

"I heard it before," she whispered, scarcely breathing, "like rushing water. I thought it was a fall."

"There is none—" he began, only to stop, like one distracted, and hurry outside. Jane followed, and found him standing near the corner of the house, his arms uplifted as if to ward a blow, his face white, his wild hair tossing in the wind.

"Look! the old well!" said he, catching her hand and setting off down the hill.

A little way from it they stopped, where the heavy drops from the breaking column of oil that gushed from the casing splattered the leaves at their feet. Bigger than anything of its kind that Ared Heiskell ever had seen, greater in its fulfilment than the most extravagant desire of his old dreams, was the volume of oil which the abandoned well spouted. Now it rose half the height of the derrick, with a roar like a wind in a forest; now it sank almost to the lip of the well, throbbing like an artery leading from the great, deep heart of the fountain ahead.

All around it the ground was deep in oil, which had been thrown out so fast that it had not yet found its level and settled down in pools, and tossed and flung in the playing jet which rose and fell, was the end of the great rope upon which the string of drilling tools had hung.

In the first amazed shock they had not grasped the great thing in detail. Now Jane clutched his arm and leaned, pointing.