

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

at a fair wage. Yet with all this in mind Baldy felt that it was a spirit of greed that was fixing its tentacles upon Fraser, goading him forward, that it was eating into his very vitals, and he was commencing to show effects of the strain. He felt that unless he could be persuaded to take a rest or change of some sort that the man's health would surely break down. It was from love, or at least a profound admiration for this man that we find Baldy reining up his steed before the door of the mill office one fine afternoon, just as Fraser was descending the steps on his way home.

In order that my reader may know somewhat of the early life and history of this man Fraser, who stands out so prominently in the commercial and political environment, as well as the diamond treasure life of the country, I will say, he was born, reared and educated in a little village set on a beautiful, gently sloping hillside of a good old southern state, east of the big Mississippi.

Fraser was a little boy of ten years, when by a strange coincidence both his father and mother died the same month, and the family was left to fight the battle of life alone. Two of the brothers gradually worked their way to the big west among the mining and lumber camps. They worked together for a year or two, when the brother decided

THE DIAMOND TREASURE REVEALED

to hit the overland trail via the Laird for the Klondyke. It was a hazardous route and many a prospector perished by hunger or exposure long before he reached the glittering goldfields. Fraser had given his brother up for dead, but not before making a diligent search and enquiry from a score or more fallen-outs by the wayside. Failing in his search for a lost brother, he set himself to the amassing of a fortune; and it is at this time in his career that we become interested in him.

"Mr. Fraser, I believe?" said Baldy, as he sprang from his horse.

"Yes, that is my name. Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing much in particular. I've heard of your big mills, an' as I happened to be in this part of the country, thought I would like to take a look through them. Would you mind?"

"Not at all. I would be glad to have you look them over from end to end. Just step inside and I will give you a note to my foreman."

At this, the two men entered the office, where Fraser scribbled a few lines which he handed to Baldy, saying.

"This will introduce you to my man and he will show you through. Are you from a distance?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Yes, quite a distance," replied Baldy. "I am sure glad for your kindness in this matter. I have never seen a big lumber mill in operation."

"Are you likely to be in our city (Fraser always called his mill town a city) for a time? If you feel inclined to call on me again I shall be delighted to see you."

It had been a long time since Fraser had seen Baldy, and it was therefore not strange that he should not recognize him, even though this same man was known in the early days of the settlement as a "bully or desperado." At that time his dress was rough, as was his manner and speech, but today he was neatly clad, his bearing gentle, and his English much improved.

The foreman was roaring out to one of his men at a machine when Baldy made his appearance and handed him the letter of introduction from Fraser. The man conducted him very affably up and down the rows of planers, and in and out among the shingle machines, all of which he explained minutely. Baldy, however, was not interested in the machines just then, but studied closely the men who were operating these belt and pulley wonder mechanisms. He noticed the boss showed a coldness and harshness toward his men when giving his commands.

THE DIAMOND TREASURE REVEALED

After a tour of about half an hour through this one department, Baldy was presented to the manager of the saw mill sheds, where he also gained an insight into the temper of the men.

It was now six o'clock, and the whistle for quitting time was bellowing forth its tumultuous roar. Hundreds of the laborers of the mills filed past him as he carelessly sat on the end of a huge log, from which vantage point he scrutinized each face that came his way. The majority of whom bore a hard expression, while not a few a fearful stare. The huge mill was soon deserted and Baldy found himself alone, in deep meditation.

He suddenly rose and wended his way to a little restaurant over the logs from the mill, where scores of men were eating. Mounting the only vacant stool that stood before the long counter, he ate his meal quietly in the midst of the hungry mill hands. During this time he heard much to attract and interest him.

"In the personal touch with men," he thought, "one can very soon feel the pulse, and can, as it were, feel the heart beats of one's fellow man, that is if one is in sympathy with, or bears good-will in his heart towards men."

"What's ol' Fraser goin' to do with Boss Stubbs, the machine eater, I'd like to know?" said a man

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

near Baldy. "If he don't get a move on and kick him off the face of the earth, I'll jab my toe between his ribs before I'm much older. For two bits I would lan' him one for luck anyway."

"I was blockin' out a bolt the other day and ol' Boss Stubbs blew up beside me, bellerin' out like a bull: 'What in thunder are ye doin'? What d'ye mean? Do ye think we're made up of millions? I'll break yer neck if ye throw that bolt away in such a shape.'"

"An' what did ye say ter him?"

"I jes' tol' him quiet like thet there was not another shingle in the bolt. At this he tore aroun', talked a hull lot and grabbed the bolt, at the same time shoving down the lever, and bang!! The ol' machine flew inter a thousan' pieces."

"What happened then?" drolled out a stool neighbor to the right.

"Happened! You should uv seen it with yer own eyes. The very sawdust turned green at the sight. The boss feller roared like a mad man, said that I knew the thing would break, an' thet I hel' me foot on the lever too tight. Jes' as if I would do sech a thing. He said he'd sure make me pay fer the break and so on."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Trail to the Hills

ABOUT noon of the next day Baldy again walked into Fraser's office. "I jest came in to say that I enjoyed looking over your mill plant bully. Had no idea that you had such a big thing away out here. I have often heard of your mills, but never had a chance to look at them till now."

"Are you engaged in the trade yourself?" queried Fraser.

"No, but I have a little enterprise in hand on a different line to yours. I am a sort of inspector and salesman combined."

"Government?"

"No, just ordinary one-man."

"Machine line or saws?"

"Machine," said Baldy.

"Take a seat," said the man of big commerce.

"I have a couple of shingle machines that are giving me all kinds of trouble, and I want you to examine them." Here he pulled a rope for a boy, and when he had appeared: "Show this gentleman the machines in shop number ten."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"But I have already inspected them," said Baldy.

"You have? And how do they show up?"

"Not very good, but if you don't mind, I'll call again after lunch, for I see that you are pretty busy."

Fraser eyed the stranger at this juncture, as if he was commencing to recognize him. "Seems to me that I have met you before, but cannot just at this moment remember the place or time."

"Look again, look me over good, and I believe you will all right."

Fraser did so, then sprang to his feet. "Of all the wonders of the world!! "Black" Baldy, or is it just plain Baldy now, with the "Black" left off? I've heard of your change of heart and am glad to see you. Are you going to set up a treasure camp in our city? Is Mr. Loraine coming over too? I don't know how my men will take to you, for I guess we are a kind of a tough bunch over here."

"That's all right, Fraser. Nobody is tough to me. Maybe some of them don't understand certain things just right."

"The machines, you mean?"

"No, not the machines, but I noticed a thing or two as I went through your mill which made me think that some of the men were not expert enough in some directions. I know I'm a poor sample to

THE TRAIL TO THE HILLS

talk to you, but I tell you that I would like to go up country to your different camps and ranches and see the men there as well."

"Very well, Baldy, that's as good as done, and I tell you, I'll go along with you. I was just beginning to want an excuse for a few days in the hills, and it can be a couple of weeks if you like. The call of the mountain trail takes hold of me every now and again."

"Nothing would suit me better than to go with you, if it is not breaking in on your time and good nature too much."

The following day found the two men well up the canyon by sunrise, Fraser riding his chestnut, while Baldy was on an untamable roan. Fraser had warned him that this steed would throw him into a ditch or break his neck or back long before the journey's end if he was not very careful, to which Baldy rejoined with a quiet good humor:

"I'll chance him; no mountain horse has thrown me yet. I like a horse with a spirit of lightning and thunder, and I think we will get along all right together."

For two hours the men rode in Indian fashion along the mountain side, Baldy in the lead.

"Do you know I heard that you were a pretty

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

tough customer after you left the old homestead, Baldy," said Fraser.

"It is too true, I am sorry to admit. The devil got into me, and I'm glad every moment of my life for being grabbed from the jaws of the pit."

"I often wondered what made such a sudden change in you."

"One life, one life, Fraser. But you're not going to throw me over for that fall, now that I have faced about, are you?"

"Throw you over? I should say not, old man. Somehow I can't help having faith in you."

"Thanks for that. That is worth a whole acre of fir lumber piled up to the sky."

The two travellers kept hard to the trail for many days, sleeping out at night under the glimmering light of the stars, and eating their meals in the open by day with the sun beating down on them.

As they sat at one of these meals conversing, Fraser said:

"Since you have taken this right about face path, Baldy, there are certain things in your past life that you should explain fully. You know a man of business wants to know the ins and outs of everything in connection with those with whom he has dealings. Every one in the settlement knew you and always felt that there was some mystery in connection with

THE TRAIL TO THE HILLS

Loraine, Lanice and yourself, but no one liked to pry into that mystery while Lanice was here for fear it would make her life unhappy. I have known you since you were a young man, and I think you can trust me with any secret that you may wish to confide in me; and I think you know me well enough to feel that I will not judge you too harshly."

"I deserve all the harsh judgment you or anyone else can pile on, but I could not tell you some things, just for the sake of others who have done so much for me, and then too, Mr. Loraine has asked me not to say a word about certain things."

"But how do you expect a cold-blooded commercial man like myself to take an interest in you and your work, if I do not know how things are put together?"

"That is right, Fraser, but has not Loraine told you that I am perfectly sincere now in my efforts towards a new life?"

"Yes, he has, but I want to hear the story from your own lips. There is no man I know of who has had such a varied and remarkable life as you."

"Yes, a remarkable devil life, I'll admit."

This man Baldy may seem to my readers as being a very unlikely man to take up treasure diamond methods; but inventions, reformations, and a breaking away from conventional ruts and path-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

ways, often spring from an unlikely and secluded source.

It was the life and love of Lanice that lifted this man up and out of the crooked roadway. Restrictions by government laws or precepts and dogmas of religious creeds made not the slightest impression on him, with regard to his imbibing or partaking of the love spirit.

After once taking root in Baldy, this spirit grew and developed with a wondrous rapidity and force. He grasped the idea with an overpowering impressiveness. To this vast domain were hastening the people from central Europe, northern Europe, and from every country on the face of the earth. They were born and brought up in a land that had been creed and corporate religion ridden for centuries.

In settling in these new lands Baldy appealed to them in the diamond treasure spirit, which entreated them with love. The entreaty came from a love heart, and appealed to the spark of love within the hearts of these fellow creatures. Lanice maintained that it was not necessary to incorporate into a religious joint stock company, and use the love lever, or divinity mind, as its capital stock, and hold a prestige thereby over the people. She said that the very fact of incorporating a divine thought, or attempting to weld it into a machine, entirely obliterated the chance for true love to find an en-

THE TRAIL TO THE HILLS

trance into the heart of an individual, in full power.

This idea of freedom of thought and sincere righteousness, could not possibly take root in the hearts of a people that had been creed ridden for generation after generation. To this great new land of valley, plain and mountain must we look for a place to sow the seed. The biggest and most difficult mountain to surmount, however, is the soaked in ideas, prejudices, forms of outward worship, and age long established creeds which the people carried along with them, in each individual heart.

No man can possibly receive or imbibe a spirit (love) by way of the finger tips, or through the operation of a machine boring it in. A machine sets forth rules and regulations for the patient to go by. This method is properly in order and profitable, in operating a commercial enterprise. A commercial organization must set a certain wage scale, a time to begin work, a time to quit, and set a standard for the kind of work to be performed by its members.

Religion is one's idea of God, spirit, love. One cannot incorporate a spirit, or govern it by dogmas or precepts. The outward show of lip and knee performance are simply theatrical or commercial. What one's heart or soul life shows forth to one's fellows or neighbors from moment to moment,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

determines whether or not there is any religion or idea of God, love, held therein.

If Baldy accepted the corporate religion of a man from Servia, Germany, Russia or Lapland, it would not suit the corporate religion of the man from England, Ireland or France; so there could be no common basis to build upon, in the big free country. If he accepted the corporate religion idea of Sam Sin of bowing down to an image of stone or white marble, it would not appeal to the man from the United States, nor the man from old Scotland's rugged hills.

All of these men, however, believed that it was right and proper for a man to give a brother man or neighbor, a sack of flour when he was hungry, and to provide comfort, joy and health to a sick, down and out man, who had for the moment fallen by the wayside. If a man held forth in sacred prayer or in hymn service, while in an upright position on a table, or in a stooping position in a chair at his home, it did not matter in the least to his neighbor man, provided the first named was kind and true. In fact no one need know how his fellow neighbor worshipped, or whether he performed any lip or knee action at all, as long as his heart and hand were ready to show forth love deeds to mankind.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Confession

NOW, I'm going to ask you one plain, blunt question—who's son are you?"

At this sudden shot Baldy looked at Fraser unflinchingly and said: "In answering you, I am trusting you to keep this secret to yourself, for the sake of Lanice. I will tell you about myself and father, but not of Lanice. I think she knows all now and you can write to her for that information. I am a son of Mr. Loraine's."

"You were quite a sized boy when you came into the country?"

"Yes."

"Did your mother come with you?"

"No."

"Where was she?"

"She died long ago, when I was about two years old, my father told me."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Did he ever talk to you about your mother?"

"Only the once, and then but just a word."

"He never cared for you?"

"He used me pretty bad, though I'm not complaining. I guess I was evil-minded all right."

"Did you ever ask about your mother?" continued Fraser.

"Occasionally, but he never seemed to want to talk of her."

"Where did he live?"

"Have only a faint idea, but there was an old miner in here years ago who knew my father and mother in the east, in fact was at their wedding. Beyond that, however, he would not tell me much."

"What did Lorraine tell Lanice?"

"He told her that her mother was dead, that she had been a beautiful woman and that she worked hard and prayed for her little girl. He loved the little girl all right. Lanice did not know that I was his son, and pretty soon I did not want her to know, either, for I am sure we did not act like father and son. I got into the cattle stealing business and robbing generally at last, and later skipped out. Now I'm back, and that's about all there is

THE CONFESSION

to tell about my life in this country, although a whole bunch of things happened while I was away from here. But I hope you don't want to know any more, Fraser."

"No, I certainly do not Baldy. It doesn't matter what they are, and I can only say that you are a brick, old man, in climbing out of the mud as you have done."

"Don't call me anything good, please, or give me pats on the back, for I don't deserve it."

They had camped for the noonday meal on the edge of a magnificent precipice overlooking a green valley below. The steel range had been set in position and a couple of mountain trout were roasted.

"What a stretch of country there is in this big west."

"Sure there is, Fraser," replied Baldy, "and it's me that knows it, for I've tramped it enough. What a field for development. There is one great problem in carrying out any great work, and you should know a good deal about it too, with your hundreds of employees, and that is how an employer or company can best keep his men in good favor and from striking. I understand that Cameron has had considerable trouble with his men on the construction work in connection with his railway."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"He did have, but he tried a new plan, and I understand he has had no further trouble. I have an idea which I think might work out, although I have not tried it myself yet."

"Well, if you try it out and find that it does work, you will sure have solved a knotty problem, for wherever I have travelled, it is the employer against the employee, or the rich against the poor. What's your plan, Frasei?"

"I think the employer and the employees should work together on the profit sharing plan. Some companies have already tried it, I believe. A laborer should receive a share of the profits just as well as the manager or owner of the plant."

"That's right. I'm glad to hear you say that."

"Don't get fancy ideas about me, Baldy. I'm not doing this to my men. I'm just talking about a plan; we all like to talk more than we practice, don't we?"

"Well, I don't know about that. We have to talk, or at least think, before we can act."

"Of course we do; I'm glad you put in that last word "think"."

"I'm no preacher, but a poor specimen of human-

THE CONFESSION

ity, but I have seen a thing or two in life; some pretty bad places and some fast and gay people too. Then again I have seen some angels on earth among them, and have come to the conclusion that there is good and bad in everyone, and want to believe that the good will come out on top every time, if it is only given the chance and some willing hand will help to bring it out."

As they talked, Baldy lit his pipe and began smoking, and soon Fraser stretched himself out on the grass for a little nap in the shade of an over-hanging tree. He had not learned to smoke, swear or drink during his life at the foot of the big mountain peaks, and Baldy found himself in deep meditation about this, and the man's many virtues as compared to his different commercial ventures. "Shall I speak to him," he thought, "about our diamond treasure plans in the mill yards, or let Loraine broach the matter to him. Fraser knows my past life, and I cannot set myself up as a saint, even if I wished to do so. Why, he is ten times the man I am. He has done something in the world, while I have been a scape-goat all my life, save for these last few months. But what's the use to mourn? I know that I am a new man now, and I feel sure that he is not the one to belittle anyone's efforts, and that he will at least

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

give me a patient hearing. Why should not a man who has under him hundreds of laborers who depend upon him for their very living, clothes, health and so on, consider these same men as a family. They look to him and depend on him for all the material needs of their bodies, and why should he not provide for their moral health needs?"

As he thus moralized Fraser wakened, and broke into his reverie with "How's the time, Baldy?"

"It's only two o'clock yet. Do you know what I've been thinking about?"

"I'll never tell you. Maybe fish, deer, or perchance of happy boyhood days when you paddled in the creek barefooted."

"You're miles away. I've been thinking of you and your great work in the world."

"Forget it all."

"I never can. You've been cutting timber and sawing it into boards, opening up mines, raising up cattle on the ranges, building up and adding wealth to the country, while I've been tearing down and producing nothing. Yet with it all, I do not envy you. I admire you for all this and only hope the good work will go on and on, and I want you to

THE CONFESSION

think of me as only a very ordinary man, although one who might have one or two ideas in his head, from hard and bitter experience, which might be of use and worth listening to. If you can bring yourself to think of me in this way, I am going to make so bold as to talk a little further."

"Proceed; I am not the man to imagine that all that's good and great comes from the mighty only. In my mills I have had a common ordinary chore boy bring out an invention that saved me thousands yearly."

"My invention is not in machinery; it deals with men!"

"You want to establish your diamond hitch in my city?"

"You've guessed it; I do. But I want you to feel right about the matter, above everything else. I am one who believes in talking face to face with men and touching heart to heart. What do you think about a father who has a home, wife and four children—shouldn't he provide food and clothing for them?"

"Most decidedly he should."

"And shouldn't he talk right, live honestly and kind like amongst that family?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"If he is the right kind of man he should."

"Now, has not the manager of a company just as much duty to perform towards his bigger family of men? True, they are not quite so close related to him, but does the little difference matter? I am not saying that you do not use your men right, mind you, for as far as you know you do the very best in the land. I'm trying to get at the idea of moral and treasure training or influence. Of course, the regular orthodox way is to leave that to the churches; but sometimes the church systems don't agree among themselves as to how it should be done.

For one man, whether he be a miner, doctor, farmer, preacher or priest, to teach this to another he must present it in person by a life made under a soul-touching plan. A beaming out fervor of love must show up around and about, and within him, in his every moment life. It must be in every moment of his life, not weekly, or monthly. He must appear to the other as honest, sincere and reasonable, and I'm thinking now of one of your bosses in the mill."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Just a little unreasonable. A wrong spirit shoots

THE CONFESSION

out from him and gets into the machines and saws and breaks them in pieces."

"Your a novel preacher, Baldy."

"It's no novelty, and I do hope that you will not consider it so, as the matter is a very serious one with me. A spiritual life is nothing more or less than a right-minded or right-living life, linking up the soul, and thinking with the Divine, thinking divine thoughts, and if you cannot get your men to think while they are performing their work, I am afraid the product they turn out will not be up to much. Your company can't think for the individual, neither can a whole sect or denomination think or grow spirits within an individual without that person thinking for himself. We have far too few persons thinking for themselves; we go too much with the crowds. We vote in politics with the crowd, or vote with the old party just because it is a grand old party. We wear a certain kind of coat or hat because the crowd wears it. Reformations are never started by a whole nation at once, nor are inventions brought out by the crowds. It is one man every time who does it. Personal ingenuity every time. Take Newton, Watt, Edison, Luther, Wesley, Paul, Napoleon and Tolstoi, it was through their personal individual divine originality (these

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

are borrowed words) that they loomed up so high in their different lines."

"How about the training these men had, Baldy?"

"They had training, at least most of them did, but scores of men in their time had a training equal to theirs and yet did not do any good. Lanice used to say that a man could do no good or perform great deeds by rules and regulations. Their aspirations or high-up acts must come from the heart.

"I am trying to develop this treasure diamond on a large scale. Do you know that that girl's main desire seemed to be to spend out her life for others and to set up the treasure in hearts, offices and homes. She had a very sacred mind. She used to say that none of our up-to-date nations should bow down to brass, wood or golden images, and I guess she was right, for take them China people; they are not up to much for all their years, for they set up all kinds of gods, made by their own hands, and worship them good and sincere. It sure does seem to me that our own white people should look out awful close what they worship or set their hearts on, or subscribe to, which is the same thing. What a man sets his heart on, or joins his name in, that's what he will grow into every time. There's some awful big things made by the hands of man all

THE CONFESSION

right, such as temples, wood and brass gods; then there are machines and railroads, bridges, theatres, boats, million dollar houses and so on. Then again there are big systems, clubs, societies (secret and open) and the hundred and one different creeds. Maybe they are all good, she used to say, but we should not worship them, as they are all built up and put together by the hand of man. Lanice was of the opinion that the home was a high up divine institution. She thought it a bold and foolish stroke for a man to try to put spirit into a steam engine, or a plow, or machinery of any kind, and then to expect a spirit to come out of the machinery. As evidence of this, witness the awful carnage and slaughter, by reason of the hatred and murderous spirit, right in the midst of centuries old, corporate religion countries, in the war of nineteen hundred and fourteen."

Baldy and Fraser by this time were well down a slope of the mountain, riding leisurely and quietly. The two bold and adventurous travellers and roamers of the hill and valley country, were both undergoing a change of heart. The first had been already melted in a crucible, while the other was being electrified.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Down the Big River

THE week after Fraser's and Baldy's hiking among the big hills and canyons, the latter continued his pushing forward, alone, searching out new fields. In this journey he met in with two men whom we have before mentioned in the earlier chapters of this book, and I am relating his experiences as he (Baldy) gave them to me:

We had just emerged from the Big Cascade, safely and soundly, yet not without being pretty well splashed up. But we had succeeded in missing the rocks, which was the all-important thing in this perilous rush through the mad and turbulent white caps of the big river.

We occupied the foremost or pilot scow in a flotilla of forty, which were loaded down with provisions, traps and tools consigned for the pioneers of the hinterland. The strain had become less tense on my nerves, for we had safely passed the most dangerous rapids of these surging waters, and I lay on a pile of sacks, enjoying to the full the race down

DOWN THE BIG RIVER

this mighty waterway. It was my fifth journey, but it was the nineteenth or twentieth for many of my companions, so that the adventure and scenery had become more commonplace to them, but to me it could never become commonplace. To our right some few miles up stream stood an embankment two hundred feet or more in height, darkish grey in color. It was neither clay, stone, sand or marble. It was of an inflammable nature, saturated with some sort of oil, and these whole precipices could be set into roaring flames of fire. We were in the world-famous tar and asphalt district. We pulled into the shore at different points to examine the natural gas which bubbled forth from the ground, here and there scooping up a pail of black tar with which our captain would mend a leaky boat. Across the river from Pelican's fox farm, the government had drilled a hole some seven hundred feet deep to test the gas supply. They had capped it in order to hold the enormous pressure. From the big pipe a smaller one led up to a height of twenty feet, from which issued forth a thundering blaze of fire which had been burning night and day for years.

Of the captain or steersman as he is called, of the pilot scow, I wish to say a little, for he is a most important personage. On him depends the safety of the whole flotilla of scows and their contents, as well

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

as the lives of the passengers on board. William Houle was his name, a man of French and Cree extraction. A man of noble soul and steady nerve, quite unlike what some wayfaring tenderfoot might expect to find in this rugged and bold region. William was gentle, unassuming and quiet in every particular. He was perhaps fifty years of age, well set up, sinewy and active. He had four helpers with big twenty-foot oars, all younger men of Highland and Cree blood. Men of whom Scotty said could'n'a spaik a worrd o' the guid auld Gaelic language, for which reason he considered them to be removed a few steps from his ancestors. However, judging from the physical make-up of these sons of the fore-runners, the highlanders were in no way superior to them in this respect, at least. William was continually on the look-out ahead. His eagle eye scanned the full width of the river, detecting long in advance of a dangerous reef or boulder, the course which his scow was to pursue, speaking and commanding in a low tone to which every helper obeyed instantly with a good grace and willing hand.

William was a striking contrast to most of his brother rivermen, in that he neither swore, drank or smoked, and he rarely ate bacon, which was a sin to most travellers here. He preferred the fresh fish

DOWN THE BIG RIVER

and game and consequently always carried a gun and line whether on a scow or on the trail across country from McMurray's post.

Of the passengers I make mention of Dromore and his financial backer from Harvard. They were returning from an extended trip to Florida. For a year past, their big dredges were at work on the mine purchased from Fraser. On receiving the five thousand dollar cheque sometime ago for Dromore, Lanice did not present it to the old man, but made all haste to Fraser's office, where she effected a bargain for half the claim. She maintained that Dromore would not accept the cheque, for she felt sure that he would claim, he deserved a good portion of this mine, nothing short of which would satisfy him. Half the claim was dedeed to Dromore, and it was this claim on which the man from Harvard had placed the dredge for operation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Climax

LANICE had become greatly alarmed about Fraser. In his greed he entered the political arena, still working desperately in the commercial world. Little by little he pushed forward until he won his way into the government. He looked around and beheld all eyes upon him. He felt himself rapidly growing in importance and was emboldened. He pushed on further and was now in the midst of the fight. He was successful in his first election, then in the next, and was climbing upward and had finally been elected premier. He was elated and puffed up, though not a great politician in the minds of many; was he not making laws and looking after the people's rights? He gathered unto himself a band of body guards and servants, who acted for him and signed for him official documents, and it was known that he manipulated bargains in land and railways to suit his own pocket. He assigned the big commercial work to his manager while at government house.

Fraser had become financially great and prominent in the promotion of large concerns. He was

THE CLIMAX

completely inoculated with the spirit of rasping greed. He entered into contracts with railways and large land companies wherein he shared the profits and commissions, and in return for said commissions he and his body guards instituted certain legislation favorable to the said commercial corporations.

In the matter of lands, fictitious prices were known to be attached to certain deeds through his influence; and in the matter of stock companies, the certificates were slightly increased over the par value by the fresh water process.

He soon abandoned his commercial pursuits, that is in reference to operating them on a separate footing as regards his personal direction from the office; but he moved every wheel, lever and belt in his political machine, to exact toll from scores of such enterprises. It was a well-known fact by men of clear discernment who were in touch with other commercial pursuits akin to those in which Fraser was in favor, that others in many cases had been forced to retire if they would not allow the political machine to participate in a share of the profits. This manipulation of finance had been also known to bring into existence certain commercial enterprises through the power and leverage which he possessed in his official capacity, whereby he profited very largely in the monies of the people.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Why not?" he would reason within himself. "They are common, ordinary folk, while I am the leader destined to become powerful, wealthy and wise."

Lanice had written him, that there must go out from his very heart's core a spirit of fairness. Those who rule nowadays must show themselves humble and serve the people without pomp and without even a semblance of greed or a striving after wealth.

"The very fact of this accumulation of material wealth establishes a deep gulf between yourself and the people. Your present manner of life will have no effect whatever in the moulding of the people's minds into a good life conception. I say this in all kindness and affection for your feelings, because I feel sure there has come into your life stealthily a subtle creature which has overpowered you, as it were, unawares. Your speeches to the people along this line of argument (Fraser had attempted many times to impress the people on official occasions of the importance of good will to neighbors) will fall like water from a duck's back. There must be the life flowing out from the very heart. The people are not blind, neither are they flinthearted. It is impossible for a flinty heart to press up against a heart of flesh, without crushing the flesh heart. You know this full well, Mr. Fraser."

"Of course I know it," he thought. "What

THE CLIMAX

strange thing has gripped me? I am overwhelmed and engulfed in it." The greedy stare was in his eyes in talking to his servants or to the people, or when he was directing his body guards in their services for him. He had been plunging forward like a mad charger. The glamor of power, wealth and gold had blinded his eyes and seared his conscience. Before he was aware of it, he had accumulated forty million dollars worth of land, mines, stocks and such like, as well as hoarding a vast amount of cash in a dark and gloomy vault. He was surprised at himself, and in brief moments of consideration when alone in his office, he would pause and ask himself "Is it right to accumulate such a vast amount of wealth for myself and servants? they too being gold bedraggled. It is surely lessening the wealth of the many people. Perhaps they are suffering; I shall look around."

There was a group of stalwart and strong men living in Fraser's constituency. They were friends of his, and although healthy and good looking, they were smitten with the same deadly disease, a sickening, loathsome, nauseating one, which, with many, was incurable. Doctors, philosophers and philanthropists all agreed as to its effects and manners of eating into the vitals; but no one had been able to heal or eradicate it. They term it the "vulturized party cranium." It affects the brain to some extent; but still, the patient can walk straight. He has an

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

illusion that he is attached to a system with a strong cord during his working day, and is led around by it. In the case of this particular group of men they were joined to Fraser and his party. It seemed to flatter him, because anything that gave him prominence, notoriety or power, would buoy him up to larger efforts in this sphere, and he would not consent to a bill in parliament to assist the medical profession in stamping out this disease. The peculiar thing in the patient is that he thrives and grows fat. I found Fraser was at the height of his glory, in the accumulation of his wealth, power and fame, and in his hypocritical attempts to show good faith and care for the people when Lanice was writing to him.

The climax was reached in his career when he was given a knighthood by the king, for which knighthood it was understood he offered a very large sum of money, but this was only rumor, however, for it was possible that the king would grant him this honor because of the services which he had performed for his country, by securing railways for it.

Lanice was earnestly praying for a change of heart in Fraser, but his servants bowed down and worshipped him. To her he was drifting further and further away from the pathway of love and honesty.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A Call—Back to the Great Highway

FRASER was seated in his elaborately furnished office under the shadow of government house, over which he held so much sway. The clock on the mantel had just tinkled out the midnight hour. Still he sat, nervously twitching his fingers which held Lanice's letter. He was saying to himself, "I know that this woman is miles and miles beyond me, that her ideals of life are lofty, yet they are right. She does not love me with a view of marriage, this I know, as she is already married and loves her husband, yet she pleads with me like a lover, urging me now to loose the bonds that bind me and earnestly invites me to come and see her before it is too late. "London is lonesome", she writes. "I have told my husband that I am writing to you, who sends his greetings and unites with me in the wish that you come with all speed possible; so do come, and be sure to cable me on receipt of this letter. We have something that will

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

interest you and which will be of wonderful value to you." This letter was simply signed "Lanice."

Sir Fraser had now reached the zenith of his ambition, as has been said, but was now awakening to the diamond treasure pathway. Lanice's letter held him as in a vise. He sat rigid and cold, with not a muscle moving, his eyes peering into and beyond the brick-a-brack on the shelf in front of him as he clutched the arms of his chair.

"She is right! she is right! The demons have been upon me, but I shall break away, if the Lord of the heavens has not forsaken me entirely."

He then rose, rang for his body guard, two of whom appeared. Singling out the foremost, he said: "Here, send this cablegram. Hurry, hurry, I say! Are you immovable? Fly to the office with this message. Mark it rush. Lose no time on the way or I'll discharge you from your position."

"I shall make extreme haste, sir, the most extreme haste possible. Indeed I shall, sir," said the man.

The next day in parliament, Sir Fraser announced his retirement from the chamber. The group, there assembled, held up their hands in astonishment, crying out:

A CALL—BACK TO THE GREAT HIGHWAY

"Gadzooks! gadzooks! most honorable sir, it cannot be true. You surely must deceive us. We shall all perish and our bones will whiten the plains without our shepherd, and our money will cease to flow towards us. We shall surely starve. We will be as an army without a leader! Consider, my dear good sir, consider and have mercy upon us, by the holy angels that guard you night and day, consider the people you have blessed in your efforts to uplift them, they will greatly mourn."

"Be still my faithful followers," replied Sir Fraser. "You know not what you are saying. I am through. I resign this day from the mighty seat which I have held. Cast about over the wide prairie, mountain or forest, and you will find some faithful designer to care for you as I have done in the past."

That very afternoon Sir Fraser bade farewell to the group of stalwart men in the government house and took his departure through the main thoroughfare of the city to the depot. Along this thoroughfare his followers gathered to obtain a parting glimpse of their leader and to offer him a farewell salute. Cheer after cheer burst forth as the carriage in which he was riding drove in a stately manner before them. All this tumult Sir Fraser met, pleasantly

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

bowing and acknowledging this farewell tribute to his honor. His mind had been fully made up for the "right about face" among his fellows, and he exhibited not the least sign of regret in this forsaking of his old life of grasping greed for gain and power over his fellows by means of a false lever.

Sir Fraser was received with open arms by Lalice and her husband in London. The former welcomed him fondly in greeting and was quite overcome with joy at his return to the new life conception. "You were lost but now you are found!" she exclaimed.

"This is Lord Vessamere, you will remember him? He is now my husband."

"Yes, yes, I remember him. Lord Vessamere, I congratulate you on having won the prize, and am most happy to meet you again. My words would be merely empty shells were I to simply say, I am delighted to meet your beautiful wife once more. My recollections of her were, of course, during her early girlhood life, but if you will pardon me for using the expression—my love for her and her beaming out grand soul has constantly become stronger from that day to this. Don't be alarmed, my lord, at my saying this. I became over-engrossed in my business affairs, and——."

A CALL—BACK TO THE GREAT HIGHWAY

"Yes, we know, Sir Fraser, but let that all pass."

"I must finish! I did not have the grace or good manners to correspond with my old time friends."

"We know you have been busy, and we forgive and forget that now. The joy of seeing you, and to feel assured of your accepting the diamond treasure is ample reward for me," replied Lanice.

"Please do not call me Sir Fraser. This prefix to my name has been bothering me of late, and I finally decided to request the king to relieve me of it."

"Has he consented?"

"Most surely. My cablegram was most emphatic in its demands. Here's his answer."

Westminster, London.

Sir Fraser,

Parliament Building,

Banks of the Great Mackenzie.

Your cablegram to hand. I hasten to reply. Although I cannot at this moment understand your motive, but believing that your judgment is at all times unerring, I hasten to comply with your wishes. I hereby revoke my order which conferred on you a knighthood.

(Sgd) GEORGE V.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Lanice rose, and with tears in her eyes, extended her hand to Fraser, saying: "Your sincerity is even deeper than I had hoped. I offer you most hearty congratulations for all these noble expressions of your soul."

Lord Vessamere was not slow in following his beautiful young wife in extending also to Fraser congratulations, and as he shook Fraser's hand, said:

"I have a very interesting story to tell you, as well as to Lanice. It will come as a great surprise and pleasure to both of you, I am sure. I have kept the secret secure within my bosom for a long time, until some opportune time should present itself for my revealing the same. I was beginning to think that it never would appear, and felt at a loss to know just what to do, but from the moment your telegram reached us, I knew that the time was near at hand."

Lanice was seated in a leather covered chair beside her husband.

"I trust that it is nothing really serious, Edward," she said, a faint expression of anxiety ruffling her naturally serene countenance.

"Indeed it is not, my dear, in fact I think that it is a very pleasant affair, yet I feel a slight timidity in telling my secret."

A CALL—BACK TO THE GREAT HIGHWAY

"Do you remember Mr. Cameron?" (addressing Fraser).

"I'll never forget him. He impressed me as being a remarkable man. His capacity for accomplishing feats in the engineering world was truly marvellous."

"Is it something about Mr. Cameron, Edward?" asked Lanice. "Do tell us, is he sick, has he met with an accident or something dreadful?"

"Quite the contrary, my dear."

"It was at the time of the building of the railroad bridge across the creek just below your father's ranch. The big dredge had been clearing the bed of the creek of boulders and gravel, in the line of the row of piles which were to be driven down. It was on toward the afternoon when the dredge had reached mid-stream. The monster shovel had deposited load after load into the scow in waiting, and the man in charge of the same was about to shove off down stream, when his spade struck on something which appeared to him quite different from an ordinary boulder. He scraped it clear of mud and sand and found it to be an old rusty iron box. This contained documents, letters, a brooch and various trinkets. Immediately after our marriage Mr. Cameron shipped this box to me, under seal, with a letter, in which he advised me of the finding and shipping of

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

the box. He said that I would know best what to do with it and its contents. He gave me the history of the finding, stating that he had opened same in the presence of a Mr. Johnson, and also stated that a certain young woman, a school teacher, knew personally the people whose names were contained on the documents which were in the box. I have the mysterious box in my safe and I shall bring it."

The box was brought in.

"Before I open this," said Lord Vessamere, "I must tell you of Cameron's belief as to its ownership and how he found out that it had been deposited in the river, and you can judge for yourself when the contents are examined. He says it was lost in the river years ago, when Lanice was but a tiny baby, by a man and his young wife, and has many absolute proofs of this. They were crossing the creek in a boat when they were capsized and drowned."

"Drowned!" exclaimed both Lanice and Fraser in one breath.

"That's what he says."

"And were the bodies found?"

"Never, my dear. You see, very few people were in the country at that time, and the bodies may have found their way to the big river and thence to the ocean."

A CALL—BACK TO THE GREAT HIGHWAY

"How very sad. Did father know of this?"

"Mr. Cameron says that he did, my dear."

"It is strange that he did not tell me of the accident."

"He did not want to disturb you with weird stories. He was good and kind to you always and very considerate for your happiness. There was a third party in the boat when it upset in the roaring waters. The river was unusually high that year, as the snow had melted very rapidly in the mountains, by reason of the chinooks, and Silver Gulch was a roaring torrent in its onward rush."

"A third party, did you say, Edward? Did he drown too?"

"No, my dear, Mr. Cameron tells me that the third party was rescued. She was just a tiny wee baby girl. She had been placed in a box, but before the angry waters had engulfed her, the box was hauled to shore by your father. He made desperate efforts to save the man and woman, but all in vain, they were beyond his reach, and the angry waters swallowed them up.

Fraser and Lanice sprang to their feet at the same time, their breaths coming and going in gasps by excitement.

"What are you saying, Edward?" said Lanice.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"I am trying to convey the knowledge that this little girl was you, my dear."

"Heavens above! Is it possible!" exclaimed Fraser.

Lanice took one or two steps forward in a groping manner, as if she were suddenly stricken blind, and fell to the floor. The two men lifted her tenderly and laid her on a nearby sofa, where Fraser applied what remedies he found at hand, while Vessamere ran here and there, calling servants to bring necessary restoratives. He was very much excited, the whole thing having been somewhat of a strain on himself; but finally the doctor arrived on the scene, much to everyone's relief.

The doctor was a quiet, methodical man, and soon had his patient in a conscious condition.

"What is it, doctor?" asked Lanice.

"Nothing serious," was the reply. "You have evidently received a nervous shock, but will be all right in a little while."

"Where is Edward?"

"Here, my dear," said her husband, who was seated nearby.

She sat up and looked about the room, and it was not long before she regained her strength and full consciousness, when the doctor retired.

A CALL—BACK TO THE GREAT HIGHWAY

"Did you say that I was rescued from a boat, and that I am not the daughter of——"

"Mr. Loraine?" continued her husband. "We know who you are full well. You are not a nameless waif."

"I feel quite overcome."

"You need not feel so, my dear."

"And you knew this all the time?"

"Of course, I did, but I did not want to upset you, for one thing, and then too, I was anxious to select the opportune moment to break the news to you; but I was beginning to think that I would just have to make one, when all of a sudden Fraser loomed into sight. As for myself, I was delighted, and felt that the change in your maiden name and your new parentage could not possibly harm you, if you but looked at the matter rightly. I shall allow Fraser to open the box, take out the long sealed treasures, peruse them and tell you of your true parentage."

"Are you quite sure that I am not dear old daddy's daughter?"

"Real sure, my dear, but he will have no heart-aches over the change. He was always good and kind to you and bestowed his love upon you as fervently as any natural father possibly could have done."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Indeed, I know. He showed me every attention and care, and I shall never forget his kindness, but I cannot quite understand why he did not tell me the true story."

"It is quite plain, my dear. He loved you as his own daughter, and wanted nothing to come between you and himself to take you away from him."

By this time Fraser had opened the box. He was standing as if rooted to the floor, dumbstricken, staring at its contents for a minute or more. The first thing that met his eye was the word or name "Fraser," then as he looked further he found a little brooch with the name "Lottie Fraser" engraved on it. He also found this name on the lid of a box and on one of the documents. Then he turned to Lanice and took her in his arms, looking down at her with an earnest and deep emotion.

"You are my brother's child," he said.

Lanice's arms stole round her uncle's neck and she wept silently. When she had composed herself, she and her uncle together examined the contents of the treasure box more fully.

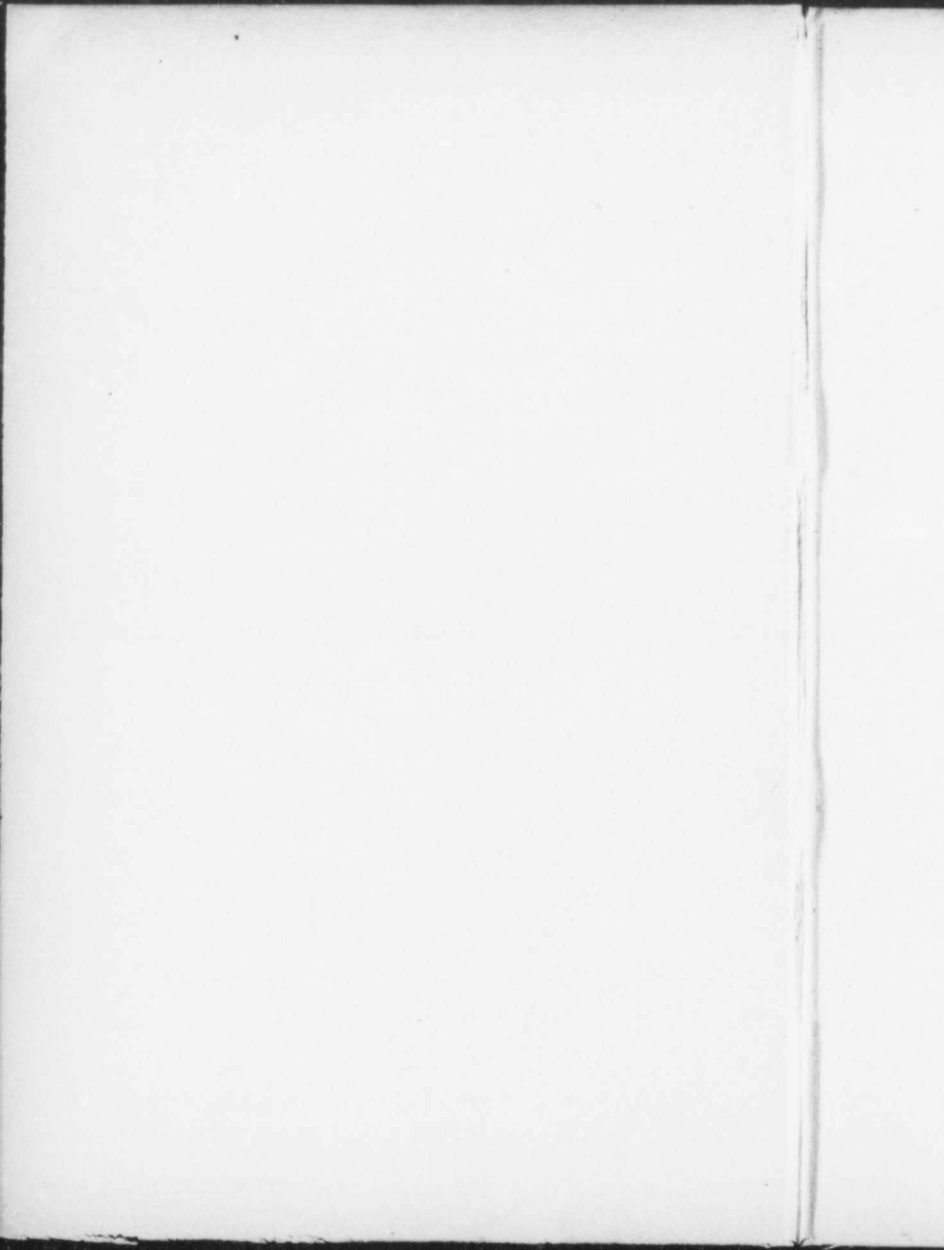
While they were thus engaged, a cablegram was brought to the door for Lanice, and on receiving it, she timidly yet quickly opened the envelope and read it in the presence of Fraser. It was from Baldy.

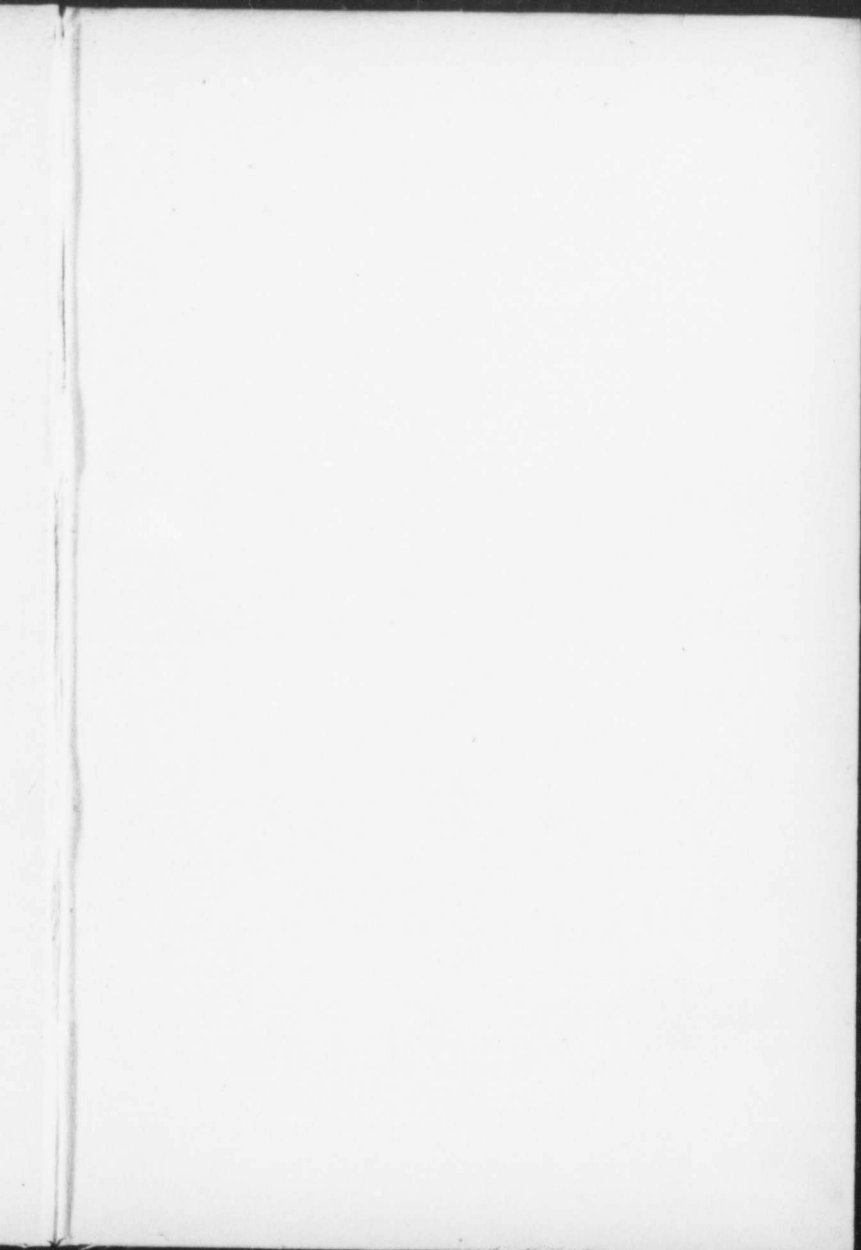
A CALL—BACK TO THE GREAT HIGHWAY

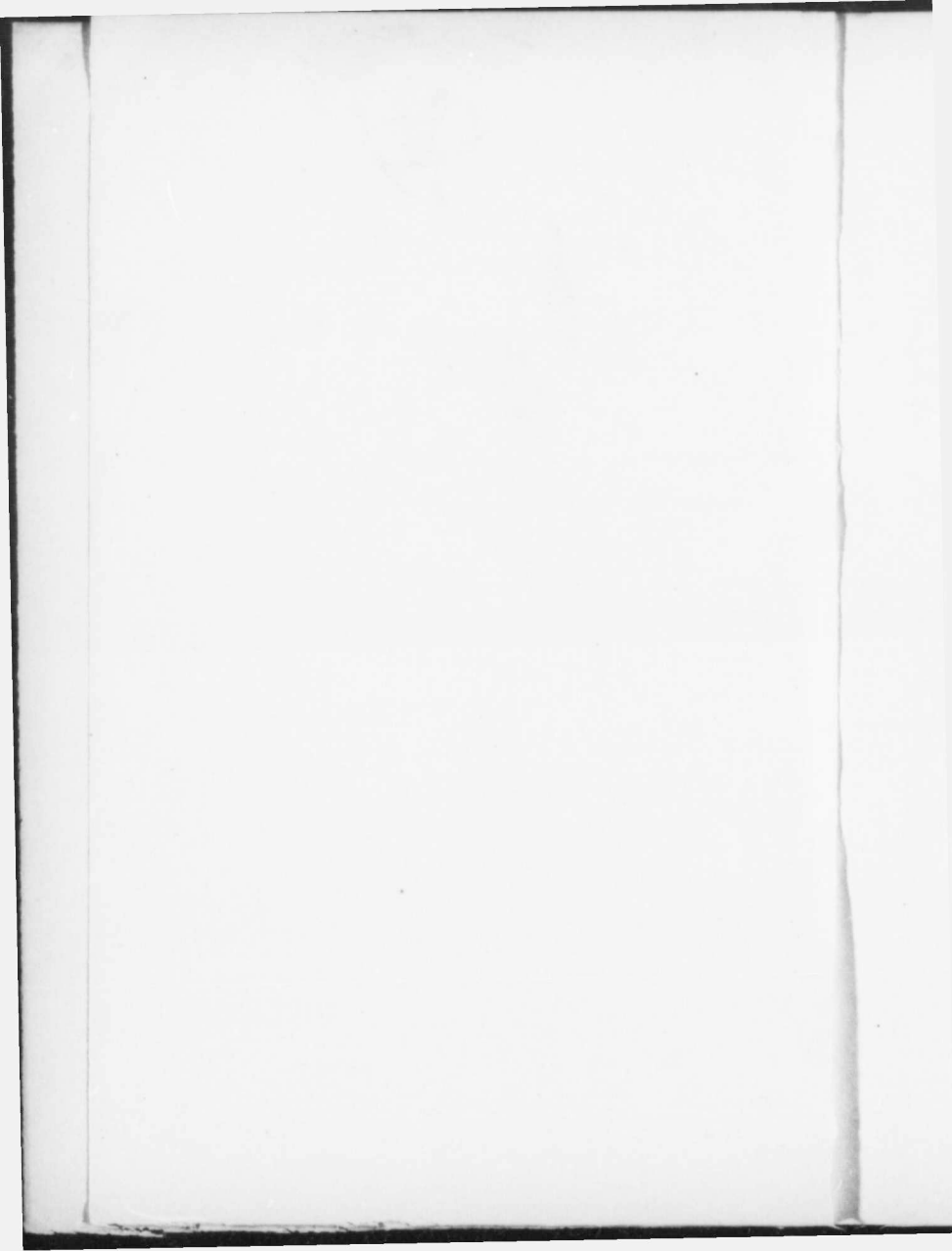
"This is the first under-ocean diamond treasure message. The fruit is growing in abundance in these big districts. Everybody over-joyed for your sake. There are one hundred personal individual churches already, including Fraser's and Loraine's, both named after you.

Fraser's commercial convention tabernacle built by himself and his men hold some big meetings. Different men of different nations are lending special features to the good will prevailing. Our great Cameron and Natoosca are the prince and princess in heart to the people in this wide country. They come over often to the conventions. I am sending this to please dear old dad. We are both longing to see you."

THE END.











" He halted his fair captive beside a little brook where he gave her a cup of water, as she sat on a log resting."— Page 244.

Confession of the Hills

By
AUSTIN WALFORD

Published by
The Middle West Publishing Company
Winnipeg, Canada

1915



CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| CHAPTER I.—Rescued and Adopted | 1 |
| CHAPTER II.—The Extension of the Iron Trail | 13 |
| CHAPTER III.—The Settling of the Strike | 20 |
| CHAPTER IV.—A Rush to Action | 29 |
| CHAPTER V.—A Race for the Alluring Gold | 39 |
| CHAPTER VI.—The Old Prospector and a Capitalist ... | 46 |
| CHAPTER VII.—A Loving Hand Intervenes | 55 |
| CHAPTER VIII.—The Tying of the Moose | 68 |
| CHAPTER IX.—Lanics at Glacier Canyon | 80 |
| CHAPTER X.—Two Men | 86 |
| CHAPTER XI.—Religion at Silver Gulch | 91 |
| CHAPTER XII.—Baldy Seeks Vengeance | 100 |
| CHAPTER XIII.—A Stranger in Placer Camp | 105 |
| CHAPTER XIV.—Lost in the Forest (Meditations) | 114 |
| CHAPTER XV.—Lord Vessamere's Pleading | 120 |
| CHAPTER XVI.—Captured By Slim | 126 |
| CHAPTER XVII.—Lord Vessamere Again | 139 |
| CHAPTER XVIII.—The Discovery | 150 |
| CHAPTER XIX.—Pushing Up the Canyon | 155 |
| CHAPTER XX.—Trouble in the Construction Camps ... | 171 |
| CHAPTER XXI.—Winning Out | 179 |
| CHAPTER XXII.—A Meeting With the Chief | 190 |
| CHAPTER XXIII.—The Indian Maid | 196 |
| CHAPTER XXIV.—Love or Class Distinction | 205 |
| CHAPTER XXV.—Baldy Again Appears | 210 |
| CHAPTER XXVI.—The Wooing of the Indian Maid ... | 220 |
| CHAPTER XXVII.—Kindred Spirits of a Great Prophet | 227 |
| CHAPTER XXVIII.—Lanice Is Held Up | 236 |
| CHAPTER XXIX.—An Awful Climax | 246 |
| CHAPTER XXX.—Slim Jim | 254 |
| CHAPTER XXXI.—At Last a Mighty Wave | 260 |
| CHAPTER XXXII.—The Diamond Treasure Revealed ... | 266 |
| CHAPTER XXXIII.—The Trail to the Hills | 273 |
| CHAPTER XXXIV.—The Confession | 281 |
| CHAPTER XXXV.—Down the Big River | 292 |
| CHAPTER XXXVI.—The Climax | 296 |
| CHAPTER XXXVII.—A Call — Back to the Great Highway | 301 |

E

ov
on
lor
up
hil
an

ye
we
slo
roc
cap
a f
old
foc

Confession of the Hills

CHAPTER I.

Rescued and Adopted

BYOND the outline of the lone prospector's cabin, a pioneer of the pioneers came trudging overland on the trail of the Cariboo, with his pack on his back. Many another venturesome man had long ago tramped in and dragged himself out again; up and down the creeks and canyons, valleys and hillsides they had labored. Scores of them had come and gone, but Loraine had remained.

He labored at the sluice box in the creek bed for years, and had made good while his claim was being worked on the level rock bed; but hand labor is slow, and as he worked back towards the bank, the rock dropped below the water level, and this handicapped him greatly. However, he had cleaned up a few thousand dollars. He lived sparingly in his old log hut, for his needs were few. Of summer food he had plenty; the mountain trout from the

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

stream; saskatoons from the hillsides, and vegetables from his garden, a little patch which he had dug up with his spade.

He cast covetous eyes on an open stretch of the fields back of his claim. Many a day had he taken a walk over this meadow of the north, viewing the luxuriant wild grass and flowers. At times it was bedecked in red, pink and blue colors. In the fall everything took on a deep brown, but to him it was beautiful at all seasons. Hundreds of acres lay clear and open, with occasional patches of trees, and fresh mountain streams here and there wending their way to the big river near by. He had grown to love and hanker after this beauty spot. Why not chuck the mining and go to ranching, he would ask himself. I could pasture hundreds of head of cattle here, and grow grain and hay in abundance. I could squat right here and apply for what I want as a homestead. I'll do it. There's no one here but an old miner now, but people will come, they will come, and I might as well make my choice before they begin to come, he thought.

So it came to pass that this lone prospector built a new house a little higher than his old one, with a porch on the front and a lean-to on the rear. In the front room he put two windows and with his own

RESCUED AND ADOPTED

hands fashioned somewhat fancy doors, that is, fancy for a cabin in the far new country.

This man had lived alone with his dog, old horse and his cattle for many years. He had not shaved his face since building his new house, and only occasionally cut his hair, so that when we find him he is rather a rough-looking rancher. As the new settlers came in he was nicknamed "Lorraine the Mane."

The old man never spoke of his ancestors or of his home ties in the east, south or wherever he hailed from, and but little was known of his earlier days in the settlement.

It was in the early fall of the year, after he had completed his new home, as he was returning from his garden one evening, he was startled by a shriek, as of a wild cat.

"What's that?" he exclaimed. He stopped and listened. He took off his hat and shaded his eyes from the sun, which was now lowering in the west. The sound had seemed to come from the direction of the canyon. Grasping a rope from a hook as he passed his cabin door, he struck off down the trail that led to the crossing of the river. The cry was growing fainter, but he followed its direction, and coming out on the bank of the creek, to his horror he discovered a man and woman in midstream,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

struggling beside an upturned boat. The current was tossing them round and round, now and then catching them in an eddy which twirled them, and finally the boat was shot out in this manner into midstream. He hastened along the bank with the rope in his hand, calling to them as he did so. They were still clinging to the boat with a deathlike grip. The man had one arm around the woman. She was growing weaker in the struggle and her arm fell to her side and soon both were struggling for their lives. Round and round they went, the spray and foam dashing against them as the waters rushed madly on to their destination.

The old man called to the man to have courage, to try and hold to the boat a little longer, that the river down below was smooth and quiet and that he could reach them there with his rope. They were rapidly becoming exhausted, however, and he could plainly see that their efforts were less frantic and that the swish and swirl of the angry and turbulent waters had been too strong to combat. In another moment a roaring, tossing wave swallowed them up and they arose no more. The boat, however, came bobbing up, tossing from wave to wave, but the man and woman had disappeared completely.

Lorraine stood staring with horror-stricken eyes

RESCUED AND ADOPTED

over the water, the rope still in his hand. He gazed down stream with a faint hope that he might discover the man or woman again, but the river of the mountains and valleys held its victims fast. He sat down after awhile, wiped his brow with his handkerchief, and fell to wondering who these people could have been. Lord! How it tossed them; never saw the like. The old stream is getting worse every year. Their boat was sure overloaded, or else they did not understand its management. They must have been newcomers. Perhaps they tried the crossing too high up. If I had only seen them before they started to cross all would have been well, he thought.

He then rose slowly, and with a heavy heart was about to wend his way back home, when there came floating near to him something resembling a box or log.

"A box!" he said, "a box! as sure as I'm alive." He rushed to the water's edge and after chasing it downstream for a short distance, he managed to throw his rope over it and haul it to land. It was sinking, for there was a good deal of water inside, but it still held right side up. He found it to contain blankets and clothing. Eagerly he lifted the fleecy shawl which concealed the contents from view, then stag-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

gered backwards. Recovering himself he once more stooped over the box and tenderly lifted out a bundle, which on examination proved to be a little baby girl, perhaps two years old, bright and rosy, and still sleeping peacefully. He held her at arms length first and then close to his bosom, for she still slept. Then he kissed the little thing.

Poor wee thing, he said, your father and mother have both gone, but I'll be both to you. You are safe. You're mine, mine, a comfort and a joy for me. Oh! God, how I thank Thee. You sure are a beautiful baby, he burst out, and not a soul will know, not a soul, by the heavens above I swear it. No one shall take you from me; you're my own little daughter. The settlers are all new; I have been here long before any of them; they will never know but she is my own child. So his thoughts ran on. He hastily grasped the box, swinging it over his shoulder, and with the little one in his other arm he headed towards his cabin. On the way the baby opened its eyes. He did not talk to her, but watched her intently. He was afraid she would feel strange, but she remained quiet for a while, gazing at the trees and rocks which they passed, and upon reaching the house she stared solemnly and steadily at the candle which the old man lighted.

RESCUED AND ADOPTED

It was not long, however, before the little thing commenced to call for her mother. Still she did not seem to be afraid. No doubt she had been used to strange sights for weeks and possibly was tired and hungry. Heating some milk, he offered it to the little girl, which to his joy and relief she supped down in big gulps. He then placed her comfortably on the bed, amidst pillows and blankets, and piled trinkets around her. For some time, however, she would not touch these. He then busied himself with his household duties, refraining from disturbing the baby, but little by little he talked to her and finally showed her pictures and drew her attention to the trinkets. She continued staring about, and at intervals would call out "Mama." The old man's eyes filled with tears and he would swallow a lump in his throat now and again, but he persevered in his endeavors to amuse her. Shall I tell her, mother will soon come?

No, I had better not mention her mother. She will soon forget, he decided.

It was long past midnight. The child refused to sleep, and now and again broke out into tears, but he would take her up, carry her round the room, showing her guns, tin pails, deer horns, and whatever he thought might amuse her and take her attention.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

A new spirit had filled his house this night and nothing seemed to look the same. He had swept the old floor, fixed up the hearth, dusted out the cupboard and hung up a picture or two on the wall. A daughter had come to him. Very soon he was sitting with the baby on his knee. He examined the different articles of clothing, but could find no trace or mark of any kind with which to identify her. Untying the little shoes, he laid them on the shelf by the clock, took off the tiny stockings, and there, by the light of the candle, the rough and unkempt man of the hills and the rosy-cheeked, pink-skinned baby girl played together. She would permit him now to hand her articles, and in her glee would throw them upon the floor for him to pick up and place beside her again.

About two o'clock in the morning, nature conquered, however, and she lay amidst pillows and trinkets, sleeping soundly.

In the days following, Loraine would take her to the fields, the creek, and out on his tramps among the hills. One thing was indeed fortunate—his summer's work was nearly completed and he could therefore remain at the house the better part of each and every day.

The little one he named Lanice. He had no hesi-

RESCUED AND ADOPTED

tancy in bestowing this name upon her. In loving memory he seemed to dwell upon it. He would fondly whisper it to her in the quiet of the evening in their snug little home amidst the hills, in calling her, or in presenting to her little articles in her happiness in the home. None of the neighbors knew positively why the old man had given the little girl this name, but they were all convinced in their minds that the name was that of the beloved wife of his early manhood, whose death, years ago, had caused him many a heartache and a long and protracted journey to the wilds of the big west.

Newcomers settled in the district and neighboring valleys, many of whom visited his homestead, but Loraine concealed the story of his finding of the baby with a jealous care. No one shall know—he would say. I cannot give her up! She is mine, my very own. Didn't I feed, clothe, love and care for her day and night?

Many a journey did Lanice make in later years to the first settlers' homes. In fact, it was these visits, and the diamond treasure that the little girl brought with her, that held quite a few to their homesteads. They would have pulled up stakes long ago but for this mountain girl. Lanice—the farmers would say in after years—gave us this farm, or at

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

least helped us to keep possession of it. The mother and father in many instances became discouraged in the struggle for existence, and the care and keeping of the little ones; but with Lanice's unexpected arrival at the door of the humble cabin with clothing and a basket of provisions, with her diamond treasure tucked away in the corner of her heart, the faithful parents would take fresh courage.

The training of the girl from her early childhood was accomplished by the patient perseverance of her guardian father. Day by day and year by year he devoted earnest attention and a loving hand to her education. He set apart one hour in the morning and one in the afternoon to her lessons. Having secured text-books on all the different subjects, he would explain as best he could the various lessons. Nothing would prevent him from attending to this daily teaching. He revealed to a neighbor the great desire of his heart, i.e., to educate his little girl. "My life has been no good to anyone. Mos'ly spent in diggin' and pickin' away up here in the mines; a regular dusty ol' moss-back, and you can bet your big wallet I'll see that Lanice will beat 'em all in learnin'—spellin', grammar and the whole caboodle of the books."

"Are you goin' to read the Bible to her too, old man?" asked the neighbor.

RESCUED AND ADOPTED

"Gosh darn my blue jeans—you bet I will, and do now every day. I'll give the girl a start in this world, if I never get started myself. I see it this way,—you know my collie dog Bruce? Well, see here, he is trained,—educated. He can heel a cow and drive them any place. He can bring them from the uphill country two miles away every night, and take them alone. Not a darn stray cow can even come around them diggin's. Well, Bruce is worth a thousand plunks, but that mongrel of Whitie's up the trail, who has had no trainin' or edercation at all, a nickel would be a heap too much for him. He is 'sure worse than nuthin' to heel cattle with. He jumps to the head or tail, and ten chances to one they go bellerin' off in the woods on the wrong track. So I says—edercation every time fer me. Now as the scripture says, train a child up in the right path or way in which it should go, and when it is old it won't leave it off, or somethin' like that, and I am in for following old Solomon in this per-tickler with my little girl."

The result of the old man's teaching brought Lanice well along in the fourth book at the age of twelve years, due to his training, coupled with the correspondence course that he had purchased for her on different occasions. There were two years

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

spent in Switzerland under the personal training of a teacher, whose deep devotional life made a lasting impression on Lanice, and we find her showing forth in her earnestness in abiding faith, single-handed, in the big north country with wonderful effect.

CHAPTER II.

The Extension of the Iron Trail

THE characters whom Lanice had to deal with were typical western ones of the years gone by; although not many years ago, either. The world moves quickly. In districts where the gun was quite in order not long since, the onward march of civilization has quickly turned them into good law-abiding places. The girl took the different men as she found them. In one case she had recourse to the gun herself. This forceful method may seem to the reader a very wrong plan for the girl to pursue, if she expected to win out by the "treasure method." She reasoned with herself that the desperado attempted to capture her and that she was compelled to make a defence with her gun. This plan, however, did not succeed with the man on the trail.

There was bubbling up within Lanice's soul a love for the people, men and women alike, as she determined in her mind. It is no new idea, that of assisting a sick miner, or trying to reform a desperado. The average man or woman will lend a helping

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

hand to these unfortunates, if such should cross their pathway, but Lanice sought out the pathway, and it was the original manner of this seeking out in mountain trail, creek bed path and hillside crooked leads, that led her into such by-way experiences.

The surveyors were stringing out their lines and setting the blue and white stakes on the creek bed. For days and months they had been working.

The man in charge called many times at the Loraine ranch. Lanice was now eighteen years of age, a girl of striking beauty, most supple and shapely in figure and altogether captivating to the eye, yet most unassuming and modest in demeanour. Cameron, the contractor, rode over this evening on purpose to see Lanice. He made pretence, however, of purchasing some milk and butter. When he arrived at the gate, Lanice was watering her little flower garden, and she was dressed in a new summer outfit.

"It is worth a heap to see those flowers and the beauteous one in their midst. I must say that this flower bed has helped me a great deal in building the railroad," said Cameron.

"I am glad that you like flowers," replied Lanice. "I tell father that I just love them."

THE EXTENSION OF THE IRON TRAIL

"But can you love a flower?"

"Why, of course. Can't you?"

"I can like it very much, but I'm afraid I can't love it. I reserve my love for higher and more beautiful objects."

"When will the rails reach our valley, Mr. Cameron?"

"Next month, I think; at least I expect we shall be here by that time."

"I am delighted to hear you say this. The railroad means much to me. I have lived here for many years without neighbors, and I see such vast stretches of land waiting and calling for the people, that it gives me great joy when I know that they will soon be occupied by industrious farmers."

"The Sundays are lonesome for me over at camp, and my visits here to you and Mr. Loraine afford me great pleasure."

"That just reminds me that we want you to come to dinner this evening. You must surely come. We will look for you."

"You shall not look in vain. I would come if I had to swim all the way, or make my way in a blizzard or a downpour of rain."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Lanice laughed outright.

"I cannot tell you how much I enjoy that laugh and your outbursts of gladness," said Cameron.

"How you talk; can't a girl laugh while she talks of flowers and woods? This whole hillside plateau, creek beds, and mountain air call me to laugh in my happiness among them. I love them all."

"Of course you do, and I would not have you feel differently towards them for the world."

"Do the people in New York and London love the hills and valleys as we love them?"

"Millions of them have never tried or never had an opportunity to try. You may be sure many would gladly make a venture were the way opened up for them."

"Do you think the people will come and partake of the good things of these wide prairies and rich valleys when your railway is complete, Mr. Cameron?"

"To be sure I do. They are waiting in thousands until we give the word that the road is finished."

"Oh! I am so glad. I have a land and a message. I know and feel it most sincerely, and with great force. This great land beyond called, and ever calls me. I feel that I am a part of it."

THE EXTENSION OF THE IRON TRAIL

"Well, Lanice, I am sure that you are. The settlers, miners and cowboys from the Columbia to the Laird say that you are part of it, and you ought to hear the railway dump men talk about you. Even Baldy has left off shooting strangers for targets, and the bottle has been broken. His gun hangs in the cabin untouched."

Have you heard this? Do you know I had done very little for that man, and talked with him on only a few occasions. He came here for cheese, bacon and bread several times, and I really thought he was a gentleman. I did not know who he was, or where he lived, or in fact anything much about his life until recently. He had not been to the house for some weeks, and I remarked to father that I felt sure Baldy must be sick or injured. One day as I was setting out to find him, father told me I had better not go far or pay too much attention to Baldy, that he was a man of iron and would get around all right. It was bright and early in the morning when I saddled Dan and set off up the trail to find this man. I carried some provisions, a bottle of medicine and a bandage cloth with me. At three o'clock, I reached his cabin, away up at the foot of Red Cliff. Whatever possessed him to take up his abode so far up the canyon I could not at the time make out. I knocked gently at the door, and he called out,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Who's there,—what do you want? You had better clear out, or I'll shoot you like a dog." I could hear his gun clicking, and I said, "It is me, Baldy." At this he said, "Come in, come in. I beg yer pardin a thousan' times." He was sitting on the edge of his bed and looked pale and haggard. I don't believe he could walk a step. He seemed to be greatly distressed and confused. "I'm sure glad to see you, but I ain't fit for you to talk to. Mebbe, though, I ain't so awful bad as you think," he said. I told him that I did not think he was bad, and that I did not care just then. It was to help him in his sickness that I had come, and that as he had not been to our ranch for so long a time, I thought there must be something wrong. Well, he just took out his handkerchief and wept like a child. He told me I was the only person he knew who cared whether he lived or died. He had been sick for two weeks. I visited him every third day, until he was able to get up and bestir himself. I found him most tender in his manner and actions.

Among the hills, valleys and canyons of the big Canadian frontier, it is very easy, indeed, for a man to vanish out of sight of one's neighbors, especially when they were so few and far between as they were when Lanice was growing into womanhood. Baldy would jump from one district or camp to an-

THE EXTENSION OF THE IRON TRAIL

other, and at certain periods would not show up at the Loraine ranch for months at a stretch. Again he would hike overland in the fall, perchance to a little cabin on the mountain slope, trapping beaver, mink and fox during the winter months, and it would be pretty well along towards spring before he would make his appearance, heading towards the post with his pack of furs.

CHAPTER III.

The Settling of the Strike

WHILE Lanice was attending to the physical needs of Baldy, she was also in deep concern about his moral or spiritual nature. She maintained it was quite as important to look after one's physical nature, even if one was not at death's immediate gateway, as it was to look after his moral nature. There are many men who cannot be reached at all in reason or moral makeup, except by means of the material road. Lanice was not oblivious to the fact, however, that a fever cooled, or broken arm healed, was not the all-important assuaging of the trials and tribulations of a down-and-out neighbor.

She had learned much about Baldy's past life during the few days she was ministering to him in his sickness: of his reputation among the settlers, of his dare-devil acts and his utter disregard for laws, creeds or government, and consequently she found it was almost impossible for him to obtain honest labor, even if he so desired. Of this Lanice

THE SETTLING OF THE STRIKE

was sure. Suspicious thoughts emanating from the hearts of many of the settlers and neighbors in the district set up a stone wall of refrigeration; a barrier almost insurmountable, if a way was not opened up for him by which he could penetrate the stone wall. Lanice recognized this most deeply in Baldy's case, and consequently set her heart and hands to work at the task of opening a way. Her first step was to convince the boss of the gang that Baldy would make a good railway construction man on the dump, on the trestle, or at the lever end of the fresno. When a sick man has recovered he is in immediate need of good nourishing food to build up his physical nature and restore it to strength and power. In Baldy's case the ways and means of securing this food was the crux. If he was unable to obtain it, his sickness might return speedily and then the last state of that man would be worse than the first. Through continued efforts, and many failures, Lanice finally obtained a promise from the boss to give Baldy a trial on the big gravel dump. She had also secured Baldy's consent to try,—“the hanged two-wheeled critter, or the blister-paw shovel if it took his right arm out by the roots”—as he put it.

The construction outfit was rapidly filling in the last gully before entering on the level plateau surrounding the Loraine homestead. The rock was

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

being blasted and levelled ahead, and Cameron was in eager expectancy to reach the level land beyond, where they could make faster progress. What little things, at times, lead a man to great achievements. True, this man, a mountain and stream conqueror, had in his mind big trestles, cuts, fills and the correct laying out of the same, but what was now uppermost in his mind in the completion of this particular section, was the joyous pleasure it would give to Lanice. She had looked forward to the day of the coming of the road to their valley, right to their door, with great hope. It would afford thousands of people a pathway to better things. They would come from the far ends of the earth to make their homes upon the land, and she would tell them of the treasure lore now being established here. Cameron was building for this girl of the mountains an iron trail. Her spirit had inspired him and drawn him onward in this tremendous undertaking.

On this particular day the one o'clock whistle had blown, and not a teamster had moved to hitch his team to a two-wheeler in the long line of fresnos. Big Mike came down on a rush to Cameron.

"They are all on strike. I swore some devil streaks at them and tore around, but not a man would budge an inch."

THE SETTLING OF THE STRIKE

"What do they want?"

"Devil a bit do I know. I was so mad and furious that I just left them in their tracks."

"Did you know that they were about to strike?"

"Never a word of it, only they've been complainin' several times lately about their bunks."

"Do you think they intend to ask for higher wages?"

"No, I don't think so. Come along with me, yer honor, or I'll beat them up pretty bad."

"Don't get excited, Mike; we will go over and see what we can do."

As they came up to the bunk houses where groups of men were assembled, Mike proceeded.

"You will never get a cent more wages on this side of the fiery place below. I'll work until midnight with the scrapers myself. And talk about the grub, there's not a hotel in America that feeds their people better than you scapegraces are fed."

"It's no' the grub nor pay we kick about, it's all 'e same bunks and blankets. And more, heap more, heap hard time all de time over us, top'f us all'e time. We gone told you 'bout dese tings long ago. We sleep all'e same ridge poles under our backs.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

No soft tings, no mattress. We no stan' dis ting no more nights."

"Why, no railroad camps have soft down quilts for their men to roll up in. Don't you ever imagine it. Fix up your bunks yourselves and get back there and go to work quick, or there will be something doing around this camp. You seem to want the whole earth padded with feathers for you."

"Mr. Cameron, we cannot afford to stop our work for such trifles. I would advise you to send out for more men and ship these gazoolers back over the ties," said Mike.

Days had passed, and the men did not move. Not a shovel was taken from off its hook, and Mike was threatening to shoot or hang the whole bunch, but the only satisfaction he could get from them was "try de ting on."

Several of the teamsters, who were willing to put up with the present condition of the bunks, hitched up their teams occasionally, and proceeded towards the dump. Their work was short-lived, however, for the men crowded around them in such forces that they carried them bodily back to the stables, stripped their horses of every stitch of harness and turned them loose on the range.

THE SETTLING OF THE STRIKE

Cameron was becoming nervous and restless. He had strolled out this afternoon and soon found himself on the trail to the Loraine homestead.

Lanice met him at the gate. "You look tired and worried," she said. Sympathy begets insight, and she had detected a sort of uneasy, anxious feeling in Cameron.

"To tell the truth, Lanice, this is the worst blow I have had during the summer."

"I know you engineers think out vast enterprises, and it may seem to you that a mountain girl can be of little service to you, but do just try me, please. I have helped many of the people out here, and you are not so very different from these folk."

"I will, Lanice, at this very moment, and be glad of your advice. To tell the truth, I never thought of you as being capable or big enough for the undertaking. I feel now that I have misjudged your ability in this regard, for I do believe you can help me."

"Of course I can."

"Well, then, our contract time is limited and we have not a moment to lose. I sent a runner to headquarters with regard to this strike, but they sent word back that I would have to settle the mat-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

ter myself and rush the contract to conclusion. Now, Mike is stubborn, and will not give an inch, and the men are just as bull-headed as he, so what is there to do?"

"What are the men striking for—more money, shorter hours or what?"

"None of these things, and we may be thankful for that. It is simply for better beds and some other measly ideas of theirs. Mike declares the beds are alright."

"Yes, I know, that's the way wars begin. First some fine trifling point and then it grows and bulges out its pompous sides, until it becomes a powerful weapon. National wars commence in the same manner, just from some petty, imaginary wrong or some suspected wounded dignity. Mind you, the real cause of these strifes do not originate or burst out by reason of these outward differences. Oh no! The original is far more deeply seated. It is away down at the very bottom of the heart of the man or men who are concerned in wielding more power.

"Now, Mr. Cameron, I feel that you conferred a great honor upon me when you said that you believed I could help you in this trial. I believe it to be a very serious matter, for if these men are not satisfied and started at their work soon, there is

THE SETTLING OF THE STRIKE

bound to spring up all sorts of trouble. I feel, with a most overwhelming force surging within me that I can win these men to the point of resuming the pick and shovel at least, and that is the all-important point just now."

"You bet your life it is, with me anyway," replied Cameron. "If I can't get those loafers to work on the dump pretty soon, there will be the d—— to pay by some land lubber."

"Mike and you have been hammering away at these men for some time now, and you say they are still in a very bad mood. Now I will try and see if I cannot sling a rope around that mood and trail it behind my cayouse over the hills, or perchance I can pet and caress it, but rest assured, I will capture it somehow. Now, I take up the contract under two conditions, and that is that Mike and yourself give me a free hand, and that you keep out of sight, here at the ranch, or away up the canyon somewhere if you like."

"But I can hardly keep my hands off the beggars!"

"It may be a trial within, but you must undergo it, and I must have it so, if we hope to win. I feel convinced of this. I have my plans already deeply laid, and am in heartfelt earnestness waiting to proceed. What do you say?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"How long a time will you require?"

"Oh, a week or ten days."

"But what will the red-headed Mike and I do in the meantime? We'll be tearing around like mad men before ten days are up."

"No you wont; you'll detect a faint outline of shovels, picks, fresnos, crowbars and horses crawling up and down the slope in one long continuous line, though perhaps in a vision, even before the sixth day is past, and you will take courage and rest as easily as if you were on a holiday in a prairie schooner."

"All right," said Cameron, springing to his feet. "Go ahead, the deed is done. The contract is signed, or at least sealed, for the starting up of the mighty railway line, and here is my hand."

Lanice extended her hand to the young engineer, and simply said, "Thank you, Mr. Cameron, you wont be sorry."

CHAPTER IV.

A Rush to Action

ACTING as if minutes were millions, Lanice proceeded immediately to the construction camp. She threaded her way in and out of the different tents and bunk houses, in search of the "boss" of the big scrapers. He was located in one of the stables amidst a bunch of teamsters, smoking, chewing tobacco and telling yarns. The big fellow slowly rose as he recognized Lanice and lifted his hat. "It is a great honor to see you down here at the stables, Miss Loraine. I thought you liked horses," he said.

"So I do."

"Well, you never call around to see our layout."

By this time some dozen of the teamsters were standing around Lanice and showed a curious interest in her.

"That is true. I certainly have not, but I have been so very busy. I am here now, though, and am glad to see your horses. How well they look,"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

she remarked as she strolled up and down the open space behind the big Clydesdales. "Which team can I have?"

"You, what do you want with a team?"

"I want to run a scraper. I notice that the west end of the dump over the big gully is nearly ready for the ties and I want to complete this myself, and when you men and Cameron are ready to start up, you can string the ties, and then the track fellows can lay the rails and the train will be in the valley in a jiffy."

"Do you mean business?"

"Never more sincere in my life."

"All right, boys, hitch up the grays, and I will see how Miss Loraine gets along. The horses need exercise anyway. Do you think you can handle a team?"

"What the d—— do you ask that girl that for?" called out a little Irishman. "If you'd seen her steer the buckin' broncho up the trail t'other day, ye'd be makin' no breaks the loike of that, boss. Holy smoke, I thought the critter would break her neck. But never a bit of it. She yanked him round and round like a merry-go-round and then set the spurs to his side. Then she sent him out on the

A RUSH TO ACTION

open and rode him till the beast got 'nough of it."

Lanice worked till six o'clock that day. Up and down the embankment she labored with the big grays. At first it was quite a hard lift for her to dump the scraper, but there are tricks in all trades, and she soon learned this one. When she drove the grays up to the stable door in the evening, it seemed as if there were a hundred curious men waiting to see her.

"Well, you'se all done out I'll bet," said the Irishman who had spoken in the morning.

"Not a bit of it. I got along fine," she said, as she proceeded to put the horses in the stable.

"There's lots of stable boys here, Miss Loraine. Here, you land lubbers, grab a'hold here. This girl has run a scraper all day and she is not going to feed and unharness her team." Three or four men soon attended to the horses, while Lanice walked up the path to the eating house with the men. The cook had set no place for her, or made any extra preparation, for he had expected that she would go right on over to the ranch. "You eat here?" he said in astonishment. "Of course, I am going to eat here," she said laughingly. "What a question. When one has worked hard all day on

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

the tip handle ends of a scraper, don't you think one wants to eat?"

"Yes, sure, I am awful glad to have yer, but——"

"Never mind, Sam, I just want to eat what the men eat. You know I am a common railroad laborer now."

The cook gave Lanice a chair at the head of the best table in the big shack, and the girl and the men of the big camp ate their first meal together. They talked of the mountains, the valleys, the vast prairies and even the fish; that is, the big fish story. Their new boarder proved so interesting and pleasant an entertainer, that the dishes had been cleared away, the candles and lamps lighted, before there was any lull in the conversation.

Along towards ten o'clock some of the men began straggling off to their bunks. The boss at this stage asked Lanice if she was afraid to go home alone. She told him that she was not going home. That she was working out and boarding at the camp and that she wanted a bed there too. But she was told there were no other women there. "That doesn't matter to me; there are lots of good men and they are just as good as women. Can't you fix me up a little tent and an old bunk of some kind?"

A RUSH TO ACTION

"Sure we can, if you want to stay."

"Want to stay! Of course I do. I can't afford to hike away over to the ranch every night, and back at seven in the morning."

During the afternoon of Lanice's first day with the scraper, Baldy drifted into camp, in search of work. He thought he had missed calculation in the days of the week, for as he came in view of the dump the whole thing seemed to be deserted.

"What's trump?" A teamster was leaning against the stable door, and catching the remark replied: "Trump—how, what d'ye mean?"

"What's the day? Sunday?"

"Nothin' doin'."

"I can see that with my own blitherin' eyes, can't I?"

"Strike, yer nibs. Everybody's struck but one man. No, she's a girl. She's driving the big grays on a scraper. See her over there on the dump."

Baldy stepped to one side of the stable, and he could see Lanice working away.

"And who's the girl?"

"Miss Loraine."

"Miss Loraine!" gasped Baldy. "What's got into her head?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Just work, s'far as I know. Says she's goin' to finish the grade west of the big trestle. That's all I can tell you."

Baldy remained loafing round the camp until dark, but out of sight of Lanice. The cook gave him a hand-out of bacon and bannock, and he strolled out behind the stable alone. He could not make out Lanice's purpose in working in this manner. At ten o'clock in the evening he crept cautiously up to the eating house and peeked through a slit in the tent, from which point he could see Lanice. At that moment she was telling the "boss" that she was going to sleep at the camp that night. "The little dare-devil," he said to himself. "Who knows what kind of toughs there may be amongst these men. Well, if I can't work, I can shoot, and if any mother's son of them makes the faintest move or a sneak on this girl, some good cold lead will find him."

So Baldy lay all night within a few yards of Lanice's tent, never so much as sleeping a wink. No one molested the girl in her slumber in the dark, however, and a little before daylight Baldy hid himself away in some quiet nook and slept soundly during the day.

Every night, and all night, while Lanice occupied

A RUSH TO ACTION

the little tent among these men, Baldy kept a vigilant watch over her. He had been misused and hardly dealt with on many a day and night by his fellow man, and he felt that some man might, in the dead of the night, attempt to steal in on the beautiful Lanice, the only one in the world who had shown any good-will towards him.

From day to day Lanice labored, eating her meals with the men and sleeping in her little tent alone at nights. During the first day or two of her labors she had no company or close-up onlookers with her on the grade. The men contented themselves by peeking round the corner of the stable. On the third day, however, a dozen or so strolled over to the big gravel slope where she held forth with the grays and the scraper.

"You'se good stuff on a grade," remarked one of the men, as she dumped the scraper right beside where they had set themselves down. "How d'you make it?"

"Fine," remarked Lanice. "I think this is the most interesting work I have engaged in for a long time. You know, I am building a big railway. Thousands of people will ride over this very spot, and I am pretty proud at having a hand in it."

"Have a smoke?" As he said this, Pat offered

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Lanice a corncob. "Begorra, every hobo grader smokes, ye know." She laughed outright.

"That is true, Pat, but I shall have to wait a while. I might scare these grays into hysterics if I started to smoke." As she spoke, she started up the team and plodded away, up and down the embankment. Finally one of the men took hold of the scraper and filled and dumped it, while she drove the team. In a little while half a dozen men were levelling down the grade with shovels, and all these worked till six o'clock. The next day, many more men came over to help the girl of the gravel trail and to keep her company.

"Sure as the old hills of Scotland are green we'll have this thing ready for the ties before we know it, if we keep on," remarked Sandy, one of the men.

In the evening the house was crowded with good natured men. Lanice, with her enthusiasm, good will and sweet songs, gave them an insight of a deeper and happier life. The crowd was beginning to catch the spirit and fervor of the mighty little heart. They were beginning to realize that there was more in labor than the mere elbow and wrist movement. The happy spirit of the little girl as she labored so patiently at the almost insurmountable hill of gravel and earthen material, and her glad-

A RUSH TO ACTION

ness of heart at the meal table in the evening conversations, were breaking in upon these men with wondrous power. As they were about to reach for their bacon and bannock at the supper table on the fifth day of her sojourn with them, she said: "I want to say a word before we commence to eat tonight, men. Just set down your bannock a minute, please. I am glad I am able to say now that I am a railway builder. The occupation gives a girl, and I am sure a man, too, an appetite like a horse, and as for a sleeping tonic, it is a world beater. Then last, but not least, it gives a man a contented mind. These are three things which the millionaire would pay a bushel of gold to possess, and I feel tonight like giving thanks to the Father above for these blessings and the good things we have to eat." At this, she pronounced a short blessing, while every man reverently bowed his head and waited in silence.

The next day at noon Lanice proposed to the men that they all turn in and complete the grade to the gully without saying a word to Cameron or Mike, and not a dissenting voice was heard as they followed the girl to the embankment and set themselves to work as if nothing had happened.

In the meantime, Cameron had word that there

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

was a breaking up of the sullen temper of the camp, and a lifting of the ugly mood. While the men were busy out on the dump, he got Mike and a few men who were on the gravel grade, to help him repair the unsatisfactory bunks. He also added a new bill of fare to the table. When the gang came home to supper that night, they ate their meal with zest, and a jolly good spirit seemed to prevail amongst them, Lanice aiding in the programme with her wit and good humor.

In the morning, as if by common consent, all hands fell to, in their accustomed places. All the harsh feelings and former difficulties seemed forgotten. The strike was ended.

CHAPTER V.

A Race for the Alluring Gold

THE gravel bed attracted Fraser to the moving point; and bright and early one beautiful sunlit morning in midsummer, he lost no time in his preparations for a trailer up the valley. Three of the best ponies were selected for the pack train, and four other sure-footed and steady mountain climbers for the saddle. Fraser rode a chestnut, while his men rode a black prancing steed each. The trail lay for the first few miles in and out among the pine trees of the forest, and later, up hill and down valley to the more open plains. Now and then they crossed a creek which coursed its way through the draws or narrow canyons. On and on they travelled, keeping pretty close to one another, with the exception of Pete, who would now and then lag a half mile behind in a berry patch, in order to feast himself on the luscious, juicy fruit of the north land. Fraser's horse kept continually in the lead, setting a good hard pace for his followers, from the breaking of camp in the

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

morning, till bacon and coffee time at twelve. There was a determination most striking in both man and horse. His faithful and fleet animal seemed to imbibe the spirit of the man as onward they journeyed from day to day.

Towards the close of the fourth day they drew near the slope leading up the divide. The men and horses were fagging under the constant strain, and a halt was therefore ordered for the night. A camp fire was lit in a jiffy and the little four-legged collapsible stove was placed in position for the frying or roasting of meat. When Fraser was first told of this four-legged stove used for the pack train, it struck him very strangely that fellows would carry such a bulky thing, as he imagined it, in their saddles, merely to fry grouse or fish on. However, after using this article for many years in his tramps over hill and plain, he became charmed, and very well acquainted with it. The stove consisted of four steel rods, pointed, a quarter of an inch thick and two feet long. To these four rods was attached a coarse wire netting, a foot square. In setting up this stove for operation, Pete was an adept, and by an actual stop watch time limit he could lift the stove from the saddle, erect it, and place a half dozen slices of bacon on the grate, in position for frying, in ten seconds. He would first unfold the

A RACE FOR THE ALLURING GOLD

stove, which was connected by loose joints at the upper ends. Then he would stick the four legs in the ground astride the fire, and behold, it was ready for operation. This stove, they say, is an invention brought out by the man who invented the dirigible balloon. It holds the bacon, fish, flour or cake in mid-air, but depends on the steel legs for support rather than the gas bag, as does the dirigible. This particular pattern of stove was not used by the original traders and trappers of the north land, for it was not invented until long after their day in the field. They used a pointed stick, which was a crude and sometimes dirty method. It cooked the meat very unevenly, and on not a few occasions the meat would be dropped bodily into the fire from off the stick, to become covered with ashes and charred wood. The advantages of this magnificent steel range for the mountain trail, Pete says, are legion. He sells these stoves at Fraser's mill store to hundreds of prospectors who trek their way up the valley to the hills beyond, on their summer hike in search of the yellow gold. "Buy a stove, buy a stove. Luck dogs your heels if you pack a Fraser stove. You will never strike it rich without a stove. You will eat better, sleep better and grow fatter, for it fries your bacon, broils the grouse or fish just right. It bakes your dough-cake, keeps it

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

up out of the dirt and is a regular howler on the coffee pot. It never kicks up in the wind, and the damper can be shut up or opened in a jiffy," is Pete's song.

But enough of the stove. The four men of the open air and mountain path are well up the slope of the divide, Fraser urging his men with his steady plunging march to a nerve and body-racking ride on this the last day before their journey's end. His mission, or more properly speaking, his harsh determination to squelch all before him, led him with an unrelenting stride forward. He was on an errand to his fellows.

Different motives lead men, with a zeal equally strenuous, in their endeavors to accomplish the particular aim set before them.

Pete and his leader were discussing their plans quietly, as they made their advance through the woods and along the zigzag path of the lone travelers. "Whatever you do, Pete, don't get excited and pull that gun of yours," said Fraser. "You are very often too ready with that instrument, and it might lead us into heaps of trouble. Better go slow along that line. We want to make a peaceable capture, if possible. Those suckers are sure in search of claims, or that is how we figure it out, and we must

A RACE FOR THE ALLURING GOLD

roust them somehow and get possession of that creek bed. If we can't scare them, then we must buy them off as a last resort, or what's better, we can tie them up to a tree."

"You need not worry about my old cannon, Fraser, it never goes off by spontaneous combustion; but when it does go, this alligator scaled finger of mine pulls the trigger, you bet."

"Just as you see best, Pete, but don't be too sure that you are proof against any and all prospectors. These land lubbers may surprise you."

As the line of seven horses wound along the curved trail of the hillside towards the end of their journey, Pete began to show signs of a new alertness and suggested to Fraser that he should take the lead. "You will be safer," he said, "and besides, I know this last lap of the road much better than you do. We must feel our way now more cautiously."

"How about camping?" said Fraser.

"Not yet, we are four miles out and must at least reach Lone Tree Creek before making a halt."

The man, his manager Pete, and the two helpers rode steadily and silently for some distance. Fraser, an indomitable man of the mines, had a heart of iron and a will unbreakable. He was grasping in

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

the extreme in his desire for gold and allowed nothing to stand in his way, not even the life of a man, towards the gathering and accumulating of his wealth. Another bold distinction between some and Fraser's aim in their journey, which it seems befitting just at this point to mention, shows that certain men pushed upward and onward with a burning zeal in their hearts to help a brother man and show forth some good will to him as soon as they could reach him, while others had a zeal fully as earnest in their hearts, to undo their brother man, and if necessary, strike him down as soon as they would reach him.

It was almost midnight when they struck camp. No fire was kindled and not even a match lighted. Conversations were carried on in whispered mumbles. The stove and the coffee pot were idle, but in their absence was brought forth cheese, crackers and cold water. Each man rolled himself quietly up in his blanket after the meal and slept as best he could.

At the first streaks of dawn, Fraser and Pete struck out on foot together, wending their way over rocks and among bushes until they were in full view of a gravel bed in the creek bottom, which lay just ahead of them.

A RACE FOR THE ALLURING GOLD

They crept behind a log and waited patiently for some time. Presently two men appeared from up the creek carrying a shovel and a dinner pail apiece, and immediately commenced digging.

CHAPTER VI

The Old Prospector and a Capitalist

THE first hole was very close to the water, and after digging a few holes two or three feet deep, they paced thirty steps farther back and commenced panning and examining each pan intently. Thus, they gradually worked up stream until they had covered a half mile of territory in this casual examination. Pete and Fraser in the meantime kept opposite them on the bench above, yet hidden from view by the bushes.

Suddenly the old prospector in the red shirt stopped, bent over his pan, threw up his hat and called out: "I've struck it! I knew I c'd find it, for I struck it before in this very same flat."

Both the old man and the prospector with him seemed much excited over the discovery. They very quickly set their stakes up and down the creek bed covering this gravel bar; after which they sat down to eat their lunch, while the two men in the bushes patiently waited.

THE OLD PROSPECTOR AND A CAPITALIST

"This is the place," Fraser whispered to Pete. "That is old man Dromore as sure as you are alive. He has piloted that Harvard fellow in here to sell him this whole bar. By the holy smoke there is something good here."

"I told you the old man would hit for this creek."

"Yes, you did, Pete, and a good prophet you are too. This is the spot he has been blowing about all right, but I never took much stock in it till I heard that Harvard fellow was coming up."

He told me once there were millions up here somewhere. I said: Of course there is, old man, and millions at the South Pole, but what good will it do us. But up till that night the Indian got drunk and talked so freely about this district, I never thought there was much in it. He told us how that Dromore carried nuggets the size of marbles, but no one would track him in. We have acted on the tip now, so let us work the thing to a finish.

"You say that the old man has not registered any of these claims?"

"He has not. He has tried to register a score already all over the country, and the office will not take any more from him until he makes good on some definite claim. So he has gobbled this Har-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

vard chap and now he thinks he has a show down. And it looks as if he sure had the real stuff all right, the way he swings his hat. That is a sure sign from old Dromore every time, and don't you forget it."

"But do you think that is the stranger we met at the hotel?"

"The very same. I would know him in Jerusalem. Tally up his shoes, his manner of holding a pipe, his cap, his moustache, all pan out exactly. He is a clean-cut fellow, and I imagine no slouch at hustling, so it's up to us to use our keenest wits, and then some, if we expect to win out in this rush for the placer mine scheme."

"We have got to nab this creek, Pete, even if we string these muckrakers to a tree to hold them from the register office. All fair play, remember; strictly within the law. Just a question of beating them to it."

"That's right, I'm following you, but it's Dromore's habit to hit the trail with lightning speed when once he has staked a claim, and if ever Dad Harvard had to hustle, he will on this trip, to keep up with the old prospector."

The two claim jumpers and gold grabbers waited a few minutes till Dromore and his man were com-

THE OLD PROSPECTOR AND A CAPITALIST

pletely out of sight, and then rushed down to the claim. It did not take them long to examine the gravel. "Four dollars to the pan, as sure as I'm alive," exclaimed Pete.

"I believe it, the very best we've ever struck yet. Here, you stake our four claims and do it awful quick, while I run back and call Egan and Jeff."

At the same moment Egan and Jeff were in conversation with Dromore and the Harvard man. They had become tired of watching around the camp, and had taken a little stroll to explore the surrounding country. While crossing a patch of open ground the old prospector spied them, and on coming closer said: "What d'ye say is yer game?"

"We have no game, no grouse, no nothings, see," said Jeff, and he held open his coat for inspection.

"What are you canny fellows doing in here?"

"We only shoot grouse, sure ting."

"Where d'ye ken are ye horses?"

"How do you know we have horses? Me see no horses."

"I can tell ye. I haven't been in here twenty year, not to know whether a man has hosses. Show me the hosses."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Jest find them yerself, if youse so smart. Me see no horses. What you want to know for?"

"A little pet idea of mine."

At this point Egan and Jeff made a bolt for the bush and Dromore and the Harvard man were left alone.

"Something suspicious about them men. I can feel it in my auld spine."

"What makes you think so?" replied the Harvard man. "Just a little nervous, I guess, in meeting the two darn spies so sudden."

"I assure you they look innocent and harmful. Shall we proceed on our journey?"

Do you really think they would shoot? You seem excited; shall we go on?

"We will make our tracks queek, o'er stane and rocks with haste, you bet. If we reach that registry office ahead of them men, we can ay be sure and looky. It 'pears to me that these laddies have trailed us, with all our sneakin' off in the dark."

Dromore, however, lost no time in crying over spilt milk, they were even now well on their way to the registry office.

Egan and Jeff had made a quick search for the

THE OLD PROSPECTOR AND A CAPITALIST

gravel bar and were soon telling Fraser and Pete of their encounter with the two men. "I believe old red shirt smells a rat," exclaimed Jeff, "for he looked hard and 'spicious at us."

"Why didn't you keep under cover or close to your horses, you mumps? We may be in for a devil of a chase now for your fool actions."

"Me see, but me no help it. But me catch ol' red shirt, me hold him."

"All right, Jeff. Now see here, you and Egan have got to catch those fellows and pretend to rob them. Take every dollar you can find and tie old red shirt to a tree or break a leg. You must delay them two days somehow, while Pete and I beat them to the office. D'ye understand? Steal their grub, or do something to delay them. The trail is rough and they will make as fast time as we will with the horses. We will take all the horses with us over the divide, and now you hike after your game."

Fraser provided Jeff and Egan with food in plenty for six days, and they were off.

We will not follow these men in their desperate undertaking. Suffice it to say that Dromore and the man from Harvard lost out in this rush. They

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

came wearily in to the land office three days late. They were nearly famished and their clothes were hanging in tatters on them. The old battered prospector presented a sorry spectacle at the land office wicket, when he was told that these claims had been filed on two days prior to that by some other men.

"I told you so," he said, and sank into a chair limp and completely dejected.

The man from Harvard, however, laughed good-naturedly and assured Dromore that he rather enjoyed the excitement and dangers in the rush for gold claims, even if they had lost out in this one particular claim. "We should have taken the other trail along the foothills," he said to Dromore, "and thus thrown those gentlemen off the scent."

"If I had carried my gun this trip, I would have thrown them off the scent all right, and don't you forget it."

"I'm glad you did not have it with you, old man."

"Maybe so, but the next time I'm going to carry it. See if I don't."

"Not if you stay with me, and I presume you are going to live up to your contract and find me a claim?"

THE OLD PROSPECTOR AND A CAPITALIST

"You bet your bottom dollar I am. I'm no easy quitter, but I am tired."

"The same here, old man, and I like to hear you talk that way. Don't you worry. This searching for gold is only becoming interesting to me. Yet again, this rush for the filing office shows that there is gold in the district. Remember, Dromore, I believe in you, and more so now that you have showed me the pure stuff."

The man from Harvard had become roused. He had come out from New York some six weeks ago on a tour of inspection in this north land, directing his energies towards picking up a bargain in lands or placer mines. Hearing of the rich country around Fraser's mill, he secured passage on the pack train which slowly conveyed him to this hinterland, beyond the fringe of the settlement bordering the railway.

His foremost acquaintance to whom he broached his purpose was Dromore. The old man was exhibiting his samples of gold to the mill hands as professor Harvard was leisurely taking a walk among the big lumber piles.

The professor was in no hurry, a noble characteristic with him; yet he was keen and eager to learn

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

of the resources of this district. The two men were soon poring over maps together and tracing out minutely long trails which Dromore had marked in red ink.

After their failure to file on the claim ahead of Fraser and his men, the Harvard man became enthusiasm itself over these placer mines and creek beds. He had seen with his own eyes the gold nuggets taken out of the claim, and this had imbued him with a desire to become possessed of one of the magnetic luring things. He reasoned that Fraser and his associates must have known that the ground was rich or they would not have followed the old man so tenaciously from day to day. He had learned that Dromore had been shadowed day and night for two months, and not a trail or a foot-path had he trod but that the indomitable Fraser knew every step he had taken and every pan of gravel that he had examined. Labor and sacrifices for gold!

CHAPTER VII.

A Loving Hand Intervenes

THE dejected and discouraged prospector hid himself away in the lone cabin which he called his home, near the sawdust dump of the mill, immediately after his failure to file on the claim. The harshness of Fraser, and his utter disrespect for the feelings of others in this matter, had weighed heavily on the old man, and the world seemed very cold and desolate to him.

He had told the man from Harvard that he could direct him to a gravel bar that held millions, that he had discovered it months ago and had examined it very carefully, and he was only waiting for an opportunity to secure the claims, also the ways and means to finance the dredging of the gravel.

Dromore, as is the case with many an old prospector, had been from year to year in search of the yellow metal among the hills and had on more than one occasion filed on a seemingly good claim; but none had brought him any money. However, on

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

examination of the present location, it showed him much wealth. Professor Harvard, after having pronounced it rich in the extreme, had assured the old man he would immediately proceed to operate a dredge on the claim, that everything looked favorable towards a small fortune for him. Dromore beheld the visions of these good things fade away before his eyes, through the trickery, greed and jugglery of his neighbor, so suddenly, that he was stricken down with a nervous collapse and a general drooping of spirits.

The week after Dromore had taken to his bed, Lanice had ridden over to Fraser's mill to explore her fields of labor, and visit the families who had sickness and trouble in their homes. At the first home she visited she was told of the serious illness of the old prospector, and of the part which Fraser had played in the rush for the placer claims.

Within a few minutes after the time of this visit, Lanice was in the cabin of the prospector. He was alone, and had not eaten anything for two days, nor had he attempted to assist himself in securing the aid of the neighbors.

"I just learned that you were sick, Mr. Dromore," said the girl, "and I have come to help you."

"There seems no use in trying, my dear Miss Lo-

A LOVING HAND INTERVENES

raine. You have helped many poor souls and led them in faith and hope, but I'm afraid my old body is long past healing, and that me auld bones won't stan' the strain much longer. There are mony kinds of sickness, don't you find?"

"Yes, I do, indeed, and I believe that I know how to treat a good many of them."

She immediately set to work to prepare some soup for her patient, and to make him more comfortable in many little ways. After devoting a few minutes to this task, she told the old man that she would run over and get Mr. Symonds to wait on him during the day, while she would search for the source of these germs that had so suddenly pounced in upon him.

She directed her footsteps with all haste to the mill, to the office of Mr. Fraser, its manager and director. She was immediately admitted by the office boy, who had a small desk in an outer room, into the presence of the mill owner. There were some half dozen men waiting in this outer room at the moment to see Fraser, but on the boy's return from the private office, she was told that Mr. Fraser wished to see her right away. He was seated before a massive table made of fir boards, which was loaded with papers and books. His stenographer

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

was busily receiving dictation as Lanice entered, and he immediately dismissed him, rose, bowed and addressed Miss Loraine most pleasantly.

"I am delighted to see and serve you. I am indeed pleased to see you looking so beautifully,—but I need not express myself in such commonplace terms as to your appearance, for I am sure you are most beautiful always, Miss Loraine."

Fraser had devoted his time and energies so closely, and his every effort towards the massing of great wealth, that at times his manner was profusely extravagant towards Lanice. This may be accounted for, however, to some extent by the fact that he was at all times profoundly impressed with her personality and her unbounded zeal and faith in the people and the country. He had a wonderful admiration for this girl, not only for her loving and tender manner towards all who came in contact with her, but also for the enthusiasm and energy with which she was endowed in her untiring and constant efforts for the people's welfare. He would repeatedly say to his manager, "If I had a score of men with such zeal, with such a magnetic dynamo, and with such a no-holding-back will and energy, I could conquer the world of finance."

Lanice greeted the outburst of the mill owner

A LOVING HAND INTERVENES

with a smile, and said: "You over-estimate my appearance, Mr. Fraser, but I thank you all the same, most heartily. They say womankind is vain and that a little flattery now and then is good for them."

"But I protest," he replied. "I do not wish you to think that I intended flattering you."

"I appreciate your kindness at all times and your best wishes, much more than I can express to you. I am glad to remember the great favors you have shown to sick people whom I have asked you to assist. In rendering this assistance I realize that you cherish at least some faint respect or good will towards me and my work."

"Towards you, Miss Loraine, every time—I admit it frankly. Not to the work. Other people's lives do not interest me in such a heart full of love fashion as they do you. And yet, I do not say that my manner of life is right or that it is the ideal life by any means, but my business engrosses me, you know."

"How much is this mill and these acres of lumber worth? Pardon me for asking this question, but I was just wondering as I walked along through them."

"I shall be delighted to tell you, if you will let me

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

figure for a minute. . . . The lumber is worth five hundred thousand and the mill one hundred thousand," he replied, after a minute's silence.

"What an enormous amount of wealth they represent! The company is prospering and still adding to this wealth, I suppose?"

"Most certainly it is; our dividends will actually run up to twenty per cent. this present year, that is, if nothing unforeseen happens. These profits are from lumber interests alone. Aside from this industry, we have the placer mines in which our dredges are now operating, and I hope to make a profit out of these of at least one million, for Pete tells me that the bed rock in the camp over which he is in charge is just alive with gold nuggets. Pete and I secured these claims together, by the aid of some old miners specially selected in the prospecting tour. I'm very much taken with the immense possibilities of these gold claims. The industry is a most profitable one as well as being enticing, to a business man. But you will not be interested in my preaching this gold lore, Miss Loraine, for I feel that your heart is endeared to people and their children in the homes and households of our country to such a degree, that visions of gold will not so much as move your little finger."

A LOVING HAND INTERVENES

"Every man has a right to pursue his own desires of the heart," said Lanice, "whether it be for gold or people. It is true my desires and heart throbs are in unison with the heart-beats of the people, as you say. As I view the life of a man and the man himself, I cannot help being overpowered, or rather astounded, at the thought of the value of that man; how he can dig and delve, plan out railways, tunnel under mountains and soar above and beyond the mountains, and how he can render service to his fellow men in a thousand and one ways. Now, it seems to me that in view of, and in consideration of the great value and the wonderful capabilities of a man, that we should show forth to this brother man a very touching respect. Lumber, trees, gold claims and mills are valuable and useful articles, and are worthy of careful attention by the business men of our land, in their endeavors to secure these products for the people. You know, I have either had a dream in my girlhood, or it has been instilled within me by a Divinity above in my early womanhood, that of all the wonderful creatures, in animal, vegetable or mineral objects that have been placed on this universe, man is the greatest, most valuable and most enduring of them all. With these attributes he is entitled to the wisest and best attention that is available in this

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

world; and it is quite plain to me that this earth is swung out into space and held in its onward whirlwind rush through this space (at the rate of thirty thousand miles an hour) by a ruling power, while the day and night, season upon season, and year upon year, is arranged likewise for this man.

This being true then as regards man, and with this conception of life before me, I performed what acts I could, and am now using my best endeavors still in my treasure device, towards man in his journey through life. Rules and regulations, law and interpretations of law, soldiers and prisons, dogmas and dungeons will not suffice to overpower this wonderful creature-man, beyond the mere animal stage, into the high estate for which he has been created. In order that a man may partake of the best and fullest life, in fact, life itself, he must recognize the fact of his being linked up with an endless chain of other men. If one link becomes rusted, festered, or perchance rubbed thin and weak, it will most surely break, if not repaired. The strong link, one of the men composing the chain, has the power to mend the broken or bent one, if he so wills. Should he neglect this mending, the whole chain is broken asunder. In the breaking there is a moving backwards, as the whole line of men in this linking have to move backward a step and join hands again,

A LOVING HAND INTERVENES

for one link has fallen by the wayside. When a man is imbued with a spirit of ill-favor to his neighbor, everything in his make-up and in the surroundings are at criss-cross angles. If he should fell a tree near the line fence and a small limb lights over in the 'criss-crossed angle' (favored man's field), he instantly pricks up his indignant ears and there is war in the air. Again, if this 'criss-crossed angle man' should find a strange cow nibbling grass too near his dooryard, he would with all haste procure a gun or a rod, rush out with a vicious howl and proceed to punish that cow.

This man's little boy and the neighbor's boy are in a quarrelsome mood over their marbles in their games at school, by reason of the contagious disease that is within the parents. This ill-favored spirit is of a deadly contagious nature, and spreads for miles from the man infected therewith. Now, if we can in any possible way imbue this infected man with an antidote for this ill-favor, we have saved him from death and destruction, and set him on a pathway where he will beam out an illumination and add a life-begetting tonic to the wayfaring man on his journey through life.

About this antidote, or treasure diamond, I wish to say that it is truly a thoroughly purging-out ingredient, and that it will round out a man in true

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

blood-purity and health, abounding in love, and will show forth in his life among his fellows as does a rainbow in the clouds above.

I am pleading today, and with all kindness of spirit presenting to you for consideration, the case of a man broken in body, heart, and faith in man, and whom I believe to be very near death's door."

"Is he really so dangerously ill? And who is the man? Not one of our mill hands?"

"No, he is not in your employ, but he is a fellow man. I have known him for a long time, and he is worthy. All men are worthy, Mr. Fraser. There are none who are past redemption. This man Dromore is in a very bad condition."

At the mention of the old prospector's name, Fraser instantly became ill at ease. His eyes shifted from the ceiling to the floor. "This is indeed news to me," he said. "I saw the old fellow only a few days ago and he appeared then in the best of health and strength."

"He has, within the last few days, been stricken down. And no wonder! I discovered that a deadly poison had been injected into his system."

"Poison, did you say?" The man of big business by tricks, sprang from his chair and confronted

A LOVING HAND INTERVENES

Lanice with an expression of mingled fear and confusion. It had suddenly dawned on him that this young woman had been scrutinizing him through and through, and had lain bare his inmost soul and his motives of life. He felt that these motives were despised by this girl, and in his lightning summing up of her beautiful life he knew that she was right.

"I came purposely to see if I could not persuade you to come over with me to see Mr. Dromore."

"Really—I—Miss Loraine, I am sure I could not be of any service or benefit to him. I am simply no good in a sick room. Besides, you are such a good nurse, that I feel sure I should only be in the way. I will gladly send him medicine, a nurse, or a doctor, or anything you may ask for his comfort."

"That is very kind of you, and I would be ungrateful, indeed, if I did not thank you most heartily for the help you proffer, and also for the many different occasions in which you have rendered me your help, in providing gifts to the sick and poor people, but this case is a peculiar one, and the poison cannot be extracted by myself or a doctor."

Lanice, with all her persuasive powers could not budge this man towards visiting his brother-man at the present time. Yet these two parted with a

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

beaming-out good will on the girl's part, and a wondering admiration on the part of the mill owner.

She returned to comfort the prospector.

The man of big-business-by-tricks wakened up. This prying into and revealing of his own life so vividly and in such an unexpected manner seemed to have upset his even tenour. At midnight he was still pacing the floor of his room. "I'll do it!" he exclaimed. "The mine is worth a million and Dromore should have some. The devil himself would admit that. I'll pay him five thousand dollars. That will look big to the old man." He banged his fist down on the table at the end of the room as he came up to it. "Holy smoke! What must Miss Loraine think of me in my planning to steal those claims from the prospector. I'm certain she knows the whole story from end to end."

He immediately called his night-watchman and dispatched him with the following letter:

My Dear Miss Loraine:

Kindly explain to Dromore that I owe him five thousand dollars. I will send the cheque to him in your care by nine o'clock in the morning. I got worrying over the poison and be-

A LOVING HAND INTERVENES

lieve you are right in saying that no skilled physician can extract it.

I hope you will pardon my oversight in certain matters, for we men of business, I am afraid, fail to catch a certain spirit in life that is so apparent to our neighbor girl.

My Admiration Yours,

FRASER."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Tying of the Moose

FROM the valley of Loraine to the settlement at the Forks is many a long day's tramp, but Lanice had persuaded her father to accompany her on this journey. The overland trail was a long and crooked one. It was the main artery for travel to the homesteader, the prospector, the speculator and the adventurer; extending as it did for hundreds of miles north in its uphill climb. Across grassy plains it leads one, skirting the base of a foothill now and then, finally growing faint and indistinct, losing itself in the far distant valley or canyon of the wilds.

The call of the trail beyond is too strong to detain the mountain girl any longer. To search out the length thereof and the human souls on its course is her earnest desire. She had, on many occasions during the last two or three years, talked to people who were on their pilgrimage to the new land beyond. Women and children were among them, and to these she had given her word that

THE TYING OF THE MOOSE

some time in the not far distant future, she would call on them in her cross-country journey.

They had three ponies for the trip: one for the pack and two for the saddle. Mr. Loraine slept in the open at nights, rolled up in his blankets. Lanice had a six by eight tent in her outfit, which provided shelter in time of rain and storm, and a shade in the days of hot sunshine, besides being a shelter for her at nights. The old gentleman would not pack a tent for himself on any of his tramps. He said if he journeyed round the north pole he preferred the open. But for Lanice he provided every comfort.

For the first three days the trail lay through an entirely unsettled country, but one of picturesque beauty. It skirted the eastern slope of a low lying hill for many miles. Through bluffs of poplar at times and then over rich grazing tracts beyond, it led them.

The travellers would break camp at about eight o'clock in the morning, and pitch their tent at four o'clock in the afternoon. So each day's journey was not a hard one. Loraine was an expert out-of-door man in the matter of cooking and the arrangements of a camp in general.

"What a great country for cattle," remarked Lo-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

rairie, as they were eating supper in front of the tent one evening.

"It certainly is; you are always spying out pasture lands, father," replied Lanice. "I think that you are a born herdsman. How many cattle would this immediate district feed, do you think?"

"Thousands, my dear—many thousands. Some day I'll send a herd up here."

"And fit me out as a cowboy?"

"That would be too wild and wooly a job for my little daughter, I think."

"Who comes there? He looks like a real cowboy and rides like one too."

Lanice raised her hand to shade her eyes from the glare of the sun, and standing on a rock for a better view, she could quite easily discern a man on horseback coming their way from across the open range, perhaps a quarter of a mile away. He was evidently heading straight for the tent, and his pony maintained a good steady lope. On and on he came, never once pulling his steed to a walk, and pretty soon he was at the tent door of the travellers.

"Your tent looked so spick and span, and white, at a distance, that I thought I would come over and

THE TYING OF THE MOOSE

see it and its occupants at close range," remarked the rider, as he sprang from his saddle.

"Glad to see you," said Loraine. "I was just telling my daughter that you rode like a thoroughbred cowboy."

"Well, I'm not a real cowboy, but I ride considerably. Are you ranching here?"

"No, just taking a hike over the trail up to the Forks to see some people. You see, my daughter has got it into her head that there may be some sick men up there, or lonesome women, and she just wants to cheer them up a bit." Turning half round, he said: "This is my daughter, Lanice. I am old Loraine, a pick and shovel miner and a pitch-fork rancher."

"I am more than pleased to meet your daughter and yourself. I hardly expected to meet a soul in this district. My name is Vessamere, and I am looking over this big country in the interests of mining and geological research."

Lanice was standing just outside the tent while the stranger dismounted and thus introduced himself. She was dressed in a neat khaki suit, tightly laced high boots, and with her dark brown hair waved loosely at her forehead, she presented a pic-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

ture of fresh loveliness. Her shapely figure, pink and white complexion, unassuming manner and innocent expression, held the stranger spellbound, and he stood for a brief moment in wonder admiration.

The girl felt slightly confused under his steady gaze, but soon remarked in her pleasant tone of voice: "You seem to have lost your way. If you are a stranger in these parts, it will indeed be hard for you to follow the trail, for it is very indistinct in places."

"I am not exactly lost," he replied. "I was just wondering. May I ask where you live?"

"We are from the Loraine valley, which you must have passed through some distance back on the trail, and we are on our way to the new settlement beyond."

"I am glad of that, or rather I am glad you are going my way," he replied. "I may be of some service to you and your father, for I have been in here before and know the country for long stretches ahead."

"Oh! I am so glad," replied the girl. "I have a treasure device for the people."

"If your device is as sweet as the bearer looks, I am sure the people will be overjoyed to receive it."

THE TYING OF THE MOOSE

"I tell my father I do not wish to be known by beauty of form or face (which, of course, I do not possess)," she said, laughingly, "but by beauty of soul. Will you eat dinner with us?"

"My men are over at camp and will be waiting for me, or I would be delighted. Thank you, most kindly all the same. We will, no doubt, meet again, seeing we are heading for the same valley. You are following the main trail, I suppose? I am taking a roundabout route over Saddle Ridge, to examine a silver ledge, so we will be longer reaching our destination." With this the young geologist bid them goodnight and rode rapidly back across the valley.

Mr. Loraine and Lanice reached the "Forks" two days ahead of the stranger, but on his arrival he searched them out and planned an excursion and a hunting tour for them after his new quarters had been chosen and arranged for.

I give the reader an account of this adventure in his own words:

Miss Loraine, her father, and myself set out on a chase for silver fox. We sighted two of these wily creatures the first day, back on the hills, and had tramped hard and for a long distance, but had not got close enough for a good view. In

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

this far northern country a fox can often be approached near enough for a shot. We carried one gun, two long ropes, blankets, and food for four days. We saw many deer, but none near enough for a shot until the third day, when we came upon a herd of twenty. Climbing leisurely up a steep bank, we came face to face on the top of a plateau with these moose. They were feeding, and did not see us until we were at close quarters. However, when they did, two of the bulls were so terror-stricken at the sight of human beings, that with their heads down and with full force, they rushed at us. Loraine jumped one way and I another. Fortunately, Lanice was considerably behind us, and at first sight of the moose, she made a rapid break for a place of safety, running with all speed possible to a rock as large as a house nearby, which she managed to clamber to the top of.

Meantime, Loraine had slid down the embankment, and was safely out of sight. My position, however, was much different. Dodging from tree to tree, and rock to rock, with a raging moose on my track, with fire in his eyes, and bellowing like a mad bull, was not an ideal situation. The rest of the herd had scampered off, but this fellow seemed determined to get me as a reward for the intrusion

THE TYING OF THE MOOSE

upon his feeding ground. Occasionally he would hit a tree with the force of a battering ram, but I would manage to dodge to another just a moment or two ahead of him. But he would soon break around after me and then I would jump behind a rock for shelter. I finally reached a rock the size of a piano. Lanice was fifty feet away on top of the house rock. From her stronghold and vantage point she could call to me when to jump next. It was growing late in the afternoon; Loraine could not be seen or made to hear. I could not escape from the eye of this terrible roaring monster for an instant, and I was certainly in a desperate plight. Suddenly a rope shot out into space with a swoop and whirl that fairly bewildered me. I thought at first that Lanice had fallen off the stronghold, and it sent a shudder through me. I soon realized, however, that she was safe. The loop of the cowboy rope had swung with the precision and speed of an arrow over and around the antlers of the ferocious bull moose, and with a deft pull of the rope, the big fellow was fastened as in a vise. With the first swish of the rope about his horns, he reared high in air, and made a plunge for the hills, but he got such a jerk that it nearly sent him on his back. He jumped, plunged and tore around, like a wild range steer.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Just wait a minute," she called. "He will soon tire of these manoeuvres and jump a little slower." She waited for his plunging to cease somewhat, and at this juncture swung the other rope, catching him by a right hind foot, and I heard her voice calling to me again. "I've got him, just a minute and I'll tie him up, then you will be free."

"He will tear you to pieces if you go near him," I called.

"No, he can't do that now," she replied, and she was down in a twinkling, untying the other end of the rope which she had previously fastened to a tree beside the house rock.

She ran a little to the right, out of reach of the moose, with the other end of the rope in her hand. She moved suddenly towards him, causing him to make another jump, and at this instant threw the end of the second rope and caught the big fellow by a front foot. This entangled the ferocious creature and brought him with a thud to his side. Lance sprang beside the high ranger of the hills in an instant, and very quickly fastened his four feet in a bunch.

It was now late in the day and the sun was skirting low in the horizon of the west. I was about

THE TYING OF THE MOOSE

dead to the world, utterly exhausted and faint. Lanice, however, ran over to me and insisted that I get up and move around. She kept me moving for five minutes or so until I had cooled off gradually. While the moose was on my trail, I was straining every nerve and perspiring to the breaking point and was in no way fitted to care for myself. In a short time she gathered a pile of grass and branches, made a cosy bed for me, rolled me up tightly in blankets and told me to rest. She told me she was going to look for her father and secure a pack horse to carry me home.

"All right, farewell," I said. I seemed to be dazed and scarcely knew what I was saying.

Lanice visited the homes of the people in the little town from day to day while I was confined to my room nursing my bruised and battered limbs. In the afternoons, and sometimes in the mornings, she would call and enquire as to my condition.

The nurse, a nismis woman, had jealously guarded my room for two days, however, and under orders had refused admittance to any callers. Lanice was given permission to see me on the third day, and as I was sitting dreaming of far-off and near-by adventure, she came tripping in.

"I am so glad to see you looking so well and

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

happy, Mr. Vessamere," she said, extending her hand to me. "I was afraid you were going to have a hard time of it."

I thanked her, and told her that I was most grateful to her for saving my life, as I verily believed she had. She would not, however, admit of having done anything worth mentioning, but only said. "I do hope you will soon recover."

"I thought you would never speak to me again on account of the way I scolded you; I assure you that I was not accountable for what I said then, and I ask your forgiveness."

"You are freely forgiven," she replied. "The scolding did not bother me in the least, for I was well aware of your condition."

"Now I want you to promise me one thing."

"And what is that?" she said. "You must not make it too hard and I will try and favor you in it."

I told her that I was most certain that I would never recover from the bruises I had received from the moose if she would not visit me often. I felt a great longing to have this girl near me, and was convinced that this was no sick-bed notion, that is, as far as I could make out in my weak state. I knew that I had conceived a strong attachment for this girl, if not an ardent love.

THE TYING OF THE MOOSE

"I think you should lie down and rest," she said.

I told her that that was not answering my question.

"I am trying to answer it," she said, "and will gladly promise to visit you, as I feel somehow that I was to blame for the trouble, and shall watch with a zealous longing for your recovery."

In my thoughts of this young woman of the big west, with her untiring ambition to show forth her "treasure device" to each and every soul she came in contact with; the gentleness and the loving disposition she at all times displayed, overwhelmed me with a desire to grow more in her favor.

CHAPTER IX.

Lanice at Glacier Canyon

LANICE was introduced to the citizens by Lord Vessamere, who had secured a warehouse in which the meeting was being held that night. Young and old were present to hear and greet Lanice.

Her manner on the platform was unassuming—natural, yet graceful and ladylike. She spoke:

The real worth of every man and woman is good, in so far as love sinks into his or her soul.

I am greatly impressed with the unmistakable signs of progress on every hand in your district. It is wonderful, and I am glad to behold it with my own eyes. The great civilizer, next to my secret, which you will learn very soon, is the railway. It has already reached our old homestead and is heading very rapidly your way.

Where progress is in evidence in material things, there is great hope for a growth in things pertaining to my treasure, should the personal life of the

LANICE AT GLAZIER CANYON

one presenting this plan, beam out in rare purity of heart among the people.

There is no nation, however powerful in gun mechanism, political greed designs, culture or art, that can possibly live beyond the rusty age life of its cannons, unless the heart life of its chief actors is set in the "diamond treasure."

To this new territory—of such vastness, the people are coming from other climes. They are bringing with them their ideals in religion, in commerce, and society of the old life. Their church connection is cut off, their social and commercial order is all made over anew, and they are beginning life afresh in this big domain. The life of one man or one woman will set a new standard, and guide the whole multitude towards a new ideal. This present age nears the introduction of the "personal life-power." The thin edge of the wedge is already entered. We have been living under the corporation and proxy-grip-life system. Other people say prayers for us, steel systems fit their people out in belts, helmets and swords, and urge them forward to slay their brother man in order to gain more territory, or to gain greater wealth and power.

I have no theory or organization of this kind to tell you about. Just a "treasure device."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

By the constant trek of the tens of thousands of these people to the last great North-west, I see before me a people similar to no other nation that the world has ever before contained. We are on the fringe of the old and most ancient east. The mighty waves of the wide Pacific, which wash this land in its ceaseless swish and roar, tell of the unrest beyond its shore line. The same waters of this great ocean lap against the land of Confucius and Bhudda. The people from this mystic shrine, as well as the people from European countries, are rapidly intermingling. The mixing of the nations of the earth is taking place on our broad acres, and it behooves us to set a standard and method here that will uplift and save the multitudes.

The spirit of the great west entralls and enthuses me. It holds me spellbound in its vastness and unlimited field for operation in agriculture, mining, railways, lumbering, machinery, and also in the diamond treasure.

You know, if a person does not find the right pathway in making a journey from one valley to another, he will surely fail to reach his destination. Can a man live in the world and ignore the present moments as they come to him each and every day, while he dreams of wealth and gratified vain ambi-

LANICE AT GLAZIER CANYON

tion, neglecting the practice of heart-life towards man, and reach the full measure of a man? Here are you miners and ranchers working away day by day, digging and delving, eating bacon and bannock, wearing muddy overalls, handling the pick and shovel during the day and in dreams at night, all with one purpose in view—to amass a big heap of the yellow stuff. Will it **alone** bring you to the full measure of a man?

She proceeded further: For a man to labor in overalls at an occupation, or to be at all times bedecked in war braid, or soft goods with white collar, adds not one jot or tittle, necessarily, to his character or heart-life conception. I rather favor the man in overalls, engaged as you miners are, for a foundation. There is the stockbroker, the merchant, or his clerk, the railway president, and the trackwalker, all bending their energies and straining every nerve in their efforts to attain something or to reach a certain goal. The miners are hankering after a big pile of gold dust; the stockbroker, a large profit in his deals; the railway president, control of more lines; the merchant, a gain of one hundred thousand or a million, perchance, in his turnover of goods; the trackwalker, a wage sufficient to enable him to keep the wolf from the door of his humble cottage. I condemn none of these, but I

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

strive with might and main to entice them, not away from their delving and panning, but into it with a more zealous and earnest heart.

If a man is working his placer mine with a greedy stare in his eyes and his heart within a steel case, he is on the wrong pathway. His life conception is "criss-cross" and he has gripped the muck-rake. If the railway president has set his heart like flint towards the grabbing up of long lines of steel rails over the bodies of his fellow men, he is also on a very crooked and sharp-angled road. Should the trackwalker lazily shuffle along in his duties and pass lightly over a faulty tie or broken rail, he too has missed the building up of a solid structure in life. It is from the individual heart that we set forth in bold characters the real spirit within us. There are no large things in the universe of man. All big affairs are made up of many, many little items, and it is with these little things from moment to moment that we have to deal. One moment built upon rightly adds a mighty pillar to a great and enduring structure. The moment let slip without action or without attempted action in my "treasure diamond" is a calamity.

Now for a man to strive with all his might to dig out gold in a placer mine, or for a railway president to engage his very best endeavors towards his

LANICE AT GLAZIER CANYON

railway, or for the trackwalker to look forward to the six o'clock whistle and his day's wage, there is nothing to be condemned, as I have thought it out; if—and what a world of difference this word "if" makes—these men are endowed with this "mystery device." Self or material things must not engulf them. Any man or nation who is wholly engaged with self or in the amassing of gold and power, without giving due respect to his fellows, their sickness or food, is on the pathway of steel. Not only will he develop into a granite refrigerator himself, but his life will add a torch to the fire of indignation in the world and sound a timbrel for wars.

If the railway president has my "treasure diamond," he will see the man ahead on the ties and immediately put on the brakes, when the locomotive will come to a standstill. The president will reach out a hand and pick up the fallen one, and thus a life will be saved.

Should the placer miner attempt to pan out his gold without this attribute buckled on to his belt, but with only a greedy light in his eyes, a stranger might accidentally stumble over his sluice box, and the miner would strike him to earth.

CHAPTER X.

Two Men

AS Lanice was returning from Glacier Canyon, there were two men hastening with all speed possible, to a little outlying post, to greet her. Neither knew the intention of the other. They were on different trails and coming from different directions. Comfortably seated on a high horned saddle, with a train of pack horses, was the wealthy mine owner, Fraser. He was longing again to meet the young woman who had won his heart and affections, or at least admiration, even in her early girlhood, with her methods among the miners in his district.

Lord Vessamere, who had been with this girl during her journey to the Forks, very often being in the same district together in their work, and who had been able to assist her in many ways with her treasure work up till the time of his accident in Glacier Canyon, had formed also a strong attachment for her.

TWO MEN

Cameron was packing overland on a train, not a very pretentious one, it is true, but steady-going and sure. His train was slow, I have said. The ponies were tired and nearly worn out after their wearisome toil up the trail. It is soon at an end, however, and Cameron turned over the ponies to the stableman with instructions to lay before them all the luxuries of horse food. "Turn them loose occasionally, and give them a chance to roll and stretch themselves," he said. "They have been good, faithful fellows. Feed them well and take good care of them, Bill, for I shall need them again not many days hence."

Lanice, returning from the little post office near the boarding camp, saw a man approaching, seemingly in great haste. Turning to see the cause of his haste, it suddenly dawned on her that the swing and walk of this man was in some way familiar. Fraser always plunged along, whether over mountain, hill or meadow country, and as now appeared on an ordinary gravel sidewalk. There was no mistaking the man.

"This is surely Mr. Fraser, the mine owner?" said the girl.

"No; just common Fraser," he replied, with a smile.

"Really, I hardly knew you in your dark suit, for

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

in the mines I remembered you always in a rougher and plainer garb. How are the good people at the mines, the lumbermen and planers? I often think of them and long to see them again."

"Well, you may be sure they would like to see you. They actually made me promise to hunt you up as soon as you came back from the north."

"Did your arm heal entirely? I was so afraid many a time that it was not set properly. You know it took so long to knit."

"I will tell you what started it knitting, if you want to really know. It was the way a certain young lady wound the bandage, talked to me and ate with me while that arm was in its sling."

"I think you are entirely mistaken. I wound the bandage very awkwardly, if I remember rightly, and ate with you at the dinner table greedily, talked and laughed loudly, and I am sure was not of much service to you at all."

The day after the meeting of Lanice with Fraser, the great man of the iron trail and clay dump was looking for her, and having located her, one of their main topics of conversation was the settling of the strike. He informed her that it had proved a most profitable transaction for him. Other con-

TWO MEN

tractors had had much difficulty in holding and securing men, but their own gang had remained constantly with them, and many of the men had used their influence to keep peace in the camp ever afterwards.

Cameron was delighted with the beautiful development of the young woman since he had seen her last, just before her departure for the Forks. He could not help thinking, however, what a contrast there was between her father's appearance and that of herself. He had heard rumors during the summer from some of the early settlers, of the secretiveness of the old man concerning his early life. Of course, this was only rumor. Old man Loraine was as dumb as an oyster on this matter. It was true he was rough at times, but he had a great heart, a generous spirit, and love to overflowing for his little daughter.

It was due to this unbounded love of the old man towards his daughter, and the kindness that he showed to her at all times, that gave Cameron a deep respect for him. On many occasions would the two men stroll up the trail together. Cameron had respect always for the old man's judgment and optimism in the big valleys, and it was always a booster, as it were, to his pushing on with the rail-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

way work. Loraine paid no attention to his manner of dress. He usually had one sleeve rolled up and one down full length; and it seemed that his pant legs worked in sympathy with his shirt sleeves, for either the left pant leg was tucked away in the boot top and the right one down over the boot, or the right was rolled up to the top and the left one was down. He wore no coat or vest in the summer, but the big leather belt with a brass buckle was always in evidence. I said he paid no attention to his manner of dress, but I forgot about his hat at the time. The hat question with him was a particular one, for he invariably wore a high-priced Mexican hat of excellent shape and style, and it sat straight as a die on his head, never an eighth of an inch to the left or right. Loraine was very even-featured. His eyes were gray and keen as a steel trap. His walk or manner of shuffling along was awkward, but to the little girl he was always grand and good.

CHAPTER XI.

Religion at Silver Gulch

AFTER supper one night, the men had gathered in a hall to hear Lanice. This was her first visit to the "Gulch" camp. She had often heard of the men there, and was anxious to meet them.

"I am not going to talk very much to you," she began this night. "You have ideas as to good will and moral life, and you know yourselves whether you live the very best lives or not. You can determine that readily when you are brought face to face with soul-touching motives of good fellowship, whether these motives are good for a man or whether they will drag him down to lower levels. I will sit on the platform and you are to occupy the benches as is usual in the ordinary meeting. The milling company who sent me here to conduct these services, leaves me free to conduct them as I choose. In fact, I hold very few meetings in my travels. I maintain and teach that each soul, separately and distinctly from any corporation life,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

must imbibe freely of the spirit of 'good will.' Otherwise the life will be cold and barren.

Forty years ago a presbyterian would not worship in a baptist church; an old time calvanist could not be persuaded to sing out the sacred hymns, if an organ kept tune with him. Methods and creeds are changing. Some are expanding, others being melted in a crucible. It does not really matter how one worships by lip or knee, if the heart is not right towards his neighbor or his fellow men."

"That's mistake, doggone heap mistake," called out old Tex in the back seat. "You mean if the heart ain't right wit' God in t'heavens?"

"What you'se talking about, ye long lanky bones? Don't ye suppose this here girl knaws what she's talking about?" called out "Shorty."

"I meant just what I said," replied Miss Loraine. "That a man's heart must be right towards his neighbor or his religion will not profit him anything. A man cannot love God without first loving his neighbor. His neighbor is God's creature and this man is constantly at his elbow through life. Were it possible that there was no other man on the earth but one, then there would be no need of such a life to go forth on the earth. We have thousands of neigh-

RELIGION AT SILVER GULCH

bors, however, and the love we show forth to them determines, in our personal contact with them, whether or not we are on the right pathway. . . .”

“I will say that na man amang us railroad beelers wan'tae set oursel's up tae contrae-dic the neighbor gurrl now before us,” said Sandy, as he sauntered over towards Lanice.

“Platform, platform. Get up and face run' aboot, Scooty,” called out a voice. He, however, proceeded only about half way up the aisle and then stopped and further addressed Lanice, as he leaned against the wall, gripping in both hands his Scotch bonnet. “I mean tae say,” he continued, “that in auld Scotland the meenasters git great reeverence beestowed upon them, and I dunna think that any of us railroad beelers ken much aboot the scriptures, only what the meenasters tell us and what the auld kirk reads to the people. Tex was just speakin' out to us his word o' mouth aboot God, and ye say, Miss Loraine, that he had na the racht idea. Noo, I have a strong idea too aboot foreordination, and mony other sreeptures wheech the kirk reeled into all the folk sae sound like, that it is in my banes and marrer, and would ye drive it oot, Miss Loraine?”

“No, indeed, Sandy, I would not, unless that yow

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

find no room to contain these ideas after I crowd in some broader ones."

"Is thees new fangled sceiptures dangrus and evil-like?"

"I am not attempting to bring in a new scripture or bible. It is always the same good old book, but we are learning through it newer and broader ideas about man. If we treat the man rightly we are honoring God."

"Did the preesbyterry sen' you up here?"

"I am afraid they did not, but you are not going to send me away because of that, are you, Sandy?"

"I would'na do a thing like thet. We set great store, we railroad beelders, on bein' upright and genteel like. For your beenfit, I will ask all the railroad beelders te show the kirk or faith they ha' been brought up in. Now, all ye presbyterians, stan' upon your feet." Two score stood up. "Now, ye ken seet doon, and ye methodists bob up, te show the lady hoo mony ye air." Thirty-five stood. "Ye tak' your seats, and all ye Grecians and Roman people mount up noo." Seventy-five of the Italians and Greeks stood up, and Sandy continued until he had shown the number of baptists, episcopalians, congregationalists, lutherans, and even those followers of Confucius and Bhudda that were present.

RELIGION AT SILVER GULCH

"Noo, Miss Loraine, ye've seen with yer ain eyes how we railroad beelders have been brought up. Fer me ainsel' I have been brought up presbyterian, and the porrich, ye ken the ootmeal, I would'na sooner leave aff the one than the oother. As each one is a pairt of my sool and boddy-like. Noo Pat, over there," indicating with his hand, "he has been brought oop on pettaties and pope preesties, and o' corse, he is soul and boddy pettaties and preesties, and you can see them theengs steekin' oot o' him. Now the same preinciple is maide knoon about Sam-Kee Sin over there in the corner. Stan' up, Sam Sin. Look on him, Miss Loraine. He has one lang braid o' hair. What is the reeson ye steek to it, Sam?"

Sam grinned from ear to ear, and said: "Wee all'e samee cue for countree and gratee Fusee."

"That's it, Sam is allee same as the rest o' us. It all depen's on hoo a mon is bracht oop. If Sam, or my wortee friend waas bracht oop a peeg, they would be peegs. That iss, a four-legged peeg, I mean. Now it stan's to reason that first a mon sh'd be verry careful about what he is born, and nex' ye ken, he sh'd be verry careful what he is bracht oop on, whetter pertatties, porridge, baptists, rice, methodists, or bannock, fer these theengs make the

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

mon sure an' solid like. Now Miss Loraine, it is too bad ta take awa' t'e porridge, pertatties, baptists, methodists and rice, for ye would ha'e to pull the mon frae' aff the face of the earth frae' the risin' of the sun till the goin' doon of the same in the evenin'. If ye hit a man's baptism, or Sam Kee Sin's confucius, they wouldna' theenk ye was right in t'e hed."

"I am not here to steal, or take away what you have," said Lanice, "but to give you more in abundance. I am for helping the man. If I can give a little salt to the rice and broader view to methodism or baptists, or a little cream for the porridge, I would be adding a benefit to men, for they take of these things individually. It is just as important for a man to beware of what he has taken, or what he grows into, as it is a matter of birth, which he cannot change."

"I weel tak' my seet in one meenit, Miss Loraine."

"But I don't want you to hurry," said Lanice. "I am delighted to hear yau. Go on."

"I was aboot to remarrk that the de'il hisself wu'd flee awa' under the gentle reesoning and persuasions of a young and beautiful leddee." Here Sandy McGlashan put on his bonnet and slowly made his way to the rear of the building and took his seat.

RELIGION AT SILVER GULCH

Lanice now sang "Lead Kindly Light."

By this time it was ten o'clock and the meeting was dismissed. The boss was escorting Lanice to her boarding house. On the way a man staggered in front of them and fell into the ditch. He fell on his face and was seemingly in a bad condition. The "boss" told Lanice that he would take her home first, and on his return would attend to this fellow. Lanice, however, maintained that this man needed care at the moment, much more than she needed to hurry home, and that she was going to help too, if it took until daylight.

"He is all muddy, in a bad state, and most likely will swear at us," said the "boss," "and likely as not tell us to go about our business. I think I can handle him better alone. He is only a drunken sot anyway, a poor down-and-out, so what is the use of us bothering with him?"

"It is the down-and-out people who need help in the worst kind of way," said Lanice, "and what is of vastly more importance to me, if I should not with might and main lend every effort to help this man, the true love spark within me would suddenly congeal, or a portion of love would, and I would be harboring a refrigerator within my soul."

The man and the woman together gently raised

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

the one who for the moment had fallen, and succeeded after much labor, in half carrying the man, assisted by his own efforts, feebly exerted now and then, to his humble home on a back street.

A light was burning in the house, and there appeared in the doorway, as they came up the footpath, a woman of timid yet refined appearance. She was poorly but neatly dressed.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Voorhees," said the "boss." "Oscar will be all right. I didn't know who he was at first. He had sure fell in with that gang of toughs again. I warned him about them fellows, to keep away from them, but somehow they lead your husband into their games every time they come to town. This is Miss Loraine; she would help me bring your husband home."

The true and patient little wife soon had the man of the house tucked away in a cosy bed, and he was there sleeping off his celebration as the two women planned for the future.

"You will think this is awful, to find my husband in such a condition?"

"I would think it much more awful, Mrs. Voorhees, if I did not devote my very best care towards your husband when I found the opportunity at my finger ends."

RELIGION AT SILVER GULCH

"I am sorry he has been so much trouble to you; but really, he is not so utterly bad as some people think he is. We are not all perfect, are we?"

"Indeed we are not, and that is one great reason why one person should show forth their very heart's life blood to another, in order to relieve the awful strain that comes upon our fellow-man at times, and to buoy up some life with a new hope."

The two women sat and talked till the early hours of the morning.

Lanice had learned that the cause of Voorhees' drunkenness was due to the evil companions with whom he had become associated.

The love bestowed on this home had already commenced to take shape and form, and before Lanice's departure the following day, she had arranged (in her mind) with the milling company for a situation for Voorhees. She learned from his good wife that the man was an expert accountant, and she felt that were he given a new start in life he would surely make good. A new start! Ah! That was the point! How many thousands of fallen men and women are starving in life tissue and hope, for the want of some helping hand and the opening up of a way for that "new start!"

CHAPTER XII.

Baldy Seeks Vengeance

MORGAN Cameron stopped suddenly at the doorstep of the Loraine household. He had been on the point of lifting the latch and ushering himself into the hospitable home of the old rancher and his beautiful daughter. He had spent many of his evenings here and many Sundays; in fact, the household seemed to be a part of him. It was home to him. He was actually working from this home in the construction of the big railway. He was somewhat unconsciously living and acting for this girl. She had captivated and held him, and all so innocently on her part.

He was now listening intently at the door. What was this he heard? It held him as in a trance. He could not move. His feet were rivetted to the spot. He felt himself growing faint, but with great difficulty he steadied himself.

"I kin tell yer, she's white, through and through, and ye're an ole heathen. Yer heart's crooked.

BALDY SEEKS VENGEANCE

You stole my medder with yer greed and slick tricks, yer strung out yer fences and cut me out on the west side, yer ol' scape grace. Ye've got bad blood in yer. Not a drop of yer life's blood is any good. I was coming up Silver Gulch one day. You never knowed this. I met a man and woman heading up the trail. I never saw them people since, and they were sure heading for this place. They were white, too. Ha, Ha! You cringe, do yer?"

The old man had fallen with a thud to the floor.

"Oh! God! Baldy have mercy," he was saying. "You know I never cheated you, only moved my fence on the line, and my little daughter fed and cared for you many a time."

"Well, if she did, what is that to yer? Now, old swarthy, I'll pound you good if you don't sign that strip of forty chains of thet medder to me tonight."

"But the government surveyors moved the line; I have nothing to do with it."

"Yes, and it shoved me up on the rocks. What good's that land ter me? If it hed not been for one thing, you'd hev got more fer this long ago, but ter'night's good enough, I'll club yer, and by the heavens above, if yer tell her who did it, you die in yer tracks the nex' time I meet yer, d'ye hear?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

And you wouldn't be the first man either I have swatted. Take that—and—."

"Hold here, what do you mean? Are you going to kill an old man when he is down?" Cameron seized Baldy with a firm grip as he burst unexpectedly in upon them.

"Now what is the matter here?"

"Ask the ol' man; he knows."

"What is it, Mr. Loraine?"

"Just a little misunderstanding."

"Let loose uv me, or I'll break yer measly head!"—and Baldy jerked from under the grip, squared himself, and made as if he was going to batter Cameron on the head. The young engineer, with muscles tense, faced the big fellow with such determination in his piercing eye, that it seemed to unnerve his opponent.

"Don't you ever make the faintest motion towards breaking or battering me up, or you'll never be able again in this world to slink in on an old man in the darkness to pound him. What is the matter with you, anyhow? Are you crazy, drunk, or what?"

"Ask the ol' man." This was all he could get out of Baldy.

BALDY SEEKS VENGEANCE

Baldy edged over to the door and was soon out and away with a bound in the darkness of the night.

Cameron helped Loraine to a chair and tried to draw him out as to the cause of the attack, but in vain. He would only say that it was a misunderstanding or a delusion of Baldy's. He could not imagine what had got into him.

"I'd have him arrested or shipped out of the country without any delay. He is not a safe man to have hanging around here."

But Loraine would not hear of anything of the sort. He maintained that he was not afraid or alarmed, and he was sure that Baldy had good in him, and that he would give him no further trouble.

On the return of Lanice the next day, about noon, Loraine was still in bed. She bathed his head and made him hot drinks, and with her characteristic fondness of him, soon had the old gentleman up and around as usual. But never a word did he breathe to her of the attack Baldy had made upon him.

There is something strange about this man Baldy, What did he know about these people or what grudge had he against them? He may be holding the old man under a blackmail hand for this very

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

secret; and yet, it is possible that his motive may have been purely murderous. At any rate, I know Loraine's are good. He thought of Fraser, and of many old-time settlers in the district. Surely some of these, and especially Fraser, must know somewhat of their family life before they reached this valley, thought Cameron.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Stranger in Placer Camp

IN this mountain side climb the stranger is Morgan Cameron. A few days' travel found him in the big placer mine. His purpose in looking over this camp in the district was from a curious desire on his part to find an old miner whom he heard was living in this vicinity. This man was at one time a partner of Loraine's; that is, in the early days.

The three days' tramp along the hillside was uneventful to the stranger. He arrived at the camp at noon on a bright and cloudless day. The miners were just coming over to the grub house as he strolled into their midst. As it was the custom for travellers dropping into these camps at meal times to take the first place which could be found at the table, he lost no time in refreshing the inner man.

After dinner the stranger took a careless stroll around the diggings, to size up the crew in general. The first couple of days he spent in this manner.

He would often help the men to shovel gravel

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

and sand into the sluice boxes, but would never go near the clean up. He told the boss that he wanted no gold, diamonds or rubies, and that he would not trade his old shoes for the biggest nugget in camp. This did not, however, relieve the watch from off the stranger at nights for some time. A word of mouth does not always go as valid truth among men. We can tell pretty well what a lion, elephant or a wild boar is going to do, and in what manner he is likely to act, but not so with a man. Man is much more capable of making stealthy movements, if he so wishes, and can easily deceive his brother man.

The stranger stayed in camp from day to day; and seemed to be a free, open and above-board fellow. A good many of the men said that they would trust him with the whole clean-up. He became acquainted with a large number of the men in camp, and talked freely with them in their work, and during their rest spells in the evening. The men were a rough-talking lot of fellows, yet fairly agreeable amongst themselves. The big dredge was working late at nights, and the workmen were tired at the close of the day.

In a dredging camp for gold in this district, it is a matter of keeping at it early and late while the season lasts. The stranger had now become a regu-

A STRANGER IN PLACER CAMP

lar workman with the other men, starting with the first whistle in the morning, and continuing until the last one at night. Day in and day out he labored receiving his pay envelope, with the other men, in gold nuggets. His first working companion was a man from New York, and then a fellow from London for some days. He labored among them in this way for weeks, and was one of their most proficient tradesmen. Nothing upset him or put him out of humor—water, stones, breaks in the flume, mud or rain always found him the same pleasant companion. He did not talk much while at his labors, and at nights he played with the miners, poker being one of the favorite games. No money, nuggets or clothes would he stake at any time, however, but his expert playing, good nature and story-telling soon made him a favorite with the miners. One night, along about twelve o'clock, he heard loud and strong words uttered by big Lank, and the man from New York, who had evidently got into a row over the division of the pool of nuggets that had been staked at the beginning of the game. He rose up in bed and listened. The row was becoming louder and fiercer. Big Lank roared out: "I'll shoot you full of holes if you touch that gold, and bury you like a dog."

At this stage, the stranger bounded out of bed

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

and ran across the yard to the room in which the miners had gathered, without even waiting to dress. He burst in upon them, rushed over to the table and shovelled up the pile of gold nuggets, placing them in his hat. Half a dozen of the miners pulled their guns, but instantly lowered them when they saw who "the breaker-in" was. Lank and the New Yorker shot dark and suspicious scowls at him but did not say anything. The miners knew that he did not want the gold for himself, but were not certain just what he was about.

"Boys," he said, "I will take this gold back with me and tomorrow night I shall give it to the man to whom it belongs. You fellows are in no mood to settle this thing tonight. Go to bed, and think the matter over and we will fix everything satisfactorily when we meet again."

After expressing himself in this firm tone, he walked to the door, stepped out across the yard to his own tent.

The miners shuffled around; some few of them grumbled, but finally picking up their hats, blew out the lights and strolled off to their different tents and cabins.

Next day everyone was at work as usual, and not a word was spoken about the affair of the pre-

A STRANGER IN PLACER CAMP

vious night, except on one occasion, which he overheard. One man said: "If Lank thought that the card which was dropped before the game was called was a good one, why did he not call a new deal then? He allowed the game to go on without a protest, and now he says there should have been a new deal."

This gave the stranger the exact information he wanted. He knew he must decide this thing right or there would be trouble. What a power "right" has! Everyone will stand by it and agree to it. He felt if he could decide this question "right" that he would win out.

The big eating house was crowded the next night. This was the gathering-place for the men after their supper (after the dishes were cleared away), either for cards, stories, dances, or just an ordinary smoke. The stranger laid the pile of gold on the table. "Now, boys," he said, "there are two ways of settling this affair. You can play the last game over again, or——"

"No," called out a dozen voices; "we never play over again in this country from Baldy Creek to the pole at the top of the earth."

"Well, then, if that is your custom, I suppose that point is settled; but in other countries they do play over again in cases of dispute."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Not so here," they called out. "That is for school boys and little girls, but not for us."

"Now the other and only way left is to give the gold to the winner of the game as it stands."

"Sure," they yelled out. "You bet it is. The game was played through without anyone demanding a new deal at the start, and in every country that I have been in, from China to Hindustan, and South America, to this very spot, if a game is played through without a protest, no matter how the deal was made, or if half a dozen cards were dropped and not picked up, the winner got the gold just the same as in any other game."

He thereupon handed the pile over to the winner without further ado.

At this Lank said: "I would just like to wring your neck, young man."

The stranger was about the youngest man in camp. He stood five feet eight in his socks, was sinewy, quick and fearless, with a determination in his eye that meant something.

"Well," he said, "you have a chance to wring my neck, if you can, right now. But I tell you at the start I never wrestle or fight with anyone in anger, or with hatred against him. If you wring my neck, lay me on my back, or throw me out the door; it

A STRANGER IN PLACER CAMP

will be without any bitterness or anger on my part."

"I don't give a whoop about your anger or bitterness. That don't matter a bit to me," and so saying Lank seized on him with an iron grip.

Now Lank was a big, brawny man, the best wrestler for miles around, and no slouch of a boxer; in fact, he was the bully of the camp in a rough way. No sooner had Lank laid a hand on him than the stranger ducked and feinted, which put him wabbling and off his guard. This eased his grip. The stranger then worked round from hold to hold, and finally got a "half Nelson" on Lank and threw him with a thump on his back on the hard floor. It nearly took his breath, but he jumped up and rushed at his man with an oath, hitting and pounding the air with his fists. At this onslaught, the stranger knew in an instant that Lank was striking wild and with unguided and wasteful force. He guarded off the blows with one hand and hit Lank hard with the other. Lank hammered back at him, but somehow seldom landed. Either the stranger was not there, or his arm broke the force and in a fraction of a second Lank received a stunning blow in the face, neck or ribs. The onslaught of Lank's lasted for some time, but he began to show weakness, and tried to clinch. This the stranger would

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

not allow, as boxing seemed to suit him even better than wrestling. He saw that it would only take a little longer in this contest to lay Lank out, so he kept him at arm's length. The stranger kept continually at him, and was now watching for a knock-out blow. In time an opening presented itself, and he laid Lank out with a swing that sent him in a heap. He remained thus for some little time, then rolled over and raised on his elbow, looking one way and another in a dazed manner. He got up, staggered across the floor and out into the vacant patch.

"Boys," said the stranger, "some of you see that Lank gets to his cabin all right."

At this time in the stranger's career, his conception of life ran in the groove, "challenge me, hit back at thee" method.

This description of the actual hand to hand fight in the placer camp of the canyons is made up of facts just as they occurred, and for a purpose. It is but one of the battles of life. There are many other battles in every man's life that are harder and far more lasting in effect than this one. There are battles in business, in national, social, political and church life. This battle between the stranger and Lank hurt only the face and ribs. It was proving out the strength of muscle and the power of the

A STRANGER IN PLACER CAMP

boxing art. In the case of strife between business men, it is a struggle for mastery in property, in wheat, in stocks and mines. They use hatred, covetousness and trickery. One of these men may have a home, wife and little ones; and his success in business may mean much to them. His losing out may put the home in bankruptcy and the little ones in hunger on the street. What matter to the other; he has gained his point, his greed is satisfied, or his money piled up. The other's everything has gone. But what of it—that is his look out. It is a struggle of souls, and the souls are hurt eternally.

It seems rather peculiar, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that rough-and-tumble men are quite often drawn by rough-and-tumble methods. This battle was not according to the stranger's programme, yet when he was forced into it, he thought it best to teach this bully a lesson without the use of pen and ink and a black board.

Cameron had become pretty well acquainted by this time with the men in camp, or rather I should say, with all those who answered in some respects the description of the man he was seeking. His keen insight and tact in drawing out certain information he wished to obtain, soon led him to believe that the man he was after was not in the camp, and he therefore lost no time in hitting the trail on the return journey.

CHAPTER XIV

Lost in the Forest (Meditations)

THE forest was fairly open, with very little under-bush to hinder one from freely walking through it. Lanice wandered on and on, enjoying the bracing mountain air, picking flowers, jumping logs, and at one time chasing a deer. The girl had no fear in the woods; but this particular forest was new to her, and she exhibited a keen interest in exploring it as she proceeded from point to point. She had wandered far before she was aware of the general direction of her course, paying little attention to the trails or paths, which were, however, few and far between.

She had been tramping for hours over the grass and leaf-strewn ground among the trees, occasionally following a track to a berry patch. She thought suddenly that she should be near the homestead she intended to visit, it being that of a man and his family who had recently moved to this upper settlement. She had thought to shorten her journey to their home by cutting directly through the forest.

In her handbag she carried some sandwiches, a

LOST IN THE FOREST (MEDITATIONS)

piece of cheese and a few slices of pork, and feeling hungry, she sat down on a log and ate a small portion of this lunch, for it was long past twelve o'clock. She had become confused in her directions and could not possibly say which was north, south, east or west. She rested for a few moments and then proceeded with rapid movements due west, as she thought, which course should surely lead her to the settler's cabin. In this direction she wandered for fully an hour. It led, however, along continually rougher ground and denser woods, so she diverted her course to the right and kept onward through and among the pines. Soon she came to the edge of an open and grassy plain, which led her to think of wild animals. "It is a long time since I have met a black forest ranger in the open, and I would certainly like to get a glimpse of a big fellow," she thought.

Before proceeding further in this search for big game without a gun, she resorted to the mountain tactics taught her by her father, that of wearing blue when in danger of being attacked. She was not afraid of coming to harm, however, except that she might possibly come near a she-bear and her cub unexpectedly, when there might be trouble. She quickly placed her blue underskirt over the khaki colored skirt, then walked cautiously along,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

hunting for Bruin's tracks, or some sign of his being in the region. She did not have to search very long, for sure enough, there was a track leading to the grassy meadow into the deep woods beyond. She remembered that this was about feeding time for Bruin, so hiding behind a tree nearby, she waited for a few minutes. Indeed, it was not long before she heard a rustling in the trees, and peeping out from her hiding place, she espied a large fellow lumbering leisurely along.

As he drew near her hiding place he commenced to sniff the air, then he looked round, sniffed again, stood still for a moment and without further ado, turned in his tracks, starting back in his path for a few steps. Lanice held her breath for an instant, but the big ranger bounded off the path and was soon lost to view among the trees.

Lanice now came out from her hiding place and proceeded on her way again. It was growing late in the afternoon, and the forest was beginning to put on a boogy appearance, so she hurried forward in the hope that she would discover some trail or creek which might lead her to a clearing or a cabin; but in vain was her tramp. She began to realize that she had lost her way.

Hastily she laid down her handbag and climbed a tree in order to spy out the land, and if possible

LOST IN THE FOREST (MEDITATIONS)

discover a way out. There was not a clearing in sight, and on descending to the ground again she took up the lone trail. It was soon quite dark amongst the trees, but she hastened onwards. In a little time she came to a stream, beside which she found a path, which upon careful examination she found to be one made by human footsteps. Following this a little way, she came upon a cabin. This proved to be empty, with not a sign of life around it. It was well and strongly built, however, with iron-hinged doors and strongly barred windows. She opened the front door and peered in, but it was getting too dark to see clearly. She struck a match and discovered a bed, two blankets, a stove, bench, table, pail, axe and a small mirror. There was also a half sack of flour suspended from the ceiling by a rope. She cried aloud in her excitement and joy at finding this shelter and provisions: "This is glorious."

In a remarkably short time Lanice had a fire in the little stove and some hard dough cakes in the oven. "What a magnificent repast and lovely entertainment I shall have in this abode all by myself tonight," she soliloquized. "I am far away from the ranchers, miners and even my own home, but I am safe, which is something to be thankful for. I am at home amidst the solitude of the trees of the forest."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

After clearing away her supper dishes, which were very few that night, she sat by the little fire until midnight. In the solitude of the little cabin she scribbled a few lines. She thought of the homes and the people of the district to whom she was so fondly devoted. The little folk, the old folk, the sick and the poor had a warm care thought going out to them from her continually. She wrote as follows:

The establishing of a home and the instilling into its occupants the diamond treasure, are the all-important duties or privileges for any people of any kind. There is no institution known to man that is of such value to the nation as the home institution. The mother and father know and feel the sacred duties and joyous hopes and responsibilities they possess in the home. The mother presses the tiny baby to her bosom, sings to it, hugs and fondles it most lovingly. It is her own precious darling—her very own. She sees life budding forth in it. Does she tire and grow weary in loving this morsel of flesh, that pays not the least possible attention to her care and love? Oh, no! It has no conception of the good will bestowed upon it. It cares not for nor heeds the trouble and the weary nights it causes its mother, and yet the true loving mother never grows harsh at her baby. Time comes, however, when the little one grown to riper years, fully appreciates the personal attentions bestowed upon

LOST IN THE FOREST (MEDITATIONS)

it. There are a few, however, a very few, who, when grown to manhood or womanhood, do not feel, or at least do not show a reciprocating love to those who showered such fond care upon them in their earlier life. But this cannot deaden the effect of that love once expended upon them. It travels forward forever. Love never dies. Good will and earnest favors are real live beings. A woman expends favors and devotes attention to these matters for the reason that it is bubbling up from the depth of her soul. Other things: gold, lumber and even the beautiful valleys fade away and are no more, but love bestowed never ends in its ether wave journey among the people.

The day showed forth in streaks of golden light bursting in through the window of the little cabin. Lanice lost no time in making her way up the hillside and soon alighted upon the main trail which led her directly to the new settler's abode. Her visit here was a happy event for the mother and little ones. To Lanice's great joy, she found no sickness among them, and she seized the opportunity to teach the little ones a lesson or two in the first reader, which she had presented them with.

On the return trip Lanice took the pathway leading round the forest, and arrived at the old home ranch early in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XV.

Lord Vessamere's Pleading

IT WAS late that evening when Lord Vessamere broke away from the side of Lanice in her father's home in this distant land. He had long ago learned to love the mountain girl, so beautiful in form, face and soul, as he would often say to himself.

His geological research in the northwest was at an end. He had been unrelenting in his efforts throughout, considerate to his employees, and at all times showed forth a democratic spirit towards the settlers with whom he came in contact.

On this particular evening he was on his last visit to Lanice, for he was shortly taking his departure for London. The girl was attired in a blue silk gown, one Lord Vessamere had often seen her wear on his former visits. It was draped with chiffon, with a touch of real lace at the throat. The necklace which she wore was one presented to her by her father on her eighteenth birthday. She also wore satin slippers, matching her gown in color.

LORD VESSAMERE'S PLEADING

"I leave for London by a roundabout way, to deliver my report in person to the president," he was saying to Lanice. "I only wish they would accept it by mail, but the directors have a set rule as regards these geological reports, and I have no alternative. I have been greatly interested in the work, as well as the mountain scenery, with its valleys, canyons, rivers and forests, but my interest and admiration for these is faint in comparison with my wonder and admiration for the lovely girl I found dwelling amongst it all, and at the almost unbelievable influence her life has been to the people of the country and to myself," he added.

"I am afraid you value my small efforts too highly," replied Lanice, "for really, my life has been, and is now very simple indeed. Only the tiniest kind of deeds have been performed by my hands, I am sure."

"That may be true," he replied, "but just the same these deeds show up like the mountains with a rainbow crowning them to me."

Lanice colored a little, and said: "You are extravagant in your language, Lord Vessamere, but I cannot tell you how I appreciate these words from you, and I thank you most sincerely for them. You have not hitherto said much in connection with

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

what I consider my life's work, but now I feel that you realize the feeble efforts I have put forth have been good for the people, in the different districts wherein I have labored. I hope you will not forget the 'treasure device' which is going on apace in this great west, when you journey eastward, and that you will let your memory linger kindly on the families who have settled in this wide land, and who are building up for themselves new homes. In this land of new homes, beautiful mountains and plains, there will surely spring up broader ideas as regards material things as well as in moral and religious matters. Scores of men are coming into this district who are devoting their utmost endeavors towards the building up of material things, but few are devoting attention exclusively towards teaching the 'leaven' method, I am sorry to say."

"I agree with you most heartily in all this, Miss Lanice, but I was wishing you were going to say something more personal; that is, something I would not forget in my eastern journey, something in connection with the little mountain girl before me."

"Would you wish me to think of you?" "Why, of course—what a wayward question. I think of everyone I have met in this wide west most fondly. I know them all by name, big and little. They are

LORD VESSAMERE'S PLEADING

all dear to me, as are the rivers, the valleys and the plains."

"There is one thing I have often thought of in my travels, one which is of deep concern to me and on which there is confusion in my mind about."

"And what is that, pray? I did not know you worried over trifles," said the girl.

"But this is not a trifle, Miss Lanice. What do you think of class distinction?"

"I do not know what to think of it, or rather I would not like to say just now, for fear my views would not be right, or that you would not coincide with them. I will say this much, however, I have been with one of the titled folk of the old land (gracefully nodding to Lord Vessamere), have seen him in all kinds of weather, among all kinds of people in his hard tramps over the trail and in hunting for moose, and I must say that I have never been afraid of him."

"That is certainly a good way of putting your case, Miss Lanice, and I am glad to hear you say it. For my part, I have fully appreciated your lovely life, your joyous beaming expression and queenly bearing, and my admiration for you is, and has been abounding. I feel I must confess this now; I cannot forbear until a future day, for my heart is

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

aching for you. Your beauty of soul, your outward beauty and your aristocratic heart is in a class as high as the highest. Miss Lanice, I love you, and plead with you tonight for your hand."

The girl was sitting in a rocker on the opposite side of the room when Vessamere burst forth so suddenly with his love appeal. She had not the faintest notion that this man was so fondly drawn to her; it was all so sudden; and yet, there flashed across her mind remembrances of past occasions, where his love was shown forth to her, if she would have but seen it. She realized that now. At all times she had taken a great interest in this sturdy young man of title, to whom so much had been entrusted, and in his undaunted energy and faithfulness to his labors. She felt that his life had gradually, yet firmly, become interwoven with her own through his attention to her and her mission. For a moment she sat rigid, while he took her hand, and she heard his voice as if it was far off, saying: "May I hope, may I entreat for an answer tonight, Lanice? I know you feel this pleading to be sudden, perhaps inopportune, but my affection and love for you has been no one-day growth with me, although it was unbounded, fervent and sincere from the first day we met on that memorable journey to the Forks, but it has grown even stronger from day to day."

LORD VESSAMERE'S PLEADING

Lanice insisted that Vessamere should postpone his pleading for an answer that night, but nothing would swerve him from the question. He said geological reports, business trip and everything would be thrown to the winds until he had received her answer. But Lanice said: "You may change your mind when you reach London, and forget all about the little girl of the mountains."

"Lanice, I beg of you to not mention such foreign thoughts," he said. "My mind has been made up on this point long ago."

I shall not lead my reader farther in the mysteries of courtship and love; suffice it to say that the man won out and the wedding day date was named before he took his departure that night.

CHAPTER XVI

Captured by Slim

IT WAS not many days after this evening that Lord Vessamere spent with Lanice that he found himself in one end of Slim's cave home, on an old blanket spread over a little pile of straw. The district was filled to overflowing with the riff-raff of humanity, dirty, hard-faced, wrinkled or ragged specimens mostly; infants, little children, girls and boys in their teens, old men and old women. Huddled in rooms at night and wandering the streets by day, they live on and on. Scraps of old carpets, rags and battered benches and boxes are the furnishings of most of their homes.

Slim Jim's stone and earth walled apartment boasted of one room downstairs, that is twelve feet lower than the level of the street. An old carpet and one quilt for each of the three bunks constituted its bedding. These bunks were on the floor. Two boxes, two broken-down benches, a stool, a little stove, one basin, three knives and three forks, a

CAPTURED BY SLIM

frying pan, broom and an old towel, were the sole furnishings in this room.

Vessamere had wandered considerably out of the best business part of this city and was looking it over as he was waiting for a train. He found himself in a thickly settled foreign centre with rows of tenement houses, and as he was standing for a moment endeavoring to get his bearings, a cab drove slowly up to the curb near him, and he decided to jump in and have the fellow drive him uptown. He remembered stepping into the cab and followed by a man who quickly closed the door behind him, also the subsequent struggle, but after that his mind was a blank. Some half dozen men had carried him to this den while he was still in a stupor, had laid him on a bed on the floor and there left him.

In speaking of the experience later, he said: "Slim examined my knee, stretched it out on a box and then sent for a doctor. The knee was causing me a good deal of pain, and I was wondering what kind of a doctor Slim had to attend to me. It struck me that a practice among these people would not net a very large income, but as I pondered, doctor Warwick himself appeared. He walked slowly down the passageway and clumsily over to where I lay. He rubbed my knee, twisted my foot backward and for-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

ward, bent my leg up and down, sideways and cross-ways, finally bathing it in a strong and stinging liniment. He told me the limb was not broken, but that I would have to remain absolutely quiet for weeks, and forbade me standing on it or allowing the least bit of pressure to be borne upon it, for, he said, 'otherwise you will be limpy lame all yer life.' He asked about my head, and if it gave me any pain, felt my pulse with an ease that told of long practice, then he bandaged my knee with a piece of an old sheet, soaked thoroughly in a yellowish green oil taken from a bottle in his handbag. He then took out his clay pipe, filled it full from a half twisted plug of tobacco, sat down on a box beside me, crossed his legs and commenced puffing away like a steam engine.

This doctor, it appeared, lived some distance down the street, or rather the alley. He travelled bare-footed, wore gingham pants, a striped apron, a dark straw hat, and carried, as before stated, a little black handbag. He was very plump, this man, weighing two hundred and fifty pounds at a rough guess.

"Slimmie 'structed me to fleex up a man, tie up'es knee and care for and vlait on 'ee man."

I had been used to all kinds of society, that of the titled class, the middle class and the great north-

CAPTURED BY SLIM

west type, consisting of miners among the hills, ranchers and railway men, Indians and college men, that vast cosmopolitan crowd, but this man was of a new order, and I found a great deal in him to interest me and make life bearable for me here. Their manners, their mode of living, their houses and even their manner of speech was unfamiliar. The few things they used in their homes, and the very homes themselves were so different to what I had been accustomed to. "Classes, classes, classes," I thought, "what barriers they set up in this world between people of the human race."

In the course of conversation I told the doctor that I was on my way to London, that I had met with a misfortune to my knee while in the city, and so had been unable to proceed further. That my friend, Slim, had been kind to me and had placed me under good medical skill, and that I was sure I would soon be around again as well as ever, at which he assured me that I would be "all-lightee in flew weeks." He also informed me that Slim was a good man and a shrewd one at business, but that he did not pay him very regularly, that the pay came on rare occasions, but that sometimes it was in good big sums. In response to my questionings he admitted that business was not always good, and in his "altee-lightee-samee" style of conversation he

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

told me the winters were hard on the little folks, who had a hard time to keep warm. That they had to stuff up the cracks in their buildings with old rags and paper in order to keep out the cold wind; that a great number of the babies died, and that he labored under much difficulty and with many nights of lost sleep in caring for them. Then again in the summer the hot sun beats down on their unprotected heads, making them sick, and that many were unable to go out at all during the daytime on that account. He had told the people it was a poor place for them to raise their babies in, but it was no use talking.

After the doctor had smoked out his pipeful and finished expostulating (he could perform this act allee-samee white man), he gathered up his medicine cabinet, telling me I would be "altee lightee" now for a time. After he had departed, I lay in my bed staring at the stone walls with their ornamentation of cobwebs. "If ever I get out of here," I thought, "I will see what I can do for these people, or with the combinations or organizations that are responsible for this awful condition. It is a big sore spot on the nation. How can these people be expected to be of any use to the world until a way is opened for the betterment of the homes. There is no ambition in their hearts, no hope, and in fact,

CAPTURED BY SLIM

I can see no channel through which they can crawl, unless a large way is opened, and the way must be large. The machine, or combination of machines certainly must be large and powerful to hold these tens of thousands of people down in such abject misery. If I could but send word to Miss Loraine as to my whereabouts! But that is impossible. I am watched like a cat, and even if I could, would it be wise to disturb or alarm her?"

One night later, Slim came crawling down the alley with a lighted candle in his hand. When he came in I was wide awake, and had not slept a wink that night.

"Hello, pardner," he said; "still awake, eh?"

"Yes," I replied, "somehow I can't sleep very well."

"How's the knee?" he asked.

"I guess it is coming along all right. Your worthy doctor Warwick of this highly esteemed district and community is certainly a skilled physician."

"He has been in to see yer tonight?"

"Yes. He waits on me and bandages this old knee of mine in fine style."

"Thet's good," said Slim. "What do yer say to a drink, pard'? You're strong enough now?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Thanks, I'd rather not. It hurts me, and I can't sleep if I drink."

"All right, Lordy, you know best. No harm, not the leas' bit offended nor miffed up about it. I bank on letting a man drink or not drink, jes' as the notion takes him. There's no sense in cocking a six-shooter un'er a man's nose ter make him drink if he ain't disposed. What about some beef tea?"

"I'll take some of that if you have it handy. It is the very thing I want."

Slim hustled around, opened a can of beef tea extract and soon had it boiling hot.

"Can you drink it out of this cup, Lordy?" he asked.

"You bet I can," I said. "It is the only kind of cup I have used for months.

"Is it?" he queried. "Where have you been to be using tin cups so much?" Slim became interested.

"Drunk it up already? I'll get some more."

"It's fine," I said. "Yes, I'll take another cup."

"How long have you been in this city?" was his next question.

"Just one day before I came to this hotel," I told him.

CAPTURED BY SLIM

"Thought so," said Slim. "Relations here or anyone with you?"

"No, not a single soul."

"Any in America?"

"No; my people all live in London."

"What's the name of 'em?"

"Vessamere," I told him.

"Vessamere?" Slim queried in astonishment. "You Lord Vessamere?"

"That's what they call me."

"Good."

"Why; what's good about it? What do you want to keep me here for? I am sure I cause you a good deal of trouble and inconvenience. Send me over to my hotel and I'll pay you when we get there. I don't happen to have my pocketbook with me at this present moment."

"No need of any money, Lordy. You see I have been handed my first hand-out."

"I know you have been, and I think it plenty and sufficient for a haul from one man."

"Not if he can git more. Besides, I am not ready to pry open yet. You're in my private coop just now and have a good ward, all at my cost, under my

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

own doctor's care. You have the very best room in the layout, the best doctor in the city, and what more can you want?" He looked at me with a grin.

"There will be an upheaval among your camps if my people find out that you are confining me in your sink hole coop."

"I'll look after your people all right. That's part of my business this 'lookin' after people.' Don't you worry about that, Lordy. I'm sendin' word to your people tomorrer."

"Sending word!" I exclaimed. "What kind of word will you send?"

"I have the right word to fit the occasion."

I hardly knew how to take this last remark of Slim's. He stood at the foot of my bed, with one hand in his pocket, his old black hat on the back of his head, a stub of a pipe between his teeth and the candle still in his hand.

"Well, goodnight Cop," he laconically remarked, "hope ye'll sleep tight. 'll see yer tomorrer. I have many d—— good reasons for advising' ye to lay still." As he spoke he slouched over to the hole entrance, blew out the light, and quietly made his way out into the darkness. I now remembered sending a cablegram to my uncle in London the

CAPTURED BY SLIM

day I arrived at the first station, advising him that I was just starting and would reach home by a certain day. What would he think had happened to me? Would Miss Loraine hear that I had been waylaid and held for a ransom? If I only had some means of sending her word of my whereabouts; I believe she would soon find means of liberating me. I would much rather have her find and release me from this hole than have my people know that I was captured.

The next day I only had one visitor, and that a little girl. She came briskly along the alley about nine o'clock, poked her tousled head into the entrance, looked cautiously around, and finally came over to where I lay. She asked if I was awake. I told her I had been awake for hours, and I enquired of her in my most pleasant tones what she had come for. She confided that the doctor had sent her over to see what I wanted for breakfast. "That is very nice of the doctor," I said. "Bring me some boiled eggs, tea and bread and butter."

"All right, mister," she replied, and was off in a twinkling. She very soon returned with my breakfast spread on a rough piece of board. She had combed her hair, washed her face and was looking much more tidy. I think this waitress of mine was

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

about twelve years of age. She sat beside me as I ate, and talked. This little waif from the underworld of the big city had a face and form of beauty. It was true her speech and bearing was uncouth, but her face was very even-featured. She had a straight clear-cut nose and very dark blue eyes, which looked out kindly at one. She was bare-footed, and her head lacked a hair ribbon to hold the luxuriant growth of dark hair which fell over her shoulders down to her waist. She wore no apron, just a plain, greasy old dress. This interesting little girl brought me many a meal after this one, and added much to my comfort. I fell to wondering at the great problems of life with all its different stations and classes which the people of the world occupy. Here was this little girl, Nellie, beautiful, as I have said, in form and face, ready of wit, intelligent, pleasant of speech, and in her eyes showing forth a depth of soul (and Lanice had said that one soul was worth a million dollars in gold, if it were possible to value a soul in money). This young girl was like a lily in a stagnant pond. "What will become of her in after life if she remains in this awful community?" were my thoughts. She could not realize the grave dangers which might befall her. I questioned her as to whether she had always lived here in this place, and she told me that

CAPTURED BY SLIM

she had, that her mother had died long ago and that her father had moved away and that she had never seen nor heard of him since.

I found this little girl, and hundreds of others in the same district, their faces and forms perhaps just as beautiful, their wit and intelligence fully as strong as the girls of the wealthier classes, sinking or about to sink in the depths of misery and degradation. There was no opportunity here for the development of the faculties and graces which are everlasting. Nellie's youthful beauty and happy smile would soon be dragged into the mire; in fact, she was right in the mire of this wretched sore spot of the nation. This is the way of the world, among its hedges and by-ways we find rare jewels and flowers of youth, and I wished that the time would come when titles and knight-hoods would be conferred on individuals for their true worth of soul, rather than for their ancient name, political or commercial fame or prowess at arms. If a corporation or a nation would look after the ills, penury and poverty of a down-trodden sister or brother, as attentively as a millionaire does to his sick baby, or to his broken arm, what a world of broken-down lives, diseased and hungry mortals could be buoyed up to happiness. But alas, a na-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

tion cannot do these things without the hearts of the people, or at least a few of the leaders' hearts being right at the core. A broken arm hurts the whole man. Its pain and throbs cry out in very plain terms to the man for relief. In the very self-same manner does a broken-down brother cry out to his fellow man. He is part and parcel of his fellow-man. No one man can suffer without incurring pain and showing ill-effects on his neighbor man. It may show forth in the neighbor by his becoming surcharged with the disease of the sick one, or perhaps show forth merely in lack of production, either of material matter or a moral or spiritual deterioration, and in the midst of my reverie, I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lord Vessamere Again

WHEN I opened my eyes I did not know how long I had been sleeping, but I realized that it must be late in the night. There were men in the cave beside me. Some were grumbling, others talking low and coarsely, from which I judged that they must have whiskey with them. I lay as still as a mouse for a time, then noiselessly crawled over to that side of my room and peered through an opening in the wall. To my astonishment and horror I beheld in the dim candle light two fashionably dressed women sitting in the corner with their mouths bandaged and a frightened stare in their eyes. They were young women. One of the men with the girls I could plainly see was Slim. The other two I had not seen before. They were hard and ugly-looking and one was evidently half drunk. It was this fellow who awakened me, I think, or perhaps it was the noise of the shuffling of feet as the girls were being dragged or forced along the passage. My curiosity and fear was instantly

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

aroused to know what was the object of these men tonight. I could hardly believe that they were altogether beasts of prey, for I had had many conversations with Slim, and it seemed to me that he had much that was good in him, but he had a desperate mania for robbing and holding rich people for ransoms. Yet, he might resort to greater depths, I feared.

He was dressed this night in a good dark tweed suit, white collar and cuffs and polished shoes. The different fish evidently demanded different clothes.

The larger of the other two men was saying: "Now you ribbins and high feathers, don't you even so much as wink or give a gurgle out of your mouths, or it won't be good fer you. I'm goin' to take this strap off'n yer mouths. Jese' do as I say and ye won't get hurt."

"I would advise you girls to do as this man says," said Slim. "He is a desperate character."

The girls I judged to be from eighteen to twenty years of age. They sat there pale and trembling, with their arms around each other, their hair disarranged and their hats in their hands.

"Jes' tell us straight everything we ask you," said the big fellow, "and dere won't no harm come

LORD VESSAMERE AGAIN

to any of you. Where d'ye live? If you tell us wrong places, one of our men can soon know that it is wrong and it won't be good fer you."

The girls gave him two different addresses.

"What's yer dad do?"

One girl had no father nor mother, was just boarding out. The other's father was in some business, I did not catch the nature of.

"Did they know you was out late tonight?"

They told the man that they were both supposed to be in a neighboring town visiting friends or relations.

"Dese peoples knowed ye was comin'?"

"No," was their reply.

"How long was you to stay?"

"Just two days."

At this the three men held a whispered conversation in the far corner of the room for a few minutes. Slim then told the girls that the host (doctor Warwick) would look after their wants for the night and that they hoped they would enjoy themselves and sleep well. The three men disappeared in the darkness and doctor Warwick very quickly but quietly, came in beside the girls.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Hello, girlees," he said. "How you allee samee come here, hope no blones blokee. Too bad you comee these placee. You allee samee stay home late allee ways?"

The girls began to show a little courage, and with faint hope they let go of one another and stood up. The doctor told them not to be afraid, that this was a good, clean and decent house, hotel, and that he would care for them all right. He told them that Slim was never, under any circumstances a bad man, but that he was only after gold from the high-up people.

He questioned the girls as to who they were and what they were doing that night. They told the doctor that they went out alone to a theatre and were talking perhaps a little loudly and laughing, perhaps in rather an unlady-like manner, that they went to a restaurant after the theatre and found all the tables full, except one, at which sat two young men, where they joined them. These two men opened a conversation with them and they soon were all talking freely together, and most innocently, as they thought. They insisted on paying for our dinners and some ice cream.

"How muchee softee! You silly girlee."

They continued their narration by saying the men

LORD VESSAMERE AGAIN

told them that they were clerks right beside the building. They gave us their cards, and said that they knew Mabel's father quite well. Then they ordered a cab and insisted on taking us to our homes, but they brought us here instead.

How long will so many of the girls of our country refuse to learn by others, that it is better to go to fewer theatre parties and late luncheons at night, than to run the chances of meeting in with evil companions.

"Will girlees have slome tea?" asked the doctor, and he hurried around to prepare it for them. He had them wash their faces, comb their hair and did what he could for their comfort that night.

As I lay awake planning feverishly how I could escape and rescue these innocent girls from this hole, I could hear their occasional sobs. My knee was mending rapidly, and I could manage to get round on it. I walked over to the far side of the room and peeped through a hole in the wall. Through it I could see an ugly-looking man sitting or lounging on the far side of the door, in the space which served as a passage way. "A sentinel on watch over our castle and its possessions," I thought. Could I hit him on the head and get away? It was a risky thing to try.

During the next day I saw nothing of Slim. Doc-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

tor Warwick, the two girls and myself were the sole occupants of the prison.

Early in the afternoon I wrote on a slip of paper, and while the doctor was engaged in frying some eggs on the stove in the corner at the far end of this room, I slipped it through a crack in the old wall near the girls. One of them saw it and secured it before the doctor turned his head. On it I had written that I was held, like them, for a ransom, that I would do all in my power to protect them, and see that they were not harmed and that I was planning for our mutual escape, advising them to keep cool and quiet. I had overheard the address of the girl's father, and I was determined to get away from this place, hunt him up, and get him to secure a posse of men to round up these scoundrels. Some days previous to this, I had decided to say nothing about Slim and his capturing me, but I now changed my mind. The decoying of these innocent girls and dragging them to this den were tactics loathsome to me, and I decided then and there to break up their gang if it were possible. I was convinced that Slim was the leader, that he was a shrewd man, not easily beaten, and also that he had a good half dozen rendezvous under ground to which he could remove his goods, or stock in trade, at a moment's notice.

LORD VESSAMERE AGAIN

"Within the jungles of a great city, amidst its tall buildings and warehouses, and in spite of its electric lights, what varied experiences there were. It is true, indeed, that one-half of the world does not know what the other half is doing," I mused. I cannot tell you of all the thoughts that surged within me as I lay in this den of vice in the great modern city, with its thousands and thousands of human beings, perhaps more than one-tenth of them in this district existing in tumble-down tenements, caves or cellars; dirty, abject with want, hunger and degradation. Yet not many blocks away were thousands of others in fine clothing, with well filled cupboards, carpeted houses and gilt edged dishes, living sumptuously and luxuriously, while their neighbors starved, and they seemed quite oblivious to the want and suffering at their door; quite content, thinking the system right and proper. The denizens of the slums lived on from day to day without the least chance or way of escape from their wretchedness and want. It is not one man's or a dozen men's fault. It is the fault of systems, corporations and political parties, and I will not say but that corporate religion has a big share of blame attached to it. In many cases the down-trodden and poor are superior in intellect and integrity than the richer classes. What a contrast

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

between the life of these people and that of those in the far distant prairie and valley. In that country of broad plains and beautiful valleys there are millions of acres of open and partly wooded land waiting for the foot of man. Land capable of sustaining and nourishing millions who huddle in the big cities and centres which cannot or will not supply them with the necessaries of life. There they might have the fresh air and sunshine and enjoy the big open country with its fields as yet untouched.

The confinement was beginning to wear on me, now that my knee was almost well, and I was growing desperate. The girls had been imprisoned for several days, and from what I could make out, were weakening under the nervous strain, and might at any time become seriously ill. For some reason or other Slim had not visited me since their capture and things were looking bad for both myself and the girls. I had decided to make a bold dash for liberty this coming night, and had succeeded in passing a note to the women late that same afternoon. I told them I would do or die, giving them at the same time all my plans. As soon as they heard me cry out "fire," they were to rush with all possible speed to the door and down the passageway, and that I would be with them.

LORD VESSAMERE AGAIN

Everything was quiet on that eventful night. I had gathered all the old paper and rags that I could find. Doctor Warwick was with the two young women, and outside the entrance sat the man of the ugly visage. Stealthily and noiselessly I crawled up to the opening unnoticed. Doctor Warwick, I knew, was sitting near the girls on the floor, with his back towards me. I secured a stick that was lying near the hole, made my way cautiously to the passage, quickly lighted my bundle of papers, threw them into the middle of the room I had left, and called out "fire." At my cry the man at the door burst in. I banged him on the head and he rolled over to the ground with a thump. This was our opportunity to gain a road to freedom, if possible, and we soon found our way along the passage. We groped along in the dim light with what speed we could make and suddenly came to what seemed to be a stone wall. I stumbled over a pile of rubbish and fell forward against a little door, which flew open with the impact and revealed to us an alley, better lighted than the one we were in, and running at right angles to it. At this juncture we heard voices and a clattering behind us. A little distance ahead were a group of men coming our way. We hesitated, and before we had made up our minds as to what was best to do, the fellows be-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

hind came up to us, grabbed me and threw me on my back.

"What do you mean by trying to hold this man, our friend?" the girls demanded, "and for all we know, to murder us?"

They held me in a grip of iron as I lay there and the girls talked to the man. They said it was not right to hold us in confinement and that they would stand for it no longer. Mabel affirmed that she was down to the breaking point, and that they simply must let them go home. The men who held me were both strangers. I had not seen them before. They permitted me to stand up presently, securely pinioned, one on either side, holding me by the arms.

"We don't want nuthin' from the girls, I'll tell you straight," said the smaller of the two. "No money allee samee. Sure t'ing everly time. Our chief he jus' formee me dis yer night dere's no money comin', so ze girlees can hike. Me show 'em out. Now, Mr. Lordy Dowdy, you go back with us an' stay 'til we say you go."

I said, "Thank heaven for all small favors! Girls you are free." They pleaded with the two men for some minutes to obtain my freedom and at first utterly refused to be sent home, unless I was set

LORD VESSAMERE AGAIN

at liberty, and stuck to it with a determination that was surprising. They said that they would create a disturbance in the city if I was not set at liberty. My two gaolers, however, remarked that it did not matter a d—— to them, that they would look after all future disturbances, and at last the girls reluctantly shook hands, thanked me for my kind attentions and efforts to save them from their predicament, and departed, while I was led back to my stylish boarding house, and settled down in the same apartment I had occupied before. Here I was left to meditate further on the economics and inequalities of life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Discovery

DOWN at the crossing of Silver Gulch river, just a little below Loraine's old homestead, a large crew of bridge builders were engaged, under the direction of Morgan Cameron, in the piling work for a bridge to be constructed at this point. There were the scows, donkey engines, ropes, tackle, pile drivers and all the requirements for the carrying on of their work. This particular day Cameron had ordered an examination of the bed of the river. It was late in the afternoon and the grappling irons had been clearing away from the bed of the river boulders and rocks of all sizes and shapes. In its last pull up, however, it had scooped up more than rocks. It had just emptied its contents into the scow and two or three men were examining the debris which had been unloaded with the muck, sand and gravel, when one of them discovered something unusual. It was a heavy article for its size, and was about fourteen inches by twelve, and possibly eight inches deep. He handed it to Cameron who carried

THE DISCOVERY

it to his tent. It was an old metal box. The lid was rusted and securely locked. He deposited it safely in his tool chest for the time being and then returned to his superintending of the bridge gang. He continued directing the excavating operations until the six o'clock whistle had blown and the men had all scattered to their shanties.

The young engineer had been considerably disturbed and much confused since his encounter with Baldy that memorable night. He had heard all that Baldy had said to the old man, and it weighed heavily upon his mind. Not that it lessened his admiration for Lanice, but it in some way conjured up unpleasant things in his mind. There was certainly some mystery about the girl and the old man. The more he thought of her beauty of soul, her clear pink and white complexion, dark brown hair and refined bearing, the more he wondered. The old man was certainly kind to her and loved her with a parental fondness, and had given Lanice to understand that her mother had died while she (Lanice) was very young.

As Cameron sat alone in his tent this night, he thought of the iron box and decided to take another look at it. He carefully lifted it out of the big chest,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

examining it minutely. He turned it over and over and then tried to pry it open, but the lock was rusted so deeply that he could not seem to make any impression upon it. He then found a hammer and spent considerable time on it with this tool and chisel, but finally saw that this was useless. He then placed the box inside the tool chest once more, which he locked securely, and hurriedly putting on his coat and hat went off in the direction of Bill Johnson's home. He was the chief mechanic of the construction camp and Cameron knew that he would surely find a way of opening the box. After the two men had talked the matter over, Johnson gathered up a drill and some other tools which he thought might be necessary, and returned with Cameron. The box was once more taken from the chest and Johnson drilled a hole in the lock, and in a very short time had it open. Together they examined the little trinkets, old letters, photographs and documents. Everything was badly moulded, with the exception of one letter and a document, which were rolled up together in a buckskin bag which in turn had been placed inside a rubber pouch. These were in a remarkably well preserved condition. They examined the document and read the letter. It was headed and dated "Morpeth," November twelfth, and read as follows:

THE DISCOVERY

My dear Girl:

I have just heard that you recently arrived on this earth. I was pleased indeed to hear this. It is true that you are very young and inexperienced in world manners; you are also very small, for I hear that you only weigh seven and a half pounds. Now, I do not censure you, nor poke fun at you for this, as I know that you will grow very rapidly in that mighty country and that you will develop into a beautiful woman. I am told that you have all the indications of a queen and a great leader, and you will reach out with power and strong cords among the people you come in contact with. Some day, I believe, that you will travel far and will become a great and good woman. You will gather about you an army of men and women, not bedecked with swords or guns, but each with a breast-plate of glad tidings and with a helmet of peace on their heads, their feet shod with the wings of "swiftness to heal." I wish you God-speed in your starting out. I hope you may thrive and grow rapidly.

This letter was signed "Your very best uncle in the world."

One of the brooches they examined had engraved on it "L. F." The two men examined each article

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

carefully, and then Cameron placed them back in the box, but said nothing to Johnson as to his suspicions in connection with how the box had been deposited in the river.

To add to Cameron's misgivings this evening, there was waiting for him on his arrival at his cabin, a letter from Lanice. She had heard that there was a lone miner away up country sick nearly unto death. She had a foreboding that this man might be Baldy, but whether the man was Baldy or not, he needed attention, and she had asked Cameron if there was any way possible to send a man to this sick miner's cabin. It so happened that Cameron had everything working smoothly at the crossing at this time. He could easily leave the boss in charge and make the trip himself, and he might solve a mystery for himself, and last, but not least, save a sick miner. Cameron was one of those big-hearted, out-spoken fellows with a quick decisive turn and zeal unbounded for any man in need. He sent word to Lanice that he would start at once himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

Pushing up the Canyon

THE following morning found Cameron on his way bright and early. At night the traveller picked a dry spot by a sheltering rock or log, rolled up in a blanket and slept.

On the second day he was thirty miles on his journey and still ascending the steeps. He realized the desperate situation of the man he was seeking, so with determination and good cheer he continued the hard climbing.

At night-fall of the fifth day out he saw a light in the distance; his heart beat lightly and with fresh hope he exclaimed: "Somebody here." The outlines of a cabin set on a level bench considerably above high-water mark on the plateau were easily discerned. As he approached, the door was opened quietly and at the same instant a light was protruded through the opening very close to his face, and "hands up" was heard as a greeting salute.

"No objections; but why all this formality? I am

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

no robber or murderer. Can't you give a fellow something to eat?"

"That 'pends," says the man, "who you pan out."

"Look me over and see if you know me."

"Never set eyes on you before."

"Nor do I remember seeing you; so we are even on that score."

"What you're in these diggin's for?"

"That may be your business and it may not," answered the man looking him unflinchingly in the eye.

"We'll make it business of ours; but come in to our dug-out, you melo-cotton. Are you single-handed?"

"Yes, alone and broke, with no pick, shovel, dog, grub or money, and hungry as a bear. If you will kindly move those guns around a little, I believe I would enjoy your camp a trifle better; thank you, that is fine."

The two men of the shack kept eyeing the stranger with a suspicion that would be nerve-racking to a timid fellow; but he calmly ate his supper.

"You're up here looking for somebody?"

"With precision you have hit my plans. Go on guessing."

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

"We're not guessin'; we know your blunderin' game to a finish. If you think you're such a high scoodlum spy you might wake up some frosty mornin' and find yourself stark and stiff."

"That would be rather touching; but I hardly follow your argument."

"It's no matter. Who told you we had claims up here?"

"Who told you that I said you had claims here?"

"Well, that's what we guess."

"I have guessed considerably in my day, but I find on my way thus far in life that it does not pay to guess; I now work exclusively by definite principles. Whether you are miners, politicians, preachers, lawyers, farmers or ditchers, there is always a safe rule to go by, and that is the rule of principle and not the rule of guessing."

"How far have you come today? Did you meet anybody down the canyon?"

"I came about fifteen miles and I did not meet anyone. Why?"

"Oh, nothing much. We thought we saw some long lanky guy goin' over the rise of ground at the three pines; but maybe it was a deer. Have you any tobaccer?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"That is one thing I have, as well as a bottle or two of medicine, a few crackers and some cheese. Will you have some?"

"Nothing but tobaccer, and we can shuffle you out the shiny nuggets for a great big price a pouch if you want to divvy up."

"Well, pardner, you're our guest tonight, and you will fare on the very best we have in the shape of grub, and sleep on our best cedar bough bed that is a dead cinch," said the second man of the cabin with a labiodental twang. "And you can bet your old hat everything we say goes in our camp to icemonger, claim jumper, or sky pilot. When we share up, we share up, and when we shoot we shoot. We feed a man bacon one hour, and fill him full of bullets the next if it suits our taste and general 'viction of heart; whether the trailer, that is the man we feed or fill up with lead, disagrees with our plan of going on or not, that matters not to Graham and me a—bit. We take 'streme delight to do these tings, you bet, either afore meals or after; but when we say we do a ting, we do it if it breaks our rubber necks; so you are safe in our humble home tonight, believe me, pard. Don't you hit the pipe yourself?"

"Never learned the act; I never got that high up in modern civilization, but someday I may reach the

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

lofty altitude, and aspire to the noble deed so suddenly that it might take your breath if you happened to be in my neighborhood at the time. Do you know, I rather envy you fellows who fill up the good old brier, clay or corn cob and draw in the amber juice or tobacco liquid and then launch it forth in the form of golden ringlets above your head. You see, I am trying to keep up to that oration of yours."

I believe your pard would make a preacher or a politician or some such a brand. At this the big man laughed outright.

"A preacher; I see my chum here making a try at preachin'."

"How long have you been here?"

"Five years."

"You have! No wonder you are suspicious, full of oratory and fond of the brier. How do you procure your provisions?"

"We get them with the company's goods on the other side of the ridge; they're working a rock game over there."

"Say, Ruff, if you don't let up on that pipe, we won't have any tobaccer left soon,"—this from the big man to the little fellow. "You have not told us who you're lookin' for yet, stranger."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Neither have I, but I thought you knew."

"Well, we've a good straight guess."

"I thought this light was leading me to the very spot and man that I was searching for when I first saw it, but I was mistaken."

"It might pay you to blurt it out, for no matter what your game is, you have to get our orders to go any furdur on from this dig-out. If your game's square, you may hike on."

"And what would you call 'square', pray?"

"We'll tell you what we think after you speak out your own say; that's the rule of our school."

"Are there many miners in here?"

"Darn few."

"Do you know them all and their locations or claims?"

"You bet we do, and every path in and out of the whole country."

"Good, then I want one or both of you very early in the morning to accompany me; that is all I can tell you tonight. I am sleepy and pretty nearly all in."

In the morning bright and early the stranger awoke and aroused the two miners. They climbed out of bed, unbolted the door and threw open the

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

windows, letting in a burst of glorious sunshine and fresh mountain air, and such air! The cabin was pretty well up the slope of Deep Canyon. The traveller stepped out to take a view of the grand and magnificent scenery spread out before him. To the right was a lofty peak with huge broad shoulders and massive head, likened very much to a giant man. The head was snow-capped and part of the breast was wrapped in a sheet of white. It stood in stillness towering above all environment, grand and magnificent. To the left began peak after peak stretching as far as the eye could reach, some snow-capped, others of bare rock. Down the slopes of these were forests in their denseness and solitude.

Straight in front of the cabin stretched forth a level plateau of perhaps twenty-five miles in extent from east to west. This was on one side of the creek only. This plateau was entirely clear of trees, and it was covered with wild flowers and short velvety grass, a lovely spot to behold. The log house of the miners was set at the side next to the creek which ran quietly and smoothly at this point. The shore line was a white sandy beach, with a sprinkling of small smooth pebbles, which beach sloped gently to the water's edge. Two or three hundred yards back of the cabin on somewhat higher ground, and coming from up stream, was a ditch or small

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

canal cut through the grassy yard. It ran for a mile or two and must have cost a good deal of hard labor. "I'll bet these fellows have a good thing in this creek bed. No wonder they are watching things pretty closely," thought the traveller.

He said to his hosts: "You have a great thing here; at least you have a beautiful place. I don't know about the gold nuggets, but judging from the labor in building that ditch and flume you have for the sluicing, there are some all right. Now don't get alarmed; I did not come here to spy on you nor will I ever breathe a word about you or your claims outside if you don't want me to. I believe in letting a man operate his own show, whether in placer mines, cattle-raising, lumbering, or any old occupation. How do you know but I am looking for a claim?"

"If you are, we'll help you get a dandy, and take it from me, it'll be some claim."

"No, I am not looking for a claim. I have no time, and it would be too bad to tie it up from someone else if I did not work it myself."

"They call me Cameron down at the camp."

At this the two miners rushed up to him, grabbed his two hands and slapped him on the back.

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

"Well I'll be doggasted! I told Ruff last night that 'that feller was no spy or claim jumper.' I knew from the cut of his jib. Well, say, we're glad to have you hanging around; rather have you than the king of England or the president of the United States, you bet. You won't take it hard the way we talked to you, but do you know there are some sneaks in the world and they find their way up here sometimes, but they find hard tramping to find their way back again. What brought you up here?"

"I am hunting for a sick man, but he may be farther on."

The three men soon hit the trail together for the cabin of a sick miner some distance beyond.

"You say you fellows have been here for five years?"

"Yes, and we have made a good clean-up. We have one hundred thousand clinks in gold nuggets buried around here in snooky spots, and we're goin' to show you every one of the holes with the pure stuff in them. We're glad you come in. I reckon my chum here is sure growin' into a snaky miser, and I don't like that disease a little bit, although maybe I look like one myself. I want to talk the matter over with you, Cameron. You're the very man

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

I wanter see. Do you know, we've been muckraking this stuff out in such full-up pockets that it sure as guns turned our heads, specially Ruff's."

"What about your own greasy lumbago, sand mucker self?" replied Ruff.

"Well, cut it out; you see I am gettin' tired of it all. In a little town way down in middle west, I left a good woman and true, and my darling little girl to battle this old life alone, years ago. There was no work in the town and me and Martha were down and out. I stayed around as long as I could stand it, and then in the dark night I struck out for the north and gold. It is a long story. I worked from town to town for two years but never could scrape enough money together to go back or to send for my wife, and so I took a notion, this Ruff and I together, to strike out for the hills, and here we have been muckrakin', scratching gravel and shovelin' sand until we're regular moles."

"Did you never write to your wife?"

"Yes, once, and I told her I had hard luck but some day I would go back for her or send for her, and I told her to stay with her mother and that as sure as the sun was above in the heavens I would come to her as soon as I could. That's the last I

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

have sent her in a letter of any kind. I never told her where I was going and she may think I'm dead. It's just awful, but I couldn't help it. I got papers from our home, and I learned that my wife and her old mother and my little girl are still there together in the same old house. I just got diggin' in this sand and ditch, and I guess the gold's turned my head. I would sit up at nights for the first months with my gun at my side to watch these gold bubbles, and here I 'ave been for these years growin' worse and worse. Ruff never had a wife and his god is gold, and he talks and thinks gold till I am sick at my stomach. I think he has gone a little be-gubbled, and I was just thinking if I don't do something pretty soon, he won't be fit for the eagles to pick, and it's just 'bout a cinch my old bones 'll be no better, even if they're a little bigger."

"Did you say you had a hundred thousand dollars dug out?"

"That is what we have, fifty thousand apiece in gold slugs by dead weight. It wouldn't pile much to a millionaire, but to us two gravel sifters it sure seems half the earth with a fence round it."

"Well, when we hit the trail in this gravel dug-out, and for months or a year more I tell you straight goods nothin' in dis world sooped it up to us so

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

good in our numskulls, and Ruff and me just touched the high spots; gold was the whole thing."

The three men were all this time making slow but sure headway up the gully, Graham leading the way, with Cameron close at his heels and Ruff bringing up the rear on a trot. It was noon when they reached the man's shanty. Cameron examined the bed and clothing and felt sure that the man had been sick, but nowhere could they see him. They searched inside and outside, around by the wood pile back in the little clump of trees, over by a heap of logs, and finally examined some lately cut splinters.

"He has been sick all right, or he would have chopped more wood. There is no water pail here, no fresh water in the house; I see he has some flour and bacon yet, so he is not starving. I'll bet he has crawled out for water."

They followed the path down the zigzag course, and here at the very water's edge they found the poor man lying stretched out in the noon-day sun on the sand with the empty pail at his side. Graham lifted him carefully, and they soon had his head bathed and water for him to drink. He could not swallow, seemingly, or even open his eyes. The man was nearly gone. His tongue was parched and dry and he was in a woefully wasted condition, down

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

to skin and bones. He had dragged himself this morning out to the little stream of water and had given up for good on the bank, exhausted and ready to die. They finally managed to pour some water down his throat and by this act and a good deal of rubbing they made signs of life appear. He opened his eyes and leaned his head against Graham.

"That you, Graham?" he said.

"Sure, it is me, Swanson; we found you all right."

"Guess I'm sick," he said.

"There is no guessin' about it. You are sure sick, and good and sick, but we will pull you through, don't get scared. We have a good man with us; he came all the way from the Lord only knows where, just to pick you up off this sand. Now we will carry you up to the shanty, and you lie still as a mouse. We want ter see what we can do with you."

It was plain to Cameron at first sight that this man was not Baldy, but he did not say anything to Graham or Ruff about his suspicions as to who he had expected to find.

Although the sick miner to whom Cameron had ministered in the little cabin on the hillside, on his recovery still remained at the sluice box, one of the three diggers and delvers into the sandbar had de-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

terminated on a complete round-about-face in his mode of life.

Ruff and Swanson became partners in the Swanson claim; that is, they had agreed to work this claim together for a term of six months, taking a half and half share in the clean-up. It was arranged that Ruff move bed, bag and baggage over to Swanson's mansion. This mansion of big timber construction was laid out in four square—fourteen by fourteen. Within we find fitted out and furnished, a kitchen, living room and parlor. The little sheet-iron stove in the kitchen sat on four granite rocks, each about the size of a peck measure. In the southeast corner Swanson's bed is spiked to the wall. In the northeast corner Ruff's bunk is set up on two posts on one side and a log of the cabin on the other. The head is pointing north, for Ruff would not sleep with his head pointing to the east, west or south, nor would he alight from his bed in the morning facing east, not for a full-up and running over pan of gold nuggets. In the centre of the abode, with one leg in the parlor, one in the living room and two in the kitchen, stands a table. Beside the table are two wooden benches. The floor of the cabin is of plain, unvarnished earth. Within convenient reach of the little stove are a couple of frying pans, fitted between wooden pegs

PUSHING UP THE CANYON

driven into the logs of the house. Close up to the ceiling and in the corner over Ruff's bed is suspended a rifle and a shot gun. The only picture adorning the walls of this mansion is a calendar bearing an advertisement, a white horse being the most prominent figure in this picture. From the ceiling is suspended a sack of flour and side of bacon, being at a little distance from the rifle. Behind the door stand picks, shovels, crowbars and the usual tools of the gravel bed artist.

Great planning was going on in the brains of this cabin's inhabitants in these days as to the best method of running a flume, and a scheme for separating sand and gold, better than the sluice box, or as to how they could minimize the everlasting shovel monotony of the old "elbow method." True it was, that mining topics did not by any means occupy their entire attention in the long winter evenings, for Ruff was fond of reciting to his partner long and boastful stories of his early manhood. When he was in full swing, Swanson did not get much chance beyond an occasional nod of the head or chirping "Yes, I know," and he would hold forth until the wee hours of the morning.

Graham has "swore off" as he termed it, from all further mining exploits. He bade goodbye to

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

the hills, the cabin, the sluice box and the gravel bar, also to his companion. He has changed his clothing and left behind him forever the "blue jay," smoke, pick, shovel and crowbar.

He has an entirely new bearing. His head is erect and steady, his step firm and strong, and his eye is ever on the alert and now peering into the distance. To the home of his early manhood he is going. A new life and hope is electrified within him. What recollections and fond remembrances arise; the young wife as he last saw her, the old wooden gate, the cottage, with its little garden. Would his love-life companion forgive and receive him? Would she recognize him? "The old home." How it thrilled him to mention those words. The miner in the far distant hills dreams of it, the lone bachelor rancher on the wide prairies dwells upon it with a longing heart.

CHAPTER XX.

Trouble in the Construction Camps

CAMERON was still absorbed in business affairs. He had completed the big railway through and beyond the Loraine Valley, and had secured a charter for the building of a new railway. This was a transcontinental, which was to run from the Hudson's Bay westward, south of the Copper Mine and the Big Bear, heading straight over land and Behring Straits, terminating in the great city of London. Cameron was possessed with a mania for constructing railways. The spirit of the land had gripped him strongly and held him most tenaciously. He dreamed of railways at night and strained every nerve in the daytime towards the accomplishing of his project. "In the completion of this enterprise," he would say, "I shall have my iron-spiked pathway. I shall have wealth and shall obtain unlimited power and my great end and aim in life will be accomplished. What is more gratifying in this world?"

The survey had been completed and the money

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

was forthcoming for the hundreds of men, teams and scrapers, who were now busily engaged in tearing up the soil, filling in depressions and levelling down the elevations along the line of the new trans-continental. There was a harsh driving and unrelenting urging forward of the men to their very last point of endurance. The octopus of ambition and greed was upon the enterprise. Many lives were sacrificed in the dangerous hurrying of leaders in their greedy desire to obtain more labor in the hours of the day. Onward with the steel, string out the ties, up with the trestle, and drive on the scrapers, was the slogan. The men were grumbling at the slave-driving and harsh methods. They were kept a few minutes overtime a few days in each week; and started in their work a little ahead of the seven o'clock whistle in the mornings. They were barely allowed time to gulp down their mid-day meal. The food furnished in the hall was placed before them in a rough and tumble manner. The bunks of their sleeping tents were sadly neglected, and there was dirt and filth gathering everywhere. The men were out of sorts; the strain was becoming unbearable; they felt the lack of sympathy, and care given towards their comforts.

On Friday at noon the gang from one end of the construction line to the other walked out on strike.

TROUBLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION CAMPS

Everything was tied up solidly. Cameron pleaded, argued with them and threatened them by turns, but they were adamant. He had been hard with them and now they were hard with him. He slipped in some new men, but they were soon driven out, or joined the strikers, and remained loafing around the camps after their arrival. Both Cameron and Mike were in desperate moods. They were growing less compassionate with the men as days went by, and there seemed no chance of a settlement whatever. Ten days had passed in this manner. Mike was raging up and down the dump, swearing and calling the men all kinds of "western nicknames," but they heeded him not. The two men met one day at a string of scrapers on the dump, in earnest conversation about the problem.

"Let's take a walk, Mike, and see if we can't figure out some plan to get these men to work. There must surely be some way of settlement," said Cameron.

"Divil a bit o' it, do I think, on this side of hell. They are as stubborn as mules and as ignorant and crazy as bats," returned Mike.

They walked together along the top of the dump to the eastward, leaving the camps gradually behind them, and all the time in deep thought as to their project.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"I've got it, Mike, I've got it!" ejaculated Cameron. "Let's wheel around and hit the trail to the telegraph station. Not a minute to lose. Reach out and make good strides, for I am going to hustle."

In an hour they reached the clap-board cabin of the operator.

The two men hurried into the office. "How's the wire, Harry?" asked Cameron.

"Working like a charm."

"Can you get Loraine station for me?"

"I'll send in a call this very minute. I am awful glad to see you fellows," remarked the operator. "It gets pretty lonesome and monotonous here just having this little brass instrument to talk to."

"I have seven hundred men to talk and swear at and I get too much of it. I got angry, and Mike and I just had to break loose and seek more congenial company, so here we are with you," said Cameron.

"What's the trouble down at the camps?"

"Trouble? Why everything is trouble and nothing but trouble. I would give my old shirt and everything I own to change places with you, Harry. Here you sit in your cabin with nothing to bother

TRUBLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION CAMPS

you, with a sweep of green grass and beautiful flowers before your eyes as far as you can see, and you are at liberty to wander out among them if you please, no time schedule for you; no seven o'clock whistle; you are as free and unbounded as the birds of the air."

"That is perfectly true, and do you know that it is not so awful lonesome as one would imagine. I have a couple of pet rabbits, a young silver fox, a dozen prairie chicken and a badger, and they are pretty good company for me. Come over here and see them; I'll just attach my outdoor signal to this instrument by which I can hear a call four hundred yards away."

Cameron, Mike and Harry strolled out to the wire netted zoological garden of this lone operator of the big prairie.

"Come here, Daniel, and show my friends what you can do."

Harry opened the little gate and Daniel toddled out. He stood on his hind legs while Harry fed him with some bread and cheese. He then climbed on to his shoulder, took off Harry's hat and waved it towards the visitors. The silver fox was even more accomplished and better trained than the badger, and it was evident that Harry had some very

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

interesting company. They had spent possibly half an hour in viewing Harry's zoo, garden and plantation, when suddenly his signal commenced clicking out his call.

Cameron had wired to Lanice:

"Great missionary field here. Large number of men in camp. New settlers coming. Good accommodation. You will enjoy the trip I know, and the people are longing to see you. Please answer immediately. Am waiting at the telegraph office."

Lanice's answer was short and plain:

"Will start immediately for the new field."

Towards the evening of the fifth day there was seen approaching far off on the trail of the lone and now extinct buffalo, three persons on horseback. They were perhaps four miles away. Cameron's heart beat wildly at this sight, and he was running to and fro as they approached. At intervals he would peer eargerly across the prairie. Onward and onward they came and very soon were at the cabin door of the young engineer.

"Miss Loraine, I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have come," exclaimed Cameron.

Lanice was helped off the dapple grey. "I am really delighted to view my field, Mr. Cameron,"

TROUBLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION CAMPS

she replied. "Thank you for advising me of the need of my presence."

"I had good reasons for sending for you, one being to see and greet you personally; another was that I wanted you to see this prairie country for yourself."

"What a wonderful country, and such an immense stretch of prairie. I had no idea that it was so vast and attractive."

"But you have only seen a corner of it."

"I can see magnificent possibilities in this ocean-wide field, because of its vastness and also of its fertility. Railways and towns will spring up here. I look at this country from one viewpoint, and you look at it from another, Mr. Cameron."

I do not censor you for this, nor find fault, for you are in the commercial world but I am in another sphere."

"There will soon be thousands of families here," he replied, "but just now we have only one, and I must introduce you to the woman."

Cameron escorted Lanice to Mike's home, where she was greeted with great warmth by his wife and the two little girls. Mrs. Maguire soon had a good steaming hot dinner for the company present. The little girls in the meantime were busily engaged in

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

talking to Lanice and asking her myriads of questions. Mrs. Maguire was a trim little Scotch-woman, her husband hailing from Ireland. They had a cosy little home of six rooms. The house was built of rough boards, with strips of batting nailed over the cracks. It had a board roof and withal had a neat appearance. It was plainly but comfortably furnished.

The hostess remarked that "she hoped Miss Loraine would not get lonesome."

"Don't you worry about that Mrs. Maguire. I don't often become lonesome; in fact, I am exceedingly glad to be here among you all and it may be for some time," replied Lanice.

In a big stretch of sparsely settled country a newcomer is usually hailed with great delight and cordiality, and Miss Loraine felt that she was made very welcome indeed.

CHAPTER XXI.

Winning Out

THE following morning Lanice rose bright and early and was away before breakfast, even before the other occupants of the household were bestirring themselves. She saddled the dapple grey herself and proceeded out over the prairie for a morning ride. This was incidental to her determined effort to reach the construction camps before the men had had their breakfast. Before her lay the big open prairie, also to her right and left it spread out in broad expanse.

"What a bewildering stretch of land," she soliloquized, "waiting for the people to use it."

In all directions was a luxuriant growth of wild grass, flowers and pea vine. Certainly a splendid heritage for man. She had ridden rapidly at right angles to the direction of the construction camps, but now turned her charger suddenly and was soon galloping directly towards them. The men were just washing before breakfast, when she reined up her grey in the midst of them. They were seven

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

hundred in number, and all appeared to be in an ugly mood; but the novelty of the sight of a young girl with her Mexican hat, trim khaki suit and silver spurs, on a visit to them, and so early in the morning, was fascinating and made it an important event in their camp life. Some of the laggards were just crawling out of bed and a few were still in bed. The cook and his helpers were busily engaged preparing the morning meal, in the midst of flour, bacon and pots and pans, and they did not notice her arrival for a moment. The rest of the men, however, soon gathered about the girl. They had not heard of her arrival at Mike's home, and none knew of her mission. These men were all strangers to her. It was a motley crew that gathered around her; some very shabbily dressed, others unkempt. Some, however, were bright and intelligent and of neat appearance. There were Greeks, Italians, Swedes, Scotch, American and English.

"You lost, hey, lady?" asked George.

"I think not," she replied. "I came here on purpose to see you. How is the railway work going?"

"No go, vell bad ting. Boss he no savvy good hours, too much hard push, too much all samm grub, too bad hard bed, and all samm hard words all time. We all strike, all mens strike."

WINNING OUT

"Are you on strike, did you say?"

"Sure ting, we stay strike too."

"But how can Mr. Cameron build a railway if none of you men will work?"

"Me no care, his d——r——"

(Here two or three big fellows called out in some foreign language and one thrust his hand over the speaker's mouth.)

"Big railway go bust we no care, we shoot hard, stiff, cold, dead."

"Now, see here, men; I just came to make a call on you, but I feel I must talk very plainly though kindly to you. You are going to have a big railway. I have many things to say to you, but want some breakfast first."

"You no breakfast? You sure hungry. Come, come with us. Here, cook, you d——, hurry up, you slow d——, hurry."

The cook, together with a couple of helpers who had turned in to carry the food for their guest, soon had the table loaded down with all the good things they could gather. These were placed on a long table which was made of plain bare boards with no oilcloth over it, and, as it seemed to Lanice, had not been cleaned for a month. Their visitor was

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

seated at the head of the table, with ten men on each side and with Sandy at the far end.

"Hev yer come far?" they queried.

"Not very far this morning, but I came very far during the last week, and every step of the way to see you people and the country. I am sorry you have trouble. I have only been here a little while, and, of course, do not know much about your troubles or Mr. Cameron's. It is indeed too bad that you and he cannot agree. I cannot build rail-ways, but I can tell you how to agree; how to walk and act so that the boss, the engineer and yourselves will all pull together. You must know if some men pull one way on a tie or rail and some the other, that it is impossible to get the tie or rail in position. The engineer is required to construct so much of the railway grade before he can get money to pay you men, and you are required to work so long each day at the grade before you get any wages. Every-one must think right and act right towards one another in this world or there is bound to be trouble."

"He all samm boss. Me no care."

"But maybe you do not know about the boss, what contract he has to fill or in what time he has to fulfill it."

WINNING OUT

"You see Mr. Cameron?"

"Yes, I will see him, and I am sure he is reasonable, and that there will be no difficulty when you all understand things fully. This man must be capable and trustworthy when the company sends him out here to take charge of this large enterprise. Perhaps it is at headquarters the trouble lies. They may have placed on Mr. Cameron's shoulders too heavy a task to be accomplished in so short a space of time, and may not understand conditions.

"I have come a long way to see you men, as I have said, and have carried with me a wonderful treasure of great price. It has only recently been discovered. It would appear that it had been hidden away. I want to tell you about this treasure sometime soon. I know that you do not know very much about it, for I noticed all along the dump as I rode into your camps that it was pretty truly absent at this present moment. You can lay many thousands more ties per day by using this treasure. You teamsters can build a better grade, and can keep your horses in better order; you shovellers can easily handle more gravel by using it. It is not hard to carry or hold on to. I do not manufacture this thing, nor have I ever known of any place where it was manufactured. Some people have recently discovered it tucked away under some big piles of steel

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

and iron. I was awfully glad when I found it. Your wages are not nearly as valuable as this treasure, even if you worked for a thousand years and received ten dollars a day for your labor. How much do you receive a day for pick and shovel work?"

"Two dollars a day," called out one fellow.

"Well, that is pretty good. How much are you getting now?"

"Nuddins, by —, nuddins."

"Well, that is too bad. No one getting any money and no railroad building. There must be something wrong."

"Somedings rong alriid, somedings. The boss, he say he know all, we know nuddins."

"That is the way of the old school. One may say one thing, and another something else, but they all forget to use this treasure."

"I am very glad to have met you men and to have partaken of this good meal, the best I have had in a long time. I must thank the cook and all of you for your kindness."

At this Miss Loraine mounted the grey and returned at a gallop to Mrs. Maguire's.

Cameron had wired the company for an exten-

WINNING OUT

sion of time in which to complete the grade to mile One Forty-two and they had refused it.

"I'll take this thing in my own hands," he said to Mike, "and we will try a new plan with the men, but not for a little while."

Lanice had been in their midst now for three or four days. Every night the construction gang had turned out to hear "the little girl with the great heart" and she was given a good hearing at all the meetings.

After the men had partaken of their dinner on the fourth day of Lanice's holding forth among them, Cameron said to Mike: "We'll try our plan now. I believe a new spirit is in camp. You hike over to the teamsters' tents and get those ten bosses together. Tell them I want to see them right away at my tent. You know the ones to pick out, the refractory fellows, and be sure to bring that big red haired fellow, as he seems to have a great influence with the men. Then hustle over to the shovellers' tent and pick out a half a dozen of the bosses there and send them up as well. You stay with the men and talk with them for awhile about the weather, fish, bear or anything, until I get through with these gravel dusters."

When the men in question had crowded into

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Cameron's little tent and had set themselves down, some on chairs, others on benches and stools, Cameron said:

"I was wondering, boys, if some of you were not getting tired of hanging around doing nothing? I am real sure that I am myself. I have no time to lose if we can finish this contract on time and the company have refused to extend it a day. You men and all the rest of the gang are losing wages, and the summer is getting along. You need the money and your families need it. It is possible that a mother, a sister or a wife is depending upon you and are expecting you to do your duty. What is the use of tying things up so? We're all too pig-headed, I guess. What do you say if we get to work?"

At this appeal of Cameron's to their horse sense, as he called it, the leader said: "We're with you, but ye ken the hash, Meester Cameron? Weel, it is na' to be sae aften amang us. The parrich iss wholesome like, it beelds a body oup so strang fer th' day's job. Them skilpit beenes frae Boss-tene, which them Yankees preech so strang, air gude fer to set before the likes o' we railroad beelders. And noo, Meester Cameron, ye ken th' drink frae the kettle? Tay, tay, all the time tay, from the breakin' o' t'morning t' the gooin' doun o' the sun. I am

WINNING OUT

sure it isse na mare than proper to breng oup this subjec' o' drink. T'ould land o' Scootland wud be gleid t' send ye a barrel, ay a hogshead o' Scootch whuskey. Eet bilds a mon oup. What dae yee say, boys?"

"You must remember that there are Italians, Swedes and also Irishmen among you, Sandy, maybe they would not care at all for your Scotch whiskey," said Cameron.

"Ye try 'em. I warrant ye thet not a las' man w'ad refuse to wet his whistle wi' the gude auld Scootch."

"Well, I fear it would be a hard matter to get a hogshead of old rye in so far up the rough trail without its getting a hole punched in it, but I'll promise you more variety in drinks. Tea and coffee one day, lemonade and tea the next. We will also add porridge to the bill of fare, fresh meat three times a week, pies, cake, and some other good things, and now we will consider this "eats" question settled?"

"About the hour question. I have considered this carefully, and have come to the conclusion that we can cut off a half an hour a day. The weather is hot and I think the men and teams will do well if they pull through even at those hours."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"The wages will stand the same."

"Give us a raise of two bits a day, and we'll push the scrapers to the limit."

"I can't do that, Sam, I'd lose money on the contract. I'll agree to do this, however, in connection with your meal tickets: cut off a dollar a week for each man. I will also see that the store prices on goods of all kinds are reduced. On boots, overalls, smocks and tobacco, particularly, I find that my man has marked the prices high. This department has been making too big a profit, and I have given instructions to the man in charge that I did not want to make money out of storekeeping. My profits should come from the construction end, and as you fellows cannot buy from any other store (seeing that there is not another within one hundred miles of us), I have no wish to take advantage of you in this connection.

I have told you the concessions I am willing to make, now I would like to hear what you are ready to do in return. There is one thing I would like particularly, and that is that you get some of your men to turn in for half an hour after supper twice a week to clean up the camp, cart out tin cans and bury them, dig a drain down to the creek and a few things like that. We must keep a clean camp if

we
thi
tha
roc
tak
wh:
"
mu
Me
gle
a g

WINNING OUT

we want our men to keep healthy. Then another thing I would like is for you boss teamsters to see that your men double up on the grade east of the rock cut with the scrapers. By doing this you can take heavier loads and make better time. Now, what do you say to all this?"

"I fer my pairt (and I think the rest air wit' me), must say that ye hev spoke weel an' like a mon, Meester Cameron, an' I think the hull caboodle are gled ter say t' strike iss aff." Sandy spoke up with a good emphasis.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Meeting with the Chief

CAMERON and Mike had travelled a hundred miles or so on their cross country trek and exploration of the new right of way. Camped a little way off the trail at the edge of a poplar bluff, they were one evening preparing their dinner, which was an appetizing one, for Mike had shot two mallards. He had them rolled in clay, ready to bake, when a band of Indians rode into camp. The chief, dismounting, advanced towards Cameron, holding out his pipe of peace. After the usual courtesies had been exchanged, the chief spoke:

"You beeg railway engineer?" he queried.

"Yes," said Cameron.

"You beeld beeg railway from Mr. Hudson's Bay Ocean?"

"Am working hard for that now, chief," replied Cameron.

"You want oil, iron and silver?"

"We sure will, and great quantities of them, too. Are they in this country? "

A MEETING WITH THE CHIEF

"Heaps, beeg heaps ore. Follow me in the mornin' and me show white man. Me heap rich, my tribe rich. No buffalo, deer, otter, not much. White man all time kill, scare way. My people they hunt oil, iron, coal, silver and gold and find heap lot. Me an' my people eat fish, berries, some corn, yes and we grow some, an' potatoes and wheat, all same as white man."

The band of Indians stayed and talked with Cameron and Mike around the little fire which the latter had built from sticks which he had gathered in the poplar bluff.

There is something home-like and attractive in circling about a camp fire. It sets hearts in unison with one another, and stirs up friendly feelings.

The camp broke up at an early hour the following morning and every man on his own cayouse made his way across the prairie, the chief in the lead, Cameron and Mike close behind. They had ridden so for perhaps half an hour and had reached a little rise in the ground between two depressions, when the chief suddenly halted and dismounted.

"See," he said to Cameron, "coal, heap coal here. Spread beeg fire forty miles."

Cameron examined the croppings. They showed good and clear.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Four miles further on they came to a little stream of oil, wending its way like a huge black snake to a not far distant slough. On closer investigation the slough proved to be a good sized pond, composed of a thick oily tar substance.

"White man say this heap good," said the chief.

"Yes, very good, chief, worth a fortune," replied Cameron.

"My tribe keep this. No buffalo, no deer—must have somethings. Your railway no take this?" He scrutinized Cameron's face as he put the question.

In an instant it flashed across the other man's mind what these wandering tribes had lost with the advent of the white man, the game, land and freedom, and as the head of this tribe fully realized the fact that his people were losing ground in so many ways, he was endeavoring to grasp something lasting for them. Cameron might have ignored the red man's claim very easily, if he so wished, but he did not.

"No," he replied, "my railway will not take this from you and your tribe, chief, and I'll help you in every way possible to secure your rights from the Government. It is your country, you discovered it, have lived off its products and raised your children in it. It is indeed yours."

A MEETING WITH THE CHIEF

Cameron and Chief White Bear sat down together on this spot on the open prairie. A young Indian filled a pipe to the brim, lighted it and handed it to his chief, who smoked it calmly and very solemnly for some seconds, then passed it to Cameron, who went through the same performance. This established the compact between the two men in connection with the coal and oil lands. When they had concluded their smoke they remained seated, but the chief motioned to his men, who then formed a circle round them, Mike joining in the same, and all sat down in regular order. The same young Indian took the pipe from the chief, who had received it from Cameron, and handed it to one of the men in the circle. So the pipe of peace passed from one to the other, each taking a few draws from it, until it completed the circle.

Then Cameron addressed the chief: "Do you know where the big silver mines are, chief?" he queried.

"Not far on Athabasca," replied White Bear. "Some day pr'aps your beeg railroad go that way? I go with you there some day. Beeg lots silver there."

"All right, chief," Cameron replied. "Someday you and I will inspect that silver country. I want you to come to our construction camps soon and see

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

all my men and watch them building the railroad. I'll give you a heap big feast for a whole week or two weeks if you like. Will you come?"

"My men go north in few days, make camp at Beeg Lake. When they come back then I go see you."

The two chiefs, one over a band of noble red men, the other over a camp of railroad builders composed of men of all nations, shook hands and parted company, Cameron to take the south trail with Mike as his sole follower, while White Bear and his tribe proceeded to the lake.

It was early fall, and Cameron was struck with the rich coloring of the wonderful expanse of prairie which was there awaiting the husbandman.

The prairie builds no impediment for the sons of men to surmount. No ugly visaged rock or boulder stands at its gateway. No rough unkempt hillside looms up on its peaceful breast to arrest the man in his wonder admiration to behold and possess its riches offered, so free and abounding to him. In its lap and on its swelling bosom it carries and holds forth in bounteous plenty, food and sweetness already prepared for the pilgrim. To the field that presents food and health to the hungry and weary, there goes forth praises and thankfulness.

Behold these vast stretches in the spring time;

firs
zep
me
an
rev
Pr
vel
spa
gro
ga
plc
spi
roa
far
old
aft
for
les
in
an
bla
du
ma
har
len
ma
fol
kin

A MEETING WITH THE CHIEF

first there appears at the early visit of the over hill zephyr, and even before the frost and snow has melted before the sun's rays, as it pierces the nooks and corners, the purple and pink emblems; a rich revelation of the depth of soul and soil of the great Producer. In hot pursuit and almost before the velvety creations have bowed their heads with sparkling dew drops, there bursts forth an ocean of green verdure in its beauty.

To the efforts of man in his searching out for rich gardens, the prairie contains no obstacle for the plow, steam engine or locomotive, but there is spread out before him instead, long miles of level roadway, and vast acres of pasture reaching out as far as the eye can see on either side of the path or old buffalo trail. Behold the prairie again; field after field is waving with the breeze in its budding forth in a mass of golden grain. Uneasy and restless are the casements bearing their heavy load, and in countless numbers they are swaying backwards and forwards, like unto a mighty sea under the full blaze of a glorious sunshine. The prairie has produced and given up of her wealth. The people are made glad and they go hurrying to the bounteous harvest. Machines, wagons, railways and mills are lending all possible steel energy that they can command also, towards the gathering of the hundred fold reward, that the prairie is yielding up to mankind.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Indian Maid

CHIEF White Bear with his eighteen year old daughter arrived at the construction camps without attendants. Cameron was seated on the wheel of a big scraper when he caught sight of them coming down the trail. Beside the horses they were riding there was a pack horse pretty well loaded down with bedding and tents. As they drew nearer he recognized the chief with his white cayouse. The girl was riding a jet black pony of splendid build, with a graceful neck, and a good stepper. The chief was bedecked in buckskin breeches, beaded moccasins, and a highly colored Hudson's Bay blanket was strapped around him. His head was surmounted by a high hat of otter skins, with a dozen streaming eagle feathers sticking out from the top. His young daughter wore a divided buckskin skirt, and an elaborately decorated, highly colored blanket, similar to that of her father, was buckled about her waist with a buckskin belt, heavily beaded

THE INDIAN MAID

from end to end. A similar belt was buckled quite tightly around her immediately under her arms. She also wore moccasins heavily beaded with an intricate design. About her bare neck hung a valuable pearl necklace. Her jet black hair was combed straight back from her forehead and hung in long braids to her waist, the braids being artistically interwoven with strings of beads. Her head was encircled with a band of blue, red and gold colored ribbons, which band was placed over her forehead. She presented a magnificent type of the young womanhood of the noble red men of the plains.

Cameron greeted them cordially, the girl dismounting first to assist her father—reversing the white man's custom of the man dismounting first.—The chief did not introduce his daughter, as is the civilized custom, but opened a conversation with Cameron in which the young girl joined later. This is their mode of formal introduction. The girl talked English fluently and possessed the grace and manners of a college girl. Cameron could hardly keep his eyes off the girl as he listened to her pleasant words and watched her joyous beaming countenance. Two or three of his men took charge of the ponies, and under the direction of the chief, erected their little tent, placing their pack in it.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

The host conducted the chief and his daughter to Mike's house, where it was arranged by Lanice and Mrs. Maguire that Natoosca should share a room and bed with the former. This, in fact, was more of Lanice's planning, and she found to her surprise in conversing with the Indian maid that she had had most careful training. She played the piano well, held a school teacher's certificate, together with a normal training. Her speaking voice was most musical, and the dark eyes and drooping lashes bewitchingly becoming to the girl.

This daughter of the plains was the descendent of generation upon generation of noble spirits which inhabited the land years before the white man even dreamed of its vast domains. Their knowledge of modern inventions, it is true, was scant, yet their knowledge of the prairie in its varied moods, and of its creatures, the beaver, muskrat, mink, badger, deer and buffalo is far superior to our own. They know nothing of our courts and magistrates, yet they have a law among themselves which is a revelation to a white man, in the matter of taking a wife, dividing spoils in their hunt for caribou and many such things of their daily life. The same are just and fair to all.

Lanice coaxed Chief White Bear to allow Na-

THE INDIAN MAID

toosca to remain with her at the construction camp for a month. At first when she broached the matter he grunted much and looked so fondly at his daughter that she felt she should not ask this of him. However, he gave his reluctant assent, and they were happy. The two girls shared the same room, took their meals together, and together visited the construction camp, being constantly in each other's company. Natoosca told how the prairie had called to her to return from the big city where she had attended school, and how lonesome and homesick she had been, while she was living in the city.

Cameron had a neat appearance always in his daily work, with his khaki duck pants, and khaki shirt, long tan boots and Mexican hat. He was constant at his post with the men in the day time, but in the evening he was generally to be found at Mike's house, or riding about the country with the two young women. Sometimes he would take quite long rides with them, and they spent happy times together.

With Natoosca's aid Lanice had now established the "treasure device" among the railroad builders tents and cabins, and the girls were planning to establish it among the various tribes of Indians throughout the country.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

As they were sitting at breakfast one bright sunny morning, one of the girls in gazing through the window across the room from her, noticed a number of men running to some object which lay on the ground, and as they both hurried to the door to obtain a clearer view, they caught a glimpse of a man lying close beside a scraper, which was quickly hidden from them by the crowd which had gathered about him. The girls rushed out, leaving their meal unfinished, and arriving on the spot found the man to be Cameron. One of the big scrapers had accidentally caught his arm and broken it just below the elbow. He was carried to Mike's home on a stretcher, for he was pale and shaken and evidently in some pain, though he told the girls that they need not worry, a broken arm was a simple matter and he would soon be round again.

In their search for the camp doctor the girls were not successful. To their dismay they learned that he had been away for three days on a shooting trip, up the lake six miles or more away, and from all they could gather would not be back until the following evening.

"Which lake is he at?" asked the girls.

"That lake northwest from here; I think they call it Deer Tail."

THE INDIAN MAID

"I know it," Natoosca said, "and I'll have him here in about two hours' time. May I borrow your grey, Lanice?"

She was gladly given permission.

Natoosca was soon mounted on her own slick little black, with a rope hanging to the horn of her saddle by which she was leading Lanice's grey.

The two horses were pretty evenly matched in a race, and the Indian girl gave her little black a loose rein to start, and they sped across the prairie at a gallop that would take the breath from an automobile racer, even on a level course in the open.

She reached Deer Tail Lake in thirty minutes, bounded off her horse, pulled the reins over his head and was soon in search of the doctor. She crawled through the reeds up to the water's edge and came out where she could get a good view of the lake from end to end. The lake was a small one, about half a mile wide by three in length, a great resort for geese and duck. She could see nothing but the hundreds of wild fowl which dotted the end of the lake at which she stood, which told her that the hunter was at the other end, so she immediately returned to the horses, sprang with a bound into the saddle and soon was galloping along the trail in his direction. Reining in her horse on a

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

little rise of ground, she gave the Indian call for a lost man: "Tahoo, Tahoo," as loudly as she could call it. She then listened intently. Again her voice rang out "Tahoo, Tahoo!" Again no answer. Presently the little black horse pricked up its ears, neighed and started ahead. She gave him the rein and he took the trail leading to the northwest corner of the lake. The two horses were now galloping. Onward they swept for a short distance, when suddenly the little black stopped short. Natoosca stood up in her saddle and called again. Almost immediately there came the answering "Halloa?" She then called in English: "Doctor, come quickly."

The medical man emerged from the thick growth of reeds in which he had been hiding to get a shot at the geese as they commenced to settle down in their flight over him to the lake. "How do you do, my little girl; and what is the matter? Anyone hurt? I thought I should not have come on this expedition without leaving someone in my place."

The girl hurriedly told him about the accident to Cameron, urging him to lose no time in returning.

"What about my tent, traps and fowl, which I have up at the little bluff?"

"Don't wait for those, doctor," replied Natoosca. "Leave them to me; I will gather them up and bring

THE INDIAN MAID

them along on my horse. This dapple grey is a good one, and you need not be afraid of lagging on the way. He can make the camps in twenty-five minutes and hardly turn a hair. Just give him a free rein; he knows the trail and will take you without a stumble or side step of any kind."

The doctor was a man of medium height and weight. The grey was impatient to be off. He snorted and pranced, tugged at the rein and scarcely gave the man time to mount into the saddle before he was away.

Natoosca now rode over to the little clump of trees, rolled the guns, geese and traps into one bundle and tied the tent neatly around them. This she buckled on behind the saddle and soon followed the doctor to the camp. She had quite a load but the little black hit a steady trotting gait over the trail which he kept without a break until his arrival.

By the time she reached her destination, the broken arm had been set, bound in splints and the patient was resting easily in his bed.

"We have to thank you for this swift assistance," said Cameron to Natoosca. "I don't know who could have found the doctor in such quick order for us. Did you have much trouble?"

"Upon my arrival at the lake, I immediately found

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

the shore at the eastern end, but indications assuring me that he was at the far end, I soon located him there and he lost no time in getting to you."

"How did he go, doctor?" asked Lanice, referring to her pony.

"He is a jewel. As swift as an arrow. Why, I hardly thought I could stand his pace. I had to pull him in several times and steady him down a little.

T
wa
too
tim
am
wil
pre
to c
ma
the
On
nev
hus
but
for
of l
The
finis

ssur-
him

rring

y, I
d to
wn a

CHAPTER XXIV

Love or Class Distinction

THE railway camps had been moved four times during the season, and were now situated towards the western limit of the prairie lands. Nattoosca had paid a second visit to Lanice during that time. She had established a new method of life among her people in the matter of cleanliness, good will and industry, and among other things had impressed on them the necessity of learning how best to cultivate the soil. The girls together had visited many of the homes of the new settlers, establishing the leaven of their diamond treasure among them. One of the families they visited was living on a new homestead, cultivating and improving it. The husband had been formerly employed in the camp, but having saved a little, had taken a homestead, for the working of which he had purchased a team of horses, a plow, set of harrows and a wagon. The three-roomed house was neatly constructed and finished outside with white paint, faced with green.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

His family, consisting of his wife and two little boys, were snugly settled in the new home and were enjoying the novelty of the new location, the sweet-scented flowers and the delicious air. The husband had already planted an acre of potatoes, half an acre of corn, a quarter of an acre of turnips, one hundred acres of wheat and had set out rows of strawberry plants and small shrubbery. He was infused with the spirit which Lanice had spread abroad and it was bearing much fruit. In this home as well was set up a full-fledged diamond treasure.

The two girls had long planned a journey to the new settlements beyond the Big Bear. This morning found them with three pack horses loaded down with provisions and a tent for their journey. The dapple grey and the jet black were pawing the ground and snorting as if eager to be off, and a score or so of the men, including Cameron, had come over from the camps to bid them God-speed. The girls were in high spirits and eagerly looking forward to their sojourn among the settlers beyond. The men shouted and threw their hats in the air and the whistles of the donkey engines tooted out their good wishes to the girls for their happiness and safe return. They shook hands with everyone, Cameron being the last to come forward. He assisted the young women to their saddles and away

LOVE OR CLASS DISTINCTION

they started over the old buffalo trail. Cameron stood in front of the little house watching their departure with a longing expression in his eyes. At the half-mile corner post on the quarter section they turned and waved him a goodbye.

He had become strangely enraptured with the little Indian maid. Yet she was not so little, standing five foot six, and weighing one hundred and forty-five pounds. He had realized long since that Lanice would never enter the marriage union with him. She was friendly, kind and showed a loving disposition towards him at all times, but he felt within his heart that he was not the man for her and that another was held more dearly long since.

It was true Natoosca was of a different class and breed. But what of that? She was truly handsome, even more so than many of the white girls that he knew, was possessed of a far superior physique, and from what he had learned of her ancestors, her grandparents and great grandparents had lived up to and beyond the nineties. Her physical nature was healthy and robust, and he found himself growing more fondly attached to her as the days passed. With regard to her spiritual and intellectual faculties, they were certainly well developed. It seemed that the one flaw in this gem

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

lay in the fact that she was not of the white tribe, but if one was to live up to Lanice's high ideals of the "love life," there were to be no distinctions in class, nationality, politics, denomination or color. Cameron knew that his people in the east would hold up their hands in horror if he even suggested that he should make such a union, but then they do not know her, he said to himself. She has none of the greedy and expensive habits of the white race, which they seemed to cling to so fondly. She knew of them but did not care for them, nor did he. Her ideals were lofty, and her life beautiful. This girl was deeply interested in her fellow creatures, their education, and welfare; the opening up of the country she knew was in their best interests, a vital part of which was the building of the railways. Her own people knew where coal, silver and oil were to be found in plenty, and also of the best hunting grounds for the fur-bearing animals, and she knew that with education in these matters they could obtain larger returns for that knowledge. Her father had provided for her in the matter of school education and she had absorbed this as well as any of her white sisters, which showed her intellectual powers of a high order, and having had these advantages granted to her she was fully appreciative of them, and anxious that others should have similar

LOVE OR CLASS DISTINCTION

advantages. Where schools were not possible, she did her part in fostering a desire for learning, and generally managed to obtain books to assist in the work. She set the standard among them. She was spotlessly clean, neat of attire, of a loving disposition, healthy, robust, joyous in spirit, and full to overflowing in life. She was kind and thoughtful to old and young, and Cameron knew her heart was in this north land, as was his. He felt that she had grown to trust him, and if the quality of her affection for him was love, he knew it was of the type that would last to the very end of life's journey, through sickness, sorrow, life's blizzards and mountain climbs, undying, fervent, in poverty or health, a jewel of rare worth, and together he knew they could do much to develop this new territory.

CHAPTER XXV.

Baldy Again Appears

CAMERON sent word to Mike that he would not be over to the dump during the day and instructed him to attend to things as best he could.

He had long been fighting this overmastering affection which had taken possession of him since the advent of the Indian maid into camp. Many times during the course of the past weeks had he been tempted to declare his love and ask her to become his wife, but the fact of her skin being red brown, instead of white, alone held him in check. This day, however, he had decided to fight the question out with himself, and so desired to be alone. He knew she would soon return and he felt that he must have the question solved by the time she arrived. If his pride conquered his love, then he knew that he must resign his position with the railway company then and there, and get quickly out of sight of the prairies and this girl, who seemed an integral part of himself. As he thought the matter over, he was

BALDY AGAIN APPEARS

amazed at how little the matter of resigning his position affected him. What did worry him was the prospect of leaving this beautiful girl forever.

He took his hat and strolled out over the prairie, with no definite aim in view, but before he realized it he found himself at Deer Tail Lake. It was a lovely spot, with a good sized hill to the north, sloping gently down to the white sandy beach of the lake. On the western shore were groves of poplar and maple, with flowers and shrubs in abundance, where he threw himself down in the shade of the trees. He lay there for an hour, resting from his ramble and still pondering as to what his decision should be. He knew it was no light question, for on it hinged all his future life. He knew that the girl admired and respected him, and in his own heart he felt her affections were abounding and abiding. He thought of the zeal which she had displayed in her work with Lanice among the settlers and in the construction camps and was convinced that it was sincere and unaffected.

He had not yet settled the problem, but he rose and strolled along the beach towards the upper end of the lake, and was passing a thicket of native maples, when he heard a rustling in the bushes and suddenly a man confronted him with a levelled re-

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

volver, ordering him to hold up his hands. He looked a desperate fellow and held his gun with such precision and aim that it sent shivers down Cameron's spine, although he was in no way timid or cowardly. The sight of the steel barrels were certainly not soothing. The victim held up his hands and the stranger advanced without further parley, searched every pocket in Cameron's clothing and finally ordered him to take to the trail ahead of him. They maintained a steady, silent tramp through the bush out to the open, where they struck the trail going directly opposite to the one leading to the camps, the man with the gun keeping about ten paces in the rear. On and on they tramped, and Cameron began to have evil forebodings as the sun sank in the west. He held his nerve, however, though it had never really failed him, and it was stronger and more tensely drawn than when first the stranger broke in upon his reveries. He could not imagine what this man wanted with him, for he had no money, and it was a very long way to canyons or caves; it meant five days' steady tramping. If they had horses they could make it in less time, of course, and he realized that with them there would have been better chances of taking advantage of a careless slip.

At nightfall they camped beside a little stream

BALDY AGAIN APPEARS

and just before the stranger commenced to build his fire and set a camp stake, he pulled out a little chain and padlock, backed Cameron up to a tree and commenced chaining his ankle to the same, which is always a very risky and dangerous "one man" act. He was very cautious in his movements, however, turning his prisoner's face towards the tree. At this juncture Cameron balked, spread out his legs and in the scuffle faced round, demanding of the stranger what he meant.

"I'm just going to slip this rusty chain around yer skinny leg and the tree, that's all, pardner," said the man.

"And chain me up like a dog, eh? Is it not enough that you have hounded me through the country for the last few hours at the point of a gun, so that I should not escape from your clutches?"

The two men now faced each other. The stranger had lowered his gun to his side, and remarked:

"How can I get any grub for your throat or mine either if I leave you free to dangle yer han's roun' me. I've tackled the job of holdin' a man up, and ain't agoin' to run no chances."

"Well, there's no need for you to do that. I'll build the fire and get out the grub, while you stand

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

and watch over me. I'm as hungry as a coyote," and so saying he stooped down to gather up some sticks that were at his feet. While in this position he had managed to move several feet closer to his man, though it was certain he was taking desperate chances by so doing. Cameron was quick in action naturally, and seizing the psychological moment bounded upon the stranger before he had time to change the position of either arm.

"You d— scoundrel," he cried, "I'll teach you a lesson for holding a man up on the free and open prairies, one that you'll never forget."

So saying he secured his right arm, bent it beneath him and strained his wrist backwards with such force and quickness that the man with the gun released his grip on it and it fell to the ground at their feet. In the scuffle which followed, Cameron found his antagonist very powerful, but a trifle slow and ignorant of a few wrestling tricks. They tugged and twisted and finally down they went, Cameron holding ferociously to the man beneath him.

"Now," he said, "what is your game? It would do you no good to murder me, for I have no money."

The stranger made no reply, but struggled fiercely. Cameron soon had him in his power, however.

BALDY AGAIN APPEARS

Gradually and little by little he dragged his man to a tree nearby, took the chain which the stranger had intended for him and succeeded in fastening his antagonist to the tree.

"The scene is changed, you murderer," said Cameron. "I have you good and solid now and just where I want you."

"All right, old pal; suppose we chew the grub," was the nonchalant reply, and the stranger sat with his back against the tree, and with a composed expression on his face he pulled off his wig and moustache. He then took a pipe from his pocket, lit a match and proceeded to smoke.

"Baldy!" exclaimed Cameron. "Well of all things I ever set eyes on in a circus, this is the strangest. But I am glad that it is you, Baldy. How in thunder did you get three hundred miles over from your usual haunts?"

"I ain't in them diggin's any more," replied Baldy. "I'm livin' in a big city."

"Whatever got into your head to make a raid on me?"

"There's some mistries, some d—— black mistries, Cameron. I fell down on it. Yore safe, and I, I know d—— well I'm chained up. Say, but yer a

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

tough customer! It never enter'd my thick hed that you would be so quick. It was certin not 'cordin' to th' rule and regerlashuns ter give yer a chanct to stoop in such a limped-up shape so near ter me, but it niver struck me ye w'd make the rush break you did."

"Baldy," said Cameron, "I can't figure out what has got into you."

"The devil, the devil, and nothing but the devil, I guess. If I'm pushing my show with the powers o' hell, what's thet to you?"

"I know you had some hard luck and a fight or two in the Gulch country which had imbittered you somewhat, but I never thought it would bring you to attempting to drop on an old friend."

"Well, old tough, rake over yer num'skull. D'ye mind the time you bolted in when I was thumpin' the daylights out o' ol' man Loraine in his own house? We was jes' settlin' then and there some ol' scores and 'portant 'fairs between us, and you interfered and made me gol darned mad."

"I knew nothing of a family feud or anything between you. I simply thought you had been drinking and viciously taken a notion to beat him up."

"Divil a bit o' it. That one thump I gev' the ol'

BALDY AGAIN APPEARS

man was the las' he would uv got from me. I had a much better revenge; a good big lever on 'im."

"I don't understand you yet, Baldy, but am willing to forgive and forget. I know something of your past troubles and trials, and moreover, this is an epoch-marking day in my life and I do not want to harbor barbarous or murderous feelings against anyone."

"Cinch it to me, Cameron; come up here and shake paws. I think you know enough of me to trust me and that when I says a thing I sticks to it like a leech to a man for the last drop o' blood. Tell ye right here, pardner, if we call this thing square and ye do not ask me too many questions, I'll forgive and forget, too, and will hike out at early mornin' to my devil trick haunts in the big city, where the policemen slip the bumps."

"Well, all right, Baldy," said Cameron, and he helped him to his feet after first unlocking the chain. Together they sat down to their meal of bacon, flap jacks and tea. As they sat chatting by the light of the grey moon above, their conversation drifted to the one girl whom they mutually respected and admired, and to the other one known only by Cameron.

"By all thet's good and true in heaven above,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

don't you blather a word o' this thing to Lanice," said Baldy. "Maybe sometime in the far away future I'll see her agen, and if there is anythin' thet will bring me out o' this awful spell, it is the in-floons of thet same little girl."

"I believe you, Baldy, but you are not yourself. Some power has taken possession of you. What that power is I cannot say, but I believe that Lanice would call it plain and unvarnished 'Satan's power.' I don't claim to be much better than you, Baldy, but I do know this one thing, which you evidently have not yet grasped, and that is that you are living under the impression and illusion that you cannot break away from this spell, that everyone is against you and ready to spitefully use you. It is a false impression, old man. There are dozens of people I know who like you for the good they can see in you and which they believe would come out stronger if you would but let it. There is one who is gradually drawing you though, by her spirit."

Baldy did not breathe a word as to his mode of living away off in the big city, but they talked of old times, the Loraine ranch and many little incidents of their past life, occurring while the railroad was being built through that country. Baldy seemed to know where every one of the old-time

BALDY AGAIN APPEARS

settlers were living and what they were doing. Here was a man of strong nerve, tense muscle and bright intellect, who, like the steward in the parable, was hoarding his talents wrongly.

It was almost noon when Cameron walked into camp the next day. Mike and his wife had remained up till midnight, and were indeed rather alarmed as time passed and he did not return. They finally concluded that he had taken a notion to visit Chief White Bear and his band, who were camped some seven or eight miles beyond Deer Tail Lake, for they noticed that he had taken the trail in that direction. They therefore retired for the night, thinking he would make his appearance the next day without fail.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Wooing of the Indian Maid

THREE weeks had passed since this memorable day. The girls had returned from their overland hike to the settlement, and it had been very successful. The people had taken kindly to the diamond treasure and had cordially assisted them during their travels to the different homes.

Cameron and Natoosca were seated in the hospitable home of Mrs. Maguire's that night. He had resolved this day to seek the girl's heart and hand, and that at the earliest possible moment, and had seized this opportunity to be alone with her to tell his tale of love, he having learned that Lanice was spending the day and evening with a sick shoveller in his little tent over the dump.

"You have known me now quite a while, Natoosca, and I hope you do not think altogether unkindly of me," he said.

"I was afraid of you once, Mr. Cameron," she replied, "and that was when you made Lanice and I work so hard at your old books."

THE WOOING OF THE INDIAN MAID

He smiled.

"So you were afraid of me then? I had good reason for making you work so hard. Did I never tell you?"

"You certainly did not, and I could not imagine why, as I said, unless it was on account of your being a poor bookkeeper."

"Maybe that was the reason, or partly so, but you are miles astray as to the main cause, and I shall allow you to guess at it."

"What pleasure could you find in visiting two girls? One who used to ramble on with my wild and wooly stories of our people and their doings! Which reminds me, Mr. Cameron, what do you really think of the noble red men?"

Cameron made bold immediately.

"Think? I don't think at all. I am in love with him and have been always; rather I mean that I am ardently in love with the daughter of a noble red man."

Natoosca, who was seated in a rocker quite close to Cameron as they conversed, suddenly sprang to her feet and walked to the mantel, carelessly leaning against it. She was attired in a beautiful black silk dress, cut low in the neck in the prevailing

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

style, her sole ornaments being her pearl necklace and a rose at her bosom. She was facing the man now with an innocent girlish expression.

"It is most kind of you to say this, Mr. Cameron. I appreciate it and shall never forget your words. I feel flattered at your admiration for me and my people. For myself, I like all the men who are engaged in the big construction work, particularly the one who plans the building of the railway. It must indeed be a noble occupation."

She did indeed admire this man, and she now anxiously watched the varying expressions on his lovelit countenance.

He rose and walked over to her side as she stood in the full bloom of her young womanhood, and encircled her waist with one arm, at the same time looking fondly into her dark mellow eyes.

"I have something very important to tell you tonight, Natoosca," he said. "When you went away on that last trip I felt lonesome and forlorn. The place seemed empty without you and I have been waiting with a patient and longing heart for your return—to tell you how I love you." Here he took both her hands in his and kissed her fondly.

"Mr. Cameron, you should not do this," said the girl.

THE WOOING OF THE INDIAN MAID

"Why not, little girl," he replied. "I would not do it or say that I love you if I did not feel that some day you would consent to become my wife. I want you, Natoosca; I want you more than I can say. Will you marry me?"

"Mr. Cameron, I do not doubt your love for me," said the girl, "but have you considered everything?"

"I know of what you are thinking. Of course I have, and the more I study it out, the more I love you."

"O, Mr. Cameron, am I worthy? I do admire, and love you, but would not admit it to myself until I knew and felt assured of your love."

He took her in his arms and fondly embraced her.

"My own little girl," he said. "Never was a man as proud as I, of my little wife to be, and I know I shall ever be so."

"May I tell Lanice? I know she will be so glad," said Natoosca presently. "It was only recently she told me what a noble fellow you were and I had to tell her not to praise you too highly or I would just cry. Dear, I know that I have higher ideals than most of my own people, and you do love me truly, do you not? I am so happy!"

"I love you with all my heart and always shall,

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

my little girl," replied the man, in a low voice. "You are all the world to me."

The girl stepped up on a stool, flung her arms about her lover and kissed him in the fullness of her heart, and he returned her embrace.

"Why, Natoosca, you are crying," he said suddenly.

"Yes, dear, for joy," she replied. "I simply cannot keep back the tears. I cannot tell how deeply I have longed to be truly loved by an honest and noble white man, and of all the men I have ever met, you are the one whose love was most longed for. It is marvellous that you, the biggest man in this great wide west, can appreciate a little Indian maid like me, so I must be pardoned for my overflow of joy. I cannot keep back the tears, I am so, happy."

"It is just your sweet, innocent and natural self that makes me love you so, Natoosca. You won't mind if I call you by the English translation of your name? Do you remember that you told me the meaning of the name Natoosca?"

"Indeed I shall not mind; in fact, I shall be delighted to be known and called by the English name, for am I not to be your wife?"

"Most assuredly you are, my dear," and he kissed

THE WOOING OF THE INDIAN MAID

her reverently again. "There now," he added, "that seals the bargain of our engagement and for your new name."

"What do you think I sent for by the last pack train, my dear?"

"I have no idea."

"Let me whisper it in your ear. A ring."

"You dear good thing, and before you had asked me to be your wife, too. But it was indeed nice of you."

Footsteps sounded at the door, and in burst Lanice without undue ceremony.

"Lanice, my dear Lanice, I am so happy!" exclaimed Natoosca. "I have such great news to tell you."

Lanice looked from one to the other.

"I congratulate you both," she said, as she shook their hands warmly.

After they had talked it all over with her, Cameron said:

"Miss Loraine, I want you to witness and help at the christening of Natoosca, who is to adopt her translated name. She is this day to change her name to Regine. If you will kindly put your arms

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

about her so that she cannot get away, I will do the christening."

Here he secured a glass of water, and taking the rose from Natoosca's dress, he dipped it in the water and shook it over her head, allowing a little water to sprinkle down, saying at the same time in a droll manner, yet solemnly:

"In the name of the Almighty above, and all that's good on the earth beneath, I now pronounce upon you the new name by which you will be known henceforth and forever, first to myself and then to all others who may know thee in the future years. I christen thee REGINE. Amen and Amen."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Kindred Spirits of a Great Prophet

REGINE had been telling Lanice for some time of an old prophet who lived with a certain tribe of Indians, was in fact one of them, and of his manner of telling out his dreams or "divinations" as he called them. The old man had foretold many wonderful events, and had impressed her as being almost uncanny.

She was saying:

"I feel sure that many more of his prophecies will come to pass! I would like for you and Mr. Cameron to come with me on a visit to him. You could then see the old man with your own eyes and hear some of his wonderful sayings. I am particularly anxious for you, Lanice, to see him, and to tell me what you think of his interpretations of things. The tribe is but thirty miles away, which would be a nice little ride for our prancing steeds. Do you think Mr. Cameron would come with us?"

"I am sure he would," rejoined Lanice. "He

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

would be as delighted as a schoolboy to join us on this outing."

"The tribe all live in one village and are truly a remarkable people as regards industry and peacefulness."

Sunday dawned with golden streaks of light slanting across the eastern sky. At four o'clock the sun was well in view on the distant horizon, looking as though he was rising from out a mighty ocean. The mirage hid from view the green prairies for many miles and it appeared as if a great stretch of water had taken its place. The little clump of trees some two miles distant had taken on the form of castles with turrets, church steeples and great towers, and lo a large city appeared. A little to the right for many miles was shown a panorama of grandeur, an inverted city with streets, boulevards, rows of houses, sky-scraper buildings and wharves, interspersed with the masts of many ships. This was no imagination of the brain, nor the fanciful vision of a dream. The scene was really there in plain view well above the sky line, and as the party gazed upon it, the awe inspiring magnificence held them entranced. Into Natoosca's mind flashed a prophecy of the old Indian seer, as to the future of these great prairies. Very swiftly while they gazed, the scene changed, as do the northern lights, and there appeared, as it were, a lake in the distance.

KINDRED SPIRITS OF A GREAT PROPHET

It was now six o'clock, and Cameron had brought their three horses to the door, the dapple grey, his sweetheart's black and his own thoroughbred chestnut. The girls with their sweet and innocent laughter and happy minds made him think of the wild songbirds. They prattled in high glee as Cameron adjusted their saddles and arranged the cinch. At length all was ready, and after kissing Mrs. Maguire and the children goodbye, they sped off over the trail with a bound. Natoosca's little black was always keen for a race at the start, and she had a hard time to hold him in for awhile, and keep him even with the grey and chestnut. They were soon many miles on their way and found the fresh prairie air exhilarating, and it surcharged them with a joyous vigor.

On arriving at the Indian village, they were surrounded by many curious faces, little and big, old and young came forward to greet Natoosca. She talked with them about their papooses and visited them in their tents. It was the custom of the tribe to immediately prepare a meal for their visitors on their arrival, and the same by this time being ready, all sat down in a circle on the ground and partook of roast venison and potatoes.

"We came on purpose to see and hear your prophet," said Natoosca. "Will he be ready to receive us today?"

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

She was told (in Indian) that he was now in the tent preparing for his prophecy.

"May we, my friends and I hear him?"

She was given cordial permission. They found the tent, which was situated just a little way from the front of the big chief's tent. Inside, it was a square-walled black tent, at the far end of which sat the prophet. On either side of him was a light burning in a basin of some kind of oil. The face of the seer was wrinkled and drawn, but his eyes shone out brilliantly clear, and he possessed a dignified bearing.

He commenced beating upon the little drum which lay at his feet, but in a few minutes placed the drumsticks on the top of it and set it away in the right hand corner of the room. He then went through some motions similar to those made by a person throwing a ball, and finally stood up straight and erect. His prophecy is given below in English:

"My dear people: You are my people, the great spirit watches over you. We are quiet people, we do no fighting. We hunt, fish and plant grain. Our little children are many. This is our land; we have much land about us. The big chief of the white man will give us this land, and we must work it. We have mines, oil springs and a rich, very rich country.

KINDRED SPIRITS OF A GREAT PROPHET

Now the various tribes over these prairies are meeting the white men. These are the people who are building trains and railways for them to run on across the country. They build also big cities and houses to live in, much houses. They also tell us of the great Spirit. One of our big papooses, I have watched her—the noble girl. She has eaten venison and bread with the white man. She is learning. The white man searches out new things and use many tools. Our people must learn too. This papoose of ours is joining with noble white man and her life shall be good. I can see the white man (his eyes were closed), he is laying long steel rails far off over the country. He is strong and good.”

Natoosca leaned forward. The black tent was closed on all sides and the visitors were in this tent.

“Many times have I sought out the Great Spirit in my prayer and talk to learn what was right. He speaks plainly on this. As a rule it is better that our daughters marry among our own people. I call on him for our daughter Natoosca!”

At this the girl gripped Cameron’s hand.

“What is he saying, dear?” said he.

“Nothing wild,” replied the girl. “He is talking about me and mentioned my name.”

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Here she leaned forward, listening intently.

"He says he sees me and that I am riding over the prairies, that he is calling on the Great Spirit concerning me. Just a minute!"

The prophet proceeded:

"The white man is calling our daughter, she hears him and waves her hand. She smiles and the white man comes to her. She runs away and he searches for her. She grows pale and sick-looking—she comes back, for he calls. She smiles again and he has come closer; he has taken hold of her hand again and she still smiles at him. They go hand in hand over the trail. The trail is long, but they go gladly onward. Many people come to their house, many people bow down to white man; and also bow down to our daughter. The great white man do heap big good for many people. He mark off land for us and he write papers; our people fall down to him just so—"

At this juncture the old prophet knelt and remained on his knees for sometime in a silent and prayerful mood. Natoosca watched and listened intently, at the same time clinging closely to Cameron's hand. All was very quiet. The old man arose and paced backward and forward in his sanc-

KINDRED SPIRITS OF A GREAT PROPHET

tuary. Quietly he seated himself on a stool in the centre of the room, where he continued his oration.

"I see the great world before me. It is being racked and scraped, rolled and pressed by a powerful hand. This hand at times is very hard and cruel, yet at every stroke and hard knock another hand rubs and smoothes out the rough places and gently feeds the people of the earth; spreading over the prairies bright sunshine, and showering down upon it the beautiful rain.

Now I see before me people in great sorrow, even as though they had come through a great war. Many of them are travelling this way, bearing heavy burdens. They are bending hard to their task but still marching onward. Again I see these same people; they have a new bearing, their heads are erect and they go forth in happiness and contentment. Our daughter is among them, bedecked in fine clothing and jewels. She seems very happy, but at the same time is engaged in assisting these people.

Away off on the prairie I see a noble white man with his sleeves rolled up, directing hundreds of people, who are hurrying backwards and forwards carrying tools and boards. They seem to be building something. I cannot see whether this is a house, a railway or a ship, but they keep

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

constantly at their work. I see spread out before me large herds grazing in the open, being watched over and cared for by some man of our own race. These shepherds are mounted on horses, and are leisurely riding back and forth as the herds wander over the pasture land.

Again I see large fields of golden grain, thousands of acres spread out and reaching far into the distance. In and among these fields is machinery, which is being used and operated by our own people. Further away I see train-loads of people, mostly white, alighting from these trains, on to the open prairie. I see them looking around. Some are carrying boxes and barrels, others carrying blankets, but all are pressing forward viewing the land before them."

The old man again paced to and fro, then opened the door of his little tent and greeted Natoosca, calling her by name. She advanced, offering him her hand, which he reverently held for a moment. She then presented Lanice and Cameron to him, whom he greeted very cordially, shaking them by the hand, and immediately he walked with them to the big chief's tent, to which they had been invited. They found the chief within, with his wife and two sons. The chief was seated on the ground in the centre of the tent, whilst the other three stood beside him. His visitors were invited to be seated, and

KINDRED SPIRITS OF A GREAT PROPHET

when they had settled down, the three who stood, squatted to one side of the big chief. The pipe which was lighted was a big one, the bowl being about the size of an ordinary teacup, which was filled with tobacco, the stem being about three feet long. After it had been handed to him, the chief smoked quietly and without speaking for a moment or two, then passed it to Cameron, who took a few puffs and handed it to Natoosca, who also smoked it, passing it in turn to Lanice, and so it completed the circle. The chief spoke but little during this performance, for he looked upon it as an important and dignified ceremony, in connection with the sealing of life compacts between himself and those who smoked with him.

Cameron and the young women were at last free and they strolled among the various tents, which they found to be in neat and good order. They were placed in even rows, fronting on the trail which our visitors had followed. They also inspected the corrals and found hundreds of good ponies, as well as twenty thoroughbred holstein cows, a considerable number of hogs and a quantity of domestic fowl. In conversation with one of the Indian men Cameron learned that they had no poor among them. There was a sort of common community, and all were provided with necessary food and clothing.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Lanice is Held Up

IT was a lovely day, and Mrs Maguire had planned to pay an afternoon visit to one of the neighbors. Lanice had accompanied her part of the way. Returning to the house, as she was making her way through an old creek bed, where there was a deep growth of poplars, a strange man very coolly stepped out on to the path in front of her, saying in a rough voice:

"Hands up, an' move 'em quick."

"I have no money," said Lanice, "and anyway, what do you mean by molesting a lone woman in this way?"

"Thet's my bizness, you do as I say an' you won't get shot."

"But I can't understand what it all means. I have no money, and surely you don't mean to steal a lonely girl away? I have travelled up and down this country all my life, on the different trails in and among the hills and canyons, and across the wide

LANICE IS HELD UP

prairies, during which time I have never been molested or harmed by any man, or animal either, and I have never been afraid of anyone."

"Thet may be so, little gurl, but jes' now ye're up aginst it. There is no time for dilly-dallyin'. I have a big deal on, no little farm house game, nor prairie or canyon stick up. It's a cold steel gang far off that's after you, so ye had better fall in line."

"But I have never heard of such a thing in this country before! You don't live near here, do you?"

"Not on yer life I don't."

"Do you know if you get caught doing this, that it will go pretty hard with you, for there are a great many honorable men in the construction gangs that are working on this railway, who are determined men, too, and I would not wish to see them harm you."

"Don't worry yer head about me! I'm growed up, ain't I?"

"Yes, you seem to be, but it does seem a strange thing for a girl to be held up in this fashion in the free and open country, where every one is on neighborly terms."

"It's real d—— strange, an' I'll 'dmit ut. Maybe it never has happened before, and maybe never will

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

again, who's to say, but ye can see with yer own eyes that it's plain goods jes' now. So move along, yer in for bein' used like a man thief, though yer not that. I'll tell ye this much, ye'll be used like a queen if ye don't kick over the traces."

It was evident to the girl that this man was not very careful, nor did he seem to be afraid of being outwitted by her. It dawned on her that she might trick or trap him in some manner and possibly get possession of his gun. She therefore took on a more determined attitude of mind, though this bandit fellow still maintained his matter-of-fact, sure-of-foot air, ordering her to hustle. He was good enough, however, to allow the girl little spells for resting as they made their way along the trail, uphill and down valley towards the little station fifty miles away. He followed at about twenty paces to the rear continually, seldom speaking to her, and so the day passed from noon till night, their camping time. And at last, even if she asked the big fellow questions or protested at being thus driven, he would remain silent, occasionally levelling his gun at her.

The desperado, however, provided his quarry with good food: bacon, coffee, bannock and butter. He prepared the meals himself at each camping place at a little distance from her. At night she was provided with good big blankets, while he re-

LANICE IS HELD UP

mained out of sight somewhere without any covering save that of his every day suit. During the third night of their camping in the wilds, Lanice slept but little. At break of day she bestirred herself and commenced to reconnoitre. Of her assailant she could see or hear nothing; but in cautiously making her way up to a clump of bushes nearby, she spied the big fellow, lying on his back, fast asleep, his gun loosely gripped in one hand. Quick as a flash she dropped on one knee, and in a stooping position made her way inch by inch to the sleeping "monster," as she termed him in her mind.

"He is sure out of commission for the moment," she said to herself.

She was soon within ten feet of her adversary, her eyes were flashing, her nerves tense, and her feet and hands were feeling cautiously everything in her pathway. Gradually she edged closer till she was but three feet away from him, and still he slept. He was breathing heavily and she noticed a twitching at his mouth as though his teeth were setting, and he was planning to close upon his prey. For an instant she breathed a prayer.

There are sleeps and sleeps. There is the sleep of stupor, the sleep of over-powering weariness, and the sleep of death.

With a firm hand the girl reached out and it was

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

soon within four inches of the deadly weapon—two inches—one inch—and now, with a quick grasp, she snatches up the cold steel, springs to her feet, backing away quickly eight or ten paces, at the same time covering the man with the gun with a deadly aim. The instant he felt the weapon slipping from his hand, the desperado sprang to his feet with an oath, on first impulse making towards the girl, but halting and wavering under her aim.

“Back, you traitor!” she cried, “or you die in your tracks.”

He halted as he was bidden, but demanded in a vulgar crashing harangue of expletives “what business she had to attempt such a dangerous piece of gun show?”

“Just about as much business as you have in driving me ahead of you like a dog on this lonesome trail.”

“I’ll give you a spurt for yer life for this devil trick before we get out of these woods. Don’t ye know that it’s a — crazy trick to be workin’ off? You may lose an arm or p’raps get yer ear peeled off.”

“That’s what you think, but it seems to me that you are in more danger of losing an arm or even your head at this very instant, for I notice that you

LANICE IS HELD UP

are stealing a little closer on very dangerous ground. I give you my best word and warning that I'll use this gun with deadly aim, exactly the same as I would on a grizzly if he attacked me. I have been attacked, and how do I know that my life is not in just as great danger as though a grizzly was after me? I put you and Mr. Grizzly in the same class just now."

"But didn't I try to drive it into your head jes' now that you wouldn't get hurt if you stuck to orders?"

"What do you mean by getting hurt? I am hurt already. It is no small matter for a big wild man to grab a girl and drive her ahead of him over logs, rocks and through bushes, across long stretches of rough country, and to possibly decoy her into some lonely cave."

"Now, see here, ye little spit-fire-shootem, get off yer high perch and come down to earth, or I'll fin' a way to make you pretty quick."

"You will never be able to do that, you big grizzly. It is more probable that one more of your tribe will measure his length on this grassy footpath if he attempts any rush-acts in this war now on between your brute lordship and myself."

The big fellow did not know how to take this last remark of the girl's. He had been caught off

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

guard and she certainly had him in her power for the present. He kept edging sideways towards her, little by little, until he succeeded in reaching a couple of small trees that stood quite close together. Against these he leaned carelessly for a little while. At this moment Lanice made a dash for the main trail over which they had recently travelled. The desperado followed her quickly, though cautiously.

"What er you up to?" he queried.

"I'm going back home," she replied. "All I ask of you is to keep at a safe distance, fifty yards at least, all the time, remember, or I'll use the same kind of an argument which you have been attempting to use on me."

The bandit, however, kept coming closer and closer, with a glowering expression, which he thought would strike terror to the girl's heart; but here, she, quick as a flash, took aim and sent a bullet through the sleeve of his coat. This straightened him up and he stood still for a moment.

"What d'ye mean?" he demanded.

"Just that you are to keep fifty yards away."

All this time the girl was making good progress on the trail by means of a side, backward trot, the bandit continually following in hot pursuit, in a sneaking and crouching manner.

LANICE IS HELD UP

In this wise they picked their way along for hours, neither the woman or man speaking to each other during that time. It was a march of grim determination. Onward they went; through streams of water, up hill and down valley, with never a halt, one fleeing for her life, the other possibly to a death. The pursuer was on the defensive, but in the meantime was making plans for a stealthy attack. He seized a stone every now and again which he slipped into his pocket as he jogged along, and just as the girl was jumping over a log and through some underbrush, he let go one of these missives with the swiftness and speed of an arrow, which caught Lanice on the elbow or wrist and sent the gun spinning some distance from her into the grass. On the instant he made a howl and dash for the girl, which fairly made her dizzy, but in spite of this, she scrambled through the bushes and over the grass as best she could for the gun. He, however, was too swift and strong for her. He seized her by the arm just as she was reaching for it, dragging her backwards. At this instant he lost no time in grabbing for the deadly weapon, the commander of the murderous forces.

As they approached the end of their tramp, and the station house loomed into view, the big man showed a nervous twitching in every movement.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

His heavy disguise, his moustache, hair, beard, gloves and thick voice stood him in good stead at this stage of the game. He halted his fair captive beside a little brook where he gave her a cup of water as she sat on a log resting.

"It is now time for me to blurt out," he began. "Maybe ye don't know where ye're goin' but I'm goin' to tell you now. Somebody's hurt awful bad and is sick too. I'm takin' you straight to him."

The girl sprang to her feet.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

The gun man held up a gold watch, a tie pin and a silk handkerchief.

"Where did you get those, you scoundrel?"

"Don't get rattled," rejoined the man. "I told you he was sick an' wants to see you. If you kick over the traces ye'll never set eyes on him again in this old world. He's caged in good and tight all right."

"Caged in where?"

"Now ye're fishin'."

"This is awful!"

"Seems a little like it, little girl, but it'll be a d— sight more awful if you open your mouth to a soul on the train what's up. Read this letter."

LANICE IS HELD UP

The girl did as she was bid. She read:

"My Dear Lanice:

I am held within an underground cave by this man for a high ransom and am in a desperately bad condition. I would rather have you help me than my people, so please come with this man. He has a plan."

This letter was signed _____

The writing was an excellent imitation if not real of that of a dear friend and was in every particular, signature and all, as good as genuine.

"Now yer see with yer own eyes, don't you, thet I don't talk much, but I acts pretty hard."

Lanice had by this time resumed her seat on the log, and was holding the crumpled letter in her hands.

"What d'ye say?"

"I'll go," said the girl in a faltering voice, "but if you are tricking me or if you harm that man, your own life will be in grave danger."

"Thet's 'all right, little girl, now here's our train. Mum's the word, remember, an' every turn of the wrist 'll pan out smooth as silk, but any hitch, an' th'll be the devil to pay."

CHAPTER XXIX.

An Awful Climax

IN Lord Vessamere's apartment all was quiet that Sunday afternoon. No one was stirring save the rough, bony dark-browed fellow at his door, who sat cross-legged and cross-minded. This man spoke very little English.

Of a sudden, Vessamere arose from his chair, putting his hand to his ear, he strained forward, listening intently. With a nervous shaking he called to the man at the door, motioning for him to come closer. The big fellow shambled over.

"Do you hear that? Who is that?"

The doorkeeper shook his head.

"What house?" queried Vessamere.

No answer.

"Where is Slim, your chief?"

At this he pointed towards the direction of the singing, which could be heard more plainly now:

"Bring him here. Go and get him, get your chief."

AN AWFUL CLIMAX

"My chief?"

"Yes, your chief. I want him quick—quick, d'ye hear?"

"All right, I go get him," and so saying the keeper hooked a chain round his prisoner's well leg and a link in the floor, slipped in a padlock, turned the key and was off.

In a very short time he was back with Slim.

"What d'ye want?" said Slim.

"Who is that singing?"

"What d'ye want to know fer?"

"I have my reasons for asking. If you are playing your game at such a heinous limit as I suspect you are, by the gods above I will murder you. I cannot mistake that voice. Do you know who that woman is?"

"Always know my catches, even down and up to their aunts and uncles, my lord."

"Now see here, the very gates of hell, in so far as aristocracy and gold can let loose, will pour out their vengeance upon you and your holes of vice and trickery. Where did you get this girl?"

"Be calm, be calm. Don't get excited. I got her in the woods, my lord. She was lost."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

"Lost, you say? You are lying like a devil."

"I tell you you're excited. Talk like a gentleman, never swear. It is a strict rule in my business never to use swear words.

"Can I sit still and be calm, you beast, knowing that she has been brought to this place? What did you bring her to this city for?"

"My business, my lord."

"Your business? What kind of business do you style it? It would appear as if it were a slippery brimstone business, in which the very imps of the bottomless pit are engaged!"

"This business brings my stock bang up with wide open eyes, face agin face with tricks, poor lints and slum kitchens. It is true my lord, I use some brains to trap people, in a race, a scuffle or a leap. I make use of poisoned drugs and pay cash for them too. I use guns, electric wires, jimmies, flash lights, and so on; all common things, my lord, to rake in the sheaves with. I set great store on the kind of sheaves I pitch in. I have barns, store houses and dingys where I hang up my goods. I peddle my goods as live stock to the biggest bidder; sometimes the live stock themselves are sure the biggest bidders. Now d'ye see? Hold a minute, my lord, you swear too much. Now your business and mine are both twins. Maybe you deal

AN AWFUL CLIMAX

in wheat, stock, race horses, theatre and opera dresses, I don't know. You sell your stocks and wheat to the highest bidder, so we are both alike in this, my lord. Do you follow me?"

"I'd like to wring your neck!"

"No chanct, my lord, no chanct! Your stock has no eyes; they cannot see nor feel the heart cuts and sore spots that your shark deals set into some people. You get the gold, my lord, and you are satisfied with the way of getting it. Now my stock has eyes and maybe a few things they sees hurts 'em, but jus' the same I am more sure of their gold. Your soaked-up stock takes hold of poor widders and poor working people, grinding them down, anybody and everybody you can catch with 'em; you don't see 'em and so you don't care, my lord. I don't harm widders, nor does I squeeze them that is strugglin' to get along. I jes' picks on the rich fellers. I see my goods before I gets 'em and examines 'em 'ticular like."

"Did you say that Miss Loraine was lost in the woods and that you found her?"

"I think thet's the infermation I gev yer, my lord."

"And you have her confined in one of your apartments in this vile locality, you scapegoat? You have held me for three weeks in this hole, and now have the gall to bring this young woman famous for

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

her beauty, voice and treasure talents right into the middle of this litter and dirt. Do you know what this confinement sets into, what that woman is to me? I am to marry her to-morrow at two o'clock."

"All of 'em has been sized up, my lord."

"You knew that?"

"Mos' certin I did, but if you set eyes again on this young woman's face for the next ten years, you're a lucky duck."

At this Vessamere grew pale.

Slim continued: "We have sink holes, black alleys, pits, dungeons and so on underground, and all yer slickest 'tectives and gold would never fin' her if I took the notion."

Vessamere stared at the man in dumb astonishment, white to the lips.

"I can whisk her away from one to another of them dens, cold cellars and cobweb holes. When I goes in fer a deal in my stock, I sees that my stock is boosted and padded up to the very bes' 'dvan-tage."

"Miss Loraine believes that I am in near readiness for our wedding."

"Of course, my lord, and very proper too."

AN AWFUL CLIMAX

"She expected to be on her way long before this to buy her wedding outfit."

"It's too bad the c'nectin' link is broken up, my lord."

"But see her! Have you no heart?"

"None in my bargain business. I never lets any-thing interefere with that."

"It will kill this young woman to be dragged through your dungeons and black holes."

"Meb'be so. We're all got ter die some time, my lord."

"I told you once that I never would whisper, even to my people as to this, after being released, if you promised not to write them for ransom money, as I would not for the world have them know that I fell into this trap so easily."

"I know yer did, my lord. What's the diff though?"

"Will you tell me how you contrived to bring Miss Loraine fifteen hundred miles without being detected?"

"That's my secret, but I'll tell yer this one thing, ut was my own plan, right up ter the finish."

At this juncture there was a commotion outside and the screams of a woman could be plainly heard.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Vessamere felt himself growing cold and he cast a dumb stare on Slim.

"Nothing to be alarmed at," said that individual. "Jes' changing a piece of stock to a new den."

"Let me go to her! I shall go crazy under this strain!"

"It's all right; your lady love has jus' been led across to new rooms, a den with stone walls, and she doesn't like the looks of some of my men. But she'll get used to it all in time."

"What a black heart you have!"

"One don't carry his heart into business. You should know thet. It's jees' a case of wit and tricks to get yer price. Yer plan of action is about the same as mine. You use chink bug scare and grasshopper dope in selling wheat stocks, fire lore in well spouts, salt pockets for gold mines to help the profits soar. It is a case of the millionaires on one side, the poor on tother, and tricks in every trade."

"Mark you, if any harm befalls this young woman, I'll shoot you dead or strangle you."

"You won't get a chanct, my lord, fer ye'll never git out of my clutches. We have black, muddy water for fellers like you, an' dead dogs holler out no tales." So saying, and with a knowing wink, Slim departed.

AN AWFUL CLIMAX

That night Vessamere could not sleep. He had been planning to pay this desperate character off in the sum demanded the very next day and thus gain his freedom, but now it was all changed. "How did the wretch trap that girl and bring her from such a distance to this place? He must have drugged her, the demon! It makes my blood run cold. What can I do? He won't release me, and he has taken Lanice to another location, but I'll buy her liberty, if it takes my entire fortune, and that this very day."

In the meantime, Lanice was securely locked within stone walls not far down the alley.

The girl had endeavored many times to gain an interview with the desperado who had brought her to this den, that she might demand from him a fulfilment of his promise, but he did not appear. The old Chinese doctor was very attentive to her wants, however, and at nights a withered up, scrawny old woman kept her company. She occupied a bed in the far corner of the room.

Lanice was not by nature a timid woman, nor given to looking on the dark and dull side of things, but in her predicament she could not help wondering and even worrying at the strange and desperate proceedings of this man.

CHAPTER XXX.

Slim Jim

THE wedding day had dawned, and Slim rose early. "A good day to hit up a deal on my stock," he muttered to himself.

As he entered the room he found Vessamere smoking, and apparently thinking deeply.

"You look happy in that smokin' pose," was his greeting.

"If I do, my looks belie me, for I am in the depths of misery. Are you going to release me for the sum arranged for as promised? My knee is strong enough for me to walk on. If I am not let loose soon, there's going to be a damned row round these plantations."

"Now, don't git excited, lordy. Remember them dungeons I spoke of."

Here he rapped on the wall and shortly after, in stalked four ruffians carrying a rope, at least the first one carried it.

"Now as I said before," went on Slim, "there's

SLIM JIM

dungeons for such foul talkers as you, and I have a notion right now to shut you up in one."

"Do it then, and curses on you."

"Thanks, for your good wishes."

"You can put me in one and keep me there till Gabriel sounds his horn, and the demons of hell pitchfork you into the brimstone lake if you like. I don't care."

"All stock dealers like you and me is hiked to the same place."

"You can release Miss Loraine this very day, letting her go on my ransom, the one which I promised for myself."

"Nothin' doin'. Takes double for a woman."

"Make it double then, and send her home without further delay, but by the holy gods, never allow a single soul to know where I am. I can live in sink holes, dungeons or dark cells till doomsday, and die in them too; it makes no difference to me. Give me a pen and ink."

"All right, lordy, twenty thousand dollars will set the girl free."

Just one hour after the closing of the bargain, Lanice was ushered into the ladies' parlor of the palatial Hotel Du Bois, and to her intense surprise

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

and joy, into the presence of Lord Vessamere himself. He had been whisked away by Slim to the same hotel a few minutes before her arrival. The girl stood dumbfounded for an instant, then moved towards him.

"You look pale. Are you ill? How did you manage to come here to meet me? Oh! but I am so glad to see you. I received your letter, you know, and was almost overcome."

"What letter do you mean? I never sent a letter to you, for I did not want to worry you. I was making rapid progress and thought I could break away before our wedding day. But, however, here we are together, and everything is in apple pie order."

"But my dear, how can I arrange for my wedding in such a short space of time? None of our people are here and I have nothing prepared for my trousseau, you know," and she peered out of the window, bewildered at the rapid turn of events.

"Why should we care about a trousseau. We shall have the wedding as arranged, for it is extremely bad luck to postpone one's wedding day. Then again, you might get lost, my dear. I have been greatly alarmed for your safety," here he kissed her fondly, "and you know, Lanice, your promise."

"Of course, I know, but dearest, it seems all so strange and confusing that I hardly know what I

SLIM JIM

am doing. What will your people in London think of it? Have you been there?"

"No, my dear, I have not. I was delayed for weeks on some important business. Anyway, I do not care what my people think; it is you I want. This is the day appointed for our wedding bells to ring out, and I am just bubbling over with joy to know that all trains, cabs and omnibusses have made connections strictly on time for us. We are merely using modern western methods in our style of wedding, and there is nothing to alarm anyone," declared Vessamere.

The sole present received that day by the young couple was the twenty thousand dollar cheque, which was enclosed to the bride with a little note expressing good wishes for her future happiness, which was endorsed by Baldy.

"It is strange that I did not know Baldy when he captured me on the trail. Do you know, dear, that I pinched myself to be sure I was not dreaming," said the girl. "I was not a bit afraid until he began swearing and aiming at me with his gun. I realized then that he meant business."

"That was a pretty clever trick, his arranging for the wedding in this city. Most extremely kind and thoughtful of him, I think. I feel sure though that something has touched his old heart with a mighty force."

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

The insight which Lanice had taken of the life of those dwellers of the slums during her brief stay amongst them, had made a deep impression on her mind, and she could not stem the sympathy which welled up in her heart for them. She fully believed that the reason of so much misery and misunderstanding, harsh judgment, and lack of assistance for them was due to the fact that the people did not place themselves in heart's touch with one another's lives, that they did not really know of one another's needs. It is really necessary to place one's finger on the pulse, to feel the heart throbs, in order to be moved by any appreciable good-will power. She therefore proposed to her husband that they organize a company for the sole purpose of mixing communities and classes, and actually establishing homes for the poor among the richer classes, and vice versa.

"What are you laughing at, dear?" she said.

"Just thinking what a nervous and nauseating shock it would strike in some of our more exclusive folk. But I am with you. There is abundance of good among these poor people, besides stacks of evil, but that is true of both classes, so that, in the words of Slim: "We are equal on that score." That fellow Slim, or Baldy, is a hero, and we'll just have to forgive him now, I suppose, although he did have me caged up like a roaring lion."

SLIM JIM

"Yes, dear, it makes me shudder to think of of it, and that awful tramp which I had to take with him."

The experience of Lanice and Cameron in being held up on the big prairie or canyon in the early days of the settlement of these districts, was due wholly to the mania of one man as you will have noticed, and not to the evil temperament of the people. His motive was neither murderous or for gold-grabbing, but as he thought at that stage in his life, it was the best plan by which to gain his living and carry out his pay-back desires of the heart.

CHAPTER XXXI.

At Last a Mighty Wave

LORRAINE'S progress in the last few years in the ranching and live stock business was attended with marvellous success, by reason of the unlimited demand for fresh meat in the railway camps and in the numerous towns and villages springing up in all directions.

Lanice had recognized when attending Baldy during his sickness at his own homestead, and after that, in his determination and cleverness to perform any task he had undertaken, that he was a man of worth. She could not conceive of anyone being beyond the reach and power of her diamond treasure. It was, therefore, decided between Lanice and her father that by some hook or crook "Slim" was to be enticed from his haunts. Lanice had written that the community was wholly to blame for the driving out of this man Baldy, and for this reason, if for no other, the community, or at least some members of it, were in duty bound to reinstate him.

"It is impossible for us to rest at ease or pass

AT LAST A MIGHTY WAVE

over lightly the loss of the soul of one man," she wrote to her father.

"We must redeem this one man who belongs to us, and whom no power under heaven and no creature on earth but ourselves, through the diamond treasure can redeem. It is really beyond our calculations to value the soul of one man. I understand that you were very close to him, and believe that if you would write him a letter offering him a position on the ranch, either in the livestock business or in the growing of the grain and hay, that he would give up the city slum life." Loraine was easily persuaded to lend his aid in the matter, and it was he who wrote the letter to Baldy.

"We'll see what can be done," Loraine wrote to Lanice.

"Slim" lay in the same cave in which Lord Vessamere had been imprisoned. It was midnight, and the little nickel alarm clock ticked off the hours as it hung over his head. "Red" had just come in.

"What of the night?" he asked. "How goes it?"

"Don't go at all, nothin' doin'," replied "Red."

"What's the matter with you, yer looks pale."

"O, I don't know, Slim," replied "Red." "Failin' nerve, I guess. Saw the new moon's face over my left shoulder and on the thirteenth, too. So I ses

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

to meself, I says, 'It's all up this month, Reddy,' and the hoo-doo has gat me all right. Got a letter fer you."

"Fer me? Who in — is writing letters to me?"

"Search me, old pard. Read it and fin' out." Here he tossed the letter across to "Slim" and the head of the hold-up gang took hold of the missive very gingerly and cautiously, as if he was expecting it to explode. He turned it over, and examined the writing and postmark very minutely, then little by little tore open one end. It read:

The Loraine Ranch.

My Dear Baldy:

My business here has grown to a pretty big proposition since you left our country. I have added also many thousands of acres to my ranch. I am growing older, and have missed you a lot.

Lanice, now Mrs. Vessamere, as you know, gave me your address and I want you to come back to the old homestead. I am deeding a part of it this day at the land office to you. You are a younger man than I, and I want you to take charge of my ranch at a salary of one hundred dollars a month. I am enclosing your first month's wages.

Yours, As Long Ago,

EDMOND LORAINÉ.

AT LAST A MIGHTY WAVE

Slim rose from off his ragged quilt. He was fully dressed and commenced pacing the floor. Backward and forward he paced, now and again pausing before an old faded picture which hung on the wall, his hands clenched behind his back. Stealthily he fumbled inside his pockets and drew forth an old letter, which was carefully folded in a small leather pocket book, and a tear trickled down his worn and weather-beaten cheek. A tender chord vibrated and a heart string set in motion; sympathy had been stretched out to him, and a flood of memories took possession of his soul. His old friend had shown faith in him in spite of his life and past record, and the realization of this had completely broken him up. He fell limp upon the bed, which he had managed to reach.

"What's shot into you?" asked "Red" as he hastened over to his pal.

"Nothin' much, I'll jack up in a minute." Slim remained stretched out on the bed, with face downwards for fully five minutes after this. Then turning over slowly, he said:

"Come over close agin' me, 'Red.'" I want to talk a little. We've come bang up agin the partin' stunt tonight. You and I have been trottin' along the rough and stony way a goodish time, and I've allus foun' you a gent at every turn of the wrist. You never went back on a pard nor swore at an enemy.

CONFESSION OF THE HILLS

Not a penny of a down-and-out man or woman did you ever touch with a ten-foot pole. Any woman who fell into our hands—fell inter our han's—I ses, you never corralled 'em. They was fed like queens by yer nibbs, and I know yer heart is white."

"What about the girl of the mountain slope, or Lanice, as you call her?"

"Well, I did dip into the bush fer her all right, but for a d— good reason, and that was to bring that man Lordy to time. He was a wily critter all right. Nothin' would have moved him to fork out that ransom ef I hadn't hit the other game of bringin' in the girl. I found out long before she broke in on us that Lordy loved her good and sound and was dead sartin that the girl did the same by him. Their weddin' day was set, too, and I soon scooped the ruse, and I dug in all my bes' licks to hit out fer these ceremonies, which you know right well was pulled off ter a finish. I coughed up that cheque to the groom so that they might have plenty of pocket cash for their honeymoon. To this same angel girl I owe a big debt. I was some happy and contented once and then back-slid. I didn't hev far ter go, you bet, so the jar didn't bump me very bad. The neighbors who were looking for evil jumped on me, and I bolted, but know deep down in my heart that an angel prayer and a big power has been after me ever since, and it shot out straight from this

AT LAST A MIGHTY WAVE

here girl. Tonight, this very hour, I hit the home trail, away from these old haunts. Goodbye, old chum, goodbye. It won't be forever, I feel that. If I can hold out in the fight against my old black heart, I'll sure ship you out of here, by the stars above I swear it."

The two faithful partners in lying-in-wait-to-capture, shook hands in silence, and Slim passed out of the back door of the den, quietly wending his way through the alley and back streets till he reached a hotel pretty well up towards the union station.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Diamond Treasure Revealed

BALDY and Loraine established right in the midst of the now prosperous Loraine Valley a partnership for the handling of the livestock business and the extensive land subdivisions. The forty acre tracts which they had plotted out by the hundreds were sold to actual settlers, many of whom were brought out from the city by "Slim" or Baldy, as we once more know him. These people were selected specially. In connection with their commercial lines they also set up (in operation from the same office) a department of "diamond treasure", which spirit had been spread zealously abroad by Lanice, the same being closely adhered to by the people. The country was at that time but sparsely settled, and it was quite an arduous undertaking for anyone to visit every home personally; but thousands of people were scattered in all directions up and down the valley and over the plain now, and these men found ample scope to deliver and set in motion the treasure on a larger scale.

Loraine took charge of the treasure extension from his office, while Baldy practised the combina-

THE DIAMOND TREASURE REVEALED

tion of its power and commerce, and that with a zeal that was astounding, Baldy being more zealous than the other man. He had an advantage over him, some maintained, by reason of his having partaken of the "false life" and draining it to the very last dregs. It is true that in passing through this experience he had learned of the utter folly and degradation which such a life would lead a man into, and when a way was opened up for him to escape it, he had freely accepted the new life; his heart had bounded within him and he was now surcharged with a zeal for that new life that was overpowering.

He had also been redeemed, or lifted from a lower depth than Loraine, and consequently was more deeply thankful and joyous in this new life.

Fraser's capacity or talent for handling large enterprises in the commercial line appealed at all times to Baldy as most wondrous, and yet in his busiest hour he could find time for interviews with Lanice in years gone by. Provisions, clothes, and such necessary things were sent out with a free hand at that time, to anyone she would solicit aid for, without question. His commercial ventures had proved to be great money-makers and his holdings had become very valuable, both in lands, timber tracts and mines; and the hundreds of men in his employ were provided with constant labor, day by day, and that