

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LIFTING OF THE VEIL.

THE days went past, and the two ranchers, together with the old man whom they had rescued, were kept close prisoners by the blizzard.

Suffering tortures indescribable, poor Seth lay with his once frozen limbs swathed in oil-soaked wrappings. He was too weak to speak, and the only sounds that he uttered were moans of pain. He was tenderly nursed by Noel and Dick in turns, though the latter was often surprised to observe how the patient shrank from the touch of the one, while he evidenced no repulsion from contact with Winton, the other. Truly, coals of fire were being heaped on the old man's head.

It was a week before the storm abated sufficiently to enable Winton to communicate with Seth's home, and inform the wife and sons of the calamity. Then the doctor was sent for, while the old man was thickly wrapped in blankets and taken to his own home.

When the surgeon arrived he pronounced the case one of a most serious nature. The extremities of the four limbs were found to have been so badly frozen that amputation was an immediate necessity.

"It will mean a risk," the medical man said to Mrs. Gordon, when, after his examination, he had retired with