

MONTY'S DAUGHTER.

BY J. NORRIS.

IN a canyon of the Rocky Mountains, not far from the dividing line between Montana and Idaho, is a mining camp, at one time known as Merrywell. It is one of the very oldest gold camps in Montana, and has several times undergone a change of name; therefore, I am not certain that it is still known as Merrywell.

Many fortunes have been won and lost there, and many lives sacrificed to the only god worshipped in Merrywell—gold.

In this camp, not a great many years ago, there dwelt an old man and his daughter. So long had the old man been associated with Merrywell, and so often had he been heard to declare that he was never beyond the boundaries of Montana, that wherever he was known at all, he was known as Old Montana, or Old Monty, for short. He had married in early life, and had lived happily for years, loving his wife and daughter as he had loved gold. But death visited the mining camp, and Old Monty's partner left for a State where gold is so common that the streets are paved with it, and pearls and diamonds are so plentiful that the poorest wear them.

Monty's daughter grew to beautiful womanhood. She was now seventeen, and Monty loved her as he had never loved anyone before. With little companionship but that of Nature, and with no world but the world of Merrywell, she grew and developed under the influence of her mountain environments. She was tall, graceful, beautiful, fair as a lily, supple as a fawn, and her step so light as not to crush a mountain daisy. The miners adored her. I said they worshipped no god but gold in Merrywell. I must now withdraw the statement. They did. They worshipped Lizzie, Old Monty's daughter. There was not a man in the camp who would not empty his six-shooter in her defence, or throw down his life at her feet.

Lizzie was seventeen when Merwin Gray came to the gold camp. Gray had the manners of a gentleman, but the heart of a fiend. To Lizzie, his polished manners and fine speech were a revelation. Accustomed as she was to the rude speech of the rough miners, this new form of language, with its subtle sweetness, was wholly irresistible. Merwin Gray's conversation intoxicated her, and when he told her of the manners and customs of the big outside world, she felt like a caged bird. The monotony of her old home became more irksome, and it was rapidly losing all its attractions for her. In the evening, when the setting sun threw the shadows of the great mountains upon everything in the rude camp, she looked off to where the far-away foothills were bathed in light, and longed, with an unspeakable longing, for the pleasures of that mysterious outer world. To live with Merwin Gray in that pleasure-land, far away beyond the foothills, where all was beautiful and bright and pleasant; where the ear was never offended by foul oaths, coarse jesting and ribald song, and where fighting and drinking were unknown;—this was her ideal, this was her day-dream; and her day-dream continued until it ended in the nightmare of reality.

One morning Lizzie failed to appear at the usual hour, and Old Monty, fearing that she might be ill, tapped lightly at her bedroom door. There was no response. He pushed the door open and entered. Lizzie was not in the room, and her bed had not been slept in. He walked over to the little dressing-table and found thereon a slip of paper with these words pencilled upon it:

"DEAR FATHER,—You may think, when you read this, that I do not love you, but I love you dearly; only this life is too dull and lonely for me. I am going away with Merwin. We shall be married in the city. Merwin is rich; he came here only for his health, and he