

of sharpness, almost of bitterness and scorn. All the thirty slave-driving big brains into which Allan had been hammering his ideas and arguments were working for all they were worth. This proposal of Allan's was, indeed, no everyday affair. It needed and deserved consideration. It was no question of a couple of million of bushels of wheat or bales of wool, no mere matter of a few thousand shares in a diamond mine. A great deal more was here at stake. For some of them this project of Allan's meant a big pile of gold without much risk, for others a good deal of risk was involved. But they had to reflect upon the question of prestige. For they could not leave Lloyd out of account—Lloyd the all-powerful who stalked through the world, creating and destroying. Lloyd knew what he was about and this fellow Allan was evidently going ahead. During the last few weeks there had been big transactions on Wall Street in Montanas and in industrial securities. Now they knew that Lloyd had been at the back of all this, while putting forward some of his men of straw. It was manifest that this Lloyd, who was sitting quietly in his counting house smoking his cigars, had been unloading for weeks past specially for this occasion. He was always in first, had always pegged out the best claims before the rush came. But in this case it was not too late to get nearly even with him. They had only to get their cables off to all parts of the world that evening after the conference. To-morrow morning they might all be too late.

Yes, they had to think of prestige.

Some of them sought to solve the problem for themselves by subjecting Allan's personality to a microscopic analysis. While they had been listening to his address and noting all he had to say about the construction of the Tunnel and the technical difficulties involved therein, they had scrutinized him from his patent leather shoes upwards, his snow-white flannel trousers, his belt, his shirt, his collar and his tie, to his massive brow, and the large crown of his head well covered with copper-red hair. The man's face, all wet with perspiration, glistened like bronze, but in spite of his hour's talking it showed no sign of fatigue. On the contrary, it was full of vigour and alertness. His eyes looked out boldly, as hard