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further side of Yellow Old Bald, came upon this girl, weeping passionately, helplessly, from some careless, barbarous unkindness which had brought up afresh in her young stormy heart all the emptiness of her life, and made her lot seem to her intolerable. The two sat the long hours out, pouring forth their souls to each other; Creed's kind eyes full of tenderness and pity for the beautiful, neglected, heart-hungry creature at his side; the girl warming, melting to the first kindness, the first consideration and admiration which had ever been hers. The world was made anew for both man and girl; when suddenly Birdella, glancing in affright at the late sun, leaped to her

feet, exclaiming:
"Oh, me! Hit's nigh onto sundown! Pap an' the boys'll be home—an' they hain't a lick struck fer supper! I-oh, I'm 'most afeard--'

But Creed's voice reassured her-his protecting arm was around her. He walked home with the shrinking girl, helped her with the fire and the supper, and, when "pap and the boys" came tramping in later, ravenous and saturnine, quietly took the old man apart and asked him for his daughter to wife. Jephtha Blacklock spat gravely upon

Creed Carrier had risen before the sun, fed and curried and brusned the norses, lingering long over the little filly's towet, buckling on the side-saddle, which made his strong hands tremble but to touch, and had taken his way down the roundabout horse trail to Garyville, arriving there several hours before the train was due.

This day, which had been chosen upon his last visit to Birdella as their wedding-day, when he should meet her at Garyville, take her to old Squire Ashe's for the marriage, and afterward up the mountain trail to the new cabin —this day, as it happened, some sort of excursion was afoot. The train came in slowly, and more than an hour late, long string of coaches packed with lilarious humanity. Creed Carrier stood back, confused at the noise and tumult; the drumming of steam from the engine oppressing his ears, the evil smells, the clash and babble of many voices, shrill, crude, insistent. I rom the line of coaches poured forth girls and women tawdrily dressed in cheap lawns, with strange colored rib-bons about their necks and waists, struggling beneath a load of self-consciousness, carrying it off with an air of bravado; men clad in their native the ground and made answer:

"Yes, sir, take her an' welcome. I than those others besides them, upon was a layin' out to wed with Miranda whom they gazed with envy, dressed in



"Far'well," he said, using the sad, impressive word of mountain adieu.

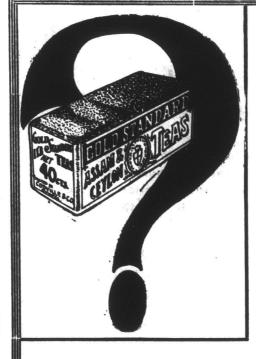
Dickert myse'f; an' they's gin'ally cheap "boughten" clothes. rippets an family interruptions wherever they's stepmothers an' stepda'ters. I'm proud ye want Birdelly," and looking long and curiously into Creed's quiet gray eyes, he added: "O' co'seo co'se—ever' man's got his own taste—I'm proud ye want Birdelly." Upon the unembarrassed silence which en-sted, he spoke again: "How soon?" "Jest as soon as I kin git my place ready for her. I aim to build a new house. I reckon hit'll take me two morths in all."

in the old man looked curithe wooer. After the mount 🤄 E ilen, he said no word; but in mind the wonder was great, ing home a "woman," more acquisition were a mule or

II. the valley at Garyville, the the little narrow-gage road.

The glare, the heat, the dust, the coal smoke, were like poison to the mountain man; the air, tainted with sulphurous gases, seemed to choke in his lungs; the smeared, red, perspiring faces grieved his eyes. It was all a painful contrast to the clear, clean, sunlit spaces and heavenly quietude of his mountain-top. This was what the valley meant to Creed Carrier.

Presently his bewildered eye descrided Eirdella coming down the aisle of a coach; and as she walked slowly, among the giggling, vociferating crowd, her lover made out that there were two people with her-a fat, red-face 1 girl whom, as he drew rear, he heard her address as "Miz Culp." and a squat. under-sized man whom the red-faced "Gittleson." woman in turn called And, he knew not why, his heart sank. instead of leaping in his breast as it had done these many weeks at the mere thought of Birdella's presence. He y seemed hot and dusty and stood at the step of the coach to meet to the mountain man her, watching with the gaze of anxious



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