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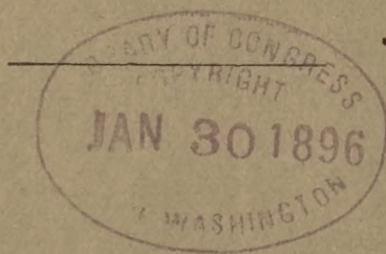
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Ladies First!

A NOVEL

BY

Mrs. DOMINIQUE FRANÇOIS VERDENAL



NEW YORK
THE HOME PUBLISHING COMPANY
3 EAST FOURTEENTH STREET

SHORTLY TO APPEAR

Her Senator

A New and Exciting Novel

BY

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER,

AUTHOR OF

“Mr. Barnes of New York,” “Mr. Potter of
Texas,” “That Frenchman,” “Miss Nobody
of Nowhere,” “A Princess of Paris,”
Etc., Etc.

THE HOME PUBLISHING COMPANY,
3 East 14th St., New York.

“Ladies First!”

A Novel

BY

Mrs. Dominique François Verdenal

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Welcome
since*

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NEW YORK
THE HOME PUBLISHING COMPANY

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“LADIES FIRST!”

CHAPTER I.

HAIL FELLOWS!

“Now this is a magnificent scheme. If I succeed it will put a cool million to my credit,” soliloquized Roy Banatyne, as he stroked his blond beard with a self-satisfied air and seemed to scent a fortune in the rich specimens of ore as they lay before him on his office desk, which ores had accompanied a lengthy document he had just read, re-reading those lines that pleased his imagination most, and which excited his speculative tendency to the greatest degree of delightful enthusiastic anticipation.

He had that disposition to risk, which, when given unbridled license, rushed headlong to financial ruin or victory, with the recklessness of the hounds and riders in at the death; or like the racer that dashes down the home stretch with dilated nostrils and strained tendons, regardless of neck or limb, spurred, not only by his rider, but also by the pleasurable effort to win or die. He was gifted with that dauntless nerve, which, whether victory or ruin was the result of a speculative stroke, could enjoy the one or watch the death throes of the other with a placid smile.

Roy Banatyne was a racer after money; not that he was mercenary—quite the contrary; although a multi-millionaire he was wholly indifferent to the luxuries with which money could surround him. But it was exhilarating sport for him to battle with the gales of fortune in his endeavor to save his bark from wreckage in that surging, plunging sea of finances. This peculiar species of gambling, copiously tinctured with its moral guilt, fascinated him. He did not pretend to pose as a model hero, and in an emergency, when the stock market was not going his way, would use a little strategy that by the scrupulous would not be considered quite *au fait*.

To win his point he was willing to surrender his hopes of Heaven for a probable certainty of the other place, thinking that others had the privilege to do the same, if their judgments and consciences so prompted. In the excitement of money getting, when he forgot the strictest rules of upright principle, it was more due to heedlessness in the headlong race than from deliberate, dishonorable intent. To take a trick at any risk or to give a blow beneath the belt in his wrought up state, he would not have scrupled, neither would such a return from his adversary have surprised or chagrined Roy H. Banatyne.

If a friend lost by his stock manipulations he was often ready to return the sum to the loser with open-handed generosity. He was a bold, daring speculator. “Go in on a possibility, whoop her up to a certainty, and let the devil catch the hindmost,” was his oft-repeated advice, and

although he used phrases which might be construed against his integrity, he did not mean them in their common acceptance, but as a sort of throw-down-the-gauntlet challenge to all adversaries to enter the arena of stock gambling and play battledore and shuttlecock with their fortunes, and see who would win the day and consequently the money.

Whether his fearless reliance on luck, or his generosity, enlisted that invisible protection given to birds, flowers and things which exist and are cared for with no thought of theirs for the dreaded “ rainy day,” be it said that so far everything had gone his way, and that he had been successful far beyond his most sanguine expectations.

Banatyne’s score in years was thirty-five. A handsome man of decided blonde type, Scotch born, but no trace of an accent heralded his native country. A man of the world fully equipped with all the *savoir faire*, that such a position implies—belonged to all the clubs, and took every inch of enjoyment out of life that did not interfere with his speculative tendency, for that was the very oxygen he breathed, to which no other pleasure could be compared.

It was in the sixties, that era when California, the Banner State of gold-producing properties, electrified the world. When she, though but an infant in years, was a veteran in importance. When the financial powers of both the Eastern and the Western hemispheres stood on tip-toe, fearful that so vast a gold production from the, until then, unknown section, would revolutionize com-

merce, paralyze the known pulses of finances and circumvent methods that would be felt from the globe's center to its circumference.

Like a powerful magnet, she attracted good, bad and indifferent—particularly the adventuresome—from all parts of the universe. They were reckless men, as far as making and losing money was concerned. Many of them were generous men and would help a friend to the extent of a good sized fortune without as much security as the scratch of a pen. Such a man was James R. Keene, who was the recognized Free Lance of the California Street Stock Exchange. A natural born speculator, who frequently ventured his all to win fortune's favor.

Such a man was J. W. Gashwiler, who was one of the most successful and popular of mine speculators on the Pacific Coast. His purse strings were loosened to every sycophant who called him friend. And contemporary were such men as William C. Ralston, a prince of generosity and debonair leader in time of prosperity, but lacking endurance in the face of adversity.

William Sharon, whose cool head and practical sense saw possibilities and improved them; and hosts of others identified with the mining interests of the Pacific Coast, who became known the world over as representatives of the new field and a new era; and such a man was Roy Banatyne, the daredevil of a manipulator, as far as generosity was concerned; but there the likeness stopped, for the latter was built upon a very different plan, inasmuch as he had little crooked nooks, and unexpected

corners, that the honor of the former gentlemen would never have tolerated for a moment in their own business methods.

Money was made easily, was lost easily, given freely. It was not then the hoarded commodity in California that it is to-day. It changed hands with the rapidity of lightning. A Monte Carlo spirit permeated the atmosphere. John W. Mackay and James G. Fair were miners in flannel shirts and trousers tucked into cowhide boots, uncovering the Great Bonanza on the Comstock.

John P. Jones was digging gold in the mountains of Trinity even while indulging in politics as a laxative. Alvinza Hayward was sinking deep shafts in the mother lode in Amador and working gold quartz successfully.

It was that feverishly alert period when the spirit of wild speculation was at white heat. The Stock Exchange was the center of eager, excited, almost turbulent crowds, who elbowed each other aside in their frantic endeavors to tempt Fortune's smiles. The mechanic left his work which paid him a pittance comparatively, to risk his savings in the whirlpool; the merchant forgot his legitimate ventures in the race for immediate gain. The lawyer threw aside his brief, the doctor neglected his patients—professional and working men crowded brokers' offices and watched with eager eyes and flying pulse the market's fitful fluctuations. Servants of the household, following the examples openly set by their mistresses, would put up their wages as margins in mining stock and perhaps win a fortune in the lottery of California

Street or perhaps otherwise, which was more frequently the case. Whether loss or gain resulted it was taken good-naturedly. The cry was, "Hurrah for the next winner or loser!"

The air was surcharged with this chance spirit to risk. Many bold operators had laid the foundation stones of their millions, others had not the courage to count their losses. When the market was "booming" the wife would buy a few four hundred dollar dresses, to find by the time that they were finished she could not afford a calico; or would invest in carriage and horses, and at the end of a week the sheriff or his deputy might stand at the head of the team and she would be obliged to walk home from her calling or shopping expedition, which she did without the least chagrin, knowing from experience that if it was the "down" to-day the "up" would be to-morrow; and so this nerve-straining, brain-racking excitement held sway in San Francisco, the "ups" and "downs" chasing each other in such rapid succession, that one scarcely knew from day to day whether fickle fortune would count him millionaire or pauper; and by a great many old-timers they are still considered "The Palmy Days of California."

Now that the air was rife for it, Roy Banatyne was about to float another mine; he was going to place upon the market a new property, the report of which, with maps, plans and diagrams, he had just received from his expert with accompanying ore specimens, "not selected," but "taken carelessly" from the dump among "thousands like them or better."

He walked the floor of his office with a nervous alert step, his motion accelerating his thoughts, until they disdained concealment.

“ And why not succeed ? ” he said. “ All my efforts have been successful so far, and this property promises better than anything I have ever taken hold of. Here’s a report sent by my expert, saying that it is almost as good as the Bonanza on the Comstock ; the ledge crops out boldly, and the samples assay up in the thousands. Everything is in its favor. No time to be lost after reading such a report. A gold mine like this is a fortune, not only for myself, but for all my friends. Failure ? Humph ! It isn’t in the cards.

“ But suppose the ledge pitches out or ‘ pinches,’ ” he went on, his thoughts moving at a more rapid speed, “ and the mine doesn’t pan out well, my syndicate is composed of men who can well afford to lose the money, and we will come out of the financial conflict like scarred warriors ready to buckle on our armor and try another deal,” and a broad smile of keen enjoyment at the anticipated pleasure of the coming combat lighted up the face of this warrior, who was a commanding general in the struggle in which all nations take part : to gain the largest amount of booty in the great universal war for Pelf ! Pelf !

“ So Banatyne, old boy,” he continued, voicing his thoughts to space, his nerves worked up to a high pitch of excitement, “ prepare for a call upon your reserved fund of ‘ bull ’ talk, and to show as goodly a quantity of the richest specimens of ore that have ever been seen in this or any other

world.” And he sank into a large office chair, still holding the report from “my expert” in his hand, for Banatyne, while his thoughts ran away with him, had unconsciously walked a great distance although in a small space.

As he turned in his chair his office door opened.

“Hello, Halstead,” he said with a cheery, hospitable tone in his voice: “Walk right in if you want to read a report on a regular pot boiler,” offering for his friend’s perusal the document that he had just read.

“I suppose it’ll make my eyes dance and see stars for the rest of my natural life,” replied Halstead.

“Well, rather,” returned Banatyne with a self-assured air accompanied by a satisfied smile, which made Halstead’s heart double its throbs, and his pulse beat at a decidedly increased speed, for he was one of Banatyne’s most ardent followers and devoted friends, and he foresaw in his pleased expression that in the coming deal the daring mine promoter intended to do himself full justice, and Halstead was going to keep abreast of him in the conflict.

“Oh, no, I guess not,” remarked Halstead, which was a jolly contradiction of that which he considered a positive fact, and he chose to emphasize it by the derisive use of the negative. “We’ll go in on a shoe string and come out with a tan yard this time sure, eh, Roy, old boy?” and he slapped Banatyne on the back in true good fellowship style.

“Read the report,” was Banatyne’s irrelevant

answer, pointing to the paper, and anxious to hear Halstead's concurring suggestions and spicy comments, always ready to enjoy another's thoughts when they ran in the same channel as his own.

“ Cold nosed as a fish, of course, ” said Halstead disdainfully, as he gave the document a casual glance, his hopeful nature predicting the utter impossibility of any man, no matter how expert, fixing an adequate value upon that particular mining property.

Nat Halstead was a fine looking, fair haired man, with a singularly impressive face, for such a hayseed guilelessness overspread his countenance, had Diogenes' search-light, in that ever memorable hunt for an honest man, cast its rays upon Nat, he would have unhesitatingly been picked out as the *rara avis* to meet all the combined requirements. His sunny, devil-may-care smile, however, at times somewhat marred his saintly expression, for although it lighted up a face beaming with good nature, cordiality, and generosity, it also revealed his daring, reckless spirit for speculation, which cropped out in every feature, in every gesture.

An enthusiastic admirer of the gentler sex, he fell like a stricken deer at the first glance of a bright eye, but if there is truth in the saying, “ There is safety in numbers, ” he was the surest bachelor of his time. He was in love with all the ladies, which wholesale infatuation debarred him most effectually from ever entering the list of Benedicts. No mining deal was of sufficient importance in his opinion to interfere with his

gallantry. It was with him "the ladies first and all the time, God bless 'em!"

Just as he was in the act of picking up the all-important report, his eye fell upon a neglected little note still sealed in its pink-tinted envelope. All of his gallantry rushed upon him like an overwhelming torrent. He took it up with tenderest solicitude, and asked in plaintive tone, his eyes gazing fondly upon the feminine superscription:

"How could you, Roy? From Tricksie?"

"Yes, from Tricksie," answered Banatyne, taking the note from Halstead's loving, lingering grasp, after the latter had smoothed its perfumed surface, as it contact with anything so decidedly effeminate did his very soul good. Banatyne placed it, still unsealed, in his pocket, for though at times his hands could be tied by a single hair of a pretty woman's head, or he could be led a willing captive by the most inexperienced coquette, with him business predominated gallantry, and a *billet doux* on rose-tinted paper was powerless beside an encouraging report from his expert. Consequently the heliotrope-scented missive was doomed to await the pleasure of the receiver, imagining, as he did, that it must be a request for no small number of his dollars, which seemed to be at the command of men and women alike, particularly if she was a pretty and fascinating woman, with a soupçon of insouciant freedom, and "old" Banatyne seemed to find none who were not.

"By Jove, she's true as steel," said Halstead with a tinge of envy in his voice for such con-

stancy. “You ought to marry her, Banatyne.” The remark implied that such marriage might be a condescension on Banatyne’s part, while a great compliment conferred upon the absent one under discussion.

“She *is* an adorable creature,” returned Banatyne, his business voice softened to a lover’s tone, “but there’s a gulf separating us.”

“And what is that?” asked Halstead, surprised.

“It’s all very well for you bachelors, who have no incumbrances, to give advice,” said Banatyne, “but do you ever stop to consider influence upon children? Wouldn’t it be a great injustice to give my child such companionship?”

Halstead answered with some impatience: “Now you’re talking like a putty man. Influence!” he echoed the word almost mockingly. Then not wishing to appear too harsh he changed to softer mood and added lightly: “Suffering humanity! anyone to hear you talk would think you’d just dropped down from Heaven with a special halo for your saintly head. How about your *own* influence?” he asked in a laughing tone, needful to make a bold suggestion acceptable.

“Oh!” answered Banatyne, whisking the ashes from his cigar, “the world looks differently upon such a state of things in a man.”

“There you go—that is so like a man. By Jove, Banatyne, we are pompous animals. But divest us of the indulgence allowed us by the partial conventionals of the world—rob us of the

foible of self-importance—and what are we? Why, mere mental pigmies—moral monstrosities and cowards by instinct. If we want to do anything real mean, we conveniently envelop ourselves in the cloak afforded us by that society which spoils us with its fostering care, and, like a humored small boy, cuddle in our mother’s petticoats and say: ‘Mamma says I may,’ at the same time pointing a tantalizing finger at his twin sister, he adds: ‘You can’t, mamma won’t let you!’ We really should be proud of ourselves, we are such brave and noble animals.” And Halstead’s lips curled in sarcasm, while the color burned in his face as he finished this outburst in favor of the sex he genuinely and honorably loved to a degree approaching veneration.

“Well, what are we going to do about it?” asked Banatyne, smiling at his friend’s earnestness. “You and I can’t go on a crusade against the ways of the whole world, for the masculine portion would not be the only ones arrayed against us, but the weaker sex——”

“They may be weaker physically, but great Cæsar’s ghost! They are regular full-fledged Samsons compared with us morally,” blurted out the woman’s champion.

“Please allow me to finish my sentence, Halstead,” returned Banatyne good naturedly, for in his soul he agreed with Halstead in every word. “I was going to say that it is a recognized fact that women are more exacting towards their own sex than men are.”

“Yes, of course, and why are they so exacting

regarding their own sex?” excitedly went on Halstead. His color deepened with his poetic sentiment for those he considered almost defenseless. “ Yes, why ?” he repeated. “ Simply because the world in its harshness toward them as a sex is so unbearably tyrannical that it makes them cowards. If a woman as pure as an angel should hold out a helping hand to a fallen sister, the act of charity would be recorded in her favor in Heaven, but it would smirch her character in the eyes of this world. She is forced by wrongly organized society to appear cruel and cold to her own sex. I, for one, hope the time is not far distant when she, through increased independence of character, will be as ready to frown upon the uncleanness and impurity of a man as she does now, through cowardice, upon that of woman.”

“ Hear ! hear ! Go it, old man ! My sentiments exactly. ’Pon my soul, you look glorious when you champion the cause of woman,” said Banatyne, clapping his hands by way of approval.

“ Why, we may go through all the dissipations that cry to Heaven for vengeance, but when we come to select a wife, a girl in her teens—who has been kept as closely guarded as a pearl in its oyster shell—is scarcely reckoned pure enough for our spoilt and debauched lordships,” concluded Halstead, just as a third party entered the office.

CHAPTER II.

“FIGURES DON'T LIE.”

“HELLO, Prince James, come right along if you want to read a report that'll make your eyes dance and see stars for the rest of your natural life,” was Halstead's abrupt change of subject. He had a way of inventing names that he thought suited the peculiarities of his friends. He called Kelvyn “Prince James” on account of his faultless style in dress and polished manners, Halstead himself being somewhat inclined to carelessness in his own attire.

“I haven't read the report myself. But I'll take Ban's word for it,” he added, rising from his chair. “I have an engagement”—here he jerked out his watch in a nervous hurry and cried, “By Jove, that young lady'll think me as uncivilized as a Hottentot. I'm sure to be five minutes late. Can't help it,” and he rushed from the office.

“I suppose you'd like to be a Cræsus inside of a week,” said Banatyne to the new comer, a smile of the most cordial welcome beaming upon his face.

“No objections,” laconically answered the other, as he walked up to his friend Banatyne, with the air of one who knew that he was not an intruder—and their hands met in warm and hearty grasp.

James Kelvyn's presence was always pleasing to Banatyne. He was a manly young fellow, not

more than twenty-five years old—a superb specimen of his Maker’s mechanism—frame and muscle magnificent, complexion olive, hair and mustache dark brown. Eyes hazel and glistening with mirth and gayety, a poetic head surmounting the body of a powerful young athlete. An impulsive nature, easily led by one who gained his confidence, which was not a difficult task, for he was at that age when all men were honest in his eyes, and the world wore its rosiest hues.

He was ambitious of financial success, and through Banatyne’s assistance and “points” he had passed several milestones in the direction of his goal. He was secretary for more than a dozen mining companies, at a liberal salary from each, making an aggregate sum that even a capitalist would not refuse. He swore by his friend Banatyne as he would by his own honor, and called him his “Big Injun,” meaning by the expression that he was his hero and model in all things. The careless, don’t-care-what-happens air of the mine promoter fascinated the young man. To Kelvyn, Banatyne was the most daring, boldest and bravest character he had ever known, and he determined to follow him on to victory. The possibility of failure never thrust its gaunt and discouraging shadow before his hopeful young eyes. The curtain between him and the near future was of impenetrable thickness, and he cared not to pierce it.

His close attention to the fascinating wiles of the capricious stock market made him oblivious to the charms of society. His very indifference to

the existence of women piqued their vanity and put them on their mettle to capture this unappreciative “ Lord of Creation.” Their manœuvres to attract the attention of the handsome, well-fixed financially, and unconscious Apollo would have made the head of a more devoted swain take on most prodigious proportions. The girls who were in love with Kelvyn were many, and still he was wholly unconscious of their tender feelings, and innocent of any act of his that had created suffering in young hearts of the opposite sex; an exasperating state of things for the girls, for which his God-given, attractive personality or brilliant financial outlook, perhaps both, were to blame. Kelvyn’s mother was a well-to-do widow, whom he loved with beautiful, tender, filial devotion. They occupied a handsome home, part of the estate left by his late father. Time had rushed along, and the dear, gray-haired mother was in the evening of life, when one fears to venture, and leans upon the arm of younger blood; when parent takes the place of the child she has led by the hand into independence, and the child by virtue of unworn force and unspent strength assumes the responsibility of parent. She looked up to her son as counselor and guide in all things.

As Banatyne turned and twisted the ore specimens, pointing out their good qualities to Kelvyn, who didn’t understand so much about them as did this P. M. (which letters Halstead sometimes placed in the corner of his calling cards, and which were the abbreviations for “ Practical Miner,”) the men composing his syndicate began to assemble

in his outer office in answer to a call for a meeting to consider the report on the new mining property, which report had been anxiously awaited for some weeks. Banatyne expatiated upon the merits of the new ledge, declaring in his forceful style that there was never anything like it in the history of mining. “No risk run in investing in this new property. I tell you the ledge in the Peerless is gigantic, almost solid walls and a vein of almost pure metal. The Comstock is an infant compared to it,” he went on with increasing energy. “But read the report, which is, of course, as bloodless as a fish, but according to that calculation we have more than five hundred thousand tons of ore developed and in sight. Lowest average \$100.00 per ton, that makes \$50,000,000. Isn't that as plain as day? Figures don't lie; anybody'll tell you that,” and his imagination continued to stretch to its fullest tension, while the most tranquil air of the sincerest honesty that a human countenance ever wore overspread his features.

It required a man of nerve to enter and lead others into this wild and unknown path of chance. His extravagant talk produced a kind of intoxication, as a result of which the ordinary rules of prudence were forgotten. “Cost of mining and milling, you can lump at \$5.00 per ton, because wood and water are plenty,” he dashed along: our two hundred stamp mill” (which mill, of course, hadn't even been contracted for) “will crush 500 tons per day, which makes \$50,000.00 per day. Do you see?” and not waiting for questions to be answered, for he read acquiescence in his listeners,

animated faces, he continued; "Deduct cost of mining and milling, and it makes \$47,500.00 per day, net; multiply that by, say, thirty days, for the mill will run Sundays, and we have a monthly net yield of \$1,325,000.00. Now, what dividend is that on 200,000 shares? Why, over six dollars per share per month, and the yearly product over \$15,000,000.00!—all available for dividends. Tell you, there never was anything like it! The Comstock isn't a circumstance to the Peerless," as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, "and if it was anywhere within forty miles of the Comstock, it would sell for double the money," he added.

Of course the shares were all subscribed for, at figures much in advance of the purchase money paid by Banatyne to the original owners of the crude prospect, the subscribers considering themselves fortunate individuals to get in at what they were assured was "bed-rock price." The "dear public" would be accommodated at a much greater advance when the stock was listed and the manipulation of the deal began.

By the time the meeting of the privileged share-holders had adjourned, many frequenters of California Street had gathered in Banatyne's outer offices. Men who showed the unmistakable air of prosperity and men who had borne the strokes of adversity, but who, having been once intoxicated by the elixir of a "good buy," were powerless to resist the temptation to try their luck again.

They were ready to file into the ranks once more, and if it were possible to realize a sufficient sum upon the garments that covered their backs, would

have parted with them in a moment, and so put up a margin on ten shares of stock—provided Banatyne would give them a sure “point,” which he was seldom scrupulously backward in doing; never failing, as we have seen, to prove to them by figures, which “never lie,” the enormous dividends which would be forthcoming inside of sixty days “or less.”

Even “mud-hens,” the discourteous title bestowed by the gallant curbstone operators upon the fair women who ventured to take a hand in the game of chance, were there to ask Banatyne’s opinion about stocks, and, of course, they were advised to put all their pin money in Peerless, for Roy was never flesh to one, fowl to another. He courted the aid of everyone in his deals. Many “mickles make a muckle,” as his ancestors would say. Everything was grist that came to his mill.

“Would you advise me to buy Comstocks or to short them?” “Do you think Ophir or Gould & Curry will carry their dividends?” “What do you think Belcher will do to-day?” were among the numerous questions asked by these venturesome dames. Banatyne thought he had an audience worthy of his subject. If they did not buy they would surely advertise his latest scheme, and he advanced the cause of his Peerless in this strain: “You’ll make a big killing as sure as taxes.”

“Yes, just as sure as Gabriel ’ll blow his trumpet,” came the cheery voice of Halstead from the corridor, for he had made a hurried call and returned in time for the meeting.

The fever quickly spread and became as quickly epidemic. Men mortgaged their homes; women realized on their diamonds to enable them to purchase some coveted shares of the Peerless. In a few days the property was incorporated, with a capitalization up in the millions. Banatyne was made president and Kelvyn secretary, and application was made *pro forma* to list the stock upon the Exchange.

Every foot of Kelvyn's mother's property was mortgaged and the money invested in the Peerless, for, in her great love and blind confidence in her son's judgment, Mrs. Kelvyn had transferred everything to him, saying: "It will all be his anyway, God bless him! when I am called to join his dear, noble father in the promised land; so why should he not have it now, when he, perhaps, needs it most?" The dear old lady, feeling proud and extremely happy in being able to aid her son and to show her confidence in their dear friend, Banatyne, who, because of his many kindnesses to her "Jamie," had won a warm place in her grateful heart.

Banatyne was the solitary person whom Kelvyn could have said he loved, except this same dear, white-haired mother, who awaited the return of her son every evening, and while at dinner listened with astonished ears to his recital of the fluctuations of fortune in California Street, and the inestimable riches of mining properties in which he was largely interested through the kindness of Banatyne.

Men thought Kelvyn flippant; he was so light-

hearted, so boyish, so gay, which were but the effervescent qualities, common attributes of success. Roy, with his peculiar, venturesome spirit, attracted him—his dash and nerve excited the younger man's admiration, and led him blindly by that peculiar hypnotic force that oddly enough permits one man to govern another. Kelvyn, without influence, would have been, for the sake of his aged mother, prudent of his financial resources. But under Banatyne's magnetic charm he had “staked” his mother's last cent upon his friend's judgment of a mining property, and felt as secure as if the expected profits were in the bank's vaults.

CHAPTER III.

A LOVE LEDGE.

THE evening of the day on which the mining enterprise or "deal," as Banatyne would call it, had been so happily and briskly arranged, these two friends dined together in true Bohemian style at "The Poodle Dog," a French restaurant noted for its good cheer and easy company.

As was his habit after a big transaction, Banatyne imbibed freely whether he had lost or won, declaring that champagne was the only beverage to properly celebrate the joys of victory or drown the sorrows of defeat. It was on such occasions that Banatyne's perpetual *affaires du cœur* were the subject of conversation; for although he was eternally in love, each affair was of short duration.

"I am not a marrying man, you know," he would say, when in this confidential mood. "I love the sweetness of a kiss only while it lasts. Why should a man marry and burden himself with unnecessary cares?"

But as a matter of fact he had married at the age of twenty-one, and was the father of as fine a boy as any native son of the golden West could possibly be. The lad was then about thirteen years of age, a handsome sturdy little fellow, an exact reproduction in features of his good-looking father. He attended Santa Clara College, and for

his special benefit Banatyne kept a magnificent suite of rooms at the Occidental Hotel, which were also known as Banatyne's home. Here the boy's vacations were spent, his father often waiting until the close of a school term to take his son with him on his mine inspection trips. The boy wondered if any other fellow had as great a father as he, while Banatyne was confident that his son's equal could not be produced. Dougald (which signifies “stranger”) was the good strong Scotch name that the lad bore.

His early life was never a subject of conversation with Banatyne. His friends sometimes asserted that when very young he had married in some mining camp, and that his wife was still living. Those who studied his character believed that it was some rash act, in keeping with his impulsiveness in all things; while his dear (?) friends whose ostentatious affection for value received approached the sycophant type, told all the listeners they could find that a stain of illegitimacy hung over “Dug's” head—as the little fellow was often called. But none ventured to question the bright manly boy, much less the father, who could be very austere if occasion demanded.

As Ban did not find great enjoyment in conventional society, it remained an open question among those who knew the son whether the father was a bachelor or a widower, but as many of *ses intimes* agreed with him that “marriage is the salvation of women and the destruction of men,” he was even more interesting to them because of

a past that savored of romance yet was shrouded in mystery.

Banatyne was a man personally to attract the ladies—handsome of features, genial in manners and careful in dress, and although he had no great knowledge of books, he possessed a certain elegance of bearing that so often outshines the greatest erudition. The weaker *les belles* the better he liked them, and the looseness of his purse-strings attracted them as the sweets of the flowers attract the bees.

The two friends had partaken with keen relish of the toothsome dishes spread before them, and had arrived at the dreamy period of *liqueurs* and cigars, when reason sees through misty vistas, the tongue without guide cares little what it says, and man is hardly accountable for his acts, when Ban thought of a little pink note that was nestling somewhere nearest his heart.

“Let me see what Tricksie has to say,” he remarked, and taking from his pocket a handful of papers, after some difficulty he found the neglected missive, which he forthwith opened and read :

“DEAR BOY :

“I bought Gould & Curry last week at 75, to-day it closed at 40. I’m called upon for ‘more mud.’ Do come around this evening: I want to consult you about what’s best to be done.”

Here Banatyne interpolated, with a broad, good natured smile, “same story,” and a wink at Kelvyn that said plainer than words, “I understand Tricksie’s tricks,” as he finished the note:

“Bring Kelvyn with you, if you can prevail upon that icicle to come, and we will thaw him out.

Tout à vous,

MABEL.”

“What say you, ‘Prince James,’ to a little racket?” asked Banatyne. Halstead had given him this title which suited him so well that all his intimate friends addressed him by it. Kelvyn hesitated. Perhaps the vision of a gray head surmounted by a dainty lace cap passed before his somewhat tangled senses. “I’ll toss up whether to go there or to Maguire’s Opera House,” continued Banatyne, taking a twenty-dollar gold piece from his pocket. Kelvyn said he hoped the theatre would win. “Well, I hope Tricksie will come out ahead,” replied Banatyne. Then he offered to wager that Tricksie would come out ahead. And he held up his glass to drink to the beatific vision that his imagination at that moment pictured her.

“Here’s to you, Tricksie,” he said, “heads you win, tails the theater,” and he emptied his glass, flipped up the double eagle, which came down in Tricksie’s favor. “I tell you luck’s with me to-day, ‘Prince James,’” he continued, “Why I’d ’ave hung myself if that had come down the other way,” which gallant exaggeration was misleading, for it was perfectly immaterial to him whether he went to Tricksie’s or not.

After some demurring on Kelvyn’s part, he concluded that it would not do to offend Banatyne, to whom he and his mother felt under great obligations, so he soothed the pricks of his con-

science with the thought “I’ll go; it’s not only to my interest, but to my mother’s interest as well.” So with after-dinner Henry Clays between their lips, they sauntered along Dupont street, then up Sutter, until they reached the place of *La Belle’s* abode. It was a splendid establishment, for in those days when the “ups and downs” of fickle fortune flirted with each other, these sirens who refused the narrow path of prudishness and convention flirted with the promoters of the cause, amused themselves with the caprice of a momentary romance and basked in the sunshine of temporary prosperity.

Tricksie was beautiful; even the most surly cynic could not deny that. Her hair was glistening gold. Her eyes as blue as the sapphires that adorned her pretty pink-tipped ears and fingers. Her complexion perfect, without the aid of artifice, as the changes of color in her pretty dimpled cheeks attested. Her figure was always robed with a careful study to show to best advantage its graceful outlines. *A tout ensemble* of youth, grace and beauty.

Tricksie prided herself upon her woman’s subtle intuition that reads men like books. She understood Roy’s weak points, and though he professed indifference to her sex she knew he could hardly deny a request from even a plain woman, and she did not wonder at his plight when under the influence of her fascinating wiles. His wealth had surrounded her with the most extravagant luxury, but it was not wealth that Tricksie craved; marriage was the goal for which she longed, and

marriage it should be if she could overcome the scruples that tortured her.

For she recognized marriage as the harbor-light of her reformation—as the solace for a most alert conscience. “The world will say that I am not worthy of him,” she meditated. “The world may be right in theory but in justice it is wrong. Why is the same fault worse in me than it is in him? Are women made of superior clay that so much perfection is expected of them? He was the emissary from Satan who tempted me. If I have sinned, he is my only partner in guilt. To him I have been as true as ever was wife sanctioned by most holy writ. To take another false step would be to degrade me beyond self-recognition. If constancy and faithful love count for aught, I am entitled to be his wife as legally as ever woman was bound to man. Why should I allow a self-humility, a self-unworthiness to stand between me and honorable wifeness? I am surely not so much baser than he in the eyes of my God. His love, as does His wrath, falls upon His children alike. It is the cruel and unjust prejudice of the world toward her daughters that makes a crime so much worse in me than it is in him, but it is time to think of myself more and let the world, which trampled upon me when I struggled to make an honest living, think what it pleases.”

Her arguments and reasoning were not always convincing to her torturing opponent—the wee but persisting voice of scruple.

As Banatyne and Kelvyn entered they found Tricksie gracefully reposing in the comforting

abyss of a large easy chair, which she had studiously placed in a soft red light, knowing that this subdued, rosy glow would further enhance her already beautiful complexion. The arms of the chair caressed the outlines of her form as if gloating over the fact that their privilege caused pangs of envy to masculine hearts.

At Tricksie's back, and under her head, were several silken pillows, the delicate hues of which she knew were most becoming. One little foot in pale, silken stocking, and satin slipper covering, resting upon a stool of unique design, peeped from beneath her dainty lace skirts, and looked as innocent as an infant's smile; and notwithstanding that Tricksie had spent moments of premeditated care to use this weapon to the best possible advantage one would never have dreamed she had given it a thought, it looked so guileless.

A Gatling gun would not have been more fatal to poor Roy had it struck him in the region of the heart, than was that wee little satin-covered toe. She waved a large white feather fan and looked as soft as velvet and as innocent as a fawn. Pretty! fascinating! weak little woman!

After a commonplace greeting, Roy remarked: "You are beautiful enough to drive men to perdition, Miss Mabel," not trying in the least to disguise his admiration.

"Well, don't you think it's a jolly trip?" laughed back Tricksie.

"What, drifting to the bad?" asked Kelvyn.

"Not drifting, but going headlong," answered

Tricksie, with a reckless *abandon* that startled even Banatyne.

Tricksie thought it was *chic* to talk naughtily, though she knew better than she did, and she did better than she talked.

“How about the stopping place?” was Kelvyn’s suggestive question.

“The temperature will hardly be equal to a thaw-out for such an icicle as you, Mr. Kelvyn,” retorted Tricksie with a thrilling don’t-care sort of laugh which so fascinated Roy that he immediately collapsed into a state of complete hypnotic helplessness.

“I’m convinced you’d find it otherwise, Miss Mabel; a scorching heat would even melt hearts like yours,” returned Kelvyn.

“You needn’t try to make me think of the dungeon of eternal pain, Mr. Kelvyn, and so spoil all my joys in this world that I may be happy in another, which other world, to say the least, appears to me to be a great uncertainty,” boldly asserted the fair doubter.

“It does seem the other world is all guess,” Banatyne said, agreeing with Tricksie at the peril of his soul or a dozen souls if he had had them.

Kelvyn, seeing his friend Banatyne on dangerous ground, ventured, “If, in practising your Atheism, Miss Mabel, you only injured yourself, your sin would not be so great. Do you ever hold yourself responsible for the downfall of others?”

“I hold myself responsible for nothing, Mr. Kelvyn, save to see that I have a good time while youth permits. Ah! irrevocable youth!” Trick-

sie said, with a lingering fondness in her voice for that youth which meant all the world to her.

“ It will be safer,” replied Kelvyn, “ to be able to tell the Lord that you have redeemed some fallen soul than that you have aided in its downfall. Women should be God’s allies in trying to save men rather than joint conspirators with his Satanic Majesty in helping him make them even worse than they are,” Kelvyn returned.

“ And why, pray, is so much more expected of women than of men? Are we not all mortals, burdened with the same weaknesses?” asked Tricksie, with heightened color and sparkling eyes as she warmed with the excitement of conversation. “ I declare, Mr. Kelvyn, you remind me of one of my youthful experiences,” she continued. “ A ‘ big brother ’ of twelve took his two little sisters, bright, golden-haired, blue-eyed little cherubs of eight and ten, to a children’s party. Soon began the games of Pillow and Keys, Ring Round Rosy and other kissing games. The big brother drew his charges into a corner, saying ‘ Children, you must not play these kissing games. Sit right here and keep quiet, or I shall tell mother when we get home ! ’

“ With this parting admonition he left them, frightened and alone, but joined the laughing ring himself, and became one of the foremost in kissing the *other fellows’ sisters*. At length the lady of the house seeing the two forlorn little figures clinging together with unshed tears in their pretty, wistful eyes, led them into the games. Of course all the boys pounced upon them as they were new-

comers, and the little girls had a merry romp until, chancing to catch the glaring eyes of the big brother, all joy was taken out of their poor little hearts, for that glance plainly said: ‘Unnatural, shameless ones! When we reach home you shall be spanked and put to bed.’

“As in fact they were, being made to feel that they had disgraced themselves and brother, simply because they had only done the half of what he had enjoyed to the fullest.

“May you never be tempted, ‘big brother,’” laughingly continued Tricksie, “though of course a *man* may have all the brightness of life without reproach,” she added bitterly, yet with such pathos in her voice that Ban winced a little, and even Kelvyn’s tones became less severe as he replied:

“Your illustration, Miss Mabel, is apt as a lesson from childhood, but remember the line between artless youthful innocence and growing susceptibility is closely drawn. With my convictions of duty, call them strained if you like, I should as readily condemn the brother as the sisters. Sow and you shall reap! According to my code of principles, girls from their very infancy should be guarded more closely, if possible, than your pet bird there in its cage. They are Heaven’s representatives in this miserable world of ours. May you soon be convinced of my way of thinking.”

Tricksie only shrugged her pretty shoulders at Kelvyn, and beamed her sunniest smile upon Banatyne, as she asked, “Does the religion you

profess, Mr. Kelvyn, constitute you the uninvited adviser of the public?"

"I profess no particular religious dogma, Miss Mabel, but I believe in Christianity and an honest life, and I try to live as I believe. May the angels whisper to you some day of the goodness of God," Kelvyn said so solemnly that the profane smile died upon Tricksie's lips, almost before it was born, as he took her hand to bid her good night. Tricksie's pretty white eyelids drooped until they veiled her softened eyes, which a moment before were flashing defiance.

As she rose to bid her guest a more courteous leave, the movements and poses of her graceful figure, robed in a gown of gauzy, clinging texture, soft as summer zephyr, completed her conquest of Banatyne, and a momentary glimmer of jealousy passed through his mind as he thought that Kelvyn held her hand longer than was necessary.

Kelvyn's words and manner smote Tricksie's conscience, and for an instant after his departure her gayety subsided; but to be conventional and thoughtful she imagined was to be stupid, and to be stupid was to cease to be attractive, and Tricksie was equal to the occasion.

"Humph," she said, "Mr. Kelvyn ought to have been a preacher. Ice water is warm compared to him. If he is not soulless, he is as heartless as the world's charity," and she playfully brushed Roy's cheek with the white feathers of her fan, and then her soft, warm hand lay caressingly on his, and she gazed into his eyes with an injured baby look.

“ Do you know, Roy,” she said, “ I stand to lose dreadfully in that Gould & Curry buy ; I really may be obliged to part with my jewelry——”

“ Nonsense, nonsense, little one,” said Banatyne interrupting her. “ Part with your jewelry ? Well, not while yours truly has a bank account or credit with the brokers. How much do you need ? ”

“ My brokers want three thousand for margin,” was the reply, “ and they want it P. D. Q., as usual.”

Roy’s gallantry and purse supplied the demand, and relieved Tricksie’s momentary worry.

The sum was large, but it was given freely by the Prince of Generosity, as Ban was sometimes called. A much less beautiful or fascinating woman, or a brother man met coming down the hill of adversity, would have been treated with the same liberality, and why not Tricksie ? She, who had baited her hook with toothsome bits ? Had she asked for twice the sum she would have received it from his outstretched palm, with his expressed gratitude that she had deigned to accept it. There was nothing mean about Roy either in love or in stock operations. Such men are easy prey for all designing men and women.

This butterfly woman, who talked and acted as if her heart and brain were as empty of substance as a soap bubble, was a queer compound. When alone, her conscience lashed her with knotted cords, and she was as unlike Tricksie of an hour before, as day is to night.

For every reckless word she spoke, for every

illegal smile she bestowed, she had pangs of remorse that tortured her soul and were almost unbearable. Her "ways and means," necessitated by adverse tides, caused the hot blushes of shame to mount her forehead and suffuse her cheeks; aye, they burned into her inmost conscience like flames of hell.

She had been born in poverty and reared in an atmosphere of religious wholesomeness. She was the charity boarder at school, and was obliged to do the household drudgery of scrubbing, dish-washing and furniture dusting, and other so considered servile work, to earn an education. She was always accommodating to such of the girls as were better supplied with this world's goods than herself, and felt rewarded if they on occasions gave her a patronizing smile.

But impetuous youth is often thoughtlessly cruel. It seldom stops to analyze the effect of an unkind word, a cold glance, a scornful shrug of the shoulders—and many such were bestowed upon poor Mabel in her struggle for an education. There was one, however, in that school who took time to be kind, and to whom it was of no consequence that one of her school friends was in fine linen, the other in rags; her smiles and love were like God's sunshine, for the rich and poor alike, and that was whole-souled, broad-minded and outspoken Edna Maxwell.

She always showed a kindly feeling for "the charity girl." Helped her with encouraging words to forget the slurs and coldness of her more thoughtless companions. Many a time had she

comforted her as the poor girl sat by the wayside in despair. Mabel had the natural girlish longing for feminine finery, which taste was seldom gratified to the extent even of a new hair ribbon, unless Edna's meagre allowance of pin money furnished the wherewithal to make the pitiful purchase. Luxuries were strangers to her and necessaries were often wanting.

Her parents died when she was yet young. At the age of seventeen she started bravely out into the surging world to try and earn an honest living. Her earnest endeavors in the struggle of life were not successful. She was “black and blue” from the bruises she received in her great battle for existence, having no weapon but her beauty with which to fight her way: a most dangerous, if often successful, aid to women. She had gone thinly clad and hungry, while the temptations of possible silks and satins and luxurious plenty were numerous, and offered with flattering allurements.

It requires courage to refuse carriage and jewels, “purple and fine linen,” when the stomach is empty and the body cold. A voice frequently whispered in her ear that she was wasting her young life in sacrifices, but she would not hear it. She trembled when the tempter whispered that virtue brought only misery. Tricksie was not as strong as most women: yet many stronger and better protected have fallen by the wayside. She loved life and warmth and luxury. She was unthinking. Men found her fair, and flattered her vanity, and she craved emancipation from the

slavery of poverty. An emissary of the devil pictured in glowing colors the contrast of radiant love with her pitiable loneliness and—she yielded and became *la belle amie* of Roy Banatyne.

But her emancipation was dearly purchased, for all her physical sufferings were as nothing compared with unrelenting remorse. The memory of those poverty-stricken days was invoked almost as a self justification, and she would exclaim, in appealing voice, “Oh, God! Dear God! Had I kept my soul pure, I would have starved, and life is sweet, though heavily laden with burdens. Forgive, oh forgive!”

After Roy’s visit, those blinking little night owls of heaven, the stars, crept under the gray covering of early dawn, before sleep, the solace of human woe, closed Tricksie’s tearful eyes, and she forgot her joys and sorrows.

CHAPTER IV.

TRICKSIE MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.

ONE day, after one of Tricksie's torturing debates with her conscience as to the right or the wrong of her marrying Banatyne, she started out to indulge in a shopping tour, which was her safety-valve in all vexatious moods. As she was stepping from her carriage in front of a drygoods emporium, she came almost in immediate contact with an old friend who was bent upon the same feminine pastime. A sudden flush of mortification spread over Tricksie's throat and face. She would gladly have escaped the meeting, but it was too late.

The young miss of her school days had developed into a stylish woman, a transformation of figure and feature only; the brave, warm heart was unchanged, for as Tricksie's *outré* dress and elegant equipage attracted all eyes, so did they attract the attention of her defender and comforter in the weary days of her juvenile state, and, entirely regardless of street form or ceremony, she fairly snatched Tricksie to her breast, embracing her with regulation school-girl gushiness, at the same time exclaiming:

“ Why, Mabel Duprey ! ” The name was as far as Edna Maxwell could proceed, for intense surprise mingled with sincere pleasure at

her meeting with Tricksie, whom she had not seen since they had left school, for an instant robbed her of speech, and, in her excitement, she gave Tricksie an impulsive little squeeze.

"Edna!" was all Tricksie could say, as she stood there in the street, much subdued and abashed, the target for all observing eyes.

"Why, Mabel, I hardly recognized, in such elegant, fashionable splendor, my dear school friend," said Edna, as soon as she had recovered speech after her joyous outburst.

"And I scarcely knew in the handsome young woman the kind friend of my unhappy childhood," returned Tricksie, pressing Edna's hand, while blushes mounted and burned her face from chin to forehead.

"Well, you did seem to be always weighted with more of this world's sorrow than was your share," dashed along Edna, as if a burden had been lifted from her sympathetic shoulders, as she kissed Tricksie's burning cheek. "It was time for the wheel of fortune to turn in your way. They say every dog has his day, Mabel, and I suppose us girls must have ours, too." Edna rushed heedlessly along, overjoyed at her friend's apparent good fortune.

"I hope so," returned Tricksie, more sadly than Edna thought the circumstances warranted.

"Well, I *know* so," returned the optimistic Edna, with Tricksie standing before her as a shining example. Then, noting for the first time the burning flush upon Tricksie's face and her strained expression, an idea struck her, and a sudden

thought was no sooner born in Edna's brain than she turned it adrift in words.

“ Married?” she exclaimed inquiringly.

“ No,” stammered Tricksie.

“ How, then?” asked Edna, with the freedom of girlhood friendship, her eyes beaming with happiness, as they scanned the lavish extravagance in Tricksie's evidently changed circumstances.

“ I made some money in stocks,” replied Tricksie, and notwithstanding Edna had the best and most honest eyes in the world, Tricksie could not face them as she made that statement.

“ Good,” answered Edna heartily. “ You know I've been traveling ever since I left school; had a year in Paris and a season in London, but I'm glad to get back to dear California. I just love her pioneer ruggedness.” Then turning suddenly she said: “ But see how we are attracting the passers-by. Come, let us go into the store,” and as she started to suit the action to her words, she in true school-girl style passed her arm around Tricksie's waist, but apparently her companion was not responsive, for she drew back in very evident awkward constraint.

She had never felt so painfully and gallingly the brand of the scarlet letter as at that moment. To be seen with her friend she knew was contaminating to that friend's character. She must appear cold when her heart yearned to embrace. She must stand aloof because her friendship would injure the one she loved so well. She must not enter the store with Edna, nor was it right for her to be seen in the

street with her. She could not accompany her to her hotel, neither could she ask her friend to her own home. No one knew better than Tricksie or could possibly feel it more keenly than she did, that her spiritual disease was as infectious to her friend's reputation as is the leper to the physical condition of one incautious enough to breathe the same poisonous atmosphere with the one so afflicted. No one knew better than Tricksie how slight a suspicion would tarnish the fair name of one of her own sex.

"What must I do?" was her troubled mental query. Quick as a flash came her answer to the dilemma.

"Get into the brougham, Edna," she said abruptly. "I want to hear all about yourself." And without allowing her friend to object, she in her excitement almost lifted her into the well-appointed equipage that awaited her pleasure.

"To the Cliff!" she ordered the coachman briefly, and hurriedly seated herself in the carriage, feeling relieved when she closed the door and happy in the thought that she could have Edna, at least for a little while, away from the scrutinizing eyes of the watch-dogs of society and secure that, in this way, she would be less liable to wound the friend of her childhood with her own sword.

After the first outburst of young and loving hearts, and inquiries and answers concerning schoolmates, teachers and kindred subjects of mutual interest, Edna, who could not keep her eyes one minute from Tricksie's sumptuous belong-

ings, or her brain one minute from wondering how it came about, said, as she passed her arm around Tricksie's waist and gave her an affectionate little hug:

“Come now, Mabel, tell me all about your sudden good fortune. I'm as glad as if I had been the lucky one myself. It really seems like a wonderful fairy story.”

“Well, a friend of mine gave me some points in stocks,” commenced Tricksie, toying with her porte-monnaie.

“And they came out all right?” returned Edna, patting Tricksie caressingly upon her daintily gloved hand.

“Yes,” answered Tricksie, her eyes cast down.

“A friend worth having,” remarked Edna.

“Perhaps you would not think her so,” Tricksie said, not daring to look into Edna's frank and honest young face.

“Why do you insinuate that I might not appreciate her friendship?” Edna asked, showing surprise.

“Because by some she is considered a citizen of Bohemia, the land of the free, and freedom is an expensive luxury for a woman,” returned Tricksie, determined and anxious to have Edna's opinion of herself and surroundings, even if obliged to practice a little subterfuge to obtain it.

“Am I to understand that she is a woman living after her own law?” questioned Edna, with a whole line full of interrogation points in her astonished voice.

“In a certain degree, yes,” replied Tricksie, and

her eyes gazed out of her carriage window, while Edna looked at her with closer scrutiny.

“She was homeless and friendless,” continued Tricksie, nervously, without even as much as a glance in her friend’s face, who was watching her intently, “sensitive, emotional”—she went on as if speaking to a father confessor. “Exigencies of circumstances almost compelled her to fall. She is not fitted by nature nor by temperament to abide in the atmosphere of Bohemia. She has erred, to be sure, but her conscience scourges her every hour she lives for that false step. Knowing this, would you reject her friendship?” asked Tricksie, and she nervously pressed her handkerchief to her upper lip to dry a slight perspiration that had gathered there, while her feet and hands grew cold as she awaited almost breathlessly her friend’s answer.

“Much depends upon the woman in question,” returned Edna, thoughtfully, “If, as you say, she was forced to err and is sincerely repentant—well,” she paused cautiously. “I don’t think there can be any difference of opinion on the subject,” she added.

“And what is your opinion?” asked Tricksie, eagerly, as she took Edna’s hand, unconsciously pressed it, and for the first time had courage to look into her companion’s face.

“I would look at her false step in a broad and generous way. If she had stumbled and fallen, I should certainly lend her a helping hand to lift her up,” was Edna’s response.

“Always my generous Edna, ready to encourage

rather than condemn,” said Tricksie, with grateful love.

“Why, if she finds that she has taken the wrong path, the one that will lead her into the mire, she certainly has the right of individual action and may and should be helped to retrace her steps. No, Mabel, far from shunning her, I would aid her bewildered soul in its groping for the right path,” Edna said. “But why so sad, Mabel? One might think it was you, you take your friend’s trouble so to heart. Don’t let your sympathy worry your gentle heart too much, *cherie*,” continued Edna as she embraced Tricksie.

“I do sympathize with her deeply,” Tricksie said, in a faltering voice, and for an instant silence like a requiem for the struggling soul fell upon them.

Presently Tricksie ventured:

“Suppose she had an offer of marriage from a respected man—this man knowing her past—would it be right for her to accept him?”

“That depends upon circumstances. Of course, it is understood that she is determined to be a true and loyal wife,” began Edna.

“Oh, there isn’t the slightest doubt about that,” interrupted Tricksie warmly, “but she loves him with such intensity that she is willing to sacrifice her own happiness rather than to be so selfish as to injure him, and she is fearful that an alliance of marriage with her will lower his position in the community.”

“I’m afraid your friend is over scrupulous. There is such a thing as pulling chestnuts out of

the fire for one's own consumption sometimes," was Edna's very practical and prosaic suggestion. "Besides a woman seldom affects her husband's status; she might possibly aid him to some extent, but I don't think that she can ever, by her own individual exertions, place him at the pinnacle of her ambition; neither can she lower him in the eyes of the world. It is the man's privilege to make the niche in life that the wife must occupy; no matter how far superior she is to her husband, marriage places her exactly upon his level. And a wife has very little to do with the making or unmaking of his position in the community, and that's all there is about it from my narrow view of the case," concluded Edna, as the horses stopped at the entrance to the Cliff House, an hostelry celebrated the world over for its ocean view and seal-infested rocks; for it is here that the soft Pacific foams in long, lazy billows over islets covered with the true sea-lion. At that time it was the place *par excellence* for the bloods of San Francisco to bait their trotters and refresh the inner man.

Its great veranda facing the ocean was often crowded with the belles of San Francisco society and their beaux in the afternoon, and occupied later in the evening by ladies of a lighter character with their gentlemen friends.

"Let us jump out and have a glance at Ben Butler and his lesser brethren!" suggested Miss Maxwell, eagerly, as the hoarse barking of the seals came fiercely to them, mingled with the roar of the surf.

“No! no! Tell the coachman to drive along the beach, then back to the Occidental,” hurriedly said Tricksie to the footman, for she had seen one or two of Banatyne’s intimates lounging at the portals of this popular inn, casting curious eyes on the equipage, as if wondering who were its occupants. The low tide had left the sea-splashed beach as glossy and firm as a parquet floor. The coachman gave the horses the ribbons, and they pranced along over the smooth surface at their own sweet will; the beating of their hoofs and jingle of their harness lost in the ocean’s tumultuous war. The ambitious breakers, with each unsuccessful effort to reach their highest point when in their mighty prime, dashed against the carriage wheels, bathed the grateful hoofs of the splendid thoroughbreds, then receded crest-fallen, leaving the beach strewn with their snowy froth. The splendid brutes sped away at a rapid gait; the white foam, flying from their mouths over breasts and flanks, was carried by the stiff sea breeze until it mingled with the scattered foam of the surf; they sniffed the invigorating salt air until their horse-flesh fairly trembled with intoxicating delight.

As Tricksie looked from her carriage window she thought:

“Even those waves in their angry mood would be more merciful to me than the judgment of pleasure seekers assembled in that house, and who by the law of humanity are reckoned my brothers and sisters. All children of the great unseen Father. They are, indeed, without pity.”

Now the carriage rolled over the magnificent road on its return to the city as the two young girls, so fair to look upon, chatted merrily of the beautiful scene, the latest styles and anything that came to Tricksie's quick mind, which she felt must keep the conversation from her personal affairs. Both declared the drive had been too short as they reached the door of Edna's hotel.

"You'll come and see me to-morrow, Mabel," Edna said, as she was stepping from the carriage.

"There may be no to-morrow," replied Tricksie, hiding her sadness behind a forced and nervous smile.

"How very cautious and precise you are getting!" returned Edna, feigning an offended air. "Well, I shall certainly see you very soon," she added, kissing her hand to Tricksie as she went toward the hotel entrance.

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure," replied Tricksie.

At this moment Banatyne, accompanied by Dougald, suddenly emerged from the very door Edna was about to enter. He was transfixed with astonishment as he noted to whom Miss Maxwell's affectionate gestures were directed. Tricksie caught the swift covert glance he darted toward her while he bared his head with most chivalrous gallantry to Edna.

As the horses moved away Tricksie quickly gathered her frou-frou skirts with nervous grasp, and cautiously peering through the little window at the back of her carriage, saw Banatyne and Edna engaged in animated conversation. He

was troubled with no scruples about any serious results coming to Edna from being seen in the honest light of day in his company, while she had felt like a thief in the night stealing a few hours of this sweet girl's companionship.

Then her eyes rested upon Dougald, and she wondered who this handsome boy, so like Banatyne, could be. Then the carriage turning a corner shut the interesting group from her vision.

She sank back sobbing amid the richly upholstered cushions, enveloped in her silks, furs and costly laces, smarting with the sting of utter humiliation as she recalled the distinction that Banatyne had made in his greeting to her, who, through her love for him, had become an outcast from society, and his greeting to Edna, who had lived a life that slander could not touch.

“ Ah, why could not I have had the protection of a home and pure love too,” she moaned, as in this hour of anguish she drained to its very dregs the bitter cup of retribution.

In less than two hours after Edna's return to her rooms, a box was handed to her, which upon opening she found contained a generous bunch of beautiful violets, attached to which was a note that read as follows :

“ To dear Edna, the friend of my school days :

From one she should not know, for I am of those who are nameless.”

Edna crushed the note in her hands nervously, while the color receded from her face and lips.

“ Great God!” she ejaculated beneath her breath. “ It is Mabel Duprey's writing. Then it

was her own story that she told me to-day !”

Her lips trembled while tears gathered in her eyes and like heaven's dew fell upon and watered the violets that Tricksie had plucked with loving touch and sent to the trusted friend of her childhood.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEAR DANCE ON PEERLESS.

KELVYN had been sent East, and educated in the classics, which was then considered the proper educational regimen. He was graduated from one of the leading Eastern medical schools, and bore with him his parchment degree of M.D. When he returned to San Francisco, he practiced his profession just one year, but found that the pioneer physicians, who embraced many of the brightest intellects gathered from every center of population in the United States, monopolized the lucrative practice of that young city.

He concluded that if he had only his profession to depend upon while he was building up a practice, “bread and butter” might even be a luxury difficult to obtain. Wealthy patients were distrustful of inexperienced practitioners. Fortunately for him, he was in that easy state of circumstances when a man can drop one occupation and pick up another, or wait until something comes his way that suits his inclination and fancy.

He was looking about for something to occupy his idle moments, when he made the acquaintance of Roy Banatyne. He listened to Banatyne’s extravagant idea about “the great riches that could be dug from the bosom of mother earth with a cambric needle,” and concluded that he had

been a consummate ass to have wasted a whole year of precious time upon so tame a pursuit as pills and boluses.

Banatyne was a self-made man, endowed with an abundance of shrewdness, but wholly ignorant of book theories. He needed just such a man as Kelvyn, whose thorough education made him fully competent to guide him through many difficulties and complications; who was accurate and expert in all office work, and above all unswerving in his fidelity to the interests of his benefactor.

The Peerless had been on the market for several weeks. Kelvyn was a member of the Stock Exchange, a seat having been bought for him by Banatyne for the bagatelle of \$40,000, and he was generally believed to be Banatyne's leading broker in the Board. He was instructed by Banatyne as to the manipulation of Peerless, which was, generally, to sustain the market in any emergency that might arise. At first, the stock was held firmly; few shares were offered for sale, although bids were numerous, and at higher prices than it had first been placed on the market; the public were evidently "coming in" on the flood tide.

The Peerless was stimulating Roy's speculative tendency. Tricksie was busy with his heart interests. *La Belle* had made deep inroads into his susceptible nature, and Roy was seriously in love, perhaps, for the second time in his fitful life.

Tricksie had sent several of her little notes to Kelvyn, asking him to honor her by calling, as she wished to excuse herself for her reckless talk on his former visit. "Regrets" were the invari-

able and only answers. Kelvyn preferred to take no risks. Fire melts the hardest metals.

One of the rose tinted missives attracted Banatyne's attention, as it lay on Kelvyn's desk. ' It was as innocent within as without ; notwithstanding that fact, it caused an angry glance, and an unpleasant expression passed over Banatyne's face as he thought " More margins, I suppose. If he had no money she——" further thought was not expressed in words.

In a few days, greater activity began upon the stock board, and Peerless seemed to be the special bone of contention. One lot of ten thousand shares was thrown upon the market, with evident orders to realize, and the stock broke a fraction, but recovered itself under prompt buying and again closed at an advance, which gave renewed confidence to Roy's friends. It was a busy day for Kelvyn. At the close of the session he hurried to Banatyne.

" Say, Roy, don't you think we had better realize a little?" he said. " Big profits. I'd be satisfied;" and his eyes shone with frank and boyish delight.

" Not a share," answered Banatyne. " What do you take me for? She's only getting ready to start; she'll reach a hundred sure. Frozen fact," and his eyes were averted from Kelvyn's honest face.

" But hadn't we better put ourselves on velvet?" continued Kelvyn, earnestly. The rapid pace was a little too hot for one of his slow going, medical methods. He had not yet been seasoned to his

new vocation. “Now don’t talk like a big baby,” laughed Banatyne, “be more nervy; stand firmly to your post, and buy every share offered within designated limits, you understand? It’s the biggest buy on the whole list, and I know what I am talking about.”

The next day the stock was very irregular. It received blows that astounded the brokers. But a young man, known as Banatyne’s buyer, stood in the center of the floor, the object of their attacks when concerted movements were made to depress Peerless. He was flushed with excitement, and although the novice of the Stock Exchange, he seemed wide awake enough to meet all comers in the game, no matter what their peculiar tactics. It was quite evident that he was acting for the inside syndicate, and that his orders were practically unlimited.

Of course, the syndicate had other brokers, filled evidently with cross orders, on the floor for emergencies and opportunities. But they all looked up to Kelvyn as their general director, and a nod from him here and there meant obedience. There were disquieting rumors on the street that Banatyne had grossly exaggerated the value of Peerless, and that instead of producing pay ore at an early day assessments were more likely to be in order.

Still it was a matter of surprise and comment that so much “long” stock should be gradually coming in. It looked as if some one was unloading, or that a masterly hand was directing the game of realization from under cover.

Orders poured in by speculators who had often before measured swords with Banatyne, to down him if possible, for if he had devoted friends and followers, he had also a small army of seared warriors who were opposed to him, and were eager for a fray that promised profits, no matter at whose cost. If money was to be made by tearing down, they were ready to tear down, and rather liked the opportunity.

Kelvyn noted the increasing boldness of the antagonistic elements, and when offers to sell in blocks of one thousand or more were made, he sprang to the center and met them all, restoring confidence in his own ranks that began to look somewhat demoralized. He quickly dispatched a trusted messenger to Banatyne, announcing the new departure in the enemy's movements. Presently the mine promoter himself appeared momentarily in the lobby of the Exchange, and gave Kelvyn a reassuring glance, and his bids became bolder and more aggressive. The day wore on until within half an hour of the close of the Exchange. Suddenly there was a murmur followed by a hasty eruption in the center of the floor, with cries of "Peerless! Peerless!" "What's offered for a thousand?" directed immediately at Kelvyn, who stood alert with eyes ablaze, every sense strained to a tension point. Valiantly he met the new onslaught with undaunted vigor. It was evident that some more recent and more alarming news had stimulated the new bear attack. The crowd of excited brokers surged around Kelvyn and fairly hurled their

offers in his teeth faster than he could meet them. The lobby was crowded with a throng of men more excited than had been seen for many days. As they saw the tide apparently turning with resistless power, they eagerly called to their brokers, “Sell a hundred more!” “Sell a thousand, seller thirty!” There floated in the air a confused murmur: “Only a prospect,” “Pinched in the bottom,” “Not worth a dollar a share on merit;” so say the experts. That was the drift that came to Kelvyn’s ears, and he faltered. His judgment called a halt—his orders, action. At that moment a leading broker thundered, “Sell ten thousand, seller ninety,” at a price so far below the regular quotation that Kelvyn’s answer, “Take ’em,” in a hoarse voice, was unheard above the din, so great was the confusion and turmoil. Thousands upon thousands of shares were offered at still lower prices. Kelvyn lost his senses, the rout was complete, and pandemonium reigned supreme until a few moments later, when the gong was heard announcing the end of the work of loss and gain for that eventful day.

Panic knows no bounds. He rides ruthlessly over the fortunes of the erstwhile favorites of success, trampling them under feet with ghoulish glee. Those who an hour before were rich in Peerless stock found themselves practically ruined! Their shares had been closed out “under the rules” by their brokers the moment their margins were uncovered. Some hadn’t saved enough for a morning’s breakfast—many were on the verge of ruin. Such were the uncertainties

of stock speculation in those exciting days, and they are repeated even unto the present time in all the exchanges and bourses of the world.

The Stock Exchange had closed. Where chaos had reigned an hour before was now silent as the grave.

Kelvyn, pale, exhausted and broken in spirit, slowly found his way to his office. Friends he met were passed by without recognition. There was an absent, hunted look in his eyes. Nerving himself to the effort, he conferred with his clerks and summed up the day's operations. He had purchased thousands upon thousands of shares of Peerless at varying prices, the larger number for Banatyne and the syndicate. But for his own account and those of his friends, who relied upon his information and from whom he had discretionary orders based upon his advice, he had bought stock enough to swamp them all, including himself. Banatyne he knew could stand the blow. But Kelvyn himself had “plunged,” and on the strength of Banatyne's assurances, had invested not only his all, but sacrificed his mother's little property as well.

His friends, too, would be unable to meet their obligations, and, by the rules of the Board, he must make their accounts good to his fellow brokers. The more he looked at the situation, the worse it appeared. Mechanically, he wrote Banatyne a stereotyped notice: “Bought for your account” so many shares of Peerless, etc., and carried it to Banatyne's office, thinking to confer with his chief on the situation,

but it was late and he found the office closed ; even the boys had gone home after the exciting day's work. A few stragglers remained in the street, but their presence was unheeded.

Not for a moment did he question even in thought Banatyne's good faith. The break in Peerless, he concluded, was the result of a bear combination, which temporarily had won the day ; eventually those who held their stock would be rewarded by large profits, he doubted not. But he could not be one of these. He could not accept charity—not even from Banatyne.

It was late when Kelvyn reached his home ; as he passed the door of his mother's sleeping apartment, her soft voice asked :

“ Is that you, James ? ”

“ Yes, mother,” he replied, his voice trembling with pity for that mother whom he fain would have taken in his arms and held there close against his heart for all time if that would have shielded her from the blow that he himself must deal her ; if, by giving his life, he could have protected that loved one from the hardships of the poverty that his own recklessness had brought upon her, he would gladly have given up this existence.

“ Good night, my darling boy,” she said.

“ Good night, mother, dear,” he faltered, choking down a sob while thoughts and emotions almost stifled his heart beats.

Once within the privacy of his bedchamber he sank beneath the weight of woe that oppressed him. Seated in a chair with his head bowed heavily upon his chest, he took a retrospective

view of his mother's tender care of him in helpless babyhood ; her love and guidance through his boyhood ; her entire confidence in him since his manhood ; and what had been his return for such devotion ? Through him, she was homeless, comforts she most needed in her decrepit old age must be denied her—through him she was a pauper. These thoughts maddened him !

He rose and in nervous trepidation walked the floor until his weary limbs refused him longer support. Then a heavy sigh broke from him as he threw himself upon the bed, his proud spirit crushed with sorrow for his aged mother, his self-condemnation harrowing his very soul. Sleep refused him even a minute's relief. There he lay stretched motionless on the couch save for the shudder that now and then shook his frame. Away from the eyes of the world, the strong man wept like a child.

Dawn follows the darkest night, and as day struggled through the windows gradually lighting up the surroundings, the pictures, the frescoes on the walls, the bright colors in the carpet, the shadows of the furniture, it fell upon the prostrate form of the unhappy Kelvyn as he had lain during the long hours in dejected and unchanged position. The day rolled on until all the busy life of that busy city was astir.

After waiting patiently a half-hour for her son's appearance at breakfast, Mrs. Kelvyn turned to the morning papers, still wondering why “Jamie” slept so late, as he was always punctual and most courteous to her even in the smallest details of

life. Glancing at the morning news she was horror-stricken by the dramatic account, colored even more vividly than necessary, of:

“DOWNFALL OF ‘THE PEERLESS’
AND JAMES KELVYN.”

“It cannot be true,” she cried, and rushing to her son’s room she listened. Then came to her strained and anxious ears a sob that well nigh broke her heart.

Bursting open the door she rushed wildly in still holding the paper in her hand, exclaiming: “Oh, my son! My boy! My love! tell me it is not true,” as she pointed to the flaming headlines.

Kelvyn leaped from his bed with pallid face and sunken, bloodshot eyes, and caught her to his heart, too deeply moved to speak. For one moment she lay on his breast; then with frightened eyes and trembling voice and loving words, repeated: “Tell me, my darling, that it is not true!”

“God forgive me, my sweet mother, it is true,” he sobbed as he tenderly drew her to the couch, with his arms still about her, her head still upon his breast. Gradually her head drooped lower, her body rested more heavily against him; a low whisper, “God protect you,” was sighed into his ear as her frail life went out.

Then came days and nights of burning tears and bitter anguish, a never-tiring remorse suggesting to his conscience, “Semi-murderer!” The air seemed stifling.

“Will my brain dwell forever on one subject?”

silence answered him. Mechanically he took his hat and left his home. He was walking aimlessly along Montgomery street when a friend who had also lost heavily in the “Peerless” deal accosted him with :

“ Hello, Kelvyn, where are you going?”

“ No place in particular,” Kelvyn answered absently.

“ Been sick?” asked his friend, as he noticed the great change in Kelvyn’s appearance.

“ No,” sadly returned Kelvyn.

“ By jove, Banatyne played his game most unscrupulously. I tell you he is matchless in that sort of nerve,” went on his friend.

“ What game?” asked Kelvyn, suddenly showing some interest.

“ Why, haven’t you heard the talk of the street? Everybody says Banatyne unloaded his stock in Peerless when it was at its highest figure, and on his best friends, too.”

“ I refuse to believe him so base.” There was impatient discord in Kelvyn’s voice.

“ Of course, you are at liberty to believe as you please. It’s very evident that you are not on to Roy’s little tricks. Why, he’d break any man he ever had dealings with.”

An angry gleam darted from Kelvyn’s eyes, the first awakening of a suspicion that Banatyne had played him false.

“ Oh, yes, indeed,” went on his friend. “ You recollect that first ten thousand shares that were so suddenly thrown upon the board, and caused

the first break? Well, they have been traced to him almost without a doubt!”

Kelvyn's hands clenched until his nails made imprints upon his palms. “But in a business like this,” went on the unconscious agitator, “people seem to forget all rules of honor, and the greater the theft, the more applauded is the thief. Good morning,” and the friend went on his way, not dreaming that he had started a fire of anger the flame of which would be ruthless in its might.

Kelvyn quickened his steps and lengthened his strides. He had an object in view now. His teeth were set like a mastiff's. His features were rigid in their coldness. His brain throbbed. Hurry as he would, it seemed to him that he moved only at a snail's pace. He saw neither persons nor things, but rushed blindly along to meet his former friend. He arrived at Banatyne's office in a state of mind bordering upon lunacy. Without ceremony, or pause, he entered, as if fearful he might falter in his resolve. He had a claim to settle with this man; not only a money claim, but he held that Banatyne was accessory to his mother's death, and he wanted it over with, quickly.

Banatyne was in a cheery mood. “Hello, Prince James, where have you been all this time? you look like the ghost of yourself,” he said, his good-natured face radiant with his sunniest smile.

“One word with you, Mr. Banatyne,” was the cold reply. Banatyne left his group of friends, and approached Kelvyn.

“I am here, Mr. Banatyne, to ask a contradiction from your own lips of the report on the street.

Did you unload your Peerless stock on the market, and when it was at its highest price?” bluntly asked Kelvyn, his frame trembling, and his face flushed with a frenzied delirium. Kelvyn’s manner was so imperious, so threatening, that Banatyne momentarily staggered. Had he been approached in a more friendly manner, his reception would have been different. He might then have explained, as he did to the satisfaction of more credulous friends, that the slump in Peerless was caused by the treachery of one of his own syndicate who, having withdrawn a big block of pool stock for alleged collateral purposes, had secretly thrown it upon the market. Kelvyn’s tone irritated him, and he answered:

“I hardly think I am bound to answer your question as to my business methods,” and he half turned away, a sneer usurping the place of the old-time smile.

Kelvyn was heedless as to smile or sneer, but proceeded directly with the question he wished settled.

“Were you the one who broke the market while advising your friends to buy, and beggared me and hundreds of others? If so, you are a mean, contemptible thief.” They were dauntless words, spoken fearlessly, as he flung the hair out of his eyes with a gesture of impatient anger.

“Now, you’re talking damned nonsense,” said Banatyne, giving way to indignant anger; and he continued: “I have my opinion of a man who ‘squeals’ when a ‘deal’ doesn’t go his way.”

“And I have my opinion of a man who cannot

defend his record and answer straightforward questions. I was as weak as water in your hands. You did me favors, gratitude for which bent my neck, and you placed your foot upon it and kept me your slave, but your favors were all for a purpose, you soulless scoundrel! You had use for an honest man to further your dishonest ends.” Kelvyn was in a dangerous mood. The storm of hot and bitter words came thick and fast, as poisoned arrows from savages’ quivers. “My mother’s death I lay at your door.” He hissed the words, and the veins on his forehead stood out like whipcords, while his frame and voice quivered with ungovernable rage.

When Kelvyn spoke of his mother’s death, Banatyne’s face blanched. The wrecks of fortunes had often been laid at his door, but Kelvyn’s accusation was more serious and far-fetching.

“You talk like a madman,” Banatyne said; and he continued in a mellowed voice: “You shan’t lose a cent, Kelvyn. What are you worrying about?”

“Will you tell that to all the paupers your doubled-faced scheming and treachery has made? Can you bring back my mother to me?” asked Kelvyn, and his eyes flashed fiercely and glared and glistened with a yellow light, like a tiger about to seize its prey. Banatyne cowered before the strapping young athlete who looked most powerful in his wrath and sorrow.

Then in a moment Kelvyn’s passion went beyond his control. The insanity of rage made him oblivious to every human feeling and before

friends could intervene he struck Banatyne a blow that felled the mine promoter to the floor, where he lay all in a heap. “He is dead!” excitedly shouted one of his friends, “and by all that’s sacred, his death shall be avenged!” and he rushed for an officer of the law; but not quicker than Kelvyn’s friends hurried him away, for he was in an irresponsible, nervous condition and could be led by any master hand.

The Sacramento boat was within a few minutes of its starting hour. They took Kelvyn aboard, gave him a sleeping potion, and in less than fifteen minutes after he had struck down Banatyne he was steaming away up the Sacramento river, and would awake the following morning to find himself alone in a strange place, with a troubled conscience and shattered hopes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PET OF GOLD GULCH.

THE sound of sturdy men's voices singing, above which the bird-like notes of a girl rang out and echoed and re-echoed through Rock Cañon, in the great mountain range of the Sierra Nevadas, until one listening could easily have imagined a chorus of human beings mocked by the mysterious creatures of Spiritland. A thousand voices sang back the song, prolonging the last notes until they died away in trembling whispers; then the gay laugh of the girl, contagious for the men, was perfectly imitated by the echo-voices, and the people of two worlds seemed happy in chorus. Coming nearer, the words of their rollicking song were easily distinguished:

“ We miners are men of pluck,
 With pick and pan, with pick and pan,
 We go to try our luck,
 With pick and pan,
 With pick and pan.
 We dig up the yellow gold
 In weather warm or cold,
 And then our fortune's told
 With pick and pan,
 With pick and pan.”

With—pick—a-n-d—p-a-n—died away in the echo-voices of the invisible imitators. Before the mysterious singers had finished their mocking a

group of four jolly comrades appeared upon the top of a rough and rocky eminence; a fifth might have been included did not deference to the other characters forbid, for he was only a little burro, and, although a good and faithful friend, caste excludes him from the human order of beings. He was being led by one of three men, and seated upon his back was another figure.

This figure elevated to such distinction might have been some mountain deity or spirit. To the ordinary beings of this earth it bore no particular likeness. Whether man, woman or child, at that distance, mortal eye could not discern. The manner of sitting on the burro was man-like; the flapping abbreviated material that covered the upper part of the limbs was child-like; the full round voice was almost woman-like.

Up the slope this group of figures stood out like a living picture against a background sky of brilliant colors, the usual last effort of a dying, glorious day.

“The mountains, huge, shapeless, and solemn,” the dazzling snow which was the perpetual covering of their summits, the irregular rocks jutting out in fantastic shapes, black by contrast, made a picture, the grandeur of which could be produced only by the brush of the great artist, Nature.

The men walked leisurely along, while the little burro picked his steps warily over the jagged and stony surface, stepping cautiously over huge boulders of rock, not even losing his footing when he trod upon small, loose rolling stones. Now, the quintet appeared upon an elevation, then

disappeared from view, to reappear within the range of vision, only in a few moments to be lost again; and so they descended the rough mountain trail through the gorge, until they reached the ravine, where progress was easier. The group was within a short distance of the mining camp known as Gold Gulch; and as the burro, like his kind, was not inclined to hurry, they made slow progress toward their home.

Gold Gulch had been planted on the slope of a mountain, a spot with fantastic and uneven surface, without vegetation or growth save the hardy pines that seemed to say to each other, “We will grow to delight the eye of man, and no stress of weather or lack of soil shall down us.” Bless their sturdy, humane shelter! Their equally obliging twin sister, born of Mother Nature, was the swift stream of water which rushed down from the mountains and flowed straight through the camp. This water would have been as clear as a minister’s conscience, had it not been aiding, farther up the mountains, to segregate the little golden nuggets from their home nest in Earth’s breast, thereby making its ripples as yellow as the gold it cleansed.

In the foreground stood a plain one-story house constructed of unpainted yellow pine shingles, upon which “Amador Hotel” in bold characters was conspicuous; also, “Post Office,” “Adams’ Express,” “Gold Dust Bought,” “Picks and Pans for Sale,” were painted with the tar that had never dreamed of being raised from the wagon axle-tree to such literary distinction. In fact, this main edifice was a regular “Pooh

Bah” of an institution—the Waldorf of Gold Gulch, without the luxury of sofa cushions and the effective light of Oriental lamps; and accordingly held its head high in mighty scorn of its more lowly neighbors surrounding and adjacent.

These were numerous log huts and cabins with doors swung on leathern hinges; windows were an unknown quantity, so there was no other opening for the light of day or the oxygen of life than these doors. The outer walls were decorated with pan, pick and other utensils useful to the seeker of gold in his business; the owner’s epicurean taste was proclaimed by the quantity of “jerked beef” which hung upon the side of his residence.

His laundry usually occupied a nail in juxtaposition with his provender, and was decorated with stripes of the water’s mud color. As there was not a flat-iron within miles around, and as he was his own laundress, the miner didn’t find fault with his *blanchisseuse* for not polishing his linen, or for the absence of buttons that had without permission gone off to a picnic; the ghastly efforts to arrange a neck-tie were forgotten menaces to his reason, and a collar button couldn’t lord it over him, by flying under a bureau or down an invisible mouse-hole.

His boots could collect all the real estate they deemed profitable without complaint from him, and if his razor acted as if it needed a rest it was granted, as if two or three days’ growth was a matter of no importance; and so, without the influence

of woman's scrutinizing eyes, independent man is apt to retrograde into an uncivilized state.

Men were standing in groups, or lounging on the porch of the hotel—white men in red flannel shirts, their rough trousers tucked in high-topped cowhide boots; Chinese in dark blue cotton blouses, pajamas, wooden clog shoes and broad-brimmed, plaited straw hats that made them look like huge animated walking mushrooms. Some were in stooping position beside the stream, busy washing out pan after pan of earth, selecting therefrom bits of gold, or shining masqueraders of the valuable metal, which disappointments were thrown back into the stream with some show of impatience, coupled with well-rounded oaths.

The four returning prospectors were almost within the limits of the camp, so near that one could hear the jingle of the mining implements which hung from the sides of the little burro, as also the voice of his human freight.

"I tell you, Captain Jim, these hur are fine ore specimens, or I don't know nothin' 'bout mines; no porphyry 'bout these hur rocks," said the figure in a girl's voice, handling the ore like a mining expert.

"Yes, I think we've struck something rich in this prospecting trip," answered Kelvyn.

Two years had elapsed since the events narrated in the preceding chapter, during which time Kelvyn had been in reality a P.M. (Practical Miner). On his arrival in the camp, his "biled shirt" and fashionably-cut clothes, his delicate hands and his city-made complexion, his delicious aroma of

refinement and generally up-to-date appearance—were a sort of “Peach Blow Vase” elegance that the miners thought should be placed in a glass case and kept as a priceless relic of far-away civilization; but when he put aside his first-class toggery and appeared in the regulation miner’s outfit, and even eclipsed old-timers in his indifference for “store clothes,” and wielded the pick with a vim that brought blisters to his white hands; when his skin became bronzed by the sun and weather until he was as hardy and as tough as a pine cone; when his face had been unvexed by a razor for two years; when he washed his own shirt and patched his own trousers, he was taken by the hand and recognized as a brother miner.

His manly honor, his gracious bearing, his tenderness to those in distress, soon made him the favorite of the camp, not to mention the influence of his handsome face, which, strong-minded as people may be, is always a “drawing card,” and helped make James Kelvyn that which he was, the autocrat of Gold Gulch. “Captain Jim” was his title there, instead of “Prince James,” as in the days of his luxuries on Pine Street; and had he been asked which title he preferred, he would quickly have accepted the former.

He was the biggest one of this particular group, and that is giving him a great deal of material, for they were all large men, except Tattie, who wasn’t a man at all. Captain Jim called out to the little burro, in a voice so full of refined melody that a New York belle might long to hear it again:

“Whoa, Bruiser; you’ve done good work. A

little slow, but always to be relied upon. Here, Barney, take the fiery steed and give him the best menu the camp affords.” Captain Jim had a way of talking to the little burro, thinking, perhaps, he understood him about as well as many of his associates in the “diggings.” The man to whom he spoke looked puzzled, scratched his head and answered:

“Begorra, I tried him on that maynoo once, as ye call it, and Bruiser didn’t take to it at all, at all. Be aisy now, I’ll give him a bit o’ hay, if it’s all ther same to yez.”

By this time the girl, for girl she proved to be at close range, had sprung from Bruiser’s back, picked up each little hoof as dexterously as a belle would lift a lace handkerchief, a familiarity that the men would not have dared (for Bruiser brooked no familiarity about his hind legs, except from the kindly hand that he knew so well), took therefrom the stones or whatever was foreign to those tough little hoofs, wiped them off with the tag end of her torn frock, patted his rough, little coat, smoothed his long ears and actually kissed the little beast, murmuring in his elongated sound-catcher:

“You love Tattie, don t you, Bruiser?” in such a wooing way, and the sound of the voice was so agreeable, that one could scarcely believe that it came from this nondescript of patches and tatters. She was older than her very abbreviated frock would indicate—at least fifteen years had passed since she had first opened her baby eyes upon the light of this world. She had evidently outgrown

her skirt; it reached only a little below the knee, and was of some light cotton material, freckled with large red polka dots, and no one could possibly regret that it was in the last stage of rags.

Her well-formed limbs were covered by soiled white stockings, one of which had a rent from the knee half-way down the ankle and through which her flesh shone pink, without the slightest blush of embarrassment on her part; the other hung down over her foot, without the least distress to its wearer, the gear that held it in adjustment having lost its fastening, but Tattie didn't seem to miss it. A miner's sunburnt, red flannel shirt, opened at the throat for lack of buttons, torn at the elbow, patched on the back with a contrasting color, covered that part of her body which an opera dress in the city usually neglects.

A large sombrero, such as the Mexican greaser wore, was pulled down over her head until it rested upon her ears, to baffle the efforts of the wind to blow it off; her feet were encased in moccasins, to which were frequently attached spurs which she used without stint when subduing a “bucking mustang,” but which were never required when Bruiser was the steed of burden and responsibility.

As if wearied of so much finery, she took off her hat and hung it on the most convenient place at hand—the ground. Even in her ragged and semi-savage state she was a beauty—as brown as an autumn leaf, as wild as a rabbit, but, when her fancy was attracted, as loving and trustful as a faithful dog, to which no other tried devotion can

be compared. Her complexion was of that creamy olive that bespoke the Spanish blood of her mother, and which no out-door exposure could spoil. Her eyes, dark, large and lustrous, fringed with silken curling lashes, were also the inheritance of her Spanish mother. A laughing mouth, with the whitest of teeth; her features, although still in the chubby state of pretty childhood, were the embryo of the beautiful woman into which she was before very long to mature.

Her hair must have resembled that of the paternal side, for it was a sunny blonde, and had always been kept short until recently it had been allowed to grow and had attained a length of about four inches. It was tightly braided and tied with white rag strings, each little braid standing straight out from the back of her head, and every motion waved the white rags like diminutive flags of truce.

Her figure, for one so young, might have made the corseted and distorted city belle drop her artificial encasements, don a miner's shirt, ride burros and mustangs, swing picks and take long tramps over the mountains; for these health-giving, developing athletics had given the unconscious Tattie a figure that artists would have delighted to copy—but there were no artists in Gold Gulch. The miners bent upon the object that brought them so far from home and friends, “across the plains,” dug and delved for the precious; and if Captain Jim sometimes noticed this specimen of budding young womanhood, it was with a purely platonic interest, and with pity that the child could not be sent to school.

It had been her custom to accompany the miners in their prospecting tours ever since she was a wee mite of five years, and was considered by those honest fellows the mascot of their fortune-hunting trips. She answered to the soubriquet “Tattie,” derived from tatters, which was the chronic state of her wearing apparel. She had no memory of any place but this same mining camp; no knowledge of any subject but mines; no affection for any one but her mother and the miners; and so Tattie grew up, with no thought of circumstances, consequences nor proprieties. She had come with her mother to Gold Gulch from Dogtown, a mining settlement many miles distant, when but an infant, and her mother had married Denhardt Lutner shortly after her arrival in camp. Tattie loved her step-father—with the affection that they say Satan feels for a saint, and the feeling was evidently warmly reciprocated.

Another member of the group was Barney Ryan, a jovial, cheery, young Irishman, who, when his effervescent good humor was about to run over, would dance the “Barn Door Jig,” which he did well, or sing “Patrick’s Day in the Morning,” which he did badly; and when his humor was at low tide would thrash Lutner, which he did admirably.

The last of the party was “Big Sam” Williams, who, in the days of his prosperity and influence, was a bouncer at one of San Francisco’s principal hotels, but his modesty forbade ever referring to that erstwhile exalted position; and if, occasionally, he used Lutner as an objective exhibit of his re-

maintaining athletic powers, it was only to convince people of the thorough manner in which the bouncer had performed the duties of his whilom office when in full swing.

Lutner was a mean, contemptible apology for a man. He wouldn't have deserved sympathy if he had received any, which he didn't. When he first married, his business profession was to complain in piteous tones of the great struggle to support his wife and stepchild, and borrow from everybody in the place for the ostensible purpose of purchasing "bread and butter," and as he seemed to forget the honorable process of ever returning those sums, rather increasing the obligations whenever opportunity favored him, and as his weakly little wife bought the "bread and butter" herself with the hard-earned money that her washing for some of the miners brought her, he lost caste with those who knew him, rapidly.

His unkind treatment of his wife and stepchild made him hated and despised. His shiftless and lazy indifference to the responsibilities of life caused him to be treated with utter contempt. When he felt inclined he could be plausible and quite gentlemanly in demeanor, but these evidences of a better nature were at rare intervals. He could also quote the classics by the yard. He was evidently a case of misplaced birth, fostered by education. He was not a "bold, bad man," but a sneaky bad man, which is much the worse type. He was of medium height, black hair, beard and eyes, and would not have been so bad-looking but for a scar that extended

almost across his left cheek, and which, when he smiled, moved upward like a magnified crow's-foot, as if determined to point out the sinister expression of his eyes. He might just as well have had a card tied around his neck labeled “Villain!”

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOSS CLAIM.

OTHER miners soon joined the group, and intently examined the specimens that these particular prospectors had brought; viewing the rock under magnifying-glasses, testing its value with chemicals and horn spoons, in which latter procedure Tattie was one of the most expert and interested.

"Oh, I tell you, I know good rock from bad," she laughed; "these are some sample chunks as we found away up on the divide, jest where Dead Man's Hill comes across Last Year's Gulch. My! but we went a long tramp to-day, didn't we, boys?" and a great sigh escaped her, as if to rest her tired little body.

"Yes, away beyond our usual stamping ground" Kelvyn assented. "That there ledge cropped out three-quarters of a mile, didn't it, Big Sam?" Tattie first affirmed, and then questioned.

"As plain as kin be, oh, she's a stayer, she is!" replied "Big Sam," with the proud air of a man who thought his opinion was worth something.

"Here, let me put some of this red, decomposed stuff under the glass again," said Kelvyn, and after examining it critically, he exclaimed: "Whew! If there is much of this kind of ore in the ledge it's worth a kingdom!"

Barney Ryan added value to the prospect by saying, “Be aisy, now,” as he closely examined another piece. “Faith, shure, look at this wan, byes; it’s purtier nor a speckled pig,” and Big Sam Williams sent its worth up into just as many millions as these hard-working fortune-hunters could crave by assuring them that it was “reg’lar, chawed rosin, the real stuff stickin’ out all over it,” he declared; and, continuing to scrutinize the rock, “Well, I’ll be blowed,” he cried, and then asked: “Did you ever see such likely lookin’ quartz in all your born days? And whar thet kim from, thar’s more—heaps more—you can jest bet your store clo’es on thet.”

By way of emphasis, he slapped Lutner, who was listening to every word, on the back with such force that it sent that worthy ten feet beyond hearing distance. Then Barney Ryan took from his pocket a specimen sample, and exclaimed: “Here’s a piece of float I picked up down i’ th’ Gulch, just this soide o’ Hangtown. Faith, an’ if I was as full o’ poteen as this is o’ gowld, oi’d say dooble, and cudn’t wark strate.”

Tattie, pleased because she knew the miners were happy—she hadn’t the slightest knowledge of the value of money herself—said: “My souls, boys, but you have been awfully lucky to-day.” “*You’ve* been,” repeated Kelvyn; “what’s the matter with yourself? I want you to understand, Tattie, that our luck is your luck, and that we put you down in every claim we locate.”

Tattie was wise enough to know that this was meant for a kindness, but how it was ever going

to benefit her in the least she failed to understand. A pretty blush spread over the girl's face, and gratitude, or lack of polish, frightened away the "thank you" that she had a vague thought the unexpected announcement deserved.

"Did you locate that hill ledge, Captain Jim?" asked Big Sam.

"Yes, I located it, and who do you suppose I put in as sole owner?"

As if with one voice, the miners shouted, "Why, the pet o' the camp, our Tattie, o' course."

"You guess right every time," Kelvyn replied. "I called it the Boss Claim, and its sole owner on the record is D. B. Lutner—that's our Tattie, you know, and if written out would spell Dolores B. Lutner, but D. B. Lutner is a long enough name for such a little body," and he patted Tattie's blonde-covered head in a fatherly way. "By the way, Sam, here are all the locations we made to-day; just you run over to the Recorder's office in Adams & Co.'s and have them regularly filed and recorded."

Lutner, who had returned from his involuntary send-off, was again sneaking around, listening to the talk, as he always did, when prospectors returned for the evening. Something in Kelvyn's remark must have pleased him, for his Satanic smile made his eyes glitter—those eyes that flattered themselves that they concealed the bad quality of his soul, into which they were the only peep-holes; but the mask was always torn away by the alert and tell-tale scar, which never forgot the duty imposed upon it.

“My reg’lar Sunday, go-to-meetin’ name,” said Tattie. “Why, nobody could tell by that if I was a girl or boy, could they?” Tattie, in her inmost soul, had always regretted that she had not been born a boy. She thought it would have been much easier to be a boy than a girl. Somehow, girl’s ways were so different from hers. She had never had a girl child for a companion, but some kind friend once gave her a doll, and told her all nice little girls played with dolls. That inanimate baby was never a comfort to Tattie. A kite, a top or a ball was much preferred.

Action was as necessary for her rugged individuality as the oxygen she breathed. She had always gone by her stepfather’s name. The miners had told her it was not her name, but a thing so unimportant did not trouble Tattie. If sometimes Kelvyn felt curious to know whether she was the offspring of wedlock or the result of an *affaire du cœur*, there was no way by which this curiosity could be appeased. In a mining camp, social differences are forgotten. There is no gossip as to “who is who,” “which is which,” and “what is what.” The doctrine of social equality is really a practice, not a theory.

The miners, evidently satisfied that a rich claim had been discovered, congratulated Kelvyn and his companions (Tattie included) upon their good luck, and, asking to be advised of the thorough assays of the samples, dispersed to their several occupations or rather idlenesses, for the darkening shadows of evening were settling over the

camp. After dark, all work was tabooed. Another day was done.

Tattie took from an unused miner's gold-rocker, which was her library, wherein she had stored old magazines, torn books and scraps of newspapers, one of her literary treasures, and was trying to pick out by the fast disappearing twilight the letters, which, by the most brilliant light, were not familiar to her, when a voice asked, in soft Spanish cadence.

“Are you trying to learn by the waning light, Dolores?” Her mother always called her by her pretty Spanish name, and the girl answered back in a language which was a mixture of rough English and dulcet Spanish:

“*Si, mi madre*, and these hyur letters all look the same to me, dizzy, funny, little black specs, up and down, and a kind o' sideways, but I'm a-goin' to tackle 'em.” Her mother understood English, but seldom attempted to speak it. “I do not think you learn good English in the camp—only the coarse sayings of the miners,” replied her mother, in her soft, rolling Spanish tones. “Captain Kelvyn told me you should go to school and you will become *una señorita consumada*.”

“Oh, *madre mia!*” ejaculated the girl, and she threw her arms caressingly about her mother's neck. “*Amor mio*,” and she kissed her mother's pretty black hair in her ecstasy of delight.

Her love for her mother was most profound, intensified because that dear little mother, the only blood relationship she had ever known on earth, was a frail little body, not so tall as Tattie, and

whom the girl could take in her strong, young arms and actually carry about. Her constant disputes with her ill-natured husband, defending Tattie against his unjust attacks, told upon her physical constitution, and she had other pains and heart-aches that she did not tell, even to Tattie.

“*Si, muchachita,*” said the mother, fondly, though with a sad cadence in her weak voice, “you will start to school as soon as Captain Kelvyn receives an answer from his letter which he sent to the convent, and which should not be more than three days coming.”

The girl’s delight was radiant in every feature. “Oh, *mi madre, me gusta mucho,*” she cried; then she fell into the miners’ slang, “Ain’t that just scrum? It’ll come killin’ hard to leave you and this dear old camp and all the thumpin’ big hearts of the miners; but I hanker after learnin’, *mi madre,* since Captain Jim has told me so much about books and music, and great people, born as we are, made as we are, but who know so much more than we do. Even if I do get to be a polished lady,” and she stopped, and for an instant pondered—“yes, ‘polished,’” she repeated, “that’s what Captain Jim called it. I needn’t be so shiny that I won’t know all the dear critters.”

“*Dolores, escucha me,*” replied the mother. “Scrum and critters,” she repeated after her daughter, but with such a comical effort to suit the Spanish tongue to the English slang, and with such an irresistibly funny pronunciation, that Tattie’s joyous and amused laugh rang through the place like riotous music.

"Don't come it English, *mi madre*. I like you better in Spanish," advised Tattie, with a patronizing air that human nature forces upon a child when she arrives at fifteen and is taller than her mother.

"You must wait till I get to be a top-lofty young lady, *madre mia*; when I'm harnessed up in fine feathers, I'll come it this dodge," and Tattie picked up her ragged skirt with an uncultured daintiness and strutted off with native grace like a semi-barbaric peacock. Her movements soon graduated into wild and agile steps; the numerous rents in her adjusted stocking were forgotten, and her dislocated stocking was forgiven, as the tatters of her frock moved with the night breeze, and her truly graceful poses, like the accordion plaits of a well-trained *danseuse*.

As if her conscience was irritated by the semblance of pride, she pantingly embraced her mother, pressed her flushed young cheek against her cold face, saying: "No, no, *mi madre* I didn't mean that; I wouldn't give a blind Chinaman for store clothes," and still rubbing her ruddy cheek woingly against the colorless face of her mother, like the young of some dumb animal, gathering every fragment of affection, she asked, with a strange tremor in her usually steady voice, "When did you say I'd pull up stakes, *mi madre*?" The thought of parting from her mother made her manner so tender, so gentle, that one would scarcely have recognized in this clinging, affectionate child the Tattie of the mountains; she who at times would break a bucking mustang, catch a

steer with a lasso, hit an antelope with a bullet, sling a pick like a miner, and many other accomplishments not taught in a young ladies' fashionable boarding school.

Tears were in her voice when she murmured: “So soon? My heart's just thumping right up in my throat,” she half sobbed; “I know the big tears will come, when I have to say—have to say” —she faltered—“good-by — to — to —” Her voice was silenced by emotion; her head sank upon her mother's shoulder, and Tattie wept.

The child had been taught by the miners that tears were a display of weakness, “just like a girl.” Tattie felt very like a girl, and a very little girl, at that moment, and apologized to herself for such a departure from her usual rules of thought.

Her mother caressed her affectionately. “You will not be away so very long, Dolores. I will go to see you often, and you shall come home every vacation.

“You are getting too old to run wild, Captain Kelvyn says.” Kelvyn's opinion generally settled things in Gold Gulch.

“Think of the beautiful books you will be able to read,” continued the consoling mother, “and the music you will learn.”

“*Si, si, mi madre,*” sobbed Tattie, “but I'm sad to leave you.”

“Hush, hush, *muchachita,*” soothingly replied the sorry little mother, as she kissed her darling's tears away.

“Everybody says I'm wild. I'm afraid I'll give the good teachers a lot o' trouble, *mi madre.*”

"You do the best you can, Dolores," was the mother's answer.

"*Si, mi madre*, I'll try to do just like the other ones. They'll want to keep me in, won't they, *mi madre*? Oh, I know they will," she went on, as if aghast at anticipated prison walls.

"You know, *mi madre*, I never come in, only to sleep: I couldn't sleep if I hadn't the air all day long. I'll be all scrowged up." That word "scrowged," which was of Tattie's own coinage, meant cramped, or crowded. "I like the great big sky, with all the bright colors. I like the broad land, the high, black and gray mountains," she added, as her eyes took sweeping glances, and her arms swayed in expanded gestures of the freedom of her life and home. "But I'll try to stay in the house, I'll try to be good, *mi madre*," and then she had a comforting cry.

Her sobbing ceased, and, as if in a rhapsody, she murmured, looking wistfully in her mother's eyes: "Oh, *mi madre*, I think I'll love music;" and then, with a sudden flash of determination, she added: "And you can jest bet your last pinch o' gold dust I'll stick to it closer 'n Bruiser does to hay. I've never heard any music 'cept Big Sam's jew's-harp, but, do you know, *mi madre*," and a dreamy look stole into her soft eyes, "I can listen to the singin' o' the birds all day long; and the water a-droppin' from that old flume there—well, all sounds 'round here is just bang-up music to me. Do you know, *mi madre* I've been takin' lessons from the birds, and this is the way the red-breast goes," and she

threw back her head, and whistled to the stars that were just beginning to assemble, and were a fitting audience for such heavenly sounds, notes that the birds, those little feathery songsters, would have split their dear little windpipes had they tried to imitate them.

Wild, sweet, harmonious melodies!

The mother was listening with maternal admiration when the sweet commune of mother and child was rudely disturbed by Lutner, who, in coarsest tones, growled:

“Loafing around as usual, eh? If you were a boy I’d put you to work, but, being a girl, you are fit for nothing but cuddling in your mother’s arms and eating what little money I can earn.”

At the first sound of his voice Tattie arose, deliberately folded her arms, and faced him, while the poor wife sat as if exhausted by the constant occurrence of these scenes.

“’Tain’t none o’ your business if I’m a girl. You ain’t none o’ my father—is he, now, *madre*,” she said, turning to her mother.

“Get along there,” he commanded, but the girl did not budge. “Get along there, I tell you,” he repeated, “out of my sight.”

The girl kept her post, gazing at him with such a dare-devil of an expression darting from her angry eyes that a stronger man than Denhardt Lutner might have quailed.

“If you wasn’t my mother’s husband,” she hissed between her clenched teeth, “I’d make a target of you at short range, so I would,” and she clutched the rifle, which was never far from her

side; but her mother took the weapon, without the girl's noticing the action, so intently was her gaze fixed upon the object of her deadly hatred.

“There's one thing,” she continued, as her Spanish eyes half closed with a leer upon her step-father, “I'll always thank heaven for, and that is that you ain't my *real* father. Why, if I thought 'at one drop o' your blood ran in my veins, I'd prick my veins with a pin, so I would, and as the last drop left my body, die, happy because I had saved the world from anything 'at could ever be like you,” and with a “ugh” or grunt like a wild Indian, she turned from him toward her mother.

Lutner, no longer under the spell of her piercing black eyes, as well as encouraged by the removal of the rifle, for physically he was very cautious, and relying upon the influence of his wife, who always endeavored to control Tattie's outbursts of provoked temper, growled, “If your mother had proper respect for her husband she'd teach her kid better manners.”

Tattie was about to retort when her mother checked her. Feeling secure under his wife's protection, he snarled, “I'll thrash the life out of you,” making a menacing gesture toward Tattie. He was in a furious rage. Tattie, heedless of the peacemaking efforts of her mother, her cheeks burning, her eyes blazing, and just indignation vibrating in every nerve, in every fiber, walked up to the man and said:

“I jes' dare you t', so I do!” Almost before her words were finished, she was seized by his brutal hands, and dashed aside with such force

that pain caused her to cry aloud. Her mother caught her in her arms just as several miners, who, having heard the scream, appeared in the doorway, and Lutner slunk away. Barney Ryan's Irish blood was in a turbulent condition, and he shouted so that the retreating ears of Lutner might not miss the words :

“More throuble wid that skulking stipfather? Shure Oi'd loike to brake iv'ry bone in his body, and it's meself can do it,” and he began to roll up his sleeves, and looked like a plucky bantam in a cockpit.

“I was only laughin’,” declared Tattie, nervously.

“Shure, Oi says the tears in yure oyes,” insisted Barney.

“Well, I allus laughs till I cries,” returned Tattie, and her honest eyes were veiled as she uttered the falsehood, but she had saved Lutner from a good, sound drubbing.

Kelvyn knew she was prevaricating, and thought he would counsel her while she was in a softened mood. He told her that moderation was good in all things, and that she had done well in controlling her impatience ; that even if her stepfather was exasperating, she must not follow his example and be exasperating also ; and explained how two wrongs did not make a right, until Tattie hung her head in shame ; then, bashfully lifting her blushing face, she turned to the miners and said, with apologetic humility :

“You know, boys, I give my stepfather lots of trouble. I'm sorry my temper's bigger 'n I am my own self—but—but—” and a glimpse of her

defiant look returned to those black eyes, as she slyly turned her back upon Kelvyn's scrutinizing gaze—that would-be good shepherd was reveling in the happy thought that even if he wasn't practically religious, but only an up-to-date Christian, he might gather into the fold a few stray lambs—well, like Tattie, for instance—when her very audible whisper gave him grave doubts as to his beneficent influence.

“But it does me good to give him sass,” and she turned her head and glanced towards Kelvyn in an apprehensive way, as if expecting to dodge a rebuke if he had heard her remark, “and I'd just like to give him a good *manotada*,” she whispered, laughingly, as she suited an energetic gesture to the Spanish word, as if to slap someone would do her wicked little soul a world of good.

Tattie had a spirit hard to subdue when her temper was raised to concert pitch.

“I tried to like him first off,” she went on, “until he beat me one day—my heart will never stop aching over that,” and the look of defiance in her pretty eyes gave way to burning tears, that came unbidden, and coursed down her flushed cheeks, her voice trembling with emotion. When she pathetically dried her eyes with the ragged tatters of her poor, little, cotton frock, several flannel shirt sleeves went up in unison, to arrest a suspicious moisture in strong men's eyes. Then a smile, like a sunbeam, finished the tropical shower, and she gave her father praise, by asserting, “He's a better man 'n I am, 'cause I ain't no man 't all,” and, as if considering it her imperative

duty to drive away “the blues” that she had caused the miners, judging from their doleful countenances, she said, cheerfully, “But this sort o’ talk makes our sky dull.” Then, in clear, bird-like notes, she struck up a song, the doggerel of which Kelvyn had composed for “the boys,” the miners joining in the refrain, and Gold Gulch resounded in merriment :

“ A wild mining life is the life for me,
Oh, Christopher Columbus, ain’t it free ?
Tho’ my style is not such,”

Here she fluttered her tattered skirt,

“ As would please fine ’Frisco much,
It’s too nice for anything, as you can see.”

Then she did a *pas seul* that was simply inimitable (it being Tattie’s own patent), and the miners swelled the chorus :

“ I’m not a fop, you plain can see,
Such fetching styles, they wouldn’t suit me,”

as Tattie, singing at the top of her melodious voice, walked up and down, with a peculiar, weird, uncultured grace, like a rough-and-ready fairy, made to order for the glory of Gold Gulch.

The moon had risen in all her full orbéd glory, and lent her countenance, as well as her mellow light, to this scene of innocent mirth.

Barney Ryan, with the enthusiasm of his race, then became the soloist, and sang his words with a rich brogue, but no melody :

“ Be you tree hundrid fate undher th’ ground,
And a flud makes up its moind t’ come ’round,
You will git virry wet,
And yure a lucky dog, you bet,
If you come out o’ that moine safe and sound.”

Again Tattie did her own peculiar “walk around” and led the chorus:

“I’m not a fop, you plain can see,
Such fetching styles, they wouldn’t suit me.”

Here Big Sam Williams, bubbling over with enjoyment of the scene, let loose his great basso profundo, and like rolls of thunder came the deep-chested sounds, entirely regardless of tune—a species of rough-hewn recitative:

“When up in the hills, we tramp, pick and dig,
And find big chunks like a pretty speckled pig;
Then we all homeward set,
Oh, what need have we to fret?
How much care we for trouble—not a fig.”

For the third time Tattie stepped to the front, with skirt daintily lifted, and walked, with half dancing feet, which gradually began to twinkle and to move in livelier time, until they merged into a well-defined dance, leaving the miners to do the walk-around business.

Even Kelvyn caught the fun-inspiring infection, and, forgetting the propriety expected in the autocrat of Gold Gulch, apparently thinking moonlight more indulgent than the garishment of day, stepped around with the elegant grace and ease of a ballet master. His voice had evidently been trained, and, as he sang, the culture blended with Tattie’s wild fanciful method, and their combined voices made most exquisite harmony. As their finishing notes died away, and they stood in the silvery moonlight, a more picturesque couple could not be imagined; the exercise had loosened the braids of

Tattie's hair, and the evening breeze tossed it into different coifs, each style being more becoming than the last—now a fluffy, silken blonde lock would be blown across her forehead, giving her an unconsciously becoming negligee, the next breeze would bare her pretty brow, till she would look like a Madonna; at least so thought Kelvyn as he gazed upon her young loveliness.

Even Kee, the Chinese cook, was stirred to the depths of his Celestial emotion, and slipped slyly out from the hotel kitchen to see what the hilarity was all about, just as Kelvyn, flushed with excitement and pleasurable fatigue, called out: “No more to-night, boys. The curtain is down. Let's turn in.”

CHAPTER VIII.

TATTIE'S FAREWELLS.

THE day, and almost the hour, had arrived for Tattie to say good-by to home and friends. The letter from the convent, in answer to Kelvyn's, had been received. Yes, the good Mesdames would attend to the purchasing of her outfit; the money for which, and for her schooling, was freely contributed by Kelvyn.

For three days she had not only been visiting everybody in the camp, but she had made pilgrimages to every spot for miles around that was hallowed to her. Favorite nooks and corners in the deep and rocky gorges of the majestic mountains, and the little waterfalls and most picturesque scenes along the fantastic, rushing stream, had to be told “good-by.” Her loved mountain peaks must be climbed, upon the summits of which she stood on tiptoe, that her eyes might take a farewell look of landscapes she knew and loved so well. And Bruiser, the little burro, must be seen and thanked for the many miles he had carried her over rough roads. Tattie's good-by to the dumb little friend of her childhood was sorrowful; but Bruiser looked upon her scalding tears, apparently, with utter indifference, only braying louder and longer for the supper of oats

he knew she would give him, and of which, for the last three days, he had received a double ration.

Tattie's friends had invited her and her mother to supper in the hotel dining-room; the tempting pastry and extra dishes upon which Kee had given his most skillful attention and Celestial talent had been discussed, and they were awaiting the arrival of the stage—Tattie, almost in a feverish state, from efforts to subdue her emotion.

The miners, good honest fellows, were feeling sad over the departure of the little being who had for many years given them all the pleasure they had enjoyed in their camp. Big Sam and Barney Ryan had known Tattie since her babyhood. It was hard for them to recognize the fact that she could no longer be considered a prattling tot; she was always a baby to them—the wee thing they had loved since she crept on all fours—the toddler they had helped teach to walk, who, if they held out their labor-roughened hands, would step out trustfully, and, when she reached a safe port in their arms, would nestle so close that they could feel the flutter of her little heart, telling the fright that her lips could not speak in attempting those first steps. They asked no greater pleasure than to feel the velvety baby face cuddled in their necks, the zephyr-like breath fan their rough skin, or to have her baby fingers clutch their hair or tug at their beards.

Barney Ryan had fashioned the first pair of shoes out of an old glove, to protect the cunning

toes or “Baby” when she ventured upon the path of life, which, in the uneven surface of the camp, was not only figuratively, but actually, beset with pitfalls. They taught her to ride, to swim, to throw the lasso, to use a pick, to tell good ore from bad, to run a dash of a hundred yards, to throw quoits, to try her muscles by lifting different-sized stones, and to shoot with unerring aim, all of which Tattie did “like a boy,” and much better than most boys, to the entire satisfaction and delight of her tutors.

When Barney Ryan sat down to the table he said to Big Sam in a low voice:

“Aisy, Sam, shure there ain’t no more use o’ my thryin’ to ate nor there be to stick a mustherd plaster on to a wooden leg. There’s a big lump in me troat, shure, an’ I can’t schwallow it at all, so I can’t.”

“I feel like a woman, and could blubber right out,” responded Big Sam, confidentially to Barney, and although it was in Sam’s best *sub rosa* style it was heard by Kelvyn.

“Well, you mustn’t,” he cautioned; “tears would make the child sad.”

“I s’pose it’s all right,” said Big Sam; “it’s a blasted pity to see the poor child a-tryin’ to read all the old books she could find, and no one to help her. Us boys, and the old diggin’s ’ll never be the same to her when she comes back with all her book learnin’ notions.”

“Perhaps not, Sam,” Kelvyn answered, “but our selfishness must not be a stumbling-block to the girl’s good; besides, she’s not happy with her

stepfather, and perhaps her mother's life will be freer from discord when the child is away.”

Barney Ryan grunted that it was a new way to make a mother happy by sending her child away, and then turned to “Big Sam” and asked him if he had brought in the carpet-bag that held the keepsakes.

“Yes, it's up thar in the corner,” answered “Big Sam,” with a decided *tremolo* in his voice. A great, long sigh escaped Tattie as she arose from the table, and pushed her plate, with her untouched supper, from her.

“Well, boys, the stage 'll be hyur soon, an' I s'pose the time's come for me to leave all o' you uns,” she said, with the air of a culprit about to be executed; then, looking upon the sad countenances around her, she reassured them with “Well, after all, I'm kinder useless in camp; and, besides, it ain't a-goin' to be for so very long. It's work 'at I think 'll suit me better 'an minin'.”

Tattie was dressed in her best. A clean cotton gown of a decided pink tone, white stockings without holes in them, a pair of new black shoes, much too large for her feet, laced up with red strings and a black shawl thrown over her head in true Spanish style. /

Her mother was attired in a black dress that had seen better days; a black shawl enveloped her head, one end of which was brought across the front and thrown gracefully over the opposite shoulder, leaving only her eyes exposed, which were truly the long, dark eyes of the donna.

“Say, boys, you all know Jim Dulligan,” said

Tattie, suddenly, as if remembering something.

"Yes, 'course. Why?"

"He fell down the shaft to-day and broke his leg. It'll lay him up for some months.

"There ain't no dollar in Jim's cabin—nothin' but a new baby. It didn't have nowhere else to go, I guess, and that's the reason it come. Dropped in through the chinks in the roof—its mother told me," and she picked up an idle hat that she evidently thought might be in better business, and passed it around.

"Come, boys, chip in lively," she said, in something of an authoritative tone. The boys did as they were requested by this innately born little Samaritan. Her soul beamed through her eyes when she examined the generous contribution of gold dust and valuable little nuggets, that she knew would bring a good supply of provisions and pay the doctor's bill, when exchanged into money at the catch-all of every commercial transaction—the Amador Hotel.

"If that isn't enough, we'll stand another assessment," Kelvyn said, with one of his pleasant smiles, and Barney's generosity seemed likely to develop into a mine pocket as large as an orphan asylum or a home for cripples; and "Big Sam" said: "I'm a fine nurse, I'll go down and set up with Jim's leg to-night;" and his flannel shirt sleeve passed over his eyes, suggestive of unusual emotion.

"When I'm gone," said Tattie, with tears in her voice as well as in her beautiful eyes, "there are a few things I want you to do for my sake: First,

give the gold dust to Jim,” and she placed the hat containing the contributions on the table.

“That we will,” was answered in chorus.

“Do it sort o’ careless like,” cautioned thoughtful little Tattie, “’cause uf Jim is poor in many ways, he’s rich in one thing.”

“And what is that, Tattie,” asked Kelvyn, his voice showing emotion.

“Why, in feelin’s,” replied Tattie. “You mustn’t look into his eyes when he has to say ‘Thank you,’ ’cause he don’t like for people to see the tears ’at allus comes,” and she wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

“I’m afraid all the sick and distressed will miss you, Tattie,” remarked Kelvyn.

“Well, they won’t one bit, neither,” returned Tattie, “that is, uf you attend to your duties,” and the young voice recovered some of its evenness, in its earnest effort to exhort others to tread the right path, while the consciences of her hearers gave them a little twinge, as they thought how little they had considered their neighbors. “Be sure to attend to Jim’s baby,” Tattie further commissioned.

“A little out of our line, but we’ll do our best,” Kelvyn assured her.

“There’s a nursin’ bottle and a little jug o’ catnip tea in *mi madre’s* cabin to take to him.”

Barney Ryan said he’d attend to them. As if afraid or ashamed of the big tears that were beginning to make themselves altogether too unmanageable, Tattie threw her head back, bit her lips, and seemed to be examining the ceiling. She was

praying God for strength to help her bear this parting, which was the greatest trial of her life, for, be it said to the credit of Tattie's mother, she had taught her child her religious views, and Tattie could bless herself and say her prayers, never forgetting before retiring to her humble little bed to make the sign of the cross, saying, "*En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo, y del espiritu Sancto. Amen.*" Then, crossing her thumb over her first finger, she would pronounce, with greatest reverence, the name "Jesus," and her prayer always included her friends; Kelvyn coming in for a lion's share—not that he needed it more than the others, but because Tattie liked him, next to her mother, better than any person or thing on earth. Even Lutner was recommended to God's mercy with great fervor.

It required several efforts and audible swallows before Tattie could finish her last will and testament, as it were. Persistent sobs would escape their courageous little keeper, and tears just ready to overflow, and so bear proof positive that she was "just like a girl," made her eyes glisten.

"Be sure to see 'at the pins don't stick the baby," said Tattie, in a quivering voice. "And feed my kitten," she added.

"A new business, but we can learn," replied Kelvyn.

Here Barney Ryan whispered to "Big Sam" that it was time to give Tattie the keepsakes.

"Well, go ahead and do it," said "Big Sam," not wishing to make an exhibition of his own emotional feelings.

Barney Ryan then braced himself as if for a go-as-you-please fight in the ring, made several quick attempts to swallow lumps in his throat, wiped his horny hand across his eyes, and stepped toward the center of the room, like a small boy about to say his first piece in public.

“ Tattie, shure us byes don't want you to be afther fergettin' us, so we hav' got togeth'r, and put into dthis bag,” and here he made his first gesture, intending to point to the bag, but his hand involuntarily went up toward the ceiling, with fine oratorical effect, “ some prisints.” Then, drawing from the bag a small revolver prettily mounted with silver, a relic of former civilization, he almost howled, “ Here's a daisy, shure, er rigular barker ! Its moie kapesake fur yez, an' Big Sam gives yer this't,” as he held up a valuable nugget of gold; “ Jim Higgins gives yer this't, a purty little bag o' gold dust, an Cap'n Jim gives yer this't, wid all our regards.” And Barney produced a very legal-looking document, which he waved proudly in the air as he said : “ 'Tis ther notice of location, jist as good as a rigular deed o' ther Boss Claim, and what makes yer er real live locatur in yer own name.” With a sob and a gulp Barney returned the paper to the bag as he continued, after surreptitiously wiping away a tear :

“ Now, Tattie, what I want to say is, that—that—we have loved yer all yer life ”—a very audible sigh—“ and that—that—you know where your frins is, and yer mustn't—forgit—forgit—us.” Then followed an almost silent hand-shak-

ing, in which all joined except one man, who was anxiously watching that ancient, pitiful valise, not for the purpose of donating to its store, but of abstracting therefrom, and that was he who by right should have been the child's protector rather than defrauder. Denhardt Lutner, when he saw that location notice, placed among the other gifts, determined to make an effort to secure it. He stealthily sidled toward the object of his desire, casting furtive glances at the wished-for receptacle that contained the coveted document. But Kee held the valise, and Lutner's sinister eyes could not see their way clear to the robbery.

Tattie murmured her thanks as well as she could, for her emotions had almost mastered her sturdy efforts to control them.

Things were looking very serious for her. She was going away from the camp, the only place she ever remembered of having seen in all her life, to be among strangers. "How would they treat her?" "Would they be cross or kind?" were her reflections, but she soon overcame self-pity in her thoughts of others.

"Boys, yer are too good ter me," she sobbed. "Jest a few words, and I'm gone," and she reassured herself by adding, "for a little while. Look after *mi madre*," came from the child, with her whole heart and soul in her trembling voice.

"We will, sure as guns," responded the miners, heartily.

"Don't let Melican man hurt Kee—help him along like good fellows."

Kelvyn said Kee would be all right—he would take him under his special protection.

“And—and—” continued Tattie, in a voice quivering with suppressed feeling, “have a kind word for poor old Dad. He’s good, but—but—we don’t understand his ways.”

As those words fell upon Lutner’s ears, his eyes lowered, and he moved a step or two from his position of vantage to secure the deed.

“Satan’s ’bout the on’y one who can understand him, I’m a-thinkin’,” snarled Big Sam, and Lutner’s eyes returned to the valise and he resumed his former position.

“Where’s Dad?” asked Tattie, looking around for the worthy who answered to that relationship.

“Oh!” was the trembling little ejaculation when she saw Lutner, who was at that moment glaring upon the guardsman of the coveted paper, and Tattie advanced toward him, offering her hand with the most feeling “Good-by, Dad.”

The surly ruffian refused the proffered hand, and snarled “Good-by, girl,” and even that cold civility would have been denied her had he not feared men who had been born with souls.

Kelvyn called Kee to get a rope and tie up the valise. Kee trotted off in the usual half run he always assumed when he was going to do anything for a person he liked.

The crack of the stage-driver’s whip sounded, followed soon after by a very loud “Whoa!” and the horses, steaming and panting, stopped in front of the Amador Hotel.

Two travelers alighted—a man and a boy. Before they entered the house, and at the supreme moment of sadness, when Tattie's words failed her, and she was taking a silent leave of her friends, Lutner sneaked closer to the valise, and stealthily extracted therefrom Tattie's location notice—just as Kee was returning to tie up the bag. The Chinaman's suspicions were aroused, and he accused Lutner, in his plainest English, of having tampered with its contents.

"Wha' you ketch um in blag?" he cried. "Gimme blag, dam qulick," continued the irate Celestial.

"Take your old bag; I don't want it," returned Lutner, as he threw the bag at Kee, and went off, mumbling to himself, for there was no one else with whom he was on speaking terms, "Go on, damn you all; but I've got the deed, and my name's D. B. Lutner. Lucky that smart tenderfoot didn't know that my initials are the same as the girl's," and the tell-tale scar pointed upward to his eyes as the Satanic smile appeared and he thought, "Kind of Kelvyn to make me D. B. Lutner, sole owner of the richest claim yet discovered in this region."

"Me tell Captain Jim," retorted Kee, and he turned with that in view, but Kelvyn was most seriously occupied supporting Tattie's mother in his strong arms.

CHAPTER IX.

KELVYN'S INHERITANCE.

JUST as the two travelers were entering the house they met Kelvyn, Tattie and her mother, who were leaving. In the doorway the light from the room fell full upon the faces of Banatyne and his son Dougald, who were on one of their mine hunts. The faces of the little group leaving the room were covered by the night's shadows; even if that had not been the case, Banatyne would never have recognized Kelvyn, in the rough-looking, bearded miner into which "Prince James" had developed. Kelvyn started at the unexpected meeting; but there was no time for reflection. Tattie's mother had fallen in an unconscious condition into her child's arms, and Kelvyn was obliged to return to the room with the little woman, where he placed her upon a chair, and where friends were soon trying to restore her to consciousness. Tattie, seeing her mother so ill: wept the bitterest tears of her life. Banatyne, not being able to look through the group of solicitous friends, asked, naturally, "What's the trouble?" and Tattie sobbed, "*Mi madre's so sick.*"

Dougald's heart was touched with the child's grief, and he took her hand so gently, and said, "Don't cry, little girl; your mother'll soon be well."

She has only fainted, I think." Tattie raised her eyes to his face, and, in an instant, experienced a sudden influence, a strange, indefinable magnetism that made her love the boy at once. Banatyne's voice was heard in the bar-room adjoining. "Give me a little soothing syrup. I'm all chilled through," he was saying. "My goodness! what a storm! That confounded stage has broken down, and even if it hadn't, I wouldn't go another step in such weather. Why don't you fellows order better weather in these diggings, anyhow? Can you let me have two beds?"

During that speech Kelvyn was carrying the almost inanimate body of Mrs. Lutner to her cabin hard by, Dougald and Tattie following hand in hand, through the driving rain.

He placed the little mother upon her comfortless bed. Fifteen minutes later the doctor, who had been hastily summoned, came, but declared that death was only a question of minutes. Tattie hovered over her mother and watched for some sign of returning consciousness.

At last a glimmer of intellect shone in her eyes. Those wistful eyes dwelt fondly upon Tattie for an instant, as she held out her hand feebly, which Tattie took, smothered with kisses and bathed with burning tears; then the eyes of the mother turned toward and seemed to become riveted upon Dougald; she feebly advanced her other hand toward him, and her lips moved, but uttered no sound. Awed by the sad scene and her appealing look, he pressed the trembling hand in both his own as the mother, with the strength that

death often gives just before life goes out, drew the boy to her, kissed him with lingering devotion, pressed him to her dying heart, as if she would keep him always ; a similar farewell to Tattie, and she murmured : “ Good-by, dear children. God protect you both.”

She asked for Captain Kelvyn. In a moment he was on his knees at her bedside.

“ If I should die,” she gasped, “ promise me that you will guard and protect Dolores.”

“ I promise,” Kelvyn replied, solemnly.

She fell back upon her pillow, and all thought her spirit had taken its flight, but after a moment of grievous suspense her lips moved, and Kelvyn bent his head to catch her words.

“ If at any time she becomes a burden,” the dying mother whispered between the painful gasps for sufficient breath, which was rapidly failing her.

“ She will never be a burden to me,” Kelvyn assured the sufferer, and a faint smile of gratitude passed over her pallid face.

“ Will pray God and the saints in heaven to bless you,” she murmured.

Again her breath was exhausted, and her fast-waning strength failed her, but, as if determined to hold life long enough to enable her to make known her disposition of her child, she again recovered herself sufficiently to add : “ There is a small wooden box under my bed, which you must take—when I am no more on this earth ; if you—want—to—send—her—away—from you—open—the—box.”

Her speech left her. Her breathing came faster

and faster. Her eyes, wide open, looked fixedly upon Tattie and Dougald, who were clasped in each other's arms, sobbing and weeping. The doctor listened to her faint heart-beats; her nails grew dark, a purplish tinge came over her face.

In a few moments the physician raised his head, and, in great solemnity, said:

"It is all over. She is dead."

These words seemed to stun Tattie. She looked at him in a dazed, wondering way. Her tears ceased to flow. She moved mechanically to her mother's beside; silently stroked the dead face with a caressing hand, passed her arm around the lifeless little form, dropped down upon her knees and hid her face upon the breathless bosom.

The doctor pronounced the death a case of heart disease, precipitated by a sudden nervous shock.

Kelvyn tried to soothe Tattie and lead her away, but she refused to leave her mother. For hours the child's head lay upon the still breast—the living clinging to its dead.

"Big Sam" and Barney Ryan whispered words of consolation to the child, but Tattie either did not hear or did not heed, and looked as if nothing but force would make her cease her watchful vigil.

At last Dougald passed his arm around the little heart-broken mourner, gently lifted her head, and placed it upon his shoulder. "You will grieve yourself sick," he said kindly. "Come with me."

Tears rushed to Tattie's burning eyes, and soothed her sore heart. She wept and was comforted by the young stranger, whom she had not

known two hours before her bereavement. Dougald led her from the cabin back to the hotel, followed by her old-time friends. Lutner watched by the dead alone. Remorse might have been his companion, had he not said farewell to that unwelcome presence years before.

At the hotel Banatyne was waiting for his son, wondering what could have become of him, and as Dougald lead the weeping child into the room he asked: “Isn’t the mother better?” “Betther is it ye ask?” answered Barney Ryan in surprise, his moistened eyes glistening; “shure she died tree hours ago.” “A sad business,” murmured Banatyne, in a meditative way.

Kelvyn did not speak. He did not wish to recognize Banatyne and relied upon his own changed appearance to serve as a disguise. At times a lingering fondness for his old friend asserted itself, and he repented of the rage that possessed him when he had struck Banatyne down, but this was not one of those moments when he felt in a softened mood, for the death scene recalled the taking away of his own mother; and he still held Banatyne accountable in a measure for that overshadowing bereavement.

Banatyne turned to Tattie, saying: “Try to stop crying, and forget——” The words would not come. He grew pale, for as the child held her face up, as a baby would have done, in a submissive way, to have her tears dried by a kindly hand, something in the sorrowful little features must have impressed him; but then a sorrowing child cannot be looked upon by anyone without a heart pang.

Tattie in her grief was more beautiful than ever. Her blonde hair had loosened from the braids and looked like a disheveled mass of riotous sunshine; the sad little face beneath made a contrasting cloud of gloom. Her long dark lashes were wet with tears. She was passing through the lights and shadows of life—one as bright as the other is dark.

Banatyne drew the young girl close to him. "Where is your father?" he asked, and he shaded his eyes with his palm as he placed his elbow upon the table and rested his bowed head upon his hand.

"Don't think I ever had a father," she said with a half-smothered sob.

"Never had a father?" repeated Banatyne.

"Not a real father, only a stepfather," innocently explained Tattie.

"Where is he?" anxiously queried Banatyne.

"He don't like me; Captain Jim is goin' to be my father and mother, too, now, so he is," answered the orphaned girl.

"Were you born in this camp?"

"No, sir, I was borned away over in Dogtown."

Banatyne's hand clutched his handkerchief nervously and he scanned Tattie's features with anxious gaze.

"What is your name?"

"Dolores, but they calls me Tattie, 'cause my close is ragged." Banatyne turned pale, and his beard concealed the nervous twitching of his lips.

"How old are you, Dolores?" he asked with an unsteady voice.

“I’ll be fifteen the tenth o’ this month,” answered Tattie.

“How strange, papa,” remarked Dougald, “for that will be my birthday, too, and I will be fifteen. Shake,” he said to Tattie, offering his hand, “we are just the same age.” They shook each other warmly by the hand, and Tattie’s smile broke through her rift of tears like a rainbow—childhood’s grief, though poignant, is fickle and easily assuaged and comforted.

“Who is Captain Jim?” Banatyne asked suddenly, as he placed his hand tenderly upon Tattie’s head.

“Why, Captain Jim Kelvyn,” she answered, astonished that everybody in the world did not know her “Captain Jim.” “*Mi madre* gave me to him just now before she died, and I love him best of anybody.”

“Jim Kelvyn,” repeated Banatyne, and his eyes wandered around the room as if in search of “Prince James.” Kelvyn was temporarily absent.

He pressed Tattie’s rough little hands, holding them for an instant, and hurriedly left the room. Dougald bade her good night, promising to see her in the morning, and followed his father. Then Tattie returned to her group of friends and slipped her hand into Kelvyn’s. He stroked her blonde-covered head and made a vow in his inmost soul to protect and serve the little being, her mother’s dying gift to him, with unswerving fidelity.

The child, weary of watching and weeping, crept into his arms, and resting her head upon his breast, dozed off into a troubled sleep. “Big

Sam" put his coat over her, and Barney Ryan gently untied her shoes and slipped them off, saying, "Shure, her fate are as cold as oice." Tattie in her griet was again their baby.

The three friends spoke in whispers, so as not to disturb Tattie's slumbers. The question of what was best to be done was discussed, and they concluded that it was doubly important now that she should be placed in school without delay. Kelvyn would be appointed her legal guardian, and would accompany her to the convent.

The day following a grave was dug in the side of the slope, and Tattie's mother was laid at rest. Tattie thought the grave was so narrow that if "*Mi madre*" wanted to unfold her hands, which had been crossed upon her breast, she could not do it, and they shoveled so much cruel and heavy earth upon the pine coffin that when the angels called her she could not rise.

Tattie's imagination was in a disturbed state. She had a vague idea that she had met with a terrible loss, and now naturally turned to Kelvyn for consolation. She followed him from place to place as noiseless as his shadow. She would nestle in his arms and tell him how much she loved him.

"Now that *mi madre* is gone, I love you best of all," she would say, "and Barney Ryan next, and Big Sam next, and Kee next and Bruiser the last—poor old Bruiser, he has so few friends." Late in the afternoon, after the funeral, Tattie and Dougald busied themselves gathering pine cones, with which they made an inclosure around her mother's grave. With great difficulty they broke

the small hard burrs from the cones, and fastened them on a wooden cross to mark the head of her mother's resting place.

Banatyne had not been well—a nervous chill had followed his exposure to the storm; so the doctor said, and by his orders he had kept his room all day.

In the evening just after supper, and before the arrival of the stage, Kelvyn, Big Sam and Barney Ryan were talking in one corner of the dining-room and Tattie and Dougald were leaning carelessly upon the table from which the supper dishes had been removed. The two children were obviously already very much attached to each other; Tattie took no pains to disguise the fact that she never had, in all her life, seen anything quite so pretty as Dougald. His shirt was so nice and shiny; just as white as the snow on top of the mountains; his clothes were so new, his skin so fair, his hands so soft, and she spent much of her time in stroking his light, curly hair, and in pressing and rubbing his delicate hands.

Kelvyn watched them with some uneasiness, and a misty idea floated through his brain that Tattie needed advice, but how to be her adviser was the question that puzzled him, so he determined to place his charge in school immediately.

Kelvyn had very strict ideas concerning women. An angel dropped from heaven could not be more perfect than the standard he expected in his earthly sisters. Feeling, as he did, in the possessive case vein regarding Tattie, he determined, there and then, that she should be educated to the

strictest letter of the law—according to his blue code of ethics.

"Are you a good horse-backer?" he heard the object of his solicitude ask the boy, and he smiled when he saw the amused look on Dougald's face.

"Pretty fair," was the answer.

"Kin you hold onto a bucking mustang?" was the next question from this budding expected-to-be womanly perfection.

"I never tried," was the reply.

"Oh, I kin, if he bucks a whole day," was the boast of the future rule produced, Miss Propriety.

"Wonder if you kin lasso a wild bull?" was the next poetic query emanating from the raw material upon which Kelvyn and the professors were to work on æsthetic lines.

"I'm sure I couldn't," mildly answered the boy, with rather a startled expression.

Tattie was not feeling her best, or she would have shown her contempt for a boy so lacking in essential knowledge, from her point of view; as it was, she made no further comment.

The stage arrived and departed; among its passengers were Banatyne and Dougald. Tattie held five twenty-dollar gold pieces which Banatyne pressed into her hand, and Kee delivered a note to Kelvyn, which read as follows:

"MY DEAR KELVYN:

I feel great interest in the little girl whose mother died so suddenly yesterday. She could not have been placed in better hands than yours. I would esteem it a great favor to be allowed to contribute sufficiently for her entire support and education. Very kindly draw upon me for any amount she may need, and oblige

Yours, very truly,

ROY H. BANATYNE."

As Kelvyn looked at the careless, familiar writing it seemed like a hand-clasp of the brother man he had once called friend and loved so well; and he thought, “Well, Roy’s generosity should cover a multitude of sins,” as he sat down to make reply :

MR. BANATYNE.

DEAR SIR: As the legal guardian of the child in question, and I might say foster father, I feel it incumbent upon me to decline with thanks your very generous offer. My promise to her dying mother to guard and protect her child makes it my sacred duty to fulfill the trust in every particular. I consider the little being more unfortunate than if she were an orphan, as she is wholly ignorant as to who her father was or whether he is living or dead. If dead, he, of course, can lay no claim to her; if living, he must have deserted her in her infancy, and by virtue of his abandonment would have no right to her child, she is mine to do for as rightfully as if God Himself had sent her to me. Again thanking you, I have the honor to be,

Respectfully yours.

JAMES KELVYN.

To Roy H. Banatyne, Esq.”

Kelvyn posted his letter. The next day he started from Gold Gulch with Tattie, and by eight o’clock in the evening she was placed in school. Lutner left the camp the same day and settled in Hangtown.

After Tattie’s departure from Gold Gulch there was much gloom in the camp, and for several days Captain Jim and his companions succumbed to many pronounced fits of the blues. They seemed to vie with each other in carrying out Tattie’s last requests, and when they gathered around their log cabin fire for their evening meals of bacon and flap-jacks, their talk, by common consent, was about their absent one. Finally, one night, as they

turned over their blankets to soften them for a night's rest, Captain Jim spoke up :

“ We must brace up, boys ; and the best brace is work. We have several good locations that need development. We can't work them all. Suppose we start on the Crœsus—that seems to me to be more favorably located. It's nearest camp and available for timber and water. What say you ? ”

All were agreeable, except Barney Ryan blurted out :

“ What's the matter wid Tattie's Boss Claim ? ” and Captain Jim smilingly answered :

“ Oh, the Boss Claim will keep. Don't worry about that. If the Crœsus turns out all right, we'll work the Boss with the Crœsus; you know it takes a mine to work a mine. We've done all the work the law requires for a year. So it is safe. The Boss is located away over the ridge, you know, out of the way of the general run. So there will be no danger from jumpers. But few prospectors get so far away from camp in their wanderings.”

“ Wait until our Crœsus mill is running ; then we will open up and see what the Boss Claim is like,” said Captain Jim, whose word was law.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. ROY H. BANATYNE SECOND.

IT was only a momentary unconsciousness that Kelvyn's blow inflicted upon Banatyne on that memorable day of "Prince James's" very hurried and not altogether voluntary departure from Frisco. The mine promoter recovered, before the doctor who had been summoned, reached the office, and greeted Halstead, who was bending over him in anxious solicitude with a smile of recognition.

"Why, you didn't know me from Job's off ox just now," said Halstead assisting Banatyne to rise.

"No, old boy, I took you for one of the numerous stars that were showering all about me for a time," replied Ban smilingly, as he brushed his clothes, collected his hat, cane and scattered senses, and further remarked that he had his opinion of a man who could not stand a downward slide in the market and who wouldn't listen to reason.

"Yes, and crawfishes when a deal doesn't come his way," added his always faithful friend and ally, Halstead.

"I'll redeem Kelvyn's property and make his loss good," said Banatyne. "The mine is all right, and you can tell everybody I know it," he reiterated. "Now let us go around the corner and get a little soothing syrup," he added, "just

to quiet our nerves," his habitual smile finding its way back to his face as they all accompanied him with pleasure.

Banatyne's manner of recovering from Kelvyn's "convincing" argument, was his usual way of apparently accepting all the common or even uncommon annoyances to which mankind is heir with a reckless smile and a bold front that challenged it to down him for any length of time.

But try as he might, Banatyne could not forget Kelvyn's face as he raised his hand to strike him down. "I didn't think 'Prince James' would take it quite so hard," he said to himself. "But the young preacher must keep off my preserves," he concluded, as the recollection of Tricksie, as she had stood with downcast eyes before Kelvyn that evening of their discussion, came back to him. "The girl hasn't been the same since," he went on, "and what in thunder was she writing to him all the time for anyway?"

The more Balantyne turned the affair over in his mind the less self-reproach he felt, as he thought of Kelvyn's fallen fortunes. "There certainly has been a change in Tricksie," he kept saying to himself. "She's just as sweet and lovely as ever, only the lightness has gone from her laugh and her eyes are so pathetic at times. I wonder what the girl is moping about, anyway? I'll see if I can find out to-night and if it is Kelvyn's work I'll—" He did not finish the sentence even to himself, but the same dangerous look came into his eyes as when he saw the first little pink note Kelvin had held in his hand.

Tricksie had not referred to the fleeting glance Banatyne had cast upon her the day they had so unexpectedly seen each other at her parting with Edna, although she did ask him: “Who was that handsome boy I saw with you yesterday, Roy, dear?”

“When—where? What boy?” he stammered.

“Just as you were coming out of the Occidental,” answered Tricksie. “Why he looks just like you, dearest,” she purred. “He might almost pass for your son.”

“I have no son,” answered Ban, and, feeling that he was on dangerous ground, hurriedly changed the subject, not noticing then the difference that one day had made in Tricksie’s appearance, and not knowing that even at that time Tricksie was only simulating her former gayety, which she could never feel again in her present surroundings; for it was Edna’s generous words, not Kelvyn’s reproaches, that had taken root in her wayward heart. It was the tender hand of the pure, noble woman, held out, though unknowingly not the condemning finger of the hypercritical man, that was helping Tricksie in her terrible struggle between right and wrong.

As Banatyne came to her that evening after his encounter with Kelvyn he was shocked by the pallor of her face and changed appearance, for she had, after much conflicting thought, made a mighty resolve, which she meant to tell him at that very meeting.

“Why, sweetness, what’s the matter?” he cried. Then all the vanity of his nature asserting itself, the thought came to his mind, “She’s heard about

my row with Kelvyn and has been anxious, bless her dear little frightened heart.”

“ Oh, Ban, I’ve been so unhappy,” she began, not knowing just how to tell him what she felt must be told at once before the fascination of his presence could take away her strength of purpose.

“ Why, I’m all right, baby,” he said, “ and Kelvyn can go and shoot himself if he wants to.”

This remark about Kelvyn was so unexpected, that before Tricksie could gather herself sufficiently to resist the caresses she had never meant to enjoy again, Banatyne had her in his arms, and between kisses was giving her an account of his “ interview ” with Kelvyn.

But she had not heard the last few words of his recital, for she was praying for strength to resist the power of his caresses. As he finished she sprang from his arms, crying : “ Ban, leave me ; we must never meet again ! ”

And standing before him, white and trembling, with a new beauty in her face, he looked at her aghast. Then, like lightning, flashed through his brain the thought : “ My God ! She *does* love Kelvyn ! ” And he cried savagely : “ He shall not have you, you are mine, do you hear ? Mine ! ” and nearly crushing her delicate wrist in his frenzy of love and jealousy he continued in a hoarse voice : “ You are mine by the law of Heaven, and before another sun goes down you shall be mine by the law of man or James Kelvyn shall answer for it ! ”

With a moan of pain Tricksie would have swooned at his feet, had not Banatyne caught

her to his heart, pleading now: ‘Mabel—Mabel! Sweetheart! Say you don’t love him. Say you will be my wife, my adored wife, to-morrow!’”

A great flood of joy filled the poor tired soul, bringing hope for a better life, as Tricksie nestled close to the heart she loved so well, sobbing: “I could never love any one but you, my darling!”

“Then, why did you talk about parting forever?” demanded Banatyne in surprise.

“Because the torture of the life I have been leading became unbearable, and I had resolved to leave all this luxury and shame and go back to poverty and respectability if I could ever recover it,” answered Tricksie.

“You shall have respectability, love, and honor and every joy that I can give you, my blessed,” cried Banatyne in joyous tone. “For the first parson I can corral to-morrow morning shall make you Mrs. Roy H. Banatyne.”

“And there is no other, Roy, dear?” queried Tricksie.

“Why, no, my darling, how could you think such a thing?” answered Banatyne.

“Well, you see, dearest, I cannot help wondering about that handsome young stripling so like yourself, my own dear Ban, that I saw with you that day at the Occidental. I thought, perhaps, there might have been another Mrs. Roy H. Banatyne at some time who had left you pledges of her love, and I wouldn’t like that.”

“Nonsense, little one, that boy’s only a young friend of mine,” he stammered, for somehow even in his great passion for Tricksie he felt that hers would

not be quite the influence he would like Dougald to be under; “at least,” he thought, “not at present, anyhow.” “Of course I have never been married,” he continued, “but I’m going to be to-morrow, to the sweetest, most beautiful woman alive.”

“Your truly wedded wife,” cried Tricksie, “and no one between us? I am so happy! I shall always have you now and all to myself,” she cooed in a low, musical whisper, as she lay in Roy’s arms, her baby blue eyes looking lovingly up into his face with perfect trust and belief in every word he spoke.

Banatyne felt half sorry next day as he stood before the “parson” taking those solemn vows he had always held so lightly before, and said to himself: “I wish I had told Tricksie about Dougald and started life with her on the square. But she made such a point of being the first and only Mrs. Banatyne—well, all’s fair in love and war,” he reasoned.

Ban’s conscience was very elastic, well adapted to any theory that made life easier for him. “But I’m going to do right by the girl,” he resolved as the minister concluded: “I now pronounce you man and wife.”

And he kept good his resolve as far as his lights went, for he built a magnificent residence, furnished it in princely style and installed therein Tricksie as high priestess. Dougald absent in his school home did not know of his father’s marriage. His vacations were spent either at the hotel, where Banatyne was obliged to still keep his suite of rooms to give his boy a home, or in making

trips to the mines with his father. The boy possessed Banatyne's best love and holiest memories—a proof that the man was not wholly lost to moral discernment.

With his usual generous impulse, coupled with a natural shrewdness to provide against a rainy day, Banatyne had made over a great deal of money to his wife, trusting to his good luck to replace the sum to his own credit should the exigencies require such a return.

Tricksie was the wonder of her more conventional neighbors. They looked upon her from afar, and gathered their skirts closer about them if perchance she passed by.

They feasted their eyes upon the different stylish equipages as they were rolled out of the handsome and well appointed stables for her service, and watched the vehicles of different mercantile establishments deposit their wares at her residence. Cost was unheeded in supplying luxuries for Tricksie, and some people wondered how she could enjoy all the beauties of her handsome home, without the companionship of friends to help her.

Notwithstanding Tricksie's ability to indulge every wish that money could purchase, her life would have been irksome in the extreme, had it not been for some of Banatyne's gentlemen friends. At first Tricksie did not notice the slights that were pointedly hurled at her. She loved her husband, and so far had been a most exemplary wife. But not a call had she received from any of the lady members of the households whose husbands and brothers visited her because of business

relations with her husband. Often these callers expressed regrets that their wives and sisters had been unable to accompany them as was their desire, but "previous engagements," "sickness," and other social excuses had prevented. Tricksie listened to these fashionable falsehoods with courteous dignity, but at times she really pined for the society and love of some friendly woman. The fact of the matter was, Tricksie was as effectually ostracised by her own sex as though she had been at the North Pole, surrounded by icebergs. Not so with her mate. He was welcomed everywhere. Hale fellow well met by the very people who cast her out, making one law for Roy, another for his wife, and Tricksie queried why? A pained and puzzled expression passed over her countenance, but after serious meditation she aroused herself from the unpleasant reverie, saying: "Oh dear! I must not think. To look pretty seems to be all that is expected of me. I only wish some kind woman would teach me how to be like her and to be good. But, at any rate, I shall not think any more."

And, with this wise conclusion, her mood suddenly changing, she rushed to her safeguard, dress, exclaiming, as she threw herself impatiently but very gracefully upon her divan: "Oh dear, what a perfectly lovely, heavenly day. I'll go shopping."

Soon after she returned from this comforting expedition, Roy's figure appeared between the blue satin portieres of the door leading to his wife's exquisitely appointed boudoir.

"Hello, sweetness! If I give you a real bear

hug will it mash your furbelows?" he cried, as he came forward and lightly touched the costly laces and rich ribbons of her gown.

"Never mind the furbelows, Roy," answered his pretty wife, with an inviting smile. The invitation having been accepted, she was soon nestling in her husband's arms, feeling that if all the world was against her, here was one who at least thought her not quite despicable, and who loved her, and whom she loved with an ardor akin to idolatry. Having presumed upon the invitation, until Tricksie was obliged to cry "Quits," or run the risk of being loved to death by her bearlike husband, Roy spied the shopping results that were just being delivered.

"What did you promise to pay for all those dry goods?" he asked, pointing to the numerous piles of costly gowns and *lingerie* and smiling upon Tricksie as he might have smiled upon a child who had just received a visit from Santa Claus.

"I didn't promise to pay at all. I promised that *you'd* pay," laughed Tricksie, as she passed her white arms about his neck, and showered kisses upon the lips that she loved so well.

"Grass is pretty short, Trix," was Roy's prosaic reply, "but don't let that interfere with your shopping," he added, "only please don't ask for much ready cash. What would the world do, and yours truly in particular, without a credit system?" he asked as he gave his wife a good manly hug, and stopped her words with a kiss.

"Why, Roy, are stocks down?"

"Slightly," Roy answered, as he thought of the impoverished condition of his exchequer. "Don't you want some of the money that is to my credit in the Bank of California?" asked his wife, sympathetically.

"What a delicate way you have of offering your own," he replied. "I hardly think I would use your money. I'd rather sacrifice Kelvyn's property that I have carried for him the last two years, paying taxes and incidental expenses, not to mention the interest on my money that is tied up, but I'll strain every nerve before I let it go. Why, my note is considered as good as gold everywhere, and it costs nothing to give it," he concluded, with his usual reckless air.

"But some day you'll be obliged to pay those notes, won't you?" innocently asked his more cautious wife.

"That depends upon luck and circumstances," answered Roy, with the sanguine assurance of one who almost believed he had a charmed life.

"Some people pay notes one way, some another. I've had lots of friends pay me in full by applying to the bankruptcy courts; some have gone away, or died, forgetting their notes. Now, don't you see, if the worst comes to the worst, I may pay my creditors off in like coin,—but don't you bother your little head about it," he continued. "I'm the business man of this firm," and he gave Tricksie an enraptured little squeeze, "and if I can't run this shebang, I'd better shut up shop. I'm sure I ought to be able to play all kinds of tunes on my own fiddle."

“ Oh, Roy, dearie, is there nothing I can do to be useful? My sphere seems so limited. Am I always to be a brainless doll that needs sawdust? Nobody loves me ; on the contrary ”—— Tricksie’s eyes filled with tears,—“ I’m—I’m— ” pride and emotion choked her voice, for she would not acknowledge, even to her husband, that she noticed the disdain with which she was treated.

“ What’s the matter with *me* ? ” asked Roy in a surprised, injured tone. “ Why, you have a whole world of love right here, little one, ” and he caressed her fondly, and pressed her head tenderly against his heart. Tricksie could hear its throbs, and she thought its every beat was for her, and felt consoled.

It was scenes like this that prevented Banatyne from telling his wife of Dougald’s existence. He hadn’t the courage to confess himself a falsifier, and forfeit her confidence ; or to tell her that she had only a divided interest in his affections, for the time to dread any evil influence she might have upon his child had passed. Tricksie had proven herself worthy of every confidence.

CHAPTER XI.

WITHIN CONVENT WALLS.

TIME galloped along in its triumphs, as Time has a way of doing, and still Tattie did not think his speed would break his legs. Three years of her school days had passed, much the same as anybody else's school days would have passed, if we except the shocks she occasionally gave the good madames, who were charged with her education.

In the first days of her school life, when she was trying very hard to be good, her name was so draped with black marks that Tattie wondered how the books would hold them all. It seemed to her that everything she did was wrong—not according to convent standard. Her walk was wrong. She was made to understand that she did not know how to sit down properly; she did not know how to eat according to rule; she did not know how to get into a room, and when she got there she did not know how to make her exit—so the madames said; the only thing that was not decidedly objected to was her breathing, and that surprised her, because she breathed in the convent just the same as she had in Gold Gulch. Things which she prided herself upon knowing were frowned down upon as not worth knowing. Poor Tattie was like a wild bird in its first cage, and it was not gilded, either—from her point of view.

Once when she led “the girls” beyond the limits of their playground to the stable yards and dexterously turned loose the horses from their stalls and gave an exhibition in lariat throwing, the madames did not seem to appreciate such an example of mountain training, and besides the usual line of decorated marks credited to her name she was obliged to say the rosary three times; and when she, on occasions, would take her companions around the corner of the convent building, and give them a lesson in whistling, she was threatened with expulsion; and when on the impulse of the moment, she would pick up her skirts, which the sisters had lengthened, so that they were always in Tattie’s way, and asked the girls to see how many they could count while she made a dash of a hundred yards, propriety was so outraged, that she was forbidden to speak to the girls for a whole month, which command she obeyed until a little clandestine trickery enabled her to do otherwise; but whenever caught in acts of disobedience, she always “owned up” and took her dose of penance like a “little man.”

An episode of her early school days happened when one of the boys from Mr. Brown’s college, hard by, threw a note, sealed with molasses candy, over the fence at her, and then kissed his hand and hugged himself in a most expressive way. Tattie instantly scaled the convent fence, and gave him such a drubbing that the other college boys refrained from annoying the good sisters or their charges for the rest of the term; and still the nuns did not appreciate Tattie’s vindication of

herself and the other girls, notwithstanding the fact, as Tattie knew, that novenas upon novenas had been offered to protect the girls from those beardless antagonists, all to no practical purpose. Tattie was curious to know what would please the good, fastidious madames ; her intentions were the best, but she always ran counter to their ideas of propriety.

The girls all liked Tattie, but at that period of her existence, she failed to recognize the truthfulness of the sentimental tradition that school days are the happiest of one's life.

The first letter to her guardian ran very much like this—short and to the point :

“ DEAR CAPTAIN JIM : I'm down on this here school. Wish I was back to Gold Gulch with you and the boys and Bruiser.
TATTIE.”

No doubt Captain Jim would have appreciated the sentiments, but, as all letters were sent to the Superioress unsealed, this effusion, although it had required a great deal of time and patience for Tattie to form the letters, after studying which letters should be formed, never paid into Uncle Sam's treasury the three cents it would have cost for its transportation. First, the waste basket ; then, the kitchen furnace—and then cremation.

Things had changed since then, and so had Tattie. She had become civilized, as it were. Her weather-beaten appearance had taken flight. Her hair had grown long, and so had her skirts—for uniformity's sake. Her beauty had become more beautiful. Her blonde hair had arrived at the womanly dignity of being twisted into a loose

coil at the nape of her neck. She was recognized as the prettiest girl in the convent. Many of her schoolgirl admirers vied with each other in expressing their admiration for her in the regulation school girl's ardent terms.

“I love Dolores Lutner best,” one would say; “She's my favorite,” another would announce, clasping her hands and rolling her eyes heavenward, by way of showing how she “adored her”; and a dispute would arise as to which should have her as her “favorite girl,” showing that inborn nature to love which works so much happiness or misery, as the case may be, when those innocents venture into the broader fields of life.

Tattie had two correspondents, her guardian James Kelvyn, who watched with interest her improvement, as indicated in her letters, and Dougald Banatyne, to whom she had obtained permission from her guardian to write, though much against his will. The sudden attachment she had developed for the boy had never diminished, and Kelvyn could not deny the child this solitary friendship for one of her own age. The childrens' letters were full of affectionate terms, and they addressed each other as “Dear Cousin,” a little ruse of Kelvyn's to allay the scruples of the madames.

“In my summer vacation, papa says I may go up to your school, and see you again. Won't that be jolly? I'm counting the days; believe me,” he wrote.

Tattie looked forward to Dougald's coming with almost a sisterly affection, although the boy was a

comparative stranger to her. She had never had a playmate in all her life before coming to school; had never known a child of her own age, before she met him, so Dougald seemed her pioneer contemporary. He had visited her in her last vacation, and her guardian had been to see her twice; other visitors, she had had none.

The summer vacation had again arrived, and Kelvyn, not knowing exactly what to do with his young charge, after much thought, concluded it was best for her to again spend that time with the good nuns, and he was in the parlor of the convent, waiting to see Tattie, who had been summoned by the portress, with that soul thrilling announcement to a convent girl:

"A visitor is in the parlor for you, Dolores! Mother Mary says you may go right in! Do brush your hair first, child!"

It had been a year since Tattie had been called to the parlor. Excitement caused her eyes to sparkle; her young blood leaped into her cheeks, while her heart seemed to treble its beats. Her nervousness was not allayed by the deferential manner in which the girls looked at her and the impressive, hushed and awed voices continually whispering: "Dolores Lutner is called to the parlor!" "Say, Dolores is going to the parlor!" "I wonder who it is," thought Tattie. She knew it could only be one of two—Kelvyn or Dougald.

"Say, Tat" (some of the girls had learned her soubriquet, but had been forbidden by the nuns to use it), "if you get a box of candy you know me, don't you?"

Kelvyn could scarcely recognize in the tall, demure, beautiful girl, as she stood before him, robed in the black uniform of the convent, his little ward, Tattie. She looked abashed for an instant, as if not knowing just how to act ; Kelvyn, too, felt somewhat embarrassed, but Tattie, evidently, concluded to act as she had always done—with “ dear Captain Jim,” who was both “ father and mother ” to her now, and throwing her arms around his neck, she kissed him and caressed him with all the fervor of an impetuous child, the warmth of whose pent-up nature must have an outlet for its affection somewhere, and who considered this very good material upon which to lavish it.

“ Oh, Captain Jim, you are a darling to come. I’m so glad to see you,” she exclaimed ; the sincerity of which greeting could not be questioned. And the thought flashed through Kelvyn’s mind, “ if the faintest suspicion of love, other than platonic, enters my heart for this beautiful girl, her actions would disarm it. No, no, I must only have a fatherly feeling for her ; any other sentiment would be dishonorable.”

“ You have grown a great deal, Tattie, in the last year,” Kelvyn remarked in his most fatherly tone

“ Yes,” she replied, “ Sister Lucy is obliged to let the hems and tucks out of my dresses all the time ; just see how long this one is,” and she sprang up and turned around and around to show Kelvyn the length of her gown ; then came and stood by his chair and stroked his hair tenderly with the hand that was three years before as rough

and brown as a pine cone, but which had toned down into the well-kept, tapering hand of a very lovely young lady.

"How is the old camp?" she asked.

"The claims are turning out well as we develop them. I haven't been up to the Boss Claim we located for you because my own mine, the Cræsus, has kept me so busy, but we have kept up the assessment work all along, and you can't work more than one mine at a time, you know. I've put up a mill on the Cræsus, and it keeps fifty stamps running, and is paying me fairly well. I may sell it to a syndicate that is considering the matter and return to civilization, feeling well paid for my experience as a practical miner."

"That's good news, Captain Jim," and she gave him a congratulatory kiss, which Kelvyn received in as fatherly a manner as possible, and then she asked with some hesitation, and her eyes lowered, "Have you ever heard from——of——?"

"Oh you mean Lutner?" interrupted Kelvyn, "Well, yes," he continued, "he went to Hangtown, the day you left, and has been there off and on ever since. I'll never forget the jubilee the boys had to celebrate his departure. I wrote you all about that long ago," Kelvyn explained.

"Yes, I remember, but I thought there might be some later news of him," Tattie said, and then she asked if they had ever heard from Kee. "No," answered Kelvyn, "that heathen Chinee was too glad to get off so easily. He stole your Boss Claim location that I put in the valise for you, Tattie, sure; no doubt about it."

“I never could believe that of Kee,” Tattie rejoined, “he was always so good to me.”

“Why, nobody else touched the valise, positively,” asserted Kelvyn. “You can never understand those heathen Chinese. They are very deceitful fellows, with their innocent smiles and oily tongues. Kee tried to blame it on Lutner. Now, Lutner may be bad, but he never could be such a sneak as that. No, no, that rope business didn’t go—but Kee went,” laughed Kelvyn, thoroughly satisfied with his detective work. “But the paper won’t do anybody any good, for it stands in your name,” added Kelvyn.

“It is not my real name. They call me Lutner here and I do not like it,” Tattie said, in a grave, earnest tone.

For an instant Kelvyn was silent. Tattie’s words gave him a twinge of remorse, for might not the contents of the box left in trust to him by her dying mother reveal the girl’s true name? Many times he had determined to open it, and as many times he had concluded not to do so, for had not that departing breath gasped, “when she is a burden to you and you want to send her away, open the box.” It was very plain that it was only in those emergencies she wished the secret revealed, and had he not assured the dying mother that the child would never be a burden to him? What right had he to open the box after giving such an assurance? What right had he to pry into her buried secrets, unless he did so under prescribed conditions? No, he would keep his promise to the letter. He would never break the seal of that

receptacle; he felt that all right to further protect and care for Tattie should he do so, would be denied him—that she might be taken from his custody, and she had become indispensable to his happiness.

He looked at her young loveliness and felt just pride at being her guardian. To watch over her gave him some aim in life—some interest beyond the present. She was bequeathed to him by her mother. Who had a better right than he? Surely not even a father, who, if living, had deserted her when most she needed paternal care.

If the sealed secret would reveal her illegitimacy, he did not wish to know it. It should remain forever closed. He was startled as Tattie broke the silence, saying:

“My mother spoke to you when she was dying. Tell me *all* she said,” and she looked into Kelvyn’s face with pleading eyes.

“Your mother asked me to take care of you, and I promised her I would,” answered Kelvyn

“That you have done, and are continuing to do, nobly, Captain Jim, but is that *all*?” asked Tattie, evincing an intuitive instinct that surprised him.

“Well—H’m——No—not exactly,” Kelvyn answered, with confused hesitation.

“What else did *mi madre* say?” she asked, looking wistfully into Kelvyn’s truthful eyes and instinctively compelling him to obedience.

“Something about a box—that—I imagine—contains some—secret,” he stammered, “which perhaps—had better——”

Tattie did not wait for him to finish his sentence,

but asked in a steady voice, which contrasted with Kelvyn's emotion, “Do you think that secret relates to me?”

“Without doubt,” was Kelvyn's involuntary reply, and he continued, “It is my wish that it——”

“Send it to me,” the girl demanded in a peremptory voice that indicated her right of possession.

“The box was given to *me*. I accepted it under certain conditions,” Kelvyn said, the nerves of his face twitching with emotion, as he continued, with trembling voice, “I feel it is my duty to guard it in its present sealed state until certain conditions happen.”

“Oh, Captain Jim,” I implore you. *You* never knew what it was to bear a name you hate; to lie awake at night and wonder what and who you are. Send it to me, Captain Jim, please; please do,” and Tattie was kneeling before him, her hands clasped. “Never mind conditions, Captain Jim,” she added with increased vehemence. “*Mi madre* would have told me all when she knew I could understand, and now I am old enough.” And her silken lashes, wet with pleading tears, whipped Kelvyn into obedience.

“I will send it,” he promised in a husky voice.

In these few words it was agreed to unearth the secret that meant so much to Tattie, that would unveil the past, and be fraught with lasting consequences. The girl still had her old way of quickly changing gloom into sunshine, and, with that good intention, she turned the subject of conversation.

"You know I wrote you that Dougald came to see me during our Easter vacation," and her tears were replaced by smiles; but the sunshine did not radiate upon Kelvyn. She had selected the wrong subject, [unwittingly, so far as he was concerned.

"Yes?" and Kelvyn's voice betrayed his unpleasant mood.

"Yes," replied Tattie, so astounded at Kelvyn's frown that words failed her.

"Did the madames allow it?" he asked with fatherly indignation.

"Why shouldn't they?" questioned back Tattie, showing some surprise, and, thinking Captain Jim was not the same, she determined that she would never sit on his lap and kiss him again as long as she lived.

"Because it is not right," Kelvyn said, in his strictest, chiding, parental style. "He is a stranger to you."

"A what?" flashed back Tattie, for that way of calling Dougald was so odd to her that she could not help showing her utter astonishment.

It seemed to her that she had known Dougald all her life—long before she had ever seen Captain Jim, even if it wasn't true in point of time.

"I said a *stranger*," repeated Kelvyn, and a glimmer of impatience passed over his countenance.

"He doesn't seem so to me. Why, I love him ever so much," she went on in childish fervor, "and he loves me just as much in return."

“How do you know?” asked Kelvyn, in a “cold, stern-parent” tone.

“Why, he told me so,” frankly answered his ward. “How else should I know?”

She, who was entirely ignorant of the art of flirting, had used Cupid’s methods as dexterously as the most accomplished belle of society, for the thought struck Kelvyn that perhaps Tattie had treated Dougald with the same affectionate cordiality with which she had greeted him, and a heightened color flushed his face, as the first pang of jealousy played havoc with his hitherto unfettered heart.

In his childish irritation he felt bitterly revengeful. He was filled with regret that he had suggested the little ruse of Tattie calling Dougald “cousin,” which, of course, gained him admittance into the convent. What a boomerang! He should have known the impropriety of the situation. The idea of a young girl being allowed to receive visits from a perfectly strange young man, under pretense of being her cousin! Was ever such a privilege granted? Was ever such imprudence heard of? And this was the reward he had received from that ungrateful stripling! He had dared to speak to Tattie of love, and he determined in a fatherly way, as was his duty, to give Tattie a lesson in the proprieties. With this in view, he walked the floor with his head bent, like a flinty general of the army, meditating tactics to conquer his enemy, and at the same time discipline the faulty, while Tattie stood looking at him in consternation.

As he walked toward her she showed disappointment that he did not speak, and when he turned his back upon her and walked in an opposite direction, Tattie thought the back of his coat did not look blacker than the angry passion in his face; and she stood appalled and awed, wondering what she had done to offend Captain Jim, for she had never seen him act like this before. Little did the girl dream that she had awakened in this strong man a tender feeling that had hitherto been foreign to his nature. At last, having evidently determined upon his tactics, he "turned about and faced his enemy." Tattie looked up into his face wistfully and awaited the scolding that she felt sure was coming. He took both her hands in his, and people not afflicted as Kelvyn was would certainly have thought he delayed his speech too long, as he stood gazing with irresistible admiration at the beauty of the young woman just graduated from childhood. After a prolonged silence he said, with a very impressive and fatherly air, accompanied by an "I-love-you" tone of voice: "Tattie, you are getting too old to behave with so little dignity. I wonder that the madames have not inculcated this lesson before; never tell a man that you love him 'ever so much'; it doesn't make so much difference with me, because I'm your protector by right," and his love-lit eyes held her gaze as a magnet attracts steel, "and never let a man say to you that he loves you 'ever so much' in return, particularly that unfledged stripling, Dougald Banatyne."

Tattie started and stood with veiled eyes, her dark lashes resting upon her flushed cheeks, for her face was burning with blushes, but she made him no answer.

As he took his leave, he offered her a fatherly kiss, which, much to his surprise, she declined to accept, reminding him that she must not forget her lesson so soon.

She watched him from the window. She admired his graceful walk, his manly figure, until he was beyond her strained vision. Eighteen is an impressionable age. She wondered why he so disliked Dougald and she battled with a dim idea that either she had changed or Captain Jim was changed—yes, very much changed. She was sure that she didn't feel in his presence the same as she used to up in the mines, and she marvelled at the persistent blushes that suffused her cheeks and were still burning to such degree that she was ashamed for "the girls" to see her.

What was the meaning, she asked herself, of the unruly way her eyelids had of drooping when he looked at her? They never acted like that before to-day; still, she was forced to acknowledge that the change, far from being unpleasant, was most agreeable, and she wished he had made a longer visit and felt a pang of sorrow that their parting had been just a little constrained.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PAST'S BURIED SECRETS.

THE first thing to occupy Kelvyn's attention on his return to Gold Gulch was to dispatch that promised box to Tattie, which he did not do without serious misgivings as to the propriety and the necessity of so doing. In due course of time it arrived at the convent. It was an ordinary little pine affair. The nails which had guarded its secret were rusty with time and service. Before Kelvyn parted with it he had to overcome a great many objections that obtruded themselves. Finally he concluded that, as Tattie had not asked the conditions under which he had received it, and as he would not open it himself he would still have the right to be her guardian. Suddenly a very considerate feeling flashed through his mind. "It will be cowardly to send it to her to open all alone," he thought, and an almost irresistible desire to revisit Tattie seized him, but he overcame the inclination manfully, as he concluded, "if it contains a secret that she would not like revealed, it is better that no other eyes or ears be present when she opens it. That its contents relate to her is certain. If she desires to confide in anyone, who more worthy than one of the good madames? If she wishes to intrust her secret to me she can suit her pleasure. But I am satisfied with matters

as they are, with the exception of that Dougald Banatyne affair. I know the idea is preposterous that Tattie could fall in love with that brainless youth, but still, I—as the grand engineer and motive power of Tattie’s movements—must put the brakes on in that quarter at least, and at the first opportunity I shall suggest to the madames that his room is better than his company. I can never marry Tattie myself; the relationship I bear toward her would prevent that, but when she does marry, I will see to it that a man entirely worthy of her be the happy mortal who will gain my fatherly consent,” and with great vehemence of agitation Kelvyn started up the mountain path, thinking that a grapple with pick and shovel would relieve his belligerent feelings.

As he walked along, his mind was still busy with Tattie. He wondered at the great change that had taken place in the little semi-savage, who once ran wild in the “diggings,” and he had a nice little talk with himself. “By Jove, what a beautiful woman she has grown to be! I flatter myself that I gave her some good counsel. Who can say that a bachelor doesn’t know how to instruct a young girl after the little speech I made her upon the correct methods she must employ toward fresh young men? I’m educating her as a girl should be educated. The tendency of the age is to make women strong-minded. Now, a woman who thinks upon subjects outside of home is an abomination to me, and to all right-thinking men. Woman is made to be loved; to gain that goal, she should be womanly—not manly. It is human

nature for sex to love contrasts. Woman should lose her identity in that of her husband—love him, trust him, lean upon him confidingly, and let him do the thinking part of the business. Her brain is not made of the proper caliber to think—God bless her! A pretty thing, made to love and to be loved. That is her sphere. She should not wish it broadened. Tattie will be just such a trusting little soul. Pure as a snowflake from heaven. Her husband will mold her thoughts, as a sculptor molds the clay."

Kelvyn's reflections had so engrossed him that he noticed neither direction nor distance. Suddenly he exclaimed: "Hello! here I am, nearly at the Boss Claim. Strange—my thoughts of its owner must have been the stepping-stones that guided me here. I may as well do some assessment work now upon that open cut we started two years ago," and he struck the Boss Claim's cropping a good blow, that buried the point of the pick several inches into the rocky surface. "A few strokes of work each year," he continued, delving away, "is claimed by that sort of hocus-pocus science known as law if we wish to continue the ownership of a hole in the ground," and Kelvyn plied the pick with a new vigor, as he continued: "I'll put in a good day's work and send Barney Ryan and Sam Williams over to-morrow. We'll sink a regular prospecting shaft at this end of the claim."

When a man works for a girl he loves, his muscles, like haughty gallants, wring from his brow drops of perspiration. Each little globule is almost as welcome as is the kiss of the object of his ado-

ration. These are the epochs of his life, when he would, in very truth, rather work than play.

By a coincidence, not so strange as it may seem, Lutner and a companion were not very far from the spot where Kelvyn was exercising his manly prowess in his labor of love. The fiendish black eyes of Lutner were watching the gallant young miner with a half-closed expression that almost shut the peepholes into his lost soul.

The two men were proceeding leisurely toward Hangtown when they saw Kelvyn, whose back was toward them. They stopped and spoke in cautiously low tones. Lutner said: “That man is working on my ledge. For nearly three years I have prevented this by keeping the discovery of this claim a secret. I knew if I reported the truth they would all pounce down on it, and here is this man as a starter.”

“Well, all you will have to do is to show your title which proves your prior location,” his companion said.

“What good will that do?” answered Lutner. “An army of soldiers couldn’t prevent these hungry villains from robbing me of my rights,” and he ground his teeth in rage and took a firmer grip of his mining pick. “That man is alone,” and he unclosed his eyes and rolled them in a sidling way, glancing at his companion, for he couldn’t look an honest man square in the face.

“What do you mean?” asked his friend, horror depicted in his face.

“I mean that he is digging his own grave,” was the muttered answer, as his murderous hand found

its way to his hip pocket, and he stealthily moved toward Kelvyn's back, but his friend clutched his hand and held it firmly in his pocket, as he said hoarsely: "Do you suppose for a moment that I would be a party to a cowardly murder? Oh, no, Lutner, you mistake your man. Let go of that revolver—quick," he said in an excited and louder tone, as he took the weapon from the scowling Lutner.

The raised voices attracted Kelvyn's attention, and, as by that time the men had approached very near him, he raised himself from his recumbent position and greeted Lutner cheerily: "Hello, Lutner, my friend, how is the world using you?"

"No better than it can help," Lutner snarled, and he and his companion passed on a short distance and then stopped, where they appeared to be holding a council; Lutner in a surly, aggressive mood, his companion cautioning and at times apparently threatening.

Kelvyn evidently did not like the looks of things; he watched the men closely—at the same time giving some attention to his own handy revolver, for all men carried arms in those days, and the custom is still in vogue to a considerable extent in the mining towns.

When Lutner took another look at Kelvyn and saw that the latter was prepared for all comers, he changed his purpose, and the two companions passed on their way. When Kelvyn had finished his work, and had gone about half a mile toward his home, Lutner and his friend returned, and evidently, as a result

of their long conference, removed the stakes with which Kelvyn had marked the end and side boundaries of the Boss Claim, replacing them at what they considered an opposite course from the Boss ledge. Lutner then concluded to “lie low” for a day or two—but he was very much like his prototype, the devil—he never took a vacation; and when he was “lying low” he was busiest, planning and preparing a more vigorous assault upon his victim.

When Tattie was told by one of the nuns that a small box had arrived for her, and that she might come into the pantry while it was being opened, the young girl’s face turned deathly pale. Every feature of her fine countenance showed nervous agitation.

“I would rather be allowed to open it when alone,” Tattie ventured tremblingly, as she moved mechanically along with the sister, her limbs almost refusing her support.

“That, you know, Dolores, is against the rules of the convent,” the sweet-voiced sister mildly answered.

“I must insist,” returned Tattie. There was a melancholy cadence in her voice, blended with a firmness that caused the sister to turn and look with surprise at the young girl by her side. Tattie was in a state of confusion, but she did not feel helpless. She relied upon Heaven to aid her to stand boldly by her resolution that, come what might, no strange eyes should see the contents of that box until she herself was acquainted with their character.

One word of explanation which, unfortunately, is so often forgotten, or denied from a sense of pride, would have cleared the girl's difficulties and gained her the countenance of the good sisters and their protection ; but Tattie, in her eagerness to shield her mother's secret, had but the one idea—the one thought—that no one should resurrect that long-hidden memory but herself, and she stood firm in the unshaken constancy of her own mind.

"It is a request that I must make," Tattie said, trying to steady her trembling voice.

Her very anxious looks justly caused the nun's suspicion.

"It will not be allowed, Dolores," the religious answered firmly. "May I ask what the box contains that causes you to object so obstinately to my opening it?"

"I don't know," Tattie replied truly, and Sister Aloysius looked pained as she marveled, "Could this girl, who had always been so sincere that, rather than deviate from the truth by the slightest equivocation would accept any punishment, be untruthful now?" and she took a small hammer with which she broke the fastenings of the inoffensive-looking little box, but Tattie caught it with both hands, and stood as firm as a young pine of the Gold Gulch mountain side.

"Please don't open it, dear sister," she said in a voice that sounded like a pleading prayer, while the burning tears gathered and fell from her aching eyes.

"Give me your reason, Dolores," sympathetically requested the nun, as she passed her arm

around the girl's waist and pressed Tattie's head to her bosom, longing to soothe and console the girl, who, though obstinate, revealed a high spirit that she could not help admiring.

“I cannot,” answered Tattie firmly.

“Then I shall have to report you to the Superioress;” sadly the sister spoke the consequences of the girl's disobedience.

“As you will,” Tattie sobbed the words as she clasped the little box tenderly to her heart, as she would have clasped her little mother in life, and as she longed to do now in her own misery.

The big bell that rang in its belfry the relative strokes that called the different madames clanged out, one—two—three—the number that designated the summons of the Superioress; but the call was not answered, and Tattie stood like a frightened criminal awaiting her judge, clasping her treasure—perhaps her name—her honor—or may be her dead mother's shame—firmly to her breast. Little did Kelvyn or she either picture such a scene of suffering as this, for the rule of opening packages sent to the convent had escaped their memories.

Again the great bell clanged out from its brazen throat, One! two!! three!!!—each peal vibrating through Tattie's nervous little body like a death knell; presently the Mother Superioress responded, and inquired mildly and calmly, “What is the trouble?”

Sister Aloysius simply made a gesture of her hand toward Tattie, to whom the Superioress

turned. Tattie stated her case as intelligently as she could, sobs interfering at frequent intervals, when the sister who would like to have been the girl's champion aided her in explaining the situation.

The Superioress tried to prevail upon Tattie to conform to the rules of the school, suggesting that perhaps the father who was her spiritual adviser could instruct her in her duty. Tattie assured them that the priest could not help her, and that she must positively and firmly refuse to have the box opened by other hands than her own, and that she must be alone when she revealed its contents.

After more ineffectual persuasion on the part of the madames and firm refusal on Tattie's part, slowly but surely came words from the Superioress, that head of authority who rules by kind but firm discipline: "Then, Dolores Lutner, you must take the alternative. You must leave our convent. A pupil who disobeys our rules cannot be one of us. Others would set our rules at defiance. We cannot have the example before our school. I am sorry."

Tattie stood dauntlessly erect and received her sentence; proud that, though self-humbled, she held safely sheltered that which her mother had kept so sacred.

She asked permission to go to the dormitory, which, being granted, she sought that retreat from the kindly looks of the troubled nuns. Once alone, a reaction took place; her strength almost forsook her; her head reeled; her feet tottered as

she went blinded with tears toward her little cot, still clasping the box that contained the only relics of her dead mother—perhaps the only clue to her own identity. One of the sisters had accompanied her to the dormitory, unlocked the door and turned the key, when Tattie entered, and she was left alone. Tattie realized the shame that always attended expulsion from school—whatever the cause might be—and gave vent to her feelings of bitter mortification with all the outbursts of a sensitive young heart; anguish racked her girlish frame.

"Did I do right in disobeying?" "Is the excuse sufficient that gives such trouble to the dear sisters who have always been so good, so gentle to me?" "Am I not thinking too much of myself? Ah! if so, I'm sure I am doubly punished in my disgrace." These were the suggestions of her troubled conscience. She continued: "The girls will shun me. What will Captain Jim think? What will Dougald say?"

She placed the little box upon her white-covered cot, and stood alone in this vast room, with its long rows of little beds, every one whiter than her dead mother's face. The small sections at each end of the room, draped in white curtains, which formed the inclosures for the couches of the madames who had charge of the dormitory during the night, stood like shrouded ghosts beckoning. She was so far away from the school-rooms, the refectories and all centers of life in that great convent building that the stillness of a graveyard, with its rows of white head-stones,

could not have been more profound. It was a scene and place to awe even the unimaginative; to Tattie, with her nerves all warped and unstrung, it was weird and sepulchral.

Her feet and hands grew cold; her cheeks were flushed; her head hot and throbbing; her imagination feverishly morbid.

"The girls will mock me, will revile me," suggested her wrought-up feelings, and then she gazed upon the little box that had caused all the trouble, and, clutching it closely, felt comforted.

Where were her thoughts? Far away in the old mining camp, by the side of a little grave she had inclosed with pine cones. She saw the cross that Dougald's hands had helped her fashion at its head. The little box took on the shape of the pine casket. She saw the narrow trench. At its side a pile of freshly dug yellow clay, to make room for *mi madre's* body, as it lay in its earthly bed. She saw the merciful hands of the miners take up the little coffin. She watched them wend their way up the slope; saw them lower it into its grave; heard the sickening thuds as the clods and small stones fell upon the lid. All base material wrought by overstrung nerves!

Mi madre! mi madre! she cried in ghastly anguish, "when I raise the lid of your coffin, will your lips be as cold as when I last kissed them, or will they grow warm with their blood coloring to my touch? Will the loved hands unclasp to smooth my hair, as they did before they became so stiff and cold and white? Ah! *mi Madre, amor mio!* why don't you speak to

Dolores? Tell me of your new home. Tell me of God. Tell me of the Blessed Virgin. So still, *mi madre*. No word! No message! for poor forlorn Dolores. I will raise the lid of your coffin that hides your dear face. I will hear your voice.”

Her trembling fingers sought the box; with reverent touch they undid the fastenings of the sacred seal.

The old daguerreotypes—the faded letters—exposed to view broke the spell, and awoke Tattie from her wild reveries. Nervously her hands opened the case that enclosed the portrait. It is beyond the power of words to describe the feelings of that young girl, as she gazed upon that face. “So this is my father, my very own father,” ran her thoughts, as her eyes riveted upon the features in the picture. Some of his friends would not have recognized it readily, for he had changed in the fifteen or twenty years ago since it was buried in its primitive receptacle, but for a certain young face that was almost its counterpart—a reproduction in a younger generation—a most striking resemblance between father and son.

Silently, intently, Tattie gazed upon it, holding it in one hand, while the other hand mechanically picked up a letter, yellow with age. She closed the case, and her eyes grew larger and more lustrous, as she read with feverish excitement the contents of those long buried missives.

A wild hysterical joy took possession of the girl. She shed tears; they were not born of sorrow, but the offspring of a heart overflowing with grateful gladness, and she cried in her delirious

delight: "At last! At last! Ah! *Mi madre!* my sainted mother! God told me you were ever pure. I never doubted your goodness. You are my rescuer. My Soul! My God!" Her overwhelmed feelings went beyond all human control.

With every sense alert, her quick ear heard the click of the key in the door, that seemed to call her back from the world of the dead. The soft step of Sister Aloysius sounded loud in contrast with the stillness, as she approached Tattie, put her arms about the girl, whose tear-stained face revealed her recent suffering; soothed her nerves as those dear brides of the church can soothe, and Tattie told Sister Aloysius, who had been her favorite madame in the three years of her convent life, the story of the contents of her little box, showing her the pictures and insisting upon the nun's reading the letters, which she did reluctantly.

Tattie asked the Sister to dispatch to her guardian, Captain Kelvyn, for permission to go to San Francisco, which was done, and the requested permission received without useless delay.

Affectionate partings with the Sisters and girls, whom she loved and who loved her in return—with no shame attached to her leaving—Tattie sped away, never to return, unless in after years, when her history ceases to interest us, to visit the scenes of her school days, and those madames whom the Reaper will spare to meet and welcome her to the school rooms, halls and dormitories, re-peopled by a new generation.

CHAPTER XIII.

LUTNER TURNS HONEST MINER.

LUTNER had been a resident of Hangtown three years. He made no friends in his new quarters, but seemed to have a sudden attack of industry, starting out every morning early, not returning until late in the evenings. For months that routine continued, always starting before the other miners and returning after they had been at home for some time.

The following spring those who knew him were surprised one day to see Lutner take the stage for Sacramento, and a few days afterward return, accompanied by a strange man, who proved to be a successful and influential mine expert.

For several weeks Lutner and the new arrival were seen prospecting the mountains and gulches around Hangtown. To all intents and purposes they were “looking for a mine”—an occupation which engrossed all the able-bodied men who regarded Hangtown simply as a base of supplies. Lutner was of such a suspicious nature that he believed every man’s eye was upon him and read his secret. It was only after he had pledged the expert to secrecy that he finally, and by a round-about way, led him to the ledge that he had been during all this time uncovering as quietly as it was possible.

The expert carefully examined Lutner's work, and it did not take him long to express a favorable opinion, which was more than confirmed after a number of measurements, assays and working tests.

"This is the making of a big property, and no mistake, Lutner; it surprises me that you should have done so much work all by yourself; why didn't you employ men to assist you and push the work of development? By this time you might have a big mine fully developed; as it is, you have a splendid prospect, superficially opened," were the expert's comments.

Lutner answered with something of a surly growl: "I had my own reasons. No one knows when he's safe from prowling jumpers up in these mountains. There are lots of reckless miners who would jump a good thing if they saw it without as much as saying "by your leave."

"But, of course," interrupted his expert, "you have located all right, and no one can hold title against you, and you know the law respects the ownership of the first locator."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Lutner, with a chuckle, drawing from his inner shirt pocket a long linen envelope, showing much wear. From this he took a paper, across the face of which was printed "Mining Location," and below, in writing, "D. B. Lutner." "You see," he continued, "here is my name, and the location was recorded the same day it was made. "You don't suppose I'd open up this property if the papers weren't straight? Trust me for that," laughed the

unscrupulous Lutner, as he returned his “papers” to their safe deposit.

After Lutner’s expert had departed, having given that worthy some practical advice about working his mine, he continued his labors. It was remarked, however, that in his visits to San Francisco, he usually carried a large carpet bag, well filled with gold quartz specimens which he had broken out from pockets in his ledge. These found ready sale to the jewelers of San Francisco, who turned the polished quartz-gold into elegant articles of jewelry, for which there was a great demand. Upon the proceeds Lutner lived like a prince. No one would ever have dreamed that the well-dressed man who promenaded Montgomery street with his silk hat, his fashionably-cut clothes, and altogether elegant appearance, was that same Denhardt Lutner, the strolling miner of Hangtown. At the end of his outing, his funds exhausted, he would secretly depart from the city, return to the mountains, don his mining toggery, and appear as if Hangtown was the only place he had ever seen in all his life.

He was so quiet and unsociable that everybody considered and spoke of him as a harmless crank; consequently no special attention was paid to his movements. Two years and a half he spent in that double life existence; now a hard working miner, following his ledge; again a well-pampered man of the world, living a life of ease in San Francisco. Luxury and hardship alternated; stealthily working the mine all alone, afraid to confide in anyone, partly because he judged every-

body by himself, as to honesty of purpose, or fearful lest the unequalled richness of the property would attract general attention, and its rightful owners be thereby made aware of what was going on; satisfied with occasional extravagances and royal times when he made his hurried visits to San Francisco, always returning to "the diggings" the typical mining tramp.

At the end of another year Lutner concluded that he would sell the mine, and so make his fortune in one grand swoop, and leave the State, for a foreign country; too many prospectors were climbing the mountains. He did not like so many neighbors who might ask troublesome questions. His encounter with Kelvyn about this time hastened his decision to sell the property, which was now looking well at all points.

So, at the expiration of three years, while Tattie had been gaining wealth of mind, Lutner had been gaining wealth of pocket.

Accompanied by Dick Simmons, Lutner went to San Francisco with such specimens of ore and a report that made the eyes of the speculators and mine promoters "dance and see stars," as Halstead expressed it in his original way.

After much negotiation, Lutner sold a large slice of the mine, a controlling interest, to Banatyne, who had immediately ordered a hundred stamp mill erected on the property to ensure big dividends.

Banatyne had been obliged to do a "great deal of talk," to get his followers to "stand in," as he termed it. He had made a great many mistakes

recently, and he and his followers had lost heavily, but he declared that this time “The pole is long enough to reach the persimmons.”

If it had not been that he had placed so much of his money in his wife's name, the situation would have been most unpleasant. As it was, a great many judgments were outstanding against him, but Banatyne didn't mind “little things like those.” They were only the spice of a hazardous life.

Lutner was not exactly pleased with the way things stood; he would much rather have sold the entire property, as he was very anxious to travel, but he had been assured by Banatyne that when the stock should be listed, by good manipulation, he would be much wealthier, if not wiser, and he consented to wait two weeks in the city for the consummation of the sale of his remaining shares on the Board.

Meantime, Lutner was living like a king at the Cosmopolitan Hotel on the proceeds of the first payment made by Banatyne. His reckless extravagance was the wonder of people who knew how to spend money themselves.

A case of live while you may “like hedge hogs dressed in lace.”

CHAPTER XIV.

IN SEARCH OF A FATHER.

A tall, graceful figure, whose perfect outlines were not concealed by the straight full folds of her convent uniform of black serge, walked along Montgomery, until she reached California street, where she paused with that mystified expression that bespoke a stranger in the city. Her undetermined manner as to which direction to take, first attracted the notice of the passers-by—a notice soon riveted by undisguised admiration of her girlish loveliness; a discourtesy pardonable in any locality, for such comeliness as hers was rare, indeed. It is only the homage that man pays to feminine beauty and grace the wide world over.

Old Boreas, who makes himself more blusteringly at home in San Francisco than his frigid reception would appear to warrant, was busiest that day with his biggest blow; and, as the young girl stood on the corner, he dallied with her skirts and kept them in a constant flutter, tinged her cheeks with a rosy hue, while a little riotous lock of blonde hair seemed to enjoy the frolic afforded it by the stiff breeze. She addressed a guardian of the peace, who pointed to a building a block away, and smiled pleasantly as the young girl hurried to her destination with an earnest "thank you, sir."

When she arrived at the place designated by the officer, she entered the building with a peculiar sensation of doubt as to the manner of her reception. Passing along the marble-floored corridor, she read the different names of the occupants upon the several doors. Presently, she halted, breathlessly. Across the frosted glass which composed the upper panel of this particular entrance, in large letters, was the magic name for which she searched. Her name—the name traced in faded ink upon the old letters yellow with time that she carried in her hand:

Roy H. Banatyne.

For an instant she leaned against the wall trying to steady her nerves—pressing her hand hard against her heart to stop its tumultuous throbbing, before she gave the signal that would be the open sesame of the portal—the only barrier that now stood between herself and the author of her being.

Banatyne was in the highest exaltation attendant upon one of his boom excitements—this time over Lutner’s mining property—and in response to a timid knock at the office door, he called out, cheerily: “Open the door and walk right in,” and, as Tattie turned the knob, obedient to the invitation, and entered, he continued, “and I’ll show you some specimens of ore that came from the richest ledge ever sampled,” and Tattie was in her father’s presence.

He was busy examining and assorting ore specimens, and turned with a hurried glance; catching a glimpse of her skirts he said to himself:

“It’s only a woman.”

Tattie started when she saw his face, as she thought:

"Why, he must be the gentleman who was so kind to me three years ago at Gold Gulch, when my mother had just died."

"Are you Mr. Banatyne?" she asked in unsteady tones.

He did not hear her words, only the voice reminded him that she was in the room. His brain was working at high pressure, busy with but one all-absorbing thought that filled its every nook—its every crevice.

"Got any pin money? Put it up as margin on this property. Double the sum in less than no time," were the very odd first words which he said to her, as he continued examining and commenting upon the wonderful richness of the ore specimens which had thrown San Francisco into one of its frequent periodical speculative fevers.

"Won't you be seated?" he said, hardly deigning a glance at Tattie, whom he had immediately diagnosed as a book agent or a "mud hen."

Tattie was glad to accept the proffered chair, for she really felt weak from nervous excitement,

She could not speak. Her emotion was great, but not greater than was her surprise at such a queer greeting. Her first impulse had been to throw herself into her father's arms even at the risk of meeting with an unwelcome reception. She had longed so many years to know him, to have his protection, to be loved by him, but his unexpected manner had completely nonplussed

her, she could only gaze at him as he rattled along with his mine talk, which had become almost a mania with him.

“Now here’s a specimen that’s almost solid metal. Why there are tons and tons of gold in sight in this fabulous ledge,” he dashed along, apparently not waiting or expecting any remark whatever from his visitor. Finally he turned toward her with an ore specimen in his hand; evidently it had been his intention to show it to her, but his interest was so intense it was hard to coax his eyes away from the attractive magnet and for a moment he forgot, and stood examining the treasure in hand, while she gazed upon the absorbed man, scanning his hair, his forehead, his eyes, his every feature, and thought as she detected in his blonde hair and smile a resemblance to herself:

“Ah! he is indeed my father.” With the impulse of strong affection almost overwhelming because it had been so long denied her, she advanced a step toward him, intending to throw her arms about his neck and crying aloud for the first time in loving tone, “Father! Father!” but her movement was checked by an excited voice and these discordant words:

“Never was anything discovered to equal it! Never will be! Never can be! Now, here’s a specimen that’ll go thousands of dollars to the ton!” he said, advancing towards her, and handing her a piece of ore which Tattie took mechanically and held.

“Wouldn’t you like to make a fortune inside of a week?” he asked.

“If honestly made I should be foolish to object,” replied she, “but I am looking for Mr. Roy Banatyne—” she added tremulously, and stopped suddenly.

He apparently had not heard her inquiry regarding himself, for he continued :

“Look at the specimen,” and Tattie obeyed as if in a trance. “Isn’t it the finest piece of stuff ever sampled by man? It’s a new mine up near Gold Gulch,” he offered by way of explanation. “I just received these samples. Their richness simply astounds me. In the last drift they have opened up a body of solid gold quartz seven feet wide by over a hundred feet long. The walls are perfectly formed. We call it the bridal chamber,” he dashed along as if Satan and all his imps were at his heels.

Banatyne’s magnetic power had influenced his daughter and changed her thoughts. She stood as if in a hypnotic state, her eyes riveted upon the ore which she held in her hand, while Banatyne’s eyes fastened upon her face, which recalled a memory. “Where? When have I seen her?” were his mental queries. “Handsome than any picture,” was his unexpressed opinion.

“Who the deuce is she? I have certainly seen her face before but still I cannot imagine how such exceeding loveliness failed to impress upon my memory every detail of my meeting with her.”

Suddenly the girl stopped, looking as if she had been aroused from a somnambulistic walk, and said smilingly, “How foolish! I didn’t come here to see ores; I am looking for—Mr. Roy Banatyne.”

Banatyne thought her lips were made to smile destruction to masculine hearts, and shifted himself into a more becoming pose, for he was a susceptible man and Tattie was the loveliest of her sex. “I have certainly seen her before. She must be a book agent” was his final conclusion. “My wife says there’s not an inch of room left in the house for another book. It’s not a convenient reputation to have, that of helping all female strugglers because they will keep a-coming. I’ll never be able to refuse this marvel of beauty. Feminine loveliness always makes me ‘stand and deliver.’” Quick as a flash, he thought he saw his way out of the dilemma. “I’ll just play I’m another fellow, this once,” so, before the thought was fully shaped, he had said:

“I’m sorry, but Mr. Banatyne is out,” then he added, coolly, “and I’m a traveller, and my grip is packed so full I couldn’t add even a book or a handkerchief to its already crammed condition,” and he twisted his moustache into a more becoming curl, and arranged his soft, silky blonde beard.

Tattie was transfixed with amazement.

“Then this is *not* my father,” was her reflection.

“Is there any way in which I can be of service to you?” he asked, gallantly.

“Yes,” answered Tattie softly, “tell me of Mr. Banatyne,” and she never removed her gaze from his face, the more she looked the more he reminded her of the stranger who had pressed the shining double eagles into her hand at Gold Gulch, and the more his features resembled the old daguerreotypes she had taken from the box left by her

dying mother, until Banatyne felt abashed, for even Roy could muster a little embarrassment when he was not discussing mines, and while he was being closely watched as if he were a freak by a beautiful girl with bewitching eyes.

Tattie's woman's penetration instantly saw through Banatyne's subterfuge. She was as well satisfied then that her father sat there before her as if he had lovingly proclaimed himself. What his motive was in denying himself was a secondary consideration to her, but naturally she distrusted him. In a moment she had read and re-read in imagination all those letters rusty with age, and concluded that his was the fault that had caused the separation of father and mother. The suspicion had flashed through her mind that perhaps her father knew her and assumed this disguise to avoid acknowledging her as his daughter. A momentary feeling of indignation possessed her, and she determined to compel him to unmask himself.

"Of course you know this Mr. Banatyne I am looking for?" she asked, quietly.

"Oh, yes, very well, indeed," responded Roy, feeling just a little uncertain and nervous, as he adjusted his necktie, stealing a glance at the questioner, and wondering what was coming next.

"A man about your age from the description I have had of him, isn't he?" she continued to question.

"Well, yes, I guess he must be about my age," answered Roy, very much disconcerted.

"And from photographs I have seen, you resem-

ble him somewhat,” she said, mischief sparkling in her eyes as she continued. “You seem well acquainted with Mr. Banatyne, perhaps you will give me the information I require just as well as he could. By-the-way, excuse me, Mr.—What shall I call you?”

“Ba——,” began Banatyne, unthinkingly, “Yes, Brown,” he corrected himself nervously, growing red in the face, as he noticed a shadow of a smile play about the girl’s lips.

“Of course, Mr. Brown,” said Tattie, with just a touch of indignant sarcasm in her voice, “Now tell me something more about your friend Banatyne.” “You understand, Mr. Ba——I mean Smith,” and she looked at him roguishly as he interrupted her with:

“Yes, Brown.” He determined to stand upon his feet, if possible.

“Well, you understand, Mr. Brown, that you needn’t answer unless you want to. Anyone can refuse to answer questions—*even about himself.*”

That was a home thrust, and Banatyne turned nervously in his chair and looked toward the door, apparently hoping for some timely interruption. He liked the things that flavored life, but this seasoning had a dash of cayenne that was decidedly too hot for him.

“I am always ready to accommodate the ladies,” he returned, bravely courteous. “Please proceed with question number one,” and he tried to look as indifferent as possible, as he picked up one of Halstead’s discarded chrysanthemums and adjusted it in his buttonhole.

"Is your friend Mr. Banatyne married?" suddenly queried Tattie, looking her father straight in the eye.

He hesitated, stammered, "Well, yes, he was married, and, come to think of it, twice married."

"He certainly is a close friend of yours; for you know all about his alliances," rejoined Tattie. "And, pray," she continued, as she drew her chair closer to Banatyne, "What was his first wife's name?"

Roy edged away, looked at her curiously and answered, "She was a Spanish girl, Dolores Diaz."

Tattie started exultantly as she exclaimed:

"And I knew Dolores Diaz's daughter, and her name was Banatyne. See, here is mother's picture and your own!" and she handed him the small package that she had brought with her that contained the old portraits and faded letters.

"Ah! tell me that the voice of instinct whispers to you who I am? Tell me that you know me by your natural love of me, before I call you by that sacred title which is my right," she said, supplicatingly.

The man, for one instant, was petrified with astonishment, absolutely dumbfounded. But, when he had gazed into the brown eyes, soft as any gazelle's, all suffused with hysterical pleading tears, his pulse quickened. His heart grew warmer, for a spark had at last been kindled by almost ignored Nature. He pushed the blonde locks that had become disheveled in her excitement back from her brow,

that he might see the beautiful face clearer, and the *father love* was supreme.

“Your face—your face”—faltered Roy in a voice choking with emotion, “is like your mother’s. Your blonde hair——”

“Is like my father’s said Tattie, her eyes glistening with hysterical tears.

“You are the little girl that I met at Gold Gulch three years ago?” questioned Roy, in a trembling voice.

“Yes, father,” sobbed Tattie.

A long, tender embrace, showers of kisses upon her blonde head, as she rested for the first time, since infancy, in that safe port—a father’s arms. All her troubles and woes were forgotten in her delight as she clung to him with but one lingering fear—that of losing him again. They were too happy to notice the intrusion of a young Frenchman who was often a guest at Banatyne’s house, and at rare intervals, a visitor at his business office. This Frenchman, true to the traditions of his nationality, was too polite to disturb this, which seemed to him, most affectionate and spicy *tete-a-tete*, and he quietly left the office, thinking that Americans could cope with his people *en affaires d’amour*.

CHAPTER XV.

LE MARQUIS DE BEAUVILLE.

THE Marquis de Beauville turned away, congratulating himself upon this happy chance, which he meant to use to its fullest value in pressing his heretofore entirely unsuccessful suit for Tricksie's favor; for, notwithstanding all his boasted blue blood, his elegance of manner and aristocratic bearing, he had only met with dignified rebuffs when his compliments to Tricksie had become too ardent. He had first taken up Halstead, thinking to make much out of that gentleman's apparent guilelessness in business, but finding the honest-looking Nat not quite so manageable as he had thought, began looking about for other ways and means of replenishing a greatly depleted fortune.

About this time he fell in with Banatyne, who invited him to his house. The marquis was at once taken by Mrs. Banatyne's beauty, and as he soon learned, partly through observing closely, but much more by a little judicious questioning about town, that she had at one time been regarded as of easy virtue, and that even then she was cut by her own sex, he felt confident of an easy victory. He still further observed that Banatyne left her alone much of the time for the more engrossing subject of business, even when he might have

considered his wife's happiness a little more. Then he learned still another fact which greatly intensified his interest in the fair young wife, namely, that she had a large amount of available property in her own name. It was this last bit of information that made the marquis smile most complacently, as he twirled his carefully dressed mustache, and his red lips parted in joyful anticipation of one day holding in his arms the runaway sweetheart who would bring him plenty of money and great joy as well, until such time as he was tired of her charms, when he could bid her go back to her wifely duties. He had not met with the success he had hoped for, but, as he cautiously withdrew from Banatyne's door, he felt that he now held the trump card which, if carefully played would soon win the game he so coveted. On his way out he passed young Dougald, who had just come up to San Francisco for a short visit, and chuckled to himself, saying: "I shall find out who zat boy is. I see him about here toujours, and if he come in upon zat scene interessante I have just left he may be much useful to me."

Entering his father's office very unceremoniously, Dougald was more surprised when he saw Tattie there than he was when she was introduced to him as his twin sister, for after a most affectionate meeting, in which tears, smiles and kisses were mingled, in equal proportions, he said:

"I am not one bit surprised, Tattie, that you are my sister. The feeling must have been bred in my bones that you were closely related to me. You never did seem to me far off like other

girls,' since the very first time I met you at Gold Gulch."

"I, too, felt that there was something close between us, Dougald," replied Tattie. "The joy and pleasure that would have been mine in all the years that I have not known a brother are crowded into this one moment of delight," and she threw her arms about his neck, much to the detriment of his shirt collar, and exclaimed, "I can kiss you and love as much as I like now, can't I?"

"You bet you," assented the boy, as he lifted his sister from the floor with a hug

After a moment's pause, Dougald became serious. The smile died upon his boyish face and left it deathly pale; he passed his hand across his eyes to push back the weeping mourners that were threatening to come in the shape of tears, as he murmured "Then the funeral at Gold Gulch ——" and paused with pitiful, trembling lips.

"Was your mother's funeral," Banatyne informed him, and then his father continued: "Sit right here my children, and I will tell you all about it," and with Dougald on one side holding his father's hand, and Tattie on the other in similar affectionate employment, he told the story of his first marriage and divorce.

"I was married to your mother, Dolores Diaz, nineteen years ago the twenty-seventh of last October, in a mining camp known as Dogtown. You were the result of that union, my children, and are twin brother and sister. I was a proud and happy father the day of your birth. Then

came trouble and disagreements, with the result that I was divorced from your mother when you were babies, and I left the mines, bringing my infant boy with me, your mother keeping the wee, tiny, baby girl,” and he pressed the young hands that were clasped in his own.

“We were divorced by mutual consent,” he continued. “After the separation, I sent money back for the child I had left, and I am not boasting when I say the sums were not stinted. I did this every month for one year, and every month for one year the sums were returned to me. ‘I wish you to consider the child dead,’ she wrote. I cannot understand why she was so bitter. Perhaps it was the thoughtlessness of youth, for seventeen years ago she was very young. Perhaps I was to blame; in fact I am almost certain I was. We were both very young;” here Tattie dried his weeping eyes with her own handkerchief, a kindly favor he had done for her three years ago—when she mourned the death of the same loved one—“and didn’t understand each other,” he continued. “Well, time passed; I never heard a word from her or you, Dolores,” and he looked fondly on his daughter, then added, “A few years ago, I met my second wife—and now my children, I must confess the weakest and most despicable act of my life, when—I—your father——” his voice trembled and refused him. Pity was the straightest path to love with Tattie. She impulsively stopped his lips with a kiss, and assured him, that if he was going to tell of what he thought was a fault of his own, they would

not believe it, because he was just the dearest father living.

“You bet you” was the firm conviction with which Dougald concurred, and both of his children insisted that he speak no more upon a subject that gave them all painful memories, and soothed his grief with such loving caresses, that he wondered how he had possibly lived so long without one of them.

After smiles had replaced their tears, Banatyne told Dougald to take his sister to the hotel, as he would be obliged to make some explanations to his wife, before introducing his children to the paternal home. Under Dougald’s chaperonage he thought the hotel was the proper place for his sister. “Come on sister, mine,” said Dougald. It did him good to say “sister.”

“She will need some new clothes and things,” said Banatyne. “Get her whatever she wants and send the bills to me,” he added, his face once more beaming with his good natured smile, “No stinting, Dougald; remember money’s no object, and, with her fine feathers, we will drop the soubriquet of Tattie, and I will see that it is no longer applicable to my daughter,” said the father, proudly. Dougald said he knew just what she needed, which was very doubtful. After leaving their father’s office, the twins did all the shops in grand style: neither of them had ever indulged in that pastime, “shopping,” before, and Dolores took to it kindly—that is feminine human nature—and left the store keepers in good humor, for their buoyant youth and

happiness seemed contagious, and no doubt, the big bills they sent to their father had something to do with the production of the smiling countenances of the clerks.

“ My goodness ! ” exclaimed Banatyne, as soon as the office door closed behind his children. “ Wheu ! When I think of telling Tricksie, the cold perspiration breaks out all over me. Great Scott ! ! ” and he dried the beads of moisture from his forehead as he threw himself into a chair and extended his limbs, like a man whose strength is spent, and who drops from sheer exhaustion.

Just then Halstead came in, exclaiming in great excitement :

“ I say, Roy, who was the handsome young lady who just went out ? By Jove, a peach ! As pretty a girl as I have seen for an age. I ’ m quite gone — All broke up — pulverized — mashed ; ” and he leaned up against the wall to support his weakened condition, as if every arrow in Cupid ’ s quiver had pierced his heart.

“ A young relative of mine, ” Banatyne answered, indifferently.

“ Why didn ’ t you tell a fellow you were related to such a lovely specimen of womankind ? My respect — I might say veneration — for you has increased ten-fold in the last few minutes. ”

“ Now don ’ t talk like a lunatic let loose from Bedlam, Nat Halstead, ” Banatyne said, a little impatiently.

Halstead, unheeding Banatyne ’ s remarks, continued : “ Roy, do you think a few flowers would be acceptable ? And have I your permission to call ? ”

“Why, of course, old boy, nothing would give me greater pleasure,” answered genial Banatyne.

Halstead’s flow of rippling language rattled along with the swiftness of a locomotive, until he noticed Banatyne’s preoccupied state of mind—which mind was deep in meditation upon Tricksie—his base deception of her—upon the scene, particularly, when he should disclose to his wife the fact of his first marriage and of the existence of his twin children. When he thought of these necessary disclosures his courage failed him.

Halstead gave Banatyne a return-to-your-senses slap on the back, and said in a voice half serious, half joking:

“There’s an ominous cloud upon that massive brow; come down off your high stilts, old fellow, and tell us all your troubles. Report on your “Last Hope” not favorable? Mine not worth a last year’s bird’s nest?”

““Not worth a last year’s bird’s nest? Report not favorable?”” echoed Banatyne, contempt for such an insinuation almost consuming him. Then his trustful smile lighted up his face until honest conviction beamed from every pore and all thought of family trouble was banished like mist before the rising sun, and Banatyne was immediately the mine promoter *par excellence*.

““Report not favorable?”” he emphasized again. “It’s a report that’ll make you fellows want to sell your clothes to invest your last red cent in the property. Almost solid walls of pure and unadulterated——”

“Draw it mild, Roy,” interrupted Halsted.

“The ore assays run sky high,” continued Banatyne.

“In your untamed fancy,” suggested Halstead.

“Why, Roy, your imagination runs faster than a skeered mustang,” he added, for Halstead loved to draw Banatyne out.

“Never was anything like——” began Banatyne.

“I’ve heard that before Roy; for Heaven’s sake don’t get that old timer off again,” interrupted Halstead.

At this moment, several of the stockholders in the Last Hope entered the office, and, seeing Banatyne’s face radiant with its broadest smiles, symbolic of his satisfied frame of mind, exclaimed, “Hail to the Chief!”

Banatyne answered the salute, by raising his hands as far above his head as the length of his arms and his feet on tiptoe would permit, and shouted, “Away up, boys, away up!”

“The reports are good, then?” asked Jack Nelson.

“What a question! What a *useless* question,” said another friend, “Can’t you read the report in Roy’s face—why waste your words?”

“Just to quiet your nerves, and to prepare you for what is coming, let’s step around the corner; I think a little tansy would be the proper caper just now.”

They all accepted Banatyne’s invitation. *En route* he explained that it was a report that would make them feel good from the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet. Arrived at the nerve-

cure symposium, he lifted a glass to his lips, the example being followed by his companions, and said:

"I tell you those ore specimens are enough to make your mouths water. Here's to our new scheme, May the Lord love us, and not call for us until we have exhausted the ledge in the Last Hope," and they drained their glasses in answer to the toast. Banatyne explained that if his expectations of the toast were realized they would live to be as old as Methuselah.

"What expert did you send to the mine?" Halstead inquired.

"A reliable, trusty fellow," Banatyne replied.

"You know Tom Hays?"

"Colder nosed than a fish," broke in Halstead. "When he says there is one million in sight, you can bet your bottom dollar there are three." "And that man Lutner is no slouch of a mine-expert himself," said Banatyne. "He shows his good faith by selling only a part of the property, and he wouldn't sell that if he wasn't ordered by his physician (an old friend of mine) to stop all active work, and travel. Can't have too much of a good thing, boys," and they drained another B. & S.

"Well, what are you going to do with the property? develop the mine further; put it on the board; or sell it as it stands?" inquired Halstead.

"Now, old boy," said Banatyne, drawing Halstead aside, "I'll tell *you*, confidentially, just what I think, what I am doing, and what I am

going to do. I never before felt so sure of a mine as I do about this ‘Last Hope’ business. No question about her paying dividends from the word go, so I have ordered a hoisting works and fifty-stamp mill. Too big? Oh, no. You see there’s a splendid water power and we can run at a minimum. Between you and me and the gatepost, this goes no further. Lutner is crazy as a June bug to sell all his interest, but I’ve tied it up so nobody gets it but your uncle,” and Banatyne gave Halstead an expressive wink. “Now, here’s my program, and you must stand in and ask no questions: Put it on the Board, start it at a fair bed-rock price, so as to let all our friends have a whack at it; then boom her! Then sell enough stock at the advance to take up the balance of Lutner’s stock. Do you catch on? Isn’t that a brilliant scheme?”

“Colossal. Easy as rolling off a log” interjected Halstead, as Banatyne stopped to take breath. “The public will come in as sure as boys love green apples” he added.

Banatyne laughed all over his face, as he replied. “Why, don’t you know that in stocks a new crop of fools is born every few years? and it’s about time for a new spring harvest and another shearing.” Here he turned towards his waiting friends with a confident air. “Just as sure as little apples grow, nobody’ll get the ‘Last Hope’ for the price of a box of sardines.”

“We’ll go in on a shoe string and come out with a tan yard sure, this pop,” declared Halstead with a very pronounced and knowing wink,

and the friends celebrated their sudden accumulation of unhatched millions, by tapping several “cold bottles,” in consequence of which indulgence Banatyne got the “Last Hope” and Tattie gloriously entangled, for, as Halstead, in the kindness of his heart, guided his friend’s unsteady footsteps homeward, his own perambulators apparently thought that “the longest way around was the nearest way home,” judging by the many and unnecessary times he cut the side walk on the bias, as they zig-zagged like ships without pilots, Banatyne remarking in a voice that seemed to rival his feet in its waywardness:

“Now, Nat, (hic) if the last daughter (hic) don’t turn out well—”

“The last what?” hiccoughed Halstead, and he failed in his efforts to look “as sober as a judge.”

“The Last Hope” (hic)? “What did I say?” asked Banatyne, and he looked irritated that one had dared to question the intelligence of his speech.

“You said the last ‘daughter,’” explained Halstead.

“Well you know (hic) I didn’t mean that,” ejaculated Banatyne, “because (hic) I don’t know much about my last daughter, but if the “Last Hope” doesn’t (hic) pan out well, (hic) why I’m (hic) no judge of a father (hic), Whoop la! (hic)” and Banatyne’s pride in his own lucid opinion exploded in a rollicking laugh, that had “one of the finest” been on duty within a mile, these two roistering companions might have had the freedom of the city extended to them in the way of a night’s lodging.

“Roy, you’re getting very much mixed,” remarked Halstead, the cool air having restored his own reason in a degree.

“My head (whoop) is perfectly clear (hic),” Banatyne declared, as they both ascended the outer steps of his residence, “But where’s the madame?” he continued, as he tried to pull himself together. “You, see, Halstead, I wish (hic) my wife (hic) was in the country (hic). She’s not always cordial when I have an attack of (hic) nervous prostration. (Whoop).”

A thought passed through Halstead’s sufficiently sobered senses, as he took Banatyne’s latch key from its owner’s pocket.

“I’ll try to play a harmless trick on the Madame and save Roy from a well-deserved caudle. I think I can manage it.”

He stood his friend like a closed umbrella up in the corner of the outside vestibule, and inserted the latch key. Kee, the erstwhile *chef* of the *cuisine* at Gold Gulch was lighting the hall gas, and hearing the click of the key, opened the door. In the moves on the chess-board of life, that particular chinaman, Kee, had found his way to, and was employed by Banatyne as his butler *en chef*.

“Is Mrs. Banatyne in?” inquired Halstead.

“Yes, slir,” answered Kee, promptly.

“Well, you needn’t tell her right away that I want to see her,” exclaimed Halstead, as yet a little confused.

“Me sabbee,” said Kee, “Bloss allee sam bloke up. Me allee same good Chinaman.”

“Well, that’s what I want,” said Halstead, “A

good Chinaman to direct me to the boss's room, which Kee quietly did.

Never did a man feel more grateful for a clear coast than did Halstead. Having tied Banatyne's head up in a wet towel, he put his charge comfortably in bed, as Kee shuffled off to tell the Madame there was a visitor who wished to see her, but who requested that she need not hurry as he would wait. The message, however, was not delivered, for, immediately as he emerged from Banatyne's room, Halstead met Tricksie face to face. She was very much astonished to see him coming from her husband's private apartment, and Halstead didn't feel as nervy as he would have done if he had been in her drawing room, with a diplomatic speech fully composed for the occasion.

"I have just placed Mr. Banatyne comfortably in bed," he said gravely, and slightly confusedly, and "I hope he will soon be better."

"What do you mean? Is my husband ill?" asked Tricksie with a scared face.

"He had a fall," prevaricated the friend in need.

"Don't tell me he is hurt, Mr. Halstead. Don't tell me that," said Tricksie, and anxious tears gathered in her eyes, as she pushed past Halstead to enter the room wherein lay her injured lord and master, but Halstead restrained her gently. "No, no, I wouldn't go in there now. His skull is not fractured. Oh, don't be alarmed, all he wants is quiet and rest. I thought I would not call you until the doctor had made a thorough

examination, so as to be able to allay your fears.

"You're sure the doctor found nothing serious?" Tricksie queried, drying her tears with her dainty lace handkerchief.

"He couldn't make a thorough examination; said he would be back in an hour, when he would be able to tell more about him. Don't think there is any immediate danger," continued Halstead, thoughtfully curling his mustache, "but I would advise you not to disturb him. Don't go near him, as he is under the influence of a strong sleeping potion, and now seems to be resting quietly," and he opened the door and permitted Trieksie to peep in, a privilege she felt thankful for. "There's a great deal to be gained by sleep," said Halstead, and he thought Tricksie a beauty, but not as youthful as the pretty creature he had met that morning in Roy's office; and a sudden desire to give his eyes another feast, possessed him. "Mrs. Banatyne, I am loath to leave you alone in this distressing predicament; if you have a young lady relative in the house, it would give me great pleasure to know that you have comforting society before I go," said this arch-hypocrite, the most sincere solicitude expressed in his concerned tone.

"No, I haven't a female friend or relative in the wide world," said Tricksie, in a voice that sounded like a wail to Halstead, who, though disappointed at his failure to see the unknown this time, was determined to make another effort, remembering that Roy had said that she was *his* relative, hence the assertion of Tricksie was perfectly correct.

As he bade Tricksie good night and left the house, he felt that Banatyne was his debtor, and he hoped the recording angel would not make his falsehoods appear too black. Tricksie, left alone in her trouble, walked the floor and meditated aloud :

"Oh dear! if Roy should die, what would become of me? I would not want to live. I could never survive such a sorrow. Oh dear! Oh dear!" and Tricksie buried her face in her handkerchief and wept some penitential and sorrowful tears.

Presently she was startled by a sound—a prolonged, nasal, deep-chested affair—as it penetrated the two-foot wall of Banatyne's sleeping apartment.

She threw up her head, rested her chin on her hand, adjusted her ear, and awaited its successors, and they came right along, regular, plebian, old-fashioned snores.

Her tears crept back, ashamed of their credulity, and her anxious expression was cleared by a hopeful look.

"I can hear him snore from away out here. They sound quite natural. Surely he wouldn't sleep like that if he were in pain. Doctors always make a fuss about trivial things, just to get up a big reputation about their wonderful cures." Here she went on tiptoe and peeped into her husband's room. "There he is, poor dear, with his head all bandaged up; but I mustn't go near him, Mr. Halstead said. My! how he does sleep. They must have given him a powerful dose." As she turned

from the alleged sick man, her eyes fell upon two large boxes, the results of her latest shopping. She toyed carelessly with the fastenings. She tiptoed again, cautiously, to her husband's door. “There he is, sleeping twenty knots an hour;” again she looked, more pleasantly, toward her recent purchases. “I wonder if it would hurt Roy if I should try on those beautiful things?” and she gazed wistfully at the unopened treasures. “I may never have another chance to wear them,” and her pretty lips puckered into a pretty pout. “*Crêpe*, and all that sort of thing. Ugh! The very thought makes me feel as cold as the headstone of a grave.”

Tricksie undid the packages, glancing around nervously, her frightened gaze resting and returning stealthily towards the door of her husband's apartment like a thief in the night.

The pretty baubles were exposed to her admiring eyes. She looked longingly upon the shimmering silk and the lacey softness of the charmers. With loving fingers she touched each article in the array of finery. She clasped her hands and exclaimed in ecstatic delight:

“Oh dear, if I was dying myself, I'd try to get up and see how I'd look in those dreamy beauties. I *will* try them on.”

Tricksie proceeded to decorate herself. The first adornment was a handsome, long, opera cloak, made of light blue velvet, lined throughout with ermine, and, as Tricksie graced the wrap, or as the wrap graced Tricksie, as you like it, she walked up and down in front of a mirror, now

drawing the cloak together in front, enveloping her skirts entirely with the rich velvet, then throwing the garment back and open, to admire the magnificent fur lining, Then she tried that "adorable bonnet," and then a large fan must be used before the mirror that she might watch its graceful moves and catch the pose most becoming.

To indulge this pardonable vanity before her glass, Tricksie was obliged to turn her back upon the door of her husband's apartment, and was only aware of his presence when she saw his reflection in the mirror, and Banatyne thought, as he watched his wife's antics: "Poor Tricksie, I do give her *so* much trouble! This last straw has upset her mind completely." And Tricksie thought Banatyne's injury had made him delirious. She rushed to him and insisted that he did not feel well.

"Yes, I'm all right," he said.

"No, you're not, dearie," she insisted, leading him back to his bed.

"Now lie down, darling. The doctor will be back in a moment," and the more he tried to make her believe he was well, the more she insisted that he was ill. She bathed his head, and cared for him so tenderly that Banatyne thought the millenium had surely come. Every gentle word, every kind act was a coal of fire on his aching head, and he registered an inward vow "never to do so again;" and he thought that it might be a good time to tell her about his twin children, but he could not summon the courage necessary to disturb the peaceful, loving picture in which he was the central figure.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN JIM'S WORRY.

DOUGALD'S rooms at the hotel had taken on that undefinable air that suggests "a woman around." Pretty bric-a-brac lent a new charm. Flowers and ferns were to be seen; bright bits of drapery and bows of ribbon of rainbow coloring were placed here and there; rocking chairs had dispossessed some of the straight-back, comfortless affairs that seemed to invite visitors to make their calls as short as possible; and that surest sign of female presence, a pin cushion, decorated with graceful blue satin bows, and well stocked with pins, those valiant little aids of women and despised of men, those *avant couriers* of a frivolous sex—not to mention a straggling hair-pin or two—rested in sweet repose, with no fear of causing a war of scandal, upon the silk-lined lace covering of a young bachelor's dresser.

Dolores had been the occupant for nearly a week, in fact ever since she had found her way to San Francisco and to her father. Not one line had she sent to Captain Jim, although each day she had resolved to write him a "nice, long letter." Had she not intended to make it so "nice and long" it would have been received at Gold Gulch several days before, but she had so much to tell him, she couldn't think of writing it in a hurried fashion. No, she must wait until she had plenty of time, but

the time hadn't come yet, and Captain Jim, on his part, was worrying himself gray over her silence.

"What could it mean," he thought, and immediately upbraided himself for allowing the young girl to go to San Francisco alone; it was most imprudent. He concluded that he had neglected his duty shamefully, and that he would start at once for San Francisco to make amends for that neglect. He hadn't the slightest idea where she was stopping. If he only knew her address he might write.

He hurriedly packed his grip. Just as he was about to step into the stage, the mail bag was thrown out by the driver,, and Kelvyn concluded to wait until it was opened, thinking the long-looked-for letter might be among its contents.

Yes, there was a letter. He opened it quickly, and read it in as great haste as it had been written. It did not change his plans, for he took his seat in the stage, and re-read the apology of Tattie more leisurely.

"DEAR CAPTAIN JIM :

"I have waited almost a week for sufficient time to write you a nice, long letter, until I am quite ashamed of the delay; so have concluded at last, contrary to my good resolutions, to send you only a hurried line; indeed it is forced upon me, Captain Jim, as time seems to refuse to be at my disposal. I have so much to tell you. So much has happened, I can't write it all. Do come on receipt of this. I'm stopping at the Occidental Hotel. I'm sure you will enjoy seeing the happiest girl alive, in

Your affectionate ward,

DOLORES B.

"What does she mean by 'Dolores B'?" wondered Kelvyn; "Really girls are very queer creations; and stopping at a big, public hotel! Who ever heard of a young girl stopping at a hotel,

alone? I declare, girls haven't the slightest idea of how to take care of themselves,” and Kelvyn settled himself back in the corner of the stage with a “Humph!” which grunted exclamation meant a great deal. He further thought that she was very much at fault not to have written him before, and he wondered if she had seen that beardless strippling of a Dougald Banatyne—and the capital letter of that youngster's surname never took on such proportions as it did before Kelvyn's vision.

“B?” “B?” “B?” was the accompanying spectre that lengthened that never-to-be-forgotten stage ride to the distance of the earth's circumference.

Kelvyn reached San Francisco on regular schedule time, notwithstanding that it had seemed to him the leaden wheels of the stage-coach would never cease their slow revolving. Immediately upon his arrival he started for the Occidental Hotel. A breezy, airy young couple, in very animated conversation, came up behind and passed him. Kelvyn's eyes opened wide, as he caught a glimpse of the profiles of Dougald and Tattie, who were hurrying along in the same direction as himself.

As the young couple were in advance of him, he had an opportunity of noting the elegance and style of Tattie's well-fitting gray dress, her superb figure, and how well she wore the paraphernalia that goes to make up a fashionable young woman. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes sparkled with the buoyancy of youth and perfect health, in the enjoyment of surroundings so new to her.

On they went, Dougald carefully assisting Dolores at the street crossings, or placing himself protectingly between her and a threatening team in the great procession of a city's thoroughfare; and Kelvyn following behind with unsteady steps, determined to see them to the hotel, which was, like his, evidently their objective point, and then by the right of legal guardianship, demand satisfaction of Dougald Banatyne, if he was not already married to Tattie. *Married!* the word stabbed him to the heart, with as much venom as a poisoned dagger thrust by a treacherous hand. He waited until the young people had taken the elevator and had ascended beyond his sight. Then he almost staggered to the office desk, and inquired in a voice husky with suppressed emotion, "Is Miss Lutner stopping here?"

"No, sir," brief, but telling, came the reply.

"Banatyne?" hoarsely queried Kelvyn, and he passed his hand over his mouth to conceal its nervous twitching.

"Yes," answered the clerk. "Do you wish to send your card up?"

"No," replied Kelvyn, and his head swam, as he reeled toward the street door for air. "So they're married already. This is what she wanted to tell me," he hissed between his teeth. He started for the street, but in his nervous state he was afraid to go far. He must compose himself before he could meet her. He engaged rooms, and was shown to his suite, which proved to be on the same floor with those of the, as he supposed, bride and groom.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRICKSIE'S HORNET'S NEST

A FEW days after Ban's "fall" Tricksie was in her most becoming negligé, lounging in her boudoir, when Kee entered, announcing:

"A cololed man, alle same one niggler, wantee see Missee Blanantlyne."

"Has he any packages?" asked Tricksie, the inveterate shopper that she was.

"Yes, malm, alle time plackages," answered the bland celestial.

"Show him in," said Tricksie.

In a few minutes, Andrew Jackson Johnson appeared, bearing a box, almost large enough to contain the flowers of the universe. He would have excited the risibles of a man receiving his death sentence. His trousers were made of cloth of a dark chocolate and yellow plaid; his Prince Albert coat, almost gone to seed, was a cinnamon brown, buttoned up to show his figure, which was slim to a degree of emaciation; his necktie was yellow, to match the stripe in his trousers, and a large yellow rose was secured to the button-hole of his Prince Albert, showing a taste for unity of color. Andrew Jackson Johnson was a regular colored swell. The whiteness of his teeth, looked like a chalk mark across a crow, as he smiled expansively, bowed profoundly, and addressed himself politely to Mrs. Banantlyne:

"I'se de valet to Gen'l Nathaniel Halstid. He have done requested me to brung dese flow'rs, and he done sed, if it'll be 'greeble to yo', he will call hyar dis ebenin' at ha'f past ait 'clock," and he bowed and turned like a wound up automatic ebony toy, when it works, and was about to make a start for the door.

Tricksie had been so amused at his elegant importance, that she had not caught the name of the sender, and she called to him and asked, her face wreathed with smiles which she could not repress, "what is the name?"

"Gen'l Nathaniel Halstid," answered Andrew Johnson, as proud of his employer's title, as he was of his own good clothes.

"You're sure you haven't made a mistake, as to where these flowers belong?" she asked.

"Bress de Lawd, no, indeed," answered Andrew Jackson Johnson, with a broad smile. "I'se bin in dis bizness too long to mak' eny mistakes," which was the truth, for Halstead sent more flowers to ladies than any other man on the Pacific Coast.

Banatyne was just entering as Andrew Jackson Johnson was retreating. "What is it?" he asked, smiling at the pompous fellow.

"Mr. Halstead sends me flowers, and asks permission to call this evening," replied Tricksie. Well, this is a new departure for him to become so excessively formal," she laughed.

Banatyne felt a cold chill creep down his broad back.

"Let me see the box," he said. "Why, it's addressed to me, *Mr. Banatyne.*"

“I know,” answered his wife? But here is his card, upon which is written, “For the ladies.” Now, as I am the only lady in the house, the flowers must necessarily be intended for me,” she added with a puzzled look and then an amused laugh.

“It’s strange,” asserted Banatyne, in a slightly shame-faced way.

“I know Mr. Halstead’s reputation as a lady’s man, but he never sent *me* flowers before, and since when has he become so very formal as to ask permission to call. Such ceremony from an old friend like Mr. Halstead is quite overwhelming. Now, don’t you think it odd, Roy?” asked Tricksie.

“Well, rather,” returned her husband, evasively. Then a loop-hole of escape suddenly presented itself, and he added:

“He must think it’s your birthday, marriage anniversary, or some little event like that,” and he felt like applying some very vigorous language to that irrepressible lady’s man for his inopportune gallantry.

“Perhaps it is a peace offering for his recent neglect of us, for you know he hasn’t been here since the evening you had your fall, and the doctor thought you were so badly hurt, when you were not hurt at all. What hypocrites those doctors are, to be sure,” and unsuspecting Tricksie’s lip curled with scorn for such medical frauds.

“Yes, exactly,” said Banatyne, as he gave his mustache an upward turn, while his conscience gave him an inward twinge. He thought, “That

fool, Halstead, is sending flowers to my young lady daughter; I forgot to tell him that she wasn't stopping here yet. I must try to see him before Tricksie does. That's the only way out of *this* scrape."

The predicament did not present pleasant possibilities to Roy, but he was not a man to let future moments of trouble stand in the way of present moments of pleasure, so he changed the order of thought.

"Do you know, sweetness, I stand to make a cool million in the "Last Hope?"

"Why, you lucky old darling," said Tricksie, putting one bare arm about his neck and cuddling up closer, feeling that he was a good, stout staff to lean upon, as she patted his cheek fondly with her jeweled hand.

"It *is* luck, sweetness," answered Banatyne, "for I tell you my exchequer was getting pretty low down," and he kissed his wife rapturously in the excessive delight he felt, consequent upon his good fortune.

"How many fortunes have you made, lost, and given away, Roy, during our married life?" asked his wife, in a humoring tone.

"Let me think," he said, clamping the tips of his four fingers against his forehead, as if to invoke memory to his aid, and for an instant feigned a brown study; then he began to enumerate slowly, upon his fingers, "One, two, three, four, five, six——"

Here Tricksie clasped his hands and laughingly said, "Now don't be foolish, Roy."

“ Well, I really couldn't count 'em ; they're thicker than mosquitoes in a summer swamp,” he declared, willing and happy to allow his hands to rest within the soft palms of his wife's, and as she fondly stroked and looked down upon them, they seemed to Tricksie to bear the insignia lines of good nature and generosity, and she said, without raising her eyes to his face :

“ Sometimes I tremble for your financial safety, Roy, and think perhaps it is the duty of a wife to a daring speculator like you to hold at least one side of the purse strings.” Here she raised her head and looked at her husband, her eyes beaming with love of him, and added :

“ Why, really, Roy, I wonder that your recklessness and generosity haven't sent us to the poor-house long ago.”

“ Poor house !” repeated Banatyne, “ That's better. I thought you were going to say 'jail.' Well, when we *do* go, sweetness, we'll be sure to get rooms on the sunny side, for there's nothing like standing up for your rights and getting the worth of your money,” laughed her heedless husband. “ I suppose this means that you want a small donation,” he added, with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

Tricksie pouted, for her feelings were really hurt. Such a thought had not entered her mind, but Banatyne was in sober earnest, determining to make some return for his recent escapade and deception, in which his alleged wounded head and lately-discovered daughter played so conspicuous a part, and he took out a number of papers and

placed them upon a small table as he searched his pockets for his checque-book.

"I really did not intend that for a hint," persisted his wife.

"You could never make me believe that, you sweet little torment," he provokingly contradicted, and gave her a regular "bear hug." Then he filled out a checque for a good round sum and handed it to Tricksie, saying, "There, you are pretty well fixed for the present anyhow."

Tricksie accepted the checque, remarking, "Well, you won't have to force me to take it."

"No, I see it won't be necessary to hold your nose," returned Banatyne, with which very prosaic opinion, he kissed his wife full upon her pouting lips, and left the room, saying he must hurry and get dressed to see Halstead.

Tricksie called him back with "Roy! Oh, Roy!" Her husband put his head through the door.

"Parting is such sweet sorrow," he began, holding his hand outspread upon his chest and his head turned coyly to one side, looking more like Jumbo than Juliet.

"Oh, stop your nonsense, Roy," said Tricksie, laughingly. "I just wanted to say that I shall insist upon Mr. Halstead's remaining for the evening."

"Most assuredly," returned Banatyne, and then he continued, in a feigned, chiding tone:

"Now, sweetness, why did you call me back? You know how long it takes me to get my back-hair fixed, and what an effort it is to tear myself

away from you. Worse than a youngster with his first sweetheart,” and kissing his wife again, he hurriedly left the room.

Tricksie turned from the door with a smile in her happy eyes, and her husband’s praises upon her freshly-kissed lips, murmuring to herself:

“How happy he’ll be when I tell him,” and a betraying blush overspread her beautiful face as she thought of the sweet secret she would soon whisper into her husband’s willing ear, and felt the eloquent thrill of maternal love for the unborn life in its earliest bud.

“Ah! when God so blesses me, He will surely help me to do a mother’s part nobly.” Her voice was soft and tremulous.

“Dear, darling Roy,” she went on, “God bless him. He’s an ang——” that word was never finished, for, as she turned, the papers he had placed upon the table attracted her attention. The breeze had blown in through the open window, and the lace curtain had scattered the letters and bills about the floor. Tricksie proceeded very carefully to gather them up. Why couldn’t that particular paper have fallen with its buttered side down? No, there it lay, its great, black, inky figures indelible on paper, indelible in Tricksie’s mind, turned up to the honest daylight and to a wife’s staring eyes.

What would we do for the transition of scenes and diversity of episodes adown the stream of life, were it not for trifles? Trifles make and trifles unmake. The scratch of a pen, a breath of wind, the

flutter of a paper, the glance of an eye, each trivial in itself, but each most momentous in results.

Tricksie crouched down upon the floor beside that tell-tale paper. She did not pick it up, but turned it gingerly with the tips of her fingers, that her hypnotized eyes might read its confession more clearly and without contamination. Two great tears gathered, but they were forced back. For once she felt too strong for tears. Finally she caught the paper up, and crushed it in her hands as a crouching feline would pounce upon and crunch its prey. Again, and again, she closed her revengeful little fist upon the inanimate paper, grinding her teeth as if that gave her more strength to hurt. She arose, and paced the floor. As was Tricksie's intensity of love, so was her intensity of jealousy. She went nearer the light, to read that which she thought was the indisputable proof of her husband's unfaithfulness—hoping against hope that she might have been mistaken at first; but the words burned into her brain and almost broke her poor, little, jealous heart. Written upon the body of the billhead of a prominent dry goods establishment, she read:

SAN FRANCISCO,.....186..

MR. ROY H. BANATYNE.

Bought of WHITE, GOODS & Co.

1 Sealskin sacque.....	\$500.00
1 dozen night dresses, \$6.00 each.....	72.00
1 dozen pairs, extra length, silk hose, \$5.00 pair.....	60.00
½ dozen ladies gloves, \$2.50 pair.....	15.00
1 reception dress.....	250.00
1 walking costume.....	100.00

—————
\$997.00

Received payment,

“A dainty creature at any rate,” she interjected, her lips curling with superlative scorn.

“None of these articles are for me,” she continued, “for I have made no such purchases, and I am sure Roy H. Banatyne could not use them personally. Look’s like there’s a woman in the case.” Her eyes flashed, and the angry fusillade came strangely from Tricksie’s lips, for they seemed made only for kisses—and to formulate sweet nothings.

“They can’t be mining implements,” she said scornfully, her eyebrows elevated, “No, no, Mr. Banatyne, these articles are not in your line of business,” and her eyebrows descended with a frown, “unless, perchance, you have taken in a new partner.”

“No time now to ask an explanation; my company is too near at hand; but, my most faithful and constant husband, you shall see that two can play at your little game.”

“I will flirt with the Marquis de Beauville to-night to such an extent that your heart will ache for the next six months,” and ringing for her maid, she ordered: “Lay out my violet costume.”

When the maid had disappeared, Tricksie murmured to herself, “I have scorned heretofore to listen to the Marquis’ foolish compliments. How often he has said that he likes me best in violet.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SLIME OF THE SERPENT.

Tricksie had never looked more attractive in her life than she did that evening. Robed in an exquisite shade of violet satin, her beautiful shoulders and well-shaped arms bare, a large bunch of violets fastened in her corsage, a few of the dark green leaves resting against her bosom, showing to advantage by contrast its snowy whiteness. Her blonde hair twisted into a fluffy, artistic knot on the top of her dainty head, with little feathery locks, just enough to soften the contour of her face, straying from the confines of hair-pins, and wafting about at their own sweet will. While her satin-covered toes were not too abashed to peep out with every graceful move of her lithe, girlish figure.

“I wonder if my husband could offer any explanation for those bills of feminine finery,” she said to her own reflection in a large mirror; “the Marquis has good taste,” she continued, the first thought, so foreign, suggested the second: “I *do* look well in violet. How these husbands do deceive us poor wives,” and she sighed as she fastened one of Halstead’s “Beauty Roses” in her bosom, the blossom finding a dangerous rival in the wearer. “I will try a little flirtation on my own account—just to see how my husband will take it. I wager I’ll bring him to my feet,” she continued. Pardonable vanity, with such a reflec-

tion smiling at her. “I shall cool my anger by a mild flirtation with the Marquis,” she murmured as she arranged a stray blonde lock more to her fancy. “Well, perhaps I should be a little afraid of the Marquis,” she added carelessly.

“What are you doing, little one?” asked Banatyne as he entered the room.

Tricksie began nonchalantly humming a light air and remained in front of the mirror ignoring her husband and his question with as much ostentatious indifference as her back could possibly make apparent.”

“You’re looking very well this evening,” said Banatyne, not noticing his wife’s intended slight.

She glanced over her shoulder at him, and thought her husband was appearing at his very best also; then she turned her back upon him again, saying:

“Did you address *me*, Mr. Banatyne?” the words dropping like icicles from the eaves of an ice house, as she readjusted a diamond star in her hair.

Yes, I had the boldness,” he answered carelessly, walking towards the other end of the room, with a vague idea that in some unaccountable way a refrigerator had suddenly slipped in upon his hearthstone.

“You see, I hadn’t completed my decorations,” Tricksie condescended to explain, “I’m busy with the finishing touches. I want to look my handsomest this evening. You know the Marquis de Beauville is coming.”

"Yes, I believe this is his usual evening for calling," returned her husband indifferently.

"The Marquis is right; I *do* look well in violet." This repeated remark, although made to her reflection in the mirror, must have been intended for her husband's ears, for it was spoken in a voice so decidedly audible that he could not possibly have escaped hearing it.

"By George! he does show good taste," assented her obtuse husband. "The French are noted for their taste, you know. Why haven't you worn it before?" he asked, as he picked up a piece of gold quartz that had found its way upon the drawingroom mantel-shelf, and busied himself examining it.

"I never cared before to show my appreciation of him by wearing his favorite color. Ah, he is a handsome fellow," sighed Tricksie, rolling her eyes heavenward.

Banatyne caught a glimpse of the rolling heavenward movement of his wife's pretty blue orbs.

"Sick?" he asked.

"No," was snapped back at the sympathetic inquiry.

Then Tricksie walked up to him and, looking him straight in the face, said: "I wonder if we two will ever cease being susceptible."

"You may leave me out in your figuring on the future and only wonder at yourself," returned Banatyne, good-naturedly. "I'm as blind as a mole, and can't see beyond the present, and don't want to."

"I don't know about that," answered Tricksie,

with a smile cold enough to have frozen the blood in her lips. “Seal-skin sacques and other expensive feminine foibles must be donated by a purse influenced by a warm susceptibility for the sweetheart so favored,” and she felt relieved, for she was morally certain that that shot would take effect.

Banatyne was too innocent to accept the insinuation, for he had forgotten all about the purchases made for Dolores, even if he had examined the bills to see what they comprised; consequently the shaft went wide of its target, and Tricksie realized her failure to impress him by innuendo when he began to strut up and down the room in a comical way, saying: “I feel like a regular two-year-old to-night. I flatter myself that I am looking very handsome,” as he viewed himself on all sides.

“Handsome men are not objectionable, provided they have a grain of sense,” retorted Tricksie.

“Ah, there’s the trouble,” said Banatyne, but he didn’t recognize the reflection, and left his wife to marvel at the nerveless effrontery of men in general, and of her husband in particular, and at that critical moment Mr. Halstead was announced.

Halstead’s presence acted like a tropical warmth, when rays of the genial sun waft the thermometer up in the nineties and Tricksie’s frigid mood thawed like ice.

“I’m delighted to see you, Mr. Halstead, you have treated us cruelly of late. Why, you haven’t been here since the evening you brought Mr. Banatyne home when——”

“Don’t mention it, please don’t mention it, Mrs.

Banatyne,” replied Halstead, actually blushing at the remembrance of his deception, and arresting the thanks that he imagined were trembling upon a grateful wife’s lips. “I make my apology most humbly,” he continued as he took Tricksie’s proffered hand, “for once I’ve allowed business to precede pleasure, but the self-denial has been torturing; I shall never do so again,” he said in his most chivalric style.

“Very gallantly said,” returned Tricksie smilingly, “and I accept your flowers as the peace offering for which you, of course, intended them, and wear this one as a flag of truce,” indicating the rose which she had placed in her corsage.

A chill trickled down Halstead’s back as a vision of Dolores passed before him, and a sense of a husband’s proprietorship for which he had the greatest regard, annoyed his scruples, still he murmured with the overabundance of chivalry for which he was noted, “Favored flower!” and then flashed an inquiring glance at Banatyne. The latter fearful lest his friend might, by some indiscreet question, let the cat out of the bag, bent forward at an angle of acute interest and looked intently in an opposite direction.

“Since when have you become so very formal, Mr. Halstead, as to consider it necessary to ask permission to call? I really think I should take offense at such ceremony from an old friend,” Tricksie said, with a malicious little pout.

“Ah, yes,” began Halstead nervously, “the flowers, of course, were intended for you, Mrs. Banatyne, but the note——”

“Halstead! I say Halstead!” called Banatyne quickly and almost furiously.

“Excuse me one moment, Mrs. Banatyne,” said Halstead as he arose and walked toward Banatyne in answer to the abrupt summons. Banatyne feeling master of the situation, his face broadened into a smile as he thought of Halstead’s disappointment at not meeting Dolores. He watched with amusement the comical and furtive glances his guest cast on all sides as if looking for a fairy or phantom of some kind to enter through the walls.

“I say, Roy,” he whispered, pulling Banatyne by the sleeve, “where’s your young relative?”

“Will explain later. Don’t mention the girl now.”

Halstead smiled, and replied:

“Well, I never would have thought it, old fellow, but your secret’s in good hands,” and unresponsive Banatyne wondered what he meant by that speech; and just then the Marquis de Beauville, “spick and span,” in all the glory of the tailor’s art and the barber’s science, appeared in the doorway, making an appropriate figure for the colored plate of a fashion magazine entitled “How to Dress.”

A nervous thrill of fear ran through Tricksie, and for an instant her determination to excite her husband’s jealousy by a flirtation with the Marquis faltered, but the tell-tale feminine articles in that hideous black ink acted as a nerve tonic, and steadily and without the slightest tremor she extended her jeweled hand to her latest caller, beamed her welcoming, prettiest smile, and greeted him most cordially.

"I'm overjoyed to see you this evening, Marquis," she said warmly.

"Ze plasair is all mine, Madame," returned the Marquis, making his most approved obeisance, allowing his eyes to feast for a moment upon the beautiful woman, then, reluctantly turning his well repaid enraptured stare from that vision of radiant loveliness to the masculine in sombre broad-cloth, he responded in a most polished manner to the greeting of his host, and to the indifferent nod of Halstead.

As soon as the Marquis had an opportunity, he said to Tricksie in his best die-away languishing style:

"Si charmante, Madame, my favorite couleur?"

"Yes," Tricksie answered, "I feel like pleasing you to-night," and she looked wistfully towards her husband, who was talking cheerily to Halstead, and his jolly laugh grated upon his wife's nerves.

"Cela makes me vaire proud to be," answered the Marquis, and he fixed his eyes upon Tricksie with such a devouring gaze that she involuntarily moved towards her husband for protection, but Banatyne was too much engrossed with his subject to notice her.

"A beautiful girl—you and she made a very suspicious picture in your office, Roy. I expected to meet her here this evening," said Halstead.

"You see how it is, Hal., I couldn't bring her here," returned Banatyne, in a resigned tone.

These were fragments of her husband's conversation that tingled against Tricksie's sensitive eardrum, and spurred her on to desperation. She

reeled slightly as she turned again to the marquis and faced dauntlessly his admiring gaze, saying :

“Will you take this seat with me?” as she led the way to one of those twisted figure-eight *tete-à-tetes* that bring the heads almost as close together as did the time-honored sofas of our grandmothers. “I shall claim sole proprietorship of you for the entire evening,” she added, as she seated herself, the Marquis accepting, with pleasure, the invitation so effusively offered him by his hostess, declaring, in lowered voice, that he would consider himself in the seventh heaven of ecstatic bliss to be in the possession of so lovely a proprietress for the rest of his existence, and that he envied the husband to a degree of hatred who had been so fortunate as to have preceded him in that delightful and coveted capacity.

“Why do you remind me of an unhappy state of affairs?” asked Tricksie, in a voice loud enough to be heard in the next room, so fearful was she that her words might escape her husband’s attention, at the same time moving as far away from the Marquis as the very social-producing piece of furniture would permit, and laughing in her low, thrilling, cooing way, that Banatyne loved so well. “Why, even married women sometimes retain their sentiment,” she declared, flirting a roguish look at the Marquis, which found its way to Banatyne.

“*Et pourquoi non?*” asked the marquis, with a careless shrug of his shoulders, at the same time mentally surprised, for Madame had never allowed him to come so near before.

Tricksie glanced at Banatyne and welcomed an impatient expression on his face, but it was not indicative of jealousy, as Tricksie was flattering herself. Her unresponsive husband was thinking: "Now sweetness is going to make a fool of herself. Women can't help it, any more than a ledge in a mine can help giving out."

The dialogue rippled along, Tricksie's voice growing louder from nervousness and her desire that her husband should hear every word, the Marquis' more subdued and insinuating consequent upon what he considered the warmest encouragement from Madame.

At last this proximity to the man became unpleasant to Tricksie and in order to free herself from the position she said:

"I know you like music, Marquis, for you have often told me so, and I can see it in your eyes; the immortal bard says 'the eye is the window of the soul,' and never were words more truly spoken," and she glanced over her pretty shoulder toward Banatyne to see the effect of poetry, but her curiosity and exertion met with no satisfaction, for her husband was showing Halstead the good points in the ore specimen, having first decided that his wife was talking idiotically.

"Ah, madame," answered the Marquis, attempting covertly to take Tricksie's hand, which she quickly prevented by rising and moving to a safe distance. "I must acknowledge zat next to ze pretty women, zat ze music is ze shrine at which I worship."

"I saw it in those tell-tale eyes," replied Trick-

sie, and her hurried glance tried to fathom her husband's feelings as she walked toward the piano, but Banatyne was apparently as unconcerned as an Apache chief in the wilds of Arizona awaiting his regular government rations.

“You nevaire would sing for me, Madame, when I have before asked ze favaire so often,” said the Marquis in an injured tone.

“You have never before found me in the mood that I am in to-night,” returned Tricksie going quite near her husband and taking from her bosom some violets, she placed them in the Marquis' buttonhole, that worshipper having dropped upon his knees to be so decorated. Even that master-stroke fell as flat upon her unconcerned husband as a snow-flake upon a stone, for he only smiled and remarked much to Tricksie's surprise and chagrin:

“When you get through having those posies planted, Marquis, come here; I want to show you some free gold, the prettiest thing you ever saw. There it is,” he continued, as he held the ore specimen at arm's length, he and Halstead gazing at it in ecstatic bliss; “as full of gold as a preacher is of prayer.”

“Prettier than a smiling infant,” assented his staunch friend Halstead.

“I'll sing you a little love melody, Marquis,” said Tricksie in a weary sort of way as she fully realized how futile had been her efforts to kindle even a spark of jealousy in her husband.

“I suppose you bachelors think that we old matrons never sigh for a romance,” she said, turning

the pages of her music and glancing at her husband's indifferent back.

"One bachelor is of ze opinion zat one matron at least, should nevaire sigh in vain, madame," was the Marquis' insinuating reply.

Tricksie sang in an almost pleading cadence: "If You Love Me, Darling, Tell Me with Your Eyes," throwing all the expression at her command in her voice. While her rich full tones filled rooms and halls, her eyes would glance at the Marquis, but the trembling voice was for her husband, and Tricksie felt more like crying than she did like singing, as she thought how indifferent Banatyne was, and that he hadn't shown the slightest resentment after all her efforts at a distasteful flirtation to bring him to his senses, and she concluded that where there was "no jealousy there was no love," and she presumed that somebody didn't only have the sealskin sacque but her husband's heart as well, and she was accordingly more miserable than before.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the song the Marquis was at Tricksie's side bending over her so closely that she felt his breath fan her cheek as he said:

"I hope I am to have ze honaire to meet ze young lady here zis evening," a suave smile and a further inclination of the head, "zat I have ze plaisair to see at ze office of your husband ze ozer day," and he awaited the effect of his words as a blood-thirsty assassin watches the result of his poniard's fatal thrust.

"What young lady?" eagerly asked Tricksie,

as she in an apparently careless way plucked at the flowers upon her bosom and looked furtively at the Marquis to read how much or little he knew, not lifting her shading lids lest he should discover the agitation in her tell-tale eyes.

“Ah!” answered the Marquis, opening his eyes wider by way of showing his feigned surprise, then he half-closed them and shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say: “It is done;” as he added “I am sorry to speak,” and he looked regretful.

Tricksie toyed with her rings. She darted a look of defiance at this man who had dared to insinuate that her husband was not the perfection of truth; the almost glorified image of his maker. Her own little suspicion was allowable, but nobody else had the right to cast as much as the mist of a breath upon his fair name. Such unheard of effrontery! Such inborn baseness! “You dare to insinuate——” and Tricksie paused.

“No,” answered the Marquis, carelessly. “It seem[’]vaire natural to me if ze[’]demoiselle knew your husband so well, she might know you a leettle.”

Here again that hideous paper with its ink-dyed accusation that she could claim but part of her husband’s affection, thrust itself before her eyes. Her proud air became subdued; averting her face from the gaze of the mischief-maker, she rested it heavily upon her hands as if in painful meditation. The Marquis knew he had struck deep, and hawk-like awaited the result.

Presently she clasped her hands nervously and spoke beneath her breath, her eyes, as in a hor-

rible nightmare, stared calmly into space, the rigid whiteness of her face betraying her suffering. "You did right to speak, Marquis, but you must tell me more. What was her name?" Her voice was calm, only the firm clasp of her hands that sent the life-blood to the tips of her fingers, dying them a ruby red, told her humbled agitation.

"I did not have ze plaisair to know," replied the Marquis, in a low comedy tone, enjoying a Frenchy little chuckle.

"Were you not introduced?" asked Tricksie, evincing a cold, dignified surprise.

"A French gentilhomme knows when he is de trop," returned the Marquis, with a low, vulgar laugh, "and I left wizout them to see me."

"You mean to insinuate," flashed Tricksie, for her pride was again trying to assert itself, "that my husband has an intrigue with——"

"Ah, Madame," interrupted the Marquis, "I do not insinuate. I am sorry to say the fact stare me in ze face; but he is only like all ze vaire good husbands," he added, with that shrug of the shoulders that meant columns of words.

"I refuse to believe you, Marquis de Beauville," said Tricksie firmly, rising and moving as if to leave his presence; but he touched her bare arm, causing her to shrink from him, as a child shrinks from darkness.

"You doubt my word, Madame; zen it will be necessaire for me to prove it," said the Marquis in a low tone, a mocking smile parting his lips, disclosing the gleam of his white teeth.

“I defy you to prove that my husband is not that which I believe him to be, faithful and conscientious in all things,” said Tricksie proudly, as she left the side of the serpent who had become at once obnoxious and hateful to her; yet her confidence in her husband was very weak. The Marquis stood for a moment motionless, like an attacking enemy baffled by a stout defense. However, the prize was evidently worth another effort, for he again intruded himself upon Tricksie, a Satanic smile lurking about his handsome face.

“Madame, you me defy to prove ze truth of my word?” he asked, mockingly.

“Yes, I defy you,” answered Tricksie, coldly and calmly, as she gazed, without flinching, straight into his eyes, a challenge in her haughty stare.

“And will zere be some reward for me, Madame? For me, whose heart and soul you have so long ago read?” pleaded the audacious fiend.

“Long ago,” repeated Tricksie in derision.

“I haven’t known you but a month, and I wish to Heaven I had never seen you,” she added impatiently, waving her hand angrily, as if to brush him from the path she wished to pass.

“Ah! Madame, zen you wish to live ze deceived wife? You enjoy to live zat way? C’est bien,” he returned in a taunting voice, as he shrugged his shoulders, and stopped short, with firmly closed lips, as if the subject would never be broached by him again.

Tricksie fumbled with her bracelets. She pushed

them farther up her arm, then pulled them hard upon her hands, as if to jerk them off, without undoing the clasp. She cruelly plucked the leaves from the violets in her bosom, and threw them upon the floor. After an instant, holding firmly to the arms of the chair, she exclaimed: "You false accuser. How dare you slander a man in the ears of his wife and under his very roof?"

Again he shrugged his shoulders, and made a gesture of feigned protest, by quickly extending both hands, then closing them, and dropping them helplessly to each side. "Bien, Madame, you force me to speak, when I would razer to be silent," he said, "I really have pity for you, Madame," he added in a pathetic tone.

"I do not ask your sympathy," flashed Tricksie, her indignation thoroughly aroused.

"If I prove my accusation, it will not make you to hate me, Madame; I may hope to——"

Tricksie cut his cringing speech: "Prove your accusation," she said, "and never dare to talk to me like that," fairly hurling the words at him.

As she passed him going from the drawing room into the hall the Marquis hissed rather than said; "Madame not always was so scrupulous." Tricksie winced at this reflection upon her past.

"Will you meet me to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock in ze reception room of ze Ocidental Hotel?" asked the persistent Marquis, following Tricksie from the room.

"Yes," answered Tricksie, defiantly, "but not for the pleasure of seeing you," she said with a cutting hatred, that made the Marquis wince in

turn, “but to prove to you the falsity of your contemptible slander,” and she frowned down upon the cringing figure who showed a disposition to become more ardent, now that they were alone.

“And if you see wiz your own eyes zat what I say is true, may I have ze hope zat we shall go to Paris—Ah! dear Paris, where not only riches, but honaire, social distinction, title, position, all, will be for you.” His eyes were lustrous with unshed tears. He was pleading as a criminal pleads for life.

Tricksie was worked up to the point of desperation. “If what you say is true, you may hope almost anything,” she returned recklessly.

As she faltered toward her husband, who was too much engrossed in conversation to notice the unusual whiteness of her face or the nervous trembling about her pretty, child-like lips. Banatyne was saying, “An expert came down from Hangtown to-day, and said that it was the talk up there that Lutner had jumped the claim, and that whoever had bought the property, known now as the ‘Last Hope Mine,’ from him, would find that he had no title.”

“What rabbit dust,” returned Halstead scornfully, as Tricksie approached him to excuse herself, pleading a severe headache, and wishing him “good night.”

“Too bad,” said Banatyne, but whether the sympathy was expressed for his wife or his mine, was not apparent, and Tricksie retired to her room to pass a restless, sleepless night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

READ THAT!

WHEN Kelvyn found himself alone in his room at the hotel, he tossed his inoffensive valise about ten feet away from him with as much venom as if it had been Dougald Banatyne himself. The innocent overcoat that he carried on his arm he threw upon the table as spitefully as if it had been his worst enemy. He sat his hat on the back of his head, drove his hands deep into his pockets, and proceeded to walk the floor in vehement agitation, meditating upon his wrongs generally and upon Tattie's ingratitude particularly.

Undoubtedly she was married. His great love for the girl would admit of no other solution. His pessimistic mood forced him to jump at a conclusion and to take for granted that which he dreaded most.

He walked the floor most of the night, marveling that Tattie could marry such a rattled-brained, sappy stripling. A boy without the semblance of a beard—a pretty doll-like face, but no character, no manliness. "Well, I'm not going to worry myself to death about it," he said, with determination, as he flung himself into a chair.

Had he reflected for a moment he might have fathomed his own heart and discovered that all this indignation proved that he was so jealous, and so

“heels over head” in love with Tattie himself that he could no more help worrying than he could help his heart from breaking within the next twenty-four hours, if the situation should remain clouded.

As her guardian he considered that he had a duty to perform. But how approach it? Her apparent ingratitude in taking such a step without consulting him cost her entire sex such anathema as men disgruntled by a single caprice of one woman do oftentimes lavish free of charge.

“I will write to her,” he thought, and he forthwith scrawled upon paper:

“MRS. BANATYNE:

DEAR MADAME:—”

which only served to light a fresh cigar—the eighth one, and the night not half spent. A pure and spotless piece of paper again was blemished with:

“MY DEAR MRS. BANATYNE:

Allow me to congratulate you——”

but this fared no better than the first.

“I will send her my card to-morrow,” was his next determination, “and see her in the public reception room, as any other chance acquaintance, or stranger, for that matter, would do. I will know if all is right with her and then I will leave San Francisco, never to return, and so pass out of her life forever. Would to God, she could pass out of mine as quickly and as easily!” With this wail from his sore heart he went to the window, opened it and leaned out to catch the cool breezes upon his feverish face.

So was passing the night with Kelvyn and with one other watcher many streets away. Although their thoughts were wed upon the same themes—imaginary wrongs and self-pity—Tricksie and Kelvyn were as far apart as the Antipodes.

Dolores, the innocent cause of all this trouble to these two hearts, had slept the sweet sleep of youth and an easy conscience.

Kelvyn's suffering, coupled with his indecision as to how he should act, tortured him into a feverish state. The morning found him in an almost hopeless condition of misery. His face was haggard, his hair dishevelled, but he had manfully determined that he would ascertain, as was his duty as Tattie's guardian, if her marriage had been performed according to the strictest letter of the law; then congratulate her and her young husband and sincerely wish them all the happiness in the world. Not one word of reproach should they hear from him for her apparent ingratitude; the thoughtlessness of youth had excused that hours before.

Not the semblance of a sign, by word, look or sigh, of the great love he bore her, except concealed under a platonic cloak. Not one visible regret, lest it might mar her happiness. She had written, "I know you will enjoy seeing me the happiest girl in the world." He said aloud: "She shall see me enjoy it. I will shut out the love that is my life, my very soul. I will bury it and my heart together."

For a moment he stood irresolute, then he shook

his great broad shoulders, expanded his chest, clenched his fists, and seemed to have taken a bracer, for to all intents and purposes Kelvyn “was himself again.” He arranged his toilet and went bravely out, with a sore heart, and a very prosaic and insisting stomach, for no food had passed his lips for twenty-four hours.

Tricksie had resolved to see her husband’s attorney the first thing in the morning and place in his hands every dollar that she had in the bank, for it had all been given to her by Roy; the money she would direct him to use in the liquidation of all outstanding judgments against her husband. She would leave him, she thought, “free of debt, and free of——” here burning tears coursed down her cheeks, “Yes, free of me,” she spoke the last three words—they were too cruelly obtrusive to be concealed in thought.

Her husband had knocked at her door in the morning, for she had not appeared at breakfast, and had called through the key-hole, “Good-bye, sweetness.” She had answered with a sobbing voice, “Good-bye.” He had not noticed the sobs, nor did he turn the knob. Tricksie had listened for that evidence of a desire to see her; whether he was in too great a hurry to get down to business, or to company more agreeable she could only surmise.

Before four o’clock that afternoon Tricksie had attended to all business matters, as she had resolved. The attorney may have been surprised by her serious countenance, because she had

always showered smiles, sunshine and happiness upon her part of the world, but then willing one's self from affluence to poverty is a serious business, but not the saddest, according to her way of thinking.

She gave Judge Rush, the attorney, a note, which she wished him to deliver to Banatyne at six o'clock, if he did not hear from her before that hour, as she was contemplating a trip to the country, which something might intervene to prevent; in which event she would let him know and it would not then be necessary to deliver the message to her husband.

She had dressed herself in her plainest gown, and through blinding tears had taken that, which she thought might be her farewell look at all of the beautiful things “he” had given her; then she tied a heavy veil closely about her face and went tremblingly out from her home, feeling more lonely and helpless than when she struggled against the breakers and buffets of a business world for her meager existence. There was a streak of light in the lining of Tricksie's cloud—the hope that the accusation made by a scoundrel would prove false; however, she was determined that if she did find her husband untrue, she would go—she did not care where; she would do—she did not care what. There would be nothing left for her to live for. She would do some dreadful, desperate act. She would not live in the same place to breathe the same air as did Roy.

Late that afternoon Banatyne hurriedly entered Dolores' room at the hotel, and tossing her a

note, exclaimed: “Well of all things! Read that!” Then he beat the arms of the chair into which he had thrown himself, a rap-a-tap with his open palms, as he watched the agitated excitement the girl showed in her face as she read, seasoned with many interjections of “Ohs!” and frightened “Oh mys!” Tricksie’s note, which the attorney, true to his name, had delivered three hours in advance of the appointed time:

“MY HUSBAND—for such you are by all the laws of earth, and of Church, and if there be such a thing as marriage in the other world, by all the laws of heaven: and until now, such you have been, by all the loving care, generosity and protection that that relationship means to a right minded man; but a cloud blacker than midnight has come between us. If I can penetrate its thickness, and find, as I am praying to find, a silver lining, you will never receive this note. The proof of this is to be afforded me before six o’clock. If, on the contrary, the cloud does not clear, you will never see again

Your unhappy

TRICKSIE.”

Dolores raised her eyes slowly from the note, expecting to see Banatyne in tears; but to her surprise he was calmly smoking a cigar, maybe a little more vigorously than usual. That was all.

“Don’t the perversity of women beat all?” he asked, brushing a fleck of ashes from his coat.

His cool indifference did not strike a responsive chord in his daughter’s heart.

“Might it not be possible that men are a little to blame?” she returned, in defense of her sex.

“Not a bit of it,” answered her father. “Men are too busy scratching for a living,” he continued, “to imagine all sorts of silly, improbable things.”

“But doesn’t the tone of your wife’s note alarm you?” asked Dolores in surprise.

“God bless you, child, no. It’s only a woman’s caprice,” laughing apparently at what he considered a good joke.

“But where can she be?” asked Dolores, not fancying in the least this new phase to her, of her father’s character.

“Don’t worry; she’ll turn up all right,” he said lightly, “but what *does* annoy me,” he continued impatiently, “is that, woman-like, she turned every cent of her money over to my lawyer, with the expressed wish that all of my debts should be paid immediately—that is, as far as her money would go; and although one’s creditors are always ready to meet him more than half way, that lawyer, like the darned fool that he is, paid them all off dollar for dollar, and left me higher ’n a kite. Women should never have the handling of money; it’s out of their line,” here he wiped the perspiration from his face in a nervous sort of way, paused an instant without paying the slightest attention to the wonder in his daughter’s wide open eyes, and went on: “Now comes a rumor that I have no title to The Last Hope, which has caused a break in the market, and there you have it in a nut shell,” he concluded, waving his hand toward Dolores, as if to say, “You know as much about it now as I do. Did you ever see such an abused man as I am?”

He walked the floor as he said, more to himself, than to his daughter, “Ridiculous. Down to bed rock, and don’t owe a dollar. Great financier

ing that.” Dolores saw at a glance that the fact of the payment of his debts was his chief annoyance and angry worry. “A fellow never knows when he is out of the woods;” then laughingly added, “But it’s an ill wind, they say, that blows nobody any good. My credit’s established on a firmer basis now than ever, and I can commence all over again.”

Dolores had never met her step-mother. When she had first discovered her father, ten days before, he had said something about an explanation, but she had heard nothing more about it. Dougald had mentioned some rumors and mysterious whispers he had heard, and Dolores thought maybe her father had good cause for not taking his children to the home of the second Mrs. Banatyne, never dreaming that the fault was, in a measure, his own; but the episode just mentioned, particularly the settlement of her father’s debts by his wife, which was Dolores’ first intimation that her father’s resources did not meet all of his necessities, made her anxious to meet Tricksie. The wife’s generous act towards her husband appealed to her more forcibly, because, if rumor was true, nothing good could be expected from this particular wife, and Dolores began to question the veracity of Rumor, and thought her a goss libeller.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

IN the meantime a scene was being enacted in the hall leading to Dolores' room. Two figures—a man and a woman—walked along the corridor of the hotel, the man speaking in low tones, the woman not answering. Occasionally, when he became engrossed with his theme, he forgot to walk; the woman, as if under hypnotic influence, stopped when he stopped, and walked when he walked. Hotel guests passing by did not notice that the woman faltered several times, and that the man's proffered support was spurned with gestures indicative of contempt.

Kelvyn emerged from his room; he had not summoned sufficient courage to meet his ward and the day was almost spent—five o'clock P. M.; but he would certainly go to the office *this* time, and send up his card.

He passed the figures in the hallway, then turned involuntarily, for there was something in the lady's manner that attracted him. She tottered, hesitated, turned as if to retrace her steps, but her companion seemed to urge her to reconsider and proceed in the direction in which they had first intended.

As she turned her face, Kelvyn recognized

Tricksie. “Poor frail Tricksie,” he thought, “is she tempting now, or being tempted.”

The object of the thought was of no importance to him. Just a tinge of pity for one so frail; a sneer of contempt for a woman who had a past—a woman who had once erred. To Kelvyn there was no excuse, no forgiveness for a sister mortal who had deviated from the straight and narrow path by so much as an inch, or even a hair’s breadth; she had strayed far and wide from the beaten track, and Kelvyn’s prejudice was correspondingly bitter. Perfection was a woman’s inheritance, according to his standard.

“Tricksie is Banatyne’s legal wife now, I hear,” he thought, and a compassionate smile spread over his face for a fellowman so coupled. The smile suddenly gave place to an expression of horror. A pain of anguish contracted his fine countenance, and he closed his eyes for a second, as if to shut out the sight the thought pictured. The truth had flashed upon him that this was to be Tattie’s relative, her companion. “Great God!” he exclaimed, unconsciously, beneath his breath, “Tattie the little waif I found in the mountains, the little one whose education I surrounded with every care to keep her safe and spotless as women should be!” A sudden desire to speak to Tricksie seized him. “Yes, for Tattie’s sake I will inquire—I may gain some information,” he thought, as he retraced his steps, and soon overtook the figures, for Tricksie lacked the fortitude and strength to walk quickly to the expected realization of her fears.

"Mrs. Banatyne, I believe," said Kelvyn, lifting his hat, and extending his hand.

Tricksie started and seemed recalled from another world. She seized Kelvyn's hand, as a drowning being would grasp some life-saving object that floated within reach. "Oh, Mr. Kelvyn," she said, in a low quivering voice, "I'm so glad!" and she held his fingers tightly, with her two little trembling hands.

"I'm sorry I startled you," said Kelvyn, for Mrs. Banatyne's nervousness was illy concealed; "You are very well, I suppose," but he didn't suppose anything of this kind, only an awkward commonplace, for he never in his life expected to see handsome, happy, reckless Tricksie, such a careworn, haggard, white-faced woman.

"Oh, yes, yes," she murmured, as well as her excitement would permit, still clinging to Kelvyn's hand, the Marquis hovering near by, frowning his displeasure at Kelvyn's intrusion—"but—but—it has been so long since—since—I saw you—" she stammered on, not for a moment letting go the support of his hand, as if the slightest contact with the strong man was a comfort to her. "It is such an unexpected—pleasure—" she almost gasped the words, as the Marquis stood hawklike over his victim; his demon eyeballs glaring into her blanched face like two burning coals shot from the furnace of hell.

Tricksie's wistful eyes, her clinging helplessness, her anguish plainly visible in every line of her pretty childlike face, appealed to Kelvyn's strong manly nature. He thought the woman

needed protection, and he concluded to put her in the direction to secure it.

“Are you looking for your husband, Mrs. Banatyne?” he asked kindly.

“Yes,” whispered Tricksie, her lips turning an ashy white, and her eyes set steadfastly on Kelvyn’s face, “Have you seen—” she could not finish the question, her head reeled, her lips trembling as she clutched a nearby chair.

“Yes, I just had a glimpse of him,” answered Kelvyn, not free from bitterness, “as he went into that room,” pointing down a private hallway opposite.

“Where?” asked Tricksie, hoarsely, her eyes following Kelvyn’s finger as he pointed again in the same direction, down the private hall, saying “Room 152.”

“152!” repeated Tricksie, and she bent forward and stared in the direction, asked God to make those stubborn walls of penetrable stuff that her eyes might enter and know. The Marquis’ eyes glistened with satisfaction at this unexpected evidence.

“With—with—” faltered Tricksie, her breath coming quicker, as she stared wistfully into Kelvyn’s face.

“With his son, I presume,” interrupted Kelvyn, carelessly, as he tipped his hat and went his way, for the Marquis had moved closer and touched Tricksie’s elbow, as if to move on.

“With his son!” She gasped, trying to undo the fastening of her veil. She felt suffocating.

"His son," she whispered again, hoarsely, as if afraid the very air might hear of the great wrong. "Has this intrigue been going on so long?" she continued, talking in a dazed way to herself, although her escort thought that at last she was unburdening her woe and turning to him for consolation.

The Marquis pressed his limp hand closer to his breast, saying: "Permettez moi. Will not madame take my arm?" Tricksie brushed him aside as she would a scorpion that had stung her.

"How dare you come near me?" she asked, as she shrank from him and clung closer to the wall for support; her eyes darting hatred, disgust, and shrinking horror.

"If it had not been for you, I would never have known it, and would have been living happily with my husband to-day, I hate you for the agony I now suffer."

The Marquis gave his usual shoulder-shrug and said impatiently, "*Sacre tonnere!* zat is like a woman; she always want to know about her husband, zen if some one be so kind as to tell her of his amours, zen she find ze faute, and he receives no thanks for ze pains. *Bien!*"

"Ze time will not be long, when madame will think different," returned the Marquis, gloating over the satisfaction which was so near at hand, for he could hear Roy's voice, blending with female tones, as Tricksie with difficulty, dragged herself around the corner of the corridor, into the private hall that led immediately to Dolores' rooms.

Her lips were compressed, her face deadly pale. The Marquis' eyes were ablaze with the pleasurable satisfaction of an accomplished, fiendish task.

“The reward is mine, the reward is mine! Will ze proud madame act now?” ran his thoughts. “Who has she left but me, to lean upon, I like to know.”

The door of Dolores' room had been carelessly left ajar by Banatyne when he rushed in to show her his wife's note, and Tricksie plainly heard his well-known voice.

“Oh, well, let her go. She was a daisy. Prettier than a cherub, but I'm sick of the whole business.”

Roy was talking about his mine, but his wife thought herself the subject being discussed. She saw the flutter of a dress skirt through the half-open door; and heard a woman's voice say: “There, don't worry, dearie; it is an ungrateful sort of business when you can be so deceived.”

“I am not worrying—I never worry.”

Tricksie could endure no more. Reeling, she turned, and like a wounded fawn staggered away from the door, her escort following like a dog satisfied with his expected bone. She deigned to lean heavily upon his arm now, for she needed support. After all of these years of contrition and conscience torture, will she take another false step? Will the devil again get the upper hand? On, ON would she go, led and tempted by that Satan's agent, who was almost gleeful in his triumph. Would no help come to save her from herself?

Still Tricksie walked on, heedless, unmindful of the great precipice yawning before her. The sudden proof of her husband's infidelity, and her yearning to be away from a scene that pained her, even unto death, revived her almost exhausted strength. Her steps became quick and more vigorous with the sudden reaction, and the Marquis found it difficult to keep pace with her. If she could have hurled herself into another world she would have gladly done so. As they stood waiting for the elevator, Tricksie turned and involuntarily glanced back toward the room where she knew her husband was. Her breath came fast, from overwrought feelings, and her haste to put space between herself and her heart's keeper. She never loved Roy so much in all her life as she did at that moment. There was no jealousy then—only the harrowing thought that she was about to give him up forever.

Then she thought of her child, their child, could she half orphan her unborn babe? Render it homeless and friendless. These silent yet eloquent appeals to her mother heart, and her courage failed. With a quick gasp she faced about, and started, like a fearless infant in its first steps to reach an objective point, before it falls. She rushed in the direction of Dolores' room, almost flying, fearful lest her sudden impulse should be spent before she saw her loved one.

Her escort, surprised at this flank movement, hurried after his wayward victim. He touched her upon the arm as if to arrest her sudden determination. "Have you not of ze pride, one leetle

bit, madame?” he asked anxiously. She faltered. She wavered. But the magnet of love was too powerful; she did not turn her face again. She fairly ran down the corridor, around the corner, past the private hall, through the door, straight into Dolores’ room, to fall, panting, and almost exhausted, into her husband’s outstretched arms.

“Why what a state you are in,” said Banatyne,” anxiously, as he pressed his sobbing, hysterical wife to his heart, kissing and hugging her in his original, vigorous style; “There, my darling pet, don’t worry.”

She clung to him now with an intensity born of her all-absorbing love, Roy’s lips pressing hers with burning, lingering kisses, and this was the picture that met the astonished eyes of the Marquis, when he very impolitely pushed open the door which Dolores had closed, and walked, unbidden, into somebody else’s apartments.

“*Diable! Sacre!*” escaped his angry lips as he absented himself with great alacrity.

After Tricksie’s outburst of emotion had subsided, and she could with effort control a few words, she half-turned her face but did not raise her head from its nestling place upon Roy’s breast, and, like a weeping child, that had been frightened at the object upon which it had at last summoned courage to gaze, with half averted eyes she asked in sobbing tones: “Who (bitter sob) is (bitterer sob) she?” (bitterest sob of all) and she pointed a trembling finger toward Dolores.

“My daughter, by my first wife,” ventured Roy

with his head bowed down, looking as sheepish as possible.

“Your daugh—” but Tricksie’s ecstasy of delight left the sentence incomplete, as she renewed her kisses upon her husband’s lips, then fairly sprang from him and bounded across the room, caught Dolores in her arms and almost smothered the girl with kisses and caresses; again she turned towards Roy, her emotional strength almost gone—she would have collapsed had not her husband caught her as she reeled,—and she lay crying tears of happiness in his arms, the astonished Dolores looking on through transparent, sympathetic drops that were gathering in her eyes while Roy’s trembling hand fondly stroked the bowed head of his wife.

“You see, Roy—” came Tricksie’s tearful voice, from its cuddling place, close against his neck; “you see—you know—you are my dear love—my all—my best earthly possession—” and her hand groped its way to his cheek, and stroked it softly and caressingly. “I wouldn’t like you to love anybody else’s daughter like that,” and a smile flitted over her face as Roy pressed her yielding form closer, and said coaxingly:

“How flurried you are. Can’t you tell me your trouble, dearest?”

“Well, you see,” faltered Tricksie, her lips trembling, “I didn’t know you had a daughter,” and she drew the sympathetic Dolores toward her and kissed her most affectionately.

“And did somebody try to make you jealous, my pet?” guessed Banatyne.

“ Hush !” she shuddered, nestling closer.

“ When you were so anxious to be my first wife, sweetness, I was too much in love with you to tell you I had been married before, and had children ; I could not think of causing you the slightest unhappiness. It was my great love for you—that ”—faltered Banatyne, as he hung his head, overcome with embarrassment.

“ That made you tell me a great big fib,” assisted Tricksie. “ Why, I’m willing to be step-mother to half the world, Roy, if it will only leave me you, dearie. Any more ?” she asked roguishly.

“ Yes, my darling twin brother, Dougald,” interrupted Dolores, determined not to allow another opportunity to have him denied, and, with a commendable spirit to help her father in the hour of his trouble.

“ Are you sure, Roy,” that no more chickens will come home to roost ?” she asked in mocking solemnity.

“ Honor bright !” said Banatyne, crossing his heart, and holding up his right hand in comic mimicry, “ these are all,” and he blessed his stars that his conscience was at last relieved of a deception that had so worried him.

“ I am sure, if my son is one-half as handsome as is my daughter,” said Tricksie, taking both of Dolores’ hands in hers, and looking fondly and admiringly into the girl’s face, “ I ought to be a very proud mother, indeed. Your hair is like your father’s,” she said, affectionately, “ and so is your smile,” and she passed her arm about Dolores’ waist, and the two women went over to the

soia. As they sat there, they made a strikingly contrasting picture—with the odds slightly in Dolores' favor, for she had more youth certainly on her side.

Tricksie was at least ten years older than Tattie, but she did not look it. Her face was almost baby-like in its softness. Every feature, every line, revealed indecision—weakness—frailty. It was the face of a pretty toy, that men might play with, either to abuse or to love—depending upon what kind of men it met.

Dolores' beauty was of a nobler, stronger type. Each line of her face evinced strength of character, high purpose of intention. Her lips, although decidedly kissable, looked as if there might be other duties of more importance for them to do. Her eyes, beautiful in sympathy, could flash defiance at that which did not please them.

At this moment Dougald bounded in, but stopped short, with enforced dignity, confused on seeing a strange lady in the room.

"That's your son, Roy, and consequently mine," exclaimed Tricksie, as she arose and greeted the astonished Dougald, taking him affectionately by the hands, she added, a happy smile beaming from her happy face: "You are the perfect image of your father."

"So I have been told many times before," laughed Dougald, as he always enjoyed the compliment.

"How will you like me for your mother?" asked Mrs. Banantyne, drawing herself up, and looking as important as possible.

Dougald looked first at his sister, then at his father, both of whom sat with smiling, expectant faces.

“ I only wish I had the right to the honor of such relationship,” returned Dougald, with commendable, budding gallantry.

“ Well, the honor is yours,” said his father proudly, and the picture of the happy family was complete.

A knock at the door attracted the attention of the group. A card was the response to the opening, and in one corner of the tiny pasteboard was written, “ For Mrs. Banatyne;” the caller’s name that it announced was “ Mr. James R. Kelvyn,”

Dolores danced around the room, holding the card high above her head: “ Captain Jim! Captain Jim! at last, at last!” she cried.

“ I like, the way you appropriate my visitors,” laughed Tricksie, playfully, trying to snatch the card. “ That card is intended for me, look!” and Dolores stopped, while Tricksie drew her attention to the penciling in the corner, “ For Mrs. Banatyne,” but we will not be rivals so soon, Dolores, darling,” she said, as she noticed a shade pass over the girl’s face and reading her heart secret as plainly as if it had been exposed to the power of a thousand-candle electric search light.

“ I met him in the corridor, I believe,” said Tricksie, passing her hand nervously across her forehead, as if to make sure of herself, “ but really, I hardly remember. I was so excited and nervous.”

When Kelvyn entered the room, he was in the last state of suppressed nervousness. Tricksie met

him cordially but Dolores feigned cold dignity.

"I don't know whether I am considered in this call, or not," she playfully pouted. "I am sure you needn't have been so pointedly partial as to specify on your card that you wished only to call upon Mrs. Banatyne. No, I don't think I will shake hands with you at all, Captain Jim," was her answer, as she laughingly refused Kelvyn's proffered, trembling hand.

"I thought that was the proper thing to do," replied Kelvyn apologetically. "I did call specially upon Mrs. *Dougald* Banatyne, to offer my congrat—"

"Mrs. *Dougald* Banatyne?" repeated Dolores, with astonishment, then smiled at Kelvyn's rueful expression. "My brother is not married that we know of. Good joke! good joke!" she added, shrieking with laughter.

How then?" asked Kelvyn with a puzzled look.

"Do you remember the little box? This is its secret," replied his ward, her eyes resting fondly upon *Dougald*.

In an instant the truth flashed upon Kelvyn. Dolores had not only found her father, but also a brother, and this was what she wanted to tell him. What a fool he had been!

Such a sudden and pleasant awakening from so horrible a nightmare was too much for Kelvyn. He was incredulous of his own eyes. Like a doubting Thomas, he must perforce have more proof; he accordingly gathered Dolores unto himself, blushes, laughter and all, and stammered:

“Then you are still my Tattie.”

Tricksie took a snap shot and drew conclusions. Dolores extricated herself from his entangled arms, saying, as the blushes rushed to her cheeks, “I don’t know about the possessive part of it, but I am Tattie, or rather Dolores, now, with a surname that I love; Dolores Banatyne, at your service, please your honor,” as she courtesied by way of introducing herself to Captain Jim. “This is my twin brother, Mr. Dougald Banatyne, also at your service,” as Dougald came forward and received a friendly grip from Kelvyn that almost crushed every bone in his right hand.

Now, if there was anything besides dress, with which Tricksie was conversant, it was the science of love. She knew it in all its phases, in all its numerous and varying degrees, and she thought “Aha, my icicle; so Cupid has you in his toils at last.”

“Hello, Prince James,” called a cheery voice from an inner room, and Banatyne came sauntering out.

“You are just in time to save your property,” he said to Kelvyn, with his well-known cordial hand shake. “When this pink of perfection,” here he indicated Tricksie by an inclination of his head, “turned all of her money over to pay my debts, and I got notice from that darned fool of a lawyer that he had actually paid dollar for dollar, the first thing I thought of was, ‘There goes Kelvyn’s property. I’ve hung on to it like a tin pan to a dog’s tail; and it’s all there yet, taxes paid up, street assessments. All the modern improvements. Everything complete. Nobody’s

been in the house since you left. No, sir; I wouldn't let 'em set foot in it. Had to do a lot o' repairs on that store property in Montgomery street. It hasn't been rented well of late but you're just in time to save it," and he gave Kelvyn a hearty clap on the back. It would 'a gone up the flume this time, sure, for now I haven't my wife's money to make free with any more, and must get some cash for emergencies."

Kelvyn grasped Banatyne's hand. "Well, Roy, you are not perfect by any means," he said, "but your generosity ought to cover a pile of sins; we all have our faults, but don't know it."

Of course everything was explained to Kelvyn, but not to his entire satisfaction. There was a discord in the harmony of arrangements, and that discord was Tricksie. He could forgive the shortcoming in the man. The generosity of the woman he passed unnoticed. The only thought he entertained, wherein Tricksie figured, was to save his ward from her—as he thought—contaminating influence. He would use his best endeavors to keep the girl from such polluting contact.

Tricksie was overjoyed at the prospect of having so charming a companion as Dolores. At last," she thought, "my prayer has been heard, and I will have a friend of my own sex," and inwardly she returned heartfelt thanks, and registered a vow to try to deserve her friendship.

The newly made mother felt very important, and bustled around like a young hen with her first brood of chickens; of course the rooms at the hotel would be given up right away; Dou-

gald, like a good son that he was, would see about the luggage; she had come down in the street car, but she would return and send the carriage for them; that is, for Dolores, Dougald and Mr. Kelvyn, and they must come up, as soon as possible, as it was much past the dinner hour now; Mr. Kelvyn, she hoped, would honor them with a long visit.

“’Day, ’day! Will see you later,” said Tricksie, waving her gloved hand like a baby as she left the room to carry out her hospitable intentions, Banatyne following her. Suddenly he returned to insist upon Kelvyn’s dining with them: “Come up to the house, Prince James,” he said, “I want to show you some ore specimens. The biggest mine afloat to-day. Broke a trifle yesterday, but she was on top again to-day at the close of the Board. By the way, she’s located in your region; I call her The Last Hope, because she’s my only expectation. If she don’t turn out all right your uncle’s gone up the flume,” and he gave a sanguine laugh at the mere mention of such an impossibility.

Then he threw his arm about Kelvyn’s neck and whispered something in his ear; the laughing response to which was; “No, thanks; not a share, Roy; a burnt childs dreads the fire.” Again he drew Kelvyn’s head toward him and whispered, to which Kelvyn replied, “Swore off, Roy.” By this time his wife was half way to the elevator, about a hundred feet away, and when she turned to look for him he remembered her presence and started briskly to overtake her, saying, “All right, Prince James,

but don't forget the dinner at seven. Kelvyn looked at his broad back as he hurried away, and thought: "Well, nobody could help liking Roy; even his coat looks genial, and it's chuckfull of good fellowship," and he turned his face toward the interior of the room and Miss Banatyne. She and Dougald had commenced that littering occupation—packing; Dougald, with the haphazard impetuosity of boyish youth, eager for a change, was throwing things right and left from chiffonier drawers, from dressers, from closets, all pell mell, like a young cyclone scattering the leaves in a flower garden; silken hose of every color, slippers to match, gowns beruffled and beflooned,—nothing was sacred to his rapid transit method of rolling up and tucking in. Dolores had stopped when Kelvyn returned, and was trying to do the hostess act under very trying circumstances; even when she saw some of her pretty things in danger of destruction from Dougald's rough treatment she only gave a little suppressed "Oh!" and again turned her attention to Kelvyn. Presently, Dolores and Kelvyn found themselves almost buried in a snow-drift of bewildering mysteries,—sheer, cobwebby, lacey, embroidered dainties in *lingerie*, their snowflake whiteness relieved by delicate tinted ribbons while the aroma of heliotrope sachet filled the room. "I can't fold those fleecy lacy nothings," shouted Dougald, red in the face; "I declare girls have so many notions and things a fellow never dreamed of," throwing another shower of the unmanageable garments at his sister

and Kelvyn, saying “You both fold and I’ll tuck in.” Presently he held up a P. D. or Z. Z. or some other alphabetical combination and said, “I say, Sis, do you want this?” when he saw the blushes rush into her cheeks and Captain’s Jim’s eyes suddenly drop,—he realized he had done something wrong, and quickly hid the offending mystery behind his back, as Dolores said:

“Don’t trouble yourself, brother dear; I will finish the packing,” and began to gather her pretty incomprehensible mystics; bashfully shielding their outlines from masculine eyes. She placed them in an inner room, to be packed with fond and caressing hand into a fit receptacle for such dainty loveliness, Dougald remarking in a relieved tone that he would go down to the office, pay the hotel bill and attend to having their belongings sent up to his father’s house, as he thought he understood that business better than he did packing. “Will be back in thirty minutes,” he informed them, “and both of you good people be ready; it won’t take the carriage longer than that to come down. Remember, thirty minutes,” he repeated, by way of impressing them with the idea of haste.

CHAPTER XX.

TRUE LOVE AS USUAL STRIKES A SNAG.

KELVYN was alone with Dolores at last for "thirty minutes." "Thirty minutes," to tell a girl of his love; "thirty minutes" in which to be raised to the seventh heaven of ecstatic bliss or to be dashed to the depths of hopeless despair; "thirty minutes" in which to be told to live or die. The last few days had convinced him how desperately he was in love with her. Now that she had a father he was relieved from longer service in that capacity, but he was anxious to assume a new responsibility. He nerved himself and made a desperate resolve that he would know his fate, "now or never." If she refused him he could die but once, and now was as good a time as any. So he started in with cruel bluntness:

"Dolores, do you love me?"

He tried to ask the question in the same careless tone that he was wont to assume in the mining camp when Tattie was a semi-savage child following him from place to place, as a pet spaniel follows the hand that is kind to it, and when she would have answered him: "Yes, Captain Jim, I love you more 'an I love Bruiser; I love you next to *mi madre*,"—but the tone was not the same. His voice was strangely tremulous. The vibration of the great and powerful love of a man

who had never loved before,—a love that had not been dribbled out to this one and to that one, until it had been reduced to a weakling. It was *all* there, whole and entire,—and it spoke in his voice. It shook his frame like the deep toned vibrations of a church organ, which, touched by a finger, makes the edifice tremble, so mighty is its awakened volume.

“Why, Captain Jim!” exclaimed Dolores, surprised at the unexpected question;—then she hesitated, and stood shyly abashed. Words did not come as plentifully or as readily as they used to up in Gold Gulch. After a pause she replied:

“Of course I love you, Captain Jim. How seriously you ask the same old question. How could I help loving you?” “Haven’t you always been kind to me? Wouldn’t I be most ungrateful not to return it in some way?” and she half raised her eyes to his, while blushes suffused her face.

“I am the debtor, Dolores,” he returned thoughtfully. “You have given me some one to live for, some one to love,” and he took her hand, pressed it passionately, the girl only blushing more deeply.

Instead of creeping into Captain Jim’s arms as she once would have done so innocently, she instinctively moved away from him; but he held her hand firmly in his unconscious earnestness, and with such force as to cause her some pain. “Is it only gratitude that makes you love me, dearest?” and he bent forward to catch the answer like a man anxiously awaiting the verdict that tells him he will live or die.

“I don’t know,” was the noncommittal answer—for the girl had that inborn perversity of woman, not to yield too soon, but determined that a man must coax her a little to be his wife—and she glanced slyly at the clock. Those thirty minutes were speeding fast away.

“Now that other friends, who have a better right to you than I, have come between us, and I see you passing away from me, I cannot bear the sacrifice,” pleaded Kelvyn as he clung to her hand. “Tell me, Dolores, that I may continue to be your guardian,—your protector,—not in the old way, but by all the rights of a husband,” he went on. “Tell me, Dolores, for God’s sake, ‘yes!’”

“Yes,” she whispered in a shy little way. Then she was so abashed that she felt like hiding her face. So she covered it with a blush as Kelvyn folded her in his arms, and kissed her again, and again, without one bit of *fatherly* sentiment.

Dolores was his affianced bride. She was all his own. “Thank you, my darling, and thank you, my God,” said Kelvyn, reverently.

He would have enjoyed remaining that way for all time in silent adoration of his sweet love, feeling her heart throbs against his own, but those thirty minutes were flying, for time waits for no man, not even a lover, and Kelvyn had a task to perform. He must save Dolores from Tricksie’s influence; she must not go to Tricksie’s house. He must talk quickly of prosaic, practical things, of this common earth. It must be done before Dougald’s return, for no ears but Dolores’ must hear what he would rather not be obliged to speak.

To introduce a most unpleasant subject following so closely upon the heels of his exalted love-you-to-death ecstasy was not to Kelvyn's taste—but duty forced and time pressed him to be quick and to the point.

“My darling,” he said, his cheek resting upon her head which was nestling against his heart.

“Yes,” answered her muffled voice.

“I have something very particular to say to you,” and his arm drew her form closer to him.

“Say it, Captain Jim,” came from the tucked away voice.

“The subject will be distasteful to us both;” the last word indicating a union pleasant to contemplate.

“Then don't say it, Captain Jim,” she laughed, “I am too happy.”

“I must, my pet; duty obliges me,” returned Kelvyn in a solemn tone.

“Then go on,” said Dolores, in a happy submissive manner.

“I don't suppose you know anything about your father's second wife?” he asked; his voice had lost its thrill. He talked like a man who was forcing himself to speak.

“Never saw her until to-day,” replied Dolores, and she shifted her head to make it more comfortable.

“Never saw her until to-day,” repeated Kelvyn in a relieved tone. “Thank God for that! Your father has shown more moral discernment than I gave him credit for.”

"But I learned as much of her nature in one short hour as if I had known her a life time," continued Dolores, and a sad cadence vibrated her voice. "She is a woman whom a blind person could lead," added Dolores, affectionate sympathy for the person discussed decidedly *en evidence* in her tones, which now came full and round, as she had raised her head from its cuddling nest and rested it lightly upon his shoulder.

"I am so glad to know that your father has some little respect left for the proprieties and public opinion," said Kelvyn, warmly.

"How?" asked his affianced looking him fair and square in the eyes.

"How?" repeated Kelvyn, "why by not bringing you in contact with that woman," he added almost savagely.

"Is she not my father's wife?" asked Dolores, very much surprised.

"Oh, yes," quickly answered Kelvyn, "certainly by all the rights that the law can give—but——"

"Well?" asked the daughter with wide opening eyes.

"But she,——" and Kelvyn again hesitated.

"She, what?" asked Dolores somewhat warmly, for this was something new in Captain Jim to deal in covert insinuation.

"She has a past, my darling," he said sadly.

"What past?" asked Dolores, her eyes gazing steadily enough on him now, as if to compel a direct answer.

Kelvyn hesitated.

“What past?” repeated Dolores; “it is hardly fair to strike from ambush, Captain Jim. It is not like you,” she added reproachfully.

Kelvyn started at her tone.

“I have heard some rumors reflecting upon my father’s wife,” she continued, “but rumor is not always to be relied upon, except by those eager to believe. Make your accusation, Captain Jim. Let me hear the worst that she has done,” demanded the girl very much like a lawyer pleading for a client.

“She was your father’s free companion two years before he married her,” replied her lover.

A blush mounted Dolores forehead and Kelvyn’s face was flushed with excitement.

“Must I also renounce my father?” asked Dolores innocently.

“No,—no,—certainly not,” answered Kelvyn, and a smile passed over his face, he was so amused at Dolores’ lack of worldly wisdom.

“Why not?” asked Dolores surprised beyond measure.

“Oh, that which in a man is a peccadillo is an unpardonable crime in a woman,” explained Kelvyn, carelessly.

“That hardly seems just,” answered the girl, meditatively.

“Well, just or not, it is the way of the world, my darling. It has different codes of morals—one for men and a stricter one for women,” Kelvyn went on in an explanatory way.

“I have no intimate knowledge of the world,” said Dolores, looking as when perplexed over

some intricate school study, "but it seems to me that the specific lesson taught by the law does not encourage, but represses reformation."

"Once fallen, never rise: Is that the world's charity to its daughters?" and Dolores awaited Kelvyn's answer. He was just recovering from a rude awakening to the fact that the little girl, whose education he had conducted with such safeguards, to produce the perfection seasoned to his tastes and ideas, had strange views, that would be difficult to reconcile and subdue.

"One false step, and she must continue down the grade," went on Dolores, giving vent to her suddenly awakened mind, "her brother is forgiven, but no matter what were the circumstances that caused his sister's sin; no matter what her contrition, there is no place for her. She must not dare to raise her eyes to the honest (?) man who caused her misery. Is this the lesson of the world into which I am just entering, Captain Jim?" and her eyes filled with sympathetic tears, and robbed her of all tendency to strong mindedness in its vulgar acceptance.

"There are many varieties——" he began.

"Naturally," interrupted Dolores, "as there are varieties and grades in all evil doers, but are all of them repulsive and ingrain malefactors? Surely some of them have a spark of individual worth. I plead for those who have erred but once and are contrite for——"

"She is blemished," impatiently interrupted Kelvyn. "She is unfit. She is——"

“I’m afraid our views are very different on this point, Captain Jim,” interrupted Dolores, as she withdrew her hand from his. “Excuse me, but you seem over-exacting regarding the faults of women. I am sure my father’s wife has many and great virtues.”

Here the knowledge of Tricksie’s intense love for Banatyne, her unselfish bestowal of her money to pay his debts, were forced upon Dolores, and she continued: “But the world, and especially *you* of that world, Captain Jim, have not the inspiration, or, I’m afraid, the inclination, to appreciate the fact. I saw enough to-day to convince me of her truth, of her love, and of her loyalty. No discussion would make me ignore these evidences.”

“Dolores, this is a vital question. We will not discuss it further,” said Kelvyn.” “When you have mingled with the world longer, you will acknowledge the justice of my apprehension of this woman’s influence upon you. I ask, as a personal favor, that you do not go to her house and become as one of her family. Remain here for a few days longer with your brother. We will hasten our marriage, and you will be saved from her contaminating influence when I am your husband.”

“Not go to her house? Not become a member of my father’s family?” repeated Dolores.

“No, certainly not,” said Kelvyn. “Why, she hasn’t a lady friend in the world; of social standing, she has none,” he added, with the assurance that that statement would settle the question without doubt

in his favor, but his affianced's answer startled him.

"So much the more reason why I should go," said Dolores, her voice trembling with emotion. "She should not be left to tread her path alone. It would be a hard fight for her to wage against the devil single-handed. I will lend her such service as I may."

"You will go?" asked Kelvyn in dismay.

"Certainly," answered Dolores firmly, "she needs me."

"You will sacrifice all——" he faltered, his voice echoing his intense excitement and astonishment.

"If my views are obnoxious to you, Mr. Kelvyn," and Dolores drew herself up to her fullest height, her eyes flashing fire as she thought his words implied a threat, "you may consider yourself relieved from the annoyance of listening to them again."

Kelvyn caught the haughty, indignant girl in his arms.

"Will you not heed my warning, Dolores?" he asked passionately, his great love mingled with the poetic veneration he felt for the girl almost overwhelming him; but freeing herself, Dolores answered simply:

"That would suit my pleasure, the other my conscience," when Dougald rushed in.

"Come along, good people," he exclaimed, "the carriage is at the door, and by Jove she's a daisy. Pop knows how to put on style. Not ready yet?" he asked in surprise. "What have you people been doing, anyhow? You haven't packed up a blessed thing," and Dolores and Kelvyn's faces

showed as much confusion as did the room, and he bustled around helping Dolores to gather up the scattered wardrobe.

The packing finally accomplished, the porter placed the trunks on the diminutive hand-drays and carted them to the freight elevator, said “Thank ye,” for Dougald’s liberal tip, and Dougald, Kelvyn and Dolores hastened down to the hotel entrance, where Dougald produced a very brief note from Tricksie saying, “Orders from headquarters.”

Kelvyn read the following :

“MY DEAR SON: The victoria is not large enough for three, besides ‘two’s company.’ Let Captain Kelvyn and Dolores come in the victoria, and you, like a dear, good boy, patronize the street car. Am awaiting anxiously to give you all a hearty welcome to your home. I will always be

Your loving

MOTHER.”

“These are the orders, Captain Kelvyn, get right in,” said Dougald.

“Thank you, no,” returned Kelvyn, as he tucked the robe carefully about his sweetheart, adjusting the foot cushion for her cunning bottines. “I will be compelled to deny myself the pleasure.”

“What’s the trouble now?” asked Dougald. “I thought it was all fixed, and you were coming, Captain Kelvyn.”

“I claim the privilege on this occasion usually accorded to the ladies,” said Kelvyn, “of changing my mind. Please make my excuses to your father, I’m not feeling well,” and lifted his hat with cold dignity, saying, “Good afternoon,” as he walked away.

Up a steep hill grade, the horses being compelled to take a winding zig-zag course to decrease the abruptness of the ascent, then down a long incline, crossing car tracks—those ever present menaces to wheels of which San Francisco has more than her proportion—went the spanking pair, Dougald laughing and happy. Being a boy, he was not expected to be sore tried by lovers' trials for some years to come; and for the same reason he was not hedged in by prudish guards or restraints until he felt like a fettered bird. Dolores, meditative, because, being a girl, her childhood ended just five years too soon.

Presently the driver drew rein and turned into the carriage way of one of San Francisco's handsomest mansions.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOME CONFIDENCES.

THE house stood on one of the city's famous elevations, commanding a water view which could not be surpassed from any spot of earth. The great bay of San Francisco spread out like an infant ocean, so generous is its magnitude.

Two massive gates opened in the low railing that surrounded the grounds, one at the north, the other at the south end. The carriage way wound from one to the other, leaving between a circular stretch of lawn, in the centre of which a fountain sent its sparkling jets of water high, to descend in artificial showers upon the antics of diminutive gold and silver fish sporting their tiny fins in the miniature lake below them.

When the brother and sister reached their father's home Tricksie met them at the very threshold, with most cordial welcome. After expressing genuine surprise at Kelvyn's absence, for Tricksie had hoped that Dolores would be a magnet of sufficient power to soften his prejudice toward herself and to bring him to her house, she began the pleasant duties of making her husband's children feel perfectly at home. It was a happy, congenial task.

She had pined so long for female friendship, that she almost looked upon Dolores as an angel

sent from heaven to answer her earnest and fervent prayers for some kind friend of her own sex.

She conducted them to the apartments that were honored in being assigned to their occupancy.

"Now make yourself entirely comfortable and at home, Dougald," she said. "Remember, my son, that this is just as much, or more, your home than it is mine," and she kissed the boy, and stroked him lightly and fondly upon the cheek. She could talk more freely to Dougald than she could to Dolores for she had been more accustomed to that gender. Anything feminine had given her such a wide, wide berth that she felt almost awkward and shy in the girl's presence.

"Come, Dolores," she said, "your rooms are right here, adjoining your brother's," and she led her step-daughter into apartments that were pictures of dainty elegance.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Dolores, as she threw her arms about Tricksie's neck, kissing her with impulsive affection.

"I know you arranged those lovely flowers. Everything is so exquisite," she added, her admiring eyes glancing around the handsome appointments. "It is kind of you to give Dougald and me such a sweet and cordial welcome."

"Mrs. —," then the girl hesitated, she did not want to say "Mrs. Banatyne" and could not quite say "mother."

The step-mother, perhaps, divining her embarrassment, said:

"Why don't you call me Tricksie?"

“I don’t quite like that name,” explained Tattie, and she placed her finger under Tricksie’s chin and lifted the soft dimpled face as she would have done a younger sister’s; as she looked upon its doll like beauty, she said:

“I feel more like calling you “Baby.”

“That would be reversing the order of things,” laughed Tricksie, “why I am older than you—ten years older—as I should be.”

“Well, I am bigger,—yes, ten years bigger,—than you,” smilingly retorted Dolores, as she drew herself up, and her queenly height and superb proportions overtopped Tricksie by at least three inches.

“Your father sometimes calls me ‘Sweetness,’” smiled Tricksie in a suggestive way.

“An appropriate name,” declared Dolores, “so ‘Sweetness’ it shall be.”

The introduction having been concluded to the satisfaction of both, “Sweetness” seated her new found idol in the comfortable abyss of an easy chair, telling her to rest there a moment and she would get her one of her own *negligés*, as Dolores’ trunks had not arrived. Then she would help her off with her dress and assist in arranging her hair. Tricksie had no idea of relegating this pleasure to a maid so soon. She hurried to her well supplied wardrobe and brought her prettiest *negligé*, insisting upon Dolores wearing it.

Tricksie then took Dolores to her own room, where her dresses, wraps, bonnets and other dainty apparel were pulled down and dragged out for special inspection. Her jewel caskets opened

their treasures, at Dolores' disposal, and, contrary to her expressed veto, more than half of Tricksie's belongings were moved to Dolores' quarters, to be, as Tricksie declared, that young lady's possessions forevermore.

"This jewelry and finery are more suitable for a young girl than for an old married woman," Tricksie said, in a happy chummy tone. "You will not feel offended if I offer you these things, will you dearest?" and she hesitated, looked uneasy, for she was at a loss how to show one-half the appreciation she felt for her girl friend and step-daughter.

"Of course not, 'Sweetness,'" was Dolores' smiling reply, "How could I be offended at such good-fellowship?"

"Now, I have tired you showing you so many evidences of a very weak woman," said Tricksie, as she noticed the girl's face grow pensive after the excitement of overhauling the extensive wardrobe; "but, oh! I just love pretty things," she added, clasping her hands with childish enthusiasm; then, suddenly exclaimed, "Come, let's go down and see if dinner isn't ready; your father ought to be home by this time."

A sigh escaped Tattie as she thought that Captain Jim would not be there, and if his purpose held, he might never come.

"I'll send Captain Kelvyn a very pressing invitation to honor us to-morrow," went on Tricksie fully understanding Dolores' pensive mien.

"He will not come," said Dolores, quickly.

"Will not?" repeated Tricksie.

“No.” Dolores answered as carelessly as she could, and forgetting her decision to let her hair alone she began to take the pins out of her coil mechanically, preparatory to its rearrangement. Her light tresses, in which there was a crimple made by nature’s curling iron, fell almost to her waist like a cape of gold.

“Why do you think he will not come?” asked Tricksie, with just a glimmer of impatience, for she recalled Kelvyn’s many “regrets” in earlier days, and recognized in his refusal now to accept her hospitality the stubborn prejudice of the world.

“Oh, I don’t know,” answered Dolores, carelessly and evasively.

Tricksie paused for a moment, then asked bluntly: “Why don’t you cry, dear?” as she sat in a helpless sort of attitude, so willing to do, but feeling bound by the shackles of prejudice as securely as is bound a culprit by the handcuffs of the law.

“Cry?” repeated Dolores as she turned from the mirror of the dresser, the comb that had been running through her tresses arrested by her intense surprise: “Cry,” she again echoed. “Why should I cry?” and she stared at her step-mother in blank astonishment.

“Why I always cry when things trouble me and don’t go my way. It does me so much good,” Tricksie offered by way of explanation.

“I seldom cry. Tears never do me any good,” returned the girl, and she jerked an obstinate tangle from her hair.

"Did Kelvyn make no excuse?" asked Mrs. Banatyne in a resigned, harder tone.

"Oh, yes; he said he wasn't feeling well; which, of course, was an excusable falsehood, and good enough for the occasion, in his estimation," and a playful hair that had dared to tickle Dolores' cheek was very unceremoniously jerked out by the root. And she turned again to the mirror.

Tricksie knew that Kelvyn had never liked her. She knew his supreme hatred for even the semblance of a spot upon a woman's character, and there was not the slightest doubt in her mind, but that she was the gulf separating these two young people.

"Dolores"—then the voice stopped short, like a person afraid to speak another word. When Miss Banatyne turned, what a transformation was there! Instead of the happy, dimply, smiling Tricksie, she saw a hard-faced, sadly-troubled, deeply-earnest woman. Both of her elbows rested upon the table, crushing the life out of the shy violets that were nestling there; her head leaned heavily and helplessly upon her hands.

"Well, Sweetness," said Dolores by way of reply. But Tricksie did not hear. There was an instant's embarrassing silence. "Did you speak?" asked Dolores, wishing to arouse Tricksie from her unhappy reverie.

"Yes," answered Tricksie desperately. The color was ebbing fast from her cheek and lip. "I was going to say something, but second thoughts are always best," and she raised her head, rested

her chin in her hand, and stared hard and sullenly into space.

“Not always,” contradicted the girl, “I’m here to be talked to,” and her sympathetic voice kindly invited confidences.

“Did Kelvyn say anything about me?” and Tricksie’s lips trembled like a baby’s when one it loves seems cross, and she looked straight into Dolores’ eyes for an answer, until she turned toward the mirror and picked up the comb that had dropped.

“Did he?” again asked Tricksie, earnestly.

“No,” answered Dolores, and she thought this was one of the few occasions where a white lie was better than the black truth, and the recording angel above was so preoccupied that he failed to make a note of her evasion.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SLAUGHTER OF "LAST HOPE."

THREE days had passed. Dolores and Dougald were beginning to feel at home in their father's house. Tricksie was full of kind solicitude for their happiness. Each day they loved their father's wife better, as the goodness of her heart and nobleness of her character developed.

Kee, of course, was Dolores' most devoted slave. He had made his complaint against Captain Jim and the Melican man generally for having suspected his loyalty and honesty, but she assured him sympathetically, that she never had believed him guilty of the theft of her location paper, and Kee felt correspondingly relieved.

"Captain Jim," thought Dolores, "makes up his mind to anything, and then he is more obstinate than Bruiser ever dared to be," but a sigh always accompanied a thought of Captain Jim. "Oh, dear; I wonder where he is." That reflection invariably produced a wistful look in her handsome Spanish eyes.

Kelvyn had not been heard from, a fact that seemed to concern Tricksie more than it did Dolores. Each evening upon Roy's return he was met with the question from his wife: "Any news from Prince James?"

"No, not a word," had been the answer.

He had not even called at Banatyne's office, and

had not been seen around the Exchange since his return to San Francisco. Tricksie feared and Dolores felt positively convinced that he had gone back to Gold Gulch without so much as a good-by to any of them. As far as Tricksie was concerned, she would not have expected that civility from Kelvyn; but she certainly felt disappointed that he had treated her stepdaughter with such cold indifference, and how to remedy things gave her serious thought.

Those three days had been rattlers for Banatyne. The stock market had been as skittish as the most frolicsome kitten. The "Last Hope" had been the foot ball with which the brokers toyed in their rough and tumble fashion. Now, it bounded over their heads, and eager exchequers strained their uttermost limits to reach it; then a few financial athletics would almost flatten it to the floor. Up one moment, until its holders were inflated like multi-millionaires, down the next instant, and they shrunk into pauper-like proportions. Banatyne was in the full enjoyment of the excitement he loved so well.

The fourth day had arrived, and still no news from Kelvyn; Dolores' eyes had become more wistful. Tricksie's anxiety, coupled with the firm conviction that she was the obstacle, went beyond her control. Just as her husband was taking his hat to start down town to business, she kissed him, saying:

"Roy, dear, I do wish you would send to the hotel and inquire about Mr. Kelvyn; I'm quite sure he is not well. He certainly wouldn't go back to

the mines without coming to say good-by to Dolores. He'll think we are worse than uncivilized to leave him sick in the hotel without even so much as an inquiry."

"Why didn't you say so before?" asked Banatyne. "I've been so busy or I would have looked Prince James up before this. It is strange, come to think of it. I certainly will go there this very day," he said, as he went to the corner to catch an approaching car.

The color had rushed into a certain young lady's cheeks. Her heartbeats, she was afraid, were audible. She caught Tricksie and squeezed her in the excess of her gratitude, at the same time making a poor attempt at a pout, saying:

"Now, why did you do that, you darling?" and she gave Tricksie three grateful kisses, with a fourth thrown in for full measure. "I wouldn't humble myself to inquire after the obstinate fellow. He doesn't deserve it," she added; notwithstanding her objections the expectation of hearing from Captain Jim had an effect upon Dolores. Her spirits went upward like a feather in the air.

Just as Banatyne stepped from the street car he met Halstead and they hurried along together. When these two worthy backers of the "Last Hope" reached California street it was almost impossible for them to push their way through it was so blocked, crowded and jammed with excited men. They were angry men. They were desperate men as well. "There they go!" "That's Banatyne!" "The other one's Halstead!" "Two of the biggest liars on top of God's

earth!” “Wouldn’t believe either of them under oath!” were some of the remarks they heard as they forced their way along. Their experienced eyes as well as their ears told them something unusual was in tow, although such expressions were not new to either of them. They had been criticized before, but they knew there was more going on than the ordinary commotion common to that busy bustling rendezvous where so many reckless men had been wrecked and so few cautious men rewarded.

As they reached their office building an angry voice shouted over the heads of a group of men who were abusing them not in the choicest vernacular:

“What’s the matter with the market, Banatyne?”

“Don’t know,” answered Banatyne in an indifferent tone, “we have only just come down town.”

“The story has gained ground that you have no title to the ‘Last Hope,’” was hurled back at Banatyne and Halstead’s retreating figures in bitterest tones.

Halstead turned in the door’s threshold and faced the crowd, saying, impatiently:

“All rabbit dust! Stuff and rot! You fellows scare worse than jack rabbits anyhow.” Then from force of habit he carelessly gestured a bow from his hat and followed Banatyne into the office, only to emerge the next instant to reconnoitre the “lay out” himself.

“You’re a nice pair to draw to,” was his derisive greeting from an angry member of the noisy crowd.

“Just hold your horses and don't let your remarks run away with you,” returned Halstead, his good natured lips curved with contempt. “Yesterday when the stock was as sprightly as a pack of fire-crackers you fellows were like smiling cherubs, and to-day because there's a little slump in the market you crawfish like the cowards that you are.”

At this defiance one of the belligerents made a wrathful rush at Halstead, who didn't budge a single step, his muscles as ready for active service as was his courage for what appeared to be a financial crisis, and his color deepened as he shouted:

“Suffering humanity! Lay on Macduff and damned be he who first cries hold, enough!” and he struck an attitude that showed he meant fight if necessary. “I'll tackle the whole crowd.” But the mere assertion cooled the ardor of their hotter comrades and Halstead went on his mission to the Exchange to see what the Bulls and Bears were doing with the “Last Hope.”

Three minutes hadn't elapsed before a curbstone broker rushed into Banatyne's office exclaiming: “Roy, Roy! the market on ‘Last Hope's’ broken all to pieces! There's a report on the street that there is something wrong with your title to the mine and the shorts are just climbing over each other to sell it right and left—just wiping the floor with it.”

“What infernal nonsense,” said Banatyne, red in the face, as he wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead. “Why, Judge Rush, the best mining lawyer in the State, examined the title and

said it was A 1, without a flaw. Run around and tell my brokers *all* to stand in and take every share offered, and I pity the shorts. Don't sell what you haven't got, boys; take a fool's advice.” Turning to his private secretary he continued: ‘ Get around and tell the boys not to be excited, not to sell their stock; that there is nothing wrong, and I say so. Stand by the stock. My title can't be questioned; it's the biggest buy on the whole list.’”

The two men started like winged Mercuries to carry reassurance to the broken lines of Banatyne's forces. They almost ran over a messenger boy who was progressing, as usual, at a snail's pace in Banatyne's direction.

“Roy Banatyne?” asked the boy slowly, addressing himself to the mine promoter when he had finally reached the office and opened the door. “A tel—”

“That's me. What is it?” asked Banatyne, snatching the message from the boy so hurriedly that the youngster thought a Kansas cyclone had struck him endways. He tore open the envelope and read:

“Roy Banatyne: English syndicate in their investigation ‘Last Hope’ have discovered your title from Lutner a forgery. Two miners, Sam Williams and Barney Ryan, hold possession for real owner, they say, and refuse me admission to mine.

“THOMAS HAYES.”

As Banatyne was reading Dougald had hurried into the office, pale as death. His secretary had returned so excited he could scarcely speak.

“Great Scott!” exclaimed Banatyne. “If this

telegram tells the truth we are *all* up the flume." He reeled just a trifle but instantly recovered himself. "But it's all damned nonsense. It can't be true. We don't scare at shadows." And throwing himself more erect he struck his expanded chest firmly with his clenched fist, saying: "It'll be a bigger breaker than that to make me give up the ship."

Dougald picked up the dispatch and read it eagerly. He had just come in from the Exchange where men were wild and riotous, as mob law for the moment was supreme. He had heard bold threats and he trembled for his father's safety.

"What will you do, Pop?" the boy asked, drawing nearer to his father as if desirous of shielding him from danger.

"Do?" snorted Banatyne. "Buy every share I can get. You and Ed. go back to the Board and tell my brokers not to pay any attention to what they hear, but to stand under the market. We *must* do it," added the desperate man. "Might as well be killed now for a sheep as a lamb."

At that moment Halstead bounded into the room as if he had been shot out of a cannon:

"What in the name of the Lord is the matter with the stock? She's deader than unlit punk," and he flung himself across the desk as if suffering a pain in that part of the anatomy that troubles a colicky baby.

"Only that complication about the title," coolly explained nervy Banatyne. "The shorts wouldn't have any capital if they didn't make it out of

whole cloth. If they hadn't started that infernal story the stock would be booming.”

“What does Judge Rush say about it?” queried the equally nervy Halstead.

“He says the title's clear—clear as day on the face of it,” emphasized Banatyne. “Go over to the Board, and stand under the ‘Last Hope.’ It's make or break with *me*.”

“Holy smoke! I'm in the same boat, Roy. Won't have enough left to pay my funeral expenses,” returned reckless Halstead, laughing as if it was a good joke, and he immediately returned to the Board.

He had been gone scarcely an instant when a confused sound of feet was heard at the office door, then a perfect swarm of messengers, brokers, frightened-looking women, and desperate stock speculators, crowded into the office and surged around Banatyne. Angry excitement was stamped upon every face. Many of the men had staked their all upon his advice, and their mood was surly in the extreme. Occasionally they broke out into inarticulate and abusive clamor. They asked Banatyne questions upon questions regarding the property and the cause of the market's decline. He was like a criminal being tried by mob law. At this critical moment Dougald hurried in and unconsciously added new danger to his father's already perilous predicament by shouting above the angry crowd: “Stock selling at five dollars; a drop of six dollars per share in less than an hour!”

An enraged murmur arose from the incensed crowd.

"Who are the short brokers?" shouted Banatyne above the din of discontent.

"The whole Board it seems to me," answered back Dougald in a loud voice, the compact and obstinate men preventing him access to his father's side. "Whitaker and Clarkson, Sherwood and Bently, have obeyed your orders, and are purchasing stock on the declines, but the cry is still they come."

The last statement softened the frowns of some of the furious people in the assembly until a surly fellow growled:

"A put up job. I'll bet my head Banatyne hasn't bought a share, or if he has he's sold ten where he bought one."

Here Banatyne's secretary returned with the startling intelligence that the Exchange was in a greater uproar if that was possible—the street panicky, followed by Halstead walking slowly in with debonnair indifference, and a fresh flower in his buttonhole.

"Thought I'd buy it while I had cash enough on hand," he said, with a devil-may-care chuckle, as he pointed to the blossom. "Well, you'd think Gabriel had blown his last toot this time, sure pop. Reminds me of a cattle stampede on the plains," he added more hurriedly. "Everybody crazy. 'Last Hope' selling at three-fifty! Just think of it. I bought a block yesterday at twelve dollars. Oh, Lord!" and he sank into a chair, with a hearty laugh and a reckless comedy air

strangely out of tune with the groans and the hisses of desperately exasperated men, who, finding themselves paupers, pushed closer to him and Banatyne with dangerous gleams darting from their angry eyes.

In a moment Halstead sprang to his feet.

“ What’s the matter with you all ? ” he shouted excitedly. “ Aren’t you men ? Can’t you stand a momentary collapse in the market without squealing ? I’ve got ten shares where you may have one, and I’m not pleading the baby act, am I ? ”

“ I’ll wager this bit, which is about all I have left,” sneered a heavy loser, “ that you and Banatyne have unloaded at high figures ; that neither of you have a share left.”

“ You couldn’t find one in *this* crowd to take that bet,” was the insinuation from another.

“ No, we want enough carfare to ride home to our wives ; they are beggars,” snarled a third.

“ Well, we are all pretty well loaded with Banatyne and Halstead’s stock ; they have the profits but I wouldn’t like to be burdened with their consciences,” was another compliment for their burning ears.

“ You’re all talking like a lot o’ putty men. I’m up to my neck in that stock,” declared Halstead, “ and so is Banatyne, and that’s a dead moral certainty,” he added vindictively, rage flashing from his eyes, for he was telling the truth and dared face his accusers.

“ Oh ! yes, you are,” snarled a disgusted individual ; “ we’ve heard that dodge before.”

Just in the nick of time as if to prove their innocence, several messenger boys entered Banatyne's office and cried above the confused mutterings:

"Mr. Roy Banatyne?"

"Here!" sounded Banatyne's voice from the midst of his surrounding complainants. The boys pushed through the crowd to Banatyne, each one handing him a sealed envelope:

"Ah! Here are some reports from the brokers and I'll give you all the benefit of what they have to say," and Banatyne read the first report aloud, more to relieve himself from an uncomfortably cramped position than to clear his record of an accusation.

"Bought for your account 1,700 shares 'Last Hope' at \$10.00."

"That must have been at the opening and before the break," laughed Banatyne, and his smile was reflected in some of the hitherto frowning faces. "Ah! here's another," he continued, as a second boy handed him an insignificant looking paper which read:

"Bought for your account 3,200 shares 'Last Hope' at \$8.00." "Whew!" said Banatyne, "that's a pretty big drop;" but he smiled his careless smile.

"Here's another, '2,850 shares at \$5,' and—Great Scott! here's the clincher, '3,200 shares from five dollars down to three.'"

"That *is* hell a mile," and Banatyne would have indulged in other energetic Anglo-Saxon phrases but the reports didn't give him time, for they

came from the brokers thick and fast like snowflakes in a blizzard; but Banatyne with steady nerve and firm voice faced the storm and read his own and Halstead's doom without a quiver.

“You see, boys, we've been standing in instead of letting go. The market is heavily oversold,” he said.

“Yes, and sure as boys slide down cellar doors those shorts will be clamoring for stock soon. They shan't borrow nary a share from me,” said Halstead, with an expressive wink.

“They won't get any of mine,” declared Banatyne, stroking his beard.

“Nor mine,” answered some of the crowd, with revived hope, their anger having changed to admiration for such plucky cool-headed speculators.

Here another messenger boy pushed his way to Banatyne.

“The cry is still they come!” shouted the mine manipulator as he waved his hand in air with a defiant gesture which said plainer than words: “Here I stand like a rock. You can't down me. I still live. Come on!” and he read the following report without turning a hair:

“Bought for your account 18,900 shares ‘Last Hope’ at one dollar and four bits per share”

“Suffering humanity!” ejaculated Halstead. “Well, that's rubbing the hair the wrong way and no mistake.” His lips compressed perceptibly and a momentary pallor spread over his face, but a quick gasp acted like a supporting prop and he said, a happy-go-lucky smile broadening his face:

"It's a little rocky, boys, but never say die, Hope springs eternal in the human breast!" "It can't go any lower than that for they have our orders to take it *all* at that limit," he concluded, with a sweeping wave of his hand, and he and Banatyne looked the brace of daring, reckless, leading speculators that they were.

"The fellow laughs longest who laughs last,—and my laughing time hasn't come yet," added Halstead, with that smile that robbed him of his hayseed guilelessness, and transformed him into the bold and defiant manipulator that many knew Nat Halstead to be.

"We sympathize with you, old fellows; we are all in the same boat," said one of the men in the crowd, voicing the sentiments of his comrades.

"That's all right, boys, the boat won't sink. Our ship'll be on top," went on Banatyne, cheerily, the crowd thirsting for his every encouraging word. "The worst is over," he continued. "Come here in the morning, and we'll have some good news that'll make the bears hunt their holes."

The dauntless courage of these two speculators, their very assurance, their sanguine hope, were absorbed by their co-sufferers, and, after giving three cheers for Banatyne and Halstead, the assemblage dispersed, feeling better for having listened to such optimistic views that accorded with their hopes.

As soon as he and Halstead were alone, and after fairly mopping the perspiration from their foreheads, necks and hands, Banatyne said:

“ I think we’ve bought about sixty thousand shares to-day; I have one hundred thousand, including Lutner’s shares, in the box; that leaves about forty thousand shares out.”

“ I don’t think there is that much stock out,” said Halstead. “ I imagine we have more of the pie than you think. Oh, we’re in for it now, Roy, as the terrier said to the rat.”

“ Perhaps you’re right,” returned Banatyne, “ Now, if I can get some favorable news to-night from the mine, and see that damned Lutner, and clear up the title business——”

“ We’ll squeeze the shorts so to-morrow they’ll think their time’s come, sure pop,” interrupted Halstead.”

Here Banatyne took his watch from his pocket and, looking at it in a meditative way, he continued: “ It’s after Board hours. They may fume and howl, but we can’t be called upon to pay for to-day’s purchases before two o’clock to-morrow,—so let to-morrow take care of itself!” and he closed his watch with a quick snap, then stroked his beard, adding: “ This looks like the smallest-sized hole we ever had to squeeze through.” In an instant his meditative mood was cast adrift, and his always hopeful, buoyant spirit was again holding sway. “ Pshaw!” he said, “ there’s no such word as fail. Up the flume?” and he smiled at the utter impossibility of such an event. “ Oh! no, I guess not,” said Halstead with sanguine assurance, and they went around the corner and tapped a cold bottle for “ The Last Hope.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ SEND FOR ‘ CAPTAIN JIM. ’ ”

TRICKSIE and Dolores had thought and talked all day of Kelvyn until their nerves were on a strain. First, they thought he had returned to the mines without calling, and “ He was as mean as it is possible for a man to be ; ” “ A cold unsociable fellow. ” Then another picture presented itself : “ Something horrible has happened to him ; he has met with foul play. ” “ Yes, there are so many reckless characters in San Francisco who would kill a man for a two-and-a-half gold piece. ” The final conclusion was that he was sick. “ Yes, ” said Dolores, “ and all alone ; not a soul to hand him a drink of water, ” and her eyes moistened as she thought : “ Will my father never come ? ”

Banatyne was a little late for dinner. His wife and daughter both felt confident that he was at Kelvyn’s sick bed.

“ Do you think it would be wrong for me to go and take care of Captain Jim in his illness ? ” Dolores asked, plaintively.

“ We will try to prevail upon him to come here if he is able to be moved, ” had been Tricksie’s answer, feeling confident that such arrangement would please Dolores, and, at the same time, give Tricksie an opportunity to try and soften his prejudice towards her, which she doubly desired now that there was a possibility that Kelvyn might

become a member of the family. “ I shall help to nurse him so tenderly,” she thought, “ he will be forced to give me a little bit of praise.”

Dolores had not told any one about the engagement so suddenly made and so suddenly broken, as *she* thought.

It was only fifteen minutes past the dinner time, but the minutes seemed like hours, so anxious were they to see Banatyne and learn if the object of their solicitude was expected to live or die.

Soon the tired mine manipulator appeared, and throwing his slouch hat down upon a gold gilt satin upholstered chair, declared that he was as “ hungry as a wolf.”

That he should be heartless enough to think of the “ inner man ” before he spoke of the sick man was a surprise and disappointment to the two thoroughly nerve-racked anxious women.

“ Well, how is Kelvyn? Is he likely to get well?” were Tricksie’s anxious questions, and Dolores was close at hand eagerly listening for her father’s answer.

“ What are you talking about?” asked Banatyne, as if he had never heard the name “ Kelvyn” in all his life.

“ Isn’t he sick?” asked Tricksie, showing disappointment, as she feared her hand did not after all hold that trump card.

“ Sick?” repeated Banatyne with provoking absentmindedness; “ *Sick?* ” he emphasized again: “ How do I know?”

“ Haven’t you been with him?” asked Tricksie, showing impatient surprise.

"Not much," answered her husband in such an exasperatingly indifferent way as he quickened his pace in the direction of dinner, that the ladies could scarcely conceal their impatience.

"Didn't you send to inquire after him?" asked his wife, not in her sweetest tone, she and Dolores standing still addressing themselves to Banatyne's retreating back:

"Had other fish to fry," called the hungry man from the dining room: "Why don't you come along?"

"I declare, Roy; it's provoking the way you keep dinner waiting until it's all cold and for no reason whatever," remarked his wife from the hall, glad to find a flaw to excuse her impatience.

"Who's keeping the dinner waiting now, I'd like to know?" called Roy's voice. "Come on in, and you shall hear a good joke," he added, remembering for the first time his promise of the morning relative to Kelvyn.

"To tell you the sober truth," continued Roy, as the family seated itself at the table, "I haven't had a moment to spare to Kelvyn to-day, or anybody else, for that matter. Ask Dougald."

"That's mean now, Roy," pouted his wife, while his daughter was an interested listener.

"You're both looking very charming," he said, again ignoring the all important subject; and he spoke the truth, for the ladies had entertained a hope that if Kelvyn was in the city, he might return with Roy and be their guest at dinner.

"Well girls," Banatyne commenced, "I'm down to bed rock to-night."

“ I should say so ; ‘ Last Hope ’ selling for one dollar and four bits,” contributed Dougald.

“ Thought it was up to ten dollars,” said Tricksie.

“ So it was this morning, but things sometimes change quicker ’n chain lightning,” answered Banatyne, as if he enjoyed the joke : “ If I don’t get some good news to-night we’ll have to hurry about those sunny rooms in the poor house, or that shanty in Poverty Row, for either’s likely to be crowded,” laughed Banatyne ; then he continued with a shade of impatience, “ I left word for that man Lutner——”

“ Lutner ? ” interrupted his daughter, her eyes opening wide with surprise.

“ Yes, do you know him ? ” asked her father.

“ Denhardt Lutner ? ” asked Dolores excitedly.

“ Yes, that’s the man,” returned Banatyne.

“ My step-father,” said the girl briefly.

Banatyne arched his eyebrows and was decidedly surprised at the announcement. “ Your stepfather ? ” he repeated.

“ At least that is the name of my step-father,” explained his daughter.

“ Has he anything to do with your mine, ‘ The Last Hope ’ ? ” she asked anxiously.

“ Well, rather,” replied Banatyne. “ He sold me the property.”

“ He did ? ” asked Dolores in an astonished tone.

“ Yes,” was the answer, “ and now it’s rumored, and in fact I have a dispatch in my pocket to that effect, that he sold that which was not his to sell. In stock talk he sold short, and the report that I

have no title to the mine broke it all to pieces to-day," and he drained a good sized goblet of claret. "He'll be up here this evening to make explanations," went on Banatyne, "I just want to get at those 'shorts' to-morrow," and he smacked his wine-moistened lips either at the anticipated pleasure in store for to-morrow, when he would annihilate the "shorts," or the desire to get every drop of what he considered a good thing.

Dolores involuntarily flinched when her father announced that Lutner would be there that evening.

"It will not be necessary for me to see him, will it?" she asked, showing dread of such a meeting.

"Suit yourself about that," Tricksie counseled, noticing Dolores' lips growing white.

"I would rather not see him," Dolores said, sadly, and her eyes seemed to take a retrospective view of by-gone scenes.

"All right, we'll just go up stairs, and spend the evening together," said Tricksie. "You can join us, Dougald, if you promise to be a very good boy." Just then Kee brought a dispatch to Banatyne.

"Ah! here's news," said the P. M., hurriedly, tearing open the envelope. "Just what I've been waiting for," and he read aloud for the benefit of the family:

"Sam Williams and Barney Ryan,"—

at the names of her old mining friends Dolores started and listened to the further reading of that dispatch with a pallid face, her hands clutching,

the table cloth, and her eyes gazing hard at her father's lips as he pronounced each word—

“ leading a party of miners,”

went on Banatyne, reading,

“ have taken possession, and hold the mine for rightfu. owner. They swear that they helped to locate ‘ The Last Hope ’ three years ago, calling it ‘ The Boss Claim. ’ ”

Dolores took a quick breath, Kee dropped a glass and smashed it; but the reading went right along:

“ They say that any man who conveyed title in name of D. B. Lutner is a forger, as it belongs to no man ; am afraid we are all up the flume.

“ THOMAS HAYES. ”

“ That's hard luck,” said Banatyne, folding the dispatch and placing it in his vest pocket. “ Up the flume ! ” he said, repeating the last words of the dispatch. “ We'll see about that,” he added in a defiant tone.

His daughter pushed her plate to one side and arose from her unfinished dinner, white as the cloth that covered the table.

“ Send for Captain Jim,” she said, the words almost inarticulate from the emotion she was trying to conceal. “ Send for him before you see Lutner,” she insisted.

Tricksie immediately concluded that Dolores, although a very nervy girl, could bear the strain no longer. Her great love for Kelvyn had finally compelled her surrender, and that the girl jumped at this excuse to bring her lover back; and Tricksie was with her heart and soul.

Kee blurted out, in agitated English, which, at its best, was difficult to understand, “ Bloss Claim,

allege same, Last Hope. Me savee," and trotted off in a celestial flutter.

Dolores felt keenly the disgrace that was about to fall upon her mother's husband. "I cannot accuse him," she thought, "Let Captain Jim do that."

"Does Kelvyn know anything about the Boss Claim?" Banatyne inquired of his daughter.

"He and I were among the prospectors who located it. Where is your 'Last Hope' mine located?" she asked, leaning a little heavier upon her stepmother.

"Why, up there in Amador County, between Gold Gulch and Hangtown," explained her father, pointing as if it was just across the street, and he fumbled at his pocket, took out the telegram, and read it again. "This fool thing says it belongs to 'no man.' Who does it belong to then?" he asked with a puzzled look, and replacing the dispatch in his pocket when his daughter's answer arrested his action.

"Possibly to a woman," she said calmly, as she started to go, then turned, and said again: "But send for Captain Jim. He will tell you all," and left the room with Tricksie, while Banatyne repeated, in a puzzled, mystified way: "To a woman? to a woman? How's that going to help *me*?" His obtuseness, as thick as a stone wall, as usual, prevented his taking the hint.

Tricksie felt confident that her idea was the correct one. She could only look upon any episode involving a handsome young man and a beautiful young girl in the light of a love romance.

She didn't even hear the mine talk, so engrossed was she with the romantic side of the question; but Dougald, quick to receive inspiration from his sister, said to himself: "To a woman? I'll bet a cookie that mine belongs to my sister. Gee whiz! Here's a go."

He immediately began to hustle on his overcoat and grabbed his hat.

"Where are you going, youngster, in such a big hurry?" his father asked.

"Down to the hotel to see if Kelvyn's still in the city," answered Dougald, breathlessly.

"Don't look only at the hotel," advised his father, "but search the town; I've got to have this thing settled to-night or I'm flatter against the wall than a flounder. Don't come back without Captain Jim. He's the key to the situation."

Dougald left the house almost on a run, while Banatyne went up stairs where Dolores told him and Tricksie the story of the Boss Claim.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“IS THAT YOU SWEETNESS?”

DOUGALD readily found Kelvyn at the hotel where he had been quietly stopping, and he never had such a cordial greeting in his life as Kelvyn extended to him. He was to that moody lover like a breath from Heaven to the tortured in Hades. “Ah! a message from my unyielding sweetheart, at last,” was his happy thought:

“Put on your coat and hat and come with me,” was Dougald’s abrupt answer to Kelvyn’s outburst of welcome; “Haven’t time to talk here. We’ll talk going up in the cars,” he continued, in such a hurry-flurry way that Kelvyn felt sudden alarm, and his apprehension was, of course, all for his affianced.

“How is your sister?” he asked as indifferently as he could, while he hastily put on his coat, snatched his hat and gloves and hurried away with Dougald, like a doctor who has been called to save or kill a patient.

“Why haven’t you been up to see for yourself?” asked Dougald, his voice keeping up with his hurrying steps.

Dougald’s evasive answer to Kelvyn’s question convinced the pessimistic lover that his fears were well grounded and that something was wrong with his darling and his remorse was poignant.

“I don’t know,” he answered, like a shamed school boy who would like to hide his face with his arms.

“Been in the city almost a week,” went on his young tormentor, in a hurt tone, “and never came near to know whether people were living or dead,” he added, with a merry twinkle in his eye as he noticed Kelvyn’s troubled expression.

“Your sister is not sick, is she?” asked Kelvyn, a slight tremor in his voice.

“Did I say anybody was sick?” asked Dougald, laughing at Kelvyn’s concern.

“No, not exactly,” returned Kelvyn, with a feeble little smile “but you act as if it’s a case of life or death.”

“Well, so it is, a very, very urgent case,” returned Dougald, purposely prolonging the lover’s suspense.

“Why don’t you tell a fellow right out what the trouble is?” demanded Kelvyn, not able longer to conceal his anxiety.

“Why, that man Lutner——” began Dougald. At the sound of the name Kelvyn’s heart gave a leap. “Has he dared to molest Dolores?” interrupted Kelvyn, grasping the car seat nervously.

“Well, it looks that way to me,” went on Dougald, and the more he tried to explain the more misty he became to himself and the clearer things appeared to the listener. “At any rate,” continued Dougald, “the first thing my sister said when she heard Pop read that dispatch was ‘Send for Captain Jim,’ so here you are,” he concluded, as they reached the house.

Kelvyn’s heart beat fast and he thought: “God

bless the girl; she knew ‘Captain Jim’ would not fail her.”

In the meantime Dolores, Banatyne and Tricksie had been discussing the situation. Banatyne’s opinion of Lutner was that he was a consummate scoundrel, and that he should be punished. Dolores pleaded for mercy for him, asking her father to save him from punishment if it was in his power to do so. Tricksie said, simply, “We all have our faults,” when Dougald rushed into the room and announced that Kelvyn was down stairs.

“I just hustled him,” the boy dashed along. “When I first went in his room he was so afraid something had happened to Dolores he almost keeled over, and I just kept him on the ragged edge for a little while, for his meanness in not coming up before. When I tried to explain what we wanted him for—not quite understanding myself what it was all about—he felt relieved, and the more mixed I got the more he would nod his head, as knowing as an owl, and say, ‘I understand.’ ‘I half suspected it.’ ‘I’m not astonished,’ so I suppose he knows all about the matter.”

“It’s seven o’clock now, and as Lutner is booked for eight, you had all better come right down, see our amateur detective, and improve this shining hour,” and he darted out and down the broad stairs three steps at a time into the drawing-room where Kelvyn was, determined not to miss one word of this sure enough detective story.

Banatyne also hurried down to see Prince James, but Tricksie determined not to be in any

haste going, and Dolores also kept her seat. Tricksie looked at the girl with astonishment as she asked, “Aren’t you going down, dearest?”

“No; you and Papa go down and talk the matter over with Captain Jim.” she said coolly; “He can tell you more about it than I can. I haven’t been in Gold Gulch, you know, for three years.”

“Won’t you please go down and see him?”

“I don’t care to. “We didn’t part friends,” Dolores explained, her lips trembling, “and if I go down he will think I sent for him to make up,”

“That is nonsense, my child; I’m sure the mine was sufficient cause to justify the sending, besides he may think your father sent for him,” said her stepmother, trying to console the troubled girl.

“Didn’t you hear Dougald say that he told him that I had sent for him? He will jump at the conclusion that I wanted to make friends or that I have changed my opinion regarding a certain discussion we had,” said Dolores, with flushed cheeks and tears just ready to come.

“And don’t you want to be friends? Why, if you had my emotional and energetic temperament you would have met him at the threshold,” said Mrs. Banantyne.

“Of course, I would like to be friends with him, Sweetness, but not at the sacrifice of my opinions. I can’t humble myself to make the first advances, because he is decidedly in the wrong,” was Miss Obstinance’s response.

“Why, what has he done to make you so positive, Dolores,” asked Mrs. Banantyne.

“Now please don’t ask me, Sweetness; it’s a

very decided difference of opinion that separates Captain Jim and me,” and the girl kissed her step-mother affectionately.

“ See how quickly he came,” went on Tricksie, pleading the lover’s cause. “ Did you hear Dougald say how concerned he was about you?”

“ Yes, I heard that,” she answered, rising, and Tricksie thought she had won her case: but the obstinate girl walked farther away from the door to the window, and looked out; then she turned and said: “ Sweetness, you go down—he may think it strange if he doesn’t see you.”

“ He will not think it strange if he doesn’t see me, Dolores, because I’m not in the case at all; but he will certainly think it strange if he doesn’t see *you*.”

“ Oh! no, he won’t,” contradicted Dolores as she turned her back and looked out of the window. “ Won’t you please go alone, Sweetness?”

She noted Kelvyn’s anxious look toward the door as she entered and his disappointment at not seeing Dolores. Banatyne had heard from Kelvyn the full history of the Boss Claim as well as a great deal about Lutner, and a plan was formed to have Banatyne see Lutner first, and for curiosity to find out just how far Lutner would go in his rascality, and if he would try in the slightest degree to offer any excuse for his misdeeds.

They were curious to know what would be his tactics, now that his rascality was discovered. At the proper time Kelvyn would appear upon the scene, if his testimony was needed to confute any of Lutner’s statements after Banatyne had

interviewed him. They had determined, for Dolores' sake, since she wished it, to be as lenient with the scoundrel as was consistent with the attitude he would assume.

After Tricksie had greeted Kelvyn most cordially, Banatyne said to her excitedly: “Why the whole mine belongs to Dolores!”

“Is it possible? Then I'm delighted” said his wife, showing as much pleasure as if she had been the possessor of such unmistakable riches herself.

“Yes; every inch of it,” Kelvyn said.

“Why, now it's as plain as the nose on your face,” was Banatyne's convincing contribution.

“By the way, how is Miss Banatyne?” asked Kelvyn, trying to appear indifferent.

“Not very well,” was the arch match-maker's reply.

“Not well?” repeated Kelvyn, with concern.

“All bosh,” laughed Banatyne, with a toss of his head, “she's only nervous for fear we'll punish that step-father of hers.”

“Isn't the owner of the great ‘Last Hope’ mine, going to allow me one little peep at her ladyship?” asked Kelvyn, rather nervously.

“I'm afraid she's hardly able to come down,” answered his hostess, sadly; “By the way, would you mind coming upstairs, Captain Kelvyn?” she continued; “remember, one of the eight Beatitudes is ‘To visit the sick;’ and the sick, you know, are always so glad to see their friends.”

Kelvyn blessed Tricksie from the bottom of his heart for that suggestion and did that Christian

Beatitude with alacrity as she led him on tip-toe up to the alleged sick room; opening the door softly, she ushered the bold lover into his sweetheart's boudoir, and left them to make up their lovers' quarrel in the usual sweet and entirely satisfactory way.

Dolores had turned the artificial lights of her room very low and reseated herself at the window to enjoy the moonlight of a glorious night.

At first, the room to Kelvyn's eyes, accustomed to glaring gaslight, seemed as dark as Egypt's darkest catacomb. Dolores heard him stumble over a chair and thought, "That's Sweetness back again: God bless her; she's all out of breath from running up and down stairs," for Kelvyn's breathing was hard consequent upon his exciting joy and delightful anticipation of soon holding Dolores to his heart again. He almost groped his way along. Presently he heard a sob and he followed the sound with his eyes, whose sight was rewarded by a blond covered head upon which the moonbeams shone through the open casement. The white arms and neck gleamed in the soft light. He stood breathlessly still for a moment. Dolores' voice murmured;—"Is that you, Sweetness?"—Could he believe his own ears? He did not expect so kindly a welcome from his haughty love. He knew her high-strung spirit of old.

"Yes, it is I," exclaimed Kelvyn, his voice trembling with repressed love and excitement.

"A man!" screamed the girl in alarm, as Kelvyn's heavy tones fell upon her astonished ear.

"What else did you expect?" asked Kelvyn, as

he caught his sweetheart in his arms. “So sweet a call from so loved a Juliet would surely bring erring Romeo to her side,” he added, as he pressed her to his heart, rained kisses from willing lips unto willing lips, and there in the moonlight, whose soft halo conceals the blushes of modest love, she again promised to become Mrs. James Kelvyn at a very early date. Each felt that Tricksie had planned their surrender, and they voted her a brigadier-general in the tactics necessary to carry on a campaign of love.

CHAPTER XXV.

SQUARING ACCOUNTS.

LUTNER, true to his appointment, arrived at eight o'clock sharp, and was met by Banatyne. Dougald remained within ear shot, for a boy of eighteen is much more interested in the trapping of a villain than he is in love affairs, and, besides, he was fearful of violence to his father, so he determined to be on hand should lusty help be required.

Lutner was very *debonnair* in appearance—regularly jaunty in his manner. He extended his clammy, moistened hand to Banatyne, without a curve in his fingers. Banatyne clasped it warmly from force of habit, dropping it instantly, as if it were a slimy asp with poisonous sting.

"Hello, Banatyne," was his greeting, "I thought you were a man who didn't scare like a jack rabbit." Then he laughed, and the scar was just as vigilant as ever, and curved up in crow-foot shape toward the well remembered sinister eyes.

"Well, I don't, unless my assailant strikes from under cover," returned Banatyne, forcing a laugh.

"What do you mean, old fellow?" asked Lutner, as he settled himself comfortably in the largest and easiest chair he could find.

"Now, there's no use, Lutner, whipping the devil around the stump," returned Banatyne,

bluntly. “You have heard, of course, the rumors floating about, and know how they have affected the market on the ‘Last Hope?’”

“Well, yes, I have heard some wild nonsense,” he answered, flirting his handkerchief from his pocket, its perfume meeting small favor from Banatyne’s nostrils, for they gave a quick snort like an angry steer, as he said: “It may be nonsense for *you*, but it is damned hard sense for *me*.” Banatyne was getting angry, as he continued:

“You sold me that mine outright, taking my money for it, and yesterday I bought nearly every share that was offered, so that to-day I stand loaded with about three-fourths of the entire property, and my friends have the balance; now comes the almost positive assurance that you sold that which was not yours to sell. In fact that you stole the property known as the ‘Boss Claim,’ and hadn’t any more right to a foot of that mine than I had, consequently we have been swindled—that’s the plain English of it.”

Lutner leaned back in the chair, and heard the accusation without apparent surprise or agitation. He surveyed Banatyne, coolly. He knew why he had been sent for, and he expected this expose. He did not flinch at the words.

“Well, I wouldn’t be quite as credulous as you are, Banatyne, for all the mines in California,” he said, in a tone that implied sympathy for Banatyne’s glaring weakness.

“So, you believe every thing you hear,” he added, in a pat-you-on-the-back tone, as he lolled in his chair and took a handsome gold cigar case

from his pocket and opened it, preparatory to offering one of the highest-priced weeds purchasable.

"No, not everything," returned Banatyne, his usually smiling lips curving with a sneer. "Now, for instance, if anyone should tell me that you were *truthful* I wouldn't believe *that*; no, not by a *jugful*," his patience kicking hard against the cool impudence of that brazen-faced villain.

"That's unkind, old fellow," said Lutner, politely, offering him a cigar.

"I am not smoking," said Banatyne, brusquely, as he waved the cigar away.

"Since when have you reformed?" asked Lutner, throwing one leg over the other.

"Since now," was the brief reply.

"Ah," said Lutner, slowly, as he selected a cigar and then replaced the case carefully in his pocket.

"Well, what have you got to say?" asked Banatyne sharply, as if he was in a hurry to show Lutner the street door.

"Nothing much," answered Lutner, as he took a quartz matchbox from his pocket, turned it slowly around until he got the proper side, struck a match upon it and lit his cigar, while Banatyne was standing, watching and waiting for his answer, very much like a volcano about to irrupt.

"Well, *say* it," blurted out Banatyne.

"Well, what I was going to say is this," he added, taking the cigar from his mouth, looking to see if it was well lighted, and returning it to his lips to perfect its light by a few more puffs.

"Is *what*?" howled Banatyne, his patience well nigh exhausted.

“That mine was my property,” said Lutner, slowly, “I”—here he took a long, loving pull at his cigar—“discovered it, staked it out”—another pull at his cigar—“worked it, and here is the original location notice of the old ‘Boss Claim’ standing in D. B. Lutner, and recorded three years ago.” Here he took a paper from his pocket and showed it to Banatyne, adding “Didn’t your expert find it so recorded at Gold Gulch?”

Banatyne did not answer. He had promised Kelvyn that he would keep his temper, to see how far the rascal would go and where he would wind up, but he was having the hardest work of his life to fulfill the promise. He handed the paper back to Lutner.

“Satisfactory?” asked Lutner.

“Not exactly,” returned Banatyne, his lip curling in contempt.

“Not?” and Lutner elevated his eye brows. “Hard to please” he added briefly.

“Not so credulous as you supposed,” sneered Banatyne.

“No,” answered Lutner, and he puffed wreaths of smoke above his head, and threw himself farther back in the chair to see if his smoke rings were successes. “It is your property now—at least you say most of it is your property,” he added, as he arose and walked slowly over to a receiver and relieved his cigar of its ashes. “That’s all you wished to see me for?” he concluded, inquiringly, as he turned to Banatyne, affecting to consider the business at an end, offering his hand to take his leave.

"Not just yet," said Banatyne, refusing Lutner's proffered hand and placing himself between that worthy and the door, "There is a gentleman here who is extremely anxious to see you; perhaps his presence will refresh your elastic memory as to facts."

"And pray who wishes to honor me so?" asked Lutner, with cold sarcasm, and not without some tremor in his voice.

"An old friend of yours," Banatyne returned, double discounting him on sarcasm; then he said to Dougald, for that young man had loomed into sight like a star in the East, not able to subdue longer his burning desire to gaze upon a real live villain: "Tell Kelvyn to come here." Dougald darted away as if a red hot liner was after him.

Lutner's face paled, but he kept his composure and well-affected nonchalance, and said, as if trying to recall his memory—"Kelvyn?—Kelvyn? I haven't the honor of knowing the name—I never heard it before."

"Well he's heard yours, and he knows you like a book," snapped Banatyne.

Lutner took a quick step toward the door, but Banatyne had no idea of allowing him to escape before he should be confronted by Kelvyn, and relieved of some of his audacious effrontery at least; that would be some satisfaction if they didn't do anything more, so he merely moved back a step, when Lutner moved, but still kept himself between Lutner and the door.

"I have an engagement," said Lutner; "please do not insist upon my remaining longer," and his sarcasm was more bitter than gall.

“Oh, I must insist,” returned Banatyne enjoying his chance to retaliate. “*Chacun a son tour!*”

Lutner’s longing, covetous eyes riveted upon that exit like the eyes of a wild beast upon the door of its cage, and he moved quickly to one side and took a long stride in its direction, but his keeper was quite as alert as he, and backed into the opened casement of the door and stood facing the desperate Lutner, blocking his exit completely. At that instant the sound of hurrying footsteps fell upon Lutner’s ears. His face grew pale to the very lips. Suddenly he seized Banatyne and flung him to one side with the strength of a desperate man who grappled for his life, and dashed out of the room, meeting Kee in the hall.

“Lutner! mline!”—but Kee’s scream was hushed, for Lutner had taken the astonished Chinaman by the throat and thrown him against the wall with such force that his celestial breath for an instant was lost. Just then Kelvyn’s hand gripped Lutner’s arm like a circle of iron. The baffled villain tried to free himself, but he was held as in a vice of steel, and Kelvyn shook him as a mastiff might shake a sky terrior, until Lutner’s jaws chattered like a pair of castanets.

Tricksie and Dolores appeared in the hall—Tricksie speechless with fright, Dolores white with emotion. “Oh! please let him go, Captain Jim,” came his sweetheart’s pleading voice. Kelvyn’s grasp relaxed, which enabled Lutner to jerk away and he flung himself, blinded with rage, out of the front door. They heard a howl of terror, followed by a fall—Lutner had, in his furious

frenzy, rushed beyond the outside vestibule and fallen down the long flight of steps to the carriage drive below.

For an instant they all stood as if transfixed with horror, when suddenly Tricksie with the energy of emotion, and before any hand could stay her, darted out of the door and down the steps. Banatyne, Kelvyn and Dougald followed, while Dolores sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands as if to save her eyes from some horrible sight.

At the foot of the steps lay Lutner, his face turned up to the moonlight, more terrible in the ghastliness of death than it had been sinister in life.

Tricksie waved her bare white arms in air, then clutched her head between her cold hands and gazed like a hypnotized person at the dead face. Banatyne passed his arm around her waist, and took her hand to lead her away.

"Dead! Killed! Look at the dead eyes! how they stare up to God!" she said in an awed voice, then with a shriek, that sounded wild and shrill in the night air, and despite her husband's almost super-human strength to prevent, she fell face down, prone upon the earth. Banatyne and Kelvyn carried her into the house—she trembled like a frightened bird—Banatyne trying to quiet her with soothing words—"Don't mind, pet, the world is better without him—" he said. The only answer from Tricksie was a low wail; her frame shook convulsively, and she continued to murmur: "Staring—dead eyes! Killed!"

“She shouldn’t have seen that terrible sight,” Banatyne said to Kelvyn.

“I tried to stop her,” Kelvyn replied, “but she rushed past me too quickly.”

“Her emotional nature always makes her an intense sufferer for a little while, but she recovers quickly,” her husband said, hopeful and sanguine Banatyne in all things.

Now was the time that Dolores’ strong nature served her and others well. She helped place Tricksie in bed. She nursed her for days and nights. Her grief was intense, but not a tear nor an hysterical sob escaped her. She soothed her father, for when he lost hope, he was in despair, indeed.

The best medical skill that could be obtained, from the first declared the issue doubtful, the terrible and sudden fright was fatal in her condition, and human skill could not avail to save mother and child. A week had passed and no sign of returning consciousness had been shown in the patient’s clouded mind. Her ravings were always of the “staring, dead eyes,”—“the ghastly white face in the moonlight.”

At last, on the day of the end, the fever subsided; the patient’s temperature was lower, and a more natural expression took the place of the one of horror that her face had worn for more than a week. Dolores felt more hopeful, and she tiptoed out of the room to call her father, Kelvyn and Dougald, to look at the pale face as it lay in apparently painless sleep.

“Doesn’t she look better?” whispered Dolores

to poor, sobbing Banatyne. “ Much more natural,” she added with a hopeful smile.

“ Yes,” answered her father, “ but she doesn’t look like my Sweetness,” he added, wiping away the burning tears, which had come fresh in his great sorrow.

The invalid moved. She opened her eyes and looked at Banatyne in a dazed way ; then she lifted herself wearily, for some strength had seemingly returned, and rested feebly upon her elbow ; looking around, she greeted her loving watchers with a smile. Such a smile ! It seemed a reflection from the innermost court of Heaven.

Banatyne knelt by the bed, put his arms around her emaciated form and pillowed her head upon his shoulder. With effort, she raised her thin white hand, cold as marble, to his face, where it nestled in his beard, but without sufficient strength to caress him as was her habit. Dougald crouched behind the couch and bowed his head upon the cover-lid to smother the sobs that he could not control—for he had good reason to love his father’s young wife with all the fervor that a child feels for a parent ;—Dolores stood by with Kelvyn’s arm about her waist, and a happy hopeful smile for the invalid’s recovery upon her lips. Tricksie raised her eyes to the young couple and murmured :

“ You are happy ? ”

“ Yes,” whispered Kelvyn, “ thanks to you, Mrs. Banatyne, Dolores has promised to be my wife,” and he kissed Tricksie’s hand, Dolores nodding acquiescence with a loving little smile, as she softly asked, “ Are you better ? ”

“ I feel no pain,” was Tricksie’s answer beneath her failing breath; after a pause, she murmured: “ Where is my boy?”

His sister motioned to Dougald to dry his eyes and come around to the front where Tricksie could see him. The poor boy lifted his tear stained face and did his best to subdue his emotion, but as he approached Tricksie his grief mastered control; he bowed his head upon the pillow just where she lay and gave vent to his feelings, his boyish frame shaking with convulsive sobs. Tricksie’s hand felt its way, and rested upon his bowed head, as if to soothe his trouble. Presently the invalid whispered:

“ All is dark. I cannot see any of you.”

Death had pitilessly presaged his coming by robbing her of sight. One cold white hand rested upon Dougald’s bowed head, the other groped its way to Banatyne’s face. She felt his tears, and, with lips upon which the death dew was gathering, she whispered so softly that none could hear but him: “ I am not grieved to die for myself, but I would pray for strength to give you a new life—to live for,—our unborn child,—but God will not heed that prayer,—I am going—too late,—you must not weep—” she sighed. “ Goodbye, dearest ones. I am not afraid to meet my God. He knows——”

The exhausted body lay limp in Banatyne’s arms. There was a sigh like a tired child’s—and a blot had been erased from the world’s escutcheon. Tricksie was with her Maker. She was in the

august presence of that Impartial Judge who calls a crime a crime whether the offender be man or woman.

The breakers in the great Ocean of Time surged and seethed and rolled along, regardless of death and heedless of life, and two years had rushed by.

Captain Jim and Dolores, whose honeymoon still lingered, although it was more than a year old, often had reminiscent talks of Tricksie.

"The darling," Dolores, would say with wet eyes, "she was *so* good. It was harder for her to do right than it is for us who have been gifted by God with stronger natures. She was so contrite. I'm sure she went straight to Heaven. You know 'one tear shed in repentance of sin opens the gates of Paradise,'" and Kelvyn would take his wife in his arms and kiss away the tears that she shed in remembrance of Tricksie.

Mr. Samuel Williams and Mr. Bernard Ryan (better known in Gold Gulch in early days as "Big Sam" and Barney Ryan) had become successful mine owners, and spent much of their time in San Francisco. They were always welcome guests at the palatial home of Mr. and Mrs. James Kelvyn, as were also Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Halstead, formerly Edna Maxwell, for Halstead had at last concentrated his affections upon one divinity and had married, although a little late in life, none the less happily.

They were present one evening when the Last Hope was the subject of discussion.

"The ledge gits richer with every foot we sink.

Oh! she kim to stay, she did,” said Mr. Samuel Williams.

“Be gorra, I loikes the looks of her betther ivery day. She’s purttier nor a speckled pig,” declared the enthusiastic Mr. Bernard Ryan

“She has yielded over ten millions of dollars in two years,” said Kelvyn, “and paid fifty-two consecutive semi-monthly and extra dividends of five dollars per share. That’s a splendid record for a two-year-old, eh?”

The pensive look died away from Banatyne’s eyes. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead. The old time fire lighted up his face and blazed into resurrected warmth as he cried:

“We’ll drink to the ‘Last Hope.’”

“Yes, we’ll toast the mine,” assented Halstead, but, true to his chivalric instincts, he added, raising a glass of sparkling wine to his lips:

“Ladies First!”

THE END.

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