

the hat into the shadow of a thicket without detection.

All this time there was silence between them. When the girl swerved from the desired direction the man would lay a big hand on her shoulder and twist her right without comment. Once she turned her head to find him still grinning in vapid satisfaction. A tremor ran through her slim frame. After that she stubbornly kept her face to the front.

As they toiled up a second and more precipitous slope the twilight thickened and dimmed the horizon beyond a few hundred yards; the infinite sadness of the whip-poor-wills knocked painfully on the girl's heart, wrestling with her stoicism; an owl hooted dismally from the solitudes, and close ahead a hidden spring tinkled in minute minor tongues.

Then the man's voice jangled through the sweet dusk: "Here we be, Miss. Step right erlong in now and make yerself comfortable."

A huge dark bulk solidified in the gloom before her, a black patch at its base. This was the abode of the recluse: a cave in a cliff, concealed by a tangle of raspberry canes and gigantic thistles.

For an instant the girl hesitated. It seemed as if she was about to pass through the door of her tomb. Courage for the impending struggle would be easier in the open under the soft drift of starlight than cooped up in the bowels of the mountain. But remonstrating or any sign of apprehension would only hasten the crisis she wished to delay to the last possible moment. With an inward sob of prayer she stooped her head and entered.

The air within the cave was pungent and thick with wood-smoke. A tiny nest of coals glowed at her feet. She paused, fearing to strike her head against sloping walls, while the man dropped some sticks on the ashes and blew them into flame. The light flared luridly, disclosing a high-ceiled, rock room nearly fifteen feet in diameter, dry as bone and bare, except for a flattened heap of skins and leaves at the far end. In one corner leaned a rusty musket. Close to the fire lay the hind-quarter of a deer, a balsam-stained sheath-knife beside it. Her eyes took in these few details at a glance, then rested on her captor. It was as if she had been allowed

to gaze back a million years to the life of the prehistoric cave-dweller. Huge, naked and hairy, he squatted on his hams and toyed with the mysterious element he had called into existence; while in the haunted night without terrific monsters slunk back and forth, sniffing for human prey.

The man felt her gaze, rose noiselessly and advanced around the fire, his face suffused with smiles. The girl's limbs stiffened into readiness. She noticed his eyes were focused above her own in a sort of child-like rapture. Coming within reach, he cautiously raised a hand and brushed it back and forth across her hair. Her combs aroused his curiosity and he plucked them out slowly, one at a time, and dropped them on the earth, until her thick tresses fell to her waist and gleamed in the fire-light like burnished copper. This phenomenon pleased him exceedingly. He began to chuckle as he let the loose coils twine around his fingers.

In spite of her abhorrence Faith forced herself to endure his touch without flinching. She even parted her lips in an appreciative smile.

"Do you like it, George?" she questioned, when the silence became unbearable.

"Gosh, he do like it! It be that fine an' soft like, Missie. Sort o' like sunshine, ain't it, now?"

The girl sought to divert his mind to other channels by claiming a hunger she was far from feeling, but his fascination was too strong.

"It be mighty pretty hair, Missie," he continued, ruffling it again. "George could most roll in it, so'soft it be an' smooth an' silky."

"Oh, you must not pull so hard—it hurts me." It was a vain appeal to his sympathy.

"No, no, George wouldn't hurt a fly. He be a good man. Ain't it mighty pretty, eh?—jest like silk."

His eyes, glowing with baleful enthusiasm, filled her with self-disgust. Her beauty had become a curse to her, hindering escape. Although his foolish words disclosed the full depths of his brain she believed it was only a matter of time before he tired of his caresses, and thrust on by a gradually awakening passion, became more brutal in his attitude. If she could but disengage his mind for one brief moment she