

Portway raised his rifle, lowered it, shook his head, and glanced round, before standing the piece against the side of the precipice, as he saw that below them the gulch went down sheer at least five hundred feet.

Then, bending over his victim, he tore open his breast, gazed for a few moments at the blue stain, which stood out plainly on the white skin, and then rapidly emptied the pockets of his trousers. As he did so his eyes fell again on the glittering plain gold ring upon Harrington's finger. This he hurriedly transferred to his own, seeing as he did so that a name was roughly scratched within, and then, setting his teeth, he gave a glance round, a needless precaution in that solitary place, caught the poor fellow by arm and waistband, raised him, and in another moment would have thrust him over into the gulf, when a smile full of cunning crossed his face.

Dropping the body he drew his bowie-knife, he muttered the one word "Indian," and taking the crisp curling hair with his left hand, he prepared to give the last refined piece of diabolism to his deed by contriving that if the body were found the first wandering tribe in the neighborhood should get the blame.

There was no sign of compunction, no quiver of muscle or nerve; the head was dragged up, and the next moment the point of the keen hunting-knife divided the skin of the scalp, and the bright steel shone red in the soft western glow.

CHAPTER IV.

DAN PORTWAY THINKS AND ACTS.

"It will make assurance doubly sure," Dan Portway thought, and, quick as lightning, he recalled the discovery of a murdered family of settlers he had seen on the plains, where, after death had been dealt with arrow and tomahawk, each poor creature had been scalped.

Dan Portway had exchanged friendly grips of the hand with his victim scores of times, had shared luxuries with him in hours of plenty, and the last scrap in those of famine. More than that, upon one occasion, during their