of the spare room and looked in. His

wife had drawn a low chair to the

side of the bed, and sat with her head lesting on her arm, apparently asleep.

The patient was as quiet as if death

Mr. Warren dropped again to his

knees and resumed his methodical feeling of the ground. He began

where he had left of when the doctor

interrupted him. With growing ner-vousness he observed that he had

covered in his search more than the

space that included all the useless

trifles that he recognized as having

Then it suddenly occurred to him that if the catch-all had been emptied

with a toss, which would be the natur-

al way for a man to empty it, a heavy

article like a stone would have gone further from the window than light articles like shreds of worsted. In-

deed, the very presence of the shreds two or three feet from the side of the

house, showed that the action had

been a toss and not a mere turning

He immediately extended his line of search, and a moment later, at the

pase of a tall sunflower he found a

pebble. He looked at it with a frown. Could that be what he had taken

from Dutton's vest pocket? It hadn't

as much sparkle as a fragment of

quartz crystal. It was positively ugly,

as uninteresting a stone as he had seen by a roadside. And yet, it seem-

ed different somehow from the stones

Mr. Warren sat in the grass and tried to recall the little he had read about diamonds. The only thing he

could remember that helped him at all

in his perplexity was something about

cutting diamonds, and the phrase

"diamond in the rough" recurred to

him. Perhaps it needed only the work

of the cutter to make this uninviting

The impatient lowing of cattle re-

minded him that it was past time for

beginning the morning chores, and he

went to the barn, taking the pebble with him for further examination and

speculation. Shortly after he had gone Golding

came swinging down the road and

turned in at the gate. As he did so

he caught sight of Warren entering

the barn, and his eyes shone with satisfaction. He, too, went to the

chamber window as Warren had done,

and he, too, saw Mrs. Warren over-

come with fatigue at the bedside of

Golding softly tried the front door.

It was locked. Elsie had taken that

rather unusual precaution the night before, and when Dr. Nason left the

house he had gone out by way of the

kitchen. Golding stepped to the cor-

ner of the house and looked toward

Presumably he was milking, and would be occupied there a half hour

Golding walked quickly and softly

around to the kitchen door and went

in. . From what had occurred during

the previous evening he judged that

one of the doors at the further side

of the kitchen communicated directly

with the spare room, but he chose not

to enter that way. Instead, he went

into the hall and unlocked the front

door, opening it until its creaking

warned him to desist. Then he cau-

tiously entered the sick room.

The attitudes of patient and watcher

not disturbed by his movements. Gold-

ing went directly to the chair upon

which Dutton's clothes had been laid.

He went through the coat pockets

first, taking out all the letters and

papers that Mr. Warren had found

and left unexamined. Golding ran over them hastily, and his face be-trayed a sense of triumph when he

came to an official-looking document

in a heavy envelope. He read it hast-

ily, and thrust it into his pocket with the other papers. Then he thought better of his action, took out Dutton's

papers and replaced them in the poc-

ket of Dutton's coat, first making a

memorandum upon an envelope of his

own from the document that had in-

Next he turned to the patient's trou-

sers, neglecting the vest altogether.

He brought forth a knife and a bunch of keys. The knife he slipped back,

and he thrust the keys into his own

pocket with a jingle, just as Mrs. War-

ren started up and cried:
"What are you doing there, Mr.

(To be Continued Tomorrow.)

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terested him so greatly.

Golding?'

Mrs. Warren was

Warren was not in sight.

The chance was worth

sparkle with all the hues of

round about Granite.

pebble

the rainbow.

the patient.

or more.

were unchanged.

taking.

upside down of the little basket.

been probably in the catch-all.

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"Josef Helmuth's Goetz," "A Pot of Gold," "The Strange Object of Thornton Wetmore," etc.

CHAPTER IX .- A BUNCH OF KEYS. Nicholas Warren had but an imperfect understanding of his own action. His simple, uneventful life since war times had not stimulated self analyis, for his emotions and impulses ran in even, familiar channels. Love for his wife and daughter had ruled his life, and almost his only contention had been with the soil from which he was content to extort such return as assured him and his plenty to eat and enough to wear. Shelter never entered sensibly into his calculation or needs, for to live in Granite as a married man was to own a house.

There had been times when too much or too little rain had depleted the crop, and he had uttered the common cry of discontent and wished that he were rich, but his wish had taken the vague form of a longing for money in the bank, in railroad or Government bonds, in factories, and it had speedily vanished as an unattainable dream, and he had returned to his hard labor with philosophical determination to make the best of it.

Now there had been unexpectedly

thrust upon him what seemed like an opportunity to acquire more wealth than had figured in his dreams-it seemed to be all but under his hand, and avariciousness, that is latent more or less in every human being, was gradually and surely growing within him, suppressing all other impulses, and mastering his being. He had not yet admitted to himself that he wanted to find Dutton's diamonds, or the "President," for his desire was now centered on that single stone for his own use. He wilfully evaded the analysis of his motives when it came to that, or stubbornly told himelf hat if Dutton should recover he would restore the valuable jewel to him. It mattered not how he might act should he find the "President" in his posses-The great point was that he wanted to find it, to see it, to hold it to the light and observe its sparkle, and as he pawed over the grass his eyes ached with the momentary hope and expectation of seeing the diamond

flash upon him. He was working systematically, trying to leave no inch of ground unfelt, feeling with the finger tips back and forth in lines parallel to the window frame, just as he had plowed many furrow after furrow.

"Dr. Nason must have seen it," was his silent moan. "Golding is probably right in saying that no man could resist the temptation it would offer. What if Nason should now have the stone, and realizing that it belongs to Dutton, so administer medicines that Dutton should never awake! Well, if Dutton should never wake-

Warren turned with a great start of fear, and half lay upon the grass, supporting himself with one arm and raising the other as if to ward off im-

pending evil. He saw Dr. Nason standing near the door with his hands in his coat pockets, looking grave and disturbed. Warren returned his gaze with gap-

ing mouth. am greatly troubled, Nick," said the doctor. what's the matter?" re-

turned Warren, slowly rising and wondering whether the doctor suspected what he was down on his knees in the The patient has been muttering in

ing apparently about proceeding fur-What does he say "

"I am afraid it concerns you very seriously, my friend," replied Dr. Nason, with a significant glance toward the chamber window. He had spoken in a low tone, and Warren re-

"If you're afraid Martha'll hear you, come out by the gate." as another. Have yet to make about it?" doctor away from the scene of his

search. They went down the path to the gate, and, placing his hand on Warren's shoulder, Dr. Nason said:
"I am a physician, Nick, and my
first thought and care must be for my

patient. I am also a citizen, and as such I am liable to be called as a witness. It would be nothing short of agony for me to go on the stand and say anything that should be to your injury. If I were to tell the whole truth as the oath prescribes-" He paused and kept his eyes search-

ingly upon Warren. "What could you say that should hurt me, doctor?" asked Warren, with as good an assumption of confidence

as he could command. "This man," responded the doctor, "s suffering not only from shock brought about by the assault to which he was subjected, but from what appears to be a fever of long standing. If he suffered from shock alone, he would by this time have recovered consciousness to a degree. Now, you remember that the stranger, Golding, was anxious to be present and listen to the patient should he begin to

talk in his delirium. Why? Because at the gate until the doctor galloped he believes that Dutton would speak away. Then he stepped to the window of whatever was uppermost on his mind at the time he was struck down. I don't pretend to know what Golding hoped to deduce from such remarks as the patient might make, but it is a fair inference that he would look for something suggestive of the assault, and of the person who committed it.
"Is that what Dutton has been maundering about?" asked Warren,

calmly. "How can I tell? He mentions your name, Nick, and while a sick man's tones may not indicate anything, it is pretty certain that you were in his thoughts, you and your wife."

"He mentions Martha, too?" "But what does he say?" "Nothing coherent. There is nothing

as yet that I can so piece together as to get an understanding of what was is in the man's mind. But what if presently there should be, Nick? I don't think I should like to hear it." "I shouldn't like to have you." Dr. Nason was startled.

"Nick," he began, but Warren interrupted him with the question:
"Did Martha hear these words that

troubled you?" "Certainly; she bent over the bed and listened very closely. I do not think she understood their purport, Ndck.

Warren gave the doctor a glance that seemed to say, "You don't know what you're talking about." "What do you understand their pur-

port to be, doctor?" "Why, if Golding is correct, it would imply that he was thinking of the person who assaulted him." Warren smiled. The doctor could see that the assault did not trouble

him in the least. "I believe you said he mentioned Martha's name, too?" remarked Warren; "now, if Golding is correct, and I should think a doctor ought to know,

that would mean-" "See here, my friend," interposed Dr. Nason earnestly, "it won't do to split hairs with me. I'm not asking you to tell me a secret; I don't seek your confidence. Of course, your wife had nothing to do with the assault, and I have no suspicion that you had; but other people might suspect that, and I think that Golding does. The circumstances are unfortunately damaging. I won't say they justify sus-picion, but they can readily be twisted and interpreted to support it. In the hands of an unprincipled man, such as I fear Golding is, they may be so interpreted as to cause you a great deal of trouble. Don't you understand that I am anxious not to know anything that could be perverted into testimony against you?"

"Yes, I see, and I appreciate your kindness. It is better than you think, for you don't know all the circumstances, and if you did, you'd see that a case against me would appear to be

"Then let me caution you to be very cautious. These rambling words of Dutton's may have no connection with the assault. In his fever he may be reverting to something in the distant If there ever was anything, Nick, between you and Dutton to cause an enmity, don't for heaven's sake let a hint of it escape you. Given a motive for you to commit violence upon him, and Golding might make out a powerful case against you." Dr. Nason paused, hoping, perhaps,

dentially, but Warren was silent. His eyes were downcast, and when he raised them it was not to the doctor's face, but to the grass plot in front of the chamber window.

"I'm going home now," continued the doctor. "The patient will not need me again for some hours, and as Mrs. Varren insists on remaining with him there is no reason why I should

"Won't you wait for breakfast, doctor? "Thank you, no. I shall get home

in time for breakfast." He started toward the stable, but turned back when Warren called to

"Doctor," he asked, hesitatingly, "weren't there any other words in Dutton's talk besides our names?" "Yes, but none to which I could at-

tach any meaning." "I might, if I knew them, doctor." Warren longed to ask whether Dut ton had mentioned diamonds, but he dared not.

said the doctor, with a smile, "I don't myself take much account of a delirious man's raving for whatever he says in such a condition is likely to mean no more than the nonsense we think of so seriously in dreams. Still, if you can make anything out of the fact that Dutton made frequent allusions to the president, you're welcome to your deductions.

"The 'President'!" exclaimed Warren, trying in vain to conceal the indelirium," replied the doctor, hesitat- terest he had in this information. "What did he say about it-him, I mean?

> "He didn't mention the president by name, so whether he referred to Mr. Cleveland or one of his predecessors in the office, I don't know. He might have had some claim in which he tried to interest the president, and perhaps it became a mania with him. One speculation, however, is as good as another. Have you any suggestion

"No," answered Warren, glad that the inquiry was so put that he could answer truthfully, "I have none. You will be up again during the day?"

The doctor nodded and went on to the barn, while Warren remained at the gate feeling a maze of doubts and anxieties. There had been evidently no fiction in Golding's statements about the diamond called the "President." It seemed certain enough that Dr. Nason had not found it, if, indeed, it was in the catch-all. And yet, the doctor was going away. He had not asked why Warren was on his knees before the chamber window. He was a cool, collected man, who could easily mask his emotions. The diamond must be sought for-but not until the doctor had gone. Then there were those other terrible thoughts—when might not Dutton in his delirium expose those secrets which even the dector in his ignorance of the facts judged to be of such importance that he advised Warren to conceal them? What would be Dutton's course if he should recover? Why had he gone to

Sam Springer's cabin on the mountain? Worrying thus, Mr. Warren stood

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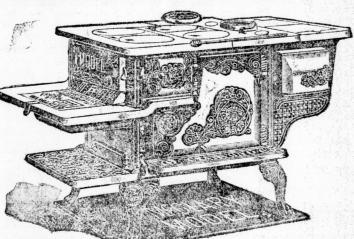
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