

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

## HOW I SECURED A BONANZA.

## CHAPTER III.—Continued:

Brown started a game of forty-fives, over which he and the miners were soon wrangling, while the young women with Ralph, Dave, Popay and I adjourned to the sitting room to indulge in a most exciting game of "who?" Dave who was quite a gallant in his way constituted himself master of ceremonies, and soon had us paired off around the table, taking care to place the Porcupine on his left. It was my first introduction to the game and as it may be a local one, I will briefly describe it.

The dealer asked a question and dealt himself a card face upwards on the table. He then in the same manner, dealt the cards around the board until his card was matched. The person matching being considered to have answered the question in the affirmative. He or she then asked a question, and in this simple manner the game went on. Hearts, not cash are the stakes played for, and the game often proves a convenient vehicle for the timid swain to test the feelings of his fair innamorata. Ralph was seated next the younger daughter of our host, and was guilty of most eccentric dealing, in order to have his decidedly spoony questions answered by her. With David and the Porcupine, it was the old story, and my fair partner's whispered information that they were engaged was decidedly superfluous. The questions were often most comically answered and the mirth grew uproarious. Occasionally, a brawny fist would come down on the table in the other room with a thump, that set the dishes rattling, and proclaimed that the "live finger" had done its deadly work. As I wished to make some purchases at a little shop down the road, I excused myself, with some difficulty, and left them to their innocent enjoyment.

## CHAPTER IV.

## I CATCH THE GOLD FEVER.

Slipping out into the cold night air, I found that a heavy mist was falling and that the darkness was intense. I was bound for Mag DeYoung's, who lived close by. She was proprietress of a small shop, and in addition to her lawful business, managed to turn an honest (1) penny by selling liquor in defiance of the law. She was a widow, long past the prime of life, and a typical Chezzetcooker. Tall and thin, with sparkling black eyes, and sallow complexion, she was the reverse of good looking, but her vivacity and loquacity were tremendous and made her a general favorite. As I opened the door and stepped into her kitchen there was a momentary commotion, followed by dead silence. The room was dense with tobacco smoke and the fumes of strong liquor were almost stifling. Several miners were in the room, while Mag stood near the dresser looking painfully frightened. The moment she recognized me she sprang joyfully forward.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Spendall, I was afraid you were some of the temperancers spying round to inform on me. It's very hard when a poor woman has to have spies set on her," and she wrung my hand with her hard long fingers until my eyes watered with the pain.

"It's all right, boys," she said, turning to the miners, and well filled tumblers were at once drawn from their hiding places, while I was pressed to "take snuthin'," an invitation I had sense enough to decline with thanks.

Mag had once been summoned for selling liquor without a license, and had retained me to defend her. I was so far successful that she was fined, and had, in addition, to pay my fee, but by a judicious abuse of the magistrate and the informer, I soothed her feelings and we remained the best of friends. Taking a seat, I entered into a long conversation with the miners. They were working on the Anderson property (since most profitably developed), and gave me glowing accounts of the richness of the leads they had discovered. I had always looked on gold mining with great distrust, but as I listened, my distrust vanished, and before long I was intensely interested and filled with desires to venture something in the search for gold. The miners evidently considered that they had struck a rich lead in me, and were working it for all it was worth. They were doing the talking and drinking while I was footing the bill; and, I have no doubt, that if I could have fulfilled my share of the contract they would still have been talking and drinking in Mag's snug room. As it was late, I stepped into the adjoining shop and beckoned Mag to follow.

Chezzetcookers are celebrated knitters of socks, guernseys and other woolen goods, and Mag had a large stock, from which I wished to select my winter's supply. "Business was business" with her, and by the time I had made my purchases and settled for them, her extra profits, I shrewdly suspected, had more than balanced my fee. As I turned to go she called me back and drew from her capacious pockets a large piece of quartz and handed it to me. It was studded with gold, some pieces being of the diameter of my thumb, and was the finest specimen I had then seen. As I looked at it, a strange thrill shot through me. Here was gold, the gold I had so long toiled in vain for, and to be had for the digging! If I could only secure the property that it came from my fortune was assured. Mag's eyes glittered most unnaturally and she was full of suppressed excitement.

"Where did you get it?" I eagerly inquired.

"From Jako Rehm's boy. He drop't in this evening for a drink and said that his father had found the lead and was going into Halifax in the morning to take it up. I coaxed him to lend me the sample, and after first making me promise not to tell his father, he consented."

"Where does Jako live?" I asked, mentally determined to hunt him up at once, and if possible purchase an interest in his property.

"Three miles from here, down near the beach."

(To be continued.)

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