

it was, that Lizzie was not at the 'door' to meet me. I remember thinking, as I found the concealed line which we called our latch string, pulled down the knotted rope and went up the cliff, hand over hand, how pleasant our warm house would be after the frosty air. With my grip still strapped on my shoulder, I hurried along the path, turned the corner of the little grove of bushes which hid the house, and saw—a heap of smoking ashes. How it happened, I do not know. Probably the poor girl had put a lot of wood into the miserable sheet-iron stove before going to bed the night before, but it was plain that she had been burned to death in her sleep. I can only hope, and I think it must have been so, that she had been suffocated by the smoke before the flames touched her.

For a few minutes, the horror of it so overcame me that had the fire not destroyed our rifles—had one of them been hanging there before my eyes—I should probably have blown my brains out. There was a revolver in the grip on my shoulders, but I never thought of that—indeed, I was too dazed to think of anything at the time. It was not, of course, that I had ever had more than a boyish fancy for my wife—indeed, before I had been a day away from the sight of the blackened ruins, I am afraid I was beginning to take the 'happy release' view of the matter—but the horror of it!

At last, shivering and miserable, I crawled into a pile of old sacks and shavings in an outhouse, and got through the night as best I could. With daybreak, I was at work digging a deep grave amid the ashes of the house, and into it I lowered as gently as I could all that was left of poor Lizzie's body; and then I made

haste to leave the valley. You may guess that I never returned to it, and there is gold enough under the floor of that old outhouse to make a very fair basis for a bank account, but if you want to get it, you will have to go through the devil's hole, for I rigged a slip knot on our rope ladder, and pulled it down after me with the latch string. I wanted no strange feet on that lonely grave. I had, however, brought away a good deal, and some speculations into which I went for the sake of diverting my mind, have increased the amount considerably. That is my story." And Tom lay back in his chair with a sigh which showed that the telling of it had taken his thoughts back to the lonely grave among the Western mountains.

It is just about three years since that sigh was uttered, and this morning I asked Tom's permission to write out the story for "The Lake." He said he had no objection, provided I would "juggle the names about a bit," which I have done. You will remember that he told me the story originally with a question—Should he tell my aunt and cousin? My advice was, "say nothing about it to Mrs. Blanton, and as for Grace, do as you think best." What he had done, I did not know till last night. He and Grace have just returned from a trip to Muskoka, and last night they were describing to me an incident of their trip. Tom had been caught in a sudden storm in the woods and had lost his way, not getting to camp until midnight. As he painted the pitiful plight he was in just before he heard the shouts and caught sight of the lanterns of his searching friends, Grace said with a ringing laugh, "It was almost as bad as the devil's hole, wasn't it?"