

had stood a dwelling and its outbuildings, now all was buried under countless tons of debris, and the mountain side looked as though it had been stricken by some mighty giant hand. Looking over the waste the mountaineer was surprised to see a human being coming toward him, and a moment later, as the emaciated figure drew near, he was horrified to find it was his son. But how changed he was! The light of reason had fled,

And he would complete his harangue with a diabolical laugh, only to commence another strain of similar import. The fetters that had seemed to bind the mountaineer were now suddenly released; tons seemed to roll from him. Once more that tranquil peace came over him, and the torments of hell were passed, and he realized that what he had just looked upon was only a vision. As he lifted his eyes there was still the shadowy form of

les of years dropped away from him, and he arose a free man, freed from all hatred and malice, willing to do the bidding of that frail, shadowy form that had remained with him but a moment of time, yet had wrought such a change. As the mountaineer arose to depart on his strange mission, the apparition vanished and he was once more alone. Without hesitating, he went out into the night and storm. It was with no

stand. He was not a little puzzled as to how he should address those who had been his enemies, and what excuse he should offer for calling upon them at such a time. As he entered the gate and passed the kitchen window, he could not help noticing the cozy interior and those within, who were so sharply silhouetted against the bright light from the great fireplace, and he was much relieved, though profoundly surprised, to see his son one of the party. He could hardly believe that Alfred was on speaking terms with the Browns, but after looking a moment he was convinced. Stepping to the door, he knocked loudly and awaited the answer in some trepidation.

The door was opened by Alfred, who, on seeing his father, was so surprised and crestfallen that he could only stammer: "Father, I'm coming—I'm coming. I—I called in here to get—I called in here to get—to get—"

"Waal, did yer git it?" interrupted his father. At this juncture the fair hostess came to Alfred's rescue and began to offer an explanation which was interrupted by the father: "Don't tell me nothin' about it; I know it all, an' confound it, Alfred, my boy, I don't blame you a mite. By the great horn spoon, if I wuz in your place, I'd done the same thing, for I must say Miss Brown is the likeliest lookin' gal I ever see, except your mother!"

At this rather crude, but well-meant compliment, Miss Brown blushed and tried to hide her confusion by inviting the mountaineer into the kitchen, an invitation he was in no wise loath to accept. When by their cheerful fire-side, surrounded by the hospitable company, the effect was like old wine, and to the rough mountaineer it was as an oasis in the desert, for his life thus far had been beset with trouble, and seldom had such an opportunity presented itself. For a time he gave himself up to enjoyment, listening to the gay laughter of Agnes, and the friendly talk of the mother.

The evening passed very quickly to all, and it was Alfred who suggested that they had better start for home at once if they expected to arrive there before the dawning Christmas Day. They took leave of their kind hostess somewhat reluctantly, but not without many promises to come again; in fact, they agreed to come the very next day and help to eat the turkey that was already being prepared. They made their way home with considerable difficulty, though the storm had somewhat abated.

The next morning the mountaineer awoke with a start to find the sun had already overtopped the eastern mountains and was shedding its welcome rays into the uttermost parts of the valley. Quickly donning his clothes, he repaired to the barn with his milk pail, to find that Alfred had preceded him and had the milking almost completed. Chancing to glance over the valley, the mountaineer staggered as though smitten, for the recollection of that vision of the avalanche came to him as might the lightning from a cloudless sky; and for the first time the full sense of his obligation burst upon him. There was everything just as he had seen it in the vision, and he trembled, for he momentarily expected to hear the roar that would denote the utter annihilation of his new-found friends, the Browns.

Calling to Alfred, in tones of distress and entreaty, he bade him come to his assistance. Quickly strapping on his snowshoes, he started directly for the Brown cabin.

Alfred, who was much alarmed and puzzled at his father's action, lost no time in following, and together they sped as fast as possible over the deep, yielding snow, the father acquainting his son with the catastrophe he dreaded. Every moment seemed an age to the struggling men. Would they reach the scene in time to save two souls from eternity, or would they be only in time to behold their destruction?

By the regular route to the Brown homestead they would have to make a



THE ASCENSION.

and in those staring eyes one could see the unrelenting which holds possession of the maniac. His actions, too, filled the soul of the mountaineer with dread, as he repeatedly pointed to the place where the Brown cabin had stood, and then to himself: "You killed them! You killed them for your inhuman selfishness! They would have been alive, alive I say! Alive, ha! ha! My jewel, my Agnes—alive!"

his departed wife, her face lit up with an encouraging smile. Pointing in the direction of the Brown dwelling, she said: "Go!" And though years had rolled away, and sickness, sorrow, pain and death had come and gone without his once going to his hated neighbor for help or consolation, that one command, which he was conscious had not been spoken but conveyed in a far nobler and greater plane of thought, was enough. The barriers and shack-

les of years dropped away from him, and he made his way over the narrow bridle path, now totally obliterated by the snow which had been falling steadily since early in the day. As he neared the Brown home he felt strangely swayed between the old-time hatred and the new resolve to do as he had been bidden and as he believed to be right, when his better nature asserted itself, though what he was going for at this particular time he himself did not under-