

all, it had planted in their faces a blended expression of sadness and hope fatigued that was painful to see. It is the brand that is on every old prospector's face. A very few of the men were young fellows of thirty, or even within the twenties. Their youth impelled them to break away from the table earlier than the others, and, seizing their rods, to start off for the fishing in the river.

But those who thought of active pleasure were few indeed. Theirs was killing work, the most severe kind, and performed under the broiling sun, that at high mountain altitudes sends the mercury above 100° on every summer's day, and makes itself felt as if the rarefied atmosphere was no atmosphere at all. After a long day at the drill or the pick or shovel in such a climate, it was only natural that the men should, with a common impulse, seek first the solace of their pipes, and then of the shake-downs in their tents. I did not know until the next morning how severely their systems were strained; but it happened at sunrise on that day that I was at my ablutions on the edge of the river when Dan Dunn's gong turned the silent forest into a bedlam. It was called the seven-o'clock alarum, and was rung two hours earlier than that hour, so that the men might take two hours after dinner out of the heat of the day, "else the sun would kill them," Dunn said. This was apparently his device, and he kept up the transparent deception by having every clock and watch in the camp set two hours out of time.

With the sounding of the gong the men began to appear outside the little tents in which they slept in