

THE LADY OF THE CROSSING

sitting in that bucket like a toad and going over Dead Man Gulch, where more than one has lost his head and plunked down, and hit the Noo Jerusalem summary, I tell you, I said to myself: 'Marsden, you're a fool!' That was one side. And I also said: 'She had no right to put it up to you to do it.' " He paused. "Say," he spoke diffidently, "I can't help being curious why you did it. I want to treat you according to Hoyle, Mr. Haig, for I got to respect you. Would it be according to Hoyle to ask why you did it, anyhow? All I know is that you were there yesterday when she talked about it. You must have heard."

"I did hear," said Sam.

"Oh, you did! Well, that's something. Look here, then, tell me this: Do you think it is just the state she put me into that's responsible for the way I took her remark? Do you think it was just my fancy that she meant it as a challenge? I get fogged. If I asked her now I guess she'd be liable to say she never meant it. But I'm asking you. You heard—you were there, whatever you've done it for. That she flung that out as a whet to you and me was my notion of it. You say you didn't do it for her. But you heard her. Do you think it was meant as a challenge to me, then?"

"It was intended so," replied Sam. "You're not wrong there. It was. And I thought then that she had no right to say it."

"That's what I think now! But say—can't you tell me why in thunder you came up?"

"I came up," said Sam slowly, "to let her see