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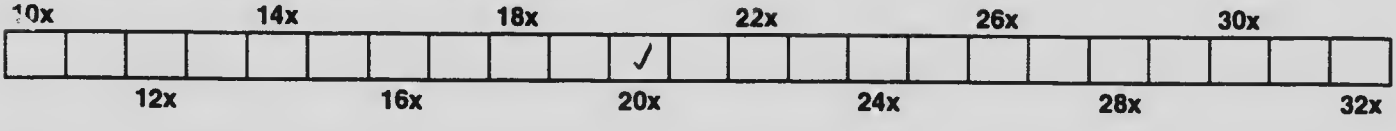

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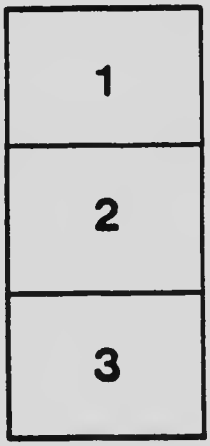

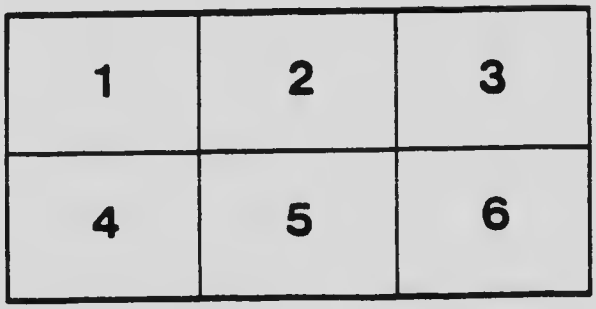

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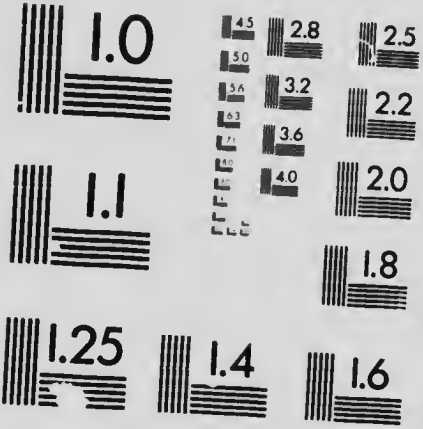

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CLIVE FORRESTER'S GOLD

"A MOMENT LATER WE PLUNGED DOWNWARD INTO SPACE."

[See page 59

Clive Forrester's Gold

BY

CHARLES R. KENYON

WITH THREE ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. FINNEMORE

"Men have a touch-stone whereby to try gold, but gold is the touch-stone whereby to try men."—Dr. FULLER.

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PART I

TOLD BY CLIVE FORRESTER

CHAPTER I

A TIMELY RESCUE

AS I rode slowly along to the meet that dull April morning—they hunt foxes late in Wales—I thought I was the most unlucky man in the world. I had missed by two paltry marks my last chance of getting into the army—the profession upon which I had set my heart—and my prospects seemed as gloomy as the cloud-capped mountains around me.

I had just re-read the fateful letter, and was crumpling it in my hand, when I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs on the road behind me. At the same moment a voice, which I

recognised as that of the master of the hounds, called out, 'Good morning, Forrester.'

'Good morning, Sir Robert,' I answered, my heart in my mouth, so to speak, as I turned towards him, for I hoped to see by his side the tall, graceful figure of his daughter on her favourite chestnut. But, alas! I was once more doomed to disappointment—he was alone.

Sir Robert Jocelyn was the head of a large firm of shipowners. He had come into a nice little property in the neighbourhood when he was young, and married the daughter of one of the oldest county families, a sweet, fragile woman, who died some years later, leaving two sons and a daughter, who were now grown up. The latter, Grace Jocelyn, had accompanied her father to the meets ever since she was old enough to sit on her pony, and she and I had had innumerable gallops together in years gone by. Her unaccountable absence that morning seemed to be the crowning point of my ill-fortune.

Whether Sir Robert noticed my look of surprise and consternation I cannot say, but he just remarked, as he rode quickly on, 'Grace's horse went lame, and she had to return for a fresh mount.' Then, as if suspicious of an inclination on my part to hang behind and wait for his daughter, he checked his horse

for a moment, and added, 'But come on. It's getting rather late, and I shall want your help to watch one side of the big plantation.'

The hounds began to give tongue soon after they were put into the covert, and in about ten minutes later there was a burst of music such as thrills the blood in the veins of the fox-hunter.

I glanced hastily round, but there was no sign of Miss Jocelyn, and, excited though I was by this time, I wished the hounds had not found quite so soon. Almost immediately some one at the opposite side of the plantation gave a loud 'Tally ho!—away ho!' and I knew that the fox had broken covert, and was crossing the common beyond.

The inspiriting cry had scarcely died away ere I was galloping my hardest along a grassy drive which bisected the wood, for I knew there was no time to be lost if I wished to share in the fun. The drive curved somewhat, restricting my view, so that it was only by the sound of the horn which the huntsman occasionally blew that I could tell which way the hounds were running. Once clear of the trees, however, I could see the pack streaming away over the high table-land which bordered the covert, and a long line of horsemen galloping in the rear. One glance sufficed to show

me that no riding-habit was amongst them. As I looked, the leading hounds turned sharply to the left and headed towards one of the most precipitous edges of the plateau.

'Ah!' I exclaimed, 'his point is the Alt Fawr,' which was the Welsh name for the steep edge which fell away one thousand feet, almost sheer to the rocky bed of the river below. And I turned my horse's head straight across the common so as to join in with the hunt before they reached that spot. As I had only to cover the segment of the semicircle described by the hunters, I caught them up without difficulty about a quarter of a mile short of the point where Reynard and some of the leading hounds had disappeared from view over the edge of the heather-covered declivity.

My horse was comparatively fresh, and soon there was only the huntsman in front of me. He was just calling to me to be careful not to approach too near the edge of the mountain when I heard a half-suppressed scream and the sound of a horse coming at full speed behind me. Almost before I had time to turn my head some one was overtaking and passing me on the right side. A glance showed me that it was a lady—a tall, dark girl. 'Grace Jocelyn!' I murmured, 'on——' I did not wait to notice

what horse she was riding. It was enough for me that she could not hold the brute, and that it was carrying her headlong to destruction

We were already within a couple of hundred yards of the declivity, and, although the girl was pulling with all her strength, it was plain she would be carried over the precipice in a few seconds. I had just begun to rein in my horse when I heard the despairing cry, and saw Miss Jocelyn's agonised look as she passed me; but, quick as thought, I struck in the spurs and dashed after her.

'Well done! Stick to him, Miss Jocelyn,' I cried, encouragingly, 'I'm coming!'

Luckily the horse I was riding was almost thoroughbred, and one that responded to every touch of rein or spur. I had done most of the training of him as a colt, and we understood each other thoroughly. He seemed to know now exactly what was required, and we fairly raced over the smooth turf. In a marvellously short time I was carried alongside the runaway. And not too soon. A few yards further on was the brink of the precipice. Jocelyn's horse was mad for the time being, and the poor girl could do nothing. My brain was in a whirl, but some instinct told me it was useless to attempt to stop her horse. Yet something must be done, and that instantly. Mine was the heavier,

stronger animal, and I succeeded in imparting to him my own strong determination, for he pressed up close to Jocelyn's horse, as I seized her bridle and turned both horses slightly, so that for a few moments we galloped on by the side of the precipice, then, another slight turn, and we were galloping away from it, side by side, on and on, until gradually the runaway slackened speed, and I was able to stop him quite easily. A few moments more, and I had dismounted, and was assisting Miss Jocelyn to alight.

'How can I thank you?' she cried; 'you have saved my life.' And then the reaction came on, and she who had ridden so splendidly, sitting straight on her saddle, when it seemed as if she were riding to certain death, burst into tears, and cried like a child.

I busied myself with the horses, giving Miss Jocelyn's a bit of my mind, I can tell you, though the poor beast was punished itself, and not slightly, for the foam was streaming from its mouth, and the sweat from its skin was dripping upon the ground.

A few minutes later old Sir Robert galloped up with the huntsman, and they said some pretty things about what I had done; yet I scarcely listened for thinking of Miss Jocelyn,

and wondering if she felt better, only I remember Sir Robert said, amongst other things—

'Thanks, Clive, my boy. You're a chip of the old block! There isn't another man in the country but a Forrester could have done such a feat of horsemanship,' he added, as he jumped from his horse with wonderful alacrity considering his years. Seizing hold of my hand, he shook it cordially.

There was no more hunting for me that day—my nerves were too thoroughly shaken, but I accompanied Sir Robert home with his daughter, and we all went almost in silence, unable to prevent ourselves thinking of what might have been.

CHAPTER II

BETTER THAN GOLD

WHEN I called at the Priory the following evening to inquire after Miss Jocelyn's health I was shown into the library, where I found Sir Robert smoking. He greeted me with unusual warmth. 'Grace,' said he, in answer to my question, 'is all right, thanks to you, Clive, my boy. But now tell me,' he went on, after a little while, looking into my eyes, 'have you heard whether you've passed or not yet?'

'I heard yesterday that I had failed by two marks,' I replied, feeling very hot in the face.

Sir Robert raised his eyebrows. 'Well, all I can say is those two marks have lost the army a very good man!' he exclaimed. 'But don't you be down about it,' he added; 'it may turn out the best thing that could have happened to you. Look here!' and he picked

up the *Times*, which was lying on the floor beside his chair, and glanced down the columns.

'Read that,' he said, handing the paper to me, and pointing to a paragraph headed in bold type, 'A NEW ELDORADO.'

It was only a few lines, but it was to the effect that 'gold had been struck very rich' on a small tributary of the Yukon River called Klondike, far away in the North-West territory of Canada, about one hundred miles from the Alaska boundary. The reports of returned miners showed that for hundreds of square miles the tributaries of the Yukon were teeming with gold, and instances were cited of lucky individuals taking out as much as twenty or thirty thousand pounds worth of gold dust and nuggets in a few weeks. The richness of the field was confirmed by the report of the Canadian commissioner to the district, and it seemed more than probable that the discoveries of '48 in California and later on in Australia would be completely eclipsed by those of the Yukon. At the same time, intending immigrants were warned that the district being on the verge of the Arctic circle, the climate was a terribly severe one, and that food was already almost at famine price owing to the inrush of miners from the States.

'My word!' I cried. 'If this report will bear investigation I'm off to Klondike.'

'I should not have shown it to you if I were not in possession of confirmatory evidence of its truth from an independent and reliable source,' said the baronet, rising from his seat and taking a letter from the mantelshelf. 'This is from my son Louis,' he went on, unfolding a sheet of closely-written note-paper which he had abstracted from the envelope while reseating himself in his comfortable chair.

'What, my old college chum, Lou?' I interrupted. 'Do you mean to say that he has gone to Klondike?'

'No, not exactly that, Clive—at least, I hope not,' he corrected himself, the slightest shade of anxiety manifesting itself in his voice for a moment. 'You know he just failed, as you have done, in his final examination—only of course he was trying for a berth as a navy surgeon, while you were for the army.'

'Yes, he told me all that last Christmas,' I replied, 'but I've heard nothing from him since except that he was thinking of taking a voyage round the world in one of your fleet of merchant steamers.'

'Well, he elected to sail as surgeon with Captain Watson in the Dolphin some months

ago, on a trip to the Pacific coast of America. They took out a cargo of general merchandise to San Francisco and Victoria, British Columbia, and were to bring back wheat and tinned goods. But here's the letter,' he added, handing me the sheet—'you can read it for yourself; and there's a message for "Old Clive."'

I soon ran through the note which was written in Lou's characteristic style—a thorough mixture of boyish light-heartedness and manly self-reliance. The gist of the communication so far as I was concerned was contained in the last page. 'I wonder,' it ran 'if old Clive has got in through the militia, as he intended? If not, tell him to pack up his traps and come out here, or rather to the Canadian North-West. There is nothing talked about on this coast at present but the Klondike gold-fields which, greatly to the disgust of the U.S. authorities, are just outside the Alaskan boundary in British Territory. If he travels direct by the Canadian Pacific route to Vancouver he will be there almost as soon as we are, for we shall be at least another fortnight or three weeks at this port. It is almost impossible to get cargoes loaded, or unloaded. Half the dock labourers have been seized with the . fever and have set off to Alaska, while the ..er hali have struck for higher wages!

It's all I can do myself to sit still to write these lines. There's a spirit of unrest abroad, and if it were not that the skipper has entreated me "for the men's sake" to set a good example and help him to steady the crew, I believe I should have levanted long since! I must say I hate this sense of responsibility, and when we reach Victoria I doubt if it will be effectual to keep me to my duty. If Clive decides to come out, tell him to cable probable time of arrival to me at Victoria (c/o Captain Watson, ss. Dolphin) and I will be on the look-out for him. And be sure to send a note by him to Watson telling him to give me my discharge, or whatever you call it, so that I can act on the square and not be forced to sneak away like a thief! For I'm going to Klondike, and if old Clive comes—and with his constitution and brute strength he's just the man for the trip—we shall be able to chum together, and in all probability make our pile and return within the year. By way of a little encouragement you can tell him that I know for a fact that £20,000 worth of gold has been secured by one man as the result of only three months' work on the Klondike placers.

'PS.—It will be odd if the black sheep of the family, your scapegrace younger son Louis, should return home a millionaire!

'PPS.—Should C. F. elect to come—and if he's not already booked for the army he will be foolish if he doesn't—tell him to start at once, and bring as little luggage and as much coin as possible. We can buy a complete outfit suitable for the climate (which is dreadful) at Victoria.'

'Well, what do you think of that?' asked Sir Robert, as I handed him back the letter.

His keen grey eyes were fixed intently on my face as if he would read my answer there before it was spoken. I knew that a crisis in my life had arrived. He liked me well; but he had one weakness—he was avaricious. Money was his god. He knew that I admired his daughter, and had a strong suspicion that the attachment was mutual, but he also knew that I was only a younger son in a large family, without any prospects worth mentioning, although my father held a very good position in the county. Hence the fact that hitherto he had not encouraged me to visit the Priory, notwithstanding my school and college friendship with his younger son Louis—the elder was married and lived in London, acting as resident manager to the shipping business.

The look which Grace had given me when she thanked me for saving her life flashed through my mental vision at that moment, and,

even if I had not been naturally fond of adventures, I should have hesitated at no enterprise, however hazardous, which offered a genuine chance of breaking down the barrier that divided us.

'I think it will suit me exactly,' I said. 'It is the very chance I was looking for.'

I could see that the Baronet was pleased. His eyes fairly sparkled as he answered, 'Bravo! Spoken like a man, Forrester. I can see *you* don't mean to wait for dead men's shoes.'

'I fear there are none worth waiting for, Sir Robert,' I answered lightly. 'But tell me,' I added, 'whether you are willing that Louis should accompany me from Victoria to Klondike.'

'Willing?' he answered, with an amused laugh, 'most certainly, though I doubt it would make very little difference to Master Louis's plans if I were not! Ha! ha! ha!' And he was still laughing as I rose to go. 'When do you think you'll start?' he added abruptly, as we passed into the hall.

I was getting rather desperate, as my chances of seeing Grace were rapidly vanishing, and scarcely thinking what I said, I answered offhand, 'Oh, to-morrow, or the following day at latest.'

'Ah! you're a man of action; that's what I like, Forrester. Come this way'; and Sir Robert opened the drawing-room door and ushered me in saying, 'Here's your rescuer, Grace, come to inquire after you. I'll leave you to answer for yourself while I fish for trout before dinner.' He closed the door behind him and was gone.

This was extraordinary consideration on the part of the formerly cold-mannered baronet, and I could scarcely credit my good-fortune.

There was certainly no trace of annoyance in the slight exclamation of surprise which escaped Miss Jocelyn's lips as she rose from her seat to meet me. 'Oh, Mr. Forrester, how kind of you to come and ask after me!' she said, glancing my way with a pretty blush just touching her cheeks with colour.

'I hope you are not the worse for your adventure, Miss Jocelyn,' I replied, trying to suppress my emotion and speak calmly. 'It must have been a great shock.'

'Well, it was,' she confessed. 'I felt rather bad afterwards, but I am better to-day.' And she smiled happily,

'That's right,' I said, thinking what a lovely woman she had grown into, and feeling half dazed and very stupid as I stood silent before her.

'Won't you sit down?' she asked at length.

I felt the necessity of saying something, and began abruptly, 'Miss Jocelyn, I—the fact is,' I blurted out, 'I'm off to the Yukon.'

'The Yukon!' she exclaimed, in tones of consternation and horror. 'Klondike—that frightful region of which the papers are so full. But why? You said you were trying for the army. You——' She stopped abruptly and her face flushed, as she evidently realised that she was betraying far too much anxiety on my account. 'But you are not in earnest, Mr. Forrester? You are only joking?' she said.

'Indeed I am not, Miss Jocelyn. Matters are far too serious with me. I have failed again by two marks and lost my last chance for the army. I was feeling dreadfully down on my luck, but your father has just drawn my attention to the new gold-fields and shown me Lou's letter. The gold-fields seem marvellously rich, and I have decided to go out and join your brother in a bid for fortune.'

'Money, money—it's always money first with father,' she began, and then checked herself, with a look of contrition.

'Money is a good thing,' I ventured.

'But it is not the highest good!' she exclaimed. 'There is what is better—you know it—infinitely better than money.'

I am afraid I did not think much of her

words at the time, for I was admiring the brightness of her blue eyes and the brilliancy of her complexion; only, afterwards, when I was far away, I remembered all that she had said.

"Oh, Mr. Forrester,' she continued, clasping her hands together in earnestness, 'you know what I mean. In choosing a career do not set *gold*, nothing but gold, before you as a goal!'

I laughed, in the joy of my heart, because she showed such deep interest in me. 'Why decry gold?' I exclaimed; 'we can do little in life without it. Perhaps, too, I want it for a very worthy object!' and I gave her a look full of significance.

She seemed a little embarrassed, and could not pursue her argument.

'You know what I mean,' she said. 'A thing may be good in itself, and yet not sufficiently so to be the end and aim of one's life.'

'*You* are the end and aim of mine?' I cried, quite carried away by my feelings. 'And I only want gold,' I added, 'because without it your father will not look on me as a lover for his only daughter.' And then I told her, or tried to tell her, what she was to me. Whereupon I learnt that she had loved me for quite a long time.

When I walked home that evening I felt a

different being. The task I had set myself seemed as nothing in comparison with the reward. What was a journey to the Yukon and a few months, or even years, of privation and hardships in the gold-fields compared to the winning of such a wife as Grace? And she had promised never to marry any one else.

As for her father, I knew that gold—abundance of gold—was all I needed to secure his consent, though without it, or its equivalent, I might plead in vain ; and therefore I determined to lose no time in securing as large a fortune as possible. It was, however, only as a means to an end that I looked upon it—for gold as gold I cared little enough.

CHAPTER III

ON THE WAY TO KLONDIKE

IT is wonderful what steam can do. In ten days from that eventful evening I was at Montreal taking my ticket for Victoria, and five days later I stepped on to the platform at Vancouver, the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The train was very late and I was just wondering whether Louis Jocelyn, to whom I had wired from Winnepeg, would meet me there or at Victoria, when a hearty voice at my elbow exclaimed, 'Bravo, Clive! I'm jolly glad to see you, old man,' and the next moment we were gripping each other by the hand in a way that friends only do when they meet in distant lands; and such friends! Louis Jocelyn was my *beau idéal* of what a man should be—brave, strong, sweet-tempered, like his sister, yet capable of swift, passionate anger when injustice or treachery occurred; and withal, like Grace, he was a true Christian,

though not accustomed to speak about it. 'Deeds, not words,' was his motto.

'I'm just as glad to see you, Lou,' I replied, 'for I was feeling a bit stranded after this tremendous railway journey, almost without a break from Montreal.'

'Well, it's nothing to what's in store for us from here to the Yukon,' replied Lou; 'but you look as if it would not affect you much—what a giant you are, Cli! I really believe you've grown since I saw you at Christmas!'

'I'm afraid I've grown a bit heavier,' I said, laughing, 'but not taller.'

'Oh, you needn't trouble about the weight,' replied Lou—'the Pass, and what's beyond, will soon reduce that for you; but six feet four inches is rather an inconvenient height to stow away in a tent or canoe.' And he looked me up and down with a half admiring, half quizzical smile on his handsome face.

'Come, you're not so very diminutive yourself,' I said, laughing. He stood nearly six feet in his stockings, and was well proportioned and muscular.

'Oh, I'm all right amongst ordinary mortals,' he replied; 'it's only when I'm near you that I feel so insignificant. But come along,' he added, catching up some of my *impedimenta*, 'or we shall miss the boat.'

On the Way to Klondike

When we arrived at Nanaimo on the other side of the straits a train was waiting to take us on to the capital. But having to transfer both passengers and luggage caused a further delay, and we did not arrive at Victoria until the small hours of the morning. Under these circumstances Lou's suggestion that we should sleep at the Dominion Hotel and go on board the Dolphin next day was promptly acted upon. We had a comfortable room and slept like tops in spite of the bustle which goes on almost continually at such a place during a mining boom.

When we were just finishing breakfast Lou informed me that he had some good news to communicate. He said he had been keeping it till then so as not to over-excite me and prevent my having a good night's sleep and a hearty feed, as I should need all my strength for what had to be done that day and the following.

'I should not have supposed you were capable of keeping any sort of news to yourself so long,' I said. 'What is it?'

'Well, about ten days ago,' began Lou, without deigning to notice my aspersion, 'old Watson received a cablegram from my father as representing the firm, cancelling his previous instructions and telling him to take a cargo of

flour and other provisions to Juneau and Skagway Bay, or Dyea, and dispose of it to the merchants there, and as soon as navigation was open further north to carry a light cargo to St. Michael's at the mouth of the Yukon. He also told him to further our plans as far as he could consistently with his duty to the firm.'

'Bravo!' I exclaimed; 'that will doubtless be to our advantage, as now I suppose we shall get a free passage for ourselves and luggage to Dyea, where our land journey commences.'

'Exactly,' answered Lou, 'and if you had only seen what I have of the crowded condition and general discomfort of the regular steamers you would be still more rejoiced at escaping that part of the trials entailed by a journey to Klondike, not to mention the saving of expense.'

'But won't it cause us some delay while the cargo is being shipped?' I asked.

'No,' replied Lou, 'for most of it is already on board, thanks to the energy imparted to the crew by the promise of an extra bounty for every day saved. In fact,' he continued, 'we shall have to look spry, as the Americans say, or we shall not have completed our own preparations before the Dolphin is ready to sail.'

'Do you know where to get the necessary outfits?' I asked.

'Yes,' replied Lou; 'I've found out all about that. And if you'll wait here until I have run down to the wharf and reported myself and your safe arrival to the captain, I'll accompany you to some of the best places. You can be studying these maps and guides,' he added, 'and then you will have a better idea of what is required.'

The upshot of all this was that when we landed at Dyea, on the 10th of May, we found ourselves burdened with between eleven and twelve hundred pounds of bacon, split peas, beans, sugar, evaporated apples, peaches, butter, oatmeal, coffee, tea, salt, rice, evaporated potatoes, besides ten sacks of flour, four dozen tins of condensed milk, ten bars of soap, one dozen tins of beef extract, and, to crown all, one medicine chest. In addition to these provisions, we had bales of clothing, bedding, blankets, canvas, &c., and hampers and cases of tools, candles, cooking utensils, and tin cups, plates, cans, &c.; besides a miscellaneous collection of shovels, axes, rope, nails, oakum, pitch, and what not. Of course we each took a small battery of firearms and the indispensable gold-pan. And as if this was not enough, Lou had further burdened himself

with a Kodak, which he carried in his pocket.

When all this *impedimenta* was landed and piled up on the beach at Dyea I think we realised for the first time what sort of an undertaking we had embarked on. We looked at the heap of baggage, and then at the Mountain Pass looming in the distance, over which every particle of it would have to be transported, and—well, it affected us differently. I sat down and began to read a book I had picked up somewhere, in order to compose my mind, while Lou produced his camera and took a view of the situation, as he expressed it.

The steamer had gone back to Skagway Bay, after disgorging us and our baggage, to land part of her cargo there, and, as it was too late to make a forward movement that evening, we contented ourselves with exploring what there was to explore of Dyea and inquiring as to means of transport. We were lucky in finding a man who contracted to haul our stuff to the foot of the Pass for one cent per pound, but from there to the summit he wanted five cents, as the snow was melting and the trail very bad even for dog-sleighs and Indians. We accepted the first offer, and asked for time to consider the second. Then

we returned and pitched our tent for the night alongside of our belongings. We had had some supper at one of the saloons 'up town,' but we unpacked our little stove and collected some firewood in readiness to prepare breakfast in the morning.

Our first night under canvas passed very quietly. We both slept soundly, and thoroughly enjoyed our tin cups of coffee at seven o'clock.

We talked matters over after breakfast, and decided to accompany the contractor, who was about to start with his first load to the foot of the Pass. Arrived there, we would each shoulder a fifty or sixty pound package, and march with it up the canyon to the first halting-place. We should then be better able to judge as to the alleged difficulties of transport and the charges for haulage.

We carried out our programme, and when we got back we were sufficiently convinced of the strict moderation of the contractor's demand, and hastened to close with the offer. That first short stage would have been no mere pleasure trip with nothing heavier than a walking-stick to carry, but with half a hundredweight strapped on to one's back it was simply killing. The snow was half melted, and I perspired so much that I believe I lost

two pounds weight in that one trip. At that rate it needs only a simple sum in arithmetic to show what I should have been reduced to by the time our two thousand five hundred pounds weight of stuff had been lodged on the summit of the mountain. Lou took one or two snapshots at me with his Kodak, as I occasionally floundered in the mire and slush, but even he had not sufficient vitality left to photograph the crowning scene, when we both fell down from sheer exhaustion on reaching our destination at Pleasant Camp. That name would have extorted sarcasm from an Eskimo, and neither of us could refrain from airing our best vein of it.

When we got back to Dyea we were good for nothing but supper and bed (we had taken our dinner with us). And we awoke next day feeling very stiff and sore. We felt entitled to a little extra indulgence on that account, and it was nearly nine o'clock before we finished breakfast. I was just strolling forth from our snug little tent when I heard some one shouting my comrade's name.

'Who in the world can that be?' cried Lou, springing to his feet and rushing outside.

He returned in a minute or two with an open letter in his hand and a surprised look in his face.

'Well, I never heard of such a thing!' he exclaimed. 'What will the governor say?'

'What's the matter?' I inquired. 'Anything gone wrong with the ship?'

'Rather!' he cried indignantly. 'I wonder what poor Watson will do?' And he placed a letter in my hand.

He watched my face as I read its truly astonishing contents.

CHAPTER IV

A DOUBTFUL ALLY

THIS was the letter:—

'S.S. Dolphin.
'May 11, 1897.

'To Captain Watson.

'Sir,—We take the liberty to inform you that we have all decided to cut this for Klondike to-night. We can no longer refuse to take advantage of such an easy road to fortune. But don't fret, sir. We'll return in eighteen months with plenty of gold to buy the ship and make you a present of it.

'Signed for your disobedient but faithful crew—

'James Waite, Chief Engineer.
'Odo Falck, Boatswain.'

'Umph! Does this mean that the crew have deserted in a body?' I asked of Lou,

who was reading another letter that had come in the same envelope.

'Neither more nor less, old fellow,' replied he. 'Read this!' and he passed me Captain Watson's explanation.

'DEAR MR. JOCELYN,' wrote the Captain, 'I'm in a pretty fix, as you will see from the enclosed, which is an exact copy of a note I found pinned to my cabin door when I turned out this morning. I thought at first it was some foolish hoax, but I soon found out my mistake. Save for the old cook and the cabin boy (who were both fastened up in the fo'castle, where they could not give any alarm) there was not a soul left aboard; for the first and second mates were both on shore looking after the cargo we had landed the previous day. There was not a boat left behind, and I had to signal to the wharf people to send me one out before I could get ashore to institute a pursuit of the rascals. All I can learn is that a party of sailors were seen about midnight making their way towards the White Pass. Before starting after them I send this to apprise you of the matter, in case any of them should go your route, and to authorise you to have them arrested and turned back under escort wherever you find them, even if

they have got all the way to Klondike. The simpletons! I expect half of them will perish of cold or famine before then. Excuse haste.

'Yours truly,

'J. WATSON,

'Captain ss. Dolphin.'

'Phew! That's a pretty go!' I exclaimed when I had read the letter. 'What do you think will be the end of it?'

'Direst disaster to many of the misguided fellows, I fear,' replied Lou. 'But it's all that Odo Falck's doing. He was always telling the crew how foolish they were to slave on a ship when they might go to Klondike and make their fortunes in a few months.'

'What? The boatswain did that?' exclaimed I.

'Yes.'

'Then why wasn't he got rid of?'

'Aye, you may well ask that,' answered Lou; 'but I can't rightly answer. Falck seemed to have some uncanny influence over the Captain, and to be sure he was a very good seaman. He could navigate a ship as well as the Captain himself, I believe; and he was as big and strong as he was old and ugly, which is saying a good deal.'

'Where in the world did the Captain find such a prodigy?' asked I.

'He picked him up at the Cape when our old bo'sun was taken ill and had to be left behind in hospital. He's a mongrel sort of chap, combines the blood of half a dozen white races with a strong dash of Malay.'

'A queer kind of man to engage as boatswain,' said I.

'Yes, but it's generally "Hobson's choice" in a case of this kind.'

Further discussion on the subject was interrupted by the contractor's arrival for our last load of baggage. We hoped to have got a lift ourselves to the foot of the Pass, but when the last package was put on the waggon we found there was only just room for the driver; so we had to shoulder our guns and tramp the whole way to Pleasant Camp. We had hired an Indian guide, and sent him on in advance to prepare our supper, or at least have a fire and some hot water ready for us. He belonged to a tribe of Yukon Indians, but had come to Dyea last autumn with furs, which he had exchanged for a new gun and ammunition. His name was Hoka.

Our thirteen-mile walk to Pleasant Camp took us six hours. We pushed on the same evening as far as Sheep Camp, two or three

miles higher up the canyon, intending to cross the summit from there the next morning. We reckoned without our host, however, as it snowed all night and half the following day. So we decided to wait a little, and remained quietly in camp. While we were sitting by our fire a rough-looking man walked up, and, without being invited, squatted himself down on a heap of wood beside us. Not appreciating this intrusion, I mildly suggested that he must have made a mistake, as neither of us had the pleasure of his acquaintance. But I might as well have spared my sarcasm, for, instead of taking the hint, he coolly demanded some supper, as he was very hungry.

My first impulse was to jump up and pitch the impudent fellow out of our camp, but the thought that perhaps he was really starving restrained me, and instead I threw him half a loaf of bread and a chunk of salt meat. The way he devoured these confirmed in me the impression that he must have had nothing to eat all day, and I felt rather softer towards him. Nevertheless I hoped he would take himself off as soon as his hunger was appeased. In this, however, I was doomed to disappointment. As soon as he had swallowed the last mouthful of food, he asked for a quid of tobacco.

'Here,' I said, tossing him a small packet; 'you can smoke that as you go along.'

'I guess I ain't going any further to-night, boss,' he replied, pulling out a dirty clay pipe, and settling himself more comfortably on the firewood.

My temper was fast getting the better of me, and I sprang to my feet, exclaiming, 'You'll go out of this very quickly if you don't mend your manners, my man, and ask permission to rest awhile!'

The intruder looked up from filling his pipe, and stared me up and down as if I were some curiosity; while, save for an ominous fingering of the butt of a revolver which stuck from his belt, he vouchsafed no further acknowledgment of my threat.

What would have been the upshot I don't know, as I was just about to seize him, regardless of consequences, when Lou interfered.

'Don't be a fool, Cli!' he cried. 'Don't you see the rascal's armed? Leave him to me.'

Lou had not risen from his seat on the other side of the tent, but, as I turned at his words, I saw that he had drawn a little nearer the firewood and that his right hand rested on one of the faggots.

'And how do you propose to deal with such exceeding impertinence?' I asked sharply.

'*Thus!*' cried Lou; and, with a movement quick as thought he pulled away the faggot.

In an instant the intruder was sprawling on his back in the half-melted snow. His revolver, which he had just drawn in anticipation of my rush, exploded as he fell, and the bullet whistled uncomfortably near my head. Before he could recover himself, or even fire again, I flung myself upon him and wrested the weapon from his hand. With equal promptitude Lou stood over him, faggot in hand, threatening to bring it down on his head if he attempted to move, for the fellow still had his bowie-knife.

As soon as he saw the game was up he changed his tactics and assumed an injured air.

'Wal, ye're purty smart for Britishers,' he began, 'but yer ain't smart enough to know a friend when yer see one. I guess I could 'ave saved yer an almighty lot of hauling if yer'd treated me hospitabler. Thar's nobody knows this here trail better than Bill Noker, you bet!'

'Well, I must confess I don't understand your Western ways,' I said, feeling quite mollified now the man was in our power; 'and if you meant to befriend us, you'd a very queer way of setting about it.'

A Doubtful Ally

'MacDougal'—that was the contractor—'told me yer'd nobody but a pesky Injun to help yer, and maybe yer'd be glad of a pard.'

'It was extremely kind of Mr. MacDougal,' interjected Lou, 'but we should prefer him to mind his own business.'

'I think we might allow Mr. Noker to resume his seat,' I suggested, 'and perhaps we can find him employment after we reach the summit, if that's what he's after.'

The end of it was that we engaged Noker for a week on trial at two-and-a-half dollars a day. I didn't care for the man's appearance, and he'd a shifty way of not looking one in the face; but he seemed well acquainted with the country, and declared that he knew a far better route to Lake Bennett than the one usually taken by the miners.

'It's a bit roundabout,' he said, 'but you'll have ice nearly all the way, instead of rocks and stony ground.'

'Ice?' I repeated. 'Is it a glacier, then?'

'You bet!' he replied. 'That's what you Britishers call it.'

The idea of sliding down a glacier quite captivated me, though Lou declared he would have preferred a river of water to one of ice. I began to think better of Bill Noker, and to

put more faith in his project of taking us by the new route, for I knew that glaciers abound in Alaska; in fact, we had seen several of these natural wonders as we sailed up the Lynn Canal to Dyea, notably the Davidson Glacier, and our guide-books told us that these mountains were intersected by canyons, the majority of which were still occupied by glaciers. This, of course, was corroboratory of Bill's statement, and the only point that caused me uneasiness was the consideration that all glaciers ought to trend seawards, and not inland. However, Bill easily met this objection of mine by saying that the peculiar contour of that point of the mountain range caused this particular ice-river to flow directly inland for about ten miles before bending sharply back again towards Glacier Bay.

This explanation seemed plausible enough, and when we started from the summit a few days later it was with all our belongings packed on to three large sleighs. One of them was formed of our long, narrow hand-sleighs lashed together with rope, and the other two were constructed of pine timber, cut and shaped in the forest below, and hauled up to the summit by the wire cable, up which everything had to be hauled on account of the precipitous nature of the ascent.

A Doubtful Ally

It had been bitterly cold the last night or two on the summit, but we reaped the advantage of having a good thick carpet of frozen snow to facilitate our descent to the glacier. The canyon in which this lay was, Bill said, further to the north than the ordinary trail. So after shooting down the almost perpendicular slope some five hundred feet from the extreme summit, we edged away to our left instead of keeping to the right.

We were now on a stretch of almost level ground, and our heavily-laden sleighs required the united efforts of all four of us to draw them singly. After taking one for a mile or so we left it and returned for another, until at last we reached the promised canyon. By this time we were all pretty well exhausted, and, as evening was drawing on, it was decided to camp where we were until morning, in spite of Noker's insistence that we could just as well eat and sleep as we glided gently down the ice-river. Unfortunately, or rather fortunately, we had not such implicit confidence in our new acquaintance as to take his advice and embark on an unknown glacier just as daylight was waning.

Tired as we were, Lou and I could not help exclaiming at the magnificence of our surroundings. We seemed to be in the midst of

a sea of snow mountains. Far as the eye could reach on every side were peaks and hollows, cliffs and ridges in endless variety. But what caused it all to look so glorious, was the splendid colouring. The setting sun threw a wave of purple light over one part of the scene, while other parts were bathed in all the colours of the rainbow, from deepest rose to palest amber.

The air, too, was marvellously pure and invigorating, though bitterly cold as night came on. In consequence of that and our exertions we developed the most ravenous appetites! Beans and bacon, which were now our staple fare, were relished as much as the choicest viands under normal conditions. Both Lou and myself ate, drank, and slept as we had seldom done before.

After supper Lou and I walked, or rather slid, down the steep sides of the canyon to obtain a nearer view of the glacier, for we had pitched our camp in a sheltered hollow near the brow of the canyon, thinking it would be warmer than down on the wind-swept ice.

'Oh, look!' exclaimed Lou, who was first to reach the bottom of the steep slope, 'it's a veritable glacier, and no mistake, with just a carpeting of snow.'

'Aye, and it stretches away inland as far as we can see,' said I, with delight.

'And such a gentle slope, too. I can't think why all the miners and prospectors don't take this route.'

'Bill says they don't know of it,' I replied. And then such an uneasy feeling shot through me, as the improbability of the reason was suddenly borne in upon my mind, that I became abruptly silent. What if this man were a villain, who, partly out of spite at his own discomfiture on our first meeting, and partly from a desire to possess himself of our valuable outfit, was purposely misleading us, and perhaps only awaiting a favourable opportunity to murder us in cold blood. Was it for this he had brought us to this unfrequented region! Time would show, but meanwhile I resolved to be on my guard.

'What's up, old man?' inquired Lou, noticing my change of countenance.

'I'll tell you,' I said; and taking him by the arm, I explained my doubts as we made our way back to camp.

CHAPTER V

A PLUNGE INTO SPACE

THE result of our confab was that we concluded there was no immediate cause for alarm. We were still too near the frequented route for any one to molest us with impunity. Judge Lynch held absolute sway in these wild regions, and thieves and murderers knew that if caught they need expect no mercy at his hands. The only precaution we took was to keep ourselves awake until Bill Noker and the Indian were asleep. Not, however, that we had any reason to distrust the latter. On the contrary, he had gained our confidence by his quiet attention to the small duties we had entrusted to him.

Dog-tired as we were, we slept so soundly that, although the wind rose in the night to almost a gale, we only awoke when the tent fell in upon us, which it did at last. Then we had to scramble out and fix it up again, which

was no easy job, as, in addition to the cold wind, it was just commencing to rain and snow —about half and half. Noker and the Indian had their work cut out to light the stove and cook breakfast; and by the time the meal was over the storm had increased so much that all hopes of making an onward move that day were blasted. Indeed, we had as much as we could do to keep ourselves and our baggage from being saturated with wet. Towards midday the sleet changed to snow as the wind veered round more to the north, and presently the storm culminated in a terrific blizzard, which continued all the afternoon and throughout the following night. I had come prepared to rough it, but I scarcely reckoned upon encountering a belated blizzard in the latter end of May.

Time after time our tent was blown down, and on each occasion we suffered torments from cold before we could get it up again. Luckily our Indian turned out trumps, and more than justified the good opinion we had formed of him. He was ever ready to come to our assistance, whilst Noker, on the contrary, had taken a sullen fit, and having rolled himself in one of our rugs and crept under the canvas covering of one of the sleighs, refused to budge. But it was Lou who in the end tried my patience most. We had just succeeded in restoring the

overthrown tent to an upright position, and I was struggling with all my might to maintain it so, while Lou and Hoka drove in the iron tent-pins and refastened the guy ropes. The force of the wind was so enormous that, in spite of my fourteen stone weight, I was swayed backwards and forwards like a plaything, every moment expecting that either the tent would be swept from my grasp or I should be carried away with it.

'For pity's sake look sharp!' I roared, 'or I shall have to let go!'

Lou's reply of 'Hold on, old man, I've got you now!' was an enigma until, glancing round, I saw him just slipping something into his pocket. It was the Kodak! He had actually stopped in the very midst of tightening the ropes to take a snapshot at me!

If he had not been Grace's brother I think I should have let the tent go and sent him after it. But as it was I vowed that I would be even with him before our trip was ended—and I was, too.

The sun shone brightly next day; the wind had subsided, and only the snow remained to remind us of the storm. We were so deeply embedded in drifts that we had to cut a passage through them before we could get out of the hollow. This accomplished, we found

the snow had literally smoothed matters for us, and we were able to lower the sleighs, one by one, on to the glacier without difficulty. The sides of the canyon, as Noker called it, although it was only a deep, narrow valley filled by the glacier, were thickly covered with snow, which, being soft, just sufficiently retarded the sleighs to prevent them from overpowering us and being dashed to pieces on the ice below.

'Hurrah!' exclaimed Lou, as soon as we had got the last sleigh down and had time to look about us; 'it seems as if even the elements fought in our favour. The glacier is as smooth as glass, the wind is in the right direction, and——'

'"Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction!"' I interjected. I'm not in the habit of quoting Scripture, and reverence it far too much to do so lightly, and I don't know what made me say the words, but my observation had a curious effect on Bill Noker, who happened to be standing within earshot.

'Destruction!' he repeated. 'No, no, Boss; it's quite safe. Yes, it's safe, I tell yer!' His tones were excited.

My surprise at this unexpected outburst was doubled when I looked round and saw the speaker's face. It was almost livid. His eyes were staring straight before him, as if he saw

some dreadful apparition, and his lips twitched nervously.

My involuntary exclamation of surprise at the man's strange behaviour brought him to his senses, and he stammered out some rigmarole about an accident which he had witnessed there many years ago, when, he said, some half-dozen drunken miners had attempted to go that way without a guide. In his confusion he seemed unconscious of the fact that he was contradicting his former assertion that the glacier was quite safe.

Lou and I exchanged glances, but neither of us made any reply to the man. I think we both felt that we had been foolish to trust him and let him inveigle us away from the recognised route; but, having come so far, we had no mind to turn back. Nevertheless, for my own part, I felt more determined than ever to keep a strict watch over Mr. Bill Noker.

'Now then, I cried, up with the sails, and let's make a start.'

I had appointed Lou to one sleigh, myself to another, and Noker and the Indian to the third, which was made of hand-sleighs. The order of our little flotilla was as follows: Noker and the Indian were to lead, as the former professed to know the way, and Lou and I were to follow about a hundred yards behind.

This arrangement did not appear to be altogether to our guide's liking, to judge from the expression of his face, but he did not venture to oppose it openly. We had a short mast and sail for each sleigh, and a long pole, or boat-hook, to steer with.

It took us a little time to get these right, but at last all was ready, and off we went. There was a nice breeze almost directly behind us, and after a few shoves with our poles, to get a fair start, we were soon gliding steadily over the smooth surface of the glacier. Noker and the Indian, being in the lightest sleigh, gradually forged ahead until they had gained the prescribed lead. Then they took in sufficient canvas to enable them to maintain that distance.

'Hurrah for Klondike!' shouted Lou, in high spirits, as our heavier sleighs began to gain impetus, 'this is the way I like to travel.'

'Nothing can be nicer—while it lasts,' I replied, taking my Winchester from its case and laying it on the baggage beside me.

'What's that for?' inquired Lou.

'Possible eventualities,' I answered evasively, for I was already beginning to feel a little ashamed of my suspicions. There was something so exhilarating in the pure mountain air, the bright sunshine, and the delightful motion

of the sleighs as they glided swiftly onward, tl[illegible] it dissipated doubts and fears in spite of oneself.

'Oh, bosh!' cried Lou. 'Nothing venture, nothing have; so let's be merry while we may!'

We had [illegible]ned our sleighs together, as there [illegible] lack of room on that broad highway [illegible] soon we were chatting and exchanging jokes as freely as if we had been sailing on the Cam. At first I had kept a sharp look-out ahead through my field-glass, but as mile after mile was accomplished without any apparent change in the nature of the glacier my vigilance relaxed, and I contented myself with only an occasional survey. I reflected, too, that so long as Noker was in front there could be no danger to us, as he was not likely to risk his own precious skin by leading us astray.

By the time an hour or two had passed I had yielded to the allurements of the situation so far as to follow Lou's example, and lie on my back smoking. My head rested against a bale of clothing, and I could see, without getting up, the steep sides of the gorge, though the sail obstructed my view forward. We took it in turns to rise every now and then to make sure we were following the

guide's sleigh. And I had told both Noker and the Indian that they were to shout and warn us whenever it seemed advisable to slacken sail.

The breeze had strengthened a little, and we were bowling along in fine style.

'Hurrah! We must be going quite seven miles an hour now!' exclaimed my comrade, rising in his turn to take an observation forward. 'Oh, dear!' he added next moment, in a very different tone of voice, springing to his mast. 'Down with your sail, man! Quick!'

I was on my feet in an instant, and one glance sufficed to explain the cause of my comrade's sudden perturbation, and to make me tear down my sail in frantic haste. Our sleighs were leaving the glacier!

Almost in front of us, but a little to our left, a jutting promontory of rock seemed to cleave the ice river into two unequal portions, the main one curving off abruptly to the northward, and the lesser one—which appeared to be a mere offshoot from the glacier proper—going straight on—to a precipice. At least that was what it looked like to my frenzied perception. How I blamed my folly for not having kept a sharper look out. We had run blindly into the trap which Noker

had evidently laid for us when he cautioned us to keep as close as we could to the right side of the glacier. We *had* kept to the right, with the result that we now found ourselves irretrievably committed to this dangerous offshoot. We were already so near the wedge-like promontory—under which we saw that the pilot sleigh (as we had dubbed it) was almost stationary—that there was no hope of getting back into the proper channel. Even to have attempted to do so at the speed we were going would inevitably have caused us to be dashed to pieces on the rocks. Our only chance—and it was a small one—was to keep clear of the latter, and endeavour by every means in our power to bring our sleighs to a standstill before they overshot the ice-field.

My hair nearly stood on end as I saw clearer than before that, scarcely a hundred yards ahead, the spur we were about to traverse ended apparently in space, for nothing more substantial than mist was visible beyond that distance.

'Lou! Lou! Try to stop the sleighs! Drive the point of your pole into the ice!' I cried, suiting the action to the word, for, even in that extremity, I remembered that the end of each pole was armed with an iron spike and hook.

'Aye, aye, sir!' responded Lou, in nautical lingo, as he imitated my example, and drove his steel-pointed pole into the ice in front of the sleigh. But though he spoke lightly, I saw that he glanced above as if in appeal to the All-Father. Our lives were in jeopardy, and Lou knew it.

Two jets of snow-white spray spurted up as the spikes cut deeply into the solid ice, and despair almost gave place to hope when the friction began to tell and we felt our speed gradually slackening. But it was still a toss up whether we could stop the sleighs in time to avert destruction, the impetus we had gained and the weight of our loads being difficult to overcome.

As for the pilot sleigh, its occupants, having evidently taken time by the forelock, had lowered their sail and applied their brakes betimes. But how came it that they had neglected my instructions to shout a timely warning of the danger? I thought at least the Indian could have been relied upon, and that was why I had appointed him to accompany our treacherous guide—for such he had now proved himself to be.

The answer was at hand.

We were almost abreast of the pilot sleigh, when an exclamation of Lou's—who was on

that side—made me cast a glance that way, and I saw what made my blood boil. The Indian was lying face downwards, and apparently insensible, across the cargo, whilst Noker was endeavouring to give our sleighs as wide a berth as possible, by pushing his own as close as he could under the cliff.

'Villain! Traitor!' I yelled. 'Why didn't you give us a shout?'

A half triumphant, half malicious expression crossed the scoundrel's ugly visage, as, with a horrible oath, he retorted, 'Serves yer right, yer bloomin' Britishers!' and raising his right foot, made as though he were kicking us over the abyss which yawned below.

But that insulting demonstration cost him dear, and nearly sealed our fate as well. For, as Lou passed within a few yards of the stationary sleigh, he suddenly raised his pole and thrust out lustily at the American, exclaiming, 'We'll not go without a blow at our faithful guide!'

The thrust was well aimed, but the pace at which we were going caused it to stop one inch or so short of Noker's body. Yet, strangely enough, as the end of the pole dropped, its steel hook caught in the top of one of his high Wellington boots, jerking him on to his back upon the ice.

A Plunge into Space

Lou tried to extricate his pole from the boot, but in vain, and I shall never forget the yell of despair which the scoundrel uttered as he found himself being dragged to the death he had planned for us. But my comrade's impulsive act had destroyed our last chance of stopping the sleighs in time. They swung half round, owing to the brake being unevenly applied after my comrade had withdrawn his pole, and continued their course, broadside on, until I managed to right them again by jumping in Lou's sleigh and thrusting my spike in front of it. I had scarcely done this, however, before we began to descend the ice with great rapidity, and, to my horror, I found we had reached the rounded edge, or lip, of the glacier, where the mist hung so heavily as to veil the depth of the precipice beyond.

I dropped my pole and shut my eyes with a cry of despair, as, a moment later, we plunged downwards into space.

'Goodbye, old chap. Sit tight!' were the last sounds I was conscious of, although, strange to say, I fancied I was on my black hunter leaping down the Alt Fawr with Grace, on her hunter, by my side.

CHAPTER VI

SHOOTING THE RAPIDS

WE weren't killed after all, for, after an interval of oblivion, I became dimly conscious that some one was pouring water down my throat and exhorting me to pull myself together.

'Where am I?' I cried, at last, as my senses gradually returned.

'Safe enough, thank God,' replied Lou's familiar voice.

'I thought we were killed,' I said dubiously.

'Killed!' repeated Lou. 'Oh, dear no, not at all. Only you were so foolish as to stick to the sleigh and get mixed up with the other heavy weights. But you'll be better soon, only you must keep quiet a bit and not talk any more just now.'

'Nonsense, man; I'm all right. Tell me what has happened,' I insisted.

But my comrade was busily engaged with

something, and affected not to hear me. I had opened my eyes, and as I gazed around it struck me that it was strangely dark except where light broke in at the end of a sort of tunnel high above us. I was completely puzzled.

'Where *are* we?' I asked again; and then, as a sudden thought flashed through my bewildered brain, I added, 'Have we arrived? Is this our mine?'

'No, but it came precious near to being our tomb!' replied Lou. Then, recollecting himself, he said hastily, 'We're at the bottom of a snowdrift, that's all. Now I shan't answer any more questions till you've had a sleep. So drink this.'

The soothing draught which he gave me sent me into a dreamless sleep, and when I awoke all that had happened came back quite clearly to my mind, though I was still at a loss to know how it was we were at the bottom of a snowdrift instead of having been killed outright by our fall over the precipice. Lou did his best to enlighten me, though he admitted that a good deal of what he said was only conjecture. He apologised for this, and explained with his irrepressible flippancy that 'in the hurry of the moment' he had 'unfortunately neglected to take a

snapshot with his Kodak of our descent,' but he believed he was correct in saying that the speed with which we had shot over the edge of the glacier had carried us clean over a frightful chasm into the deeply drifted snow at the foot of the opposite slope.

While I was trying to grasp this marvellous theory, Lou went on to explain that he had struck the drift a little to one side of the passage made by the sleighs, and consequently his fall was so completely broken by the yielding snow that he was no more hurt than if he had jumped from a diving-board into a swimming-bath.

'And Noker and the Indian?—what has become of them?' I inquired.

'The Indian is all right,' replied Lou. 'I heard his cry of astonishment as he discovered our whereabouts some time ago, so he must have been only stunned. But as for that wretched Noker,' he added, 'all I can say is that he's not likely to trouble us any further —his whereabouts are absolutely unknown. "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein,"' he added softly.

Hoka's revival was the saving of us. First he shouted encouragement, then, unfastening the long hand-sleighs of which the pilot sleigh was composed, he lowered them down to us

by means of ropes. After which, with his hunter's skill, he got down himself to the snowdrift where we were imprisoned, and discovered a way of bringing us out of it. This was by digging a short cut through the drift from the foot of the cliff.

We had to abandon the two big sleighs and a good deal of the heavier luggage, but the most indispensable articles we packed upon our light hand-sleighs, and thus carried them off with us.

We had no further difficulty in reaching Lake Bennett, and Lou insisted that, after all, our disaster was probably the best thing that could have happened to us. 'Now,' he said, 'we can easily manage with two small boats, instead of three big ones, which would have taken us nearly a month to build.'

This was certainly the most philosophical way of looking at it, although I had my misgivings as to securing enough provisions at Klondike for the winter. On this score Lou referred me to one of the guide-books, which, under the heading of 'Game,' enumerated moose, caribou, reindeer, bear, and quantities of duck and other wild fowl as affording good sport to the hunter in the Yukon territory.

It seemed as if at last Fortune was going to smile upon us. The morning after our arrival

at Lake Bennett we were offered a couple of small boats, with oars and sails complete, for the nominal sum of sixty dollars. They belonged to a party which had preceded us, who found the boats that they had brought with infinite cost and trouble all the way from Victoria too small for their requirements. We bought them offhand and stowed ourselves and goods into them as soon as possible. The wind being favourable, we hoisted our sails the same evening and were soon well on our way down the lake. We hoped to make the lower end before nightfall, but nearly made the bottom instead! For an awfully sudden squall caught us, and before we could get our sails down we were within an ace of being capsized. My boat would certainly have been, for I was not so good a sailor as Lou; but fortunately I had the Indian with me. He saw the danger, and, flinging himself across the gunwale on the windward side, just managed to keep her from going over while I let go the sheet.

'That was a narrow squeak for us!' exclaimed Lou when the danger was past and it only remained to bail out the water we had shipped and thank Providence for our escape.

It was nearly midnight before we landed and pitched our camp. But, late as it was, we were too hungry to turn in without supper, for

we had only eaten a few biscuits since breakfast. Lou roasted a duck he had shot, and I made some short-cakes, while the Indian rigged up the tent and collected a lot of fir branches to spread our blankets on. Our hunger being appeased, we anticipated a refreshing night's rest as we rolled ourselves in our furs and flung our weary bodies down upon the extemporised couches.

Alas! we reckoned without our hosts, the mosquitoes, who claim possession of this country as soon as the warm weather begins. Neither of us could get a wink of sleep until Lou bethought him of a remedy which Captain Watson had recommended and provided him with. This was incense, which the Captain, who had travelled a good deal in Central Africa, declared was the only thing he had found really effective against the terrible insect pest.

'For pity's sake, let's try some, then!' I exclaimed when Lou had finished expatiating at some length on the alleged merits of this simple remedy. But Lou was not so ready to turn out and expose himself to a flank attack, as he expressed it, as might have been supposed from the enthusiasm with which he had extolled the Captain's gift. He said he didn't remember exactly where he had put the

incense or whether it wasn't lost. But I turned a deaf ear to all these subterfuges and joined with the mosquitoes in giving him no peace until he had bundled out and searched for it.

At last, after ransacking nearly every package he possessed and roundly anathematising the whole race of insects in general and mosquitoes in particular, he found the article he was looking for. And it proved well worth the trouble it had cost to find it, for no sooner had the delicious perfume filled the tent than the mosquitoes began to slacken in their attacks, and in less than a quarter of an hour they had entirely ceased to trouble us. The knowledge of this simple remedy and the means to apply it was of the utmost value to us then and afterwards.

Nothing very exciting occurred for a couple of days until we reached Lake Tagish. Then we nearly repeated our experience on Lake Bennett, but finally weathered the storm in safety. It was lucky for us that the ice had broken up early this season, or we should have met with great delay from it. As it was we found a block in the narrow channel leading to Marsh Lake.

While waiting for this to disperse we amused ourselves by shooting wild fowl and jack-snipe,

which literally swarmed on the flats around us. By the time the ice had cleared sufficiently for us to resume our journey we had shot enough geese, ducks, and jack-snipe to last us whilst travelling half the remaining distance to Klondike. We were able to vary our fare, too, by catching fish which abounded in these waters.

After a week's delay we at last floated downstream to Mud Lake. The monotony of this part of the journey rather palled upon us, and we actually looked forward to the excitement of shooting the Rapids which intervened before we could enter Lake Labarge.

In due time we arrived at the Rapids.

'Here they are at last!' cried Lou.

'What—the Rapids?'

'Yes, indeed, the famous White Horse Rapids!'

It was true enough in regard to the first series, but we discovered later that the Rapids properly so named were some four miles lower down the river. However, we found the first instalment quite enough to damp our ardour for what had still to come. We soon had all our work cut out to prevent our boats from being stove in against the rocks as we were swept along on the seething waters, and the waves lower down the canyon were almost as bad. My boat was so nearly swamped, being

the most heavily laden, that the Indian jumped overboard and swam for shore. The sudden lightening just enabled the little craft to keep afloat, and I reached the landing-place in safety a minute after Lou, who had given us a lead down this terrible gorge.

The moment I had secured the boat I seized a rope and ran to a jutting ledge of rock to look for Hoka. I was just in time to see him being swept along towards the more awful Rapids below. I gave a shout and flung my coil of rope across the swirling water. The Indian was evidently too exhausted to make any further effort to swim against such a current. With the stoicism of his race he had given up the futile struggle and resigned himself to his fate. But he heard my shout; he saw the rope strike the water just in front of him; he flung out his arms and—what was that? Had he missed? No; I soon felt his weight on the rope as I rapidly drew it in, and in another minute, with Lou's assistance, I had dragged him on to the rock.

This adventure sobered us, and we awaited the assistance of a party of miners who were a few miles behind before attempting the dreaded portage below. This portion of the Rapids was becoming better known as the 'Miners' Grave' than by its former title of White Horse

Rapids, and well it had earned the ominous name, to judge from the numerous cairns and rude crosses that marked the last resting-places of those who had lost their lives in endeavouring to make the passage.

Luckily, by the combined efforts of half a dozen men and the skilful use of ropes and poles, the boats were got safely down, and by the following day we were serenely sailing on the picturesque Lake Labarge. This was really the pleasantest part of our journey so far. We began to think our worse troubles were over and that the rest of our journey would be almost a pleasure trip compared to what we had gone through. But, alas! we were too sanguine. The event showed that this peaceful stage was merely the calm before the storm—the storm of disaster and death!

We were indeed in such high spirits that we laughed and sang as we floated calmly over the placid waters of the lake. Even the mosquitoes seemed to have declared a truce until we reached the entrance of the Hootalinqua River, when we had to resort to a huge fire to drive them off during supper-time and incense on retiring to rest later on.

'Look out—Rapids ahead!' suddenly cried Lou about noon on the second day after entering the Hootalinqua. He was, as usual, a

little in advance of my boat. I was lying down and Hoka was steering. I had barely time to jump up and lower the sail and seize my oars in imitation of my comrade when the boat was caught and hurried along in the resistless current.

We had got to rely so much upon the Indian's acuteness of sight and hearing that both Lou and I had become a little lax in keeping a proper look-out ahead. For once it seemed that Hoka himself had been caught napping, for the heat and mosquitoes had induced him to follow my example and envelope all but his eyes in a piece of muslin I had given him. Poor Hoka! he paid dearly for his unwonted lack of vigilance!

The river had suddenly contracted, and soon we found ourselves being whirled down a narrow channel at a terrific pace. The waves, or rather heavings of water, rose and fell to such an extent that we kept losing sight of the leading boat. Several times I thought it had foundered and that I should never see poor Lou again. But, as it happened, he got through all right, while our boat, being overladen, shipped so much water that, in spite of all our efforts, she filled and sank. We had got almost past the worst part of the channel when, seeing that the boat was foundering,

Hoka gave me a warning shout and sprang overboard. He was a powerful swimmer, and though the sides of the river were too steep to obtain a footing at that point, I had little fear but that he would gain the bank lower down. At least that was my notion as soon as I could find time to consider the matter at all. As it was I had to fight for my own life in the boiling surf. As the boat sank under me I grabbed the first thing that came to hand, and, fortunately, it chanced to be a bale of woollen clothing. This proved so buoyant that, after a very unpleasant five minutes, I finally scrambled out of the river about a quarter of a mile below where the accident happened.

The first thing that caught my eye was Lou running back along the bank to meet me with a rope. But neither of us ever saw poor Hoka again. He must have been dashed against a sunken rock and stunned when he first jumped into the water.

We erected a cross to the poor fellow's memory and long mourned the loss of a faithful servant.

CHAPTER VII

KLONDIKE AT LAST

IT took us some time to recover our spirits after the sad catastrophe in the Hootalinqua Rapids. We both felt poor Hoka's death very much, for he had proved a faithful ally throughout the journey. He seemed to take to us from the first, and I think it was because we treated him as a human being and not as a mere 'beast of burden.'

After leaving Fort Selkirk, situated at the junction of the Lewes and Pelly Rivers, we found ourselves, at last, on the longed-for Yukon. The realisation of this fact and the grandeur of the scenery, with high snow mountains towering above, or stretching away into the distance on either side, had its effect upon us, and our depression gradually dispersed, like the early morning mists before the sun's heat. Presently I noticed that my companion was smiling, and the next minute he glanced

across at me, with a merry sparkle in his dark eyes.

'What is it, old fellow?' I inquired. 'Out with it.'

'I was only thinking of that pile of luggage we landed with at Dyea,' he said, 'and how little of it is left to incommode us now!'

'Aye, it's rather a poor finish for such an imposing start,' I acknowledged ruefully.

'"*Two men in a boat!*"' he answered in such a comical way that I fairly burst out laughing.

Yet there was little cause for merriment in our condition. Instead of having provisions enough to last us for many months, we had barely sufficient to support us till we reached Klondike, while of all our camp and mining equipment there remained only a few bundles of clothes and one set of mining tools. Luckily we still had my Winchester rifle and a good stock of cartridges, though the shot-gun was, with many other valuable articles, at the bottom of the Hootalinqua.

But all was now comparatively plain sailing; and without further adventure than an occasional hunt on shore for a supply of fresh meat, we reached Klondike about a week after leaving Fort Selkirk. It came upon us rather unexpectedly at the last, for, seeing a few log

huts and miners' tents on the right bank, we steered towards them to ask how far we were from the far-famed Eldorado. Just as our boat touched the shore a rough-looking fellow came out of one of the nearest cabins, and made for what appeared to be a saloon. Hailing him, I asked if he could tell me how far it was to Klondike. He seemed surprised at my question, and walked towards me.

'Klondike?' he repeated. 'Why, it's right here, stranger.'

It was now my turn to be surprised. '*This* Klondike!' I exclaimed. 'This miserable mudhole!' For the ground being swampy, and the frost having just broken up, it appeared little better than a quagmire with a lot of navvies encamped upon it.

The miner seemed to take my contemptuous expression anent the place as a personal insult. He had evidently been drinking, for he squared up to me in a threatening manner, and said very offensively, 'Wal, ef yer don't like it yer can leave it! Yer ugly Britisher!'

Under ordinary circumstances I should not have been so foolish as to take any notice of a drunken man, but I was feeling sorely disappointed and sick at heart at my first introduction to Klondike, and this blackguardly behaviour of one of its citizens was as the last

straw to my load of misery. I sprang ashore, saying—

'After coming so far I could not think of returning without giving you a lesson in manners;' and, seizing the fellow by the shoulders, I proceeded to shake him unmercifully.

Meanwhile a small crowd began to collect, and one of my victim's pals drew a knife and rushed upon me. A shout from Lou warned me of my danger, and I sprang aside. The would-be assassin missed his aim, and as he lunged past, I turned and hit him a blow with my left fist, which sent him down like a log.

There was a little cheer from the onlookers, who seemed quite pleased at the discomfiture of the two men. This was explained afterwards when I found that they were two of the worst rowdies in the camp—which is saying a good deal!

'Make way there! What's the matter?' cried an authoritative voice at this juncture. And, looking round, I saw a couple of smart-looking horsemen drawing rein at the edge of the group. Their uniform proclaimed them to be members of the North-West Mounted Police, and I was by no means sorry to see them. For now that I had relieved my pent-up feelings I was beginning to wonder how the

matter would end. I could not well stand guard over my assailants all night, and already the first one—the other lay quiet enough where he had fallen—had drawn his revolver and attempted to shoot me. He failed, because he was so befuddled with the bad whisky he had drunk and the shaking I had given him, that he could not hold the weapon steady; and, before he could repeat the attempt, one of the policemen sprang from his horse and wrested the pistol from his grasp. After which, with equal dexterity, he clapped the handcuffs first on him and then on his pal, who was just making an effort to rise.

This only occupied a minute, during which time the second policeman—who appeared to be a sergeant—sat motionless on his well-trained horse covering the miscreants with his revolver. Then he turned and beckoned me to follow, as they all started off for the Police Barracks.

I glanced round, wondering what had become of Lou, whom I had last seen securing the boat. At that very moment his voice caught my ear.

'Capital, capital!' he was exclaiming, 'it ought to make a splendid picture!'

There was no difficulty in finding the speaker. He was mounted on the top of an

'I TURNED AND HIT HIM A BLOW WITH MY LEFT FIST'

empty whisky barrel in front of the adjoining saloon, and towered above the heads of the crowd.

'What in the world are you doing there?' I cried, not because I didn't know—for I saw him returning the Kodak to his pocket—but because I was thoroughly annoyed at his untimely frivolity.

He assumed such a look of injured innocence that I almost repented of my angry expression even before he jumped down and, pushing his way through the throng, inserted his arm in mine.

'Don't be angry, old man!' he began, in his persuasive sort of way. 'I saw you were more than a match for the two of them, and it seemed such a splendid opportunity of immortalising your prowess and at the same time illustrating the most effective method of making one's *début* in a mining camp and enlisting the sympathies of all peace-abiding citizens. See,' he continued, glancing around, 'we're getting quite an ovation!' And so indeed it appeared, for as we marched up the main thoroughfare of the camp the crowd increased until we were surrounded by nearly a hundred men of all ages and conditions. But what was more to the point, they all seemed to be in high good-humour, and many of them openly commended

me for the "handsome whipping" I had given "Californian Joe" and his pal "Bill."'

This was all very pleasant in its way, but I should have preferred to be allowed to seek a night's lodging in peace and quietness. Lou, however, appeared thoroughly to enjoy the situation. He kept nodding and smiling in his easy, fascinating manner to the delighted mob, until at last I had to check him lest they should take us by force and carry us shoulder-high through the settlement. I never saw such a fellow as Lou; he would win his way in any sort of company. There must be some Irish blood somewhere in his veins, for his jovial, good-humour and innate tact never fail him.

The barracks were reached at last, and after Lou and I had given our version of the fray, we were allowed to depart, while Californian Joe and his pal, being old offenders, were locked up, notwithstanding my endeavour to get the former off with a fine, on account of the rough handling I had given him. The commissioner said that it was impossible for him to overlook such serious offences as fighting with a knife or pistol; they were becoming far too frequent, and he was determined to put them down with a strong hand.

'If they oftener ran up against men of your

calibre, Mr. Forrester,' he said smiling, 'there would be less need for magisterial severity.'

After this little episode we had no difficulty in obtaining accommodation. The best that Klondike afforded—which consisted of a very modest shake-down in a tent or cabin—was at our service. Indeed, the inhabitants showed such a disposition to lionise us that it was quite embarrassing.

At length, after submitting with the best grace we could to having our healths drunk at half the saloons in the place, we agreed to accept the hospitality of a young man, whose shabby moleskin suit seemed in little accord with his quiet, gentlemanly bearing. He was a tall, long-limbed, athletic young fellow of about five-and-twenty, and, though not exactly handsome, he had a strong, intellectual face, and a very winning smile.

'I've a spare room in my cabin,' he said, 'and I should be only too glad of your company if you'll take pity on my loneliness.'

Needless to say we accepted the offer with many thanks, and our new friend, whose name was Dick Webster, accompanied us to the boat and helped us to carry our things to his hut, which luckily was only about a hundred yards from the river. Afterwards, when we were all having supper together, we gave him an

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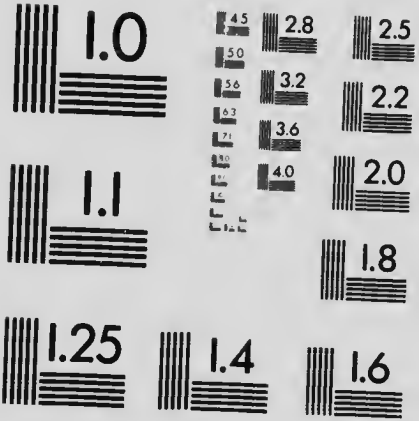

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account of our adventures, and he, in his turn, narrated his experiences of the Yukon district.

He was an American—a Yale man—and it seemed he had come to Alaska, attracted by the gold discoveries, nearly two years before, in company with an old Californian miner named Coulson. They were working a claim near Circle City when the news arrived of the rich finds on the Klondike river. As they were scarcely making enough to support them where they were, they at once abandoned their claim and joined the rush over the boundary into the new Eldorado.

'And found it no better than the old one, I suppose,' said Lou, 'judging from the squalid look of the place and the ragged condition of the inhabitants.'

'Ah! but you know appearances are often deceptive,' was Webster's quiet rejoinder. And after a pause he added, 'There's scarcely a man here—barring, of course, a few ne'er-do-wells—who isn't making from five to twenty dollars per day, and some who have struck it rich will go home at the end of this summer with fortunes of from ten to one hundred thousand dollars in gold.'

'That,' exclaimed Lou, 'was what *we* hoped to do until we got here and saw this miserable-looking place. It was then our spirits went

down to zero, and my friend—who is usually quite harmless—became exasperated. Our minds had been buoyed up through all our toils and dangers by the hope of reaching this place—the world-renowned Klondike—and when we arrived and saw the reality—well, I needn't enlarge on it, but I am only surprised that Californian Joe has a whole bone left in his body. I consider that after the civil (?) greeting he gave us Forrester exercised unusual moderation in his treatment of him.'

'I and the rest of my fellow-citizens are equally surprised that your friend lives to enjoy his victory!' said Webster. 'Californian Joe is a desperado of the deepest dye, and since he and his pal arrived at Klondike they have tried to boss the whole place, as they did the Alaskan town of Circle City before coming here. Luckily our splendid police force exercises a restraining influence over even such scoundrels as these.'

'It was no doubt fortunate for us that Californian Joe had been imbibing so freely of Klondike whisky,' I said. 'But you haven't told us,' I continued, 'what success you and your partner have met with on this new gold-field?'

'Nor what became of Coulson,' interpolated Lou.

A pained expression flitted across the American's face at this query, and he seemed trying to collect himself a little before replying. Then he said he would finish his little narrative while we smoked our pipes after the supper-things were cleared away.

Accordingly, when we lighted our pipes he prepared to do so. But first he opened the door of the hut and stood a few moments looking out into the night, as though to assure himself that no eavesdroppers were lurking near.

'You asked me what success I met with after coming here,' he said, on returning to his seat. 'Look here, I'll show you.'

He took a narrow pointed shovel which leaned against the wall and began digging up the earth in a corner of the hut. Presently, after excavating about a foot of soil, he stooped down and pulled out of the hole a stout, much-soiled and blackened canvas bag, which seemed to be extremely heavy.

'There!' he said in a low tone, full of triumph, as he lifted it on to the table.

'Nuggets?' queried I, eagerly.

'Gold?' ejaculated Lou.

For a moment the young man did not reply. His right hand rested heavily upon the bag. His eyes glistened as he looked at us.

CHAPTER VIII

A LUCKY PARTNERSHIP

'THERE!' he exclaimed, as he opened the mouth of the sack and displayed its contents before us. 'That's not a bad result for a fortnight's labour, is it?'

'A fortnight's labour!' I repeated; 'why, there must be thousands of pounds worth of gold here!'

'Six hundred ounces,' he replied. 'That will be value for about two thousand pounds in your money.'

'Hurrah!' cried Lou; 'then Klondike is not a fraud after all, but a solid reality!'

'There's gold enough where that came from,' said Webster, impressively, and dropping his voice almost to a whisper, 'to make all three of us millionaires!'

'All three of us!' cried Lou excitedly; 'but you wouldn't be so foolish as to show us the spot and let us share the gold for nothing!'

Webster smiled at my companion's *naïveté*

but I could see he was rather pleased at it than otherwise.

'No,' he replied, 'gold is not to be got for nothing, even on the Klondike;' and the pained expression crossed his face again as he added significantly, 'or I should not now be in want of a partner, or two!'

'What happened to the poor fellow?' I ventured to ask.

'Frozen to death!' he answered in a shaky voice, as if the recollection unmanned him. 'Yes,' he went on, trying to collect himself, 'it's a terrible climate this. We'd struck it rich, as they say, after weeks of ill-luck, but it was on a lonely creek up in the mountains. The greed of gold was upon us, and when we saw the dust and nuggets lying thick on the bed-rock we worked on reckless of consequences. We were half-famished to begin with, and for a whole fortnight, while gathering up the pay-dirt and nuggets, we lived on a small leg of salt pork and a few biscuits. Then I fell sick of scurvy, and my partner was perforce obliged to leave me and go to the camp to procure food and medicine. Poor fellow, he was in a very weak state himself, but he reached a store, procured the necessaries and endeavoured to struggle back with them. Winter, however, had suddenly set in. He

was caught in a blizzard, and fell chilled and exhausted a couple of miles from the mine. Finding he did not return, I crawled down the mountain next day to look for him, and discovered him lying on his face, quite dead—frozen as hard as a rock—with the bundle of necessaries beside him. I seized a bottle containing some strong stimulant and drank it off, scarcely realising what I was about. I knew no more until I found myself in the Police Barracks at Dawson City, just across the river from here. It turned out that the store-keeper, having noticed Coulson's feeble condition, had tried, but in vain, to dissuade him from attempting the return journey that evening. Then, when the blizzard came on, he had got so uneasy about him that he could not rest until he had given notice to the police. They set out at the first streak of daylight to look for him, but it was not until the afternoon that they struck his trail. And shortly afterwards they came upon me lying insensible across his dead body.'

The American stopped and stirred up the fire with an old ramrod, as if to intimate that his narrative was finished.

'What a terrible experience!' I said feelingly, for the story had made a deep impression on me.

Lou did not speak, but sat staring at the glowing embers before him, as if he would read there some sign of our own fate. I never saw him look so serious before, and he quite started when Webster's voice at length broke the momentary silence.

'Yes, it was a terrible experience,' assented the latter; 'but no worse than scores of others have suffered here, and than hundreds more will suffer before the gold is won.'

'You think so?' I said.

'Yes, *I'm sure of it*,' he answered emphatically. 'Look at the hundreds of people on their way here now, and the thousands more who will flock in during the summer. Not half of them bring enough food to support them, and hundreds will die of starvation next winter.'

'It's not a cheerful prospect, certainly!' I admitted, as I wondered whether I should be amongst the victims of famine. Then I thought of Grace and sighed.

'I don't want to dishearten you,' continued Webster, 'but I think it is only right to acquaint you with some of the conditions under which mining has to be carried on in this frigid region, before laying before you a proposition which I have in my mind.'

'Thanks,' I said. 'We're only greenhorns,

of course; but we came here prepared to rough it, and we shan't complain if only we have a fair amount of success.'

'I can promise you that,' he answered promptly; 'aye, more than that—riches—*wealth!*—if you agree to my proposal.'

'What is it?' I asked, with assumed carelessness, though my heart was beating fast at the prospect of obtaining quickly the fortune I had come in search of that would enable me to marry Grace.

'Just this,' he replied, looking me squarely in the face: '*I've* got the mine and the experience. *You've* got strong limbs and honest hearts, or I'm no judge of character. The combination is just what is needed to ensure a rapid fortune to each and all of us, if we can arrange the terms and work this claim together. My idea is to divide the proceeds—the net yield of gold—into two equal portions, one for me and one between you two.'

'Done, done!' exclaimed Lou, springing to his feet in his excitement, but sitting down again when he caught the expression of my face.

'Stop a moment until I have finished my say,' pleaded Webster, smiling. 'There's always the chance, of course, that you might find a good claim for yourselves. But, on the

other hand, you might lose all the summer prospecting without success. I think what I propose, therefore, would be to our mutual advantage. But I don't want you to decide until you have seen Webster's Discovery Claim. You know,' he added, 'or perhaps you don't know, that the first claim on any particular stream is always known as the Discovery Claim, the next claim to it is marked No. 1, and so on. My claim is in a part of the mountain called the Devil's Grip,' he explained. And then, catching the expression on our faces, he added hastily, 'But that, again, is only a name given by the miners, you know. It's a dreary enough region, to be sure, though by no means so bad as that would imply. However, you shall see the mine to-morrow, and then you can judge for yourselves whether its golden attractions do not far outweigh its forbidding situation.'

'We'll accompany you thither with pleasure,' I said. 'Your proposition seems a very fair one.'

'There's an ominous sound about the name which is far from attractive, especially to a superstitious sailor,' observed Lou; 'but gold will cover a multitude of drawbacks!'

'You're right,' replied the American; 'and so let's cover up the gold!' And seizing the

bag of dust and nuggets, he deposited it in the hole again, and shovelled back the earth. 'There,' he said, 'that'll come in useful to buy provisions with and enable us to start at once —for I'm much mistaken if you don't catch on to my offer. So now let's turn in and be ready for an early start.'

A good shake-down in a warm log hut was a luxury after camping out for so many weeks, and we slept well, in spite of the ever-attentive mosquito. After a good breakfast of bread and bacon, with coffee and preserved milk, we set out for the mountains. Webster strode along at a pace which was rather trying to men who had lately spent most of their time cramped up in a boat. Nevertheless, we were not to be outdone even by a Yale man, and therefore struggled manfully onward, one on either side of him.

When we had gone about seven miles we struck a small stream, flowing towards the Klondike River from the [illegible]. This we followed for some miles up a long valley, which seemed always to be coming to an end, so tortuous and narrow was it. All the time we were getting further and further into the mountains, which became more rugged and precipitous at every turn of the path. At length we found ourselves at the end of a

deep gorge, whose rock-walls towered some thousands of feet above us. We had to pick our way over huge boulders and fragments of rock, and sometimes to wade knee-deep through the icy water.

As we turned a slight bend in the canyon, Webster, who was a few paces in advance, suddenly stopped, and, pointing with his staff, cried—

'Look! There's the Devil's Grip!'

Hurrying forward, we saw what held us for a moment spell-bound. A hundred yards in front of us was a magnificent glacier. It filled the gorge for nearly half its depth and glistened like crystal in the sunshine. The sides of the canyon closed in at this point, leaving a passage scarcely thirty feet wide, and it looked exactly as though the ice-flow had been suddenly arrested here in its descent from the lofty snow-clad mountain beyond. The glacier appeared to be the source of the stream we had ascended, for the latter flowed in considerable volume from a tunnel at its base.

After gazing in silent awe for a moment or two at this stupendous sight, both Lou and I burst out into loud exclamations of surprise.

'The Devil's Grip!' I repeated. 'And well named too!'

'How weirdly grand!' cried Lou.

'But where's the mine?' I asked a minute later, as I partially recovered from my astonishme·

'You're standing on the edge of it!' was the surprising answer.

'What—here?' I exclaimed, sceptically, looking down at my feet. And then for the first time I noticed that, from where I stood to the foot of the glacier there was a level stretch of coarse s· . and gravel, extending from side to side of t e canyon.

'If *this* is a mine,' cried Lou, 'all I can say is that appearances are very deceptive. I should as soon have thought of looking for gold in a brickfield as here!'

'It will be just as well then for you if you haven't to start out prospecting on your own account!' said Webster. 'For it is in such places as this that some of the richest finds have been made. And I believe,' he continued, 'that this particular spot will beat the record when we get fairly to work on it, for as yet I've only sampled it as it were.'

Webster walked on to the centre of the drift and beckoned to us to follow. 'Here,' he said, 'this is the shaft the gold you saw came out of!' And, presently, we found ourselves looking down into a deep hole, which might have

been an old disused well from its unsymmetrical appearance.

'Is that all you have to show us, then?' I asked, somewhat impatiently.

'Not if you'll take the trouble to descend the shaft with me,' replied Webster, coolly.

'Oh, certainly, if you think it's worth while,' I answered, curtly, for I really began to think our new acquaintance was either a knave or a fool, the whole thing looked so extremely unpromising.

However, Lou was more discerning. He saw a storm was brewing, for the American naturally resented my sarcastic manner of speech, and came to the rescue with his ready tact. 'Let's have something to eat first,' he said. 'We're all getting as cross as bears for want of food after our long walk.' And down he sat on a ledge of rock and began unpacking his wallet. 'If we'd only got a bottle of champagne with us now,' he went on gaily, 'there'd be plenty of ice to cool it!'

This put every one in a good humour again, and we made a hearty meal of the salt bacon and biscuits we had brought with us. As soon as we had finished our luncheon and rested awhile, Webster rose from his seat and, asking us to wait where we were for a minute or two, disappeared from view round a projecting rock

on the opposite side of the gorge. He soon returned with a strong pole about nine feet long, a bucket, and a coil of stout rope.

'Now,' he said, 'if you're ready, we'll proceed to view the mine.'

Lou and I both sprang to our feet at once and assisted him to arrange the tackle. In a very short time the stout pole was placed across the mouth of the shaft in the grooves prepared for it. Heavy stones were laid over the two ends to keep it in position, so that, by giving the rope a turn round the pole, one man could safely lower his partner into the mine.

All being ready, the American invited me to step into the bucket; and much as I should like to have waived my claim to precedence on this occasion, I felt that any politeness of the kind might easily be misconstrued. Therefore, with a forced smile and a feeble little joke about this being my first experience of a 'bucket-shop,' I grasped the rope with both hands and stepped into the unsubstantial-looking iron pail. And then, just as Webster, who had charge of the rope, was about to lower away, the weird stillness of the gorge was broken by a most unearthly sound. It was something between a sigh and a groan, long drawn out, as though from some wretched creature whose life was being slowly squeezed out of it.

'Hark! What is that?' cried Lou, turning as white as a sheet, and showing an evident intention to take to his heels.

As for myself, I was out of the bucket and on to the gravel in no time. But, with my habitual caution, I cast a hasty glance at the American, to see how he took the strange occurrence before committing myself further.

He was standing pale and motionless in the very attitude he had assumed when about to lower me into the pit.

CHAPTER IX

TRAPPED BY AN AVALANCHE

BUT the expression on Webster's face was that of surprise and annoyance rather than of alarm. He was looking at the glacier, but turned towards me as I sprang back on the drift, and said with a peculiar smile—

'She is worse than usual to-day. I never heard her moan so heavily before!'

'Who?' I inquired. 'Is there some mad woman, or witch, in yon ice cavern?'

'No, it's only the glacier itself, writhing in the Devil's Grip,' he answered calmly.

I suppose I looked puzzled and incredulous, for he added immediately, as he threw down the rope. 'But come with me to the mouth of the tunnel, and perhaps you can discover some less fanciful explanation for the strange noises.'

We started off, but, finding Lou was not following, I called to him to do so. He stood as if rooted to the spot. 'No, no; come

back!' he cried. 'This place is haunted. Why tempt our fate by going further? Hark! What is that?'

A low, rumbling sound caught my ear at the same moment, but it sounded far away like distant thunder, and I was too much annoyed to heed it. I had never known Lou show the white feather before. Indeed, he was always too recklessly daring, and it was more than I could stand to see him yield to superstitious panic before the eyes of a stranger and an American.

'Come along, and don't play the fool!' I shouted aloud, hoping to throw dust in our conductor's eyes and shield my comrade's honour. But it was no use; he would not move an inch, but still stared vacantly before him, as though under some strange spell. He had always declared that he thought he had the gift of second sight.

'Clive,' he answered, in a hollow sort of voice, so different to his usually gay and careless style, 'I've an overpowering presentiment of evil. As you love your life—*as you love Grace, come back and get out of this!*'

There was something in the solemn earnestness with which these words were uttered that impressed me not a little, and I restrained the hasty answer which had started to my lips.

Just then Webster, becoming impatient, called out, 'Now, then, you Britishers, are you going to scuttle?'

Lou heard the taunt, and it seemed to break the spell which held him as if by magic. In a moment he was himself again. With a ready retort he rushed past me and made straight for the American. The latter was equally 'game,' and at once closed with his assailant. They were about evenly matched in size and strength, and for a few seconds I looked on at as pretty a wrestling bout as could have been witnessed out of Cornwall or Cumberland.

How long it would have lasted, or which of them would have proved the better man, will never be known—and is of little consequence—for they had scarcely been at it half a minute when Nature gave us something else to think about. We were all within a few yards of the glacier, and I was just debating with myself whether I ought not to interpose and restore the peace, when the same noise that Lou had called my attention to a minute before, only a hundred times louder, reverberated through the gorge, and startled even the wrestlers into a cessation of hostilities. Then all at once I realised what was happening.

'Look out, you fellows!' I yelled, as I darted under the ice-wall. 'Quick! quick! or the avalanche will be upon you!'

For there was no mistaking that once heard, never-to-be-forgotten sound which now struck terror into our hearts. Some huge mass was coming crashing and grinding down the glacier, as though half the mountain above had slipped from its place and was sweeping everything before it into the valley. A brief moment or two of horrible suspense, as we all three cowered together in the mouth of the tunnel, wondering what was going to befall us, and then, with a roar like thunder, the avalanche swept over us and projected itself into the gorge below.

For a few moments we thought that we were lost, and certainly we were well-nigh smothered in the clouds of dust and powdered ice and snow which filled the canyon and obscured the light. To add to the horror of the situation, the unearthly moaning sound which we had heard before again came wailing through the icy cavern, as though from the regions of the lost.

'Do you hear?' cried Lou. 'There's that dreadful wailing again! Is this the mouth of the Inferno?'

'It strikes me the Inferno's outside, and not

in,' replied the matter-of-fact American. 'These noises may easily be accounted for by air-suction.'

My own nerves were not a little shaken by the appalling crash of the avalanche and the succeeding darkness and wailings; but this simple explanation of the latter strange phenomenon eased my mind considerably. And as for Lou, he paid no further attention to the weird sounds.

Nevertheless, our plight was bad enough, for the thick darkness prevented us from ascertaining the real state of affairs. There was only a glimmer of light outside the cavern, whilst within it was black as Erebus. At length, however, the dense volumes of dust and snow began to disperse, and daylight to reassert itself. Soon I could distinguish my companions' figures, and then their faces, as they strained their eyes trying to penetrate the thick and murky atmosphere outside.

'Bravo!' exclaimed Lou. 'We're not buried alive in this awful tunnel, at all events. I can see an open space in front.'

'That's a blessing,' I answered fervently, 'though I fear we're not yet out of the wood, or rather the canyon!'

'No, indeed we are not!' exclaimed Webster. 'Look there!'

We had all emerged from our temporary asylum, and were gazing about us, though it was still difficult to see clearly more than a few yards in front of us. I looked in the direction Webster was pointing, and almost gasped.

What I had at first taken for a cloud of mist and dust was a solid bank of ice and snow extending from side to side of the canyon, and completely blocking the exit.

Without a word I turned and looked at Webster. He was gazing at the obstruction in a dazed sort of way, as if trying to realise what had happened. Lou was the only one who seemed fully alive to the emergency.

'Well,' he said, 'what do you call this?'

'Trapped—fairly trapped!' answered Webster, laconically.

'No chance of scuttling now,' said Lou, unmercifully, 'unless there's some other way of getting out of this place.'

'No, there is not! I wish there were!' replied the American, with emphasis.

'You don't mean to say that we're hopelessly imprisoned by the fall of the avalanche?' I said.

'I *do* though. Unless——'

'Unless what?'

'Unless by any chance we could find an exit through the tunnel.'

What! Under the glacier?' I asked.

'Yes, but it's a poor chance, I admit.'

I thought it was an extremely poor one, but I did not say anything.

'I'd rather risk my neck trying to scale these cliffs, thank you!' was Lou's dictum. 'But why not try the avalanche first?' he queried.

'Try it by all means, if you like,' replied Webster, rather crustily; 'but I guess you'll find it impracticable.'

We had walked slowly on until we were now at the foot of the fallen avalanche, and nothing daunted, but rather spurred to action by the tone of Webster's reply, Lou at once essayed to climb the obstacle. The *débris* sloped gently upwards for the first twenty yards or so, and Lou accomplished that distance without very great difficulty. But when he got to the almost perpendicular face of the huge mass he discovered that further progress was impossible. Every time he tried to gain a foothold the treacherous snow or ice gave way, and he fell back again, sometimes bringing enough of the snow down with him to almost bury him. Much chagrined and exhausted, he at length returned to us, saying it was 'no go.'

'Crikey!' exclaimed Webster at this moment, in a tone of alarm, 'we're between two enormous perils—the creek is rising!'

It was quite true. While we had been watching Lou's efforts, the str ..n, dammed back by the fallen avalan:he, had gradually risen until it already covered the gravel bank. We were actually standing in several inches of water.

'We must do something,' I said, 'or we shall all be drowned like rats in a hole. Suppose we try the tunnel?'

'You can try it if you like,' said Lou; 'but I'd rather chance scaling one of these cliffs. It looks fairly easy up to that ledge above us, any way!'

'But my gold, *my gold!* What will become of that?' cried Webster despairingly. 'The mine will be flooded, and I shall never be able to get to it again!' And in the depths of his distress he began wringing his hands frantically.

'Life is the first consideration now,' I said. 'Gold will avail us nothing without that.'

'But there are millions in my claim!' he cried piteously. 'My fortune was made; and now I shall lose all. I'm beggared—beggared!'

For a few minutes—good fellow and brave man as he was—the greed of gold seemed to overcome him; he was utterly unmanne-

CHAPTER X

A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE

THE strange thing was that, with death staring him in the face, Webster's first concern should be for his gold—gold which, though it were in millions could not purchase him an hour's reprieve from the fate which seemed to await him and all of us.

But this curious phase of character was as brief as it was sordid and unworthy of the man.

'How foolish I am!' he exclaimed, suddenly pulling himself up short. 'Yes, worse than foolish to endanger your lives as well as my own for metal which is as plentiful on the Klondike as dirt. Wait a moment,' he added, 'we must have candles and ropes.' And away he darted to the little cave whence he had procured the needful articles before, and which luckily had just escaped being buried by the avalanche.

When he returned I was trying to dissuade Lou from what I considered his foolhardy intention of trying to scale the cliff, but without avail.

'Thanks, old fellow, but I prefer to meet my fate above ground,' was all I could get out of him.

'Then take this rope; you may find it useful,' said Webster, handing him one of the coils he had brought from the cave.

When it came to parting with my old chum, my feelings nearly got the better of me. It seemed doubly hard to separate under such circumstances, for the odds were vastly against our ever seeing one another again. I made one more effort to induce Lou to accompany the American and myself, but he only shook his head and said, 'No, even if my instincts were not so dead against burrowing as they are, it would be folly to put all our eggs into one basket. Our only hope is not to neglect a chance. My forte is climbing, and I prefer to hang my hopes on that. You and our American friend prefer the dark and sinuous ways of the water-rat! So be it, every one to his taste; and whoever succeeds in first making his escape must help the others.'

It was characteristic of Lou to joke in the most dangerous situations, and I took it as a

good omen. For however brave, and even reckless, a man might be by nature, he would scarcely be able to jest under such circumstances as ours without an inward consciousness of resource and power to overcome them. Besides, I had no warrant for supposing that the ice-tunnel would afford any better chance of escape than did the cliffs. The dangers of the latter were sufficiently apparent, while those of the tunnel were unknown, and therefore left room for hope—that was all. So without another word we wrung each other's hands and parted.

Webster had already lighted a couple of candles, one for me and one for himself, and was impatiently awaiting me at the entrance of the cavern.

'Come,' he said; 'every minute's delay lessens our chance. The water is already backing into the tunnel!'

'Then for'ard on!' I cried, as I took the candle which he was holding out to me. And the next moment we were wading knee-deep in the glacier-stream.

There was just room to walk side by side, though I found it necessary to keep a good look-out on account of the varying height of the passage.

Luckily our candles gave plenty of light, owing to the reflecting and diffusing power

of the ice-walls and roof. The farther we penetrated into the cavern, however, the narrower the opening became, until at last we had to walk single file and in a stooping position. As some set-off to this the stream, though swifter, varied less in depth, and the icy water never penetrated our high rubber boots. The air was so cold that our breath froze on our beards and moustaches, making them perfectly stiff, but the pace at which we went kept us from getting chilled.

Webster, who showed the sterling qualities he possessed by the resolute way he braved the hidden dangers of the unknown passage, insisted upon taking the lead. He said he had brought me into the perilous situation, and it was his duty to get me out again if such a thing were possible.

We must have gone about half a mile in this fashion when the American suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise, and stopped so short that I ran up against him.

'What is it?' I asked, incautiously raising my head, and sustaining a severe bump in the attempt to look over my leader's shoulder.

'Look! look!' he exclaimed, advancing a few paces into what appeared to be a kind of grotto. 'Am I mad, or is this solid reality?'

There was plenty of room now to see past

and above my companion, and the sight filled me with as much amazement as it had done him. I was by his side in a moment, gazing like him in a half stupefied way at the scene before us. The low, narrow tunnel had suddenly terminated in a vast fissure in one of the mountain walls which confined the glacier. The sound of falling water showed that this fissure was the source or commencement of the subterranean stream. But what held our gaze in speechless admiration and wonder was the nature of the riven rock. It was simply quartz of dazzling whiteness, streaked and crusted in the most lavish manner with—*GOLD!* Yes, there could be no doubt about it—far as our candles threw their light it glinted and shimmered on pearly quartz and yellow gold. The fissure was evidently neither more nor less than a gigantic lode or seam of gold-bearing quartz of surpassing richness.

We moved slowly forward and upward, for the bed of the stream, or rather torrent as it was now, rose by a succession of steps higher and higher into the mountain until it apparently terminated in a high waterfall. The crevice or fissure gradually narrowed until it was barely more than half a yard wide where the water fell some hundreds of feet almost sheer down into a tiny pool. In some places the gold was

hanging so loosely from the rock walls that we could strip it off with our fingers without difficulty.

'Hullo!' cried Webster, 'this is the source of my claim's wealth! It's the mother-lode, the matrix of all the gold that lies in the gravel drift below.'

We were both so excited by our marvellous discovery that, for a moment or two, we actually forgot that our object was to escape from drowning and not to find gold!

A sudden idea seemed to strike the American—whose miner's instincts had been so strangely re-aroused—and stooping down, he plunged his hand into one of the shallow basins at our feet, for below each step in the rocky bed of the torrent was a small water-worn trough. When he withdrew and opened his hand it was full of nuggets, varying in size from a pea to a small potato!

'Whoop!' he cried, in his excitement. 'Here's a bigger and richer bank than even your far-famed Bank of England. Whoo-oop!'

But before I could reply, there came a response, as it seemed, from another quarter—the long, wailing sigh which before had so disturbed poor Lou's nerves and my own. It was a response which instantly brought us

back to the terrible realities of our situation—realities which burst upon us with redoubled force after the momentary diversion caused by our marvellous discovery.

'Listen!' I exclaimed; 'there's that sound of ill-omen again! And where's the opening we were searching for before we came across all this gold? A square yard of daylight would be a pleasanter sight, to me at all events, than all the gold of Klondike.'

'You're right, my friend,' replied Webster, pulling himself together. 'Gold makes me mad, I think. It's my evil genius always luring me into danger. But I'll master it yet, if it's not toolate. Ah! there's the rub!' he added bitterly, as he commenced searching for any possible way of getting up the side of the waterfall, while I held both candles high above my head in order to aid him. 'That dreadful howl came from above us somewhere,' he said after a pause; 'so there must be an air-hole at all events. Besides, where does all this water come from?'

'Suppose we blow out the candles,' I suggested. 'Then we shall soon see if there is a glimmer of daylight anywhere.'

'A capital idea, Forrester,' he answered. 'Out with them!'

I blew out one, and was preparing to

extinguish the other likewise, when my companion cried out, 'Stop!'

'Why, what's the matter?' I asked, still holding the candle on a level with my mouth.

'The matches—I've lost the matches!' he exclaimed.

'Oh, if that's all, I have some,' I replied; and, giving a vigorous puff, we were instantly in total darkness.

At that very moment the ghostly wail was repeated, but this time not quite so distinctly. It seemed, too, as if it came from over the waterfall, and not from directly above us as we had previously imagined. We both gave an involuntary cry of dismay, as, on looking up, we could only see the faintest glimmer of light, so small and far away that it appeared more like a tiny star than an opening into daylight. There was no possibility of our ever being able to reach the outlet, and, with heavy hearts, we turned our thoughts and faces towards the tunnel by which we had entered this *cul-de-sac*.

To our surprise and horror all was pitchy darkness in that direction also; not even the dullest gleam of light could we discern, strain our eyes as we might. A horrible idea flashed through my brain. 'What if the water had already risen to the roof of the tunnel and cut off our retreat.

The same thought seemed to have occurred to my companion, for he suddenly cried, 'Light the candles—quick!—quick! or we shall be too late!'

As I fumbled in my pocket for the little box of vestas I always carried, Webster grew impatient, and again urged me to be quick.

'We shall be too late,' he repeated; 'the passage will be full of water!'

But my fingers were stiff with cold and almost [illegible] any sense of feeling. However, I found the little silver box at last, and hastily extracted a match. As I tried to strike it the box slipped from my numbed fingers and fell into one of the shallow pools at our feet.

With an involuntary cry of dismay I plunged my hand into the water after it; for although I could not see, I knew by the splash exactly where it had dropped.

'What in thunder are you doing, man?' yelled my companion. He knew instinctively what had happened, and was almost beside himself at this cruel aggravation of our predicament.

'Sorry, old chap, but my fingers are perfectly useless with cold,' I replied, groping in the water with my hand, and scooping up handfuls of what I knew by its weight was gold—gold!

How it mocked us at every turn! That box of vestas was worth more to us than bushels of it. 'Ah! here it is; I've found it!' I cried in tones of relief, as at last I drew the match-box from the water.

'They'll all be spoiled,' said Webster hopelessly.

'Not a bit of it,' I answered confidently; it's perfectly water-tight.' And then I gave quite a gasp, as I discovered that the lid, which opened and closed with a spring, was wide ajar. In my haste I had evidently forgotten to close it before proceeding to strike the match which I had extracted. My companion noticed my sudden collapse and divined the cause.

'Spoiled or spilled?' he asked bitterly.

'Spilled,' I replied, with deep mortification. 'I must have left the lid open—like an ass.'

'Are *all* gone?' he inquired.

'Every one—no, stay—what is this?' I said, correcting myself, as my forefinger came in contact with a single vesta jammed cross-ways in the bottom of the box.

'What's that?' cried Webster eagerly; 'found one? Then let me have it. Perhaps I can manage to ignite it if the water has not penetrated the composition too far. I've done it before.'

I was not sorry to be relieved of the responsibility of striking our last match, and that a damp one. So I handed it over to my companion, with a mild injunction to him to be careful. The darkness was so intense that it affected our nerves terribly, and the rock steps in the bed of the torrent made it dangerous to move without a light, hence the importance of being able to relight our candles.

'Have you got it?' I asked, as I felt our fingers touch.

'No. Don't let go till I tell you,' he said anxiously.

We were both so perturbed by this time that it took fully half a minute before the transfer was safely effected.

'Now for the box!' he said. And I passed that also to him.

Presently I heard him begin, very gingerly at first, to rub the match on the striker. There was no result, and he gradually increased the friction, until at length a few sparks rewarded his efforts. With this encouragement he gave a bolder rub. Instantly there was a flash and a crackle, and then, just as I was about to cry 'Hurrah!' came a sudden relapse into Stygian darkness, as, with a hiss and a splutter, the head of the match fell off into the water.

My contemplated cheer ended in a groan of

dismay, and an expression more forcible than polite escaped the lips of the American. It was a horrible disappointment to us both, and for some moments we were quite prostrated by the calamity. However, it was no use giving way to despair, and we soon pulled ourselves together again.

'Couldn't you feel your way down with your staff?' I suggested, remembering the stout sort of Alpenstock which my companion was carrying when we entered the cavern.

'To be sure—a happy thought,' he answered promptly. 'I laid it against the rock somewhere hereabouts, before trying to climb the fissure;' and he began groping about for it. 'Ah, here it is!' he cried, 'follow close behind me.'

I caught hold of the rope, which was coiled round his shoulders, so as to steady him if he chanced to stumble, and in this way we commenced slowly to retrace our steps towards the tunnel. Whenever we came to one of the small waterfalls, which occurred at irregular distances in the descent, we gauged its depth with the pole before attempting to jump or clamber down it. In this way we at last reached the ice-passage, but even then we could not see a glimmer of light as we peered anxiously down it.

A Terrible Experience

'Heaven help us!' exclaimed Webster, 'we'll never see the light of the sun again!'

I did not speak. I was too horrified at the prospect of being drowned, or at all events buried alive in that awful cavern.

'I was foolish to have led you here,' he went on, 'but something put it into my mind there might be an opening into the mountains, and it seemed certain death to remain where we were.'

'You acted for the best, old chap,' I said, 'so don't worry about that. Suppose we go down the tunnel and find out how far the water has advanced. There is just a chance we may be able to get through and rejoin Lou?'

'All right,' acquiesced my companion. 'We may as well do that as stay where we are. I'm shivering with cold.'

'So am I,' I answered; 'come along.' And, taking the lead, I hurried down the icy tunnel as fast as I could walk, closely followed by Webster.

When we had got about half through, as near as I could judge, I suddenly found myself wading into deep water. It was evident that we were too late—the tunnel was flooded!

CHAPTER XI

IMPRISONED IN THE FISSURE

'HALT,' I cried. It's no use proceeding further and getting soaked with this icy water. 'We've no chance of getting through.'

'None whatever,' replied the American, hopelessly. 'We're not more than half way, and the fall is so great that the mouth of the tunnel must be already ten or fifteen feet under water.'

Without another word we turned and walked back dejectedly to our living tomb.

I tried not to think of the horrible situation, but it was too much for me, and my agony of mind was intense as I reviewed all the circumstances that had brought me there, and pictured to myself what might have been my happy return to England and to Grace but for that terrible avalanche. It was maddening to think how nearly I had attained the object of my journey —wealth, aye, wealth beyond my most sanguine anticipations—and then, to be foiled by such an unlooked-for calamity as this!

Imprisoned in the Fissure

When we reached the fissure we instinctively clambered along the rugged water-course to its highest accessible point at the foot of the big waterfall. Then, when we could get no further, we s t down on pieces of rock and awaited our fate, whether drowning, or starvation, we could not tell.

What my companion's thoughts were I cannot say, but mine gradually became calmer and more resigned, as I bethought me that there was just a chance Lou might have contrived to scale the cliff, and if so I knew he would lose no time in mustering a rescue party from the camp. Anyhow, the water would take a long time to reach us yet, and while there was life there was hope.

With this comforting reflection I rose and paced up and down as far as I was sure of my footing, in the endeavour to keep up the circulation, for the atmosphere was like that of an ice-house. Webster followed my example, and when we felt a little warmer we sat down again for a while.

In this way we passed many hours, as we could tell from the fact of our watches having both stopped for want of winding.

'I'm dog-tired,' I said at length. 'Suppose we take it in turns to sleep and watch?'

'All right,' replied Webster. 'You shall

take first turn while I go down and see—I mean feel—how much higher the water has risen.'

I only seemed to have just dropped off when Webster aroused me, and said he was afraid to let me sleep longer on account of the cold.

'Longer!' I exclaimed. 'You might have let me have a few minutes at all events.'

'A few minutes!' repeated Webster. 'Why, you've been fast asleep for at least two hours!'

'Nonsense.'

'If you don't believe me look up the chimney!'

This was the name we had given the distant glimmer above and beyond the waterfall. Before I had dropped asleep the light had become very pale and dull, but now it was bright and star-like as when we had first discerned it, showing that the brief twilight of the Arctic Summer had once more given place to brilliant sunshine.

'It is day!' I exclaimed. And then, remembering our position, I added, 'What about the water?'

'It's not yet up to the second step from here,' replied Webster. 'So I reckon we've still a few hours' grace.'

'And perhaps the water will have reached the top of the obstruction and found a way of escape before then,' I said hopefully.

'No, it's no use building on that,' he answered, decisively. 'The avalanche has dammed the canyon for at least a hundred feet in height, so that even if we escape drowning we are bound to perish from cold and starvation long before the water has worn a channel through the obstruction deep enough to clear the mouth of the tunnel. Unless——' He stopped short.

'Unless what?' I inquired eagerly.

'Oh! I was going to say unless help comes from outside,' he answered; and then added dejectedly, 'But that is very unlikely.'

He became silent after that, and I thought, ah, how intensely I thought of my past life, and especially of my happy home in the Rectory in Wales, and my school and college days, interspersed with holidays, all brightened by my friendship with Lou at the Hall, and the happy meeting with his sister in their home and in mine, in the hunting-field and in church, where her singing often entranced me by its sweetness. That singing, her earnestness, and the look on her face as she sang, or listened to the sermons—my father's sermons, which so often fell idly on my ears, though not on hers—used to raise me, as it were, to a higher level, so that I found myself longing to be better and holier, and I prayed, yes, I prayed

that I might be so, but alas! how often when I returned to school and college I forgot the resolutions, and forgot the prayers and did as others did, and thought no harm of it, and screened myself behind their good opinions, imagining that, because they thought me estimable, I undoubtedly was so.

And then came my humiliation at failing for the army, and my parents' disappointment, and the dejection in which I started for the hunt on that dull April morning which turned out to be so fateful! Again I seemed to hear Sir Robert's cheery voice exclaiming, 'Good morning, Forrester!' and the hounds beginning to give tongue; and the music of the hunt, and the call of 'Tally ho!—away ho!' resounding across the countryside. Almost I seemed to see again Grace Jocelyn dashing up on the horse she could not hold, and feel, once more, the strain of breathless anxiety in which I shared her danger, by galloping with her alongside the precipice until, with the help of my good horse, I was able to guide hers further and further away from it.

I saved her life then, and the life that I had saved she promised should be shared with mine. Ah! that was something to have lived for, even if I perished away in far Alaska, in a mountain crevice lined with gold.

Memory recalled to me Grace's words—

'It (money) is not the highest good. There is what is better—you know it—infinitely better than much gold.'

And again, 'Do not set gold, nothing but gold, before you as a goal.'

But I had craved for gold, and there was a sort of grim irony in the fact that I had reached it. I was surrounded with gold—gold, gold everywhere, 'hard and yellow, bright and cold;' gold heaped up all over, beyond my wildest dreams, and I was to die amongst it, yes, imprisoned with the gold, there was no escape. Soon, very soon, the water washing over the gold, would wash over my corpse as well! I groaned.

'There is what is better, infinitely better than gold.'

The words, Gracie's words, came warm and real into my heart, calling up to my recollection the words she added to her tender leave-taking when I said goodbye—'God bless you, Clive; I shall pray for you every day and every night until you return to me.'

Perchance she was praying for me then. And I? Should I not pray for myself?

I bent my head, whilst fervent prayer went up from my most inmost heart to God, Whose ears are ever open to the cry of the distressed.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH

AFTER a while Webster spoke. I had thought him asleep; he was so very silent. His first words startled me—

'The water has ceased to rise,' he said.

'No! Has it? Are you sure?'

'Yes.' He told me how he had been watching and gauging it. 'At least we shall not be drowned like rats in a hole,' he said, but there was no joy in his voice.

'Then there is hope,' I exclaimed. 'We may be rescued yet?'

'It isn't likely,' said Webster. 'Nay, I don't think there is a chance. For one thing, your friend could not scale that cliff, and even if he does, and gets back to Klondike, who will he get to come here on the forlorn hope of finding us alive? The miners will be scattered, even if they are reached. They will be intent on gold, the lust of gold, of more and more

gold, may make them deaf to any talk of coming out here to try to rescue us.'

'But surely a spirit of comradeship——' I was beginning, when he interrupted.

'I don't say they won't do a good deal for each other, aye, and even for strangers like yourselves, who have just come to try to share their work of gold-digging and to win gold as they are winning it. But there are limits to this kindly fellow-feeling. Put it to yourself. What man who is picking up gold, gold, gold from morning until night, in such quantities that he is acquiring an enormous fortune, would lay down his pan, and start off at a stranger's bidding to seek for a couple of men below ground, in one of the least known and most dreaded parts of the mountain—the Devil's Grip? They'd be sorry, aye, they'd be sorry for our misfortune, but they would say to themselves, "We cannot risk our lives in exploring and searching that awful place for two men who, as likely as not, are dead by now." And they would go on with their work, piling up the gold for which they live out here, enduring so many hardships. And small blame to them!' he added.

'Do they ever take any risks to save life?' I asked, despondently.

'Of course they do. But they have some-

thing better to go upon than the tale of a stranger,' Webster answered, moodily. 'And, you know, it's each man for himself in this life,' he added, with a sigh.

'There's one man who will leave no stone unturned to help us,' I exclaimed, thinking of Lou.

'And he probably lies, dashed to atoms, at the bottom of the cliffs!'

'Don't!' I said. 'Don't!' and a sob broke from me, in spite of my manhood, at the thought of such an end to poor old Lou.

Webster became silent for a while. Then, all at once, he exclaimed, 'It's awful to be buried alive, and worse to be stuck here, waiting, waiting for the doom, which is slowly coming nearer and nearer! Can't you speak?' he asked, almost resentfully. 'You surely know more about religion than I do—I who have lived for years in this howling wilderness. Can't you say something that will comfort a dying man?'

I started. 'Oh, don't call yourself that!' I exclaimed.

'I guess we might as well call a spade a spade,' he retorted. 'How long can we live without food in this terrible cold? Even now it is an effort to speak, and the tiger of hunger within me is becoming less aggressive as I

get more and more past the desire for food. Death is coming to us, and you know it. Tell me then what there is to comfort me?'

'God,' I said. 'There is God.'

'Yes; I believe that,' he answered. 'I have never been such a fool as to doubt the existence of God. But what do we know of Him?'

I was silent for fully a minute. I, who had never preached to any one in my life, and who had never meant to preach. What did I know of Him?

'I daresay you know as much as I, Webster,' I said at last. 'It is He, who made all things, to whom all turn sooner or later——"

'Turn? How?'

'In prayer.'

'I believe you,' said Webster. 'I knew a man—an awful sinner he was—who lay dying in his sins, swearing and cursing so awfully that all dreaded to go near him, yet his last words were, 'I want to say my prayers.'

I was silent. In my heart I was praying for myself, aye, and for Webster too, and poor Lou, when my companion began again, 'It seems a mean thing only to pray to Him when death is coming and we are in our last extremity.'

'It is,' I said. 'It is a mean thing. But He would rather we did that than nothing'

'Now, *how* do you know?' burst from Webster. The man was in great earnest.

What could I say? I was no preacher. But I knew what the Bible said. Had I not listened to its lessons, year in year out, in church and at home, ever since I first heard the Bible stories as a child at my mother's knee? Evidently Webster had not, so I began to tell him, as best I could, what the New Testament especially has taught us about the way of salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was hard work speaking so much in my cold and exhausted state, but Webster's intense interest lured me on. And I shall never forget his listening like a child while I repeated—for I knew it by heart—the parable of the Father's love to the prodigal son, and the trenchant comments he made. 'Just so!' 'God would!' 'A good father would!' 'There'd be nothing raked up, when once the son came home!'

Long after I had stopped, from sheer exhaustion, I heard Webster murmuring in feeble, trembling tones—

'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son—make me—hired servant.' He was falling asleep almost before he uttered the last syllable, but, fearing that if he slept, in his

weak state, he would never wake again, I pulled hold of his arm, exclaiming loudly, 'Wake up! I've thought of something we can do!'

'What is it?' came sleepily from the poor fellow.

'We can have a service. Let us sing.'

'Yes,' he answered, sleepily, 'yes.'

It was awfully hard work, but I began to sing the grand old hymn—'All people that on earth do dwell,' to the tune of the Old Hundredth.

To my inexpressible relief, Webster joined in. And we sang the hymn quite through from beginning to end, and then another, and another.

By the time we ended the third hymn my companion seemed to be more wide awake than I, for he suddenly exclaimed—

'I say, let's make a vow that we will do something if God will spare our lives. I've heard of folks doing that. If we die, it won't do us any harm; and if we live, I'm sure it will be a pleasure to do something.'

'All right!' said I. 'What shall we vow?'

Webster appeared to think a few moments, then he said, all in a hurry, as if he were afraid his resolution would fail him, 'If God will spare my life, I will give half of all the

gold I get to Him, to be spent in His service.' He paused, and then added, 'Amen.'

I did not speak immediately, whereupon Webster said, quite sharply, 'Now, come on! It's your turn.'

Thus adjured, I could do no less than make a similar promise to his.

Yet still Webster was not satisfied. 'We ought to give something that would cost us more,' he said.

'Personal trouble. Is that what you mean?'

'Yes.' After a minute, he added, slowly, 'You see, all the gold is His——'

'So it is. Our hearts ought to be His, too.'

'Yes; and our lives.'

I nodded. 'Well,' said I, 'if He spares my life I'll try and live for Him.'

'In what way?' asked Webster.

'I suppose, by doing things for His poor,' I answered, slowly.

'I will do so too,' said Webster, very solemnly. 'Amen,' he added.

We were silent a long time, and then the remembrance of my father's teaching made me add, 'We must ask for the Holy Spirit to help us to keep our vows—for we have no strength in ourselves.'

Webster did not answer, and I was not sure that he heard.

CHAPTER XIII

RESCUED

AT length we became too weak and exhausted to struggle against the drowsiness which cold and famine engendered, and we slept the sleep that seldom knows an awakening in this world. Moreover, it happened that, whilst asleep, I dreamt that I was back again in old England, and approaching the home of my loved one. A heavy bag of gold which I carried impeded me not a little, but I could see Grace coming to meet me, and I struggled on. When I reached the brook which flowed through the park I found, to my dismay, that it was swollen into quite a river, and the bridge was half submerged. However, Grace was calling my name and beckoning me from the other side, so I stepped on to it and began wading through the water, which was rushing over it. I had scarcely reached the middle of the structure when it began to give

way. Grace screamed to me to make haste, but the gold had grown so heavy that I could scarcely stagger along. I tried to throw it off, but it was strapped on to my back. While I was trying to unloose it the bridge gave way, and I was precipitated into the flood. As I sank hopelessly down, under my load of gold, Grace uttered a shriek so piercing and prolonged that I awoke.

To my surprise I was lying on my back, with the torrent washing over my head; and the narrow gorge was filled with the most unearthly noise. As I sprang to my feet this suddenly ended in a long-drawn-out moan, or wail, like those we had heard before, only louder.

Ere I could recover from my bewilderment I heard a sigh almost at my feet. 'Webster!' I cried, 'is that you?' But there was no answer, so I stooped down, and found my companion lying back against the rock insensible.

How long I was trying ineffectually to restore him to consciousness I don't know, but I was suddenly startled by a flash of light. Before I could glance up, however, it had vanished, and the darkness seemed thicker and more intense by contrast. I was beginning to think it could only have been some optical illusion when I fancied I saw a faint glow of light at the

bottom end of the gorge. I rubbed my eyes, and stared and wondered as the glow grew brighter, and occasional gleams of light shot athwart the cavern for an instant, and then vanished as before. Each succeeding flash, however, became stronger and less evanescent, until, at last, the heavy darkness gradually dispersed, the distant glow resolving itself into a bright flame, the rays from which were caught by the glittering quartz and yellow gold, and diffused in brilliant light throughout the chasm.

What wonder that, for a moment or two, it seemed to my numbed faculties as though heaven's gates were opening wide to admit my spirit and my companion's? But soon a voice, savouring too much of earth—a bold and ringing shout—awoke the echoes of the cavern and dispelled the momentary illusion.

'Ho, there. Clive! Where are you?' it cried. 'For Heaven's sake speak and tell me you're alive!'

Then before I could answer it burst out again in the wildest exclamations of surprise and astonishment, in which presently other voices joined, and I knew that our rescuers had entered the chasm and discovered the marvellous riches.

I tried to shout, but my tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth, until Lou's

voice rang out again, 'Clive, ho! Where are you?' he called.

'*Here—up here!*' I managed to cry at last; and then as I heard my comrade's joyous response, and realised that I was saved, the revulsion of feeling was so great that my senses gave way, and I swooned and fell across the insensible body of the American.

When I came to myself I was lying on an improvised couch in the valley below the canyon, warmed by the glorious sun, and having my hands and feet chafed by Lou and other good Samaritans. Webster was near by, and undergoing the same attentions from others of the rescuers.

Food and stimulants soon restored me to comparative health and strength, but Webster was longer in reviving, though eventually he pulled through all right.

The moment I was well enough I gave Lou no peace until he told me how the rescue had been effected. This he did, at last, in his own graphic way.

'Well,' he said, 'as soon as you two duffers had walked into that death-trap I set to work to scale the cliff, and just managed to reach that ledge I showed you. It was a ticklish business though, and I wouldn't tackle it again for anything. Once on the ledge, howeve., I

'I SWOONED AND FELL ACROSS THE INSENSIBLE BODY OF THE AMERICAN'

found no difficulty in making my way along it until beyond the fallen avalanche. Then I fastened the end of my rope firmly to the cliff, by wedging it into a crevice, and descended safely to the bottom of the canyon. The rest was easy enough. It was downhill nearly all the way to Klondike, and walking and running by turns, I soon reached it.

'The curious thing was that almost the first persons I met on reaching the settlement were the deserters from the Dolphin—or, at least, all who were left of them! It had been a case of the survival of the fittest!'

'You don't say so!' I exclaimed.

'I do though; and lucky it was that they had just arrived that morning, and had not scattered in search of work, for there were very few miners about.'

'And what did they say when they saw you?' I inquired.

'Why, they looked extremely sheepish, and I was so afraid they would all turn tail and bolt that, waiving for the moment the question of desertion, I hurriedly explained the errand I had come on, asking them if they would return with me and as many more men as I could collect, to endeavour to rescue you and the American. On this their leader, James Waite, the chief engineer of the Dolphin,

stepped forward and said they would do anything in the world for me—luckily I had always been a favourite on board—if I would promise them one thing.

'"What is that?" I asked.

'"That you give us your word of honour you will not denounce us to the police, or the commissioner, as deserters, or even mention the fact to any one at Klondike," they replied. "We've made our way here, through terrible difficulties and with the loss of nearly half our number, and we don't mean to go back for any one till we've tried our luck at the diggings."

'This was spoken with an air of determination which was not to be misunderstood, and was endorsed by murmurs of applause from the half-dozen weather-beaten survivors of the Dolphin's crew, who stood around.

'"Look here, Waite, and all of you," I replied, "you've committed a dishonest and illegal act in deserting your ship, and the sooner you return to it and your duty the better it will be for you. At the same time I've no wish to be hard upon you, after the terrible privations and dangers you must have gone through, especially as I believe you were led away by the excitement of the gold-fever and the persuasions of that rascally boatswain,

Falck——" At the mention of this man's name there was a chorus of hisses which completely drowned my voice.

'"By the way," I added, as soon as the outburst had subsided, "I don't see the fellow. Where is he?"

'"Left us to our fate, the cur!" answered Waite bitterly, "when we were in direst straits from fatigue and hunger."

'"Aye, he took our only remaining pack-mule, and scuttled back to the coast for fear of his precious life!" cried Bill Hardy, the boatswain's mate.

'"That'll do, mates!" interrupted Waite, as another of the sailors began to add his accusation also. "That'll do. We're interrupting Mr. Jocelyn's speech."

'"I was going to say," I continued, "that under the circumstances I would give you a chance to retrieve your characters without foregoing your fortunes, on certain conditions."

'"What are they, sir?" inquired the engineer and several others in a breath.

'"Firstly," I said, "that you give me your help in trying to rescue my friends; and secondly, that as soon as each of you shall have secured a couple of thousand pounds worth of gold for himself, you shall one and all return with me or Mr. Jocelyn to Skagway

and assist in taking the Dolphin back to England."

'"Agreed," they cried; "*we will.*"

'"Then it's a bargain," I said, "and I'll keep your secret here, and use my influence on your behalf with the Captain hereafter. So now come and have a good supper. We shall need it before we set out for the De——, for the mountains, I mean."

'I had nearly said for the Devil's Grip,' laughed Lou, 'but corrected myself just in time.'

'If all sailors are as superstitious as you,' I answered, 'it was just as well you suppressed the name. Otherwise poor Webster and I might never have been rescued. But go on, old fellow.'

'There's not much to add,' he replied. 'I ordered a substantial meal at one of the eating-houses, or saloons, and while it was preparing Waite helped me to get a few packages of food and other necessaries at the stores, where luckily we fell in with an old miner who volunteered to accompany us. He brought with him in a handbag what was worth a hundred men!'

'Blasting powder?' I inquired.

'No, dynamite cartridges,' answered Lou. 'We found a way to the top of the canyon, and dropped them one by one on to the mass

of ice and snow. The effect was marvellous. In a few minutes the obstruction was completely broken up, and the pent-up waters of the stream rushed through, with resistless force, carrying everything before them into the valley below. But there was one result,' continued Lou, in a tone of great glee, 'which I had not reckoned upon. As soon as the rapidly-subsiding flood sank to the mouth of the tunnel the most blood-curdling noises began proceeding from it. For a moment or two the sailors stood terror-stricken. Then, as the moaning and wailing increased, they turned back, with one accord, and bolted headlong down the mountain.

CHAPTER XIV

DIVIDING THE GOLD

'AH! that was the noise which aroused me,' I said, laughing, 'and was doubtless caused by air-suction.'

'Which fully proves the correctness of Webster's theory,' acquiesced Lou. 'But to finish my story,' he added, 'it only remains to be told that, having with difficulty stopped the stampede and restored a degree of confidence, I set the sailors to work under the old miner to clear away what little remained of the *débris*, and so completely set free the claim, Webster's Discovery. Then, having lighted a couple of torches which I had brought with me for the purpose, I screwed up my courage and, accompanied by Waite, entered the ice-passage.'

'And you were just in the nick of time to save our lives, old fellow. If indeed Webster manages to pull through,' I added seriously.

'It will be as much as he can do, I think,' answered Lou, rising from his seat beside me. 'I must go and see how he is getting on.'

When my comrade returned he reported the American as being much stronger, and by the following day, we were able to move him down to his own cabin at Klondike. There we discussed what was best to be done about our wonderful quartz mine. We had already made a formal application to the Gold Commissioner for the grant of a claim for mining, in accordance with the Dominion Mining Regulations.

Waite was of course the only one of the Dolphin's crew who had seen the wondrous wealth of the Glacier Mine, as we had termed it, but we thought it best to take all of them, and the old miner, who came, likewise, into a modified partnership. It was decided to amalgamate the Glacier Mine and the claim, Webster's Discovery, and form ourselves into a company to work them.

The difficulty was to make an equitable distribution of the shares. Finally, Webster, who was more experienced in such matters, drew up a scheme which we all agreed to. It was this :—

The number of shares was to be one hundred proportioned as follows :—

32 shares to Dick Webster ...	... ...	32
22 each to Lou and myself ...	... ...	44
6 each to the engineer and the old miner, Arizona Bob ...	... ...	12
and 2 each to the six sailors	... ...	12
	Total	100

What had chiefly influenced us in taking so many outsiders into the company was the need for expedition. Miners and prospectors were flocking into the district by hundreds, and provisions were already at famine prices. So that we thought it was very desirable that we should secure all the gold we could and clear out of the country before the Arctic winter and starvation set in. The share system, too, was the best and most popular method of employing extra labour.

Webster made a rapid recovery, and I had completely regained my usual health and strength by the time Lou and the others had conveyed enough provisions, tents, blankets, &c., to the canyon to last our party a month or more. It made a big hole in the gold Webster had shown us to buy what was needful, with flour at £10 a sack, and other food in proportion.

But this was of little consequence when our first day's work recouped us many times over

for the outlay. Indeed, such was the richness of the Glacier Mine that in less than an hour we scooped up enough gold to reimburse Webster for the capital he had advanced!

To make a long story short, we took out close upon half a million sterling from the two mines within a fortnight. Such a marvellous yield had never been known before even on the Klondike, and when it became known that some, if not all, of the company intended selling out and leaving the district before winter, offers from the miners came pouring in from all quarters.

Although we lived in huts and tents erected on a bit of level ground at the mouth of the canyon, some of us went down to the settlement almost every other day. It was on one of these occasions that we heard that the last steamer of the season had arrived at Dawson City, and would leave again for St. Michael's, at the mouth of the Yukon, on the following Saturday.

'I mean to leave with it!' said I, as visions of Grace and home instantly rose in my mind's eye.

'And so say I,' echoed Lou, tossing his hat in the air like any schoolboy. 'We've made our pile, and now we'll hie back to old England to enjoy it. Yoicks! We shall just

be in time for the opening meet of the governor's hounds!'

'Stop a minute,' interposed Webster, quietly. 'I should like to have a few words with you apart, Mr. Forrester.'

* * * * *

I was silent, for I did not know how to answer the man who in a few brief words had revolutionised all my thoughts.

'What of your vow?' he had asked, 'what of your vow made when in imminent danger of losing your life? You know the old saying, that "Some one was sick, some one a monk would be. Some one got well, and never a monk was he," which was putting the proverb politely. 'Surely Mr. Forrester,' he asked, '*you* are not going to be like that?'

It was in vain I argued that I fully intended to do great good over in England, with a large part of the wealth that I had wrested from the Klondike, and that, oh, yes, certainly I hoped to live for God and to help on His work when I got comfortably settled at home; he would not concede that in that way I could fulfil the spirit of my vow.

'Here, where your wealth has been gathered, here, where the light of Christianity is almost nil, because of the lust of gold which possesses

the ignorant and lawless miners, aye, and the more cultured but avaricious strangers who are coming, for ever coming, here, where famine, disease, and untold misery will lie in wait for every one next winter, *I shall stay*,' he said, 'and the whole of my gold, if necessary, shall be spent in chartering, if possible, a special steamer to bring provisions from Port St. Michael after the last steamer of the season has been run, and before winter sets in. I probably have not enough gold for that, and for the load of provisions I am sending for, but——' Stopping short, he looked at me.

He was a better man than I. The disciple had got beyond his master; the pupil had got beyond the teacher. Yes, he to whom I had preached when we were in the shadow of death had surpassed me in true Christianity. He was going to give his life, and, besides that, he was going to cast into the treasury *all that he had.*

I wrung his hand. But for a few minutes I could not speak. There was Grace. How could I delay, even for a year, our marriage upon my return, which I had been so blissfully anticipating. Would she not think I was slighting her if I lingered a moment longer than was necessary in this far-distant and dangerous land? Would it be right for me to

overshadow her young life with the anxiety which knowing I was a prisoner here for the winter would entail? Her father would call me a quixotic idiot. What would Grace say?

'Do not set gold, nothing but gold, before you as a goal. It is not the highest good. There is what is better—infinitely better.'

Her words, her well-remembered words, coming into my mind settled the question. Grace would understand.

PART II

TOLD BY LOUIS JOCELYN

CHAPTER I

LEAVING CLIVE BEHIND

IT was a bitter disappointment to me when, upon everything being arranged for us to clear out of the country and leave Klondike before the terrible winter and starvation commenced, my dear friend and chum, Clive Forrester, elected to remain behind.

At first I would not believe it; and I raged and stormed against what seemed to me his crass stupidity. It appeared Webster had been talking him over to some quixotic scheme of doing missionary work, as well as feeding, at enormous expense, some of the poor beggars who were going to remain out here, and Clive mentioned some big vow, made when they were

on the brink of losing their lives in that cavern in the Devil's Grip. Well, of course if he made it, as a man of honour and truth, he was bound to keep it; but, as far as I could see, there was no mention of Klondike in the wording of the vow, and I thought he might come home with me and marry Grace, who, of course, is dying for him, after which, if they liked, they could both go and be missionaries to the poor at home—I am sure some of them are in need of it—where it would be, to say the least of it, more pleasant to work.

But Clive would not budge an inch in his determination, and, when I twitted him with not caring for my sister's feelings, he was so incensed that he closed on me, and we had as pretty a wrestling bout as you might care to see, which ended, I regret to say, in Clive's overcoming me, and making me promise not to repeat what he was pleased to term my tremendous insult. Ah well, he is a good fellow—too good by far to perish out here among the rough miners, which will, I expect, be the end of him.

And now I am off for home, carrying with me a voluminous letter for Grace and a big gold nugget for the same destination. Dear old girl, what a poor substitute they will be for her lover!

As for the business arrangements about our mine, the engineer and sailors sold their shares to Arizona Bob, whilst Webster agreed that I should continue to hold my share in the mine, he and Clive looking after it for me. And of course the engineer and sailors—the renegade crew of the Dolphin—are returning with me, as they promised, to their ship.

Having come to a satisfactory settlement, Webster drew me on one side, saying, 'I have some news to tell you which may not be quite so much to your liking.'

'What's that?' I exclaimed.

'Simply that the rumour we have heard of pirates seems to be quite true,' he answered. 'Indeed, Mr. Jocelyn, I am stating what I believe to be a fact.'

'Pirates in these days! It is simply incredible!' I protested.

'Not in regard to these particular pirates, who have stolen a ship somewhere and are lurking about for the purpose of attempting to steal bullion from the miners who are leaving Klondike with it. The Ocean Pride, belonging to Seattle,' Webster continued, 'was chased for some hours by a strange steamer, and it is believed that a vessel called the Santa Clara, which left St. Michael's for San Francisco a few days before her, laden with

gold dust, has been seized, robbed, and scuttled, as nothing has since been heard of her.'

'A very pretty story, to be sure,' I responded, 'only it lacks confirmation, and personally I should prefer to risk an uncertainty of that kind to the certainty of starvation if we remain here;' and I sighed as I thought of poor Clive.

'Well,' said Webster, 'I have told you what I have heard. You must make your own choice.'

'All right,' said I. 'Nothing that I can hear will prevent my going.'

With a lot of help from dear old Clive, I succeeded in reaching Klondike with all my gold in time for embarkation on the day appointed for the steamer to leave.

Clive and Webster came down to the rude wharf to see me off, bid me 'Goodbye,' and I am sure there were tears in my chum's eyes when he grasped my hand at parting.

I could not say anything—I really could not—for the lump in my throat and the difficulty I experienced in controlling my emotions.

So we left him there, the generous, pure-hearted hero, and I went on my way alone, little knowing what the future had in store for me.

CHAPTER II

IN APPREHENSION OF DANGER

EXCEPT for the occasional excitement of running aground on a gravel-bed, there was little to relieve the tedium of our journey down the Yukon. In some places the lake-like expanses of water and the rugged grandeur of the mountains were magnificent; but we were too anxious to get clear of the mighty river before it was closed by the grip of the Arctic winter to take much pleasure in scenery. Our one desire was to get out of the country with our gold while yet there was time, and the most welcome sight to our eyes was the harbour of St. Michael's, with a small ocean steamer at anchor awaiting the arrival of our boat before sailing for San Francisco.

'Hurrah!' I cried, 'we're fairly beyond the clutches of Arctic ice and starvation at last. 'Hurrah for the open sea!'

Forty-eight hours later we were safely on board the Polar Queen, steering straight for the North Pacific. Our captain kept well out to sea before turning south, in order to avoid the long tongue of land called the Alaskan Peninsular, which projects far westward from the mainland.

There was a stiffish head-wind, which made things very unpleasant until we got fairly away from the Behring Sea. But after that the weather became beautifully calm and bright. Besides our own party there were some ten or twelve other passengers, about half of whom were likewise returning home with fortunes of varying amounts, and the others were leaving in order to escape the threatened famine, but with the intention of returning the following spring. Altogether we had fully two tons weight of gold on board.

For the first few days we were all more or less on tenterhooks for fear of pirates, and by taking it in turns to watch we kept a constant look-out day and night against surprise. But at the end of the week, when we had safely rounded the Peninsular and accomplished a third of our voyage, we began to laugh at the idea of modern corsairs and to relax our vigilance.

'Pirates!' cried one man, a nice fellow

called Clayton, who shared my cabin and whom I invited to go home with us in the Dolphin, when his turn came round to take the first watch after nightfall. 'They're a perfect myth. I don't believe any exist, except in the imagination of a few cranky sailors and drunken saloon-keepers!'

'Well, don't let us shout before we're out of the wood!' I said. 'We'll continue the watch, at any rate. I'll relieve you at one o'clock instead of at midnight; and Waite will take his turn at three.'

'All right, old chap, if you think it necessary to keep up the farce,' replied Clayton. 'Though I must say it seems a work of supererogation on a well-manned steamer like this, where proper watches are kept.'

'No doubt; but better to be over-cautious than over-confident,' I answered, 'when all one's fortune—not to say happiness—is at stake.'

'Right you are, Jocelyn. We ought to be at Skagway in two or three days now; and then, once on board the Dolphin, with steam up, we can snap our fingers at any piratical craft afloat!'

'Yes, she's rather a different stamp of vessel from the Polar Queen, I know very well,' said I, 'but we won't draw invidious comparisons, especially as our Yankee skipper is such a

good fellow as to go out of his way to land us at Skagway, or Vancouver, as may be required.'

'Oh, I feel certain you will find your steamer still at Skagway Bay,' replied Clayton, confidently. 'It's very unlikely that your Captain Watson would be able to get enough hands to move her even so far as Victoria,' he added.

'Suppose he's gone off in search of a fresh crew? What shall we do then?' asked Waite, who was doubtless feeling anything but comfortable at the near prospect of seeing his irate captain.

'He would never leave his ship; so there's no fear of that!' answered Clayton, unwittingly giving the engineer a little stab.

A couple of hours later the game was over, and we all separated, Clayton to his watch on deck, I to our small cabin, and the others to their bunks.

I lay down in my berth, but instead of sleeping until it was time to relieve my chum at the look-out, I began thinking of dear old Clive and of my return home without him. What a fine fellow he was!—finer a thousand times than I, who had actually sometimes imagined I was more of a Christian than he. Reticent and reserved by nature, he is not wont to babble of sacred things; but show him his duty, and he

does it like a man, even though the doing of it may be his death-blow. So quiet he is, and firm and strong! The poet's description of a hero came into my mind—

'Walking his round of duty,
Serenely day by day,
With the strong man's hand of labour
And childhood's heart of play.

True as the knights of story,
Sir Lancelot and his peers,
Brave in his calm endurance
As they in tilt of spears.

As waves in stillest waters,
As stars in noonday skies,
All that wakes to noble action
In his noon of calmness lies.'

Yes, Clive was like that; and, without the least perception of the splendour of his deed, at the call of what he thought was duty and obedience to his vow, he laid down his gold—all the gold that he had just acquired—and his dearly cherished dream of buying an estate in Hampshire that had once belonged to his ancestors, and which he knew was now in the market, and postponed for at least a year all possibility of his marriage with Grace, whom he loved so dearly. I was mad, I think, with rage and

disappointment, when I twitted him with not really loving Grace. Shall I ever forget his look, or the quick colour which flamed up in his face, or the way in which he rushed at me, in wrath, at first, till his common sense and the old feeling of comradeship returned?

And then my thoughts flew to the future, and I was imagining myself arriving at our dear old home in Wales—alone, without Clive—when a commotion above rudely brought back my thoughts to the stern realities of the present. While I was wondering what could have happened, Clayton pushed back the curtain and stepped into the cabin.

'Hullo!' I said. 'What is the matter?' For he stood a moment without speaking, and his face looked pale and anxious by the lamplight.

CHAPTER III

A BRUSH WITH PIRATES

'WHY, there's a strange vessel signalling to us to stop, and we cannot make her out,' he answered. 'I've come down to tell you, and to get my night-glass.'

'A strange vessel!' I exclaimed. 'What on earth can she want?' And visions of pirates and poverty quickly replaced those of home and old England.

'Come along, we shall soon see!' replied Clayton. 'The captain was just rushing on deck as I came down.'

In another minute we both stood on the bridge beside the captain, being highly favoured passengers. He was giving some orders very rapidly, but we only caught the last one. 'Signal to her that we are bound for Vancouver,' he was saying. Then he ran to the engine-room speaking-tube, and almost immediately the steamer began to plunge and quiver,

as it were, with the increased speed which was forced upon her.

Meanwhile I had adjusted my binocular, and was taking a long look at the stranger.

'What do you make of her, sir?' inquired the captain, walking up to where we were standing, and raising his own glass again to his eyes. Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on, 'Most suspicious-looking craft, I call her! What business has she to tell us to stop till she gets within speaking distance. I've answered her by putting on every pound of steam that the engines will bear, and I hope to show her a clean pair of heels.'

'Why!' exclaimed I at this moment; 'if that ship's not the Dolphin, I'm a Dutchman!'

'The Dolphin!' he repeated, in astonishment (I had, of course, told him all about her). 'Do you really mean it? Then your energetic old captain must have managed to scrape together a crew of some sort, and come out to meet us. Did he know you were returning so soon?' he added.

'Not he! I cannot understand it,' I answered, handing him the glass with a puzzled expression of face. 'It is so like the Dolphin; yet it is most unlikely she should be here.'

'I don t know what you mean by calling that

craft the Dolphin,' said the American skipper. 'The Flying Dutchman would be more like her name, I should think. Just see how she is overhauling us. And whatever are her crew up to now?' he added excitedly. 'Looks uncommonly as though they were training a gun upon us!'

The words were scarcely uttered before there was a bright flash over the bows of the strange ship, and the next instant a shot whistled above us, and crashed through our steamer's funnel.

For a second or two we were too much astonished to do more than look at one another, and then, at last, the truth forced itself upon us.

'*The pirate! the pirate!*' exclaimed our captain, in tones of rage and dismay.

'Shall you fight him?'

'Have you any guns?'

Our questions were met by the skipper with a hopeless shake of the head, and by the enemy with another shot, which came tearing through our stern and wrecked the steering gear.

'Stop the engines!' yelled our captain. 'That last shot has crippled us, and the next may send us to the bottom. The scoundrels! I wish I'd a gun of some sort to return their compliments.'

Meanwhile the pirate was rapidly overhauling

us, our vessel being nearly stationary. It was a bright moonlight night, and through the glass I could plainly see her crew collecting at the side of their vessel, ready to jump down upon our decks as soon as they got alongside. The sight almost maddened me. Just when I had obtained the gold which had cost me such a lot of labour, to have it wrested from me by a pack of desperadoes like these!

'But they shall not have it without a struggle!' I said to myself, as I handed the glass to another man, and hastened to my cabin.

When I returned a minute later with my Winchester repeating rifle in one hand and a bag of cartridges in the other, I found most of the ship's company gathered round the captain and Waite, who were conversing together in a very excited manner.

'It's the Dolphin, sure enough,' the latter was saying; 'and if that's not Odo Falck in command, I'm a Hollander!'

'Odo Falck! Well, now, I begin to unravel the mystery,' I cried, as though struck by some sudden inspiration. 'That villainous boatswain, who, you say, deserted you other fellows on the march, and returned to Skagway, must have collected a band of desperadoes like himself from the riff-raff assembled there, and seized the Dolphin, with the object of way-

laying the gold-laden steamers from the Yukon.'

'That sounds likely enough,' declared Waite, while a murmur of assent from many in the crowd proved that they were of the same opinion. Therefore, thinking it a favourable moment to enlist their aid, I turned and asked who would stand by me in an endeavour to beat off the pirates.

'You can reckon upon me, Mr. Jocelyn,' exclaimed Clayton, hastening off in search of a weapon.

'And me, sir,' cried Waite.

'And me!' 'And me!' 'And me!' echoed each one of the Dolphin's old crew.

Alas, alas! not one of them had any weapon but his jack-knife.

'I guess me and my pards 'll jine in, Boss!' quietly ejaculated a grizzled old miner as he gave his trusty rifle an affectionate hug, and glanced round at the bearded men behind him.

'You bet!' was the firm but laconic answer they gave, though nearly half of them were without firearms of any description.

'Now every man of you take the best cover you can find,' I cried, as I quickly loaded my rifle, and took up my own position, where I could command a good view of my surroundings without greatly exposing myself.

I was just wondering what had become of Waite at this juncture when suddenly the engines recommenced to work, and the steamer to move onward. Then there was a great commotion below, and exclamations from the ship's crew, who had mostly come on deck, and the next minute the captain appeared, raging, storming, and calling upon his men to go down and stop the engines.

'Are you all mad?' he cried, catching sight of me, 'to risk the lives of every one on board, my wife and child included, for the sake of your wretched gold? Who started the engines without my orders? This is mutiny!—mutiny!'

Before I could frame a reply I was hurled to the ground and half stunned by my head coming in contact with the bulwarks, as the pirate ship crashed into us. Owing to our steering-gear being useless, the Polar Queen had swung partially across the track of the approaching steamer. The latter, being the bigger ship, and coming bows on, was apparently little damaged. She had her grappling irons ready, and in a trice our deck was swarming with men armed to the teeth.

'Bail up!' cried a stentorian voice which was not unfamiliar to me. 'Show us the gold, or go to your graves in the sea with it!' And

a kick from a heavily booted foot accompanied the demand and roused me from my semi-stupor.

I staggered to my feet, revolver in hand, but was knocked senseless, and knew nothing more until I found myself with Clayton, Waite, and the rest of the Dolphin's men in an open boat on the wide ocean.

'How in the world did we get here?' I asked; and then I recollected the pirates, and my senses almost gave way again. But they gave me water, and after a while I was well enough to be told all that had happened.

It appeared that after the pirates had taken possession of all the gold and other valuables which they could find, they brutally left us to perish in the sinking steamer—for the collision had knocked a hole into her below water-line. The Americans they had simply disarmed and carried off as prisoners.

'It was that brute Odo Falck!' added Clayton. 'He was so mad at Waite for restarting the engines that he had half a mind to shoot us on the spot. He said he would have done so if there had not been so many of his old shipmates on board.'

'Umph!' I said. 'Then it really was the former boatswain of the Dolphin who was in command of the pirate ship?'

'Yes, and *the pirate ship was the Dolphin*. Fancy your father's feelings when he hears about it!'

There was a wail from Waite and the renegade crew at that moment.

'Our gold, our gold for which we sinned!' they cried. 'It is all gone!'

And the irony of the situation lay in the fact that the gold that they had lost was carried away in the very ship from which they deserted in order to obtain it.

'Retribution,' I was beginning, but checked myself. The unhappy men were suffering enough.

CHAPTER IV

RECOVERING THE SPOIL

'THEN I suppose you took to the boats as soon as you found there was no chance of keeping the Polar Queen afloat?' I asked.

'Yes,' answered Clayton. 'We collected as much water and food as we could carry, and left in the ship's boats, but one of them proved unseaworthy, so we all had to crowd into this —the long boat. We've been driving before half a gale of wind all night, and where we are now goodness only knows!'

'Land ho!' cried one of the sailors at this moment.

'Where? where?' was our eager inquiry. For besides being very short of provisions through having had to abandon the other boat, we were so overcrowded as to be in danger of foundering.

The sailor answered by pointing to where a tiny speck was just visible across the wide

expanse of waters. Waite, who was steering, immediately headed the boat in that direction and handed me the glass.

'It is an island,' I said, after taking a good look, 'but I cannot see any sign of inhabitants.'

The island turned out to be further away than we had supposed, and the weather having again turned squally, we had to rely on our oars, not daring to put up a sail. As it was we several times narrowly escaped being swamped.

The daylight was rapidly waning when at last we approached the island and looked anxiously for a suitable landing-place.

Suddenly we saw the figure of a man on a low ridge not far from the shore. He seemed to perceive us at the same moment, for he at once took off his jacket and waved it to us. Then he pointed to a spot where the breakers seemed comparatively harmless, and, taking the hint, we pulled for it with renewed hope. A minute or two later we grounded on a tiny beach, and the sailors springing out, soon pushed and dragged the boat beyond reach of the waves.

Our mysterious signaller hastened to meet us with many rude expressions of surprise and joy. And to our great astonishment he turned out to be the old miner—usually called Mike—

who had been so prompt to offer his help in opposing the pirates.

'Why, Mike!' I exclaimed, 'how in the world did you get here?'

'Easy enough, since they brought us along with them,' he answered; 'but I cannot think how you Britishers got here. Me and my pards gave you all up for lost.'

'We took to the boats, and were driven here before the gale,' I said. 'But do you really mean to say that the pirates are on this very island?'

'That's so,' he replied emphatically. 'They're having a good booze after their grand haul last night, and we'll find them all dead drunk by morning.'

'What a chance for us!' I exclaimed. 'We'll spoil the spoilers, get back our gold, and recover the Dolphin all at one stroke!'

'But how did you get away? Where are they hidden?' asked Clayton.

Then old Mike gave us a graphic account of his escape, and of the high carouse which was being held in a big cavern just over the ridge, while the Dolphin, he said, was lying at anchor in a snug little harbour close by.

We formed our plans while eating our supper, and then lay down for a few hours' rest before putting them into execution. I was far too

excited at the prospect of recovering my gold, or at least having a good fight for it, to sleep, and I spent the night with my mind in a whirl of varied emotions.

At the first glimmer of dawn we launched our boat. The sea was beautifully calm, and we pulled quietly round a little promontory to the southward, and along the rocky coast-line, until we came to a deep but narrow channel which gave entrance to a small and completely land-locked harbour. For a few moments we could scarcely see the Dolphin in the feeble light, as she lay at anchor close under the over-shadowing cliffs. But when, at last, we perceived her, I gave a cry of delight.

This indiscretion might have cost us dear, for, as it turned out, the wary pirate-captain had remained on board the ship with one or two of the crew.

However, no one appeared to have heard the cry, and keeping close under the fiord-like walls of the harbour, we pulled our boat quietly alongside the steamer.

As we did so I exultantly drew Waite's attention to her figure-head (a gilt representation of a dolphin) and to where her name had been painted over and thus obliterated. But I had too much on my mind to think of his feelings as I followed him somewhat clumsily

up a rope ladder, which hung very conveniently over the ship's side.

From what Mike had told us, we scarcely expected to find any one on board—at any rate, in a state to offer serious opposition. So that I was rather taken aback when, just as I stumbled on deck, I heard a sharp scuffle and my companion's exclamation of 'Traitor!' Then followed a sound as of some one falling, and the next moment a heavy, thick-set fellow rushed out of a hatchway opposite. I recognised him at once as Odo Falck, who was now the pirate-captain.

He had evidently been taken completely by surprise, for he was unarmed like myself!

As soon as he saw me he put down his bullet head and rushed at me. I had only just time to catch him by the collar with both hands to save myself from being butted overboard. Then he tried to break away from me, but I held him fast, and seeing what a powerful and desperate man I had to deal with, I drew him towards me a little, and then forced back his head against the side of the hatchway, completely stunning him.

'Bravo, Mr. Jocelyn!' cried Waite, reappearing at this moment. 'I should have been here sooner, only that brute knocked me from top to

bottom of the steps, and I didn't know where I was for a second or two.'

Meanwhile Clayton and one or two of the sailors had followed me on board, and they very quickly pinioned the burly pirate, whom Waite, the sailors, and I at once identified as Odo Falck, the former boatswain of the Dolphin, though he had partially disguised himself by means of a false moustache and some hair-dye.

There was only one other man on board, and he had tried to hide himself on hearing the scuffle. But when we promised him that his life should be spared if he would show us where all the gold was hidden, he readily complied.

The consequence was that within an hour we had not only repossessed ourselves of all that the pirates had taken from us, but had recovered nearly as much more, which they had captured from other vessels returning from the Yukon and hidden in a cave on shore. We likewise released the captain and crew of the Polar Queen, whom we found in the afterhold.

Mike only discovered his 'pards,' as he called the miners, after a long and anxious search. They had been moved after Mike's escape to a sort of offshoot of the main cavern, where all the pirates were lying in various stages of drunkenness. It was rather a critical business

disarming the latter and then bringing their prisoners away with us, but we accomplished it without loss.

We had left some of the men to get up steam, and by the time we had all the gold and the rescued men aboard, the Dolphin was ready for sea.

CHAPTER V

A PRACTICAL JOKE

BEFORE reaching Skagway Bay, where we had decided to call and make inquiries about Captain Watson (whom the pirates had put ashore there after seizing his ship) we saw a British cruiser proceeding seawards. On perceiving us she immediately altered her course, and, to our surprise, gave us chase.

Then, all at once, the reason for this strange behaviour dawned upon us. 'Well, that is rich,' I exclaimed, laughing heartily. 'Do look at them! They evidently take us for the pirates of whom they are in search.'

'I'll tell you what, sir,' said Waite. 'There must be some one on board who knows the cut of the Dolphin very well to be able to distinguish her at this distance.'

'Most likely Captain Watson himself,' I observed, adding, 'He would naturally proceed

to Victoria, B.C., where one or two British men-of-war are always stationed, and enlist the aid of the commander in the endeavour to recover his ship.

'Yes, he would do that, sir,' said the engineer.

'To be sure he would,' I rejoined, hastening away to give orders for the vessel to be put about and to proceed cautiously to meet the cruiser. A few minutes later, I began to laugh heartily again, as I watched the latter through my glass. 'They're evidently suspicious of us in spite of my signal,' I exclaimed. 'Look! They've cleared the deck for action, and I can see the bluejackets preparing to give us a warm reception, if we turn out to be the wolf in sheep's clothing.'

'Then, my word, you'd better put matters on a surer footing at once!' cried Clayton. 'For I've no wish to be slaughtered through such a mistake as that.'

'Ship ahoy!' I cried out, seizing a speaking trumpet.

'Ahoy there!' came the response from the now rapidly nearing cruiser, and then the demand, 'What's the name of your ship, and where are you for?'

And then it occurred to me to have some fun, so I answered—still through the trumpet,

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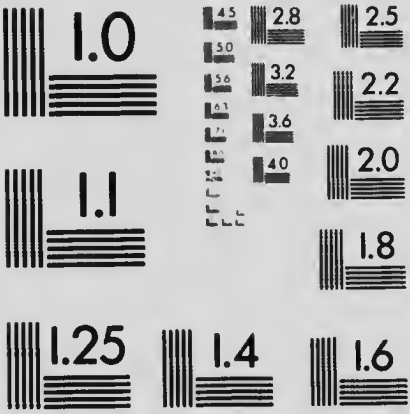

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though the vessels were now quite close, and the engines had been stopped, 'This is the Dolphin, with gold from the Yukon. We're without our captain, who deserted at Skagway.'

'*Liar! Who are you?*' roared a voice from the cruiser, and I could see a portly figure, in the attire of a merchant captain, step up to the naval officer in command, and gesticulate wildly, while quite a small commotion was caused on the vessel.

As for me, I put down the trumpet, and fairly roared with laughter at the success of my little joke. 'Poor old Watson! He'll never forgive me, I fear,' I said, as soon as I could control my voice.

The next minute the British captain seemed to have yielded to the civilian's entreaties, and, waiving red-tape and naval etiquette, allowed him to stand forward and put a question himself.

'Who may you be, sir, I ask?' he shouted wrathfully.

'I'm Louis Jocelyn, son of Sir Robert Jocelyn, owner of this ship!' I replied in my natural voice, standing conspicuously forward on the Dolphin's bridge, but still pretending to be ignorant of my questioner's identity.

The effect was wonderful. Captain Watson —for he it was—stood for a moment com-

pletely nonplussed. Then he exclaimed, in tones expressive of the utmost astonishment, 'Why, it's Mr. Jocelyn, as I'm alive! But how in the world——'

We could hear no more, as the vessels had drifted too far apart. In a few minutes, however, a boat was lowered from the man-of-war, and one of her officers accompanied Captain Watson on board the Dolphin.'

I stepped forward to meet my old friend, and, with a few appropriate words of congratulation, invited him to resume command of the steamship, and to pardon the joke I had played upon him. This the good captain was only too pleased to do in his joy at finding himself once more in possession of his beloved ship. He listened in amazement to the explanations we briefly gave him, and was quite overcome when I brought forward Waite and the few other survivors of his old crew, and begged him to overlook their offence, in consideration of the sufferings they had endured and the efficient way they had assisted in my rescue and the subsequent recapture of the Dolphin.'

Afterwards I gave Captain Watson and the naval officer a full account of my adventures, while taking some refreshment in the saloon. Then Odo Falck was transferred, heavily

ironed, to the cruiser, which at once proceeded to the island to secure the rest of the pirate gang. They were subsequently made over to the United States' authorities, as the acts of piracy had mostly been committed in American waters and on American ships.

As for ourselves, we steamed direct to Vancouver, where we landed the captain and most of the crew of the ill-fated Polar Queen, a few electing to be engaged by Captain Watson to assist our crew on her homeward voyage. At Vancouver, not to be outdone by Clive Forrester, I spent a lot of my gold in inducing a large contractor to send a shipload of food by St. Michael and along the Yukon to the Klondike, though I h l my fears as to whether it would ever reach its destination.

However, it was all that I could do, and I did it—mortal man could do no more—and it only left me a modest fortune to take home. However, I had my share in the mine and I told myself it was to my interest that those in charge of it should be preserved from starvation.

Dear old Clive! Without that consideration I would have given my last farthing to save him one pang of hunger. Should I ever see him again, I wondered, as I left Vancouver, at length, to go home in the Dolphin at Captain Watson's urgent request.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

'BUT, Clive? Oh, Lou, Lou; how could you leave Clive in that terrible land?'

It was Grace who was speaking, in anguish, and she had drawn me aside from my father, who was so full of happiness at my return that he could scarcely endure me out of his sight. I had cabled from Vancouver to say that I was returning without Clive, in order to prepare her for my solitary arrival, but something had gone wrong with the message, and every one was shocked and disgusted to think that I had left my friend out there.

Grace was standing with our father at the great door of the Priory, to welcome us back, and she looked more beautiful than I had ever seen her. When I stepped out of the carriage and ran up the steps to greet them they saw that I was alone, but imagined that I had left Clive at the Rectory with his parents, and that he would be following me presently, to see his

beloved, and I, not knowing the truth ab
the telegram, blurted out the truth v
startling abruptness.

'You received my wire saying Clive
staying out there,' I said; and as there was
answer, I went on, 'Did you not get my w
telling you that Clive was remaining
Klondike for the present?'

'No, no!' replied my father, while G
turned as white as a sheet. 'We
received a telegram saying, "Returning
the Dolphin. Clive remaining with us
present," which seemed rather vague, to
the least of it. Get the telegram, G
Why, bless me, Grace!' he stopped shor
alarm at the sight of her face. 'Pull you
together, my dear. Lou has come h
There, that is better,' as the colour sl
returned to her face. Then he began as
questions about the ship and about th
covery of the Dolphin, Captain Watson ha
wired to him about its loss.

Grace listened impatiently. All her car
for Clive, and as soon as she thought my f
would tolerate it she drew me aside, in
to learn particulars.

I put my arm round her neck, as I answ
'Don't take it in that way, darling. It w
wish to remain. He is a hero, Grace,

better Christian than I. He got a big fortune in gold, and then, then—can you blame him?—he remembered that "there was something better than gold." The miners had no one there to speak to them of God and religion. No one had leisure to get up services on a Sunday, or visit their sick-beds when they were laid up. There was no one to speak to the dying, and try to raise a man's thoughts to the Saviour who died for him. And Clive had a gift for the work. A man, Webster, told me that when he was once on the very brink of the grave Mr. Forrester spoke, like a man inspired, of the love and the mercy of God, till he was constrained to vow that if he were spared he would lay down all his wealth, and himself too, at the foot of the Cross. Clive was in the same peril also, and he made the same vow. Shortly after they were saved from a horrible death. Can you blame him because he kept his vow?'

She was weeping now, and clung to me for a moment; and then, quite herself, she said bravely, though the tears were streaming down her face faster than she could wipe them off, 'No, it's all right—of course. Did he—did he send anything?'

I gave her his letter, and she ran away to peruse it alone.

Afterwards she told me that it was a beautifu
letter, full of loving, helpful words, and cheerin
her with hopes of their union, after he had go
things into a little better order for the teachin
and religious assistance of the poor gold-digge
at Klondike. He assured her, too, that th
climate, though severe, was not unhealthy, an
that he had never felt in better health than h
was at that moment. Finally, he confessed
her that it was her own advice, not to mak
gold his chief consideration and goal, whi
had, in the first instance, led to the change
his own heart and life. He was sure she wou
not blame him, he said, or imagine for o
moment that his staying out there betokene
in the slightest degree, a failure of love towar
her. On the contrary, he assured her that ve
fierce and keen had been the conflict betwe
inclination and duty, which by God's gra
ended in his deciding to remain at Klond
another year, or if necessary two or thr
She would pray for him, he knew, and
promised to pray for her night an- day.

* * * * *

They were over at last, the long, long ye
of waiting, and Clive Forrester left Klond
under the happier conditions brought about
the development of transportation lines on

Yukon and the construction of the railway from Skagway over the White Pass and down the Yukon to the White Horse Rapids, by which means freights were greatly reduced and the prices of food approached a normal level.

We had been enabled to send out clergymen, too, to carry on the work, roughly commenced by Clive and Webster, in the shape of Bible-readings and services, visiting the sick and disabled, reading the funeral service over the dead, and consoling the sick and afflicted, so that Clive could be spared to come home and marry his *fiancée*, whose letters sent every summer had greatly cheered and assisted him in the strenuous life he was leading. Of course he brought back a fortune —when fortunes are to be had for the picking up a man would be lacking in common sense did he not avail himself of the opportunity —but it was less than half of what it would have been if he had not spent money so freely on his work.

'Indescribably foolish!' pronounced my father when he heard of the matter.

But Grace said, 'Nay, not so! What is regarded as foolishness by men of the world may be counted as true wisdom on High, and I am sure it is better for Clive to "lay

up treasure in heaven" than to have no en
of gold upon earth.'

They are married now, and my tale is tol
As I lay down my pen I see them riding b
as handsome and 'well set up' a couple a
can be found in all Wales; and I must sa
this, it is my honest conviction that they ar
the happier because of what my father cal
'poor Clive's quixotic notions.'

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