

### 320 THE GREATER POWER

ride away," she informed the stranger. "You are going on into the Bush?"

"Yes," answered the man. "Can you tell us the easiest way to reach the cañon?"

Laura was glad that he had asked for the easiest route, for soon after the snow had gone, Nasmyth had broken out a shorter and somewhat perilous trail over the steepest part of the divide. Only the pack-horses now went round by the longer way. She thought hard for a moment or two, and then told the man how to find the old trail.

He rode away with his companion, and Laura's face was thoughtful when she sat down again. She made a hasty breakfast, and went out to the stable. Waynefleet was still busy when she reached it, and she took down the side-saddle before she turned to him.

"I have left your breakfast ready, but you must excuse me," she announced; "I am going to the cañon."

Waynefleet raised his brows and looked at her with his most precise air, but, seeing that had no effect, he made a gesture of resignation.

"Very well," he said. "I presume you do not, as usual, think it worth while to acquaint me with your object."

Laura laughed. "I'm not exactly sure of it myself. I may tell you a little more when I come back."

She led the horse out, and, crossing the clearing, rode hard for a league or so, and then made sure by the prints of their horses' feet that the strangers had followed her instructions before she struck into the shorter trail. It was scarcely wide enough to ride along, and for a while dense thickets of fern and undergrowth closed in on it. Further on, it skirted a quaggy swamp, and led through several rapid creeks, while here and there great fallen trees compelled her to turn aside, and there were groves of willows to be painfully struggled through. The cayuse she rode was, however, more or less accustomed to