

## CHAPTER IV.

THE faint tinkle of the bell which had brought Jack and Macdonald to their feet on that glorious morning in the valley, sounded clearer and clearer as the pack-train moved down the winding trail. Now and again the packers could be heard vociferating at the more timid animals where the path became narrow and dangerous. Louder and louder grew the clamor of the approaching party. The tinkle of the bell changed to a most unmusical clangor. The hoof-beats of the laden horses came with a muffled deadness. A merry laugh rang through the air, and rippled overhead in circling wave-sounds. Snatches of popular airs from a comic opera proclaimed a tenor fresh from civilized haunts. The bloodhounds, who had vacated the tent when Jack brought forth his field-glasses, stood beside their master, growling ominously, notwithstanding repeated commands for silence. Jack's saddle pony and pack mule left the rich pasture near the marsh and came up to the tent on a galop. The pony neighed again and again, betraying a curious mixture of fear and delight upon receiving a chorus of replies. Then, as though aware that an appreciative audience awaited his entry, a horseman dashed from the shrubbery to the open, flung himself from his horse, loosened the two broad cinches, and was just in time to catch the bell-mare by her forelock, and lead her to where Macdonald had