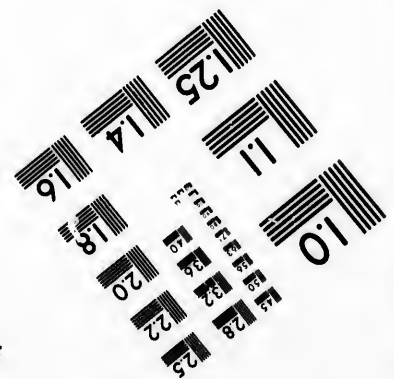
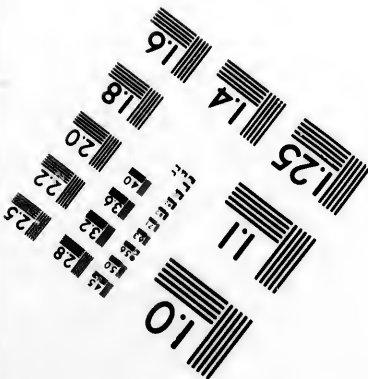
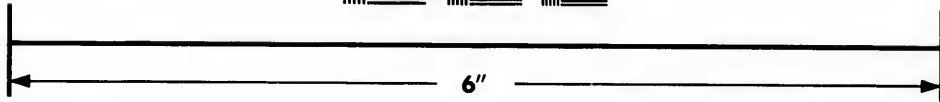
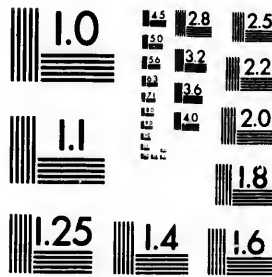
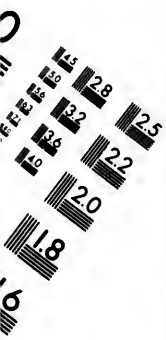


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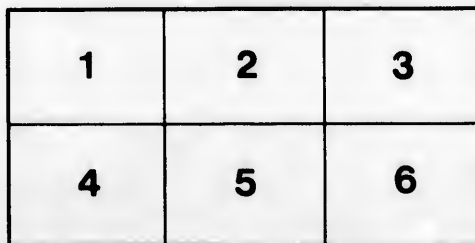
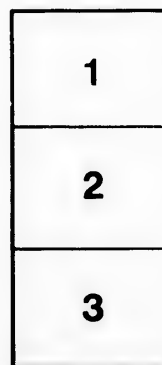
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FABLES OF THE NECHACO

Story of the Interior of British Columbia

BY SLIVERS, L.L.D.



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BY
SLIVERS, L.L.D.




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Dedication

To those who love the open, who are ambitious to know the truth and aid and profit in the development of the last and best great west, this book is dedicated.

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FABLES OF THE NECHICO

By Silvers L.E.D.
Illustrated by P.G. Bundy

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Once upon a time two brothers set out from London to make their fortune in British Columbia. They were nearly of the same age and physique and mental accomplishments. The older boy was of a venturesome and roaming nature and the younger boy was just the opposite. Being of a different turn of mind, they soon parted after reaching British Columbia and were lost to each other. The older boy, being fond of adventure and travel, frequented all the larger cities, working for good wages, enjoying himself immensely and soon gained the sobriquet of "Happy Jack." He made good money, but he spent it foolishly. To all entreaties of real estate men, who endeavored to get him to plant a few dollars of his earnings in some good farm or town lot, he turned a deaf ear and continued on revelling in the admiration of his companions who, from a purely selfish desire, lauded his actions and beamed on his liberality. Age crept on at a rapid pace and the once proud and admired "Happy Jack" found himself a premature old man, his money spent, his earning power gone and friends vanished. From one

position to another, of less importance, he changed, and soon found himself dissipated, broke, friendless and homeless. Too proud to go among his old friends or to ask for aid from those upon whom he had spent a life's earnings, he packed his blankets and "hit the trail" out into the rural districts where a great Railway Company were crying for laborers to complete their great system. Once out into the open country where every thing was free and happy, he had plenty of time for reflection. The wild flowers gave off an aroma much more sweet and fragrant than the fumes of the artificial life he had led and intensified his heart-hunger and lonesomeness. On he trudged along the grade, now and then stopping at the contractors' camps to inquire for work. Everywhere he was met with an offer of work, but it was not such work as he had been accustomed to and he shrank from the offers. During the days as he travelled on, it seemed the grade would never end. On through the beautiful valleys along the Great Fraser River, for a distance the grade would take him, and again through

farms and past cattle herds, everything seemed pleasing and inviting, but foreign to him. He was in another world. Here he found sincerity, truthfulness, a freedom of conscience and real happiness, nothing in keeping with his former life of extravagance and artifice. One night after a long, hard tramp, he

him the hospitality of the camp. The foreman was a tall, large, well proportioned man of middle age, keen eyed and forceful of manner, a man who was educated and resourceful, who had made a success in life by spanning many large streams for the Big Corporation in whose employ he was. Something in the



After a long, hard tramp, he reached the camp of a contractor.

reached the camp of a contractor and begged for food and shelter. He was utterly miserable and wretched. The foreman of the bridge gang, for he had come upon one of the big camps building, one of the large bridges across the Lower Nechaco River, met him with a good natured handshake and offered

man seemed to attract "Happy Jack," for as such we have come to know him, although the name ill suited him at the present time. Here was a man who had done something. He had made the best of his early training and had frowned upon all temptations which had been life to the derelict. This bridge

foreman was enjoying the fruits of his labors. Now his task was a comparatively easy one as he was at the head of his department with a large force of both skilled and common laborers at his command, who regarded him as a superior being, and who were, by his instructions and guidance, slowly but surely bringing to completion a great traffic way, across one of the dangerous passes of the Lower Nechaco. This day, after the evening meal, the men all lay about upon the moss covered bank of the great river near where the steam shovels of the graders had cut a great wound in the bank on both sides of the stream, at either end of which great steel graders stretched their length toward the middle span. The Bridge Builder was explaining some of the more important work for the morrow, while those directly connected with this particular work were listening attentively, while others were enjoying their pipes and a quiet rest after the day's toil. To "Happy Jack" this picture was a revelation. For the greater part these men had never known the kindness of a good home, such as he had left many years ago, and still, uncouth as most of these common laborers were, they were his masters in happiness and contentment, as well as in health and finance. Many of them had small farms along the line which was now building through this wonderful, fertile valley. Others had placed a part of their earnings in one or more city lots in the more important town-sites along the line and had found themselves richer by many

dollars over their investment. All of this meant a certain amount of sacrifice and thrift, something heretofore unknown to "Happy Jack," and he was becoming restless and weary. He was nothing to these people and they seemed to resent his visit, although the greater part were men of his own race and blood, he felt that he was not wanted among them. The awful loneliness of his wasted life fell upon him and, for the moment, he was lost in retrospection. He could hear the laughter of the city life, feel the slap upon the back, of an acquaintance whose insincerity now chilled him. He could see the dollars upon dollars that he had made only to throw away upon those who now mocked him, and had turned a deaf ear to his wants before his taking leave of his former life. All the wretchedness of a mis-spent life now crept upon him and for, perhaps the first time in his life, he gave a serious thought to his future welfare. For the first time in his life, he wished for a home, if only a small lot, garden tract or piece of land upon which he could stand and say to the world, "This is mine; upon this spot I am master of everything." The laborers had about all disappeared in their cabins, they were tired from their day's labor and the morning would come only too soon to start another day's work upon the bridge. These men were accustomed to retire and rise with the sun. There were no night hawks among them, no wild carousals with bursting heads and bleary eyes the morning after. The more "Happy Jack" knew of

these men and the freedom of the rural life to which they had been accustomed, the more he felt the great sacrifice he had made to make himself a good fellow, for nothing more than to earn a few smiles from insincerity. The bridge builder was the last to rise from where he had been sitting, upon a huge coil of steel cable and as he passed "Happy Jack", he stopped, and eyeing "Happy" for a moment, said, "What's the matter, old chap? You look sort of worn out. You would not do for a bridge gang, as the work is too heavy. Better get to bed over there," pointing in the direction of the bunk house, "you will find a comfortable cot for the night, and take my advice, old man, get all the sleep you can in the fore part of the night. That "Daredevil," the owner of the best land from here and Fort Fraser along the right of way, will be in here tomorrow morning before daylight, and he'll wake us all up with that great team of his loaded with farm products for the gang. He has all my men scared out of their wits with his dare-devil driving and fast horses. Only the other day he wanted to lay a wager with the time-keeper that he could ride any one of his six horses over that girder, out to the first span, and I believe he could do it. He had a pretty hard time of it when he first located here, but he stuck to the plow, and now has one of the best and most productive farms in all the Nechaco Valley, and that is saying a whole lot, when this country is noted for its fine agricultural land. He just returned from the old country

with his family, where they had gone for a trip and visit to his old home in Lancashire." At the name of his old home, "Happy" winced, and the bridge maker rattled on with his description of the farmer. "He don't need to work, but does it for the love of the out-of-door life, and his love of fine horses, which he always drives. He made a lot of money in Fort Fraser when that town was put on the market a few years back, and since that time he has taken an active interest in the politics and the general welfare and development of the district. Good night' and when you hear a sound like a cyclone hit the camp, you will know what it is. It is only Will Brown." The Bridge Builder passed on in to his tent without seeing the frightened look on "Happy's" face, nor was he aware of the emotions of this poor unfortunate at the sound of Will Brown's name. Little did the Bridge Builder dream that this man whom he admired for his character, wealth and daring was the brother of the unfortunate he had sheltered this night.

CHAPTER II.

"Happy" sat for a long time in the same position as the Bridge Builder left him, after the first shock, at the mention of his brother's name, looking out into the night with a blank stare. It had been several years since he and his brother had parted. There had been some misunderstanding at the parting owing to their entirely different temperaments, and Will had been almost forgotten by the older brother, which fact and the additional

fact that his brother had prospered and was one of the richest men in the Nechaco Valley did not relieve "Happy's" present mental condition. He had plenty of natural ability and even more than his brother; he boasted of an excellent education which his younger brother did not possess, or at least did not have at the time of their separation. But

as the eye could reach, one of the characters peculiar to the western world, where big men are developed and big things accomplished. "Happy" knew the history of many such men. He had lived the greater part of his life among such conditions and had known of scores of incidents where a poor man had made himself rich beyond description,



The Bridge Builder's Camp.

"Happy" felt now that his brother, owing to the Bridge Builder's description, whom he had come to look upon as his workmen did, a superior being, must have developed into one of the big ranchers, with land and stock and beautiful fields as far

almost in a day, by having the forethought, judgment and courage to secure a land holding somewhere in one of the many small towns that had grown into cities in the remarkable short time for which the West was noted.

"Happy" thought over the many advantages which had come to him. He lived over and over again the many opportunities which he had lost. The many lost opportunities now loomed up before "Happy's" vision like a horrible nightmare, and the follies of his life seemed to crowd themselves all at once upon him. Long after the midnight bell had struck "Happy" sat motionless, his chin resting upon his chest and in a sort of semi-conscious condition his mind flew on over the events of his life, leading up to the present day. In his reverie, he had forgotten for the time that the night air had chilled his body or that everything about was wet from the dew which invariably falls in the Nechaco at that time of the year. "Happy" was alone, alone in a great new land where everything was life and hustle. It was a new world to "Happy" that had suddenly burst upon his vision. He felt, with keen regret, the humiliation his brother would of necessity feel at his present miserable condition. Would his brother recognize him? There was a possibility that he would not, and in this thought "Happy" was both consoled and startled. One moment he felt as if he would leave before his identity became known and the next moment his longing to see and talk with his brother riveted him to the spot. What excuse could he give? What reparation could he make for his useless, selfish and unimportant life? Arousing himself from his present stupor, he got up and walked slowly into the tent where the camp mess cook had prepared for him a bed. Throwing himself upon the

cot, his troubled mind and body were soon resting in sleep.

CHAPTER III.

How long "Happy" slept he did not know. It was still dark when he suddenly sprang to his feet, aroused by a distant rumble that shook the ground upon which he stood in front of his tent. On the sound came, nearer and nearer. As he listened he thought he could distinguish the sound of horses' hoofs as they travelled at a wild gait upon the hardened surface of the Nechaco Road, a road upon which the Government had expended large sums of money, making it a renowned drive, 'way from Fort Fraser, out through rich fields of hay and grain, past beautiful lakes fringed about their moss-covered edges with wild roses and berry bushes, and backed in many spots by stately poplars that cast their shadows during the long summer days, into the clear sparkling waters of the Nechaco Valley lakes. From where "Happy" stood he had a clear vantage of the surrounding tents and cabins and saw lights appearing one after another in all directions. Morning rays were just visible in the east, and "Happy" knew the camp was awake and soon the workmen would be preparing for another day's labor. On the sound of hoofs came, and now the rattle of wheels could be inaudibly heard. The next moment, before "Happy" could bring his mind to a solution of the uproar, he heard distinctly the sound of a man's voice ring out upon the morning air. That voice! "Happy" grasped a guy rope in one hand and clutched at his

shirt over his heart with the other. He leaned forward, as if in mortal fear, heedless of the emotion the unusual occasion had aroused in the camp. Men came hurrying from their sleeping quarters, looking first in one direction and then another, seemingly conscious of some imminent danger. Light was just beginning to break through the early mist to the east.

On the roar came like the sound of a cavalry charge, but the voice, that but a moment before had startled the camp with its deafening appeal of mingled command and fear was hushed. Another moment and six huge, black, excited and foaming objects could be seen, running like mad, turning to the left of the camp and heading directly for the river. "Happy" was staring wildly at the unexpected and mad flight of the horses, when suddenly he saw the form of a man being dragged by some invisible means along the side of the frightened steeds. Like a flash the truth dawned on "Happy." That voice was the voice of his brother, who had in some unaccountable manner lost control of his fiery team and was being dragged to sure and sudden death! The leader swerved to the right and the lead chain tripped one of the swing horses, which halted their progress. But only for a moment. The great horse was on his feet in an instant and on they flew with their human sacrifice. By making a few leaps "Happy" could head off the team. Unaccustomed as he was to handling horses, he would take the chance of saving the life of his brother. There was no doubt the helpless form

rolling and bumping on the ground near the crazed beasts was that of Will Brown, the dare-devil driver. There was no time to lose, no time to weigh the chances of losing his life with that of saving his brother's. "Happy" was no coward at any time, and now all his energies were thrown into action, as he sprang forward towards the leaders with a prayer upon his lips. He closed his eyes, lunged forward and grasped the bridle of the leader. The horse reared in the air, carrying "Happy" off his feet. Hanging on to the headgear with one hand, the other shot out and closed upon the nostrils of the maddened animal. "Happy" felt a terrific blow in his side and he was conscious of a heavy fall. For the instant he saw the big steed stumble, throwing himself into the soft dirt. He was on top of the animal and all the others came rolling over them. "Happy" tried to release himself, and then all was dark.

CHAPTER IV.

"Hold them all down until we can get the tramp out without being kicked and trampled on." Happy heard this comment and the epithet applied to him stung all the more as he recognized the bridge builder's voice. "Tramp I may be, but I was the only man among you who had the courage to stop the mad flight of the horses." Happy thought to himself. Happy was just coming to his senses and knew that several men were holding the horses from lunging or jumping, in an effort to get to their feet. Happy was laying face down between two animals and another horse was laying crosswise above him.

In this manner Happy was protected in the fall, otherwise he would have been crushed to death. Happy was now fully conscious, and was suffering from a severe pain in his right side. Just then one of the horses gave a lunge, freeing itself from the men holding it, and gained his feet. The other two rolled about for a moment and also got to their feet, leaving Happy upon the ground partly mashed into the soft dirt where the team had piled up one on top of each other, as he had caught the leader. "Pick him up boys, and carry him into my tent. The Company surgeon has pronounced Brown out of danger with no bones broken, but this poor devil did not fare so well. He's a brave beggar at any rate. He put us all to shame in stopping these horses. But for his quick act Brown and the team would all be at the bottom of the Neehaco by this time."

Happy heard all this from the Bridge Builder. Evidently they thought him done for, but aside from the numbness in his lower limbs and the awful pain in his side he was none the worse for his experience and now that he knew his brother was unharmed he took courage and opened his eyes as they gently rolled him over, face upward, preparatory to moving him to the Bridge Builder's tent. The Bridge Builder was standing over him, and on seeing signs of life he stooped quickly and laid his big rough hand on Happy's forehead, brushing the hair back from his face. "Hand me the water can quick and get the doctor. He's got enough life in him yet to fight for." Happy tried to

speak, but blood was coming from both nose and mouth and he spoke with difficulty. "Don't talk, old man, save your energies, you will pull through all-right." Just then the surgeon came running up, threw a wet towel over his face and tore open his shirt to examine his heart. For a moment he listened to his breathing and heart action, while those about all held their breath for his answer. "He's alright, boys, and we can move him without danger. Bring out a light cot from my tent." As the surgeon said this he raised the towel and wiped Happy's face clean of dust and blood. Then Happy felt his shirt sleeve ripped open with some sharp instrument and a sharp pain like a pin prick on the inside of the arm just below the elbow, and in a moment the pain in his side was gone. He felt as if he was floating in air, his muscles relaxed, and he had a half conscious idea of being carried away as the powerful drug which the surgeon had injected began its quieting effect.

The bridge builder and surgeon, assisted by as many of the laborers as could conveniently help, raised Happy onto the cot and carried him into the tent where his brother lay on another cot, badly cut and bruised from being dragged several hundred yards by his frightened team. It was a strange coincident that the brothers should again be united in this manner after many years of separation. Will Brown was sleeping under a mild opiate the surgeon had administered before dressing the many small wounds he had received while being helplessly tangled up in the harness and trappings of his famous

team. In a short time he would be awake and able to be up, and in a few days he would be completely over his mishap. It was now nearly noon and the two men lay quietly upon their cots. The two brothers were about the same size, both of medium stature, rather stout and short. Their features were regular with blue eyes and dark hair. Happy's hair, however, was quite gray, and while there was less than two years difference in their age, Happy looked from ten to fifteen years the older. Happy's wounds had been carefully examined and attended to by the surgeon, who had discovered that two ribs were broken and that at least one had been driven into his lungs in the fall. This left Happy in a bad condition. The wound in the lung had caused the blood to flow freely from his mouth when he had been moved. The doctor had left instructions to watch him closely and to prevent him from moving about on the cot, fearing a hemorrhage that might cost him his life.

CHAPTER V.

Evening came on, but it brought no change of importance to the injured men. The bridge builder had taken care of the big team, and had succeeded in picking up the load of vegetables and supplies which had been turned over in the runaway. The exact cause of the accident could not be ascertained, but it was presumed that the driver was riding on the boxes piled high upon the wagon, when the team, for some reason, became unmanageable and ran off the hard road, causing the two front wheels to sink into the soft, rich

valley soil, throwing the load, together with the driver, forward upon the horses, thus increasing their fright. With one bound the horses had torn themselves loose from the wagon, which was cramped and fast in the loose dirt, and carried the driver, who was tangled in the trappings with them. This was the only solution of the accident, and perhaps could not be better explained by the information of the owner himself. The men were all laying about on the green grass near the cook tent after the evening meal, while many of the workmen were quietly enjoying the inevitable pipe; others were earnestly discussing the events of the day and the extraordinary exhibition of bravery of the tramp. Nearly all the men who ventured an explanation of the circumstances held a different view. All of a sudden there was a lull in the conversation and a horse could be distinctly heard coming at full gallop up the road from the direction of Fort Fraser. The rider was now in view, and a moment later the rider, a lady, dismounted at the surgeon's tent. The horse was out of breath, and it was evident it had been sent over the miles between town and the camp at full speed. A number of the workmen exchanged knowing glances as they recognized the rider. She was a new comer in town, and had been often seen recently in company with the bridge builder.

Inside the tent the bridge builder and the surgeon were discussing the events of the day, together with another incident in which the railroad company would be involved in a damage

suit for an injury occurring to one of its employees. They had been so engrossed in their talk that they had paid no attention to the commotion outside caused by the unexpected visitor. The first intimation either had of the new arrival was, when the screen door of the large hospital tent was thrown open and Gene Reynolds stood before them. Both men rose to their feet instantly. It was apparent that the visitor was excited and bewildered. Looking first at one and then the other, she held out her hand to the bridge builder and excitedly exclaimed, "Mr. Carver." Then, hesitatingly, she continued, "I thought you were dangerously hurt. I heard in the store that you were nearly killed in a runaway. My horse was saddled and in front of the store preparatory to my usual evening canter and I came at once, thinking I could be of some service." All this was said so quickly by the excited girl, that she scarcely realized what she had said or its importance to the man she addressed, who was deeply in love with her, but who, up to this time never dreamed that his love was returned.

The girl, flushed from her ride and the anxiety for the man she dearly loved, stood before him, a perfect picture for an artist. Underneath a large felt riding hat masses of blond hair were hanging about her face and shoulders and her large blue eyes were staring wide open, as if disbelieving what they told her, that he was unharmed. The bridge builder was surveying her beautiful figure and poise and thought to himself what a fool he had been never to have realized

what a really beautiful woman she was. Unaccustomed as he was to the society of women, he was a poor judge of feminine qualities which most men rave over. He knew that Gene Reynolds was fascinating—that during the hours spent in her company she absorbed all of his attention, so much that he seemed to forget his work, his surroundings and everything except her wit and laughter. Only occasionally was she ever quiet. At such times, even in the midst of an animated conversation she would lose control of herself completely as if suffering from some hidden pain. Her arms would drop listlessly to her side and as she would turn from him he could easily discern that she was suffering from great emotion which she was striving to overcome. Her gaze returned to him; gave him the impression of a frightened deer brought to bay by the crack of a rifle and the sting of the huntsman's knife. These moods, as the bridge builder termed them, had occurred more frequently of late, but he scoffed at the idea that anything in her past life was the cause. Gene was nearing thirty, but her education, refinement and excellent manners precluded such a thought. The surgeon was the first to break the awkward silence by excusing himself and left the tent. Alone for a moment, the bridge builder determined to use the unexpected opportunity to press his suit for her hand. "I am so glad you are not hurt, you have always been so kind. My life here among the country folk is a lonely one. My ideas and experiences have been so entirely dif-

ferent, and I half suspect at times they resent my coming among them." "And I am sorry I am not hurt," the bridge builder stepped near to her as he said this, continuing, "It would be worth while getting hurt to have such a charming nurse." Stamping her foot on the floor like a spoiled child Gene said, "Don't make fun of me." She stepped back and he caught her riding whip, which was fastened to her waist, and drew her towards him, and before she realized his intent he had caught her in his arm and was looking straight into her eyes. For a moment they stood thus, each lost in their own emotions. "I know you love me, won't you admit it?" "No! I hate you." "Then I'll go out in the back yard and get hurt so you will take care of me." Gene knew she loved this man more than all the world. She was accustomed to flattery and had made many men wretched for being so foolish as to fall in love with her, but none of them had ever touched Gene's heart, and she could truthfully say that Carver was the first man she had ever even cared for. His last remark seemed so silly for him, as he was always so grave and serious. She could not help but smile, relieving her embarrassment to some extent. Slowly releasing her arms from his embrace she threw them about his neck, and drawing his face down to hers kissed him passionately. Of a sudden the lovers were startled by someone calling for Mr. Carver, and another moment the young man who had been assigned the care of the runaway victims put his head in through the door of the hospital

tent, saying, "Pardon me, sir, but it's Mr. Brown who wishes to see you, sir." As Gene and the bridge builder followed the boy he was telling her of the morning's adventure of Will Brown. Gene was visibly affected, as she had come to look upon Mr. Brown as one of her best friends. It was his company who had brought her to Fort Fraser and given her her present position, and Mr. Brown, above all others connected with the corporation, had put himself out to make her life in the new country pleasant by entertaining her on more than one occasion in his elegant new home near town. In fact, both Gene and the bridge builder owed their present happiness to Will Brown, as it was through him and in his house they had first met. Will Brown had sufficiently recovered from his misfortune to be able to sit up; in fact, walk about some, and had made preparations for his return home early the next morning. "Good evening, Miss Reynolds," said Brown as they entered his tent. "What brings you out here?" and without knowing the truth, continued, "Did you think it was Carver that was hurt? Lucky dog, Carver, to have won such a girl." "Oh! please stop, Mr. Brown." "I've known your secret for a long time," Brown continued, and the bridge builder beat a hasty retreat, much to the amusement of Brown and the boy, leaving Gene to face the ordeal alone. "Can I be of service to you? Are you badly hurt?" Gene inquired, hoping to change the subject. "No, I am not hurt much. At present I am a bit sore from the knocking about I got before the team was

stopped. Tell Mr. Carver to come back, boy. I wish to thank him for his kindness." The boy left the tent in search of the bridge builder. "I wish to leave some instructions for the care of the man whom they say stopped the team at the risk of his life and is suffering from a hole in his lungs punched in by two broken ribs. He's a brave devil of a tramp, but he got a nasty fall in stopping the team and I intend to see that everything is done for him that can be done to save his life. That's him there," pointing to the other cot. "He's sleeping under the influence of a drug." Happy was laying on his back, with his face partly concealed and turned to the wall. Gene walked over to the cot and carefully raised the blanket from his face. "Happy Jack!" "Good God!" I—I thought!" Gene raised her hands to her face and reeled backwards. Brown jumped to his feet and helped her to a seat. "Do you know him?" queried Brown. "No—yes; I don't know what to say." Regaining her composure remarkably quick, Brown thought, she begged him not to mention the circumstance for the present to Mr. Carver.

CHAPTER VI.

Late that evening, after dining with the Bridge Builder, Mr. Brown and the Doctor, Gene ordered her horse and started for town. All the men, especially the Bridge Builder, were nonplused at her absolute refusal to allow anyone to accompany her home. True, it was a beautiful, warm night, with a June moon shining o'er head, making the night almost as light as day

in the clear, dry atmosphere of the Neehaco and there was really no danger, but there was one who craved the opportunity of accompanying her. After Gene's departure, the Bridge Builder, fearing for her safety, followed at a short distance, on the Surgeon's horse. He intended only to go out on the road a short way, or until Gene had passed through a heavy clump of trees on the road into Fort Fraser, which was not far from their camp. A number of new settlers had recently come into the district and been camped along the road, or had taken up land and were living in temporary shacks. The most of these people were strangers and the Bridge Builder felt it best to see Gene beyond this point. Contrary to the Bridge Builder's expectations, Gene rode very slowly, apparently lost in meditation, but he, being accustomed to her moods, thought little or nothing of her queer decision to ride home alone. Once through the trees, and out into the open, she stopped, and standing up in her stirrups, she raised herself up as high as possible and looked across the country, evidently trying to locate some object. For a moment she stood thus and then, quick as a flash, she settled back on her saddle and sent her horse flying off the road, out into the tall meadow grass and straight across country, almost at right angles to the road. The Bridge Builder was astonished at this unexpected turn, and sat motionless for a moment, completely bewildered by her movements. He was some distance behind her and just in the edge of the trees, completely hidden from view. From the

direction in which she went, if she held the same course, she would pass by the south end of the timber, a point which the Bridge Builder could reach un-

It was none of his business where she was going,—perhaps to the home of some settler who was sick that she knew of, or perhaps to stay all night at the



She stopped, and standing up in her stirrups, she raised herself up as high as possible and looked across the country.

observed and ahead of her. Here the Bridge Builder hesitated. He fully realized now that he was spying upon the girl he loved. For the first time, he felt queerly.

home of some family she knew, rather than take the long ride back to town. This might be the reason of her decision to return alone. All these ideas came

and went as he rode carefully through the timber. Finally he halted his horse as he heard Gene coming at a gallop through the grass, almost directly before him. Just beyond where he was concealed, there was one cabin occupied by a man who had aroused considerable curiosity by his peculiar habits and the fact that he never mingled with any of the other settlers, which was something unusual in a new country like this. Everyone here was friendly and sociable and always willing and ready to help one another. Contrary to the customs of the settlers, he had no associates, which made him an object of comment, and for some reason the men at the camp had taken a dislike to him. This feeling was shared by the Bridge Builder himself, although he scarcely knew why. The man was not a farmer, although he had secured one of the best farms in the neighborhood and adjoining the Railroad. By this time, Gene was approaching and within easy speaking distance. As she passed, the Bridge Builder's horse stepped on a dry twig which snapped and Gene stopped, looking directly in the direction of the Bridge Builder. He was suffocated with excitement, fearing he would be discovered, but before he could regain his normal composure, Gene passed on and had stopped within a short distance of the cabin, looking around to make sure no one was about, gave a sharp whistle. In a moment the window of the cabin opened and a similar whistle was heard from within. Immediately the door opened and the owner could be seen, standing in front of the cabin with a

rifle in his hand. Gene dismounted and, throwing her bridle reins to the man, passed on into the cabin. Not a word was spoken by either. The man took the horse around to the back and returned to the front door. For a moment he stood outside the door, the outline of his figure could be faintly seen against the cabin. Shortly the door opened and he passed in. The Bridge Builder could see Gene open the door and hold it open to allow this man to enter. There seemed to be a complete understanding between the two, although not a word up to this time had passed between them. By this time the Bridge Builder was furious with jealousy. Who was this man? What possible connection could he have with the girl? That she knew him and that there was something of an unusual nature between them was most apparent, otherwise she would not be so indiscreet as to visit him at this hour of the night, alone. The Bridge Builder got off his horse, made him fast to a tree and started towards the house. As he neared the cabin, he heard the two inside talking excitedly, and before he reached the cabin the door opened and Gene came out, followed closely by the man, who was shaking his hand at her in a threatening manner, as he said, "You make Carver come to my terms or suffer the consequences."

The Bridge Builder by this time had got so close to the cabin that he had hard work in concealing himself, but the two people were so engrossed in their conversation that they paid no attention to who might be near.

"I tell you Bob, I love this

man with all my heart, and I intend to marry him against you and the whole world. He is reasonable and will believe me,—of this I am sure.”

The Bridge Builder knew they were talking of him. Her declaration of love for him took him completely by surprise, which changed his feelings immediately, but the next moment he was doomed to still further anxiety and bewilderment.

“Get my horse—I am going!” said the girl.

“You are not going until we come to a full understanding. You have no love for this man,—he is not of your kind and you would never be happy with him. These people are not of your kind. What do they know of the life you know? What is pleasure and enjoyment to them would be purgatory to you.”

“Don’t argue with me any longer. I have told you that I no longer fear you, and I have proved it by coming here tonight at this hour, alone.”

“Oh! You have never had any reason to fear any bodily harm from me. You entered into this scheme with me to make money out of these rich country folks and by G—! you will play the game to the end.”

“Bob, you are a coward—you always were one and today I discovered something that will make a good dog of you in a short time. I came here tonight to try and break with you and let you go your way and live as you like, do as you like, as long as you keep your hands off the man I love.”

“Love, that’s a thing for babies to play with. Why you don’t know the first rudiments of

what that word means. You don’t love this man, neither did you ever love any other man that you have known. You were always ready to make money before. What’s come over you? Since you came here you have become a different person. Why, one would think you had always lived the simple life. Has the atmosphere, the big farms and the quiet happiness of the country people turned your head? What is this mysterious information you got today that makes you so brave?”

“Get my horse and I will give you something to think over.”

Bob, as she called him, turned the corner of the cabin and returned with her horse. As he came up to Gene, she said something which the Bridge Builder could not hear and which made the man drop the reins of the horse. Leaning forward, he put his hand up to the side of the cabin to support himself, and as he did this, Gene sprang into the saddle. Looking back over her shoulder as she started away, she said, “Yes, you can take my word. The tramp is Happy Jack.”

Chapter 7.

The Bridge Builder watched Gene ride slowly across the uplands towards Fort Fraser, until she was lost in the night. The unexpected had happened—his ideals of the girl he loved had been smashed. Like a lightning bolt from a troubled sky, when it reaches down and strikes the topmost branches of the tallest pine and rips it to the very roots, leaving it split, charred and withered, but still standing and defiant. Just so had Gene’s meet-

ing this night with this man, the one man in the entire Nechaco with whom he had never held anything in common, her reference to her old life and associates, her compact with this wanderling of the underworld, for the Bridge Builder was now convinced of his true character, had changed her from the beautiful, innocent girl he had loved to a charred and blackened hag, who had one object left in the world, to fight for the man she loved—but did she really love or was it purely a selfish desire to marry a man who would or could give her a home and position and compel respect for her. The Bridge Builder returned to his horse without even a glance in the direction Gene had taken. Mounting his horse, he returned slowly to his camp, determined to dismiss her from him forever. such were his thoughts and he really believed he would do this very thing, but men of his calibre, men who brook no opposition from man or elements, men who can and do overcome all obstacles are the very weakest where women are concerned. Especially is this true, when the object of his affections is the target of a selfish, miserable cur who seeks to wrong her and that was what was being planned inside the cabin he had just left. Bob Morris was a small, mean, insignificant creature, who had preyed upon unfortunate women, taking advantage of their confidence and position in nearly all the large coast cities. Not alone had he prospered in the nefarious life, but he had almost committed murder for the purpose of robbery and had been smart enough to protect himself, by

accusing and convicting another of his crime. When he had run the limit of his misdeeds, he had made his way out into the rapidly settling district of the Nechaco, where he hoped to carry on his dishonest dealings with the innocent country people, who were massing great fortunes in the rapid rise of both Fort Fraser city property and farm land near by. By a strange coincidence, however, just at the time when he felt himself most secure in his present undertakings, a man should appear on the scene whom he most feared of all the people, both men and women, whom he had abused. Happy Jack was the one person in all the world whom he feared and Happy Jack had stumbled right into the middle of his contemplated operations, and had by saving the life of the richest man in Fort Fraser, made himself a hero in the eyes of all the community. Happy Jack must be gotten rid of but how. Bob Morris was pacing to and fro in his cabin, in deep study, his hands clenched behind his back and stooped, his hat pulled down over his cold gray eyes, that snapped under long black lashes, the muscles of his face drawn to such an extent as to depict the keen and hardened criminal that he was. The door and windows carefully locked and bolted, with his gun conveniently placed, but for the occasional start from some sound outside, he was oblivious to his surroundings. Suddenly he stopped short and gazed at a thing on the floor near the door—something he had not noticed before. As if fixed to the spot he stood, his eyes riveted

on the object, the muscles of his face worked in nervous twitches, his hands loosened from their clinched position behind his back and reached for the object. In this short space of time, his alert criminal brain had planned to do away with the man he feared, who was laying helpless in a nearby tent and to fix the crime on another through the evidence of Gene's whip, which he now held before him. Coward that he was, he would stab Happy to death in his present helpless condition and leave Gene's whip as tell-tale evidence.

The Bridge Builder reached camp about the same time Gene Reynolds reached the home of Will Brown, where she intended to stay until morning. Entering the large gates to the drive way that led up to the house from the east, she was soon inside the beautiful grounds for which this country home was known throughout the entire Nechoaco Valley. Her horse was tired and she allowed him the freedom of his head, which he held nearly to the ground as he moved slowly up the drive-way, lined with magnificent shrubbery which had been imported from England together with the keeper and his family who lived in the keeper's lodge, just inside the gates. As Gene neared the house, a farm hand hailed her to make sure who it was at this time of the night.

The great farm house was lighted up from top to bottom and the family were all up, expecting more news from the father and husband.

Mrs. Brown greeted Gene as she dismounted from her horse and made anxious inquiries as

to the welfare of her husband. She had, however, been kept fully advised and knew he would be home early next morning.

"What makes you so late. Miss Reynolds? One of the boys who left camp after you did has been in some time."

Gene gave a start and looked first at Mrs. Brown and then at her horse as he was being led away. She wished she had not come here now, that she knew someone might have followed her. If Mrs. Brown knew that she had been to see Bob Morris that night and meant to question her, she did not feel equal to the task of explaining. She knew Mrs. Brown was the kindest of all kind women, but these country folk would not excuse an indiscreet act on her part, much less Mrs. Brown, who was especially set in her ideas of propriety. The first thing that came to her to say was that she had lost her way. This was a silly excuse as she knew every inch of the ground between town and the camp, but it sufficed and Mrs. Brown dismissed the subject, much to her relief. Once within the great living-room, where every convenience for comfort and luxury was provided, she sank down in a large chair, resting her tired feet upon the head of an immense bear rug which had been taken in the mountains to the north of Fort Fraser the year before. To her right was an old fashioned, English, open fire-place, which was the joy of all the household and guests, during the winter months. Large comfortable pieces of furniture were placed about over the hardwood floor of the room, while many beautiful and

rare pictures adorned the walls in a careless, yet artistic manner. Mrs. Brown came in shortly, and with her came the maid, with a tray of light refreshments including cake, delicious home made bread and butter and a quantity of rich, pure, Jersey cream, from Mr. Brown's famous Jersey herd.

Gene ate heartily. She knew she was more than welcome and this was about all the home she knew or had known since her arrival in Fort Fraser several months before. She did not occupy her small room in town much of the time except to sleep in; after her work was done in the store each day, she usually rode until way after dark, enjoying the fresh air of the country and the many beautiful country homes, the owners of which were always glad to see her. Mrs. Brown said little while Gene ate, occasionally did she interrupt her by making some trifling remark about the weather, or her housework, which did not need any reply, for all of which Gene was very thankful as she was tired and did not feel in a communicative mood.

"You are tired out, dear child. It was foolish of you to go rushing off to Mr. Carver at the first news of the accident. My! I had no idea things had progressed so rapidly with you two sly ones. You are certainly fortunate to win such a man and Will and I are going to have you married right here in our house."

Gene raised her hand as if to stop the words which were cutting her like a knife, but Mrs. Brown kept right on.

"We have come to look upon

you, Miss Gene, as one of the family, and you must confide in me, dear child, everything from now on."

"Please don't, Mrs. Brown. I know it was a very foolish thing of me to do to think of him seriously, and I am very, very fond of Mr. Carver, but he has never asked me to become his wife and I am afraid he never will!"

"Never will! Why, what do you mean, child? Only the other day I was joking him and just for amusement suggested that there might be another to whom you had given your heart and at the very mention of that possibility, he turned a deathly white, and for once he lost his usual calm completely. Why, child, I tell you Mr. Carver loves you beyond description, and, if you are foolish enough to — —"

"Mrs. Brown, please, please do not talk of that for the present," broke in Gene, rising from her seat at the same time. "Please, Mrs. Brown, you do not understand—you who have never had to fight life's battles—you have always had Mr. Brown to shield you from the world. He was big enough and brave enough to come out into a great new country and carve out a fortune and a mansion for you and the children, while you have merely looked on, protected from every pitfall, while I have had to fight—fight for myself and for my mother until her death."

Gene, by this time had crossed the great living-room and was wringing her hands in a frantic effort to conceal her emotions, which were most apparent and unexpected. Great tears were streaming down her cheeks, her

hair was falling loosely about her shoulders, as her breath came and went in heavy sighs. Poor, little Mrs. Brown was almost frightened out of her wits at this outburst, but feeling that it was nothing but the overwrought and tired nerves of a

lap. For a little while neither spoke, while Gene sobbed out her excitement, then finally got up, and kissing Mrs. Brown, she begged her forgiveness for being such a child.

But little did Mrs. Brown know what terrible emotion she



Gene slipped down in front of her, and buried her head in her hands in Mrs. Brown's lap.

tired girl, who had perhaps, quarrelled with her sweetheart, she arose slowly and going to Gene, she caught her in her arms and, as she dropped onto a couch, Gene slipped down in front of her, and buried her head in her hands in Mrs. Brown's

had this day overcome or what an ordeal she had gone through with Bob Morris and the terrible position she was now in. Her marriage to the bridge Builder and all the happiness she had pictured through their love had been blighted and she fully re-

alized now, that nothing short of a superhuman love on his part, would ever forgive her for her connection with Bob Morris and other things which she fully intended to make a full confession of at the first opportunity.

"Don't pay any attention to me, please. I am in trouble Mrs. Brown, but please don't question me tonight, and when you know all, if you can forgive—"

As Gene spoke she drew away from Mrs. Brown. For some reason she felt her position keenly. She knew, good and motherly as this woman was, did she know the truth of her past life, she would not be permitted to enter the home she was now enjoying. Mrs. Brown was as all women of her class are, who have always been shielded from the world, narrow, especially when it came to judging her own sex.

The two ladies stood facing each other, the one terrified at what the morrow would bring, and the other wondering with her limited experience. She could not reconcile the girl's peculiar mood this evening. Mrs. Brown was her senior by many years, but in experience and knowledge of the world, she was a mere child in comparison to the younger woman. Still, thinking it was nothing but a lovers' quarrel, she placed her arm about Gene in a most affectionate manner, and led her up the wide stairway, leading from the big living-room to her accustomed apartments on the next floor.

Chapter 8.

The following morning found the camp in its usual busy condition. The Bridge Builder was out early directing in person

the placing of a large steel girder, over the main span of the bridge, considerable care had to be exercised, owing to the frail superstructure, and the swift current in the river at this point. Will Brown had made all arrangements to care for the "Tramp," as Happy had come to be known, and was leaving the tent where he had been confined since the accident, when Happy rolled over on his cot, and, in doing so, started a small hemorrhage and began coughing severely. Will Brown turned and watched Happy for a long time. This was the first time that he had really had a look at the man who saved his life, and something about Happy struck him as being familiar, but in his present condition, and having gone several weeks without shaving, disguised him completely, except to those who had seen him recently. Happy finally sat up on the edge of his cot. He was sore and stiff from the experience and bandages, but his brain was clear and he knew that he was out of danger and the thought that he had saved his brother's life made him forget his own condition for the moment.

"We got a bad fall the other morning. I am glad you are able to be up," said Happy.

"Yes, we did get several bumps and had it not been for your quick wit and courage, another bump and I and the team would have bumped into eternity. Everyone has told me, that team would kill me, and I am about ready to believe it is true and I am going to return evil for good and give you those horses. I raised them myself

and they are the pride of all Nechaco."

Will Brown had advanced towards Happy as he said this, and, laying his hand on Happy's shoulder, continued, "and with the team goes one of my best farms. I want you for a neighbor—its time you quit tramping about and settled down. Any one who is brave enough to save a stranger's life, is made of the right stuff and all they need is a start in the right direction and I am going to give you the right start. Goodbye! I must be returning home. I have left instructions to have you brought to my home as soon as you are able to be up and away from the doctor's care."

And before Happy could realize what this offer meant to him, Will Brown had left the tent and was off for his beautiful home.

About noon, the Bridge Builder came into Happy's tent to find him enjoying a big bowl of bread and milk and the inside of the tent was literally banked with flowers of all kinds. The Fort Fraser district was noted above all other things for its magnificent flowers, the climate and soil being conducive to the development of both large and beautiful colored roses and other flowers, and Brown's home was a perfect rose garden at this time of the year. Mrs. Brown had sent out two large baskets, one filled with all the delicacies she could think of and which could not be had in a construction camp, and the other was loaded with flowers. She could not go herself to administer to the wants of the man who had saved her husband's life, but she had done the next best thing

sent one of her servants with all the comforts she could think of and Happy was enjoying them to the fullest extent when the Bridge Builder came in.

"Hello! I see the Browns have rewarded you for your part in the mix-up the other day. Judging from the orders around here, one would think Brown owned the railroad—he does own nearly everything else."

The Bridge Builder was in an ugly mood. He had spent a restless night and everything seemed to irritate him and the attempt to make Happy more comfortable in his unfortunate condition only added to his ill feelings.

"I am sorry if I have inconvenienced you, Mr. —," Happy hesitated, "I haven't the pleasure of your name."

"Carver," blurted the Bridge Builder, "and my name is—is," Happy was thinking hard. Should he give him his name or the cognomen he had long been known by, finally he said, "Happy Jack."

The Bridge Builder dropped the rose he had been examining and turned quickly around. He remembered the name from last night. Gene was right — she must have recognized him, but why did she not tell him? "He was the one to whom she should have confided in," thought the Bridge Builder, in his usual dominating spirit.

Happy noticed the movement, but could find no excuse for it.

"Happy Jack" is an odd name," said the Bridge Builder, "where have you spent most of your life?"

"I have spent most of my life nowhere and everywhere, just roaming about—here today and

gone tomorrow. My experiences have been so many and so varied that I take life as it comes—nothing worries me."

"I wish nothing worried me," said the Bridge Builder, "yesterday I was the happiest man on earth and today perhaps the most miserable."

"Ho! Ho! A woman in the case! The same old story," said Happy, and Carver shot a look at Happy that told him he had hit the bullseye.

"What do you know of it?"

"I beg pardon, Mr. Carver," said Happy, bowing towards the Bridge Builder. "Nothing but a woman can clip a man's wings flying in the seventh heaven and drop him back to old mother earth and the realities of life in one short day."

The Bridge Builder was amused at Happy's deductions and for the time forgot his keen disappointment in Gene and laughed heartily.

"You're a queer fellow, but when you know all you wont blame me."

"Well, maybe I wont and maybe I will. I have a habit of always siding with the woman, but at any rate, I could have no possible interest in your love affairs."

"You may have a lot to do with them," was the answer, and as the Bridge Builder said this he passed out of the tent and left Happy completely puzzled at his last remark.

"He's a queer sort," thought Happy, "I dont like his manner, but he'll get over his love affair and soon another will take her place."

Happy settled back on his couch. He was improving very

rapidly and the kindness of his brother and family to a stranger, as they supposed, was adding its beneficial effects on Happy's mind. His talk with the Bridge Builder had brought back unpleasant memories. He could picture in his mind the image of the girl he loved. He lived over again, as he had often done, their quarrel, he could see this selfsame girl in the witness box, swearing his freedom away and to a pure falsehood.

Happy was tired from his morning's exertion. He had never erred on virtue's side and ghosts of memories, reeling, drunk with wine and excesses, carried him off into the land of Nod. Happy's troubled sleep lasted for perhaps an hour, when he awoke to find standing before him, the girl whom he had loved and who had sold his love and his freedom for gold. Gene Reynolds was a few years older than when he last saw her, but her beauty had increased with the time.

Chapter 9.

Happy sat up and rubbed his eyes, putting his hand out towards Gene, who, thinking he intended to offer her his hand as a token of friendship, caught it in both hers, but he drew it back quickly as if stung by a viper. Happy was beginning to doubt his mental physical senses. He fully recognized Gene, but why she should be there or why she had come to him was far beyond his ability to comprehend. Several minutes elapsed and Happy was still staring at her when she, becoming impatient, stamped her foot on the floor and said: "Why don't you

say something—don't stare at me in that manner."

"Have a seat," said Happy, still wondering if he really were awake.

"Don't look at me that way, I tell you," said Gene, "you are driving me mad. Say something—swear at me—curse me, tell me that I have lied about you, tell me that I won your love and then swore you into jail, tell me anything—that I have ruined your life—anything."

By this time Gene's voice had raised to a high pitch and she fairly screamed the last word. The last remark amused Happy, who could not help but smile. It is a strange condition of the human mind that compels us at times even in most serious moments of our lives to laugh when we feel the deepest sorrow. Happy was never more serious in his life, nor more perplexed, but he could not help but smile at Gene's rantings. Finally, he said: "And if I choose not to charge you of any of the things which you stand self accused of, what then?"

This last remark took all the fight out of Gene. She had come into Happy's presence fearing for her life, and had she known that Happy was practically over his accident, perhaps she would not have had the courage to meet him, as well as she knew Happy's temper and that he had just cause to kill her. His unusual behavior she could not understand, and, as usual when the unexpected happens, she was thrown completely off her guard. Happy had successfully disarmed her by his actions.

"I know what you must think of me," she said.

"I think you do not know my feelings, otherwise you, of all persons, would never come near me. I feel sure it is for some special reason, not that you want to make amends for what you have done in the past, but for some purely selfish reason. I know these things for a certainty, and, having the nerve of a stone image, you risk your life in coming to me."

"I know I have wronged you," said Gene.

"Don't speak of that now. You know and I know what has passed, but for the present there is little use to break open old wounds. Out with it—what do you want?"

"Will you help me, Happy?"

"I will reserve my answer until you have stated your case or trouble."

"Don't be too hard on me. Happy. I have wronged you but I hope to be in a position soon to aid you and to repay you for all the misery I have ever caused you. I know it is a weak excuse to rely upon—the fact that I am a woman, but had I been a man I would have done differently. You know how hard it was for me while mother lived. I had to get money for her."

"You did not need to steal nor swear your best friend's life away," said Happy.

"But I was desperate. Mother was dying, the doctor had taken everything I had and then told me as they usually do, under such circumstances, that a change of climate was the only relief for her. Bob Morris offered me the money to swear against you."

At the mention of Bob Mor-

ris' name, Happy sprang to his feet, and advancing towards Gene, he said, "If I ever lay my hands on that miserable cur, he will die a dog's death."

Gene stepped back. She had never seen Happy or any other man look so earnest or make such a threat. She had intended to tell Happy of Bob's whereabouts, but his present attitude precluded such a risk.

"I fully realize what your feelings were at one time for me, but I did not love you, nor did I ever tell you that I did, but I am in love now and the strange thing of it all is that I am coming to you as the only one in the world that holds my future happiness in your hands. You know positively as many others do, who are not brave enough to admit it, that I never was immoral. I have been a thief—I have perjured myself for money, and I have always associated with both men and women who were bad, but I have never emulated their habits and you must prove this. I have come to you direct, as soon as I knew you were here. I am guilty of everything you may choose to charge me with. Wont you be merciful, Happy?"

"Why should I show you any consideration after my incarceration in that miserable hole, a perfect Hell on earth. You might at least have sent me some word of encouragement, but no, you left me there, there in that condition to rot for all you thought or cared for."

Happy had crossed the tent and was looking at a beautiful specimen of a rose—his back half turned from Gene, who was almost dumb with fear at the

thought that she could not win Happy's forgiveness.

"These are beautiful flowers. Our paths have not been strewn with many such," said Happy, seemingly oblivious that Gene Reynolds was desperately in earnest about her future.

"Why don't you go back to your old friend, the one you favored as against me? He would surely help you—he is such a brave and sympathetic individual especially where a woman's honor is at stake."

"For God's sake, Happy, please don't mention his name. You are a man—he is a beast. He would sell me outright for a glass of whiskey if he could."

Gene was becoming furious at Happy's indifference. Somehow she felt he was playing with her, like the cat plays with a mouse, but after all his heart would not allow him to injure her. Happy was becoming tired from being on his feet, the first time since the accident, and he crossed the tent and almost fell on the cot.

Gene caught him in her arms and straightened him. As she did this, she slipped down on her knees before Happy, catching his hands in hers, while great tears rolled down her cheeks, as she kept on pleading for his forgiveness. They were both absorbed in their own thoughts. Gene was begging hard now and she was not the kind to ask for any quarter, she was the type of woman who fights to the last, but here she was in the wrong and she knew it. She cared enough for Happy to deeply regret all the unhappiness she had caused him. The touch of Gene's arms as she helped him back on the cot, the sight of her big,

blue eyes streaming with tears and her apparently utter helpless position, brought back all the old love for her and he could have taken her back and forgotten all, when they were startled by someone stepping into the tent.

Happy looked up to see the Bridge Builder standing before them. Gene rose to her feet slowly and looked first at Happy and then at Carver, fearing for the outcome of this meeting. Gene Reynolds had nothing to fear from the man she loved, as a consequence of her acquaintance with Happy, but she was placed in a most embarrassing position to say the least. No one spoke. Happy was just beginning to understand the true situation and remained silent with the idea of determining for a certainty just how matters stood between Gene and the Bridge Builder. He now recalled the remark made by the Bridge Builder on leaving the tent early in the day, and wondered how much Gene had told Mr. Carver of her past or his former association with her. Another thing Happy had not learned from Gene as yet, was just how she first learned of his present whereabouts, or who had told her that he was in the Neehao Valley. It was hardly possible that she should know these facts by mere accident. The Bridge Builder broke the silence by addressing Gene in rather a cold, though courteous manner.

"Are you old friends?" he said.

"Yes," replied Gene. "I have known Happy for a long time and I am more than sorry to learn of his misfortune."

The Bridge Builder was an-

noyed at finding the two together, as he could plainly see that Gene was excited and had been crying. What this tramp or Bob Morris held in the life of this girl, he determined to find out, if not from her, then by some means from one or both of these men. The situation was very trying for all three. Happy was the least affected, although he was anxious to know just what part he was expected to play in the drama, which was slowly unfolding before him.

"Happy and I have lived in the same cities and at one time we were the best of friends," broke in Gene.

"And now," suggested Carver, "you are enemies."

Gene shot a look at Happy, expecting him to reply, but Happy's face was a blank.

"No, not exactly that—only today our meeting brought back unpleasant memories and I feel very, very sorry."

"For Happy's injuries?" broke in Carver, "well you need not worry. He will be amply repaid by Brown."

Happy did not like Carver's attitude, neither did he like the manner in which he was treating Gene, but not knowing just how far matters had progressed between these two, he hesitated before taking up Gene's burden against Carver, who was acting no less than a ruffian's part towards the girl, whom Happy had every reason to believe he loved.

Happy now came to her rescue by saying, "Mis Reynolds and I have been friends and acquaintances for a long time. I knew her mother, who is now dead and it was of her we were speaking when you came in."

At this remark, Gene gave a sigh of relief, inwardly thanking Happy for the lie he had told, as she knew, to help her out of a difficult situation.

The Bridge Builder in a cold, commanding voice which chilled Gene's heart and a look that sent creepy feelings over Happy, said: "I am just going into Fort Fraser on some business, will you ride back to town with me Miss Reynolds?"

CHAPTER X.

Once out into the open air, Gene felt herself much relieved. Her meeting with Happy and the unexpected interruption of the Bridge Builder had so worked upon her nerves that she was scarcely able to cope with his cold, shrewd questions, or outwit his searching gaze. The two rode for a mile or two for the most part through a beautiful poplar grove, one of those beauty spots for which the great Neehaco Valley is famous. While the sun, out in the open at this time of the year is very hot, within the small, thickly growing poplar groves the atmosphere is always cool and inviting. As the riders gained the open country at a point where several newcomers had secured small farms and were helping one another to erect cabins and fences, preparatory to spending their first winter in their adopted and favored locality, Gene remarked,

"It's a wonderful thing to live in a great, new land, where everything is free and open, where all share the common burdens of life with a light heart—where all have the self same purpose in life, to become the owners of a large farm and enjoy its conse-

quent independence. My life has been singularly disappointing in this respect. I have always lived where there is nothing but strife, nothing but bickering, lies and deceit—where freedom was an unknown quantity—where each individual was pulling at the others' heart strings in an effort to trample upon the unfortunate, to the credit of the more aggressive and perhaps less honest individual, who succeeds in society."

The Bridge Builder had been secretly admiring Gene. She was fascinating to a degree and alone with her, along a great, new highway, flanked on either side as far as the eye could reach with small homesteads, slowly but surely building into magnificent homes, where happiness was depicted on the faces of each farmer or child, they passed Gene seemed to breathe the happiness of her surroundings, her face beamed with its natural sweetness and the added absorption of her present environment, induced increased charm to her personality. As they rode on, she had completely regained her self-composure. Although she had been severely tried in the ordeal of facing Happy and asking his forgiveness and later the suspicious gaze of the man she dearly loved, she threw off these unpleasant thoughts and was now taken up with the country life, into which she had only recently come. Her questions and her apparent interest in all conditions for the welfare of the new community, so arrested the attention of the Bridge Builder, that he completely forgot that he had intended to question her further regarding her association

with Happy and Bob Morris. Time passed quickly and before the Bridge Builder realized the distance covered, they were entering the outskirts of the big, new town on the Nechaco. The sound of the Fort Fraser sawmill, a large lumbering plant, could be plainly heard in the distance, along the shores of the upper Nechaco, and the hammer of the workmen on the many

Chamberlain Avenue to Corporation Street, where the Bridge Builder said good-bye to Gene and stopped in front of the bank, in which he had some business with its manager. Gene, after bidding him good-bye, spurred her horse into a fast gallop and rode on out to Fifth Avenue, where she had made a former engagement for dinner. The Bridge Builder finished his busi-



The Bridge Builder and Gene rode on into town, turning down Chamberlain Avenue to Corporation Street.

new houses, building in the town and suburbs, created an almost deafening noise.

The Bridge Builder and Gene rode on into town, turning down

ness with the banker, then rode down to the lumbering plant and placed a large order for rough lumber to be delivered along the right-of-way the following day,

after which he, in company with Will Brown, whom he had met on the street, entered the Fort Fraser hotel for dinner. Seating themselves at a table near a window and well to the rear of the room, the men gave their orders hurriedly, as was their custom and soon found themselves engrossed in a careful observation and study of the many new people who were enjoying the evening meal at the new and already prominent hostelry, which boasted of the best service along the line between Prince Rupert and Edmonton.

"There are many new families locating here lately. When I stay at the ranch for a few days, I scarcely know anyone on my return to town and the demand for all kinds of supplies is on the increase daily. I am thinking of increasing our store to double its present capacity, and this will necessitate securing additional help from the coast cities. I hope I am lucky in securing another such as Miss Reynolds. She is the best saleswoman I ever had behind the counter."

Thus Brown rattled on in a sort of lazy manner, commenting on Gene's many virtues and her ability, as he helped the Bridge Builder to a generous portion of a double tenderloin, winding up his remarks by asking how the love affair was progressing. The Bridge Builder, wishing to avoid the subject, remarked on the excellent cuisine of the New Hotel, to which Brown replied,

"Well, its not all in the cooking. Most any one could furnish an excellent table in the Nechaco, where the best of vegetables and the choicest of

beef can be had. Why, I tell you, Carver — when you have finished your work here and are transferred to other parts, you will miss Fort Fraser and its fine products. Last year, when I went to Europe with my family, I almost starved for want of good, ripe wholesome fruit, vegetables and cream. I am actually ashamed to tell you what I think of the stuff they call cream in the large centres which I visited on my trip. I often wished as I travelled about and saw the misery and hardship of the people in the large cities, that I could bring them all back with me and turn them loose in the Nechaco, where they could enjoy the freedom and riches of God's country. The Creator of the Universe never intended that people should all huddle up in certain, small and crowded districts to become a prey one upon another for their very existence. I tell you, Carver, your railroad is doing a great and good act towards humanity in building this road through the country. The Nechaco is big enough and rich enough to furnish sustenance, independence and happiness to millions of people, and I look soon to see this vast district filled with millions of happy, prosperous farmers and merchants."

"I agree with you perfectly," broke in Carver, "and I expect to make the Nechaco my home. After I have finished my activities with the Company, I mean to settle down somewhere in the Nechaco and spend the remainder of my life among the beautiful surroundings this district affords."

By this time the men had near-

ly finished their meal and were gazing out of the window along the avenue which was fast becoming a trade street. The new town was just beginning to take on a metropolitan air. Several new and imposing business blocks were in course of construction, preparatory to housing large stocks of merchandise, and farming implements. Here and there, over the entire townsite, active work could be seen in clearing and excavating for both commercial and residence buildings.

After the meal, the two friends wandered out into the main lobby of the hotel and occupied two large, comfortable chairs for a while, quietly enjoying an after-dinner cigar. Both men were watching a large party of settlers who had just arrived from the south in autos, when their attention was directed to Gene Reynolds, as she rode by at a rapid clip. Following Chamberlain Avenue for a short distance, she turned down Corporation street toward the river, and was soon lost to view.

The Bridge Builder watched her disappear and turning to Brown, said in an undertone.

"I've something of importance to talk to you about. I will ride back with you as far as your home."

Motioning to a servant, the men ordered their horses and rode out slowly into the rural district, casually remarking on the rapid growth and development that had taken place during the last year.

"Brown," said Carver, "I have some strange things to tell you which I want you to listen to carefully, noting all the details and after I have finished,

I want your best and candid judgment of what the solution is or will be. To begin with, it is needless for me to tell you that up until a few days ago, I was desperately in love with Gene Reynolds."

"Yes," said Brown, "and now you two have had a quarrel. Mrs. Brown has told me all about it and you are foolish enough to think that you can never forgive her for some trifling thing and that your life is ruined. Don't worry, old Man—you have less sense than I thought you had. As a matter of fact, I think all men are d—n fools where women are concerned."

"What did Mrs. Brown tell you?" asked Carver.

"Oh," replied Brown, "she described Miss Reynolds coming to our home late the evening after she made that fool ride out to your camp to take care of you. On her arrival anyone could have seen that she was in a high state of nervousness, flying into a rage at the mention of your name and said as could be expected, that you and she could never marry."

Brown laughed at the picture he had drawn of the girl's ravings and was merely amused at the two lovers and what he believed to be a quarrel about some trifling matter, too silly to even talk about, when his attention was startled at the expression on the Bridge Builder's face.

"Please, don't make light of what I have to say. It is not a lover's quarrel. Miss Reynolds and I have not quarreled, but it is of her and the night you speak of that I wish to confide in you."

Something in Carver's tone precluded any further nonsense

and Brown's face immediately took on a look of seriousness, as the Bridge Builder described Gene's actions of the night in question. The Bridge Builder described in detail the meeting of Gene and Bob Morris, their actions and repeated what he was able to hear of their conversation. Brown listened intently. He was even more surprised at her actions than the man who loved her, and could offer no excuse whatever as Carver continued with a description of his meeting early in the day, with Gene and her apparent interest in the man who had saved Brown's life. After the narrative had been told in all its details of the two incidents, the two men rode on in silence for some distance, when Brown, remembering the incident in the tent, the same day of the accident, explained to Carver that Gene had recognized the tramp and now he remembered that she had called him "Happy." He further explained that she had begged him not to mention the fact to Carver, which he had promised not to do.

"This then, explains to me how she first came to know the individual who stumbled into our camp and saved your life. Well! What is the answer?"

The Bridge Builder was impatient, evidently thinking that Brown could solve the problem immediately, but in this he was disappointed, as Brown was even more puzzled than the Bridge Builder himself. By this time the two had reached Brown's home and had reined up their horses in front of the large gate to the left of the big farm house.

"I can give you no answer,"

said Brown. "It is all a queer piece of business. To me only one thing is possible which may throw some light on the identity of the tramp. On leaving the other day, I brought with me what clothes and effects the tramp had, intending to have them mended and washed. Among these clothes, Mrs. Brown found a small bundle of papers. Of course, up to now, I have not opened them, holding them as a sacred trust, but for the good of all concerned, I will open them tonight, and let you know tomorrow what their contents are, or if anything can be learned that will throw any light on the present difficulty."

CHAPTER 11.

The Bridge Builder waved a goodbye from down the road as he rode rapidly off to camp, while Brown passed through the large gates and rode slowly towards his magnificent new home, where he was met by a farm hand who took his horse and Brown disappeared through a side entrance to the house, off the large west veranda. Brown went immediately to a small room just off the large living room, which he used as an office and library and going directly to the safe, he opened it and took therefrom a small package of papers that had been carefully wrapped in strong, brown paper and tied with a strong cord. The package showed considerable wear, as if it had been carried in this manner for some length of time. Brown laid it on the table and, pulling up a chair, sat for some time quietly smoking and gazing at the package, which he felt would un-

ravel at least, the identity of the man at the camp, who had, by his daring and strength, saved his life. Something about the act which he was about to do was repugnant to him. He knew that he was betraying a trust and that he had no right to open or examine into the secrets contained within the small package which lay before him.

Brown was about to do something which he would have denounced in anyone else, and something which he had never done before. He felt, however, that there were extenuating circumstances in this case. The owner had saved his life, and he meant to reward him for this. He should know his identity so as to be more able to judge what the nature of the reward should be.

He felt, from what he knew, and had been told by the Bridge Builder, that these papers would perhaps, throw some light on the past of Gene Reynold, who held a position of trust in his employ and now that she was known to have some connection with Bob Morris, a man Brown would not trust, he felt he should know something of her past and what part Morris was playing in his present adventure.

And again, he knew the Bridge Builder to be a man of more than ordinary ability, though perhaps a cold, shrewd judge of human nature and affairs. He had always done, or caused to be done, as far as his ability allowed, those things which he believed to be right and just, regardless of influence.

Brown and the Bridge Builder were, and had been, fast friends since their first meeting, the dyn-

amic force of the latter, compelling respect from all, and especially such men as Brown, who loved justice above all else. The Bridge Builder was now in a position to be injured by virtue of his love for this girl, and for this reason more than any other, Brown determined to aid his friend by whatever evidence there might be gleaned from the papers before him.

More than an hour elapsed during which time Brown had sat almost motionless except for the occasional gesture of the hand in removing his cigar from his lips or replacing the same. Finally, he reached for the package and quickly undid the wrappings.

A dozen or more letters were in the bundle, the one on top addressed "John Brown," with the familiar post-mark of his home in England and the hand writing was that of—"Mother." Brown knew the handwriting and with trembling hands opened the envelope and sat motionless, staring at the contents.

Gene Reynolds, after leaving the main thoroughfare, struck off across country aimlessly. She was verging on a complete nervous breakdown. For the last few days, or ever since her discovery of the present whereabouts of Happy, she had not had a moment's peace. She was continually censuring herself for the part she had played against Happy, and for her unwise acceptance of a compact with Bob Morris, whom she loathed, to unduly influence the Bridge Builder. It was a beautiful, warm evening—one of those long, summer, twilight evenings for which the Nechaco was famous and

all unconsciously, her horse had taken a trail leading directly toward Bob Morris' cabin and the Bridge Builder's camp. Gene loved her saddle horse and, while riding through the tall peavine and vetch almost waist high, she allowed her horse the freedom of his head, that he might eat his fill of the nutritious wild grasses that grow there so abundantly. The horse wandered about in the tall grass, until finally he stopped at the bank of a beautiful, clear brook. Everything was quiet, even the birds that sang so sweetly all the long, summer day had hushed their notes until the sun of the coming morning would awaken them. Gene slipped from her horse and allowed him to wander at will, as he enjoyed the fresh, green grass all about. Two hours or more later, Gene jumped to her feet from a sound sleep. The crack of a rifle had brought her to her feet instantly. Her horse was not in sight—it had grown dark and now she could distinctly hear the beating of running horses, and a moment later, another sharp report rang out on the midnight air — a heavy thud was heard in the distance, and then all was deathly still. Gene was beside herself with fear. She had lost the trail and did not know in what direction to go. She started to run along the shore line of the small lake, stumbled over a log got up and turned directly into the underbrush, where she scrambled on until out of breath, she fell breathless, scratched and bleeding,—her hair dishevelled and part of her clothes torn from her body, into the road leading to and not far from the

Bridge Builder's camp.

Another moment a bullet whistled passed her ears, she dropped behind a stump and screamed for help at the top of her voice.

"Stand in the open and hold up your hands!"

The command came in the slow, cold voice of the Bridge Builder. Gene obeyed, and as the large form of the Bridge Builder came near enough for her to recognize him, she swooned and dropped unconscious to the ground.

When Gene came to her senses she found herself lying upon a cot in one of the Companies log cabins, generally used for the housing of construction supplies. The room was practically empty except for a large coil of rope and a few kegs of nails. A cot had been brought in for her use and a lighted lantern hung at the far end of the room, which gave off a dull, sickly light.

Gene got up from the cot on which she had been placed in an unconscious condition, her body was chilled from the cold night air and sore from many bruises. Her clothes were torn and dusty, her hat was gone and altogether, Gene Reynolds was about as miserable as a human being could possibly be, and looked as if she had aged years.

Gene walked to the window of the cabin. She knew it was late and much to her surprise, she saw groups of men standing about, evidently in earnest conversation and occasionally she could see them point in her direction. She now recalled her experiences early in the evening and the command from the Bridge Builder. Of a sudden,

a great fear seized her and she shook from head to foot, rushing to the door, which to her horror she found locked. She screamed for help and beat with both her hands upon the door. After a moment she stood still, her fear still growing. She was deathly pale, her breath came and went in quick succession and she was afraid of her very self.

Suddenly she realized that the camp was aroused and some one was unlocking the door. She heard the padlock spring open and the iron bar, that held the door, drop and as the door swung open, she rushed out, only to fall into the arms of the Bridge Builder, who forced her back into the cabin, closely followed by Will Brown. Now voices could be heard all about the cabin, and, as the Bridge Builder pushed Gene back upon the cot where she had been lying, Will Brown rushed at her and it was with considerable difficulty that the Bridge Builder held him from doing some bodily harm to her.

Will Brown was acting more like a crazy man than anything else. The Bridge Builder was doing his duty as he saw it. He had taken Gene into custody as was his duty as a provincial officer, believing she had committed a crime, and regardless of his love for the girl. He would have treated her in the same manner, had she been his sister. With him, relation or friendship ceased when an acknowledgement of same interfered with justice, but on the other hand, no one in his custody could be abused even by those whom they had injured.

Will Brown, as a usual thing,

did not show any temper, but when he did he was feared by all who knew him best. He had learned from the papers in his possession that Happy was his brother, and he believed that Gene Reynolds had made a desperate and perhaps successful attempt on his brother's life. They had what they honestly believed conclusive evidence to warrant this belief, and Will Brown would have strangled Gene in his present excitement.

The Bridge Builder was a much more powerful man than Brown and threw him hard against the back wall of the cabin and warned him not to attempt to do any bodily injury to the prisoner.

"Mr. Carver, will you please explain to me what all this means? Has everyone gone crazy?"

"Miss Reynolds, I am dreadfully sorry for you and I almost hate myself for the part I am compelled to play in this affair. Personally, I had rather that you had made a clean job of Happy and got away for good and all."

"My God," Gene breathed, "Happy is not hurt? No! No! Tell me, no one has killed Happy?"

Gene rushed toward the Bridge Builder, who held her at arms length by placing his big hands firmly on her shoulders and looking straight into her eyes.

"Miss Reynolds, I am not your legal adviser. Please do not talk, lest something you might say may work to your disadvantage. Whatever is the cause of your action, I, at least, believe you had good reasons to do what you did. No woman kills or at-

tempts to kill a man without good cause."

"You have no right to say that Carver. You and I have been friends for a long time. You know that Happy was nearly killed by this woman and you also know that Happy is my brother."

The last remark completely dazed Gene. She stepped backwards and sat heavily upon the couch, then looked first at one and then the other. Both men were watching her closely and at the same time exchanged puzzled glances. She did not act guilty and the fact that she was being held accused of the crime did not seem to interest her half as much as Happy's condition and the fact that he was Will Brown's brother.

Her first question, after she had recovered her composure, was even more perplexing to the men.

"How do you know this, Mr. Brown?" she said. "I am so glad for his sake. He always said he had a good brother some where in the world."

"Why did you try to kill him?" thundered Brown, as he advanced toward her.

Gene was so afraid of Will Brown that she could scarcely make any reply. She shrank from him as she said.

"I—I—don't deny it."

"Happy was found in his tent with a knife wound in his neck," explained Brown, "the knife is one you could easily get or have in your possession, and was found near the body, together with your whip. You were found near by in your present condition, after your horse had been shot by Bob Morris, whom you

eluded and was afterwards captured by Mr. Carver. We have Morris' complete story of how he saw you leave the camp. Morris is positive and we have all the evidence necessary, so don't think you will escape."

"Bob Morris killed my horse, did he, and he says I tried to kill Happy, did he—" broke in Gene in a low hard tone.

"Please do not answer or talk of the matter for the present."

Gene got up, walked to the window and looked out over the fields. Daylight was breaking forth and some of the men could be seen coming from their camps. In the meantime, both men had been watching Gene closely.

Suddenly she wheeled around.

"Does Happy say that I tried to kill him?"

"He has not spoken so far. The surgeon says he will live and will be able to talk in a few hours."

"Has Happy seen Bob Morris?" Gene asked.

"No!" said the Bridge Builder, "I do not think Happy has ever seen him."

"Then don't mention his name in Happy's presence until after the doctor has pronounced him out of danger from any mental shock. Remember this, and let me know at once when Happy is able to talk—and now, please leave me alone."

Both men left the cabin, and as they did so, Gene said to the Bridge Builder:

"Please do not lock the door. Place a guard to watch me if you will, but you have my word that I will not leave until the guilty one is brought to a confession."

The Bridge Builder looked first

at Brown, and then at Gene.

"Take a chance," said Brown, "she cannot get away and somehow, although she has not denied the act, I feel differently about her now than I did."

Consequently, Gene was left practically free with simply a watch over her and an admonition not to talk to anyone. The breakfast bell rang and all hurried in to devour a hearty meal.

The climate of the Fort Fraser district is conducive of good appetites, and, as the bridge gang sat eating heartily, Brown and the Bridge Builder were discussing their impressions of Gene and the probable cause of her act. So far, neither man had thought of the possibility of another committing the crime. Why did she speak of Bob Morris as she did? Why did she want us to keep Bob Morris' name from Happy, until after he was strong enough to stand a shock? Why did Bob Morris kill her horse and try to kill her also? Both men jumped to their feet with the same impression at the same time. At the door, an Indian sat motionless. He was waiting for his breakfast and watching the cabin in which Gene was held.

"Get your horse and mine quick. I want you to go with me."

The Indian knew that something had happened and in a moment he was back riding his own horse and leading the Bridge Builder's. The latter jumped into the saddle motioning the Indian to follow. The cook came to the door and thrust a bag of meat and bread into the Indian's hand.

As the two started off, Brown said:

"I will look after the girl until you return with Morris."

Down the road the two went at a keen gallop, rounding the small grove of poplars and off across the valley a short distance to where Bob Morris' cabin stood.

The Bridge Builder was the first to reach the cabin. He dismounted and rapped on the door, but no one answered, nor was there any sign of life. By this time the Indian had come up and said to the Bridge Builder:

"Morris gone. He go early this morning."

"Gone where?" demanded the Bridge Builder.

"I don't know. Indian boy say he saw him on other side of river, riding very fast."

The Bridge Builder thought for a moment, and then threw his heavy form against the door, which gave way, almost throwing the Bridge Builder on his head into the middle of the room. Inside, everything was in confusion. Evidently Morris had left in a hurry.

After a moment's thought, the Bridge Builder said to the Indian

"Can you catch Morris?"

"Yes! Indian catch him quick. He kill Happy. White girl no kill Happy. Indian heap know. I like White girl. Me bring him back—maybe me bring him back dead—maybe not—me don't know."

"Take my horse," said the Bridge Builder, "he is sure and fast. Here is my gun and some money. Follow him until you find him."

The Indian merely grunted. He took the gifts as a matter of course.

As he settled down in the fine new saddle, and on one of the best pieces of horse flesh ever raised in the Fort Fraser district, he raced away in the direction of where Morris had last been seen, with a sober look of determination on his face.

CHAPTER XII.

The Bridge Builder returned to camp on the Indian's pony and soon found Will Brown, who was pacing to and fro outside the Surgeon's tent, waiting for some news of Happy's condition. Happy had been stabbed while asleep, by some one riding into the camp, who had disappeared before any one was awakened. The finding of the riding whip belonging to Miss Reynolds and a new knife such as she sold from the stock under her care in the store and further, from the fact that she was discovered nearby, had fixed the crime upon her. Happy perhaps could not tell who the assassin was or the motive, and as he had lost so much blood before he was found, he had not yet spoken. The Surgeon however, had given hope of his recovery and believed Happy would regain sufficient strength during the day to talk.

Will Brown could hardly restrain himself. He had not spoken to his brother since his discovery of Happy's identity and there were so many things he wanted to talk to him about. The Bridge Builder hurriedly explained that Morris had left, evidently in a hurry and that the Indian was on his trail. After some discussion as to the probable trail he would take, Will Brown sent for all his farm hands and despatched them in every possible direc-

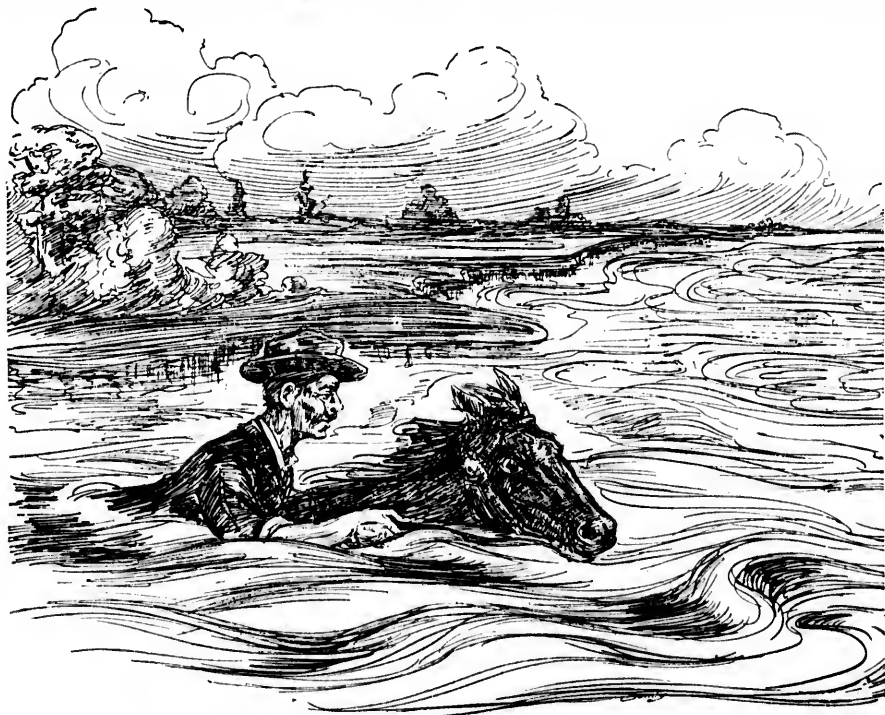
tion to notify the settlers throughout the Fort Fraser district to keep a sharp look out for the man they believed to be connected in some way with the attempt on Happy's life.

The Indian made straight to the river, where he knew Morris had crossed, from what he had learned from the Indian boy early in the morning. The Nechaco river is deep and has considerable current in most places and only in certain places is it safe except for the experienced horseman to venture across. At the ford the Indian got off his horse and examined the hoof prints of Morris' horse. Fortunately the horse had a large hoof and new shoes with sharp corks, thus making the tracks easier to follow. The river at this point makes a large bend, some five miles around, following the north bank and from Morris' location, when seen by the Indian boy, earlier in the day, he had made the entire distance and was making west or perhaps northwest. The Indian, by taking a cut across the narrow neck of land on the south bank, could by crossing the river at a place known to be safe only to a few Indians, shorten the distance travelled by Morris, several miles, and he determined on this course, rather than follow the trail, as he knew in what direction Morris had gone. As he raced across the meadow land, along the south bank, he passed by the ford which he wanted to make, and had gone a mile or more beyond before he discovered his error. Riding up to the bank, he got off his horse and scrambled through the brush, down to the water's edge to get his bearings.

A little way above the point where he had reached the water, he noticed that the clean water of the Nechaco was a little muddy at the shore line, and walking a short distance along the shore, he discovered, quite to his surprise, that some one had come across the river only a short time before. His suspicions aroused, he followed the tracks out onto dry land and sure enough, it was

fore sundown someone would be on his trail, and he meant to sell his life as dearly as possible.

The Indian hurried back to his horse and took up the trail and soon discovered that Morris was traveling south, bearing a little to the east and going at full speed. The Indian followed as fast as possible and made good time. Being on a better horse and a better rider, he was cover-



Morris crossed the river at one of its most dangerous points.

the horse's track he was looking for. Morris had doubled back on his trail and crossed the river at one of its most dangerous points. This had been done perhaps either from one or two causes—either a lack of knowledge of the river currents, or in order to throw off his pursuers, for Morris knew that be-

ing the ground faster than any white man could, no matter how experienced and Morris was inexperienced. Mile after mile, the Indian flew on, never losing the trail for a moment, except at small streams which abound in this district and which Morris invariably would travel for some distance either up or down

stream, for the express purpose of throwing his followers off his track, at those points the Indian would lose some time in again picking up the trail. About two o'clock in the afternoon, the Indian came upon a small Indian village, here he got the first report on his prey, for Morris was none other than a hunted victim of the Indian's craftiness. Indian Joe, as he was known, soon learned that the man he sought had passed only a short time before, and his horse was very tired and could scarcely travel. The Indian asked for something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he unsaddled his horse and allowed him his freedom to rest and feed in the tall grass on the banks of a nearby stream. Indian Joe had sent his horse over a long distance at a fast gait, but he knew how to ride and favor his horse at every opportunity, so that an hour or so would rest his horse sufficiently to take up the trail again and make up for lost time, and then he preferred, if possible, to take Morris after dark. After he had rested and eaten heartily of such food as the Indians have in a good game land, he started off after his man. During his stay with the Indians at the village, he had told of the attempted murder and why he was following this man, but none of the Indian had offered to assist him in the capture, contrary to the general belief that Indians love the chase and are always looking for the excitement of the trail, unless they are directly interested, an episode of this kind does not interest them. Had Indian Joe been a white man and had come

upon a small village of white settlers, the whole town would have turned out to help catch the culprit, but not so with the Indian. This is one of the striking differences between the red man and the white.

The Indian travelled fast all afternoon, having less difficulty in following the trail than during the morning, and as darkness came on, he was well towards the southeast rim of the Nechaco valley and was starting into the foot hills of a high range of mountains beyond. The country was much harder now to travel over, and after a short travel in the mountains, the Indian was about ready to stop for the night, but it was getting too dark to see the tracks he had followed all day. No fire had been discovered as yet, which he had confidently counted upon to locate his prize. The Indian never thought that Morris would be careful enough to make his camp for the night in such a manner that he could not be easily seen, but this was just what Morris had done. He had selected an ideal spot for a camp and made a small fire in a hollow among the hills in such a manner that he could discover any one who might be following him before they would see him, and this tact on Morris' part had not been counted upon by his pursuer.

Morris had eaten his supper and staked his horse nearby on some good grass, leaving the saddle on for a quick get-away should the occasion arise. Morris was half laying and half leaning against a small poplar tree, looking out over the rim of the hill, over which he had come down to reach his present hiding place,

when suddenly the form of a horse and rider could be seen in the dim sky line. He raised his rifle and took deliberate aim at the animals head. He knew he was camped far off the main travelled road in this district and any one showing up at that time of the evening and in that spot must be after him and he was taking no chances. At the crack of the rifle, the Indian's horse reared up and lunged backward, the bullet just grazing his neck, and quick as a flash, Indian Joe was off and pushed his horse into a clump of brush, out of sight. He was so surprised that he could not tell for the moment in which direction the shot had been fired from. The Indian crawled back to the rim of the hill and soon discovered the small fire which Morris had endeavored to extinguish immediately after the shot. Now both men were alert to the true situation. The Indian lay very quietly for some time, trying to locate his man, and after a while he heard Morris' horse and finally located about where he was standing. He figured that Morris would not be far from the horse although he might be some distance away. Indian Joe was working at a decided disadvantage. He had never seen this particular spot in daylight and did not appreciate its worth as a hiding place. Morris knew that no one could reach him but from one direction, and he had only to keep his eye in that direction to discover his follower, and again anyone approaching would probably frighten his horse, thus giving him a warning, while on the other hand, the Indian had to keep his eye on

every direction as he crawled slowly about in the underbrush.

The small fire was now completely smothered and Indian Joe made his way cautiously down into the small ravine. Morris' horse was a little way above him and so far, had not noticed his approach. The horse was tired after being ridden hard all day, and was eating away where he had been tied, and Indian Joe could hear him plainly as he moved about in the tall grass. Suddenly a small flickering light came from the camp-fire embers. The blaze only showed for a moment, but sufficiently long for the Indian's quick eye to locate Morris standing not far away. Without hesitation the Indian pulled on Morris and the shot being fired in the darkness, proved the Indian's keen judgment of location and distance, as the ball took effect in Morris left shoulder, who fell heavily on the ground with a loud groan. Instantly the Indian was upon him, and as he rolled Morris over, thinking him dead, Morris snatched the Indian's hunting knife, which the Indian was holding in his teeth, and before Indian Joe could prevent it, he had received a nasty gash in his side. Both men clinched in a death struggle, but it was a one sided fight. The Indian was much the stronger and he soon wrenched the knife from Morris' hand and pinioned his arms behind his back and tied them. After attending to the wound in his side and stopping the flow of blood, he examined the wound in Morris' shoulder and found that he was bleeding internally. The Indian knew that animals shot in this manner would sometimes live

for several days and others would die in a few hours, so he helped Morris on to his horse and soon both men were on their way back to the Indian village, where a team could be secured for the remainder of the trip back to the bridge camp.

CHAPTER XIII.

Soon after the morning meal the camp cook went to the cabin where Gene was confined and requested her to come into the cook tent for breakfast. The cook was a burly sort of a fellow, accustomed to satisfy the appetites of the Bridge gang and hardened to their abuse of his fare. Gene followed him at a short distance. As she passed into the large mess tent, where two long tables were being cleared of the early meal, the cook motioned her to a small table that was usually occupied by the Surgeon and Bridge Builder. This table was located so that the occupant could look out over the camp, and it just so happened that Happy's tent was in her direct line of vision. Gene sat at the table, munching away slowly at her breakfast and watching the men go and come about the camp, attending to their usual duties. Her eyes were riveted on the tent that held the one man in all the world, whose life seemed linked inseparably with hers. She knew the Surgeon, the Bridge Builder and Mr. Brown were in the tent. She had seen them a short time before go into the tent, and it seemed they never would come out. Their long stay in the tent seemed to harbor ill for Happy. Gene finally finished her meal and walked leisurely out into the warm sunshine. It was a

beautiful morning—just such an atmosphere that makes one feel at peace with oneself and the whole world. She stood for a moment, gazing around at the natural beauties of her surrounding, filling her lungs with the invigorating air, when suddenly she discerned the man who had been set to watch her. The thought chilled Gene, who felt the sting of accusation keenly. Passing on, she was soon in front of Happy's tent, where she hesitated, not knowing just what course to pursue. Should she go in or not. As she was debating this question in her mind, all three men came out of the tent and Gene stepped aside as they passed and started for the tent, whereupon the Bridge Builder turned and addressed her in even a more stern voice than was his usual custom.

"Where are you going?"

"Its quite evident that I am going to see Happy," Gene replied.

"I think you had better not see him—you have caused him enough suffering, don't you think?"

Gene was too surprised to answer for a time, and stood staring at the Bridge Builder in open astonishment. She could scarcely believe her own eyes nor her ears. Could she ever have loved this brute, who at the first intimation of wrong doing, had firmly believed her guilty? Would Happy have treated her in a like manner under like circumstances? No! He would have given her the benefit of a reasonable doubt, no matter how conclusive the evidence against her. As these thoughts passed through her troubled mind, she

unconsciously turned her face towards Happy's tent. The Surgeon noticed the look upon her face, and thought he could see in her expression a sincere sorrow for the wounded man.

"She may see the patient," said the Surgeon. "He is out of all danger, but promise me, Miss Reynolds, you will not do or say anything that will unnecessarily arouse him."

At this Gene passed into the tent, and the men went on out to the bank of the Nechaco, where the great steel bridge was nearing completion. All the men held their own views as to the probable cause of the attack. The Bridge Builder and Brown believed Gene guilty, but that in some way Bob Morris was at the bottom of the whole plot to do away with Happy, while the Surgeon held to the belief that Morris, and Morris alone was the guilty party.

When Gene Reynolds entered Happy's tent, he was sitting, or rather, half reclining upon his cot, with a lot of pillows at his back. Happy had quite recovered from his accident in the runaway, but he had lost considerable blood from the knife wound and was a little pale and weak. Before Happy could get to his feet, Gene was sitting down beside him, holding both his hands in hers, and looking straight at him, said, "Happy, you don't believe I tried to kill you—do you Happy?"

"They have told me what seems to be sufficient evidence, but I can't believe you would do such a thing Gene. On the other hand, you are the only one who knew me, and there is your whip—there is the knife, such as

you sell every day in the store. Then you were caught trying to get away after your horse was shot from under you. I was stabbed while asleep and have no idea who would wish to injure me, and yet with all this evidence against you, I can't bring myself to believe you guilty."

"Thank God! Happy you have faith in me. I can explain my presence near the camp last night. Mr. Carver arrested me and is still holding me as his prisoner. He has prejudged me and has treated me like an ordinary convicted criminal."

Gene was courageous now that Happy had expressed a doubt as to her guilt. She could have raised all suspicions in a moment in Happy's mind by telling him of Bob Morris, but she wanted to hear Happy say he did not believe her guilty, before she told him who she really believed had attempted his life.

"I had grown very fond of Mr. Carver, but his action and his treatment of me last night and this morning has made me hate him, and you know how I can hate any one. My love and hate are both strong."

Gene got up from where she was sitting and backed toward the door of the tent. Her old look of defiance had returned to her, and Happy found himself admiring her as of old.

"I will soon straighten out this affair, if you will tell that brute to leave me alone," said Gene.

"Excuse me, Miss Reynolds, were you referring to me?" said the Bridge Builder.

Gene did not waver now, and

returned the Bridge Builder's stare.

"Yes," she replied, "I am not guilty of this act and I will soon prove it to you, and after this you have my very cordial invitation never to speak to me again except in your official capacity."

This last remark was said in the bitterest of sarcasm and cut the Bridge Builder, who had returned to ask Happy some unimportant question, thinking Gene had gone.

"I am only doing my duty Miss Reynolds," he said.

"You are at liberty to do so," replied Gene, "but you might as well know now that all the love I might have had for you has turned to hate."

A deathly silence followed this remark, during which time Gene and the Bridge Builder looked straight at one another as the blood came and went in his face, to flush and pale in turn, as Gene continued in her cold, sarcastic tone.

"I am lucky not to have given my hand to a man who would not at least attempt to protect me even though I were guilty. The kind of man I shall marry is one who will fight for me to the last ditch. That is the school I have been trained in—where friends are friends—where a friend is not tried and found guilty before they have at least an opportunity to defend themselves. You with your proffered love would have hung me without further question for a crime which I am as innocent of as you are."

As the Bridge Builder left the tent, she followed him, and once away from Happy's hearing, she

said. "Find the man who shot my horse and you will find the man who tried to kill Happy."

"I knew you and he were friends," said the Bridge Builder, but Gene interrupted, "I beg your pardon—acquaintances only."

"I followed you the night you went to his cabin."

"You were spying upon me," Gene fairly screamed, and before the Bridge Builder could explain, she had turned upon her heels and made straight toward Will Brown, who was coming up the trail from the Bridge.

CHAPTER XIV.

During all the afternoon and evening Gene made frequent visits to Happy's tent to make him as comfortable as possible and insisted, much to the disgust of the camp cook, on preparing Happy's meals and at the same time, she was keeping close watch on the men that were coming in from almost every direction, to report to either Mr. Brown or the Bridge Builder the progress of the man hunt. Late in the evening an Indian came in with the information that Indian Joe was on the trail and would, no doubt, overtake the fugitive before morning. Gene gave a sigh of relief at this information, as she knew Indian Joe, and she knew he did not like Morris for some injury he had done to the Indian a few months back. The Bridge Builder, after his encounter with Gene, had given up all hopes of renewing their friendship, and had gone sullenly off to drive his men with renewed vigor. The Brown brothers sat talking of

home and their life's experiences until far into the night, and Gene had waited in her cabin until she knew Happy should have some rest, when she entered the tent and insisted on breaking up the long conference. Will Brown and Gene made Happy as comfortable as possible for the night, and as she started to leave the tent, Happy caught her hand. Gene's face flushed as she turned a bashful look towards Will Brown, who had noticed the act.

"Good night, Gene."

"Good night, Happy," she said.

With a thrill from a hand pressure that only lovers know, Gene left the tent to spend a restless night in the miserable cabin assigned to her. Will Brown walked slowly from the tent to his own sleeping tent, much too puzzled to even hazard a guess as to the cause of the strange happenings. During his long talk with Happy, he had learned who Gene was and of her people and his love for her. Will Brown at Gene's urgent request, had not mentioned Bob Morris' name, and he perhaps, of all persons, could straighten matters out. He was convinced against his will that Gene was not guilty and that Bob Morris, whom he had no fear would ever get away, was guilty—but why? No one rested that night. The Bridge Builder was too much wrought up over his disagreement with Gene to have any rest and then again reports were continuously coming from different sources as to the present whereabouts of Morris. As is usual, Morris had been seen at a hundred different places at the same

time by people who have a greater imagination than horse sense. Gene was out early in the morning, as soon as any one was able to be about, and made a searching inquiry from all the men who had been out on the man hunt. None of them however, impressed her like the Indian story. About noon, the camp was thrown into another turmoil by the arrival of Indian Joe and the much wanted Morris. Morris had been brought into camp in a farm wagon and was practically unconscious and in a dying condition. But for Indian Joe's judgment and hurry back to the camp, Morris would never have lived to tell the truth of his connection with the attempt upon Happy's life. As soon as he arrived, the Surgeon gave him a powerful heart stimulant, which revived him sufficiently to allow him to tell his story. Morris knew he was dying. On being questioned as to who made the attempt on Happy, he admitted that he and no one else was guilty. Somehow all his misdeeds came up before his dying eyes and he determined to at least do one honorable act before his death and free the girl from any connection with the crime, no matter how cleverly he had planned the attack, nor how successful he had been in placing the blame on her.

After a complete and detailed written statement had been made, he waved every one away and out of the tent into which he had been carried. All had seen him except Happy and Gene. As the crowd filed out, these two stepped in and stood before the cot upon which he was lying. At

the sight of him, Happy sprang at him like a mad man, Gene screamed and Will Brown and the Bridge Builder came into the tent instantly, just in time to prevent Happy from choking out the last bit of life that yet remained in him. Gene threw her arms about Happy and forced him back. Morris, realizing that something unusual was transpiring, opened his eyes, only to see the man he had most abused, standing before him. He sat upright on the cot, opened his mouth as if to speak, his chin

dropped upon his chest and with a dry gurgle in his throat, he dropped heavily back upon the cot dead. Happy took Gene in his arms. Her nerves had completely left her for the time, now that the terrible ordeal was over and great tears were rolling down her cheeks, but Happy kissed them away as she clung to him. The Bridge Builder and Happy's brother passed out, followed by Happy, who supported Gene out into the bracing air of the great Nechaco, where she soon regained her strength.



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