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"To be sure you could! Remember you are my ward now, and I must be true to my trust. I can't hear of you going to the city—at least not yet. Why, we're hardly acquainted!"

"Well, I feel as if I'd known you all my life!" she said quickly. "Your father and I were good friends in the old days," I said, "and I shouldn't be surprised but that you and I would be just as good friends. You're very much like him."

"Oh—we are friends already! Dad married just after you and he parted. My mother was an American girl. She died when I was born. So you see I've been lonely nearly all my life. But I know a good friend when I see one!"

I smiled at her naive simplicity and charming candor. To tell the truth her words sent a glow to my heart.

"And by the way," she continued, "dad left you half of the shares of the Devil's Rim, I have the other half. But the old thing is worth absolutely nothing."

"What! Did your father continue to work the old Devil's Rim? Why everyone gave it up twenty years ago!"

"I know. But dad was an everlasting optimist, poor dear! He scraped all he had together and bought the mine himself."

it, I felt glad! Yes I was glad that he could never marry her. After some weeks though I became angry at the idea of him trifling with her affections.

"Have you told her what you told me?" I demanded of him one day late in October.

"No—why should I?" he retorted.

I turned on him and gave him a fatherly talking to, and we had our first real quarrel. I could see that he was troubled though and I softened a bit toward him.

"You're crazy about her yourself!" he flung at me, "but I say, you don't need to imagine she'll look at you. You're an old fossil you know—"

"I was her father's friend," I interrupted with some heat. "And I have promised to care for her till she is twenty-one. Her interests come first with me, and I can't have you playing with her, Billy, much as I like you."

It was the very next day that a letter arrived for Billy. It was from England and bore a crest on the flap. Nell handed it to him with a smile and a saucy little twinkle in her eye.

"From your other girl," she said.

He flushed and turned away with some commonplace remark, and I watched him open the missive. Love is certainly blind. I ought to have



Some pretty French girls paid particular attention to the Russian troops at the Mirabeau Camp. The soldiers were treated with fruits and sweets, and the troops were not a bit backward, although they could not talk French.

"And did he get any gold?"

"Just enough to provoke him. He lacked the capital to drill deep enough and far enough on all sides. Oh, he had unlimited faith in the thing."

"I should think so! Well, here we are miss—I mean Nell—and there's my rascally young partner standing in the store door with his eyes popping out of his head. Come here Billy and meet Miss Harvey!"

I thought that I knew exactly what was going to happen. Billy was going to fall headlong in love with Miss Blue-Eyes. Later events proved my conjectures entirely correct. In fact Nell won everybody's heart. 'Twas a way she had. Billy forgot all about the war in which our Empire was engaged. After a very short while it seemed perfectly natural to have Dave's daughter around. She seemed like a part of the place and I for one, began to wonder how we ever had managed without her. For cleverness she could run rings around poor Billy. The books were kept in apple pie order and she gave both of us pointers on how to conduct the post office matters.

I used to watch her and Billy as, in the warm autumn evenings they would stroll away up the mountain path by the flaming sumachs. They seemed made for one another and yet at the thought I experienced an odd pang. I did not try to analyze my feelings on the subject, but put them roughly aside. Then I remembered poor old Billy's predicament and, though I hate to have to admit

been able to discern from this little passage of words that the girl did not care for Billy more than as a friend.

The lad's face was a study as he read the letter. His expression seemed a compound of surprise, pleasure and something else that was like regret almost. Bye-and-bye he came out to where I was working over a new case of goods.

"She's dead," he said to me in an odd voice.

"Who's dead — your mother?" I cried, lifting my head from the depths of a packing box.

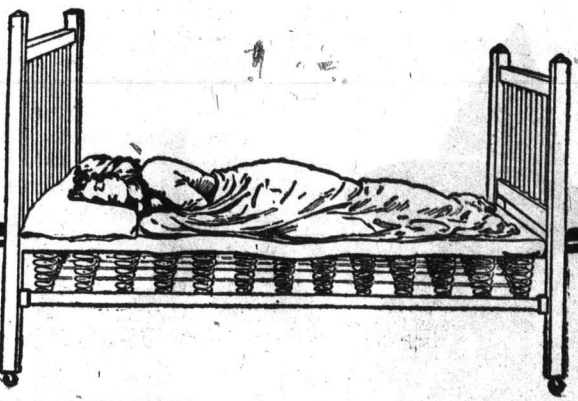
"No, no, sh! My—my wife," he said, coming closer. She was instantly killed in a motor accident two weeks ago. The letter is from my mother. She wants me to go home."

"Great Jehoshaphat!" I exclaimed, "is your wife dead, Billy? You chump! Why, of course you will have to go home! Although you didn't agree very well still she was your wife you know. When do you think of going?"

"Oh, say, old chap, what's the hurry?" he demanded. "I don't know as I'll go at all, that is unless I can persuade—a certain little person to go along, too."

An icy hand seemed to clutch at my heart, as he spoke. "Is it a sin I wonder," Billy went on, "to feel glad? Really a great weight has suddenly rolled off my heart!"

That evening he and Nell went walking as usual. It was now frosty out-of-doors and the tingling air



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