

THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY

on. She's telegraphing already." He showed her the yellow message and slipped it back into his pocket. "And there was a deputy sheriff inquiring for me," he added bitterly.

"Oh, dear!" pouted Dixie, yanking at the reluctant pack-horse. "I just knew she'd do it. Mother means well, but she's a New Yorker, and—well, I hope she's satisfied!"

"Yes, I hope so too," added Bowles. "I never did have anything to be ashamed of, but—do you know who I am?"

"No, I don't," answered Dixie May. "And I don't care, either," she added, glancing across at him with clear-seeing eyes. "I always knew you were a gentleman, and—say, what's the matter with that pack?"

She dismounted quickly as she spoke, and Bowles dropped off to help. Then, after the ropes had been tightened, they stood silent within the circle of their horses.

"Mr. Bowles," began Dixie, leaning one arm on the pack and looking thoughtfully away, "being the man you are, you—you wouldn't compel a lady to apologize to you, would you?"

"Why no, no—certainly not!" gasped Bowles, alarmed by a mistiness in her eyes.

"Because if that's what you're going away for——"

"Oh, my dear Miss Lee!" protested Bowles,