

an hour or two ago. I don't propose to do anything further in the cañon; in fact, I have accomplished the purpose I had in hand."

As his meaning dawned on them, the men gazed at each other in evident consternation, until one of them turned to Laura.

"Well," he commented, "in that case I guess it's quite a pity we didn't, but I begin to understand the thing. This is the young lady who told us the trail. She must have taken a shorter way."

Laura smiled at him. "You," she reminded him, "seemed anxious to go by the easiest one."

The other man looked at Nasmyth. "I'm acting for Hutton, and it seems you have got ahead of him," he observed. "Still, we're both out on business, and I don't bear you any ill-will. In fact, if you're open to make any arrangement, I should be glad to talk to you."

Nasmyth smiled as he answered: "You can at least come and get some supper. I expect the boys will fix you and your horses for the night."

They went down the gully together, and a few minutes later walked into the flickering light of a great fire, near which a rudely bountiful supper had been laid out. Nasmyth pointed to the strangers.

"Boys," he said, "these are the men we expected, but I don't think they mean to worry us now, and they've had a long ride." He turned to the strangers. "Won't you sit down?"

There was a great burst of laughter, and one of the strangers smiled.

"We're in your hands, but I don't know any reason why you shouldn't be generous, boys," he said.

He sat down, but for a moment or two Nasmyth and Laura stood still in the glare of the fire, and the eyes of everyone were fixed upon them. Laura's face was flushed, but Nasmyth was calm with a new dignity.