

CHAPTER XXVI

DAYLIGHT had made no assertion of total abstinence though he had not taken a drink for months after the day he resolved to let his business go to smash. Soon he proved himself strong enough to dare to take a drink without taking a second. On the other hand, with him coming to live in the country, had passed all desire and need for drink. He felt no yearning for it, and even forgot that it existed. Yet he refused to be afraid of it, and in town, on occasion, when invited by the storekeeper would reply : " All right, son. If my taking a drink will make you happy, here goes. Whisky for mine."

But such a drink begat no desire for a second. It made no impression. He was too profoundly strong to be affected by a thimbleful. As he had prophesied to Dede, Burning Daylight, the city financier, had died a quick death on the ranch, and his younger brother, the Daylight from Alaska, had taken his place. The threatened inundation of fat had subsided, and all his old-time Indian leanness and latheness of muscle had returned. So, likewise, did the old slight hollows in his cheeks come back. For him they indicated the pink of physical condition. He became the acknowledged strongest man of Sonoma Valley, the heaviest lifter and hardest winded among a husky race of farmer folk. And once a year he celebrated his birthday in the old-fashioned frontier way, challenging all the valley to come up the hill to the ranch and be put on its back. And a fair portion of the valley responded, brought the women-folk and children along, and picnicked for the day.

At first, when in need of ready cash, he had followed Ferguson's example of working at day's labour ; but he