

DEVIL'S FORD & TALES
BY
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Devil's Ford

CHAPTER ONE

It was a season of unequalled 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 flour pan 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 naive delight of children, and rehearsed their glowing future with the importance and triviality of school-boys.

"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 canyon. 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 the 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 new-comer. “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.

“Hadn’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 TWO

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 canyons, 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 tenement 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 accommodations 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 blond 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. “[racial expletive] 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 new 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 alarming 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 isn’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 discomfort 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 steppers 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 [racial expletive] 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 wouldn'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 mustn'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 that 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 isn't one nearer here than Sacramento; but I reckon we could get a small one by Thursday. You couldn'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 drily. "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 any way."

"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 experience 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 one 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 is over seventeen, for all his baby moustache—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 drily. “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 shouldn't," said Christie shortly, whose ideas of a general classical impropriety had been gathered from pages of Lempriere'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 reentered 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 isn'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 couldn’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 entrusted 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 impulses 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 death-like, 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!—didn’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 weren’t frightened, dear?”

“Not in the least,” said Christie, with a strange little laugh. “Go to sleep.”

CHAPTER THREE

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-story villa, with a not unpicturesque combination of deep veranda and trellis work, 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 didn'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 new-comers, 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-entree 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'r 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 fellers was doin' the high-toned 'thankee, 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 locaters. 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 debris, 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 behind gilded bars than in the garish light of day—and an equal number of pale-faced, dark-moustached, 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 veracious 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 fulfilment 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 Villa 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 that 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 isn'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 regarding 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 reentered 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 couldn’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 wasn'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 worshipped; 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 FOUR

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 langour.

“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 wouldn’t have toted it in, anyhow, if some of those high-falutin’ fellows hadn’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 “Travatore.” “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, may be, 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 to 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 wouldn’t do for them to make a reg’lar curderoy road o’ themselves for the houl 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 can 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 didn'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 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 wouldn’t stand for 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 wouldn’t stand for 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 moustaches haz cost

him half a dozen scimmages already. He’z had a fight for every hair that’s growed in his moustache 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 barrooms, 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 elite 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, wouldn'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 into 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 pretence 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 FIVE

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 entree 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 pascar with two fash'nable young ladies," etcetera, etcetera.

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 high-road at right angles, to reach the deeper woods beyond. Dick would have lingered on the highway—ostensibly to point out to his companions 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 hands towards the flume, he said, "Look at that work of your father's; there ain't no other man in Californy 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. 'Tain'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 isn'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 isn'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 question 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 wildflowers 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 didn’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 SIX

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 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 she 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 wasn’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 doesn’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 confidences 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 could 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 reentering. 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 forests 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 role 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 wouldn'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 be only 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 could 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' fete; 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 canyon 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 the 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 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 canyon 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 moustache 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 wouldn'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 *tete-a-tete* with a common Mexican vaquero, gallop off in the direction of the canyon, 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 ranche?" she continued, looking at him attentively.

His brow colored slightly.

"No, I'm living here, but I have bought no ranche. I'm only a hired man on somebody else's ranche, 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 wasn’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 didn'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, unkissed, 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 wasn’t me he meant?”

“Not at all,” said Christie coldly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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 isn’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.

“Didn’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 are 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 tete-a-tete 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 high-falutin’ 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 gineral 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 widders—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 a-top of your six million profit, and you let’s 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 didn’t let on yer knew him, so to speak, nat’rally, or p’raps 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, and Company.”

“Of course,” said Christie rapidly. “How forgetful I am! Pray forgive me, Mr. Hall. I didn’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 EIGHT

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 lustre-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 tunnelled 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 trapsin' round. P'raps you wouldn'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 Lagrange 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 fairly set 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 snowfields, 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 canyon 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 can not, 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 debris 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 skilful 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 debris. 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 IS done that gives tone to the hull, and hez brought this yer new luck to you all!”

The Outcasts of Poker Flat

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third 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 sums 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 amphitheater, 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 half the journey to Sandy Bar was 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 “couldn’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 canyon 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 damned 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 gaiety 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 its 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 whisky, which he had prudently cached. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whisky," 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 cached his cards with the whisky as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "didn'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—[racial expletive] 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 hopeless, 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 didn’t swear and wasn’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 canyon 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 accordion, 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 canyon," 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 someone 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' waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting pines, 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.

A Yellow Dog

I never knew why in the Western States of America a yellow dog should be proverbially considered the acme of canine degradation and incompetency, nor why the possession of one should seriously affect the social standing of its possessor. But the fact being established, I think we accepted it at Rattlers Ridge without question. The matter of ownership was more difficult to settle; and although the dog I have in my mind at the present writing attached himself impartially and equally to everyone in camp, no one ventured to exclusively claim him; while, after the perpetration of any canine atrocity, everybody repudiated him with indecent haste.

“Well, I can swear he hasn’t been near our shanty for weeks,” or the retort, “He was last seen comin’ out of YOUR cabin,” expressed the eagerness with which Rattlers Ridge washed its hands of any responsibility. Yet he was by no means a common dog, nor even an unhandsome dog; and it was a singular fact that his severest critics vied with each other in narrating instances of his sagacity, insight, and agility which they themselves had witnessed.

He had been seen crossing the “flume” that spanned Grizzly Canyon at a height of nine hundred feet, on a plank six inches wide. He had tumbled down the “shoot” to the South Fork, a thousand feet below, and was found sitting on the riverbank “without a scratch, ‘cept that he was lazily givin’ himself with his off hind paw.” He had been forgotten in a snowdrift on a Sierran shelf, and had come home in the early spring with the conceited complacency of an Alpine

traveler and a plumpness alleged to have been the result of an exclusive diet of buried mail bags and their contents. He was generally believed to read the advance election posters, and disappear a day or two before the candidates and the brass band—which he hated—came to the Ridge. He was suspected of having overlooked Colonel Johnson’s hand at poker, and of having conveyed to the Colonel’s adversary, by a succession of barks, the danger of betting against four kings.

While these statements were supplied by wholly unsupported witnesses, it was a very human weakness of Rattlers Ridge that the responsibility of corroboration was passed to the dog himself, and HE was looked upon as a consummate liar.

“Snoopin’ round yere, and CALLIN’ yourself a poker sharp, are ye! Scoot, you yaller pizin!” was a common adjuration whenever the unfortunate animal intruded upon a card party. “Ef thar was a spark, an ATOM of truth in THAT DOG, I’d believe my own eyes that I saw him sittin’ up and trying to magnetize a jay bird off a tree. But wot are ye goin’ to do with a yaller equivocator like that?”

I have said that he was yellow—or, to use the ordinary expression, “yaller.” Indeed, I am inclined to believe that much of the ignominy attached to the epithet lay in this favorite pronunciation. Men who habitually spoke of a “YELLOW bird,” a “YELLOW-hammer,” a “YELLOW leaf,” always alluded to him as a “YALLER dog.”

He certainly WAS yellow. After a bath—usually compulsory—he presented a decided gamboge streak down his back, from the top of his forehead to the stump of his tail, fading in his sides and flank to a delicate straw color. His breast, legs, and feet—when not reddened by “slumgullion,”

in which he was fond of wading—were white. A few attempts at ornamental decoration from the India-ink pot of the storekeeper failed, partly through the yellow dog's excessive agility, which would never give the paint time to dry on him, and partly through his success in transferring his markings to the trousers and blankets of the camp.

The size and shape of his tail—which had been cut off before his introduction to Rattlers Ridge—were favorite sources of speculation to the miners, as determining both his breed and his moral responsibility in coming into camp in that defective condition. There was a general opinion that he couldn't have looked worse with a tail, and its removal was therefore a gratuitous effrontery.

His best feature was his eyes, which were a lustrous Vandyke brown, and sparkling with intelligence; but here again he suffered from evolution through environment, and their original trustful openness was marred by the experience of watching for flying stones, sods, and passing kicks from the rear, so that the pupils were continually reverting to the outer angle of the eyelid.

Nevertheless, none of these characteristics decided the vexed question of his BREED. His speed and scent pointed to a "hound," and it is related that on one occasion he was laid on the trail of a wildcat with such success that he followed it apparently out of the State, returning at the end of two weeks footsore, but blandly contented.

Attaching himself to a prospecting party, he was sent under the same belief, "into the brush" to drive off a bear, who was supposed to be haunting the campfire. He returned in a few minutes WITH the bear, DRIVING IT INTO the unarmed circle and scattering the whole party. After this the theory of his being a hunting dog was abandoned. Yet it was

said—on the usual uncorroborated evidence— that he had “put up” a quail; and his qualities as a retriever were for a long time accepted, until, during a shooting expedition for wild ducks, it was discovered that the one he had brought back had never been shot, and the party were obliged to compound damages with an adjacent settler.

His fondness for paddling in the ditches and “slumgullion” at one time suggested a water spaniel. He could swim, and would occasionally bring out of the river sticks and pieces of bark that had been thrown in; but as HE always had to be thrown in with them, and was a good-sized dog, his aquatic reputation faded also. He remained simply “a yaller dog.” What more could be said? His actual name was “Bones”—given to him, no doubt, through the provincial custom of confounding the occupation of the individual with his quality, for which it was pointed out precedent could be found in some old English family names.

But if Bones generally exhibited no preference for any particular individual in camp, he always made an exception in favor of drunkards. Even an ordinary roistering bacchanalian party brought him out from under a tree or a shed in the keenest satisfaction. He would accompany them through the long straggling street of the settlement, barking his delight at every step or misstep of the revelers, and exhibiting none of that mistrust of eye which marked his attendance upon the sane and the respectable. He accepted even their uncouth play without a snarl or a yelp, hypocritically pretending even to like it; and I conscientiously believe would have allowed a tin can to be attached to his tail if the hand that tied it on were only unsteady, and the voice that bade him “lie still” were husky with liquor. He would “see” the party cheerfully into a saloon, wait outside the door—his tongue fairly lolling from his mouth in enjoyment—until they reappeared, permit them

even to tumble over him with pleasure, and then gambol away before them, heedless of awkwardly projected stones and epithets. He would afterward accompany them separately home, or lie with them at crossroads until they were assisted to their cabins. Then he would trot rakishly to his own haunt by the saloon stove, with the slightly conscious air of having been a bad dog, yet of having had a good time.

We never could satisfy ourselves whether his enjoyment arose from some merely selfish conviction that he was more SECURE with the physically and mentally incompetent, from some active sympathy with active wickedness, or from a grim sense of his own mental superiority at such moments. But the general belief leant toward his kindred sympathy as a “yaller dog” with all that was disreputable. And this was supported by another very singular canine manifestation—the “sincere flattery” of simulation or imitation.

“Uncle Billy” Riley for a short time enjoyed the position of being the camp drunkard, and at once became an object of Bones’ greatest solicitude. He not only accompanied him everywhere, curled at his feet or head according to Uncle Billy’s attitude at the moment, but, it was noticed, began presently to undergo a singular alteration in his own habits and appearance. From being an active, tireless scout and forager, a bold and unobtainable marauder, he became lazy and apathetic; allowed gophers to burrow under him without endeavoring to undermine the settlement in his frantic endeavors to dig them out, permitted squirrels to flash their tails at him a hundred yards away, forgot his usual caches, and left his favorite bones unburied and bleaching in the sun. His eyes grew dull, his coat lusterless, in proportion as his companion became blear-eyed and ragged; in running, his usual arrowlike directness began to deviate, and it was

not unusual to meet the pair together, zigzagging up the hill. Indeed, Uncle Billy's condition could be predetermined by Bones' appearance at times when his temporary master was invisible. "The old man must have an awful jag on today," was casually remarked when an extra fluffiness and imbecility was noticeable in the passing Bones. At first it was believed that he drank also, but when careful investigation proved this hypothesis untenable, he was freely called a "derved time- servin', yaller hypocrite." Not a few advanced the opinion that if Bones did not actually lead Uncle Billy astray, he at least "slavered him over and coddled him until the old man got conceited in his wickedness." This undoubtedly led to a compulsory divorce between them, and Uncle Billy was happily dispatched to a neighboring town and a doctor.

Bones seemed to miss him greatly, ran away for two days, and was supposed to have visited him, to have been shocked at his convalescence, and to have been "cut" by Uncle Billy in his reformed character; and he returned to his old active life again, and buried his past with his forgotten bones. It was said that he was afterward detected in trying to lead an intoxicated tramp into camp after the methods employed by a blind man's dog, but was discovered in time by the—of course—uncorroborated narrator.

I should be tempted to leave him thus in his original and picturesque sin, but the same veracity which compelled me to transcribe his faults and iniquities obliges me to describe his ultimate and somewhat monotonous reformation, which came from no fault of his own.

It was a joyous day at Rattlers Ridge that was equally the advent of his change of heart and the first stagecoach that had been induced to diverge from the highroad and stop regularly at our settlement. Flags were flying from the post

office and Polka saloon, and Bones was flying before the brass band that he detested, when the sweetest girl in the county—Pinkey Preston— daughter of the county judge and hopelessly beloved by all Rattlers Ridge, stepped from the coach which she had glorified by occupying as an invited guest.

“What makes him run away?” she asked quickly, opening her lovely eyes in a possibly innocent wonder that anything could be found to run away from her.

“He don’t like the brass band,” we explained eagerly.

“How funny,” murmured the girl; “is it as out of tune as all that?”

This irresistible witticism alone would have been enough to satisfy us—we did nothing but repeat it to each other all the next day— but we were positively transported when we saw her suddenly gather her dainty skirts in one hand and trip off through the red dust toward Bones, who, with his eyes over his yellow shoulder, had halted in the road, and half-turned in mingled disgust and rage at the spectacle of the descending trombone. We held our breath as she approached him. Would Bones evade her as he did us at such moments, or would he save our reputation, and consent, for the moment, to accept her as a new kind of inebriate? She came nearer; he saw her; he began to slowly quiver with excitement—his stump of a tail vibrating with such rapidity that the loss of the missing portion was scarcely noticeable. Suddenly she stopped before him, took his yellow head between her little hands, lifted it, and looked down in his handsome brown eyes with her two lovely blue ones. What passed between them in that magnetic glance no one ever knew. She returned with him; said to him casually: “We’re not afraid of brass bands, are we?” to which he apparently

acquiesced, at least stifling his disgust of them while he was near her—which was nearly all the time.

During the speechmaking her gloved hand and his yellow head were always near together, and at the crowning ceremony—her public checking of Yuba Bill's "waybill" on behalf of the township, with a gold pencil presented to her by the Stage Company—Bones' joy, far from knowing no bounds, seemed to know nothing but them, and he witnessed it apparently in the air. No one dared to interfere. For the first time a local pride in Bones sprang up in our hearts—and we lied to each other in his praises openly and shamelessly.

Then the time came for parting. We were standing by the door of the coach, hats in hand, as Miss Pinkey was about to step into it; Bones was waiting by her side, confidently looking into the interior, and apparently selecting his own seat on the lap of Judge Preston in the corner, when Miss Pinkey held up the sweetest of admonitory fingers. Then, taking his head between her two hands, she again looked into his brimming eyes, and said, simply, "GOOD dog," with the gentlest of emphasis on the adjective, and popped into the coach.

The six bay horses started as one, the gorgeous green and gold vehicle bounded forward, the red dust rose behind, and the yellow dog danced in and out of it to the very outskirts of the settlement. And then he soberly returned.

A day or two later he was missed—but the fact was afterward known that he was at Spring Valley, the county town where Miss Preston lived, and he was forgiven. A week afterward he was missed again, but this time for a longer period, and then a pathetic letter arrived from Sacramento for the storekeeper's wife.

“Would you mind,” wrote Miss Pinkey Preston, “asking some of your boys to come over here to Sacramento and bring back Bones? I don’t mind having the dear dog walk out with me at Spring Valley, where everyone knows me; but here he DOES make one so noticeable, on account of HIS COLOR. I’ve got scarcely a frock that he agrees with. He don’t go with my pink muslin, and that lovely buff tint he makes three shades lighter. You know yellow is SO trying.”

A consultation was quickly held by the whole settlement, and a deputation sent to Sacramento to relieve the unfortunate girl. We were all quite indignant with Bones—but, oddly enough, I think it was greatly tempered with our new pride in him. While he was with us alone, his peculiarities had been scarcely appreciated, but the recurrent phrase “that yellow dog that they keep at the Rattlers” gave us a mysterious importance along the countryside, as if we had secured a “mascot” in some zoological curiosity.

This was further indicated by a singular occurrence. A new church had been built at the crossroads, and an eminent divine had come from San Francisco to preach the opening sermon. After a careful examination of the camp’s wardrobe, and some felicitous exchange of apparel, a few of us were deputed to represent “Rattlers” at the Sunday service. In our white ducks, straw hats, and flannel blouses, we were sufficiently picturesque and distinctive as “honest miners” to be shown off in one of the front pews.

Seated near the prettiest girls, who offered us their hymn books—in the cleanly odor of fresh pine shavings, and ironed muslin, and blown over by the spices of our own woods through the open windows, a deep sense of the abiding peace of Christian communion settled upon us. At

this supreme moment someone murmured in an awe-stricken whisper:

“WILL you look at Bones?”

We looked. Bones had entered the church and gone up in the gallery through a pardonable ignorance and modesty; but, perceiving his mistake, was now calmly walking along the gallery rail before the astounded worshipers. Reaching the end, he paused for a moment, and carelessly looked down. It was about fifteen feet to the floor below—the simplest jump in the world for the mountain-bred Bones. Daintily, gingerly, lazily, and yet with a conceited airiness of manner, as if, humanly speaking, he had one leg in his pocket and were doing it on three, he cleared the distance, dropping just in front of the chancel, without a sound, turned himself around three times, and then lay comfortably down.

Three deacons were instantly in the aisle, coming up before the eminent divine, who, we fancied, wore a restrained smile. We heard the hurried whispers: “Belongs to them.” “Quite a local institution here, you know.” “Don’t like to offend sensibilities;” and the minister’s prompt “By no means,” as he went on with his service.

A short month ago we would have repudiated Bones; today we sat there in slightly supercilious attitudes, as if to indicate that any affront offered to Bones would be an insult to ourselves, and followed by our instantaneous withdrawal in a body.

All went well, however, until the minister, lifting the large Bible from the communion table and holding it in both hands before him, walked toward a reading stand by the altar rails. Bones uttered a distinct growl. The minister stopped.

We, and we alone, comprehended in a flash the whole situation. The Bible was nearly the size and shape of one of those soft clods of sod which we were in the playful habit of launching at Bones when he lay half-asleep in the sun, in order to see him cleverly evade it.

We held our breath. What was to be done? But the opportunity belonged to our leader, Jeff Briggs—a confoundedly good-looking fellow, with the golden mustache of a northern viking and the curls of an Apollo. Secure in his beauty and bland in his self-conceit, he rose from the pew, and stepped before the chancel rails.

“I would wait a moment, if I were you, sir,” he said, respectfully, “and you will see that he will go out quietly.”

“What is wrong?” whispered the minister in some concern.

“He thinks you are going to heave that book at him, sir, without giving him a fair show, as we do.”

The minister looked perplexed, but remained motionless, with the book in his hands. Bones arose, walked halfway down the aisle, and vanished like a yellow flash!

With this justification of his reputation, Bones disappeared for a week. At the end of that time we received a polite note from Judge Preston, saying that the dog had become quite domiciled in their house, and begged that the camp, without yielding up their valuable PROPERTY in him, would allow him to remain at Spring Valley for an indefinite time; that both the judge and his daughter—with whom Bones was already an old friend—would be glad if the members of the camp would visit their old favorite

whenever they desired, to assure themselves that he was well cared for.

I am afraid that the bait thus ingenuously thrown out had a good deal to do with our ultimate yielding. However, the reports of those who visited Bones were wonderful and marvelous. He was residing there in state, lying on rugs in the drawing-room, coiled up under the judicial desk in the judge's study, sleeping regularly on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's bedroom door, or lazily snapping at flies on the judge's lawn.

"He's as yaller as ever," said one of our informants, "but it don't somehow seem to be the same back that we used to break clods over in the old time, just to see him scoot out of the dust."

And now I must record a fact which I am aware all lovers of dogs will indignantly deny, and which will be furiously bayed at by every faithful hound since the days of Ulysses. Bones not only FORGOT, but absolutely CUT US! Those who called upon the judge in "store clothes" he would perhaps casually notice, but he would sniff at them as if detecting and resenting them under their superficial exterior. The rest he simply paid no attention to. The more familiar term of "Bonesy"—formerly applied to him, as in our rare moments of endearment—produced no response. This pained, I think, some of the more youthful of us; but, through some strange human weakness, it also increased the camp's respect for him. Nevertheless, we spoke of him familiarly to strangers at the very moment he ignored us. I am afraid that we also took some pains to point out that he was getting fat and unwieldy, and losing his elasticity, implying covertly that his choice was a mistake and his life a failure.

A year after, he died, in the odor of sanctity and respectability, being found one morning coiled up and stiff on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's door. When the news was conveyed to us, we asked permission, the camp being in a prosperous condition, to erect a stone over his grave. But when it came to the inscription we could only think of the two words murmured to him by Miss Pinkey, which we always believe effected his conversion:

“GOOD Dog!”

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 for 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 "Jay-bird 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 barrooms—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 housekeeping 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 canyon 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 Canyon; 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 gamblers' 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-crowned mountain was that evening withheld from Sandy Bar. The little canyon 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 having shaken the hand of each person in the room with labored cordiality, he wiped his serious, perplexed face on a red bandanna 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 in 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 allers 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.

"Thet'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 doesn'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, bein' a far-minded man, and to you, gentlemen, all, as far-minded men, ef this isn'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 bedrock, 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 evildoers, 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 didn'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 Canyon—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 cortege went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs; and the bluejays, 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 enclosure, 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 enclosure; 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 couldn'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 couldn't speak, and didn'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 bandanna handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you couldn'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 Devotion of Enriquez

In another chronicle which dealt with the exploits of “Chu Chu,” a Californian mustang, I gave some space to the accomplishments of Enriquez Saltillo, who assisted me in training her, and who was also brother to Consuelo Saitillo, the young lady to whom I had freely given both the mustang and my youthful affections. I consider it a proof of the superiority of masculine friendship that neither the subsequent desertion of the mustang nor that of the young lady ever made the slightest difference to Enriquez or me in our exalted amity. To a wondering doubt as to what I ever could possibly have seen in his sister to admire he joined a tolerant skepticism of the whole sex. This he was wont to express in that marvelous combination of Spanish precision and California slang for which he was justly famous. “As to thees women and their little game,” he would say, “believe me, my friend, your old Uncle ‘Enry is not in it. No; he will ever take a back seat when lofe is around. For why? Regard me here! If she is a horse, you shall say, ‘She will buck-jump,’ ‘She will ess-shy,’ ‘She will not arrive,’ or ‘She will arrive too quick.’ But if it is thees women, where are you? For when you shall say, ‘She will ess-shy,’ look you, she will walk straight; or she will remain tranquil when you think she buck-jump; or else she will arrive and, look you, you will not. You shall get left. It is ever so. My father and the brother of my father have both make court to my mother when she was but a senorita. My father think she have lofe his brother more. So he say to her: ‘It is enofe; tranquillize yourself. I will go. I will efface myself. Adios! Shake hands! Ta-ta! So long! See you again in the fall.’ And what make my mother? Regard me! She marry my father—on the instant! Of thees

women, believe me, Pancho, you shall know nothing. Not even if they shall make you the son of your father or his nephew.”

I have recalled this characteristic speech to show the general tendency of Enriquez’ convictions at the opening of this little story. It is only fair to say, however, that his usual attitude toward the sex he so cheerfully maligned exhibited little apprehension or caution in dealing with them. Among the frivolous and light-minded intermixture of his race he moved with great freedom and popularity. He danced well; when we went to fandangos together his agility and the audacity of his figures always procured him the prettiest partners, his professed sentiments, I presume, shielding him from subsequent jealousies, heartburnings, or envy. I have a vivid recollection of him in the mysteries of the SEMICUACUA, a somewhat corybantic dance which left much to the invention of the performers, and very little to the imagination of the spectator. In one of the figures a gaudy handkerchief, waved more or less gracefully by dancer and danseuse before the dazzled eyes of each other, acted as love’s signal, and was used to express alternate admiration and indifference, shyness and audacity, fear and transport, coyness and coquetry, as the dance proceeded. I need not say that Enriquez’ pantomimic illustration of these emotions was peculiarly extravagant; but it was always performed and accepted with a gravity that was an essential feature of the dance. At such times sighs would escape him which were supposed to portray the incipient stages of passion; snorts of jealousy burst from him at the suggestion of a rival; he was overtaken by a sort of Saint Vitus’ dance that expressed his timidity in making the first advances of affection; the scorn of his ladylove struck him with something like a dumb ague; and a single gesture of invitation from her produced marked delirium. All this was very like Enriquez; but on the particular occasion to which I refer, I think no one was

prepared to see him begin the figure with the waving of FOUR handkerchiefs! Yet this he did, pirouetting, capering, brandishing his silken signals like a ballerina's scarf in the languishment or fire of passion, until, in a final figure, where the conquered and submitting fair one usually sinks into the arms of her partner, need it be said that the ingenious Enriquez was found in the center of the floor supporting four of the dancers! Yet he was by no means unduly excited either by the plaudits of the crowd or by his evident success with the fair. "Ah, believe me, it is nothing," he said quietly, rolling a fresh cigarette as he leaned against the doorway. "Possibly, I shall have to offer the chocolate or the wine to thees girls, or make to them a promenade in the moonlight on the veranda. It is ever so. Unless, my friend," he said, suddenly turning toward me in an excess of chivalrous self-abnegation, "unless you shall yourself take my place. Behold, I gif them to you! I vamos! I vanish! I make track! I skedaddle!" I think he would have carried his extravagance to the point of summoning his four gypsy witches of partners, and committing them to my care, if the crowd had not at that moment parted before the remaining dancers, and left one of the onlookers, a tall, slender girl, calmly surveying them through gold-rimmed eyeglasses in complete critical absorption. I stared in amazement and consternation; for I recognized in the fair stranger Miss Urania Mannersley, the Congregational minister's niece!

Everybody knew Rainie Mannersley throughout the length and breadth of the Encinal. She was at once the envy and the goad of the daughters of those Southwestern and Eastern immigrants who had settled in the valley. She was correct, she was critical, she was faultless and observant. She was proper, yet independent; she was highly educated; she was suspected of knowing Latin and Greek; she even spelled correctly! She could wither the plainest field nosegay in the hands of other girls by giving the flowers their botanical

names. She never said “Ain’t you?” but “Aren’t you?” She looked upon “Did I which?” as an incomplete and imperfect form of “What did I do?” She quoted from Browning and Tennyson, and was believed to have read them. She was from Boston. What could she possibly be doing at a free-and-easy fandango?

Even if these facts were not already familiar to everyone there, her outward appearance would have attracted attention. Contrasted with the gorgeous red, black, and yellow skirts of the dancers, her plain, tightly fitting gown and hat, all of one delicate gray, were sufficiently notable in themselves, even had they not seemed, like the girl herself, a kind of quiet protest to the glaring flounces before her. Her small, straight waist and flat back brought into greater relief the corsetless, waistless, swaying figures of the Mexican girls, and her long, slim, well-booted feet, peeping from the stiff, white edges of her short skirt, made their broad, low- quartered slippers, held on by the big toe, appear more preposterous than ever. Suddenly she seemed to realize that she was standing there alone, but without fear or embarrassment. She drew back a little, glancing carelessly behind her as if missing some previous companion, and then her eyes fell upon mine. She smiled an easy recognition; then a moment later, her glance rested more curiously upon Enriquez, who was still by my side. I disengaged myself and instantly joined her, particularly as I noticed that a few of the other bystanders were beginning to stare at her with little reserve.

“Isn’t it the most extraordinary thing you ever saw?” she said quietly. Then, presently noticing the look of embarrassment on my face, she went on, more by way of conversation than of explanation:

“I just left uncle making a call on a parishioner next door, and was going home with Jocasta (a peon servant of her uncle’s), when I heard the music, and dropped in. I don’t know what has become of her,” she added, glancing round the room again; “she seemed perfectly wild when she saw that creature over there bounding about with his handkerchiefs. You were speaking to him just now. Do tell me—is he real?”

“I should think there was little doubt of that,” I said with a vague laugh.

“You know what I mean,” she said simply. “Is he quite sane? Does he do that because he likes it, or is he paid for it?”

This was too much. I pointed out somewhat hurriedly that he was a scion of one of the oldest Castilian families, that the performance was a national gypsy dance which he had joined in as a patriot and a patron, and that he was my dearest friend. At the same time I was conscious that I wished she hadn’t seen his last performance.

“You don’t mean to say that all that he did was in the dance?” she said. “I don’t believe it. It was only like him.” As I hesitated over this palpable truth, she went on: “I do wish he’d do it again. Don’t you think you could make him?”

“Perhaps he might if YOU asked him,” I said a little maliciously.

“Of course I shouldn’t do that,” she returned quietly. “All the same, I do believe he is really going to do it—or something else. Do look!”

I looked, and to my horror saw that Enriquez, possibly incited by the delicate gold eyeglasses of Miss Mannersley, had divested himself of his coat, and was winding the four handkerchiefs, tied together, picturesquely around his waist, preparatory to some new performance. I tried furtively to give him a warning look, but in vain.

“Isn’t he really too absurd for anything?” said Miss Mannersley, yet with a certain comfortable anticipation in her voice. “You know, I never saw anything like this before. I wouldn’t have believed such a creature could have existed.”

Even had I succeeded in warning him, I doubt if it would have been of any avail. For, seizing a guitar from one of the musicians, he struck a few chords, and suddenly began to zigzag into the center of the floor, swaying his body languishingly from side to side in time with the music and the pitch of a thin Spanish tenor. It was a gypsy love song. Possibly Miss Mannersley’s lingual accomplishments did not include a knowledge of Castilian, but she could not fail to see that the gestures and illustrative pantomime were addressed to her. Passionately assuring her that she was the most favored daughter of the Virgin, that her eyes were like votive tapers, and yet in the same breath accusing her of being a “brigand” and “assassin” in her attitude toward “his heart,” he balanced with quivering timidity toward her, threw an imaginary cloak in front of her neat boots as a carpet for her to tread on, and with a final astonishing pirouette and a languishing twang of his guitar, sank on one knee, and blew, with a rose, a kiss at her feet.

If I had been seriously angry with him before for his grotesque extravagance, I could have pitied him now for the young girl’s absolute unconsciousness of anything but his utter ludicrousness. The applause of dancers and bystanders

was instantaneous and hearty; her only contribution to it was a slight parting of her thin red lips in a half-incredulous smile. In the silence that followed the applause, as Enriquez walked pantingly away, I heard her saying, half to herself, "Certainly a most extraordinary creature!" In my indignation I could not help turning suddenly upon her and looking straight into her eyes. They were brown, with that peculiar velvet opacity common to the pupils of nearsighted persons, and seemed to defy internal scrutiny. She only repeated carelessly, "Isn't he?" and added: "Please see if you can find Jocasta. I suppose we ought to be going now; and I dare say he won't be doing it again. Ah! there she is. Good gracious, child! what have you got there?"

It was Enriquez' rose which Jocasta had picked up, and was timidly holding out toward her mistress.

"Heavens! I don't want it. Keep it yourself."

I walked with them to the door, as I did not fancy a certain glitter in the black eyes of the *Senoritas* Manuela and Pepita, who were watching her curiously. But I think she was as oblivious of this as she was of Enriquez' particular attentions. As we reached the street I felt that I ought to say something more.

"You know," I began casually, "that although those poor people meet here in this public way, their gathering is really quite a homely pastoral and a national custom; and these girls are all honest, hardworking peons or servants enjoying themselves in quite the old idyllic fashion."

"Certainly," said the young girl, half-abstractedly. "Of course it's a Moorish dance, originally brought over, I suppose, by those old Andalusian immigrants two hundred years ago. It's quite Arabic in its suggestions. I have got

something like it in an old CANCIONERO I picked up at a bookstall in Boston. But,” she added, with a gasp of reminiscent satisfaction, “that’s not like HIM! Oh, no! HE is decidedly original. Heavens! yes.”

I turned away in some discomfiture to join Enriquez, who was calmly awaiting me, with a cigarette in his mouth, outside the sala. Yet he looked so unconscious of any previous absurdity that I hesitated in what I thought was a necessary warning. He, however, quickly precipitated it. Glancing after the retreating figures of the two women, he said: “Thees mees from Boston is return to her house. You do not accompany her? I shall. Behold me—I am there.” But I linked my arm firmly in his. Then I pointed out, first, that she was already accompanied by a servant; secondly, that if I, who knew her, had hesitated to offer myself as an escort, it was hardly proper for him, a perfect stranger, to take that liberty; that Miss Mannersley was very punctilious of etiquette, which he, as a Castilian gentleman, ought to appreciate.

“But will she not regard lofe—the admiration excessif?” he said, twirling his thin little mustache meditatively.

“No; she will not,” I returned sharply; “and you ought to understand that she is on a different level from your Manuelas and Carmens.”

“Pardon, my friend,” he said gravely; “thees women are ever the same. There is a proverb in my language. Listen: ‘Whether the sharp blade of the Toledo pierce the satin or the goatskin, it shall find behind it ever the same heart to wound.’ I am that Toledo blade—possibly it is you, my friend. Wherefore, let us together pursue this girl of Boston on the instant.”

But I kept my grasp on Enriquez' arm, and succeeded in restraining his mercurial impulses for the moment. He halted, and puffed vigorously at his cigarette; but the next instant he started forward again. "Let us, however, follow with discretion in the rear; we shall pass her house; we shall gaze at it; it shall touch her heart."

Ridiculous as was this following of the young girl we had only just parted from, I nevertheless knew that Enriquez was quite capable of attempting it alone, and I thought it better to humor him by consenting to walk with him in that direction; but I felt it necessary to say:

"I ought to warn you that Miss Mannersley already looks upon your performances at the sala as something outre and peculiar, and if I were you I shouldn't do anything to deepen that impression."

"You are saying she ees shock?" said Enriquez, gravely.

I felt I could not conscientiously say that she was shocked, and he saw my hesitation. "Then she have jealousy of the *senoritas*," he observed, with insufferable complacency. "You observe! I have already said. It is ever so."

I could stand it no longer. "Look here, Harry," I said, "if you must know it, she looks upon you as an acrobat—a paid performer."

"Ah!"—his black eyes sparkled—"the *torero*, the man who fights the bull, he is also an acrobat."

"Yes; but she thinks you a clown!—a GRACIOSO DE TEATRO—there!"

“Then I have make her laugh?” he said coolly.

I don’t think he had; but I shrugged my shoulders.

“BUENO!” he said cheerfully. “Lofe, he begin with a laugh, he make feenish with a sigh.”

I turned to look at him in the moonlight. His face presented its habitual Spanish gravity—a gravity that was almost ironical. His small black eyes had their characteristic irresponsible audacity—the irresponsibility of the vivacious young animal. It could not be possible that he was really touched with the placid frigidities of Miss Mannersley. I remembered his equally elastic gallantries with Miss Pinkey Smith, a blonde Western belle, from which both had harmlessly rebounded. As we walked on slowly I continued more persuasively: “Of course this is only your nonsense; but don’t you see, Miss Mannersley thinks it all in earnest and really your nature?” I hesitated, for it suddenly struck me that it WAS really his nature. “And—hang it all!—you don’t want her to believe you a common buffoon., or some intoxicated muchacho.”

“Intoxicated?” repeated Enriquez, with exasperating languishment. “Yes; that is the word that shall express itself. My friend, you have made a shot in the center—you have ring the bell every time! It is intoxication—but not of aguardiente. Look! I have long time an ancestor of whom is a pretty story. One day in church he have seen a young girl—a mere peasant girl—pass to the confessional. He look her in her eye, he stagger”—here Enriquez wobbled pantomimically into the road—“he fall!”—he would have suited the action to the word if I had not firmly held him up. “They have taken him home, where he have remain without his clothes, and have dance and sing. But it was the

drunkenness of love. And, look you, thees village girl was a nothing, not even pretty. The name of my ancestor was—”

“Don Quixote de La Mancha,” I suggested maliciously. “I suspected as much. Come along. That will do.”

“My ancestor’s name,” continued Enriquez, gravely, “was Antonio Hermenegildo de Salvatierra, which is not the same. Thees Don Quixote of whom you speak exist not at all.”

“Never mind. Only, for heaven’s sake, as we are nearing the house, don’t make a fool of yourself again.”

It was a wonderful moonlight night. The deep redwood porch of the Mannersley parsonage, under the shadow of a great oak—the largest in the Encinal—was diapered in black and silver. As the women stepped upon the porch their shadows were silhouetted against the door. Miss Mannersley paused for an instant, and turned to give a last look at the beauty of the night as Jocasta entered. Her glance fell upon us as we passed. She nodded carelessly and unaffectedly to me, but as she recognized Enriquez she looked a little longer at him with her previous cold and invincible curiosity. To my horror Enriquez began instantly to affect a slight tremulousness of gait and a difficulty of breathing; but I gripped his arm savagely, and managed to get him past the house as the door closed finally on the young lady.

“You do not comprehend, friend Pancho,” he said gravely, “but those eyes in their glass are as the ESPEJO USTORIO, the burning mirror. They burn, they consume me here like paper. Let us affix to ourselves thees tree. She will,

without doubt, appear at her window. We shall salute her for good night.”

“We will do nothing of the kind,” I said sharply. Finding that I was determined, he permitted me to lead him away. I was delighted to notice, however, that he had indicated the window which I knew was the minister’s study, and that as the bedrooms were in the rear of the house, this later incident was probably not overseen by the young lady or the servant. But I did not part from Enriquez until I saw him safely back to the sala, where I left him sipping chocolate, his arm alternating around the waists of his two previous partners in a delightful Arcadian and childlike simplicity, and an apparent utter forgetfulness of Miss Mannersley.

The fandangos were usually held on Saturday night, and the next day, being Sunday, I missed Enriquez; but as he was a devout Catholic I remembered that he was at mass in the morning, and possibly at the bullfight at San Antonio in the afternoon. But I was somewhat surprised on the Monday morning following, as I was crossing the plaza, to have my arm taken by the Rev. Mr. Mannersley in the nearest approach to familiarity that was consistent with the reserve of this eminent divine. I looked at him inquiringly. Although scrupulously correct in attire, his features always had a singular resemblance to the national caricature known as “Uncle Sam,” but with the humorous expression left out. Softly stroking his goatee with three fingers, he began condescendingly: “You are, I think, more or less familiar with the characteristics and customs of the Spanish as exhibited by the settlers here.” A thrill of apprehension went through me. Had he heard of Enriquez’ proceedings? Had Miss Mannersley cruelly betrayed him to her uncle? “I have not given that attention myself to their language and social peculiarities,” he continued, with a large wave of the hand,

“being much occupied with a study of their religious beliefs and superstitions”—it struck me that this was apt to be a common fault of people of the Mannersley type—”but I have refrained from a personal discussion of them; on the contrary, I have held somewhat broad views on the subject of their remarkable missionary work, and have suggested a scheme of co-operation with them, quite independent of doctrinal teaching, to my brethren of other Protestant Christian sects. These views I first incorporated in a sermon last Sunday week, which I am told has created considerable attention.” He stopped and coughed slightly. “I have not yet heard from any of the Roman clergy, but I am led to believe that my remarks were not ungrateful to Catholics generally.”

I was relieved, although still in some wonder why he should address me on this topic. I had a vague remembrance of having heard that he had said something on Sunday which had offended some Puritans of his flock, but nothing more. He continued: “I have just said that I was unacquainted with the characteristics of the Spanish-American race. I presume, however, they have the impulsiveness of their Latin origin. They gesticulate—eh? They express their gratitude, their joy, their affection, their emotions generally, by spasmodic movements? They naturally dance—sing—eh?” A horrible suspicion crossed my mind; I could only stare helplessly at him. “I see,” he said graciously; “perhaps it is a somewhat general question. I will explain myself. A rather singular occurrence happened to me the other night. I had returned from visiting a parishioner, and was alone in my study reviewing my sermon for the next day. It must have been quite late before I concluded, for I distinctly remember my niece had returned with her servant fully an hour before. Presently I heard the sounds of a musical instrument in the road, with the accents of someone singing or rehearsing some metrical composition in words that, although couched in a language foreign to me, in expression and modulation

gave me the impression of being distinctly adulatory. For some little time, in the greater preoccupation of my task, I paid little attention to the performance; but its persistency at length drew me in no mere idle curiosity to the window. From thence, standing in my dressing- gown, and believing myself unperceived, I noticed under the large oak in the roadside the figure of a young man who, by the imperfect light, appeared to be of Spanish extraction. But I evidently miscalculated my own invisibility; for he moved rapidly forward as I came to the window, and in a series of the most extraordinary pantomimic gestures saluted me. Beyond my experience of a few Greek plays in earlier days, I confess I am not an adept in the understanding of gesticulation; but it struck me that the various phases of gratitude, fervor, reverence, and exaltation were successively portrayed. He placed his hands upon his head, his heart, and even clasped them together in this manner.” To my consternation the reverend gentleman here imitated Enriquez’ most extravagant pantomime. “I am willing to confess,” he continued, “that I was singularly moved by them, as well as by the highly creditable and Christian interest that evidently produced them. At last I opened the window. Leaning out, I told him that I regretted that the lateness of the hour prevented any further response from me than a grateful though hurried acknowledgment of his praiseworthy emotion, but that I should be glad to see him for a few moments in the vestry before service the next day, or at early candlelight, before the meeting of the Bible class. I told him that as my sole purpose had been the creation of an evangelical brotherhood and the exclusion of merely doctrinal views, nothing could be more gratifying to me than his spontaneous and unsolicited testimony to my motives. He appeared for an instant to be deeply affected, and, indeed, quite overcome with emotion, and then gracefully retired, with some agility and a slight saltatory movement.”

He paused. A sudden and overwhelming idea took possession of me, and I looked impulsively into his face. Was it possible that for once Enriquez' ironical extravagance had been understood, met, and vanquished by a master hand? But the Rev. Mr. Mannersley's self-satisfied face betrayed no ambiguity or lurking humor. He was evidently in earnest; he had complacently accepted for himself the abandoned Enriquez' serenade to his niece. I felt a hysterical desire to laugh, but it was checked by my companion's next words.

"I informed my niece of the occurrence in the morning at breakfast. She had not heard anything of the strange performance, but she agreed with me as to its undoubted origin in a grateful recognition of my liberal efforts toward his coreligionists. It was she, in fact, who suggested that your knowledge of these people might corroborate my impressions."

I was dumfounded. Had Miss Mannersley, who must have recognized Enriquez' hand in this, concealed the fact in a desire to shield him? But this was so inconsistent with her utter indifference to him, except as a grotesque study, that she would have been more likely to tell her uncle all about his previous performance. Nor could it be that she wished to conceal her visit to the fandango. She was far too independent for that, and it was even possible that the reverend gentleman, in his desire to know more of Enriquez' compatriots, would not have objected. In my confusion I meekly added my conviction to hers, congratulated him upon his evident success, and slipped away. But I was burning with a desire to see Enriquez and know all. He was imaginative but not untruthful. Unfortunately, I learned that he was just then following one of his erratic impulses, and had gone to a rodeo at his cousin's, in the foothills, where he was alternately exercising his horsemanship in catching and breaking wild cattle and delighting his relatives with his

incomparable grasp of the American language and customs, and of the airs of a young man of fashion. Then my thoughts recurred to Miss Mannersley. Had she really been oblivious that night to Enriquez' serenade? I resolved to find out, if I could, without betraying Enriquez. Indeed, it was possible, after all, that it might not have been he.

Chance favored me. The next evening I was at a party where Miss Mannersley, by reason of her position and quality, was a distinguished—I had almost written a popular—guest. But, as I have formerly stated, although the youthful fair of the Encinal were flattered by her casual attentions, and secretly admired her superior style and aristocratic calm, they were more or less uneasy under the dominance of her intelligence and education, and were afraid to attempt either confidence or familiarity. They were also singularly jealous of her, for although the average young man was equally afraid of her cleverness and her candor, he was not above paying a tremulous and timid court to her for its effect upon her humbler sisters. This evening she was surrounded by her usual satellites, including, of course, the local notables and special guests of distinction. She had been discussing, I think, the existence of glaciers on Mount Shasta with a spectacled geologist, and had participated with charming frankness in a conversation on anatomy with the local doctor and a learned professor, when she was asked to take a seat at the piano. She played with remarkable skill and wonderful precision, but coldly and brilliantly. As she sat there in her subdued but perfectly fitting evening dress, her regular profile and short but slender neck firmly set upon her high shoulders, exhaling an atmosphere of refined puritanism and provocative intelligence, the utter incongruity of Enriquez' extravagant attentions if ironical, and their equal hopelessness if not, seemed to me plainer than ever. What had this well-poised, coldly observant spinster to do with that quaintly ironic ruffler, that romantic

cynic, that rowdy Don Quixote, that impossible Enriquez? Presently she ceased playing. Her slim, narrow slipper, revealing her thin ankle, remained upon the pedal; her delicate fingers were resting idly on the keys; her head was slightly thrown back, and her narrow eyebrows prettily knit toward the ceiling in an effort of memory.

“Something of Chopin’s,” suggested the geologist, ardently.

“That exquisite sonata!” pleaded the doctor.

“Suthin’ of Rubinstein. Heard him once,” said a gentleman of Siskiyou. “He just made that pianner get up and howl. Play Rube.”

She shook her head with parted lips and a slight touch of girlish coquetry in her manner. Then her fingers suddenly dropped upon the keys with a glassy tinkle; there were a few quick pizzicato chords, down went the low pedal with a monotonous strumming, and she presently began to hum to herself. I started—as well I might—for I recognized one of Enriquez’ favorite and most extravagant guitar solos. It was audacious; it was barbaric; it was, I fear, vulgar. As I remembered it—as he sang it—it recounted the adventures of one Don Francisco, a provincial gallant and roisterer of the most objectionable type. It had one hundred and four verses, which Enriquez never spared me. I shuddered as in a pleasant, quiet voice the correct Miss Mannersley warbled in musical praise of the PELLEJO, or wineskin, and a eulogy of the dicebox came caressingly from her thin red lips. But the company was far differently affected: the strange, wild air and wilder accompaniment were evidently catching; people moved toward the piano; somebody whistled the air from a distant corner; even the faces of the geologist and doctor brightened.

“A tarantella, I presume?” blandly suggested the doctor.

Miss Mannersley stopped, and rose carelessly from the piano. “It is a Moorish gypsy song of the fifteenth century,” she said dryly.

“It seemed sorter familiar, too,” hesitated one of the young men, timidly, “like as if—don’t you know?—you had without knowing it, don’t you know?”—he blushed slightly—“sorter picked it up somewhere.”

“I ‘picked it up,’ as you call it, in the collection of medieval manuscripts of the Harvard Library, and copied it,” returned Miss Mannersley coldly as she turned away.

But I was not inclined to let her off so easily. I presently made my way to her side. “Your uncle was complimentary enough to consult me as to the meaning of the appearance of a certain exuberant Spanish visitor at his house the other night.” I looked into her brown eyes, but my own slipped off her velvety pupils without retaining anything. Then she reinforced her gaze with a pince-nez, and said carelessly:

“Oh, it’s you? How are you? Well, could you give him any information?”

“Only generally,” I returned, still looking into her eyes. “These people are impulsive. The Spanish blood is a mixture of gold and quicksilver.”

She smiled slightly. “That reminds me of your volatile friend. He was mercurial enough, certainly. Is he still dancing?”

“And singing sometimes,” I responded pointedly. But she only added casually, “A singular creature,” without exhibiting the least consciousness, and drifted away, leaving me none the wiser. I felt that Enriquez alone could enlighten me. I must see him.

I did, but not in the way I expected. There was a bullfight at San Antonio the next Saturday afternoon, the usual Sunday performance being changed in deference to the Sabbatical habits of the Americans. An additional attraction was offered in the shape of a bull-and-bear fight, also a concession to American taste, which had voted the bullfight “slow,” and had averred that the bull “did not get a fair show.” I am glad that I am able to spare the reader the usual realistic horrors, for in the Californian performances there was very little of the brutality that distinguished this function in the mother country. The horses were not miserable, worn-out hacks, but young and alert mustangs; and the display of horsemanship by the picadors was not only wonderful, but secured an almost absolute safety to horse and rider. I never saw a horse gored; although unskillful riders were sometimes thrown in wheeling quickly to avoid the bull’s charge, they generally regained their animals without injury.

The Plaza de Toros was reached through the decayed and tile-strewn outskirts of an old Spanish village. It was a rudely built oval amphitheater, with crumbling, whitewashed adobe walls, and roofed only over portions of the gallery reserved for the provincial “notables,” but now occupied by a few shopkeepers and their wives, with a sprinkling of American travelers and ranchmen. The impalpable adobe dust of the arena was being whirled into the air by the strong onset of the afternoon trade winds, which happily, however, helped also to dissipate a reek of garlic, and the acrid fumes of cheap tobacco rolled in cornhusk cigarettes. I was leaning over the second barrier,

waiting for the meager and circuslike procession to enter with the keys of the bull pen, when my attention was attracted to a movement in the reserved gallery. A lady and gentleman of a quality that was evidently unfamiliar to the rest of the audience were picking their way along the rickety benches to a front seat. I recognized the geologist with some surprise, and the lady he was leading with still greater astonishment. For it was Miss Mannersley, in her precise, well-fitting walking-costume—a monotone of sober color among the parti-colored audience.

However, I was perhaps less surprised than the audience, for I was not only becoming as accustomed to the young girl's vagaries as I had been to Enriquez' extravagance, but I was also satisfied that her uncle might have given her permission to come, as a recognition of the Sunday concession of the management, as well as to conciliate his supposed Catholic friends. I watched her sitting there until the first bull had entered, and, after a rather brief play with the picadors and banderilleros, was dispatched. At the moment when the matador approached the bull with his lethal weapon I was not sorry for an excuse to glance at Miss Mannersley. Her hands were in her lap, her head slightly bent forward over her knees. I fancied that she, too, had dropped her eyes before the brutal situation; to my horror, I saw that she had a drawing-book in her hand and was actually sketching it. I turned my eyes in preference to the dying bull.

The second animal led out for this ingenious slaughter was, however, more sullen, uncertain, and discomposing to his butchers. He accepted the irony of a trial with gloomy, suspicious eyes, and he declined the challenge of whirling and insulting picadors. He bristled with banderillas like a hedgehog, but remained with his haunches backed against the barrier, at times almost hidden in the fine

dust raised by the monotonous stroke of his sullenly pawing hoof—his one dull, heavy protest. A vague uneasiness had infected his adversaries; the picadors held aloof, the banderilleros skirmished at a safe distance. The audience resented only the indecision of the bull. Galling epithets were flung at him, followed by cries of “ESPADA!” and, curving his elbow under his short cloak, the matador, with his flashing blade in hand, advanced and—stopped. The bull remained motionless.

For at that moment a heavier gust of wind than usual swept down upon the arena, lifted a suffocating cloud of dust, and whirled it around the tiers of benches and the balcony, and for a moment seemed to stop the performance. I heard an exclamation from the geologist, who had risen to his feet. I fancied I heard even a faint cry from Miss Mannersley; but the next moment, as the dust was slowly settling, we saw a sheet of paper in the air, that had been caught up in this brief cyclone, dropping, dipping from side to side on uncertain wings, until it slowly descended in the very middle of the arena. It was a leaf from Miss Mannersley’s sketchbook, the one on which she had been sketching.

In the pause that followed it seemed to be the one object that at last excited the bull’s growing but tardy ire. He glanced at it with murky, distended eyes; he snorted at it with vague yet troubled fury. Whether he detected his own presentment in Miss Mannersley’s sketch, or whether he recognized it as an unknown and unfamiliar treachery in his surroundings, I could not conjecture; for the next moment the matador, taking advantage of the bull’s concentration, with a complacent leer at the audience, advanced toward the paper. But at that instant a young man cleared the barrier into the arena with a single bound, shoved the matador to one side, caught up the paper, turned toward the balcony and

Miss Mannersley with a gesture of apology, dropped gaily before the bull, knelt down before him with an exaggerated humility, and held up the drawing as if for his inspection. A roar of applause broke from the audience, a cry of warning and exasperation from the attendants, as the goaded bull suddenly charged the stranger. But he sprang to one side with great dexterity, made a courteous gesture to the matador as if passing the bull over to him, and still holding the paper in his hand, re-leaped the barrier, and rejoined the audience in safety. I did not wait to see the deadly, dominant thrust with which the matador received the charging bull; my eyes were following the figure now bounding up the steps to the balcony, where with an exaggerated salutation he laid the drawing in Miss Mannersley's lap and vanished. There was no mistaking that thin lithe form, the narrow black mustache, and gravely dancing eyes. The audacity of conception, the extravagance of execution, the quaint irony of the sequel, could belong to no one but Enriquez.

I hurried up to her as the six yoked mules dragged the carcass of the bull away. She was placidly putting up her book, the unmoved focus of a hundred eager and curious eyes. She smiled slightly as she saw me. "I was just telling Mr. Briggs what an extraordinary creature it was, and how you knew him. He must have had great experience to do that sort of thing so cleverly and safely. Does he do it often? Of course, not just that. But does he pick up cigars and things that I see they throw to the matador? Does he belong to the management? Mr. Briggs thinks the whole thing was a feint to distract the bull," she added, with a wicked glance at the geologist, who, I fancied, looked disturbed.

"I am afraid," I said dryly, "that his act was as unpremeditated and genuine as it was unusual."

"Why afraid?"

It was a matter-of-fact question, but I instantly saw my mistake. What right had I to assume that Enriquez' attentions were any more genuine than her own easy indifference; and if I suspected that they were, was it fair in me to give my friend away to this heartless coquette? "You are not very gallant," she said, with a slight laugh, as I was hesitating, and turned away with her escort before I could frame a reply. But at least Enriquez was now accessible, and I should gain some information from him. I knew where to find him, unless he were still lounging about the building, intent upon more extravagance; but I waited until I saw Miss Mannersley and Briggs depart without further interruption.

The hacienda of Ramon Saltillo, Enriquez' cousin, was on the outskirts of the village. When I arrived there I found Enriquez' pinto mustang steaming in the corral, and although I was momentarily delayed by the servants at the gateway, I was surprised to find Enriquez himself lying languidly on his back in a hammock in the patio. His arms were hanging down listlessly on each side as if in the greatest prostration, yet I could not resist the impression that the rascal had only just got into the hammock when he heard of my arrival.

"You have arrived, friend Pancho, in time," he said, in accents of exaggerated weakness. "I am absolutely exhaust. I am bursted, caved in, kerflummoxed. I have behold you, my friend, at the barrier. I speak not, I make no sign at the first, because I was on fire; I speak not at the feenish—for I am exhaust."

"I see; the bull made it lively for you."

He instantly bounded up in the hammock. "The bull! Caramba! Not a thousand bulls! And thees one, look you,

was a craven. I snap my fingers over his horn; I roll my cigarette under his nose.”

“Well, then—what was it?”

He instantly lay down again, pulling up the sides of the hammock. Presently his voice came from its depths, appealing in hollow tones to the sky. “He asks me—thees friend of my soul, thees brother of my life, thees Pancho that I lofe—what it was? He would that I should tell him why I am game in the legs, why I shake in the hand, crack in the voice, and am generally wipe out! And yet he, my pardner—thees Francisco—know that I have seen the mees from Boston! That I have gaze into the eye, touch the hand, and for the instant possess the picture that hand have drawn! It was a sublime picture, Pancho,” he said, sitting up again suddenly, “and have kill the bull before our friend Pepe’s sword have touch even the bone of hees back and make feenish of him.”

“Look here, Enriquez,” I said bluntly, “have you been serenading that girl?”

He shrugged his shoulders without the least embarrassment, and said: “Ah, yes. What would you? It is of a necessity.”

“Well,” I retored, “then you ought to know that her uncle took it all to himself—thought you some grateful Catholic pleased with his religious tolerance.”

He did not even smile. “BUENO,” he said gravely. “That make something, too. In thees affair it is well to begin with the duenna. He is the duenna.”

“And,” I went on relentlessly, “her escort told her just now that your exploit in the bull ring was only a trick to divert the bull, suggested by the management.”

“Bah! her escort is a geologist. Naturally, she is to him as a stone.”

I would have continued, but a peon interrupted us at this moment with a sign to Enriquez, who leaped briskly from the hammock, bidding me wait his return from a messenger in the gateway.

Still unsatisfied of mind, I waited, and sat down in the hammock that Enriquez had quitted. A scrap of paper was lying in its meshes, which at first appeared to be of the kind from which Enriquez rolled his cigarettes; but as I picked it up to throw it away, I found it was of much firmer and stouter material. Looking at it more closely, I was surprised to recognize it as a piece of the tinted drawing-paper torn off the “block” that Miss Mannersley had used. It had been deeply creased at right angles as if it had been folded; it looked as if it might have been the outer half of a sheet used for a note.

It might have been a trifling circumstance, but it greatly excited my curiosity. I knew that he had returned the sketch to Miss Mannersley, for I had seen it in her hand. Had she given him another? And if so, why had it been folded to the destruction of the drawing? Or was it part of a note which he had destroyed? In the first impulse of discovery I walked quickly with it toward the gateway where Enriquez had disappeared, intending to restore it to him. He was just outside talking with a young girl. I started, for it was Jocasta—Miss Mannersley’s maid.

With this added discovery came that sense of uneasiness and indignation with which we illogically are apt to resent the withholding of a friend's confidence, even in matters concerning only himself. It was no use for me to reason that it was no business of mine, that he was right in keeping a secret that concerned another—and a lady; but I was afraid I was even more meanly resentful because the discovery quite upset my theory of his conduct and of Miss Mannersley's attitude toward him. I continued to walk on to the gateway, where I bade Enriquez a hurried good-by, alleging the sudden remembrance of another engagement, but without appearing to recognize the girl, who was moving away when, to my further discomfiture, the rascal stopped me with an appealing wink, threw his arms around my neck, whispered hoarsely in my ear, "Ah! you see—you comprehend—but you are the mirror of discretion!" and returned to Jocasta. But whether this meant that he had received a message from Miss Mannersley, or that he was trying to suborn her maid to carry one, was still uncertain. He was capable of either. During the next two or three weeks I saw him frequently; but as I had resolved to try the effect of ignoring Miss Mannersley in our conversation, I gathered little further of their relations, and, to my surprise, after one or two characteristic extravagances of allusion, Enriquez dropped the subject, too. Only one afternoon, as we were parting, he said carelessly: "My friend, you are going to the casa of Mannersley tonight. I too have the honor of the invitation. But you will be my Mercury—my Leporello—you will take of me a message to thees Mees Boston, that I am crushed, desolated, prostrate, and flabbergasted—that I cannot arrive, for I have of that night to sit up with the grand-aunt of my brother- in-law, who has a quinsy to the death. It is sad."

This was the first indication I had received of Miss Mannersley's advances. I was equally surprised at Enriquez' refusal.

"Nonsense!" I said bluntly. "Nothing keeps you from going."

"My friend," returned Enriquez, with a sudden lapse into languish- ment that seemed to make him absolutely infirm, "it is everything that shall restrain me. I am not strong. I shall become weak of the knee and tremble under the eye of Mees Boston. I shall precipitate myself to the geologist by the throat. Ask me another conundrum that shall be easy."

He seemed idiotically inflexible, and did not go. But I did. I found Miss Mannersley exquisitely dressed and looking singularly animated and pretty. The lambent glow of her inscrutable eye as she turned toward me might have been flattering but for my uneasiness in regard to Enriquez. I delivered his excuses as naturally as I could. She stiffened for an instant, and seemed an inch higher. "I am so sorry," she said at last in a level voice. "I thought he would have been so amusing. Indeed, I had hoped we might try an old Moorish dance together which I have found and was practicing."

"He would have been delighted, I know. It's a great pity he didn't come with me," I said quickly; "but," I could not help adding, with emphasis on her words, "he is such an 'extraordinary creature,' you know."

"I see nothing extraordinary in his devotion to an aged relative," returned Miss Mannersley quietly as she turned away, "except that it justifies my respect for his character."

I do not know why I did not relate this to him. Possibly I had given up trying to understand them; perhaps I was beginning to have an idea that he could take care of himself. But I was somewhat surprised a few days later when, after asking me to go with him to a rodeo at his uncle's he added composedly, "You will meet Mees Boston."

I stared, and but for his manner would have thought it part of his extravagance. For the rodeo—a yearly chase of wild cattle for the purpose of lassoing and branding them—was a rather brutal affair, and purely a man's function; it was also a family affair—a property stock-taking of the great Spanish cattle-owners—and strangers, particularly Americans, found it difficult to gain access to its mysteries and the fiesta that followed.

"But how did she get an invitation?" I asked. "You did not dare to ask—" I began.

"My friend," said Enriquez, with a singular deliberation, "the great and respectable Boston herself, and her serene, venerable uncle, and other Boston magnificos, have of a truth done me the inexpressible honor to solicit of my degraded, papistical uncle that she shall come—that she shall of her own superior eye behold the barbaric customs of our race."

His tone and manner were so peculiar that I stepped quickly before him, laid my hands on his shoulders, and looked down into his face. But the actual devil which I now for the first time saw in his eyes went out of them suddenly, and he relapsed again in affected languishment in his chair. "I shall be there, friend Pancho," he said, with a preposterous gasp. "I shall nerve my arm to lasso the bull, and tumble him before her at her feet. I shall throw the 'buck-jump' mustang at the same sacred spot. I shall pluck for her the buried

chicken at full speed from the ground, and present it to her. You shall see it, friend Pancho. I shall be there.”

He was as good as his word. When Don Pedro Amador, his uncle, installed Miss Mannersley, with Spanish courtesy, on a raised platform in the long valley where the rodeo took place, the gallant Enriquez selected a bull from the frightened and galloping herd, and, cleverly isolating him from the band, lassoed his hind legs, and threw him exactly before the platform where Miss Mannersley was seated. It was Enriquez who caught the unbroken mustang, sprang from his own saddle to the bare back of his captive, and with the lasso for a bridle, halted him on rigid haunches at Miss Mannersley’s feet. It was Enriquez who, in the sports that followed, leaned from his saddle at full speed, caught up the chicken buried to its head in the sand, without wringing its neck, and tossed it unharmed and fluttering toward his mistress. As for her, she wore the same look of animation that I had seen in her face at our previous meeting. Although she did not bring her sketchbook with her, as at the bullfight, she did not shrink from the branding of the cattle, which took place under her very eyes.

Yet I had never seen her and Enriquez together; they had never, to my actual knowledge, even exchanged words. And now, although she was the guest of his uncle, his duties seemed to keep him in the field, and apart from her. Nor, as far as I could detect, did either apparently make any effort to have it otherwise. The peculiar circumstance seemed to attract no attention from anyone else. But for what I alone knew—or thought I knew—of their actual relations, I should have thought them strangers.

But I felt certain that the fiesta which took place in the broad patio of Don Pedro’s casa would bring them together. And later in the evening, as we were all sitting on

the veranda watching the dancing of the Mexican women, whose white-flounced sayas were monotonously rising and falling to the strains of two melancholy harps, Miss Mannersley rejoined us from the house. She seemed to be utterly absorbed and abstracted in the barbaric dances, and scarcely moved as she leaned over the railing with her cheek resting on her hand. Suddenly she arose with a little cry.

“What is it?” asked two or three.

“Nothing—only I have lost my fan.” She had risen, and ,was looking abstractedly on the floor.

Half a dozen men jumped to their feet. “Let me fetch it,” they said.

“No, thank you. I think I know where it is, and will go for it myself.” She was moving away.

But Don Pedro interposed with Spanish gravity. Such a thing was not to be heard of in his casa. If the senorita would not permit HIM—an old man—to go for it, it must be brought by Enriquez, her cavalier of the day.

But Enriquez was not to be found. I glanced at Miss Mannersley’s somewhat disturbed face, and begged her to let me fetch it. I thought I saw a flush of relief come into her pale cheek as she said, in a lower voice, “On the stone seat in the garden.”

I hurried away, leaving Don Pedro still protesting. I knew the gardens, and the stone seat at an angle of the wall, not a dozen yards from the casa. The moon shone full upon it. There, indeed, lay the little gray-feathered fan. But beside it, also, lay the crumpled black gold-embroidered riding-gauntlet that Enriquez had worn at the rodeo.

I thrust it hurriedly into my pocket, and ran back. As I passed through the gateway I asked a peon to send Enriquez to me. The man stared. Did I not know that Don Enriquez had ridden away two minutes ago?

When I reached the veranda, I handed the fan to Miss Mannersley without a word. "BUENO," said Don Pedro, gravely; "it is as well. There shall be no bones broken over the getting of it, for Enriquez, I hear, has had to return to the Encinal this very evening."

Miss Mannersley retired early. I did not inform her of my discovery, nor did I seek in any way to penetrate her secret. There was no doubt that she and Enriquez had been together, perhaps not for the first time; but what was the result of their interview? From the young girl's demeanor and Enriquez' hurried departure, I could only fear the worst for him. Had he been tempted into some further extravagance and been angrily rebuked, or had he avowed a real passion concealed under his exaggerated mask and been deliberately rejected? I tossed uneasily half the night, following in my dreams my poor friend's hurrying hoofbeats, and ever starting from my sleep at what I thought was the sound of galloping hoofs.

I rose early, and lounged into the patio; but others were there before me, and a small group of Don Pedro's family were excitedly discussing something, and I fancied they turned away awkwardly and consciously as I approached. There was an air of indefinite uneasiness everywhere. A strange fear came over me with the chill of the early morning air. Had anything happened to Enriquez? I had always looked upon his extravagance as part of his playful humor. Could it be possible that under the sting of rejection he had made his grotesque threat of languishing

effacement real? Surely Miss Mannersley would know or suspect something, if it were the case.

I approached one of the Mexican women and asked if the *senorita* had risen. The woman started, and looked covertly round before she replied. Did not Don Pancho know that Miss Mannersley and her maid had not slept in their beds that night, but had gone, none knew where?

For an instant I felt an appalling sense of my own responsibility in this suddenly serious situation, and hurried after the retreating family group. But as I entered the corridor a *vaquero* touched me on the shoulder. He had evidently just dismounted, and was covered with the dust of the road. He handed me a note written in pencil on a leaf from Miss Mannersley's sketchbook. It was in Enriquez' hand, and his signature was followed by his most extravagant rubric.

Friend Pancho: When you read this line you shall of a possibility think I am no more. That is where you shall slip up, my little brother! I am much more—I am two times as much, for I have marry Miss Boston. At the Mission Church, at five of the morning, sharp! No cards shall be left! I kiss the hand of my venerable uncle-in- law. You shall say to him that we fly to the South wilderness as the combined evangelical missionary to the heathen! Miss Boston herself say this. Ta-ta! How are you now?

Your own Enriquez.

Three Vagabonds of Trinidad

“Oh! it’s you, is it?” said the Editor.

The Chinese boy to whom the colloquialism was addressed answered literally, after his habit:

“Allee same Li Tee; me no changee. Me no ollee China boy.”

“That’s so,” said the Editor with an air of conviction. “I don’t suppose there’s another imp like you in all Trinidad County. Well, next time don’t scratch outside there like a gopher, but come in.”

“Lass time,” suggested Li Tee blandly, “me tap tappee. You no like tap tappee. You say, alle same dam woodpeckel.”

It was quite true—the highly sylvan surroundings of the Trinidad “Sentinel” office—a little clearing in a pine forest—and its attendant fauna, made these signals confusing. An accurate imitation of a woodpecker was also one of Li Tee’s accomplishments.

The Editor without replying finished the note he was writing; at which Li Tee, as if struck by some coincident recollection, lifted up his long sleeve, which served him as a pocket, and carelessly shook out a letter on the table like a conjuring trick. The Editor, with a reproachful glance at him,

opened it. It was only the ordinary request of an agricultural subscriber—one Johnson—that the Editor would “notice” a giant radish grown by the subscriber and sent by the bearer.

“Where’s the radish, Li Tee?” said the Editor suspiciously.

“No hab got. Ask Mellikan boy.”

“What?”

Here Li Tee condescended to explain that on passing the schoolhouse he had been set upon by the schoolboys, and that in the struggle the big radish—being, like most such monstrosities of the quick Californian soil, merely a mass of organized water—was “mashed” over the head of some of his assailants. The Editor, painfully aware of these regular persecutions of his errand boy, and perhaps realizing that a radish which could not be used as a bludgeon was not of a sustaining nature, forebore any reproof. “But I cannot notice what I haven’t seen, Li Tee,” he said good-humoredly.

“S’pose you lie—allee same as Johnson,” suggested Li with equal cheerfulness. “He foolee you with lotten stuff—you foolee Mellikan man, allee same.”

The Editor preserved a dignified silence until he had addressed his letter. “Take this to Mrs. Martin,” he said, handing it to the boy; “and mind you keep clear of the schoolhouse. Don’t go by the Flat either if the men are at work, and don’t, if you value your skin, pass Flanigan’s shanty, where you set off those firecrackers and nearly burnt him out the other day. Look out for Barker’s dog at the crossing, and keep off the main road if the tunnel men are coming over the hill.” Then remembering that he had virtually closed all the ordinary approaches to Mrs. Martin’s

house, he added, "Better go round by the woods, where you won't meet *any one*."

The boy darted off through the open door, and the Editor stood for a moment looking regretfully after him. He liked his little protege ever since that unfortunate child—a waif from a Chinese wash-house—was impounded by some indignant miners for bringing home a highly imperfect and insufficient washing, and kept as hostage for a more proper return of the garments. Unfortunately, another gang of miners, equally aggrieved, had at the same time looted the wash-house and driven off the occupants, so that Li Tee remained unclaimed. For a few weeks he became a sporting appendage of the miners' camp; the stolid butt of good-humored practical jokes, the victim alternately of careless indifference or of extravagant generosity. He received kicks and half-dollars intermittently, and pocketed both with stoical fortitude. But under this treatment he presently lost the docility and frugality which was part of his inheritance, and began to put his small wits against his tormentors, until they grew tired of their own mischief and his. But they knew not what to do with him. His pretty nankeen-yellow skin debarred him from the white "public school," while, although as a heathen he might have reasonably claimed attention from the Sabbath-school, the parents who cheerfully gave their contributions to the heathen *abroad*, objected to him as a companion of their children in the church at home. At this juncture the Editor offered to take him into his printing office as a "devil." For a while he seemed to be endeavoring, in his old literal way, to act up to that title. He inked everything but the press. He scratched Chinese characters of an abusive import on "leads," printed them, and stuck them about the office; he put "punk" in the foreman's pipe, and had been seen to swallow small type merely as a diabolical recreation. As a messenger he was fleet of foot, but uncertain of delivery. Some time previously

the Editor had enlisted the sympathies of Mrs. Martin, the good-natured wife of a farmer, to take him in her household on trial, but on the third day Li Tee had run away. Yet the Editor had not despaired, and it was to urge her to a second attempt that he dispatched that letter.

He was still gazing abstractedly into the depths of the wood when he was conscious of a slight movement—but no sound—in a clump of hazel near him, and a stealthy figure glided from it. He at once recognized it as “Jim,” a well-known drunken Indian vagrant of the settlement—tied to its civilization by the single link of “fire water,” for which he forsook equally the Reservation where it was forbidden and his own camps where it was unknown. Unconscious of his silent observer, he dropped upon all fours, with his ear and nose alternately to the ground like some tracking animal. Then having satisfied himself, he rose, and bending forward in a dogged trot, made a straight line for the woods. He was followed a few seconds later by his dog—a slinking, rough, wolf-like brute, whose superior instinct, however, made him detect the silent presence of some alien humanity in the person of the Editor, and to recognize it with a yelp of habit, anticipatory of the stone that he knew was always thrown at him.

“That’s cute,” said a voice, “but it’s just what I expected all along.”

The Editor turned quickly. His foreman was standing behind him, and had evidently noticed the whole incident.

“It’s what I allus said,” continued the man. “That boy and that Injin are thick as thieves. Ye can’t see one without the other— and they’ve got their little tricks and signals by which they follow each other. T’other day when you was kalkilatin’ Li Tee was doin’ your errands I tracked him out

on the marsh, just by followin' that ornery, pizenous dog o' Jim's. There was the whole caboodle of 'em—including Jim—campin' out, and eatin' raw fish that Jim had ketched, and green stuff they had both sneaked outer Johnson's garden. Mrs. Martin may *take* him, but she won't keep him long while Jim's round. What makes Li foller that blamed old Injin soaker, and what makes Jim, who, at least, is a 'Merican, take up with a furrin' heathen, just gets me."

The Editor did not reply. He had heard something of this before. Yet, after all, why should not these equal outcasts of civilization cling together!

* * * * *

Li Tee's stay with Mrs. Martin was brief. His departure was hastened by an untoward event—apparently ushered in, as in the case of other great calamities, by a mysterious portent in the sky. One morning an extraordinary bird of enormous dimensions was seen approaching from the horizon, and eventually began to hover over the devoted town. Careful scrutiny of this ominous fowl, however, revealed the fact that it was a monstrous Chinese kite, in the shape of a flying dragon. The spectacle imparted considerable liveliness to the community, which, however, presently changed to some concern and indignation. It appeared that the kite was secretly constructed by Li Tee in a secluded part of Mrs. Martin's clearing, but when it was first tried by him he found that through some error of design it required a tail of unusual proportions. This he hurriedly supplied by the first means he found—Mrs. Martin's clothes-line, with part of the weekly wash depending from it. This fact was not at first noticed by the ordinary sightseer, although the tail seemed peculiar—yet, perhaps, not more peculiar than a dragon's tail ought to be. But when the actual theft was discovered and reported through the town, a

vivacious interest was created, and spy-glasses were used to identify the various articles of apparel still hanging on that ravished clothes-line. These garments, in the course of their slow disengagement from the clothes-pins through the gyrations of the kite, impartially distributed themselves over the town—one of Mrs. Martin's stockings falling upon the veranda of the Polka Saloon, and the other being afterwards discovered on the belfry of the First Methodist Church—to the scandal of the congregation. It would have been well if the result of Li Tee's invention had ended here. Alas! the kite-flyer and his accomplice, "Injin Jim," were tracked by means of the kite's tell-tale cord to a lonely part of the marsh and rudely dispossessed of their charge by Deacon Hornblower and a constable. Unfortunately, the captors overlooked the fact that the kite-flyers had taken the precaution of making a "half-turn" of the stout cord around a log to ease the tremendous pull of the kite—whose power the captors had not reckoned upon—and the Deacon incautiously substituted his own body for the log. A singular spectacle is said to have then presented itself to the on-lookers. The Deacon was seen to be running wildly by leaps and bounds over the marsh after the kite, closely followed by the constable in equally wild efforts to restrain him by tugging at the end of the line. The extraordinary race continued to the town until the constable fell, losing his hold of the line. This seemed to impart a singular specific levity to the Deacon, who, to the astonishment of everybody, incontinently sailed up into a tree! When he was succored and cut down from the demoniac kite, he was found to have sustained a dislocation of the shoulder, and the constable was severely shaken. By that one infelicitous stroke the two outcasts made an enemy of the Law and the Gospel as represented in Trinidad County. It is to be feared also that the ordinary emotional instinct of a frontier community, to which they were now simply abandoned, was as little to be trusted. In this dilemma they disappeared from the town the

next day—no one knew where. A pale blue smoke rising from a lonely island in the bay for some days afterwards suggested their possible refuge. But nobody greatly cared. The sympathetic mediation of the Editor was characteristically opposed by Mr. Parkin Skinner, a prominent citizen:

“It’s all very well for you to talk sentiment about [racial expletive]s, Chinamen, and Injins, and you fellers can laugh about the Deacon being snatched up to heaven like Elijah in that blamed Chinese chariot of a kite—but I kin tell you, gentlemen, that this is a white man’s country! Yes, sir, you can’t get over it! The [racial expletive] of every description—yeller, brown, or black, call him ‘Chinese,’ ‘Injin,’ or ‘Kanaka,’ or what you like—hez to clar off of God’s footstool when the Anglo-Saxon gets started! It stands to reason that they can’t live alongside o’ printin’ presses, M’Cormick’s reapers, and the Bible! Yes, sir! the Bible; and Deacon Hornblower kin prove it to you. It’s our manifest destiny to clar them out— that’s what we was put here for—and it’s just the work we’ve got to do!”

I have ventured to quote Mr. Skinner’s stirring remarks to show that probably Jim and Li Tee ran away only in anticipation of a possible lynching, and to prove that advanced sentiments of this high and ennobling nature really obtained forty years ago in an ordinary American frontier town which did not then dream of Expansion and Empire!

Howbeit, Mr. Skinner did not make allowance for mere human nature. One morning Master Bob Skinner, his son, aged twelve, evaded the schoolhouse, and started in an old Indian “dug-out” to invade the island of the miserable refugees. His purpose was not clearly defined to himself, but was to be modified by circumstances. He would either capture Li Tee and Jim, or join them in their lawless

existence. He had prepared himself for either event by surreptitiously borrowing his father's gun. He also carried victuals, having heard that Jim ate grasshoppers and Li Tee rats, and misdoubting his own capacity for either diet. He paddled slowly, well in shore, to be secure from observation at home, and then struck out boldly in his leaky canoe for the island—a tufted, tussocky shred of the marshy promontory torn off in some tidal storm. It was a lovely day, the bay being barely ruffled by the afternoon “trades;” but as he neared the island he came upon the swell from the bar and the thunders of the distant Pacific, and grew a little frightened. The canoe, losing way, fell into the trough of the swell, shipping salt water, still more alarming to the prairie-bred boy. Forgetting his plan of a stealthy invasion, he shouted lustily as the helpless and water-logged boat began to drift past the island; at which a lithe figure emerged from the reeds, threw off a tattered blanket, and slipped noiselessly, like some animal, into the water. It was Jim, who, half wading, half swimming, brought the canoe and boy ashore. Master Skinner at once gave up the idea of invasion, and concluded to join the refugees.

This was easy in his defenceless state, and his manifest delight in their rude encampment and gypsy life, although he had been one of Li Tee's oppressors in the past. But that stolid pagan had a philosophical indifference which might have passed for Christian forgiveness, and Jim's native reticence seemed like assent. And, possibly, in the minds of these two vagabonds there might have been a natural sympathy for this other truant from civilization, and some delicate flattery in the fact that Master Skinner was not driven out, but came of his own accord. Howbeit, they fished together, gathered cranberries on the marsh, shot a wild duck and two plovers, and when Master Skinner assisted in the cooking of their fish in a conical basket sunk in the ground, filled with water, heated by rolling red-hot stones from their

drift-wood fire into the buried basket, the boy's felicity was supreme. And what an afternoon! To lie, after this feast, on their bellies in the grass, replete like animals, hidden from everything but the sunshine above them; so quiet that gray clouds of sandpipers settled fearlessly around them, and a shining brown muskrat slipped from the ooze within a few feet of their faces—was to feel themselves a part of the wild life in earth and sky. Not that their own predatory instincts were hushed by this divine peace; that intermitting black spot upon the water, declared by the Indian to be a seal, the stealthy glide of a yellow fox in the ambush of a callow brood of mallards, the momentary straying of an elk from the upland upon the borders of the marsh, awoke their tingling nerves to the happy but fruitless chase. And when night came, too soon, and they pigged together around the warm ashes of their camp-fire, under the low lodge poles of their wigwam of dried mud, reeds, and driftwood, with the combined odors of fish, wood-smoke, and the warm salt breath of the marsh in their nostrils, they slept contentedly. The distant lights of the settlement went out one by one, the stars came out, very large and very silent, to take their places. The barking of a dog on the nearest point was followed by another farther inland. But Jim's dog, curled at the feet of his master, did not reply. What had *he* to do with civilization?

The morning brought some fear of consequences to Master Skinner, but no abatement of his resolve not to return. But here he was oddly combated by Li Tee. "S'pose you go back allee same. You tellee fam'lee canoe go topside down—you plentee swimee to bush. Allee night in bush. Housee big way off—how can get? Sabe?"

"And I'll leave the gun, and tell Dad that when the canoe upset the gun got drowned," said the boy eagerly.

Li Tee nodded.

“And come again Saturday, and bring more powder and shot and a bottle for Jim,” said Master Skinner excitedly.

“Good!” grunted the Indian.

Then they ferried the boy over to the peninsula, and set him on a trail across the marshes, known only to themselves, which would bring him home. And when the Editor the next morning chronicled among his news, “Adrift on the Bay—A Schoolboy’s Miraculous Escape,” he knew as little what part his missing Chinese errand boy had taken in it as the rest of his readers.

Meantime the two outcasts returned to their island camp. It may have occurred to them that a little of the sunlight had gone from it with Bob; for they were in a dull, stupid way fascinated by the little white tyrant who had broken bread with them. He had been delightfully selfish and frankly brutal to them, as only a schoolboy could be, with the addition of the consciousness of his superior race. Yet they each longed for his return, although he was seldom mentioned in their scanty conversation—carried on in monosyllables, each in his own language, or with some common English word, or more often restricted solely to signs. By a delicate flattery, when they did speak of him it was in what they considered to be his own language.

“Boston boy, plenty like catchee *him*,” Jim would say, pointing to a distant swan. Or Li Tee, hunting a striped water snake from the reeds, would utter stolidly, “Melikan boy no likee snake.” Yet the next two days brought some trouble and physical discomfort to them. Bob had consumed, or wasted, all their provisions—and, still more unfortunately, his righteous visit, his gun, and his superabundant animal spirits had frightened away the game, which their habitual quiet and taciturnity had beguiled into

trustfulness. They were half starved, but they did not blame him. It would come all right when he returned. They counted the days, Jim with secret notches on the long pole, Li Tee with a string of copper “cash” he always kept with him. The eventful day came at last—a warm autumn day, patched with inland fog like blue smoke and smooth, tranquil, open surfaces of wood and sea; but to their waiting, confident eyes the boy came not out of either. They kept a stolid silence all that day until night fell, when Jim said, “Mebbe Boston boy go dead.” Li Tee nodded. It did not seem possible to these two heathens that anything else could prevent the Christian child from keeping his word.

After that, by the aid of the canoe, they went much on the marsh, hunting apart, but often meeting on the trail which Bob had taken, with grunts of mutual surprise. These suppressed feelings, never made known by word or gesture, at last must have found vicarious outlet in the taciturn dog, who so far forgot his usual discretion as to once or twice seat himself on the water’s edge and indulge in a fit of howling. It had been a custom of Jim’s on certain days to retire to some secluded place, where, folded in his blanket, with his back against a tree, he remained motionless for hours. In the settlement this had been usually referred to the after effects of drink, known as the “horrors,” but Jim had explained it by saying it was “when his heart was bad.” And now it seemed, by these gloomy abstractions, that “his heart was bad” very often. And then the long withheld rains came one night on the wings of a fierce southwester, beating down their frail lodge and scattering it abroad, quenching their camp-fire, and rolling up the bay until it invaded their reedy island and hissed in their ears. It drove the game from Jim’s gun; it tore the net and scattered the bait of Li Tee, the fisherman. Cold and half starved in heart and body, but more dogged and silent than ever, they crept out in their canoe into the storm-tossed bay, barely escaping with their miserable lives to the

marshy peninsula. Here, on their enemy's ground, skulking in the rushes, or lying close behind tussocks, they at last reached the fringe of forest below the settlement. Here, too, sorely pressed by hunger, and doggedly reckless of consequences, they forgot their caution, and a flight of teal fell to Jim's gun on the very outskirts of the settlement.

It was a fatal shot, whose echoes awoke the forces of civilization against them. For it was heard by a logger in his hut near the marsh, who, looking out, had seen Jim pass. A careless, good-natured frontiersman, he might have kept the outcasts' mere presence to himself; but there was that damning shot! An Indian with a gun! That weapon, contraband of law, with dire fines and penalties to whoso sold or gave it to him! A thing to be looked into—some one to be punished! An Indian with a weapon that made him the equal of the white! Who was safe? He hurried to town to lay his information before the constable, but, meeting Mr. Skinner, imparted the news to him. The latter pooh-poohed the constable, who he alleged had not yet discovered the whereabouts of Jim, and suggested that a few armed citizens should make the chase themselves. The fact was that Mr. Skinner, never quite satisfied in his mind with his son's account of the loss of the gun, had put two and two together, and was by no means inclined to have his own gun possibly identified by the legal authority. Moreover, he went home and at once attacked Master Bob with such vigor and so highly colored a description of the crime he had committed, and the penalties attached to it, that Bob confessed. More than that, I grieve to say that Bob lied. The Indian had "stoled his gun," and threatened his life if he divulged the theft. He told how he was ruthlessly put ashore, and compelled to take a trail only known to them to reach his home. In two hours it was reported throughout the settlement that the infamous Jim had added robbery with violence to his illegal possession of

the weapon. The secret of the island and the trail over the marsh was told only to a few.

Meantime it had fared hard with the fugitives. Their nearness to the settlement prevented them from lighting a fire, which might have revealed their hiding-place, and they crept together, shivering all night in a clump of hazel. Scared thence by passing but unsuspecting wayfarers wandering off the trail, they lay part of the next day and night amid some tussocks of salt grass, blown on by the cold sea-breeze; chilled, but securely hidden from sight. Indeed, thanks to some mysterious power they had of utter immobility, it was wonderful how they could efface themselves, through quiet and the simplest environment. The lee side of a straggling vine in the meadow, or even the thin ridge of cast-up drift on the shore, behind which they would lie for hours motionless, was a sufficient barrier against prying eyes. In this occupation they no longer talked together, but followed each other with the blind instinct of animals—yet always unerringly, as if conscious of each other's plans. Strangely enough, it was the *real* animal alone—their nameless dog—who now betrayed impatience and a certain human infirmity of temper. The concealment they were resigned to, the sufferings they mutely accepted, he alone resented! When certain scents or sounds, imperceptible to their senses, were blown across their path, he would, with bristling back, snarl himself into guttural and strangulated fury. Yet, in their apathy, even this would have passed them unnoticed, but that on the second night he disappeared suddenly, returning after two hours' absence with bloody jaws—replete, but still slinking and snappish. It was only in the morning that, creeping on their hands and knees through the stubble, they came upon the torn and mangled carcass of a sheep. The two men looked at each other without speaking—they knew what this act of rapine meant to themselves. It meant a fresh hue and cry after them—it meant that their starving companion

had helped to draw the net closer round them. The Indian grunted, Li Tee smiled vacantly; but with their knives and fingers they finished what the dog had begun, and became equally culpable. But that they were heathens, they could not have achieved a delicate ethical responsibility in a more Christian-like way.

Yet the rice-fed Li Tee suffered most in their privations. His habitual apathy increased with a certain physical lethargy which Jim could not understand. When they were apart he sometimes found Li Tee stretched on his back with an odd stare in his eyes, and once, at a distance, he thought he saw a vague thin vapor drift from where the Chinese boy was lying and vanish as he approached. When he tried to arouse him there was a weak drawl in his voice and a drug-like odor in his breath. Jim dragged him to a more substantial shelter, a thicket of alder. It was dangerously near the frequented road, but a vague idea had sprung up in Jim's now troubled mind that, equal vagabonds though they were, Li Tee had more claims upon civilization, through those of his own race who were permitted to live among the white men, and were not hunted to "reservations" and confined there like Jim's people. If Li Tee was "heap sick," other Chinamen might find and nurse him. As for Li Tee, he had lately said, in a more lucid interval: "Me go dead— allee samee Mellikan boy. You go dead too—allee samee," and then lay down again with a glassy stare in his eyes. Far from being frightened at this, Jim attributed his condition to some enchantment that Li Tee had evoked from one of his gods—just as he himself had seen "medicine-men" of his own tribe fall into strange trances, and was glad that the boy no longer suffered. The day advanced, and Li Tee still slept. Jim could hear the church bells ringing; he knew it was Sunday—the day on which he was hustled from the main street by the constable; the day on which the shops were closed, and the drinking saloons open only at the back door.

The day whereon no man worked—and for that reason, though he knew it not, the day selected by the ingenious Mr. Skinner and a few friends as especially fitting and convenient for a chase of the fugitives. The bell brought no suggestion of this—though the dog snapped under his breath and stiffened his spine. And then he heard another sound, far off and vague, yet one that brought a flash into his murky eye, that lit up the heaviness of his Hebraic face, and even showed a slight color in his high cheek-bones. He lay down on the ground, and listened with suspended breath. He heard it now distinctly. It was the Boston boy calling, and the word he was calling was “Jim.”

Then the fire dropped out of his eyes as he turned with his usual stolidity to where Li Tee was lying. Him he shook, saying briefly: “Boston boy come back!” But there was no reply, the dead body rolled over inertly under his hand; the head fell back, and the jaw dropped under the pinched yellow face. The Indian gazed at him slowly, and then gravely turned again in the direction of the voice. Yet his dull mind was perplexed, for, blended with that voice were other sounds like the tread of clumsily stealthy feet. But again the voice called “Jim!” and raising his hands to his lips he gave a low whoop in reply. This was followed by silence, when suddenly he heard the voice—the boy’s voice—once again, this time very near him, saying eagerly:

“There he is!”

Then the Indian knew all. His face, however, did not change as he took up his gun, and a man stepped out of the thicket into the trail:

“Drop that gun, you d——d Injin.”

The Indian did not move.

“Drop it, I say!”

The Indian remained erect and motionless.

A rifle shot broke from the thicket. At first it seemed to have missed the Indian, and the man who had spoken cocked his own rifle. But the next moment the tall figure of Jim collapsed where he stood into a mere blanketed heap.

The man who had fired the shot walked towards the heap with the easy air of a conqueror. But suddenly there arose before him an awful phantom, the incarnation of savagery—a creature of blazing eyeballs, flashing tusks, and hot carnivorous breath. He had barely time to cry out “A wolf!” before its jaws met in his throat, and they rolled together on the ground.

But it was no wolf—as a second shot proved—only Jim’s slinking dog; the only one of the outcasts who at that supreme moment had gone back to his original nature.