

bottle from under his arm, held it out at arm's length and apostrophized it in terms which Mr. McNab would have regarded as a personal insult, and which the community on the Blue might possibly have resented with a challenge to mortal combat. His next step, had they witnessed it, would certainly have led to the conclusion that he was a dangerous lunatic, and one, at that, whose peculiar madness was of a kind specially objectionable to the residents of Blue Bar. He placed the object toward which his feelings had undergone so sudden a revulsion carefully on the ground, and seizing in his hands a huge boulder, he proceeded to let it drop accurately upon it. He oscillated critically over the fragments, as if to assure himself that the result had been satisfactorily attained, and then strode rapidly and unsteadily into the forest. How such unsound principles of economy came to be adopted by him never very clearly appeared; and the problem of his absence from camp for two whole days, and his subsequent reform upon the subject of whiskey, were matters very freely discussed at McNab's hut, without any definite or reliable result being arrived at.

Summer had melted imperceptibly into autumn; and the bright tints that glittered on the mountain-slopes and through the sturdy undergrowth of the forest told that it in its turn was soon to give way to winter. Chihuahua Bar was piled up with great heaps of boulders and gravel, furrowed here and there with deep ditches and trenches, and otherwise gave ample evidence of the hard work that had been done. But, as Old Platte remarked, "The luck was down on them," and the partners had very little to show for their long months of toil. Gentleman Dick had worked as hard and earnestly as the others, and had never been known to utter a word of complaint through the many hardships and mishaps they endured. But a great change had come over him. No one who saw him when he joined the party in Denver would have ventured to call him strong or robust, but, delicate as he was then, he was now a mere shadow by comparison. The change had been more marked and rapid during the last few weeks. He had seemed to fade gradually away, growing daily weaker and weaker, until at last a knowledge of his increasing debility forced itself upon the not very observant faculties of his companions—coming rather as a sense of indefinable uneasiness on his behalf than any actual apprehension of his real condition. His great expressive eyes shone out with an unnatural brilliancy from his pale, sunken cheeks, and a deeper shade of melancholy seemed settling on his naturally thoughtful face. Thompson probably noticed it more than anybody else, but said nothing, while Old Platte and Jones exchanged ideas on the subject with a sort of puzzled anxiety, mingled, it might be, with some genuine alarm. They noticed that the work began to fatigue him more and more, and that he often had to pause in the middle of it, weary and exhausted.

At last, one day, about the first of November, he remained in his bunk in the cabin, unable to come down to the claim. In their rough, uncouth way they pitied him, and would have given anything they could command to be able to relieve him. But they seemed instinctively to feel that his case was something out of their reach, and with the exception of a weak suggestion from Jones, that he should try some of "them ar antibilious pills as he had in his box," no course of medical treatment