

## TWO VENTURES.

BY HURKARU.

## CHAPTER IX—CLOSED.

In days gone by two or three hundred miles was looked upon as quite a formidable distance for a hero and heroine to be separated, and was in truth farther, according to the methods of communication, than Colorado is from Maine at the present time. Steam and electricity however have so nearly obliterated space, that we may expect shortly to read romances in which the courtship is carried on "viva voce" between the gentleman in New York, or Boston, and the lady in San Francisco, or Los Angeles, and I must ask you now to return to Denver, whither Washington Van Higgin was hurrying with all possible despatch.

Arriving there, he very soon learned the truth regarding the late explosion in the tunnel, and having, in the course of his numerous business relations, often had dealings with the press, speedily rectified the false reports which had been circulated as to the origin of the disaster, so that not only was the stigma removed from the name of John Dugdale, but the affairs of the Colorado Tunnel Company, about which there had been some disagreeable whispers, were stated to be in the most flourishing condition and the work proceeding in a highly satisfactory manner. This latter was a slight stretch of the imagination, or at the least "taking time by the forelock," still we must not be very severe upon Van Higgin under the circumstances. He had a large amount at stake in the Tunnel and resolved to make it a success, so he justified himself in nipping what he honestly believed to be groundless rumors in the bud, by exaggerating, or as he put it anticipating, the progress of the work.

The day following his arrival in Denver, he proceeded to Deadville, the mining town at the east entrance of the tunnel, where he found Dugdale quite restored as to health, but laid on his back with a compound fracture of his leg, and evidently a cripple for some weeks to come.

"This is confoundingly annoying Dugdale," he said, shaking the wounded man by the hand, "but it can't be helped, and we must discuss what is best to be done. I am thoroughly glad there was no failure so far as you were concerned."

"Failure!" cried Dugdale. "The machine worked splendidly, in fact too well to please the strikers, but we need not fear any repetition of what took place."

"Good; and I have no doubt the patent will be all right, which will be a fine thing for you, I suppose," returned Van Higgin cheerfully.

"Right you are," said Dugdale, "and a fine thing for the tunnel too. Now look here Mr. Van Higgin, or perhaps I ought to say 'Boss' in these regions —"

"Call me what you like."



ANTICIPATION.

"Well then Boss, we don't want any more delay. The shaft will soon be clear and in working order again. Here is the key of the desk on the table yonder; open it and you will find the sketch of the drill machine which you had better take to Boyce and Jones in Denver. They are good honest machinists and will construct a new machine in a week or so, but of course you will tell them the invention is private property and the patent applied for. By the time the drill is made I think I shall be able to stand being moved on a stretcher up the tunnel so as to superintend the work, which will be much pleasanter than lying idle here."

"You are one of those cards we call trumps, Dugdale," cried Van Higgin admiringly, "and I almost feel disposed to play a lone hand, only I never like to put all my eggs in one basket. But you must not overtask yourself, you know."

"Never fear—the hardest task that can be set me is to keep me doing nothing in a place like this with no one to help me," was the response.

Van Higgin had now secured, and pocketed, the plan of the drill machine, and once more seating himself beside Dugdale's bed he continued the discussion.

"What is your opinion regarding the tunnel—the time it should take for completion, the prospects, and so forth?"

"As far as I can judge, it will be four

to five years before there is a clear way right through," replied Dugdale. "But my work will be practically finished when the winter sets in, as by then it will be merely a question of following out the plans and orders for which a good contractor will be quite competent. As to prospects, they will depend greatly upon the quality and extent of the mines, but I should say that in from twelve to eighteen months the venture ought to rather more than pay its way."

"Let us go carefully into the figures," rejoined Van Higgin, but with those statistics I will not trouble the reader, and merely say that Van Higgin took leave of Dugdale apparently quite satisfied.

In another ten days Dugdale, with mattress on a stretcher, was carried to the scene of the late explosion where a new drill machine, modelled precisely after the former one, was in position ready for work. The surgeon attending Dugdale was very much opposed to the latter's being moved at all, saying that it might bring on serious consequences, but Dugdale was obdurate, maintaining that his health was more likely to suffer from inaction than from extra inconvenience or discomfort.

"It is not your health that I am afraid of Mr. Dugdale," said the surgeon.

"What then?" asked the patient.

"Permanent lameness," was the answer.

"I'll run the risk of that and take all