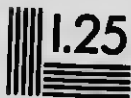
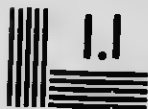


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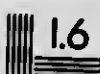
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ness; and at the earliest day I could leave my business I am here to inquire in person regarding her health."

"Oh!" and Max struggled with a desire to laugh at the change in the captain's attitude since 'Tana was a moneyed individual instead of a little waif. Poor 'Tana! No wonder she looked with suspicion on late-coming friends.

"Yes, she is better—much better," he continued, as they walked up from the boat. "I suppose you knew that a cousin of Mrs. Huzzard, a lady from Ohio, has been with us—in fact, came up with our party."

"So I heard—so I heard. Nice for Mrs. Huzzard. I was not in town, you know, when you rested at the Ferry. I heard, however, that a white woman had come up. Who is she?"

They had reached the tent, and Mrs. Huzzard, after a frantic dive toward their very small looking glass, appeared at the door with a smile enchanting, and a courtesy so nicely managed that it nearly took the captain's breath away. It was the very latest of Lavina's teachings.

"Well, now, I'm mighty—hem!—I'm extremely pleased that you have called. Have a nice trip?"

But the society tone of Mrs. Huzzard was so unlike the one he had been accustomed to hearing her use, that the captain could only stare, and before he recovered enough to reply, she turned and beckoned Miss Slocum, with the idea of completing the impression made, and showing with what grace she could present him to her cousin.

But the lately acquired style was lost on him this time, overtopped by the presence of Miss Lavina, who gazed at him with a prolonged and steady stare.

"And this is your friend, Captain Leek, of the Northern Army, is it?" she asked, in her very sharpest voice—a voice she tried to temper with a smile about her lips, though none shone in her eyes. "I have no doubt you will be very welcome to the camp, Captain Leek."

Mrs. Huzzard had surely expected of Lavina a much more gracious reception. But Mrs. Huzzard was a bit of a philosopher, and if Lavina chose to be somewhat cold and unresponsive to the presence of a cultured gentleman, well, it gave Lorena Jane so much better chance, and she was not going to slight it.

"Come right in; you must be dead tired," she said, cordially. "Mr. Max, you'll let Dan know he's here, won't you—that is, when he does show up again, but no one knows how long that will be."

"Yes, I am tired," agreed the captain, meekly, and not quite at his ease with the speculative eyes of Miss Slocum on him. "I—I brought up a few letters that arrived at the Ferry. I can't make up my mind to trust mail with these Indian boatmen Dan employs."

"They are a trial," agreed Mrs. Huzzard, "though they haven't the bad effect on our nerves that one or two of the camp Indians have—an awful squaw, who helps around, and an ugly old man, who only smokes and looks horrible. Now, Lavina—she ain't used to no such, and she just shivers at them."

"Yes—ah—yes," murmured the captain.

"Lavina says she knew folks of your name back in Ohio," continued Mrs. Huzzard, cheerfully, in order to get the two strangers better acquainted. "I thought at first maybe you'd turn out to know each other; but she says they was Democrats," and she turned a sharp glance toward him, as if to read his political tendencies.

"No, I never knew any Captain Leek," said Miss Slocum, "and the ones I knew hadn't any one in the Union Army. Their principles, if they had any, were against it, and there wasn't a Republican in the family."

"Then, of course, that would settle Captain Leek belonging to them," decided Mrs. Huzzard, promptly. "I don't know much about politics, but as all our men folks wore the blue clothes, and fought in them, I was always glad I come from a Republican State. And I guess all the Republicans that carried guns against the Union could be counted without much arithmetic."

"I—I think I will go and look for Dan myself," observed the captain, rising and looking around a little uncertainly at Miss Slocum. "I brought some letters he may want."

He made his bow and placed the picturesque corded hat on his head as he went out. But Mrs. Huzzard looked after him somewhat anxiously.

"He's sick," she decided as he vanished from her view; "I never did see him walk so draggy like. And don't you judge his manners, either, Lavina, from this first sight of him, for he ain't himself to-day."

"He didn't look to me as though he knew who he was," remarked Lavina; and after a little she looked up from the tidy she was knitting. "So, Lorena Jane, that is the man you've been trying to educate yourself up to more than for anybody else—now, tell the truth!"

"Well, I don't mind saying that it was his good manners made me see how bad mine were," she confessed; "but as for training for him—"

"I see," said Miss Lavina, grimly, "and it is all right; but I just thought I'd ask."

Then she relapsed into deep thought, and made the needles click with impatience all that afternoon.

The captain came near the tent once, but retreated at the vision of the knitter. He talked with Mrs. Huzzard in the cabin of Harris, but did not visit her again in her own tent; and the poor woman began to wonder if the air of the Kootenai woods had an erratic influence on people. Dan was changed, Tana was changed, and now the captain seemed unlike himself from the very moment of his arrival. Even Lavina was a bit curt and indifferent, and Lorena Jane wondered where it would end.

In the midst of her perplexity, Tana added to it by appearing before her in the Indian dress Overton had presented her with. Since her sickness it had hung unused in her cabin, and the two women had fashioned garments more suitable, they thought, to a young girl who could wear real laces now if she chose. But this she was again, dressed like any little squaw, and although rather pale to suit the outfit, she said she wanted a few more "Indian hours" before departing for the far-off Eastern city that was to her as a new world.

She received Captain Leek with an unconcern that was discouraging to the pretty speeches he had prepared to utter.

Dan returned and looked sharply at her as she sat whittling a stick of which she said she meant to make a cane—a staff for mountain climbing.

"Where do you intend climbing?" he asked.

She waved the stick toward the hill back of them, the first step of the mountain.

"It is only a few hours since I picked you up down there, looking as if you were dead," he said, impatiently; "and you know you are not fit to tramp."

"Well, I'm not dead yet, anyway," she answered, with a shrug of her shoulders; "and as I'm going to break away from this camp about to-morrow, I thought I'd like to see a bit of the woods first."

"You—are going—to-morrow?"

"I reckon so."

"'Tana! And you have not said a word to me of it? That was not very friendly, little girl."

She did not reply, but bent her head low over her work.

After observing her for a while in silence, he arose and put on his hat.

"Here is my knife," he remarked. "You had better use it, if you are determined to haggle at that stick. Your own knife is too dull for any use. You can leave it here in the cabin when you are done with it."

She accepted it without a word, but flushed red when he had gone, and she found the eyes of Harris regarding her sadly.

"'Not very friendly,'" she said, going over Overton's words—"you think that, too—don't you? You think I'm ugly, and saucy, and awful, I know! You look scoldings at me; but if you knew all, maybe you wouldn't—if you knew that my heart is just about breaking. I'm going out where there is no one to talk to, or I'll be crying next."

The two cousins and the captain were in 'Tana's cabin. Mrs. Huzzard was determined that Miss Slocum and the captain should become acquainted, and, getting sight of the girl, who was walking alone across the level, she at once followed her, thinking that the two left behind would perhaps become more social if left entirely to

themselves. And they did; that is, they talked, and the captain spoke first.

"So you—you bear a grudge—don't you, Lavina?"

"Well, I guess if I owed you a very heavy one, I've got a good chance to pay it off now," she remarked, grimly.

He twirled his hat in a dejected way, and did not speak.

"You an officer in the Union Army?" she continued, derisively. "You a pattern of what a gentleman should be; you to set up as superior to these rough-handed miners; you to act as if this Government owes you a pension! Why, how would it be with you, Alf Leek, if I'd tell this camp the truth of how you went away, engaged to me, twenty-five years ago, and never let me set eyes on you since—of how I wore black for you, thinking you were killed in the war, till I heard that you had deserted. I took off that mourning quick, I can tell you! I thought you were fighting on the wrong side; yet if you had a good reason for being there, you should have staid and fought so long as there was breath in you. And if I was to tell them here that you haven't a particle of right to wear that blue suit that looks like a uniform, and that you were no more 'captain' of anything than I am—well, I guess Lorena Jane wouldn't have much to say to you, though maybe Mr. Overton would."

He grew actually pale as he listened. His fear of some one overhearing her was as great as his own mortification.

"But you—you won't tell—will you, Lavina?" he said pleadingly. "I haven't done any harm! I—"

"Harm! Alf Leek, you never had enough backbone to do either harm or help to any one in this world. But

don't you suppose you did me harm when you spoiled me for ever trusting any other man?"

"I—I would have come back, but I thought you'd be married," he said, in a feeble, hopeless way.

"Likely that is now, ain't it?" she demanded. And, woman-like, now that she had reduced him to meekness and humiliation, she grew a shade less severe, as if pretty well satisfied. "I had other things to think of besides a husband."

"You won't tell—will you, Lavina? I'll tell you how it all happened, some day. Then I'll leave this country."

"You'll not," she contradicted. "You'll stay right here as long as I do, and I won't tell just so long as you keep from trying to make Lorena Jane believe how great you are. But at the first word of your heroic actions, or the cultured society you were always used to—"

"You'll never hear of them," he said eagerly, "never. I knew you wouldn't make trouble, Lavina, for you always were such a good, kind-hearted girl."

He offered his hand to her, sheepishly, and she gave it a vixenish slap.

"Don't try any of your skim-milk praise on me," she said, tartly. "Huh! You, that Lorena thought was a pillar of cultured society! When, the Lord knows, you wouldn't have known how to read the addresses on your own letters if I hadn't taught you!"

He moved to the door in a crestfallen manner, and stood there a moment, moistening his lips, and apparently swallowing words that could not be uttered.

"That's so, Lavina," he said, at last, and went out.

"There!" she muttered aggrievedly—"that's Alf Leek, just as he always was. Give him a chance, and he'd ride over any one; but get the upper hand of him, and he is

meeker than Moses. Not that much meekness is needed to come up to Moses, either." Then, after an impatient tattoo, she exclaimed:

"Gracious me! I do wish he hadn't looked so crushed, and had talked back a little."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MURDER.

That evening, as the dusk fell, a slight figure in an Indian dress slipped to the low brush back of the cabin, and thence to the uplands.

It was 'Tana, ready to endure all the wilds of the woods, rather than stay there and meet again the man she had met the night before. She had sent the squaw away; she had arranged in Mrs. Huzzard's tent a little game of cards that would hold the attention of Lyster and the others; and then she had slipped away, that she might, for just once more, feel free on the mountain, as she had felt when they first located their camp in the sweet grass of the Twin Springs.

The moon would be up after a while. She could not walk far, but she meant to sit somewhere up there in the high ground until the moon should roll up over the far mountains.

The mere wearing of the Indian dress gave her a feeling of being herself once more, for in the pretty conventional dress made for her by Mrs. Huzzard, she felt like another girl—a girl she did not know very well.

In the southwest long streaks of red and yellow lay across the sky, and a clear radiance filled the air, as it does when a new moon is born after the darkness. She felt the beauty of it all, and stretched out her arms as though to draw the peaks of the hills to her.

But, as she stepped forward, a form arose before her—a tall, decided form, and a decided voice said:

"No, 'Tana, you have gone far enough."

"Dan!"

"Yes—it is Dan this time, and not the other fellow. If he is waiting for you to-night, I will see that he waits a long time."

"You—you!" she murmured, and stepped back from him. Then, her first fright over, she straightened herself defiantly.

"Why do you think any one is waiting for me?" she demanded. "What do you know? I am heartsick with all this hiding, and—and deceit. If you know the truth, speak out, and end it all!"

"I can't say any more than you know already," he answered—"not so much; but last night a man was in your cabin, a man you know and quarreled with. I didn't hear you; don't think I was spying on you. A miner who passed the cabin heard your voices and told me something was wrong. You don't give me any right to advise you or dictate to you. 'Tana, but one thing you shall not do, that is, steal to the woods to meet him. And if I find him in your cabin, I promise you he sha'n't die of old age."

"You would kill him?"

"Like a snake!" and his voice was harsher, colder, than she had ever heard it. "I'm not asking you any questions, 'Tana. I know it was the man whom you—saw that night at the spring, and would not let me follow. I know there is something wrong, or he would come to see you, like a man, in daylight. If the others here knew it, they would say things not kind to you. And that is why it sha'n't go on."

"Sha'n't? What right have you—to—to—"

"You will say none," he answered, curtly, "because you do not know."

"Do not know what?" she interrupted, but he only drew a deep breath and shook his head.

"Tana, don't meet this man again," he said, pleadingly. "Trust me to judge for you. I don't want to be harsh with you. I don't want you to go away with hard thoughts against me. But this has got to stop—you must promise me."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I'd look for the man, and he never would meet you again."

A little shiver ran over her as he spoke. She knew what he meant, and, despite her bitter words last night to her visitor, the thought was horrible to her that Dan—

She covered her face with her hands and turned away.

"Don't do that, little girl," he said, and laid his hand on her arm. "'Tana!"

She flung off his hand as though it stung her, and into her mind flashed remembrance of Jake Emmons from Spokane—of him and his words.

"Don't touch me!" she half sobbed. "Don't you say another word to me! I am going away to-morrow, and I have promised to marry Max Lyster."

His hand dropped to his side, and his face shone white in the wan glimmer of the stars.

"You have promised that?" he said, at last, drawing his breath hard through his shut teeth. "Well—it is right, I suppose—right. Come! I will take you back to him now. He is the best one to guard you. Come!"

She drew away and looked from him across to where the merest rim of the rising moon was to be seen across

the hills. The thought of that other night came to her, the night when they had stood close to each other in the moonlight. How happy she had been for that one little space of time! And now—Ah! she scarcely dare allow him to speak kindly to her, lest she grow weak enough to long for that blind content once more.

"Come, 'Tana."

"Go. I will follow after a little," she answered, without turning her head.

"I may never trouble you to walk with you again," he said, in a low, constrained tone; "but this time I must see you safe in the tent before I leave."

"Leave! Going! Where to?" she asked, and her voice trembled in spite of herself. She clasped her hands tightly, and he could see the flash of the ring he had given her. She had put it on with the Indian dress.

"That does not matter much, does it?" he returned; "but somewhere, far enough up the lake not to trouble you again while you stay. Come."

She walked beside him without another word; words seemed so useless. She had said words over and over again to herself all that day—words of his wrong to her in not telling her of that other woman, words of reproach, bitter and keen; yet none of her reasoning kept her from wanting to touch his hand as he walked beside her.

But she did not. Even when they reached the level by the springs, she only looked her farewell to him, but did not speak.

"Good-by," he said, in a voice that was not like Dan's voice.

She merely bowed her head, and walked away toward the tent where she heard Mrs. Huzzard laughing.

She halted near the cabin, and then hurried on, dreading to enter it yet, lest she should meet the man she was trying to avoid.

Overton watched her until she reached the tent. The moon had just escaped the horizon, and threw its soft, misty light over all the place. He pulled his hat low over his eyes, and, turning, took the opposite direction.

Only a few minutes elapsed when Lyster remembered he had promised Dan to look after Harris, and rose to go to the cabin.

"I will go, too," said 'Tana, filled with nervous dread lest he encounter some one on her threshold, though she had all reason to expect that her disguised visitor had come and gone ere that.

"Well, well, 'Tana, you are a restless mortal," said Mrs. Huzzard. "You've only just come, and now you must be off again. What did you do that you wanted to be all alone for this evening? Read verses, I'll go bail."

"No, I didn't read verses," answered 'Tana. "But you needn't go along to the cabin."

"Well, I will then. You are not fit to sleep alone. And, if it wasn't for the beastly snakes!—"

"We will go and see Harris," said the girl, and so they entered his cabin, where he sat alone with a bright light burning.

Some newspapers, brought by the captain, were spread before him on a rough reading stand rigged up by one of the miners.

He looked pale and tired, as though the effort of perusing them had been rather too much for him.

Listen as she might, the girl could hear never a sound from her own cabin. She stood by the blanket door,

connecting the two rooms, but not a breath came to her. She sighed with relief at the certainty that he had come and gone. She would never see him again.

"Shall I light your lamp?" asked Lyster; and, scarce waiting for a reply, he drew back the blanket and entered the darkness of the other cabin.

Two of the miners came to the door just then, detailed to look after Harris for the night. One was the good-natured, talkative Emmons.

"Glad to see you are so much better, miss," he said, with an expansive smile. "But you scared the wits nearly out of me this morning."

Then they heard the sputter of a match in the next room, and a sharp, startled cry from Lyster, as the blaze gave a feeble light to the interior.

He staggered back among the rest, with the dying match in his fingers, and his face ashen gray.

"Snakes!" half screamed Mrs. Huzzard. "Oh, my! oh, my!"

Tana, after one look at Lyster, tried to enter the room, but he caught and held her.

"Don't, dear!—don't go in there! It's awful—awful!"

"What's wrong?" demanded one of the miners, and picked up a lamp from beside Harris.

"Look! It is Akkomi!" answered Lyster.

At the name Tana broke from him and ran into the room, even before the light reached it.

But she did not take many steps. Her foot struck against something on the floor, an immovable body and a silent one.

"Akkomi—sure enough," said the miner, as he saw the Indian's blanket. "Drunk, I suppose—Indian fashion."

But as he held the light closer, he took hold of the girl's arm, and tried to lead her from the scene.

"You'd better leave this to us, miss," he added, in a grave tone. "The man ain't drunk. He's been murdered!"

Tana, white as death itself, shook off his grasp and stood with tightly clasped hands, unheeding the words of horror around her, scarce hearing the shriek of Mrs. Huzzard, as that lady, forgetful even of the snakes, sank to the floor, a very picture of terror.

Tana saw the roll of money scattered over the couch; the little bag of free gold drawn from under the pillow. He had evidently been stooping to secure it when the assassin crept behind him and left him dead there, with a knife sticking between his shoulders.

"The very knife you had to-day!" said Lyster, horror-stricken at the sight.

The miner with the lamp turned and looked at her strangely, and his eyes dropped from her face to her clasped hands, on which the ring of the snakes glittered.

"Your knife?" he asked, and others, attracted by Mrs. Huzzard's scream, stood around the doors and looked at her too.

She nodded her head, scarce understanding the significance of it, and never taking her eyes from the dead man, whose face was yet hidden.

"He may not be dead," she said, at last. "Look!"

"Oh, he's dead, safe enough," and Emmons lifted his hand. "Was he trying to rob you?"

"I—no—I don't know," she answered, vaguely.

Then another man turned the body over, and utter surprise was on every face; for, though it was Akkomi's blanket, it was a much younger man who lay there.

"A white man, by Heavens!" said the miner who had first entered. "A white man, with brown paint on his face and hands! But, look here!" and he pulled down the collar of the dead man's shirt, and showed a skin fair as a child's.

"Something terribly crooked here," he continued. "Where is Overton?"

Overton! At the name her very heart grew cold within her. Had he not threatened he would kill the man who visited her at night? Had he come straight to the cabin after leaving her? Had he kept his word? Had he—

"I think Overton left camp after supper—started for the lake," answered some one.

"Well, we'll do our best to get it straight without him, then. Some of you see what time it is. This man has been dead about a half hour. Mr. Lyster, you had better write down all about it; and, if any one here has any information to give, let him have it."

His eyes were on the girl's face, but she said nothing, and he bent to wipe off the stain from the dead man's face. Some one brought water, and in a little while was revealed the decidedly handsome face of a man about forty-five years old.

"Do any of you know him?" asked the miner, who, by circumstance, appeared to have been given the office of speaker—"look—all of you."

One after another the men approached, but shook their heads; until an old miner, gray-haired and weather-beaten, gave vent to a half-smothered oath at sight of him.

"Know him?" he exclaimed. "Well, I do, though it's five years since I saw him. Heavens! I'd rather have found him alive than dead, though, for there is a stand-

ing reward offered for him by two States. Why, it's the card-sharper, horse-thief and renegade—Lee Holly!"

"But who could have killed him?"

"That is Overton's knife," said one of the men.

"But Overton had not had it since noon," said Tana, speaking for the first time in explanation. "I borrowed it then."

"You borrowed it? For what?"

"Oh—I forget. To cut a stick with, I think."

"You think. I'm sorry to speak rough to a lady, miss, but this is a time for knowing—not thinking."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Lyster.

The man looked at him squarely.

"Nothing to offend innocent folks," he answered. "A murder has been done in this lady's room, with a knife she acknowledges she has had possession of. It's natural enough to question her first of all."

The color had crept into her face once more. She knew what the man meant, and knew that the longer they looked on her with suspicion, the more time Overton would have to escape. Then, when they learned they were on a false scent, it would be late—too late to start after him. She wished he had taken the money and the gold. She shuddered as she thought him a murderer—the murderer of that man; but, with what skill she could, she would keep them off his track.

Her thoughts ran fast, and a half smile touched her lips. Even with that dead body at her feet, she was almost happy at the hope of saving him. The others noticed it, and looked at her in wonder. Lyster said:

"You are right. But Miss Rivers could know nothing of this. She has been with us since the moon rose, and that is more than a half-hour."

"No, only fifteen minutes," said one of the men.

"Well, where were you for the half-hour before the moon rose?" asked the man who seemed examiner.

"That is really the time most interesting to this case."

"Why, good heavens, man!" cried Lyster, but 'Tana interrupted:

"I was walking up on the hill about that time."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

Mrs. Huzzard groaned dismally, and Lyster caught 'Tana by the hand.

"'Tana! think what you 're saying. You don't realize how serious this is."

"One more question," and the man looked at her very steadily. "Were you not expecting this man to-night?"

"I sha'n't answer any more of your questions," she answered, coldly.

Lyster turned on the man with clenched hands and a face white with anger.

"How dare you insult her with such a question?" he asked, hoarsely. "How could it be possible for Miss Rivers to know this renegade horse-thief?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the man, drawing a long breath and looking at the girl. "It ain't a pleasant thing to do; but as we have no courts up here, we have to straighten out crimes in a camp the best way we can. My name is Saunders. That man over there is right—this is Lee Holly; and I am sure now that I saw him leave this cabin last night. I passed the cabin and heard voices—hers and a man's. I heard her say: 'While I can't quite decide to kill you myself, I hope some one else will.' The rest of their words were not so clear. I

told Overton when he came back, but the man was gone then. You ask me how I dare think she could tell something of this if she chose. Well, I can't help it. She is wearing a ring I'll swear I saw Lee Holly wear, three years ago, at a card table in Seattle. I'll swear it! And he is lying here dead in her room, with a knife sticking in him that she had possession of to-day. Now, gentlemen, what do you think of it yourselves?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD-BY.

"Oh, 'Tana, it is awful—awful!" and poor Mrs. Huzard rocked herself in a spasm of woe. "And to think that you won't say a word—not a single word! It just breaks my heart."

"Now, now! I'll say lots of things if you will talk of something besides murders. And I'll mend your broken heart when this trouble is all over, you will see!"

"Over! I'm mightily afraid it is only commencing. And you that cool and indifferent you are enough to put one crazy! Oh, if Dan Overton was only here."

The girl smiled. All the hours of the night had gone by. He had at least twelve hours' start, and the men of the camp had not yet suspected him for even a moment. They had questioned Harris, and he told them, by signs, that no man had gone through his cabin, no one had been in since dark; but he had heard a movement in the other room. The knife he had seen 'Tana take into the other room long before dark.

"And some one quarreling with this Holly—or following him—may have chanced on it and used it," contested Lyster, who was angered, dismayed, and puzzled at 'Tana, quite as much as at the finding of the body. Her answers to all questions were so persistently detrimental to her own cause.

"Don't be uneasy—they won't hang me," she assured him. "Think of them hanging any one for killing Lee Holly! The man who did it—if he knows whom he was settling for—was a fool not to face the camp and get credit for it. Every man would have shaken hands with him. But just because there is a little mystery about it, they try to make it out a crime. Pooh!"

"Oh, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Huzzard, totally scandalized. "A murder! Of course it is a crime—the greatest."

"I don't think so. It is a greater crime to bring a soul into the world and then neglect it—let it drift into any hell on earth that nets it—than it is to send a soul out of the world, to meet heaven, if it deserves it. There are times when murder is justifiable, but there are certain other crimes that nothing could ever justify."

"Why, 'Tana?" and Mrs. Huzzard looked at her helplessly. But Miss Slocum gave the girl a more understanding regard.

"You speak very bitterly for a young girl; as if you had thought a great deal on this question."

"I have," she acknowledged, promptly; "you think it is not a very nice question for girls to study about, don't you? Well, it isn't nice, but it's true. I happen to be one of the souls dragged into life by people who didn't think they had responsibilities. Miss Slocum, maybe that is why I am extra bitter on the subject."

"But not—not against your parents, 'Tana?" said Mrs. Huzzard, in dismay.

The girl's mouth drew hard and unlovely at the question.

"I don't know much about religion," she said, after a little, "and I don't know that it matters much—now

don't faint, Mrs. Huzzard! but I'm pretty certain old married men who had families were the ones who laid down the law about children in the Bible. They say 'spare the rod and spoil the child,' and then say 'honor your father and mother.' They seem to think it a settled thing that all fathers and mothers are honorable—but they ain't; and that all children need beating—and they don't."

"Oh, 'Tana!"

"And I think it is that one-sided commandment that makes folks think that all the duty must go from children to the parents, and not a word is said of the duty people owe to the souls they bring into the world. I don't think it's a square deal."

"A square deal! Why, 'Tana!"

"Isn't it so?" she asked, moodily. "You think a girl is a pretty hard case if she doesn't give proper respect and duty to her parents; don't you? But suppose they are the sort of people no one can respect—what then? Seems to me the first duty is from the parent to the children—the duty of caring for them, loving them, and teaching them right. A child can't owe a debt of duty when it never received the duties it should have first. Oh, I may not say this clearly as I feel it."

"But you know, 'Tana," said Miss Slooam, "that if there is no commandment as to parents giving care to their children, it is only because it is so plainly a natural thing to do that it was unnecessary to command it."

"No more natural than for a child to honor any person who is honorable, or to love the parent who loves him, and teaches him rightly. Huh! If a child is not able to love and respect a parent, it is the child who loses the most."

Miss Slocum looked at her sadly.

"I can't scold you as I would try to scold many a one in your place," she said, "for I feel as if you must have traveled over some long, hard path of troubles, before you could reach this feeling you have. But, 'Tana, think of brighter things; young girls should never drift into those perplexing questions. They will make you melancholy if you brood on such things."

"Melancholy? Well, I think not," and she smiled and shrugged her shoulders. "Seems to me I'm the least gloomy person in camp this morning. All the rest of you look as though Mr. Holly had been your bosom friend."

She talked recklessly—they thought heartlessly—of the murder, and the two women were strongly inclined to think the shock of the affair had touched her brain, for she showed no concern whatever as to her own position, but treated it as a joke. And when she realized that she was to a certain extent under guard, she seemed to find amusement in that, too. Her expressions, when the cousins grew pitiful over the handsome face of Holly, were touched with ridicule.

"I wonder if there was ever a man too low and vile to get woman's pity, if he only had a pretty face," she said, caustically. "If he was an ugly, old, half-decent fellow, you wouldn't be making any soft-hearted surmises as to what he might have been under different circumstances. He has spoiled the lives of several tender-hearted women like you—yet you pity him!"

"'Tana, I never knew you to be so set against any one as you are against that poor dead man," declared Mrs. Huzzard. "Not so much wonder the folks think you know how it happened, for you always had a help-

ing word for the worst old tramp or beggarly Indian that came around; but for this man you have nothing but unkindness."

"No," agreed the girl, "and you would like to think him a romantic victim of somebody, just because he is so good-looking. I'm going to talk to Harris. He won't sympathize with the wrong side, I am sure."

He looked up eagerly as she entered, his eyes full of anxious question. She touched his hand kindly and sat close beside him as she talked.

"You want to know all about it, don't you?" she asked, softly. "Well, it is all over. He was alive, after all, and I would not believe it. But now you need never trail him again, you can rest now, for he is dead. Somebody else has—has owed him a grudge, too. They think I am the somebody, but you don't believe that?"

He shook his head decidedly.

"No," she continued; "though for one moment, Joe, I thought that it might have been you. Yes, I did; for of course I knew it was only weakness would keep you from it, if you were in reach of him. But I remembered at once that it could not be, for the hand that struck him was strong."

He assented in his silent way, and watched her face closely, as if to read the shadows of thought thrown on it by her feelings.

"It's awful, ain't it?" she whispered. "It is what I said I hoped for, and just yet I can't be sorry—I can't! But, after this stir is all over, I know it will trouble me, make me sorry because I am not sorry now. I can't cry, but I do feel like screaming. And see! every once in a while my hands tremble; I tremble all over. Oh, it is awful!"

She buried her face in her hands. Only to him did she show any of the feeling with which the death of the man touched her.

"And you can't tell me anything of how it was done?" she said, at last. "You so near—did you see any one?"

She longed to ask if he had seen Overton, but dared not utter his name, lest he might suspect as she did. Each hour that went by was an added gain to her for him. Of course he had struck, not knowing who the man was. If he had known, it would have been so easy to say, "I found him robbing the cabin. I killed him," and there would have been no further question concerning it.

"But if all the other bars were beaten down between us; this one would keep me from ever shaking hands with him again. Why should it have been he out of all the camp? Oh, it makes my heart ache!"

While she sat thus, with miserable thoughts, others came to the door, and looking up, she saw Akkomi, who looked on her with keen, accusing eyes.

"No—it is not true; Akkomi," she said, in his own jargon. "Keep silent for a little while of the things these people do not know—a little while, and then I can tell you who it is I am shielding, but not yet."

"Him!" and the eyes of the Indian turned to the paralytic.

"No—not him; truly not," she said, earnestly. "It is some one you would want to help if you knew—some one who is going fast on the path from these people. They will learn soon it is not I; but till then, keep silence."

"Dan—where?" he asked, laconically, and her face paled at the question.

Had he any reason to suspect the dread in her own mind? But a moment's thought reassured her. He had asked simply because Overton seemed always to him the controlling spirit of the camp, and Overton was the one he would have speech with, if any.

"Overton left last night for the lake," explained Lyster, who had entered and heard the name of Dan and the interrogative tone. Then the blanket was brought to Akkomi—his blanket, in which the man had died.

"I sold it to the white man—that is all," he answered through 'Tana; and more than that he would not say except to inform them he would wait for Dan. Which was, in fact, the general desire of the committee organized to investigate.

They all appeared to be waiting for Dan. Lyster did not by any means fill his place, simply because Lyster's interest in 'Tana was too apparent, and there was little of the cool quality of reason in his attitude toward the mysterious case. He did not believe the ring she wore had belonged to Holly, though she refused to tell the source from which it had reached her. He did not believe the man who said he heard that war of words at her cabin in the evening—at least, when others were about, he acted as if he did not believe it. But when he and 'Tana chanced to be alone, she felt the doubt there must be in his mind, and a regret for him touched her. For his sake she was sorry, but not sorry enough to clear the mystery at the expense of that other man she thought she was shielding.

Captain Leek had been dispatched with all speed to the lake works, that Seldon, Haydon, and Overton might be informed of the trouble in camp, and hasten back to settle it. To send for them was the only thing

Lyster thought of doing, for he himself felt powerless against the lot of men, who were not harsh or rude in any way, but who simply wanted to know "why"—so many "whys" that he could not answer.

Not less trying to him were the several who persisted in asserting that she had done a commendable thing—that the country ought to feel grateful to her, for the man had made trouble along the Columbia for years. He and his confederates had done ugly work along the border, etc., etc.

"Sorry you asked me, Max?" she said, seeing his face grow gloomy under their cheering (?) assertions.

He did not answer at once, afraid his impatience with her might make itself apparent in his speech.

"No, I'm not sorry," he said, at last; "but I shall be relieved when the others arrive from the lake. Since you utterly refuse to confide even in me, you render me useless as to serving you; and—well—I can't feel flattered that you confide in me no more than in the strangers here."

"I know," she agreed, with a little sigh, "it is hard on you, and it will be harder still if the story of this should ever creep out of the wilderness to the country where you come from—wouldn't it?" and she looked at him very sharply, noting the swift color flush his face, as though she had read his thoughts. "Yes—so it's lucky, Max, that we haven't talked to others about that little conditional promise, isn't it? So it will be easier to forget, and no one need know."

"You mean you think me the sort of fellow to break our engagement just because these fools have mixed you up with this horror?" he asked, angrily. "You've no right to think that of me; neither have you the

right—in justice to me as well as yourself—to maintain this very suggestive manner about all things connected with the murder. Why can you not tell more clearly where your time was spent last evening? Why will you not tell where the ring came from? Why will you see me half-frantic over the whole miserable affair, when you could, I am sure, easily change it?"

"Oh, Max, I don't want to worry you—indeed I don't! But—" and she smiled mirthlessly. "I told you once I was a 'hoodoo.' The people who like me are always sure to have trouble brewing for them. That is why I say you had better give me up, Max; for this is only the beginning."

"Don't talk like that; it is folly," he said, in a sharp tone. "'Hoodoo!' Nonsense! When Overton and the others arrive, they will find a means of changing the ideas of these people, in spite of your reticence; and then maybe old Akkomi may find words, too. He sits outside the door as impassive as the clay image you gave me and bewitched me with."

She smiled faintly, thinking of those days—how very long ago they seemed, yet it was this same summer.

"I feel as if I had lived a long time since I played with that clay," she said, wistfully; "so many things have been made different for me."

Then she arose and walked about the little room restlessly, while the eyes of Harris never left her. Into the other room she had not gone at all, for in it was the dead stranger.

"When do you look for your uncle and Mr. Haydon?" she asked, at last, for the silences were hardest to endure.

She would laugh, or argue, or ridicule—do anything rather than sit silent with questioning eyes upon her. She even grew to fancy that Harris must accuse her—he watched her so!

“When do we look for them? Well, I don’t dare let myself decide. I only hope they may have made a start back, and will meet the captain on his way. As to Dan—he had not so very much the start, and they ought to catch up with him, for there were the two Indian canoists—the two best ones; and when they are racing over the water, with an object, they surely ought to make better time than he. I can’t see that he had any very pressing reason for going at all.”

“He doesn’t talk much about his reasons,” she answered.

“No; that’s a fact,” he agreed, “and less of late than when I knew him first. But he’ll make Akkomi talk, maybe, when he arrives—and I hope you, too.”

“When he arrives!”

She thought the words, but did not say them aloud. She sat long after Max had left her, and thought how many hours must elapse before they discovered that Dan had not followed the other men to the lake works. She felt sure that he was somewhere in the wilderness, avoiding the known paths, alone, and perhaps hating her as the cause of his isolation, because she would not confess what the man was to her, but left him blindly to keep his threat, and kill him when found in her room.

Ah! why not have trusted him with the whole truth? She asked herself the question as she sat there, but the mere thought of it made her face grow hot, and her jaws set defiantly.

She would not—she could not! so she told herself.

Better—better far be suspected of a murder—live all her life under the blame of it for him—than to tell him of a past that was dead to her now, a past she hated, and from which she had determined to bar herself as far as silence could build the wall. And to tell him—*him*—she could not.

But even as she sat, with her burning face in her hands, quick, heavy steps came to the door, halted, and looking up she found Dan before her.

"Oh! you should not," she whispered, hurriedly. "Why did you come back? They do not suspect; they think I did it—and so—"

"What does this all mean?—what do *you* mean?" he asked. "Can't you speak?"

It seemed she could not find any more words, she stared at him so helplessly.

"Max, come here!" he called, to hasten steps already approaching. "Come, all of you; I had only a moment to listen to the captain when he caught up with me. But he told me she is suspected of murder—that a ring she wore last night helped the suspicion on. I didn't wait to hear any more, for I gave the little girl that snake ring—gave it to her weeks ago. I bought it from a miner, and he told me he got it from an Indian near Karlo. Now are you ready to suspect me, too, because I had it first?"

"The ring wasn't just the most important bit of circumstantial evidence, Mr. Overton," answered the man named Saunders; "and we are all mighty glad you've got here. It was in her room the man was found, and a knife she borrowed from you was what killed him; and of where she was just about the time the thing happened she won't say anything."

His face paled slightly as he looked at her and heard the brief summing up of the case.

"My knife?" he said, blankly.

"Yes, sir. When some one said it was your knife, she spoke up and said it was, but that you had not had it since noon, for she borrowed it then to cut a stick; but beyond that she don't tell a thing."

"Who is the man?"

"The renegade—Lee Holly."

"Lee Holly!" He turned a piercing glance on Harris, remembering the deep interest he had shown in that man Lee Holly and his partner, "Monte."

Harris met his gaze without flinching, and nodded his head as if in assent.

And that was the man found dead in her room!

The faces of the people seemed for a moment an indistinct blur before his eyes; then he rallied and turned to her.

"Tana, you never did it," he said, reassuringly; "or if you did, it has been justifiable, and I know it. If it was necessary to do it in any self-defense, don't be afraid to tell it all plainly. No one would blame you. It is only this mystery that makes them want to hear the truth."

She only looked at him. Was he acting? Did he himself know nothing? The hope that it was so—that she had deceived herself—made her tremble as she had not at danger to herself. She had risen to her feet as he entered, but she swayed as if to fall, and he caught her, not knowing it was hope instead of despair that took the color from her face and left her helpless.

"Courage, Tana! Tell us what you can. I left you

just as the moon came up. I saw you go to Mrs. Huzzard's tent. Now, where did you go after that?"

"What?" almost shouted Lyster. "You were with her when the moon rose. Are you sure?"

"Sure? Of course I am. Why?"

"And how long before that, Mr. Overton?" asked Saunders; "for that is a very important point."

"About a half-hour, I should say—maybe a little more," he answered, staring at them. "Now, what important thing does that prove?"

One of the men gave a cheer; three or four had come up to the door when they saw Overton, and they took the yell up with a will. Mrs. Huzzard started to run from the tent, but grew so nervous that she had to wait until Miss Slocum came to her aid.

"What in the world does it mean?" she gasped.

Saunders turned around with an honestly pleased look.

"It means that Mr. Overton here has brought word that clears Miss Rivers of being at the cabin when the murder was done—that's what it means; and we are all too glad over it to keep quiet. But why in the world didn't you tell us that, miss?"

But she did not say a word. All about Dan were exclamations and disjointed sentences, from which he could gain little actual knowledge, and he turned to Lyster, impatiently:

"Can't you tell me—can't some of you tell me, what I have cleared up for her? When was this killing supposed to be done?"

"At or a little before moonrise," said Max, his face radiant once more. "'Tana—don't you know what he has done for you? taken away all of that horribly mis-

taken suspicion you let rest on you. Where was she, Dan?"

"Last night? Oh, up above the bluff there—went up when the pretty red lights were in the sky, and staid until the moon rose. I came across her up there, and advised her not to range away alone; so, when she got good and ready, she walked back again, and went to the tent where you folks were. Then I struck the creek, decided I would take a run up the lake, and left without seeing any of you again. And all this time 'Tana has had a guard over her. Some of you must have been crazy."

"Well, then, I guess I was the worst lunatic of the lot," confessed Saunders. "But to tell the truth, Mr. Overton, it looks to me now as if she encouraged suspicion—yes, it does. 'Overton's knife,' said some one; but, quick as could be, she spoke up and said it was she who had it, and she didn't mind just where she left it. And as to where she was at that time, well, she just wouldn't give us a bit of satisfaction. Blest if I don't think she wanted us to suspect her."

"Oh!" he breathed, as if in understanding, and her first words swept back to him, her nervous—"Why did you come back? They suspect me!" Surely that cry was as a plea for his own safety; it spoke through eyes and voice as well as words. Some glimmer of the truth came to him.

"Come, 'Tana!" he said, and reached his hand to her. "Where is the man—Holly? I should like to go in. Will you come, too?"

She rose without a word, and no one attempted to follow them.

Mrs. Huzzard heaved a prodigious sigh of content.

"Oh, that girl Montana!" she exclaimed. "I declare she ain't like any girl I ever did see! This morning, when she was a suspected criminal, she was talky, and even laughed, and now that she's cleared, she won't lift her head to look at any one. I do wonder if that sort of queerness is catching in these woods. I declare I feel most scared enough to leave."

But Lyster reassured her.

"Remember how sick she has been; and think what a shock this whole affair has been to weak nerves," he said, for with Dan's revelations he had grown blissfully content once more, "and as for that fellow hearing voices in her cabin—nonsense! She had been reading some poem or play aloud. She is fond of reading so, and does it remarkably well. He heard her spouting in there for the benefit of Harris, and imagined she was making threats to some one. Poor little gir'! I'm determined she sha'n't remain here any longer."

"Are you?" asked Mrs. Huzzard, dryly. "Well, Mr. Max, so long as I've known her, I've always found 'Tana makes her own determinations—and sticks to them, too."

"I'm glad to be reminded of that," he retorted, "for she promised me yesterday to marry me some time."

"Bless my soul!"

"If she didn't change her mind," he added, laughingly.

"To marry you! Well, well, well!" and she stared at him so queerly, that a shade of irritation crossed his face.

"Why not?" he asked. "Don't you think that a plain, ordinary man is good enough for your wild-flower of the Kootenai hills?"

"Oh, you're not plain at all, Mr. Max Lyster," she returned, "and I'll go bail many a woman who is smarter than either 'Tana or me has let you know it! It ain't the plainness—it's the difference. And—well, well! you know you've been quarreling ever since you met."

"But that is all over now," he promised; "and haven't you a good wish for us?"

"Indeed I have, then—a many of them, but you have surprised me. I used to think that's how it would end; and then—well, then, a different notion got in my head. Now that it's settled, I do hope you will be happy. Bless the child! I'll go and tell her so this minute."

"No," he said, quickly, "let her and Dan have their talk out—if she will talk to him. That fever left her queer in some things, and one of them is her avoidance of Dan. She hasn't been free and friendly with him as she used to be, and it is too bad; for he is such a good fellow, and would do anything for her."

"Yes, he would," assented Mrs. Huzzard.

"And she will be her own spirited self in a few weeks—when she gets away from here—and gets stronger. She'll appreciate Dan more after a while, for there are few like him. And so—as she is to go away so soon, I hope something will put them on their former confidential footing. Maybe this murder will be the something."

"You are a good friend, Mr. Max," said the woman slowly, "and you deserve to be a lucky lover. I'm sure I hope so."

Within the cabin, those two of whom they spoke stood together beside the dead outlaw, and their words were low—so low that the paralyzed man in the next room listened in vain.

"And you believed that of me—of me?" he asked, and she answered, falteringly:

"How did I know? You said—you threatened—you would kill him—any man you found in here. So, when he was here dead, I—did not know."

"And you thought I had stuck that knife in him and left?"

She nodded her head.

"And you thought," he continued, in a voice slightly tremulous, "that you were giving me a chance to escape just so long as you let them suspect—you?"

She did not answer, but turned toward the door. He held his arm out and barred her way.

"Only a moment!" he said, pleadingly. "It never can be that—that I would be anything to you, little girl—never, never! But—just once—let me tell you a truth that shall never hurt you, I swear! I love you! No other word but that will tell your dearness to me. I—I never would have said it, but—but what you risked for me has broken me down. It has told me more than your words would tell me, and I—Oh, God! my God!"

She shrank from the passion in his words and tone, but the movement only made him catch her arm and hold her there. Tears were in his eyes as he looked at her, and his jaws were set firmly.

"You are afraid of me—of me?" he asked. "Don't be. Life will be hard enough now without leaving me that to remember. I'm not asking a word in return from you; I have no right. You will be happy somewhere else—and with some one else—and that is right."

He still held her wrist, and they stood in silence. She could utter no word; but her mouth trembled and she tried to smother a sob that arose in her throat.

But he heard it.

"Don't!" he said, almost in a whisper—"for God's sake, don't cry. I can't stand that—not your tears. Here! be brave! Look up at me, won't you? See! I don't ask you for a word or a kiss or a thought when you leave me—only let me see your eyes! Look at me!"

What he read in her trembling lips and her shrinking, shamed eyes made him draw his breath hard through his shut teeth.

"My brave little girl!" he said softly. "You will think harshly of me for this some day—if you ever know—know all. But what you did this morning made a coward of me—that and my longing for you. Try to forgive me. Or, no—you had better not. And when you are his wife—Oh, it's no use—I can't think or speak of that—yet. Good-by, little girl—good-by!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

LEAVING CAMP.

Afterward, Tana never could remember clearly the incidents of the few days that followed. Only once more she entered the cabin of death, and that was when Mr. Haydon and Mr. Seldon returned with all haste to the camp, after meeting with Captain Leek and the Indian boatman.

Then, as some of the men offered to go with them to view the remains of the outlaw, she came forward.

"No. I will take them," she said.

When Mr. Haydon demurred, feeling that a young girl should be kept as much as possible from such scenes, she had laid her hand on Seldon's arm.

"Come!" she said, and they went with her.

But when inside the door, she did not approach the blanket-covered form stretched on the couch; only pointed toward it, and stood herself like a guard at the entrance.

When Seldon lifted the Indian blanket from the face, he uttered a startled exclamation, and looked strangely at her. She never turned around.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Haydon.

No one replied, and as he looked with anxiety toward the form there, his face grew ashen in its horror.

"Lord in heaven!" he gasped; "first her on that bed

and now *him!* I—I feel as if I was haunted in this camp. Seldon, is it—is it—”

“No mistake possible,” answered the other man, decidedly. “I could swear to the identity. It is George Rankin!”

“And Holly, the renegade!” added Haydon, in consternation; “and Lord only knows how many other aliases he has worn. Oh, what a sensation the papers would make over this if they got hold of it all. My! my! it would be awful! And that girl, Montana, as she calls herself, she has been clever to keep it quiet as she has, for—Oh, Lord!”

“What is the matter now? You look fairly sick,” said the other, impatiently. “I didn’t fancy you’d grieve much over his death.”

“No, it isn’t that,” said Haydon, huskily. “But that girl—don’t you see she was accused of this? And—well seeing who he is, how do we know—”

He stopped awkwardly, unable to continue with the girl herself so near and with Seldon’s warning glance directed to him.

She leaned against the wall, and apparently had not heard their words. Seldon’s face softened as he looked at her; and, going over, he put his hand kindly on her hair.

“I am going to be your uncle, now,” he said in a caressing tone. “You have kept up like a soldier under some terrible things here; but we will try to make things brighter for you now.”

She smiled in a dreary way without looking at him. His knowledge of the terrible things she had endured seemed to her very limited.

“And you will go now with us—with Mr. Haydon—”

back to your mother's old home, won't you?" he said, in a persuasive way. "It is not good, you know, for a little girl not to know any of her relations, or to bear such shocking grudges," he added, in a lower tone.

But she gave him no answering smile.

"I will go to your house if you will have me," she said. "You and Max are my friends. I will go only with people I like."

"You know, my dear," said Mr. Haydon, who heard her last words. "You know I offered you a home in my house until such time as you got to school, and—and of course, I'll stick to it."

"Though you are a little afraid to risk it, aren't you?" she asked, with an unpleasant smile. "Haven't you an idea that I might murder you all in your beds some fine night? You know I belong to a country where they do such things for pastime. Aren't you afraid?"

"That is a very horrible sort of pleasantry," he answered, and moved away from the dead face he had been staring at. "I beg you will not indulge in it, especially when you move in a society more refined than these mining camps can afford. It will be a disadvantage to you if you carry with you customs and memories of this unfinished section. And after all, you do not belong here, your family was of the East. When you go back there, it would be policy for you to forget that you had ever lived anywhere else."

Mr. Haydon had never made so long a speech to her before, and it was delivered with a certain persistence, as if it was a matter of conscience he would be relieved to have off his mind.

"I think you are mistaken when you say I do not belong here," she answered, coolly. "Some of my family,

have been a good many things I don't intend to be. I was born in Montana; and I might have starved to death for any help my 'family' would have given me, if I hadn't struck luck and helped myself here in Idaho. So I think I belong out here, and if I live, I will come back again—some day."

She turned to Seldon and pointed to the dead form.

"They will take him away to-day—I heard them say so," she said quietly. "Let it be somewhere away from the camp—not near—not where I can see."

"Can't you forget—even now, 'Tana?"

"Does anybody ever forget?" she asked. "When people say they can forget and forgive, I don't trust them, for I don't believe them."

"Have you any idea who killed him?" he asked. "It is certainly a strange affair. I thought you might suspect some one these people know nothing of."

But she shook her head. "No," she said. "There were several who would have liked to do it, I suppose—people he had wronged or ruined; for he had few friends left, or he would not have come across to these poor reds to hide. Give old Akkomi part of that gold; he was faithful to me—and to him, too. No, I don't know who did it. I don't care, now. I thought I knew once; but I was wrong. This way of dying is better than the rope; and that is what the law would have given him. He would have chosen this—I know."

"Did you ever in your life hear such cold-blooded words from a girl?" demanded Haydon, when she left them and went to Harris. "Afraid of her? Humph! Well, some people would be. No wonder they suspected her when she showed such indifference. Every word she says makes me regret more and more that I acknowl-

edged her. But how was I to know? She was ill, and made me feel as if a ghost had come before me. I couldn't sleep till I had made up my mind to take the risk of her. Max sung her praises as if she was some rare untrained genius. Nothing gave me an idea that she would turn out this way."

"This way' has not damaged you much so far," remarked Mr. Seldon, dryly. "And as she is not likely to be much of a charge on your hands, you had better not borrow trouble on that score."

"All very well—all very well for you to be indifferent," returned Mr. Haydon, with some impatience. "You have no family to consider, no matter what wild escapade she would be guilty of, you would not be touched by the disgrace of it, because she doesn't belong in any way to your family."

"Maybe she will, though," suggested Seldon.

Mr. Haydon shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"You mean through Max, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I was simple enough to build on that myself—thought what a nice, quiet way it would be of arranging the whole affair; but after a talk with this ranger, Overton, whom you and Max unite in admiring, I concluded he might be in the way."

"Overton? Nonsense!"

"Well, maybe; but he made himself very autocratic when I attempted to discuss her future. He seemed to show a good deal of authority concerning her affairs."

"Not a bit more than he does over the affairs of their paralyzed partner in there," answered Seldon. "If she always makes as square friends as Dan Overton, I sha'n't quarrel with her judgment."

When 'Tana left them and went into the other cabin, she stood looking at Harris a long time in a curious, scrutinizing way, and his face changed from doubt to dread before she spoke.

"I am hardly able to think any more, Joe," she said at last, and her tired eyes accented the truth of her words; "but something like a thought keeps hammering in my head about you—about you and—" She pointed to the next room. "If you could walk, I should know you did it. If you could talk, I should know you had it done. I wouldn't tell on you; but I'd be glad I was going where I would not see you, for I never could touch your hand again. I am going away, Joe; won't you tell me true whether you know who did it? Do you?"

He shook his head with his eyes closed. He, too, looked pale and worn, and noticing it, she asked if he would not rather move to some other dwelling, since—

He nodded his head with a sort of eagerness. All of the two days and the night he had sat there, with only the folds of a blanket to separate him from the room where his dead foe lay.

"I will speak to them about it right away." She lifted his hand and stroked it with a sort of sympathy. "Joe, can you forgive him now?" she whispered.

He made her no reply; only closed his eyes as before.

"You can't, then? and I can't ask you to, though I suppose I ought to. Margaret would," and she smiled strangely. "You don't know Margaret, do you? Well, neither do I. But I guess she is the sort of girl I ought to be. Joe, I can't stay in camp any longer. Maybe I'll leave for the Ferry to-day. Will you miss me? Yes, I

know you will," she added, "and I will miss you, too. Do you know—can you tell when Dan will come back?"

He shook his head, and an hour later she said to Max: "Take me away from here, back to the Ferry—any place. Mrs. Huzzard will, maybe, come for a few days—or Miss Slocum. Ask them, and let me go soon."

And an hour after they had started, another canoe went slowly over the water toward the Kootenai River, a canoe guided by Akkomi; and in it lay the blanket-draped figure of the man whose death was yet a mystery to the camp. He was at least borne to his resting place by a friend, though what the reason for Akkomi's faithfulness, no one ever knew; for some favor in the past, no doubt. Seldon knew that 'Tana would rather Akkomi should be the one to cover his grave; though where it was made, no white man ever knew.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON MANHATTAN ISLAND.

"What do you intend to make of your life, Montana, since you avoid all questions of marriage? You will not go to school, and care nothing about fitting yourself for the society where by right you should belong."

A whole winter had gone, and the springtime had come again; and over all the Island of Manhattan, and on the heights back from the rivers, the green of the leaves was creeping over the boughs from which winter had swept all signs of life months ago.

In a very lovely little room, facing a park where the glitter of a tiny lake could be seen, 'Tana lounged and stared at the waving branches and the fettered water.

Not just the same 'Tana as when, a year ago, she had breasted the cold waves of the Kootenai. No one to look at her now, would connect the taller, stylishly dressed figure, with that little half-savage who had scowled at Overton in the lodge of Akkomi. Her hair was no longer short and boyish in its arrangement. A silver comb held it in place, except where the tiny curls crept down to cluster about her neck. A gown of soft white wool was caught at her waist by a flat woven belt of silver, and an embroidered shoe of silvery gleam peeped from under the white folds.

No, it was not the same 'Tana. And the little gray-haired lady, who slipped ivory knitting needles in an

out of silky flosses, watched her with troubled concern as she asked:

"And what do you intend to make of your life, Montana?"

"You are out of patience with me, are you not, Miss Seldon?" asked the girl. "Oh, yes, I know you are; and I don't blame you. Everything I have ever wanted in my life is in reach of me here—everything a girl should have; yet it doesn't mean so much to me as I thought it would."

"But if you would go to school, perhaps—"

"Perhaps I would learn to appreciate all this," and the girl glanced around at the fine fittings of the room, and then back to the point of her own slipper.

"But I do study hard at home. Doesn't Miss Ackerman give me credit for learning very quickly? and doesn't that music teacher hop around and wave his hands over my most excellent, ringing voice? They say I study well."

"Yes, yes; you do, too. But at a school, my dear, where you would have the association of other girls, you would naturally grow more—more girlish yourself, if I may say so; for you are old beyond your years in ways that are peculiar. Your ideas of things are not the ideas of girlhood; and yet you are very fond of girls."

"And how do you know that?" asked Tana.

"Why, my dear, you never go past one on the street that you don't give her more notice than the very handsomest man you might see. And at the matinees, if the play does not hold you very close, your eyes are always directed to the young girls in the audience. Yes, you are fond of them, yet you will not allow yourself to be intimate with any."

And the pretty, refined-looking lady smiled at her and nodded her head in a knowing way, as though she had made an important discovery.

The girl on the couch lay silent for a while, then she rose and went over to the window, gazing across to the park, where people were walking and riding along the green knolls and levels. Young girls were there, too, and she watched them a little while, with the old moody expression in her dark eyes.

"Perhaps it is because I don't like to make friends under false pretenses," she said, at last. "Your society is a very fine and very curious thing, and there is a great deal of false pretense about it. Individually, they would overlook the fact that I was accused of murder in Idaho—the gold mine would help some of them to do that! But if it should ever get in their papers here, they would collectively think it their duty to each other not to recognize me."

"Oh, Montana, my dear child, why do you not forget that horrible life, and leave your mind free to partake of the advantages now surrounding you?" and Miss Seldon sighed with real distress, and dropped her ivory needles despairingly. "It seems so strange that you care to remember that which was surely a terrible life."

"Much more so than you can know," answered the girl, coming over to her and drawing a velvet hassock to her side. "And, my dear, good, innocent little lady, just so long as you all try to persuade me that I should go out among young people of my own age, just so long must I be forced to think of how different my life has been to theirs. Some day they, too, might learn how different it has been, and resent my presence among them. I prefer not to run that risk. I might get to like some

of them, and then it would hurt. Besides, the more I see of people since I came here, the more I feel that every one should remain with their own class in life."

"But, Montana, that is not an American sentiment at all!" said Miss Seldon, with some surprise. "But even that idea should not exclude from refined circles. By birth you are a lady."

The girl smiled bitterly. "You mean my mother was," she answered. "But she did not give me a gentleman for a father; and I don't believe the parents of any of those lovely girls we meet would like them to know the daughter of such a man, if they knew it. Now, do you understand how I feel about myself and this social question?"

"You are foolishly conscientious and morbid," exclaimed the older lady. "I declare, Montana, I don't know what to do with you. People like you—you are very clever, you have youth, wealth, and beauty—yes, the last, too! yet you shut yourself up here like a young nun. Only the theaters and the art galleries will you visit—never a person—not even Margaret."

"Not even Margaret," repeated the girl; "and that is the crowning sin in your eyes, isn't it? Well, I don't blame you, for she is very lovely; and how much she thinks of you!"

"Yes!" sighed the little lady. "Mrs. Haydon is a woman of very decided character, but not at all given to loving demonstrations to children. Long ago, when we lived closer, little Margie would come to me daily to be kissed and petted. Max was only a boy then, and they were great companions."

"Yes; and if he had been sensible, he would have fallen in love with her and made her Mrs. Lyster, in-

stead of knocking around Western mining towns, and making queer friends," said the girl, smiling at the old lady's astonished face. "She is just the sort of girl to suit him."

"My dear," she said, solemnly, "do you really care for him a partiele?"

"Who—Max? Of course I do. He is the best fellow I know, and was so good to me out there in the wilderness. There was no one out there to compare me with, so I suppose I loomed up big when compared with the average squaw. But everything is different here. I did not know how different. I know now, however, and I won't let him go on making a mistake."

"Oh, Montana!" cried the little lady, pleadingly.

Just then a maid entered with two cards, at which she glanced with a dismay that was comical.

"Margaret and Max! Why, is it not strange they should call at the same time, and at a time when—"

"When I was pairing them off so nicely, without their knowledge," added the girl. "Have them come up here, won't you? It is so much more cozy than that very elegant parlor. And I always feel as if poor Max had been turned out of his home since I came."

So they came to the little sitting room—pretty, dark-eyed Margaret, with her faultless manners and her real fondness for Miss Seldon, whom she kissed three times.

"For I have not seen you for three days," she explained, "and those two are back numbers." Then she turned to 'Tana and eyed her admiringly as they clasped hands.

"You look as though you had stepped from a picture of classic Greek," she declared. "Where in that pretty curly head of yours do you find the ideas for those

artistic arrangements of form and color? You are an artist, Montana, and you don't know it."

"I will begin to believe it if people keep telling me so."

"Who else has told you?" asked Lyster, and she laughed at him.

"Not you," she replied; "at least not since you teased me about the clay Indians I made on the shores of the Kootenai. But some one else has told me—Mr. Roden."

"Roden, the sculptor! But how does he know?"

She glanced from one face to the other, and sighed with a serio-comic expression. "I might as well confess," she said, at last. "I am so glad you are here, Miss Margaret, for I may need an advocate. I have been working two hours a day in Mr. Roden's studio for over a month."

"Montana!" gasped Miss Seldon, "but—how—when?"

"Before you were awake in the morning," she said, and looked from one to the other of their blank faces. "You look as if it were a shock, instead of a surprise," she added. "I did not tell you at first, as it would seem only a whim. But he has told me I have reason for the whim, and that I should continue. So—I think I shall."

"But, my child—for you are a child, after all—don't you know it is a very strange thing for a girl to go alone like that, and—and—Oh, dear! Max, can't you tell her?"

But Max did not. There was a slight wrinkle between his brows, but she saw it and smiled.

"You can't scold me, though, can you?" she asked.

"That is right, for it would be no use. I know you would say that in your set it would not be proper for a girl to do such independent things. But you see, I do not belong to any set. I have just been telling this dear little

lady, who is trying to look stern, some of the reasons why society life and I can never agree. But I have found several reasons why Art life and I should agree perfectly. I like the freedom of it—the study of it. And, even if I never accomplish much, I shall at least have tried my best.”

“But, Montana, it is not as though you had to learn such things,” pleaded Miss Seldon. “You have plenty of money.”

“Oh, money—money! But I have found there are a few things in this world money can not buy. Art study, little as I have attempted, has taught me that.”

Lyster came over and sat beside her by the window.

“Tana,” he said, and looked at her with kindly directness, “can the Art study give you that which you crave, and which money can not buy?”

Her eyes fell to the floor. She could not but feel sorry to go against his wishes; and yet—

“No, it can not, entirely,” she said, at last. “But it is all the substitute I know of, and, maybe, after a while, it will satisfy me.”

Miss Seldon took Margaret from the room on some pretext, and Lyster rose and walked across to the other window. He was evidently much troubled or annoyed.

“Then you are not satisfied?” he asked. “The life that seemed possible to you, when out there in camp, is impossible to you now.”

“Oh, Max! don’t be angry—don’t. Everything was all wrong out there. You were sorry for me out there; you thought me different from what I am. I could never be the sort of girl you should marry—not like Margaret—”

"Margaret!" and his face paled a little, "why do you speak of her?"

"I know, if you do not, Max," she answered, and smiled at him. "I have learned several things since I came here, and one of them is Mr. Haydon's reason for encouraging our friendship so much. It was to end any attachment between you and Margaret. Oh, I know, Max! If I had not looked just a little bit like her, you would never have fancied you loved me—for it was only a fancy."

"It was no fancy! I did love you. I was honest with you, and I have waited patiently, while you have grown more and more distant until now—"

"Now we had better end it all, Max. I could not make you happy, for I am not happy myself."

"Perhaps I—"

"No, you can not help me; and it is not your fault. You have been good to me—very good; but I can't marry any one."

"No one?" he asked, looking at her doubtfully. "Tana, sometimes I have fancied you might have cared for some one else—some one before you met me."

"No, I cared for no one before I met you," she answered, slowly. "But I could not be happy in the social life of your people here. They are charming, but I am not suited to their life. And—and I can't go back to the hills. So, in a month, I am going to Italy."

"You have it all decided, then?"

"All—don't be angry, Max. You will thank me for it some day, though I know our friends will think badly of me just now."

"No, they shall not; you are breaking no promises. You took me only on trial, and it seems I don't suit,"

he said, with a grimace. "I will see that you are not blamed. And so long as you do not leave America, I should like you to remain here. Don't let anything be changed in our friendship, 'Tana."

She turned to him with tears in her eyes, and held out her hand.

"You are too good to me, Max," she said, brokenly. "God knows what will become of me when I leave you all and go among foreign faces, among whom I shall not have a friend. I hope to work and—be contented; but I shall never meet a friend like you again."

He drew her to him quickly.

"Don't go!" he whispered, pleadingly. "I can't let you go out into the world alone like that! I will love you—care for you—"

"Hush!" and she put her hand on his face to push it away; "it is no use, and don't do that—try to kiss me; you must not. No man has ever kissed me, and you—"

"And I sha'n't be the first," he added, shrugging his shoulders. "Well, I confess I hoped to be, and you are a greater temptation than you know, Miss Montana. And you ought to pardon me the attempt."

Her face was flushed and shamed. "I could pardon a great deal in you, Max," she answered; "but don't speak of it again. Talk to me of other things."

"Other things? Well, I haven't many other things in my mind just now. Still, I did see some one down town this morning whom you rather liked, and who asked after you. It was Mr. Harvey, the writer, whom we met first at Bonner's Ferry, up in the Kootenai land. Do you remember him?"

"Certainly. We met him afterward at one of the art galleries, and I have seen him several times at Roden's

studio. They are great friends. He looked surprised to find me there, but, after I spoke to him, he talked to me a great deal. You know, Max, I always imagine he heard that suspicion of me up at the camp. Do you think so?"

"He never intimated it to me," answered Max; "though Haydon nearly went into spasms of fear lest he would put it all in some paper."

"I remember. He would scarcely allow me breathing space for fear the stranger would get near enough to speak to me again. I remember all that journey, because when I reached the end of it, the past seemed like a troubled dream, for this life of fineness and beauty and leisure was all so different."

"And yet you are not contented?"

"Oh, don't talk of that—of me!" she begged. "I am tired of myself. I just remembered another one on the train that journey—the little variety actress who had her dresses made to look cute and babyish—the one with bleached hair, and they called her Goldie. She looked scared to death when he—Overton—stopped at the window to say good-by. I often wondered why."

"Oh, you know Dan was a sort of sheriff, or law-and-order man, up there. He might have known her unfavorably, and she was afraid of being identified by him, or something of that sort. She belonged to the rougher element, no doubt."

"Max, it makes me homesick to think of that country," she confessed. "Ever since the grass has commenced to be green, and the buds to swell, it seems to me all the woods are calling me. All the sluggish water I see here in the parks and the rivers makes me dream of the rush of the clear Kootenai, and long for a canoe and

paddle. Contrive something to make me forget it, won't you? Make up a party to go somewhere—anywhere. I will be cavalier to your lovely little aunt, and leave you to Margaret."

"I asked you before why you speak of Margaret and me in that tone?" he said. "Are you going to tell me? You have no reason but your own fancy."

"Haven't I? Well, this isn't fancy, Max—that I would like to see my cousin—you see, I claim them for this once—happy in her own way, instead of unhappy in the life her ambitious family are trying to arrange for her. And I promise to trade some surplus dust for a wedding present just as soon as you conclude to spoil their plans, and make yourself and that little girl and your aunt all happy by a few easily spoken words."

"But I have just told you I love you."

"You will know better some day," she said, and turned away. "Now go and pacify your aunt, won't you? She seemed so troubled about the modeling—bless her dear heart! I didn't want to trouble her, but the work—some work—was a necessity to me. I was growing so homesick for the woods."

After she was left alone, she drew a letter from her pocket, one she had got in the morning mail, and read over again the irregular lines sent by Mrs. Huzzard.

"I got Lavina to write you the letter at Christmas, because I was so tickled with all the things you sent me that I couldn't write a straight line to save me; and you know the rheumatiz in my finger makes it hard work for me sometimes. But maybe hard work and me is about done with each other, Tana; though I'll tell you more of that next time.

"I must tell you Mr. Harris has got better—can talk some and walk around; can't move his left arm any

yet. But Mr. Dan sent for two fine doctors, and they tried to help him with electricity. And I was scared for fear lightning might strike camp after that; but it didn't. Lavina is here still, and likely to stay. She's a heap of company; and she and Captain Leek are better friends than they was.

"There is a new man in camp now; he found a silver mine down near Bonner's Ferry, and sold it out well. He was a farmer back in Indiana, and has been on a visit to our camp twice. Mr. Dan says it's my cooking fetches him. Everything is different here now. Mr. Dan got sawed lumber, and put me up a nice little house; and up above the bluff he has laid out a place where he is going to build a stone house, just as if he intends to live and die here. He doesn't ever seem to think that he has enough made now to rest all his days. Sometimes I think he ain't well. Sometimes, 'Tana, I think it would cheer him up if you would just write him a few lines from time to time. He always says, 'Is she well?' when I get a letter from you; and about the time I'm looking for your letters he's mighty regular about getting the mail here.

"That old Akkomi went south when winter set in, and we reckon he'll be back when the leaves get green. His whole village was drunk for days on the money you had Mr. Seldon give him, and he wore pink feathers from some millinery store the last time I saw him. But Mr. Dan is always patient with him whether he is drunk or sober.

"I guess that's all the news. Lavina sends her respects. And I must tell you that on Christmas they got some whisky, and all the boys drank your health—and drank it so often Mr. Dan had to give them a talking to. They think a heap of you. Yours with affection,

LORENA JANE HUZZARD.

"P. S.—William McCoy is the name of the stranger I spoke of. The boys call him Bill."

CHAPTER XXVI.

OVERTON'S WIFE.

A few hours later, 'Tana sat in a box at the theater; for the party she had suggested had been arranged, and pretty Miss Margaret was radiant over the evening planned for her, and 'Tana began to enjoy her rôle of matchmaker. She had even managed to tell Margaret, in a casual manner, that Miss Seldon's idea of a decided engagement between herself and Max had never a very solid foundation, and now had none at all. He was her good friend—that was all, and she was to leave for Italy in a month.

And Margaret went up to her and kissed her, looking at her with puzzled, admiring eyes.

"They tried at home to make me think very differently," she said. "But you are a queer girl, Miss Montana. You have told me this on purpose, and—"

"And I want to hear over in Italy that you are going to make a boy I like very happy some of these days. Remember, Margaret, you are—or will be—a millionairess, while he has not more than a comfortable income; and boys—even when they are in love—can be proud. Will you think of that?"

Margaret only blushed and turned away, but the answer was quite satisfying to 'Tana, and she felt freer because her determination had been put into words, and the last bond connecting her with the old life was to be

broken. Ever since the snows had gone, some cord of her heart-string had been drawing all her thoughts to those Northern hills, and she felt the only safety was to put the ocean between them and her.

The home Mr. Seldon had offered her with his sister was a very lovely one, but to it there came each week letters about the mines and the people there. Mr. Seldon had already gone out, and would be gone all summer. As he was an enthusiast over the beauties and the returns of the country, his letters were full of material that she heard discussed each day. Therefore, the only safety for herself lay in flight; and if she did not go across the ocean to the East, she would surely grow weaker and more homesick until she would have to turn toward entirely and cross the mountains to her West.

Realizing it all, she sat in her dainty array of evening dress and watched with thoughts far away the mimic scene of love triumphant on the stage before her. When, on the painted canvas, a far-off snow-crowned mountain rose to their view, her heart seemed to creep to her throat and choke her, and when the orchestra breathed softly of the winds, music, and the twittering of birds, the tears rose to her eyes and a great longing in her heart for all the wild beauty of her Kootenai land.

Then, just as the curtain went down on the second act, some one entered their box.

"You, Harvey?" said Max, with genuine pleasure. "Good of you to look me up. Let me introduce you to my aunt and Miss Haydon. You and Miss Rivers are old acquaintances."

"Yes; and that fact alone has brought me here just now," he managed to say to Lyster. "To confess the truth, I have been to see Miss Rivers at her home this

evening, having got her address from Roden, and then had the assurance to follow her here. You may be sure I would not have spoiled your evening for any trivial thing, but I come because of a woman who is dying."

"A woman who is dying?" repeated 'Tana, in wonder, "And why do you come to me?"

"She wants to see you. I think—to tell you something."

"But who is it?" asked Lyster. "Some beggar?"

"She is a beggar now at least," agreed Mr. Harvey—"a poor woman dying. She said only to tell Miss Rivers, and here is a line she sent."

He gave her a slip of paper, and on it was written:

"Come and take some word to Dan Overton for me. I am dying.
OVERTON'S WIFE."

She arose, and Margaret exclaimed at the whiteness of her face.

"Oh, my dear," sighed Miss Seldon, "you know how I warned you not to give your charities individually among the beggars of a city. It is really a mistake. They have no consideration, and will send for you at all hours if you will go. It is so much better to distribute charity through some organization."

But 'Tana was tying her opera cloak, and moving toward the entrance.

"I am going," she said. "Don't worry. Is it far, Mr. Harvey? If not, perhaps I can be back to go home with you when the curtain goes down."

"It is not far," he answered. "Will you come, Lyster?"

"No!" said 'Tana; "you stay with the others, Max. Don't look vexed. Maybe I can be of some use, and that is what I need."

Many heads turned to look at the girl whose laces

were so elegant, and whose beautiful face wore such a startled, questioning expression. But she hurried out of their sight, and gave a little nervous shiver as she wrapped her white velvet cloak close about her and sank into a corner of the carriage.

"Are you cold?" Harvey asked, but she shook her head.

"No. But tell me all."

"There is not much. I was with a doctor—a friend of mine—who was called in to see her. She recognized me. It is the little variety actress who came over the Great Northern, on our train."

"Oh! But how could she know me?"

"She did not know your name; she only described you, remembering that I had talked with you and your friends. When I told her you were in the city, she begged so for you to come that I could not refuse to try."

"You did right," she answered. "But it is very strange—very strange."

Then the carriage stopped before a dingy house in a row that had once belonged to a very fashionable quarter, but that was long ago. Boarding houses they were now; and their class was about number three.

"It is a horrible place to bring you to, Miss Rivers," confessed her guide; "and I am really glad Miss Seldon did not accompany you, for she never would have forgiven either of us. But I knew you would not be afraid."

"No, I am not afraid. But, oh, why don't they hurry?"

He had to ring the bell the second time ere any one came to the door. Then, as the harsh jangle died away, steps were heard descending the stairs, and a man without a coat and with a pipe in his mouth, shot back the bolt with much grumbling.

"I'll cut the blasted wire if some one in the shebang don't tend to this door better," he growled to a lady with a mug of beer, who just then emerged from the lower regions. "Me a-trying to get the lines of that new afterpiece in my head—chock-full of business, too!—and that bell clanging forever right under my room. I'll move!"

"I wish you would," remarked Harvey, when the door opened at last. "Move a little faster when you do condescend to open the door. Come, Miss Rivers—up this way."

And the lady of the beer mug and the gentleman of the pipe stared at each other, and at the white vision of girlhood going up the dark, bad-smelling stairway.

"Well, that's a new sort in this castle," remarked the man. "Do you guess the riddle of it?"

The woman did not answer, but listened to the footsteps as they went along the hall. Then a door opened and shut.

"They've gone to Goldie's room," she said. "That's queer. Goldie ain't the sort to have very high-toned friends, so it can't be a long-lost sister," and she smiled contemptuously.

"She's a beauty, anyway, and I'm going to see her when she makes her exit, if I have to sit up all night."

"Oh! And what about the afterpiece?"

"To the devil with the afterpiece! It hasn't any angels in it."

Inside Goldie's room, a big Dutch blonde in a soiled blue wrapper sat by the bed, and stared in open-mouthed surprise at the new-comers.

"Is it *you* she's been askin' for?" she asked, bluntly. But 'Tana did not reply, and Harvey got the blonde

to the door, and after a few whispered words, induced her to go out altogether, and closed the door behind her.

"I thought you'd come," whispered the little woman on the bed. "I thought the note would bring you. I saw you talk to him, and I dropped to the game. You're square, too, ain't you? That's the kind I want now. That swell who went for you is the right sort, too. I minded his face and yours. But tell him to go out for a minute. It won't take long—to tell you."

Harvey went, at a motion from 'Tana. She had not uttered a word yet. All she could do was to stare in wonder at the wreck of a woman before her—a painted wreck; for, even on her deathbed, the ghastly face was tinted with rouge.

"I can't get well—doctor says," she continued. "There was a baby; it died yesterday—three hours old; and I can't get well. But there is another one I want to tell you of. You tell him. It is two years old. Here is the address. Maybe he will take care of it for me. He was good-hearted—that's why he married me; thought I was only a little girl without a home. Any woman could fool him, for he thought all women were good. He thought I was only a little girl; and I had been married three years before."

She smiled at the idea of that past deception, while 'Tana's face grew hard and white.

"How you look!" said the dying woman. "Well, it's over now. He never cared for me much, though—not so much as others did. He was never my real husband, you know, for I never had a divorce. He thought he was, though; and even after he left me, he sent me money regular for me to live quiet in 'Frisco, but it didn't suit me. Then he got turned dead against me

when I tried to make him think the child was his. He wouldn't do anything for me after that; I had cheated him once too often."

"And was it?" It was the first time 'Tana had spoken, and the woman smiled.

"You care, too, do you? Well, yes, it was. You tell him so; tell him I said so, and I was dying. He'll take care of her, I think. She's pretty, but not like me. He never saw her. She's with a woman in Chicago, where I boarded. I haven't paid her board now for months, but it's all right; the woman's a good soul. Dan Overton will pay when you tell him."

"You write an order for that child, and tell the woman to give it to me," said 'Tana, decidedly, and looked around for something to write with. A sheet of paper was found, and she went to Harvey for a pencil.

"'Most ready to go?" he asked, looking at her anxiously

She nodded her head, and shut the door.

"But I can't write now; my hands are too weak," complained the woman. "I can't."

"You've got to!" answered the girl; and, taking her in her strong young hands, she raised her up higher on the pillow. "There is the paper and pencil—now write."

"It will kill me to lay like this."

"No matter if it does; you write."

"You're not a woman at all; you're like iron—white iron," whined the other. "Any woman with a heart—" and the weak tears came in her eyes.

"No, I have no heart to be touched by you," answered the girl. "You had a chance to live a decent life, and you wouldn't take it. You had an honest man to trust

you and take care of you, and you paid him with deceit. Don't expect pity from me; but write that order."

She tried to write but could not, and the girl took the pencil.

"I will write it, and you can sign it," she said; "that will do as well."

Thus it was accomplished, and the woman was again laid lower in the bed.

"You are terrible hard on—on folks that ain't just square," she said. "You needn't be so proud; you ain't dead yet yourself. You don't know what may happen you."

"I know," said the girl, coldly, "that if I ever brought children into the world, to be thrown on strangers' hands and brought up in the streets to live your sort of life, I would expect a very practical sort of hell prepared for me. Have you anything more to tell me? I'm going."

"Oh—h! I wish you hadn't said that about hell. I'm dreadful afraid of hell," moaned the woman.

"Yes," said the girl; "you ought to be."

"How hard you are! And the doctor said I would die to-night."

Then she lay still quite a while, and when she spoke again, her voice scemed weaker.

"You have that order for Gracie, and you are so hard-hearted. I don't know what you will do—and I don't want her to grow up like me."

"That is the first womanly thing I have heard you say," replied the girl.

She went over to the bed and took the woman's hands in hers, looking at her earnestly.

"Your child shall have a beautiful and a good home," she said, reassuringly. "I am going for her myself to-

morrow, and she will never lack care again. Have you any other word to give me?"

The woman shook her head, and then as 'Tana turned away, she said:

"Not unless you would kiss me. You are not like other women; but—will you kiss me?"

And, with the pressure of the dying kiss on her lips, 'Tana went out the door.

"Please give her every care money can secure for her," she said to the woman at the door; while the man, minus the pipe, was there to open it.

"Mr. Harvey, can I trouble you to look after it for me? You know the doctor and can learn all that is needed. Have the bills sent to me; and let me know when it is all—over."

They reached the theater just as the curtain went down on the last act, and she remained in the carriage until her own party came out.

"I can hardly thank you enough for coming after me to-night," she said, as she shook hands very cordially with Harvey. "You can never be a mere acquaintance to me again. You are my friend."

"Have I ignorantly done some good?" he asked, and she smiled at him.

"Yes—more than you know—more than I can tell you."

"Then may I hope not to be forgotten when you are in Italy?"

"Oh!" and the color flushed over all the pallor caught from that deathbed. "But I—I don't think I will go to Italy after all, Mr. Harvey. I have changed my mind about that, and think I will go back to the Kootenai hills instead."

CHAPTER XXVII.

LIFE AT TWIN SPRINGS.

Over all the land of the Kootenai the sun of early June was shining. Trees of wild fruits were white with blossoms, as if from far above on the mountains the snows had blown down and settled here and there on the new twigs of green.

And high up above the camp of the Twin Springs, Overton and Harris sat looking over the wide stretches of forest, and the younger man looked troubled.

"I think your fear is all an empty affair," he said, in an argumentative tone. "You eat well and sleep well. What gives you the idea you are to be called in soon."

"Several things," said the other, slowly, and his speech was yet indistinct; "but most of all the feel of my feet and legs. A week ago my feet turned cold; this week the coldness is up to my knees, and it won't go away. I know what it means. When it gets as high as my heart I'll be done for. That won't take long, Dan; and I want to see her first."

"She can't help you."

"Yes, she can, too. You don't know. Dan, send for her."

"Things are all different with her now," protested the other. "She's with friends who are not of the diggings or the ranges, Joe. She is going to marry Max Lyster; and, altogether, is not the same little girl who made our

coffee for us down there in the flat. You must not expect that she will change all her new, happy life to run back here just because you want to talk to her."

"She'll come if you telegraph I want her," insisted Harris. "I know her better than you do, Dan. The fine life will never spoil her. She would be happier here to-day in a canoe than she would be on a throne. I know her best."

"She wasn't very happy before she left here."

"No," he agreed; "but there were reasons, Dan. Why are you so set against her coming back?"

"Set against it? Oh, no."

"Yes, you are. Mrs. Huzzard and all the camp would be only too glad to see her; but you—you say no. What's your reason?"

"Joe, not many months ago you tried to make me suspicious of her," said Overton, not moving his eyes from a distant blue peak of the hills. "You remember the day you fell in a heap? Well, I've never asked you your reasons for that; though I've thought of it considerably. You changed your mind about her afterward, and trusted her with the plan of this gold field down here. Now, you had reasons for that, too; but I never have asked you what they are. Do the same for me, will you?"

The other man did not answer for a little while, but he watched Dan's moody face with a great deal of kindness in his own.

"You won't tell me?" he said at last. "Well, that's all right. But one of the reasons I want her back is to make clear to you all the unexplained things of last summer. There were things you should have been told—that would have made you two better friends, would have broken down the wall there always seemed to be

between you—or nearly always. (She wouldn't tell you, and I couldn't.) It left her always under a cloud to you, and she felt it. Many a time, Dan, she has knelt beside me and cried over her troubles to me—and they were troubles, too!—telling them all to me just because I couldn't speak and tell them again. And I won't, unless she lets me. But I don't want to go over the range and know that you two, all your lives, will be apart and cold to each other on account of suspicions I could clear away."

"Suspicions? No, I have no suspicions against her."

"But you have had many a troubled hour because of that man found dead in her room, and his visit to her the night before, and that money she asked for that he was after. All such things that you could not clear her of in your own mind, when you cleared her of murder—they are things I want straightened out before I leave, Dan. You have both been good friends to me, and I don't want any bar between you."

"What does all that matter now, Joe? She is out of our lives, and in a happier one some one else is making for her. I am not likely ever to see her again. She won't come back here."

"I know her best; she will come if she is needed. I need her for once; and if you don't send for her, I will, Dan. Will you send?"

But Overton got up and walked away without answering. Harris thought he would turn back after a little while, but he did not. He watched him out of sight, and he was still going higher up in the hills.

"Trying to walk away from his desire for her," thought Joe, sadly. "Well, he never will. He thinks I don't know. Poor Dan!"

Then he whistled to a man down below him, and the man came and helped him down to camp, for his feet had grown helpless again in that strange chill of which he had spoken.

Mrs. Huzzard met him at the door of a sitting room, gorgeous as an apartment could well be in the Northern wilderness. All the luxuries obtainable were there; for, as Harris had to live so much of his time indoors, Overton seemed determined that he should get benefit from his new fortune in some way. The finest of furs and of weavings furnished the room, and a dainty little stand held a tea service of shell-pink china, from which the steam floated cheerily.

And Lorena Jane herself partook of the general air of prosperity, as she drew forward a great cushioned chair for the invalid and brought him a cup of fragrant tea.

"I just knew you was tired the minute I saw you coming down that hill," she said, filling a cup herself and sitting down to enjoy it. "I knew a cup of tea would do you good, for you ain't quite so brisk as you was a few weeks ago."

"No," he agreed, and gulped down the beverage with a dubious expression on his face. He very much preferred whisky as a tonic; but as Mrs. Huzzard was bound to use that new tea service every day for his benefit, he submitted without a protest and enjoyed most the number of cups she disposed of.

"I suppose, now, you got sight from up there on the hill of the two young folks going boat riding?" she remarked, with attempted indifference; and he looked at her questioningly.

"Oh, I mean Lavina and the captain! Yes, he did

get up ambition enough to paddle a boat and ask her to ride in it; and away they went, giddy as you please!"

"I thought you had a high regard for the captain?" remarked Harris.

"Who? Me? Well, as Mr. Overton's relation, of course I show him respect," and her tone was almost as pompous as that of the captain used to be. "But I must say, sir, that to admire a man—for me to admire a man—he must have a certain lot of push and ambition. He must be a real American, who don't depend on the record of his dard relations to tell you how great he is—a man who will dig either gold or potatoes if he needs them, and not be afraid of spoiling his hands."

"Somebody like this new lucky man, McCoy," suggested Harris, and she smiled complacently but did not answer.

And out on the little creek, sure enough, Lavina and the captain were gliding with the current; and the current had got them into dangerous waters.

"And you won't say yes, Lavina?" he asked, and she tapped her foot impatiently on the bottom of the boat.

"I told you yes twenty-five years ago, Alf Leek," she answered.

He sighed helplessly. His old aggressive manner was all gone. The tactics he would adopt for any other woman were useless with this one. She knew him like a book. She had him completely cowed and miserable. No longer did he regale admiring friends with tales of the late war, and incidentally allow himself to be thought a hero. One look from Lavina would freeze the story of the hottest battle that ever was fought.

To be sure, she had as yet refrained from using words against him; but how long would she refrain? That

question he had asked himself until, in despair, a loophole from her quiet vengeance had occurred to him, and he had asked her to marry him.

"You never could—would marry any one else," he said, pleadingly.

"Oh, couldn't I?"

"And I couldn't, either, Lavina," he continued, looking at her sentimentally. But Lavina knew better.

"You would, if anybody would have you," she retorted. "I know I reached here just in time to keep poor Lorena Jane from being made a victim of. You would have been a tyrant over her, with your great pretensions, if I hadn't stopped it. You always were tyrannical, Alf Leek; and the only time you're humble as you ought to be is when you meet some one who can tyrannize over you. You are one of the sort that needs it."

"That's why I asked you to marry me," he remarked, meekly.

And after a moment she said:

"Well, thinking of it from that point of view, I guess I will."

Far up on the heights, a man lying there alone saw the canoe with the man and the woman in it, and it brought back to him keen rushes of memory from the summer time that had been. It was only a year ago that Tana had stepped into his canoe, and gone with him to the new life of the settlement. How brave she had been! how daring! He liked best to remember her as she had been then, with all the storms and sunshine of her face. He liked to remember that she had said she would be cook for him, but for no other man. Of course her words were a child's words, soon forgotten by her. But all her words and looks and their journeys made him

love the land he had known her in. They were all the treasures he had with which to comfort his loneliness.

And when in the twilight he descended to the camp, Joe—or his own longings—had won.

"I will send the telegram for you, old fellow," he said, and that was all.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AGAIN ON THE KOOTENAI.

Another canoe, with a woman in it, skimmed over the waters in the twilight that evening—a woman with all the gladness of youth in her bright eyes, and an eagerness for the north country that far outstripped the speed of the boat.

Each dark tree-trunk as it loomed up from the shores, each glint of the after-glow as it lighted the ripples, each whisper of the fresh, soft wind of the mountains, was to her as a special welcome. All of them touched her with the sense of a friendship that had been faithful. That she was no more to them than any of the strangers who came and went on the current, she could not believe; for they all meant so much, so very much to her.

She asked for a paddle, that she might once more feel against her strength the strong rush of the mountain river. She caressed its waves and reached out her hands to the bending boughs, and laughter and sighs touched her lips.

"Never again!" she whispered, as if a promise was being made; "never again! my wilderness!"

The man who had charge of the canoe—a stalwart, red-whiskered man of perhaps forty-five—looked at her a good deal in a cautious way. She was so unlike any of the girls he had ever seen—so gay, so free of speech

with each stranger or Indian who came their way; so daintily garbed in a very correct creation of some city tailor; and, above all, so tenderly careful of a child who slept among the rugs at her feet, and looked like a bit of pink blossom against the dark furs.

"You are a stranger here, aren't you?" she asked the man. "I saw no one like you running a boat here last summer."

"No, no," he said, slowly; "I didn't then. My camp is east of Bonner's Ferry, quite a ways; but I get around here sometimes, too. I don't run a boat only for myself; but when they told me a lady wanted to get to Twin Springs, I didn't allow no scrub Indians to take her if my boat was good enough."

"It is a lovely boat," she said, admiringly; "the prettiest I ever saw on this river, and it is very good of you to bring me yourself. That is one of the things makes me realize I am in the West once more—to be helped simply because I am a girl alone. And you didn't even know my name when you offered to bring me."

"No, but I did before I left shore," he answered; "and then I counted myself kind of lucky. I—I've heard so much about you, miss, from folks up at Twin Springs; from one lady there in particular—Mrs. Huzzard."

"Oh! so you know her, do you?" she asked, and wondered at the self-conscious look with which he owned up that he did—a little.

"A little? Oh, that is not nearly enough," she said, good-naturedly. "Lorena Jane is worth knowing a good deal of."

"That's my opinion, too," he agreed; "but a fellow needs some help sometimes, if he ain't over handy with the gift of gab."

"Well, now, I should not think you would need much help," she answered. "You ought to be the sort she would make friends with quick enough."

"Oh, yes—friends," he said, and sent the canoe on with swifter, stronger strokes. The other boat, paddled by Indians and carrying baggage, was left far behind.

"You make this run often?" she asked, with a little wonder as to who the man was. His dress was much above the average, his boat was a beautiful and costly thing, and she had not learned, in the haste of her departure, who her boatman was.

"Not very often. Haven't been up this way for two weeks now."

"But that is often," she said. "Are you located in this country?"

"Well—yes, I have been. I struck a silver lode across the hills in yon direction. I've sold out and am only prospecting around just now, not settled anywhere yet. My name is McCoy."

"McCoy!" and like a flash she remembered the post-script of Mrs. Huzzard's letter. "Oh, yes—I've heard of you."

"You have? Well, that's funny. I didn't know my name had got beyond the ranges."

"Didn't you? Well, it got across the country to Manhattan Island—that's where I was when it reached me," and she smiled quizzically. "You know Mrs. Huzzard writes me letters sometimes."

"And do you mean—did she—"

"Yes, she did—mentioned your name very kindly, too," she said, as he hesitated in a confused way. Then, with all the gladness of home-coming in her heart and her desire that no heart should be left heavy, she added:

"And, really, as I told you before, I don't think you need much help."

The kindly, smiling eyes of the man thanked her, as he drove the canoe through the clear waters. Above them the stars were commencing to gleam faintly, and all the sweet odors of the dusk floated by them, and the sweetest seemed to come to her from the north.

"We will not stop over—let us go on," she said, when he spoke of Sinna Ferry. "I can paddle while you rest at times, or we can float there on the current if we both grow tired; but let us keep going."

But ere they reached the little settlement, a canoe swept into sight ahead of them and when it came near, Captain Leek very nearly fell over the side of it in his anxiety to make himself known to Miss Rivers.

"Strangest thing in the world!" he declared. "Here I am, sent down to telegraph you and wait a week if need be until an answer comes; and half-way on my journey I meet you just as if the message had reached you in some way before it was even put on paper. Extraordinary thing—very!"

"You were going to telegraph me? What for?" and the lightness of her heart was chased away by fear. "Is—is any one hurt?"

"Hurt? Not a bit of it. But Harris thinks he is worse and wanted you, until Dan concluded to ask you to come. I have the message here somewhere," and he drew out a pocket-book.

"Dan asked me to come? Let me see it, please," and she unfolded the paper and read the words he had written—the only time she had ever seen his writing in a message to her.

A lighted match threw a flickering light over the page, on which he said:

"Joe is worse. He wants you. Will you come back?"
"DAN OVERTON."

She folded it up and held it tight in her hand under the cloak she wore. He had sent for her! Ah! how long the night would be, for not until dawn could she answer his message.

"We will go on," she said. "Can't you spare us a boatman? Mr. McCoy has outstripped our Indian extras who have our outfit, and he needs a little rest, though he won't own up."

"Why, of course! Our errand is over, too, so we'll turn back with you. I just passed Akkomi a few miles back. He is coming North with the season, as usual. I thought the old fellow would freeze out with the winter; but there he was drifting North to a camping-place he wanted to reach before stopping. I suppose we'll have him for a neighbor all summer again."

The girl, remembering his antipathy to all of the red race, laughed and raised in her arms the child, that had awakened.

"All I needed to perfect my return to the Kootenai country was the presence of Akkomi," she confessed. "I should have missed him, for he was my first friend in the valley. And it may be, Mr. McCoy, that if he is inclined to be friendly to-night, I may ask him to take me the rest of the way. I want to talk to him. He is an old friend."

"Certainly," agreed McCoy; but he evidently thought her desire was a very peculiar one.

"But you will have a friend at court just the same—

whether I go all the way with you or not," she said and smiled across at him knowingly.

Captain Leek heard the words, too, and must have understood them, for he stared stonily at the big, good-looking miner. Their greeting had been very brief; evidently they were not congenial spirits.

"Is that a—a child?" asked the captain, as the little creature drooped drowsily with its face against 'Tana's neck; "really a child?"

"Really a child," returned the girl, "and the sweetest, prettiest little thing in the world when her eyes are open." As he continued to stare at her in astonishment while their boats kept opposite each other, she added: "You would have sooner expected to see me with a pet bear, or wolf, wouldn't you?"

"Yes; I think I would," he confessed, and she drew the child closer and kissed it and laughed happily.

"That is because you only know one side of me," she said.

The stars were thick overhead, and their clear light made the night beautiful. When they reached the boats of Akkomi, only a short parley was held, and then an Indian canoe darted out ahead of the others. Two dark experts bent to the paddles and old Akkomi sat near the girl and the child. Looking in their dusky faces, 'Tana realized more fully that she was again in the land of the Kootenais.

It was just as she would have chosen to come back, and close against her heart was pressed the message by which he had called her.

The child slept, but she and the old Indian talked now and then in low tones all through the night. She felt no weariness. The air she breathed was as a tonic

against fatigue, and when the canoe veered to the left and entered the creek leading to camp, she knew her journey was almost over.

The dusk was yet over the land, a faint whiteness touched the eastern edge of the night and told of the dawn to come, but it had not arrived.

The camp was wrapped in silence. Only the watchman of the ore-sheds was awake, and came tramping down to the shore when their paddles dipped in the water and told him a boat was near. It was the man Saunders.

"Miss Rivers!" he exclaimed, incredulously. "Well, if this isn't luck! Harris will about drop dead with joy when he sees you. He took worse just after dark last night. He says he is worse, though he can talk yet. I was with him a little while, and how he did worry because you wouldn't get here before he was done for! Overton has been with him all night; went to bed only an hour ago. I'll call the folks up for you."

"No," said the girl, hastily; "call no one yet. I will go to Joe if you will take me. If he is so bad, that will be best. Let the rest sleep."

"Can I carry the—the baby?" he asked, doubtfully, and took the child in his arms with a sort of fear lest it should break. He was not the sort of man to be needlessly curious, so he showed no surprise at the rather strange adjunct to her outfit, but carried the little sleeper into the pretty sitting room, where he deposited it on a couch, and the girl arranged it comfortably, that it might at last have undisturbed rest.

A man in an adjoining room heard their voices and came to the door.

"You can come out for a while, Kelly," said Saunders. "This is Miss Rivers. She will want to see him."

A minute later the man in charge had left 'Tana alone beside Harris.

All the life in him seemed to gather in his eyes as he looked at her.

"You have come! I told him you would—I told Dan," he whispered, excitedly. "Come close; turn up the light; I want to see you plain. Just the same girl; but happier—a heap happier, ain't you?"

"A heap happier," she agreed.

"And I helped you about it some—about the mine, I mean. I like to think of that, to think I made some return for the harm I done you."

"But you never did me any harm, Joe."

"Yes, I did—lots. You didn't know—but I did. That's why I wanted you to come so bad. I wanted to square things—before I had to go."

"But you are all right, Joe. You are not going to die. You are much better than when I saw you last."

"Because I can talk, you think so," he answered. "But I am cold to my waist—I know what that means; and I ain't grumblin'. It's all right, now that you have come. Queer that all the time we've known each other, this is the first time I've talked to you! 'Tana, you must let me tell Dan Overton all—"

"All! All what?"

"Where I saw you first, and—"

"No—no, I can't do that," she said, shrinking back. "Joe, I've tried often to think of it—of telling him, but I never could. He will have to trust or distrust me, but I can't tell him."

"I know how you feel; but you wrong yourself. Any

one would give you credit instead of blaming you—don't you ever think of that? And then—then, 'Tana, I tried to tell him down at the Ferry, because I thought you were in some game against him. I managed to tell him you were Holly's partner, but hadn't got any farther when the paralysis caught me. I hadn't time to tell him that Holly was your father, and that he made you go where he said; or that you dressed as a boy and was called 'Monte,' because that disguise was the only safety possible for you in the gambling dens where he took you. Part of it I didn't understand clearly at that time. I didn't know you really thought he was dead, and that you tramped alone into this region in your boy's clothes, so you could get a new start where no white folks knew you. I told him just enough to wrong you in his eyes, and then could not tell him enough to right you again. Now do you know why I want you to let me tell him all—while I can?"

It had taken him a long time to say the words; his articulation had grown indistinct at times, and the excitement was wearing on him.

Once the door into the room where the child lay swung open noiselessly, and he had turned his eyes in that direction; but the girl's head was bowed on the arm of his chair, and she did not notice it.

"And then—there are other things," he continued. "He don't know you were the boy Fannie spoke of in that letter; or that she gave you the plot of this land; or, more—far more to me—that you took care of her till she died. All that must give him many a worried thought, 'Tana, that you never counted on, for he liked you—and yet all along he has been made to think wrong of you."

"I know," she assented. "He blamed me for—for a man being in my cabin that night, and I—I wanted him to—think well of me; but I could not tell him the truth, I was ashamed of it all my life. And the shame has got in my blood till I can't change it. I want him to know, but I can't tell him."

"You don't need to," said a voice back of her, and she arose to see Overton standing in the door. "I did not mean to listen; but I stopped to look at the child, and I heard. I hope you are not sorry," and he came over to her with outstretched hand.

She could not speak at first. She had dreamed of so many ways in which she would meet him—of what she would say to him; and now she stood before him without a word.

"Don't be sorry, 'Tana," he said, and tightened his hand over her own. "I honor you for what I heard just now. You were wrong not to tell me; I might have saved you some troubles."

"I was ashamed—ashamed!" she said, and turned away.

"But it is not to me all this should be told," he said, more coldly. "Max is the one to know; or, maybe, he does know."

"He knows a little—not much. Seldon and Haydon recognized—Holly. So the family knew that, but no more."

It was so hard for her to talk to him there, where Harris looked from one to the other expectantly.

And then the child slipped from the couch and came toddling into the light and to the girl.

"'Tana—bek-fas!" she lisped, imperatively. "Bek-fas."

"Yes, you shall have your breakfast very soon," promised the girl. "But come and shake hands with these gentlemen."

She surveyed them each with baby scrutiny, and refused. "Bek-fas" was all the world contained that she would give attention to just then.

"You with a baby, 'Tana?" said Harris. "Have you adopted one?"

"Not quite," and she wished—how she wished it was all over! "Her mother, who is dead, gave her to me. But she has a father. I have come up here to see what he will say."

"Up here!"

"Yes. But I must go and find some one to get her breakfast. Then—Dan—I would like to see you."

He bowed and started to follow her, but Harris called him back.

"This spurt of strength has about done for me," he said. "The cold is creeping up fast. I want to tell you something else. Don't tell her till I am gone, for she wouldn't touch my hand if she knew it. I killed Lee Holly!"

"You didn't—you couldn't!"

"I did. I was able to walk long before you knew it, but I lay low. I knew if he was living, he would come where she was, sooner or later, and I knew the gold would fetch him, so I waited. I could hardly keep from killing him as he left her cabin that first night, but she had told him to come back, and I knew that would be my time. She thought once it might be me, but changed her mind. Don't tell her till I am gone, Dan. And—listen! You are everything to her, and you don't know it. I knew it before she left, but— Oh, well, it's all

square now, I guess. She won't blame me—after I'm dead. She knows he deserved it. She knew I meant to kill him, if ever I was able."

"But why?"

"Don't you know? He was the man—my partner—who took Fannie away. Don't you—understand?"

"Yes," and Overton, after a moment, shook hands with him.

"I didn't want 'Tana to go back on me—while I lived," he whispered. It was his one reason for keeping silence—the dread that she could never talk to him freely, nor ever clasp his hand again; and Overton promised his wish should be regarded.

When he went to find 'Tana, Mrs. Huzzard had possession of her, and the two women were seeing that the baby got her "bek-fas," and doing some talking at the same time.

"And he's got liis new boat, has he?" she was saying. "Well, now! And it's to be a new house next, and a fine one, he says, if he can only get the right woman to live in it," and she smoothed her hair complacently. "He thinks a heap of fine manners in a woman, too; and right enough, for he'll have an elegant home to put one in and she never to wet her hands in dish-water! But he is so backward like; but maybe this time—"

"Oh, you must cure him of that," laughed the girl. "He is a splendid fellow, and I won't forgive you if you don't marry him before the summer is over."

At that instant Overton opened the door.

"If you are ready now to see me—" he began, and she nodded her head and went toward him, her face a little pale and visibly embarrassed.

Then she turned and went back.

"Come, Toddles," she said; "you come with 'Tana."

A faint flush was tingeing the east, and over the water-courses a silvery mist was spread. She looked out from the window and then up the mountain.

"Let us go out—up on the bluff," she suggested. "I have been shut up in houses so long! I want to feel that the trees are close to me again."

He assented in silence and the child, having appeased its hunger, was disposed to be more gracious, and the little hands were reached to him while she said:

"Up."

He lifted her to his shoulder, where she laughed down in high glee at the girl who walked beside in silence. It was so much easier to plan, while far away from him, what she would say, than to say it.

But he himself broke the silence.

"You call her Toddles," he remarked. "It is not a pretty name for so pretty a child. Has she no other one?"

They had reached the bluff above the camp that was almost a town now. She sat down on a log and wished she could keep from trembling so.

"Yes—she has another one—a pretty one, I think," she said, at last. "It is Gracie—Grace—"

She looked up at him appealingly.

But the emotion in her face made his lips tighten. He had heard so many revelations of her that morning. What was this last to be?

"Well," he said, coldly, "that is a pretty name, so far as it goes; but what is the rest of it?"

"Overton," she said, in a low voice, and his face flushed scarlet.

"What do you mean?" he asked, harshly, and the little one, disliking his tone, reached her arms to 'Tana.

"Whose child is this?"

"Your child."

"It is not true."

"It is true," she answered, as decidedly as himself.

"Her mother—the woman you married—told me so when she was dying."

He stared at her incredulously.

"I wouldn't believe her even then," he answered. "But how does it come that you—"

"You don't need to claim her, if you don't want to," she said, ignoring all his astonishment. "Her mother gave her to me. She is mine, unless you claim her. I don't care who her father was—or her mother, either. She is a helpless, innocent little child, thrown on the world—that is all the certificate of parentage I am asking for. She shall have what I never had—a childhood."

He walked back and forth several times, turning sometimes to look at the girl, whom the child was patting on the cheek while she put up her little red mouth every now and then for kisses.

"Her mother is dead?" he asked at last, halting and looking down at her.

She thought his face was very hard and stern, and did not know it was because he, too, longed to take her in his arms and ask for kisses.

"Her mother is dead."

"Then—I will take the child, if you will let me."

"I don't know," she said, and tried to smile up at him. "You don't seem very eager."

"And you came back here for that?" he said, slowly, regarding her. "'Tana, what of Max? What of your school?"

"Well, I guess I have money enough to have private teachers out here for the things I don't know—and there are several of them! And as for Max—he didn't say much. I saw Mr. Seldon in Chicago and he scolded me when I told him I was coming back to the woods to stay—"

"To stay?" and he took a step nearer to her. "'Tana!"

"Don't you want me to?" she asked. "I thought maybe—after what you said to me in the cabin—that day—"

"You'd better be careful!" he said. "Don't make me remember that unless—unless you are willing to tell me what I told you that day—unless you are willing to say that you—care for me—that you will be my wife. God knows I never hoped to say this to you. I have fought myself into the idea that you belong to Max. But now that it is said—answer me!"

She smiled up at him and kissed the child happily.

"What shall I say?" she asked. "You should know without words. I told you once I would make coffee for no man but you. Do you remember? Well, I have come back to you for that. And see! I don't wear Max's ring any longer. Don't you understand?"

"That you have come back to me—'Tana!"

"Now don't eat me! I may not always be a blessing, so don't be too jubilant. I have bad blood in my veins, but you have had fair warning."

He only laughed and drew her to him, and she could never again say no man had kissed her.

"'Tana!" said the child, "'ook."

She looked where the little hand pointed and saw all the clouds of the east flooded with gold, and higher up they lay blushing above the far hills.

A new day was creeping over the mountains to banish shadows from the Kootenai land.

THE END.

