

already done battle for her ; and she had waited upon me as a lady upon a knight who lies wounded in an enchanted tower. What was I summoned for ? What was to happen ? The very vagueness was of itself a romance ; as a good knight, all I had to do as yet was to live for the day, and to have faith in my good fortune.

I had not yet met so much as a single dragon. But none the less my spirits rose almost hour by hour ; more indeed than was quite becoming in one whose lady might, for aught I could tell, be pining in chains in the depth of some giant's dungeon. Whatever end my journey was to have, I should be sorry when it came ; for the present hour was very good indeed. Yes—Life was, indeed, the best thing worth having of all things in the world ; Life for its own sake—Life, just for the sake of living.

It was on the sixth day of our journey that we felt ourselves reaching the heart of the mountains, indeed. Our last halting-place had been our strangest ; a village of gold-washers ; that is to say, of a race who have formed a sort of hereditary caste from time immemorial, and spend their lives in searching the soil and refuse carried down by the mountain streams for particles of gold. They were a swarthier people than even the sun-blackened peasants, and spoke a language among themselves exceedingly like what Phil Dwyer had taken for the jargon of horse-thieves ; and I must own that we were both a little relieved when we found our own steeds the next morning safe and sound. For the rest, we had been entertained as