

26 *The SINGER of The KOOTENAY*

do the first thing, the first honest thing, my hands get a chance to work at. I know I've been weak and silly, mother, and I got in with a worthless bunch, and I've played the fool—yes, in lots of ways besides that last crazy scrape that I got expelled for. I've got many enemies to fight, mother—and they're mostly here," as he laid his hand upon his breast. "I haven't done anything so bad, dear—nothing low or base—but I'll own up that I've been wild, and reckless, and selfish. But I'm going to play the man, mother—and I'm going to do something to pay you back—and I'm going to make you proud of me yet, mother, you wait and see if I don't. That country's big—away out there among the mountains—and my arms are strong; and I'll get along, don't you ever fear about me."

The yearning eyes that looked up into his were a mist of tears. Twice she tried to speak before the words would come. "I know you will, my bonnie," she faltered at last, "and there's just one thing I want you always to remember; there'll be no morning, Murray, and no evening—and no hour—that your mother won't be thinking of you—and loving you—and trusting you. And praying for you, Murray! Yes, my son, and waiting for you — Oh, my boy, my darling!" she suddenly broke forth in passion, drawing him down upon her bosom, "please don't