

304 The La Chance Mine Mystery

Anyhow, you've got Macartney's gun! You can go ahead and see."

But I had no need to. An abandoned picket has a way of knowing when the game is up, and Macartney's men had cleared out on the double, even before Charliet's first rifle bullet missed them. We caught them afterwards, half dead in the bush,—but that doesn't come in here. I walked into the Halfway with my dream girl beside me, and both of us jumped as Dudley suddenly poked his pig-eyed face between us.

"You needn't hop, you two," he commented irritably; "you can have your Old Nick, Paulette, for all me! What I'm thinking of's that boy—and Baker! I guess they saved my life all right between them, and I'm going to set them up for what's left of theirs. Got anything to say against that, hey?" with his old snarl.

"Not much," I returned soberly. But Paulette clasped both Dudley's podgy hands in hers.

"Oh, *dear* Dudley," she said softly. But there were tears in her eyes.

I know; for I kissed them away afterwards, when we were alone.

THE END