

A posse of men were approaching. The torches drew nearer and nearer — voices could be heard. She strained her ears — but it was not that of her husband. Again she staggered to her feet, reeled, and would have fallen had not Blakeman caught her. He had seen the party and turned back before he reached them.

“He’s all right, madam — there he comes — they are all coming.”

Thayor pushed his way ahead. He had heard the scream and recognized the voice.

“My God, Blakeman. What’s the matter?” He was on his knees beside her now, her head resting in the hollow of his elbow.

“Madam’s only fainted, sir. We got worried at your being gone so long.”

Margaret tried to throw herself down beside her mother, but Holcomb held her back.

“No — let your father alone,” he whispered — “and let us come away.”

The trapper and the others, followed by Holcomb and Margaret, moved toward the camp, the torches illumining their faces. No one saw