

Seeds of Pine

submerge us. Who are these close-nudged folk and whither away?

She who runs may read them for hard-headed, white-handed men in search of "prospects"; brown-throated homesteaders; real-estate agents out for talking points and for "snap" fortunes; mining engineers with dunnage bags—young fellows all in the full force of life—these, and "the gang," who are ill-looking men and rather dirty.

The gang fare forth to work on the railway grades. They are always ganging—that is "going"—for the words are strictly synonymous. The gang going to the city meet the gang coming out.

And so in everything they are retroactive, and fight much, and swear, to give weight to their differences of opinion. In one thing only is the gang agreed, no navy has yet been found who disputed the axiom that the Boss is "a yellow canine."

There is a sprinkling of women, too, and we talk to each other in the friendly manner of the country. A couple of them are half-breed girls, with drooping feathers and skirts that have a hiss. Surely their men are industrious Indians. Both are cinched into their clothes like a cayuse into its pack-saddle. Both have skin the colour of brown coffee into which milk has been poured, and always they are fussing with their pinned-on curls. "The judicious Hooker" once watched some women doing this, and he said they were "a-dilling and burling their hair." No one may ever hope to strike out a more apt expression. The younger of the girls has an indiscreet mouth and desirous eyes. I should not