

that the Blue Lightning was bound to pan out big in the end, so there wa'n't nothing for it but to stay right there in Towt's old shanty till spring. So we scratched together every last grain o' the shiny that we could lay hands on, and put it in a old bootleg for winter fodder, and went on digging, me 'n' Towt did, 'lowing every day would be the last, and calkerlating we could get to the settlement and back to the camp with the grub afore we had to quit the mine for the winter.

Then old Towt hit his first streak of luck. It was along late in the afternoon, the twenty-sixth day of November,—I don't need no notch in my stick to remember that,—when he struck the pocket; and I'm a hoss-thief if he didn't pry out nuggets—yeller-gold nuggets—till he had a good handful.

Course I tried to take a hand, but my knife-blade broke, and I jest stood there, shaking and

—and I wanted to stop my ears at his blarphemous swearing.

Cou-se I knowed he wouldn't be gone long and leave the young 'un; but when he walked into our cabin that very night, as right as a trivet, I was some surprised, and in the morning when we went past the little dug-out, which we'd used it for a cellar when we had any victuals to put into it, and I seen a board across the hole, and a stun bang-up agin the board, and a big white cross chalked onto the stun, I was some surpriseder.

That cross were old Towt's seal, and there wasn't a man in Soledad Diggings would have felt it safe to move that stun a hair with that er white cross onto it. So, as I was saying, we went on past the dug-out—Towt never giving a look that way, but romping with Nugget—and we clumb up to the mine and was just goin' to get down to work when what does that er little Nugget do but fasten onto

old Towt and begin to ask questions about God and angils and things. She must 'a' learned about 'em somehow or 'nother afore she came to our diggin's.

"Pappy," says she, looking up there at a heap o' big white clouds, "Pappy, does the angils live in them there clouds?"

Old Towt kep' on, and didn't answer.

"A'nt they jest a dandy place for angils to play in? Wist I was up there," says she, soft-like.

Towt kinder twisted 'round and didn't let on as he heerd.

"Who makes 'em, anyhow?" says Nugget.

Course I knowed the Lord was 'sponsible, and I kinder looked at Towt, shamed like,

cloud up there, dumb as a fish. His face kept getting red and all wrinkled up, but he couldn't seem to think of a swear-word. I dursn't skursely look at him.

There wasn't a word spoke for a consid'able spell after that, but Towt loafed around irresolute, which were some trying to me, being as I wanted to get to work. It had been damp and gray all the day before, and this morning it was some damper and grayer, and soft-like; but all of a sudden a kinder stinging wind lit down onto us, and Nugget 'lowed to go home, and home she started, whether 'r no.

Towt didn't do no great amount of talking after then, but he worked like a beaver, hunting everywhere for the pocket, for a spell, then says he:

"Come, old man, le's dig for the cabin. I can't seem to light on the lead, and it's no good digging on Thanksgiving Day, nohow."

I'd forgot all about it's being Thanksgiving, and anyhow, seemed to me that all we had to be thankful for was right there in that tunnel, and I was crazy to get to prying out nuggets ag'in, but I alwus made a pint of letting old Towt do the heft o' the bossing, so we started for the shanty.

Bout half-way down, the blizzard struck us. Snow and wind and the trail all choked up in no time. An' warn't it cold, too! And so dark and blurry-like you couldn't make out where ye was, only now and then. Towt he jest charged ahead, neck-or-nothing, and I tried to foller.

"Hold on, Towt!" I yelled ag'in the wind. "Hold up, now, ye long-legged cyclone-chaser! Let a feller ketch breath, can't ye?"

He grabbed ahold on me. "Old man," says he, "d'ye reckon she's got home?"

"Why, in course!" says I.

"If she haint"—says Towt, and the swear-words came out of his mouth a yard long, while he was all the while tearing ahead like a harrycane.

But when we got in and found she wasn't there—he never spoke a word but stood a minute dumb-founded and dazed-like, then him 'n me tore for the boys' cabins. We roused 'em out—every man Jack of 'em were ready to go it blind for little Nugget. We took lanterns and ropes and out we tumbled into the storm.

Talk about blizzards! I've been starved and froze and snowed under in these er mountains, but I never seen nothing could shake a stick at that Thanksgiving Day. Snow fine as dust, 'n' wind blowing all ways to onct, trails wiped clean out, and up there was jest one big gray blur. 'Twa'n't more'n jest turned afternoon, but we couldn't 'a' seen a headlight six foot off.

We hooted and stumbled over each other, and flared the lanterns round wild; one of the boys had a cowbell and one had a fish-horn, and we rung and tooted and yelled, but no sight or sound of little Nugget. And so, finally, when we'd made all the noise we could, and been everywhere, seemed like, the bulk on us gathered 'round the old deserted shaft of the Lone Jack-Rabbit Mine, with feelings which we dasn't let a-loose on. It were that deep we knowed, of course, little Nugget couldn't—but it wouldn't near thinking out, and we jest stood there, stupid as a passel of fools, and not one of us could think of a word to say.

Old Towt had been getting whiter and weaker every minute; and here he sunk down all of a heap, with his head atween his knees, and groaned the worst-afflicted groans I ever heerd groaned—it were fit to break your heart to listen at 'em—and we boys all went down onto our knees in the snow there aside on him, but not one of us could think of a word to say.

"Boys," says old Towt, as hoarse as ary frog, "boys, if 'aint too much trouble—O boys! can't none on ye pray?"

We wa'n't not to say gifted in prayer, none on us, but one o' the boys had been a meeting-goer back home, so as we were all kneeling there, he begun to say the Lord's Prayer and we all piled in after him, one way or 'nother. When we said "Amen!" old Towt kept sailing right on, and says he:

"O God A'mighty! gimme back my little Nugget. If ye will, I won't never swear another word, s'help me God! O God A'mighty? she's all I have—what's that?"

And Towt jumped up, hollering and sputtering and sprawlin' every which way. "I heerd her! She's in the shaft, boys—the shaft!"



laughing, and pretending I wa'n't crying, a-looking at the gold as long as there was light to see it by.

Then we started for the shanty. I wanted to shout and sing over the good luck, but Towt, he kep' mum, and didn't open his mouth all the way, and weren't not to say a joyous companion.

Well, that night we baked a luxur'ous big hoe-cake, and we fried our last scrap o' bacon, which we made two scraps on it; then we sot down to talk it all over.

We piled up the nuggets in the middle of the table, and Towt found one with a hole in it, which he strung around little Nugget's neck; and we emptied the dust out o' the bootleg, and was counting it all over, and trying to make it seem true that we'd struck it rich, and I was 'lowing we'd be in the mine before sun-up, come morning, a-prying out nuggets again, when up jumps Towt, and says, says he:

"Old man, gimme my share of the slugs, and I'll light out o' this for a spell."

"Goin' home for your Thanksgiving?" says I, laughing.

I mout as well laugh, but my heart stopped beatin', and I got trembly all over, to think of old Towt startin' off fool-fashion, leaving them nuggets lying there in the pocket, waitin' to be picked up.

Howsomever, I wasn't fool enough to say anything rash to Towt, and we didn't squander any more words on the subject. We made a fair and square divv of the dust, and then Towt left the heft of his share on the table. "I'll be back in the spring," says he next morning, as he pulled on his boots, "and if ye let anything happen to Nugget"



but he kept pegging away and didn't say a word.

After a spell she asked again: "Who makes 'em, pappy? Pappy, who makes clouds?"

Old Towt looked round, sort of foolish, and says he: "God A'mighty!"

"Oh!" says Nugget, in a sorter disapp'inted way. She'd heerd that er name purty to'able often, kinder loose, ye might say. Then says she: "Does God A'mighty make the sky, too, and the moon and stars and— and gold-nuggets and everything?"

"Yes," says old Towt, mighty sheepish.

"But ye don't like God A'mighty, does ye, pappy?"

If ever I seen a confused man that man were old Towt. He jest sat down and eyed a big woolly