
THE HOMESTEADERS

This he unfolded very slowly and deliberately before the eyes of the onlookers. It contained a small quantity of white powder. Before any hand could reach him he had thrown his head back and swallowed it.

"Too late!" he cried, as Grey snatched the empty paper from his fingers. "Too late! Well, I guess I beat you all out, eh? And, as I said before, what are you going to do about it? Twenty years, eh, Jim? You'll be scrawny and rheumatic by that time, and the beautiful Beulah will be fat and figureless. Twenty years for you, Jim, but twenty minutes for me—and I wouldn't trade with you, damn you! I beg the pardon of the ladies present. One should never forget to be a gentleman, even when—when——"

But Gardiner's breath was beginning to come fast, and he raised his hands to his throat. A choking spell seized him, and he would have fallen had not the policeman and the coroner held him on his feet. "Let me lie down," he said, when he got his breath. "Let me lie down, can't you? Have I got to die on end, like a murderer?"

They led him to the adjoining room, where he fell upon the bed. The muscles of his great arms and neck were working in contortions, and his tongue seemed to fill his mouth.

"Most extraordinary," said the coroner. "Strychnine, doubtless. We can't do much