? What if he should return — if

he had already returned? She rose to her feet, whitening, yet joyful with the thought. She would return at once; what was the girl to her now? Yet there was time to satisfy herself if he were at *her* house. She had been told where it was; she could find it in the dark; an open door or window would betray some sign or sound of the occupants. She rose, replaced her hat over her eyes, knotted her flaunting scarf around her throat, groped her way to the door, and glided into the outer darkness.

## CHAPTER VII

It was quite dark when Mr. Jack Brace stopped before Father Wynn's open door. The windows were also invitingly open to the wayfarer, as were the pastoral counsels of Father Wynn, delivered to some favored guest within, in a tone of voice loud enough for a pulpit. Jack Brace paused. The visitor was the convalescent sheriff, Jim Dunn, who had publicly commemorated his recovery by making his first call upon the father of his inamorata. The Rev. Mr. Wynn had been expatiating upon the unremitting heat as a possible precursor of forest fires, and exhibiting some catholic knowledge of the designs of a Deity in that regard, and what should be the policy of the Legislature, when Mr. Brace concluded to enter. Mr. Wynn and the wounded man, who occupied an armchair by the window, were the only occupants of the room. But in spite of the former's ostentatious greeting, Brace could see that his visit was inopportune and unwelcome. The sheriff nodded a quick, impatient recognition, which, had it not been accompanied by an anathema on the heat, might have been taken as a personal insult. Neither spoke of Miss Nellie, although it was patent to Brace that they were momentarily expecting her — all of which went far to strengthen a certain wavering purpose in his mind.

“Ah, ha! strong language, Mr. Dunn,” said Father Wynn, referring to the sheriff's adjuration; “but ‘out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh.’ Job, sir, cursed, we are told, and even expressed himself in vigorous Hebrew regarding his birthday. Ha, ha! I'm not op-



posed to that. When I have often wrestled with the spirit I confess I have sometimes said, 'D—n you.' Yes, sir, 'D—n you.'"

There was something so unutterably vile in the reverend gentleman's utterance and emphasis of this oath that the two men, albeit both easy and facile blasphemers, felt shocked; as the purest of actresses is apt to overdo the rakishness of a gay Lothario, Father Wynn's immaculate conception of an imprecation was something terrible. But he added, "The law ought to interfere with the reckless use of camp-fires in the woods in such weather by packers and prospectors."

"It is n't so much the work of white men," broke in Brace, "as it is of Greasers, Chinamen, and Diggers, especially Diggers. There's that blasted Low, ranges the whole Carquinez Woods as if they were his. I reckon he ain't particular just where he throws his matches."

"But he's not a Digger; he's a Cherokee, and only a half-breed at that," interpolated Wynn. "Unless," he added, with the artful suggestion of the betrayed trust of a too credulous Christian, "he deceived me in this as in other things."

In what other things Low had deceived him he did not say; but, to the astonishment of both men, Dunn growled a dissent to Brace's proposition. Either from some secret irritation with that possible rival, or impatience at the prolonged absence of Nellie, he had "had enough of that sort of hog-wash ladled out to him for genuine liquor." As to the Carquinez Woods, he [Dunn] "did n't know why Low had n't as much right there as if he'd grabbed it under a preëmption law and did n't live there." With this hint at certain speculations of Father Wynn in public lands for a homestead, he added that "if they [Brace and Wynn] could bring him along any older American settler than an Indian, they might rake down his [Dunn's] pile." Unprepared

for this turn in the conversation, Wynn hastened to explain that he did not refer to the pure aborigine, whose gradual extinction no one regretted more than himself, but to the mongrel, who inherited only the vices of civilization. "There should be a law, sir, against the mingling of races. There are men, sir, who violate the laws of the Most High by living with Indian women — squaw men, sir, as they are called."

Dunn rose with a face livid with weakness and passion. "Who dares say that? They are a d—d sight better than sneaking Northern Abolitionists, who married their daughters to buck niggers like" — But a spasm of pain withheld this Parthian shot at the politics of his two companions, and he sank back helplessly in his chair.

An awkward silence ensued. The three men looked at each other in embarrassment and confusion. Dunn felt that he had given way to a gratuitous passion; Wynn had a vague presentiment that he had said something that imperiled his daughter's prospects; and Brace was divided between an angry retort and the secret purpose already alluded to.

"It's all the blasted heat," said Dunn, with a forced smile, pushing away the whiskey which Wynn had ostentatiously placed before him.

"Of course," said Wynn hastily; "only it's a pity Nellie ain't here to give you her smelling-salts. She ought to be back now," he added, no longer mindful of Brace's presence; "the coach is over-due now, though I reckon the heat made Yuba Bill take it easy at the up grade."

"If you mean the coach from Indian Spring," said Brace quietly, "it's in already; but Miss Nellie did n't come on it."

"Maybe she got out at the Crossing," said Wynn cheerfully; "she sometimes does."

"She did n't take the coach at Indian Spring," returned

Brace, "because I saw it leave, and passed it on Buckskin ten minutes ago, coming up the hills."

"She's stopped over at Burnham's," said Wynn reflectively. Then, in response to the significant silence of his guests, he added, in a tone of chagrin which his forced heartiness could not disguise, "Well, boys, it's a disappointment all round; but we must take the lesson as it comes. I'll go over to the coach-office and see if she's sent any word. Make yourselves at home until I return."

When the door had closed behind him, Brace arose and took his hat as if to go. With his hand on the lock, he turned to his rival, who, half-hidden in the gathering darkness, still seemed unable to comprehend his ill luck.

"If you're waiting for that bald-headed fraud to come back with the truth about his daughter," said Brace coolly, "you'd better send for your things and take up your lodgings here."

"What do you mean?" said Dunn sternly.

"I mean that she's not at the Burnhams'; I mean that he does or does not know *where* she is, and that in either case he is not likely to give you information. But I can."

"You can?"

"Yes."

"Then, where is she?"

"In the Carquinez Woods, in the arms of the man you were just defending — Low, the half-breed."

The room had become so dark that from the road nothing could be distinguished. Only the momentary sound of struggling feet was heard.

"Sit down," said Brace's voice, "and don't be a fool. You're too weak, and it ain't a fair fight. Let go your hold. I'm not lying — I wish to God I was!"

There was a silence, and Brace resumed, "We've been rivals, I know. Maybe I thought my chance as good as

yours. If what I say ain't truth, we 'll stand as we stood before; and if you're on the shoot, I'm your man when you like, where you like, or on sight if you choose. But I can't see another man played upon as I've been played upon — given dead away as I have been. It ain't on the square.

"There," he continued, after a pause, "that's right; now steady. Listen. A week ago that girl went down just like this to Indian Spring. It was given out, like this, that she went to the Burnhams'. I don't mind saying, Dunn, that I went down myself, all on the square, thinking I might get a show to talk to her, just as *you* might have done, you know, if you had my chance. I did n't come across her anywhere. But two men that I met thought they recognized her in a disguise going into the woods. Not suspecting anything, I went after her; saw her at a distance in the middle of the woods in another dress that I can swear to, and was just coming up to her when she vanished — went like a squirrel up a tree, or down like a gopher in the ground, but vanished."

"Is that all?" said Dunn's voice. "And just because you were a d—d fool, or had taken a little too much whiskey, you thought" —

"Steady! That's just what I said to myself," interrupted Brace coolly, "particularly when I saw her that same afternoon in another dress, saying good-by to the Burnhams, as fresh as a rose and as cold as those snow-peaks. Only one thing — she had a ring on her finger she never wore before, and did n't expect me to see."

"What if she did? She might have bought it. I reckon she has n't to consult you," broke in Dunn's voice sternly.

"She did n't buy it," continued Brace quietly. "Low gave that Jew trader a bearskin in exchange for it, and presented it to her. I found that out two days afterwards.

I found out that out of the whole afternoon she spent less than an hour with the Burnhams. I found out that she bought a duster like the disguise the two men saw her in. I found the yellow dress she wore that day hanging up in Low's cabin — the place where I saw her go — the *rendez-vous where she meets him*. Oh, you 're listenin', are you? Stop! SIT DOWN!

"I discovered it by accident," continued the voice of Brace when all was again quiet; "it was hidden as only a squirrel or an Injin can hide when they improve upon nature. When I was satisfied that the girl had been in the woods, I was determined to find out where she vanished, and went there again. Prospecting around, I picked up at the foot of one of the biggest trees this yer old memorandum-book, with grasses and herbs stuck in it. I remembered that I'd heard old Wynn say that Low, like the d—d Digger that he was, collected these herbs; only he pretended it was for science. I reckoned the book was his and that he might n't be far away. I lay low and waited. Bimeby I saw a lizard running down the root. When he got sight of me he stopped."

"D—n the lizard! What's that got to do with where she is now?"

"Everything. That lizard had a piece of sugar in his mouth. Where did it come from? I made him drop it, and calculated he'd go back for more. He did. He scooted up that tree and slipped in under some hanging strips of bark. I shoved 'em aside, and found an opening to the hollow where they do their housekeeping."

"But you did n't see her there — and how do you know she is there now?"

"I determined to make it sure. When she left to-day, I started an hour ahead of her, and hid myself at the edge of the woods. An hour after the coach arrived at Indian Spring, she came there in a brown duster, and was joined

by him. I'd have followed them, but the d—d hound has the ears of a squirrel, and though I was five hundred yards from him he was on his guard."

"Guard be blessed! Was n't you armed? Why did n't you go for him?" said Dunn furiously.

"I reckoned I'd leave that for you," said Brace coolly. "If he'd killed me,—and if he'd even covered me with his rifle, he'd be sure to let daylight through me at double the distance,—I should n't have been any better off, nor you either. If I'd killed *him*, it would have been your duty as sheriff to put me in jail; and I reckon it would n't have broken your heart, Jim Dunn, to have got rid of *two* rivals instead of one. Hullo! Where are you going?"

"Going?" said Dunn hoarsely. "Going to the Carquinez Woods, by God! to kill him before her. I'll risk it, if you dare n't. Let me succeed, and you can hang *me*, and take the girl yourself."

"Sit down, sit down. Don't be a fool, Jim Dunn! You would n't keep the saddle a hundred yards. Did I say I would n't help you? No. If you're willing, we'll run the risk together, but it must be in my way. Hear me. I'll drive you down there in a buggy before daylight, and we'll surprise them in the cabin or as they leave the wood. But you must come as if to arrest him for some offense—say, as an escaped Digger from the Reservation, a dangerous tramp, a destroyer of public property in the forests, a suspected road agent, or anything to give you the right to hunt him. The exposure of him and Nellie, don't you see, must be accidental. If he resists, kill him on the spot, and nobody'll blame you; if he goes peaceably with you, and you once get him in Excelsior jail, when the story gets out that he's taken the belle of Excelsior for his squaw, if you'd the angels for your posse you could n't keep the boys from hanging him to the first tree. What's that?"

He walked to the window, and looked out cautiously.

"If it was the old man coming back and listening," he said, after a pause, "it can't be helped. He'll hear it soon enough, if he don't suspect something already."

"Look yer, Brace," broke in Dunn hoarsely. "D—d if I understand you, or you me. That dog Low has got to answer to *me*, not to the *law*! I'll take my risk of killing him, on sight and on the square. I don't reckon to handicap myself with a warrant, and I am not going to draw him out with a lie. You hear me? That's me all the time!"

"Then you calkilate to go down thar," said Brace contemptuously, "yell out for him and Nellie, and let him line you on a rest from the first tree as if you were a grizzly."

There was a pause. "What's that you were saying just now about a bearskin he sold?" asked Dunn slowly, as if reflecting.

"He exchanged a bearskin," replied Brace, "with a single hole right over the heart. He's a dead-shot, I tell you."

"D—n his shooting," said Dunn. "I'm not thinking of that. How long ago did he bring in that bearskin?"

"About two weeks, I reckon. Why?"

"Nothing! Look yer, Brace, you mean well — thar's my hand. I'll go down with you there, but not as the sheriff. I'm going there as Jim Dunn, and you can come along as a white man, to see things fixed on the square. Come!"

Brace hesitated. "You'll think better of my plan before you get there; but I've said I'd stand by you, and I will. Come, then. There's no time to lose."

They passed out into the darkness together.

"What are you waiting for?" said Dunn impatiently, as Brace, who was supporting him by the arm, suddenly halted at the corner of the house.

"Some one was listening — did you not see him? Was it the old man?" asked Brace hurriedly.

"Blast the old man! It was only one of them Mexican packers chock-full of whiskey, and trying to hold up the house. What are you thinking of? We shall be late."

In spite of his weakness, the wounded man hurriedly urged Brace forward, until they reached the latter's lodgings. To his surprise, the horse and buggy were already before the door.

"Then you reckoned to go, anyway?" said Dunn, with a searching look at his companion.

"I kalkilated *somebody* would go," returned Brace evasively, patting the impatient Buckskin; "but come in and take a drink before we leave."

Dunn started out of a momentary abstraction, put his hand on his hip, and mechanically entered the house. They had scarcely raised the glasses to their lips when a sudden rattle of wheels was heard in the street. Brace set down his glass and ran to the window.

"It's the mare bolted," he said, with an oath. "We've kept her too long standing. Follow me;" and he dashed down the staircase into the street. Dunn followed with difficulty; when he reached the door he was confronted by his breathless companion. "She's gone off on a run, and I'll swear there was a man in the buggy!" He stopped and examined the halter-strap, still fastened to the fence. "Cut! by God!"

Dunn turned pale with passion. "Who's got another horse and buggy?" he demanded.

"The new blacksmith in Main Street; but we won't get it by borrowing," said Brace.

"How, then?" asked Dunn savagely.

"Seize it, as the sheriff of Yuba and his deputy, pursuing a confederate of the Injin Low — **THE HORSE-THIEF!**"



## CHAPTER VIII

THE brief hour of darkness that preceded the dawn was that night intensified by a dense smoke, which, after blotting out horizon and sky, dropped a thick veil on the high-road and the silent streets of Indian Spring. As the buggy containing Sheriff Dunn and Brace dashed through the obscurity, Brace suddenly turned to his companion.

"Some one ahead!"

The two men bent forward over the dashboard. Above the steady plunging of their own horsehoofs they could hear the quicker, irregular beat of other hoofs in the darkness before them.

"It's that horse-thief!" said Dunn, in a savage whisper. "Bear to the right, and hand me the whip."

A dozen cuts of the cruel lash, and their maddened horse, bounding at each stroke, broke into a wild canter. The frail vehicle swayed from side to side at each spring of the elastic shafts. Steadying himself by one hand on the low rail, Dunn drew his revolver with the other. "Sing out to him to pull up, or we'll fire. My voice is clean gone," he added, in a husky whisper.

They were so near that they could distinguish the bulk of a vehicle careering from side to side in the blackness ahead. Dunn deliberately raised his weapon. "Sing out!" he repeated impatiently. But Brace, who was still keeping in the shadow, suddenly grasped his companion's arm.

"Hush! It's *not* Buckskin," he whispered hurriedly.

"Are you sure?"

"Don't you see we're gaining on him?" replied the other contemptuously. Dunn grasped his companion's hand and pressed it silently. Even in that supreme moment this horseman's tribute to the fugitive Buckskin forestalled all baser considerations of pursuit and capture!

In twenty seconds they were abreast of the stranger, crowding his horse and buggy nearly into the ditch; Brace keenly watchful, Dunn suppressed and pale. In half a minute they were leading him a length; and when their horse again settled down to his steady work, the stranger was already lost in the circling dust that followed them. But the victors seemed disappointed. The obscurity had completely hidden all but the vague outlines of the mysterious driver.

"He's not our game, anyway," whispered Dunn. "Drive on."

"But if it was some friend of his," suggested Brace uneasily, "what would you do?"

"What I *said* I'd do," responded Dunn savagely. "I don't want five minutes to do it in either; we'll be half an hour ahead of that d—d fool, whoever he is. Look here; all you've got to do is to put me in the trail to that cabin. Stand back of me, out of gunshot, alone, if you like, as my deputy, or with any number you can pick up as my posse. If he gets by me as Nellie's lover, you may shoot him or take him as a horse-thief, if you like."

"Then you won't shoot him on sight?"

"Not till I've had a word with him."

"But" —

"I've chirped," said the sheriff gravely. "Drive on."

For a few moments only the plunging hoofs and rattling wheels were heard. A dull, lurid glow began to define the horizon. They were silent until an abatement of the smoke, the vanishing of the gloomy horizon line, and a certain impenetrability in the darkness ahead showed them

they were nearing the Carquinez Woods. But they were surprised on entering them to find the dim aisles alight with a faint mystic aurora. The tops of the towering spires above them had caught the gleam of the distant forest fires, and reflected it as from a gilded dome.

"It would be hot work if the Carquinez Woods should conclude to take a hand in this yer little game that's going on over on the Divide yonder," said Brace, securing his horse and glancing at the spires overhead. "I reckon I'd rather take a back seat at Injin Spring when the show commences."

Dunn did not reply, but, buttoning his coat, placed one hand on his companion's shoulder, and sullenly bade him "lead the way." Advancing slowly and with difficulty, the desperate man might have been taken for a peaceful invalid returning from an early morning stroll. His right hand was buried thoughtfully in the side pocket of his coat. Only Brace knew that it rested on the handle of his pistol.

From time to time the latter stopped and consulted the faint trail with a minuteness that showed recent careful study. Suddenly he paused. "I made a blaze hereabouts to show where to leave the trail. There it is," he added, pointing to a slight notch cut in the trunk of an adjoining tree.

"But we've just passed one," said Dunn, "if that's what you are looking after, a hundred yards back."

Brace uttered an oath, and ran back in the direction signified by his companion. Presently he returned with a smile of triumph.

"They've suspected something. It's a clever trick, but it won't hold water. That blaze which was done to muddle you was cut with an axe; this which I made was done with a bowie-knife. It's the real one. We're not far off now. Come on."

They proceeded cautiously, at right angles with the

"blazed" tree, for ten minutes more. The heat was oppressive; drops of perspiration rolled from the forehead of the sheriff, and at times, when he attempted to steady his uncertain limbs, his hands shrank from the heated, blistering bark he touched with unglowed palms.

"Here we are," said Brace, pausing at last. "Do you see that biggest tree, with the root stretching out halfway across to the opposite one?"

"No; it's further to the right and abreast of the dead brush," interrupted Dunn quickly, with a sudden revelation that this was the spot where he had found the dead bear, the night Teresa escaped.

"That's so," responded Brace, in astonishment.

"And the opening is on the other side, opposite the dead brush," said Dunn.

"Then you know it?" said Brace suspiciously.

"I reckon!" responded Dunn grimly. "That's enough! Fall back!"

To the surprise of his companion, he lifted his head erect, and with a strong, firm step walked directly to the tree. Reaching it, he planted himself squarely before the opening.

"Halloo!" he said.

There was no reply. A squirrel scampered away close to his feet. Brace, far in the distance, after an ineffectual attempt to distinguish his companion through the intervening trunks, took off his coat, leaned against a tree, and lit a cigar.

"Come out of that cabin!" continued Dunn, in a clear, resonant voice. "Come out before I drag you out!"

"All right, 'Captain Scott.' Don't shoot, and I'll come down," said a voice as clear and as high as his own. The hanging strips of bark were dashed aside, and a woman leaped lightly to the ground.

Dunn staggered back. "Teresa! by the Eternal!"

It was Teresa, — the old Teresa! — Teresa, a hundred times more vicious, reckless, hysterical, extravagant, and outrageous than before, — Teresa, staring with tooth and eye, sunburnt and embrowned, her hair hanging down her shoulders, and her shawl drawn tightly around her neck.

“Teresa it is! the same old gal! Here we are again! Return of the favorite in her original character! For two weeks only! Houp là! Tshk!” and, catching her yellow skirt with her fingers, she pirouetted before the astounded man, and ended in a pose. Recovering himself with an effort, Dunn dashed forward and seized her by the wrist.

“Answer me, woman! Is that Low’s cabin?”

“It is.”

“Who occupies it besides?”

“I do.”

“And who else?”

“Well,” drawled Teresa slowly, with an extravagant affectation of modesty, “nobody else but us, I reckon. Two’s company, you know, and three’s none.”

“Stop! Will you swear that there is n’t a young girl, his — his sweetheart — concealed there with you?”

The fire in Teresa’s eye was genuine as she answered steadily, “Well, it ain’t my style to put up with that sort of thing; at least, it was n’t over at Yolo, and you know it, Jim Dunn, or I would n’t be here.”

“Yes, yes,” said Dunn hurriedly. “But I’m a d—d fool, or worse, the fool of a fool. Tell me, Teresa, is this man Low your lover?”

Teresa lowered her eyes as if in maidenly confusion. “Well, if I’d known that *you* had any feeling of your own about it — if you’d spoken sooner” —

“Answer me, you devil!”

“He is.”

"And he has been with you here — yesterday — to-night?"

"He has."

"Enough." He laughed a weak, foolish laugh, and, turning pale, suddenly lapsed against a tree. He would have fallen, but with a quick instinct Teresa sprang to his side, and supported him gently to a root. The action over, they both looked astounded.

"I reckon that was n't much like either you or me," said Dunn slowly, "was it? But if you 'd let me drop then you 'd have stretched out the biggest fool in the Sierras." He paused, and looked at her curiously. "What's come over you; blessed if I seem to know you now."

She was very pale again, and quiet — that was all.

"Teresa! d—n it, look here! When I was laid up yonder in Excelsior I said I wanted to get well for only two things. One was to hunt you down, the other to marry Nellie Wynn. When I came here I thought that last thing could never be. I came here expecting to find her here with Low, and kill him — perhaps kill her too. I never even thought of you; not once. You might have risen up before me — between me and him — and I 'd have passed you by. And now that I find it 's all a mistake, and it was you, not her, I was looking for, why" —

"Why," she interrupted bitterly, "you 'll just take me, of course, to save your time and earn your salary. I 'm ready."

"But, I 'm not, just yet," he said faintly. "Help me up." She mechanically assisted him to his feet.

"Now stand where you are," he added, "and don't move beyond this tree till I return."

He straightened himself with an effort, clenched his fists until the nails were nearly buried in his palms, and strode with a firm, steady step in the direction he had come. In a few moments he returned and stood before her.

"I've sent away my deputy — the man who brought me here, the fool who thought you were Nellie. He knows now he made a mistake. But who it was he mistook for Nellie he does not know, nor shall ever know, nor shall any living being know, other than myself, And when I leave the wood to-day I shall know it no longer. You are safe here as far as I am concerned, but I cannot screen you from others prying. Let Low take you away from here as soon as he can."

"Let him take me away? Ah, yes. For what?"

"To save you," said Dunn. "Look here, Teresa! Without knowing it, you lifted me out of hell just now; and because of the wrong I might have done her — for *her* sake, I spare you and shirk my duty."

"For her sake!" gasped the woman — "for her sake! Oh, yes! Go on."

"Well," said Dunn gloomily, "I reckon perhaps you'd as lieve left me in hell, for all the love you bear me. And maybe you've grudge enough agin me still to wish I'd found her and him together."

"You think so?" she said, turning her head away.

"There, d—n it! I did n't mean to make you cry. Maybe you would n't, then. Only tell that fellow to take you out of this, and not run away the next time he sees a man coming."

"He did n't run," said Teresa, with flashing eyes. "I — I — I sent him away," she stammered. Then, suddenly turning with fury upon him, she broke out, "Run! Run from you! Ha, ha! You said just now I'd a grudge against you. Well, listen, Jim Dunn. I'd only to bring you in range of that young man's rifle, and you'd have dropped in your tracks like" —

"Like that b'ar, the other night," said Dunn, with a short laugh. "So *that* was your little game?" He checked his laugh suddenly — a cloud passed over his face.

"Look here, Teresa," he said, with an assumption of carelessness that was as transparent as it was utterly incompatible with his frank, open selfishness. "What became of that b'ar? The skin — eh? That was worth something?"

"Yes," said Teresa quietly. "Low exchanged it and got a ring for me from that trader Isaacs. It was worth more, you bet. And the ring did n't fit either" —

"Yes," interrupted Dunn, with almost childish eagerness.

"And I made him take it back, and get the value in money. I hear that Isaacs sold it again and made another profit; but that's like those traders." The disingenuous candor of Teresa's manner was in exquisite contrast to Dunn. He rose and grasped her hand so heartily she was forced to turn her eyes away.

"Good-by!" he said.

"You look tired," she murmured, with a sudden gentleness that surprised him; "let me go with you a part of the way."

"It is n't safe for you just now," he said, thinking of the possible consequences of the alarm Brace had raised.

"Not the way *you* came," she replied; "but one known only to myself."

He hesitated only a moment. "All right, then," he said finally; "let us go at once. It's suffocating here, and I seem to feel this dead bark crinkle under my feet."

She cast a rapid glance around her, and then seemed to sound with her eyes the far-off depths of the aisles, beginning to grow pale with the advancing day, but still holding a strange quiver of heat in the air. When she had finished her half-abstracted scrutiny of the distance, she cast one backward glance at her own cabin, and stopped.

"Will you wait a moment for me?" she asked gently.

"Yes — but — no tricks, Teresa! It is n't worth the time."

She looked him squarely in the eyes without a word.



“Enough,” he said; “go!”

She was absent for some moments. He was beginning to become uneasy, when she made her appearance again clad in her old faded black dress. Her face was very pale, and her eyes were swollen, but she placed his hand on her shoulder, and bidding him not to fear to lean upon her, for she was quite strong, led the way.

“You look more like yourself now, and yet — blast it all! — you don’t either,” said Dunn, looking down upon her. “You’ve changed in some way. What is it? Is it on account of that Injin? Could n’t you have found a white man in his place?”

“I reckon he’s neither worse nor better for that,” she replied bitterly; “and perhaps he was n’t as particular in his taste as a white man might have been. But,” she added, with a sudden spasm of her old rage, “it’s a lie; he’s *not* an Indian, no more than I am. Not unless being born of a mother who scarcely knew him, of a father who never even saw him, and being brought up among white men and wild beasts less cruel than they were, could make him one!”

Dunn looked at her in surprise not unmixed with admiration. “If Nellie,” he thought, “could but love *me* like that!” But he only said: —

“For all that, he’s an Injin. Why, look at his name. It ain’t Low. It’s L’Eau Dormante, Sleeping Water, an Injin name.”

“And what does that prove?” returned Teresa. “Only that Indians clap a nickname on any stranger, white or red, who may camp with them. Why, even his own father, a white man, the wretch who begot him and abandoned him, — *he* had an Indian name, — Loup Noir.”

“What name did you say?”

“Le Loup Noir, the Black Wolf. I suppose you’d call him an Indian, too? Eh? What’s the matter? We’re

walking too fast. Stop a moment and rest. There — there, lean on me !”

She was none too soon ; for, after holding him upright a moment, his limbs failed, and stooping gently she was obliged to support him half reclining against a tree.

“It’s the heat !” he said. “Give me some whiskey from my flask. Never mind the water,” he added faintly, with a forced laugh, after he had taken a draught of the strong spirit. “Tell me more about the other water — the Sleeping Water, you know. How do you know all this about him and his — father ?”

“Partly from him and partly from Curson, who wrote to me about him,” she answered, with some hesitation.

But Dunn did not seem to notice this incongruity of correspondence with a former lover. “And *he* told you ?”

“Yes ; and I saw the name on an old memorandum-book he has, which he says belonged to his father. It’s full of old accounts of some trading-post on the frontier. It’s been missing for a day or two, but it will turn up. But I can swear I saw it.”

Dunn attempted to rise to his feet. “Put your hand in my pocket,” he said in a hurried whisper. “No, there ! — bring out a book. There, I have n’t looked at it yet. Is that it ?” he added, handing her the book Brace had given him a few hours before.

“Yes,” said Teresa, in surprise. “Where did you find it ?”

“Never mind ! Now let me see it quick. Open it, for my sight is failing. There — thank you — that’s all !”

“Take more whiskey,” said Teresa, with a strange anxiety creeping over her. “You are faint again.”

“Wait ! Listen, Teresa — lower — put your ear lower. Listen ! I came near killing that chap Low to-day. Would n’t it have been ridiculous ?”

He tried to smile, but his head fell back. He had fainted.

## CHAPTER IX

FOR the first time in her life Teresa lost her presence of mind in an emergency. She could only sit staring at the helpless man, scarcely conscious of his condition, her mind filled with a sudden prophetic intuition of the significance of his last words. In the light of that new revelation she looked into his pale, haggard face for some resemblance to Low, but in vain. Yet her swift feminine instinct met the objection. "It's the mother's blood that would show," she murmured, "not this man's."

Recovering herself, she began to chafe his hands and temples, and moistened his lips with the spirit. When his respiration returned with a faint color to his cheeks, she pressed his hand eagerly and leaned over him.

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"Of what?" he whispered faintly.

"That Low is really your son?"

"Who said so?" he asked, opening his round eyes upon her.

"You did yourself, a moment ago," she said quickly. "Don't you remember?"

"Did I?"

"You did. Is it so?"

He smiled faintly. "I reckon."

She held her breath in expectation. But only the ludicrousness of the discovery seemed paramount to his weakened faculties. "Is n't it just about the ridiculousest thing all round?" he said, with a feeble chuckle. "First *you* nearly kill me before you know I am Low's father; then

I'm just spoilin' to kill him before I know he 's my son; then that god-forsaken fool Jack Brace mistakes you for Nellie, and Nellie for you. Ain't it just the biggest thing for the boys to get hold of? But we must keep it darl until after I marry Nellie, don't you see? Then we'l have a good time all round, and I'll stand the drinks. Think of it, Teresha! You don' know me, I do' know you, nobody knowsh anybody elsh. I try kill Lo'. Lo' wants kill Nellie. No thash no' ri—" But the potent liquor, overtaking his exhausted senses, thickened, impeded, and at last stopped his speech. His head slipped to her shoulder, and he became once more unconscious.

Teresa breathed again. In that brief moment she had abandoned herself to a wild inspiration of hope which she could scarcely define. Not that it was entirely a wild inspiration; she tried to reason calmly. What if she revealed the truth to him? What if she told the wretched man before her that she had deceived him; that she had overheard his conversation with Brace; that she had stolen Brace's horse to bring Low warning; that, failing to find Low in his accustomed haunts or at the camp-fire, she had left a note for him pinned to the herbarium, imploring him to fly with his companion from the danger that was coming; and that, remaining on watch, she had seen them both — Brace and Dunn — approaching, and had prepared to meet them at the cabin? Would this miserable and maddened man understand her self-abnegation? Would he forgive Low and Nellie? — she did not ask for herself. Or would the revelation turn his brain, if it did not kill him outright? She looked at the sunken orbits of his eyes and hectic on his cheek, and shuddered.

Why was this added to the agony she already suffered? She had been willing to stand between them with her life, her liberty, and even — the hot blood dyed her cheek at the thought — with the added shame of being thought the

cast-off mistress of that man's son. Yet all this she had taken upon herself in expiation of something — she knew not clearly what; no, for nothing — only for *him*. And yet this very situation offered her that gleam of hope which had thrilled her; a hope so wild in its improbability, so degrading in its possibility, that at first she knew not whether despair was not preferable to its shame. And yet was it unreasonable? She was no longer passionate; she would be calm and think it out fairly.

She would go to Low at once. She would find him somewhere — and even if with that girl, what mattered? — and she would tell him all. When he knew that the life and death of his father lay in the scale, would he let his brief, foolish passion for Nellie stand in the way? Even if he were not influenced by filial affection or mere compassion, would his pride let him stoop to a rivalry with the man who had deserted his youth? Could he take Dunn's promised bride, who must have coquetted with him to have brought him to this miserable plight? Was this like the calm, proud young god she knew? Yet she had an uneasy instinct that calm, proud young gods and goddesses did things like this, and felt the weakness of her reasoning flush her own conscious cheek.

“Teresa!”

She started. Dunn was awake, and was gazing at her curiously.

“I was reckoning it was the only square thing for Low to stop this promiscuous picnicking here and marry you out and out.”

“Marry me!” said Teresa in a voice that, with all her efforts, she could not make cynical.

“Yes,” he repeated, “after I've married Nellie; tote you down to San Angeles, and there take my name like a man, and give it to you. Nobody'll ask after *Teresa*, sure — you bet your life. And if they do, and he can't stop

their jaw, just you call on the old man. It's mighty queer, ain't it, Teresa, to think of you being my daughter-in-law?"

It seemed here as if he was about to lapse again into unconsciousness over the purely ludicrous aspect of the subject, but he haply recovered his seriousness. "He'll have as much money from me as he wants to go into business with. What's his line of business, Teresa?" asked this prospective father-in-law, in a large, liberal way.

"He is a botanist!" said Teresa, with a sudden childish animation that seemed to keep up the grim humor of the paternal suggestion; "and oh, he is too poor to buy books! I sent for one or two for him myself the other day!" — she hesitated — "it was all the money I had, but it was n't enough for him to go on with his studies."

Dunn looked at her sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks, and became thoughtful. "Curson must have been a d—d fool," he said finally.

Teresa remained silent. She was beginning to be impatient and uneasy, fearing some mischance that might delay her dreaded yet longed-for meeting with Low. Yet she could not leave this sick and exhausted man, *his father*, now bound to her by more than mere humanity.

"Could n't you manauage," she said gently, "to lean on me a few steps further, until I could bring you to a cooler spot and nearer assistance?"

He nodded. She lifted him almost like a child to his feet. A spasm of pain passed over his face. "How far is it?"

"Not more than ten minutes," she replied.

"I can make a spurt for that time," he said coolly, and began to walk slowly but steadily on. Only his face, which was white and set, and the convulsive grip of his hand on her arm, betrayed the effort. At the end of ten minutes she stopped. They stood before the splintered,

lightning-scarred shaft in the opening of the woods, where Low had built her first camp-fire. She carefully picked up the herbarium, but her quick eye had already detected in the distance, before she had allowed Dunn to enter the opening with her, that her note was gone. Low had been there before them; he had been warned, as his absence from the cabin showed; he would not return there. They were free from interruption — but where had he gone?

The sick man drew a long breath of relief as she seated him in the clover-grown hollow where she had slept the second night of her stay. "It's cooler than those cursed woods," he said. "I suppose it's because it's a little like a grave. What are you going to do now?" he added, as she brought a cup of water and placed it at his side.

"I'm going to leave you here for a little while," she said cheerfully, but with a pale face and nervous hands. "I'm going to leave you while I seek Low."

The sick man raised his head. "I'm good for a spurt, Teresa, like that I've just got through, but I don't think I'm up to a family party. Could n't you issue cards later on?"

"You don't understand," she said. "I'm going to get Low to send some one of your friends to you here. I don't think he'll begrudge leaving *her* a moment for that," she added to herself bitterly.

"What's that you're saying?" he queried, with the nervous quickness of an invalid.

"Nothing — but that I'm going now." She turned her face aside to hide her moistened eyes. "Wish me good luck, won't you?" she asked, half sadly, half pettishly.

"Come here!"

She came and bent over him. He suddenly raised his hands, and, drawing her face down to his own, kissed her forehead.

"Give that to *him*," he whispered, "from *me*."

She turned and fled, happily for her sentiment, not hearing the feeble laugh that followed, as Dunn, in sheer imbecility, again referred to the extravagant ludicrousness of the situation. "It is about the biggest thing in the way of a sell all round," he repeated, lying on his back, confidentially to the speck of smoke-obscured sky above him. He pictured himself repeating it, not to Nellie — her severe propriety might at last overlook the fact, but would not tolerate the joke — but to her father! It would be just one of those characteristic Californian jokes Father Wynn would admire.

To his exhaustion fever presently succeeded, and he began to grow restless. The heat, too, seemed to invade his retreat, and from time to time the little patch of blue sky was totally obscured by clouds of smoke. He amused himself with watching a lizard who was investigating a folded piece of paper, whose elasticity gave the little creature lively apprehensions of its vitality. At last he could stand the stillness of his retreat and his supine position no longer, and rolled himself out of the bed of leaves that Teresa had so carefully prepared for him. He rose to his feet stiff and sore, and, supporting himself by the nearest tree, moved a few steps from the dead ashes of the camp-fire. The movement frightened the lizard, who abandoned the paper and fled. With a satirical recollection of Brace and his "ridiculous" discovery through the medium of this animal, he stooped and picked up the paper. "Like as not," he said to himself with grim irony, "these yer lizards are in the discovery business. Pr'aps this may lead to another mystery;" and he began to unfold the paper with a smile. But the smile ceased as his eyes suddenly caught his own name.

A dozen lines were written in pencil on what seemed to be a blank leaf originally torn from some book. He



trembled so that he was obliged to sit down to read these words : —

When you get this, keep away from the woods. Dunn and another man are in deadly pursuit of you and your companion. I overheard their plan to surprise you in our cabin. *Don't go there*, and I will delay them and put them off the scent. Don't mind me. God bless you ; and if you never see me again, think sometimes of

TERESA.

His trembling ceased ; he did not start, but rose in an abstracted way, and made a few deliberate steps in the direction Teresa had gone. Even then he was so confused that he was obliged to refer to the paper again, but with so little effect that he could only repeat the last words, "think sometimes of Teresa." He was conscious that this was not all ; he had a full conviction of being deceived, and knew that he held the proof in his hand, but he could not formulate it beyond that sentence. "Teresa" — yes, he would think of her. She would think of him. She would explain it. And here she was returning.

In that brief interval her face and manner had again changed. She was pale and quite breathless. She cast a swift glance at Dunn and the paper he mechanically held out, walked up to him, and tore it from his hand.

"Well," she said hoarsely, "what are you going to do about it?"

He attempted to speak, but his voice failed him. Even then he was conscious that if he had spoken he would have only repeated, "think sometimes of Teresa." He looked longingly but helplessly at the spot where she had thrown the paper, as if it had contained his unuttered words.

"Yes," she went on to herself, as if he was a mute, indifferent spectator — "yes, they're gone. That ends it

all. The game's played out. Well!" suddenly turning upon him, "now you know it all. Your Nellie *was* here with him, and is with him now. Do you hear? Make the most of it; you've lost them — but here I am."

"Yes," he said eagerly — "yes, Teresa."

She stopped, stared at him; then taking him by the hand led him like a child back to his couch. "Well," she said, in half-savage explanation, "I told you the truth when I said the girl was n't at the cabin last night, and that I did n't know her. What are you glowerin' at? No! I have n't lied to you, I swear to God, except in one thing. Do you know what that was? To save him I took upon me a shame I don't deserve. I let you think I was his mistress. You think so now, don't you? Well, before God to-day — and He may take me when He likes — I'm no more to him than a sister! I reckon your Nellie can't say as much."

She turned away, and with the quick, impatient stride of some caged animal made the narrow circuit of the opening, stopping a moment mechanically before the sick man, and again, without looking at him, continuing her monotonous round. The heat had become excessive, but she held her shawl with both hands drawn tightly over her shoulders. Suddenly a wood-duck darted out of the covert blindly into the opening, struck against the blasted trunk, fell half stunned near her feet, and then, recovering, fluttered away. She had scarcely completed another circuit before the irruption was followed by a whirring bevy of quail, a flight of jays, and a sudden tumult of wings swept through the wood like a tornado. She turned inquiringly to Dunn, who had risen to his feet, but the next moment she caught convulsively at his wrist: a wolf had just dashed through the underbrush not a dozen yards away, and on either side of them they could hear the scamper and rustle of hurrying feet like the outburst of a summer shower. A cold wind

arose from the opposite direction, as if to contest this wild exodus, but it was followed by a blast of sickening heat. Teresa sank at Dunn's feet in an agony of terror.

"Don't let them touch me!" she gasped; "keep them off! Tell me, for God's sake, what has happened!"

He laid his hand firmly on her arm, and lifted her in his turn to her feet like a child. In that supreme moment of physical danger, his strength, reason, and manhood returned in their plenitude of power. He pointed coolly to the trail she had quitted, and said:—

"The Carquinez Woods are on fire!"

## CHAPTER X

THE nest of the tuneful Burnhams, although in the suburbs of Indian Spring, was not in ordinary weather and seasons hidden from the longing eyes of the youth of that settlement. That night, however, it was veiled in the smoke that encompassed the great highway leading to Excelsior. It is presumed that the Burnham brood had long since folded their wings, for there was no sign of life nor movement in the house as a rapidly driven horse and buggy pulled up before it. Fortunately, the paternal Burnham was an early bird, in the habit of picking up the first stirring mining worm, and a resounding knock brought him half dressed to the street door. He was startled at seeing Father Wynn before him, a trifle flushed and abstracted.

“ Ah ha ! up betimes, I see, and ready. No sluggards here — ha, ha ! ” he said heartily, slamming the door behind him, and by a series of pokes in the ribs genially backing his host into his own sitting-room. “ I ’m up, too, and am here to see Nellie. She ’s here, eh — of course ? ” he added, darting a quick look at Burnham.

But Mr. Burnham was one of those large, liberal Western husbands who classified his household under the general title of “ woman folk,” for the integers of which he was not responsible. He hesitated, and then propounded over the balusters to the upper story the direct query, “ You don’t happen to have Nellie Wynn up there, do ye ? ”

There was an interval of inquiry proceeding from half a dozen reluctant throats, more or less cottony and muffled, in those various degrees of grievance and mental

distress which indicate too early roused young womanhood. The eventual reply seemed to be affirmative, albeit accompanied with a suppressed giggle, as if the young lady had just been discovered as an answer to an amusing conundrum.

“All right,” said Wynn, with an apparent accession of boisterous geniality. “Tell her I must see her, and I’ve only got a few minutes to spare. Tell her to slip on anything and come down; there’s no one here but myself, and I’ve shut the front door on Brother Burnham. Ha, ha!” and suiting the action to the word, he actually bundled the admiring Brother Burnham out on his own doorstep. There was a light pattering on the staircase, and Nellie Wynn, pink with sleep, very tall, very slim, hastily draped in a white counterpane with a blue border and a general classic suggestion, slipped into the parlor. At the same moment the father shut the door behind her, placed one hand on the knob, and with the other seized her wrist.

“Where were you yesterday?” he asked.

Nellie looked at him, shrugged her shoulders, and said, “Here.”

“You were in the Carquinez Woods with Low Dorman; you went there in disguise; you’ve met him there before. He is your clandestine lover; you have taken pledges of affection from him; you have” —

“Stop!” she said.

He stopped.

“Did he tell you this?” she asked, with an expression of disdain.

“No; I overheard it. Dunn and Brace were at the house waiting for you. When the coach did not bring you, I went to the office to inquire. As I left our door I thought I saw somebody listening at the parlor windows. It was only a drunken Mexican muleteer leaning against the

house; but if *he* heard nothing, *I* did. Nellie, I heard Brace tell Dunn that he had tracked you in your disguise to the woods — do you hear? that when you pretended to be here with the girls you were with Low — alone; that you wear a ring that Low got of a trader here; that there was a cabin in the woods” —

“Stop!” she repeated.

Wynn again paused.

“And what did *you* do?” she asked.

“I heard they were starting down there to surprise you and him together, and I harnessed up and got ahead of them in my buggy.”

“And found me here,” she said, looking full into his eyes.

He understood her and returned the look. He recognized the full importance of the culminating fact conveyed in her words, and was obliged to content himself with its logical and worldly significance. It was too late now to take her to task for mere filial disobedience; they must become allies.

“Yes,” he said hurriedly; “but if you value your reputation, if you wish to silence both these men, answer me fully.”

“Go on,” she said.

“Did you go to the cabin in the woods yesterday?”

“No.”

“Did you ever go there with Low?”

“No; I do not know even where it is.”

Wynn felt that she was telling the truth. Nellie knew it; but as she would have been equally satisfied with an equally efficacious falsehood, her face remained unchanged.

“And when did he leave you?”

“At nine o’clock, here. He went to the hotel.”

“He saved his life, then, for Dunn is on his way to the woods to kill him.”

The jeopardy of her lover did not seem to affect the young girl with alarm, although her eyes betrayed some interest.

"Then Dunn has gone to the woods?" she said thoughtfully.

"He has," replied Wynn.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"I want to know what you are going to do?"

"I *was* going back to bed."

"This is no time for trifling, girl."

"I should think not," she said, with a yawn; "it's too early or too late."

Wynn grasped her wrist more tightly. "Hear me! Put whatever face you like on this affair, you are compromised — and compromised with a man you can't marry."

"I don't know that I ever wanted to marry Low, if you mean him," she said quietly.

"And Dunn would n't marry you now."

"I'm not so sure of that either."

"Nellie," said Wynn excitedly, "do you want to drive me mad? Have you nothing to say — nothing to suggest?"

"Oh, you want me to help you, do you? Why did n't you say that first? Well, go and bring Dunn here."

"Are you mad? The man has gone already in pursuit of your lover, believing you with him."

"Then he will the more readily come and talk with me without him. Will you take the invitation — yes or no?"

"Yes, but" —

"Enough. On your way there you will stop at the hotel and give Low a letter from me."

"Nellie!"

"You shall read it, of course," she said scornfully, "for it will be your text for the conversation you will have with him. Will you please take your hand from the lock and open the door?"

Wynn mechanically opened the door. The young girl flew upstairs. In a very few moments she returned with two notes: one contained a few lines of formal invitation to Dunn; the other read as follows:—

DEAR MR. DORMAN,— My father will tell you how deeply I regret that our recent botanical excursions in the Carquinez Woods have been a source of serious misapprehension to those who had a claim to my consideration, and that I shall be obliged to discontinue them for the future. At the same time he wishes me to express my gratitude for your valuable instruction and assistance in that pleasing study, even though approaching events may compel me to relinquish it for other duties. May I beg you to accept the inclosed ring as a slight recognition of my obligations to you?

Your grateful pupil,

NELLIE WYNN.

When he had finished reading the letter, she handed him a ring, which he took mechanically. He raised his eyes to hers with perfectly genuine admiration. "You're a good girl, Nellie," he said, and, in a moment of parental forgetfulness, unconsciously advanced his lips towards her cheek. But she drew back in time to recall him to a sense of that human weakness.

"I suppose I'll have time for a nap yet," she said, as a gentle hint to her embarrassed parent. He nodded, and turned towards the door.

"If I were you," she continued, repressing a yawn, "I'd manage to be seen on good terms with Low at the hotel; so perhaps you need not give the letter to him until the last thing. Good-by."

The sitting-room door opened and closed behind her as she slipped upstairs, and her father, without the formality



of leave-taking, quietly let himself out by the front door.

When he drove into the highroad again, however, an overlooked possibility threatened for a moment to indefinitely postpone his amiable intentions regarding Low. The hotel was at the farther end of the settlement toward the Carquinez Woods, and as Wynn had nearly reached it he was recalled to himself by the sounds of hoofs and wheels rapidly approaching from the direction of the Excelsior turnpike. Wynn made no doubt it was the sheriff and Brace. To avoid recognition at that moment, he whipped up his horse, intending to keep the lead until he could turn into the first cross-road. But the coming travelers had the fleetest horse; and finding it impossible to distance them, he drove close to the ditch, pulling up suddenly as the strange vehicle was abreast of him, and forcing them to pass him at full speed, with the result already chronicled. When they had vanished in the darkness, Mr. Wynn, with a heart overflowing with Christian thankfulness and universal benevolence, wheeled round, and drove back to the hotel he had already passed. To pull up at the veranda with a stentorian shout, to thump loudly at the deserted bar, to hilariously beat the panels of the landlord's door, and commit a jocose assault and battery upon that half-dressed and half-awakened man, was eminently characteristic of Wynn, and part of his amiable plans that morning.

"Something to wash this wood smoke from my throat, Brother Carter, and about as much again to prop open your eyes," he said, dragging Carter before the bar, "and glasses round for as many of the boys as are up and stirring after a hard-working Christian's rest. How goes the honest publican's trade, and who have we here?"

"Thar's Judge Robinson and two lawyers from Sacramento, Dick Curson over from Yolo," said Carter, "and that ar young Injin yarb doctor from the Carquinez Woods.

I reckon he 's jist up — I noticed a light under his door as I passed."

"He 's my man for a friendly chat before breakfast," said Wynn. "You need n't come up. I 'll find the way. I don't want a light; I reckon my eyes ain't as bright nor as young as his, but they 'll see almost as far in the dark — he-he!" And, nodding to Brother Carter, he strode along the passage, and with no other introduction than a playful and preliminary "Boo!" burst into one of the rooms. Low, who by the light of a single candle was bending over the plates of a large quarto, merely raised his eyes and looked at the intruder. The young man's natural imperturbability, always exasperating to Wynn, seemed accentuated that morning by contrast with his own over-acted animation.

"Ah ha! — wasting the midnight oil instead of imbibing the morning dews," said Father Wynn archly, illustrating his metaphor with a movement of his hand to his lips. "What have we here?"

"An anonymous gift," replied Low simply, recognizing the father of Nellie by rising from his chair. "It 's a volume I 've longed to possess, but never could afford to buy. I cannot imagine who sent it to me."

Wynn was for a moment startled by the thought that this recipient of valuable gifts might have influential friends. But a glance at the bare room, which looked like a camp, and the strange, unconventional garb of its occupant, restored his former convictions. There might be a promise of intelligence, but scarcely of prosperity, in the figure before him.

"Ah! We must not forget that we are watched over in the night season," he said, laying his hand on Low's shoulder, with an illustration of celestial guardianship that would have been impious but for its palpable grotesqueness. "No, sir, we know not what a day may bring forth."

Unfortunately, Low's practical mind did not go beyond

a mere human interpretation. It was enough, however, to put a new light in his eye and a faint color in his cheek.

"Could it have been Miss Nellie?" he asked, with half-boyish hesitation.

Mr. Wynn was too much of a Christian not to bow before what appeared to him the purely providential interposition of this suggestion. Seizing it and Low at the same moment, he playfully forced him down again in his chair.

"Ah, you rascal!" he said, with infinite archness; "that's your game, is it? You want to trap poor Father Wynn. You want to make him say 'No.' You want to tempt him to commit himself. No, sir! — never, sir! — no, no!"

Firmly convinced that the present was Nellie's and that her father only good-humoredly guessed it, the young man's simple, truthful nature was embarrassed. He longed to express his gratitude, but feared to betray the young girl's trust. The Rev. Mr. Wynn speedily relieved his mind.

"No," he continued, bestriding a chair, and familiarly confronting Low over its back. "No, sir — no! And you want me to say 'No,' don't you, regarding the little walks of Nellie and a certain young man in the Carquinez Woods? — ha, ha! You'd like me to say that I know nothing of the botanizings, and the herb collectings, and the picnickings there — he-he! — you sly dog! Perhaps you'd like to tempt Father Wynn further, and make him swear he knows nothing of his daughter disguising herself in a duster and meeting another young man — isn't it another young man? — all alone, eh? Perhaps you want poor old Father Wynn to say 'No.' No, sir, nothing of the kind ever occurred. Ah, you young rascal!"

Slightly troubled, in spite of Wynn's hearty manner, Low, with his usual directness, however, said, "I do not want any one to deny that I have seen Miss Nellie."

“Certainly, certainly,” said Wynn, abandoning his method, considerably disconcerted by Low’s simplicity, and a certain natural reserve that shook off his familiarity. “Certainly it’s a noble thing to be able to put your hand on your heart and say to the world, ‘Come on, all of you! Observe me; I have nothing to conceal. I walk with Miss Wynn in the woods as her instructor — her teacher, in fact. We cull a flower here and there; we pluck an herb fresh from the hand of the Creator. We look, so to speak, from Nature to Nature’s God.’ Yes, my young friend, we should be the first to repel the foul calumny that could misinterpret our most innocent actions.”

“Calumny?” repeated Low, starting to his feet. “What calumny?”

“My friend, my noble young friend, I recognize your indignation. I know your worth. When I said to Nellie, my only child, my perhaps too simple offspring — a mere wildflower like yourself — when I said to her, ‘Go, my child, walk in the woods with this young man, hand in hand. Let him instruct you from the humblest roots, for he has trodden in the ways of the Almighty. Gather wisdom from his lips, and knowledge from his simple woodsman’s craft. Make, in fact, a collection not only of herbs, but of moral axioms and experience,’ — I knew I could trust you, and, trusting you, my young friend, I felt I could trust the world. Perhaps I was weak, foolish. But I thought only of her welfare. I even recall how that, to preserve the purity of her garments, I bade her don a simple duster; that, to secure her from the trifling companionship of others, I bade her keep her own counsel, and seek you at seasons known but to yourselves.”

“But — did Nellie — understand you?” interrupted Low hastily.

“I see you read her simple nature. Understand me? No, not at first! Her maidenly instinct — perhaps her

duty to another — took the alarm. I remember her words. ‘But what will Dunn say?’ she asked. ‘Will he not be jealous?’”

“Dunn! jealous! I don’t understand,” said Low, fixing his eyes on Wynn.

“That’s just what I said to Nellie. ‘Jealous!’ I said. ‘What, Dunn, your affianced husband, jealous of a mere friend — a teacher, a guide, a philosopher. It is impossible.’ Well, sir, she was right. He is jealous. And, more than that, he has imparted his jealousy to others! In other words, he has made a scandal!”

Low’s eyes flashed. “Where is your daughter now?” he said sternly.

“At present in bed, suffering from a nervous attack brought on by these unjust suspicions. She appreciates your anxiety, and, knowing that you could not see her, told me to give you this.” He handed Low the ring and the letter.

The climax had been forced, and, it must be confessed, was by no means the one Mr. Wynn had fully arranged in his own inner consciousness. He had intended to take an ostentatious leave of Low in the bar-room, deliver the letter with archness, and escape before a possible explosion. He consequently backed towards the door for an emergency. But he was again at fault. That unaffected stoical fortitude in acute suffering, which was the one remaining pride and glory of Low’s race, was yet to be revealed to Wynn’s civilized eyes.

The young man took the letter, and read it without changing a muscle, folded the ring in it, and dropped it into his haversack. Then he picked up his blanket, threw it over his shoulder, took his trusty rifle in his hand, and turned toward Wynn as if coldly surprised that he was still standing there.

“Are you — are you — going?” stammered Wynn.

“Are you *not*?” replied Low dryly, leaning on his rifle for a moment as if waiting for Wynn to precede him. The preacher looked at him a moment, mumbled something, and then shambled feebly and ineffectively down the staircase before Low, with a painful suggestion to the ordinary observer of being occasionally urged thereto by the moccasin of the young man behind him.

On reaching the lower hall, however, he endeavored to create a diversion in his favor by dashing into the bar-room and clapping the occupants on the back with indiscriminate playfulness. But here again he seemed to be disappointed. To his great discomfiture, a large man not only returned his salutation with powerful levity, but with equal playfulness seized him in his arms, and after an ingenious simulation of depositing him in the horse-trough set him down in affected amazement. “Bleht if I did n’t think from the weight of your hand it wath my old friend, Thacramento Bill,” said Curson apologetically, with a wink at the bystanders. “That ’th the way Bill alwayth uthed to tackle hith friendth, till he wath one day bounthed by a prithe-fighter in Frithco, whom he had mithtaken for a mithionary.” As Mr. Curson’s reputation was of a quality that made any form of apology from him instantly acceptable, the amused spectators made way for him as, recognizing Low, who was just leaving the hotel, he turned coolly from them and walked towards him.

“Halloo!” he said, extending his hand. “You ’re the man I ’m waiting for. Did you get a book from the exthpreth offithe latht night?”

“I did. Why?”

“It ’th all right. Ath I ’m rethponthible for it, I only wanted to know.”

“Did *you* send it?” asked Low, quickly fixing his eyes on his face.

“Well, not exactly *me*. But it ’th not worth making a

mythtery of it. Teretha gave me a commithion to buy it and thend it to you anonymouthly. That'th a woman'th nonthenth, for how could thee get a retheipt for it?"

"Then it was *her* present," said Low gloomily.

"Of courthe. It wath n't mine, my boy. I'd have thent you a Tharp'th rifle in plathe of that muthle-loader you carry, or thomething thenthible. But, I thay! what'th up? You look ath if you had been running all night."

Low grasped his hand. "Thank you," he said hurriedly; "but it's nothing. Only I must be back to the woods early. Good-by."

But Curson retained Low's hand in his own powerful grip.

"I'll go with you a bit further," he said. "In fact, I've got thomething to thay to you; only don't be in thuch a hurry; the woodth can wait till you get there." Quietly compelling Low to alter his own characteristic Indian stride to keep pace with his, he went on: "I don't mind thaying I rather cottoned to you from the time you acted like a white man — no offenthe — to Teretha. She thayth you were left when a child lying round, jutht ath promithecuouthly ath she wath; and if I can do anything towardth putting you on the trail of your people, I'll do it. I know thome of the voyageurth who traded with the Cherokeeeth, and your father wath one — was n't he?" He glanced at Low's utterly abstracted and immobile face. "I thay, you don't them to take a hand in thith game, pardner. What'th the row? Ith anything wrong over there?" and he pointed to the Carquinez Woods, which were just looming out of the morning horizon in the distance.

Low stopped. The last words of his companion seemed to recall him to himself. He raised his eyes automatically to the woods, and started.

"There *is* something wrong over there," he said breathlessly. "Look!"

"I thee nothing," said Curson, beginning to doubt Low's sanity; "nothing more than I thaw an hour ago."

"Look again. Don't you see that smoke rising straight up? It is n't blown over from the Divide; it's new smoke! The fire is in the woods!"

"I reckon that 'th so," muttered Curson, shading his eyes with his hand. "But, hullo! wait a minute! We'll get hortheth. I say!" he shouted, forgetting his lisp in his excitement, "stop!" But Low had already lowered his head and darted forward like an arrow.

In a few moments he had left not only his companion but the last straggling houses of the outskirts far behind him, and had struck out in a long, swinging trot for the disused "cut-off." Already he fancied he heard the note of clamor in Indian Spring, and thought he distinguished the sound of hurrying hoofs on the great highway. But the sunken trail hid it from his view. From the column of smoke now plainly visible in the growing morning light he tried to locate the scene of the conflagration. It was evidently not a fire advancing regularly from the outer skirt of the wood, communicated to it from the Divide: it was a local outburst near its centre. It was not in the direction of his cabin in the tree. There was no immediate danger to Teresa, unless fear drove her beyond the confines of the wood into the hands of those who might recognize her. The screaming of jays and ravens above his head quickened his speed, as it heralded the rapid advance of the flames; and the unexpected apparition of a bounding body, flattened and flying over the yellow plain, told him that even the secure retreat of the mountain wild-cat had been invaded. A sudden recollection of Teresa's uncontrollable terror that first night smote him with remorse, and redoubled his efforts. Alone in the track of these frantic and bewildered beasts, to what madness might she not be driven!

The sharp crack of a rifle from the highroad turned his



course momentarily in that direction. The smoke was curling lazily over the heads of a party of men in the road, while the huge bulk of a grizzly was disappearing in the distance. A battue of the escaping animals had commenced! In the bitterness of his heart he caught at the horrible suggestion, and resolved to save her from them or die with her there.

How fast he ran, or the time it took him to reach the woods, has never been known. Their outlines were already hidden when he entered them. To a sense less keen, a courage less desperate, and a purpose less unaltered than Low's, the wood would have been impenetrable. The central fire was still confined to the lofty treetops, but the downward rush of wind from time to time drove the smoke into the aisles in blinding and suffocating volumes. To simulate the creeping animals, and fall to the ground on hands and knees, feel his way through the underbrush when the smoke was densest, or take advantage of its momentary lifting, and without uncertainty, mistake, or hesitation glide from tree to tree in one undeviating course, was possible only to an experienced woodsman. To keep his reason and insight so clear as to be able in the midst of this bewildering confusion to shape that course so as to intersect the wild and unknown tract of an inexperienced, frightened wanderer belonged to Low, and to Low alone. He was making his way against the wind towards the fire. He had reasoned that she was either in comparative safety to windward of it, or he should meet her being driven towards him by it, or find her succumbed and fainting at its feet. To do this he must penetrate the burning belt, and then pass under the blazing dome. He was already upon it; he could see the falling fire dropping like rain or blown like gorgeous blossoms of the conflagration across his path. The space was lit up brilliantly. The vast shafts of dull copper cast no shadow below, but there was no sign nor

token of any human being. For a moment the young man was at fault. It was true this hidden heart of the forest bore no undergrowth; the cool matted carpet of the aisles seemed to quench the glowing fragments as they fell. Escape might be difficult, but not impossible; yet every moment was precious. He leaned against a tree, and sent his voice like a clarion before him: "Teresa!" There was no reply. He called again. A faint cry at his back from the trail he had just traversed made him turn. Only a few paces behind him, blinded and staggering, but following like a beaten and wounded animal, Teresa halted, knelt, clasped her hands, and dumbly held them out before her. "Teresa!" he cried again, and sprang to her side.

She caught him by the knees, and lifted her face imploringly to his.

"Say that again!" she cried passionately. "Tell me it was Teresa you called, and no other! You have come back for me! You would not let me die here alone!"

He lifted her tenderly in his arms, and cast a rapid glance around him. It might have been his fancy, but there seemed a dull glow in the direction he had come.

"You do not speak!" she said. "Tell me! You did not come here to seek her?"

"Whom?" he said quickly.

"Nellie!"

With a sharp cry he let her slip to the ground. All the pent-up agony, rage, and mortification of the last hour broke from him in that inarticulate outburst. Then, catching her hands again, he dragged her to his level.

"Hear me!" he cried, disregarding the whirling smoke and the fiery baptism that sprinkled them, — "hear me! If you value your life, if you value your soul, and if you do not want me to cast you to the beasts like Jezebel of old, never — never take that accursed name again upon

your lips. Seek her — *her?* Yes! Seek her to tie her like a witch's daughter of hell to that blazing tree!" He stopped. "Forgive me," he said in a changed voice. "I'm mad, and forgetting myself and you. Come."

Without noticing the expression of half-savage delight that had passed across her face, he lifted her in his arms.

"Which way are you going?" she asked, passing her hands vaguely across his breast, as if to reassure herself of his identity.

"To our camp by the scarred tree," he replied.

"Not there, not there," she said hurriedly. "I was driven from there just now. I thought the fire began there until I came here."

Then it was as he feared. Obeying the same mysterious law that had launched this fatal fire like a thunderbolt from the burning mountain crest five miles away into the heart of the Carquinez Woods, it had again leaped a mile beyond, and was hemming them between two narrowing lines of fire. But Low was not daunted. Retracing his steps through the blinding smoke, he strode off at right angles to the trail near the point where he had entered the wood. It was the spot where he had first lifted Nellie in his arms to carry her to the hidden spring. If any recollection of it crossed his mind at that moment, it was only shown in his redoubled energy. He did not glide through the thick underbrush, as on that day, but seemed to take a savage pleasure in breaking through it with sheer brute force. Once Teresa insisted upon relieving him of the burden of her weight, but after a few steps she staggered blindly against him, and would fain have recourse once more to his strong arms. And so, alternately staggering, bending, crouching, or bounding and crashing on, but always in one direction, they burst through the jealous rampart, and came upon the sylvan haunt of the hidden spring. The great angle of the half-fallen tree acted as a barrier to the

wind and drifting smoke, and the cool spring sparkled and bubbled in the almost translucent air. He laid her down beside the water, and bathed her face and hands. As he did so his quick eye caught sight of a woman's handkerchief lying at the foot of the disrupted root. Dropping Teresa's hand, he walked towards it, and with the toe of his moccasin gave it one vigorous kick into the ooze at the overflow of the spring. He turned to Teresa, but she evidently had not noticed the act.

"Where are you?" she asked, with a smile.

Something in her movement struck him. He came towards her, and bending down looked into her face.

"Teresa! Good God! — look at me! What has happened?"

She raised her eyes to his. There was a slight film across them; the lids were blackened; the beautiful lashes gone forever!

"I see you a little now, I think," she said, with a smile, passing her hands vaguely over his face. "It must have happened when he fainted, and I had to drag him through the blazing brush; both my hands were full, and I could not cover my eyes."

"Drag whom?" said Low quickly.

"Why, Dunn."

"Dunn! He here?" said Low hoarsely.

"Yes; did n't you read the note I left on the herbarium? Did n't you come to the camp-fire?" she asked hurriedly, clasping his hands. "Tell me quickly!"

"No!"

"Then you were not there — then you did n't leave me to die?"

"No! I swear it, Teresa!" the stoicism that had upheld his own agony breaking down before her strong emotion.

"Thank God!" She threw her arms around him, and hid her aching eyes in his troubled breast. }  
J

“Tell me all, Teresa,” he whispered in her listening ear. “Don’t move; stay there, and tell me all.”

With her face buried in his bosom, as if speaking to his heart alone, she told him part, but not all. With her eyes filled with tears, but a smile on her lips, radiant with new-found happiness, she told him how she had overheard the plans of Dunn and Brace, how she had stolen their conveyance to warn him in time. But here she stopped, dreading to say a word that would shatter the hopes she was building upon his sudden revulsion of feeling for Nellie. She could not bring herself to repeat their interview — that would come later, when they were safe and out of danger; now not even the secret of his birth must come between them with its distraction, to mar their perfect communion. She faltered that Dunn had fainted from weakness, and that she had dragged him out of danger. “He will never interfere with us — I mean,” she said softly, “with *me* again. I can promise you that as well as if he had sworn it.”

“Let him pass now,” said Low; “that will come later on,” he added, unconsciously repeating her thought in a tone that made her heart sick. “But tell me, Teresa, why did you go to Excelsior?”

She buried her head still deeper, as if to hide it. He felt her broken heart beat against his own; he was conscious of a depth of feeling her rival had never awakened in him. The possibility of Teresa loving him had never occurred to his simple nature. He bent his head and kissed her. She was frightened, and unloosed her clinging arms; but he retained her hand, and said, “We will leave this accursed place, and you shall go with me as you said you would; nor need you ever leave me, unless you wish it.”

She could hear the beating of her own heart through his words; she longed to look at the eyes and lips that told her

this, and read the meaning his voice alone could not entirely convey. For the first time she felt the loss of her sight. She did not know that it was, in this moment of happiness, the last blessing vouchsafed to her miserable life.

A few moments of silence followed, broken only by the distant rumor of the conflagration and the crash of falling boughs. "It may be an hour yet," he whispered, "before the fire has swept a path for us to the road below. We are safe here, unless some sudden current should draw the fire down upon us. You are not frightened?" She pressed his hand; she was thinking of the pale face of Dunn, lying in the secure retreat she had purchased for him at such a sacrifice. Yet the possibility of danger to him now for a moment marred her present happiness and security. "You think the fire will not go north of where you found me?" she asked softly.

"I think not," he said; "but I will reconnoitre. Stay where you are."

They pressed hands, and parted. He leaped upon the slanting trunk, and ascended it rapidly. She waited in mute expectation.

There was a sudden movement of the root on which she sat, a deafening crash, and she was thrown forward on her face.

The vast bulk of the leaning tree, dislodged from its aerial support by the gradual sapping of the spring at its roots, or by the crumbling of the bark from the heat, had slipped, made a half revolution, and, falling, overbore the lesser trees in its path, and tore, in its resistless momentum, a broad opening to the underbrush.

With a cry to Low, Teresa staggered to her feet. There was an interval of hideous silence, but no reply. She called again. There was a sudden deepening roar, the blast of a fiery furnace swept through the opening, a thousand luminous points around her burst into fire, and in an instant she was lost in a whirlwind of smoke and flame! From the

onset of its fury to its culmination twenty minutes did not elapse ; but in that interval a radius of two hundred yards around the hidden spring was swept of life and light and motion.

For the rest of that day and part of the night a pall of smoke hung above the scene of desolation. It lifted only towards the morning, when the moon, riding high, picked out in black and silver the shrunken and silent columns of those roofless vaults, shorn of base and capital. It flickered on the still, overflowing pool of the hidden spring, and shone upon the white face of Low, who, with a rootlet of the fallen tree holding him down like an arm across his breast, seemed to be sleeping peacefully in the sleeping water.

Contemporaneous history touched him as briefly, but not as gently. "It is now definitely ascertained," said "The Slumgullion Mirror," "that Sheriff Dunn met his fate in the Carquinez Woods in the performance of his duty; that fearless man having received information of the concealment of a band of horse-thieves in their recesses. The desperadoes are presumed to have escaped, as the only remains found are those of two wretched tramps, one of whom is said to have been a Digger, who supported himself upon roots and herbs, and the other a degraded half-white woman. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the fire originated through their carelessness, although Father Wynn of the First Baptist Church, in his powerful discourse of last Sunday, pointed at the warning and lesson of such catastrophes. It may not be out of place here to say that the rumors regarding an engagement between the pastor's accomplished daughter and the late lamented sheriff are utterly without foundation, as it has been an *on dit* for some time in all well-informed circles that the indefatigable Mr. Brace, of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express, will shortly lead the lady to the hymeneal altar."

## A BLUE GRASS PENELOPE

### I

SHE was barely twenty-three years old. It is probable that up to that age, and the beginning of this episode, her life had been uneventful. Born to the easy mediocrity of such compensating extremes as a small farmhouse and large lands, a good position and no society, in that vast grazing district of Kentucky known as the "Blue Grass" region, all the possibilities of a Western American girl's existence lay before her. A piano in the bare-walled house, the latest patented mower in the limitless meadows, and a silk dress sweeping the rough floor of the unpainted "meeting-house," were already the promise of those possibilities. Beautiful she was, but the power of that beauty was limited by being equally shared with her few neighbors. There were small, narrow, arched feet besides her own that trod the uncarpeted floors of outlying log cabins with equal grace and dignity; bright, clearly opened eyes that were equally capable of looking unabashed upon princes and potentates, as a few later did, and the heiress of the county judge read her own beauty without envy in the frank glances and unlowered crest of the blacksmith's daughter. Eventually she had married the male of her species, a young stranger, who, as schoolmaster in the nearest town, had utilized to some local extent a scant capital of education. In obedience to the unwritten law of the West, after the marriage was celebrated the doors of the ancestral home cheerfully opened, and bride and bridegroom issued forth, without regret and without sentiment, to seek the further



possibilities of a life beyond these already too familiar voices. With their departure for California as Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Tucker, the parental nest in the Blue Grass meadows knew them no more.

They submitted with equal cheerfulness to the privations and excesses of their new conditions. Within three years the schoolmaster developed into a lawyer and capitalist, the Blue Grass bride supplying a grace and ease to these transitions that were all her own. She softened the abruptness of sudden wealth, mitigated the austerities of newly acquired power, and made the most glaring incongruity picturesque. Only one thing seemed to limit their progress in the region of these possibilities. They were childless. It was as if they had exhausted the future in their own youth, leaving little or nothing for another generation to do.

A southwesterly storm was beating against the dressing-room windows of their new house in one of the hilly suburbs of San Francisco, and threatening the unseasonable frivolity of the stucco ornamentation of cornice and balcony. Mrs. Tucker had been called from the contemplation of the dreary prospect without by the arrival of a visitor. On entering the drawing-room she found him engaged in a half-admiring, half-resentful examination of its new furniture and hangings. Mrs. Tucker at once recognized Mr. Calhoun Weaver, a former Blue Grass neighbor; with swift feminine intuition she also felt that his slight antagonism was likely to be transferred from her furniture to herself. Waiving it with the lazy amiability of Southern indifference, she welcomed him by the familiarity of a Christian name.

"I reckoned that mebbe you opined old Blue Grass friends would n't naturally hitch on to them fancy doin's," he said, glancing around the apartment to avoid her clear eyes, as if resolutely setting himself against the old charm

of her manner as he had against the more recent glory of her surroundings; "but I thought I'd just drop in for the sake of old times."

"Why should n't you, Cal?" said Mrs. Tucker with a frank smile.

"Especially as I'm going up to Sacramento to-night with some influential friends," he continued, with an ostentation calculated to resist the assumption of her charms and her furniture. "Senator Dyce of Kentucky, and his cousin Judge Briggs; perhaps you know 'em, or maybe Spencer — I mean Mr. Tucker — does."

"I reckon," said Mrs. Tucker smiling; "but tell me something about the boys and girls at Vineville, and about yourself. *You're* looking well, and right smart too." She paused to give due emphasis to this latter recognition of a huge gold chain with which her visitor was somewhat ostentatiously trifling.

"I did n't know as you cared to hear anything about Blue Grass," he returned, a little abashed. "I've been away from there some time myself," he added, his uneasy vanity taking fresh alarm at the faint suspicion of patronage on the part of his hostess. "They're doin' well though; perhaps as well as some others."

"And you're not married yet," continued Mrs. Tucker, oblivious of the innuendo. "Ah, Cal," she added archly, "I am afraid you are as fickle as ever. What poor girl in Vineville have you left pining?"

The simple face of the man before her flushed with foolish gratification at this old-fashioned, ambiguous flattery. "Now look yer, Belle," he said, chuckling, "if you're talking of old times, and you think I bear malice agin Spencer, why" —

But Mrs. Tucker interrupted what might have been an inopportune sentimental retrospect with a finger of arch but languid warning. "That will do! I'm dying to know all

about it, and you must stay to dinner and tell me. It's right mean you can't see Spencer too; but he is n't back from Sacramento yet."

Grateful as a tête-à-tête with his old neighbor in her more prosperous surroundings would have been, if only for the sake of later gossiping about it, he felt it would be inconsistent with his pride and his assumption of present business. More than that, he was uneasily conscious that in Mrs. Tucker's simple and unaffected manner there was a greater superiority than he had ever noticed during their previous acquaintance. He would have felt kinder to her had she shown any "airs and graces," which he could have commented upon and forgiven. He stammered some vague excuse of preoccupation, yet lingered in the hope of saying something which, if not aggressively unpleasant, might at least transfer to her indolent serenity some of his own irritation. "I reckon," he said, as he moved hesitatingly toward the door, "that Spencer has made himself easy and secure in them business risks he's taking. That 'ere Alameda ditch affair they're talking so much about is a mighty big thing, rather *too* big if it ever got to falling back on him. But I suppose he's accustomed to take risks?"

"Of course he is," said Mrs. Tucker gayly. "He married *me*."

The visitor smiled feebly, but was not equal to the opportunity offered for gallant repudiation. "But suppose *you* ain't accustomed to risks?"

"Why not? I married *him*," said Mrs. Tucker.

Mr. Calhoun Weaver was human, and succumbed to this last charming audacity. He broke into a noisy but genuine laugh, shook Mrs. Tucker's hand with effusion, said, "Now that's regular Blue Grass and no mistake!" and retreated under cover of his hilarity. In the hall he made a rallying-stand to repeat confidentially to the servant who had overheard them, "Blue Grass all over, you bet your life," and,

opening the door, was apparently swallowed up in the tempest.

Mrs. Tucker's smile kept her lips until she had returned to her room, and even then languidly shone in her eyes for some minutes after, as she gazed abstractedly from her window on the storm-tossed bay in the distance. Perhaps some girlish vision of the peaceful Blue Grass plain momentarily usurped the prospect; but it is to be doubted if there was much romance in that retrospect, or that it was more interesting to her than the positive and sharply cut outlines of the practical life she now led. Howbeit she soon forgot this fancy in lazily watching a boat that, in the teeth of the gale, was beating round Alcatraz Island. Although at times a mere blank speck on the gray waste of foam, a closer scrutiny showed it to be one of those lateen-rigged Italian fishing-boats that so often flecked the distant bay. Lost in the sudden darkening of rain, or reappearing beneath the lifted curtain of the squall, she watched it weather the island, and then turn its laboring but persistent course toward the open channel. A rent in the Indian-inky sky, that showed the narrowing portals of the Golden Gate beyond, revealed unexpectedly, as the destination of the little craft, a tall ship that hitherto lay hidden in the mist of the Saucelito shore. As the distance lessened between boat and ship, they were again lost in the downward swoop of another squall. When it lifted, the ship was creeping under the headland towards the open sea, but the boat was gone. Mrs. Tucker in vain rubbed the pane with her handkerchief — it had vanished. Meanwhile the ship, as she neared the Gate, drew out from the protecting headland, stood outlined for a moment with spars and canvas hearsed in black against the lurid rent in the horizon, and then seemed to sink slowly into the heaving obscurity beyond. A sudden onset of rain against the windows obliterated the remaining prospect; the entrance of a servant completed the diversion.

“Captain Poindexter, ma’am!”

Mrs. Tucker lifted her pretty eyebrows interrogatively. Captain Poindexter was a legal friend of her husband, and had dined there frequently; nevertheless she asked, “Did you tell him Mr. Tucker was not at home?”

“Yes, ’m.”

“Did he ask for *me*?”

“Yes, ’m.”

“Tell him I’ll be down directly.”

Mrs. Tucker’s quiet face did not betray the fact that this second visitor was even less interesting than the first. In her heart she did not like Captain Poindexter. With a clever woman’s instinct, she had early detected the fact that he had a superior, stronger nature than her husband; as a loyal wife, she secretly resented the occasional unconscious exhibition of this fact on the part of his intimate friend in their familiar intercourse. Added to this slight jealousy there was a certain moral antagonism between herself and the captain which none but themselves knew. They were both philosophers, but Mrs. Tucker’s serene and languid optimism would not tolerate the compassionate and kind-hearted pessimisms of the lawyer. “Knowing what Jack Poindexter does of human nature,” her husband had once said, “it’s mighty fine in him to be so kind and forgiving. You ought to like him better, Belle.” “And qualify myself to be forgiven,” said the lady pertly. “I don’t see what you’re driving at, Belle; I give it up,” had responded the puzzled husband. Mrs. Tucker kissed his high but foolish forehead tenderly, and said, “I’m glad you don’t, dear.”

Meanwhile her second visitor had, like the first, employed the interval in a critical survey of the glories of the new furniture, but with apparently more compassion than resentment in his manner. Once only had his expression changed. Over the fireplace hung a large photograph of Mr. Spencer Tucker. It was retouched, refined, and ideal-

ized in the highest style of that polite and diplomatic art. As Captain Poindexter looked upon the fringed hazel eyes, the drooping raven mustache, the clustering ringlets, and the Byronic full throat and turned-down collar of his friend, a smile of exhausted humorous tolerance and affectionate impatience curved his lips. "Well, you *are* a fool, are n't you?" he apostrophized it half audibly.

He was standing before the picture as she entered. Even in the trying contiguity of that peerless work he would have been called a fine-looking man. As he advanced to greet her, it was evident that his military title was not one of the mere fanciful sobriquets of the locality. In his erect figure and the disciplined composure of limb and attitude there were still traces of the refined academic rigors of West Point. The pliant adaptability of Western civilization, which enabled him, three years before, to leave the army and transfer his executive ability to the more profitable profession of the law, had loosed sash and shoulder-strap, but had not entirely removed the restraint of the one, nor the bearing of the other.

"Spencer is in Sacramento," began Mrs. Tucker in languid explanation, after the first greetings were over.

"I knew he was not here," replied Captain Poindexter gently, as he drew the proffered chair towards her, "but this is business that concerns you both." He stopped and glanced upwards at the picture. "I suppose you know nothing of his business? Of course not," he added reassuringly, "nothing, absolutely nothing, certainly." He said this so kindly, and yet so positively, as if to promptly dispose of that question before going further, that she assented mechanically. "Well, then, he's taken some big risks in the way of business, and — well, things have gone bad with him, you know. Very bad! Really, they could n't be worse! Of course it was dreadfully rash and all that," he went on, as if commenting upon the amusing wayward-

ness of a child; "but the result is the usual smash-up of everything, money, credit, and all!" He laughed, and added, "Yes, he's got cut off—mules and baggage regularly routed and dispersed! I'm in earnest." He raised his eyebrows and frowned slightly, as if to deprecate any corresponding hilarity on the part of Mrs. Tucker, or any attempt to make *too* light of the subject, and then rising, placed his hands behind his back, beamed half humorously upon her from beneath her husband's picture, and repeated, "That's so."

Mrs. Tucker instinctively knew that he spoke the truth, and that it was impossible for him to convey it in any other than his natural manner; but between the shock and the singular influence of that manner she could at first only say, "You don't mean it!" fully conscious of the utter inanity of the remark, and that it seemed scarcely less cold-blooded than his own.

Poindexter, still smiling, nodded.

She arose with an effort. She had recovered from the first shock, and pride lent her a determined calmness that more than equaled Poindexter's easy philosophy.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"At sea, and I hope by this time where he cannot be found or followed."

Was her momentary glimpse of the outgoing ship a coincidence or only a vision? She was confused and giddy, but, mastering her weakness, she managed to continue in a lower voice:—

"You have no message for me from him? He told you nothing to tell me?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," replied Poindexter. "It was as much as he could do, I reckon, to get fairly away before the crash came."

"Then you did not see him go?"

"Well, no," said Poindexter. "I'd hardly have man-

aged things in this way." He checked himself, and added, with a forgiving smile, "But he was the best judge of what he needed, of course."

"I suppose I will hear from him," she said quietly, "as soon as he is safe. He must have had enough else to think about, poor fellow."

She said this so naturally and quietly that Poindexter was deceived. He had no idea that the collected woman before him was thinking only of solitude and darkness, of her own room, and madly longing to be there. He said, "Yes, I dare say," in quite another voice, and glanced at the picture. But as she remained standing, he continued more earnestly, "I did n't come here to tell you what you might read in the newspapers to-morrow morning, and what everybody might tell you. Before that time I want you to do something to save a fragment of your property from the ruin; do you understand? I want you to make a rally, and bring off something in good order."

"For him?" said Mrs. Tucker, with brightening eyes.

"Well, yes, of course — if you like — but as if for yourself. Do you know the Rancho de los Cuervos?"

"I do."

"It's almost the only bit of real property your husband hasn't sold, mortgaged, or pledged. Why it was exempt, or whether only forgotten, I can't say."

"I'll tell you why," said Mrs. Tucker, with a slight return of color. "It was the first land we ever bought, and Spencer always said it should be mine, and he would build a new house on it."

Captain Poindexter smiled and nodded at the picture. "Oh, he did say that, did he? Well, *that's* evidence. But you see he never gave you the deed, and by sunrise to-morrow his creditors will attach it — unless" —

"Unless" — repeated Mrs. Tucker, with kindling eyes.

"Unless," continued Captain Poindexter, "they happen to find *you* in possession."



"I'll go," said Mrs. Tucker.

"Of course you will," returned Poindexter pleasantly. "Only, as it's a big contract to take, suppose we see how you can fill it. It's forty miles to Los Cuervos, and you can't trust yourself to steamboat or stage-coach. The steamboat left an hour ago."

"If I had only known this then!" ejaculated Mrs. Tucker.

"I knew it, but you had company then," said Poindexter, with ironical gallantry, "and I would n't disturb you." Without saying how he knew it, he continued, "In the stage-coach you might be recognized. You must go in a private conveyance and alone; even I cannot go with you, for I must go on before and meet you there. Can you drive forty miles?"

Mrs. Tucker lifted up her abstracted pretty lids. "I once drove fifty — at home," she returned simply.

"Good! And I dare say you did it then for fun. Do it now for something real and personal, as we lawyers say. You will have relays and a plan of the road. It's rough weather for a pasear, but all the better for that. You'll have less company on the road."

"How soon can I go?" she asked.

"The sooner the better. I've arranged everything for you already," he continued with a laugh. "Come now, that's a compliment to you, is n't it?" He smiled a moment in her steadfast, earnest face, and then said more gravely, "You'll do. Now listen."

He then carefully detailed his plan. There was so little of excitement or mystery in their manner that the servant, who returned to light the gas, never knew that the ruin and bankruptcy of the house was being told before her, or that its mistress was planning her secret flight.

"Good-afternoon. I will see you to-morrow then," said Poindexter, raising his eyes to hers as the servant opened the door for him.

"Good-afternoon," repeated Mrs. Tucker, quietly answering his look. "You need not light the gas in my room, Mary," she continued in the same tone of voice as the door closed upon him; "I shall lie down for a few moments, and then I may run over to the Robinsons for the evening."

She regained her room composedly. The longing desire to bury her head in her pillow and "think out" her position had gone. She did not apostrophize her fate, she did not weep; few real women do in the access of calamity, or when there is anything else to be done. She felt that she knew it all; she believed she had sounded the profoundest depths of the disaster, and seemed already so old in her experience that she almost fancied she had been prepared for it. Perhaps she did not fully appreciate it. To a life like hers it was only an incident, the mere turning of a page of the illimitable book of youth; the breaking up of what she now felt had become a monotony. In fact, she was not quite sure she had ever been satisfied with their present success. Had it brought her all she expected? She wanted to say this to her husband, not only to comfort him, poor fellow, but that they might come to a better understanding of life in the future. She was not perhaps different from other loving women, who, believing in this unattainable goal of matrimony, have sought it in the various episodes of fortune or reverses, in the bearing of children, or the loss of friends. In her childless experience there was no other life that had taken root in her circumstances and might suffer transplantation; only she and her husband could lose or profit by the change. The "better" understanding would come under other conditions than these.

She would have gone superstitiously to the window to gaze in the direction of the vanished ship, but another instinct restrained her. She would put aside all yearning for him until she had done something to help him, and earned

the confidence he seemed to have withheld. Perhaps it was pride — perhaps she never really believed his exodus was distant or complete.

With a full knowledge that to-morrow the various ornaments and pretty trifles around her would be in the hands of the law, she gathered only a few necessaries for her flight and some familiar personal trinkets. I am constrained to say that this self-abnegation was more fastidious than moral. She had no more idea of the ethics of bankruptcy than any other charming woman; she simply did not like to take with her any contagious memory of the chapter of the life just closing. She glanced around the home she was leaving without a lingering regret; there was no sentiment of tradition or custom that might be destroyed; her roots lay too near the surface to suffer dislocation; the happiness of her childless union had depended upon no domestic centre, nor was its flame sacred to any local hearthstone. It was without a sigh that, when night had fully fallen, she slipped unnoticed down the staircase. At the door of the drawing-room she paused, and then entered with the first guilty feeling of shame she had known that evening. Looking stealthily around, she mounted a chair before her husband's picture, kissed the irreproachable mustache hurriedly, said, "You foolish darling, you!" and slipped out again. With this touching indorsement of the views of a rival philosopher, she closed the door softly, and left her home forever.

## II

The wind and rain had cleared the unfrequented suburb of any observant loungers, and the darkness, lit only by far-spaced, gusty lamps, hid her hastening figure. She had barely crossed the second street when she heard the quick clatter of hoofs behind her; a buggy drove up to the curb-

stone, and Poindexter leaped out. She entered quickly, but for a moment he still held the reins of the impatient horse. "He 's rather fresh," he said, eyeing her keenly; "are you sure you can manage him?"

"Give me the reins," she said simply.

He placed them in the two firm, well-shaped hands that reached from the depths of the vehicle, and was satisfied. Yet he lingered.

"It 's rough work for a lone woman," he said almost curtly. "*I* can't go with you, but, speak frankly, is there any man you know whom you can trust well enough to take? It 's not too late yet; think a moment!"

He paused over the buttoning of the leather apron of the vehicle.

"No, there is none," answered the voice from the interior; "and it 's better so. Is all ready?"

"One moment more." He had recovered his half-bantering manner. "You *have* a friend and countryman already with you, do you know? Your horse is Blue Grass. Good-night."

With these words ringing in her ears she began her journey. The horse, as if eager to maintain the reputation which his native district had given his race, as well as the race of the pretty woman behind him, leaped impatiently forward. But pulled together by the fine and firm fingers that seemed to guide rather than check his exuberance, he presently struck into the long, swinging pace of his kind, and kept it throughout without "break" or acceleration. Over the paved streets the light buggy rattled, and the slender shafts danced around his smooth barrel; but when they touched the level highroad, horse and vehicle slipped forward through the night, a swift and noiseless phantom. Mrs. Tucker could see his graceful back dimly rising and falling before her with tireless rhythm, and could feel the intelligent pressure of his mouth, until it seemed the respon-

sive grasp of a powerful but kindly hand. The faint glow of conquest came to her cold cheek ; the slight stirrings of pride moved her preoccupied heart. A soft light filled her hazel eyes. A desolate woman, bereft of husband and home, and flying through storm and night, she knew not where, she still leaned forward towards her horse. " Was he Blue Grass, then, dear old boy ? " she gently cooed at him in the darkness. He evidently *was*, and responded by blowing her an ostentatious equine kiss. " And he would be good to his own forsaken Belle," she murmured caressingly, " and would n't let any one harm her ? " But here, overcome by the lazy witchery of her voice, he shook his head so violently that Mrs. Tucker, after the fashion of her sex, had the double satisfaction of demurely restraining the passion she had evoked.

To avoid the more traveled thoroughfare, while the evening was still early, it had been arranged that she should at first take a less direct but less frequented road. This was a famous pleasure-drive from San Francisco, a graveled and sanded stretch of eight miles to the sea, and an ultimate " cocktail," in a " stately pleasure-dome decreed " among the surf and rocks of the Pacific shore. It was deserted now, and left to the unobstructed sweep of the wind and rain. Mrs. Tucker would not have chosen this road. With the instinctive jealousy of a bucolic inland race born by great rivers, she did not like the sea ; and again, the dim and dreary waste tended to recall the vision connected with her husband's flight, upon which she had resolutely shut her eyes. But when she had reached it the road suddenly turned, following the trend of the beach, and she was exposed to the full power of its dread fascinations. The combined roar of sea and shore was in her ears. As the direct force of the gale had compelled her to furl the protecting hood of the buggy to keep the light vehicle from oversetting or drifting to leeward, she could no longer shut out the

heaving chaos on the right, from which the pallid ghosts of dead and dying breakers dimly rose and sank as if in awful salutation. At times through the darkness a white sheet appeared spread before the path and beneath the wheels of the buggy, which, when withdrawn with a reluctant hiss, seemed striving to drag the exhausted beach seaward with it. But the blind terror of her horse, who swerved at every sweep of the surge, shamed her own half-superstitious fears, and with the effort to control his alarm she regained her own self-possession, albeit with eyelashes wet not altogether with the salt spray from the sea. This was followed by a reaction, perhaps stimulated by her victory over the beaten animal, when for a time, she knew not how long, she felt only a mad sense of freedom and power, oblivious of even her sorrows, her lost home and husband, and with intense feminine consciousness she longed to be a man. She was scarcely aware that the track turned again inland until the beat of the horse's hoofs on the firm ground and an acceleration of speed showed her she had left the beach and the mysterious sea behind her, and she remembered that she was near the end of the first stage of her journey. Half an hour later the twinkling lights of the roadside inn where she was to change horses rose out of the darkness.

Happily for her, the hostler considered the horse, who had a local reputation, of more importance than the unknown muffled figure in the shadow of the unfurled hood, and confined his attention to the animal. After a careful examination of his feet and a few comments addressed solely to the superior creation, he led him away. Mrs. Tucker would have liked to part more affectionately from her four-footed compatriot, and felt a sudden sense of loneliness at the loss of her new friend, but a recollection of certain cautions of Captain Poindexter's kept her mute. Nevertheless, the hostler's ostentatious adjuration of "Now

then, are n't you going to bring out that mustang for the señora?" puzzled her. It was not until the fresh horse was put to, and she had flung a piece of gold into the attendant's hand, that the "Gracias" of his unmistakable Saxon speech revealed to her the reason of the lawyer's caution. Poindexter had evidently represented her to these people as a native Californian who did not speak English. In her inconsistency her blood took fire at this first suggestion of deceit, and burned in her face. Why should he try to pass her off as anybody else? Why should she not use her own, her husband's name? She stopped and bit her lip.

It was but the beginning of an uneasy train of thought. She suddenly found herself thinking of her visitor, Calhoun Weaver, and not pleasantly. He would hear of their ruin to-morrow, perhaps of her own flight. He would remember his visit, and what would he think of her deceitful frivolity? Would he believe that she was then ignorant of the failure? It was her first sense of any accountability to others than herself, but even then it was rather owing to an uneasy consciousness of what her husband must feel if he were subjected to the criticisms of men like Calhoun. She wondered if others knew that he had kept her in ignorance of his flight. Did Poindexter know it, or had he only entrapped her into the admission? Why had she not been clever enough to make him think that she knew it already? For the moment she hated Poindexter for sharing that secret. Yet this was again followed by a new impatience of her husband's want of insight into her ability to help him. Of course the poor fellow could not bear to worry her, could not bear to face such men as Calhoun, or even Poindexter (she added exultingly to herself), but he might have sent her a line as he fled, only to prepare her to meet and combat the shame alone. It did not occur to her unsophisticated singleness of nature that she

was accepting as an error of feeling what the world would call cowardly selfishness.

At midnight the storm lulled, and a few stars trembled through the rent clouds. Her eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and her country instincts, a little overlaid by the urban experiences of the last few years, came again to the surface. She felt the fresh, cool radiation from outlying, upturned fields, the faint, sad odors from dim stretches of pricking grain and quickening leaf, and wondered if at Los Cuervos it might be possible to reproduce the peculiar verdure of her native district. She beguiled her fancy by an ambitious plan of retrieving their fortunes by farming; her comfortable tastes had lately rebelled against the homeless mechanical cultivation of those desolate but teeming Californian acres, and for a moment indulged in a vision of a vine-clad cottage home that in any other woman would have been sentimental. Her cramped limbs aching, she took advantage of the security of the darkness and the familiar contiguity of the fields to get down from the vehicle, gather her skirts together, and run at the head of the mustang, until her chill blood was thawed, night drawing a modest veil over this charming revelation of the nymph and woman. But the sudden shadow of a coyote checked the scouring feet of this swift Camilla, and sent her back precipitately to the buggy. Nevertheless, she was refreshed and able to pursue her journey, until the cold gray of early morning found her at the end of her second stage.

Her route was changed again from the main highway, rendered dangerous by the approach of day and the contiguity of the neighboring rancheros. The road was rough and hilly, her new horse and vehicle in keeping with the rudeness of the route—by far the most difficult of her whole journey. The rare wagon tracks that indicated her road were often scarcely discernible; at times they led



her through openings in the half-cleared woods, skirted suspicious morasses, painfully climbed the smooth, dome-like hills, or wound along perilous slopes at a dangerous angle. Twice she had to alight and cling to the sliding wheels on one of those treacherous inclines, or drag them from impending ruts or immovable mire. In the growing light she could distinguish the distant, low-lying marshes eaten by encroaching sloughs and insidious channels, and beyond them the faint gray waste of the lower bay. A darker peninsula in the marsh she knew to be the extreme boundary of her future home: the Rancho de los Cuervos. In another hour she began to descend to the plain, and once more to approach the main road, which now ran nearly parallel with her track. She scanned it cautiously for any early traveler! it stretched north and south in apparent unending solitude. She struck into it boldly, and urged her horse to the top of his speed, until she reached the cross-road that led to the rancho. But here she paused and allowed the reins to drop idly on the mustang's back. A singular and unaccountable irresolution seized her. The difficulties of her journey were over; the rancho lay scarcely two miles away; she had achieved the most important part of her task in the appointed time; but she hesitated. What had she come for? She tried to recall Poindexter's words, even her own enthusiasm, but in vain. She was going to take possession of her husband's property, she knew, that was all. But the means she had taken seemed now so exaggerated and mysterious for that simple end, that she began to dread an impending something, or some vague danger she had not considered, that she was rushing blindly to meet. Full of this strange feeling, she almost mechanically stopped her horse as she entered the cross-road.

From this momentary hesitation a singular sound aroused her. It seemed at first like the swift hurrying by of some viewless courier of the air, the vague alarm of some invis-

ble flying herald, or like the inarticulate cry that precedes a storm. It seemed to rise and fall around her as if with some changing urgency of purpose. Raising her eyes, she suddenly recognized the two far-stretching lines of telegraph wire above her head, and knew the æolian cry of the morning wind along its vibrating chords. But it brought another and more practical fear to her active brain. Perhaps even now the telegraph might be anticipating her! Had Poindexter thought of that? She hesitated no longer, but laying the whip on the back of her jaded mustang, again hurried forward.

As the level horizon grew more distinct, her attention was attracted by the white sail of a small boat lazily threading the sinuous channel of the slough. It might be Poindexter arriving by the more direct route from the steamboat that occasionally laid off the ancient embarcadero of the Los Cuervos Rancho. But even while watching it her quick ear caught the sound of galloping hoofs behind her. She turned quickly and saw she was followed by a horseman. But her momentary alarm was succeeded by a feeling of relief as she recognized the erect figure and square shoulders of Poindexter. Yet she could not help thinking that he looked more like a militant scout, and less like a cautious legal adviser, than ever.

With unaffected womanliness she rearranged her slightly disordered hair as he drew up beside her. "I thought you were in yonder boat," she said.

"Not I," he laughed; "I distanced you by the high-road two hours, and have been reconnoitring, until I saw you hesitate at the cross-roads."

"But who is in the boat?" asked Mrs. Tucker, partly to hide her embarrassment.

"Only some early Chinese market gardener, I dare say. But you are safe now. You are on your own land. You passed the boundary monument of the rancho five minutes

ago. Look! All you see before you is yours from the embarcadero to yonder Coast Range."

The tone of half raillery did not, however, cheer Mrs. Tucker. She shuddered slightly, and cast her eyes over the monotonous sea of tule and meadow.

"It does n't look pretty, perhaps," continued Poindexter, "but it's the richest land in the State, and the embarcadero will some day be a town. I suppose you'll call it Blue Grassville. But you seem tired!" he said, suddenly dropping his voice to a tone of half-humorous sympathy.

Mrs. Tucker managed to get rid of an impending tear under the pretense of clearing her eyes. "Are we nearly there?" she asked.

"Nearly. You know," he added, with the same half-mischievous, half-sympathizing gayety, "it's not exactly a palace you're coming to,—hardly. It's the old casa that has been deserted for years, but I thought it better you should go into possession there than take up your abode at the shanty where your husband's farm-hands are. No one will know when you take possession of the casa, while the very hour of your arrival at the shanty would be known; and if they should make any trouble"—

"If they should make any trouble?" repeated Mrs. Tucker, lifting her frank, inquiring eyes to Poindexter.

His horse suddenly rearing from an apparently accidental prick of the spur, it was a minute or two before he was able to explain. "I mean if this ever comes up as a matter of evidence, you know. But here we are!"

What had seemed to be an overgrown mound rising like an island out of the dead level of the grassy sea now resolved itself into a collection of adobe walls, eaten and incrustated with shrubs and vines, that bore some resemblance to the usual uninhabited-looking exterior of a Spanish-American dwelling. Apertures that might have been lance-shaped windows or only cracks and fissures in

the walls were choked up with weeds and grass, and gave no passing glimpse of the interior. Entering a ruinous corral they came to a second entrance, which proved to be the patio or courtyard. The deserted wooden corridor, with beams, rafters, and floors whitened by the sun and wind, contained a few withered leaves, dryly rotting skins, and thongs of leather, as if undisturbed by human care. But among these scattered débris of former life and habitation there was no noisome or unclean suggestion of decay. A faint spiced odor of desiccation filled the bare walls. There was no slime on stone or sun-dried brick. In place of fungus or discolored moisture the dust of efflorescence whitened in the obscured corners. The elements had picked clean the bones of the old and crumbling tenement ere they should finally absorb it.

A withered old peon woman, who in dress, complexion, and fibrous hair might have been an animated fragment of the débris, rustled out of a low vaulted passage and welcomed them with a feeble crepitation. Following her into the dim interior, Mrs. Tucker was surprised to find some slight attempt at comfort and even adornment in the two or three habitable apartments. They were scrupulously clean and dry, two qualities which in her feminine eyes atoned for poverty of material.

“I could not send anything from San Bruno, the nearest village, without attracting attention,” explained Poin-dexter; “but if you can manage to picnic here for a day longer, I’ll get one of our Chinese friends here,” he pointed to the slough, “to bring over, for his return cargo from across the bay, any necessaries you may want. There is no danger of his betraying you,” he added, with an ironical smile; “Chinamen and Indians are, by an ingenious provision of the statute of California, incapable of giving evidence against a white person. You can trust your handmaiden perfectly — even if she can’t trust *you*. That

is your sacred privilege under the constitution. And now, as I expect to catch the up boat ten miles from hence, I must say 'good-by' until to-morrow night. I hope to bring you then some more definite plans for the future. The worst is over." He held her hand for a moment, and with a graver voice continued, "You have done it very well — do you know — very well!"

In the slight embarrassment produced by his sudden change of manner she felt that her thanks seemed awkward and restrained. "Don't thank me," he laughed, with a prompt return of his former levity; "that's my trade. I only advised. You have saved yourself like a plucky woman — shall I say like Blue Grass? Good-by!" He mounted his horse, but, as if struck by an after-thought, wheeled and drew up by her side again. "If I were you I would n't see many strangers for a day or two, and listen to as little news as a woman possibly can." He laughed again, waved her a half-gallant, half-military salute, and was gone. The question she had been trying to frame, regarding the probability of communication with her husband, remained unasked. At least she had saved her pride before him.

Addressing herself to the care of her narrow household, she mechanically put away the few things she had brought with her, and began to readjust the scant furniture. She was a little discomposed at first at the absence of bolts, locks, and even window-fastenings until assured, by Concha's evident inability to comprehend her concern, that they were quite unknown at Los Cuervos. Her slight knowledge of Spanish was barely sufficient to make her wants known, so that the relief of conversation with her only companion was debarred her, and she was obliged to content herself with the sapless, crackling smiles and withered genuflexions that the old woman dropped like dead leaves in her path. It was staring noon when, the house singing like an empty

shell in the monotonous wind, she felt she could stand the solitude no longer, and, crossing the glaring patio and whistling corridor, made her way to the open gateway.

But the view without seemed to intensify her desolation. The broad expanse of the shadowless plain reached apparently to the Coast Range, trackless and unbroken save by one or two clusters of dwarfed oaks, which at that distance were but mossy excrescences on the surface, barely raised above the dead level. On the other side the marsh took up the monotony and carried it, scarcely interrupted by undefined water-courses, to the faintly marked-out horizon line of the remote bay. Scattered and apparently motionless black spots on the meadows that gave a dreary significance to the title of "The Crows" which the rancho bore, and sudden gray clouds of sandpipers on the marshes, that rose and vanished down the wind, were the only signs of life. Even the white sail of the early morning was gone.

She stood there until the aching of her straining eyes and the stiffening of her limbs in the cold wind compelled her to seek the sheltered warmth of the courtyard. Here she endeavored to make friends with a bright-eyed lizard, who was sunning himself in the corridor; a graceful little creature in blue and gold, from whom she felt at other times she might have fled, but whose beauty and harmlessness solitude had made known to her. With misplaced kindness she tempted it with bread-crumbs, with no other effect than to stiffen it into stony astonishment. She wondered if she should become like the prisoners she had read of in books, who poured out their solitary affections on noisome creatures, and she regretted even the mustang, which with the buggy had disappeared under the charge of some unknown retainer on her arrival. Was she not a prisoner? The shutterless windows, yawning doors, and open gate refuted the suggestion, but the encompassing solitude and trackless waste still held her captive. Poindexter had told her it was four miles

to the shanty ; she might walk there. Why had she given her word that she would remain at the rancho until he returned ?

The long day crept monotonously away, and she welcomed the night which shut out the dreary prospect. But it brought no cessation of the harassing wind without, nor surcease of the nervous irritation its perpetual and even activity wrought upon her. It haunted her pillow even in her exhausted sleep, and seemed to impatiently beckon her to rise and follow it. It brought her feverish dreams of her husband, footsore and weary, staggering forward under its pitiless lash and clamorous outcry ; she would have gone to his assistance, but when she reached his side and held out her arms to him it hurried her past with merciless power, and, bearing her away, left him hopelessly behind. It was broad day when she awoke. The usual night showers of the waning rainy season had left no trace in sky or meadow ; the fervid morning sun had already dried the patio ; only the restless, harrying wind remained.

Mrs. Tucker arose with a resolve. She had learned from Concha on the previous evening that a part of the shanty was used as a tienda or shop for the laborers and rancheros. Under the necessity of purchasing some articles, she would go there and for a moment mingle with those people, who would not recognize her. Even if they did, her instinct told her it would be less to be feared than the hopeless uncertainty of another day. As she left the house the wind seemed to seize her as in her dream, and hurry her along with it, until in a few moments the walls of the low casa sank into the earth again, and she was alone but for the breeze on the solitary plain. The level distance glittered in the sharp light, a few crows with slant wings dipped and ran down the wind before her, and a passing gleam on the marsh was explained by the far-off cry of a curlew.

She had walked for an hour, upheld by the stimulus of

light and morning air, when the cluster of scrub oaks, which was her destination, opened enough to show two rambling sheds, before one of which was a wooden platform containing a few barrels and bones. As she approached nearer, she could see that one or two horses were tethered under the trees, that their riders were lounging by a horse-trough, and that over an open door the word "Tienda" was rudely painted on a board, and as rudely illustrated by the wares displayed at door and window. Accustomed as she was to the poverty of frontier architecture, even the crumbling walls of the old hacienda she had just left seemed picturesque to the rigid angles of the thin, blank, unpainted shell before her.

One of the loungers, who was reading a newspaper aloud as she advanced, put it aside and stared at her; there was an evident commotion in the shop as she stepped upon the platform, and when she entered, with breathless lips and beating heart, she found herself the object of a dozen curious eyes. Her quick pride resented the scrutiny and recalled her courage, and it was with a slight coldness in her usual lazy indifference that she leaned over the counter and asked for the articles she wanted.

The request was followed by a dead silence. Mrs. Tucker repeated it with some hauteur.

"I reckon you don't seem to know this store is in the hands of the sheriff," said one of the loungers.

Mrs. Tucker was not aware of it.

"Well, I don't know any one who's a better right to know than Spence Tucker's wife," said another with a coarse laugh. The laugh was echoed by the others. Mrs. Tucker saw the pit into which she had deliberately walked, but did not flinch.

"Is there any one to serve here?" she asked, turning her clear eyes full upon the bystanders.

"You'd better ask the sheriff. He was the last one to



sarve here. He sarved an attachment," replied the inevitable humorist of all Californian assemblages.

"Is he here?" asked Mrs. Tucker, disregarding the renewed laughter which followed this subtle witticism.

The loungers at the door made way for one of their party who was half dragged, half pushed into the shop. "Here he is," said half a dozen eager voices, in the fond belief that his presence might impart additional humor to the situation. He cast a deprecating glance at Mrs. Tucker, and said, "It 's so, madam! This yer place *is* attached; but if there 's anything you 're wanting, why I reckon, boys," — he turned half appealingly to the crowd, — "we could oblige a lady." There was a vague sound of angry opposition and remonstrance from the back door of the shop, but the majority, partly overcome by Mrs. Tucker's beauty, assented. "Only," continued the officer explanatorily, "ez these yer goods are in the hands of the creditors, they ought to be represented by an equivalent in money. If you 're expecting they should be charged" —

"But I wish to *pay* for them," interrupted Mrs. Tucker, with a slight flush of indignation; "I have the money."

"Oh, I bet you have!" screamed a voice, as, overturning all opposition, the malcontent at the back door, in the shape of an infuriated woman, forced her way into the shop. "I'll bet you have the money! Look at her, boys! Look at the wife of the thief, with the stolen money in diamonds in her ears and rings on her fingers. *She* 's got money if *we* 've none. *She* can pay for what she fancies, if we have n't a cent to redeem the bed that 's stolen from under us. Oh, yes, buy it all, Mrs. Spencer Tucker! buy the whole shop, Mrs. Spencer Tucker, do you hear? And if you ain't satisfied then, buy my clothes, my wedding ring, the only things your husband has n't stolen."

"I don't understand you," said Mrs. Tucker coldly, turning towards the door. But with a flying leap across

the counter her relentless adversary stood between her and retreat.

"You don't understand! Perhaps you don't understand that your husband not only stole the hard labor of these men, but even the little money they brought here and trusted to his thieving hands. Perhaps you don't know that he stole my husband's hard earnings, mortgaged these very goods you want to buy, and that he is to-day a convicted thief, a forger, and a runaway coward. Perhaps, if you can't understand *me*, you can read the newspaper. Look!" She exultingly opened the paper the sheriff had been reading aloud, and pointed to the displayed headlines. "Look! there are the very words, 'Forgery, Swindling, Embezzlement!' Do you see? And perhaps you can't understand this. Look! 'Shameful Flight. Abandons his Wife. Runs off with a Notorious' —"

"Easy, old gal, easy now. D—n it! Will you dry up? I say. *Stop!*"

It was too late! The sheriff had dashed the paper from the woman's hand, but not until Mrs. Tucker had read a single line, a line such as she had sometimes turned from with weary scorn in her careless perusal of the daily shameful chronicle of domestic infelicity. Then she had coldly wondered if there could be any such men and women. And now! The crowd fell back before her; even the virago was silenced as she looked at her face. The humorist's face was as white, but not as immobile, as he gasped, "Christ! if I don't believe she knew nothin' of it!"

For a moment the full force of such a supposition, with all its poignancy, its dramatic intensity, and its pathos, possessed the crowd. In the momentary clairvoyance of enthusiasm they caught a glimpse of the truth, and by one of the strange reactions of human passion they only waited for a word of appeal or explanation from her lips to throw themselves at her feet. Had she simply told her story

they would have believed her; had she cried, fainted, or gone into hysterics, they would have pitied her. She did neither. Perhaps she thought of neither, or indeed of anything that was then before her eyes. She walked erect to the door, and turned upon the threshold. "I mean what I say," she said calmly. "I don't understand you. But whatever just claims you have upon my husband will be paid by me, or by his lawyer, Captain Poindexter."

She had lost the sympathy but not the respect of her hearers. They made way for her with sullen deference as she passed out on the platform. But her adversary, profiting by the last opportunity, burst into an ironical laugh.

"Captain Poindexter, is it? Well, perhaps he's safe to pay *your* bill; but as for your husband's" —

"That's another matter," interrupted a familiar voice with the greatest cheerfulness; "that's what you were going to say, was n't it? Ha, ha! Well, Mrs. Patterson," continued Poindexter, stepping from his buggy, "you never spoke a truer word in your life. — One moment, Mrs. Tucker. Let me send you back in the buggy. Don't mind *me*. I can get a fresh horse of the sheriff. I'm quite at home here." Then, turning to one of the bystanders, "I say, Patterson, step a few paces this way, will you? A little further from your wife, please. That will do. You've got a claim of five thousand dollars against the property, have n't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, that woman just driving away is your one solitary chance of getting a cent of it. If your wife insults her again, that chance is gone. And if *you* do" —

"Well?"

"As sure as there is a God in Israel and a Supreme Court of the State of California, I'll kill you in your tracks! — Stay!"

Patterson turned. The irrepressible look of humorous

tolerance of all human frailty had suffused Poindexter's black eyes with mischievous moisture. "If you think it quite safe to confide to your wife this prospect of her improvement by widowhood, you may!"

### III

Mr. Patterson did not inform his wife of the lawyer's personal threat to himself. But he managed, after Poindexter had left, to make her conscious that Mrs. Tucker might be a power to be placated and feared. "You've shot off your mouth at her," he said argumentatively, "and whether you've hit the mark or not you've had your say. Ef you think it's worth a possible five thousand dollars and interest to keep on, heave ahead. Ef you rather have the chance of getting the rest in cash, you'll let up on her." "You don't suppose," returned Mrs. Patterson contemptuously, "that she's got anything but what that man of hers — Poindexter — lets her have?" "The sheriff says," retorted Patterson surlily, "that she's notified him that she claims the rancho as a gift from her husband three years ago, and she's in *possession* now, and was so when the execution was out. It don't make no matter," he added, with gloomy philosophy, "who's got a full hand as long as *we* ain't got the cards to chip in. I would n't 'a' minded it," he continued meditatively, "ef Spence Tucker had dropped a hint to me afore he put out." "And I suppose," said Mrs. Patterson angrily, "you'd have put out too?" "I reckon," said Patterson simply.

Twice or thrice during the evening he referred, more or less directly, to this lack of confidence shown by his late debtor and employer, and seemed to feel it more keenly than the loss of property. He confided his sentiments quite openly to the sheriff in possession, over the whiskey

and euchre with which these gentlemen avoided the difficulties of their delicate relations. He brooded over it as he handed the keys of the shop to the sheriff when they parted for the night, and was still thinking of it when the house was closed, everybody gone to bed, and he was fetching a fresh jug of water from the well. The moon was at times obscured by flying clouds, the avant-couriers of the regular evening shower. He was stooping over the well, when he sprang suddenly to his feet again. "Who's there?" he demanded sharply.

"Hush!" said a voice so low and faint it might have been a whisper of the wind in the palisades of the corral. But, indistinct as it was, it was the voice of a man he was thinking of as far away, and it sent a thrill of alternate awe and pleasure through his pulses.

He glanced quickly round. The moon was hidden by a passing cloud, and only the faint outlines of the house he had just quitted were visible. "Is that you, Spence?" he said tremulously.

"Yes," replied the voice, and a figure dimly emerged from the corner of the corral.

"Lay low, lay low, for God's sake," said Patterson, hurriedly throwing himself upon the apparition. "The sheriff and his posse are in there."

"But I must speak to you a moment," said the figure.

"Wait," said Patterson, glancing toward the building. Its blank, shutterless windows revealed no inner light; a profound silence encompassed it. "Come quick," he whispered. Letting his grasp slip down to the unresisting hand of the stranger, he half dragged, half led him, brushing against the wall, into the open door of the deserted bar-room he had just quitted, locked the inner door, poured a glass of whiskey from a decanter, gave it to him, and then watched him drain it at a single draught. The moon came out, and falling through the bare windows full upon the stranger's

face, revealed the artistic but slightly disheveled curls and mustache of the fugitive, Spencer Tucker.

Whatever may have been the real influence of this unfortunate man upon his fellows, it seemed to find expression in a singular unanimity of criticism. Patterson looked at him with a half-dismal, half-welcoming smile. "Well, you are a h—ll of a fellow, ain't you?"

Spencer Tucker passed his hand through his hair and lifted it from his forehead, with a gesture at once emotional and theatrical. "I am a man with a price on me!" he said bitterly. "Give me up to the sheriff, and you'll get five thousand dollars. Help me, and you'll get nothing. That's my d—d luck, and yours too, I suppose."

"I reckon you're right there," said Patterson gloomily. "But I thought you got clean away — went off in a ship" —

"Went off in a boat to a ship," interrupted Tucker savagely; "went off to a ship that had all my things on board — everything. The cursed boat capsized in a squall just off the Heads. The ship, d—n her, sailed away, the men thinking I was drowned likely, and that they'd make a good thing off my goods, I reckon."

"But the girl, Inez, who was with you, did n't she make a row?"

"Quien sabe?" returned Tucker, with a reckless laugh. "Well, I hung on like grim death to that boat's keel until one of those Chinese fishermen, in a 'dug-out,' hauled me on opposite Sancelito. I chartered him and his dug-out to bring me down here."

"Why here?" asked Patterson, with a certain ostentatious caution that ill concealed his pensive satisfaction.

"You may well ask," returned Tucker, with an equal ostentation of bitterness, as he slightly waved his companion away. "But I reckoned I could trust a white man that I'd been kind to, and who would n't go back on me. No, no, let me go! Hand me over to the sheriff!"

Patterson had suddenly grasped both the hands of the picturesque scamp before him, with an affection that for an instant almost shamed the man who had ruined him. But Tucker's egotism whispered that this affection was only a recognition of his own superiority, and felt flattered. He was beginning to believe that he was really the injured party.

"What I *have* and what I have *had* is yours, Spence," returned Patterson, with a sad and simple directness that made any further discussion a gratuitous insult. "I only wanted to know what you reckoned to do here."

"I want to get over across the Coast Range to Monterey," said Tucker. "Once there, one of those coasting schooners will bring me down to Acapulco, where the ship will put in."

Patterson remained silent for a moment. "There's a mustang in the corral you can take — leastways, I sha'n't know that it's gone — until to-morrow afternoon. In an hour from now," he added, looking from the window, "these clouds will settle down to business. It will rain; there will be light enough for you to find your way by the regular trail over the mountain, but not enough for any one to know you. If you can't push through to-night, you can lie over at the posada on the summit. Them greasers that keep it won't know you, and if they did they won't go back on you. And if they did go back on you, nobody would believe them. It's mighty curious," he added, with gloomy philosophy, "but I reckon it's the reason why Providence allows this kind of cattle to live among white men and others made in his image. Take a piece of pie, won't you?" he continued, abandoning this abstract reflection and producing half a flat pumpkin pie from the bar. Spencer Tucker grasped the pie with one hand and his friend's fingers with the other, and for a few moments was silent from the hurried deglutition of viand and sentiment. "You're a white man, Pat

terson, anyway," he resumed. "I'll take your horse, and put it down in our account at your own figure. As soon as this cursed thing is blown over, I'll be back here and see you through, you bet! I don't desert my friends, however rough things go with me."

"I see you don't," returned Patterson, with an unconscious and serious simplicity that had the effect of the most exquisite irony. "I was only just saying to the sheriff that if there was anything I could have done for you, you would n't have cut away without letting me know." Tucker glanced uneasily at Patterson, who continued, "Ye ain't wanting anything else?" Then observing that his former friend and patron was roughly but newly clothed, and betrayed no trace of his last escapade, he added, "I see you've got a fresh harness."

"That d—d Chinaman bought me these at the landing. They're not much in style or fit," he continued, trying to get a moonlight view of himself in the mirror behind the bar, "but that don't matter here." He filled another glass of spirits, jauntily settled himself back in his chair, and added, "I don't suppose there are any girls around, anyway."

"'Cept your wife; she was down here this afternoon," said Patterson meditatively.

Mr. Tucker paused with the pie in his hand. "Ah, yes!" He essayed a reckless laugh, but that evident simulation failed before Patterson's melancholy. With an assumption of falling in with his friend's manner, rather than from any personal anxiety, he continued, "Well?"

"That man Poindexter was down here with her. Put her in the hacienda to hold possession afore the news came out."

"Impossible!" said Tucker, rising hastily. "It don't belong—that is"—he hesitated.

"Yer thinking the creditors'll get it, mebber," returned



Patterson, gazing at the floor. "Not as long as she 's in it; no, sir! Whether it 's really hers, or she 's only keeping house for Poindexter, she 's a fixture, you bet. They are a team when they pull together, they are!"

The smile slowly faded from Tucker's face, that now looked quite rigid in the moonlight. He put down his glass, and walked to the window as Patterson gloomily continued: "But that 's nothing to you. You 've got ahead of 'em both, and had your revenge by going off with the gal. That 's what I said all along. When folks — specially women folks — wondered how you could leave a woman like your wife, and go off with a scallawag like that gal, I allers said they 'd find out there was a reason. And when your wife came flaunting down here with Poindexter before she 'd quite got quit of you, I reckon they began to see the whole little game. No, sir! I knew it was n't on account of the gal! Why, when you came here to-night and told me quite nat'ral-like and easy how she went off in the ship, and then calmly ate your pie and drank your whiskey after it, I knew you did n't care for her. There 's my hand, Spence; you 're a trump, even if you are a little looney, eh? Why, what 's up?"

Shallow and selfish as Tucker was, Patterson's words seemed like a revelation, that shocked him as profoundly as it might have shocked a nobler nature. The simple vanity and selfishness that made him unable to conceive any higher reason for his wife's loyalty than his own personal popularity and success, now that he no longer possessed that *éclat*, made him equally capable of the lowest suspicions. He was a dishonored fugitive, broken in fortune and reputation — why should she not desert him? He had been unfaithful to her from wildness, from caprice, from the effect of those fascinating qualities; it seemed to him natural that she should be disloyal from more deliberate motives, and he hugged himself with that belief. Yet

there was enough doubt, enough of haunting suspicion, that he had lost or alienated a powerful affection, to make him thoroughly miserable. He returned his friend's grasp convulsively, and buried his face upon his shoulder. But he was not above feeling a certain exultation in the effect of his misery upon the dog-like, unreasoning affection of Patterson, nor could he entirely refrain from slightly posing his affliction before that sympathetic but melancholy man. Suddenly he raised his head, drew back, and thrust his hand into his bosom with a theatrical gesture.

"What's to keep me from killing Poindexter in his tracks?" he said wildly.

"Nothin' but *his* shooting first," returned Patterson, with dismal practicality. "He's mighty quick, like all them army men. It's about even, I reckon, that he don't get *me* first," he added in an ominous voice.

"No!" returned Tucker, grasping his hand again. "This is not your affair, Patterson; leave him to me when I come back."

"If he ever gets the drop on me, I reckon he won't wait," continued Patterson lugubriously. "He seems to object to my passin' criticism on your wife, as if she was a queen or an angel."

The blood came to Spencer's cheek, and he turned uneasily to the window. "It's dark enough now for a start," he said hurriedly, "and if I could get across the mountain without lying over at the summit, it would be a day gained."

Patterson arose without a word, filled a flask of spirit, handed it to his friend, and silently led the way through the slowly falling rain and the now settled darkness. The mustang was quickly secured and saddled; a heavy poncho afforded Tucker a disguise as well as a protection from the rain. With a few hurried, disconnected words, and an abstracted air, he once more shook his friend's hand, and

issued cautiously from the corral. When out of earshot from the house he put spurs to the mustang, and dashed into a gallop.

To intersect the mountain road he was obliged to traverse part of the highway his wife had walked that afternoon, and to pass within a mile of the casa where she was. Long before he reached that point his eyes were straining the darkness in that direction for some indication of the house which was to him familiar. Becoming now accustomed to the even obscurity, less trying to the vision than the alternate light and shadow of cloud or the full glare of the moonlight, he fancied he could distinguish its low walls over the monotonous level. One of those impulses which had so often taken the place of resolution in his character suddenly possessed him to diverge from his course and approach the house. Why, he could not have explained. It was not from any feeling of jealous suspicion or contemplated revenge — that had passed with the presence of Patterson; it was not from any vague lingering sentiment for the woman he had wronged — he would have shrunk from meeting her at that moment. But it was full of these and more possibilities by which he might or might not be guided, and was at least a movement towards some vague end, and a distraction from certain thoughts he dared not entertain and could not entirely dismiss. Inconceivable and inexplicable to human reason, it might have been acceptable to the Divine omniscience for its predestined result.

He left the road at a point where the marsh encroached upon the meadow, familiar to him already as near the spot where he had debarked from the Chinaman's boat the day before. He remembered that the walls of the hacienda were distinctly visible from the tules where he had hidden all day, and he now knew that the figures he had observed near the building, which had deterred his first attempts at

landing, must have been his wife and his friend. He knew that a long tongue of the slough filled by the rising tide followed the marsh, and lay between him and the hacienda. The sinking of his horse's hoofs in the spongy soil determined its proximity, and he made a détour to the right to avoid it. In doing so, a light suddenly rose above the distant horizon ahead of him, trembled faintly, and then burned with a steady lustre. It was a light at the hacienda. Guiding his horse half abstractedly in this direction, his progress was presently checked by the splashing of the animal's hoofs in the water. But the turf below was firm, and a salt drop that had spattered to his lips told him that it was only the encroaching of the tide in the meadow. With his eyes on the light, he again urged his horse forward. The rain lulled, the clouds began to break, the landscape alternately lightened and grew dark; the outlines of the crumbling hacienda walls that enshrined the light grew more visible. A strange and dreamy resemblance to the long blue-grass plain before his wife's paternal house, as seen by him during his evening rides to courtship, pressed itself upon him. He remembered, too, that she used to put a light in the window to indicate her presence. Following this retrospect, the moon came boldly out, sparkled upon the overflow of silver at his feet, seemed to show the dark, opaque meadow beyond for a moment, and then disappeared. It was dark now, but the lesser earthly star still shone before him as a guide, and pushing towards it, he passed in the all-embracing shadow.

#### IV

As Mrs. Tucker, erect, white, and rigid, drove away from the tienda, it seemed to her to sink again into the monotonous plain, with all its horrible realities. Except that there was now a new and heart-breaking significance to the soli-

tude and loneliness of the landscape, all that had passed might have been a dream. But as the blood came back to her cheek, and little by little her tingling consciousness returned, it seemed as if her life had been the dream, and this last scene the awakening reality. With eyes smarting with the moisture of shame, the scarlet blood at times dyeing her very neck and temples, she muffled her lowered crest in her shawl, and bent over the reins. Bit by bit she recalled, in Poindexter's mysterious caution and strange allusions, the corroboration of her husband's shame and her own disgrace. This was why she was brought hither — the deserted wife, the abandoned confederate! The mocking glitter of the concave vault above her, scoured by the incessant wind, the cold stare of the shining pools beyond, the hard outlines of the Coast Range, and the jarring accompaniment of her horse's hoofs and rattling buggy-wheels, alternately goaded and distracted her. She found herself repeating "No! no! no!" with the dogged reiteration of fever. She scarcely knew when or how she reached the hacienda. She was only conscious that as she entered the patio the dusky solitude that had before filled her with unrest now came to her like balm. A benumbing peace seemed to fall from the crumbling walls; the peace of utter seclusion, isolation, oblivion, death! Nevertheless, an hour later, when the jingle of spurs and bridle were again heard in the road, she started to her feet with bent brows and a kindling eye, and confronted Captain Poindexter in the corridor.

"I would not have intruded upon you so soon again," he said gravely, "but I thought I might perhaps spare you a repetition of the scene of this morning. Hear me out, please," he added, with a gentle, half-deprecating gesture, as she lifted the beautiful scorn of her eyes to his. "I have just heard that your neighbor, Don José Santierra, of Los Gatos, is on his way to this house. He once claimed

this land, and hated your husband, who bought of the rival claimant, whose grant was confirmed. I tell you this," he added, slightly flushing as Mrs. Tucker turned impatiently away, "only to show you that legally he has no rights, and you need not see him unless you choose. I could not stop his coming without perhaps doing you more harm than good; but when he does come, my presence under this roof as your legal counsel will enable you to refer him to me." He stopped. She was pacing the corridor with short, impatient steps, her arms dropped, and her hands clasped rigidly before her. "Have I your permission to stay?"

She suddenly stopped in her walk, approached him rapidly, and fixing her eyes on his, said, —

"Do I know *all*, now — everything?"

He could only reply that she had not yet told him what she had heard.

"Well," she said scornfully, "that my husband has been cruelly imposed upon — imposed upon by some wretched woman, who has made him sacrifice his property, his friends, his honor — everything but me!"

"Everything but whom?" gasped Poindexter.

"But *ME!*"

Poindexter gazed at the sky, the air, the deserted corridor, the stones of the patio itself, and then at the inexplicable woman before him. Then he said gravely, "I think you know everything."

"Then if my husband has left me all he could — this property," she went on rapidly, twisting her handkerchief between her fingers, "I can do with it what I like, can't I?"

"You certainly can."

"Then sell it," she said with passionate vehemence. "Sell it — all! everything! And sell these." She darted into her bedroom, and returned with the diamond rings she had torn from her fingers and ears when she entered the

house. "Sell them for anything they'll bring, only sell them at once."

"But for what?" asked Poindexter, with demure lips but twinkling eyes.

"To pay the debts that this — this — woman has led him into; to return the money she has stolen!" she went on rapidly; "to keep him from sharing infamy! Can't you understand?"

"But, my dear madam," began Poindexter, "even if this could be done" —

"Don't tell me 'if it could' — it *must* be done. Do you think I could sleep under this roof, propped up by the timbers of that ruined tienda? Do you think I could wear those diamonds again, while that termagant shopwoman can say that her money bought them? No! If you are my husband's friend, you will do this — for — for his sake." She stopped, locked and interlocked her cold fingers before her, and said, hesitating and mechanically, "You meant well, Captain Poindexter, in bringing me here, I know! You must not think that I blame you for it, or for the miserable result of it that you have just witnessed. But if I have gained anything by it, for God's sake let me reap it quickly, that I may give it to these people and go! I have a friend who can aid me to get to my husband or to my home in Kentucky, where Spencer will yet find me, I know. I want nothing more." She stopped again. With another woman the pause would have been one of tears. But she kept her head above the flood that filled her heart, and the clear eyes fixed upon Poindexter, albeit pained, were undimmed.

"But this would require time," said Poindexter, with a smile of compassionate explanation; "you could not sell now, nobody would buy. You are safe to hold this property while you are in actual possession, but you are not strong enough to guarantee it to another. There may still

be litigation ; your husband has other creditors than these people you have talked with. But while nobody could cust you — the wife who would have the sympathies of judge and jury — it might be a different case with any one who derived title from you. Any purchaser would know that you could not sell, or if you did, it would be at a ridiculous sacrifice.”

She listened to him abstractedly, walked to the end of the corridor, returned, and without looking up, said, —

“ I suppose you know her ? ”

“ I beg your pardon ? ”

“ This woman. You have seen her ? ”

“ Never, to my knowledge.”

“ And you are his friend ! That ’s strange.” She raised her eyes to his. “ Well,” she continued impatiently, “ who is she ? and what is she ? You know that surely.”

“ I know no more of her than what I have said,” said Poindexter. “ She is a notorious woman.”

The swift color came to Mrs. Tucker’s face as if the epithet had been applied to herself. “ I suppose,” she said in a dry voice, as if she were asking a business question, but with an eye that showed her rising anger, — “ I suppose there is some law by which creatures of this kind can be followed and brought to justice — some law that would keep innocent people from suffering for their crimes ? ”

“ I am afraid,” said Poindexter, “ that arresting her would hardly help these people over in the tienda.”

“ I am not speaking of them,” responded Mrs. Tucker, with a sudden sublime contempt for the people whose cause she had espoused ; “ I am talking of my husband.”

Poindexter bit his lip. “ You ’d hardly think of bringing back the strongest witness against him,” he said bluntly.

Mrs. Tucker dropped her eyes and was silent. A sudden shame suffused Poindexter’s cheek ; he felt as if he had struck that woman a blow. “ I beg your pardon,” he said hastily ; “ I am talking like a lawyer to a lawyer.” He



would have taken any other woman by the hand in the honest fullness of his apology, but something restrained him here. He only looked down gently on her lowered lashes, and repeated his question if he should remain during the coming interview with Don José. "I must beg you to determine quickly," he added, "for I already hear him entering the gate."

"Stay," said Mrs. Tucker, as the ringing of spurs and clatter of hoofs came from the corral. "One moment." She looked up suddenly, and said, "How long had he known her?" But before he could reply there was a step in the doorway, and the figure of Don José Santierra emerged from the archway.

He was a man slightly past middle age, fair, and well shaven, wearing a black broadcloth serape, the deeply embroidered opening of which formed a collar of silver rays around his neck, while a row of silver buttons down the side seams of his riding-trousers, and silver spurs completed his singular equipment. Mrs. Tucker's swift feminine glance took in these details, as well as the deep salutation, more formal than the exuberant frontier politeness she was accustomed to, with which he greeted her. It was enough to arrest her first impulse to retreat. She hesitated and stopped as Poindexter stepped forward, partly interposing between them, acknowledging Don José's distant recognition of himself with an ironical accession of his usual humorous tolerance. The Spaniard did not seem to notice it, but remained gravely silent before Mrs. Tucker, gazing at her with an expression of intent and unconscious absorption.

"You are quite right, Don José," said Poindexter, with ironical concern, "it *is* Mrs. Tucker. Your eyes do *not* deceive you. She will be glad to do the honors of her house," he continued, with a simulation of appealing to her, "unless you visit her on business, when I need not say *I* shall be only too happy to attend you, as before."

Don José, with a slight lifting of the eyebrows, allowed himself to become conscious of the lawyer's meaning. "It is not of business that I come to kiss the señora's hand to-day," he replied, with a melancholy softness; "it is as her neighbor, to put myself at her disposition. Ah! what have we here fit for a lady?" he continued, raising his eyes in deprecation of the surroundings; "a house of nothing, a place of winds and dry bones, without refreshments, or satisfaction, or delicacy. The señora will not refuse to make us proud this day to send her of that which we have in our poor home at Los Gatos, to make her more complete. Of what shall it be? Let her make choice. Or if she would commemorate this day by accepting of our hospitality at Los Gatos, until she shall arrange herself the more to receive us here, we shall have too much honor."

"The señora would only find it the more difficult to return to this humble roof again, after once leaving it for Don José's hospitality," said Poindexter, with a demure glance at Mrs. Tucker. But the innuendo seemed to lapse equally unheeded by his fair client and the stranger. Raising her eyes with a certain timid dignity which Don José's presence seemed to have called out, she addressed herself to him.

"You are very kind and considerate, Mister Santierra, and I thank you. I know that my husband" — she let the clear beauty of her translucent eyes rest full on both men — "would thank you too. But I shall not be here long enough to accept your kindness in this house nor in your own. I have but one desire and object now. It is to dispose of this property, and indeed all I possess, to pay the debt of my husband. It is in your power, perhaps, to help me. I am told that you wish to possess Los Cuervos," she went on, equally oblivious of the consciousness that appeared in Don José's face, and a humorous perplexity on the brow of Poindexter. "If you can arrange it with Mr. Poindexter,

you will find me a liberal vendor. That much you can do, and I know you will believe I shall be grateful. You can do no more, unless it be to say to your friends that Mrs. Belle Tucker remains here only for that purpose, and to carry out what she knows to be the wishes of her husband." She paused, bent her pretty crest, dropped a quaint curtsy to the superior age, the silver braid, and the gentlemanly bearing of Don José, and with the passing sunshine of a smile disappeared from the corridor.

The two men remained silent for a moment, Don José gazing abstractedly on the door through which she had vanished, until Poindexter, with a return of his tolerant smile, said, "You have heard the views of Mrs. Tucker. You know the situation as well as she does."

"Ah, yes; possibly better."

Poindexter darted a quick glance at the grave, fallow face of Don José, but, detecting no unusual significance in his manner, continued, "As you see, she leaves this matter in my hands. Let us talk like business men. Have you any idea of purchasing this property?"

"Of purchasing? ah, no."

Poindexter bent his brows, but quickly relaxed them with a smile of humorous forgiveness. "If you have any other idea, Don José, I ought to warn you, as Mrs. Tucker's lawyer, that she is in legal possession here, and that nothing but her own act can change that position."

"Ah, so."

Irritated at the shrug which accompanied this, Poindexter continued haughtily, "If I am to understand, you have nothing to say" —

"To say, ah, yes, possibly. But" — he glanced toward the door of Mrs. Tucker's room — "not here." He stopped, appeared to recall himself, and, with an apologetic smile and a studied but graceful gesture of invitation, he motioned to the gateway, and said, "Will you ride?"

“What can the fellow be up to?” muttered Poindexter, as with an assenting nod he proceeded to remount his horse. “If he was n’t an old hidalgo, I’d mistrust him. No matter! here goes!”

The don also remounted his half-broken mustang; they proceeded in solemn silence through the corral, and side by side emerged on the open plain. Poindexter glanced round; no other being was in sight. It was not until the lonely hacienda had also sunk behind them that Don José broke the silence.

“You say just now we shall speak as business men. I say no, Don Marco; I will not. I shall speak, we shall speak, as gentlemen.”

“Go on,” said Poindexter, who was beginning to be amused.

“I say just now I will not purchase the rancho from the señora. And why? Look you, Don Marco,” — he reined in his horse, thrust his hand under his serape, and drew out a folded document, — “this is why.”

With a smile, Poindexter took the paper from his hand and opened it. But the smile faded from his lips as he read. With blazing eyes he spurred his horse beside the Spaniard, almost unseating him, and said sternly, “What does this mean?”

“What does it mean?” repeated Don José, with equally flashing eyes; “I’ll tell you. It means that your client, this man Spencer Tucker, is a Judas, a traitor! It means that he gave Los Cuervos to his mistress a year ago, and that she sold it to me — to me, you hear! — *me*, José Santierra, the day before she left! It means that the coyote of a Spencer, the thief, who bought these lands of a thief and gave them to a thief, has tricked you all. Look,” he said, rising in his saddle, holding the paper like a bâton, and defining with a sweep of his arm the whole level plain; “all these lands were once mine — they are mine again to-

day. Do I want to purchase Los Cuervos? you ask, for you will speak of the *business*. Well, listen. I *have* purchased Los Cuervos, and here is the deed."

"But it has never been recorded," said Poindexter, with a carelessness he was far from feeling.

"Of a verity, no. Do you wish that I should record it?" asked Don José, with a return of his simple gravity.

Poindexter bit his lip. "You said we were to talk like gentlemen," he returned. "Do you think you have come into possession of this alleged deed like a gentleman?"

Don José shrugged his shoulders. "I found it tossed in the lap of a harlot. I bought it for a song. Eh, what would you?"

"Would you sell it again for a song?" asked Poindexter.

"Ah! what is this?" said Don José, lifting his iron-gray brows; "but a moment ago we would sell everything, for any money. Now we would buy. Is it so?"

"One moment, Don José," said Poindexter, with a baleful light in his dark eyes. "Do I understand that you are the ally of Spencer Tucker and his mistress, that you intend to turn this doubly betrayed wife from the only roof she has to cover her?"

"Ah, I comprehend not. You heard her say she wished to go. Perhaps it may please *me* to distribute largess to these cattle yonder, — I do not say no. More she does not ask. But *you*, Don Marco, of whom are you advocate? You abandon your client's mistress for the wife, is it so?"

"What I may do you will learn hereafter," said Poindexter, who had regained his composure, suddenly reining up his horse. "As our paths seem likely to diverge, they had better begin now. Good-morning."

"Patience, my friend, patience! Ah, blessed St. Anthony, what these Americans are! Listen. For what *you* shall do, I do not inquire. The question is to me what I" — he emphasized the pronoun by tapping himself on the

breast — “I, José Santierra, will do. Well, I shall tell you. To-day, nothing. To-morrow, nothing. For a week, for a month, nothing! After, we shall see.”

Poindexter paused thoughtfully. “Will you give your word, Don José, that you will not press the claim for a month?”

“Truly, on one condition. Observe! I do not ask you for an equal promise, that you will not take this time to defend yourself.” He shrugged his shoulder. “No! It is only this. You shall promise that during that time the Señora Tucker shall remain ignorant of this document.”

Poindexter hesitated a moment. “I promise,” he said at last.

“Good. Adios, Don Marco.”

“Adios, Don José.”

The Spaniard put spurs to his mustang and galloped off in the direction of Los Gatos. The lawyer remained for a moment gazing on his retreating but victorious figure. For the first time the old look of humorous toleration with which Mr. Poindexter was in the habit of regarding all human infirmity gave way to something like bitterness. “I might have guessed it,” he said, with a slight rise of color. “He’s an old fool; and she — well, perhaps it’s all the better for her!” He glanced backwards almost tenderly in the direction of Los Cuervos, and then turned his head towards the embarcadero.

As the afternoon wore on, a creaking, antiquated ox-cart arrived at Los Cuervos, bearing several articles of furniture and some tasteful ornaments from Los Gatos, at the same time that a young Mexican girl mysteriously appeared in the kitchen, as a temporary assistant to the decrepit Concha. These were both clearly attributable to Don José, whose visit was not so remote but that these delicate attentions might have been already projected before Mrs. Tucker had declined them, and she could not, without marked discourtesy, return

them now. She did not wish to seem discourteous; she would like to have been more civil to this old gentleman, who still retained the evidences of a picturesque and decorous past, and a repose so different from the life that was perplexing her. Reflecting that if he bought the estate these things would be ready to his hand, and with a woman's instinct recognizing their value in setting off the house to other purchasers' eyes, she took a pleasure in tastefully arranging them, and even found herself speculating how she might have enjoyed them herself had she been able to keep possession of the property. After all, it would not have been so lonely if refined and gentle neighbors, like this old man, would have sympathized with her; she had an instinctive feeling that, in their own hopeless decay and hereditary unfitness for this new civilization, they would have been more tolerant of her husband's failure than his own kind. She could not believe that Don José really hated her husband for buying of the successful claimant, as there was no other legal title. Allowing herself to become interested in the guileless gossip of the new handmaiden, proud of her broken English, she was drawn into a sympathy with the grave simplicity of Don José's character, a relic of that true nobility which placed this descendant of the Castilians and the daughter of a free people on the same level.

In this way the second day of her occupancy of Los Cuervos closed, with dumb clouds along the gray horizon, and the paroxysms of hysterical wind growing fainter and fainter outside the walls; with the moon rising after night-fall, and losing itself in silent and mysterious confidences with drifting scud. She went to bed early, but woke past midnight, hearing, as she thought, her own name called. The impression was so strong upon her that she rose, and, hastily enwrapping herself, went to the dark embrasures of the oven-shaped windows and looked out. The dwarfed oak beside the window was still dropping from a past

shower, but the level waste of marsh and meadow beyond seemed to advance and recede with the coming and going of the moon. Again she heard her name called, and this time in accents so strangely familiar that with a slight cry she ran into the corridor, crossed the patio, and reached the open gate. The darkness that had, even in this brief interval, again fallen upon the prospect, she tried in vain to pierce with eye and voice. A blank silence followed. Then the veil was suddenly withdrawn; the vast plain, stretching from the mountain to the sea, shone as clearly as in the light of day; the moving current of the channel glittered like black pearls, the stagnant pools like molten lead; but not a sign of life nor motion broke the monotony of the broad expanse. She must have surely dreamed it. A chill wind drove her back to the house again; she entered her bedroom, and in half an hour she was in a peaceful sleep.

## V

The two men kept their secret. Mr. Poindexter convinced Mrs. Tucker that the sale of *Los Cuervos* could not be effected until the notoriety of her husband's flight had been fairly forgotten, and she was forced to accept her fate. The sale of her diamonds, which seemed to her to have realized a singularly extravagant sum, enabled her to quietly reinstate the *Pattersons* in the *tienda* and to discharge in full her husband's liabilities to the *rancheros* and his humbler retainers.

Meanwhile the winter rains had ceased. It seemed to her as if the clouds had suddenly one night struck their white tents and stolen away, leaving the unvanquished sun to mount the vacant sky the next morning alone, and possess it thenceforward unchallenged. One afternoon she thought the long sad waste before her window had caught



some tint of grayer color from the sunset; a week later she found it a blazing landscape of poppies, broken here and there by blue lagoons of lupine, by pools of daisies, by banks of dog-roses, by broad outlying shores of dandelions that scattered their lavish gold to the foot of the hills, where the green billows of wild oats carried it on and upwards to the darker crests of pines. For two months she was dazzled and bewildered with color. She had never before been face to face with this spendthrift Californian Flora, in her virgin wastefulness, her more than goddess-like prodigality. The teeming earth seemed to quicken and throb beneath her feet; the few circuits of a plow around the outlying corral were enough to call out a jungle growth of giant grain that almost hid the low walls of the hacienda. In this glorious fecundity of the earth, in this joyous renewal of life and color, in this opulent youth and freshness of soil and sky, it alone remained, the dead and sterile Past, left in the midst of buoyant rejuvenescence and resurrection, like an empty churchyard skull upturned on the springing turf. Its bronzed adobe walls mocked the green vine that embraced them, the crumbling dust of its courtyard remained ungerminating and unfruitful; to the thousand stirring voices without, its dry lips alone remained mute, unresponsive, and unchanged.

During this time Don José had become a frequent visitor at Los Cuervos, bringing with him at first his niece and sister in a stately precision of politeness that was not lost on the proud Blue Grass stranger. She returned their visit at Los Gatos, and there made the formal acquaintance of Don José's grandmother, a lady who still regarded the decrepit Concha as a giddy muchacha, and who herself glittered as with the phosphorescence of refined decay. Through this circumstance she learned that Don José was not yet fifty, and that his gravity of manner and sedateness was more the result of fastidious isolation and temperament than

years. She could not tell why the information gave her a feeling of annoyance, but it caused her to regret the absence of Poindexter, and to wonder, also somewhat nervously, why he had lately avoided her presence. The thought that he might be doing so from a recollection of the innuendoes of Mrs. Patterson caused a little tremor of indignation in her pulses. "As if" — but she did not finish the sentence even to herself, and her eyes filled with bitter tears.

Yet she had thought of the husband who had so cruelly wronged her less feverishly, less impatiently, than before. For she thought she loved him now the more deeply, because, although she was not reconciled to his absence, it seemed to keep alive the memory of what he had been before his one wild act separated them. She had never seen the reflection of another woman's eyes in his; the past contained no haunting recollection of waning or alienated affection; she could meet him again, and, clasping her arms around him, awaken as if from a troubled dream without reproach or explanation. Her strong belief in this made her patient; she no longer sought to know the particulars of his flight, and never dreamed that her passive submission to his absence was partly due to a fear that something in his actual presence at that moment would have destroyed that belief forever.

For this reason the delicate reticence of the people at Los Gatos, and their seclusion from the world which knew of her husband's fault, had made her encourage the visits of Don José, until from the instinct already alluded to she one day summoned Poindexter to Los Cuervos, on the day that Don José usually called. But to her surprise the two men met more or less awkwardly and coldly, and her tact as hostess was tried to the utmost to keep their evident antagonism from being too apparent. The effort to reconcile their mutual discontent, and some other feeling she did not quite understand, produced a nervous excitement which

called the blood to her cheek and gave a dangerous brilliancy to her eyes, two circumstances not unnoticed nor unappreciated by her two guests. But instead of reuniting them, the prettier Mrs. Tucker became, the more distant and reserved grew the men, until Don José rose before his usual hour, and with more than usual ceremoniousness departed.

"Then my business does not seem to be with *him*," said Poindexter, with quiet coolness, as Mrs. Tucker turned her somewhat mystified face towards him. "Or have you anything to say to me about him in private?"

"I am sure I don't know what you both mean," she returned with a slight tremor of voice. "I had no idea you were not on good terms. I thought you were! It's very awkward." Without coquetry and unconsciously she raised her blue eyes under her lids until the clear pupils coyly and softly hid themselves in the corners of the brown lashes, and added, "You have both been so kind to me."

"Perhaps that is the reason," said Poindexter gravely. But Mrs. Tucker refused to accept the suggestion with equal gravity, and began to laugh. The laugh, which was at first frank, spontaneous, and almost child-like, was becoming hysterical and nervous as she went on, until it was suddenly checked by Poindexter.

"I have had no difficulties with Don José Santierra," he said, somewhat coldly ignoring her hilarity, "but perhaps he is not inclined to be as polite to the friend of the husband as he is to the wife."

"Mr. Poindexter!" said Mrs. Tucker quickly, her face becoming pale again.

"I beg your pardon!" said Poindexter, flushing, "but" —

"You want to say," she interrupted coolly, "that you are not friends, I see. Is that the reason why you have avoided this house?" she continued gently.

"I thought I could be of more service to you elsewhere," he replied evasively. "I have been lately following up a certain clue rather closely. I think I am on the track of a confidante of — of — that woman."

A quick shadow passed over Mrs. Tucker's face. "Indeed!" she said coldly. "Then I am to believe that you prefer to spend your leisure moments in looking after that creature to calling here?"

Poindexter was stupefied. Was this the woman who only four months ago was almost vindictively eager to pursue her husband's paramour! There could be but one answer to it — Don José! Four months ago he would have smiled compassionately at it from his cynical preëminence. Now he managed with difficulty to stifle the bitterness of his reply.

"If you do not wish the inquiry carried on," he began, "of course" —

"I? What does it matter to me?" she said coolly. "Do as you please."

Nevertheless, half an hour later, as he was leaving, she said, with a certain hesitating timidity, "Do not leave me so much alone here, and let that woman go."

This was not the only unlooked-for sequel to her innocent desire to propitiate her best friends. Don José did not call again upon his usual day, but in his place came Doña Clara, his younger sister. When Mrs. Tucker had politely asked after the absent Don José, Doña Clara wound her swarthy arms around the fair American's waist and replied, "But why did you send for the abogado Poindexter when my brother called?"

"But Captain Poindexter calls as one of my friends," said the amazed Mrs. Tucker. "He is a gentleman, and has been a soldier and an officer," she added with some warmth.

"Ah, yes, a soldier of the law, what you call an *oficial*

*de policia*, a chief of gendarmes, my sister, but not a gentleman, — a camarero to protect a lady.”

Mrs. Tucker would have uttered a hasty reply, but the perfect and good-natured simplicity of Doña Clara withheld her. Nevertheless, she treated Don José with a certain reserve at their next meeting, until it brought the simple-minded Castilian so dangerously near the point of demanding an explanation which implied too much that she was obliged to restore him temporarily to his old footing. Meantime she had a brilliant idea. She would write to Calhoun Weaver, whom she had avoided since that memorable day. She would say she wished to consult him. He would come to Los Cuervos; he might suggest something to lighten this weary waiting; at least she would show them all that she had still old friends. Yet she did not dream of returning to her Blue Grass home; her parents had died since she left; she shrank from the thought of dragging her ruined life before the hopeful youth of her girlhood's companions.

Mr. Calhoun Weaver arrived promptly, ostentatiously, oracularly, and cordially, but a little coarsely. He had — did she remember? — expected this from the first. Spencer had lost his head through vanity, and had attempted too much. It required foresight and firmness, as he himself — who had lately made successful “combinations” which she might perhaps have heard of — well knew. But Spencer had got the “big head.” “As to that woman — a devilish handsome woman, too! — well, everybody knew that Spencer always had a weakness that way, and he would say — But if she did n't care to hear any more about her — well, perhaps she was right. That was the best way to take it.” Sitting before her, prosperous, weak, egotistical, incompetent, unavailable, and yet filled with a vague kindness of intent, Mrs. Tucker loathed him. A sickening perception of her own weakness in send-

ing for him, a new and aching sense of her utter isolation and helplessness, seemed to paralyze her.

“Nat’rally you feel bad,” he continued, with the large air of a profound student of human nature. “Nat’rally, nat’rally you’re kept in an uncomfortable state, not knowing jist how you stand. There ain’t but one thing to do. Jist rise up, quiet like, and get a divorce agin Spencer. Hold on! There ain’t a judge or jury in California that would n’t give it to you right off the nail, without asking questions. Why, you’d get it by default if you wanted to; you’d just have to walk over the course! And then, Belle,” he drew his chair still nearer her, “when you’ve settled down again — well! — I don’t mind renewing that offer I once made ye, before Spencer ever came round ye — I don’t mind, Belle, I swear I don’t! Honest Injin! I’m in earnest, there’s my hand.”

Mrs. Tucker’s reply has not been recorded. Enough that half an hour later Mr. Weaver appeared in the courtyard with traces of tears on his foolish face, a broken falsetto voice, and other evidence of mental and moral disturbance. His cordiality and oracular predisposition remained sufficiently to enable him to suggest the magical words “Blue Grass” mysteriously to Concha, with an indication of his hand to the erect figure of her pale mistress in the doorway, who waved to him a silent but half-compassionate farewell.

At about this time a slight change in her manner was noticed by the few who saw her more frequently. Her apparently invincible girlishness of spirit had given way to a certain matronly seriousness. She applied herself to her household cares and the improvement of the hacienda with a new sense of duty and a settled earnestness, until by degrees she wrought into it not only her instinctive delicacy and taste, but part of her own individuality. Even the rude rancheros and tradesmen who were permitted to enter

the walls in the exercise of their calling began to speak mysteriously of the beauty of this garden of the almarjal. She went out but seldom, and then, accompanied by one or the other of her female servants, in long drives on unfrequented roads. On Sundays she sometimes drove to the half-ruined mission church of Santa Inez, and hid herself, during mass, in the dim monastic shadows of the choir. Gradually the poorer people whom she met in these journeys began to show an almost devotional reverence for her, stopping in the roads with uncovered heads for her to pass, or making way for her in the tienda or plaza of the wretched town with dumb courtesy. She began to feel a strange sense of widowhood, that, while it at times brought tears to her eyes, was not without a certain tender solace. In the sympathy and simpleness of this impulse she went as far as to revive the mourning she had worn for her parents, but with such a fatal accenting of her beauty, and dangerous misinterpreting of her condition to eligible bachelors strange to the country, that she was obliged to put it off again. Her reserved and dignified manner caused others to mistake her nationality for that of the Santierras, and in "Doña Bella" the simple Mrs. Tucker was for a while forgotten. At times she even forgot it herself. Accustomed now almost entirely to the accents of another language and the features of another race, she would sit for hours in the corridor, whose massive bronzed inclosure even her tasteful care could only make an embowered mausoleum of the Past, or gaze abstractedly from the dark embrasures of her windows across the stretching almarjal to the shining lagoon beyond that terminated the estuary. She had a strange fondness for this tranquil mirror, which under sun or stars always retained the passive reflex of the sky above, and seemed to rest her weary eyes. She had objected to one of the plans projected by Poindexter to redeem the land and deepen the water at the embarcadero, as it would have

drained the lagoon, and the lawyer had postponed the improvement to gratify her fancy. So she kept it through the long summer unchanged save by the shadows of passing wings or the lazy files of sleeping sea-fowl.

On one of these afternoons she noticed a slowly moving carriage leave the highroad and cross the almarjal skirting the edge of the lagoon. If it contained visitors for Los Cuervos, they had evidently taken a shorter cut without waiting to go on to the regular road which intersected the highway at right angles a mile farther on. It was with some sense of annoyance and irritation that she watched the trespass, and finally saw the vehicle approach the house. A few moments later the servant informed her that Mr. Patterson would like to see her alone. When she entered the corridor, which in the dry season served as a reception hall, she was surprised to see that Patterson was not alone. Near him stood a well-dressed, handsome woman, gazing about her with good-humored admiration of Mrs. Tucker's taste and ingenuity.

"It don't look much like it did two years ago," said the stranger cheerfully. "You've improved it wonderfully."

Stiffening slightly, Mrs. Tucker turned inquiringly to Mr. Patterson. But that gentleman's usual profound melancholy appeared to be intensified by the hilarity of his companion. He only sighed deeply, and rubbed his leg with the brim of his hat in gloomy abstraction.

"Well! go on, then," said the woman, laughing and nudging him. "Go on — introduce me, can't you? Don't stand there like a tombstone. You won't? Well, I'll introduce myself." She laughed again, and then, with an excellent imitation of Patterson's lugubrious accents, said, "Mr. Spencer Tucker's wife that *is*, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Spencer Tucker's sweetheart that *was*! Hold on! I said *that was*. For true as I stand here, ma'am, — and I reckon I would n't stand here if it was n't



true, — I have n't set eyes on him since the day he left you."

"It's the gospel truth, every word," said Patterson, stirred into a sudden activity by Mrs. Tucker's white and rigid face. "It's the frozen truth, and I kin prove it. For I kin swear that when that there young woman was sailin' outer the Golden Gate, Spencer Tucker was in my bar-room; I kin swear that I fed him, lickered him, give him a hoss, and set him in his road to Monterey that very night."

"Then, where is he now?" said Mrs. Tucker, suddenly facing them.

They looked at each other, and then looked at Mrs. Tucker. Then both together replied slowly and in perfect unison, "That's — what — we — want — to — know." They seemed so satisfied with this effect that they as deliberately repeated, "Yes, — that's — what — we — want — to — know."

Between the shock of meeting the partner of her husband's guilt and the unexpected revelation to her inexperience, that in suggestion and appearance there was nothing beyond the recollection of that guilt that was really shocking in the woman — between the extravagant extremes of hope and fear suggested by their words, there was something so grotesquely absurd in the melodramatic chorus that she with difficulty suppressed an hysterical laugh.

"That's the way to take it," said the woman, putting her own good-humored interpretation upon Mrs. Tucker's expression. "Now, look here! I'll tell you all about it." She carefully selected the most comfortable chair, and sitting down, lightly crossed her hands in her lap. "Well, I left here on the 13th of last January on the ship *Argo*, calculating that your husband would join the ship just inside the Heads. That was our arrangement; but if anything happened to prevent him, he was to join me at *Acapulco*.

Well! he did n't come aboard, and we sailed without him. But it appears now he did attempt to join the ship, but his boat was capsized. There now, don't be alarmed! he was n't drowned, as Patterson can swear to — no, catch *him!* not a hair of him was hurt. But *I— I* was bundled off to the end of the earth in Mexico alone, without a cent to bless me. For true as you live, that hound of a captain, when he found, as he thought, that Spencer was nabbed, he just confiscated all his trunks and valuables, and left me in the lurch. If I had not met a man down there that offered to marry me and brought me here, I might have died there, I reckon. But I did, and here I am. I went down there as your husband's sweetheart; I've come back as the wife of an honest man, and I reckon it's about square!"

There was something so startlingly frank, so hopelessly self-satisfied, so contagiously good-humored in the woman's perfect moral unconsciousness, that even if Mrs. Tucker had been less preoccupied her resentment would have abated. But her eyes were fixed on the gloomy face of Patterson, who was beginning to unlock the sepulchres of his memory and disinter his deeply buried thoughts.

"You kin bet your whole pile on what this Mrs. Capting Baxter — ez used to be French Inez of New Orleans — hez told ye. Ye kin take everything she's unloaded. And it's only doin' the square thing to her to say, she hain't done it out o' no cussedness, but just to satisfy herself, now she's a married woman and past such foolishness. But that ain't neither here nor there. The gist of the whole matter is that Spencer Tucker was at the tienda the day after she sailed and after his boat capsized." He then gave a detailed account of the interview, with the unnecessary but truthful minutiae of his class, adding to the particulars already known that the following week he visited the Summit House, and was surprised to find that Spencer had never been there, nor had he ever sailed from Monterey.

“But why was this not told to me before?” said Mrs. Tucker suddenly. “Why not at the time? Why,” she demanded almost fiercely, turning from the one to the other, “has this been kept from me?”

“I’ll tell ye why,” said Patterson, sinking with crushed submission into a chair. “When I found he was n’t where he ought to be, I got to lookin’ elsewhere. I knew the track of the hoss I lent him by a loose shoe. I examined, and found he had turned off the highroad somewhere beyond the lagoon, jist as if he was makin’ a bee-line here.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Tucker breathlessly.

“Well,” said Patterson, with the resigned tone of an accustomed martyr, “mebbe I ’m a God-forsaken idiot, but I reckon he *did* come yer. And mebbe I ’m that much of a habitoal lunatic but, thinking so, I calkilated you’d know it without tellin’.”

With their eyes fixed upon her, Mrs. Tucker felt the quick blood rush to her cheeks, although she knew not why. But they were apparently satisfied with her ignorance, for Patterson resumed, yet more gloomily:—

“Then if he was n’t hidin’ here bekownst to you, he must have changed his mind agin, and got away by the embarcadero. The only thing wantin’ to prove that idea is to know how he got a boat, and what he did with the hoss. And thar’s one more idea, and ez that can’t be proved,” continued Patterson, sinking his voice still lower, “mebbe it’s accordin’ to God’s laws.”

Unsympathetic to her as the speaker had always been and still was, Mrs. Tucker felt a vague chill creep over her, that seemed to be the result of his manner more than his words. “And that idea is”—she suggested with pale lips.

“It’s this! Fust, I don’t say it means much to anybody but me. I’ve heard of these warnings afore now, ez comin’ only to folks ez hear them for themselves alone, and

I reckon I kin stand it, if it 's the will o' God. The idea is then — that — Spencer Tucker — *was drowned* in that boat; the idea is " — his voice was almost lost in a hoarse whisper — " that it was no living man that kem to me that night, but a spirit that kem out of the darkness and went back into it! No eye saw him but mine; no ears heard him but mine. I reckon it were n't intended it should." He paused, and passed the flap of his hat across his eyes. "The pie, you 'll say, is agin it," he continued in the same tone of voice; "the whiskey is agin it; a few cuss words that dropped from him, accidental like, may have been agin it. All the same they mout have been only the little signs and tokens that it was him."

But Mrs. Baxter's ready laugh somewhat rudely dispelled the infection of Patterson's gloom. "I reckon the only spirit was that which you and Spencer consumed," she said cheerfully. "I don't wonder you 're a little mixed. Like as not you 've misunderstood his plans."

Patterson shook his head. "He 'll turn up yet, alive and kicking! Like as not, then, Poindexter knows where he is all the time."

"Impossible! He would have told me," said Mrs. Tucker quickly.

Mrs. Baxter looked at Patterson without speaking. Patterson replied by a long lugubrious whistle.

"I don't understand you," said Mrs. Tucker, drawing back with cold dignity.

"You don't?" returned Mrs. Baxter. "Bless your innocent heart! Why was he so keen to hunt me up at first, shadowing my friends and all that, and why has he dropped it now he knows I 'm here, if he did n't know where Spencer was?"

"I can explain that," interrupted Mrs. Tucker hastily, with a blush of confusion. "That is — I" —

"Then mebbe you kin explain too," broke in Patterson

with gloomy significance, "why he has bought up most of Spencer's debts himself, and perhaps you're satisfied it *is* n't to hold the whip hand of him and keep him from coming back openly. P'r'aps you know why he's movin' heaven and earth to make Don José Santierra sell the ranch, and why the don don't see it all."

"Don José sell Los Cuervos! Buy it, you mean?" said Mrs. Tucker. "*I* offered to sell it to him."

Patterson arose from the chair, looked despairingly around him, passed his hand sadly across his forehead, and said: "It's come! I knew it would. It's the warning! It's suthing betwixt jim-jams and doddering idjiocy. Here I'd hev been willin' to swear that Mrs. Baxter here told me *she* had sold this yer ranch nearly two years ago to Don José, and now you" —

"Stop!" said Mrs. Tucker, in a voice that chilled them.

She was standing upright and rigid, as if stricken to stone. "I command you to tell me what this means!" she said, turning only her blazing eyes upon the woman.

Even the ready smile faded from Mrs. Baxter's lips as she replied hesitatingly and submissively: "I thought you knew already that Spencer had given this ranch to me. I sold it to Don José to get the money for us to go away with. It was Spencer's idea" —

"You lie!" said Mrs. Tucker.

There was a dead silence. "The wrathful blood that had quickly mounted to Mrs. Baxter's cheek, to Patterson's additional bewilderment, faded as quickly. She did not lift her eyes again to Mrs. Tucker's, but, slowly raising herself from her seat, said, "I wish to God I did lie; but it's true. And it's true that I never touched a cent of the money, but gave it all to him!" She laid her hand on Patterson's arm, and said, "Come! let us go," and led him a few steps toward the gateway. But here Patterson paused, and again passed his hand over his melancholy brow. The necessity of

coherently and logically closing the conversation impressed itself upon his darkening mind. "Then you don't happen to have heard anything of Spencer?" he said sadly, and vanished with Mrs. Baxter through the gate.

Left alone to herself, Mrs. Tucker raised her hands above her head with a little cry, interlocked her rigid fingers, and slowly brought her palms down upon her upturned face and eyes, pressing hard as if to crush out all light and sense of life before her. She stood thus for a moment motionless and silent, with the rising wind whispering without and flecking her white morning dress with gusty shadows from the arbor. Then, with closed eyes, dropping her hands to her breast, still pressing hard, she slowly passed them down the shapely contours of her figure to the waist, and with another cry cast them off as if she were stripping herself of some loathsome garment. Then she walked quickly to the gateway, looked out, returned to the corridor, unloosening and taking off her wedding-ring from her finger as she walked. Here she paused, then slowly and deliberately rearranged the chairs and adjusted the gay-colored rugs that draped them, and quietly reëntered her chamber.

Two days afterwards the sweating steed of Captain Poin-dexter was turned loose in the corral, and a moment later the captain entered the corridor. Handing a letter to the decrepit Concha, who seemed to be utterly disorganized by its contents and the few curt words with which it was delivered, he gazed silently upon the vacant bower, still fresh and redolent with the delicacy and perfume of its graceful occupant, until his dark eyes filled with unaccustomed moisture. But his reverie was interrupted by the sound of jingling spurs without, and the old humor struggled back into his eyes as Don José impetuously entered. The Spaniard started back, but instantly recovered himself.

“So, I find you here. Ah! it is well!” he said passionately, producing a letter from his bosom. “Look! Do you call this honor? Look how you keep your compact!”

Poindexter coolly took the letter. It contained a few words of gentle dignity from Mrs. Tucker, informing Don José that she had only that instant learned of his just claims upon Los Cuervos, tendering him her gratitude for his delicate intentions, but pointing out with respectful firmness that he must know that a moment's further acceptance of his courtesy was impossible.

“She has gained this knowledge from no word of mine,” said Poindexter calmly. “Right or wrong, I have kept my promise to you. I have as much reason to accuse you of betraying my secret in this,” he added coldly, as he took another letter from his pocket, and handed it to Don José.

It seemed briefer and colder, but was neither. It reminded Poindexter that as he had again deceived her she must take the government of her affairs in her own hands henceforth. She abandoned all the furniture and improvements she had put in Los Cuervos to him, to whom she now knew she was indebted for them. She could not thank him for what his habitual generosity impelled him to do for any woman, but she could forgive him for misunderstanding her like any other woman, perhaps she should say, like a child. When he received this she would be already on her way to her old home in Kentucky, where she still hoped to be able by her own efforts to amass enough to discharge her obligations to him.

“She does not speak of her husband, this woman,” said Don José, scanning Poindexter's face. “It is possible she rejoins him, eh?”

“Perhaps in one way she has never left him, Don José,” said Poindexter, with grave significance.

Don José's face flushed, but he returned carelessly, "And the rancho — naturally you will not buy it now?"

"On the contrary, I shall abide by my offer," said Poindexter quietly.

Don José eyed him narrowly, and then said, "Ah, we shall consider of it."

He did consider it, and accepted the offer. With the full control of the land, Captain Poindexter's improvements, so indefinitely postponed, were actively pushed forward. The thick walls of the hacienda were the first to melt away before them; the low lines of corral were effaced, and the early breath of the summer trade-winds swept uninterruptedly across the now leveled plain to the embarcadero, where a newer structure arose. A more vivid green alone marked the spot where the crumbling adobe walls of the casa had returned to the parent soil that gave it. The channel was deepened, the lagoon was drained, until one evening the magic mirror that had so long reflected the weary waiting of the Blue Grass Penelope lay dull, dead, lustreless, an opaque quagmire of noisome corruption and decay to be put away from the sight of man forever. On this spot the crows, the titular tenants of Los Cuervos, assembled in tumultuous congress, coming and going in mysterious clouds, or laboring in thick and writhing masses, as if they were continuing the work of improvement begun by human agency. So well had they done the work that by the end of a week only a few scattered white objects remained glittering on the surface of the quickly drying soil. But they were the bones of the missing outcast, Spencer Tucker!

. . . . .  
The same spring a breath of war swept over a foul, decaying quagmire of the whole land, before which such passing deeds as these were blown as vapor. It called men of all rank and condition to battle for a nation's life, and among the first to respond were those into whose boyish



hands had been placed the nation's honor. It returned the epaulets to Poindexter's shoulder with the addition of a double star, carried him triumphantly to the front, and left him, at the end of a summer's day and a hard-won fight, sorely wounded, at the door of a Blue Grass farmhouse. And the woman who sought him out and ministered to his wants said timidly, as she left her hand in his, "I told you I should live to repay you."

## LEFT OUT ON LONE STAR MOUNTAIN

### I

THERE was little doubt that the Lone Star claim was "played out." Not dug out, worked out, washed out, but *played* out. For two years its five sanguine proprietors had gone through the various stages of mining enthusiasm ; had prospected and planned, dug and doubted. They had borrowed money with hearty but unredeeming frankness, established a credit with unselfish abnegation of all responsibility, and had borne the disappointment of their creditors with a cheerful resignation which only the consciousness of some deep Compensating Future could give. Giving little else, however, a singular dissatisfaction obtained with the traders, and, being accompanied with a reluctance to make further advances, at last touched the gentle stoicism of the proprietors themselves. The youthful enthusiasm which had at first lifted the most ineffectual trial, the most useless essay, to the plane of actual achievement died out, leaving them only the dull, prosaic record of half-finished ditches, purposeless shafts, untenable pits, abandoned engines, and meaningless disruptions of the soil upon the Lone Star claim, and empty flour sacks and pork barrels in the Lone Star cabin.

They had borne their poverty, if that term could be applied to a light renunciation of all superfluities in food, dress, or ornament, ameliorated by the gentle depredations already alluded to, with unassuming levity. More than that: having segregated themselves from their fellow miners of Red Gulch, and entered upon the possession of the little manzanita-thicketed valley five miles away, the failure of their enterprise

had assumed in their eyes only the vague significance of the decline and fall of a general community, and to that extent relieved them of individual responsibility. It was easier for them to admit that the Lone Star claim was "played out" than confess to a personal bankruptcy. Moreover, they still retained the sacred right of criticism of government, and rose superior in their private opinions to their own collective wisdom. Each one experienced a grateful sense of the entire responsibility of the other four in the fate of their enterprise.

On December 24, 1863, a gentle rain was still falling over the length and breadth of the Lone Star claim. It had been falling for several days, had already called a faint spring color to the wan landscape, repairing with tender touches the ravages wrought by the proprietors, or charitably covering their faults. The ragged seams in gulch and cañon lost their harsh outlines, a thin green mantle faintly clothed the torn and abraded hillside. A few weeks more, and a veil of forgetfulness would be drawn over the feeble failures of the Lone Star claim. The charming derelicts themselves, listening to the raindrops on the roof of their little cabin, gazed philosophically from the open door, and accepted the prospect as a moral discharge from their obligations. Four of the five partners were present. The Right and Left Bowers, Union Mills, and the Judge.

It is scarcely necessary to say that not one of these titles was the genuine name of its possessor. The Right and Left Bowers were two brothers; their sobriquets, a cheerful adaptation from the favorite game of euchre, expressing their relative value in the camp. The mere fact that Union Mills had at one time patched his trousers with an old flour sack legibly bearing that brand of its fabrication, was a tempting baptismal suggestion that the other partners could not forego. The Judge, a singularly inequitable Missourian, with no knowledge whatever of the law, was an inspiration of gratuitous irony.

Union Mills, who had been for some time sitting placidly on the threshold with one leg exposed to the rain, from a sheer indolent inability to change his position, finally withdrew that weather-beaten member, and stood up. The movement more or less deranged the attitudes of the other partners, and was received with cynical disfavor. It was somewhat remarkable that, although generally giving the appearance of healthy youth and perfect physical condition, they one and all simulated the decrepitude of age and invalidism, and after limping about for a few moments, settled back again upon their bunks and stools in their former positions. The Left Bower lazily replaced a bandage that he had worn around his ankle for weeks without any apparent necessity, and the Judge scrutinized with tender solicitude the faded cicatrix of a scratch upon his arm. A passive hypochondria, born of their isolation, was the last ludicrously pathetic touch of their situation.

The immediate cause of this commotion felt the necessity of an explanation.

"It would have been just as easy for you to have stayed outside with your business leg, instead of dragging it into private life in that obtrusive way," retorted the Right Bower; "but that exhaustive effort is n't going to fill the pork barrel. The grocery man at Dalton says — What's that he said?" he appealed lazily to the Judge.

"Said he reckoned the Lone Star was about played out, and he did n't want any more in his — thank you!" repeated the Judge with a mechanical effort of memory utterly devoid of personal or present interest.

"I always suspected that man, after Grimshaw begun to deal with him," said the Left Bower. "They're just mean enough to join hands against us." It was a fixed belief of the Lone Star partners that they were pursued by personal enmities.

"More than likely those new strangers over in the Fork

have been paying cash and filled him up with conceit," said Union Mills, trying to dry his leg by alternately beating it or rubbing it against the cabin wall. "Once begin wrong with that kind of snipe, and you drag everybody down with you."

This vague conclusion was received with dead silence. Everybody had become interested in the speaker's peculiar method of drying his leg, to the exclusion of the previous topic. A few offered criticism, no one assistance.

"Who did the grocery man say that to?" asked the Right Bower, finally returning to the question.

"The Old Man," answered the Judge.

"Of course," ejaculated the Right Bower sarcastically.

"Of course," echoed the other partners together. "That's like him. The Old Man all over!"

It did not appear exactly what was like the Old Man, or why it was like him, but generally that he alone was responsible for the grocery man's defection. It was put more concisely by Union Mills.

"That comes of letting him go there! It's just a fair provocation to any man to have the Old Man sent to him. They can't, sorter, restrain themselves at him. He's enough to spoil the credit of the Rothschilds."

"That's so," chimed in the Judge. "And look at his prospecting. Why, he was out two nights last week, all night, prospecting in the moonlight for blind leads, just out of sheer foolishness."

"It was quite enough for me," broke in the Left Bower, "when the other day — you remember when — he proposed to us white men to settle down to plain ground sluicing, making 'grub' wages just like any Chinaman. It just showed his idea of the Lone Star claim."

"Well, I never said it afore," added Union Mills, "but when that one of the Mattison boys came over here to examine the claim with an eye to purchasin', it was the

Old Man that took the conceit out of him. He just as good as admitted that a lot of work had got to be done afore any pay ore could be realized. Never even asked him over to the shanty here to jine us in a friendly game; just kept him, so to speak, to himself. And naturally the Mattisons did n't see it."

A silence followed, broken only by the rain monotonously falling on the roof, and occasionally through the broad adobe chimney, where it provoked a retaliating hiss and splutter from the dying embers of the hearth. The Right Bower, with a sudden access of energy, drew the empty barrel before him, and taking a pack of well-worn cards from his pocket, began to make a "solitaire" upon the lid. The others gazed at him with languid interest.

"Makin' it for anythin'?" asked Mills.

The Right Bower nodded.

The Judge and Left Bower, who were partly lying in their respective bunks, sat up to get a better view of the game. Union Mills slowly disengaged himself from the wall, and leaned over the "solitaire" player. The Right Bower turned the last card in a pause of almost thrilling suspense, and clapped it down on the lid with fateful emphasis.

"It went!" said the Judge in a voice of hushed respect. "What did you make it for?" he almost whispered.

"To know if we 'd make the break we talked about and vamose the ranch. It's the *fifth* time to-day," continued the Right Bower, in a voice of gloomy significance. "And it went agin bad cards too."

"I ain't superstitious," said the Judge, with awe and fatuity beaming from every line of his credulous face, "but it's flyin' in the face of Providence to go agin such signs as that."

"Make it again, to see if the Old Man must go," suggested the Left Bower.

The suggestion was received with favor, the three men gathering breathlessly around the player. Again the fateful cards were shuffled deliberately, placed in their mysterious combination, with the same ominous result. Yet everybody seemed to breathe more freely, as if relieved from some responsibility, the Judge accepting this manifest expression of Providence with resigned self-righteousness.

"Yes, gentlemen," resumed the Left Bower serenely, as if a calm legal decision had just been recorded, "we must not let any foolishness or sentiment get mixed up with this thing, but look at it like business men. The only sensible move is to get up and get out of the camp."

"And the Old Man?" queried the Judge.

"The Old Man — Hush! he's coming."

The doorway was darkened by a slight lissome shadow. It was the absent partner, otherwise known as the "Old Man." Need it be added that he was a *boy* of nineteen, with a slight down just clothing his upper lip!

"The creek is up over the ford, and I had to 'shin' up a willow on the bank and swing myself across," he said, with a quick, frank laugh; "but all the same, boys, it's going to clear up in about an hour, you bet. It's breaking away over Bald Mountain, and there's a sun-flash on a bit of snow on Lone Peak. Look! you can see it from here. It's for all the world like Noah's dove just landed on Mount Ararat. It's a good omen."

From sheer force of habit the men had momentarily brightened up at the Old Man's entrance. But the unblushing exhibition of degrading superstition shown in the last sentence recalled their just severity. They exchanged meaning glances. Union Mills uttered hopelessly to himself: "Hell's full of such omens."

Too occupied with his subject to notice this ominous reception, the Old Man continued: "I reckon I struck a fresh lead in the new grocery man at the Crossing. He says he'll

let the Judge have a pair of boots on credit, but he can't send them over here; and considering that the Judge has got to try them anyway, it don't seem to be asking too much for the Judge to go over there. He says he'll give us a barrel of pork and a bag of flour if we'll give him the right of using our tail-race and clean out the lower end of it."

"It's the work of a Chinaman, and a four days' job," broke in the Left Bower.

"It took one white man only two hours to clean out a third of it," retorted the Old Man triumphantly, "for I pitched in at once with a pick he let me have on credit, and did that amount of work this morning, and told him the rest of you boys would finish it this afternoon."

A slight gesture from the Right Bower checked an angry exclamation from the Left. The Old Man did not notice either, but, knitting his smooth young brow in a paternally reflective fashion, went on: "You'll have to get a new pair of trousers, Mills, but as he does n't keep clothing, we'll have to get some canvas and cut you out a pair. I traded off the beans he let me have for some tobacco for the Right Bower at the other shop, and got them to throw in a new pack of cards. These are about played out. We'll be wanting some brushwood for the fire; there's a heap in the hollow. Who's going to bring it in? It's the Judge's turn, is n't it? Why, what's the matter with you all?"

The restraint and evident uneasiness of his companions had at last touched him. He turned his frank young eyes upon them; they glanced helplessly at each other. Yet his first concern was for them, his first instinct paternal and protecting. He ran his eyes quickly over them; they were all there, and apparently in their usual condition. "Anything wrong with the claim?" he suggested.

Without looking at him the Right Bower rose, leaned against the open door with his hands behind him and his face towards the landscape, and said, apparently to the dis-



tant prospect: "The claim 's played out, the partnership 's played out, and the sooner we skedaddle out of this the better. If," he added, turning to the Old Man, "if *you* want to stay, if you want to do Chinaman's work at Chinaman's wages, if you want to hang on to the charity of the traders at the Crossing, you can do it, and enjoy the prospects and the Noah's doves alone. But we 're calculatin' to step out of it."

"But I have n't said I wanted to do it *alone*," protested the Old Man with a gesture of bewilderment.

"If these are your general ideas of the partnership," continued the Right Bower, clinging to the established hypothesis of the other partners for support, "it ain't ours, and the only way we can prove it is to stop the foolishness right here. We calculated to dissolve the partnership and strike out for ourselves elsewhere. You 're no longer responsible for us, nor we for you. And we reckon it's the square thing to leave you the claim and the cabin and all it contains. To prevent any trouble with the traders, we've drawn up a paper here" —

"With a bonus of fifty thousand dollars each down, and the rest to be settled on my children," interrupted the Old Man, with a half-uneasy laugh. "Of course. But" — he stopped suddenly, the blood dropped from his fresh cheek, and he again glanced quickly round the group. "I don't think — I — I quite sabe, boys," he added, with a slight tremor of voice and lip. "If it's a conundrum, ask me an easier one."

Any lingering doubt he might have had of their meaning was dispelled by the Judge. "It's about the softest thing you kin drop into, Old Man," he said confidentially; "if I had n't promised the other boys to go with them, and if I did n't need the best medical advice in Sacramento for my lungs, I'd just enjoy staying with you."

"It gives a sorter freedom to a young fellow like you,

Old Man, like goin' into the world on your own capital, that every Californian boy has n't got," said Union Mills patronizingly.

"Of course it's rather hard papers on us, you know, givin' up everything, so to speak; but it's for your good, and we ain't goin' back on you," said the Left Bower; "are we, boys?"

The color had returned to the Old Man's face a little more quickly and freely than usual. He picked up the hat he had cast down, put it on carefully over his brown curls, drew the flap down on the side towards his companions, and put his hands in his pockets. "All right," he said in a slightly altered voice. "When do you go?"

"To-day," answered the Left Bower. "We calculate to take a moonlight pasear over to the Cross-Roads and meet the down stage at about twelve to-night. There's plenty of time yet," he added, with a slight laugh; "it's only three o'clock now."

There was a dead silence. Even the rain withheld its continuous patter; a dumb, gray film covered the ashes of the hushed hearth. For the first time the Right Bower exhibited some slight embarrassment.

"I reckon it's held up for a spell," he said, ostentatiously examining the weather, "and we might as well take a run round the claim to see if we've forgotten nothing. Of course, we'll be back again," he added hastily, without looking at the Old Man, "before we go, you know."

The others began to look for their hats, but so awkwardly and with such evident preoccupation of mind that it was not at first discovered that the Judge had his already on. This raised a laugh, as did also a clumsy stumble of Union Mills against the pork barrel, although that gentleman took refuge from his confusion and secured a decent retreat by a gross exaggeration of his lameness, as he limped after the Right Bower. The Judge whistled feebly. The

Left Bower, in a more ambitious effort to impart a certain gayety to his exit, stopped on the threshold and said, as if in arch confidence to his companions, "Darned if the Old Man don't look two inches higher since he became a proprietor," laughed patronizingly, and vanished.

If the newly made proprietor had increased in stature, he had not otherwise changed his demeanor. He remained in the same attitude until the last figure disappeared behind the fringe of buckeye that hid the distant highway. Then he walked slowly to the fireplace, and, leaning against the chimney, kicked the dying embers together with his foot. Something dropped and spattered in the film of hot ashes. Surely the rain had not yet ceased!

His high color had already fled except for a spot on either cheek-bone that lent a brightness to his eyes. He glanced around the cabin. It looked familiar and yet strange. Rather, it looked strange *because* still familiar, and therefore incongruous with the new atmosphere that surrounded it — discordant with the echo of their last meeting, and painfully accenting the change. There were the four "bunks," or sleeping berths, of his companions, each still bearing some traces of the individuality of its late occupant with a dumb loyalty that seemed to make their light-hearted defection monstrous. In the dead ashes of the Judge's pipe, scattered on his shelf, still lived his old fire; in the whittled and carved edges of the Left Bower's bunk still were the memories of bygone days of delicious indolence; in the bullet-holes clustered round a knot of one of the beams there was still the record of the Right Bower's old-time skill and practice; in the few engravings of female loveliness stuck upon each headboard there were the proofs of their old extravagant devotion — all a mute protest to the change.

He remembered how, a fatherless, truant schoolboy, he had drifted into their adventurous, nomadic life, itself a life

of grown-up truancy like his own, and became one of that gypsy family. How they had taken the place of relations and household in his boyish fancy, filling it with the unsubstantial pageantry of a child's play at grown-up existence, he knew only too well. But how, from being a pet and protégé, he had gradually and unconsciously asserted his own individuality and taken upon his younger shoulders not only a poet's keen appreciation of that life, but its actual responsibilities and half-childish burdens, he never suspected. He had fondly believed that he was a neophyte in their ways, a novice in their charming faith and indolent creed, and they had encouraged it; now their renunciation of that faith could only be an excuse for a renunciation of *him*. The poetry that had for two years invested the material and sometimes even mean details of their existence was too much a part of himself to be lightly dispelled. The lesson of those ingenuous moralists failed, as such lessons are apt to fail; their discipline provoked but did not subdue; a rising indignation, stirred by a sense of injury, mounted to his cheek and eyes. It was slow to come, but was none the less violent that it had been preceded by the benumbing shock of shame and pride.

I hope I shall not prejudice the reader's sympathies if my duty as a simple chronicler compels me to state, therefore, that the sober second thought of this gentle poet was to burn down the cabin on the spot with all its contents. This yielded to a milder counsel — waiting for the return of the party, challenging the Right Bower, a duel to the death, perhaps himself the victim, with the crushing explanation *in extremis*, "It seems we are *one* too many. No matter; it is settled now. Farewell!" Dimly remembering, however, that there was something of this in the last well-worn novel they had read together, and that his antagonist might recognize it, or even worse, anticipate it himself, the idea was quickly rejected. Besides, the op-

portunity for an apotheosis of self-sacrifice was past. Nothing remained now but to refuse the proffered bribe of claim and cabin by letter, for he must not wait their return. He tore a leaf from a blotted diary, begun and abandoned long since, and essayed to write. Scrawl after scrawl was torn up, until his fury had cooled down to a frigid third personality. "Mr. John Ford regrets to inform his late partners that their tender of house, of furniture," however, seemed too inconsistent with the pork-barrel table he was writing on; a more eloquent renunciation of their offer became frivolous and idiotic from a caricature of Union Mills, label and all, that appeared suddenly on the other side of the leaf; and when he at last indited a satisfactory and impassioned exposition of his feelings, the legible addendum of "Oh, ain't you glad you're out of the wilderness!" — the forgotten first line of a popular song, which no scratching would erase — seemed too like an ironical postscript to be thought of for a moment. He threw aside his pen, and cast the discordant record of past foolish pastime into the dead ashes of the hearth.

How quiet it was! With the cessation of the rain the wind too had gone down, and scarcely a breath of air came through the open door. He walked to the threshold, and gazed on the hushed prospect. In this listless attitude he was faintly conscious of a distant reverberation, a mere phantom of sound, — perhaps the explosion of a distant blast in the hills, — that left the silence more marked and oppressive. As he turned again into the cabin a change seemed to have come over it. It already looked old and decayed. The loneliness of years of desertion seemed to have taken possession of it; the atmosphere of dry rot was in the beams and rafters. To his excited fancy the few disordered blankets and articles of clothing seemed dropping to pieces; in one of the bunks there was a hideous resemblance in the longitudinal heap of clothing to a withered and mummied

corpse. So it might look in after-years when some passing stranger — But he stopped. A dread of the place was beginning to creep over him; a dread of the days to come, when the monotonous sunshine should lay bare the loneliness of these walls; the long, long days of endless blue and cloudless, overhanging solitude; summer days when the wearying, incessant trade-winds should sing around that empty shell and voice its desolation. He gathered together hastily a few articles that were especially his own — rather that the free communion of the camp, from indifference or accident, had left wholly to him. He hesitated for a moment over his rifle, but, scrupulous in his wounded pride, turned away and left the familiar weapon that in the dark days had so often provided the dinner or breakfast of the little household. Candor compels me to state that his equipment was not large nor eminently practical. His scant pack was a light weight for even his young shoulders, but I fear he thought more of getting away from the Past than providing for the Future.

With this vague but sole purpose he left the cabin, and almost mechanically turned his steps towards the creek he had crossed that morning. He knew that by this route he would avoid meeting his companions; its difficulties and circuitousness would exercise his feverish limbs and give him time for reflection. He had determined to leave the claim, but whence he had not yet considered. He reached the bank of the creek where he had stood two hours before; it seemed to him two years. He looked curiously at his reflection in one of the broad pools of overflow, and fancied he looked older. He watched the rush and outset of the turbid current hurrying to meet the South Fork, and to eventually lose itself in the yellow Sacramento. Even in his preoccupation he was impressed with a likeness to himself and his companions in this flood that had burst its peaceful boundaries. In the drifting fragments of one of

their forgotten flumes washed from the bank, he fancied he saw an omen of the disintegration and decay of the Lone Star claim.

The strange hush in the air that he had noticed before — a calm so inconsistent with that hour and the season as to seem portentous — became more marked in contrast to the feverish rush of the turbulent watercourse. A few clouds lazily huddled in the west apparently had gone to rest with the sun on beds of somnolent poppies. There was a gleam as of golden water everywhere along the horizon, washing out the cold snow-peaks, and drowning even the rising moon. The creek caught it here and there, until, in grim irony, it seemed to bear their broken sluice-boxes and useless engines on the very Pactolian stream they had been hopefully created to direct and carry. But by some peculiar trick of the atmosphere the perfect plenitude of that golden sunset glory was lavished on the rugged sides and tangled crest of the Lone Star Mountain. That isolated peak, the landmark of their claim, the gaunt monument of their folly, transfigured in the evening splendor, kept its radiance unquenched long after the glow had fallen from the encompassing skies; and when at last the rising moon, step by step, put out the fires along the winding valley and plains, and crept up the bosky sides of the cañon, the vanishing sunset was lost only to reappear as a golden crown.

The eyes of the young man were fixed upon it with more than a momentary picturesque interest. It had been the favorite ground of his prospecting exploits, its lowest flank had been scarred in the old enthusiastic days with hydraulic engines, or pierced with shafts, but its central position in the claim and its superior height had always given it a commanding view of the extent of their valley and its approaches, and it was this practical preëminence that alone attracted him at that moment. He knew that from its crest he would be able to distinguish the figures of his companions, as they

crossed the valley near the cabin, in the growing moonlight. Thus he could avoid encountering them on his way to the highroad, and yet see them, perhaps, for the last time. Even in his sense of injury there was a strange satisfaction in the thought.

The ascent was toilsome, but familiar. All along the dim trail he was accompanied by gentler memories of the past, that seemed, like the faint odor of spiced leaves and fragrant grasses wet with the rain and crushed beneath his ascending tread, to exhale the sweeter perfume in his effort to subdue or rise above them. There was the thicket of manzanita, where they had broken noonday bread together; here was the rock beside their maiden shafts, where they had poured a wild libation in boyish enthusiasm of success; and here the ledge where their first flag, a red shirt heroically sacrificed, was displayed from a long-handled shovel to the gaze of admirers below. When he at last reached the summit, the mysterious hush was still in the air, as if in breathless sympathy with his expedition. In the west, the plain was faintly illuminated, but disclosed no moving figures. He turned towards the rising moon, and moved slowly to the eastern edge. Suddenly he stopped. Another step would have been his last! He stood upon the crumbling edge of a precipice. A landslip had taken place on the eastern flank, leaving the gaunt ribs and fleshless bones of Lone Star Mountain bare in the moonlight. He understood now the strange rumble and reverberation he had heard; he understood now the strange hush of bird and beast in brake and thicket!

Although a single rapid glance convinced him that the slide had taken place in an unfrequented part of the mountain, above an inaccessible cañon, and reflection assured him his companions could not have reached that distance when it took place, a feverish impulse led him to descend a few rods in the track of the avalanche. The frequent recur-



rence of outcrop and angle made this comparatively easy. Here he called aloud; the feeble echo of his own voice seemed only a dull impertinence to the significant silence. He turned to reascend; the furrowed flank of the mountain before him lay full in the moonlight. To his excited fancy a dozen luminous starlike points in the rocky crevices started into life as he faced them. Throwing his arm over the ledge above him, he supported himself for a moment by what appeared to be a projection of the solid rock. It trembled slightly. As he raised himself to its level, his heart stopped beating. It was simply a fragment detached from the outcrop, lying loosely on the ledge but upholding him by *its own weight only*. He examined it with trembling fingers; the encumbering soil fell from its sides and left its smoothed and worn protuberances glistening in the moonlight. It was virgin gold!

Looking back upon that moment afterwards, he remembered that he was not dazed, dazzled, or startled. It did not come to him as a discovery or an accident, a stroke of chance or a caprice of fortune. He saw it all in that supreme moment; Nature had worked out their poor deduction. What their feeble engines had essayed spasmodically and helplessly against the curtain of soil that hid the treasure, the elements had achieved with mightier but more patient forces. The slow sapping of the winter rains had loosened the soil from the auriferous rock, even while the swollen stream was carrying their impotent and shattered engines to the sea. What mattered that his single arm could not lift the treasure he had found; what mattered that to unfix those glittering stars would still tax both skill and patience! The work was done, the goal was reached! Even his boyish impatience was content with that. He rose slowly to his feet, unstrapped his long-handled shovel from his back, secured it in the crevice, and quietly regained the summit.

It was all his own! His own by right of discovery under the law of the land, and without accepting a favor from *them*. He recalled even the fact that it was *his* prospecting on the mountain that first suggested the existence of gold in the outcrop and the use of the hydraulic. *He* had never abandoned that belief, whatever the others had done. He dwelt somewhat indignantly to himself on this circumstance, and half unconsciously faced defiantly towards the plain below. But it was sleeping peacefully in the full sight of the moon, without life or motion. He looked at the stars, it was still far from midnight. His companions had no doubt long since returned to the cabin to prepare for their midnight journey. They were discussing him, perhaps laughing at him, or worse, pitying him and his bargain. Yet here was his bargain! A slight laugh he gave vent to here startled him a little, it sounded so hard and so unmirthful, and so unlike, as he oddly fancied, what he really *thought*. But *what* did he think?

Nothing mean or revengeful; no, they never would say *that*. When he had taken out all the surface gold and put the mine in working order, he would send them each a draft for a thousand dollars. Of course, if they were ever ill or poor he would do more. One of the first, the very first things he should do would be to send them each a handsome gun, and tell them that he only asked in return the old-fashioned rifle that once was his. Looking back at the moment in after-years, he wondered that, with this exception, he made no plans for his own future, or the way he should dispose of his newly acquired wealth. This was the more singular as it had been the custom of the five partners to lie awake at night, audibly comparing with each other what they would do in case they made a strike. He remembered how, Alnaschar-like, they nearly separated once over a difference in the disposal of a hundred thousand dollars that they never had, nor expected to have.

He remembered how Union Mills always began his career as a millionaire by a "square meal" at Delmonico's; how the Right Bower's initial step was always a trip home "to see his mother;" how the Left Bower would immediately placate the parents of his beloved with priceless gifts (it may be parenthetically remarked that the parents and the beloved one were as hypothetical as the fortune); and how the Judge would make his first start as a capitalist by breaking a certain faro bank in Sacramento. He himself had been equally eloquent in extravagant fancy in those penniless days, — he who now was quite cold and impassive beside the more extravagant reality.

How different it might have been! If they had only waited a day longer! if they had only broken their resolves to him kindly and parted in good will! How he would long ere this have rushed to greet them with the joyful news! How they would have danced around it, sung themselves hoarse, laughed down their enemies, and run up the flag triumphantly on the summit of the Lone Star Mountain! How they would have crowned him, the "Old Man," "the hero of the camp"! How he would have told them the whole story; how some strange instinct had impelled him to ascend the summit, and how another step on that summit would have precipitated him into the cañon! And how — But what if somebody else, Union Mills or the Judge, had been the first discoverer? Might they not have meanly kept the secret from him; have selfishly helped themselves, and done —

"What *you* are doing now."

The hot blood rushed to his cheek, as if a strange voice were at his ear. For a moment he could not believe that it came from his own pale lips until he found himself speaking. He rose to his feet, tingling with shame, and began hurriedly to descend the mountain.

He would go to them, tell them of his discovery, let them

give him his share, and leave them forever. It was the only thing to be done — strange that he had not thought of it at once. Yet it was hard, very hard and cruel, to be forced to meet them again. What had he done to suffer this mortification? For a moment he actually hated this vulgar treasure that had forever buried under its gross ponderability the light and careless past, and utterly crushed out the poetry of their old, indolent, happy existence.

He was sure to find them waiting at the Cross-Roads where the coach came past. It was three miles away, yet he could get there in time if he hastened. It was a wise and practical conclusion of his evening's work, a lame and impotent conclusion to his evening's indignation. No matter. They would perhaps at first think he had come to weakly follow them, perhaps they would at first doubt his story. No matter. He bit his lips to keep down the foolish rising tears, but still went blindly forward.

He saw not the beautiful night, cradled in the dark hills, swathed in luminous mists, and hushed in the awe of its own loveliness! Here and there the moon had laid her calm face on lake and overflow, and gone to sleep embracing them, until the whole plain seemed to be lifted into infinite quiet. Walking on *as* in a dream, the black, impenetrable barriers of skirting thickets opened and gave way to vague distances that it appeared impossible to reach, dim vistas that seemed unapproachable. Gradually he seemed himself to become a part of the mysterious night. He was becoming as pulseless, as calm, as passionless.

What was that? A shot in the direction of the cabin! yet so faint, so echoless, so ineffective in the vast silence, that he would have thought it his fancy but for the strange instinctive jar upon his sensitive nerves. Was it an accident, or was it an intentional signal to him? He stopped; it was not repeated; the silence reasserted itself, but this time with an ominous deathlike suggestion. A sudden and

terrible thought crossed his mind. He cast aside his pack and all encumbering weight, took a deep breath, lowered his head, and darted like a deer in the direction of the challenge.

## II

The exodus of the seceding partners of the Lone Star claim had been scarcely an imposing one. For the first five minutes after quitting the cabin the procession was straggling and vagabond. Unwonted exertion had exaggerated the lameness of some, and feebleness of moral purpose had predisposed the others to obtrusive musical exhibition. Union Mills limped and whistled with affected abstraction; the Judge whistled and limped with affected earnestness. The Right Bower led the way with some show of definite design; the Left Bower followed with his hands in his pockets. The two feebler natures, drawn together in unconscious sympathy, looked vaguely at each other for support.

"You see," said the Judge suddenly, as if triumphantly concluding an argument, "there ain't anything better for a young fellow than independence. Nature, so to speak, points the way. Look at the animals."

"There 's a skunk hereabouts," said Union Mills, who was supposed to be gifted with aristocratically sensitive nostrils, "within ten miles of this place; like as not crossing the Ridge. It 's always my luck to happen out just at such times. I don't see the necessity anyhow of trapesing round the claim now, if we calculate to leave it to-night."

Both men waited to observe if the suggestion was taken up by the Right and Left Bowers moodily plodding ahead. No response following, the Judge shamelessly abandoned his companion.

"You would n't stand snoopin' round instead of lettin' the Old Man get used to the idea alone? No; I could see

all along that he was takin' it in, takin' it in kindly but slowly, and I reckoned the best thing for us to do was to git up and git until he 'd got round it." The Judge's voice was slightly raised for the benefit of the two before him.

"Did n't he say," remarked the Right Bower, stopping suddenly and facing the others, "did n't he say that that new trader was goin' to let him have some provisions anyway?"

Union Mills turned appealingly to the Judge; that gentleman was forced to reply, "Yes; I remember distinctly he said it. It was one of the things I was particular about on his account," responded the Judge, with the air of having arranged it all himself with the new trader. "I remember I was easier in my mind about it."

"But did n't he say," queried the Left Bower, also stopping short, "suthin' about its being contingent on our doing some work on the race?"

The Judge turned for support to Union Mills, who, however, under the hollow pretense of preparing for a long conference, had luxuriously seated himself on a stump. The Judge sat down also, and replied hesitatingly, "Well, yes! Us or him."

"Us or him," repeated the Right Bower, with gloomy irony. "And you ain't quite clear in your mind, are you, if *you* have n't done the work already? You're just killing yourself with this spontaneous, promiscuous, and premature overwork; that's what's the matter with you."

"I reckon I heard somebody say suthin' about its being a Chinaman's three-day job," interpolated the Left Bower, with equal irony; "but I ain't quite clear in my mind about that."

"It'll be a sorter distraction for the Old Man," said Union Mills feebly, — "kinder take his mind off his loneliness."

Nobody taking the least notice of the remark, Union

Mills stretched out his legs more comfortably and took out his pipe. He had scarcely done so when the Right Bower, wheeling suddenly, set off in the direction of the creek. The Left Bower, after a slight pause, followed without a word. The Judge, wisely conceiving it better to join the stronger party, ran feebly after him, and left Union Mills to bring up a weak and vacillating rear.

Their course, diverging from Lone Star Mountain, led them now directly to the bend of the creek, the base of their old ineffectual operations. Here was the beginning of the famous tail-race that skirted the new trader's claim, and then lost its way in a swampy hollow. It was choked with débris; a thin, yellow stream that once ran through it seemed to have stopped work when they did, and gone into greenish liquidation.

They had scarcely spoken during this brief journey, and had received no other explanation from the Right Bower, who led them, than that afforded by his mute example when he reached the race. Leaping into it without a word, he at once began to clear away the broken timbers and driftwood. Fired by the spectacle of what appeared to be a new and utterly frivolous game, the men gayly leaped after him, and were soon engaged in a fascinating struggle with the impeded race. The Judge forgot his lameness in springing over a broken sluice-box; Union Mills forgot his whistle in a happy imitation of a Chinese coolie's song. Nevertheless, after ten minutes of this mild dissipation, the pastime flagged; Union Mills was beginning to rub his leg, when a distant rumble shook the earth. The men looked at each other; the diversion was complete; a languid discussion of the probabilities of its being an earthquake or a blast followed, in the midst of which the Right Bower, who was working a little in advance of the others, uttered a warning cry and leaped from the race. His companions had barely time to follow before a sudden and inexplicable rise in the

waters of the creek sent a swift irruption of the flood through the race. In an instant its choked and impeded channel was cleared, the race was free, and the scattered débris of logs and timber floated upon its easy current. Quick to take advantage of this labor-saving phenomenon, the Lone Star partners sprang into the water, and by disentangling and directing the eddying fragments completed their work.

"The Old Man oughter been here to see this," said the Left Bower; "it's just one o' them climaxes of poetic justice he's always huntin' up. It's easy to see what's happened. One o' them high-toned shrimps over in the Excelsior claim has put a blast in too near the creek. He's tumbled the bank into the creek, and sent the backwater down here just to wash out our race. That's what I call poetical retribution."

"And who was it advised us to dam the creek below the race and make it do the thing?" asked the Right Bower moodily.

"That was one of the Old Man's ideas, I reckon," said the Left Bower dubiously.

"And you remember," broke in the Judge with animation, "I allus said, 'Go slow, go slow. You just hold on, and suthin' will happen.' And," he added triumphantly, "you see suthin' *has* happened. I don't want to take credit to myself, but I reckoned on them Excelsior boys bein' fools, and took the chances."

"And what if I happen to know that the Excelsior boys ain't blastin' to-day?" said the Right Bower sarcastically.

As the Judge had evidently based his hypothesis on the alleged fact of a blast, he deftly evaded the point. "I ain't sayin' the Old Man's head ain't level on some things; he wants a little more sabe of the world. He's improved a good deal in euchre lately, and in poker — well! he's got that sorter dreamy, listenin'-to-the-angels kind o' way that



you can't exactly tell whether he's bluffin' or has got a full hand. Has n't he?" he asked, appealing to Union Mills.

But that gentleman, who had been watching the dark face of the Right Bower, preferred to take what he believed to be his cue from him. "That ain't the question," he said virtuously; "we ain't takin' this step to make a card-sharp out of him. We're not doin' Chinamen's work in this race to-day for that. No, sir! We're teachin' him to paddle his own canoe." Not finding the sympathetic response he looked for in the Right Bower's face, he turned to the Left.

"I reckon we were teachin' him our canoe was too full," was the Left Bower's unexpected reply. "That's about the size of it."

The Right Bower shot a rapid glance under his brows at his brother. The latter, with his hands in his pockets, stared unconsciously at the rushing water, and then quietly turned away. The Right Bower followed him. "Are you goin' back on us?" he asked.

"Are *you*?" responded the other.

"No!"

"No, then, it is," returned the Left Bower quietly. The elder brother hesitated in half-angry embarrassment.

"Then what did you mean by saying we reckoned our canoe was too full?"

"Was n't that our idea?" returned the Left Bower indifferently. Confounded by this practical expression of his own unformulated good intentions, the Right Bower was staggered.

"Speakin' of the Old Man," broke in the Judge, with characteristic infelicity, "I reckon he'll sort o' miss us, times like these. We were allers runnin' him and bedevilin' him, after work, just to get him excited and amusin', and he'll kinder miss that sort o' stimulin'. I reckon we'll miss it too, somewhat. Don't you remember, boys, the night we put up that little sell on him and made him

believe we 'd struck it rich in the bank of the creek, and got him so conceited he wanted to go off and settle all our debts at once?"

"And how I came bustin' into the cabin with a pan full of iron pyrites and black sand," chuckled Union Mills, continuing the reminiscences, "and how them big gray eyes of his nearly bulged out of his head. Well, it's some satisfaction to know we did our duty by the young fellow even in those little things." He turned for confirmation of their general disinterestedness to the Right Bower, but he was already striding away, uneasily conscious of the lazy following of the Left Bower, like a laggard conscience at his back. This movement again threw Union Mills and the Judge into feeble complicity in the rear, as the procession slowly straggled homeward from the creek.

Night had fallen. Their way lay through the shadow of Lone Star Mountain, deepened here and there by the slight, bosky ridges that, starting from its base, crept across the plain like vast roots of its swelling trunk. The shadows were growing blacker as the moon began to assert itself over the rest of the valley, when the Right Bower halted suddenly on one of these ridges. The Left Bower lounged up to him, and stopped also, while the two others came up and completed the group.

"There's no light in the shanty," said the Right Bower in a low voice, half to himself and half in answer to their inquiring attitude. The men followed the direction of his finger. In the distance the black outline of the Lone Star cabin stood out distinctly in the illumined space. There was the black, sightless, external glitter of moonlight on its two windows that seemed to reflect its dim vacancy, empty alike of light and warmth and motion.

"That's sing'lar," said the Judge in an awed whisper.

The Left Bower, by simply altering the position of his hands in his trousers' pockets, managed to suggest that he

knew perfectly the meaning of it, had always known it; but that being now, so to speak, in the hands of Fate, he was callous to it. This much, at least, the elder brother read in his attitude. But anxiety at that moment was the controlling impulse of the Right Bower, as a certain superstitious remorse was the instinct of the two others; and without heeding the cynic, the three started at a rapid pace for the cabin.

They reached it silently, as the moon, now riding high in the heavens, seemed to touch it with the tender grace and hushed repose of a tomb. It was with something of this feeling that the Right Bower softly pushed open the door; it was with something of this dread that the two others lingered on the threshold, until the Right Bower, after vainly trying to stir the dead embers on the hearth into life with his foot, struck a match and lit their solitary candle. Its flickering light revealed the familiar interior unchanged in aught but one thing. The bunk that the Old Man had occupied was stripped of its blankets; the few cheap ornaments and photographs were gone; the rude poverty of the bare boards and scant pallet looked up at them unrelieved by the bright face and gracious youth that had once made them tolerable. In the grim irony of that exposure, their own penury was doubly conscious. The little knapsack, the tea-cup, and coffee-pot that had hung near his bed were gone also. The most indignant protest, the most pathetic of the letters he had composed and rejected, whose torn fragments still littered the floor, could never have spoken with the eloquence of this empty space! The men exchanged no words; the solitude of the cabin, instead of drawing them together, seemed to isolate each one in selfish distrust of the others. Even the unthinking garrulity of Union Mills and the Judge was checked. A moment later, when the Left Bower entered the cabin, his presence was scarcely noticed.

The silence was broken by a joyous exclamation from the Judge. He had discovered the Old Man's rifle in the corner, where it had been at first overlooked. "He ain't gone yet, gentlemen — for yer's his rifle," he broke in, with a feverish return of volubility, and a high excited falsetto. "He would n't have left this behind. No! I knowed it from the first. He 's just outside a bit, foraging for wood and water. No, sir! Coming along here I said to Union Mills — did n't I? — 'Bet your life the Old Man's not far off, even if he ain't in the cabin.' Why, the moment I stepped foot" —

"And I said coming along," interrupted Union Mills, with equally reviving mendacity, "Like as not he 's hangin' round yer and lyin' low just to give us a surprise.' He! ho!"

"He 's gone for good, and he left that rifle here on purpose," said the Left Bower in a low voice, taking the weapon almost tenderly in his hands.

"Drop it, then!" said the Right Bower. The voice was that of his brother, but suddenly changed with passion. The two other partners drew back in alarm.

"I'll not leave it here for the first comer," said the Left Bower calmly, "because we've been fools, and he, too. It 's too good a weapon for that."

"Drop it, I say!" said the Right Bower, with a savage stride towards him.

The younger brother brought the rifle to a half charge with a white face but a steady eye.

"Stop where you are!" he said collectedly. "Don't row with *me*, because you have n't either the grit to stick to your ideas or the heart to confess them wrong. We've followed your lead, and — here we are! The camp's broken up — the Old Man's gone — and we're going. And as for the d—d rifle" —

"Drop it, do you hear!" shouted the Right Bower,

clinging to that one idea with the blind pertinacity of rage and a losing cause. "Drop it!"

The Left Bower drew back, but his brother had seized the barrel with both hands. There was a momentary struggle, a flash through the half-lighted cabin, and a shattering report. The two men fell back from each other; the rifle dropped on the floor between them.

The whole thing was over so quickly that the other two partners had not had time to obey their common impulse to separate them, and consequently even now could scarcely understand what had passed. It was over so quickly that the two actors themselves walked back to their places, scarcely realizing their own act.

A dead silence followed. The Judge and Union Mills looked at each other in dazed astonishment, and then nervously set about their former habits, apparently in that fatuous belief common to such natures, that they were ignoring a painful situation. The Judge drew the barrel towards him, picked up the cards, and began mechanically to "make a patience," on which Union Mills gazed with ostentatious interest, but with eyes furtively conscious of the rigid figure of the Right Bower by the chimney and the abstracted face of the Left Bower at the door. Ten minutes had passed in this occupation, the Judge and Union Mills conversing in the furtive whispers of children unavoidably but fascinatedly present at a family quarrel, when a light step was heard upon the crackling brushwood outside, and the bright panting face of the Old Man appeared upon the threshold. There was a shout of joy; in another moment he was half buried in the bosom of the Right Bower's shirt, half dragged into the lap of the Judge, upsetting the barrel, and completely encompassed by the Left Bower and Union Mills. With the enthusiastic utterance of his name the spell was broken.

Happily unconscious of the previous excitement that had

provoked this spontaneous unanimity of greeting, the Old Man, equally relieved, at once broke into a feverish announcement of his discovery. He painted the details, with, I fear, a slight exaggeration of coloring, due partly to his own excitement, and partly to justify their own. But he was strangely conscious that these bankrupt men appeared less elated with their personal interest in their stroke of fortune than with his own success. "I told you he'd do it," said the Judge, with a reckless unscrupulousness of the statement that carried everybody with it; "look at him! the game little pup." "Oh, no! he ain't the right breed, is he?" echoed Union Mills with arch irony, while the Right and Left Bower, grasping either hand, pressed a proud but silent greeting that was half new to him, but wholly delicious. It was not without difficulty that he could at last prevail upon them to return with him to the scene of his discovery, or even then restrain them from attempting to carry him thither on their shoulders on the plea of his previous prolonged exertions. Once only there was a momentary embarrassment. "Then you fired that shot to bring me back?" said the Old Man gratefully. In the awkward silence that followed, the hands of the two brothers sought and grasped each other penitently. "Yes," interposed the Judge, with delicate tact, "ye see the Right and Left Bower almost quarreled to see which should be the first to fire for ye. I disremember which did" — "I never touched the trigger," said the Left Bower hastily. With a hurried backward kick, the Judge resumed, "It went off sorter spontaneous."

The difference in the sentiment of the procession that once more issued from the Lone Star cabin did not fail to show itself in each individual partner according to his temperament. The subtle tact of Union Mills, however, in expressing an awakened respect for their fortunate partner by addressing him, as if unconsciously, as "Mr. Ford"

was at first discomposing, but even this was forgotten in their breathless excitement as they neared the base of the mountain. When they had crossed the creek the Right Bower stopped reflectively.

“ You say you heard the slide come down before you left the cabin ? ” he said, turning to the Old Man.

“ Yes ; but I did not know then what it was. It was about an hour and a half after you left,” was the reply.

“ Then look here, boys,” continued the Right Bower with superstitious exultation ; “ it was the *slide* that tumbled into the creek, overflowed it, and helped *us* clear out the race ! ”

It seemed so clear that Providence had taken the partners of the Lone Star directly in hand that they faced the toilsome ascent of the mountain with the assurance of conquerors. They paused only on the summit to allow the Old Man to lead the way to the slope that held their treasure. He advanced cautiously to the edge of the crumbling cliff, stopped, looked bewildered, advanced again, and then remained white and immovable. In an instant the Right Bower was at his side.

“ Is anything the matter ? Don’t — don’t look so, Old Man, for God’s sake ! ”

The Old Man pointed to the dull, smooth, black side of the mountain, without a crag, break, or protuberance, and said with ashen lips, —

“ It’s gone ! ”

And it was gone ! A *second* slide had taken place, stripping the flank of the mountain, and burying the treasure and the weak implement that had marked its side deep under a chaos of rock and débris at its base.

“ Thank God ! ” The blank faces of his companions turned quickly to the Right Bower. “ Thank God ! ” he repeated, with his arm round the neck of the Old Man.

“Had he stayed behind he would have been buried too.” He paused, and, pointing solemnly to the depths below, said, “And thank God for showing us where we may yet labor for it in hope and patience like honest men.”

The men silently bowed their heads and slowly descended the mountain. But when they had reached the plain one of them called out to the others to watch a star that seemed to be rising and moving towards them over the hushed and sleeping valley.

“It’s only the stage-coach, boys,” said the Left Bower, smiling; “the coach that was to take us away.”

In the security of their new-found fraternity they resolved to wait and see it pass. As it swept by with flash of light, beat of hoofs, and jingle of harness, the only real presence in the dreamy landscape, the driver shouted a hoarse greeting to the phantom partners, audible only to the Judge, who was nearest the vehicle.

“Did you hear — *did* you hear what he said, boys?” he gasped, turning to his companions. “No? Shake hands all round, boys! God bless you all, boys! To think we did n’t know it all this while!”

“Know what?”

“Merry Christmas!”



## A SHIP OF '49

### I

It had rained so persistently in San Francisco during the first week of January, 1854, that a certain quagmire in the roadway of Long Wharf had become impassable, and a plank was thrown over its dangerous depth. Indeed, so treacherous was the spot that it was alleged, on good authority, that a hastily embarking traveler had once hopelessly lost his portmanteau, and was fain to dispose of his entire interest in it for the sum of two dollars and fifty cents to a speculative stranger on the wharf. As the stranger's search was rewarded afterwards only by the discovery of the body of a casual Chinaman, who had evidently endeavored wickedly to anticipate him, a feeling of commercial insecurity was added to the other eccentricities of the locality.

The plank led to the door of a building that was a marvel even in the chaotic frontier architecture of the street. The houses on either side — irregular frames of wood or corrugated iron — bore evidence of having been quickly thrown together, to meet the requirements of the goods and passengers who were once disembarked on what was the muddy beach of the infant city. But the building in question exhibited a certain elaboration of form and design utterly inconsistent with this idea. The structure obtruded a bowed front to the street, with a curving line of small windows, surmounted by elaborate carvings and scrollwork of vines and leaves, while below, in faded gilt letters, appeared the legend "Pontiac — Marseilles." The effect of

this incongruity was startling. It is related that an inebriated miner, impeded by mud and drink before its door, was found gazing at its remarkable façade with an expression of the deepest despondency. "I hev lived a free life, pardner," he explained thickly to the Samaritan who succored him, "and every time since I've been on this six weeks' jamboree might have kalkilated it would come to this. Snakes I've seen afore now, and rats I'm not unfamiliar with, but when it comes to the starn of a ship risin' up out of the street, I reckon it's time to pass in my checks."

"It is a ship, you blasted old soaker," said the Samaritan curtly.

It was indeed a ship. A ship run ashore and abandoned on the beach years before by her gold-seeking crew, with the débris of her scattered stores and cargo, overtaken by the wild growth of the strange city and the reclamation of the muddy flat, wherein she lay hopelessly imbedded; her retreat cut off by wharves and quays and breakwater, jostled at first by sheds, and then impacted in a block of solid warehouses and dwellings, her rudder, port, and counter boarded in, and now gazing hopelessly through her cabin windows upon the busy street before her. But still a ship despite her transformation. The faintest line of contour yet left visible spoke of the buoyancy of another element; the balustrade of her roof was unmistakably a taffrail. The rain slipped from her swelling sides with a certain lingering touch of the sea; the soil around her was still treacherous with its suggestions, and even the wind whistled nautically over her chimney. If, in the fury of some southwesterly gale, she had one night slipped her strange moorings and left a shining track through the lower town to the distant sea, no one would have been surprised.

Least of all, perhaps, her present owner and possessor, Mr. Abner Nott. For by the irony of circumstances, Mr.

Nott was a Far Western farmer who had never seen a ship before, nor a larger stream of water than a tributary of the Missouri River. In a spirit, half of fascination, half of speculation, he had bought her at the time of her abandonment, and had since mortgaged his ranch at Petaluma with his live stock, to defray the expenses of filling in the land where she stood, and the improvements of the vicinity. He had transferred his household goods and his only daughter to her cabin, and had divided the space "between decks" and her hold into lodging-rooms, and lofts for the storage of goods. It could hardly be said that the investment had been profitable. His tenants vaguely recognized that his occupancy was a sentimental rather than a commercial speculation, and often generously lent themselves to the illusion by not paying their rent. Others treated their own tenancy as a joke, — a quaint recreation born of the childlike familiarity of frontier intercourse. A few had left; carelessly abandoning their unsalable goods to their landlord, with great cheerfulness and a sense of favor. Occasionally Mr. Abner Nott, in a practical relapse, raged against the derelicts, and talked of dispossessing them, or even dismantling his tenement, but he was easily placated by a compliment to the "dear old ship," or an effort made by some tenant to idealize his apartment. A photographer who had ingeniously utilized the forecabin for a gallery (accessible from the bows in the next street) paid no further tribute than a portrait of the pretty face of Rosey Nott. The superstitious reverence in which Abner Nott held his monstrous fancy was naturally enhanced by his purely bucolic exaggeration of its real functions and its native element. "This yer keel has sailed and sailed and sailed," he would explain, with some incongruity of illustration, "in a bee line, makin' tracks for days runnin'. I reckon more storms and blizzards hez tackled her than you ken shake a stick at. She 's stamped whales afore now,

and sloshed round with pirates and freebooters in and outer the Spanish Main, and across lots from Marcelleys where she was reared. And yer she sits peaceful-like just ez if she 'd never been outer a pertater patch, and had n't ploughed the sea with fo'sails and studdin' sails and them things cavortin' round her masts."

Abner Nott's enthusiasm was shared by his daughter, but with more imagination, and an intelligence stimulated by the scant literature of her father's emigrant wagon and the few books found on the cabin shelves. But to her the strange shell she inhabited suggested more of the great world than the rude, chaotic civilization she saw from the cabin windows or met in the persons of her father's lodgers. Shut up for days in this quaint tenement, she had seen it change from the enchanted playground of her childish fancy to the theatre of her active maidenhood, but without losing her ideal romance in it. She had translated its history in her own way, read its quaint nautical hieroglyphics after her own fashion, and possessed herself of its secrets. She had in fancy made voyages in it to foreign lands, had heard the accents of a softer tongue on its decks, and on summer nights, from the roof of the quarter-deck, had seen mellow constellations take the place of the hard metallic glitter of the Californian skies. Sometimes, in her isolation, the long, cylindrical vault she inhabited seemed, like some vast seashell, to become musical with the murmurings of the distant sea. So completely had it taken the place of the usual instincts of feminine youth that she had forgotten she was pretty, or that her dresses were old in fashion and scant in quantity. After the first surprise of admiration her father's lodgers ceased to follow the abstracted nymph except with their eyes, — partly respecting her spiritual shyness, partly respecting the jealous supervision of the paternal Nott. She seldom penetrated the crowded centre of the growing city; her rare excursions

were confined to the old ranch at Petaluma, whence she brought flowers and plants, and even extemporized a hanging-garden on the quarter-deck.

It was still raining, and the wind, which had increased to a gale, was dashing the drops against the slanting cabin windows with a sound like spray when Mr. Abner Nott sat before a table seriously engaged with his accounts. For it was "steamer night," — as that momentous day of reckoning before the sailing of the regular mail steamer was briefly known to commercial San Francisco, — and Mr. Nott was subject at such times to severely practical relapses. A swinging light seemed to bring into greater relief that peculiar encased casket-like security of the low-timbered, tightly fitting apartment, with its toy-like utilities of space, and made the pretty oval face of Rosey Nott appear a characteristic ornament. The sliding door of the cabin communicated with the main deck, now roofed in and partitioned off so as to form a small passage that led to the open star-board gangway, where a narrow, inclosed staircase built on the ship's side took the place of the ship's ladder under her counter, and opened in the street.

A dash of rain against the window caused Rosey to lift her eyes from her book.

"It's much nicer here than at the ranch, father," she said coaxingly, "even leaving alone its being a beautiful ship instead of a shanty; the wind don't whistle through the cracks and blow out the candle when you're reading, nor the rain spoil your things hung up against the wall. And you look more like a gentleman sitting in his own — ship — you know, looking over his bills and getting ready to give his orders."

Vague and general as Miss Rosey's compliment was, it had its full effect upon her father, who was at times dimly conscious of his hopeless rusticity and its incongruity with his surroundings. "Yes," he said awkwardly,

with a slight relaxation of his aggressive attitude; "yes, in course it's more bang-up style, but it don't pay — Rosey — it don't pay. Yer's the Pontiac that oughter be bringin' in, ez rents go, at least three hundred a month, don't make her taxes. I bin thinkin' seriously of sellin' her."

As Rosey knew her father had experienced this serious contemplation on the first of every month for the last two years, and cheerfully ignored it the next day, she only said, "I'm sure the vacant rooms and lofts are all rented, father."

"That's it," returned Mr. Nott thoughtfully, plucking at his bushy whiskers with his fingers and thumb as if he were removing dead and sapless incumbrances in their growth, "that's just what it is — them's ez in it themselves don't pay, and them ez haz left their goods — the goods don't pay. The feller ez stored them iron sugar kettles in the forehold, after trying to get me to make another advance on 'em, sez he believes he'll have to sacrifice 'em to me after all, and only begs I'd give him a chance of buying back the half of 'em ten years from now, at double what I advanced him. The chap that left them five hundred cases of hair-dye 'tween decks, and then skipped out to Sacramento, met me the other day in the street and advised me to use a bottle ez an advertisement, or try it on the stern of the Pontiac for fireproof paint. That foolishness ez all he's good for. And yet thar might be suthin' in the paint, if a feller had nigger luck. Ther's that New York chap ez bought up them damaged boxes of plug terbakker for fifty dollars a thousand, and sold 'em for foundations for that new building in Sansome Street at a thousand clear profit. It's all luck, Rosey."

The girl's eyes had wandered again to the pages of her book. Perhaps she was already familiar with the text of her father's monologue. But recognizing an additional querulousness in his voice, she laid the book aside and patiently folded her hands in her lap.

"That 's right — for I 've suthin' to tell ye. The fact is Sleight wants to buy the Pontiac out and out just ez she stands with the two fifty vara lots she stands on."

"Sleight wants to buy her? Sleight?" echoed Rosey incredulously.

"You bet! Sleight — the big financier, the smartest man in 'Frisco."

"What does he want to buy her for?" asked Rosey, knitting her pretty brows.

The apparently simple question suddenly puzzled Mr. Nott. He glanced feebly at his daughter's face, and frowned in vacant irritation. "That 's so," he said, drawing a long breath; "there 's suthin' in that."

"What did he *say*?" continued the young girl impatiently.

"Not much. 'You 've got the Pontiac, Nott,' sez he. 'You bet!' sez I. 'What 'll you take for her and the lot she stands on?' sez he, short and sharp. Some fellers, Rosey," said Nott, with a cunning smile, "would hev blurted out a big figger and been cotched. That ain't my style. I just looked at him. 'I 'll wait fur your figgers until next steamer day,' sez he, and off he goes like a shot. He 's awfully sharp, Rosey."

"But if he is sharp, father, and he really wants to buy the ship," returned Rosey thoughtfully, "it 's only because he knows it 's valuable property, and not because he likes it as we do. He can't take that value away even if we don't sell it to him, and all the while we have the comfort of the dear old Pontiac, don't you see?"

This exhaustive commercial reasoning was so sympathetic to Mr. Nott's instincts that he accepted it as conclusive. He, however, deemed it wise to still preserve his practical attitude. "But that don't make it pay by the month, Rosey. Suthin' must be done. I'm thinking I 'll clean out that photographer."

"Not just after he's taken such a pretty view of the cabin front of the Pontiac from the street, father! No! He's going to give us a copy, and put the other in a shop window in Montgomery Street."

"That's so," said Mr. Nott musingly; "it's no slouch of an advertisement. 'The Pontiac,' the property of A. Nott, Esq., of St. Jo, Missouri. Send it on to your aunt Phœbe; sorter make the old folks open their eyes—oh? Well, seein' he's been to some expense fittin' up an entrance from the other street, we'll let him slide. But as to that d—d old Frenchman Ferrers, in the next loft, with his stuck-up airs and highfalutin' style, we must get quit of him; he's regularly gouged me in that ere horsehair spekilation."

"How can you say that, father!" said Rosey, with a slight increase of color. "It was your own offer. You know those bales of curled horsehair were left behind by the late tenant to pay his rent. When Mr. De Ferrières rented the room afterwards, you told him you'd throw them in in the place of repairs and furniture. It was your own offer."

"Yes, but I did n't reckon ther'd ever be a big price per pound paid for the darned stuff for sofys and cushions and sich."

"How do you know *he* knew it, father?" responded Rosey.

"Then why did he look so silly at first, and then put on airs when I joked him about it, eh?"

"Perhaps he did n't understand your joking, father. He's a foreigner, and shy and proud, and—not like the others. I don't think he knew what you meant then, any more than he believed he was making a bargain before. He may be poor, but I think he's been—a—a—gentleman."

The young girl's animation penetrated even Mr. Nott's



slow comprehension. Her novel opposition, and even the prettiness it enhanced, gave him a dull premonition of pain. His small round eyes became abstracted, his mouth remained partly open, even his fresh color slightly paled.

"You seem to have been takin' stock of this yer man, Rosey," he said, with a faint attempt at archness; "if he warn't ez old ez a crow, for all his young feathers, I'd think he was makin' up to you."

But the passing glow had faded from her young cheeks, and her eyes wandered again to her book. "He pays his rent regularly every steamer night," she said quietly, as if dismissing an exhausted subject, "and he'll be here in a moment, I dare say." She took up her book, and leaning her head on her hand, once more became absorbed in its pages.

An uneasy silence followed. The rain beat against the windows, the ticking of a clock became audible, but still Mr. Nott sat with vacant eyes fixed on his daughter's face, and the constrained smile on his lips. He was conscious that he had never seen her look so pretty before, yet he could not tell why this was no longer an unalloyed satisfaction. Not but that he had always accepted the admiration of others for her as a matter of course, but for the first time he became conscious that she not only had an interest in others, but apparently a superior knowledge of them. How did she know these things about this man, and why had she only now accidentally spoken of them? *He* would have done so. All this passed so vaguely through his unreflective mind, that he was unable to retain any decided impression but the far-reaching one that his lodger had obtained some occult influence over her through the exhibition of his baleful skill in the horsehair speculation. "Them tricks is likely to take a young girl's fancy. I must look arter her," he said to himself softly.

A slow, regular step in the gangway interrupted his pater-

nal reflections. Hastily buttoning across his chest the pea-jacket which he usually wore at home as a single concession to his nautical surroundings, he drew himself up with something of the assumption of a shipmaster, despite certain bucolic suggestions of his boots and legs. The footsteps approached nearer, and a tall figure suddenly stood in the doorway.

It was a figure so extraordinary that even in the strange masquerade of that early civilization it was remarkable; a figure with whom father and daughter were already familiar without abatement of wonder — the figure of a rejuvenated old man, padded, powdered, dyed, and painted to the verge of caricature, but without a single suggestion of ludicrousness or humor. A face so artificial that it seemed almost a mask, but, like a mask, more pathetic than amusing. He was dressed in the extreme of fashion of a dozen years before; his pearl-gray trousers strapped tightly over his varnished boots, his voluminous satin cravat and high collar embraced his rouged cheeks and dyed whiskers, his closely buttoned frock coat clinging to a waist that seemed accented by stays.

He advanced two steps into the cabin with an upright precision of motion that might have hid the infirmities of age, and said deliberately with a foreign accent: —

“You-r-r ac-coumpt?”

In the actual presence of the apparition Mr. Nott's dignified resistance wavered. But glancing uneasily at his daughter and seeing her calm eyes fixed on the speaker without embarrassment, he folded his arms stiffly, and with a lofty simulation of examining the ceiling, said: —

“Ahem! Rosa! The gentleman's account.”

It was an infelicitous action. For the stranger, who evidently had not noticed the presence of the young girl before, started, took a step quickly forward, bent stiffly but profoundly over the little hand that held the account.

raised it to his lips, and with "a thousand pardons, mademoiselle," laid a small canvas bag containing the rent before the disorganized Mr. Nott and stiffly vanished.

The night was a troubled one to the simple-minded proprietor of the good ship Pontiac. Unable to voice his uneasiness by further discussion, but feeling that his late discomposing interview with his lodger demanded some marked protest, he absented himself on the plea of business during the rest of the evening, happily to his daughter's utter obliviousness of the reason. Lights were burning brilliantly in counting-rooms and offices, the feverish life of the mercantile city was at its height. With a vague idea of entering into immediate negotiations with Mr. Sleight for the sale of the ship, as a direct way out of his present perplexity, he bent his steps towards the financier's office, but paused and turned back before reaching the door. He made his way to the wharf and gazed abstractedly at the lights reflected in the dark, tremulous, jelly-like water. But wherever he went he was accompanied by the absurd figure of his lodger — a figure he had hitherto laughed at or half pitied, but which now, to his bewildered comprehension, seemed to have a fateful significance. Here a new idea seized him, and he hurried back to the ship, slackening his pace only when he arrived at his own doorway. Here he paused a moment and slowly ascended the staircase. When he reached the passage he coughed slightly and paused again. Then he pushed open the door of the darkened cabin and called softly: —

"Rosey!"

"What is it, father?" said Rosey's voice from the little stateroom on the right — Rosey's own bower.

"Nothing!" said Mr. Nott, with an affectation of languid calmness; "I only wanted to know if you was comfortable. It's an awful busy night in town."

"Yes, father."

"I reckon thar's tons o' gold goin' to the States tomorrow."

"Yes, father."

"Pretty comfortable, eh?"

"Yes, father."

"Well, I'll browse round a spell, and turn in myself soon."

"Yes, father."

Mr. Nott took down a hanging lantern, lighted it, and passed out into the gangway. Another lamp hung from the companion hatch to light the tenants to the lower deck, whence he descended. This deck was divided fore and aft by a partitioned passage, — the lofts or apartments being lighted from the ports, and one or two by a door cut through the ship's side communicating with an alley on either side. This was the case with the loft occupied by Mr. Nott's strange lodger, which, besides a door in the passage, had this independent communication with the alley. Nott had never known him to make use of the latter door; on the contrary, it was his regular habit to issue from his apartment at three o'clock every afternoon, dressed as he has been described, stride deliberately through the passage to the upper deck, and thence into the street, where his strange figure was a feature of the principal promenade for two or three hours, returning as regularly at eight o'clock to the ship and the seclusion of his loft. Mr. Nott paused before the door, under the pretense of throwing the light before him into the shadows of the fore-castle: all was silent within. He was turning back when he was impressed by the regular recurrence of a peculiar rustling sound which he had at first referred to the rubbing of the wires of the swinging lantern against his clothing. He set down the light and listened; the sound was evidently on the other side of the partition; the sound of some prolonged, rustling, scraping movement, with regu-

lar intervals. Was it due to another of Mr. Nott's unprofitable tenants — the rats? No. A bright idea flashed upon Mr. Nott's troubled mind. It was De Ferrières snoring! He smiled grimly. "Wonder if Rosey'd call him a gentleman if she heard that," he chuckled to himself as he slowly made his way back to the cabin and the small stateroom opposite to his daughter's. During the rest of the night he dreamed of being compelled to give Rosey in marriage to his lodger, who added insult to the outrage by snoring audibly through the marriage service.

Meantime, in her cradle-like nest in her nautical bower, Miss Rosey slumbered as lightly. Waking from a vivid dream of Venice — a child's Venice — seen from the swelling deck of the proudly riding Pontiac, she was so impressed as to rise and cross on tiptoe to the little slanting port-hole. Morning was already dawning over the flat, straggling city, but from every counting-house and magazine the votive tapers of the feverish worshippers of trade and mammon were still flaring fiercely.

## II

The day following "steamer night" was usually stale and flat at San Francisco. The reaction from the feverish exaltation of the previous twenty-four hours was seen in the listless faces and lounging feet of promenaders, and was notable in the deserted offices and warehouses still redolent of last night's gas, and strewn with the dead ashes of last night's fires. There was a brief pause before the busy life which ran its course from "steamer day" to steamer day was once more taken up. In that interval a few anxious speculators and investors breathed freely, some critical situation was relieved, or some impending catastrophe momentarily averted. In particular, a singular stroke of good fortune that morning befell Mr. Nott. He not only secured a new tenant, but, as he sagaciously

believed, introduced into the Pontiac a counteracting influence to the subtle fascinations of De Ferrières.

The new tenant apparently possessed a combination of business shrewdness and brusque frankness that strongly impressed his landlord. "You see, Rosey," said Nott, complacently describing the interview to his daughter, "when I sorter intimated in a keerless kind o' way that sugar kettles and hair-dye was about played out ez securities, he just planked down the money for two months in advance. 'There,' sez he, 'that's *your* security — now where 's *mine*?' 'I reckon I don't hitch on, pardner,' sez I; 'security what for?' 'S'pose you sell the ship?' sez he, 'afore the two months is up. I've heard that old Sleight wants to buy her.' 'Then you gets back your money,' sez I. 'And lose my room,' sez he; 'not much, old man. You sign a paper that whoever buys the ship inside o' two months hez to buy *me* ez a tenant with it; that's on the square.' So I sign the paper. It was mighty cute in the young feller, was n't it?" he said, scanning his daughter's pretty puzzled face a little anxiously: "and don't you see, ez I ain't goin' to sell the Pontiac, it's just about ez cute in me, eh? He 's a contractor somewhere around yer, and wants to be near his work. So he takes the room next to the Frenchman, that that ship captain quit for the mines, and succeeds naterally to his chest and things. He 's mighty peart looking, that young feller, Rosey — long black mustaches, all his own color, Rosey — and he 's a regular high-stepper, you bet. I reckon he 's not only been a gentleman, but ez *now*, Some o' them contractors are very high-toned!"

"I don't think we have any right to give him the captain's chest, father," said Rosey; "there may be some private things in it. There were some letters and photographs in the hair-dye man's trunk that you gave the photographer."

"That's just it, Rosey," returned Abner Nott with sublime unconsciousness, "photographs and love-letters you can't sell for cash, and I don't mind givin' 'em away, if they kin make a feller creature happy."

"But, father, have we the *right* to give 'em away?"

"They 're collateral security, Rosey," said her father grimly. "Co-la-te-ral," he continued, emphasizing each syllable by tapping the fist of one hand in the open palm of the other. "Co-la-te-ral is the word the big business sharps yer about call 'em. You can't get round that." He paused a moment, and then, as a new idea seemed to be painfully borne in his round eyes, continued cautiously: "Was that the reason why you would n't touch any of them dresses from the trunks of that opery gal ez skedadaddled for Sacramento? And yet them trunks I regularly bought at auction — Rosey — at auction, on spec — and they did n't realize the cost of drayage."

A slight color mounted to Rosey's face. "No," she said hastily, "not that." Hesitating a moment, she then drew softly to his side, and placing her arms around his neck, turned his broad foolish face towards her own. "Father," she began, "when mother died, would *you* have liked anybody to take her trunks and paw round her things and wear them?"

"When your mother died, just this side o' Sweetwater, Rosey," said Mr. Nott, with beaming unconsciousness, "she had n't any trunks. I reckon she had n't even an extra gown hanging up in the wagin, 'cept the petticoat ez she had wrapped around yer. It was about ez much ez we could do to skirmish round with Injins, alkali, and cold, and we sorter forgot to dress for dinner. She never thought, Rosey, that you and me would live to be inhabitin' a paliss of a real ship. Ef she had she would have died a proud woman."

He turned his small, loving, boar-like eyes upon her as

a preternaturally innocent and trusting companion of Ulysses might have regarded the transforming Circe. Rosey turned away with the faintest sigh. The habitual look of abstraction returned to her eyes as if she had once more taken refuge in her own ideal world. Unfortunately the change did not escape either the sensitive observation or the fatuous misconception of the sagacious parent. "Ye 'll be mountin' a few furbelows and fixin's, Rosey, I reckon, ez only natural. Mebbe ye 'll have to prink up a little now that we've got a gentleman contractor in the ship. I'll see what I kin pick up in Montgomery Street." And indeed he succeeded a few hours later in accomplishing with equal infelicity his generous design. When she returned from her household tasks she found on her berth a purple velvet bonnet of extraordinary make and a pair of white satin slippers. "They 'll do for a start-off, Rosey," he explained, "and I got 'em at my figgers."

"But I go out so seldom, father; and a bonnet" —

"That 's so," interrupted Mr. Nott complacently, "it might be jest ez well for a young gal like yer to appear ez if she *did* go out, or would go out if she wanted to. So you kin be wearin' that ar headstall kinder like this evenin' when the contractor's here, ez if you'd jest come in from a *pasear*."

Miss Rosey did not, however, immediately avail herself of her father's purchase, but contented herself with the usual scarlet ribbon that like a snood confined her brown hair when she returned to her tasks. The space between the galley and the bulwarks had been her favorite resort in summer when not actually engaged in household work. It was now lightly roofed over with boards and tarpaulin against the winter rain, but still afforded her a veranda-like space before the galley door, where she could read or sew, looking over the bow of the Pontiac to the tossing bay or the farther range of the Contra Costa hills.



Hither Miss Rosey brought the purple prodigy, partly to please her father, partly with a view of subjecting it to violent radical changes. But after trying it on before the tiny mirror in the galley once or twice, her thoughts wandered away, and she fell into one of her habitual reveries seated on a little stool before the galley door.

She was aroused from it by the slight shaking and rattling of the doors of a small hatch on the deck not a dozen yards from where she sat. It had been evidently fastened from below during the wet weather; but as she gazed the fastenings were removed, the doors were suddenly lifted, and the head and shoulders of a young man emerged from the deck. Partly from her father's description, and partly from the impossibility of its being anybody else, she at once conceived it to be the new lodger. She had time to note that he was young and good looking, graver, perhaps, than became his sudden pantomimic appearance; but before she could observe him closely, he had turned, closed the hatch with a certain familiar dexterity, and walked slowly towards the bows. Even in her slight bewilderment she observed that his step upon the deck seemed different to her father's or the photographer's, and that he laid his hand on various objects with a half-caressing ease and habit. Presently he paused and turned back, and glancing at the galley door for the first time encountered her wondering eyes.

It seemed so evident that she had been a curious spectator of his abrupt entrance on deck that he was at first disconcerted and confused. But after a second glance at her he appeared to resume his composure, and advanced a little defiantly towards the galley.

"I suppose I frightened you, popping up the fore hatch just now?"

"The what?" asked Rosey.

"The fore hatch," he repeated impatiently, indicating it with a gesture.

"And that's the fore hatch?" she said abstractedly. "You seem to know ships."

"Yes — a little," he said quietly. "I was below, and unfastened the hatch to come up the quickest way and take a look round. I've just hired a room here," he added explanatorily.

"I thought so," said Rosey simply; "you're the contractor?"

"The contractor! — oh yes! You seem to know it all."

"Father's told me."

"Oh, he's your father — Nott? Certainly. I see now," he continued, looking at her with a half-repressed smile. "Certainly Miss Nott, good-morning," he half added and walked towards the companionway. Something in the direction of his eyes as he turned away made Rosey lift her hands to her head. She had forgotten to remove her father's baleful gift.

She snatched it off and ran quickly to the companionway.

"Sir!" she called.

The young man turned halfway down the steps and looked up. There was a faint color in her cheeks, and her pretty brown hair was slightly disheveled from the hasty removal of the bonnet.

"Father's very particular about strangers being on this deck," she said a little sharply.

"Oh — ah — I'm sorry I intruded."

"I — I — thought I'd tell you," said Rosey, frightened by her boldness into a feeble anticlimax.

"Thank you."

She came back slowly to the galley and picked up the unfortunate bonnet with a slight sense of remorse. Why should she feel angry with her poor father's unhappy offering? And what business had this strange young man to use the ship so familiarly? Yet she was vaguely conscious

that she and her father, with all their love and their domestic experience of it, lacked a certain instinctive ease in its possession that the half-indifferent stranger had shown on first treading its deck. She walked to the hatchway and examined it with a new interest. Succeeding in lifting the hatch, she gazed at the lower deck. As she already knew the ladder had long since been removed to make room for one of the partitions, the only way the stranger could have reached it was by leaping to one of the rings. To make sure of this, she let herself down holding on to the rings, and dropped a couple of feet to the deck below. She was in the narrow passage her father had penetrated the previous night. Before her was the door leading to De Ferrières' loft, always locked. It was silent within; it was the hour when the old Frenchman made his habitual promenade in the city. But the light from the newly opened hatch allowed her to see more of the mysterious recesses of the forward bulkhead than she had known before, and she was startled by observing another yawning hatchway at her feet, from which the closely fitting door had been lifted, and which the new lodger had evidently forgotten to close again. The young girl stooped down and peered cautiously into the black abyss. Nothing was to be seen, nothing heard but the distant gurgle and click of water in some remoter depth. She replaced the hatch and returned by way of the passage to the cabin.

When her father came home that night she briefly recounted the interview with the new lodger, and her discovery of his curiosity. She did this with a possible increase of her usual shyness and abstraction, and apparently more as a duty than a colloquial recreation. But it pleased Mr. Nott also to give it more than his usual misconception. "Looking round the ship, was he — eh, Rosey?" he said, with infinite archness. "In course, kinder sweepin' round the galley, and offerin' to fetch you wood and water,

eh?" Even when the young girl had picked up her book, with the usual faint smile of affectionate tolerance, and then drifted away in its pages, Mr. Nott chuckled audibly. "I reckon old Frenchy did n't come by when the young one was bedevlin' you there."

"What, father?" said Rosey, lifting her abstracted eyes to his face.

At the moment it seemed impossible that any human intelligence could have suspected deceit or duplicity in Rosey's clear gaze. But Mr. Nott's intelligence was super-human. "I was sayin' that Mr. Ferrières did n't happen in while the young feller was there — eh?"

"No, father," answered Rosey, with an effort to follow him out of the pages of her book. "Why?"

But Mr. Nott did not reply. Later in the evening he awkwardly waylaid the new lodger before the cabin door as that gentleman would have passed on to his room.

"I'm afraid," said the young man, glancing at Rosey, "that I intruded upon your daughter to-day. I was a little curious to see the old ship, and I did n't know what part of it was private."

"There ain't no private part to this yer ship — that ez 'cepting the rooms and lofts," said Mr. Nott authoritatively. Then subjecting the anxious look of his daughter to his usual faculty for misconception, he added: "Thar ain't no place whar you have n't as much right to go ez any other man; thar ain't any man, furriner or Amerykan, young or old, dyed or undyed, ez hev got any better rights. You hear me, young fellow. Mr. Renshaw — my darter. My darter — Mr. Renshaw. Rosey, give the gentleman a chair. She's only jest come in from a promenade, and hez jest taken off her bonnet," he added, with an arch look at Rosey and a hurried look around the cabin, as if he hoped to see the missing gift visible to the general eye. "So take a seat a minit, won't ye?"

But Mr. Renshaw, after an observant glance at the young girl's abstracted face, brusquely excused himself. "I've got a letter to write," he said, with a half bow to Rosey. "Good-night."

He crossed the passage to the room that had been assigned to him, and closing the door gave way to some irritability of temper in his efforts to light the lamp and adjust his writing materials; for his excuse to Mr. Nott was more truthful than most polite pretexts. He had, indeed, a letter to write, and one that, being yet young in duplicity, the near presence of his host rendered difficult. For it ran as follows: —

DEAR SLEIGHT, — As I found I could n't get a chance to make any examination of the ship except as occasion offered, I just went in to rent lodgings in her from the God-forsaken old ass who owns her, and here I am a tenant for two months. I contracted for that time in case the old fool should sell out to some one else before. Except that she's cut up a little between decks by the partitions for lofts that that Pike County idiot has put into her, she looks but little changed, and her *forehold*, as far as I can judge, is intact. It seems that Nott bought her just as she stands, with her cargo half out, but he was n't here when she broke cargo. If anybody else had bought her but this cursed Missourian, who has n't got the hayseed out of his hair, I might have found out something from him, and saved myself this kind of fooling, which is n't in my line. If I could get possession of a loft on the main deck, well forward, just over the forehold, I could satisfy myself in a few hours; but the loft is rented by that crazy Frenchman who parades Montgomery Street every afternoon, and though old Pike County wants to turn him out, I'm afraid I can't get it for a week to come.

If anything should happen to me, just you waltz down

here and corral my things at once, for this old frontier pirate has a way of confiscating his lodgers' trunks.

Yours,

DICK.

### III

If Mr. Renshaw indulged in any further curiosity regarding the interior of the *Pontiac*, he did not make his active researches manifest to Rosey. Nor, in spite of her father's invitation, did he again approach the galley — a fact which gave her her first vague impression in his favor. He seemed also to avoid the various advances which Mr. Nott appeared impelled to make, whenever they met in the passage, but did so without seemingly avoiding *her*, and marked his half-contemptuous indifference to the elder Nott by an increase of respect to the young girl. She would have liked to ask him something about ships, and was sure his conversation would have been more interesting than that of old Captain Bower, to whose cabin he had succeeded, who had once told her a ship was the "devil's hencoop." She would have liked also to explain to him that she was not in the habit of wearing a purple bonnet. But her thoughts were presently engrossed by an experience which interrupted the even tenor of her young life.

She had been, as she afterwards remembered, impressed with a nervous restlessness one afternoon which made it impossible for her to perform her ordinary household duties, or even to indulge her favorite recreation of reading or castle-building. She wandered over the ship, and impelled by the same vague feeling of unrest, descended to the lower deck and the forward bulkhead, where she had discovered the open hatch. It had not been again disturbed, nor was there any trace of further exploration. A little ashamed, she knew not why, of revisiting the scene of Mr. Renshaw's researches, she was turning back when she noticed that the door which communicated with De

Ferrières' loft was partly open. The circumstance was so unusual that she stopped before it in surprise. There was no sound from within; it was the hour when its queer occupant was always absent; he must have forgotten to lock the door, or it had been unfastened by other hands. After a moment of hesitation she pushed it farther open and stepped into the room.

By the dim light of two port-holes she could see that the floor was strewn and piled with the contents of a broken bale of curled horsehair, of which a few untouched bales still remained against the wall. A heap of morocco skins, some already cut in the form of chair-cushion covers, and a few cushions unfinished and unstuffed, lay in the light of the ports, and gave the apartment the appearance of a cheap workshop. A rude instrument for combining the horsehair, awls, buttons, and thread, heaped on a small bench, showed that active work had been but recently interrupted. A cheap earthenware ewer and basin on the floor, and a pallet made of an open bale of horsehair, on which a ragged quilt and blanket were flung, indicated that the solitary worker dwelt and slept beside his work.

The truth flashed upon the young girl's active brain, quickened by seclusion and fed by solitary books. She read with keen eyes the miserable secret of her father's strange guest in the poverty-stricken walls, in the mute evidences of menial handicraft performed in loneliness and privation, in this piteous adaptation of an accident to save the conscious shame of premeditated toil. She knew now why he had stammeringly refused to receive her father's offer to buy back the goods he had given him; she knew now how hardly gained was the pittance that paid his rent and supported his childish vanity and grotesque pride. From a peg in the corner hung the familiar masquerade that hid his poverty — the pearl-gray trousers, the black frock coat, the tall shining hat — in hideous con-

trast to the penury of his surroundings. But if *they* were here, where was *he*, and in what new disguise had he escaped from his poverty? A vague uneasiness caused her to hesitate and return to the open door. She had nearly reached it when her eye fell on the pallet which it partly illuminated. A singular resemblance in the ragged heap made her draw closer. The faded quilt was a dressing-gown, and clutching its folds lay a white, wasted hand.

The emigrant childhood of Rose Nott had been more than once shadowed by scalping-knives, and she was acquainted with Death. She went fearlessly to the couch, and found that the dressing-gown was only an enwrapping of the emaciated and lifeless body of De Ferrières. She did not retreat or call for help, but examined him closely. He was unconscious, but not pulseless; he had evidently been strong enough to open the door for air or succor, but had afterwards fallen into a fit on the couch. She flew to her father's locker and the galley fire, returned and shut the door behind her, and by the skillful use of hot water and whiskey soon had the satisfaction of seeing a faint color take the place of the faded rouge in the ghastly cheeks. She was still chafing his hands when he slowly opened his eyes. With a start, he made a quick attempt to push aside her hand and rise. But she gently restrained him.

"Eh — what!" he stammered, throwing his face back from hers with an effort and trying to turn it to the wall.

"You have been ill," she said quietly. "Drink this."

With his face still turned away he lifted the cup to his chattering teeth. When he had drained it he threw a trembling glance round the room and at the door.

"There's no one been here but myself," she said quickly. "I happened to see the door open as I passed. I didn't think it worth while to call any one."

The searching look he gave her turned into an expression of relief, which, to her infinite uneasiness, again feebly



lightened into one of antiquated gallantry. He drew the dressing-gown around him with an air.

"Ah! it is a goddess, mademoiselle, that has deigned to enter the cell where — where — I amuse myself. It is droll, is it not? I came here to make — what you call — the experiment of your father's fabric. I make myself — ha! ha! — like a workman. Ah, bah! the heat, the darkness, the plebeian motion make my head to go round. I stagger, I faint, I cry out, I fall. But what of that? The great God hears my cry and sends me an angel. *Voilà!*"

He attempted an easy gesture of gallantry, but overbalanced himself and fell sideways on the pallet with a gasp. Yet there was so much genuine feeling mixed with his grotesque affectation, so much piteous consciousness of the ineffectiveness of his falsehood, that the young girl, who had turned away, came back and laid her hand upon his arm.

"You must lie still and try to sleep," she said gently. "I will return again. Perhaps," she added, "there is some one I can send for?"

He shook his head violently. Then in his old manner added, "After mademoiselle — no one."

"I mean" — she hesitated; "have you no friends?"

"Friends, — ah! without doubt." He shrugged his shoulders. "But mademoiselle will comprehend" —

"You are better now," said Rosey quickly, "and no one need know anything if you don't wish it. Try to sleep. You need not lock the door when I go; I will see that no one comes in."

He flushed faintly and averted his eyes. "It is too droll, mademoiselle, is it not?"

"Of course it is," said Rosey, glancing round the miserable room.

"And mademoiselle is an angel."

He carried her hand to his lips humbly — his first purely unaffected action. She slipped through the door, and softly closed it behind her.

Reaching the upper deck she was relieved to find her father had not returned, and her absence had been unnoticed. For she had resolved to keep De Ferrières' secret to herself from the moment that she had unwittingly discovered it, and to do this and still be able to watch over him without her father's knowledge required some caution. She was conscious of his strange aversion to the unfortunate man without understanding the reason; but as she was in the habit of entertaining his caprices more from affectionate tolerance of his weakness than reverence of his judgment, she saw no disloyalty to him in withholding a confidence that might be disloyal to another. "It won't do father any good to know it," she said to herself, "and if it *did* it ought n't to," she added, with triumphant feminine logic. But the impression made upon her by the spectacle she had just witnessed was stronger than any other consideration. The revelation of De Ferrières' secret poverty seemed a chapter from a romance of her own weaving; for a moment it lifted the miserable hero out of the depths of his folly and selfishness. She forgot the weakness of the man in the strength of his dramatic surroundings. It partly satisfied a craving she had felt; it was not exactly the story of the ship, as she had dreamed it, but it was an episode in her experience of it that broke its monotony. That she should soon learn, perhaps from De Ferrières' own lips, the true reason of his strange seclusion, and that it involved more than appeared to her now, she never for a moment doubted.

At the end of an hour she again knocked softly at the door, carrying some light nourishment she had prepared for him. He was asleep, but she was astounded to find that in the interval he had managed to dress himself completely in his antiquated finery. It was a momentary shock to the illusion she had been fostering, but she forgot it in the pitiable contrast between his haggard face and his roma-

tumed hair and beard, the jauntiness of his attire, and the collapse of his invalid figure. When she had satisfied herself that his sleep was natural, she busied herself softly in arranging the miserable apartment. With a few feminine touches she removed the slovenliness of misery, and placed the loose material and ostentatious evidences of his work on one side. Finding that he still slept, and knowing the importance of this natural medication, she placed the refreshment she had brought by his side and noiselessly quitted the apartment. Hurrying through the gathering darkness between decks, she once or twice thought she heard footsteps, and paused, but, encountering no one, attributed the impression to her over-consciousness. Yet she thought it prudent to go to the galley first, where she lingered a few moments before returning to the cabin. On entering she was a little startled at observing a figure seated at her father's desk, but was relieved at finding it was Mr. Renshaw.

He rose and put aside the book he had idly picked up. "I am afraid I am an intentional intruder this time, Miss Nott. But I found no one here, and I was tempted to look into this ship-shape little snugery. You see, the temptation got the better of me."

His voice and smile were so frank and pleasant, so free from his previous restraint, yet still respectful, so youthful yet manly, that Rosey was affected by them even in her preoccupation. Her eyes brightened and then dropped before his admiring glance. Had she known that the excitement of the last few hours had brought a wonderful charm into her pretty face, had aroused the slumbering life of her half-wakened beauty, she would have been more confused. As it was, she was only glad that the young man should turn out to be "nice." Perhaps he might tell her something about ships; perhaps if she had only known him longer she might, with De Ferrières' permission, have

shared her confidence with him, and enlisted his sympathy and assistance. She contented herself with showing this anticipatory gratitude in her face as she begged him, with the timidity of a maiden hostess, to resume his seat.

But Mr. Renshaw seemed to talk only to make her talk, and I am forced to admit that Rosey found this almost as pleasant. It was not long before he was in possession of her simple history from the day of her baby emigration to California to the transfer of her childish life to the old ship, and even of much of the romantic fancies she had woven into her existence there. Whatever ulterior purpose he had in view, he listened as attentively as if her artless chronicle was filled with practical information. Once, when she had paused for breath, he said gravely, "I must ask you to show me over this wonderful ship some day, that I may see it with your eyes."

"But I think you know it already better than I do," said Rosey, with a smile.

Mr. Renshaw's brow clouded slightly. "Ah," he said, with a touch of his former restraint; "and why?"

"Well," said Rosey timidly, "I thought you went round and touched things in a familiar way as if you had handled them before."

The young man raised his eyes to Rosey's and kept them there long enough to bring back his gentler expression. "Then, because I found you trying on a very queer bonnet the first day I saw you," he said mischievously, "I ought to believe you were in the habit of wearing one."

In the first flush of mutual admiration young people are apt to find a laugh quite as significant as a sigh for an expression of sympathetic communion, and this master-stroke of wit convulsed them both. In the midst of it Mr. Nott entered the cabin. But the complacency with which he viewed the evident perfect understanding of the pair was destined to suffer some abatement. Rosey, suddenly con-

scious that she was in some way participating in the ridicule of her father through his unhappy gift, became embarrassed. Mr. Renshaw's restraint returned with the presence of the old man. In vain, at first, Abner Nott strove with profound levity to indicate his arch comprehension of the situation, and in vain, later, becoming alarmed he endeavored, with cheerful gravity, to indicate his utter obliviousness of any but a business significance in their *tête-à-tête*.

"I ought n't to hev intruded, Rosey," he said, "when you and the gentleman were talkin' of contracts, mebbe; but don't mind me. I'm on the fly anyhow, Rosey dear, hevin' to see a man round the corner."

But even the attitude of withdrawing did not prevent the exit of Renshaw to his apartment and of Rosey to the galley. Left alone in the cabin, Abner Nott felt in the knots and tangles of his beard for a reason. Glancing down at his prodigious boots, which, covered with mud and gravel, strongly emphasized his agricultural origin and gave him a general appearance of standing on his own broad acres, he was struck with an idea. "It's them boots," he whispered to himself softly; "they somehow don't seem 'xactly to trump or follow suit in this yer cabin; they don't hitch into anythin' but jist slosh round loose, and so to speak play it alone. And them young critters nat'rally feels it and gets out o' the way." Acting upon this instinct with his usual precipitate caution, he at once proceeded to the nearest second-hand shop, and purchasing a pair of enormous carpet slippers, originally the property of a gouty sea-captain, reappeared with a strong suggestion of newly upholstering the cabin. The improvement, however, was fraught with a portentous circumstance. Mr. Nott's footsteps, which usually announced his approach all over the ship, became stealthy and inaudible.

Meantime Miss Rosey had taken advantage of the absence of her father to visit her patient. To avoid attract

ing attention she did not take a light, but groped her way to the lower deck and rapped softly at the door. It was instantly opened by De Ferrières. He had apparently appreciated the few changes she had already made in the room, and had himself cleared away the pallet, from which he had risen to make two low seats against the wall. Two bits of candle placed on the floor illuminated the beams above, the dressing-gown was artistically draped over the solitary chair, and a pile of cushions formed another seat. With elaborate courtesy he handed Miss Rosey to the chair. He looked pale and weak, though the gravity of the attack had evidently passed. Yet he persisted in remaining standing. "If I sit," he explained with a gesture, "I shall again disgrace myself by sleeping in mademoiselle's presence. Yes! I shall sleep — I shall dream — and wake to find her gone!"

More embarrassed by his recovery than when he was lying helplessly before her, she said hesitatingly that she was glad he was better, and that she hoped he liked the broth.

"It was manna from heaven, mademoiselle. See, I have taken it all — every precious drop. What else could I have done for mademoiselle's kindness?"

He showed her the empty bowl. A swift conviction came upon her that the man had been suffering from want of food. The thought restored her self-possession even while it brought the tears to her eyes. "I wish you would let me speak to father — or some one," she said impulsively, and stopped.

A quick and half-insane gleam of terror and suspicion lit up his deep eyes. "For what, mademoiselle! For an accident — that is nothing — absolutely nothing, for I am strong and well now — see!" he said tremblingly. "Or for a whim — for a folly you may say, that they will misunderstand. No, mademoiselle is good, is wise. She will say to herself, 'I understand, my friend Monsieur de

Ferrières for the moment has a secret. He would seem poor, he would take the rôle of artisan, he would shut himself up in these walls — perhaps I may guess why, but it is his secret. I think of it no more.' ” He caught her hand in his with a gesture that he would have made one of gallantry, but that in its tremulous intensity became a piteous supplication.

“I have said nothing, and will say nothing, if you wish it,” said Rosey hastily; “but others may find out how you live here. This is not fit work for you. You seem to be a — a gentleman. You ought to be a lawyer, or a doctor, or in a bank,” she continued timidly, with a vague enumeration of the prevailing degrees of local gentility.”

He dropped her hand. “Ah! does not mademoiselle comprehend that it is *because* I am a gentleman that there is nothing between it and this? Look!” he continued almost fiercely. “What if I told you it is the lawyer, it is the doctor, it is the banker, that brings me, a gentleman, to this, eh? Ah, bah! What do I say? This is honest, what I do! But the lawyer, the banker, the doctor, what are they?” He shrugged his shoulders, and pacing the apartment with a furtive glance at the half-anxious, half-frightened girl, suddenly stopped, dragged a small port-manteau from behind the heap of bales, and opened it. “Look, mademoiselle,” he said, tremulously lifting a handful of worn and soiled letters and papers. “Look — these are the tools of your banker, your lawyer, your doctor. With this the banker will make you poor, the lawyer will prove you a thief, the doctor will swear you are crazy, eh? What shall you call the work of a gentleman — this” — he dragged the pile of cushions forward — “or this?”

To the young girl's observant eyes some of the papers appeared to be of a legal or official character, and others like bills of lading, with which she was familiar. Their half-theatrical exhibition reminded her of some play she

had seen; they might be the clue to some story, or the mere worthless hoardings of some diseased fancy. Whatever they were, De Ferrières did not apparently care to explain further; indeed, the next moment his manner changed to his old absurd extravagance. "But this is stupid for mademoiselle to hear. What shall we speak of? Ah! what *should* we speak of in mademoiselle's presence?"

"But are not these papers valuable?" asked Rosey, partly to draw her host's thoughts back to their former channel.

"Perhaps."

He paused and regarded the young girl fixedly. "Does mademoiselle think so?"

"I don't know," said Rosey. "How should I?"

"Ah! if mademoiselle thought so — if mademoiselle would deign" — He stopped again and placed his hand upon his forehead. "It might be so!" he muttered.

"I must go now," said Rosey hurriedly, rising with an awkward sense of constraint. "Father will wonder where I am."

"I shall explain. I will accompany you, mademoiselle."

"No, no," said Rosey quickly; "he must not know I have been here!" She stopped. The honest blush flew to her cheek, and then returned again, because she had blushed.

De Ferrières gazed at her with an exalted look. Then drawing himself to his full height, he said, with an exaggerated and indescribable gesture, "Go, my child, go. Tell your father that you have been alone and unprotected in the abode of poverty and suffering, but — that it was in the presence of Armand de Ferrières."

He threw open the door with a bow that nearly swept the ground, but did not again offer to take her hand. At



once impressed and embarrassed at this crowning incongruity, her pretty lips trembled between a smile and a cry as she said, "Good-night," and slipped away into the darkness.

Erect and grotesque De Ferrières retained the same attitude until the sound of her footsteps was lost, when he slowly began to close the door. But a strong arm arrested it from without, and a large carpeted foot appeared at the bottom of the narrowing opening. The door yielded, and Mr. Abner Nott entered the room.

#### IV

With an exclamation and a hurried glance around him, De Ferrières threw himself before the intruder. But slowly lifting his large hand, and placing it on his lodger's breast, he quietly overbore the sick man's feeble resistance with an impact of power that seemed almost as moral as it was physical. He did not appear to take any notice of the room or its miserable surroundings; indeed, scarcely of the occupant. Still pushing him, with abstracted eyes and immobile face, to the chair that Rosey had just quitted, he made him sit down, and then took up his own position on the pile of cushions opposite. His usually underdone complexion was of watery blueness; but his dull, abstracted glance appeared to exercise a certain dumb, narcotic fascination on his lodger.

"I mout," said Nott slowly, "hev laid ye out here on sight, without enny warnin', or dropped ye in yer tracks in Montgomery Street, wherever there was room to work a six-shooter in comf'ably. Johnson, of Petaluny — him, ye know, ez hed a game eye — fetched Flynn comin' outer meetin' one Sunday, and it was only on account of his wife, and she a second-hand one, so to speak. There was Walker, of Contra Costa, plugged that young Sacramento chap, whose name I disremember, full o' holes jest

ez he was sayin' 'good-by' to his darter. I mout hev done all this if it had settled things to please me. For while you and Flynn and that Sacramento chap ez all about the same sort o' men, Rosey 's a different kind from their sort o' women."

"Mademoiselle is an angel!" said De Ferrières, suddenly rising, with an excess of extravagance. "A saint! Look! I cram the lie, ha! down his throat who challenges it."

"Ef by mam'selle ye mean my Rosey," said Nott, quietly laying his powerful hands on De Ferrières' shoulders, and slowly pinning him down again upon his chair, "ye 're about right, though she ain't mam'selle yet. Ez I was sayin', I might hev killed you off-hand ef I hed thought it would hev been a good thing for Rosey."

"For her? Ah, well! Look, I am ready," interrupted De Ferrières, again springing to his feet and throwing open his coat with both hands. "See! here at my heart — fire!"

"Ez I was sayin'," continued Nott, once more pressing the excited man down in his chair, "I might hev wiped ye out — and mebbe ye would n't hev keered — or *you* might hev wiped *me* out, and I mout hev said, 'Thank'e,' but I reckon this ain't a case for what 's comf'able for you and me. It 's what 's good for *Rosey*. And the thing to kalkilate is, what 's to be done."

His small round eyes for the first time rested on De Ferrières' face, and were quickly withdrawn. It was evident that this abstracted look, which had fascinated his lodger, was merely a resolute avoidance of De Ferrières' glance, and it became apparent later that this avoidance was due to a ludicrous appreciation of De Ferrières' attractions.

"And after we've done *that* we must kalkilate what Rosey *is*, and what Rosey wants. P'r'aps, ye allow, *you* know what Rosey is? P'r'aps you've seen her prance

round in velvet bonnets and white satin slippers, and sich. P'r'aps you 've seen her readin' tracks and v'yages, with-out waitin' to spell a word, or catch her breath. But that ain't the Rosey ez *I* knows. It's a little child ez uster crawl in and out the tailboard of a Mizzouri wagon on the alkali-pizoned plains, where there was n't another bit of God's mercy on yearth to be seen for miles and miles. It's a little gal as uster hunger and thirst ez quiet and mannerly ez she now eats and drinks in plenty; whose voice was ez steady with Injins yellin' round yer nest in the leaves on Sweetwater ez in her purty cabin up yonder. *That's* the gal ez *I* knows! *That's* the Rosey ez my ole woman puts into my arms one night arter we left Laramie when the fever was high, and sez, 'Abner,' sez she, 'the chariot is swingin' low for me to-night, but thar ain't room in it for her or you to git in or hitch on. Take her and rare her, so we kin all jine on the other shore,' sez she. And I'd knowed the other shore was n't no Californy. And that night, p'r'aps, the chariot swung lower than ever before, and my ole woman stepped into it, and left me and Rosey to creep on in the old wagon alone. It's them kind o' things," added Mr. Nott thoughtfully, "that seem to pint to my killin' you on sight ez the best thing to be done. And yet Rosey might n't like it."

He had slipped one of his feet out of his huge carpet slippers; and as he reached down to put it on again, he added calmly, "And ez to yer marrying *her* it ain't to be done."

The utterly bewildered expression which transfigured De Ferrières' face at this announcement was unobserved by Nott's averted eyes, nor did he perceive that his listener the next moment straightened his erect figure and adjusted his cravat.

"Ef Rosey," he continued, "hez read in v'yages and tracks in Eyetalian and French countries of such chaps ez

you and kalkilates you 're the right kind to tie to, mebber it mout hev done if you 'd been livin' over thar in a paliss, but somehow it don't jibe in over here and agree with a ship — and that ship lying comf'able ashore in San Francisco. You don't seem to suit the climate, you see, and your general gait is likely to stampede the other cattle. Agin," said Nott, with an ostentation of looking at his companion, but really gazing on vacancy, "this fixed-up, antique style of yours goes better with them ivy-kivered ruins in Rome and Palmyra than Rosey's mixed you up with, than it would yere. I ain't sayin'," he added, as De Ferrières was about to speak, — "I ain't sayin' ez that child ain't smitten with ye. It ain't no use to lie and say she don't prefer you to her old father, or young chaps of her own age and kind. I've seed it afor now. I suspicioned it afor I seed her slip out o' this place to-night. Thar! keep your hair on, such ez it is!" he added, as De Ferrières attempted a quick deprecatory gesture. "I ain't askin' yer how often she comes here, nor what she sez to you nor you to her. I ain't asked her and I don't ask you. I'll allow ez you 've settled all the preliminaries and bought her the ring and sich; I'm only askin' you now, kalkilatin' you 've got all the keerds in your own hand, what you 'll take to step out and leave the board?"

The dazed look of De Ferrières might have forced itself even upon Nott's one-idea'd fatuity, had it not been a part of that gentleman's system delicately to look another way at that moment so as not to embarrass his adversary's calculation. "Pardon," stammered De Ferrières, "but I do not comprehend!" He raised his hand to his head. "I am not well — I am stupid. Ah, mon Dieu!"

"I ain't sayin'," added Nott more gently, "ez you don't feel bad. It's nat'ral. But it ain't business. I'm asking you," he continued, taking from his breast pocket a large wallet, "how much you 'll take in cash now,

and the rest next steamer day, to give up Rosey and leave the ship."

De Ferrières staggered to his feet despite Nott's restraining hand. "To leave mademoiselle and leave the ship?" he said huskily, "is it not?"

"In course. Yer can leave things yer just ez you found 'em when you came, you know," continued Nott, for the first time looking round the miserable apartment. "It 's a business job. I'll take the bales back agin, and you kin reckon up what you 're out, countin' Rosey and loss o' time."

"He wishes me to go—he has said," repeated De Ferrières to himself thickly.

"Ef you mean *me* when you say *him*, and ez thar ain't any other man around, I reckon you do—'yes!'"

"And he asks me—he—this man of the feet and the daughter—asks me—De Ferrières—what I will take," continued De Ferrières, buttoning his coat. "No! it is a dream!" He walked stiffly to the corner where his port-manteau lay, lifted it, and going to the outer door, a cut through the ship's side that communicated with the alley, unlocked it and flung it open to the night. A thick mist like the breath of the ocean flowed into the room.

"You ask me what I shall take to go," he said, as he stood on the threshold. "I shall take what *you* cannot give, monsieur, but what I would not keep if I stood here another moment. I take my honor, monsieur, and—I take my leave!"

For a moment his grotesque figure was outlined in the opening, and then disappeared as if he had dropped into an invisible ocean below. Stupefied and disconcerted at this complete success of his overtures, Abner Nott remained speechless, gazing at the vacant space until a cold influx of the mist recalled him. Then he rose and shuffled quickly to the door.

"Hi! Ferrers! Look yer — Say! Wot's your hurry, pardner?"

But there was no response. The thick mist, which hid the surrounding objects, seemed to deaden all sound also. After a moment's pause he closed the door, but did not lock it, and retreating to the centre of the room remained blinking at the two candles and plucking some perplexing problem from his head. Suddenly an idea seized him. Rosey! Where was she? Perhaps it had been a preconcerted plan, and she had fled with him. Putting out the lights he stumbled hurriedly through the passage to the gangway above. The cabin door was open; there was the sound of voices — Renshaw's and Rosey's. Mr. Nott felt relieved but not unembarrassed. He would have avoided his daughter's presence that evening. But even while making this resolution with characteristic infelicity he blundered into the room. Rosey looked up with a slight start; Renshaw's animated face was changed to its former expression of inward discontent.

"You came in so like a ghost, father," said Rosey, with a slight peevishness that was new to her. "And I thought you were in town. Don't go, Mr. Renshaw."

But Mr. Renshaw intimated that he had already trespassed upon Miss Nott's time, and that no doubt her father wanted to talk with her. To his surprise and annoyance, however, Mr. Nott insisted on accompanying him to his room, and without heeding Renshaw's cold "Good-night," entered and closed the door behind him.

"P'r'aps," said Mr. Nott, with a troubled air, "you disremember that when you first kem here you asked me if you could hev that 'ere loft that the Frenchman had down stairs."

"No, I don't remember it," said Renshaw almost rudely. "But," he added, after a pause, with the air of a man obliged to revive a stale and unpleasant memory, "if I did — what about it?"

"Nuthin', only that you kin hev it to-morrow, ez that 'ere Frenchman is movin' out," responded Nott. "I thought you was sorter keen about it when you first kem."

"Umph! we'll talk about it to-morrow." Something in the look of wearied perplexity with which Mr. Nott was beginning to regard his own malapropos presence arrested the young man's attention. "What's the reason you did n't sell this old ship long ago, take a decent house in the town, and bring up your daughter like a lady?" he asked, with a sudden blunt good humor. But even this implied blasphemy against the habitation he worshiped did not prevent Mr. Nott from his usual misconstruction of the question.

"I reckon, now, Rosey's got high-flown ideas of livin' in a castle with ruins, eh?" he said cunningly.

"Have n't heard her say," returned Renshaw abruptly. "Good-night."

Firmly convinced that Rosey had been unable to conceal from Mr. Renshaw the influence of her dreams of a castellated future with De Ferrières, he regained the cabin. Satisfying himself that his daughter had retired, he sought his own couch. But not to sleep. The figure of De Ferrières, standing in the ship side and melting into the outer darkness, haunted him, and compelled him in dreams to rise and follow him through the alleys and byways of the crowded city. Again, it was a part of his morbid suspicion that he now invested the absent man with a potential significance and an unknown power. What deep-laid plans might he not form to possess himself of Rosey, of which he, Abner Nott, would be ignorant? Unchecked by the restraint of a father's roof, he would now give full license to his power. "Said he'd take his honor with him," muttered Abner to himself in the dim watches of the night; "lookin' at that sayin' in its right light, it looks bad."

## V

The elaborately untruthful account which Mr. Nott gave his daughter of De Ferrières' sudden departure was more fortunate than his usual equivocations. While it disappointed and slightly mortified her, it did not seem to her inconsistent with what she already knew of him. "Said his doctor had ordered him to quit town under an hour, owing to a comin' attack of hay-fever, and he had a friend from furrin parts waitin' him at the Springs, Rosey," explained Nott, hesitating between his desire to avoid his daughter's eyes and his wish to observe her countenance.

"Was he worse?—I mean did he look badly, father?" inquired Rosey thoughtfully.

"I reckon not exactly bad. Kinder looked as if he mout be worse soon ef he did n't hump hisself."

"Did you see him?—in his room?" asked Rosey anxiously. Upon the answer to this simple question depended the future confidential relations of father and daughter. If her father had himself detected the means by which his lodger existed, she felt that her own obligations to secrecy had been removed. But Mr. Nott's answer disposed of this vain hope. It was a response after his usual fashion to the question he *imagined* she artfully wished to ask, *i. e.*, if he had discovered their rendezvous of the previous night. This it was part of his peculiar delicacy to ignore. Yet his reply showed that he had been unconscious of the one miserable secret that he might have read easily.

"I was there an hour or so — him and me alone — discussin' trade. I reckon he's got a good thing outter that curled horsehair, for I see he's got in an invoice o' cushions. I've stowed 'em all in the forrard bulkhead until he sends for 'em, ez Mr. Renshaw hez taken the loft."

But although Mr. Renshaw had taken the loft, he did not seem in haste to occupy it. He spent part of the morn-



ing in uneasily pacing his room, in occasional sallies into the street from which he purposelessly returned, and once or twice in distant and furtive contemplation of Rosey at work in the galley. This last observation was not unnoticed by the astute Nott, who at once conceiving that he was nourishing a secret and hopeless passion for Rosey, began to consider whether it was not his duty to warn the young man of her preoccupied affections. But Mr. Renshaw's final disappearance obliged him to withhold his confidence till morning.

This time Mr. Renshaw left the ship with the evident determination of some settled purpose. He walked rapidly until he reached the counting-house of Mr. Sleight, when he was at once shown into a private office. In a few moments Mr. Sleight, a brusque but passionless man, joined him.

"Well," said Sleight, closing the door carefully. "What news?"

"None," said Renshaw bluntly. "Look here, Sleight," he added, turning to him suddenly. "Let me out of this game. I don't like it."

"Does that mean you've found nothing?" asked Sleight sarcastically.

"It means that I have n't looked for anything, and that I don't intend to without the full knowledge of that d—d fool who owns the ship."

"You've changed your mind since you wrote that letter," said Sleight coolly, producing from a drawer the note already known to the reader. Renshaw mechanically extended his hand to take it. Mr. Sleight dropped the letter back into the drawer, which he quietly locked. The apparently simple act dyed Mr. Renshaw's cheek with color, but it vanished quickly, and with it any token of his previous embarrassment. He looked at Sleight with the convinced air of a resolute man who had at last taken

a disagreeable step, but was willing to stand by the consequences.

"I *have* changed my mind," he said coolly. "I found out that it was one thing to go down there as a skilled prospector might go to examine a mine that was to be valued according to his report of the indications, but that it was entirely another thing to go and play the spy in a poor devil's house in order to buy something he didn't know he was selling and would n't sell if he did."

"And something that the man *he* bought of didn't think of selling; something *he* himself never paid for, and never expected to buy," sneered Sleight.

"But something that *we* expect to buy from our knowledge of all this, and it is that which makes all the difference."

"But you knew all this before."

"I never saw it in this light before. I never thought of it until I was living there face to face with the old fool I was intending to overreach. I never was *sure* of it until this morning, when he actually turned out one of his lodgers that I might have the very room I required to play off our little game in comfortably. When he did that, I made up my mind to drop the whole thing, and I'm here to do it."

"And let somebody else take the responsibility — with the percentage — unless you've also felt it your duty to warn Nott too," said Sleight, with a sneer.

"You only dare say that to me, Sleight," said Renshaw quietly, "because you have in that drawer an equal evidence of my folly and my confidence; but if you are wise you will not presume too far on either. Let us see how we stand. Through the yarn of a drunken captain and a mutinous sailor you became aware of an unclaimed shipment of treasure concealed in an unknown ship that entered this harbor. You are enabled, through me, to corroborate

some facts and identify the ship. You proposed to me, as a speculation, to identify the treasure if possible before you purchased the ship. I accepted the offer without consideration; on consideration I now decline it, but without prejudice or loss to any one but myself. As to your insinuation I need not remind you that my presence here to-day refutes it. I would not require your permission to make a much better bargain with a good-natured fool like Nott than I could with you. Or if I did not care for the business I could have warned the girl" —

"The girl — what girl?"

Renshaw bit his lip, but answered boldly: "The old man's daughter — a poor girl — whom this act would rob as well as her father."

Sleight looked at his companion attentively. "You might have said so at first, and let up on this camp-meetin' exhortation. Well, then — admitting you've got the old man and the young girl on the same string, and that you've played it pretty low down in the short time you've been there, — I suppose, Dick Renshaw, I've got to see your bluff. Well, how much is it? What's the figure you and she have settled on?"

For an instant Mr. Sleight was in physical danger. But before he had finished speaking Renshaw's quick sense of the ludicrous had so far overcome his first indignation as to enable him even to admire the perfect moral insensibility of his companion. As he rose and walked towards the door, he half wondered that he had ever treated the affair seriously. With a smile he replied: —

"Far from bluffing, Sleight, I am throwing my cards on the table. Consider that I've passed out. Let some other man take my hand. Rake down the pot if you like, old man, I leave for Sacramento to-night. *Adios.*"

When the door had closed behind him Mr. Sleight summoned his clerk.

"Is that petition for grading Pontiac Street ready?"

"I've seen the largest property-holders, sir; they're only waiting for you to sign first." Mr. Sleight paused and then affixed his signature to the paper his clerk laid before him. "Get the other names and send it up at once."

"If Mr. Nott does n't sign, sir?"

"No matter. He will be assessed all the same." Mr. Sleight took up his hat.

"The Lascar seaman that was here the other day has been wanting to see you, sir. I said you were busy."

Mr. Sleight put down his hat. "Send him up."

Nevertheless Mr. Sleight sat down and at once abstracted himself so completely as to be apparently in utter oblivion of the man who entered. He was lithe and Indian-looking; bearing in dress and manner the careless slouch without the easy frankness of a sailor.

"Well!" said Sleight, without looking up.

"I was only wantin' to know ef you had any news for me, boss?"

"News?" echoed Sleight, as if absently; "news of what?"

"That little matter of the Pontiac we talked about, boss," returned the Lascar, with an uneasy servility in the whites of his teeth and eyes.

"Oh," said Sleight, "that's played out. It's a regular fraud. It's an old fore-castle yarn, my man, that you can't reel off in the cabin."

The sailor's face darkened.

"The man who was looking into it has thrown the whole thing up. I tell you it's played out!" repeated Sleight, without raising his head.

"It's true, boss — every word," said the Lascar, with an appealing insinuation that seemed to struggle hard with savage earnestness. "You can swear me, boss; I would n't lie to a gentleman like you. Your man has n't half looked, or else — it must be there, or" —

"That 's just it," said Sleight slowly; "who 's to know that your friends have n't been there already — that seems to have been your style."

"But no one knew it but me, until I told you, I swear to God. I ain't lying, boss, and I ain't drunk. Say — don't give it up, boss. That man of yours likely don't believe it, because he don't know anything about it. I *do* — I could find it."

A silence followed. Mr. Sleight remained completely absorbed in his papers for some moments. Then glancing at the Lascar, he took his pen, wrote a hurried note, folded it, addressed it, and holding it between his fingers, leaned back in his chair.

"If you choose to take this note to my man, he may give it another show. Mind, I don't say that he *will*. He 's going to Sacramento to-night, but you could go down there and find him before he starts. He 's got a room there, I believe. While you 're waiting for him, you might keep your eyes open to satisfy yourself."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the sailor, eagerly endeavoring to catch the eye of his employer. But Mr. Sleight looked straight before him, and he turned to go.

"The Sacramento boat goes at nine," said Mr. Sleight quietly.

This time their glances met, and the Lascar's eye glistened with subtle intelligence. The next moment he was gone, and Mr. Sleight again became absorbed in his papers.

Meanwhile Renshaw was making his way back to the Pontiac with that light-hearted optimism that had characterized his parting with Sleight. It was this quality of his nature, fostered perhaps by the easy civilization in which he moved, that had originally drawn him into relations with the man he had just quitted; a quality that had been troubled and darkened by those relations, yet, when they were broken, at once returned. It consequently did not

occur to him that he had only selfishly compromised with the difficulty; it seemed to him enough that he had withdrawn from a compact he thought dishonorable; he was not called upon to betray his partner in that compact merely to benefit others. He had been willing to incur suspicion and loss to reinstate himself in his self-respect, more he could not do without justifying that suspicion. The view taken by Sleight was, after all, that which most business men would take — which even the unbusinesslike Nott would take — which the girl herself might be tempted to listen to. Clearly he could do nothing but abandon the Pontiac and her owner to the fate he could not in honor avert. And even that fate was problematical. It did not follow that the treasure was still concealed in the Pontiac, nor that Nott would be willing to sell her. He would make some excuse to Nott — he smiled to think he would probably be classed in the long line of absconding tenants — he would say good-by to Rosey, and leave for Sacramento that night. He ascended the stairs to the gangway with a freer breast than when he first entered the ship.

Mr. Nott was evidently absent; and after a quick glance at the half-open cabin door, Renshaw turned towards the galley. But Miss Rosey was not in her accustomed haunt, and with a feeling of disappointment, which seemed inconsistent with so slight a cause, he crossed the deck impatiently and entered his room. He was about to close the door when the prolonged rustle of a trailing skirt in the passage attracted his attention. The sound was so unlike that made by any garment worn by Rosey that he remained motionless, with his hand on the door. The sound approached nearer, and the next moment a white veiled figure with a trailing skirt slowly swept past the room. Renshaw's pulses halted for an instant in half-superstitious awe. As the apparition glided on and vanished in the cabin door he could only see that it was the

form of a beautiful and graceful woman — but nothing more. Bewildered and curious, he forgot himself so far as to follow it and impulsively entered the cabin. The figure turned, uttered a little cry, threw the veil aside, and showed the half-troubled, half-blushing face of Rosey.

“I — beg — your pardon,” stammered Renshaw; “I did n’t know it was you.”

“I was trying on some things,” said Rosey, recovering her composure and pointing to an open trunk that seemed to contain a theatrical wardrobe — “some things father gave me long ago. I wanted to see if there was anything I could use. I thought I was all alone in the ship, but fancying I heard a noise forward, I came out to see what it was. I suppose it must have been you.”

She raised her clear eyes to his, with a slight touch of womanly reserve that was so incompatible with any vulgar vanity or girlish coquetry that he became the more embarrassed. Her dress, too, of a slightly antique shape, rich but simple, seemed to reveal and accent a certain repose of gentle womanliness, that he was now wishing to believe he had always noticed. Conscious of a superiority in her that now seemed to change their relations completely, he alone remained silent, awkward, and embarrassed before the girl who had taken care of his room, and who cooked in the galley! What he had thoughtlessly considered a merely vulgar business intrigue against her stupid father, now to his extravagant fancy assumed the proportions of a sacrilege to herself.

“You’ve had your revenge, Miss Nott, for the fright I once gave you,” he said a little uneasily, “for you quite startled me just now as you passed. I began to think the Pontiac was haunted. I thought you were a ghost. I don’t know why such a ghost should *frighten* anybody,” he went on with a desperate attempt to recover his position by gallantry. “Let me see — that’s Donna Elvira’s dress — is it not?”

"I don't think that was the poor woman's name," said Rosey simply; "she died of yellow fever at New Orleans as Signora Somebody."

Her ignorance seemed to Mr. Renshaw so plainly to partake more of the nun than the provincial, that he hesitated to explain to her that he meant the heroine of an opera.

"It seems dreadful to put on the poor thing's clothes, does n't it?" she added.

Mr. Renshaw's eyes showed so plainly that he thought otherwise, that she drew a little austerely towards the door of her stateroom.

"I must change these things before any one comes," she said dryly.

"That means I must go, I suppose. But could n't you let me wait here or in the gangway until then, Miss Nott? I am going away to-night, and I may n't see you again." He had not intended to say this, but it slipped from his embarrassed tongue. She stopped with her hand on the door.

"You are going away?"

"I — think — I must leave to-night. I have some important business in Sacramento."

She raised her frank eyes to his. The unmistakable look of disappointment that he saw in them gave his heart a sudden throb and sent the quick blood to his cheeks.

"It's too bad," she said abstractedly. "Nobody ever seems to stay here long. Captain Bower promised to tell me all about the ship, and he went away the second week. The photographer left before he finished the picture of the Pontiac; Monsieur de Ferrières has only just gone; and now *you* are going."

"Perhaps, unlike them, I have finished my season of usefulness here," he replied, with a bitterness he would have recalled the next moment. But Rosey, with a faint



sigh, saying, "I won't be long," entered the stateroom and closed the door behind her.

Renshaw pulled at the long silken threads of his mustache and bit his lip until it smarted. Why had he not gone at once? Why was it necessary to say he might not see her again — and if he had said it, why should he add anything more? What was he waiting for now? To endeavor to prove to her that he really bore no resemblance to Captain Bower, the photographer, the crazy Frenchman De Ferrières? Or would he be forced to tell her that he was running away from a conspiracy to defraud her father — merely for something to say? Was there ever such folly? Rosey was "not long," as she had said, but he was beginning to pace the narrow cabin impatiently when the door opened and she returned.

She had resumed her ordinary calico gown, but such was the impression left upon Renshaw's fancy that she seemed to wear it with a new grace. At any other time he might have recognized the change as due to a new corset, which strict veracity compels me to record Rosey had adopted for the first time that morning. Howbeit, her slight coquetry seemed to have passed, for she closed the open trunk with a return of her old listless air, and sitting on it rested her elbows on her knees and her oval chin in her hands.

"I wish you would do me a favor," she said, after a reflective pause.

"Let me know what it is and it shall be done," replied Renshaw quickly.

"If you should come across Monsieur de Ferrières, or hear of him, I wish you would let me know. He was very poorly when he left here, and I should like to know if he is better. He did n't say where he was going. At least, he did n't tell father; but I fancy he and father don't agree."

"I shall be very glad of having even *that* opportunity

of making you remember me, Miss Nott," returned Renshaw, with a faint smile. "I don't suppose either that it would be very difficult to get news of your friend — everybody seems to know him."

"But not as I did," said Rosey, with an abstracted little sigh.

Mr. Renshaw opened his brown eyes upon her. Was he mistaken? Was this romantic girl only a little coquette playing her provincial airs on him? "You say he and your father did n't agree? That means, I suppose, that *you* and he agreed? — and that was the result."

"I don't think father knew anything about it," said Rosey simply.

Mr. Renshaw rose. And this was what he had been waiting to hear! "Perhaps," he said grimly, "you would also like news of the photographer and Captain Bower, or did your father agree with them better?"

"No," said Rosey quietly. She remained silent for a moment, and, lifting her lashes, said, "Father always seemed to agree with *you*, and that" — she hesitated.

"That's why *you* don't."

"I did n't say that," said Rosey, with an incongruous increase of coldness and color. "I only meant to say it was that which makes it seem so hard you should go now."

Notwithstanding his previous determination Renshaw found himself sitting down again. Confused and pleased, wishing he had said more — or less — he said nothing, and Rosey was forced to continue.

"It's strange, is n't it — but father was urging me this morning to make a visit to some friends at the old Ranch. I did n't want to go. I like it much better here."

"But you cannot bury yourself here forever, Miss Nott," said Renshaw, with a sudden burst of honest enthusiasm. "Sooner or later you will be forced to go where you will be properly appreciated, where you will be admired and

courted, where your slightest wish will be law. Believe me, without flattery, you don't know your own power."

"It does n't seem strong enough to keep even the little I like here," said Rosey, with a slight glistening of the eyes. "But," she added hastily, "you don't know how much the dear old ship is to me. It's the only home I think I ever had."

"But the Ranch?" said Renshaw.

"The Ranch seemed to be only the old wagon halted in the road. It was a very little improvement on outdoors," said Rosey, with a little shiver. "But this is so cosy and snug, and yet so strange and foreign. Do you know I think I began to understand why I like it so since you taught me so much about ships and voyages. Before that I only learned from books. Books deceive you, I think more than people do. Don't you think so?"

She evidently did not notice the quick flush that covered his cheeks and apparently dazzled his troubled eyelids, for she went on confidentially:—

"I was thinking of you yesterday. I was sitting by the galley door, looking forward. You remember the first day I saw you when you startled me by coming up out of the hatch?"

"I wish you would n't think of that," said Renshaw, with more earnestness than he would have made apparent.

"I don't want to, either," said Rosey gravely, "for I've had a strange fancy about it. I saw once, when I was younger, a picture in a print shop in Montgomery Street that haunted me. I think it was called 'The Pirate.' There were a number of wicked-looking sailors lying around the deck, and coming out of the hatch was one figure, with his hands on the deck and a cutlass in his mouth."

"Thank you," said Renshaw.

"You don't understand. He was horrid-looking, not at all like you. I never thought of *him* when I first saw

you; but the other day I thought how dreadful it would have been if some one like him and not like you had come up then. That made me nervous sometimes of being alone. I think father is too. He often goes about stealthily at night, as if he was watching for something."

Renshaw's face grew suddenly dark. Could it be possible that Sleight had always suspected him, and set spies to watch — or was he guilty of some double intrigue?

"He thinks," continued Rosey, with a faint smile, "that some one is looking round the ship, and talks of setting bear-traps. I hope you're not mad, Mr. Renshaw," she added, suddenly catching sight of his changed expression, "at my foolishness in saying you reminded me of the pirate. I meant nothing."

"I know you're incapable of meaning anything but good to anybody, Miss Nott, perhaps to me more than I deserve," said Renshaw, with a sudden burst of feeling. "I wish — I wish — you would do *me* a favor. *You* asked me one just now." He had taken her hand. It seemed so like a mere illustration of his earnestness, that she did not withdraw it. "Your father tells you everything. If he has any offer to dispose of the ship, will you write to me at once before anything is concluded?" He winced a little — the sentence of Sleight, "What's the figure you and she have settled on?" flashed across his mind. He scarcely noticed that Rosey had withdrawn her hand coldly.

"Perhaps you had better speak to father, as it is *his* business. Besides, I shall not be here. I shall be at the Ranch."

"But you said you did n't want to go."

"I've changed my mind," said Rosey listlessly. "I shall go to-night."

She rose as if to indicate that the interview was ended. With an overpowering instinct that his whole future happi-

ness depended upon his next act, he made a step towards her, with eager, outstretched hands. But she slightly lifted her own with a warning gesture. "I hear father coming — you will have a chance to talk *business* with him," she said, and vanished into her stateroom.

## VI

The heavy tread of Abner Nott echoed in the passage. Confused and embarrassed, Renshaw remained standing at the door that had closed upon Rosey as her father entered the cabin. Providence, which always fostered Mr. Nott's characteristic misconceptions, left that perspicacious parent but one interpretation of the situation. Rosey had evidently just informed Mr. Renshaw that she loved another!

"I was just saying good-by to Miss Nott," said Renshaw, hastily regaining his composure with an effort. "I am going to Sacramento to-night, and will not return. I" —

"In course, in course," interrupted Nott soothingly; "that 's wot you say now, and that 's wot you allow to do. That 's wot they allus do."

"I mean," said Renshaw, reddening at what he conceived to be an allusion to the absconding propensities of Nott's previous tenants, — "I mean that you shall keep the advance to cover any loss you might suffer through my giving up the rooms."

"Certingly," said Nott, laying his hand with a large sympathy on Renshaw's shoulder; "but we'll drop that just now. We won't swap hosses in the middle of the river. We'll square up accounts in your room," he added, raising his voice that Rosey might overhear him, after a preliminary wink at the young man. "Yes, sir, we'll just square up and settle in there. Come along, Mr. Renshaw." Pushing him with paternal gentleness from the cabin, with his hand still upon his shoulder, he followed

him into the passage. Half annoyed at his familiarity, yet not altogether displeased by this illustration of Rosey's belief of his preference, Renshaw wonderingly accompanied him. Nott closed the door, and pushing the young man into a chair, deliberately seated himself at the table opposite. "It's jist as well that Rosey reckons that you and me is settlin' our accounts," he began cunningly, "and mebbe it's just ez well ez she should reckon you're goin' away."

"But I *am* going," interrupted Renshaw impatiently. "I leave to-night."

"Surely, surely," said Nott gently, "that's wot you kalkilate to do; that's just nat'ral in a young feller. That's about what I reckon I'd hev done to her mother if anythin' like this hed ever cropped up, which it did n't. Not but what Almiry Jane had young fellers enough round her, but, 'cept ole Judge Peter, ez was lamed in the War of 1812, there ain't no similarity ez I kin see," he added musingly.

"I am afraid I can't see any similarity either, Mr. Nott," said Renshaw, struggling between a dawning sense of some impending absurdity and his growing passion for Rosey. "For Heaven's sake, speak out if you've got anything to say."

Mr. Nott leaned forward and placed his large hand on the young man's shoulder. "That's it. That's what I sed to myself when I seed how things were pintin'. 'Speak out,' sez I, 'Abner! Speak out if you've got anything to say. You kin trust this yer Mr. Renshaw. He ain't the kind of man to creep into the bosom of a man's ship for pupposes of his own. He ain't a man that would hunt round until he discovered a poor man's treasure, and then try to rob' —"

"Stop!" said Renshaw, with a set face and darkening eyes. "*What* treasure? *what* man are you speaking of?"

"Why Rosey and Mr. Ferrers," returned Nott simply.

Renshaw sank into his seat again. But the expression of relief which here passed swiftly over his face gave way to one of uneasy interest as Nott went on.

"P'r'aps it 's a little highfalutin' talkin' of Rosey ez a treasure. But considerin', Mr. Renshaw, ez she 's the only prop'ty I've kept by me for seventeen years ez hez paid interest and increased in valoo, it ain't sayin' too much to call her so. And ez Ferrers knows this, he oughter been content with gougin' me in that horsehair spec, without goin' for Rosey. P'r'aps yer surprised at hearing me speak o' my own flesh and blood ez if I was talkin' hoss-trade, but you and me is bus'ness men, Mr. Renshaw, and we discusses ez such. We ain't goin' to slosh round and slop over in po'try and sentiment," continued Nott, with a tremulous voice, and a hand that slightly shook on Renshaw's shoulder. "We ain't goin' to git up and sing, 'Thou 'st larned to love another thou 'st broken every vow we 've parted from each other and my bosom 's lonely now oh is it well to sever such hearts as ourn forever kin I forget thee never farewell farewell farewell.' Ye never happened to hear Jim Baker sing that at the moosic hall on Dupont Street, Mr. Renshaw," continued Mr. Nott enthusiastically, when he had recovered from that complete absence of punctuation which alone suggested verse to his intellect. "He sorter struck water down here," indicating his heart, "every time."

"But what has Miss Nott to do with M. de Ferrières?" asked Renshaw, with a faint smile.

Mr. Nott regarded him with dumb, round, astonished eyes. "Hez n't she told yer?"

"Certainly not."

"And she did n't let on anythin' about him?" he continued feebly.

"She said she 'd like to know where" — He stopped, with the reflection that he was betraying her confidences.

A dim foreboding of some new form of deceit, to which even the man before him was a consenting party, almost paralyzed Nott's faculties. "Then she did n't tell yer that she and Ferrers was sparkin' and keepin' kimpany together; that she and him was engaged, and was kalkilatin' to run way to furrin parts; that she cottoned to him more than to the ship or her father?"

"She certainly did not, and I should n't believe it," said Renshaw quickly.

Nott smiled. He was amused; he astutely recognized the usual trustfulness of love and youth. There was clearly no deceit here! Renshaw's attentive eyes saw the smile, and his brow darkened.

"I like to hear yer say that, Mr. Renshaw," said Nott, "and it's no more than Rosey deserves, ez it's suthing on nat'ral and spell-like that's come over her through Ferrers. It ain't my Rosey. But it's Gospel truth, whether she's bewitched or not; whether it's them damn fool stories she reads—and it's like ez not he's just the kind o' snipe to write 'em hisself, and sorter advertise hisself, don't yer see—she's allus stuck up for him. They've had clandestent interviews, and when I taxed him with it he ez much ez allowed it was so, and reckoned he must leave, so ez he could run her off, you know—kinder stampede her with 'honor.' Them's his very words."

"But that is all past; he is gone, and Miss Nott does not even know where he is!" said Renshaw, with a laugh, which, however, concealed a vague uneasiness.

Mr. Nott rose and opened the door carefully. When he had satisfied himself that no one was listening, he came back and said in a whisper, "That's a lie. Not ez Rosey means to lie, but it's a trick he's put upon that poor child. That man, Mr. Renshaw, hez been hangin' round the Pontiac ever since. I've seed him twice with my own eyes pass the cabin windys. More than that.



I've heard strange noises at night, and seen strange faces in the alley over yer. And only jist now ez I kem in I ketched sight of a furrin-lookin' Chinee nigger slinking round the back door of what useter be Ferrers' loft."

"Did he look like a sailor?" asked Renshaw quickly, with a return of his former suspicion.

"Not more than I do," said Nott, glancing complacently at his pea-jacket. "He had rings on his yeers like a wench."

Mr. Renshaw started. But seeing Nott's eyes fixed on him, he said lightly, "But what have these strange faces and this strange man — probably only a Lascar sailor out of a job — to do with Ferrières?"

"Friends o' his — feller furrin citizens — spies on Rosey, don't you see? But they can't play the old man, Mr. Renshaw. I've told Rosey she must make a visit to the old Ranch. Once I've got her thar safe, I reckon I kin manage Mr. Ferrers and any number of Chinee niggers he kin bring along."

Renshaw remained for a few moments lost in thought. Then rising suddenly, he grasped Mr. Nott's hand with a frank smile but determined eyes. "I have n't got the hang of this, Mr. Nott — the whole thing gets me! I only know that I've changed my mind. I'm *not* going to Sacramento. I shall stay *here*, old man, until I see you safe through the business, or my name's not Dick Renshaw. There's my hand on it! Don't say a word. Maybe it is no more than I ought to do — perhaps not half enough. Only remember, not a word of this to your daughter. She must believe that I leave to-night. And the sooner you get her out of this cursed ship the better."

"Deacon Flint's girls are goin' up in to-night's boat. I'll send Rosey with them," said Nott, with a cunning twinkle. Renshaw nodded. Nott seized his hand with a wink of unutterable significance.

Left to himself, Renshaw tried to review more calmly the circumstances in these strange revelations that had impelled him to change his resolution so suddenly. That the ship was under the surveillance of unknown parties, and that the description of them tallied with his own knowledge of a certain Lascar sailor who was one of Sleight's informants, seemed to be more than probable. That this seemed to point to Sleight's disloyalty to himself while he was acting as his agent, or a double treachery on the part of Sleight's informants, was in either case a reason and an excuse for his own interference. But the connection of the absurd Frenchman with the case, which at first seemed a characteristic imbecility of his landlord, bewildered him the more he thought of it. Rejecting any hypothesis of the girl's affection for the antiquated figure whose sanity was a question of public criticism, he was forced to the equally alarming theory that Ferrières was cognizant of the treasure, and that his attentions to Rosey were to gain possession of it by marrying her. Might she not be dazzled by a picture of this wealth? Was it not possible that she was already in part possession of the secret, and her strange attraction to the ship, and what he had deemed her innocent craving for information concerning it, a consequence? Why had he not thought of this before? Perhaps she had detected his purpose from the first, and had deliberately checkmated him. The thought did not increase his complacency as Nott softly returned:—

"It's all right," he began, with a certain satisfaction in this rare opportunity for Machiavelian diplomacy, "it's all fixed now. Rosey tumbled to it at once, partiklerly when I said you was bound to go. 'But wot makes Mr. Renshaw go, father,' sez she; 'wot makes everybody run away from the ship?' sez she, rather peart-like and sassy for her. 'Mr. Renshaw hez contractin' business,' sez I; 'got a big thing up in Sacramento that'll make his for-

‘tun’,’ sez I — for I was n’t goin’ to give yer away, don’t ye see? ‘He had some business to talk to you about the ship,’ sez she, lookin’ at me under the corner of her pocket-handkerchief. ‘Lots o’ business,’ sez I. ‘Then I reckon he don’t care to hev me write to him,’ sez she. ‘Not a bit,’ sez I; ‘he would n’t answer ye if ye did. Ye’ll never hear from that chap agin.’”

“But what the devil” — interrupted the young man impetuously.

“Keep yer hair on!” remonstrated the old man with dark intelligence. “Ef you’d seen the way she flounced into her stateroom! — she, Rosey, ez allus moves ez softly ez a spirit — you’d hev wished I’d hev unloaded a little more. No, sir, gals is gals in some things all the time.”

Renshaw rose and paced the room rapidly. “Perhaps I’d better speak to her again before she goes,” he said impulsively.

“P’r’aps you’d better not,” replied the imperturbable Nott.

Irritated as he was, Renshaw could not avoid the reflection that the old man was right. What, indeed, could he say to her with his present imperfect knowledge? How could she write to him if that knowledge was correct?

“Ef,” said Nott kindly, with a laying on of large benedictory and paternal hands, — “ef ye’re willin’ to see Rosey agin, without *speakin’* to her, I reckon I ken fix it for yer. I’m goin’ to take her down to the boat in half an hour. Ef yer should happen — mind, ef yer should *happen* to be down there, seein’ some friends off and sorter promenadin’ up and down the wharf like them high-toned chaps on Montgomery Street — ye might ketch her eye unconscious like. Or, ye might do this!” He rose after a moment’s cogitation and with a face of profound mystery opened the door and beckoned Renshaw to follow him. Leading the way cautiously, he brought the young man

into an open unpartitioned recess beside her stateroom. It seemed to be used as a storeroom, and Renshaw's eye was caught by a trunk the size and shape of the one that had provided Rosey with the materials of her masquerade. Pointing to it, Mr. Nott said in a grave whisper: "This yer trunk is the companion trunk to Rosey's. *She's* got the things them opery women wears; this yer contains the *he* things, the duds and fixin's o' the men o' the same stripe." Throwing it open, he continued: "Now, Mr. Renshaw, gals is gals; it's nat'ral they should be took by fancy dress and store clothes on young chaps as on themselves. That man Ferrers hez got the dead-wood on all of ye in thlis sort of thing, and hez been playing, so to speak, a lone hand all along. And ef thar's anythin' in thar," he added, lifting part of a theatrical wardrobe, "that you think you'd fancy — anythin' you'd like to put on when ye promenade the wharf down yonder — it's yours. Don't ye be bashful, but help yourself."

It was fully a minute before Renshaw fairly grasped the old man's meaning. But when he did — when the suggested spectacle of himself arrayed à la Ferrières, gravely promenading the wharf as a last gorgeous appeal to the affections of Rosey, rose before his fancy, he gave way to a fit of genuine laughter. The nervous tension of the past few hours relaxed; he laughed until the tears came into his eyes; he was still laughing when the door of the cabin suddenly opened and Rosey appeared cold and distant on the threshold.

"I — beg your pardon," stammered Renshaw hastily. "I did n't mean — to disturb you — I" —

Without looking at him Rosey turned to her father. "I am ready," she said coldly, and closed the door again.

A glance of artful intelligence came into Nott's eyes, which had remained blankly staring at Renshaw's apparently causeless hilarity. Turning to him he winked

solemnly. "That keerless kind o' hoss-laff jist fetched her," he whispered, and vanished before his chagrined companion could reply.

When Mr. Nott and his daughter departed, Renshaw was not in the ship, neither did he make a spectacular appearance on the wharf as Mr. Nott had fondly expected, nor did he turn up again until after nine o'clock, when he found the old man in the cabin awaiting his return with some agitation. "A minit ago," he said, mysteriously closing the door behind Renshaw, "I heard a voice in the passage, and goin' out, who should I see agin but that darned furrin nigger ez I told yer 'bout, kinder hidin' in the dark, his eyes shinin' like a catamount. I was jist reachin' for my weppins when he riz up with a grin and handed me this yer letter. I told him I reckoned you 'd gone to Sacramento, but he said he wez sure you was in your room, and to prove it I went thar. But when I kem back the d—d skunk had vamosed—got frightened, I reckon—and was n't nowhar to be seen."

Renshaw took the letter hastily. It contained only a line in Sleight's hand. "If you change your mind, the bearer may be of service to you."

He turned abruptly to Nott. "You say it was the same Lascar you saw before?"

"It was."

"Then all I can say is, he is no agent of De Ferrières'," said Renshaw, turning away with a disappointed air. Mr. Nott would have asked another question, but with an abrupt "Good-night" the young man entered his room, locked the door, and threw himself on his bed to reflect without interruption.

But if he was in no mood to stand Nott's fatuous conjectures, he was less inclined to be satisfied with his own. Had he been again carried away through his impulses evoked by the caprices of a pretty coquette and

the absurd theories of her half-imbecile father? Had he broken faith with Sleight and remained in the ship for nothing, and would not his change of resolution appear to be the result of Sleight's note? But why had the Lascar been haunting the ship before? In the midst of these conjectures he fell asleep.

## VII

Between three and four in the morning the clouds broke over the Pontiac; and the moon, riding high, picked out in black and silver the long hulk that lay cradled between the iron shells and warehouses and the wooden frames and tenements on either side. The galley and covered gangway presented a mass of undefined shadow, against which the white deck shone brightly, stretching to the forecastle and bows, where the tiny glass roof of the photographer glistened like a gem in the Pontiac's crest. So peaceful and motionless she lay that she might have been some petrification of a past age now first exhumed and laid bare to the cold light of the stars.

Nevertheless, this calm security was presently invaded by a sense of stealthy life and motion. What had seemed a fixed shadow suddenly detached itself from the deck and began to slip stanchion by stanchion along the bulwarks toward the companionway. At the cabin door it halted and crouched motionless. Then rising, it glided forward with the same staccato movement until opposite the slight elevation of the fore hatch. Suddenly it darted to the hatch, unfastened and lifted it with a swift, familiar dexterity, and disappeared in the opening. But as the moon shone upon its vanishing face, it revealed the whitening eyes and teeth of the Lascar seaman.

Dropping to the lower deck lightly, he felt his way through the dark passage between the partitions, evidently less familiar to him, halting before each door to listen.

Returning forward he reached the second hatchway that had attracted Rosey's attention, and noiselessly unclosed its fastenings. A penetrating smell of bilge arose from the opening. Drawing a small bull's-eye lantern from his breast he lit it, and unhesitatingly let himself down to the further depth. The moving flash of his light revealed the recesses of the upper hold, the abyss of the well amidships, and glanced from the shining backs of moving zigzags of rats that seemed to outline the shadowy beams and transoms. Disregarding those curious spectators of his movements, he turned his attention eagerly to the inner casings of the hold, that seemed in one spot to have been strengthened by fresh timbers. Attacking this stealthily with the aid of some tools hidden in his oilskin clothing, in the light of the lantern he bore a fanciful resemblance to the predatory animals around him. The low, continuous sound of rasping and gnawing of timber which followed heightened the resemblance. At the end of a few minutes he had succeeded in removing enough of the outer planking to show that the entire filling of the casing between the stanchions was composed of small boxes. Dragging out one of them with feverish eagerness to the light, the Lascar forced it open. In the rays of the bull's-eye, a wedged mass of discolored coins showed with a lurid glow. The story of the Pontiac was true — the treasure was there!

But Mr. Sleight had overlooked the logical effect of this discovery on the natural villainy of his tool. In the very moment of his triumphant execution of his patron's suggestions the idea of keeping the treasure to himself flashed upon his mind. *He* had discovered it — why should he give it up to anybody? *He* had run all the risks; if he were detected at that moment, who would believe that his purpose there at midnight was only to satisfy some one else that the treasure was still intact? No. The circumstances were propitious; he would get the treasure out of

the ship at once, drop it over her side, hastily conceal it in the nearest lot adjacent, and take it away at his convenience. Who would be the wiser for it?

But it was necessary to reconnoitre first. He knew that the loft overhead was empty. He knew that it communicated with the alley, for he had tried the door that morning. He would convey the treasure there and drop it into the alley. The boxes were heavy. Each one would require a separate journey to the ship's side, but he would at least secure something if he were interrupted. He stripped the casing, and gathered the boxes together in a pile.

Ah, yes, it was funny too that he — the Lascar hound — the d—d nigger — should get what bigger and bullier men than he had died for! The mate's blood was on those boxes, if the salt water had not washed it out. It was a hell of a fight when they dragged the captain — Oh, what was that? Was it the splash of a rat in the bilge, or what?

A superstitious terror had begun to seize him at the thought of blood. The stifing hold seemed again filled with struggling figures he had known, the air thick with cries and blasphemies that he had forgotten. He rose to his feet, and running quickly to the hatchway, leaped to the deck above. All was quiet. The door leading to the empty loft yielded to his touch. He entered, and, gliding through, unbarred and opened the door that gave upon the alley. The cold air and moonlight flowed in silently; the way of escape was clear. Bah! He would go back for the treasure.

He had reached the passage when the door he had just opened was suddenly darkened. Turning rapidly, he was conscious of a gaunt figure, grotesque, silent, and erect, looming on the threshold between him and the sky. Hidden in the shadow, he made a stealthy step towards it, with an iron wrench in his uplifted hand. But the next



moment his eyes dilated with superstitious horror; the iron fell from his hand, and with a scream, like a frightened animal, he turned and fled into the passage. In the first access of his blind terror he tried to reach the deck above through the fore hatch, but was stopped by the sound of a heavy tread overhead. The immediate fear of detection now overcame his superstition; he would have even faced the apparition again to escape through the loft; but before he could return there, other footsteps approached rapidly from the end of the passage he would have to traverse. There was but one chance of escape left now — the forehold he had just quitted. He might hide there until the alarm was over. He glided back to the hatch, lifted it, and closed it softly over his head as the upper hatch was simultaneously raised, and the small round eyes of Abner Nott peered down upon it. The other footsteps proved to be Renshaw's, but attracted by the open door of the loft, he turned aside and entered. As soon as he disappeared Mr. Nott cautiously dropped through the opening to the deck below, and going to the other hatch through which the Lascar had vanished, deliberately refastened it. In a few moments Renshaw returned with a light, and found the old man sitting on the hatch.

"The loft door was open," said Renshaw. "There's little doubt whoever was here escaped that way."

"Surely," said Nott. There was a peculiar look of Machiavelian sagacity in his face which irritated Renshaw.

"Then you're sure it was Ferrières you saw pass by your window before you called me?" he asked.

Nott nodded his head with an expression of infinite profundity.

"But you say he was going *from* the ship. Then it could not have been he who made the noise we heard down here."

"Mebbe no, and mebbe yes," returned Nott cautiously.

"But if he was already concealed inside the ship, as that open door, which you say you barred from the inside, would indicate, what the devil did he want with this?" said Renshaw, producing the monkey-wrench he had picked up.

Mr. Nott examined the tool carefully, and shook his head with momentous significance. Nevertheless, his eyes wandered to the hatch on which he was seated.

"Did you find anything disturbed *there*?" said Renshaw, following the direction of his eye. "Was that hatch fastened as it is now?"

"It was," said Nott calmly. "But ye would n't mind fetchin' me a hammer and some o' them big nails from the locker, would yer, while I hang round here just so ez to make sure against another attack."

Renshaw complied with his request; but as Nott proceeded to gravely nail down the fastenings of the hatch, he turned impatiently away to complete his examination of the ship. The doors of the other lofts and their fastenings appeared secure and undisturbed. Yet it was undeniable that a felonious entrance had been made, but by whom or for what purpose still remained uncertain. Even now Renshaw found it difficult to accept Nott's theory that De Ferrières was the aggressor and Rosey the object, nor could he justify his own suspicion that the Lascar had obtained a surreptitious entrance under Sleight's directions. With a feeling that if Rosey had been present he would have confessed all, and demanded from her an equal confidence, he began to hate his feeble, purposeless, and inefficient alliance with her father, who believed but dared not tax his daughter with complicity in this outrage. What could be done with a man whose only idea of action at such a moment was to nail up an undisturbed entrance in his invaded house! He was so preoccupied with these thoughts that when Nott rejoined him in the cabin he scarcely heeded

his presence, and was entirely oblivious of the furtive looks which the old man from time to time cast upon his face.

"I reckon ye would n't mind," broke in Nott suddenly, "ef I asked a favor of ye, Mr. Renshaw. Mebbe ye ll allow it's askin' too much in the matter of expense; mebbe ye 'll allow it's askin' too much in the matter o' time. But I kalkilate to pay all the expense, and if you 'd let me know what yer vally yer time at I reckon I could stand that. What I 'd be askin' is this. Would ye mind takin' a letter from me to Rosey and bringin' back an answer?"

Renshaw stared speechlessly at this absurd realization of his wish of a moment before. "I don't think I understand you," he stammered.

"P'r'aps not," returned Nott, with great gravity "But that 's not so much matter to you ez your time and expenses."

"I meant I should be glad to go if I can be of any service to you," said Renshaw hastily.

"You kin ketch the seven o'clock boat this morning, and you 'll reach San Rafael at ten" —

"But I thought Miss Rosey went to Petaluma," interrupted Renshaw quickly.

Nott regarded him with an expression of patronizing superiority. "That 's what we ladled out to the public gin'rally, and to Ferrers and his gang in partickler. We said Petalumey, but if you go to Madroño Cottage, San Rafael, you 'll find Rosey thar."

If Mr. Renshaw required anything more to convince him of the necessity of coming to some understanding with Rosey at once, it would have been this last evidence of her father's utterly dark and supremely inscrutable designs. He assented quickly, and Nott handed him a note.

"Ye 'll be partickler to give this inter her own hands, and wait for an answer," said Nott gravely.

Resisting the proposition to enter then and there into an elaborate calculation of the value of his time and the expenses of the trip, Renshaw found himself at seven o'clock on the San Rafael boat. Brief as was the journey, it gave him time to reflect upon his coming interview with Rosey. He had resolved to begin by confessing all; the attempt of last night had released him from any sense of duty to Sleight. Besides, he did not doubt that Nott's letter contained some reference to this affair only known to Nott's dark and tortuous intelligence.

### VIII

Madroño Cottage lay at the entrance of a little cañada already green with the early winter rains, and nestled in a thicket of the harlequin painted trees that gave it a name. The young man was a little relieved to find that Rosey had gone to the post-office a mile away, and that he would probably overtake her or meet her returning — alone. The road — little more than a trail — wound along the crest of the hill looking across the cañada to the long, dark, heavily wooded flank of Mount Tamalpais that rose from the valley a dozen miles away. A cessation of the warm rain, a rift in the sky, and the rare spectacle of cloud scenery, combined with a certain sense of freedom, restored that light-hearted gayety that became him most. At a sudden turn of the road he caught sight of Rosey's figure coming towards him, and quickened his step with the impulsiveness of a boy. But she suddenly disappeared, and when he again saw her she was on the other side of the trail, apparently picking the leaves of a manzanita. She had already seen him.

Somehow the frankness of his greeting was checked. She looked up at him with cheeks that retained enough of their color to suggest why she had hesitated, and said, "*You* here, Mr. Renshaw? I thought you were in Sacramento."

"And I thought *you* were in Petaluma," he retorted gayly. "I have a letter from your father. The fact is, one of those gentlemen who have been haunting the ship actually made an entry last night. Who he was, and what he came for, nobody knows. Perhaps your father gives you his suspicions." He could not help looking at her narrowly as he handed her the note. Except that her pretty eyebrows were slightly raised in curiosity she seemed undisturbed as she opened the letter. Presently she raised her eyes to his.

"Is this all father gave you?"

"All."

"You're sure you have n't dropped anything?"

"Nothing. I have given you all he gave me."

"And that is all it is." She exhibited the missive, a perfectly blank sheet of paper folded like a note!

Renshaw felt the angry blood glow in his cheeks. "This is unpardonable! I assure you, Miss Nott, there must be some mistake. He himself has probably forgotten the inclosure," he continued, yet with an inward conviction that the act was perfectly premeditated on the part of the old man.

The young girl held out her hand frankly. "Don't think any more of it, Mr. Renshaw. Father is forgetful at times. But tell me about last night."

In a few words Mr. Renshaw briefly but plainly related the details of the attempt upon the *Pontiac*, from the moment that he had been awakened by Nott, to his discovery of the unknown trespasser's flight by the open door to the loft. When he had finished, he hesitated, and then, taking Rosey's hand, said impulsively, "You will not be angry with me if I tell you all? Your father firmly believes that the attempt was made by the old Frenchman, De Ferrières, with a view of carrying you off."

A dozen reasons other than the one her father would

have attributed it to might have called the blood to her face. But only innocence could have brought the look of astonished indignation to her eyes as she answered quickly:—

“So *that* was what you were laughing at?”

“Not that, Miss Nott,” said the young man eagerly; “though I wish to God I could accuse myself of nothing more disloyal. Do not speak, I beg,” he added impatiently, as Rosey was about to reply. “I have no right to hear you; I have no right to even stand in your presence until I have confessed everything. I came to the Pontiac; I made your acquaintance, Miss Nott, through a fraud as wicked as anything your father charges to De Ferrières. I am not a contractor. I never was an honest lodger in the Pontiac. I was simply a spy.”

“But you didn’t mean to be—it was some mistake, was n’t it?” said Rosey, quite white, but more from sympathy with the offender’s emotion than horror at the offense.

“I am afraid I did mean it. But bear with me for a few moments longer and you shall know all. It’s a long story. Will you walk on, and—take my arm? You do not shrink from me, Miss Nott. Thank you. I scarcely deserve the kindness.”

Indeed so little did Rosey shrink that he was conscious of a slight reassuring pressure on his arm as they moved forward, and for the moment I fear the young man felt like exaggerating his offense for the sake of proportionate sympathy. “Do you remember,” he continued, “one evening when I told you some sea tales, you said you always thought there must be some story about the Pontiac? There *was* a story of the Pontiac, Miss Nott—a wicked story—a terrible story—which I might have told you, which I *ought* to have told you—which was the story that brought me there. You were right, too, in saying

that you thought I had known the Pontiac before I stepped first on her deck that day. I had."

He laid his disengaged hand across lightly on Rosey's, as if to assure himself that she was listening.

"I was at that time a sailor. I had been fool enough to run away from college, thinking it a fine romantic thing to ship before the mast for a voyage round the world. I was a little disappointed, perhaps, but I made the best of it, and in two years I was the second mate of a whaler lying in a little harbor of one of the uncivilized islands of the Pacific. While we were at anchor there a French trading-vessel put in, apparently for water. She had the dregs of a mixed crew of Lascars and Portuguese, who said they had lost the rest of their men by desertion, and that the captain and mate had been carried off by fever. There was something so queer in their story that our skipper took the law in his own hands, and put me on board of her with a salvage crew. But that night the French crew mutinied, cut the cables, and would have got to sea if we had not been armed and prepared, and managed to drive them below. When we had got them under hatches for a few hours they parleyed, and offered to go quietly ashore. As we were short of hands and unable to take them with us, and as we had no evidence against them, we let them go, took the ship to Callao, turned her over to the authorities, lodged a claim for salvage, and continued our voyage. When we returned we found the truth of the story was known. She had been a French trader from Marseilles, owned by her captain; her crew had mutinied in the Pacific, killed their officers and the only passenger—the owner of the cargo. They had made away with the cargo and a treasure of nearly half a million of Spanish gold for trading purposes which belonged to the passenger. In course of time the ship was sold for salvage and put into the South American trade until the breaking out of the Cali-

fornian gold excitement when she was sent with a cargo to San Francisco. That ship was the Pontiac, which your father bought."

A slight shudder ran through the girl's frame. "I wish—I wish you had n't told me," she said. "I shall never close my eyes again comfortably on board of her, I know."

"I would say that you had purified her of *all* stains of her past—but there may be one that remains. And *that* in most people's eyes would be no detraction. You look puzzled, Miss Nott—but I am coming to the explanation and the end of *my* story. A ship of war was sent to the island to punish the mutineers and pirates, for such they were, but they could not be found. A private expedition was sent to discover the treasure which they were supposed to have buried, but in vain. About two months ago Mr. Sleight told me one of his shipmasters had sent him a Lascar sailor who had to dispose of a valuable secret regarding the Pontiac for a percentage. That secret was that the treasure was never taken by the mutineers out of the Pontiac! They were about to land and bury it when we boarded them. They took advantage of their imprisonment under hatches *to bury it in the ship*. They hid it in the hold so securely and safely that it was never detected by us or the Callao authorities. I was then asked, as one who knew the vessel, to undertake a private examination of her, with a view of purchasing her from your father without awakening his suspicions. I assented. You have my confession now, Miss Nott. You know my crime. I am at your mercy."

Rosey's arm only tightened around his own. Her eyes sought his. "And you did n't find anything?" she said.

The question sounded so oddly like Sleight's that Renshaw returned a little stiffly:—

"I did n't look."



"Why?" asked Rosey simply.

"Because," stammered Renshaw, with an uneasy consciousness of having exaggerated his sentiment, "it did n't seem honorable; it did n't seem fair to you."

"Oh, you silly! you might have looked and told *me*."

"But," said Renshaw, "do you think that would have been fair to Sleight?"

"As fair to him as to us. For, don't you see, it would n't belong to any of us. It would belong to the friends or the family of the man who lost it."

"But there were no heirs," replied Renshaw. "That was proved by some impostor who pretended to be his brother, and libeled the Pontiac at Callao, but the courts decided he was a lunatic."

"Then it belongs to the poor pirates who risked their own lives for it, rather than to Sleight, who did nothing." She was silent for a moment, and then resumed with energy, "I believe he was at the bottom of that attack last night."

"I have thought so too," said Renshaw.

"Then I must go back at once," she continued impulsively. "Father must not be left alone."

"Nor must *you*," said Renshaw quickly. "Do let me return with you, and share with you and your father the trouble I have brought upon you. Do not," he added in a lower tone, "deprive me of the only chance of expiating my offense, of making myself worthy your forgiveness."

"I am sure," said Rosey, lowering her lids and half withdrawing her arm, — "I am sure I have nothing to forgive. You did not believe the treasure belonged to us any more than to anybody else, until you knew *me*" —

"That is true," said the young man, attempting to take her hand.

"I mean," said Rosey, blushing, and showing a distracting row of little teeth in one of her infrequent laughs,

"oh, you know what I mean." She withdrew her arm gently, and became interested in the selection of certain wayside bay leaves as they passed along. "All the same, I don't believe in this treasure," she said abruptly, as if to change the subject. "I don't believe it ever was hidden inside the Pontiac."

"That can be easily ascertained now," said Renshaw.

"But it's a pity you did n't find it out while you were about it," said Rosey. "It would have saved so much talk and trouble."

"I have told you why I did n't search the ship," responded Renshaw, with a slight bitterness. "But it seems I could only avoid being a great rascal by becoming a great fool."

"You never intended to be a rascal," said Rosey earnestly, "and you could n't be a fool, except in heeding what a silly girl says. I only meant if you had taken me into your confidence it would have been better."

"Might I not say the same to you regarding your friend, the old Frenchman?" returned Renshaw. "What if I were to confess to you that I lately suspected him of knowing the secret, and of trying to gain your assistance?"

Instead of indignantly repudiating the suggestion to the young man's great discomfiture, Rosey only knit her pretty brows, and remained for some moments silent. Presently she asked timidly:—

"Do you think it wrong to tell another person's secret for their own good?"

"No," said Renshaw promptly.

"Then I'll tell you Monsieur de Ferrières'! But only because I believe from what you have just said that he will turn out to have some right to the treasure."

Then with kindling eyes, and a voice eloquent with sympathy, Rosey told the story of her accidental discovery of De Ferrières' miserable existence in the loft. Clothing

it with the unconscious poetry of her fresh, young imagination, she lightly passed over his antique gallantry and grotesque weakness, exalting only his lonely sufferings and mysterious wrongs. Renshaw listened, lost between shame for his late suspicions and admiration for her thoughtful delicacy, until she began to speak of De Ferrières' strange allusions to the foreign papers in his portmanteau. "I think some were law papers, and I am almost certain I saw the word Callao printed on one of them."

"It may be so," said Renshaw thoughtfully. "The old Frenchman has always passed for a harmless, wandering eccentric. I hardly think public curiosity has ever even sought to know his name, much less his history. But had we not better first try to find if there *is* any property before we examine his claims to it?"

"As you please," said Rosey, with a slight pout; "but you will find it much easier to discover him than his treasure. It's always easier to find the thing you're not looking for."

"Until you want it," said Renshaw, with sudden gravity.

"How pretty it looks over there," said Rosey, turning her conscious eyes to the opposite mountain.

"Very."

They had reached the top of the hill, and in the near distance the chimney of Madroño Cottage was even now visible. At the expected sight they unconsciously stopped — unconsciously disappointed. Rosey broke the embarrassing silence.

"There's another way home, but it's a roundabout way," she said timidly.

"Let us take it," said Renshaw.

She hesitated. "The boat goes at four, and we must return to-night."

"The more reason why we should make the most of our

time now," said Renshaw, with a faint smile. "To-morrow all things may be changed; to-morrow you may find yourself an heiress, Miss Nott. To-morrow," he added, with a slight tremor in his voice, "I may have earned your forgiveness, only to say farewell to you forever. Let me keep this sunshine, this picture, this companionship with you long enough to say now what perhaps I must not say to-morrow."

They were silent for a moment, and then by a common instinct turned together into a narrow trail, scarce wide enough for two, that diverged from the straight practical path before them. It was indeed a roundabout way home, so roundabout, in fact, that as they wandered on it seemed even to double on its track, occasionally lingering long and becoming indistinct under the shadow of madroño and willow; at one time stopping blindly before a fallen tree in the hollow, where they had quite lost it, and had to sit down to recall it; a rough way, often requiring the mutual help of each other's hands and eyes to tread together in security; an uncertain way, not to be found without whispered consultation and concession, and yet a way eventually bringing them hand in hand, happy and hopeful, to the gate of Madroño Cottage. And if there was only just time for Rosey to prepare to take the boat, it was due to the deviousness of the way. If a stray curl was lying loose on Rosey's cheek, and a long hair had caught in Renshaw's button, it was owing to the roughness of the way; and if in the tones of their voices and in the glances of their eyes there was a maturer seriousness, it was due to the dim uncertainty of the path they had traveled, and would hereafter tread together.

## IX

When Mr. Nott had satisfied himself of Renshaw's departure, he coolly bolted the door at the head of the com-

panionway, thus cutting off any communication with the lower deck. Taking a long rifle from the rack above his berth, he carefully examined the hammer and cap, and then cautiously let himself down through the fore hatch to the deck below. After a deliberate survey of the still intact fastenings of the hatch over the forehold, he proceeded quietly to unloose them again with the aid of the tools that still lay there. When the hatch was once more free he lifted it, and withdrawing a few feet from the opening, sat himself down, rifle in hand. A profound silence reigned throughout the lower deck.

"Ye kin rize up out o' that," said Nott gently.

There was a stealthy rustle below that seemed to approach the hatch, and then with a sudden bound the Lascar leaped on the deck. But at the same instant Nott covered him with his rifle. A slight shade of disappointment and surprise had crossed the old man's face, and clouded his small round eyes at the apparition of the Lascar, but his hand was none the less firm upon the trigger as the frightened prisoner sank on his knees, with his hands clasped in the attitude of supplication for mercy.

"Ef you 're thinkin' o' skippin' afore I've done with yer," said Nott, with labored gentleness, "I oughter warn ye that it's my style to drop Injins at two hundred yards, and this deck ain't anywhere more 'n fifty. It's an uncomfortable style, a nasty style — but it's *my* style. I thought I'd tell yer, so yer could take it easy where you air. Where 's Ferrers?"

Even in the man's insane terror, his utter bewilderment at the question was evident. "Ferrers?" he gasped; "don't know him, I swear to God, boss."

"P'r'aps," said Nott, with infinite cunning, "yer don't know the man ez kem into the loft from the alley last night — p'r'aps yer did n't see an airy Frenchman with a dyed mustache, eh? I thought that would fetch ye!" he

continued, as the man started at the evidence that his vision of last night was a living man. "P'r'aps you and him did n't break into this ship last night, jist to run off with my darter Rosey? P'r'aps yer don't know Rosey, eh? P'r'aps yer don't know ez Ferrers wants to marry her, and hez been hangin' round yer ever since he left — eh?"

Scarcely believing the evidence of his senses that the old man whose treasure he had been trying to steal was utterly ignorant of his real offense, and yet uncertain of the penalty of the other crime of which he was accused, the Lascar writhed his body and stammered vaguely, "Mercy! Mercy!"

"Well," said Nott cautiously, "ez I reckon the hide of a dead Chinee nigger ain't any more vallyble than that of a dead Injin, I don't care ef I let up on yer — seein' the cussedness ain't yours. But ef I let yer off this once, you must take a message to Ferrers from me."

"Let me off this time, boss, and I swear to God I will," said the Lascar eagerly.

"Ye kin say to Ferrers — let me see" — deliberated Nott, leaning on his rifle with cautious reflection. "Ye kin say to Ferrers like this — sez you, 'Ferrers,' sez you, 'the old man sez that afore you went away you sez to him, sez you, 'I take my honor with me,' sez you' — have you got that?" interrupted Nott suddenly.

"Yes, boss."

"'I take my honor with me,' sez you," repeated Nott slowly. "'Now,' sez you — 'the old man sez, sez he — tell Ferrers, sez he, that his honor havin' run away agin, he sends it back to him, and ef he ever ketches it around after this, he 'll shoot it on sight.' Hev yer got that?"

"Yes," stammered the bewildered captive.

"Then git!"

The Lascar sprang to his feet with the agility of a panther, leaped through the hatch above him, and disappeared

over the bow of the ship with an unhesitating directness that showed that every avenue of escape had been already contemplated by him. Slipping lightly from the cut-water to the ground, he continued his flight, only stopping at the private office of Mr. Sleight.

When Mr. Renshaw and Rosey Nott arrived on board the Pontiac that evening, they were astonished to find the passage before the cabin completely occupied with trunks and boxes, and the bulk of their household goods apparently in the process of removal. Mr. Nott, who was superintending the work of two Chinamen, betrayed not only no surprise at the appearance of the young people, but not the remotest recognition of their own bewilderment at his occupation.

"Kalkilatin'," he remarked casually to his daughter, "you'd rather look arter your fixin's, Rosey, I've left 'em till the last. P'r'aps yer and Mr. Renshaw would n't mind sittin' down on that locker until I've strapped this yer box."

"But what does it all mean, father?" said Rosey, taking the old man by the lapels of his pea-jacket, and slightly emphasizing her question. "What in the name of goodness are you doing?"

"Breakin' camp, Rosey dear, breakin' camp, jist ez we uster," replied Nott, with cheerful philosophy. "Kinder like ole times, ain't it? Lord, Rosey," he continued, stopping and following up the reminiscence, with the end of the rope in his hand as if it were a clue, "don't ye mind that day we started outer Livermore Pass, and seed the hull o' the Californy coast stretchin' yonder — eh? But don't ye be skeered, Rosey dear," he added quickly, as if in recognition of the alarm expressed in her face. "I ain't turning ye outer house and home; I've jist hired that 'ere Madrone Cottage from the Peters ontill we kin look round."

"But you're not leaving the ship, father," continued

Rosey impetuously. "You haven't sold it to that man Sleight?"

Mr. Nott rose and carefully closed the cabin door. Then drawing a large wallet from his pocket, he said, "It's sing'lar ye should hev got the name right the first pop, ain't it, Rosey? but it's Sleight sure enough, all the time. This yer check," he added, producing a paper from the depths of the wallet, — "this yer check for \$25,000 is wot he paid for it only two hours ago."

"But," said Renshaw, springing to his feet furiously, "you're duped, swindled — betrayed!"

"Young man," said Nott, throwing a certain dignity into his habitual gesture of placing his hands on Renshaw's shoulders, "I bought this yer ship five years ago jist ez she stood for \$8000. Kalkilatin' wot she cost me in repairs and taxes, and wot she brought me in since then, accordin' to my figgerin', I don't call a clear profit of \$15,000 much of a swindle."

"Tell him all," said Rosey quickly, more alarmed at Renshaw's despairing face than at the news itself. "Tell him everything, Dick — Mr. Renshaw; it may not be too late."

In a voice half choked with passionate indignation Renshaw hurriedly repeated the story of the hidden treasure, and the plot to rescue it; prompted frequently by Rosey's tenacious memory and assisted by her deft and tactful explanations. But to their surprise the imperturbable countenance of Abner Nott never altered; a slight moisture of kindly paternal tolerance of their extravagance glistened in his little eyes, but nothing more.

"Ef there was a part o' this ship, a plank or a bolt ez I don't know, ez I hev n't touched with my own hand, and looked into with my own eyes, thar might be suthin' in that story. I don't let on to be a sailor like *you*, but ez I know the ship ez a boy knows his first hoss, as a wo-



man knows her first babby, I reckon thar ain't no treasure yer unless it was brought into the Pontiac last night by them chaps."

"But are you mad? Sleight would not pay three times the value of the ship to-day if he were not positive! And that positive knowledge was gained last night by the villair who broke into the Pontiac — no doubt the Lascar."

"Surely," said Nott meditatively. "The Lascar! There's suthin' in that. That Lascar I fastened down in the hold last night unbeknownst to you, Mr. Renshaw, and let him out again this morning ekally unbeknownst."

"And you let him carry his information to Sleight — without a word!" said Renshaw, with a sickening sense of Nott's utter fatuity.

"I sent him back with a message to the man he kem from," said Nott, winking both his eyes at Renshaw significantly, and making signs behind his daughter's back.

Rosey, conscious of her lover's irritation, and more eager to soothe his impatience than from any faith in her suggestion, interfered. "Why not examine the place where he was concealed? he may have left some traces of his search."

The two men looked at each other. "Seein' ez I've turned the Pontiac over to Sleight jist as it stands, I don't know ez it's 'zactly on the square," said Nott doubtfully.

"You've a right to know at least *what* you deliver to him," interrupted Renshaw brusquely. "Bring a lantern."

Followed by Rosey, Renshaw and Nott hurriedly sought the lower deck and the open hatch of the forehold. The two men leaped down first with the lantern, and then assisted Rosey to descend. Renshaw took a step forward and uttered a cry.

The rays of the lantern fell on the ship's side. The Lascar had, during his forced seclusion, put back the boxes of treasure and replaced the planking, yet not so carefully but that the quick eye of Renshaw had discovered it. The

next moment he had stripped away the planking again, and the hurriedly restored box which the Lascar had found fell to the deck, scattering part of its ringing contents. Rosey turned pale; Renshaw's eyes flashed fire; only Abner Nott remained quiet and impassive.

"Are you satisfied you have been duped?" said Renshaw passionately.

To their surprise Mr. Nott stooped down, and picking up one of the coins, handed it gravely to Renshaw. "Would ye mind heftin' that 'ere coin in your hand—feelin' it, bitin' it, scrapin' it with a knife, and kinder seein' how it compares with other coins?"

"What do you mean?" said Renshaw.

"I mean that that yer coin—that *all* the coins in this yer box, that all the coins in them other boxes—and thar's forty on 'em—is all and every one of 'em counterfeits!"

The piece dropped unconsciously from Renshaw's hand, and striking another that lay on the deck, gave out a dull, suspicious ring.

"They waz counterfeits got up by them Dutch supercargo sharps for dealin' with the Injins and cannibals and South Sea heathens ez bows down to wood and stone. It satisfied them ez well ez them buttons ye puts in missionary boxes, I reckon, and, 'cepting ez freight, don't cost nothin'. I found 'em tucked in the ribs o' the old Pontiac when I bought her, and I nailed 'em up in thar lest they should fall into dishonest hands. It's a lucky thing, Mr. Renshaw, that they comes into the honest fingers of a square man like Sleight—ain't it?"

He turned his small, guileless eyes upon Renshaw with such childlike simplicity that it checked the hysterical laugh that was rising to the young man's lips.

"But did any one know of this but yourself?"

"I reckon not. I once suspicioned that old Cap'en

Bower, who was always foolin' round the hold yer, must hev noticed the bulge in the casin', but when he took to axin' questions I axed others — ye know my style, Rosey? Come."

He led the way grimly back to the cabin, the young people following; but turning suddenly at the companion-way, he observed Renshaw's arm around the waist of his daughter. He said nothing until they had reached the cabin, when he closed the door softly, and, looking at them both gently, said with infinite cunning: —

"Ef it isn't too late, Rosey, ye kin tell this young man ez how I forgive him for havin' diskivered THE TREASURE of the Pontiac."

It was nearly eighteen months afterwards that Mr. Nott one morning entered the room of his son-in-law at Mardroño Cottage. Drawing him aside, he said, with his old air of mystery, "Now ez Rosey's ailin' and don't seem to be so eager to diskiver what's become of Mr. Ferrers, I don't mind tellin' ye that over a year ago I heard he died suddenly in Sacramento. Thar was suthin' in the paper about his bein' a lunatic and claimin' to be a relation to somebody on the Pontiac; but likes ez not it's only the way those newspaper fellows got hold of the story of his wantin' to marry Rosey."

## AN APOSTLE OF THE TULES

### I

ON October 10, 1856, about four hundred people were camped in Tasajara Valley, California. It could not have been for the prospect, since a more barren, dreary, monotonous, and uninviting landscape never stretched before human eye; it could not have been for convenience or contiguity, as the nearest settlement was thirty miles away; it could not have been for health or salubrity, as the breath of the ague-haunted tules in the outlying Stockton marshes swept through the valley; it could not have been for space or comfort, for, encamped on an unlimited plain, men and women were huddled together as closely as in an urban tenement-house, without the freedom or decency of rural isolation; it could not have been for pleasant companionship, as dejection, mental anxiety, tears, and lamentation were the dominant expression; it was not a hurried flight from present or impending calamity, for the camp had been deliberately planned, and for a week pioneer wagons had been slowly arriving; it was not an irrevocable exodus, for some had already returned to their homes that others might take their places. It was simply a religious revival of one or two denominational sects, known as a "camp-meeting."

A large central tent served for the assembling of the principal congregation; smaller tents served for prayer-meetings and class-rooms, known to the few unbelievers as "side-shows;" while the actual dwellings of the worshippers were rudely extemporized shanties of boards and canvas, sometimes mere corrals or inclosures open to the cloudless

sky, or more often the unhitched covered wagon which had brought them there. The singular resemblance to a circus, already profanely suggested, was carried out by a straggling fringe of boys and half-grown men on the outskirts of the encampment, acrimonious with disappointed curiosity, lazy without the careless ease of vagrancy, and vicious without the excitement of dissipation. For the coarse poverty and brutal economy of the larger arrangements, the dreary panorama of unlovely and unwholesome domestic details always before the eyes, were hardly exciting to the senses. The circus might have been more dangerous, but scarcely more brutalizing. The actors themselves, hard and aggressive through practical struggles, often warped and twisted with chronic forms of smaller diseases, or malformed and crippled through carelessness and neglect, and restless and uneasy through some vague mental distress and inquietude that they had added to their burdens, were scarcely amusing performers. The rheumatic Parkinsons, from Green Springs; the ophthalmic Filgees, from Alder Creek; the ague-stricken Harneys, from Martinez Bend; and the feeble-limbed Steptons, from Sugar Mill, might, in their combined families, have suggested a hospital, rather than any other social assemblage. Even their companionship, which had little of cheerful fellowship in it, would have been grotesque but for the pathetic instinct of some mutual vague appeal from the hardness of their lives and the helplessness of their conditions that had brought them together. Nor was this appeal to a Higher Power any the less pathetic that it bore no reference whatever to their respective needs or deficiencies, but was always an invocation for a light which, when they believed they had found it, to unregenerate eyes scarcely seemed to illumine the rugged path in which their feet were continually stumbling. One might have smiled at the idea of the vendetta-following Ferguses praying for

"justification by Faith," but the actual spectacle of old Simon Fergus, whose shot-gun was still in his wagon, offering up that appeal with streaming eyes and agonized features, was painful beyond a doubt. To seek and obtain an exaltation of feeling vaguely known as "It," or less vaguely veiling a sacred name, was the burden of the general appeal.

The large tent had been filled, and between the exhortations a certain gloomy enthusiasm had been kept up by singing, which had the effect of continuing in an easy, rhythmical, impersonal, and irresponsible way the sympathies of the meeting. This was interrupted by a young man who rose suddenly with that spontaneity of impulse which characterized the speakers; but unlike his predecessors, he remained for a moment mute, trembling, and irresolute. The fatal hesitation seemed to check the unreasoning, monotonous flow of emotion and to recall to some extent the reason and even the criticism of the worshipers. He stammered a prayer whose earnestness was undoubted, whose humility was but too apparent, but his words fell on faculties already benumbed by repetition and rhythm. A slight movement of curiosity in the rear benches, and a whisper that it was the maiden effort of a new preacher, helped to prolong the interruption. A heavy man of strong physical expression sprang to the rescue with a hysterical cry of "Glory!" and a tumultuous fluency of epithet and sacred adjuration. Still the meeting wavered. With one final paroxysmal cry, the powerful man threw his arms around his nearest neighbor and burst into silent tears. An anxious hush followed; the speaker still continued to sob on his neighbor's shoulder. Almost before the fact could be commented upon, it was noticed that the entire rank of worshipers on the bench beside him were crying also; the second and third rows were speedily dissolved in tears, until even the very youthful scoffers in the

last benches suddenly found their half-hysterical laughter turned to sobs. The danger was averted, the reaction was complete; the singing commenced, and in a few moments the hapless cause of the interruption and the man who had retrieved the disaster stood together outside the tent. A horse was picketed near them.

The victor was still panting from his late exertions, and was more or less diluvial in eye and nostril, but neither eye nor nostril bore the slightest tremor of other expression. His face was stolid and perfectly in keeping with his physique, — heavy, animal, and unintelligent.

“Ye oughter trusted in the Lord,” he said to the young preacher.

“But I did,” responded the young man earnestly.

“That’s it. Justifyin’ yourself by works instead o’ leanin’ onto Him! Find Him, sez you! Git Him, sez you! Works is vain. Glory! glory!” he continued, with fluent vacuity and wandering, dull, observant eyes.

“But if I had a little more practice in class, Brother Silas, more education?”

“The letter killeth,” interrupted Brother Silas. Here his wandering eyes took dull cognizance of two female faces peering through the opening of the tent. “No, yer mishun, Brother Gideon, is to seek Him in the byways, in the wilderness, — where the foxes hev holes and the ravens hev their young, — but not in the Temples of the people. Wot sez Sister Parsons?”

One of the female faces detached itself from the tent flaps, which it nearly resembled in color, and brought forward an angular figure clothed in faded fustian that had taken the various shades and odors of household service.

“Brother Silas speaks well,” said Sister Parsons, with stridulous fluency. “It’s foreordained. Fore-ordinashun is better nor ordinashun, saith the Lord. He shall go forth, turnin’ neither to the right hand nor the left hand,

and seek Him among the lost tribes and the ungodly. He shall put aside the temptashun of Mammon and the flesh." Her eyes and those of Brother Silas here both sought the other female face, which was that of a young girl of seventeen.

"Wot sez little Sister Meely, — wot sez Meely Parsons?" continued Brother Silas, as if repeating an unctuous formula.

The young girl came hesitatingly forward, and with a nervous cry of "Oh, Gideon!" threw herself on the breast of the young man.

For a moment they remained locked in each other's arms. In the promiscuous and fraternal embracings which were a part of the devotional exercises of the hour, the act passed without significance. The young man gently raised her face. She was young and comely, albeit marked with a half-frightened, half-vacant sorrow. "Amen!" said Brother Gideon gravely.

He mounted his horse and turned to go. Brother Silas had clasped his powerful arms around both women, and was holding them in a ponderous embrace.

"Go forth, young man, into the wilderness."

The young man bowed his head, and urged his horse forward in the bleak and barren plain. In half an hour every vestige of the camp and its unwholesome surroundings was lost in the distance. It was as if the strong desiccating wind, which seemed to spring up at his horse's feet, had cleanly erased the flimsy structures from the face of the plain, swept away the lighter breath of praise and plaint, and dried up the easy flowing tears. The air was harsh but pure; the grim economy of form and shade and color in the level plain was coarse but not vulgar; the sky above him was cold and distant but not repellent, the moisture that had been denied his eyes at the prayer-meeting overflowed them here; the words that had choked his utterance



an hour ago now rose to his lips. He threw himself from his horse, and kneeling in the withered grass, — a mere atom in the boundless plain, — lifted his pale face against the irresponsive blue and prayed.

He prayed that the unselfish dream of his bitter boyhood, his disappointed youth, might come to pass. He prayed that he might in higher hands become the humble instrument of good to his fellow man. He prayed that the deficiencies of his scant education, his self-taught learning, his helpless isolation, and his inexperience might be overlooked or reinforced by grace. He prayed that the Infinite Compassion might enlighten his ignorance and solitude with a manifestation of the Spirit; in his very weakness he prayed for some special revelation, some sign or token, some visitation or gracious unbending from that coldly lifting sky. The low sun burned the black edge of the distant tules with dull eating fires as he prayed, lit the dwarfed hills with a brief but ineffectual radiance, and then died out. The lingering trade winds fired a few volleys over its grave, and then lapsed into a chilly silence. The young man staggered to his feet; it was quite dark now, but the coming night had advanced a few starry vedettes so near the plain they looked like human watchfires. For an instant he could not remember where he was. Then a light trembled far down at the entrance of the valley. Brother Gideon recognized it. It was in the lonely farmhouse of the widow of the last Circuit preacher.

## II

The abode of the late Reverend Marvin Hiler remained in the disorganized condition he had left it when removed from his sphere of earthly uselessness and continuous accident. The straggling fence that only half inclosed the house and barn had stopped at that point where the two deacons who had each volunteered to do a day's work on

it had completed their allotted time. The building of the barn had been arrested when the half load of timber contributed by Sugar Mill brethren was exhausted, and three windows given by "Christian Seekers" at Martinez painfully accented the boarded spaces for the other three that "Unknown Friends" in Tasajara had promised but not yet supplied. In the clearing some trees that had been felled but not taken away added to the general incompleteness.

Something of this unfinished character clung to the Widow Hiler and asserted itself in her three children, one of whom was consistently posthumous. Prematurely old and prematurely disappointed, she had all the inexperience of girlhood with the cares of maternity, and kept in her family circle the freshness of an old maid's misogynistic antipathies with a certain guilty and remorseful consciousness of widowhood. She supported the meagre household to which her husband had contributed only the extra mouths to feed with reproachful astonishment and weary incapacity. She had long since grown tired of trying to make both ends meet of which she declared "the Lord had taken one." During her two years' widowhood she had waited on Providence, who by a pleasing local fiction had been made responsible for the disused and cast-off furniture and clothing which, accompanied with scriptural texts, found their way mysteriously into her few habitable rooms. The providential manna was not always fresh; the ravens who fed her and her little ones with flour from the Sugar Mills did not always select the best quality. Small wonder that, sitting by her lonely hearthstone, — a borrowed stove that supplemented the unfinished fireplace, — surrounded by her mismatched furniture and clad in misfitting garments, she had contracted a habit of sniffing during her dreary watches. In her weaker moments she attributed it to grief; in her stronger intervals she knew that it sprang from damp and draught.

In her apathy the sound of horses' hoofs at her unprotected door even at that hour neither surprised nor alarmed her. She lifted her head as the door opened, and the pale face of Gideon Deane looked into the room. She moved aside the cradle she was rocking, and taking a saucepan and teacup from a chair beside her, absently dusted it with her apron, and pointing to the vacant seat, said, "Take a chair" as quietly as if he had stepped from the next room instead of the outer darkness.

"I'll put up my horse first," said Gideon gently.

"So do," responded the widow briefly.

Gideon led his horse across the inclosure, stumbling over the heaps of rubbish, dried chips, and weather-beaten shavings with which it was strewn, until he reached the unfinished barn, where he temporarily bestowed his beast. Then taking a rusty axe, by the faint light of the stars, he attacked one of the fallen trees with such energy that at the end of ten minutes he reappeared at the door with an armful of cut boughs and chips, which he quietly deposited behind the stove. Observing that he was still standing as if looking for something, the widow lifted her eyes and said, "Ef it's the bucket, I reckon ye'll find it at the spring, where one of them foolish Filgee boys left it. I've been that tuckered out sens sundown, I ain't had the ambition to go and tote it back." Without a word Gideon repaired to the spring, filled the missing bucket, replaced the hoop on the loosened staves of another he found lying useless beside it, and again returned to the house. The widow once more pointed to the chair, and Gideon sat down. "It's quite a spell sens you wos here," said the Widow Hiler, returning her foot to the cradle-rocker; "not sens yer was ordained. Be'n practicin', I reckon, at the meetin'."

A slight color came into his cheek. "My place is not there, Sister Hiler," he said gently; "it's for those with

the gift o' tongues. I go forth only a common laborer in the vineyard." He stopped and hesitated; he might have said more, but the widow, who was familiar with that kind of humility as the ordinary perfunctory expression of her class, suggested no sympathetic interest in his mission.

"Thar's a deal o' talk over there," she said dryly, "and thar's folks ez thinks thar's a deal o' money spent in picnicking the Gospel that might be given to them ez wish to spread it, or to their widows and children. But that don't consarn you, Brother Gideon. Sister Parsons hez money enough to settle her darter Meely comfortably on her own land; and I've heard tell that you and Meely was only waitin' till you was ordained to be jined together. You'll hev an easier time of it, Brother Gideon, than poor Marvin Hiler had," she continued, suppressing her tears with a certain astringency that took the place of her lost pride; "but the Lord wills that some should be tried and some not."

"But I am not going to marry Meely Parsons," said Gideon quietly.

The widow took her foot from the rocker. "Not marry Meely!" she repeated vaguely. But relapsing into her despondent mood, she continued: "Then I reckon it's true what other folks sez of Brother Silas Braggley makin' up to her and his powerful exhortin' influence over her ma. Folks sez ez Sister Parsons hez just resigned her soul inter his keepin'."

"Brother Silas hez a heavenly gift," said the young man, with gentle enthusiasm; "and perhaps it may be so. If it is, it is the Lord's will. But I do not marry Meely because my life and my ways henceforth must lie far beyond her sphere of strength. I ought n't to drag a young, inexperienced soul with me to battle and struggle in the thorny paths that I must tread."

"I reckon you know your own mind," said Sister Hiler

grimly. "But thar's folks ez might allow that Meely Parsons ain't any better than others, that she should n't have her share o' trials and keers and crosses. Riches and bringin' up don't exempt folks from the shadder. I married Marvin Hiler outer a house ez good ez Sister Parsons', and at a time when old Cyrus Parsons had n't a roof to his head but the cover of the emigrant wagon he kem across the plains in. I might say ez Marvin knowed pretty well wot it was to have a helpmeet in his ministration, if it was n't vanity of sperit to say it now. But the flesh is weak, Brother Gideon." Her influenza here resolved itself into unmistakable tears, which she wiped away with the first article that was accessible in the work-bag before her. As it chanced to be a black silk neckerchief of the deceased Hiler, the result was funereal, suggestive, but practically ineffective.

"You were a good wife to Brother Hiler," said the young man gently. "Everybody knows that."

"It's suthin' to think of since he's gone," continued the widow, bringing her work nearer to her eyes to adjust it to their tear-dimmed focus. "It's suthin' to lay to heart in the lonely days and nights when thar's no man round to fetch water and wood and lend a hand to doin' chores; it's suthin' to remember, with his three children to feed, and little Selby, the eldest, that vain and useless that he can't even tote the baby round while I do the work of a hired man."

"It's a hard trial, Sister Hiler," said Gideon, "but the Lord has His appointed time."

Familiar as consolation by vague quotation was to Sister Hiler, there was an occult sympathy in the tone in which this was offered that lifted her for an instant out of her narrower self. She raised her eyes to his. The personal abstraction of the devotee had no place in the deep dark eyes that were lifted from the cradle to hers with a sad,

discriminating, and almost womanly sympathy. Surprised out of her selfish preoccupation, she was reminded of her apparent callousness to what might be his present disappointment. Perhaps it seemed strange to her, too, that those tender eyes should go a-begging.

"Yer takin' a Christian view of yer own disappointment, Brother Gideon," she said, with less astringency of manner; "but every heart knoweth its own sorer. I'll be gettin' supper now that the baby's sleepin' sound, and ye'll sit by and eat."

"If you let me help you, Sister Hiler," said the young man with a cheerfulness that belied any overwhelming heart affection, and awakened in the widow a feminine curiosity as to his real feelings to Meely. But her further questioning was met with a frank, amiable, and simple brevity that was as puzzling as the most artful periphrase of tact. Accustomed as she was to the loquacity of grief and the confiding prolixity of disappointed lovers, she could not understand her guest's quiescent attitude. Her curiosity, however, soon gave way to the habitual contemplation of her own sorrows, and she could not forego the opportune presence of a sympathizing auditor to whom she could relieve her feelings. The preparations for the evening meal were therefore accompanied by a dreary monotone of lamentation. She bewailed her lost youth, her brief courtship, the struggles of her early married life, her premature widowhood, her penurious and helpless existence, the disruption of all her present ties, the hopelessness of the future. She rehearsed the unending plaint of those long evenings, set to the music of the restless wind around her bleak dwelling, with something of its stridulous reiteration. The young man listened, and replied with softly assenting eyes, but without pausing in the material aid that he was quietly giving her. He had removed the cradle of the sleeping child to the bedroom, quieted the sudden

wakefulness of "Pinkey," rearranged the straggling furniture of the sitting-room with much order and tidiness, repaired the hinges of a rebellious shutter and the lock of an unyielding door, and yet had apparently retained an unabated interest in her spoken woes. Surprised once more into recognizing this devotion, Sister Hiler abruptly arrested her monologue.

"Well, if you ain't the handiest man I ever seed about a house!"

"Am I?" said Gideon, with suddenly sparkling eyes. "Do you really think so?"

"I do."

"Then you don't know how glad I am." His frank face so unmistakably showed his simple gratification that the widow, after gazing at him for a moment, was suddenly seized with a bewildering fancy. The first effect of it was the abrupt withdrawal of her eyes, then a sudden effusion of blood to her forehead that finally extended to her cheek-bones, and then an interval of forgetfulness where she remained with a plate held vaguely in her hand. When she succeeded at last in putting it on the table instead of the young man's lap, she said in a voice quite unlike her own:—

"Sho!"

"I mean it," said Gideon cheerfully. After a pause, in which he unostentatiously rearranged the table which the widow was abstractedly disorganizing, he said gently, "After tea, when you 're not so much flustered with work and worry, and more composed in spirit, we 'll have a little talk, Sister Hiler. I 'm in no hurry to-night, and if you don't mind I 'll make myself comfortable in the barn with my blanket until sunup to-morrow. I can get up early enough to do some odd chores round the lot before I go."

"You know best, Brother Gideon," said the widow faintly, "and if you think it's the Lord's will, and no

speshal trouble to you, so do. But sakes alive! it's time I tidied myself a little," she continued, lifting one hand to her hair, while with the other she endeavored to fasten a buttonless collar; "leavin' alone the vanities o' dress, it's ez much as one can do to keep a clean rag on with the children climbin' over ye. Sit by, and I'll be back in a minit." She retired to the back room, and in a few moments returned with smoothed hair and a palm-leaf broché shawl thrown over her shoulders, which not only concealed the ravages made by time and maternity on the gown beneath, but to some extent gave her the suggestion of being a casual visitor in her own household. It must be confessed that for the rest of the evening Sister Hiler rather lent herself to this idea, possibly from the fact that it temporarily obliterated the children, and quite removed her from any responsibility in the unpicturesque household. This effect was only marred by the absence of any impression upon Gideon, who scarcely appeared to notice the change, and whose soft eyes seemed rather to identify the miserable woman under her forced disguise. He prefaced the meal with a fervent grace, to which the widow listened with something of the conscious attitude she had adopted at church during her late husband's ministrations, and during the meal she ate with a like consciousness of "company manners."

Later that evening Selby Hiler woke up in his little truckle bed, listening to the rising midnight wind, which in his childish fancy he confounded with the sound of voices that came through the open door of the living-room. He recognized the deep voice of the young minister, Gideon, and the occasional tearful responses of his mother, and he was fancying himself again at church when he heard a step, and the young preacher seemed to enter the room, and going to the bed leaned over it and kissed him on the forehead, and then bent over his little brother and sister



and kissed them too. Then he slowly reëntered the living-room. Lifting himself softly on his elbow, Selby saw him go up towards his mother, who was crying, with her head on the table, and kiss her also on the forehead. Then he said "Good-night," and the front door closed, and Selby heard his footsteps crossing the lot towards the barn. His mother was still sitting with her face buried in her hands when he fell asleep.

She sat by the dying embers of the fire until the house was still again; then she rose and wiped her eyes. "Et 's a good thing," she said, going to the bedroom door, and looking in upon her sleeping children; "et 's a mercy and a blessing for them and — for — me. But — but — he might — hev — said — he — loved me!"

### III

Although Gideon Deane contrived to find a nest for his blanket in the mouldy straw of the unfinished barn loft, he could not sleep. He restlessly watched the stars through the cracks of the boarded roof, and listened to the wind that made the half-open structure as vocal as a sea-shell, until past midnight. Once or twice he had fancied he heard the tramp of horse-hoofs on the far-off trail, and now it seemed to approach nearer, mingled with the sound of voices. Gideon raised his head and looked through the doorway of the loft. He was not mistaken; two men had halted in the road before the house, and were examining it as if uncertain if it were the dwelling they were seeking, and were hesitating if they should rouse the inmates. Thinking he might spare the widow this disturbance to her slumbers, and possibly some alarm, he rose quickly, and descending to the inclosure walked towards the house. As he approached the men advanced to meet him, and by accident or design ranged themselves on either side. A glance showed him they were strangers to the locality.

"We 're lookin' fer the preacher that lives here," said one, who seemed to be the elder. "A man by the name o Hiler, I reckon!"

"Brother Hiler has been dead two years," responded Gideon. "His widow and children live here."

The two men looked at each other. The younger one laughed; the elder mumbled something about its being "three years ago," and then turning suddenly on Gideon, said:—

"P'r'aps *you* 're a preacher?"

"I am."

"Can you come to a dying man?"

"I will."

The two men again looked at each other. "But," continued Gideon softly, "you 'll please keep quiet so as not to disturb the widow and her children while I get my horse." He turned away; the younger man made a movement as if to stop him, but the elder quickly restrained his hand. "He is n't goin' to run away," he whispered. "Look," he added, as Gideon a moment later reappeared mounted and equipped.

"Do you think we 'll be in time?" asked the young preacher as they rode quickly away in the direction of the tules.

The younger repressed a laugh; the other answered grimly, "I reckon."

"And is he conscious of his danger?"

"I reckon."

Gideon did not speak again. But as the onus of that silence seemed to rest upon the other two, the last speaker, after a few moments' silent and rapid riding, continued abruptly, "You don't seem curious?"

"Of what?" said Gideon, lifting his soft eyes to the speaker. "You tell me of a brother at the point of death, who seeks the Lord through an humble vessel like myself. *He* will tell me the rest."

A silence still more constrained on the part of the two strangers followed, which they endeavored to escape from by furious riding; so that in half an hour the party had reached a point where the tules began to sap the arid plain, while beyond them broadened the lagoons of the distant river. In the foreground, near a clump of dwarfed willows, a camp-fire was burning, around which fifteen or twenty armed men were collected, their horses picketed in an outer circle guarded by two mounted sentries. A blasted cottonwood with a single black arm extended over the tules stood ominously against the dark sky.

The circle opened to receive them and closed again. The elder man dismounted, and leading Gideon to the blasted cottonwood, pointed to a pinioned man seated at its foot with an armed guard over him. He looked up at Gideon with an amused smile.

"You said it was a dying man," said Gideon, recoiling.

"He will be a dead man in half an hour," returned the stranger.

"And you?"

"We are the Vigilantes from Alamo. This man," pointing to the prisoner, "is a gambler who killed a man yesterday. We hunted him here, tried him an hour ago, and found him guilty. The last man we hung here, three years ago, asked for a parson. We brought him the man who used to live where we found you. So we thought we 'd give this man the same show, and brought you."

"And if I refuse?" said Gideon.

The leader shrugged his shoulders.

"That 's *his* lookout, not ours. We've given him the chance. Drive ahead, boys," he added, turning to the others; "the parson allows he won't take a hand."

"One moment," said Gideon, in desperation, "one moment, for the sake of that God you have brought me here to invoke in behalf of this wretched man. One moment,

for the sake of Him in whose presence you must stand one day as he does now." With passionate earnestness he pointed out the vindictive impulse they were mistaking for Divine justice; with pathetic fervency he fell upon his knees and implored their mercy for the culprit. But in vain. As at the camp-meeting of the day before, he was chilled to find his words seemed to fall on unheeding and unsympathetic ears. He looked around on their abstracted faces; in their gloomy savage enthusiasm for expiatory sacrifice, he was horrified to find the same unreasoning exaltation that had checked his exhortations then. Only one face looked upon his, half mischievously, half compassionately. It was the prisoner's.

"Yer wastin' time on us," said the leader dryly; "wastin' *his* time. Had n't you better talk to him?"

Gideon rose to his feet, pale and cold. "He may have something to confess. May I speak with him alone?" he said gently.

The leader motioned to the sentry to fall back. Gideon placed himself before the prisoner so that in the faint light of the camp-fire the man's figure was partly hidden by his own. "You meant well with your little bluff, pardner," said the prisoner, not unkindly, "but they've got the cards to win."

"Kneel down with your back to me," said Gideon in a low voice. The prisoner fell on his knees. At the same time he felt Gideon's hand and the gliding of steel behind his back, and the severed cords hung loosely on his arms and legs.

"When I lift my voice to God, brother," said Gideon softly, "drop on your face and crawl as far as you can in a straight line in my shadow, then break for the tules. I will stand between you and their first fire."

"Are you mad?" said the prisoner. "Do you think they won't fire lest they should hurt you? Man! they'll kill *you*, the first thing."

"So be it — if your chance is better."

Still on his knees, the man grasped Gideon's two hands in his own and devoured him with his eyes.

"You mean it?"

"I do."

"Then," said the prisoner quietly, "I reckon I'll stop and hear what you've got to say about God until they're ready."

"You refuse to fly?"

"I reckon I was never better fitted to die than now," said the prisoner, still grasping his hand. After a pause he added in a lower tone, "I can't pray — but — I think," he hesitated — "I think I could manage to ring in in a hymn."

"Will you try, brother?"

"Yes."

With their hands tightly clasped together, Gideon lifted his gentle voice. The air was a common one, familiar in the local religious gatherings, and after the first verse one or two of the sullen lookers-on joined not unkindly in the refrain. But as he went on the air and words seemed to offer a vague expression to the dull, lowering animal emotion of the savage concourse; and at the end of the second verse the refrain, augmented in volume and swelled by every voice in the camp, swept out over the hollow plain.

It was met in the distance by a far-off cry. With an oath taking the place of his supplication, the leader sprang to his feet. But too late! The cry was repeated as a nearer slogan of defiance — the plain shook — there was the tempestuous onset of furious hoofs — a dozen shots — the scattering of the embers of the camp-fire into a thousand vanishing sparks even as the lurid gathering of savage humanity was dispersed and dissipated over the plain, and Gideon and the prisoner stood alone. But as the sheriff of Contra Costa with his rescuing posse swept by, the man

they had come to save fell forward in Gideon's arms with a bullet in his breast — the Parthian shot of the flying Vigilante leader.

The eager crowd that surged around him with outstretched, helping hands would have hustled Gideon aside. But the wounded man roused himself, and throwing an arm around the young preacher's neck, warned them back with the other. "Stand back!" he gasped. "He risked his life for mine! Look at him, boys! Wanted ter stand up 'twixt them hounds and me and draw their fire on himself! Ain't he just hell?" he stopped; an apologetic smile crossed his lips. "I clean forgot, pardner; but it's all right. I said I was ready to go; and I am." His arm slipped from Gideon's neck; he slid to the ground; he had fainted.

A dark, military-looking man pushed his way through the crowd — the surgeon, one of the posse, accompanied by a younger man fastidiously dressed. The former bent over the unconscious prisoner, and tore open his shirt; the latter followed his movements with a flush of anxious inquiry in his handsome, careless face. After a moment's pause the surgeon, without looking up, answered the young man's mute questioning. "Better send the sheriff here at once, Jack."

"He is here," responded the official, joining the group.

The surgeon looked up at him. "I am afraid they've put the case out of your jurisdiction, sheriff," he said grimly. "It's only a matter of a day or two at best — perhaps only a few hours. But he won't live to be taken back to jail."

"Will he live to go as far as Martinez?" asked the young man addressed as Jack.

"With care, perhaps."

"Will you be responsible for him, Jack Hamlin?" said the sheriff suddenly.

"I will."

"Then take him. Stay, he 's coming to."

The wounded man slowly opened his eyes. They fell upon Jack Hamlin with a pleased look of recognition, but almost instantly and anxiously glanced around as if seeking another. Leaning over him, Jack said gayly, "They 've passed you over to me, old man; are you willing?"

The wounded man's eyes assented, but still moved restlessly from side to side.

"Is there any one you want to go with you?"

"Yes," said the eyes.

"The doctor, of course?"

The eyes did not answer. Gideon dropped on his knees beside him. A ray of light flashed in the helpless man's eyes and transfigured his whole face.

"You want *him*?" said Jack incredulously.

"Yes," said the eyes.

"What — the preacher?"

The lips struggled to speak. Everybody bent down to hear his reply.

"You bet," he said faintly.

#### IV

It was early morning when the wagon containing the wounded man, Gideon, Jack Hamlin, and the surgeon crept slowly through the streets of Martinez and stopped before the door of the "Palmetto Shades." The upper floor of this saloon and hostelry was occupied by Mr. Hamlin as his private lodgings, and was fitted up with the usual luxury and more than the usual fastidiousness of his extravagant class. As the dusty and travel-worn party trod the soft carpets and brushed aside the silken hangings in their slow progress with their helpless burden to the lace-canopied and snowy couch of the young gambler, it seemed almost a profanation of some feminine seclusion. Gideon,

to whom such luxury was unknown, was profoundly troubled. The voluptuous ease and sensuousness, the refinements of a life of irresponsible indulgence, affected him with a physical terror to which in his late moment of real peril he had been a stranger; the gilding and mirrors blinded his eyes; even the faint perfume seemed to him an unhallowed incense, and turned him sick and giddy. Accustomed as he had been to disease and misery in their humblest places and meanest surroundings, the wounded desperado lying in laces and fine linen seemed to him monstrous and unnatural. It required all his self-abnegation, all his sense of duty, all his deep pity, and all the instinctive tact which was born of his gentle thoughtfulness for others, to repress a shrinking. But when the miserable cause of all again opened his eyes and sought Gideon's hand, he forgot it all. Happily, Hamlin, who had been watching him with wondering but critical eyes, mistook his concern. "Don't you worry about that gin-mill and hash-gymnasium downstairs," he said. "I've given the proprietor a thousand dollars to shut up shop as long as this thing lasts." That this was done from some delicate sense of respect to the preacher's domiciliary presence, and not entirely to secure complete quiet and seclusion for the invalid, was evident from the fact that Mr. Hamlin's drawing and dining rooms, and even the hall, were filled with eager friends and inquirers. It was discomposing to Gideon to find himself almost an equal subject of interest and curiosity to the visitors. The story of his simple devotion had lost nothing by report; hats were doffed in his presence that might have grown to their wearers' heads; the boldest eyes dropped as he passed by; he had only to put his pale face out of the bedroom door and the loudest discussion, heated by drink or affection, fell to a whisper. The surgeon, who had recognized the one dominant wish of the hopelessly sinking man, gravely retired, leav-



ing Gideon a few simple instructions and directions for their use. "He 'll last as long as he has need of you," he said respectfully. "My art is only second here. God help you both! When he wakes, make the most of your time."

In a few moments he did waken, and as before turned his fading look almost instinctively on the faithful, gentle eyes that were watching him. How Gideon made the most of his time did not transpire, but at the end of an hour, when the dying man had again lapsed into unconsciousness, he softly opened the door of the sitting-room.

Hamlin started hastily to his feet. He had cleared the room of his visitors, and was alone. He turned a moment towards the window before he faced Gideon with inquiring but curiously shining eyes.

"Well?" he said hesitatingly.

"Do you know Kate Somers?" asked Gideon.

Hamlin opened his brown eyes. "Yes."

"Can you send for her?"

"What, *here*?"

"Yes, here."

"What for?"

"To marry him," said Gideon gently. "There 's no time to lose."

"To *marry* him?"

"He wishes it."

"But say — oh, come, now," said Hamlin confidentially, leaning back with his hands on the top of a chair. "Ain't this playing it a little — just a *little* — too low down? Of course you mean well, and all that; but come, now, say — could n't you just let up on him there? Why, she" — Hamlin softly closed the door — "she 's got no character."

"The more reason he should give her one."

A cynical knowledge of matrimony imparted to him by the wives of others evidently colored Mr. Hamlin's views. "Well, perhaps it 's all the same if he's going to die.

But is n't it rather rough on *her*? I don't know," he added reflectively; "she was sniveling round here a little while ago, until I sent her away."

"You sent her away!" echoed Gideon.

"I did."

"Why?"

"Because *you* were here."

Nevertheless Mr. Hamlin departed, and in half an hour reappeared with two brilliantly dressed women. One, hysterical, tearful, frightened, and pallid, was the destined bride; the other, highly colored, excited, and pleasedly observant, was her friend. Two men hastily summoned from the anteroom as witnesses completed the group that moved into the bedroom and gathered round the bed.

The ceremony was simple and brief. It was well, for of all who took part in it none was more shaken by emotion than the officiating priest. The brilliant dresses of the women, the contrast of their painted faces with the waxen pallor of the dying man; the terrible incongruity of their voices, inflections, expressions, and familiarity; the mingled perfume of cosmetics and the faint odor of wine; the eyes of the younger woman following his movements with strange absorption, so affected him that he was glad when he could fall on his knees at last and bury his face in the pillow of the sufferer. The hand that had been placed in the bride's cold fingers slipped from them and mechanically sought Gideon's again. The significance of the unconscious act brought the first spontaneous tears into the woman's eyes. It was his last act, for when Gideon's voice was again lifted in prayer, the spirit for whom it was offered had risen with it, as it were, still lovingly hand in hand, from the earth forever.

The funeral was arranged for two days later, and Gideon found that his services had been so seriously yet so humbly counted upon by the friends of the dead man that he could

scarce find it in his heart to tell them that it was the function of the local preacher — an older and more experienced man than himself. “If it is,” said Jack Hamlin coolly, “I’m afraid he won’t get a yaller dog to come to his church; but if you say you’ll preach at the grave, there ain’t a man, woman, or child that will be kept away. Don’t you go back on your luck, now; it’s something awful and nigger-like. You’ve got this crowd where the hair is short; excuse me, but it’s so. Talk of revivals! You could give that one-horse show in Tasajara a hundred points, and skunk them easily.” Indeed had Gideon been accessible to vanity, the spontaneous homage he met with everywhere would have touched him more sympathetically and kindly than it did; but in the utter unconsciousness of his own power and the quality they worshiped in him, he felt alarmed and impatient of what he believed to be their weak sympathy with his own human weakness. In the depth of his unselfish heart, lit, it must be confessed, only by the scant, inefficient lamp of his youthful experience, he really believed he had failed in his apostolic mission because he had been unable to touch the hearts of the Vigilantes by oral appeal and argument. Feeling thus, the reverence of these irreligious people that surrounded him, the facile yielding of their habits and prejudices to his half-uttered wish, appeared to him only a temptation of the flesh. No one had sought him after the manner of the camp-meeting; he had converted the wounded man through a common weakness of their humanity. More than that, he was conscious of a growing fascination for the truthfulness and sincerity of that class; particularly of Mr. Jack Hamlin, whose conversion he felt he could never attempt, yet whose strange friendship alternately thrilled and frightened him.

It was the evening before the funeral. The coffin, half smothered in wreaths and flowers, stood upon trestles in

the anteroom, a large silver plate bearing an inscription on which for the second time Gideon read the name of the man he had converted. It was a name associated on the frontier so often with reckless hardihood, dissipation, and blood, that even now Gideon trembled at his presumption, and was chilled by a momentary doubt of the efficiency of his labor. Drawing unconsciously nearer to the mute subject of his thoughts, he threw his arms across the coffin and buried his face between them.

A stream of soft music, the echo of some forgotten song, seemed to Gideon to suddenly fill and possess the darkened room, and then to slowly die away like the opening and shutting of a door upon a flood of golden radiance. He listened with hushed breath and a beating heart. He had never heard anything like it before. Again the strain arose, the chords swelled round him, until from their midst a tenor voice broke high and steadfast, like a star in troubled skies. Gideon scarcely breathed. It was a hymn — but such a hymn. He had never conceived there could be such beautiful words, joined to such exquisite melody, and sung with a grace so tender and true. What were all other hymns to this ineffable yearning for light, for love, and for infinite rest? Thrilled and exalted, Gideon felt his doubts pierced and scattered by that illuminating cry. Suddenly he rose, and with a troubled thought pushed open the door to the sitting-room. It was Mr. Jack Hamlin sitting before a parlor organ. The music ceased.

“It was *you*,” stammered Gideon.

Jack nodded, struck a few chords by way of finish, and then wheeled round on the music-stool towards Gideon. His face was slightly flushed. “Yes. I used to be the organist and tenor in our church in the States. I used to snatch the sinners bald-headed with that. Do you know I reckon I ’ll sing that to-morrow, if you like, and maybe afterwards we ’ll — but” — he stopped — “we ’ll talk of

that after the funeral. It's business." Seeing Gideon still glancing with a troubled air from the organ to himself, he said: "Would you like to try that hymn with me? Come on!"

He again struck the chords. As the whole room seemed to throb with the music, Gideon felt himself again carried away. Glancing over Jack's shoulders, he could read the words but not the notes; yet, having a quick ear for rhythm, he presently joined in with a deep but uncultivated baritone. Together they forgot everything else, and at the end of an hour were only recalled by the presence of a silently admiring concourse of votive-offering friends who had gathered round them.

The funeral took place the next day at the grave dug in the public cemetery — a green area fenced in by the palisading tules. The words of Gideon were brief but humble; the strongest partisan of the dead man could find no fault in a confession of human frailty in which the speaker humbly confessed his share; and when the hymn was started by Hamlin and taken up by Gideon, the vast multitude, drawn by interest and curiosity, joined as in a solemn Amen.

Later, when those two strangely assorted friends had returned to Mr. Hamlin's rooms previous to Gideon's departure, the former, in a manner more serious than his habitual cynical good humor, began: "I said I had to talk business with you. The boys about here want to build a church for you, and are ready to plank the money down if you'll say it's a go. You understand they are n't asking you to run in opposition to that Gospel sharp — excuse me — that's here now, nor do they want you to run a side show in connection with it. They want you to be independent. They don't pin you down to any kind of religion, you know; whatever you care to give them — Methodist, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian — is mighty

good enough for them, if you'll expound it. You might give a little of each, or one on one day and one another — they'll never know the difference if you only mix the drinks yourself. They'll give you a house and guarantee you fifteen hundred dollars the first year."

He stopped and walked towards the window. The sunlight that fell upon his handsome face seemed to call back the careless smile to his lips and the reckless fire to his brown eyes. "I don't suppose there's a man among them that would n't tell you all this in a great deal better way than I do. But the darned fools — excuse me — would have *me* break it to you. Why, I don't know. I need n't tell you I like you — not only for what you did for George — but I like you for your style — for yourself. And I want you to accept. You could keep these rooms till they got a house ready for you. Together — you and me — we'd make that organ howl. But because I like it — because it's everything to us — and nothing to you, it don't seem square for me to ask it. Does it?"

Gideon replied by taking Hamlin's hand. His face was perfectly pale, but his look collected. He had not expected this offer, and yet when it was made he felt as if he had known it before — as if he had been warned of it — as if it was the great temptation of his life. Watching him with an earnestness only slightly overlaid by his usual manner, Hamlin went on: —

"I know it would be lonely here, and a man like you ought to have a wife for" — he slightly lifted his eyebrows — "for example's sake. I heard there was a young lady in the case over there in Tasajara — but the old people did n't see it on account of your position. They'd jump at it now. Eh? No? Well," continued Jack, with a decent attempt to conceal his cynical relief, "perhaps those boys have been so eager to find out all they could do for you that they've been sold. Perhaps we're making

equal fools of ourselves now in asking you to stay. But don't say no just yet — take a day or a week to think of it."

Gideon still pale but calm, cast his eyes around the elegant room, at the magic organ, then upon the slight handsome figure before him. "I *will* think of it," he said in a low voice, as he pressed Jack's hand. "And if I accept you will find me here to-morrow afternoon at this time; if I do not you will know that I keep with me wherever I go the kindness, the brotherly love, and the grace of God that prompts your offer, even though He withholds from me His blessed light, which alone can make me know His wish." He stopped and hesitated. "If you love me, Jack, don't ask me to stay, but pray for that light which alone can guide my feet back to you, or take me hence forever." He once more tightly pressed the hand of the embarrassed man before him and was gone.

Passers-by on the Martinez road that night remembered a mute and ghostly rider who, heedless of hail or greeting, moved by them as in a trance or vision. But the Widow Hiler the next morning, coming from the spring, found no abstraction or preoccupation in the soft eyes of Gideon Deane as he suddenly appeared before her, and gently relieved her of the bucket she was carrying. A quick flush of color over her brow and cheek-bones, as if a hot iron had passed there, and a certain astringent coyness, would have embarrassed any other man than him.

"Sho, it 's *you*. I reck'ned I 'd seen the last of you."

"You don't mean that, Sister Hiler?" said Gideon, with a gentle smile.

"Well, what with the report of your goin's on at Martinez and improvin' the occasion of that sinner's death, and leadin' a revival, I reckoned you 'd hev forgotten low folks at Tasajara. And if your goin' to be settled there in a new church, with new hearers, I reckon you 'll want new

surroundings too. Things change and young folks change with 'em."

They had reached the house. Her breath was quick and short as if she and not Gideon had borne the burden. He placed the bucket in its accustomed place and then gently took her hand in his. The act precipitated the last drop of feeble coquetry she had retained, and the old tears took its place. Let us hope for the last time. For as Gideon stooped and lifted her ailing babe in his strong arms, he said softly, "Whatever God has wrought for me since we parted, I know now He has called me to but one work."

"And that work?" she asked tremulously.

"To watch over the widow and fatherless. And with God's blessing, sister, and His holy ordinance, I am here to stay."



## DEVIL'S FORD

### CHAPTER I

It was a season of unequaled prosperity in Devil's Ford. The half a dozen cabins scattered along the banks of the North Fork, as if by some overflow of that capricious river, had become augmented during a week of fierce excitement by twenty or thirty others, that were huddled together on the narrow gorge of Devil's Spur, or cast up on its steep sides. So sudden and violent had been the change of fortune, that the dwellers in the older cabins had not had time to change with it, but still kept their old habits, customs, and even their old clothes. The flourpan in which their daily bread was mixed stood on the rude table side by side with the "prospecting pans," half full of gold washed up from their morning's work; the front windows of the newer tenements looked upon the one single thoroughfare, but the back door opened upon the uncleared wilderness, still haunted by the misshapen bulk of bear or the nightly gliding of catamount.

Neither had success as yet affected their boyish simplicity and the frankness of old frontier habits; they played with their new-found riches with the naïve delight of children, and rehearsed their glowing future with the importance and triviality of schoolboys.

"I've bin kalklatin'," said Dick Mattingly, leaning on his long-handled shovel with lazy gravity, "that when I go to Rome this winter, I'll get one o' them marble sharps to chisel me a statoo o' some kind to set up on the spot where we made our big strike. Suthin' to remember it by, you know."

"What kind o' statoo — Washington or Webster?" asked one of the Kearney brothers, without looking up from his work.

"No — I reckon one o' them fancy groups — one o' them Latin goddesses that Fairfax is always gassin' about, sorter leadin', directin', and bossin' us where to dig."

"You 'd make a healthy-lookin' figger in a group," responded Kearney, critically regarding an enormous patch in Mattingly's trousers. "Why don't you have a fountain instead?"

"Where 'll you get the water?" demanded the first speaker, in return. "You know there ain't enough in the North Fork to do a week's washing for the camp — to say nothin' of its color."

"Leave that to me," said Kearney, with self-possession. "When I've built that there reservoir on Devil's Spur, and bring the water over the ridge from Union Ditch, there 'll be enough to spare for that."

"Better mix it up, I reckon — have suthin' half statoo, half fountain," interposed the elder Mattingly, better known as "Maryland Joe," "and set it up afore the Town Hall and Free Library I 'm kalklatin' to give. Do *that*, and you can count on me."

After some further discussion, it was gravely settled that Kearney should furnish water brought from the Union Ditch twenty miles away, at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars, to feed a memorial fountain erected by Mattingly, worth a hundred thousand dollars, as a crowning finish to public buildings contributed by Maryland Joe, to the extent of half a million more. The disposition of these vast sums by gentlemen wearing patched breeches awakened no sense of the ludicrous, nor did any doubt, reservation, or contingency enter into the plans of the charming enthusiasts themselves. The foundation of their airy castles lay already before them in the strip of rich alluvium

on the river bank, where the North Fork, sharply curving round the base of Devil's Spur, had for centuries swept the detritus of gulch and cañon. They had barely crossed the threshold of this treasure-house, to find themselves rich men; what possibilities of affluence might be theirs when they had fully exploited their possessions! So confident were they of that ultimate prospect, that the wealth already thus obtained was religiously expended in engines and machinery for the boring of wells and the conveyance of that precious water which the exhausted river had long since ceased to yield. It seemed as if the gold they had taken out was by some ironical compensation gradually making its way back to the soil again through ditch and flume and reservoir.

Such was the position of affairs at Devil's Ford on the 13th of August, 1860. It was noon of a hot day. Whatever movement there was in the stifling air was seen rather than felt in a tremulous, quivering, upward-moving dust along the flank of the mountain, through which the spires of the pines were faintly visible. There was no water in the bared and burning bars of the river to reflect the vertical sun, but under its direct rays one or two tinned roofs and corrugated zinc cabins struck fire, a few canvas tents became dazzling to the eye, and the white wooded corral of the stage office and hotel insupportable. For two hours no one ventured in the glare of the open, or even to cross the narrow, unshadowed street, whose dull red dust seemed to glow between the lines of straggling houses. The heated shells of these green unseasoned tenements gave out a pungent odor of scorching wood and resin. The usual hurried, feverish toil in the claim was suspended; the pick and shovel were left sticking in the richest "pay gravel;" the toiling millionaires themselves, ragged, dirty, and perspiring, lay panting under the nearest shade, where their pipes went out listlessly, and conversation sank to monosyllables.

"There 's Fairfax," said Dick Mattingly, at last, with a lazy effort. His face was turned to the hillside, where a man had just emerged from the woods, and was halting irresolutely before the glaring expanse of upheaved gravel and glistening boulders that stretched between him and the shaded group. "He 's going to make a break for it," he added, as the stranger, throwing his linen coat over his head, suddenly started into an Indian trot through the pelting sunbeams toward them. This strange act was perfectly understood by the group, who knew that in that intensely dry heat the danger of exposure was lessened by active exercise and the profuse perspiration that followed it. In another moment the stranger had reached their side, dripping as if rained upon, mopping his damp curls and handsome bearded face with his linen coat, as he threw himself pantingly on the ground.

"I struck out over here first, boys, to give you a little warning," he said, as soon as he had gained breath. "That engineer will be down here to take charge as soon as the six o'clock stage comes in. He 's an oldish chap, has got a family of two daughters, and — I — am — d—d if he is not bringing them down here with him."

"Oh, go 'long!" exclaimed the five men in one voice, raising themselves on their hands and elbows, and glaring at the speaker.

"Fact, boys! Soon as I found it out I just waltzed into that Jew shop at the Crossing and bought up all the clothes that would be likely to suit you fellows, before anybody else got a show. I reckon I cleared out the shop. The duds are a little mixed in style, but I reckon they 're clean and whole, and a man might face a lady in 'em. I left them round at the old Buckeye Spring, where they 're handy without attracting attention. You boys can go there for a general wash-up, rig yourselves up without saying anything, and then meander back careless and easy

in your store clothes, just as the stage is coming in, sabe ?”

“Why didn't you let us know earlier?” asked Mattingly aggrievedly; “you've been back here at least an hour.”

“I've been getting some place ready for *them*,” returned the newcomer. “We might have managed to put the man somewhere, if he'd been alone, but these women want family accommodation. There was nothing left for me to do but to buy up Thompson's saloon.”

“No?” interrupted his audience, half in incredulity, half in protestation.

“Fact! You boys will have to take your drinks under canvas again, I reckon! But I made Thompson let those gold-framed mirrors that used to stand behind the bar go into the bargain, and they sort of furnish the room. You know the saloon is one of them patent houses you can take to pieces, and I've been reckoning you boys will have to pitch in and help me to take the whole shanty over to the laurel bushes, and put it up agin Kearney's cabin.”

“What 's all that?” said the younger Kearney, with an odd mingling of astonishment and bashful gratification.

“Yes, I reckon yours is the cleanest house, because it 's the newest, so you 'll just step out and let us knock in one o' the gables, and clap it on to the saloon, and make *one* house of it, don't you see? There 'll be two rooms, one for the girls and the other for the old man.”

The astonishment and bewilderment of the party had gradually given way to a boyish and impatient interest.

“Had n't we better do the job at once?” suggested Dick Mattingly.

“Or throw ourselves into those new clothes, so as to be ready,” added the younger Kearney, looking down at his ragged trousers. “I say, Fairfax, what are the girls like, eh?”

All the others had been dying to ask the question, yet one and all laughed at the conscious manner and blushing cheek of the questioner.

"You'll find out quick enough," returned Fairfax, whose curt carelessness did not, however, prevent a slight increase of color on his own cheek. "We'd better get that job off our hands before doing anything else. So, if you're ready, boys, we'll just waltz down to Thompson's and pack up the shanty. He's out of it by this time, I reckon. You might as well be perspiring to some purpose over there as gaspin' under this tree. We won't go back to work this afternoon, but knock off now, and call it half a day. Come! Hump yourselves, gentlemen. Are you ready? One, two, three, and away!"

In another instant the tree was deserted; the figures of the five millionaires of Devil's Ford, crossing the fierce glare of the open space, with boyish alacrity, glistened in the sunlight, and then disappeared in the nearest fringe of thickets.

## CHAPTER II

Six hours later, when the shadow of Devil's Spur had crossed the river, and spread a slight coolness over the flat beyond, the Pioneer coach, leaving the summit, began also to bathe its heated bulk in the long shadows of the descent. Conspicuous among the dusty passengers, the two pretty and youthful faces of the daughters of Philip Carr, mining superintendent and engineer, looked from the windows with no little anxiety towards their future home in the straggling settlement below, that occasionally came in view at the turns of the long zigzagging road. A slight look of comical disappointment passed between them as they gazed upon the sterile flat, dotted with unsightly excrescences that stood equally for cabins or mounds of stone and gravel. It was so feeble and inconsistent a culmination to the beautiful scenery they had passed through, so hopeless and imbecile a conclusion to the preparation of that long picturesque journey, with its glimpses of sylvan and pastoral glades and cañons, that, as the coach swept down the last incline, and the remorseless monotony of the dead level spread out before them, furrowed by ditches and indented by pits, under cover of shielding their cheeks from the impalpable dust that rose beneath the plunging wheels, they buried their faces in their handkerchiefs, to hide a few half-hysterical tears. Happily, their father, completely absorbed in a practical, scientific, and approving contemplation of the topography and material resources of the scene of his future labors, had no time to notice their defection. It was not until the stage drew up before a rambling tene-

ment bearing the inscription, "Hotel and Stage Office," that he became fully aware of it.

"We can't stop *here*, papa," said Christie Carr decidedly, with a shake of her pretty head. "You can't expect that."

Mr. Carr looked up at the building; it was half grocery, half saloon. Whatever other accommodation it contained must have been hidden in the rear, as the flat roof above was almost level with the raftered ceiling of the shop.

"Certainly," he replied hurriedly; "we'll see to that in a moment. I dare say it's all right. I told Fairfax we were coming. Somebody ought to be here."

"But they're not," said Jessie Carr indignantly; "and the few that were here scampered off like rabbits to their burrows as soon as they saw us get down."

It was true. The little group of loungers before the building had suddenly disappeared. There was the flash of a red shirt vanishing in an adjacent doorway; the fading apparition of a pair of high boots and blue overalls in another; the abrupt withdrawal of a curly blonde head from a sashless window over the way. Even the saloon was deserted, although a back door in the dim recess seemed to creak mysteriously. The stage-coach, with the other passengers, had already rattled away.

"I certainly think Fairfax understood that I" — began Mr. Carr.

He was interrupted by the pressure of Christie's fingers on his arm and a subdued exclamation from Jessie, who was staring down the street.

"What are they?" she whispered in her sister's ear. "Nigger minstrels, a circus, or what?"

The five millionaires of Devil's Ford had just turned the corner of the straggling street, and were approaching in single file. One glance was sufficient to show that they had already availed themselves of the new clothing bought



by Fairfax, had washed, and one or two had shaved. But the result was startling.

Through some fortunate coincidence in size, Dick Mattingly was the only one who had achieved an entire suit. But it was of funereal black cloth, and although relieved at one extremity by a pair of high riding-boots, in which his too short trousers were tucked, and at the other by a tall white hat, and cravat of aggressive yellow, the effect was depressing. In agreeable contrast, his brother, Maryland Joe, was attired in a thin fawn-colored summer overcoat, lightly worn open, so as to show the unstarched bosom of a white embroidered shirt, and a pair of nankeen trousers and pumps. The Kearney brothers had divided a suit between them, the elder wearing a tightly fitting, single-breasted blue frock coat and a pair of pink striped cotton trousers, while the younger candidly displayed the trousers of his brother's suit, as a harmonious change to a shining black alpaca coat and crimson neckerchief. Fairfax, who brought up the rear, had, with characteristic unselfishness, contented himself with a French workman's blue blouse and a pair of white duck trousers. Had they shown the least consciousness of their finery, or of its absurdity, they would have seemed despicable. But only one expression beamed on the five sunburnt and shining faces — a look of unaffected boyish gratification and unrestricted welcome.

They halted before Mr. Carr and his daughters, simultaneously removed their various and remarkable head coverings, and waited until Fairfax advanced and severally presented them. Jessie Carr's half-frightened smile took refuge in the trembling shadows of her dark lashes; Christie Carr stiffened slightly, and looked straight before her.

"We reckoned — that is — we intended to meet you and the young ladies at the grade," said Fairfax, reddening a little as he endeavored to conceal his too ready slang, "and save you from trapesing — from dragging yourselves up grade again to your house."

"Then there *is* a house?" said Jessie, with an alarmingly frank laugh of relief, that was, however, as frankly reflected in the boyishly appreciative eyes of the young men.

"Such as it is," responded Fairfax, with a shade of anxiety, as he glanced at the fresh and pretty costumes of the young women, and dubiously regarded the two Saratoga trunks resting hopelessly on the veranda. "I'm afraid it is n't much, for what you're accustomed to. But," he added more cheerfully, "it will do for a day or two, and perhaps you'll give us the pleasure of showing you the way there now."

The procession was quickly formed. Mr. Carr, alive only to the actual business that had brought him there, at once took possession of Fairfax, and began to disclose his plans for the working of the mine, occasionally halting to look at the work already done in the ditches, and to examine the field of his future operations. Fairfax, not displeased at being thus relieved of a lighter attendance on Mr. Carr's daughters, nevertheless from time to time cast a paternal glance backwards upon their escorts, who had each seized a handle of the two trunks, and were carrying them in couples at the young ladies' side. The occupation did not offer much freedom for easy gallantry, but no sign of discomfiture or uneasiness was visible in the grateful faces of the young men. The necessity of changing hands at times with their burdens brought a corresponding change of cavalier at the lady's side, although it was observed that the younger Kearney, for the sake of continuing a conversation with Miss Jessie, kept his grasp of the handle nearest the young lady until his hand was nearly cut through, and his arm worn out by exhaustion.

"The only thing on wheels in the camp is a mule wagon, and the mules are packin' gravel from the river this afternoon," explained Dick Mattingly apologetically to Christie, "or we'd have toted — I mean carried — you and your

baggage up to the shant — the — your house. Give us two weeks more, Miss Carr — only two weeks to wash up our work and realize — and we 'll give you a pair of 2.40 step-pers and a skeleton buggy to meet you at the top of the hill and drive you over to the cabin. Perhaps you 'd prefer a regular carriage; some ladies do. And a nigger driver. But what 's the use of planning anything? Afore that time comes we 'll have run you up a house on the hill, and you shall pick out the spot. It would n't take long — unless you preferred brick. I suppose we could get brick over from La Grange, if you cared for it, but it would take longer. If you could put up for a time with something of stained glass and a mahogany veranda" —

In spite of her cold indignation, and the fact that she could understand only a part of Mattingly's speech, Christie comprehended enough to make her lift her clear eyes to the speaker, as she replied freezingly that she feared she would not trouble them long with her company.

"Oh, you 'll get over that," responded Mattingly, with an exasperating confidence that drove her nearly frantic, from the manifest kindness of intent that made it impossible for her to resent it. "I felt that way myself at first. Things will look strange and unsociable for a while, until you get the hang of them. You 'll naturally stamp round and cuss a little" — he stopped in conscious consternation.

With ready tact, and before Christie could reply, Maryland Joe had put down the trunk and changed hands with his brother.

"You must n't mind Dick, or he 'll go off and kill himself with shame," he whispered laughingly in her ear. "He means all right, but he 's picked up so much slang here he 's about forgotten how to talk English, and it 's nigh on to four years since he 's met a young lady."

Christie did not reply. Yet the laughter of her sister in advance with the Kearney brothers seemed to make the

reserve with which she tried to crush further familiarity only ridiculous.

"Do you know many operas, Miss Carr?"

She looked at the boyish, interested, sunburnt face so near to her own, and hesitated. After all, why should she add to her other real disappointments by taking this absurd creature seriously?

"In what way?" she returned, with a half smile.

"To play. On the piano, of course. There is n't one nearer here than Sacramento; but I reckon we could get a small one by Thursday. You could n't do anything on a banjo?" he added doubtfully; "Kearney's got one."

"I imagine it would be very difficult to carry a piano over those mountains," said Christie laughingly, to avoid the collateral of the banjo.

"We got a billiard-table over from Stockton," half bashfully interrupted Dick Mattingly, struggling from his end of the trunk to recover his composure, "and it had to be brought over in sections on the back of a mule, so I don't see why" — He stopped short again in confusion, at a sign from his brother, and then added, "I mean, of course, that a piano is a heap more delicate, and valuable, and all that sort of thing, but it's worth trying for."

"Fairfax was always saying he'd get one for himself, so I reckon it's possible," said Joe.

"Does he play?" asked Christie.

"You bet," said Joe, quite forgetting himself in his enthusiasm. "He can snatch Mozart and Beethoven bald-headed."

In the embarrassing silence that followed this speech the fringe of pine wood nearest the flat was reached. Here there was a rude "clearing," and beneath an enormous pine stood the two recently joined tenements. There was no attempt to conceal the point of junction between Kearney's cabin and the newly transported saloon from the flat — no

architectural illusion of the palpable collusion of the two buildings, which seemed to be telescoped into each other. The front room or living-room occupied the whole of Kearney's cabin. It contained, in addition to the necessary articles for housekeeping, a "bunk" or berth for Mr. Carr, so as to leave the second building entirely to the occupation of his daughters as bedroom and boudoir.

There was a half-humorous, half-apologetic exhibition of the rude utensils of the living-room, and then the young men turned away as the two girls entered the open door of the second room. Neither Christie nor Jessie could for a moment understand the delicacy which kept these young men from accompanying them into the room they had but a few moments before decorated and arranged with their own hands, and it was not until they turned to thank their strange entertainers that they found that they were gone.

The arrangement of the second room was rude and bizarre, but not without a singular originality and even tastefulness of conception. What had been the counter or "bar" of the saloon, gorgeous in white and gold, now sawn in two and divided, was set up on opposite sides of the room as separate dressing-tables, decorated with huge bunches of azaleas, that hid the rough earthenware bowls, and gave each table the appearance of a vestal altar.

The huge gilt plate-glass mirror which had hung behind the bar still occupied one side of the room, but its length was artfully divided by an enormous rosette of red, white, and blue muslin — one of the surviving Fourth of July decorations of Thompson's saloon. On either side of the door two pathetic-looking, convent-like cots, covered with spotless sheeting, and heaped up in the middle, like a snow-covered grave, had attracted their attention. They were still staring at them when Mr. Carr anticipated their curiosity.

"I ought to tell you that the young men confided to me the fact that there was neither bed nor mattress to be had

on the Ford. They have filled some flour-sacks with clean dry moss from the woods, and put half a dozen blankets on the top, and they hope you can get along until the messenger who starts to-night for La Grange can bring some bedding over."

Jessie flew with mischievous delight to satisfy herself of the truth of this marvel. "It's so, Christie," she said laughingly — "three flour-sacks apiece; but I'm jealous: yours are all marked 'superfine,' and mine 'middlings.'"

Mr. Carr had remained uneasily watching Christie's shadowed face.

"What matters?" she said dryly. "The accommodation is all in keeping."

"It will be better in a day or two," he continued, casting a longing look towards the door — the first refuge of masculine weakness in an impending domestic emergency. "I'll go and see what can be done," he said feebly, with a sidelong impulse towards the opening and freedom. "I've got to see Fairfax again to-night anyway."

"One moment, father," said Christie wearily. "Did you know anything of this place and these — these people — before you came?"

"Certainly — of course I did," he returned, with the sudden testiness of disturbed abstraction. "What are you thinking of? I knew the geological strata and the — the report of Fairfax and his partners before I consented to take charge of the works. And I can tell you that there is a fortune here. I intend to make my own terms, and share in it."

"And not take a salary or some sum of money down?" said Christie, slowly removing her bonnet in the same resigned way.

"I am not a hired man, or a workman, Christie," said her father sharply. "You ought not to oblige me to remind you of that."

"But the hired men — the superintendent and his workmen — were the only ones who ever got anything out of your last experiment with Colonel Waters at La Grange, and — and we at least lived among civilized people there."

"These young men are not common people, Christie; even if they have forgotten the restraints of speech and manners, they 're gentlemen."

"Who are willing to live like — like negroes."

"You can make them what you please."

Christie raised her eyes. There was a certain cynical ring in her father's voice that was unlike his usual hesitating abstraction. It both puzzled and pained her.

"I mean," he said hastily, "that you have the same opportunity to direct the lives of these young men into more regular, disciplined channels that I have to regulate and correct their foolish waste of industry and material here. It would at least beguile the time for you."

Fortunately for Mr. Carr's escape and Christie's uneasiness, Jessie, who had been examining the details of the living-room, broke in upon this conversation.

"I'm sure it will be as good as a perpetual picnic. George Kearney says we can have a cooking-stove under the tree outside at the back, and as there will be no rain for three months we can do the cooking there, and that will give us more room for — for the piano when it comes; and there 's an old squaw to do the cleaning and washing-up any day — and — and — it will be real fun."

She stopped breathlessly, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes — a charming picture of youth and trustfulness. Mr. Carr had seized the opportunity to escape.

"Really, now, Christie," said Jessie confidentially, when they were alone, and Christie had begun to unpack her trunk, and to mechanically put her things away, "they 're not so bad."

"Who?" asked Christie.

"Why, the Kearneys, and Mattinglys, and Fairfax, and the lot, provided you don't look at their clothes. And think of it! they told me — for they tell me *everything* in the most alarming way — that those clothes were bought to please *us*. A scramble of things bought at La Grange, without reference to size or style. And to hear these creatures talk, why, you'd think they were Astors or Rothschilds. Think of that little one with the curls — I don't believe he's over seventeen, for all his baby mustache — says he's going to build an assembly hall for us to give a dance in next month; and apologizes the next breath to tell us that there isn't any milk to be had nearer than La Grange, and we must do without it, and use syrup in our tea to-morrow."

"And where is all this wealth?" said Christie, forcing herself to smile at her sister's animation.

"Under our very feet, my child, and all along the river. Why, what we thought was pure and simple mud is what they call 'gold-bearing cement.'"

"I suppose that is why they don't brush their boots and trousers, it's so precious," returned Christie dryly. "And have they ever translated this precious dirt into actual coin?"

"Bless you, yes. Why, that dirty little gutter, you know, that ran along the side of the road and followed us down the hill all the way here, that cost them — let me see — yes, nearly sixty thousand dollars. And fancy! papa's just condemned it — says it won't do; and they've got to build another."

An impatient sigh from Christie drew Jessie's attention to her troubled eyebrows.

"Don't worry about our disappointment, dear. It isn't so very great. I dare say we'll be able to get along here in some way, until papa is rich again. You know they intend to make him share with them."



"It strikes me that he is sharing with them already," said Christie, glancing bitterly round the cabin; "sharing everything — ourselves, our lives, our tastes."

"Ye-e-s!" said Jessie, with vaguely hesitating assent. "Yes, even these:" she showed two dice in the palm of her little hand. "I found 'em in the drawer of our dressing-table."

"Throw them away," said Christie impatiently.

But Jessie's small fingers closed over the dice. "I'll give them to the little Kearney. I dare say they were the poor boy's playthings."

The appearance of these relics of wild dissipation, however, had lifted Christie out of her sublime resignation. "For Heaven's sake, Jessie," she said, "look around and see if there is anything more!"

To make sure, they each began to scrimp; the broken-spirited Christie exhibiting both alacrity and penetration in searching obscure corners. In the dining-room, behind the dresser, three or four books were discovered: an odd volume of Thackeray, another of Dickens, a memorandum-book or diary. "This seems to be Latin," said Jessie, fishing out a smaller book. "I can't read it."

"It's just as well you should n't," said Christie shortly, whose ideas of a general classical impropriety had been gathered from the pages of Lemprière's dictionary. "Put it back directly."

Jessie returned certain odes of one Horatius Flaccus to the corner, and uttered an exclamation. "Oh, Christie! here are some letters tied up with a ribbon."

They were two or three prettily written letters, exhaling a faint odor of refinement and of the pressed flowers that peeped from between the loose leaves. "I see, 'My darling Fairfax.' It's from some woman."

"I don't think much of her, whosoever she is," said Christie, tossing the intact packet back into the corner.

"Nor I," echoed Jessie.

Nevertheless, by some feminine inconsistency, evidently the circumstance did make them think more of *him*, for a minute later, when they had reëntered their own room, Christie remarked, "The idea of petting a man by his family name! Think of mamma ever having called papa 'darling Carr'!"

"Oh, but his family name is n't Fairfax," said Jessie hastily; "that's his *first* name, his Christian name. I forget what's his other name, but nobody ever calls him by it."

"Do you mean," said Christie, with glistening eyes and awful deliberation — "do you mean to say that we're expected to fall in with this insufferable familiarity? I suppose they'll be calling *us* by our Christian names next."

"Oh, but they do!" said Jessie mischievously.

"What!"

"They call me Miss Jessie; and Kearney, the little one, asked me if Christie played."

"And what did you say?"

"I said that you did," answered Jessie, with an affectation of cherubic simplicity. "You do, dear; don't you? . . . There, don't get angry, darling; I could n't flare up all of a sudden in the face of that poor little creature; he looked so absurd — and so — so honest."

Christie turned away, relapsing into her old resigned manner, and assuming her household duties in a quiet, temporizing way that was, however, without hope or expectation.

Mr. Carr, who had dined with his friends under the excuse of not adding to the awkwardness of the first day's housekeeping, returned late at night with a mass of papers and drawings, into which he afterwards withdrew, but not until he had delivered himself of a mysterious package

intrusted to him by the young men for his daughters. It contained a contribution to their board in the shape of a silver spoon and battered silver mug, which Jessie chose to facetiously consider as an affecting reminiscence of the youthful Kearney's christening days — which it probably was.

The young girls retired early to their white snow-drifts: Jessie not without some hilarious struggles with hers, in which she was, however, quickly surprised by the deep and refreshing sleep of youth; Christie to lie awake and listen to the night wind, that had changed from the first cool whispers of sunset to the sturdy breath of the mountain. At times the frail house shook and trembled. Wandering gusts laden with the deep resinous odors of the wood found their way through the imperfect jointure of the two cabins, swept her cheek and even stirred her long, wide-open lashes. A broken spray of pine needles rustled along the roof, or a pine cone dropped with a quick reverberating tap-tap that for an instant startled her. Lying thus, wide awake, she fell into a dreamy reminiscence of the past, hearing snatches of old melody in the moving pines, fragments of sentences, old words, and familiar epithets in the murmuring wind at her ear, and even the faint breath of long-forgotten kisses on her cheek. She remembered her mother — a pallid creature, who had slowly faded out of one of her father's vague speculations in a vaguer speculation of her own, beyond his ken — whose place she had promised to take at her father's side. The words, "Watch over him, Christie; he needs a woman's care," again echoed in her ears, as if borne on the night wind from the lonely grave in the lonelier cemetery by the distant sea. She had devoted herself to him with some little sacrifices of self, only remembered now for their uselessness in saving her father the disappointment that sprang from his sanguine and one-idea'd temperament. She thought

of him lying asleep in the other room, ready on the morrow to devote those fateful qualities to the new enterprise, that with equally fateful disposition she believed would end in failure. It did not occur to her that the doubts of her own practical nature were almost as dangerous and illogical as his enthusiasm, and that for that reason she was fast losing what little influence she possessed over him. With the example of her mother's weakness before her eyes, she had become an unsparing and distrustful critic, with the sole effect of awakening his distrust and withdrawing his confidence from her. He was beginning to deceive her as he had never deceived her mother. Even Jessie knew more of this last enterprise than she did herself.

All that did not tend to decrease her utter restlessness. It was already past midnight when she noticed that the wind had again abated. The mountain breeze had by this time possessed the stifling valleys and heated bars of the river in its strong, cold embraces; the equilibrium of nature was restored, and a shadowy mist rose from the hollow. A stillness, more oppressive and intolerable than the previous commotion, began to pervade the house and the surrounding woods. She could hear the regular breathing of the sleepers; she even fancied she could detect the faint pulses of the more distant life in the settlement. The far-off barking of a dog, a lost shout, the indistinct murmur of some nearer watercourse — mere phantoms of sound — made the silence more irritating. With a sudden resolution she arose, dressed herself quietly and completely, threw a heavy cloak over her head and shoulders, and opened the door between the living-room and her own. Her father was sleeping soundly in his bunk in the corner. She passed noiselessly through the room, opened the lightly fastened door, and stepped out into the night.

In the irritation and disgust of her walk hither, she had never noticed the situation of the cabin, as it nestled on

the slope at the fringe of the woods; in the preoccupation of her disappointment and the mechanical putting away of her things, she had never looked once from the window of her room, or glanced backward out of the door that she had entered. The view before her was a revelation — a reproach, a surprise that took away her breath. Over her shoulders the newly risen moon poured a flood of silvery light, stretching from her feet across the shining bars of the river to the opposite bank, and on up to the very crest of the Devil's Spur — no longer a huge bulk of crushing shadow, but the steady exaltation of plateau, spur, and terrace clothed with replete and unutterable beauty. In this magical light that beauty seemed to be sustained and carried along by the river winding at its base, lifted again to the broad shoulder of the mountain, and lost only in the distant vista of deathlike, overcrowning snow. Behind and above where she stood the towering woods seemed to be waiting with opened ranks to absorb her with the little cabin she had quitted, dwarfed into insignificance in the vast prospect; but nowhere was there another sign or indication of human life and habitation. She looked in vain for the settlement, for the rugged ditches, the scattered cabins, and the unsightly heaps of gravel. In the glamour of the moonlight they had vanished; a veil of silver-gray vapor touched here and there with ebony shadows masked its site. A black strip beyond was the river bank. All else was changed. With a sudden sense of awe and loneliness she turned to the cabin and its sleeping inmates — all that seemed left to her in the vast and stupendous domination of rock and wood and sky.

But in another moment the loneliness passed. A new and delicious sense of an infinite hospitality and friendliness in their silent presence began to possess her. This same slighted, forgotten, uncomprehended, but still foolish and forgiving Nature seemed to be bending over her

frightened and listening ear with vague but thrilling murmurings of freedom and independence. She felt her heart expand with its wholesome breath, her soul fill with its sustaining truth. She felt —

What was that?

An unmistakable outburst of a drunken song at the foot of the slope: —

“ Oh, my name it is Johnny from Pike,  
I'm h—ll on a spree or a strike.” . . .

She stopped as crimson with shame and indignation as if the viewless singer had risen before her.

“ I knew when to bet, and get up and get!”

“ Hush! D—n it all. Don't you hear?”

There was the sound of hurried whispers, a “No” and “Yes,” and then a dead silence.

Christie crept nearer to the edge of the slope in the shadow of a buckeye. In the clearer view she could distinguish a staggering figure in the trail below who had evidently been stopped by two other expostulating shadows that were approaching from the shelter of a tree.

“ Sho! — did n't know!”

The staggering figure endeavored to straighten itself, and then slouched away in the direction of the settlement. The two mysterious shadows retreated again to the tree, and were lost in its deeper shadow. Christie darted back to the cabin, and softly reentered her room.

“ I thought I heard a noise that woke me, and I missed you,” said Jessie, rubbing her eyes. “ Did you see anything?”

“ No,” said Christie, beginning to undress.

“ You were n't frightened, dear?”

“ Not in the least,” said Christie, with a strange little laugh. “ Go to sleep.” .

### CHAPTER III

THE five impulsive millionaires of Devil's Ford fulfilled not a few of their most extravagant promises. In less than six weeks Mr. Carr and his daughters were installed in a new house, built near the site of the double cabin, which was again transferred to the settlement, in order to give greater seclusion to the fair guests. It was a long, roomy, one-storied villa, with a not unpicturesque combination of deep veranda and trelliswork, which relieved the flat monotony of the interior and the barrenness of the freshly cleared ground. An upright piano, brought from Sacramento, occupied the corner of the parlor. A suite of gorgeous furniture, whose pronounced and extravagant glories the young girls instinctively hid under home-made linen covers, had also been spoils from afar. Elsewhere the house was filled with ornaments and decorations that in their incongruity forcibly recalled the gilded plate-glass mirrors of the bedroom in the old cabin. In the hasty furnishing of this Aladdin's palace, the slaves of the ring had evidently seized upon anything that would add to its glory, without reference always to fitness.

"I wish it did n't look so cussedly like a robber's cave," said George Kearney, when they were taking a quiet preliminary survey of the unclassified treasures, before the Carrs took possession.

"Or a gambling hell," said his brother reflectively.

"It's about the same thing, I reckon," said Dick Mattingly, who was supposed, in his fiery youth, to have encountered the similarity.

Nevertheless, the two girls managed to bestow the heterogeneous collection with tasteful adaptation to their needs. A crystal chandelier, which had once lent a fascinating illusion to the game of monte, hung unlighted in the broad hall, where a few other bizarre and public articles were relegated. A long red sofa or bench, which had done duty beside a billiard-table, found a place here also. Indeed, it is to be feared that some of the more rustic and bashful youths of Devil's Ford, who had felt it incumbent upon them to pay their respects to the newcomers, were more at ease in this vestibule than in the arcana beyond, whose glories they could see through the open door. To others, it represented a recognized state of probation before their *re-entrée* into civilization again. "I reckon, if you don't mind, miss," said the spokesman of one party, "ez this is our first call, we'll sorter hang out in the hall yer, until you're used to us." On another occasion, one Whiskey Dick, impelled by a sense of duty, paid a visit to the new house and its fair occupants, in a fashion frankly recounted by him afterwards at the bar of the Tecumseh Saloon.

"You see, boys, I dropped in there the other night, when some of you fellows was doin' the high-toned 'thank'e, marm' business in the parlor. I just came to anchor in the corner of the sofy in the hall, without lettin' on to say that I was there, and took up a Webster's Dictionary that was on the table and laid it open—keerless like, on my knees, ez if I was sorter consultin' it—and kinder dozed off there, listenin' to you fellows gassin' with the young ladies, and that yer Miss Christie just snakin' music outer that pianner, and I reckon I fell asleep. Anyhow, I was there nigh on to two hours. It's mighty soothin', them fashionable calls; sorter knocks the old camp dust outer a fellow, and sets him up again."

It would have been well if the new life of the Devil's Ford had shown no other irregularity than the harmless



eccentricities of its original locators. But the news of its sudden fortune, magnified by report, began presently to flood the settlement with another class of adventurers. A tide of waifs, strays, and malcontents of old camps along the river began to set towards Devil's Ford, in very much the same fashion as the débris, drift, and alluvium had been carried down in bygone days and cast upon its banks. A few immigrant wagons, diverted from the highways of travel by the fame of the new diggings, halted upon the slopes of Devil's Spur and on the arid flats of the Ford, and disgorged their sallow freight of alkali-poisoned, prematurely aged women and children and maimed and fever-stricken men. Against this rude form of domesticity were opposed the chromo-tinted dresses and extravagant complexions of a few single unattended women — happily seen more often at night and behind gilded bars than in the garish light of day — and an equal number of pale-faced, dark-mustached, well-dressed, and suspiciously idle men. A dozen rivals of Thompson's saloon had sprung up along the narrow main street. There were two new hotels — one a "Temperance House," whose ascetic quality was confined only to the abnegation of whiskey — a rival stage office, and a small one-storied building, from which the "Sierran Banner" fluttered weekly, for "ten dollars a year, in advance." Insufferable in the glare of a Sabbath sun, bleak, windy, and flaring in the gloom of a Sabbath night, and hopelessly depressing on all days of the week, the First Presbyterian Church lifted its blunt steeple from the barrenest area of the flats, and was hideous! The civic improvements so enthusiastically contemplated by the five millionaires in the earlier pages of this voracious chronicle — the fountain, reservoir, town-hall, and free library — had not yet been erected. Their sites had been anticipated by more urgent buildings and mining works, unfortunately not considered in the sanguine dreams of the enthusiasts, and,

more significant still, their cost and expense had been also anticipated by the enormous outlay of their earnings in the work upon Devil's Ditch.

Nevertheless, the liberal fulfillment of their promise in the new house in the suburbs blinded the young girls' eyes to their shortcomings in the town. Their own remoteness and elevation above its feverish life kept them from the knowledge of much that was strange, and perhaps disturbing to their equanimity. As they did not mix with the immigrant women — Miss Jessie's good-natured intrusion into one of their half-nomadic camps one day having been met with rudeness and suspicion — they gradually fell into the way of trusting the responsibility of new acquaintances to the hands of their original hosts, and of consulting them in the matter of local recreation. It thus occurred that one day the two girls, on their way to the main street for an hour's shopping at the Ville de Paris and Variety Store, were stopped by Dick Mattingly a few yards from their house with the remark that, as the county election was then in progress, it would be advisable for them to defer their intention for a few hours. As he did not deem it necessary to add that two citizens, in the exercise of a freeman's franchise, had been supplementing their ballots with bullets, in front of an admiring crowd, they knew nothing of the accident that removed from Devil's Ford an entertaining stranger, who had only the night before partaken of their hospitality.

A week or two later, returning one morning from a stroll in the forest, Christie and Jessie were waylaid by George Kearney and Fairfax, and, under pretext of being shown a new and romantic trail, were diverted from the regular path. This enabled Mattingly and Maryland Joe to cut down the body of a man hanged by the Vigilance Committee a few hours before on the regular trail, and to remonstrate with the committee on the incompatibility of such exhibitions with a maidenly worship of nature.

"With the whole county to hang a man in," expostulated Joe, "you might keep clear of Carr's woods."

It is needless to add that the young girls never knew of this act of violence, or the delicacy that kept them in ignorance of it. Mr. Carr was too absorbed in business to give heed to what he looked upon as a convulsion of society as natural as a geological upheaval, and too prudent to provoke the criticism of his daughters by comment in their presence.

An equally unexpected confidence, however, took its place. Mr. Carr having finished his coffee one morning, lingered a moment over his perfunctory paternal embraces, with the awkwardness of a preoccupied man endeavoring by the assumption of a lighter interest to veil another abstraction.

"And what are we doing to-day, Christie?" he asked, as Jessie left the dining-room.

"Oh, pretty much the usual thing — nothing in particular. If George Kearney gets the horses from the summit, we're going to ride over to Indian Spring to picnic. Fairfax — Mr. Munroe — I always forget that man's real name in this dreadfully familiar country — well, he's coming to escort us, and take me, I suppose — that is, if Kearney takes Jessie."

"A very nice arrangement," returned her father, with a slight nervous contraction of the corners of his mouth and eyelids to indicate mischievousness. "I've no doubt they'll both be here. You know they usually are — ha! ha! And what about the two Mattinglys and Philip Kearney, eh?" he continued; "won't they be jealous?"

"It is n't their turn," said Christie carelessly; "besides, they'll probably be there."

"And I suppose they're beginning to be resigned," said Carr, smiling.

"What on earth are you talking of, father?"

She turned her clear brown eyes upon him, and was re-

garding him with such manifest unconsciousness of the drift of his speech, and, withal, a little vague impatience of his archness, that Mr. Carr was feebly alarmed. It had the effect of banishing his assumed playfulness, which made his serious explanation the more irritating.

"Well, I rather thought that — that young Kearney was paying considerable attention to — to — to Jessie," replied her father, with hesitating gravity.

"What! that boy?"

"Young Kearney is one of the original locators, and an equal partner in the mine. A very enterprising young fellow. In fact, much more advanced and bolder in his conceptions than the others. I find no difficulty with him."

At another time Christie would have questioned the convincing quality of this proof, but she was too much shocked at her father's first suggestion to think of anything else.

"You don't mean to say, father, that you are talking seriously of these men — your friends — whom we see every day — and our only company?"

"No, no!" said Mr. Carr hastily; "you misunderstand. I don't suppose that Jessie or you" —

"Or *me!* Am *I* included?"

"You don't let me speak, Christie. I mean, I am not talking seriously," continued Mr. Carr, with his most serious aspect, "of you and Jessie in this matter; but it may be a serious thing to these young men to be thrown continually in the company of two attractive girls."

"I understand — you mean that we should not see so much of them," said Christie, with a frank expression of relief so genuine as to utterly discompose her father. "Perhaps you are right, though I fail to discover anything serious in the attentions of young Kearney to Jessie — or — whoever it may be — to me. But it will be very easy to remedy it, and see less of them. Indeed, we might begin to-day with some excuse."

"Yes — certainly. Of course!" said Mr. Carr, fully convinced of his utter failure, but, like most weak creatures, consoling himself with the reflection that he had not shown his hand or committed himself. "Yes; but it would perhaps be just as well for the present to let things go on as they were. We'll talk of it again — I'm in a hurry now," and edging himself through the door, he slipped away.

"What do you think is father's last idea?" said Christie, with, I fear, a slight lack of reverence in her tone, as her sister reëntered the room. "He thinks George Kearney is paying you too much attention."

"No!" said Jessie, replying to her sister's half-interrogative, half-amused glance with a frank, unconscious smile.

"Yes, and he says that Fairfax — I think it's Fairfax — is equally fascinated with *me*."

Jessie's brow slightly contracted as she looked curiously at her sister.

"Of all things," she said, "I wonder if any one has put that idea into his dear old head. He could n't have thought it himself."

"I don't know," said Christie musingly; "but perhaps it's just as well if we kept a little more to ourselves for a while."

"Did father say so?" said Jessie quickly.

"No, but that is evidently what he meant."

"Ye-es," said Jessie slowly, "unless" —

"Unless what?" said Christie sharply. "Jessie, you don't for a moment mean to say that you could possibly conceive of anything else?"

"I mean to say," said Jessie, stealing her arm around her sister's waist demurely, "that you are perfectly right. We'll keep away from these fascinating Devil's Forders, and particularly the youngest Kearney. I believe there has been some ill-natured gossip. I remember that the

other day, when we passed the shanty of that Pike County family on the slope, there were three women at the door, and one of them said something that made poor little Kearney turn white and pink alternately, and dance with suppressed rage. I suppose the old lady — M'Corkle, that's her name — would like to have a share of our cavaliers for her Euphemy and Mamie. I dare say it's only right; I would lend them the cherub occasionally, and you might let them have Mr. Munroe twice a week."

She laughed, but her eyes sought her sister's with a certain watchfulness of expression.

Christie shrugged her shoulders, with a suggestion of disgust.

"Don't joke. We ought to have thought of all this before."

"But when we first knew them, in the dear old cabin, there was n't any other woman and nobody to gossip, and that's what made it so nice. I don't think so very much of civilization, do you?" said the young lady pertly.

Christie did not reply. Perhaps she was thinking the same thing. It certainly had been very pleasant to enjoy the spontaneous and chivalrous homage of these men, with no further suggestion of recompense or responsibility than the permission to be worshiped; but beyond that she racked her brain in vain to recall any look or act that proclaimed the lover. These men, whom she had found so relapsed into barbarism that they had forgotten the most ordinary forms of civilization; these men, even in whose extravagant admiration there was a certain loss of self-respect, that as a woman she would never forgive; these men, who seemed to belong to another race — impossible! Yet it was so.

"What construction must they have put upon her father's acceptance of their presents — of their company — of her freedom in their presence? No! they must have

understood from the beginning that she and her sister had never looked upon them except as transient hosts and chance acquaintances. Any other idea was preposterous. And yet" —

It was the recurrence of this "yet" that alarmed her. For she remembered now that but for their slavish devotion they might claim to be her equal. According to her father's account, they had come from homes as good as their own; they were certainly more than her equal in fortune; and her father had come to them as an employee, until they had taken him into partnership. If there had only been sentiment of any kind connected with any of them! But they were all alike, brave, unselfish, humorous — and often ridiculous. If anything, Dick Mattingly was funniest by nature, and made her laugh more. Maryland Joe, his brother, told better stories (sometimes of Dick), though not so good a mimic as the other Kearney, who had a fairly sympathetic voice in singing. They were all good looking enough; perhaps they set store on that — men are so vain!

And as for her own rejected suitor, Fairfax Munroe, except for a kind of grave and proper motherliness about his protecting manner, he absolutely was the most indistinctive of them all. He had once brought her some rare tea from the Chinese camp, and had taught her how to make it; he had cautioned her against sitting under the trees at nightfall; he had once taken off his coat to wrap around her. Really, if this were the only evidence of devotion that could be shown, she was safe!

"Well," said Jessie, "it amuses you, I see."

Christie checked the smile that had been dimpling the cheek nearest Jessie, and turned upon her the face of an elder sister.

"Tell me, have *you* noticed this extraordinary attention of Mr. Munroe to me?"

"Candidly?" asked Jessie, seating herself comfortably

on the table sideways, and endeavoring to pull her skirt over her little feet. "Honest Injun?"

"Don't be idiotic, and, above all, don't be slangy! Of course, candidly."

"Well, no. I can't say that I have."

"Then," said Christie, "why in the name of all that's preposterous, do they persist in pairing me off with the least interesting man of the lot?"

Jessie leaped from the table.

"Come now," she said, with a little nervous laugh, "he's not so bad as all that. You don't know him. But what does it matter now, as long as we're not going to see them any more?"

"They're coming here for the ride to-day," said Christie resignedly. "Father thought it better not to break it off at once."

"Father thought so!" echoed Jessie, stopping, with her hand on the door.

"Yes; why do you ask?"

But Jessie had already left the room, and was singing in the hall.



## CHAPTER IV

THE afternoon did not, however, bring their expected visitors. It brought, instead, a brief note by the hands of Whiskey Dick from Fairfax, apologizing for some business that kept him and George Kearney from accompanying the ladies. It added that the horses were at the disposal of themselves and any escort they might select, if they would kindly give the message to Whiskey Dick.

The two girls looked at each other awkwardly; Jessie did not attempt to conceal a slight pout.

"It looks as if they were anticipating us," she said, with a half-forced smile. "I wonder, now, if there really has been any gossip? But no! They wouldn't have stopped for that, unless" — She looked curiously at her sister.

"Unless what?" repeated Christie; "you are horribly mysterious this morning."

"Am I? It's nothing. But they're wanting an answer. Of course you'll decline."

"And intimate we only care for their company! No! We'll say we're sorry they can't come, and — accept their horses. We can do without an escort, we two."

"Capital!" said Jessie, clapping her hands. "We'll show them" —

"We'll show them nothing," interrupted Christie decidedly. "In our place there's only the one thing to do. Where is this — Whiskey Dick?"

"In the parlor."

"The parlor!" echoed Christie. "Whiskey Dick? What — is he" —

"Yes; he's all right," said Jessie confidently. "He's been here before, but he stayed in the hall; he was so shy. I don't think you saw him."

"I should think not — Whiskey Dick!"

"Oh, you can call him Mr. Hall, if you like," said Jessie, laughing. "His real name is Dick Hall. If you want to be funny, you can say Alky Hall, as the others do."

Christie's only reply to this levity was a look of superior resignation as she crossed the hall and entered the parlor.

Then ensued one of those surprising, mystifying, and utterly inexplicable changes that leave the masculine being so helpless in the hands of his feminine master. Before Christie opened the door her face underwent a rapid transformation: the gentle glow of a refined woman's welcome suddenly beamed in her interested eyes; the impulsive courtesy of an expectant hostess eagerly seizing a long-looked-for opportunity broke in a smile upon her lips as she swept across the room, and stopped with her two white outstretched hands before Whiskey Dick.

It needed only the extravagant contrast presented by that gentleman to complete the tableau. Attired in a suit of shining black alpaca, the visitor had evidently prepared himself with some care for a possible interview. He was seated by the French window opening upon the veranda, as if to secure a retreat in case of an emergency. Scrupulously washed and shaven, some of the soap appeared to have lingered in his eyes and inflamed the lids, even while it lent a sleek and shining lustre, not unlike his coat, to his smooth black hair. Nevertheless, leaning back in his chair, he had allowed a large white handkerchief to depend gracefully from his fingers — a pose at once suggesting easy and elegant languor.

"How kind of you to give me an opportunity to make

up for my misfortune when you last called! I was so sorry to have missed you. But it was entirely my fault! You were hurried, I think — you conversed with others in the hall — you ” —

She stopped to assist him to pick up the handkerchief that had fallen, and the Panama hat that had rolled from his lap towards the window when he had started suddenly to his feet at the apparition of grace and beauty. As he still nervously retained the two hands he had grasped, this would have been a difficult feat, even had he not endeavored at the same moment, by a backward furtive kick, to propel the hat out of the window, at which she laughingly broke from his grasp and flew to the rescue.

“Don't mind it, miss,” he said hurriedly. “It is not worth your demeaning yourself to touch it. Leave it outside thar, miss. I would n't have toted it in, anyhow, if some of those highfalutin' fellows had n't allowed, the other night, ez it were the reg'lar thing to do; as if, miss, any gentleman kalkilated to ever put on his hat in the house afore a lady!”

But Christie had already possessed herself of the unlucky object, and had placed it upon the table. This compelled Whiskey Dick to rise again, and as an act of careless good breeding to drop his handkerchief in it. He then leaned one elbow upon the piano, and crossing one foot over the other, remained standing in an attitude he remembered to have seen in the pages of an illustrated paper as portraying the hero in some drawing-room scene. It was easy and effective, but seemed to be more favorable to reverie than conversation. Indeed, he remembered that he had forgotten to consult the letterpress as to which it represented.

“I see you agree with me, that politeness is quite a matter of intention,” said Christie, “and not of mere fashion and rules. Now, for instance,” she continued, with a dazzling smile, “I suppose, according to the rules, I ought

to give you a note to Mr. Munroe, accepting his offer. That is all that is required; but it seems so much nicer — don't you think? — to tell it to *you* for *him*, and have the pleasure of your company and a little chat at the same time."

"That 's it, that 's just it, Miss Carr; you 've hit it in the centre this time," said Whiskey Dick, now quite convinced that his attitude was not intended for eloquence, and shifting back to his own seat, hat and all; "that 's tantamount to what I said to the boys just now. 'You want an excuse,' sez I, 'for not goin' out with the young ladies. So, accorden' to rules, you writes a letter allowin' buzziness and that sorter thing detains you. But wot 's the facts? You 're a gentleman, and as gentlemen you and George comes to the opinion that you 're rather playin' it for all it 's worth in this yer house, you know — comin' here night and day, off and on, reg'lar sociable and fam'ly like, and makin' people talk about things they ain't any call to talk about, and, what 's a darned sight more, *you fellows* ain't got any right *yet* to allow 'em to talk about, d' ye see?'" He paused, out of breath.

It was Miss Christie's turn to move about. In changing her seat to the piano-stool, so as to be nearer her visitor, she brushed down some loose music, which Whiskey Dick hastened to pick up.

"Pray don't mind it," she said, "pray don't, really — let it be" — But Whiskey Dick, feeling himself on safe ground in this attention, persisted to the bitter end of a disintegrated and well-worn "Trovatore." "So that is what Mr. Munroe said," she remarked quietly.

"Not just then, in course, but it 's what 's bin on his mind and in his talk for days off and on," returned Dick, with a knowing smile and a nod of mysterious confidence. "Bless your soul, Miss Carr, folks like you and me don't need to have them things explained. That 's what I said

to him, sez I. 'Don't send no note, but just go up there and hev it out fair and square, and say what you do mean.' But they would hev the note, and I kalkilated to bring it. But when I set my eyes on you, and heard you express yourself as you did just now, I sez to myself, sez I, 'Dick, yer 's a young lady, and a fash'nable lady at that, ez don't go foolin' round on rules and etiketts' — excuse my freedom, Miss Carr — 'and you and her,' sez I, 'kin just discuss this yer matter in a sociable, off-hand, fash'nable way.' They're a good lot o' boys, Miss Carr, a square lot — white men all of 'em; but they're a little soft and green, maybe, from livin' in these yer pine woods along o' the other sap. They just worship the ground you and your sister tread on — certain! of course! of course!" he added hurriedly, recognizing Christie's half-conscious, deprecating gesture with more exaggerated deprecation. "I understand. But what I want say is that they'd be willin' to be that ground, and lie down and let you walk over them — so to speak, Miss Carr, so to speak — if it would keep the hem of your gown from gettin' soiled in the mud o' the camp. But it would n't do for them to make a reg'lar curderoy road o' themselves for the huol camp to trapse over, on the mere chance of your some time passin' that way, would it now?"

"Won't you let me offer you some refreshment, Mr. Hall?" said Christie, rising, with a slight color. "I'm really ashamed of my forgetfulness again, but I'm afraid it's partly *your* fault for entertaining me to the exclusion of yourself. No, thank you, let me fetch it for you."

She turned to a handsome sideboard near the door, and presently faced him again with a decanter of whiskey and a glass in her hand, and a return of the bewitching smile she had worn on entering.

"But perhaps you don't take whiskey?" suggested the

arch deceiver, with a sudden affected but pretty perplexity of eye, brow, and lips.

For the first time in his life Whiskey Dick hesitated between two forms of intoxication. But he was still nervous and uneasy; habit triumphed, and he took the whiskey. He, however, wiped his lips with a slight wave of his handkerchief, to support a certain easy elegance which he firmly believed relieved the act of any vulgar quality.

"Yes, ma'am," he continued, after an exhilarated pause. "Ez I said afore, this yer's a matter you and me kin discuss after the fashion o' society. My idea is that these yer boys should kinder let up on you and Miss Jessie for a while, and do a little more permiskus attention round the Ford. There's one or two families yer with grown-up gals ez oughter be squared; that is — the boys mighter put in a few fancy touches among them — kinder take 'em buggy riding — or to church — once in a while — just to take the pizen outer their tongues, and make a kind o' bluff to the parents, d' ye see? That would sorter divert their own minds; and even if it did n't, it would kinder get 'em accustomed agin to the old style and their own kind. I want to warn ye agin an idea that might occur to you in a giniral way. I don't say you hev the idea, but it's kind o' nat'ral you might be thinkin' of it some time, and I thought I'd warn you agin it."

"I think we understand each other too well to differ much, Mr. Hall," said Christie, still smiling; "but what is the idea?"

The delicate compliment to their confidential relations and the slight stimulus of liquor had tremulously exalted Whiskey Dick. Affecting to look cautiously out of the window and around the room, he ventured to draw nearer the young woman with a half-paternal, half-timid familiarity.

"It might have occurred to you," he said, laying his hand lightly, holding his handkerchief as if to veil mere vulgar contact, on Christie's shoulder, "that it would be a good thing on *your* side to invite down some of your high-toned gentlemen friends from 'Frisco to visit you and escort you round. It seems quite nat'ral like, and I don't say it ain't, but — the boys would n't stand it."

In spite of her self-possession Christie's eyes suddenly darkened, and she involuntarily drew herself up. But Whiskey Dick, guiltily attributing the movement to his own indiscreet gesture, said, "Excuse me, miss," recovered himself by lightly dusting her shoulder with his handkerchief, as if to remove the impression, and her smile returned.

"They would n't stand it," said Dick, "and there'd be some shooting! Not afore you, miss — not afore you, in course! But they'd adjourn to the woods some morning with them city folks, and hev it out with rifles at a hundred yards. Or, seein' ez they're city folks, the boys would do the square thing with pistols at twelve paces. They're good boys, as I said afore; but they're quick and tetchy — George, being the youngest, nat'rally is the tetchiest. You know how it is, Miss Carr; his pretty, gal-like face and little mustaches haz cost him half a dozen scrimmages already. He'z had a fight for every hair that's growed in his mustache since he kem here."

"Say no more, Mr. Hall!" said Christie, rising and pressing her hands lightly on Dick's tremulous fingers. "If I ever had any such idea, I should abandon it now; you are quite right in this as in your other opinions. I shall never cease to be thankful to Mr. Munroe and Mr. Kearney that they intrusted this delicate matter to your hands."

"Well," said the gratified and reddening visitor, "it ain't perhaps the square thing to them or myself to say

that they reckoned to have me discuss their delicate affairs for them, but" —

"I understand," interrupted Christie. "They simply gave you the letter as a friend. It was my good fortune to find you a sympathizing and liberal man of the world." The delighted Dick, with conscious vanity beaming from every feature of his shining face, lightly waved the compliment aside with his handkerchief, as she continued, "But I am forgetting the message. We accept the horses. Of course we *could* do without an escort; but, forgive my speaking so frankly, are *you* engaged this afternoon?"

"Excuse me, miss, I don't take" — stammered Dick, scarcely believing his ears.

"Could you give us your company as an escort?" repeated Christie, with a smile.

Was he awake or dreaming, or was this some trick of liquor in his often distorted fancy? He, Whiskey Dick! the butt of his friends, the chartered oracle of the bar-rooms, even in whose wretched vanity there was always the haunting suspicion that he was despised and scorned; he, who had dared so much in speech, and achieved so little in fact! he, whose habitual weakness had even led him into the wildest indiscretion here; he — now offered a reward for that indiscretion! He, Whiskey Dick, the solicited escort of these two beautiful and peerless girls! What would they say at the Ford? What would his friends think? It would be all over the Ford the next day. His past would be vindicated, his future secured. He grew erect at the thought. It was almost in other voice, and with no trace of his previous exaggeration, that he said, "With pleasure."

"Then, if you will bring the horses at once, we shall be ready when you return."

In another instant he had vanished, as if afraid to trust the reality of his good fortune to the dangers of delay.



At the end of half an hour he reappeared, leading the two horses, himself mounted on a half-broken mustang. A pair of large, jingling silver spurs and a stiff sombrero, borrowed with the mustang from some mysterious source, were donned to do honor to the occasion.

The young girls were not yet ready, but he was shown by the Chinese servant into the parlor to wait for them. The decanter of whiskey and glasses were still invitingly there. He was hot, trembling, and flushed with triumph. He walked to the table and laid his hand on the decanter, when an odd thought flashed upon him. He would not drink this time. No, it should not be said that he, the selected escort of the élite of Devil's Ford, had to fill himself up with whiskey before they started. The boys might turn to each other in their astonishment, as he proudly passed with his fair companions, and say, "It's Whiskey Dick," but he'd be d—d if they should add, "and full as ever." No, sir! Nor when he was riding beside these real ladies, and leaning over them at some confidential moment, should they even know it from his breath! No. . . . Yet a thimbleful, taken straight, only a thimbleful, would n't be much, and might help to pull him together. He again reached his trembling hand for the decanter, hesitated, and then, turning his back upon it, resolutely walked to the open window. Almost at the same instant he found himself face to face with Christie on the veranda.

She looked into his bloodshot eyes, and cast a swift glance at the decanter.

"Won't you take something before you go?" she said sweetly.

"I — reckon — not, jest now," stammered Whiskey Dick, with a heroic effort.

"You're right," said Christie. "I see you are like me. It's too hot for anything fiery. Come with me."

She led him to the dining-room, and pouring out a

glass of iced tea handed it to him. Poor Dick was not prepared for this terrible culmination. Whiskey Dick and iced tea! But under pretense of seeing if it was properly flavored, Christie raised it to her own lips.

“Try it, to please me.”

He drained the goblet.

“Now, then,” said Christie gayly, “let 's find Jessie, and be off!”

## CHAPTER V

WHATEVER might have been his other deficiencies as an escort, Whiskey Dick was a good horseman, and in spite of his fractious brute, exhibited such skill and confidence as to at once satisfy the young girls of his value to them in the management of their own horses, to whom side-saddles were still an alarming novelty. Jessie, who had probably already learned from her sister the purport of Dick's confidences, had received him with equal cordiality and perhaps a more unqualified amusement; and now, when fairly lifted into the saddle by his tremulous but respectful hands, made a very charming picture of youthful and rosy satisfaction. And when Christie, more fascinating than ever in her riding-habit, took her place on the other side of Dick, as they sallied from the gate, that gentleman felt his cup of happiness complete. His triumphal *entrée* into the world of civilization and fashion was secure. He did not regret the untasted liquor; here was an experience in after years to lean his back against comfortably in bar-rooms, to entrance or defy mankind. He had even got so far as to formulate in fancy the sentence: "I remember, gentlemen, that one afternoon, being on a pasear with two fash'nable young ladies," etc., etc.

At present, however, he was obliged to confine himself to the functions of an elegant guide and cicerone — when not engaged in "having it out" with his horse. Their way lay along the slope, crossing the highroad at right angles, to reach the deeper woods beyond. Dick would have lingered on the highway — ostensibly to point out to his com-

panions the new flume that had taken the place of the condemned ditch, but really in the hope of exposing himself in his glory to the curious eyes of the wayfaring world. Unhappily the road was deserted in the still powerful sunlight, and he was obliged to seek the cover of the woods, with a passing compliment to the parent of his charges. Waving his hand towards the flume, he said, "Look at that work of your father's; there ain't no other man in California but Philip Carr ez would hev the grit to hold up such a bluff agin natur and agin luck ez that yer flume stands for. I don't say it 'cause you 're his daughters, ladies! That ain't the style, ez *you* know, in sassiety, Miss Carr," he added, turning to Christie as the more socially experienced. "No! but there ain't another man to be found ez could do it. It cost already two hundred thousand; it'll cost five hundred thousand afore it's done; and every cent of it is got out of the yearth beneath it, or *hez got* to be out of it. 'T ain't ev'ry man, Miss Carr, ez hev got the pluck to pledge not only what he's got, but what he reckons to git."

"But suppose he don't get it?" said Christie, slightly contracting her brows.

"Then there's the flume to show for it," said Dick.

"But of what use is the flume, if there is n't any more gold?" continued Christie, almost angrily.

"That's good from *you*, miss," said Dick, giving way to a fit of hilarity. "That's good for a fash'nable young lady—own daughter of Philip Carr. She sez, says she," continued Dick, appealing to the sedate pines for appreciation of Christie's rare humor, "'Wot's the use of a flume, when gold ain't there?' I must tell that to the boys."

"And what's the use of the gold in the ground when the flume is n't there to work it out?" said Jessie to her sister, with a cautioning glance towards Dick.

But Dick did not notice the look that passed between the

sisters The richer humor of Jessie's retort had thrown him into convulsions of laughter.

"And now *she* says, wot 's the use o' the gold without the flume? 'Xcuse me, ladies, but that 's just puttin' the hull questin that 's agitatin' this yer camp inter two speeches as clear as crystal. There 's the hull crowd outside — and some on 'em inside like Fairfax, hez their doubts — ez says with Miss Christie; and there 's all of us inside, ez holds Miss Jessie's views."

"I never heard Mr. Munroe say that the flume was wrong," said Jessie quickly.

"Not to you, nat'rally," said Dick, with a confidential look at Christie; "but I reckon he 'd like some of the money it cost laid out for suthin' else. But what 's the odds? The gold is there, and *we 're* bound to get it."

Dick was the foreman of a gang of paid workmen, who had replaced the millionaires in mere manual labor, and the *we* was a polite figure of speech.

The conversation seemed to have taken an unfortunate turn, and both the girls experienced a feeling of relief when they entered the long gulch or defile that led to Indian Spring. The track now becoming narrow, they were obliged to pass in single file along the precipitous hillside, led by this escort. This effectually precluded any further speech, and Christie at once surrendered herself to the calm, obliterating influences of the forest. The settlement and its gossip were far behind and forgotten. In the absorption of nature, her companions passed out of her mind, even as they sometimes passed out of her sight in the windings of the shadowy trail. As she rode alone, the fronds of breast-high ferns seemed to caress her with outstretched and gently detaining hands; strange wild-flowers sprang up through the parting underbrush; even the granite rocks that at times pressed closely upon the trail appeared as if cushioned to her contact with star-rayed mosses, or lightly

flung after her long lassoes of delicate vines. She recalled the absolute freedom of their *al-fresco* life in the old double cabin, when she spent the greater part of her waking hours under the mute trees in the encompassing solitude, and half regretting the more civilized restraints of this newer and more ambitious abode, forgot that she had ever rebelled against it. The social complication that threatened her now seemed to her rather the outcome of her half-civilized parlor than of the sylvan glade. How easy it would have been to have kept the cabin, and then to have gone away entirely, than for her father to have allowed them to be compromised with the growing fortunes of the settlement! The suspicions and distrust that she had always felt of their fortunes seemed to grow with the involuntary admission of Whiskey Dick that they were shared by others who were practical men. She was fain to have recourse to the prospect again to banish these thoughts, and this opened her eyes to the fact that her companions had been missing from the trail ahead of her for some time. She quickened her pace slightly to reach a projecting point of rock that gave her a more extended prospect. But they had evidently disappeared.

She was neither alarmed nor annoyed. She could easily overtake them soon, for they would miss her, and return or wait for her at the spring. At the worst she would have no difficulty in retracing her steps home. In her present mood, she could readily spare their company; indeed, she was not sorry that no other being should interrupt that sympathy with the free woods which was beginning to possess her.

She was destined, however, to be disappointed. She had not proceeded a hundred yards before she noticed the moving figure of a man beyond her in the hillside chaparral above the trail. He seemed to be going in the same direction as herself, and, as she fancied, endeavoring to avoid her. This excited her curiosity to the point of urging her

horse forward until the trail broadened into the level forest again, which she now remembered was a part of the environs of Indian Spring. The stranger hesitated, pausing once or twice with his back towards her, as if engaged in carefully examining the dwarf willows to select a switch. Christie slightly checked her speed as she drew nearer; when, as if obedient to a sudden resolution, he turned and advanced towards her. She was relieved and yet surprised to recognize the boyish face and figure of George Kearney. He was quite pale and agitated, although attempting, by a jaunty swinging of the switch he had just cut, to assume the appearance of ease and confidence.

Here was an opportunity. Christie resolved to profit by it. She did not doubt that the young fellow had already passed her sister on the trail, but, from bashfulness, had not dared to approach her. By inviting his confidence, she would doubtless draw something from him that would deny or corroborate her father's opinion of his sentiments. If he was really in love with Jessie, she would learn what reasons he had for expecting a serious culmination of his suit, and perhaps she might be able delicately to open his eyes to the truth. If, as she believed, it was only a boyish fancy, she would laugh him out of it with that camaraderie which had always existed between them. A half-motherly sympathy, albeit born quite as much from a contemplation of his beautiful yearning eyes as from his interesting position, lightened the smile with which she greeted him.

"So you contrived to throw over your stupid business and join us, after all," she said; "or was it that you changed your mind at the last moment?" she added mischievously. "I thought only we women were permitted that!" Indeed, she could not help noticing that there was really a strong feminine suggestion in the shifting color and slightly conscious eyelids of the young fellow.

"Do young girls always change their minds?" asked George, with an embarrassed smile.

"Not always; but sometimes they don't know their own mind — particularly if they are very young; and when they do at last, you clever creatures of men, who have interpreted their ignorance to please yourselves, abuse them for being fickle." She stopped to observe the effect of what she believed a rather clear and significant exposition of Jessie's and George's possible situation. But she was not prepared for the look of blank resignation that seemed to drive the color from his face and moisten the fire of his dark eyes.

"I reckon you 're right," he said, looking down.

"Oh! we 're not accusing you of fickleness," said Christie gayly; "although you did n't come, and we were obliged to ask Mr. Hall to join us. I suppose you found him and Jessie just now?"

But George made no reply. The color was slowly coming back to his face, which, as she glanced covertly at him, seemed to have grown so much older that his returning blood might have brought two or three years with it.

"Really, Mr. Kearney," she said dryly, "one would think that some silly, conceited girl" — she was quite earnest in her epithets, for a sudden, angry conviction of some coquetry and disingenuousness in Jessie had come to her in contemplating its effects upon the young fellow at her side — "some country jilt, had been trying her rustic hand upon you."

"She is not silly, conceited, nor countrified," said George, slowly raising his beautiful eyes to the young girl half reproachfully. "It is I who am all that. No, she is right, and you know it."

Much as Christie admired and valued her sister's charms, she thought this was really going too far. What had Jessie ever done — what was Jessie — to provoke and remain



insensible to such a blind devotion as this? And really, looking at him now, he was not so *very young* for Jessie; whether his unfortunate passion had brought out all his latent manliness, or whether he had hitherto kept his serious nature in the background, certainly he was not a boy. And certainly his was not a passion that he could be laughed out of. It was getting very tiresome. She wished she had not met him — at least until she had had some clearer understanding with her sister. He was still walking beside her, with his hand on her bridle rein, partly to lead her horse over some boulders in the trail, and partly to conceal his first embarrassment. When they had fairly reached the woods, he stopped.

“I am going to say good-by, Miss Carr.”

“Are you not coming further? We must be near Indian Spring, now; Mr. Hall and — and Jessie — cannot be far away. You will keep me company until we meet them?”

“No,” he replied quietly. “I only stopped you to say good-by. I am going away.”

“Not from Devil’s Ford?” she asked, in half-incredulous astonishment. “At least, not for long?”

“I am not coming back,” he replied.

“But this is very abrupt,” she said hurriedly, feeling that in some ridiculous way she had precipitated an equally ridiculous catastrophe. “Surely you are not going away in this fashion, without saying good-by to Jessie and — and father?”

“I shall see your father, of course — and you will give my regards to Miss Jessie.”

He evidently was in earnest. Was there ever anything so perfectly preposterous? She became indignant.

“Of course,” she said coldly, “I won’t detain you; your business must be urgent, and I forgot — at least I had forgotten until to-day — that you have other duties more important than that of squire of dames. I am afraid this

forgetfulness made me think you would not part from us in quite such a business fashion. I presume, if you had not met me just now, we should none of us have seen you again?"

He did not reply.

"Will you say good-by, Miss Carr?"

He held out his hand.

"One moment, Mr. Kearney. If I have said anything which you think justifies this very abrupt leave-taking, I beg you will forgive and forget it — or, at least, let it have no more weight with you than the idle words of any woman. I only spoke generally. You know — I — I might be mistaken."

His eyes, which had dilated when she began to speak, darkened; his color, which had quickly come, as quickly sank when she had ended.

"Don't say that, Miss Carr. It is not like you, and — it is useless. You know what I meant a moment ago. I read it in your reply. You meant that I, like others, had deceived myself. Did you not?"

She could not meet those honest eyes with less than equal honesty. She knew that Jessie did not love him — would not marry him — whatever coquetry she might have shown.

"I did not mean to offend you," she said hesitatingly; "I only half suspected it when I spoke."

"And you wish to spare me the avowal?" he said bitterly.

"To me, perhaps, yes, by anticipating it. I could not tell what ideas you might have gathered from some indiscreet frankness of Jessie — or my father," she added, with almost equal bitterness.

"I have never spoken to either," he replied quickly. He stopped, and added, after a moment's mortifying reflection, "I've been brought up in the woods, Miss Carr, and I

suppose I have followed my feelings, instead of the etiquette of society."

Christie was too relieved at the rehabilitation of Jessie's truthfulness to notice the full significance of his speech.

"Good-by," he said again, holding out his hand.

"Good-by!"

She extended her own, ungloved, with a frank smile. He held it for a moment, with his eyes fixed upon hers. Then suddenly, as if obeying an uncontrollable impulse, he crushed it like a flower again and again against his burning lips, and darted away.

Christie sank back in her saddle with a little cry, half of pain and half of frightened surprise. Had the poor boy suddenly gone mad, or was this vicarious farewell a part of the courtship of Devil's Ford? She looked at her little hand, which had reddened under the pressure, and suddenly felt the flush extending to her cheeks and the roots of her hair. This was intolerable.

"Christie!"

It was her sister emerging from the wood to seek her. In another moment she was at her side.

"We thought you were following," said Jessie. "Good heavens! how you look! What has happened?"

"Nothing. I met Mr. Kearney a moment ago on the trail. He is going away, and — and" — She stopped, furious and flushing.

"And," said Jessie, with a burst of merriment, "he told you at last he loved you. Oh, Christie!"

## CHAPTER VI

THE abrupt departure of George Kearney from Devil's Ford excited but little interest in the community, and was soon forgotten. It was generally attributed to differences between himself and his partners on the question of further outlay of their earnings on mining improvements — he and Philip Carr alone representing a sanguine minority whose faith in the future of the mine accepted any risks. It was alleged by some that he had sold out to his brother; it was believed by others that he had simply gone to Sacramento to borrow money on his share, in order to continue the improvements on his own responsibility. The partners themselves were uncommunicative; even Whiskey Dick, who since his remarkable social elevation had become less oracular, much to his own astonishment, contributed nothing to the gossip except a suggestion that as the fiery temper of George Kearney brooked no opposition, even from his brother, it was better they should separate before the estrangement became serious.

Mr. Carr did not disguise his annoyance at the loss of his young disciple and firm ally. But an unlucky allusion to his previous remarks on Kearney's attentions to Jessie, and a querulous regret that he had permitted a disruption of their social intimacy, brought such an ominous and frigid opposition, not only from Christie, but even from the frivolous Jessie herself, that Carr sank back in a crushed and terrified silence. "I only meant to say," he stammered after a pause, in which he, however, resumed his aggrieved manner, "that *Fairfax* seems to come here still, and *he* is not such a particular friend of mine."

"But he is — and has your interest entirely at heart," said Jessie stoutly, "and he only comes here to tell us how things are going on at the works."

"And criticise your father, I suppose," said Mr. Carr, with an attempt at jocularly that did not, however, disguise an irritated suspiciousness. "He really seems to have supplanted *me* as he has poor Kearney in your estimation."

"Now, father," said Jessie, suddenly seizing him by the shoulders in affected indignation, but really to conceal a certain embarrassment that sprang quite as much from her sister's quietly observant eye as her father's speech, "you promised to let this ridiculous discussion drop. You will make me and Christie so nervous that we will not dare to open the door to a visitor, until he declares his innocence of any matrimonial intentions. You don't want to give color to the gossip that agreement with your views about the improvements is necessary to getting on with us."

"Who dares talk such rubbish?" said Carr, reddening; "is that the kind of gossip that Fairfax brings here?"

"Hardly, when it's known that he don't quite agree with you, and *does* come here. That's the best denial of the gossip."

Christie, who had of late loftily ignored these discussions, waited until her father had taken his departure.

"Then that is the reason why you still see Mr. Munroe, after what you said," she remarked quietly to Jessie.

Jessie, who would have liked to escape with her father, was obliged to pause on the threshold of the door, with a pretty assumption of blank forgetfulness in her blue eyes and lifted eyebrows.

"Said what? when?" she asked vacantly.

"When — when Mr. Kearney that day — in the woods — went away," said Christie, faintly coloring.

"Oh! *that* day," said Jessie briskly; "the day he just

gloved your hand with kisses, and then fled wildly into the forest to conceal his emotion."

"The day he behaved very foolishly," said Christie, with reproachful calmness, that did not, however, prevent a suspicion of indignant moisture in her eyes — "when you explained" —

"That it was n't meant for *me*," interrupted Jessie.

"That it was to you that *Mr. Munroe's* attentions were directed. And then we agreed that it was better to prevent any further advances of this kind by avoiding any familiar relations with either of them."

"Yes," said Jessie, "I remember; but you're not confounding my seeing Fairfax occasionally now with that sort of thing. *He* does n't kiss my hand like anything," she added, as if in abstract reflection.

"Nor run away, either," suggested the trodden worm, turning.

There was an ominous silence.

"Do you know we are nearly out of coffee?" said Jessie, choking, but moving towards the door with Spartan-like calmness.

"Yes. And something must be done this very day about the washing," said Christie, with suppressed emotion, going towards the opposite entrance.

Tears stood in each other's eyes with this terrible exchange of domestic confidences. Nevertheless, after a moment's pause, they deliberately turned again, and facing each other with frightful calmness, left the room by purposeless and deliberate exits other than those they had contemplated — a crushing abnegation of self, that, to some extent, relieved their surcharged feelings.

Meantime the material prosperity of Devil's Ford increased, if a prosperity based upon no visible foundation but the confidence and hopes of its inhabitants could be called material. Few, if any, stopped to consider that

the improvements, buildings, and business were simply the outlay of capital brought from elsewhere, and as yet the settlement or town, as it was now called, had neither produced nor exported capital of itself equal to half the amount expended. It was true that some land was cultivated on the further slope, some mills erected and lumber furnished from the inexhaustible forest; but the consumers were the inhabitants themselves, who paid for their produce in borrowed capital or unlimited credit. It was never discovered that while all roads led to Devil's Ford, Devil's Ford led to nowhere. The difficulties overcome in getting things into the settlement were never surmounted for getting things out of it. The lumber was practically valueless for export to other settlements across the mountain roads, which were equally rich in timber. The theory so enthusiastically held by the original locators, that Devil's Ford was a vast sink that had, through ages, exhausted and absorbed the trickling wealth of the adjacent hills and valleys, was suffering an ironical corroboration.

One morning it was known that work was stopped at the Devil's Ford Ditch — temporarily only, it was alleged, and many of the old workmen simply had their labor for the present transferred to excavating the river-banks, and the collection of vast heaps of "pay gravel." Specimens from these mounds, taken from different localities, and at different levels, were sent to San Francisco for more rigid assay and analysis. It was believed that this would establish the fact of the permanent richness of the drifts, and not only justify past expenditure, but a renewed outlay of credit and capital. The suspension of engineering work gave Mr. Carr an opportunity to visit San Francisco on general business of the mine, which would not, however, prevent him from arranging further combinations with capital. His two daughters accompanied him. It offered an admirable opportunity for a shopping expedition, a change

of scene, and a peaceful solution of their perplexing and anomalous social relations with Devil's Ford. In the first flush of gratitude to their father for this opportune holiday, something of harmony had been restored to the family circle that had of late been shaken by discord.

But their sanguine hopes of enjoyment were not entirely fulfilled. Both Jessie and Christie were obliged to confess to a certain disappointment in the aspect of the civilization they were now reëntering. They at first attributed it to the change in their own habits during the last three months, and their having become barbarous and countrified in their seclusion. Certainly in the matter of dress they were behind the fashions as revealed in Montgomery Street. But when the brief solace afforded them by the modiste and dressmaker was past, there seemed little else to be gained. They missed at first, I fear, the chivalrous and loyal devotion that had only amused them at Devil's Ford, and were the more inclined, I think, to distrust the conscious and more civilized gallantry of the better dressed and more carefully presented men they met. For it must be admitted that, for obvious reasons, their criticisms were at first confined to the sex they had been most in contact with. They could not help noticing that the men were more eager, annoyingly feverish, and self-asserting in their superior elegance and external show than their old associates were in their frank, unrestrained habits. It seemed to them that the five millionaires of Devil's Ford, in their radical simplicity and thoroughness, were perhaps nearer the type of true gentlemanhood than these citizens who imitated a civilization they were unable yet to reach.

The women simply frightened them, as being, even more than the men, demonstrative and excessive in their fine looks, their fine dresses, their extravagant demand for excitement. In less than a week they found themselves regretting — not the new villa on the slope of Devil's Ford,



which even in its own bizarre fashion was exceeded by the barbarous ostentation of the villas and private houses around them — but the double cabin under the trees, which now seemed to them almost aristocratic in its grave simplicity and abstention. In the mysterious forest of masts that thronged the city's quays they recalled the straight shafts of the pines on Devil's slopes, only to miss the sedate repose and infinite calm that used to environ them. In the feverish, pulsating life of the young metropolis they often stopped oppressed, giddy, and choking; the roar of the streets and thoroughfares was meaningless to them, except to revive strange memories of the deep, unvarying monotone of the evening wind over their humbler roof on the Sierran hillside. Civic bred and nurtured as they were, the recurrence of these sensations perplexed and alarmed them.

“It seems so perfectly ridiculous,” said Jessie, “for us to feel as out of place here as that Pike County servant girl in Sacramento who had never seen a steamboat before; do you know, I quite had a turn the other day at seeing a man on the Stockton wharf in a red shirt, with a rifle on his shoulder.”

“And you wanted to go and speak to him?” said Christie, with a sad smile.

“No, that's just it; I felt awfully hurt and injured that he did not come up and speak to *me!* I wonder if we got any fever or that sort of thing up there; it makes one quite superstitious.”

Christie did not reply; more than once before she had felt that inexplicable misgiving. It had sometimes seemed to her that she had never been quite herself since that memorable night when she had slipped out of their sleeping-cabin, and stood alone in the gracious and commanding presence of the woods and hills. In the solitude of night, with the hum of the great city rising below her — at times

even in theatres or crowded assemblies of men and women — she forgot herself, and again stood in the weird brilliancy of that moonlight night in mute worship at the foot of that slowly rising mystic altar of piled terraces, hanging forests, and lifted plateaus that climbed forever to the lonely skies. Again she felt before her the expanding and opening arms of the protecting woods. Had they really closed upon her in some pantheistic embrace that made her a part of them? Had she been baptized in that moonlight as a child of the great forest? It was easy to believe in the myths of the poets of an idyllic life under those trees, where, free from conventional restrictions, one loved and was loved. If she, with her own worldly experience, could think of this now, why might not George Kearney have thought? . . . She stopped, and found herself blushing even in the darkness. As the thought and blush were the usual sequel of her reflections, it is to be feared that they may have been at times the impelling cause.

Mr. Carr, however, made up for his daughters' want of sympathy with metropolitan life. To their astonishment, he not only plunged into the fashionable gayeties and amusements of the town, but in dress and manner assumed the rôle of a leader of society. The invariable answer to their half-humorous comment was the necessities of the mine, and the policy of frequenting the company of capitalists, to enlist their support and confidence. There was something in this so unlike their father, that what at any other time they would have hailed as a relief to his habitual abstraction now half alarmed them. Yet he was not dissipated — he did not drink nor gamble. There certainly did not seem any harm in his frequenting the society of ladies, with a gallantry that appeared to be forced and a pleasure that to their critical eyes was certainly apocryphal. He did not drag his daughters into the mixed society of that period; he did not press upon them the company of

those he most frequented, and whose accepted position in that little world of fashion was considered equal to their own. When Jessie strongly objected to the pronounced manners of a certain widow, whose actual present wealth and pecuniary influence condoned for a more uncertain prehistoric past, Mr. Carr did not urge a further acquaintance. "As long as you 're not thinking of marrying again, papa," Jessie had said finally, "I don't see the necessity of our knowing her." "But suppose I were," had replied Mr. Carr, with affected humor. "Then you certainly would n't care for any one like her," his daughter had responded triumphantly. Mr. Carr smiled, and dropped the subject, but it is probable that his daughters' want of sympathy with his acquaintances did not in the least interfere with his social prestige. A gentleman in all his relations and under all circumstances, even his cold scientific abstraction was provocative; rich men envied his lofty ignorance of the smaller details of money-making, even while they mistrusted his judgment. A man still well preserved, and free from weakening vices, he was a dangerous rival to younger and faster San Francisco, in the eyes of the sex, who knew how to value a repose they did not themselves possess.

Suddenly Mr. Carr announced his intention of proceeding to Sacramento, on further business of the mine, leaving his two daughters in the family of a wealthy friend until he should return for them. He opposed their ready suggestion to return to Devil's Ford with a new and unnecessary inflexibility: he even met their compromise to accompany him to Sacramento with equal decision.

"You will only be in my way," he said curtly. "Enjoy yourselves here while you can."

Thus left to themselves, they tried to accept his advice. Possibly some slight reaction to their previous disappointment may have already set in; perhaps they felt any distraction to be a relief to their anxiety about their father.

They went out more; they frequented concerts and parties; they accepted, with their host and his family, an invitation to one of those opulent and barbaric entertainments with which a noted San Francisco millionaire distracted his rare moments of reflection in his gorgeous palace on the hills. Here they would at least be once more in the country they loved, albeit of a milder and less heroic type, and a little degraded by the overlapping tinsel and scattered spangles of the palace.

It was a three days' fête; the style and choice of amusements left to the guests, and an equal and active participation by no means necessary or indispensable. Consequently, when Christie and Jessie Carr proposed a ride through the adjacent cañon on the second morning, they had no difficulty in finding horses in the well-furnished stables of their opulent entertainers, nor cavaliers among the other guests, who were too happy to find favor in the eyes of two pretty girls who were supposed to be abnormally fastidious and refined. Christie's escort was a good-natured young banker, shrewd enough to avoid demonstrative attentions, and lucky enough to interest her during the ride with his clear and half-humorous reflections on some of the business speculations of the day. If his ideas were occasionally too clever, and not always consistent with a high sense of honor, she was none the less interested to know the ethics of that world of speculation into which her father had plunged, and the more convinced, with a mingled sense of pride and anxiety, that his still dominant gentlemanhood would prevent his coping with it on equal terms. Nor could she help contrasting the conversation of the sharp-witted man at her side with what she still remembered of the vague, touching, boyish enthusiasm of the millionaires of Devil's Ford. Had her escort guessed the result of this contrast, he would hardly have been as gratified as he was with the grave attention of her beautiful eyes.

The fascination of a gracious day and the leafy solitude of the cañon led them to prolong their ride beyond the proposed limit, and it became necessary towards sunset for them to seek some shorter cut home.

"There's a vaquero in yonder field," said Christie's escort, who was riding with her a little in advance of the others, "and those fellows know every trail that a horse can follow. I'll ride on, intercept him, and try my Spanish on him. If I miss him, as he's galloping on, you might try your hand on him yourself. He'll understand your eyes, Miss Carr, in any language."

As he dashed away, to cover his first audacity of compliment, Christie lifted the eyes thus apostrophized to the opposite field. The vaquero, who was chasing some cattle, was evidently too preoccupied to heed the shouts of her companion; and wheeling round suddenly to intercept one of the deviating fugitives, permitted Christie's escort to dash past him before that gentleman could rein in his excited steed. This brought the vaquero directly in her path. Perceiving her, he threw his horse back on its haunches, to prevent a collision. Christie rode up to him, suddenly uttered a cry, and halted. For before her, sunburnt in cheek and throat, darker in the free growth of mustache and curling hair, clad in the coarse, picturesque finery of his class, undisguised only in his boyish beauty, sat George Kearney.

The blood that had forsaken her astonished face rushed as quickly back. His eyes, which had suddenly sparkled with an electrical glow, sank before hers. His hand dropped, and his cheek flushed with a dark embarrassment.

"You here, Mr. Kearney? How strange! — but how glad I am to meet you again!"

She tried to smile; her voice trembled, and her little hand shook as she extended it to him.

He raised his dark eyes quickly, and impulsively urged

his horse to her side. But, as if suddenly awakening to the reality of the situation, he glanced at her hurriedly, down at his barbaric finery, and threw a searching look towards her escort.

In an instant Christie saw the infelicity of her position, and its dangers. The words of Whiskey Dick, "He would n't stand that," flashed across her mind. There was no time to lose. The banker had already gained control over his horse, and was approaching them, all unconscious of the fixed stare with which George was regarding him. Christie hastily seized the hand which he had allowed to fall at his side, and said quickly: —

"Will you ride with me a little way, Mr. Kearney?"

He turned the same searching look upon her. She met it clearly and steadily; he even thought reproachfully.

"Do!" she said hurriedly. "I ask it as a favor. I want to speak to you. Jessie and I are here alone. Father is away. *You* are one of our oldest friends."

He hesitated. She turned to the astonished young banker, who rode up.

"I have just met an old friend. Will you please ride back as quickly as you can, and tell Jessie that Mr. Kearney is here, and ask her to join us?"

She watched her dazed escort, still speechless from the spectacle of the fastidious Miss Carr *tête-à-tête* with a common Mexican vaquero, gallop off in the direction of the cañon, and then turned to George.

"Now take me home, the shortest way, as quick as you can."

"Home?" echoed George.

"I mean to Mr. Prince's house. Quick! before they can come up to us."

He mechanically put spurs to his horse; she followed. They presently struck into a trail that soon diverged again into a disused logging track through the woods.

"This is the short cut to Prince's, by two miles," he said, as they entered the woods.

As they were still galloping, without exchanging a word, Christie began to slacken her speed; George did the same. They were safe from intrusion at the present, even if the others had found the short cut. Christie, bold and self-reliant a moment ago, suddenly found herself growing weak and embarrassed. What had she done?

She checked her horse suddenly.

"Perhaps we had better wait for them," she said timidly.

George had not raised his eyes to hers.

"You said you wanted to hurry home," he replied gently, passing his hand along his mustang's velvety neck, "and — and you had something to say to me."

"Certainly," she answered, with a faint laugh. "I'm so astonished at meeting you here. I'm quite bewildered. You are living here; you have forsaken us to buy a ranch?" she continued, looking at him attentively.

His brow colored slightly.

"No, I'm living here, but I have bought no ranch. I'm only a hired man on somebody else's ranch, to look after the cattle."

He saw her beautiful eyes fill with astonishment and — something else. His brow cleared; he went on, with his old boyish laugh.

"No, Miss Carr. The fact is, I'm dead broke. I've lost everything since I saw you last. But as I know how to ride, and I'm not afraid of work, I manage to keep along."

"You have lost money in — in the mines?" said Christie suddenly.

"No" — he replied quickly, evading her eyes. "My brother has my interest, you know. I've been foolish on my own account solely. You know I'm rather inclined to that sort of thing. But as long as my folly don't affect others, I can stand it."

"But it may affect others — and *they* may not think of it as folly" — She stopped short, confused by his brightening color and eyes. "I mean — Oh, Mr. Kearney, I want you to be frank with me. I know nothing of business, but I know there has been trouble about the mine at Devil's Ford. Tell me honestly, has my father anything to do with it? If I thought that, through any imprudence of his, you had suffered — if I believed that you could trace any misfortune of yours to him — to *us* — I should never forgive myself" — she stopped and flashed a single look at him — "I should never forgive *you* for abandoning us."

The look of pain which had at first shown itself in his face, which never concealed anything, passed, and a quick smile followed her feminine anticlimax.

"Miss Carr," he said, with boyish eagerness, "if any man suggested to me that your father was n't the brightest and best of his kind — too wise and clever for the fools about him to understand — I'd — I'd shoot him."

Confused by his ready and gracious disclaimer of what she had *not* intended to say, there was nothing left for her but to rush upon what she really intended to say, with what she felt was shameful precipitation.

"One word more, Mr. Kearney," she began, looking down, but feeling the color come to her face as she spoke. "When you spoke to me the day you left, you must have thought me hard and cruel. When I tell you that I thought you were alluding to Jessie and some feeling you had for her" —

"For Jessie!" echoed George.

"You will understand that — that" —

"That what?" said George, drawing nearer to her.

"That I was only speaking as she might have spoken had you talked to her of me," added Christie hurriedly, slightly backing her horse away from him.

But this was not so easy, as George was the better rider,



and by an imperceptible movement of his wrist and foot had glued his horse to her side. "He will go now," she had thought, but he did n't.

"We must ride on," she suggested faintly.

"No," he said, with a sudden dropping of his boyish manner and a slight lifting of his head. "We must ride together no further, Miss Carr. I must go back to the work I am hired to do, and you must go on with your party, whom I hear coming. But when we part here you must bid me good-by — not as Jessie's sister — but as Christie — the one — the only woman that I love, or that I ever have loved."

He held out his hand. With the recollection of their previous parting, she tremblingly advanced her own. He took it, but did not raise it to his lips. And it was she who found herself half confusedly retaining his hand in hers, until she dropped it with a blush.

"Then is this the reason you give for deserting us as you have deserted Devil's Ford?" she said coldly.

He lifted his eyes to her with a strange smile, and said, "Yes," wheeled his horse, and disappeared in the forest.

He had left her thus abruptly once before, kissed, blushing, and indignant. He was leaving her now, unknissed, but white and indignant. Yet she was so self-possessed when the party joined her, that the singular rencontre and her explanation of the stranger's sudden departure excited no further comment. Only Jessie managed to whisper in her ear: —

"I hope you are satisfied now that it was n't me he meant?"

"Not at all," said Christie coldly.

## CHAPTER VII

A FEW days after the girls had returned to San Francisco they received a letter from their father. His business, he wrote, would detain him in Sacramento some days longer. There was no reason why they should return to Devil's Ford in the heat of the summer; their host had written to beg him to allow them a more extended visit, and if they were enjoying themselves, he thought it would be well not to disoblige an old friend. He had heard they had a pleasant visit to Mr. Prince's place, and that a certain young banker had been very attentive to Christie.

"Do you know what all this means, dear?" asked Jessie, who had been watching her sister with an unusually grave face.

Christie, whose thoughts had wandered from the letter, replied carelessly:—

"I suppose it means that we are to wait here until father sends for us."

"It means a good deal more. It means that papa has had another reverse; it means that the assay has turned out badly for the mine — that the further they go from the flat the worse it gets — that all the gold they will probably ever see at Devil's Ford is what they have already found or will find on the flat; it means that all Devil's Ford is only a 'pocket,' and not a 'lead.'" She stopped, with unexpected tears in her eyes.

"Who told you this?" asked Christie breathlessly.

"Fairfax — Mr. Munroe," stammered her sister, "writes to me as if we already knew it — tells me not to be alarmed, that it is n't so bad — and all that."

"How long has this happened, Jessie?" said Christie, taking her hand, with a white but calm face.

"Nearly ever since we've been here, I suppose. It must be so, for he says poor papa is still hopeful of doing something yet."

"And Mr. Munroe writes to you?" said Christie abstractedly.

"Of course," said Jessie quickly. "He feels interested in — us."

"Nobody tells *me* anything," said Christie.

"Did n't" —

"No," said Christie bitterly.

"What on earth *did* you talk about? But people don't confide in you because they're afraid of you. You're so" —

"So what?"

"So gently patronizing, and so 'I-don't-suppose-you-can-help-it,-poor-thing,' in your general style," said Jessie, kissing her. "There! I only wish I was like you. What do you say if we write to father that we'll go back to Devil's Ford? Mr. Munroe thinks we will be of service there just now. If the men are dissatisfied, and think we're spending money" —

"I'm afraid Mr. Munroe is hardly a disinterested adviser. At least, I don't think it would look quite decent for you to fly back without your father, at his suggestion," said Christie coldly. "He is not the only partner. We're spending no money. Besides, we have engaged to go to Mr. Prince's again next week."

"As you like, dear," said Jessie, turning away to hide a faint smile.

Nevertheless, when they returned from their visit to Mr. Prince's, and one or two uneventful rides, Christie looked grave. It was only a few days later that Jessie burst upon her one morning.

"You were saying that nobody ever tells you anything. Well, here's your chance. Whiskey Dick is below."

"Whiskey Dick?" repeated Christie. "What does he want?"

"You, love. Who else? You know he always scorns me as not being high-toned and elegant enough for his social confidences. He asked for you only."

With an uneasy sense of some impending revelation, Christie descended to the drawing-room. As she opened the door, a strong flavor of that toilet soap and eau de Cologne with which Whiskey Dick was in the habit of gracefully effacing the traces of dissipation made known his presence. In spite of a new suit of clothes, whose pristine folds refused to adapt themselves entirely to the contour of his figure, he was somewhat subdued by the unexpected elegance of the drawing-room of Christie's host. But a glance at Christie's sad, but gracious face quickly reassured him. Taking from his hat a three-cornered parcel, he unfolded a handsome saffrona rose, which he gravely presented to her. Having thus reestablished his position, he sank elegantly into a *tête-à-tête* ottoman. Finding the position inconvenient to face Christie, who had seated herself on a chair, he transferred himself to the other side of the ottoman, and addressed her over its back as from a pulpit.

"Is this really a fortunate accident, Mr. Hall, or did you try to find us?" said Christie pleasantly.

"Partly promiskuss, and partly coincident, Miss Christie, one up and t'other down," said Dick lightly. "Work being slack at present at Devil's Ford I reck'ned I'd take a pasear down to 'Frisco, and dip into the vortex o' fash'nable society and out again." He lightly waved a new handkerchief to illustrate his swallow-like intrusion. "This yer minglin' with the *bo-tong* is apt to be wearisome, ez you and me knows, unless combined with experience and

judgment. So when them boys up there allows that there 's a little too much fash'nable society and San Francisco capital and highfalutin' about the future goin' on fer square surface mining, I sez, 'Look yere, gentlemen,' sez I, 'you don't see the pint. The pint is, to get the pop'lar eye fixed, so to speak, on Devil's Ford. When a fash'nable star rises above the 'Frisco horizon — like Miss Carr — and, so to speak, dazzles the ginerale eye, people want to know who she is. And when people say that 's the accomplished daughter o' the accomplished superintendent of the Devil's Ford claim — otherwise known as the Star-eyed Goddess o' Devil's Ford — every eye is fixed on the mine, and Capital, so to speak, tumbles to her.' And when they sez that the old man — excuse my freedom, but that 's the way the boys talk of your father, meaning no harm — the old man, instead o' trying to corral rich wid-ders — grass or otherwise — to spend their money on the big works for the gold that ain't there yet — should stay in Devil's Ford and put all his sabe and genius into grindin' out the little gold that is there, I sez to them that it ain't your father's style. 'His style,' sez I, 'ez to go in and build them works.' When they 're done he turns round to Capital, and sez he — 'Look yer,' sez he, 'thar 's all the works you want, first quality — cost a million; thar 's all the water you want, onlimited — cost another million; thar 's all the pay gravel you want in and outer the ground — call it two millions more. Now my time 's too vally-ble; my professhun 's too high-toned to *work* mines. I *make* 'em. Hand me over a check for ten millions and call it square and work it for yourself.' So Capital hands over the money and waltzes down to run the mine, and you original locators walks round with yer hands in yer pockets atop of your six million profit, and you lets Capital take the work and the responsibility."

Preposterous as this seemed from the lips of Whiskey

Dick, Christie had a haunting suspicion that it was not greatly unlike the theories expounded by the clever young banker who had been her escort. She did not interrupt his flow of reminiscent criticism; when he paused for breath, she said quietly:—

“I met Mr. George Kearney the other day in the country.”

Whiskey Dick stopped awkwardly, glanced hurriedly at Christie, and coughed behind his handkerchief.

“Mr. Kearney — eh — er — certengly — yes — er — met him, you say. Was he — er — er — well?”

“In health, yes; but otherwise he has lost everything,” said Christie, fixing her eyes on the embarrassed Dick.

“Yes — er — in course — in course” — continued Dick, nervously glancing round the apartment as if endeavoring to find an opening to some less abrupt statement of the fact.

“And actually reduced to take some menial employment,” added Christie, still regarding Dick with her clear glance.

“That ’s it — that ’s just it,” said Dick, beaming as he suddenly found his delicate and confidential opportunity. “That ’s it, Miss Christie; that ’s just what I was sayin’ to the boys. ‘Ez it the square thing,’ sez I, ‘jest because George hez happened to hypothecate every dollar he has, or expects to hev, to put into them works, only to please Mr. Carr, and just because he don’t want to distress that intelligent gentleman by letting him see he ’s dead broke — for him to go and demean himself and Devil’s Ford by rushing away and hiring out as a Mexican vaquero on Mexican wages? Look,’ sez I, ‘at the disgrace he brings upon a high-toned, fash’nable girl, at whose side he ’s walked and danced, and passed rings, and sentiments, and bokays in the changes o’ the cotillion and the mizzourka. And wot,’ sez I, ‘if some day, prancing along in a fash’nable cavalcade, she all of a suddents comes across him drivin’ a Mexican steer?’ That ’s what I said to the boys.

And so you met him, Miss Christie, as usual," continued Dick, endeavoring under the appearance of a large social experience to conceal an eager anxiety to know the details — "so you met him; and, in course, you did n't let on yer knew him, so to speak, nat'rally, or p'r'aps you kinder like asked him to fix your saddle-girth, and give him a five-dollar piece — eh?"

Christie, who had risen and gone to the window, suddenly turned a very pale face and shining eyes on Dick.

"Mr. Hall," she said, with a faint attempt at a smile, "we are old friends, and I feel I can ask you a favor. You once before acted as our escort — it was for a short but a happy time — will you accept a larger trust? My father is busy in Sacramento for the mine: will you, without saying anything to anybody, take Jessie and me back at once to Devil's Ford?"

"Will I? Miss Christie," said Dick, choking between an intense gratification and a desire to keep back its vulgar exhibition, "I shall be proud!"

"When I say keep it a secret" — she hesitated — "I don't mean that I object to your letting Mr. Kearney, if you happen to know where he is, understand that we are going back to Devil's Ford."

"Cert'nly — nat'rally," said Dick, waving his hand gracefully; "sorter drop him a line, saying that bizness of a social and delicate nature — being the escort of Miss Christie and Jessie Carr to Devil's Ford — prevents my having the pleasure of calling."

"That will do very well, Mr. Hall," said Christie, faintly smiling through her moist eyelashes. "Then will you go at once and secure tickets for to-night's boat, and bring them here? Jessie and I will arrange everything else."

"Cert'nly," said Dick impulsively, and preparing to take a graceful leave.

"We 'll be impatient until you return with the tickets," said Christie graciously.

Dick shook hands gravely, got as far as the door, and paused.

"You think it better to take the tickets now?" he said dubiously.

"By all means," said Christie impetuously. "I've set my heart on going to-night — and unless you secure berths early" —

"In course — in course," interrupted Dick nervously. "But" —

"But what?" said Christie impatiently.

Dick hesitated, shut the door carefully, and looking round the room, lightly shook out his handkerchief, apparently flicked away an embarrassing suggestion, and said, with a little laugh: —

"It's ridiklous, perfectly ridiklous, Miss Christie; but not bein' in the habit of carryin' ready money, and havin' omitted to cash a draft on Wells, Fargo & Co." —

"Of course," said Christie rapidly. "How forgetful I am! Pray forgive me, Mr. Hall. I did n't think. I'll run up and get it from our host; he will be glad to be our banker."

"One moment, Miss Christie," said Dick lightly, as his thumb and finger relaxed in his waistcoat pocket over the only piece of money in the world that had remained to him after his extravagant purchase of Christie's saffrona rose, "one moment: in this yer monetary transaction, if you like, you are at liberty to use *my* name."



## CHAPTER VIII

As Christie and Jessie Carr looked from the windows of the coach, whose dust-clogged wheels were slowly dragging them, as if reluctant, nearer the last stage of their journey to Devil's Ford, they were conscious of a change in the landscape, which they could not entirely charge upon their changed feelings. The few bared open spaces on the upland, the long stretch of rocky ridge near the summit, so vivid and so velvety during their first journey, were now burnt and yellow; even the brief openings in the forest were seared as if by a hot iron in the scorching rays of a half year's sun. The pastoral slopes of the valley below were cloaked in lustreless leather: the rare watercourses along the road had faded from the waiting eye and ear; it seemed as if the long and dry summer had even invaded the close-set ranks of pines, and had blown a simoom breath through the densest woods, leaving its charred red ashes on every leaf and spray along the tunneled shade. As they leaned out of the window and inhaled the half-dead spices of the evergreens, they seemed to have entered the atmosphere of some exhausted passion — of some fierce excitement that was even now slowly burning itself out.

It was a relief at last to see the straggling houses of Devil's Ford far below come once more into view, as they rounded the shoulder of Devil's Spur and began the long descent. But as they entered the town a change more ominous and startling than the desiccation of the landscape forced itself upon them. The town was still there, but where were the inhabitants? Four months ago they had

left the straggling street thronged with busy citizens — groups at every corner, and a chaos of merchandise and traders in the open plaza or square beside the Presbyterian church. Now, all was changed. Only a few wayfarers lifted their heads lazily as the coach rattled by, crossing the deserted square littered with empty boxes, and gliding past empty cabins or vacant shop windows, from which not only familiar faces, but even the window-sashes themselves, were gone. The great unfinished serpent-like flume, crossing the river on gigantic trestles, had advanced as far as the town, stooping over it like some enormous reptile that had sucked its life-blood and was gorged with its prey.

Whiskey Dick, who had left the stage on the summit to avail himself of a shorter foot trail to the house, that would give him half an hour's grace to make preparations, met them at the stage office with a buggy. A glance at the young girls, perhaps, convinced him that the graces of elegant worldly conversation were out of place with the revelation he read on their faces. Perhaps he, too, was a trifle indisposed. The short journey to the house was made in profound silence.

The villa had been repainted and decorated, and it looked fresher, and even, to their preoccupied minds, appeared more attractive than ever. Thoughtful hands had taken care of the vines and rose-bushes on the trellises; water — that precious element in Devil's Ford — had not been spared in keeping green through the long drought the plants which the girls had so tenderly nurtured. It was the one oasis in which the summer still lingered; and yet a singular sense of loss came over the girls as they once more crossed its threshold. It seemed no longer their own.

"Ef I was you, Miss Christie, I 'd keep close to the house for a day or two, until — until — things is settled," said Dick; "there 's a heap o' tramps and sich cattle traipsin' round. P'r'aps you would n't feel so lonesome if you

was nearer town — for instance, 'bout wher' you useter live."

"In the dear old cabin," said Christie quickly; "I remember it; I wish we were there now."

"Do you really? Do you?" said Whiskey Dick, with suddenly twinkling eyes. "That's like you to say it. That's what I allus said," continued Dick, addressing space generally; "if there's any one ez knows how to come square down to the bottom rock without flinchin', it's your high-toned, fash'nable gals. But I must meander back to town, and let the boys know you're in possession, safe and sound. It's right mean that Fairfax and Mattingly had to go down to La Grange on some low business yesterday, but they'll be back to-morrow. So long."

Left alone, the girls began to realize their strange position. They had conceived no settled plan. The night they left San Francisco they had written an earnest letter to their father, telling him that on learning the truth about the reverses of Devil's Ford, they thought it their duty to return and share them with others, without obliging him to prefer the request, and with as little worry to him as possible. He would find them ready to share his trials, and in what must be the scene of their work hereafter.

"It will bring father back," said Christie; "he won't leave us here alone; and then together we must come to some understanding with him — with *them* — for somehow I feel as if this house belonged to us no longer."

Her surmise was not far wrong. When Mr. Carr arrived hurriedly from Sacramento the next evening, he found the house deserted. His daughters were gone; there were indications that they had arrived, and, for some reason, suddenly departed. The vague fear that had haunted his guilty soul after receiving their letter, and during his breathless journey, now seemed to be realized. He was turning from the empty house, whose reproachful solitude

frightened him, when he was confronted on the threshold by the figure of Fairfax Munroe.

"I came to the stage office to meet you," he said; "you must have left the stage at the summit."

"I did," said Carr angrily. "I was anxious to meet my daughters quickly, to know the reason of their foolish alarm, and to know also who had been frightening them. Where are they?"

"They are safe in the old cabin beyond, that has been put up ready to receive them again," said Fairfax quietly.

"But what is the meaning of this? Why are they not here?" demanded Carr, hiding his agitation in a burst of querulous rage.

"Do *you* ask, Mr. Carr?" said Fairfax sadly. "Did you expect them to remain here until the sheriff took possession? No one knows better than yourself that the money advanced you on the deeds of this homestead has never been repaid."

Carr staggered, but recovered himself with feeble violence.

"Since you know so much of my affairs, how do you know that this claim will ever be pressed for payment? How do you know it is not the advance of a — a — friend?"

"Because I have seen the woman who advanced it," said Fairfax hopelessly. "She was here to look at the property before your daughters came."

"Well?" said Carr nervously.

"Well! You force me to tell you something I should like to forget. You force me to anticipate a disclosure I expected to make to you only when I came to ask permission to woo your daughter Jessie; and when I tell you what it is, you will understand that I have no right to criticise your conduct. I am only explaining my own."

"Go on," said Carr impatiently.

"When I first came to this country, there was a woman

I loved passionately. She treated me as women of her kind only treat men like me, she ruined me, and left me. That was four years ago. I love your daughter, Mr. Carr, but she has never heard it from my lips. I would not woo her until I had told you all. I have tried to do it ere this, and failed. Perhaps I should not now, but" —

"But what?" said Carr furiously; "speak out!"

"But this. Look!" said Fairfax, producing from his pocket the packet of letters Jessie had found; "perhaps you know the handwriting?"

"What do you mean?" gasped Carr.

"That woman — my mistress — is the woman who advanced you money, and who claims this house."

The interview, and whatever came of it, remained a secret with the two men. When Mr. Carr accepted the hospitality of the old cabin again, it was understood that he had sacrificed the new house and its furniture to some of the more pressing debts of the mine, and the act went far to restore his waning popularity. But a more genuine feeling of relief was experienced by Devil's Ford when it was rumored that Fairfax Munroe had asked for the hand of Jessie Carr, and that some promise, contingent upon the equitable adjustment of the affairs of the mine, had been given by Mr. Carr. To the superstitious mind of Devil's Ford and its few remaining locators, this new partnership seemed to promise that unity of interest and stability of fortune that Devil's Ford had lacked. But nothing could be done until the rainy season had set fairly in; until the long-looked-for element that was to magically separate the gold from the dross in those dull mounds of dust and gravel had come of its own free will, and in its own appointed channels, independent of the feeble auxiliaries that had hopelessly riven the rocks on the hillside, or hung incomplete and unfinished in lofty scaffoldings above the settlement.

The rainy season came early. At first in gathered mists on the higher peaks that were lifted in the morning sun only to show a fresher field of dazzling white below; in white clouds that at first seemed to be mere drifts blown across from those fresh snow-fields, and obscuring the clear blue above; in far-off murmurs in the hollow hills and gulches; in nearer tinkling melody and baby prattling in the leaves. It came with bright flashes of sunlight by day, with deep, monotonous shadow at night; with the onset of heavy winds, the roar of turbulent woods, the tumultuous tossing of leafy arms, and with what seemed the silent dissolution of the whole landscape in days of steady and uninterrupted downfall. It came extravagantly, for every cañon had grown into a torrent, every gulch a waterspout, every watercourse a river, and all pouring into the North Fork, that, rushing past the settlement, seemed to threaten it with lifted crest and flying mane. It came dangerously, for one night the river, leaping the feeble barrier of Devil's Ford, swept away houses and banks, scattered with unconscious irony the laboriously collected heaps of gravel left for hydraulic machinery, and spread out a vast and silent lake across the submerged flat.

In the hurry and confusion of that night, the girls had thrown open their cabin to the escaping miners, who hurried along the slope that was now the bank of the river. Suddenly Christie felt her arm grasped, and she was half led, half dragged, into the inner room. Her father stood before her.

"Where is George Kearney?" he asked tremulously.

"George Kearney!" echoed Christie, for a moment believing the excitement had turned her father's brain. "You know he is not here; he is in San Francisco."

"He is here — I tell you," said Carr impatiently; "he has been here ever since the high water, trying to save the flume and reservoir."

"George — here!" Christie could only gasp.

"Yes! He passed here a few moments ago, to see if you were all safe, and he has gone on towards the flume. But what he is trying to do is madness. If you see him, implore him to do no more. Let him abandon the accursed flume to its fate. It has worked already too much woe upon us all; why should it carry his brave and youthful soul down with it?"

The words were still ringing in her ears, when he suddenly passed away, with the hurrying crowd. Scarcely knowing what she did, she ran out, vaguely intent only on one thought, seeking only the one face, lately so dear in recollection that she felt she would die if she never saw it again. Perplexed by confused voices in the woods, she lost track of the crowd, until the voices suddenly were raised in one loud outcry, followed by the crashing of timber, the splashing of water, a silence, and then a dull, continuous roar. She ran vaguely on in the direction of the reservoir, with her father's injunction still in her mind, until a terrible idea displaced it, and she turned at right angles suddenly, and ran towards the slope leading down to the submerged flat. She had barely left the shelter of the trees behind her before the roar of water seemed to rise at her very feet. She stopped, dazed, bewildered, and horror-stricken, on the edge of the slope. It was the slope no longer, but the bank of the river itself!

Even in the gray light of early morning, and with inexperienced eyes, she saw all too clearly now. The trestle-work had given way; the curving mile of flume, fallen into the stream, and crushed and dammed against the opposite shore, had absolutely turned the whole river through the half-finished ditch and partly excavated mine in its way, a few rods further on to join the old familiar channel. The bank of the river was changed; the flat had become an island, between which and the slope where she stood the

North Fork was rolling its resistless yellow torrent. As she gazed spellbound, a portion of the slope beneath her suddenly seemed to sink and crumble, and was swallowed up in the rushing stream. She heard a cry of warning behind her, but, rooted to the spot by a fearful fascination, she heeded it not. Again there was a sudden disruption, and another part of the slope sank to rise no more; but this time she felt herself seized by the waist and dragged back. It was her father standing by her side.

He was flushed and excited, gazing at the water with a strange exultation.

"Do you see it? Do you know what has happened?" he asked quickly.

"The flume has fallen and turned the river," said Christie hurriedly. "But — have you seen him — is he safe?"

"He — who?" he answered vacantly.

"George Kearney!"

"He is safe," he said impatiently. "But, do you see, Christie? Do you know what this means?"

He pointed with his tremulous hand to the stream before them.

"It means we are ruined," said Christie coldly.

"Nothing of the kind! It means that the river is doing the work of the flume. It is sluicing off the gravel, deepening the ditch, and altering the slope which was the old bend of the river. It will do in ten minutes the work that would take us a year. If we can stop it in time, or control it, we are safe; but if we cannot, it will carry away the bed and deposit with the rest, and we are ruined again."

With a gesture of impotent fury, he dashed away in the direction of an equally excited crowd, that on a point of the slope nearer the island were gesticulating and shouting to a second group of men, who on the opposite shore were clambering on over the choked débris of the flume that had dammed and diverted the current. It was evident that the



same idea had occurred to them, and they were risking their lives in the attempt to set free the impediments. Shocked and indignant as Christie had been at the degrading absorption of material interests at such a moment, the element of danger lifted the labors of these men into heroism, and she began to feel a strange exultation as she watched them. Under the skillful blows of their axes, in a few moments the vast body of drift began to disintegrate, and then to swing round and move towards the old channel. A cheer went up, but as suddenly died away again. An overlapping fringe of wreckage had caught on the point of the island and arrested the whole mass.

The men, who had gained the shore with difficulty, looked back with a cry of despair. But the next moment from among them leaped a figure, alert, buoyant, invincible, and, axe in hand, once more essayed the passage. Springing from timber to timber he at last reached the point of obstruction. A few strokes of the axe were sufficient to clear it; but at the first stroke it was apparent that the striker was also losing his hold upon the shore, and that he must inevitably be carried away with the tossing débris. But this consideration did not seem to affect him; the last blow was struck, and as the freed timbers rolled on, over and over, he boldly plunged into the flood. Christie gave a little cry — her heart had bounded with him; it seemed as if his plunge had splashed the water in her eyes. He did not come to the surface until he had passed the point below where her father stood, and then struggling feebly, as if stunned or disabled by a blow. It seemed to her that he was trying to approach the side of the river where she was. Would he do it? Could she help him? She was alone; he was hidden from the view of the men on the point, and no succor could come from them. There was a fringe of alder nearly opposite their cabin that almost overhung the stream. She ran to it, clutched it with a frantic hand,

and leaning over the boiling water, uttered for the first time his name.

"George!"

As if called to the surface by the magic of her voice, he rose a few yards from her in mid-current, and turned his fading eyes towards the bank. In another moment he would have been swept beyond her reach, but with a supreme effort he turned on one side; the current, striking him sideways, threw him towards the bank, and she caught him by his sleeve. For an instant it seemed as if she would be dragged down with him. For one dangerous moment she did not care, and almost yielded to the spell; but as the rush of water pressed him against the bank, she recovered herself, and managed to lift him beyond its reach. And then she sat down, half fainting, with his white face and damp curls upon her breast.

"George, darling, speak to me! Only one word! Tell me, have I saved you?"

His eyes opened. A faint twinkle of the old days came to them — a boyish smile played upon his lips.

"For yourself — or Jessie?"

She looked around her with a little frightened air. They were alone. There was but one way of sealing those mischievous lips, and she found it!

"That's what I allus said, gentlemen," lazily remarked Whiskey Dick, a few weeks later, leaning back against the bar, with his glass in his hand. "'George,' sez I, 'it ain't what you *say* to a fash'nable, high-toned young lady; it's what you *does* ez makes or breaks you.' And that's what I sez gin'rally o' things in the Ford. It ain't what Carr and you boys allows to do; it's the gin'ral average o' things ez *iz* done that gives tone to the hull, and hez brought this yer new luck to you all!"

## A SECRET OF TELEGRAPH HILL

### I

As Mr. Herbert Bly glanced for the first time at the house which was to be his future abode in San Francisco he was somewhat startled. In that early period of feverish civic improvement the street before it had been repeatedly graded and lowered until the dwelling — originally a pioneer suburban villa perched upon a slope of Telegraph Hill — now stood sixty feet above the sidewalk, superposed like some Swiss chalet on successive galleries built in the sand-hill, and connected by a half-dozen distinct zigzag flights of wooden staircase. Stimulated, however, by the thought that the view from the top would be a fine one, and that existence there would have all the quaint originality of Robinson Crusoe's tree-dwelling, Mr. Bly began cheerfully to mount the steps. It should be premised that, although a recently appointed clerk in a large banking house, Mr. Bly was somewhat youthful and imaginative, and regarded the ascent as part of that "Excelsior" climbing pointed out by a great poet as a praiseworthy function of ambitious youth.

Reaching at last the level of the veranda, he turned to the view. The distant wooded shore of Contra Costa, the tossing whitecaps and dancing sails of the bay between, and the foreground at his feet of wharves and piers, with their reedlike jungles of masts and cordage, made up a bright, if somewhat material, picture. To his right rose the crest of the hill, historic and memorable as the site of the old semaphore telegraph, the tossing of whose gaunt arms formerly

thrilled the citizens with tidings from the sea. Turning to the house, he recognized the prevailing style of light cottage architecture, although incongruously confined to narrow building plots and the civic regularity of a precise street frontage. Thus a dozen other villas, formerly scattered over the slope, had been laboriously displaced and moved to the rigorous parade line drawn by the street surveyor, no matter how irregular and independent their design and structure. Happily, the few scrub-oaks and low bushes which formed the scant vegetation of this vast sand-dune offered no obstacle and suggested no incongruity. Beside the house before which Mr. Bly now stood, a prolific madeira vine, quickened by the six months' sunshine, had alone survived the displacement of its foundations, and in its untrimmed luxuriance half hid the upper veranda from his view.

Still glowing with his exertion, the young man rang the bell and was admitted into a fair-sized drawing-room, whose tasteful and well-arranged furniture at once prepossessed him. An open piano, a sheet of music carelessly left on the stool, a novel lying face downwards on the table beside a skein of silk, and the distant rustle of a vanished skirt through an inner door, gave a suggestion of refined domesticity to the room that touched the fancy of the homeless and nomadic Bly. He was still enjoying, in half embarrassment, that vague and indescribable atmosphere of a refined woman's habitual presence, when the door opened and the mistress of the house formally presented herself.

She was a faded but still handsome woman. Yet she wore that peculiar long, limp, formless house shawl which in certain phases of Anglo-Saxon spinster and widowhood assumes the functions of the recluse's veil and announces the renunciation of worldly vanities and a resigned indifference to external feminine contour. The most audacious masculine arm would shrink from clasping that shapeless

void in which the flatness of asceticism or the heavings of passion might alike lie buried. She had also in some mysterious way imported into the fresh and pleasant room a certain bombaziny shadow of the past, and a suggestion of that appalling reminiscence known as "better days." Though why it should be always represented by ashen memories, or why better days in the past should be supposed to fix their fitting symbol in depression in the present, Mr. Bly was too young and too preoccupied at the moment to determine. He only knew that he was a little frightened of her, and fixed his gaze with a hopeless fascination on a letter which she somewhat portentously carried under the shawl, and which seemed already to have yellowed in its arctic shade.

"Mr. Carstone has written to me that you would call," said Mrs. Brooks, with languid formality. "Mr. Carstone was a valued friend of my late husband, and I suppose has told you the circumstances — the only circumstances — which admit of my entertaining his proposition of taking anybody, even temporarily, under my roof. The absence of my dear son for six months at Portland, Oregon, enables me to place his room at the disposal of Mr. Carstone's young protégé, who, Mr. Carstone tells me, and I have every reason to believe, is, if perhaps not so seriously inclined nor yet a church communicant, still of a character and reputation not unworthy to follow my dear Tappington in our little family circle as he has at his desk in the bank."

The sensitive Bly, struggling painfully out of an abstraction as to how he was ever to offer the weekly rent of his lodgings to such a remote and respectable person, and also somewhat embarrassed at being appealed to in the third person, here started and bowed.

"The name of Bly is not unfamiliar to me," continued Mrs. Brooks, pointing to a chair and sinking resignedly into another, where her baleful shawl at once assumed the

appearance of a dust-cover; "some of my dearest friends were intimate with the Blys of Philadelphia. They were a branch of the Maryland Blys of the eastern shore, one of whom my Uncle James married. Perhaps you are distantly related?"

Mrs. Brooks was perfectly aware that her visitor was of unknown Western origin, and a poor but clever protégé of the rich banker; but she was one of a certain class of American women who, in the midst of a fierce democracy, are more or less catlike conservators of family pride and lineage, and more or less felinely inconsistent and treacherous to republican principles. Bly, who had just settled in his mind to send her the rent anonymously — as a weekly valentine — recovered himself and his spirits in his usual boyish fashion.

"I am afraid, Mrs. Brooks," he said gayly, "I cannot lay claim to any distinguished relationship, even to that 'Nelly Bly' who, you remember, 'winked her eye when she went to sleep.'" He stopped in consternation. The terrible conviction flashed upon him that this quotation from a popular negro-minstrel song could not possibly be remembered by a lady as refined as his hostess, or even known to her superior son. The conviction was intensified by Mrs. Brooks rising with a smileless face, slightly shedding the possible vulgarity with a shake of her shawl, and remarking that she would show him her son's room, led the way upstairs to the apartment recently vacated by the perfect Tappington.

Preceded by the same distant flutter of unseen skirts in the passage which he had first noticed on entering the drawing-room, and which evidently did not proceed from his companion, whose self-composed cerements would have repressed any such indecorous agitation, Mr. Bly stepped timidly into the room. It was a very pretty apartment, suggesting the same touches of tasteful refinement in its

furniture and appointments, and withal so feminine in its neatness and regularity, that, conscious of his frontier habits and experience, he felt at once repulsively incongruous. "I cannot expect, Mr. Bly," said Mrs. Brooks resignedly, "that you can share my son's extreme sensitiveness to disorder and irregularity; but I must beg you to avoid as much as possible disturbing the arrangement of the bookshelves, which, you observe, comprise his books of serious reference, the Biblical commentaries, and the sermons which were his habitual study. I must beg you to exercise the same care in reference to the valuable offerings from his Sabbath-school scholars which are upon the mantel. The embroidered book-marker, the gift of the young ladies of his Bible class in Dr. Stout's church, is also, you perceive, kept for ornament and affectionate remembrance. The harmonium — even if you are not yourself given to sacred song — I trust you will not find in your way, nor object to my daughter continuing her practice during your daily absence. Thank you. The door you are looking at leads by a flight of steps to the side street."

"A very convenient arrangement," said Bly hopefully, who saw a chance for an occasional unostentatious escape from a too protracted contemplation of Tappington's perfections. "I mean," he added hurriedly, "to avoid disturbing you at night."

"I believe my son had neither the necessity nor desire to use it for that purpose," returned Mrs. Brooks severely; "although he found it sometimes a convenient short cut to church on Sabbath when he was late."

Bly, who in his boyish sensitiveness to external impressions had by this time concluded that a life divided between the past perfections of Tappington and the present renunciations of Mrs. Brooks would be intolerable, and was again abstractedly inventing some delicate excuse for withdrawing without committing himself further, was here sud

denly attracted by a repetition of the rustling of the unseen skirt. This time it was nearer, and this time it seemed to strike even Mrs. Brooks's remote preoccupation. "My daughter, who is deeply devoted to her brother," she said, slightly raising her voice, "will take upon herself the care of looking after Tappington's precious mementos, and spare you the trouble. Cherry, dear! this way. This is the young gentleman spoken of by Mr. Carstone, your papa's friend. My daughter Cherubina, Mr. Bly."

The fair owner of the rustling skirt, which turned out to be a pretty French print, had appeared at the doorway. She was a tall, slim blonde, with a shy, startled manner, as of a penitent nun who was suffering for some conventual transgression — a resemblance that was heightened by her short-cut hair, that might have been cropped as if for punishment. A certain likeness to her mother suggested that she was qualifying for that saint's ascetic shawl — subject, however, to rebellious intervals, indicated in the occasional sidelong fires of her gray eyes. Yet the vague impression that she knew more of the world than her mother, and that she did not look at all as if her name was Cherubina, struck Bly in the same momentary glance.

"Mr. Bly is naturally pleased with what he has seen of our dear Tappington's appointments; and as I gather from Mr. Carstone's letter that he is anxious to enter at once and make the most of the dear boy's absence, you will see, my dear Cherry, that Ellen has everything ready for him?"

Before the unfortunate Bly could explain or protest the young girl lifted her gray eyes to his. Whether she had perceived and understood his perplexity he could not tell; but the swift shy glance was at once appealing, assuring, and intelligent. She was certainly unlike her mother and brother. Acting with his usual impulsiveness, he forgot his previous resolution, and before he left had engaged to begin his occupation of the room on the following day.



The next afternoon found him installed. Yet, after he had unpacked his modest possessions and put them away, after he had placed his few books on the shelves, where they looked glaringly trivial and frivolous beside the late tenant's severe studies; after he had set out his scanty treasures in the way of photographs and some curious mementos of his wandering life, and then quickly put them back again with a sudden angry pride at exposing them to the unsympathetic incongruity of the other ornaments, he, nevertheless, felt ill at ease. He glanced in vain around the pretty room. It was not the delicately flowered wallpaper; it was not the white and blue muslin window-curtains gracefully tied up with blue and white ribbons; it was not the spotless bed, with its blue and white festooned mosquito-net and flounced valances, and its medallion portrait of an unknown bishop at the back; it was not the few tastefully framed engravings of certain cardinal virtues, "The Rock of Ages," and "The Guardian Angel;" it was not the casts in relief of "Night" and "Morning;" it was certainly not the cosy dimity-covered armchairs and sofa, nor yet the clean-swept polished grate with its cheerful fire sparkling against the chill afternoon sea-fogs without; neither was it the mere feminine suggestion, for that touched a sympathetic chord in his impulsive nature; nor the religious and ascetic influence, for he had occupied a monastic cell in a school of the padres at an old mission, and slept profoundly; — it was none of those, and yet a part of all. Most habitations retain a cast or shell of their previous tenant that, fitting tightly or loosely, is still able to adjust itself to the newcomer; in most occupied apartments there is still a shadowy suggestion of the owner's individuality; there was nothing here that fitted Bly — nor was there either, strange to say, any evidence of the past proprietor in this inhospitality of sensation. It did not strike him at the time that it was this very *lack* of indi-

viduality which made it weird and unreal, that it was strange only because it was *artificial*, and that a *real* Tappington had never inhabited it.

He walked to the window — that never-failing resource of the unquiet mind — and looked out. He was a little surprised to find, that, owing to the grading of the house, the scrub-oaks and bushes of the hill were nearly on the level of his window, as also was the adjoining side street on which his second door actually gave. Opening this, the sudden invasion of the sea-fog and the figure of a pedestrian casually passing along the disused and abandoned pavement not a dozen feet from where he had been comfortably seated, presented such a striking contrast to the studious quiet and cosiness of his secluded apartment that he hurriedly closed the door again with a sense of indiscreet exposure. Returning to the window, he glanced to the left, and found that he was overlooked by the side veranda of another villa in the rear, evidently on its way to take position on the line of the street. Although in actual and deliberate transit on rollers across the back yard and still occulting a part of the view, it remained, after the reckless fashion of the period, inhabited. Certainly, with a door fronting a thoroughfare, and a neighbor gradually approaching him, he would not feel lonely or lack excitement.

He drew his armchair to the fire and tried to realize the all-pervading yet evasive Tappington. There was no portrait of him in the house, and although Mrs. Brooks had said that he “favored” his sister, Bly had, without knowing why, instinctively resented it. He had even timidly asked his employer, and had received the vague reply that he was “good looking enough,” and the practical but discomposing retort, “What do you want to know for?” As he really did not know why, the inquiry had dropped. He stared at the monumental crystal inkstand

half full of ink, yet spotless and free from stains, that stood on the table, and tried to picture Tappington daintily dipping into it to thank the fair donors — “daughters of Rebecca.” Who were they? and what sort of man would they naturally feel grateful to?

What was that?

He turned to the window, which had just resounded to a slight tap or blow, as if something soft had struck it. With an instinctive suspicion of the propinquity of the adjoining street he rose, but a single glance from the window satisfied him that no missile would have reached it from thence. He scanned the low bushes on the level before him; certainly no one could be hiding there. He lifted his eyes toward the house on the left; the curtains of the nearest window appeared to be drawn suddenly at the same moment. Could it have come from there? Looking down upon the window-ledge, there lay the mysterious missile — a little misshapen ball. He opened the window and took it up. It was a small handkerchief tied into a soft knot, and dampened with water to give it the necessary weight as a projectile.

Was it apparently the trick of a mischievous child? or —

But here a faint knock on the door leading into the hall checked his inquiry. He opened it sharply in his excitement, and was embarrassed to find the daughter of his hostess standing there, shy, startled, and evidently equally embarrassed by his abrupt response.

“Mother only wanted me to ask you if Ellen had put everything to rights,” she said, making a step backwards.

“Oh, thank you. Perfectly,” said Herbert, with effusion. “Nothing could be better done. In fact” —

“You’re quite sure she hasn’t forgotten anything? or that there isn’t anything you would like changed?” she continued, with her eyes leveled on the floor.

“Nothing, I assure you,” he said, looking at her down-

cast lashes. As she still remained motionless, he continued cheerfully, "Would you — would you — care to look round and see?"

"No; I thank you."

There was an awkward pause. He still continued to hold the door open. Suddenly she moved forward with a schoolgirl stride, entered the room, and going to the harmonium, sat down upon the music-stool beside it, slightly bending forward, with one long, slim, white hand on top of the other, resting over her crossed knees.

Herbert was a little puzzled. It was the awkward and brusque act of a very young person, and yet nothing now could be more gentle and self-composed than her figure and attitude.

"Yes," he continued, smilingly; "I am only afraid that I may not be able to live quite up to the neatness and regularity of the example I find here everywhere. You know I am dreadfully careless and not at all orderly. I shudder to think what may happen; but you and your mother, Miss Brooks, I trust, will make up your minds to overlook and forgive a good deal. I shall do my best to be worthy of Mr. Tap — of my predecessor — but even then I am afraid you'll find me a great bother."

She raised her shy eyelids. The faintest ghost of a long-buried dimple came into her pale cheek as she said softly, to his utter consternation: —

"Rats!"

Had she uttered an oath he could not have been more startled than he was by this choice gem of Western saloon-slang from the pure lips of this Evangeline-like figure before him. He sat gazing at her with a wild hysteric desire to laugh. She lifted her eyes again, swept him with a slightly terrified glance, and said: —

"Tap says you all say that when any one makes-believe politeness to you."

"Oh, your *brother* says that, does he?" said Herbert, laughing.

"Yes, and sometimes 'Old rats.' But," she continued hurriedly, "*he* does n't say it; he says *you* all do. My brother is very particular, and very good. Dr. Stout loves him. He is thought very much of in all Christian circles. That bookmark was given to him by one of his classes."

Every trace of her dimples had vanished. She looked so sweetly grave, and withal so maidenly, sitting there slightly smoothing the lengths of her pink fingers, that Herbert was somewhat embarrassed.

"But I assure you, Miss Brooks, I was not making-believe. I am really very careless, and everything is so proper — I mean so neat and pretty — here, that I" — he stopped, and observing the same backward wandering of her eye as of a filly about to shy, quickly changed the subject. "You have, or are about to have, neighbors?" he said, glancing towards the windows as he recalled the incident of a moment before.

"Yes; and they're not at all nice people. They are from Pike County, and very queer. They came across the plains in '50. They say 'Stranger;' the men are vulgar, and the girls very forward. Tap forbids my ever going to the window and looking at them. They're quite what you would call 'off color.'"

Herbert, who did not dare to say that he never would have dreamed of using such an expression in any young girl's presence, was plunged in silent consternation.

"Then your brother does n't approve of them?" he said, at last, awkwardly.

"Oh, not at all. He even talked of having ground glass put in all these windows, only it would make the light bad."

Herbert felt very embarrassed. If the mysterious missile came from these objectionable young persons, it was evi-

dently because they thought they had detected a more accessible and sympathizing individual in the stranger who now occupied the room. He concluded he had better not say anything about it.

Miss Brooks's golden eyelashes were bent towards the floor. "Do you play sacred music, Mr. Bly?" she said, without raising them.

"I am afraid not."

"Perhaps you know only negro-minstrel songs?"

"I am afraid — yes."

"I know one." The dimples faintly came back again. "It's called 'The Ham-fat Man.' Some day when mother is n't in I'll play it for you."

Then the dimples fled again, and she immediately looked so distressed that Herbert came to her assistance.

"I suppose your brother taught you that too?"

"Oh, dear, no!" she returned, with her frightened glance; "I only heard him say some people preferred that kind of thing to sacred music, and one day I saw a copy of it in a music-store window in Clay Street, and bought it. Oh no! Tappington did n't teach it to me."

In the pleasant discovery that she was at times independent of her brother's perfections, Herbert smiled, and sympathetically drew a step nearer to her. She rose at once, somewhat primly holding back the sides of her skirt, schoolgirl fashion, with thumb and finger, and her eyes cast down.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Bly."

"Must you go? Good-afternoon."

She walked directly to the open door, looking very tall and stately as she did so, but without turning towards him. When she reached it she lifted her eyes; there was the slightest suggestion of a return of her dimples in the relaxation of her grave little mouth. Then she said, "Good-by, Mr. Bly," and departed.

The skirt of her dress rustled for an instant in the passage. Herbert looked after her. "I wonder if she skipped then — she looks like a girl that might skip at such a time," he said to himself. "How very odd she is — and how simple! But I must pull her up in that slang when I know her better. Fancy her brother telling her *that!* What a pair they must be!" Nevertheless, when he turned back into the room again he forbore going to the window to indulge further curiosity in regard to his wicked neighbors. A certain new feeling of respect to his late companion — and possibly to himself — held him in check. Much as he resented Tappington's perfections, he resented quite as warmly the presumption that he was not quite as perfect, which was implied in that mysterious overture. He glanced at the stool on which she had been sitting with a half-brotherly smile, and put it reverently on one side with a very vivid recollection of her shy maidenly figure. In some mysterious way too the room seemed to have lost its formal strangeness; perhaps it was the touch of individuality — *hers* — that had been wanting? He began thoughtfully to dress himself for his regular dinner at the Poodle Dog Restaurant, and when he left the room he turned back to look once more at the stool where she had sat. Even on his way to that fast and famous café of the period, he felt, for the first time in his thoughtless but lonely life, the gentle security of the home he had left behind him.

## II

It was three or four days before he became firmly adjusted to his new quarters. During this time he had met Cherry casually on the staircase, in going or coming, and received her shy greetings; but she had not repeated her visit, nor again alluded to it. He had spent part of a formal evening in the parlor in company with a calling deacon, who, unappalled by the Indian shawl for which the widow

had exchanged her household ceremonies on such occasions, appeared to Herbert to have remote matrimonial designs, as far at least as a sympathetic deprecation of the vanities of the present, an echoing of her sighs like a modest encore, a preternatural gentility of manner, a vague allusion to the necessity of bearing "one another's burdens," and an everlasting "promise" in store, would seem to imply. To Herbert's vivid imagination, a discussion on the doctrinal points of last Sabbath's sermon was fraught with delicate suggestion; and an acceptance by the widow of an appointment to attend the Wednesday evening "Lectures" had all the shy reluctant yielding of a granted rendezvous. Oddly enough, the more formal attitude seemed to be reserved for the young people, who, in the suggestive atmosphere of this spiritual flirtation, alone appeared to preserve the proprieties, and, to some extent, decorously chaperon their elders. Herbert gravely turned the leaves of Cherry's music while she played and sang one or two discreet but depressing songs expressive of her unalterable but proper devotion to her mother's clock, her father's armchair, and her aunt's Bible; and Herbert joined somewhat boyishly in the soul-subduing refrain. Only once he ventured to suggest in a whisper that he would like to add *her* music-stool to the adorable inventory; but he was met by such a disturbed and terrified look that he desisted. "Another night of this wild and reckless dissipation will finish me," he said lugubriously to himself when he reached the solitude of his room. "I wonder how many times a week I'd have to help the girl play the spiritual gooseberry downstairs before we could have any fun ourselves?"

Here the sound of distant laughter, interspersed with vivacious feminine shrieks, came through the open window. He glanced between the curtains. His neighbor's house was brilliantly lit, and the shadows of a few romping figures were chasing each other across the muslin shades of



the windows. The objectionable young women were evidently enjoying themselves. In some conditions of the mind there is a certain exasperation in the spectacle of unmeaning enjoyment, and he shut the window sharply. At the same moment some one knocked at his door.

It was Miss Brooks, who had just come upstairs.

"Will you please let me have my music-stool?"

He stared at her a moment in surprise, then recovering himself, said, "Yes, certainly," and brought the stool. For an instant he was tempted to ask why she wanted it, but his pride forbade him.

"Thank you. Good-night."

"Good-night!"

"I hope it was n't in your way?"

"Not at all."

"Good-night!"

"Good-night."

She vanished. Herbert was perplexed. Between young ladies whose naïve exuberance impelled them to throw handkerchiefs at this window and young ladies whose equally naïve modesty demanded the withdrawal from his bedroom of a chair on which they had once sat, his lot seemed to have fallen in a troubled locality. Yet a day or two later he heard Cherry practicing on the harmonium as he was ascending the stairs on his return from business; she had departed before he entered the room, but had left the music-stool behind her. It was not again removed.

One Sunday, the second or third of his tenancy, when Cherry and her mother were at church, and he had finished some work that he had brought from the bank, his former restlessness and sense of strangeness returned. The regular afternoon fog had thickened early, and driving him back from a cheerless, chilly ramble on the hill, had left him still more depressed and solitary. In sheer desperation he moved some of the furniture, and changed the disposition

of several smaller ornaments. Growing bolder, he even attacked the sacred shelf devoted to Tappington's serious literature and moral studies. At first glance the book of sermons looked suspiciously fresh and new for a volume of habitual reference, but its leaves were carefully cut, and contained one or two bookmarks. It was only another evidence of that perfect youth's care and neatness. As he was replacing it he noticed a small object folded in white paper at the back of the shelf. To put the book back into its former position it was necessary to take this out. He did so, but its contents slid from his fingers and the paper to the floor. To his utter consternation, looking down he saw a pack of playing-cards strewn at his feet!

He hurriedly picked them up. They were worn and slippery from use, and exhaled a faint odor of tobacco. Had they been left there by some temporary visitor unknown to Tappington and his family, or had they been hastily hidden by a servant? Yet they were of a make and texture superior to those that a servant would possess; looking at them carefully, he recognized them to be of a quality used by the better-class gamblers. Restoring them carefully to their former position, he was tempted to take out the other volumes, and was rewarded with the further discovery of a small box of ivory counters, known as "poker-chips." It was really very extraordinary! It was quite the *cache* of some habitual gambler. Herbert smiled grimly at the irreverent incongruity of the hiding-place selected by its unknown and mysterious owner, and amused himself by fancying the horror of his sainted predecessor had *he* made the discovery. He determined to replace them, and to put some mark upon the volumes before them in order to detect any future disturbance of them in his absence.

Ought he not to take Miss Brooks in his confidence? Or should he say nothing about it at present, and trust to chance to discover the sacrilegious hider? Could it pos-

sibly be Cherry herself, guilty of the same innocent curiosity that had impelled her to buy the "Ham-fat Man"? Preposterous! Besides, the cards had been used, and she could not play poker alone!

He watched the rolling fog extinguish the line of Russian Hill, the last bit of far perspective from his window. He glanced at his neighbor's veranda, already dripping with moisture; the windows were blank; he remembered to have heard the girls giggling in passing down the side street on their way to church, and had noticed from behind his own curtains that one was rather pretty. This led him to think of Cherry again, and to recall the quaint yet melancholy grace of her figure as she sat on the stool opposite. Why had she withdrawn it so abruptly; did she consider his jesting allusion to it indecorous and presuming? Had he really meant it seriously; and was he beginning to think too much about her? Would she ever come again? How nice it would be if she returned from church alone early, and they could have a comfortable chat together here! Would she sing the "Ham-fat Man" for him? Would the dimples come back if she did? Should he ever know more of this quaint repressed side of her nature? After all, what a dear, graceful, tantalizing, lovable creature she was! Ought he not at all hazards try to know her better? Might it not be here that he would find a perfect realization of his boyish dreams, and in *her* all that — what nonsense he was thinking!

Suddenly Herbert was startled by the sound of a light but hurried foot upon the wooden outer step of his second door, and the quick but ineffective turning of the door-handle. He started to his feet, his mind still filled with a vision of Cherry. Then he as suddenly remembered that he had locked the door on going out, putting the key in his overcoat pocket. He had returned by the front door, and his overcoat was now hanging in the lower hall.

The door again rattled impetuously. Then it was supplemented by a female voice in a hurried whisper: "Open quick, can't you? do hurry!"

He was confounded. The voice was authoritative, not unmusical; but it was *not* Cherry's. Nevertheless he called out quickly, "One moment, please, and I'll get the key!" dashed downstairs and up again, breathlessly unlocked the door and threw it open.

Nobody was there!

He ran out into the street. On one side it terminated abruptly on the cliff on which his dwelling was perched; on the other, it descended more gradually into the next thoroughfare; but up and down the street, on either hand, no one was to be seen. A slightly superstitious feeling for an instant crept over him. Then he reflected that the mysterious visitor could in the interval of his getting the key have easily slipped down the steps of the cliff or entered the shrubbery of one of the adjacent houses. But why had she not waited? And what did she want? As he reëntered his door he mechanically raised his eyes to the windows of his neighbor's. This time he certainly was not mistaken. The two amused, mischievous faces that suddenly disappeared behind the curtain as he looked up showed that the incident had not been unwitnessed. Yet it was impossible that it could have been either of *them*. Their house was only accessible by a long *détour*. It might have been the trick of a confederate; but the tone of half familiarity and half entreaty in the unseen visitor's voice dispelled the idea of any collusion. He entered the room and closed the door angrily. A grim smile stole over his face as he glanced around at the dainty saintlike appointments of the absent Tappington, and thought what that irreproachable young man would have said to the indecorous intrusion, even though it had been a mistake. Would those shameless Pike County girls have dared to laugh at *him*?

But he was again puzzled to know why he himself should have been selected for this singular experience. Why was *he* considered fair game for these girls? And, for the matter of that, now that he reflected upon it, why had even this gentle, refined, and melancholy Cherry thought it necessary to talk slang to *him* on their first acquaintance, and offer to sing him the "Ham-fat Man"? It was true he had been a little gay, but never dissipated. Of course he was not a saint, like Tappington — oh, *that* was it! He believed he understood it now. He was suffering from that extravagant conception of what worldliness consists of, so common to very good people with no knowledge of the world. Compared to Tappington he was in their eyes, of course, a rake and a roué. The explanation pleased him. He would not keep it to himself. He would gain Cherry's confidence and enlist her sympathies. Her gentle nature would revolt at this injustice to their lonely lodger. She would see that there were degrees of goodness besides her brother's. She would perhaps sit on that stool again and *not* sing the "Ham-fat Man."

A day or two afterwards the opportunity seemed offered to him. As he was coming home and ascending the long hilly street, his eye was taken by a tall graceful figure just preceding him. It was she. He had never before seen her in the street and was now struck with her ladylike bearing and the grave superiority of her perfectly simple attire. In a thoroughfare haunted by handsome women and striking toilets, the refined grace of her mourning costume, and a certain stateliness that gave her the look of a young widow, was a contrast that evidently attracted others than himself. It was with an odd mingling of pride and jealousy that he watched the admiring yet respectful glances of the passers-by, some of whom turned to look again, and one or two to retrace their steps and follow her at a decorous distance. This caused him to quicken

his own pace, with a new anxiety and a remorseful sense of wasted opportunity. What a booby he had been, not to have made more of his contiguity to this charming girl — to have been frightened at the naïve decorum of her maidenly instincts! He reached her side, and raised his hat with a trepidation at her new-found graces — with a boldness that was defiant of her other admirers. She blushed slightly.

“I thought you ’d overtake me before,” she said naïvely. “I saw *you* ever so long ago.”

He stammered, with an equal simplicity, that he had not dared to.

She looked a little frightened again, and then said hurriedly: “I only thought that I would meet you on Montgomery Street, and we would walk home together. I don’t like to go out alone, and mother cannot always go with me. Tappington never cared to take me out — I don’t know why. I think he did n’t like the people staring and stopping us. But they stare more — don’t you think? — when one is alone. So I thought if you were coming straight home we might come together — unless you have something else to do?”

Herbert impulsively reiterated his joy at meeting her, and averred that no other engagement, either of business or pleasure, could or would stand in his way. Looking up, however, it was with some consternation that he saw they were already within a block of the house.

“Suppose we take a turn around the hill and come back by the old street down the steps?” he suggested earnestly.

The next moment he regretted it. The frightened look returned to her eyes; her face became melancholy and formal again.

“No!” she said quickly. “That would be taking a walk with you like these young girls and their young men on Saturdays. That’s what Ellen does with the butcher’s

boy on Sundays. Tappington often used to meet them. Doing the 'Come, Philanders,' as he says you call it."

It struck Herbert that the didactic Tappington's method of inculcating a horror of slang in his sister's breast was open to some objection; but they were already on the steps of their house, and he was too much mortified at the reception of his last unhappy suggestion to make the confidential disclosure he had intended, even if there had still been time.

"There's mother waiting for me," she said, after an awkward pause, pointing to the figure of Mrs. Brooks dimly outlined on the veranda. "I suppose she was beginning to be worried about my being out alone. She'll be so glad I met you." It did n't appear to Herbert, however, that Mrs. Brooks exhibited any extravagant joy over the occurrence, and she almost instantly retired with her daughter into the sitting-room, linking her arm in Cherry's, and, as it were, empanoplying her with her own invulnerable shawl. Herbert went to his room more dissatisfied with himself than ever.

Two or three days elapsed without his seeing Cherry; even the well-known rustle of her skirt in the passage was missing. On the third evening he resolved to bear the formal terrors of the drawing-room again, and stumbled upon a decorous party consisting of Mrs. Brooks, the deacon, and the pastor's wife — but not Cherry. It struck him on entering that the momentary awkwardness of the company and the formal beginning of a new topic indicated that *he* had been the subject of their previous conversation. In this idea he continued, through that vague spirit of opposition which attacks impulsive people in such circumstances, to generally disagree with them on all subjects, and to exaggerate what he chose to believe they thought objectionable in him. He did not remain long; but learned in that brief interval that Cherry had gone to visit a friend

in *Contra Costa*, and would be absent a fortnight; and he was conscious that the information was conveyed to him with a peculiar significance.

The result of which was only to intensify his interest in the absent Cherry, and for a week to plunge him in a sea of conflicting doubts and resolutions. At one time he thought seriously of demanding an explanation from Mrs. Brooks, and of confiding to her — as he had intended to do to Cherry — his fears that his character had been misinterpreted, and his reasons for believing so. But here he was met by the difficulty of formulating what he wished to have explained, and some doubts as to whether his confidences were prudent. At another time he contemplated a serious imitation of Tappington's perfections, a renunciation of the world, and an entire change in his habits. He would go regularly to church — *her* church, and take up Tappington's desolate Bible class. But here the torturing doubt arose whether a young lady who betrayed a certain secular curiosity, and who had evidently depended upon her brother for a knowledge of the world, would entirely like it. At times he thought of giving up the room and abandoning forever this doubly dangerous proximity; but here again he was deterred by the difficulty of giving a satisfactory reason to his employer, who had procured it as a favor. His passion — for such he began to fear it to be — led him once to the extravagance of asking a day's holiday from the bank, which he vaguely spent in the streets of Oakland in the hope of accidentally meeting the exiled Cherry.

### III

The fortnight slowly passed. She returned, but he did not see her. She was always out or engaged in her room with some female friend when Herbert was at home. This was singular, as she had never appeared to him as a young



girl who was fond of visiting or had ever affected female friendships. In fact, there was little doubt now that, wittingly or unwittingly, she was avoiding him.

He was moodily sitting by the fire one evening, having returned early from dinner. In reply to his habitual but affectedly careless inquiry, Ellen had told him that Mrs. Brooks was confined to her room by a slight headache, and that Miss Brooks was out. He was trying to read, and listening to the wind that occasionally rattled the casement and caused the solitary gas-lamp that was visible in the side street to flicker and leap wildly. Suddenly he heard the same footfall upon his outer step and a light tap at the door. Determined this time to solve the mystery, he sprang to his feet and ran to the door; but to his anger and astonishment it was locked and the key was gone. Yet he was positive that *he* had not taken it out.

The tap was timidly repeated. In desperation he called out, "Please don't go away yet. The key is gone; but I'll find it in a moment." Nevertheless he was at his wits' end.

There was a hesitating pause and then the sound of a key cautiously thrust into the lock. It turned; the door opened, and a tall figure, whose face and form were completely hidden in a veil and long gray shawl, quickly glided into the room and closed the door behind it. Then it suddenly raised its arms, the shawl was parted, the veil fell aside, and Cherry stood before him!

Her face was quite pale. Her eyes, usually downcast, frightened, or coldly clear, were bright and beautiful with excitement. The dimples were faintly there, although the smile was sad and half hysterical. She remained standing, erect and tall, her arms dropped at her side, holding the veil and shawl that still depended from her shoulders.

"So—I've caught you!" she said, with a strange little laugh. "Oh yes. 'Please don't go away yet. I'll

get the key in a moment,'” she continued, mimicking his recent utterance.

He could only stammer, “Miss Brooks — then it was *you*?”

“Yes; and you thought it was *she*, did n't you? Well, and you're caught! I did n't believe it; I would n't believe it when they said it. I determined to find it out myself. And I have; and it's true.”

Unable to determine whether she was serious or jesting, and conscious only of his delight at seeing her again, he advanced impulsively. But her expression instantly changed: she became at once stiff and schoolgirlishly formal, and stepped back towards the door.

“Don't come near me, or I'll go,” she said quickly, with her hand upon the lock.

“But not before you tell me what you mean,” he said, half laughingly, half earnestly. “Who is *she*? and what would n't you have believed? For upon my honor, Miss Brooks, I don't know what you are talking about.”

His evident frankness and truthful manner appeared to puzzle her. “You mean to say you were expecting no one?” she said sharply.

“I assure you I was not.”

“And — and no woman was ever here — at that door?”

He hesitated. “Not to-night — not for a long time; not since you returned from Oakland.”

“Then there *was* one?”

“I believe so.”

“You *believe* — you don't *know*?”

“I believed it was a woman from her voice; for the door was locked, and the key was downstairs. When I fetched it and opened the door, she — or whoever it was — was gone.”

“And that's why you said so imploringly, just now, ‘Please don't go away yet’? You see, I've caught you. Ah! I don't wonder you blush!”

If he had, his cheeks had caught fire from her brilliant eyes and the extravagantly affected sternness — as of a schoolgirl monitor — in her animated face. Certainly he had never seen such a transformation.

“Yes; but, you see, I wanted to know who the intruder was,” he said, smiling at his own embarrassment.

“You did — well, perhaps *that* will tell you? It was found under your door before I went away.” She suddenly produced from her pocket a folded paper and handed it to him. It was a misspelt scrawl, and ran as follows: —

“Why are you so cruel? Why do you keep me dancing on the stepps before them gurls at the windows? Was it that stuck-up Saint, Miss Brooks, that you were afraid of, my deer? Oh, you faithless trater! Wait till I ketch you! I ’ll tear your eyes out and hern!”

It did not require great penetration for Herbert to be instantly convinced that the writer of this vulgar epistle and the owner of the unknown voice were two very different individuals. The note was evidently a trick. A suspicion of its perpetrators flashed upon him.

“Whoever the woman was, it was not she who wrote the note,” he said positively. “Somebody must have seen her at the door. I remember now that those girls — your neighbors — were watching me from their window when I came out. Depend upon it, that letter comes from them.”

Cherry’s eyes opened widely with a sudden childlike perception, and then shyly dropped. “Yes,” she said slowly, “they *did* watch you. They know it, for it was they who made it the talk of the neighborhood, and that’s how it came to mother’s ears.” She stopped, and with a frightened look, stepped back towards the door again.

“Then *that* was why your mother” —

“Oh yes,” interrupted Cherry quickly. “That was why

I went over to Oakland, and why mother forbade my walking with you again, and why she had a talk with friends about your conduct, and why she came near telling Mr. Carstone all about it until I stopped her." She checked herself — he could hardly believe his eyes — the pale, nun-like girl was absolutely blushing.

"I thank you, Miss Brooks," he said gravely, "for your thoughtfulness, although I hope I could have still proven my innocence to Mr. Carstone, even if some unknown woman tried my door by mistake, and was seen doing it. But I am pained to think that *you* could have believed me capable of so wanton and absurd an impropriety — and such a gross disrespect to your mother's house."

"But," said Cherry, with childlike *naïveté*, "you know *you* don't think anything of such things, and that's what I told mother."

"You told your mother *that*?"

"Oh yes — I told her Tappington says it's quite common with young men. Please don't laugh — for it's very dreadful. Tappington didn't laugh when he told it to me as a warning. He was shocked."

"But, my dear Miss Brooks" —

"There — now you're angry — and that's as bad. Are you sure you did n't know that woman?"

"Positive!"

"Yet you seemed very anxious just now that she should wait till you opened the door."

"That was perfectly natural."

"I don't think it was natural at all."

"But — according to Tappington" —

"Because my brother is very good you need not make fun of him."

"I assure you I have no such intention. But what more can I say? I give you my word that I don't know who that unlucky woman was. No doubt she may have been

some nearsighted neighbor who had mistaken the house, and I dare say was as thoroughly astonished at my voice as I was at hers. Can I say more? Is it necessary for me to swear that since I have been here no woman has ever entered that door — but” —

“But who?”

“Yourself.”

“I know what you mean,” she said hurriedly, with her old frightened look, gliding to the outer door. “It’s shameful what I’ve done. But I only did it because — because I had faith in you, and didn’t believe what they said was true.” She had already turned the lock. There were tears in her pretty eyes.

“Stop,” said Herbert gently. He walked slowly towards her, and within reach of her frightened figure stopped with the timid respect of a mature and genuine passion. “You must not be seen going out of that door,” he said gravely. “You must let me go first, and when I am gone, lock the door again and go through the hall to your own room. No one must know that I was in the house when you came in at that door. Good-night.”

Without offering his hand he lifted his eyes to her face. The dimples were all there — and something else. He bowed and passed out.

Ten minutes later he ostentatiously returned to the house by the front door, and proceeded up the stairs to his own room. As he cast a glance around he saw that the music-stool had been moved before the fire, evidently with the view of attracting his attention. Lying upon it, carefully folded, was the veil that she had worn. There could be no doubt that it was left there purposely. With a smile at this strange girl’s last characteristic act of timid but compromising recklessness, after all his precautions, he raised it tenderly to his lips, and then hastened to hide it from the reach of vulgar eyes. But had Cherry known that its

temporary resting-place that night was under his pillow she might have doubted his superior caution.

When he returned from the bank the next afternoon, Cherry rapped ostentatiously at his door. "Mother wishes me to ask you," she began, with a certain prim formality, which nevertheless did not preclude dimples, "if you would give us the pleasure of your company at our Church Festival to-night? There will be a concert and a collation. You could accompany us there if you cared. Our friends and Tappington's would be so glad to see you, and Dr. Stout would be delighted to make your acquaintance."

"Certainly!" said Herbert, delighted and yet astounded. "Then," he added in a lower voice, "your mother no longer believes me so dreadfully culpable?"

"Oh no," said Cherry in a hurried whisper, glancing up and down the passage; "I've been talking to her about it, and she is satisfied that it is all a jealous trick and slander of these neighbors. Why, I told her that they had even said that *I* was that mysterious woman; that I came that way to you because she had forbidden my seeing you openly."

"What! You dared say that?"

"Yes; don't you see? Suppose they said they *had* seen me coming in last night — *that* answers it," she said triumphantly.

"Oh, it does?" he said vacantly.

"Perfectly. Sc you see she's convinced that she ought to put you on the same footing as Tappington, before everybody; and then there won't be any trouble. You'll come, won't you? It won't be so *very* good. And then, I've told mother that as there have been so many street-fights, and so much talk about the Vigilance Committee lately, I ought to have somebody for an escort when I am coming home. And if you're known, you see, as one of *us*, there'll be no harm in you're meeting me."

"Thank you," he said, extending his hand gratefully.

Her fingers rested a moment in his. "Where did you put it?" she said demurely.

"It? Oh! *it's* all safe," he said quickly, but somewhat vaguely.

"But I don't call the upper drawer of your bureau safe," she returned poutingly, "where *everybody* can go. So you'll find it *now* inside the harmonium, on the keyboard."

"Oh, thank you."

"It's quite natural to have left it there *accidentally* — is n't it?" she said imploringly, assisted by all her dimples. Alas, she had forgotten that he was still holding her hand. Consequently, she had not time to snatch it away and vanish, with a stifled little cry, before it had been pressed two or three times to his lips. A little ashamed of his own boldness, Herbert remained for a few moments in the doorway listening, and looking uneasily down the dark passage. Presently a slight sound came over the fanlight of Cherry's room. Could he believe his ears? The saintlike Cherry — no doubt tutored, for example's sake, by the perfect Tappington — was softly whistling.

In this simple fashion the first pages of this little idyl were quietly turned. The book might have been closed or laid aside even then. But it so chanced that Cherry was an unconscious prophet; and presently it actually became a prudential necessity for her to have a masculine escort when she walked out. For a growing state of lawlessness and crime culminated one day the deep tocsin of the Vigilance Committee, and at its stroke fifty thousand peaceful men, reverting to the first principles of social safety, sprang to arms, assembled at their quarters, or patrolled the streets. In another hour the city of San Francisco was in the hands of a mob — the most peaceful, orderly, well organized, and temperate the world had ever known, and yet in concep-

tion as lawless, autocratic, and imperious as the conditions it opposed.

## IV

Herbert, enrolled in the same section with his employer and one or two fellow clerks, had participated in the meetings of the committee with the light heartedness and irresponsibility of youth, regretting only the loss of his usual walk with Cherry and the hours that kept him from her house. He was returning from a protracted meeting one night, when the number of arrests and searching for proscribed and suspected characters had been so large as to induce fears of organized resistance and rescue, and on reaching the foot of the hill found it already so late, that to avoid disturbing the family he resolved to enter his room directly by the door in the side street. On inserting his key in the lock it met with some resisting obstacle, which, however, yielded and apparently dropped on the mat inside. Opening the door and stepping into the perfectly dark apartment, he trod upon this object, which proved to be another key. The family must have procured it for their convenience during his absence, and after locking the door had carelessly left it in the lock. It was lucky that it had yielded so readily.

The fire had gone out. He closed the door and lit the gas, and after taking off his overcoat moved to the door leading into the passage to listen if anybody was still stirring. To his utter astonishment he found it locked. What was more remarkable—the key was also *inside!* An inexplicable feeling took possession of him. He glanced suddenly around the room, and then his eye fell upon the bed. Lying there, stretched at full length, was the recumbent figure of a man.

He was apparently in the profound sleep of utter exhaustion. The attitude of his limbs and the order of his dress—of which only his collar and cravat had been loosened—



showed that sleep must have overtaken him almost instantly. In fact, the bed was scarcely disturbed beyond the actual impress of his figure. He seemed to be a handsome, matured man of about forty; his dark straight hair was a little thinned over the temples, although his long heavy mustache was still youthful and virgin. His clothes, which were elegantly cut and of finer material than that in ordinary use, the delicacy and neatness of his linen, the whiteness of his hands, and, more particularly, a certain dissipated pallor of complexion and lines of recklessness on the brow and cheek, indicated to Herbert that the man before him was one of that desperate and suspected class — some of whose proscribed members he had been hunting — the professional gambler!

Possibly the magnetism of Herbert's intent and astonished gaze affected him. He moved slightly, half opened his eyes, said "Halloo, Tap," rubbed them again, wholly opened them, fixed them with a lazy stare on Herbert, and said: —

"Now, who the devil are you?"

"I think *I* have the right to ask that question, considering that this is my room," said Herbert sharply.

"*Your* room?"

"Yes!"

The stranger half raised himself on his elbow, glanced round the room, settled himself slowly back on the pillows, with his hands clasped lightly behind his head, dropped his eyelids, smiled, and said: —

"Rats!"

"What?" demanded Herbert, with a resentful sense of sacrilege to Cherry's virgin slang.

"Well, old rats then! D'ye think I don't know this shebang. Look here, Johnny, what are you putting on all this side for, eh? What's your little game? Where's Tappington?"

"If you mean Mr. Brooks, the son of this house, who formerly lived in this room," replied Herbert, with a formal precision intended to show a doubt of the stranger's knowledge of Tappington, "if you ought to know that he has left town."

"Left town!" echoed the stranger, raising himself again. "Oh, I see! getting rather too warm for him here? Humph! I ought to have thought of that. Well, you know, he *did* take mighty big risks, anyway!" He was silent a moment, with his brows knit and a rather dangerous expression in his handsome face. "So some d—d hound gave him away — eh?"

"I had n't the pleasure of knowing Mr. Brooks except by reputation, as the respected son of the lady upon whose house you have just intruded," said Herbert frigidly, yet with a creeping consciousness of some unpleasant revelation.

The stranger stared at him for a moment, again looked carefully round the room, and then suddenly dropped his head back on the pillow, and with his white hands over his eyes and mouth tried to restrain a spasm of silent laughter. After an effort he succeeded, wiped his moist eyes, and sat up.

"So you did n't know Tappington, eh?" he said, lazily buttoning his collar.

"No."

"No more do I."

He retied his cravat, yawned, rose, shook himself perfectly neat again, and going to Herbert's dressing-table quietly took up a brush and began to lightly brush himself, occasionally turning to the window to glance out. Presently he turned to Herbert and said: —

"Well, Johnny, what's your name?"

"I am Herbert Bly, of Carstone's Bank."

"So, and a member of this same Vigilance Committee, I reckon," he continued.

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Bly, I owe you an apology for coming here, and some thanks for the only sleep I've had in forty-eight hours. I struck this old shebang at about ten o'clock, and it's now two, so I reckon I've put in about four hours' square sleep. Now, look here." He beckoned Herbert towards the window. "Do you see those three men standing under that gaslight? Well, they're part of a gang of Vigilantes who've hunted me to the hill, and are waiting to see me come out of the bushes, where they reckon I'm hiding. Go to them and say that I'm here! Tell them you've got Gentleman George — George Dornton, the man they've been hunting for a week — in this room. I promise you I won't stir, nor kick up a row, when they've come. Do it, and Carstone, if he's a square man, will raise your salary for it, and promote you." He yawned slightly, and then slowly looking around him, drew the easy-chair towards him and dropped comfortably in it, gazing at the astounded and motionless Herbert with a lazy smile.

"You're wondering what my little game is, Johnny, ain't you? Well, I'll tell you. What with being hunted from pillar to post, putting my old pards to no end of trouble, and then slipping up on it whenever I think I've got a sure thing like this," — he cast an almost affectionate glance at the bed, — "I've come to the conclusion that it's played out, and I might as well hand in my checks. It's only a question of my being *run out* of 'Frisco, hiding until I can *slip out* myself; and I've reckoned I might as well give them the trouble and expense of transportation. And if I can put a good thing in your way in doing it — why, it will sort of make things square with you for the fuss I've given you."

Even in the stupefaction and helplessness of knowing that the man before him was the notorious duelist and

gambler George Dornton, one of the first marked for deportation by the Vigilance Committee, Herbert recognized all he had heard of his invincible coolness, courage, and almost philosophic fatalism. For an instant his youthful imagination checked even his indignation. When he recovered himself he said with rising color and boyish vehemence: —

“Whoever *you* may be, I am neither a police officer nor a spy. You have no right to insult me by supposing that I would profit by the mistake that made you my guest, or that I would refuse you the sanctuary of the roof that covers your insult as well as your blunder.”

The stranger gazed at him with an amused expression, and then rose and stretched out his hand.

“Shake, Mr. Bly! You’re the only man that ever kicked George Dornton when he deserved it. Good-night!” He took his hat and walked to the door.

“Stop!” said Herbert impulsively; “the night is already far gone; go back and finish your sleep.”

“You mean it?”

“I do.”

The stranger turned, walked back to the bed, unfastening his coat and collar as he did so, and laid himself down in the attitude of a moment before.

“I will call you in the morning,” continued Herbert. “By that time,” — he hesitated, — “by that time your pursuers may have given up their search. One word more. You will be frank with me?”

“Go on.”

“Tappington and you are — friends?”

“Well — yes.”

“His mother and sister know nothing of this?”

“I reckon he did n’t boast of it. *I* did n’t. Is that all?” sleepily.

“Yes.”

"Don't *you* worry about *him*. Good-night."

"Good-night."

But even at that moment George Dornton had dropped off in a quiet, peaceful sleep.

Bly turned down the light, and drawing his easy-chair to the window, dropped into it in bewildering reflection. This then was the secret — unknown to mother and daughter — unsuspected by all! This was the double life of Tappington, half revealed in his flirtation with the neighbors, in the hidden cards behind the books, in the mysterious visitor — still unaccounted for — and now wholly exploded by this sleeping confederate, for whom, somehow, Herbert felt the greatest sympathy! What was to be done? What should he say to Cherry — to her mother — to Mr. Carstone? Yet he had felt he had done right. From time to time he turned to the motionless recumbent shadow on the bed and listened to its slow and peaceful respiration. Apart from that undefinable attraction which all original natures have for each other, the thrice-blessed mystery of protection of the helpless, for the first time in his life, seemed to dawn upon him through that night.

Nevertheless, the actual dawn came slowly. Twice he nodded and awoke quickly with a start. The third time it was day. The street-lamps were extinguished, and with them the moving, restless watchers seemed also to have vanished. Suddenly a formal deliberate rapping at the door leading to the hall startled him to his feet.

It must be Ellen. So much the better; he could quickly get rid of her. He glanced at the bed; Dornton slept on undisturbed. He unlocked the door cautiously, and instinctively fell back before the erect, shawled, and decorous figure of Mrs. Brooks. But an utterly new resolution and excitement had supplanted the habitual resignation of her handsome features, and given them an angry sparkle of expression.

Recollecting himself, he instantly stepped forward into the passage, drawing to the door behind him, as she, with equal celerity, opposed it with her hand.

"Mr. Bly," she said deliberately, "Ellen has just told me that your voice has been heard in conversation with some one in this room late last night. Up to this moment I have foolishly allowed my daughter to persuade me that certain infamous scandals regarding your conduct here were false. I must ask you as a gentleman to let me pass now and satisfy myself."

"But, my dear madam, one moment. Let me first explain — I beg" — stammered Herbert, with a half-hysterical laugh. "I assure you a gentleman friend" —

But she had pushed him aside and entered precipitately. With a quick feminine glance round the room she turned to the bed, and then halted in overwhelming confusion.

"It's a friend," said Herbert in a hasty whisper. "A friend of mine who returned with me late, and whom, on account of the disturbed state of the streets, I induced to stay here all night. He was so tired that I have not had the heart to disturb him yet."

"Oh, pray don't! — I beg" — said Mrs. Brooks, with a certain youthful vivacity, but still gazing at the stranger's handsome features as she slowly retreated. "Not for worlds!"

Herbert was relieved; she was actually blushing.

"You see, it was quite unpremeditated, I assure you. We came in together," whispered Herbert, leading her to the door, "and I" —

"Don't believe a word of it, madam," said a lazy voice from the bed, as the stranger leisurely raised himself upright, putting the last finishing touch to his cravat as he shook himself neat again. "I'm an utter stranger to him, and he knows it. He found me here, hiding from the Vigilantes, who were chasing me on the hill. I got

in at that door, which happened to be unlocked. He let me stay because he was a gentleman — and — I was n't. I beg your pardon, madam, for having interrupted him before you; but it was a little rough to have him lie on *my* account when he was n't the kind of man to lie on his *own*. You 'll forgive him — won't you, please? — and, as I 'm taking myself off now, perhaps you 'll overlook *my* intrusion too."

It was impossible to convey the lazy frankness of this speech, the charming smile with which it was accompanied, or the easy yet deferential manner with which, taking up his hat, he bowed to Mrs. Brooks as he advanced toward the door.

"But," said Mrs. Brooks, hurriedly glancing from Herbert to the stranger, "it must be the Vigilantes who are now hanging about the street. Ellen saw them from her window, and thought they were *your* friends, Mr. Bly. This gentleman — your friend" — she had become a little confused in her novel excitement — "really ought not to go out now. It would be madness."

"If you would n't mind his remaining a little longer, it certainly would be safer," said Herbert, with wondering gratitude.

"I certainly should n't consent to his leaving my house now," said Mrs. Brooks, with dignity; "and if you would n't mind calling Cherry here, Mr. Bly — she 's in the dining-room — and then showing yourself for a moment in the street and finding out what they wanted, it would be the best thing to do."

Herbert flew downstairs; in a few hurried words he gave the same explanation to the astounded Cherry that he had given to her mother, with the mischievous addition that Mrs. Brooks's unjust suspicions had precipitated her into becoming an amicable accomplice, and then ran out into the street. Here he ascertained from one of the Vigi-

lantes, whom he knew, that they were really seeking Dornton; but that, concluding that the fugitive had already escaped to the wharves, they expected to withdraw their surveillance at noon. Somewhat relieved, he hastened back, to find the stranger calmly seated on the sofa in the parlor with the same air of frank indifference, lazily relating the incidents of his flight to the two women, who were listening with every expression of sympathy and interest. "Poor fellow!" said Cherry, taking the astonished Bly aside into the hall, "I don't believe he's half as bad as *they* say he is — or as even *he* makes himself out to be. But *did* you notice mother?"

Herbert, a little dazed, and, it must be confessed, a trifle uneasy at this ready acceptance of the stranger, abstractedly said he had not.

"Why, it's the most ridiculous thing. She's actually going round *without her shawl*, and does n't seem to know it."

## V

When Herbert finally reached the bank that morning he was still in a state of doubt and perplexity. He had parted with his grateful visitor, whose safety in a few hours seemed assured, but without the least further revelation or actual allusion to anything antecedent to his selecting Tappington's room as refuge. More than that, Herbert was convinced from his manner that he had no intention of making a confidante of Mrs. Brooks, and this convinced him that Dornton's previous relations with Tappington were not only utterly inconsistent with that young man's decorous reputation, but were unsuspected by the family. The stranger's familiar knowledge of the room, his mysterious allusions to the "risks" Tappington had taken, and his sudden silence on the discovery of Bly's ignorance of the whole affair — all pointed to some secret that, innocent or not, was more or less perilous, not only to the son but to



the mother and sister. Of the latter's ignorance he had no doubt — but had he any right to enlighten them? Admitting that Tappington had deceived them with the others, would they thank him for opening their eyes to it? If they had already a suspicion, would they care to know that it was shared by him? Halting between his frankness and his delicacy, the final thought that in his budding relations with the daughter it might seem a cruel bid for her confidence, or a revenge for their distrust of him, inclined him to silence. But an unforeseen occurrence took the matter from his hands. At noon he was told that Mr. Carstone wished to see him in his private room!

Satisfied that his complicity with Dornton's escape was discovered, the unfortunate Herbert presented himself, pale but self-possessed, before his employer. That brief man of business bade him be seated, and standing himself before the fireplace, looked down curiously, but not unkindly, upon his employee.

"Mr. Bly, the bank does not usually interfere with the private affairs of its employees, but for certain reasons which I prefer to explain to you later, I must ask you to give me a straightforward answer to one or two questions. I may say that they have nothing to do with your relations to the bank, which are to us perfectly satisfactory."

More than ever convinced that Mr. Carstone was about to speak of his visitor, Herbert signified his willingness to reply.

"You have been seen a great deal with Miss Brooks lately — on the street and elsewhere — acting as her escort, and evidently on terms of intimacy. To do you both justice, neither of you seemed to have made it a secret or avoided observation; but I must ask you directly if it is with her mother's permission?"

Considerably relieved, but wondering what was coming, Herbert answered, with boyish frankness, that it was.

“Are you — engaged to the young lady?”

“No, sir.”

“Are you — well, Mr. Bly — briefly, are you what is called ‘in love’ with her?” asked the banker, with a certain brusque hurrying over of a sentiment evidently incompatible with their present business surroundings.

Herbert blushed. It was the first time he had heard the question voiced, even by himself.

“I am,” he said resolutely.

“And you wish to marry her?”

“If I dared ask her to accept a young man with no position as yet,” stammered Herbert.

“People don’t usually consider a young man in Carstone’s Bank of no position,” said the banker dryly; “and I wish for your sake *that* were the only impediment. For I am compelled to reveal to you a secret.” He paused, and folding his arms, looked fixedly down upon his clerk. “Mr. Bly, Tappington Brooks, the brother of your sweetheart, was a defaulter and embezzler from this bank!”

Herbert sat dumfounded and motionless.

“Understand two things,” continued Mr. Carstone quickly. “First, that no purer or better women exist than Miss Brooks and her mother. Secondly, that they know nothing of this, and that only myself and one other man are in possession of the secret.”

He slightly changed his position, and went on more deliberately. “Six weeks ago Tappington sat in that chair where you are sitting now, a convicted hypocrite and thief. Luckily for him, although his guilt was plain, and the whole secret of his double life revealed to me, a sum of money advanced in pity by one of his gambling confederates had made his accounts good and saved him from suspicion in the eyes of his fellow clerks and my partners. At first he tried to fight me on that point; then he blustered and said his mother could have refunded the money; and

asked me what was a paltry five thousand dollars! I told him, Mr. Bly, that it might be five years of his youth in state prison; that it might be five years of sorrow and shame for his mother and sister; that it might be an everlasting stain on the name of his dead father — my friend. He talked of killing himself: I told him he was a cowardly fool. He asked me to give him up to the authorities: I told him I intended to take the law in my own hands and give him another chance; and then he broke down. I transferred him that very day, without giving him time to communicate with anybody, to our branch office at Portland, with a letter explaining his position to our agent, and the injunction that for six months he should be under strict surveillance. I myself undertook to explain his sudden departure to Mrs. Brooks, and obliged him to write to her from time to time.” He paused, and then continued: “So far I believe my plan has been successful: the secret has been kept; he has broken with the evil associates that ruined him here — to the best of my knowledge he has had no communication with them since; even a certain woman here who shared his vicious hidden life has abandoned him.”

“Are you sure?” asked Herbert involuntarily, as he recalled his mysterious visitor.

“I believe the Vigilance Committee has considered it a public duty to deport her and her confederates beyond the State,” returned Carstone dryly.

Another idea flashed upon Herbert. “And the gambler who advanced the money to save Tappington?” he said breathlessly.

“Was n’t such a hound as the rest of his kind, if report says true,” answered Carstone. “He was well known here as George Dornton — Gentleman George — a man capable of better things. But he was before your time, Mr. Bly — *you* don’t know him.”

Herbert did n't deem it a felicitous moment to correct his employer, and Mr. Carstone continued: "I have now told you what I thought it was my duty to tell you. I must leave *you* to judge how far it affects your relations with Miss Brooks."

Herbert did not hesitate. "I should be very sorry, sir, to seem to undervalue your consideration or disregard your warning; but I am afraid that even if you had been less merciful to Tappington, and he were now a convicted felon, I should change neither my feelings nor my intentions to his sister."

"And you would still marry her?" said Carstone sternly; "*you*, an employee of the bank, would set the example of allying yourself with one who had robbed it?"

"I—am afraid I would, sir," said Herbert slowly.

"Even if it were a question of your remaining here?" said Carstone grimly.

Poor Herbert already saw himself dismissed and again taking up his weary quest for employment; but, nevertheless, he answered stoutly:—

"Yes, sir."

"And nothing will prevent you marrying Miss Brooks?"

"Nothing—save my inability to support her."

"Then," said Mr. Carstone, with a peculiar light in his eyes, "it only remains for the bank to mark its opinion of your conduct by *increasing your salary to enable you to do so*. Shake hands, Mr. Bly," he said, laughing. "I think you'll do to tie to—and I believe the young lady will be of the same opinion. But not a word to either her or her mother in regard to what you have heard. And now I may tell you something more. I am not without hope of Tappington's future, nor—d—n it!—without some excuse for his fault, sir. He was artificially brought up. When my old friend died, Mrs. Brooks, still a handsome woman, like all her sex would n't rest until she had

another devotion, and wrapped herself and her children up in the Church. Theology may be all right for grown people, but it's apt to make children artificial; and Tappington was pious before he was fairly good. He drew on a religious credit before he had a moral capital behind it. He was brought up with no knowledge of the world, and when he went into it — it captured him. I don't say there are not saints born into the world occasionally; but for every one you'll find a lot of promiscuous human nature. My old friend Josh Brooks had a heap of it, and it would n't be strange if some was left in his children, and burst through their strait-lacing in a queer way. That's all! Good-morning, Mr. Bly. Forget what I've told you for six months, and then I should n't wonder if Tappington was on hand to give his sister away."

. . . . .

Mr. Carstone's prophecy was but half realized. At the end of six months Herbert Bly's discretion and devotion were duly rewarded by Cherry's hand. But Tappington did *not* give her away. That saintly prodigal passed his period of probation with exemplary rectitude, but, either from a dread of old temptation or some unexplained reason, he preferred to remain in Portland, and his fastidious nest on Telegraph Hill knew him no more. The key of the little door on the side street passed, naturally, into the keeping of Mrs. Bly.

Whether the secret of Tappington's double life was ever revealed to the two women is not known to the chronicler. Mrs. Bly is reported to have said that the climate of Oregon was more suited to her brother's delicate constitution than the damp fogs of San Francisco, and that his tastes were always opposed to the mere frivolity of metropolitan society. The only possible reason for supposing that the mother may have become cognizant of her son's youthful errors was in the occasional visits to the house of the hand-

some George Dornton, who, in the social revolution that followed the brief reign of the Vigilance Committee, characteristically returned as a dashing stockbroker, and the fact that Mrs. Brooks seemed to have discarded her ascetic shawl forever. But as all this was contemporaneous with the absurd rumor, that owing to the loneliness induced by the marriage of her daughter she contemplated a similar change in her own condition, it is deemed unworthy the serious consideration of this veracious chronicle.





















