

THE SOWING OF ALDERSON CREE

now met again by that furious onslaught, he fought with the ferocity and anguish of fright of a cornered wild beast; thrashing himself back and forth in the other's grasp, twisting, turning, and biting, a mad, blind, terrified animal — fighting neither with sudden anger, nor smouldering hate, but just with the black passion of terror, and the poignant love of his own life.

Thus the conflict prolonged itself; David, held by his promise, not putting forth all his power, merely trying to disarm the other, and Ryerson with all his frantic strength fighting to turn his pistol and shoot. Up and down and across the road they fought. The little pebbles slipping from under their feet and flying with tiny splashes into the undergrowth; their breath wrung out of them in hoarse grunts as their bodies jerked back and forth; their feet making long struggling scrapes in the wet treacherous road-bed, and the grip of their hands slippery with perspiration. In his controlled strength David was slow, and time and again, the other, never still for the flash of a second, twisting, wrenching, springing this side and that, writhed out of his grip, and turned like a wriggling steel snake, and then only David's quick spring averted the shot. And always crazy fear looked from Ryerson's eyes.

As David sprang from her side Mary had screamed piercingly and tried to run in upon the two men, but Hedrick interposed, holding her off firmly. "No! No!" he cried, "you an' me can't do nothin' now, 'cept wait for ther end — an' keep out er ther way," he